

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

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Commissioned Officer National Army and member
of Investigating staff of Bureau, 1954.

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RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ANGLO - IRISH WAR

1916 - 1921

by

Colonel J. V. Lawless

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PREFACE.

Pages 1 to 10.

Fingal so named from the Danish and Norse
invasions of ninth and tenth centuries - some
indications of the uneasy life of the Scandinavian
settlers - the coming of the Anglo-Normans brings
the inclusion of the territory of Fingal in the
English Pale - the blending of Norse, Norman
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PREFACE.

A few words are, I think, necessary to explain the scope of this work and the reason for including in it what may at first sight appear to be irrelevant matter.

This is a personal narrative and, as such, has obvious limitations as an historical contribution; but, covering as it does, an important period of Irish history, it is intended to show as objectively as possible something of life as I found it in my time and place.

The history of any period is inseparable from that of the preceding period insofar as that the one is the sequel of the other, though that may not be directly apparent as related to a particular place or time. For example, the defeat of the Jacobite army at Aughrim in 1691 was really the climax of a European struggle, and had, therefore, much more far-reaching effects than the subjugation of Ireland to the Williamite or Orange ascendancy.

Nevertheless, the more localised details of history, taken in conjunction with some knowledge of the major factors in world history, helps towards the better understanding of events and the people concerned in them. For this reason, I begin my story with an introductory outline of the history of Fingal, in which I was born and wherein my family has had its roots for generations past.

That part of the County of Dublin bounded north and south by the Delvin and Tolka rivers was named Fingal by the native Gael as the territory occupied or inhabited by the fair foreigner, i.e., the Norwegians, who were reputedly blond or fair, in contrast to their allies, the Danes, who were said to have been dark haired or dark complexioned. The derivation of the name Fingal from the Gaelic words 'Finn' meaning fair

and 'Gaul' meaning foreigner, is, however, somewhat speculative, as the words 'Fine Gaul', meaning foreign tribe, applied indiscriminately to the Danish and Norwegian settlers and to the territory occupied by them, also has its claims.

Certain it is, however, that these Scandinavian marauders had made some of their earliest incursions along the Dublin coast and, after the capture of the port which is now Dublin, by a strong force under their chieftain, Turgesius, about the year A.D. 836^x, they peopled the fertile plain on the north of it, driving out the Gaelic occupants who had resisted them, or subjecting them to a condition of serfdom, where they remained.

In the course of time the new settlers had mingled their blood with that of their Gaelic neighbours. Many of the Scandinavian warriors took the women of the Gael as wives, and a notable example at a later stage of a Gaelic chieftain who had a Danish wife was Brian Borumha, the victor of Clontarf. It is generally accepted, at any rate, that at the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Strongbow in the year 1170 A.D. the population of Fingal was largely, if not entirely, descended from Scandinavian settlers, and the chieftain of Dublin one Hescuph McTurkell, had his residence at Kinsally (approximately, I believe, about the site of the present Kinsally House). This McTurkell was executed by Strongbow on the latter's capture of Dublin, as he claimed that McTurkell was a pirate and not entitled to treatment as an honourable enemy.

Some idea of the state of strife that existed in Fingal between the first coming of the Scandinavians and the breaking of their power by Brian at Clontarf, may be gained from the

(x) This date is given by Dalton, though Marmion in his "History of the Ports of Ireland" gives the year of the onslaught of Turgesius as 798 A.D.

following passages, quoted from Dalton's History of County Dublin:

"In 972 Fingal was devastated by O'Melaghlin, the King of Meath, who at the same time restored to liberty all his countrymen who lived there and had been kept in slavery by the settlers.

"In 1013 it was again subjected to a visitation by the same warlike chieftain, which, however, was avenged by a counter-raid on O'Melaghlin's territory by Sitric, King of Dublin, and his Royal Danes".

This was, of course, the year before the Battle of Clontarf and Danish power was at its highest, but, following this, we read that:

"In 1083 O'Loughlin laid waste Fingal, even to the gates of Dublin, and in 1131 it was similarly despoiled by Donald O'Melaghlin, and a signal victory over the Danes was won in Fingal shortly after this by Donagh O'Carroll. Again, in 1162, Murtagh O'Loughlin led an army to Dublin with the same expectations, but the Danes declining to give him battle, he devastated the district before returning to his own country".

So, apparently, for long after the Battle of Clontarf, and up to the Anglo-Norman appearance in Ireland, the population of Fingal was looked upon as foreign, i.e., Danish, or Scandinavian, by their Gaelic neighbours.

For about three hundred years the Scandinavians had dwelt, and though obviously not in undisputed possession, had at any rate maintained individual possession of the territory. It is natural, therefore, that in the subsequent ages the descendants of these hardy fighters should be found among the Fingallians more than elsewhere, as Fingal had been their sovereign territory for so long.

It is of notable interest that within that Scandinavian territory there existed at the time of the Norman invasion a considerable number of ecclesiastical establishments, among which were St. Dolough's Church at Balgriffen, Lusk, St. Margaret's, Glassmore Abbey, Swords, Grace Dieu, and many others. Many of the original pagan Scandinavian warriors had espoused christianity soon after

their settlement in Ireland, and I think we may assume that in the following couple of centuries most, if not all of them, became converts to the christian teaching and church of their adopted homeland.

The Church of St. Columkille in Swords, for instance, is recorded as the first halting place where rested the body of King Brian for a night, on its way to its burial place at Armagh. Marmion states that the monks of Swords took charge of the funeral arrangements on this occasion.

Before the descent of the Anglo-Norman expedition under Strongbow on the shores of Ireland at Waterford and Wexford in 1170, Fingal was ravished by the Norman troops of Fitzgerald at the behest of the traitor King of Leinster, Dermot McMurrrough in the year 1169. McMurrrough had recently made a treaty with Roderic O'Connor, the Ard-Ri, and given hostages for its fulfilment, but, now, anticipating the invasion of Strongbow, with whom he had a secret agreement, he wished to demonstrate his claims fo the Throne of Ireland #

Once again the fair plains of Fingal had become a battleground, and when a little later Strongbow and his Knights had captured the town of Dublin, the existing occupants of the land of Fingal had to give way to those of the new conquest in whose eyes the fertile plains seemed a prize worthy of their efforts.

A casual glance over the records of the ensuing three hundred years or so shows how this territory within the Pale came under the absolute ownership of the Norman knights and their adherents. The "English Pale", as it was called, varied in extent from time to time according to the ability of the Anglo-Normans to maintain it against the attacks of the native

chieftain; of the surrounding territory, but Fingal, as the hinterland of Dublin city, was always within that shifting boundary. In Elizabethan times, therefore, Dublin, city and county, was looked upon by the English as not only conquered, but assimilated territory, all the big landowners being English or of Anglo-Norman descent. The Gaelic Scandinavian blood, hitherto dominant in Fingal, had given way to the stronger race, and now a new blend of races was in process to constitute the new Fingallians.

While the general political and military situation between Ireland and England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would seem to call for a firm upholding of the English law and the English claim to the subjugation of Ireland by the people of the 'Pale', it is evident that the loyalty of large numbers of them had by then reached a new orientation. Perhaps the Protestant reformation in England had a lot to do with it, but at any rate, the majority of the old Anglo-Norman landowners in Fingal gave their allegiance to the Kilkenny Federation and sprang to arms in defence of their rights at Lissenhall, near Swords, on 9th December 1641. Dalton, quoting from 'Curry' and 'Borlase' states that they barricaded the town of Swords and began to parley with the 'Lords Justices' who were the representatives of the English Puritan Government in Dublin. The latter, however, sent an expedition against them under Sir Charles Coote "with all the troops that could be mustered" and this superior force defeated the Irish army of the Pale with the slaughter of about two hundred of the Fingallians. Coote's reputation as a ruthless exterminator was well established in the Cromwellian campaign which followed, so it may be safely assumed that no kid glove methods were used then to destroy all vestige of independent thought which had dared to raise its head within the heart of the Pale.

In the confiscations which followed, most of the great Norman landowners forfeited their possessions in the district and some of their names, such as Netterville, Bealing and Blackney, from this point disappear from Fingal, except as place names, where the names are attached to the land they had held. Others, however, though now impoverished, remained on in their native district, and names such as Taylor, Russell, Cadell and Barnewall are still common in Fingal.

In the ravages of Cromwell's army Fingal did not escape, its churches suffering the same destruction and desecration as similar structures did elsewhere in Ireland. But, as the leading Catholics of wealth and property had already suffered death, outlawing, or the confiscation of their property there was no fear of active opposition there to the victorious march of the Ironsides as they swept on to Drogheda. No doubt there were many Fingallians to be found in the ranks of the Royalist forces which ^{opposed} ~~offered~~ General Jones's troops at Rathmines, and Cromwell's forces at Drogheda and elsewhere, but their native district was already conquered and parcelled out to the new owners when Cromwell marched through Fingal on that last day of August 1649.

The Cromwellian plantation, rapidly supplemented within the following half century by the further land robbery of the Williamites, had stripped the Fingallians of any property they possessed; yet they, or most of them, clung about the land of their birth. As elsewhere in Ireland, reduced to the state of paupers they eluded the mandate "Hell or Connaught" and became the servitors and trades-people of the new owners of the land.

The Penal Laws which followed were designed to ensure the extirpation of the Roman Catholic Faith in Ireland, but failed in Fingal, as elsewhere, to produce the desired effect.

Certainly the unfortunate people, the 'recusants' as they were termed, had misery after misery piled upon them in the effort to break their spirit, yet they clung steadfastly to their ancient faith, and their common misery but welded these descendants of the mixed blood of past invaders closer together and gave them a common bond with the oppressed people of Ireland.

It is, therefore, not so surprising that in 1798 a Fingallian force of about 400 men, under John Carroll of Baldwinstown, marched to Tara to join the Meath men in their heroic stand at that historic spot. Paddy Archer, in his "Fingal in 1798," gives some of the details of this incident, including the capture of Carroll by the Yeomen near Garristown, and his subsequent execution in Dublin. One of the Wexford columns, which had marched north as far as Ardee, returned through Fingal to make its last stand at Drishoge near the village of Ballyboghal. So it is evident that at this period a national consciousness had gripped the people of Fingal, and the suppression of the '98 Rising with bloody ruthlessness left behind in their minds a smouldering memory that would blaze afresh in a later age.

The foregoing brief outline of the past history serves to illustrate the qualities to be expected in the Fingallians and to explain why a national tradition and sturdy independence of spirit prevailed in that district of the "Pale", making such people fertile ground for the growth of the National resurgent movements of the present century.

That the Fingallians were very much alive in the days of the Land League is shown, I think, by the wholesale advantage taken by them of the first Land Acts. If they were passive then would not the authorities of the day have dealt first with those areas of the country where agrarian agitation was greatest, and passed over the more quiescent districts until a much later date

I have no record of the events of that period in Fingal to hand, but tales I remember hearing in my childhood of my grandfather, who was a Land Leaguer and an enthusiastic Parnellite, left in my mind an impression of the active adherence to these movements of the local people. One such story told me by my grandmother impressed itself on my memory. She told it as a funny incident illustrative of the impulsive things he did, but it shows, I think, the spirit of the time.

"He had carried out a lot of improvements to his farm, as had also his father, before him, and each time such improvements were made the rent was raised accordingly. At this stage, however, the Land League spirit was in the ascendant and he had resolved to submit to no further demands for increased rent, when one day he received a demand from the local agent of the absentee landlord for a further increase in rent in view of the increased valuation of the land he had improved. Tucking the old double-barrelled muzzle loader under his arm, he forthwith paid a call upon the agent and, throwing the demand note before this gentleman, suggested its withdrawal. What transpired between them may easily be surmised. He said afterwards that he did not threaten to shoot him, but had reminded him that many of his kind were being shot throughout the land for a whole lot less. The agent assured him that there was probably some mistake in the matter and, as no further action was taken to recover the rent increase, we take it that the agent was suitably impressed by the argument".

The Boer War of 1899 excited the interest of Irishmen all over the world. The spectacle of a community of farmers leaving their homes and their farms to take up arms in the defence of their country against the might of England was something to awaken more than a passive sympathy in Ireland,

which had suffered so much from the application of that same might.

The announcement of the formation of Blake's Irish Brigade to help the Boers in their fight brought a lot of willing recruits, but, unfortunately, it was not easy to get to Africa, even if one had the money, and for those without means it was next to impossible. The only way of getting to the Boer country was via the U.S.A. where some help from Irish organisations there might be expected. Nevertheless a number did contrive to go, amongst whom were John Duff of Swords, and Tom Wade of Whitehart near Balbriggan. These two Fingallians fought all through the war under Blake, McBride and Lynch. There were others who tried to get to Africa and failed, or who only arrived for the cessation of hostilities. Amongst the latter was Edward Lawless, younger brother of Frank Lawless of Saucerstown, who, arriving in the Transvaal just as the war ended, stayed awhile working in the mines and returned home, where, later, he was to play his part in the Rising of 1916.

The G.A.A. and the Gaelic League took early root in Fingal, helped no doubt by the proximity of the fountain-head of these movements in Dublin city. The footballers of Swords and the hurlers of Lusk had made names for themselves on the playing fields before 1905, while Gaelic League classes were spreading throughout the villages of Fingal by that time, and branches of Sinn Fein were organised from them on. These activities were pioneered in the area by my father, Frank Lawless of Saucerstown, who was the Head Centre in Swords of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. This latter organisation, being a secret society, claimed its continued existence from the Fenian Brotherhood of 1867 and had as its object the attainment of Irish Freedom through the deliberate fostering of any and every activity that tended towards that

end. The practical application of the I.R.B. policy was to ensure as far as possible that only I.R.B. men held the chief and responsible positions in these other organisations and where, in some cases, enthusiastic workers who were not members of the I.R.B. held such positions, they were tactfully approached and sworn in as members.

The object aimed at by the I.R.B. was that all these national organisations should be under its control and guidance, so that while each was allowed or encouraged to pursue its own immediate aim, the aim of all would converge upon the ultimate rising in arms, necessary as a further effort to shake off the yoke of foreign domination.

There were, of course, many other Fingallians associated with my father at that early stage of events who helped in no small way to further the ideals of Irish Ireland. Names that occur to me at random are Jimmy Brangan, The Duffs, the Ryans, McDonalds of St. Margarets, Morans, Rooneys of Lusk, Colemans, Collins, Taylors, John McGuire, The Barnewalls, Mary Lawless, and, of course, many others. These were all earnest workers in Gaelic League and H.A.A. activities in the early years of the century, while a select few, of which my father, Frank Lawless, was the leading light, spread the I.R.B. circles throughout Fingal. Through these circles and openly as the Gaelic League Coiste Ceanntair representative for Fingal, Frank Lawless worked earnestly to build up a national consciousness and a true Gaelic spirit among the Fingallians.

It is hardly to be wondered at, therefore, that his own family, brought up in such an atmosphere, should accept unquestioningly the ideals he held so sacred. Having thus reached the point from which I can proceed with the story from my own memory. I close this preface.

Recollections of the Anglo-Irish War

by

Colonel J. V. Lawless

CHAPTER I.

Pages 1 to 21.

The formation of the Fianna in 1911.

The Volunteers of 1913 - The outbreak of

European War, 1914 - The Howth Gun Running.

The Volunteer Split - The Volunteer Parade

at Limerick - My introduction to the I.R.B.

O'Donovan's Rossa's funeral - Ticknock

training camp.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1043

CHAPTER I.

The first excuse for the formation of an Irish semi-military organisation was provided by Sir Robert Baden-Powell, in his Boy Scout movement, which the English element in Dublin sought to establish there. The counter-movement, Na Fianna Éireann, brought together all the boys of nationally minded parents to form Sluagha in the city wards. Very soon the Fingallians took this up and a Sluagh was established in Swords in 1911, which also had the effect of attracting the city boys to make Frank Lawless's farm at Swords their Summer camping ground.

Small boys are natural radicals, and the boys, given a uniform and some semblance of a military organisation, needed no encouragement to declare themselves openly as revolutionaries who looked forward to the day when they might strike a blow in another fight for freedom. Of course, adults smiled tolerantly at this, not realising that the boy will soon be a man, and that the sentiments imbibed in his formative years are likely to remain with him in after life, to fructify as deeds when opportunity offers.

When Sir Edward Carson formed his Ulster Volunteers with the connivance, or tacit approval, of the British Government, for the specific and stated purpose of opposing the Home Rule Act, or, rather, preventing the imposition of Home Rule in Ireland, he little thought, perhaps, that he was providing the excuse necessary to the Nationalists to found a similar military organisation which might be used to train and arm Irishmen in preparation for revolt against foreign government and for the gaining of National Independence.

It is believed now that Carson's movement began as a huge bluff, but that when the almost immediate reaction

of the Nationalists founded the Irish Volunteer Movement at the Rotunda Rink, Dublin, on 25th November 1913, the organisers of the Ulster Volunteer Movement became alarmed, and steps were taken seriously to train and arm them. Rifles and ammunition were imported from Germany, and the gun running at Larne was believed to have been connived at by the local British authorities. Also a declaration in favour of the Orange attitude made by the British Army officers stationed at the Curragh Camp at this time showed that Carson's apparent revolt against authority had the approval of certain elements of that authority, and was merely intended to throw dust in the eyes of the people of Ireland and of a weak Liberal Government in Britain.

The meeting at the Rotunda Rink in November 1913 was a memorable one. This building was at the time the largest in Dublin, in point of open floor space, and was packed to capacity. A succession of prominent Nationalists of whom I can remember Arthur Griffith, Alderman Tom Kelly, Sean McDermott and Tom Kettle, addressed the people, explaining the purpose of the meeting and the political situation which called for the formation of the Irish Volunteers. The constitution of this new organisation was announced, and received tumultuous approval, and then the enrolment for the various city battalions began.

Within a few weeks companies of Volunteers were formed at Swords, Lusk and St. Margarets, showing that the Fingallians were alive to the national situation, and this nucleus joined the city units at Howth on 26th July 1914, when the yacht "Asgard" brought the first cargo of arms to the hands of the Volunteers. The Fingal men got their share of these old Mauser rifles and brought them safely home, but an alarmed executive sought to intercept the Dublin units on

their return march to the city and to disarm them. That the attempt to disarm the Volunteers failed, and that the British military unit involved (a company of the King's Own Scottish Borderers) became so panic stricken on their return to the city, that they fired upon the jeering citizens at Bachelor's Walk, killing and wounding a number of them, showed the state of alarm into which the authorities had suddenly got. One can imagine the condition of hysteria in official circles following the incident, when, as a result of this tactless demonstration of the "mailed fist" the rush of recruits to the ranks of the Volunteers made that organisation more formidable than ever.

The story of the Howth gun running has been given in detail by a number of writers and so I need only give here what were my own impressions at the time, as one of the rank and file who marched to Howth that day.

Being at that time an engineering apprentice living in the city, I was a member of C/Company of the 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade. Practically every Sunday was devoted to Volunteer training of some kind, and as route marches and field exercises were a normal activity, no comment was made upon the announcement that on this particular Sunday, 26th July 1914, the 1st Battalion was to go on a route march to Howth in company with the other three city battalions. The strength of all four battalions was sadly depleted by the split and so this massing of the Brigade for a route march seemed a reasonable way of showing our strength as greater than it actually was, as a propaganda measure. At any rate, there was no hint that anything unusual was afoot as we marched along whistling and singing on that bright summer day. All the old favourite marching songs had their turn in the

course of the march, but one new one was repeated again and again and I learned the words and air that day from its constant repetition. It was "The soldier's song" which had recently been written by a Volunteer named Peadar Kearney and set to music by another named Heany. That song increased in popularity from then onwards to become our present National Anthem on the establishment of the State in 1921.

There is nothing further of note to mention until we had got to the end of our seven mile march to Howth. Just before we reached the town we were halted and, instead of being allowed to fall out by the roadside, were ordered to remain in our ranks ready to move at once. It was at this point that rumours and speculation on the purpose of our march began to fly around and excitement mounted, when someone got hold of the story that there were guns being landed at Howth Pier for us. Dispatch riders on bicycles were flying up and down the column and, seemingly, to and from Howth, so, after a short halt, we moved forward again along by the harbour wall, wheeling left on to the East Pier. As we turned on to the Pier I noticed some Volunteer and Fianna officers, including Sean Heuston, standing there and apparently surrounding one or two R.I.C. men who appeared to be intimidated by the display of superior force. As we marched on up the pier I noticed another Fianna boy (Paul Marshal) standing high on the wall near the lighthouse at the end of the pier. He was making a rapid series of signals out to sea with a signal flag. The sea wall on our right prevented us from seeing what lay out to sea, but very soon we saw the white painted yacht "Asgard" swing around the lighthouse and slide smoothly and silently in to the wharf. There was a tense excitement among the Volunteers thronging the pier. Officers buzzing around to ensure that the ranks were maintained intact, leaving clear passage on one side to allow the column to double upon itself in marching off. I

watched with interest the activity aboard the yacht as she was being warped in to the wall by lines thrown ashore. While some of the crew remained watching carefully the movement of the ship, the remainder were engaged in a furious stripping of hatches so that there should be no delay after tying up. A group of officers of Volunteer headquarters staff waited near the edge of the wall to greet the arrival of the yacht and its cargo and, while it was yet two or three feet from the wall, Sean Heuston and a couple of others sprang aboard. Almost at once, long rifles with gleaming barrels began to appear from the hold and were passed from hand to hand to the waiting men on the pier. We began to move forward slowly, dreading lest there should be no rifles left by the time our turn came.

As each company was armed it moved back towards the pier entrance and in an incredibly short time every man on parade was armed with a rifle.

We were so busy examining our rifles that I did not at first notice a number of formidable oak batons which were also being unloaded from the yacht and were being handed to a select number of individuals from each company. The purpose of these batons was obvious, and the question of an issue of ammunition for the rifles was raised by many voices when, at the same time, it was noticed that boxes, evidently containing ammunition, were being put ashore and were being loaded on the Fianna treck cart which stood by. We were told, however, that the ammunition would not be issued to individuals just then, but would be at hand if and when it was needed. I examined one of the batons which a comrade, John Bermingham, had secured in addition to his rifle. They were rather heavy oak staves about three feet long. The lower end was octagon section about two and a half inches across and this was reduced to form a round two-handed grip at the upper end furnished with a cord for attachment to the wrist. I did not see how one could make

effective use of such a weapon while encumbered with a rifle, and, having no thought of forfeiting my rifle, I decided not to bother claiming a baton. In any case I was secretly armed as I carried a small .32 loaded revolver in my pocket.

While we still waited on the pier after receiving our rifles, I saw my father, Charlie Weston and about forty of the Fingal Volunteers coming up wheeling their bicycles to claim rifles. I saw them afterwards as we were moving off on our return march, with rifles strapped to their bicycles, starting their return journey to Swords, Lusk and other Fingal centres. Jubilant now, we forgot how tired we were as we sang lustily on the homeward march to the city. We noticed a force of some twenty or thirty R.I.C. on the roadside at Raheny village as we passed through, but scarcely gave them a thought as they made no effort to interfere with us. Actually, as it appeared afterwards, this force of Constabulary was intended to hold up and disarm the Volunteer column, but thought better of it when the column came in sight. It is likely, however, that they notified Dublin Castle by 'phone of their inability to tackle the situation and that, as a result, a force of the Dublin Metropolitan police, supported by a company of armed soldiers, were detailed to intercept the Volunteer column before it succeeded in entering the city. When, therefore, the head of the column approached the junction of Howth Road at Clontarf, a strong force of police was seen lined two-deep across the road barring the line of march, and behind the police stood a double line of soldiers with bayonets fixed to their rifles. The leading Volunteer Company halted about 100 yards from the police line, and, as there is a road to the right near that point leading on to the Malahide Road which is scarcely 200 yards distant, the remainder of the column wheeled right to cross the Diamond in an endeavour to get in rear of the police and military by this small detour. The manoeuvre was observed, however, and the military force, or part of it, doubled back

to the junction of the Malahide and Clontarf Roads to confront the Volunteers as they appeared from the Diamond.

We retraced our steps to rejoin our comrades on the Howth Road and now a parley was in progress between the Assistant Commissioner Harrel, who was in charge of the police, and the Volunteer officers who were in front. The result of the parley was that the police refused to allow the column to pass into the city with the rifles and demanded the surrender of these, while the Volunteers refused to surrender their arms and demanded the right of way. For a few minutes this impasse remained during which time Volunteers here and there were demanding loudly of their officers that ammunition should be issued to them to protect their rifles. (Some ammunition was at hand on the Fianna treck cart, but was carefully guarded by Sean Heuston and other Fianna officers). Then the police were ordered to advance with drawn batons to disperse and disarm the Volunteers, at which point two or three of the police refused to obey Harrel's order and stood one side against the wall. These police were afterwards dismissed from the force. The others, advancing steadily against the Volunteers who waited with rifles clubbed butts up, dealt and received some hard blows before they broke and retired behind the military force.

At this time a dense mass of Volunteers filled the roadway some of the companies in rear having moved forward, and the leading company had fallen back somewhat during the police charge. The soldiers were now seen to be moving steadily towards us with rifles at the ready, while the Volunteers who had no bayonets on their rifles were ready to receive this charge. I could not see clearly what was happening in front as I was some twenty or thirty yards behind the front rank, but it seemed as if the troops were rather intimidated by our numbers and, on first contact, though one or two Volunteers

received bayonet wounds, at least three soldiers lost their rifles which were wrested from them by Volunteers, whereupon the troops retired quickly and fired a volley over our heads to discourage the Volunteers from following up their advantage. At the time the bayonet charge took place, the Volunteer ranks in rear of the front lines had become disorganised, some Volunteers pushing up towards the front, while the injured ones were getting back to the rear.

I had moved over to the left of the road where, standing up on the coping of a low wall topped by a railing in front of the garden of one of the houses I tried to see what was happening. I saw the captain of our company, M.J. Judge, who had received a bayonet wound in the left side, being assisted to the rear, so I drew my revolver, holding on to my rifle and the bars of the paling with my left arm. A Fianna officer dressed in kilts - Eamon Martin - was standing on the wall in front of me calling out to those in front to stand fast and not give way before the charge. Seeing me with the revolver in my hand he shouted at me to 'put that away' and grabbed at my arm. Apparently he realised the undesirability at that stage of events, of giving the British authorities an excuse for positive military action, by gunfire from our side. I raised my arm to avoid his grasp and in the excitement fired a shot in the air. We could not stand there glaring at each other, and so the situation was quickly resolved by the Volunteer officers instructing their men to disperse individually into the city by whatever route they could find while, in the meantime, a sufficient number of Volunteers still confronted the police and military on the road. A number of us climbed over the high wall of Marino Park with the intention of making our way through Croydon Park and Father Mathew Park on to Philipsburgh Avenue. Straggling groups crossing Croydon Park were, however, hailed by a party of

three or four Volunteer officers in uniform who had some others in civilian clothes with them. They told us that they had arranged to have our rifles dumped in Jim Larkin's house in Croydon Park where a Citizen Army guard would protect them until nightfall, when we could collect them. Croydon Park House where Jim Larkin, the Irish Labour Leader, lived, was at that time the headquarters of the Citizen Army. We did not quite like the idea of letting the rifles out of our hands, but as these officers assured us of their safety, and the fact that we could not possibly get through the city in daylight with them, we handed them in to some Citizen Army men in uniform who were busy storing them within the house.

Moving on homewards through the city we regretted having left the rifles behind, as we could see no police or military activity such as we expected. We returned to our homes as quickly as possible, however, and, having got out of uniform and had a bite to eat, we heard of the shooting at Bachelors Walk, and went over there to learn the details.

Late that night we went back to Croydon Park to claim our rifles, but were told at the house that the rifles were quite safe there and would not be given to us until the following night. Suspecting that something was wrong about this, we got in touch with our Company and Battalion officers who promised to investigate matters and see that we got our rifles, but when we arrived at Croydon Park on the following night, it was to learn that the rifles had been removed in the meantime by car or lorry to Liberty Hall, and that the Volunteer executive had agreed to allow the Citizen Army to retain them. The remainder of the dumped rifles were recovered however, as, on our next drill night - the following Thursday - each of us who had left rifles at Croydon Park was issued with a 'Howth' rifle.

High Government circles must have realised by then the possibility of war with Germany, and such apparent muddling of the Irish situation was, therefore, to be deplored at that stage. Traditional British policy in the attempt to govern Ireland had always fluctuated between periods of coercion and attempts at conciliation - as one bold statement put it, alternation of kicks and kindness - but what has been described as the British genius for compromise is, I think, the inability of the British imagination to go the whole way in either direction. The British conscience, while it saw nothing immoral in conquest by force or fraud, and even a certain amount of judicious killing off of its enemies, boggled at a complete, efficient and ruthless extermination of its conquered peoples. On the other hand, when a period of despotic coercion was heading towards its logical conclusion, i.e., complete extermination, the collective British governing mentality then turned to thoughts of conciliating the injured people without, however, considering it necessary to make restitution for the injuries caused, or even admitting the injustice of its actions.

Apparently it never entered the British concept that any people should prefer their freedom, and the enjoyment of their own culture and traditions, to the enjoyment of the British culture and system of government. The continuous struggle of the Irish people against English attempts to anglicise them was, to the English mind, sheer perversity not really explainable. English writers continually refer to the Irish people as a "paradoxical and incomprehensible race", as a race that did not react to the ordinary natural laws. Perhaps this is a more enlightened age, and the Rulers of Britain, realising that the world had not come to an end as the result of the surrender of British rule in Ireland, are more inclined now to revise their views on the justice of the Irish claim to nationhood. Or, perhaps, the continuous infiltration of Irish

and Scotch blood into the English population has brought about a widening of the imaginative faculties of the ruling classes in Britain. No doubt the relegation of Britain to the present position of a second rate world power has also a strong bearing on the matter.

If I seem to have wandered from the trend of my story it is only because I feel it necessary at this stage to give the general viewpoint of Irish Nationalist opinion at the outbreak of the 1914-18 War. English propaganda had sought to misrepresent this as anarchical, communistic, pro-German and various other things, but the fact is that the Irish Nationalist gospel was based upon, not only the right of Ireland to be free, but the absolute necessity to be free to pursue her own destiny in accordance with her people's conception of the Divine plan. Such an ideal had nothing to do with such mundane matters as trade and economics, but the new movement embraced men of science and men of practical capacity as well as the poets and dreamers who inspired them. These realised that as men must eat to live, so nations must be economically well based to enjoy real freedom. In the military field were those who studied the tactics and technique of modern warfare, and who, realising the difficulties confronting them, hoped to balance a deficiency in arms and equipment, by a superior morale and favourable conditions of fighting.

The Howth gun-running had been followed by a second shipment of arms which were landed at Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, about a week later; and the appearance of rifles on Volunteer parades gave a decided fillip to morale. A month later, August 1914, the declaration of war between Britain and Germany caused a flutter of tense excitement in Volunteer circles. Now, we thought, our chance had come; a war in Europe would so distract the forces of the enemy that surely

this was a providential opportunity to strike for freedom.

In Fingal such talk was on every lip. Those who had laboured hard in the years past to sow the seeds of National sentiment were jubilant now. Surely we thought, something will be done before this war would end, but we feared it might be a short war.

The British reaction to the Irish problem was characteristic and effective up to a point. The Irish Parliamentary Party had given a benediction to the Volunteer movement and, while they were not allowed to control it entirely, their nominees on the executive committee gave them a say in the direction of policy. This party consisted of the elected representatives of the Irish people in the British House of Commons who had stood for the limited autonomy called Home Rule. They were under the leadership of Mr. John Redmond.

The chief plank in the Parliamentary Party programme had been the gaining of agreement by the British Parliament to pass a Bill granting a measure of power in matters of local administration to a subordinate Irish Parliament. The Irish Party could only hope to gain its ends by the support of other British parties who might give such support in return for Irish backing in British political issues. In other words, the power of the Irish party was only the strength of its bargaining value in the realm of British politics, while they held the balance of power between rival British parties.

However, just about the time of the outbreak of war, the Home Rule question had been under discussion in the British House, and war shelved the matter for a time. Now, however, the offer was made to the Irish party that the House would pass the Bill in return for the support of the Party for the British Government in the war with Germany. But the proviso was made that the Bill would not be given effect until the war was over.

Such a simple trick should have deceived nobody. There was no assurance of any intention to fulfil the latter part of the contract, but the Parliamentary Party, fearing to prejudice their position in British politics, fell for it, and their speakers in the House of Commons in fulsome phrases assured the British Government of Irish support in its prosecution of the war.

In Ireland this was received with uneasy feelings. The strong political supporters of the party were joined by the Unionist element in praising the step taken, and numbers of young men in the first wave of war spirit were enticed to join the British armed forces. The stauncher national element, however, saw through the trick and decided it was better to effect a cleavage before the entire Volunteer body became demoralised by British propaganda.

Thus developed the situation since known as the Volunteer split. The Irish Party nominees on the Volunteer Executive wanted to follow Redmond's lead, by encouraging Volunteers to join the British army, and generally declaring the Volunteers on the side of Britain in the war. The Nationalist element, however, refused to agree to this and pointed out instead that the constitution of the Volunteers as adopted by the inaugural meeting did not permit any such deviation from the original purpose.

The Constitution referred to is here quoted:

- "1. To secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the peoples of Ireland.
2. To train, discipline, arm and equip a body of Volunteers for that purpose.
3. To unite for this purpose Irishmen of every creed and of every party and class".

No compromise was possible in the situation, Redmond having given his public assurance to the British Parliament,

felt he must stick to this, while the real Nationalists felt that no one was entitled to surrender any part of the National claim to the pressure of expediency. Each of the two factions of the Volunteer Executive issued a manifesto calling on the Volunteers for support, and the result was a division in the ranks in which rather more than half supported the Redmond side and the remainder followed MacNeill and Pearse. Gradually the number who supported the Redmondite faction, and who then formed the body calling themselves the National Volunteers, began to dwindle, and, as people got time to think, the position righted itself, and the Irish Volunteers grew in numbers and solidarity as the National Volunteer organisation dwindled to extinction by 1916.

In Fingal, as elsewhere, the split caused a depletion in the ranks, but the Redmondite organisation, the so-called 'National Volunteers' never achieved any active standing there and became a dead letter in the district within a few weeks. The Irish Volunteer organisation, on the other hand, recuperated rapidly and got on with the work of training and arming its members for the coming struggle which everyone felt must soon develop.

The Volunteer Executive decided to hold a large scale Volunteer parade at Limerick on Whit Sunday 1915, and for this purpose arranged to move Volunteers from the surrounding countryside, and as many as possible of the Dublin units to Limerick for the occasion. Arrangements having been made with the Railway Company, special trains, filled with armed, and for the most part, uniformed Volunteers, poured into the city of Treaty memory. Limerick was the centre of the area from which that wellknown British Regiment, the Munster Fusiliers, was drawn, and in consequence, the wives and relatives of these men constituted a considerable element of the urban population.

British propaganda during the war tended to inflame the passions of these people, so that the Nationalist part of the city's population was rather submerged by the other more noisy crowd. It was, I believe, to act as a counter-balance to this that it had been decided to make a display of Volunteer strength in Limerick, in the belief that such a parade would raise the morale of the local Volunteers, and incidentally chasten the flag-wagging West Britons. Amongst the other Dublin units which entrained that day for Limerick was the Fingal Battalion, or at least about 100 men representing it. These were drawn from all the companies of the battalion, but the bulk from Swords and Lusk.

At that particular time I was an engineering apprentice living in the city, and was, in consequence, attached to the 1st Battalion which was commanded by Comdt. Ned Daly (who, incidentally, was himself a Limerick man). For some reason I was one of two who were selected to act as runners that day to the parade commander who was F.H. Pearse, and was accordingly ordered to bring my bicycle on the train to Limerick. Everything went according to plan up to the arrival of the Volunteers in Limerick. There we were joined by contingents from Cork, Tipperary and other places. Altogether I would say about four or five thousand Volunteers assembled in the city park, from where a parade of the units began a march through the city streets, returning again to the park. All went well while the parade moved through the principal streets; an advance guard composed of a local company preceding the main body, at the head of which marched Pearse and his staff. Ned McCormack and I felt very proud of ourselves as we marched in the rear of him, wheeling our bicycles to which our rifles were strapped. I think it was in Mungret St. the first sign of trouble arose. This appeared to be a centre of West British feeling, and Union Jacks were flown in challenge from a number

of windows, but it was the women on the street shouting all kinds of insulting epithets that finally whipped up the mob to frenzy; then some stone throwing began, though not on a very big scale. Some of the women, however, opened the grating of a roadway shore and pelted us as we passed with the mud therefrom while a few helpless and ineffective police looked on. I suppose my own feelings were typical of the other Volunteers at this juncture; I felt somewhat indignant, but rather more disgusted with such an ignorant display of bad feeling. Confident in our own strength we took little notice of the antagonistic display which died away as we left that part of the town. Our march took us by the Treaty stone upon which we gazed as we passed, remembering its story and the fate of the document signed upon its weather-beaten surface over two hundred years earlier. This was the first time that most of us from Dublin had ever been in Limerick and, to us, the name of Limerick was inextricably bound up with that Treaty of Sarsfield with William of Orange in 1691, the articles of which were dishonoured by the British Parliament as soon as the Irish army had safely left the shores of Ireland. "Remember Limerick" had been the battle cry of the Irish Brigades on the continent of Europe through the eighteenth century, when, at Ramilles, Fontenoy, Cremona, and many another fight, their valour brought victory to French arms.

Two hundred years or so to a young fellow seems an awful long time ago; though we knew the story of that Treaty, it seemed far away in the distant past; but, here before our eyes, was the very stone upon which it was signed, and somehow this brought everything nearer to the present. One could, without much difficulty, visualise this great stone, without its present pedestal, standing on the ground and surrounded by the red-coated figures of Jacobite and Williamite officers, while Sarsfield and De Ginkle appended their signatures to a lengthy document upon it which, perhaps, the wind fluttered gently as

they signed. Poor Sarsfield, trusting to the honour of his foe, and De Ginkle, the honest Dutchman, never supposing that the nation he served and here represented, would so blatantly dishonour his bond so soon as the menace of the Irish army was removed.

Returned to the park, we rested and fed ourselves, and, being free to wander round for a while, set out to explore this interesting city. We were warned to keep in groups and not to go into the areas which had displayed antagonism, but we had already forgotten all about this incident. Numbers of the Limerick girls wearing little silk ribbon bows of green, white and gold came amongst us and volunteered to show us round the town. I brought home one of these little bows with me that night as a souvenir, but I never afterwards heard of the girl who gave it to me.

As the evening wore on, some stories were circulating about one or two of the Dublin Volunteers who had been chased into a house by a hostile crowd. They had received some blows and had to be rescued by a hastily summoned band of their comrades. Soon our homeward train was due and we were ordered to parade in the Park to remain there until train time came. The Cork train went first, so we watched the Southern contingent march off towards the station, secretly admiring their stalwart bearing, as they were generally all fine big fellows. A little later, over the music of brass bands, we could hear cheers and counter-cheers, and finally, a volley of rifle fire from the direction of the station. What had happened? We could only make wild surmises, but in a few minutes a local scout came back with the explanation. The Southern Volunteers on their march to the station had been assailed by a hostile and apparently partly-organised mob who proceeded to throw stones and other missiles into the ranks of the marching Volunteers. Becoming bolder in the absence of any repressive

active by the Volunteers, they attempted to storm the ranks of the Mitchelstown Company who thereupon loaded their rifles and fired a volley over the heads of the crowd. No one was hurt, but the terror-stricken crowd fled wildly in all directions, leaving the Volunteers to pursue their march undisturbed.

Our train was due within half an hour and, on Pearse's instruction, McCormack and I cycled towards the station to ascertain if the way was clear for our move to the station. This was rather a difficult mission under the circumstances, and if anyone other than Pearse had given me the order, I think I would have been inclined to argue about it, but we set out and covered about two-thirds of the distance when we saw signs of the crowd returning through the side streets, which threatened to cut off our retreat to the Park, particularly as we did not know the topography of the town. McCormack halted there and kept me in sight while I went on further to where I could see the gates of the railway station, when we returned hastily to inform Pearse that, while the way to the station was now clear, there were signs that it would not long remain so

Within a few minutes the parade moved off and we, near the head of it, behind Pearse, could see the crowds gathering in the side-streets. As we reached the station gate we saw a Capuchin friar holding up a crucifix and imploring the crowd to strive to control their passion. Later, from inside the station, we saw him being swept aside by the crowd who tried to break up the marching ranks. Towards the rear of the marching column moved the Fingal men, and as they came along the frenzy of the mob had worked up to the pitch of attempting attack on the ranks. The Volunteers had been ordered, leaving the park, to carry their rifles butt upwards on their shoulders to prevent any attempt to snatch the rifles from them, and a few attempts were made as the Fingallians came along. A quickly swung rifle butt, however, frustrated every attempt, and the marching

column never even lost step while it inflicted these occasional casualties on the shouting crowd surging about it. The journey home was uneventful thereafter, but the experience of Limerick made us realise what a long way still lay ahead before a homogeneous national front could present itself to the foreigner. There would always be those who, unthinkingly, would tie themselves as a means of livelihood, or, for other reasons, to the enemy forces holding our country, and then strive to justify their action through a bitter hostility to all things national. 'There were none so Roman as those whom Caesar's chariot wheel had crushed'.

Towards the end of 1915, having then reached my eighteenth year, I was sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood by my father, and then learned that this was the guiding and directing influence which governed all National organisations through its members. The imminence of the Rising was then clear from the activity in the procurement of arms and the general trend of discussion at meetings.

This Society, which had continued unbroken from the Fenian Rising of 1867, was the active secret separatist organisation, the function of which was to organise, guide and control the various open movements which might have a declared and limited objective, such as the language, the national games or the like, but which the I.R.B. members guided always towards the goal of national freedom. As an oathbound society it was organised in such a way that, although the Supreme Council might issue orders and directives to any of its members, very few members knew the names of any member outside their own circle.

In August 1915, when the European war was a year old, an event took place that marked the progress of the Volunteer movement and helped to strengthen it as well as to confirm it in its purpose.

O'Donovan Rossa, that redoubtable Fenian chief, died in U.S.A. and his embalmed remains were sent back to Ireland for burial.

Rossa had been an important official of the I.R.B. in America and the Brotherhood made sure that the occasion of his funeral was adequately exploited to further the aims for which he consistently worked during his life. On arrival in Dublin the coffin was borne to the City Hall where it lay in state under a guard of honour of the Volunteers, while the general public were allowed to pay their respects and view the face of the dead Fenian through a glass panel in the coffin lid. Tens of thousands of the people of Dublin and the provinces filed past the coffin, some, no doubt, actuated by curiosity, but all deeply impressed by the public homage paid to the mortal remains of the man who represented in himself the ideals and bitter sufferings of a bygone age. The funeral cortege to Glasnevin was easily the biggest seen in Dublin up to that time. The Volunteers of Dublin city and county turned out en masse for the occasion.

Pearse's splendid oration at the graveside is now historic. Without doubt, those privileged to hear it were so moved by its noble sentiments that they formed the vast majority of those who marched out to answer the call in the Easter following.

Strangely enough, the evening of Rossa's funeral saw the commencement of one of a series of Volunteer Training Camps at Ticknock in the Dublin Mountains. *

Up to this Camp, uniformed and laden with equipment, trekked a number of tired Volunteers after the graveside ceremony at Glasnevin, and this number included at least five or six Fingallians. The camp was in charge of (Ginger) afterwards Colonel J.J. O'Connell, assisted by Eamair O'Duffy

*. This Camp had in fact been in operation for some weeks previous to Rossa's funeral and was attended by different batches of Volunteer officers each week.

and J.J. Burke, who acted as Camp Quartermaster. There for a week we learned all Ginger could teach us of minor tactics and military organisation.

Names of the Fingal men in Ticknock Camp.

Ned Rooney	Lusk
Dick Coleman	Swords
Joe Taylor	Swords
James Rooney	Lusk
Jos. V. Lawless	Swords

CHAPTER II.Pages 23 to 45.

Picture of life in Swords and the surrounding districts in 1915 - A Plantation of 1790 - Various national activities in Fingal during 1915 - The Royal Irish Constabulary - Some reminiscences of a closing age - Agricultural economics and the War Boom - Nationalist reaction in the farming community - National culture in Fingal - The Black Raven Pipers of Lusk - The Volunteer Organisation and training in Fingal - Indications of the coming Rising - Easter Sunday and the cancelled parade - A dash to Liberty Hall for orders - Thomas Ashe of Dingle commands the Fingallians - We are dismissed.

CHAPTER II.

It is not easy for the younger generation to visualise what life was like and the general condition of things in Ireland in the latter part of 1915. Historical writers naturally concentrate upon the highlights and the important events. They often fail to convey a clear impression, because the sidelights and minor incidents which form the background are missing.

Let me, therefore, try to give a picture of life as I knew it in Fingal before the fateful Easter of 1916.

The town of Swords may be considered as the chief town of the territory. Others of its towns has each its own claim to fame - Malahide or Balbriggan, for instance, may be bigger towns or of more affluence, but Swords seems always the centre, and certainly was as far as modern national movements were concerned. Like any other country town, Swords had its factions, and these elements had often clashed when public opinion was stirred up by such things as local elections or the like. Actually the reason for the existence of an apparently discordant element in the population of the town of Swords goes back to a period surrounding 1790, when a British General Massey imported numbers of ex-soldiers who had served under him, and had them qualified as electors to ensure his election to Parliament as the representative of this "pocket-borough".

Dalton, in his history of The County of Dublin, quotes a contemporary writer named Falkland as follows:- "General Massey some time since cast a longing eye on this borough, which he considered as a common open to any occupant, and, to secure the command of it himself, he began to take and build tenements within its precincts, in which he placed many veteran soldiers who, having served under him in war, were firmly attached to their ancient leader. Mr. Beresford, the

first Commissioner of the Revenue, who had a sharp lookout for open places, had formed the same scheme with the General of securing this borough to himself, and a deluge of Revenue Officers was poured forth from the Custom House to overflow the place, as all the artificers of the new Custom House had before been exported in the potato boats of Dungarvan to storm that borough. The wary General took the alarm, and threatened his competitor, that for every Revenue Officer appearing there, he would introduce two old soldiers, which somewhat cooled the first Commissioner's usual ardour; thus the matter rests at present, but whether the legions of the army, or the locusts of the revenue, will finally remain masters of the field, or whether the rival chiefs, from an impossibility of effecting all they wish, will be content to go off like the two kings of Brentford, smelling at one rose, or whether Mr. Hatch's interest will preponderate in the scale, time alone can clearly ascertain".

This plantation would naturally be resented by the native inhabitants, while the newcomers would tend to keep to themselves, and being estranged from local and national sentiment, it naturally followed that service in the British army became a tradition in a number of these families. Similar circumstances have operated to produce a like state of affairs in many towns of Ireland, and in Swords, as elsewhere, the foreign body is eventually absorbed, though the process is slow and may be unduly delayed by any artificial stimulus that serves to keep up the discord.

Such stimulus did exist in Swords up to the outbreak of the 1914-18 war, by the number of townsmen serving in or connected with the British army; the inclusion of some of their names on casualty lists, or the return of the wounded, added a fresh impulse to the pro-British mentality. The war situation had, on the other hand, added a fresh zeal and a new

hope to the nationally minded, whose efforts were accordingly devoted enthusiastically to the Volunteer movement.

Of course other aspects of the national resurgence also had their devotees. The Gaelic League branches still carried on the teaching of the Irish language in night classes. Ceilis and aeriochta under Gaelic League auspices provided social contact and cultural fostering of the national consciousness. The local G.A.A. clubs set the headlines in the realm of sport and physical development, and from the constitution of the G.A.A. itself, these clubs were fervently national. In the political arena Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein clubs were in operation at Swords, Lusk and a few other places in Fingal, to deal with the question of the election of nationalist candidates to local bodies such as District and County Councils. It was in the arena of local politics that the direct fight was knit at this period. The time for the clash of arms had not yet come, though some, especially the younger element, were getting uneasy, fearing that the European war might end without the opportunity it offered to strike a blow at the war distracted enemy having been seized.

The effective garrison of the country through all these years was the Royal Irish Constabulary. There were, of course British military units stationed here and there throughout the land, but it was the R.I.C. that exercised effective control of the people, and made it possible to keep them in subjection. Those who never knew the R.I.C. may be interested to know what this force was like, or how it was that they were able to keep such a tight grip on the country and its people from the time they were first formed by Sir Robert Peel about 1830, up to the Rising of 1916, and again for a short time before their dissolution in 1921. The strength of the force was somewhat greater than our present Garda Siochana and was distributed throughout the country in much the same way,

that is, one sergeant and four or five constables to each station. There were, however, larger numbers held at certain District and County centres where they were available as reinforcements in case of any immediate call. The force was recruited in Ireland, generally amongst country lads who had to pass a high physical standard to qualify for entry to the force; I think the minimum height was five feet ten inches, and a reasonably high educational standard was required. The officers were for the most part English, or at least Anglo-Irish, and were generally ex-military officers who had distinguished themselves in the service of the British army. The usual garrison in towns of the size of Swords or Lusk was a sergeant and five or six constables, while bigger towns like Balbriggan, which was also a district centre, held twelve to twenty men, a couple of sergeants and the District Inspector. The men received their initial training in what is now the Garda Depot, and the fairly extended course included weapon training as well as police duties, drill, etc. Although the force was characterised as a police force, it was in fact an armed and trained gendarmerie, constituting no mean fighting force when grouped, and far more effective than a purely military force, because of its very select personnel, and with its intimate knowledge of the country and its people, amongst whom its members lived their daily lives.

The R.I.C. uniform was imposing, or perhaps I should say, intimidating, as no doubt it was intended to be. The men being invariably fine, sturdy, well-set-up fellows, were set off to advantage in a tight fitting high-collared tunic and close-fitting trousers of a slightly greenish black cloth. An ordinary round peaked cap and black leather belt with baton completed the attire for normal daily duties. On parade occasions, however, or when on special duty, they wore a high cork helmet surmounted by a spike and carried a Lee Enfield carbine and bayonet, with leather ammunition pouches fitted

to the belt. On such occasions they also wore short black leather leggings. A number of these fine looking big fellows were, in such array, a sight calculated to inspire fear in the stoutest heart.

Their disciplinary code was strict and was enforced with a Prussian thoroughness that ensured the strictest obedience to orders. The attainment of a high standard of marksmanship was provided for by weekly miniature practices in each barracks with "Morris Tubes" fitted to the carbines, and an annual open range practice where ball ammunition was fired.

These were the men who enforced the law and kept detailed intelligence records of every Nationalist in their respective districts. The Dublin Castle Executive depended upon this force for information of every move or threat against it, and could trust implicitly to it to carry out its orders meticulously, and to be ruthless in the suppression of what was termed disorder. Anything from an election meeting to a football match might be termed disorder at the discretion of the local R.I.C. sergeant.

So, while this armed police force, spread throughout the towns and villages like its German counterpart, the Gestapo, or the Russian O.G.P.U., strove to control the spread of what was called 'disaffection', the national organisations strove to counteract every move and by providing endless scope for their activity, so bewildered the local R.I.C. men that they were no longer certain what they were after. Even the small boys of the town at this time took elfin delight in harassing the town patrol at night, and, between the G.A.A., Gaelic League and Volunteer activities which were many and diverse, five or six police could not possibly keep contact with everything. It may be thought that keeping watch on the Volunteer activity would obviously be the important thing for them to do. But very much the same people were connected with all these

things and how was an unfortunate R.I.C. sergeant to know whether a supposed Gaelic League class was not a Volunteer meeting or musketry class, or whether the football match was not a cover for some other illegal and dangerous activity. The policeman's lot is not a happy one - as the song goes - but it was undoubtedly most uneasy then for the force that had been the unquestioned authority in the land for so long.

Remember that the men who constituted the force were Irishmen who had entered the ranks with a belief in the immutability of the established order of things. But here was a new spirit of independence, and contempt for established authority. What could they have thought about it? I suspect that many of them had serious heart searchings. Finding themselves ranged against the traditional aims of their own people, in the ranks of their country's traditional enemy, they yet were bound by the training and discipline of the force, as well as by the economic need of their daily bread. That Nationalist leanings were latent in at least some of them was shown by the fact that in quite a number of cases the sons of retired R.I.C. men were earnest Volunteers who took an active part in all phases of the National Movement. Kit Moran of Swords, who fought at Ashbourne under Tom Ashe in 1916, is the son of the late ex-Sergeant Moran who retired from the R.I.C. about 1910, and his elder brother was associated with the late Frank Lawless in the promotion of G.A.A., Gaelic League and other national activities since at least that date.

In 1915 Swords was still a rural community. Though only eight miles from the city, it was three miles from the nearest railway station at Malahide, and, as there were no buses in those days, a journey to the city was only to be undertaken when there was serious need for it. Motor cars were not common and were only used by the very well-to-do, and for the ordinary folk a trip to Dublin meant a journey by horse and car, or a

bicycle, or a seat might be had on the "Mail car" for a limited number, not more than three or four, for 2/6d each passenger. This "Mail car" was a scarlet painted jaunting car which had a box-like body for the carriage of the mail, and travelled daily between the G.P.O., Dublin, and Swords P.O., arriving in Swords in the morning about nine o'clock and leaving for Dublin about four o'clock in the evening. The horse either walked or went at an ambling trot, so the journey took about two hours each way. Occasionally, for the novelty of it, people would travel by the local hackney service to Malahide and take the train from there to Dublin, but this did not save time as the broken journey took just as long. A few years earlier, however, up to 1912 or 1913 there was quite a considerable traffic via Malahide, as up to that time the local coaching service between Swords and the railway at Malahide, run by Sevages of Swords, was quite efficient and comfortable. A drive to or from Malahide on Savage's "long car" was something for small boys to look forward to and gave even adults a thrill. This "long car" was in fact a survival of one of the famous "Bianconi Coaches". A four-wheeled vehicle drawn by two horses, it accommodated about 14 to 18 passengers seated ^{as} on a jaunting car, that is, facing outwards, while the centre well of the car accommodated luggage; the driver and another were mounted on a high box-seat in front. Painted in black and bright yellow and powered by two spirited horses, the three mile journey was invariably covered at top speed, so that the remainder of the journey by train seemed tame by comparison. As the centre of an essentially agricultural district, the economic life of Swords has always been bound up with the rise and fall of agricultural prosperity. In 1915 the war boom was on and both the surrounding farmers and the shopkeepers of the town were feeling the sudden wave of prosperity caused by the increased and increasing demand

for farm produce. Live stock in particular was in demand, and Fingal could and did produce the best of beef cattle. The price of land soared to dizzy heights, and the trend seemingly being all the time upwards, land speculators drove the market value of land offered for sale to fantastic figures (The subsequent slump, which began about 1920, brought about numerous bankruptcies).

Fingal is perhaps peculiar in that the very large feudal estates disappeared with the nineteenth century. Elsewhere I have noticed that the Lord of the Manor with his thousands of acres holds a certain sway over the people, even up to the present day, and certainly did up to 1921. But, for whatever reasons, the rich land of Fingal was broken up into working farms almost entirely with the first of the land acts. This, I think, was more responsible than anything else for a certain independence of thought and action in the Fingallians as a whole, making for self-reliance in the community. There were of course, numbers of bigger farmers whose family traditions or associations were alien to the people, but there were others to counterbalance them, who pulled their weight in the national movement, and it is notable that the former type had surprisingly limited influence on the people of Fingal.

In any case, farmers are a notoriously conservative people and dislike change of any kind. Quite a number of the bigger farmers of Fingal had been up to that time (1915) strong supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and it will be remembered that the Irish Parliamentary Party had adopted a position in association with the British Government, and in opposition to the Irish Volunteer movement at the beginning of the war. Large numbers of the supporters of the Parliamentary Party, no doubt, had up to 1916, looked upon the Irish Volunteers as merely a bluff in the game of Party politics, to be used as a bargaining power only. Few

of them, I think, had any conception of the serious purpose and deadly earnestness of the men who directed that organisation. I realised this, in a subconscious sort of way when, on the Tuesday evening of Easter Week 1916, on my way to set up an outpost to our camp at Killeek, I passed two such farmers who were staunch Irish Party men. They were engaged in earnest conversation on the road between their respective farms, and, I fancy, were discussing the catastrophic state of affairs which this mad insurrection had brought about. My sudden appearance round the bend of the road on a bicycle, armed, and in Volunteer uniform, caused them to goggle at me in speechless amazement. Although they both knew me well, they could scarcely answer my laconic salute as I passed, but hastily returned to their homes.

The subsequent years and their events must have upset the cherished notions and the set values of such men, and those who felt too old to change, simply retired within themselves. The new resurgent spirit of the nation was beyond the comprehension of those who thought in terms of parliamentary wrangling at Westminster. John Redmond's pledge to the British Government of the day had to them the appearance of a solemn international agreement. To them the activities of the newer national movement represented the inevitable turbulence of youth, dangerous, and to be deprecated, but not to be taken too seriously. The active body of the people of Fingal, as elsewhere, in the national movement, were the smaller farmers, shopkeepers, schoolteachers, clerical workers, farm labourers and artisans, or, in other words, the movement had its roots among the biggest class of the community, those who might not have the most wealth, but constituted the bulk of public opinion. This does not mean that all of these classes were active in the national cause, but a representative number were, so that when at a later stage came the clash of arms, the sympathy of the people as a whole was largely national.

I have here stated, and shown, some of the reasons why most of the bigger farmers of Fingal were unconnected with the national movement, if not hostile; but there were exceptions to this rule, notably my father, Frank Lawless of Swords, McAllisters of Turvey, Rooneys of Lusk, and others. Such a movement in the conditions of the time was not attractive to men of property, and those men of property who did adhere to the cause were exceptional. It is undoubtedly easier to get a man to engage in an enterprise entailing risk to life and limb when he has little else to lose, than it is to persuade a man of wealth or property that the cause is worth the risk of losing these; poverty can appear worse than death to those unused to it.

Scarcely a Sunday passed through the Summer and Autumn of 1915 that there was not a muster of Volunteers for some parade, exercise, or to attend a football match or aeriocht. Generally these were followed by a ceilí in Swords, Lusk, St. Margaret's or somewhere. We did not mind how far we cycled for such entertainment, and we sang and danced all night to the music of a lone violin; occasionally a piano might make its appearance. The rebel songs of these gatherings had more than a little to do with the fostering of a rebel spirit in those who listened to them. The national poets and ballad writers such as Davis, John Kells, Ingram and Paddy Archer, sowed many a seed that bloomed on the battlefield in the years that followed.

It is interesting to study the influence wielded in the struggle for freedom, of patriotic songs, poems and music. It has become a commonplace saying that "poetry and music appeals to the Irish temperament" and no doubt that is so. I often wondered, however, if this is not equally true of every other race; the difference being that the kind of music and poetry that appeals to one may leave another unmoved, but

each has its own forms of these modes of expression, in the same way that different nations have different languages, where different sounds express the same thought.

Highbrows would characterise most of our patriotic ballads, poems and music as doggerel and primitive rhythms, and I suppose that this is correct from their point of view. What they mean is that this is simple kindergarten stuff, not fulfilling the intellectual desires of those whose taste in such matters has been vitiated by the more complex subtleties of chamber music and Shelley.

All music and poetry is an attempt to express our dominant feelings; success in the achievement of expression being the measure of its worth, taking into account the intrinsic value of the feelings we try to express by these mediums. To the over 'civilised' mind, therefore, the things he wants to express or to hear expressed are the doubts, the complexes and intricacies of a life he no longer feels sure of, overshadowed by a morbid fear of death. The simple mind on the other hand has no such doubts or misgivings. He accepts his position as an entity in the scheme of divine creation, troubling himself not about the finer subtleties.

In his poetic imagination love and war represent life and death, and his faith in God bears him trustingly through either.

To such a one "The memory of the dead" and "Faidh O'Donoghue", written of men like himself, in conditions like his own, in a manner he can understand, have a direct appeal. They encourage his ego by showing him of what heroic deeds he too might be capable and make him yearn to emulate the heroes of the past.

Even the Irish dance music seemed to possess a quality that made it distinctive, and gave it an exciting effect.

It may be from the association of such music with the times and conditions, but I can never listen to the old jigs, reels and hornpipes without a certain nostalgic feeling for the days when, with the grand conceit and assurance of youth, we prepared for what was fated to be the final and successful struggle for the freedom of our country.

One of the things Fingal had reason to be very proud of at this time was the "Black Raven" Pipers of Lusk. Thomas Ashe, who was then the schoolteacher at Corduff, was chiefly instrumental in having this band formed and designing its costume as well as assisting it in achieving distinction as the foremost pipers' band of that time. The distinctive dress and flag of the Lusk Pipers deserves mention if only to explain what they symbolised, though, in fact, the general effect was very impressive.

Some time before the band was formed, perhaps about 1910 or 1911, a lecture was given in the Library in Lusk by Francis Joseph Biggar of Belfast, on the ancient Gaelic civilisation. Biggar was considered a great authority on such matters, and he seemed to have made a special study of the Norse incursions in Fingal, and their effect upon the lives and customs of the natives. I was only a small boy then, but I was brought to the lecture by my father, and still retain a memory of Biggar speaking to a crowded house which listened with a wrapt attention to his words. A few years ago I spoke of this matter to Mr. Denis McCullough, who also was present at that lecture, and he confirms that it was Biggar who inspired the dress and banner of the pipers' band, the formation of which was at that time in contemplation. Biggar had spoken of the dress of the Gaelic and Norse warriors, making the point that while there was always a certain similarities in arms and dress among the tribes and clans, there was no such thing as absolute uniformity as is known today. The insignia of the Black Raven

on a white ground is recognised as one of the Norse battle flags, though the Raven is also associated with the tales of Cuchulain. With these points in view, therefore, the costume and the flag were designed to symbolise a blend of Gaelic and Norse within the territory where the blood of both races remained.

The flag represented a Black Raven with outstretched wings covering the entire centre of a white ground. Three colours were employed in the costumes of the pipers - black, white (or rather, cream) and green, and these colours were mixed in each costume, such as black kilt with white tunic and green 'brat', or white kilt, black tunic, or black kilt, green tunic and white 'brat'. At any rate, while each varied from the other in colour combination, the general effect was pleasingly uniform. The tunic followed the ancient pattern, loose fitting with full loose sleeves, heavily embroidered with Celtic tracery.

As a pipe band it gained high honours by its performance at Feiseanna from Dublin to Killarney and, naturally, it was in great demand at all the local functions. A photograph, still in existence, which, I think, was taken about 1914 or 1915, shows the band in full array, spread out on the roadway in the middle of the village of Lusk, with its Black Raven banner prominently displayed. The round tower and whitewashed thatched cottages form a very picturesque background to these boys in their "war paint", Ashe occupying a prominent place in the foreground. If my memory of this picture serves me right, I believe that all the bandsmen shown there answered the call on Easter Monday, 1916, and served with Ashe through the Rising. Charlie Weston, Jack McNally, Paddy Doyle, Johnny Devine, the Raffertys and the McArdle brothers, the Kellys and Dan Brophy are names that occur to me at the moment.

At this period, 1915-16, the Fingal Volunteers were

organised as the 5th Battalion of the Dublin Brigade. This euphonic designation did not, of course, mean that our strength amounted to battalion strength, there, any more than elsewhere. But it was rightly decided that our organisation must provide for a great increase in numbers to be expected under war conditions, our job being then to provide the trained skeleton. The four companies of the battalion were centred at Swords, Lusk, St. Margaret's and Skerries. Each company had an average of 20 to 30 men on rolls. Swords and Lusk, being the bigger companies, were over the 30 mark. Dick Coleman was the company commander at Swords (died as a prisoner in Usk, 9th December 1918). Jim Lawless, my uncle, commanded in St. Margaret's, and Ned Rooney at Lusk, while Skerries, the smallest company, was the responsibility of Joe Thornton or Jim McGuinness, one of whom was in command there from time to time. Tom Ashe, Dr. Dick Hayes and Frank Lawless constituted the battalion staff, Dr. Hayes being in command of the battalion up to about the end of 1915 when Ashe took over the senior appointment. Hayes then became adjutant, Frank Lawless acting as battalion quartermaster

In the Winter of 1915, the feeling began to grow that the crisis was approaching. Having then reached my eighteenth year, I was sworn in as a member of the local I.R.B. circle, as already mentioned, and the general tone of discussions there indicated that all believed in the imminence of revolution and were taking all possible steps to prepare for its furtherance. Lectures for officers were organised weekly at Turvey, where a disused dwellinghouse belonging to the McAllisters was pressed into service. These lectures were given by Colonel J.J. (Ginger) O'Connell (tactics), and Thomas McDonagh (on supply problems). A peculiar point, since stuck in my mind, was the centre-piece of one of McDonagh's lectures. He was dealing with the question of feeding a large body of men in the field when no regular source of supply was available. He went on to explain the dietetic value of a number of things, but claimed that the

humble onion was the solution. According to him, one could live on indefinitely and work hard on a diet of nothing but onions, and he urged all and sundry to sow plenty of onions without delay. What a funny idea, we thought, but there might be something in it; perhaps the odour of our combined breath would keep any enemy out of gunshot range!

Inter-company and inter-battalion exercises became more and more frequent and ambitious. Sometimes we travelled towards the city or even across it to the Rathfarnham side to attack or defend against one of the city battalions, and on at least one Sunday a representative parade of all the city battalions marched out to Swords under Eamon de Valera, and engaged in an exercise at Skerries against the Fingal Battalion, marching back to the city that night. This provided great fun for the local R.I.C. who frantically endeavoured to keep a close watch on all that went on, not knowing whether we were trying to cover a German landing at Skerries or Rush, or merely causing a diversion to cover something equally dreadful elsewhere.

The Spring of 1916 brought eager scanning of the daily papers to watch the ebb and flow of war on the continent. Our hopes of German assistance were fading, but we felt more anxious than ever to do something to justify our boasts and to grab the opportunity offered by war which could not be expected to go on indefinitely, or to occur again in our lifetime. Towards the end of March, therefore, I felt that the hour was near at hand, when at an I.R.B. meeting the change of Ashe to the command of the battalion was announced as "arranged". The further talk at this meeting indicated that this was one of a number of moves by the Supreme Council made in preparation for imminent war. Early in Holy Week following, this was further confirmed by my father, Frank Lawless, who instructed me to accompany him to Kimmage where we were to pick up certain important supplies of arms,

ammunition, explosives and first-aid kit. Our destination was the old mill at Kimmage, which had been taken over by the Volunteer Executive some time in the previous year or so, originally as an ordinary parade and training centre for the 3rd Battalion, but which later became a camp for Irishmen who were refugees from conscription in England. Shortly before the Rising these men were engaged in the manufacture of a type of bayonet for fitting to the single barrel shotguns with which a number of Volunteers were armed. Our load on a pony and trap consisted of some twenty shotguns and about 5,000 rounds of buckshot cartridges, 60 lbs. of gelignite with detonators and fuse, a quantity of first-aid dressings and some field surgical kit. The latter items we left at Taylor's in Swords on the way home and they were, I think, taken charge of there by Dr. Hayes. The rest of the stuff was taken on to Saucers-town where I, who was supposed to know something of the handling of explosives, was given the gelignite to look after.

One might think that, at this stage, excitement would be at fever pitch, seeing that we had already been warned for a muster parade on Easter Sunday. This and the other indications seemed to place beyond doubt that a general rising was planned for that day. Strangely enough, however, I remember discussing the probabilities in this way with Joe Taylor of Swords, who was my constant companion at the time, and, while there was a certain pitch of anticipation in the air, there was a considerable confidence that victory was within our grasp. We had no thought of what might be between us and that victory, except perhaps to wonder how long this fight would take. The day had arrived which was the culminating point of all we had worked and trained for in the years past. We had studied British military text books such as Field Craft and Tactical Handling of Troops in the field, Field Fortifications, Manual of Military Engineering, and the like, and we had listened to lectures and practised these things as best we could.

These, and weapon training which gave us scope to improve the natural marksmanship of most countrymen, fitted us, we thought, to make a trial of our strength, even if our armament was miserably inadequate.

The younger ones of us never doubted of course that arms would be made available at the right moment. We had a supreme confidence in the leaders of our organisation, and surely it would be in the interests of Germany to see that we were armed. Also, we were conscious of influential friends in the U.S.A. who were equally anxious for our success, and who, we trusted, could surely find means to send arms once the flag was raised in battle. Therefore, we who were partly in the know went about our business these few days with a quiet confidence, even with a feeling of magnanimity towards the enemy whom we fancied as the victim of a Nemesis following the misdeeds of the past.

On Saturday I found myself confronted with a problem. Most of the gelignite was frozen, and my knowledge of this explosive extended far enough to realise that it was dangerous and uncertain in this state. How to thaw it out in the one day available was not so easy with facilities available in a farmyard, so I spread it out in the sun on a rick cover at the back of a ditch, while I hovered around to keep off stragglers who might be too inquisitive. But the April sun was not very warm and the process seemed too slow. A lot of it was oozing nitro glycerine, but nevertheless I packed a lot around my body, carrying it around so that the heat of my body helped the thawing process. Finally, I decided to take a chance by spreading it near the kitchen range while I sat and watched over it. Perhaps I was lucky, but at any rate, it appeared to be all right by tea time, and I packed it away to await the morrow, going into Swords later on my bicycle to discuss the parade details with the company commander, Dick Coleman.

The only definite orders we had at that time were to have as full as possible a parade at Swords, carrying all available arms, ammunition and equipment. I think the time of parade was fixed for 12 o'clock on the following day, Easter Sunday. We had, therefore, to make a few calls that night to ensure that our maximum strength would swell the parade and, that done, await the morning that we felt would be eventful.

With Easter Sunday morning came the most unlooked for "contretemps". The "Sunday Independent" carried a front page instruction^{to} all Volunteers from Eoin McNeill, the President of the Volunteer Executive Council, cancelling the parade for that day. No one knew what it was all about, and, as we were not in the habit of receiving instructions through the newspapers, there was vague talk of treachery, by whom, we did not know, but we decided to go ahead with our parade and await official orders. In any case most of the men would be getting to the place of parade before they would have a chance of seeing any newspaper, so there was not much else we could do. The town was in a buzz of discussion, everybody scanning the newspapers and then watching the Volunteers coming in from Lusk, from Skerries and from St. Margaret's, while the local company made its biggest showing of numbers. Actually, nearly every man on rolls in every company turned up that day, but no official orders arrived which, I think, worried the battalion staff considerably. Ashe, therefore, decided to take the men away from the town and give them something to occupy them, so they marched to Saucerstown where a tactical exercise was carried out followed by tea, as each man carried some rations. Meanwhile, about 2 o'clock, I was dispatched into Dublin by Ashe with a message for James Connolly at Liberty Hall. I was to use my own discretion if any attempt were made to stop me getting to Liberty Hall, and although I was given a written message as an authentication, I suppose, Ashe also told me verbally to inform Connolly that the battalion stood under

arms in readiness and awaited his orders. As some speed was necessary in the matter, Ashe told me to take his motor cycle, an almost new two-stroke "New Hudson", which I had ridden before and was therefore familiar with. So, very conscious of the importance of my mission, I rode off, reaching Dublin within twenty minutes or so.

There was an air of suspense about the city that created a feeling of something wrong somewhere. The day, which had started as bright and sunny, had become dull and overcast in more senses than one. Very few people were about the streets and the vehicular traffic, particularly around Beresford Place, was practically nil. No one tried to stop me, nor did I see anyone who might want to do so, though a few pedestrians in Gardiner St. gazed curiously at the armed and uniformed Volunteer dashing wildly along as if on some hell-bent and desperate mission; my loaded British service revolver in holster was, I hoped, intimidatingly displayed on my belt.

Liberty Hall was a building I had never been inside before. I was rather surprised, if anything, to find a Citizen Army man on guard inside the door. As everywhere had looked so deserted, I half expected to find no one there, but, with very little ceremony, he took me upstairs, along a passage, and announced me to someone in a room, returning himself to his post at the door. The other man went into a room or office next to his own, and almost at once James Connolly called me in. I may have seen Connolly once or twice before and, of course, I knew of him, but this was the first time, and the last, that I spoke to him face to face. I believe he had been having a meal of sandwiches or something like that when I arrived, because, as I stepped into the room and saluted him, he was crushing some paper in his hand and brushing crumbs off the table in front of him with it, then, standing up, he came towards me, brushing his moustache lightly with his hand.

He seemed to be really pleased to see me there, and shook my hand effusively before reading Ashe's note. I think this was the first indication he had had from any Volunteer Commander during the day that sounded encouraging. He questioned me as to how many men we had, how they were armed and what they thought of the morning paper's announcement, and such like, and I gave him the information he required, telling him that while we realised that a screw had come loose somewhere we would only take our orders from Ashe who, I knew, had his confidence. This conversation took less than ten minutes and at the end he instructed me to inform Ashe that "all was off for the moment, but to hold in readiness to act at any time".

On my return to Saucerstown, Ashe discussed this message with my father, Dr. Hayes and some of the other officers, and decided to let the men go home after their tea. They apparently interpreted the message as meaning that nothing was to be expected for some days at least. The evening had turned cold, and as dusk fell and the men were dispersing to their homes, Ashe, Dr. Hayes and Dick Coleman left in Dr. Hayes's car - an open Morris Oxford two seater - to stay the night with Dr. Hayes at Lusk, Ashe leaving me his motor cycle to bring back to him the next day.

Elsewhere I have written a biographical sketch of Ashe which gives a fairly full outline of the man, and perhaps I cannot do better than summarise part of it here.

A native of Dingle, Co. Kerry, Ashe came as a schoolteacher to Corduff, Co. Dublin, about 1911 or thereabouts, and would have been about twenty-five or six years of age at that time. Right away he interested himself in all the various phases of the national movement in Fingal. In Lusk, which was the nearest town to Corduff, he became a member of the local hurling team, started the pipers' band already referred to here, taught Irish in the Gaelic League classes, and took a hand in the

Volunteer training. Physically he was a fine type of virile manhood of the true Celtic type. Well over six feet in height, he was also broad and muscular and moved with the quick light grace of the athlete, while the high forehead, widely-spaced ^{blue} eyes and mop of gold curling hair qualified him as a handsome man by any standard. The same golden hair adorned his upper lip as a full moustache, which he kept waxed into sharp points at the ends. This gave him a somewhat severe military appearance which, however, was belied by soft friendly eyes. When he spoke, the soft musical voice with the lilting Kerry accent was pleasant sounding. He was a hurler of no mean ability, and with the Lusk boys, in whom dexterity with the 'camán' is inbred, he fitted easily, and captained them to victory again and again before the days of military combat came to show that he could lead them as well on the field of battle.

He was an artist, with an artist's love of the beautiful, and a poetic outlook on life. I would say that his mind was free from any special inhibitions or complexes; his fervent patriotism and deeply religious feelings combining in his love of God and his fellow men. He thought deeply and would only pursue a course when he was satisfied of its righteousness, but, having once decided his course of action, he threw his whole heart into the pursuit. The artist in him and his christian convictions recoiled from anything ugly, unnatural, or the causing of pain to man or beast.

Having studied mathematics under him for awhile about 1913 I had plenty of opportunity of watching him in his own surroundings. He lived alone in the teacher's house; a neighbouring woman came in to cook his meals, and the house was almost bare of furniture, but around the walls, unframed, and hanging or standing anyhow, were numerous water colour sketches in various stages of development.

Many a time when I came in the afternoons for my studies, I found him absent, and when sometimes I went in search of him, I would be sure to find him painting away at some stretch of tree lined road, a roadside cottage, a corner of a wood, or the like, and then I would try to come up softly to admire the technique of the painter, without disturbing him, if possible. How I envied him his ability to create these pictures which seemed marvellously beautiful to my unsophisticated eyes.

That time, 1913, was a time of labour upheavals, and Ashe, whose philosophy disposed him towards the under-dog, espoused the strikers' cause. Gradually the strike, which that summer only concerned the city workers, crept out to the surrounding country, to cause differences between those who had hitherto worked together in the national cause. We in the country knew little of the meanings of terms used by the labour leaders in their daily harangues, and thought little of the whole business, as it did not appear to have any national orientation. I was very surprised, therefore, when I arrived at Ashe's house one day to find the words "Liberty Hall" written in large capitals, with a finger, on the dust of the fanlight over the door. When I mentioned this to him he seemed quite pleased about it and sat down to explain in detail the operation of the economic system which permitted a few rich men who might be, and usually were, anti-national or indifferent, to exploit the honest working people, through whose efforts all wealth was created.

Ashe had, in fact, accepted the views of James Connolly at that time, and it was this friendliness between them that became evident to me on that Easter Sunday of 1916 when I brought Ashe's message to Connolly at Liberty Hall.

Easter Sunday had been a rather anxious and tiring day for the Fingal Volunteers. Various discussions had been going on between the men; they were trying to understand the situation and find reasons for the appearance of something gone wrong

which had been started by the newspaper announcement that morning. Consequently, when they were dismissed they appeared very dispirited. Their faith in the leaders of the Volunteer organisation had been disturbed by the appearance at the outset of what they could only conceive as bungling. Such an anti-climax to what might have been an eventful day was more than disappointing, and, as a result, no one took seriously the final injunction - "to be ready for immediate mobilisation at any moment."

CHAPTER III.Pages 47 to 62.

Fairyhouse Races as the traditional rendezvous of the natives of Fingal on Easter Monday - The arrival of a courier at Saucerstown bearing Pearse's order for the start of the Rising - Spreading the news on a motor bike - The gathering at Knocksedan - Some reflections on the name, and ancient historic associations, of Knocksedan - I am given a mission - The demolition of Rogerstown Bridge - Our camp at Finglas - An abortive night raid - Twenty men to Dublin town.

CHAPTER III.

Easter Monday in Fingal had always meant Fairyhouse Races. Always the bulk of the population seemed to make its way towards Ratoath on that day. From early morning a continuous stream of ponies and traps, jaunting cars, bicycles and even pedestrians streamed towards the popular annual race meeting of the Ward Union Hunt.

I suppose a love of horses is natural to the Irishman, and, where this can find no other outlet, he goes to a race meeting; preferably a point-to-point or a national hunt meeting, where he may enjoy a vicarious pleasure from watching the horses and their riders, the latter taking their lives in their hands over every fence. Then, too, these annual holiday meetings were a centre where widely scattered friends and relatives renewed acquaintance, and new friends were made in the atmosphere of camaraderie peculiar to these equine festivals.

There is a world of difference between race meetings such as Fairyhouse or Punchestown and the regular race meeting which is the resort of the well-to-do, the professional punter and the seeker after excitement stimulæ. The National Hunt meetings of Punchestown and Fairyhouse may be considered as the ultimate of the point-to-point season, where the winners and near winners of the various point-to-point meetings of Ireland meet to decide the national championships in speed and stamina in the different classes. Every countryman has an interest in this, for he has watched these horses receive their primary education in the hunting field, and in Fingal, everybody feels a personal interest in the two hunts that cover the territory. Fingal is a horse breeding country and most farmers or their sons ride to hounds; but even those who do not ride exhibit a keen interest, and every hunt will find its quota of followers on foot, on bicycle or car. This has

always been so as long as I can remember. I mention this point to show that in normal circumstances it might have been expected that most of those Volunteers who were on parade at Saucerstown on Easter Sunday of 1916, would be making arrangements to get to Fairyhouse on the following day, as would certainly have been the case in our house; but, in the circumstances, few felt any inclination to make last minute arrangements to make the annual pilgrimage. I know that I felt very tired going to bed that night and slept heavily.

The following morning, Easter Monday, I was awakened about seven o'clock by a violent knocking on the front door, and heard my father going down to open it. Listening to excited voices in the hall below I recognised my Aunt Mary's voice, and felt that something had happened out of the ordinary to bring her here at this hour. Mary was my father's elder sister; she was a member of Cumann na mBan and had been a strenuous worker in Gaelic League fields before the establishment of the female auxiliary to the Volunteer organisation. She had lived at Saucerstown up to about 1913 when she went to live in Dublin and kept a boarding house at 41 Cabra Park, Phibsboro. The people who stayed with her were generally those intimately connected with some branch of the national movement, and consequently, from her family, as well as domestic and social associations, she was a trusted courier. Who contacted her to give her the message she carried that morning, I never thought of finding out before her death which occurred in 1924.

When my father came into my room holding a piece of paper in his hand, his eyes were alight with the excitement of joyful news, and with the announcement "the day has come at last" he handed me the note to read.

Pearse's peculiar backhand writing was unmistakable, and as I read the one line message -

"Strike at one o'clock today".

"P.H. Pearse,

I knew the reason for his feeling of excitement which had now caught me up, and had me frantically dressing as I tried to think what had to be done. Shouting to me from his own room, where he too was hurriedly getting some clothes on, father directed me to take the message with all speed to Ashe, who, it will be remembered, was staying the night with some other of the battalion officers at Dr. Hayes's house at Lusk. Getting into my uniform I waited for no breakfast, but sped away on Ashe's motor cycle to cover the eight miles in little more than as many minutes. It was a beautiful sunny spring morning; cold, but with an augury of the coming summer in the sun's rays. As I burst in upon the sleepers at Dr. Hayes's house, they all at once became infected with promise of the morning, carried with the sunshine as well as the message I bore. Of course, everyone kept talking to everyone else, and I was questioned for further details which I could not give, but I have a remembrance of Ashe shaking me by the hand, and saying something to the effect that "this would be a day to be remembered in Ireland for evermore", while his eyes shone with the light of exultance.

Dick Coleman spoke of the practical details of trying to contact the men who had been dismissed so disappointedly the previous evening, and I undertook to do what I could about this on my way back to Saucerstown. It was agreed that I should retain the motor cycle for the present, so I proceeded to warn the key men, commencing with Ned Rooney at Lusk; Westons and McAllisters at Turvey; Taylors at Swords; Jim Lawless at Cloughran, and Dukes at St. Margaret's, the place of mobilisation being given as Knocksedan. Only at St. Margaret's was any doubt cast upon the genuineness of the call. Tom Duke was getting ready to open drills for potatoes when I called and told me he was not going to be fooled by such false alarms again. This was a reference to the previous day's parade. However, after some words on the matter, he assured me that

the St. Margaret's men would be there when they heard the first shots fired and I had to be satisfied with this. Looking back on it, one can hardly blame a busy farmer intent on taking advantage of the fine weather, for not dropping his work to rush off on what he supposed might be another wild goose chase. The wonder is that so many left their work or their play to answer a second time the call that was this time to be for real action.

Knocksedan is a spot on the old northern coach road from Dublin to Belfast, and lies about two miles west from Swords where the Dublin-Ballymun road crosses the Ward river. The river flowing on towards Swords here passes through a deep gorge which is spanned by the road bridge covering about one hundred yards to the end of its ramps, its arch over the river being about sixteen feet high. On the east and south east of the Dublin road from the bridge is Brackenstown estate which is thickly wooded. The Swords road to Killeek crosses the Dublin Road on the crest of the hill, just north of the river, and in the angle formed by the two roads on the east side of the Dublin road, between the Swords road and the river, stands the Dunn, or high mound, from which the place is named. In fact, this mound has all the appearance of a typical pagan burial ground or tumulus, and, regarding it, "Ware" in his "Antiquities of Ireland" (page 150) states: "An instance also may be seen of the Valcooster Funeral, or casting of the dead slain in battle in a heap, and covering them with earth, in a mount near "Forrest" in the barony of Coolock and County of Dublin. Numbers of human bones are now (i.e. 1639 - time of writing) to be seen lying promiscuously in this mount, which was opened for gravel some years ago by the orders of Mr. Blair on whose land it stands. Some curious gentlemen about two years ago discovered in this mount a human skeleton of a monstrous size, which measured from ankle bone to the top of the cranium eight feet four inches; so that, allowing a proportional distance between the ankle bone

and the sole of the foot, and for the skin and flesh covering the cranium, as well as the space occupied by cartilages between the several bones in a living body, the person to whom this skeleton belonged must have been not far short of nine feet high".

What ancient battle was fought here, of which neither history nor tradition exists? But the burial mound was revered as all places of burial are in Ireland, until in the course of time people remembered only the reverence due to the spot, but had forgotten why this was due. Then, as in many another case, this was attributed to fairies or, in the Gaelic, sidhe, and the place known as Cnuc-sidhe-Dunn, the hill of the fairy fort.

An alternative derivation would be Cnuc-Siodhan, the word Siodhan signifying a fairy or a fairy hill. The double reference to the word hill might refer to the hill of the fairy mound, as the mound stands on the hill crest.

Dalton, in his "History of the County of Dublin" gives the name Knocksedan as meaning the hill of the quicksands, but such a derivation could not be identified with any local topographical feature.

Certainly the hill crest on the north of the river would have been an admirable place to dispute the passage of an enemy before the bridge was built, and we may take it that the name, in one way or other, refers to an ancient and forgotten battle and the resting place of those who fell there. On the north-west of the crossroads stands the remains of an old coaching inn where the driver of the Mail Coach or post-chaise from Dublin travelling northwards, changed horses on the first stage of the journey, while the passengers refreshed themselves for the further journey. Now it is merely a ruined tenement which, however, still houses a couple of poor families.

In the field facing the ruined inn, on the east side of the Dublin road, stands the ruins of Brazeel House, about which townland in November, 1647, camped the forces of Eoin Roe O'Neill and Sir Thomas Esmond after they had defeated the forces of Colonel Trevor which opposed them at Castleknock. The Duke of Berwick, commanding 7,000 foot troops and some dragoons of the Jacobite force, also camped on the same site on the night of the defeat at the Boyne. Here they covered Dublin from the advancing Williamite forces until it was decided to retire on Athlone.

So, on this historic spot gathered the men of Eingal on that fateful Easter Monday to unsheathe the sword in another effort to achieve the freedom of our land. What a pitiful effort it might have seemed to Berwick or Eoin Roe; this miserable handful of ill-armed boys coming forth to challenge the might of a great Empire. And yet, perhaps, the spirits of the great dead watched approvingly over this beginning of what was to be the struggle that eventually brought to a successful conclusion the centuries of war between the adjoining islands. No thought of all this was with us then; perhaps Ashe, Dr. Hayes and my father were conscious of the influence of the spot and the full implications of our action, but to the rest of us this was merely the natural climax of our national faith, and we felt that we must stand or fall and be judged by the vigour of our reaction to the call to arms. By and large, we were practical fellows, knowing as well as the next how to fend for ourselves and to balance the probabilities of success against the risk involved; but above and beyond all that, was the deep-rooted feeling that the cost must not be counted, the important thing being that the effort must be made with all the force and all the practical application we could bring to bear, trusting in God and the justice of our cause for the outcome.

When I arrived at Knocksedan about ten minutes to twelve, only the Swords Company had then arrived and two or three members of the St. Margaret's Coy. The turnout even for Swords was much smaller than on the previous day, there being only about thirty men present. Ashe and some others were discussing the possible existence of an underground telephone cable following the Dublin road. and were anxiously awaiting the arrival of the Lusk Company.

Ashe then came to me with my father and instructed me to proceed on the motor cycle, via Balheary Avenue where I should meet the Lusk Company and from that unit to take Charlie Weston and certain others with me to destroy the Great Northern Railway Bridge crossing the estuary at Rogerstown, between Donabate and Rush and Lusk stations. Apparently he had discussed this project previously with Weston and had arranged to have available for the job one of the Lusk Volunteers who was a quarryman and consequently familiar with the handling of high explosives. A section of six or eight men of the Lusk Coy. were to accompany us for protection and assistance generally; so, having been given about 50 lbs of the gelignite we had, and the necessary detonators and fuse, I sped off with this tricky cargo, riding pillion, on Ashe's motor cycle.

I met the Lusk lads about the middle of Balheary Avenue and informed Ned Rooney and Weston of my detail, discovering then that the man who should have been there to deal with the explosive had failed to turn up. There was, however, another man there, John McCann, who was also a quarryman and had some practical knowledge of high explosives, and he stepped into the breach, so the demolition party turned back towards Rogerstown, while the remainder pushed on for Knocksedan..

Incidentally, I should here remark that all of the men of Lusk Company were mounted on bicycles and, as I was on a

motor cycle I checked my speed down to that necessary to keep with my party as we travelled the five or six miles between us and the railway at Rogerstown. I had been instructed before leaving Knocksedan that, on completion of our mission, we should return by a circuitous route through Kilsallaghan to Finglas, to where it was intended that the rest of the battalion would move when mobilisation was complete.

Arrived at the railway, I only then appreciated the fact that the bridge over the neck of the sea was some considerable distance up the line from the road, and we had, therefore, to walk the ties up to it, about half a mile on the top of an embankment where we felt we were exposed to the view of the whole countryside, not to mention the military remount station at Lusk, and the R.I.C. barracks at Donabate, each within a mile of the bridge in a direct line. Posting four of the men to hold the northern approach to the bridge and warn us of any attempt to cut us off there, the rest of us started off on our task. Ashe had given us two red flags and special instructions to hoist these on either side of the bridge to warn oncoming trains and this was the first part of the job accomplished.

On reaching the bridge itself, however, I saw with dismay that the task was for all practical purposes beyond our resources. I don't know if anyone had thought of making a reconnaissance of the bridge beforehand, but I know I did not, and, as far as I remember, neither did anyone else in the party. Here we had a number of thick piers built of huge blocks of cut granite, across which were laid steel box girders carrying the open superstructure of the bridge. The girders measuring in section about three feet high by two feet wide had an expansion distance of about two or three inches between their ends where they abutted on the piers; otherwise there was no nook or cranny in which to place explosive in such a way as to have anything more than a superficial effect.

If we could only have cut into the girders so as to place the explosive within the box, this would have served, nor had we the time and tools necessary to drill holes in the granite piers. We realised all this at the time and, recognising the futility of the attempt, we decided to do what we could and hope for the best. After all, we thought, fifty pounds or so of gelignite was a much bigger charge than anyone of us had ever seen or heard of going off, and one could never tell what it would do.

We stacked it all together, therefore, around the middle girder on the centre pier, filling the expansion space between the ends of the girders to give some compression effect, and covering the lot with soda and earth from the side of the embarkment. I remember watching McCann prepare the fuse and crimping the detonator on the end of it with his teeth; he said this was the orthodox way of doing it at the quarries - you wouldn't know anything about it if it went off, he added. A very long fuse was set and lit and we then moved down the line at a run, but when we got about a couple of hundred yards away, the run broke down to a walk, and then Weston suddenly remembered that we should have cut the telephone and telegraph wires which ran along the line. McCann said we still had plenty of time to do it, as the fuse would burn for at least fifteen minutes, and, anyway, we felt we were at a reasonable safety distance. Someone had gone up a pole while we were talking and begun cutting, but did not seem to make much headway, and there were a whale of a lot of wires to be cut, so he came down and I went up to see if I could do better.

The cutting implement was an ordinary pair of side-cutting pliers and I realised when I got up to the wires and tried my hand at it, it needed a bit more than a strong grip to cut through the thick strands of hardened copper. I found I could manage this best by squeezing and twisting the pliers about at the same time, but another difficulty appeared in that as each

wire snapped off, and so relieved the pull on the pole at that side, the pole inclined with a jerk to the opposite side, and, after cutting a number of wires, the pole had taken a fairly considerable list. The only way to overcome this, I thought, would be to cut the wires alternately one side and then the other, though it meant double the number of wires to be cut, because I began to cut them all on each side, and in the back of my mind was the burning fuse a couple of hundred yards ^{away} and enemy posts within rifle shot of us.

A tremendous explosion shook the embankment and nearly swept me from the top of the telegraph pole which I clutched frantically with both arms. Looking up I could see rails, sleepers and all kinds of debris hurtling in my direction. One big baulk of timber came whirling and over end across me, to land about twenty yards away at the foot of the embankment. Hastily slithering down the pole without regard to splinters I joined the others in a sprint for the road and our bicycles and safety.

We believed the noise of the explosion would bring an enemy party on our track without delay, and we wanted to get on the westward side of the Dublin-Belfast road as quickly as possible, where we would have some room to manoeuvre if attacked. We had not gone more than half the distance, however, when some lack of foresight on my part showed up to cause a dilemma. Thoughtless of the considerable distances I had travelled that day on the motor bike, I had forgotten to refill the tank, and when it suddenly gave up the ghost with a dying splutter, I realised with sinking heart that I was out of petrol and without hope of getting any for miles around. Actually, two of us were now unhorsed, because we had only travelled a couple of hundred yards on the return journey from the railway when the axle of one man's bicycle broke - Johnnie Devine's I think it was, so the bicycle was jettisoned and he mounted \Rightarrow behind me on the motor bike.

Now we were both on foot, so the others went on to the main road at Corduff to hold a way out for us if need be, and to try to secure a couple of bicycles. There was nothing else for it but to abandon the motor bike, but, with the idea of showing some effort to save it, I pushed it up to an adjoining farmhouse and handed it in there for safe custody. Running and walking by turns, Devine and I then completed the remaining mile or so to Corduff, where we found Weston and the others busily engaged in cutting the telegraph wires along the main road. One bicycle had been located and Devine went to get that while I eventually found a fairly decrepit machine which had one pedal, the axle of the other only remaining for propulsive effort on that side; but beggars cannot be choosers, and there was no selection, so we started on the final stage of our sixteen mile journey to Finglas, via Skidoo, Rollestown, Kilsallaghan and St. Margaret's. It was a very tired and hungry party that arrived in the camp at Finglas, sometime between four and five o'clock that evening. As we ate a meal of tea and sandwiches with a few cold hard-boiled eggs thrown in, we learned for the first time of the occupation of the G.P.O. and other buildings in O'Connell St. by the Volunteers, as well as some details of the fighting there, and the seizure of other strategic points in the city by the Dublin Volunteers.

Of course, the camp was agog with rumours, some of which were obviously fantastic, but others seemed to have some basis of fact. The story of the arrest of Casement on the Kerry coast had got about, and from this various deductions were made, ranging from a large scale German invasion in support of the Volunteer effort, to the landing of arms on a big enough scale to equip every Volunteer unit in the country in an up-to-date fashion.

The camp at Finglas overlooked the northern suburbs of the city, being situated just south of the village of Finglas, and

on the high ground east of the Dublin road. A lot of work had been put in during the day in fortifying the position against attack, and a regular guard relief system was in operation to provide against surprise. At this point the ground level on the camp side stands about ten to twelve feet above the road surface, so that assault from the road would not be an easy matter except through the gateway which was heavily covered by fire. On the north side was the village of Finglas, the houses, walls and gardens of which provided a succession of defence lines, while on the south and east sides were open broken country, holding a number of quarries and hillocks, across which no enemy could advance at a very fast rate while it was defended.

I located my own bicycle, which was a fairly new one. Some one had thought of bringing it to camp for me. Having made myself familiar with the camp defences, it was getting dark when I thought of looking for a place to sleep. There was one small cattle shed within the camp and it had been strewn with old and rather mouldy hay, but when I thought of this as sleeping quarters, I found it already over-full, nor did the atmosphere within make it any too attractive as a bedchamber. The beautiful sunny day had given way to a dull and heavy evening that seemed to presage rain, but there was no help for it but to wrap my blankets around me and doss down in what seemed the best place I could find by the side of a ditch. I was always a good sleeper and, with the exertions of a long day, I needed no sleeping draught, even under these uncomfortable conditions. I had only been asleep a couple of hours or so, however, when I was awakened by a peculiar sensation of acute discomfort which gradually identified itself as rain falling on my face, so I gathered myself up and moved over towards the shed, where there was now some chance of getting in owing to men moving out to relieve the guards.

The night was pitch dark and it was now raining steadily. The time would be about ten o'clock. I could hear Dick

Coleman's voice talking to Ashe nearby and gathered from what they were saying that some project was afoot, so Joe Taylor and I groped our way to where they were, near the corner of the building, to find out what was happening. We were told that twenty men were required for a raid, to start on their way as soon as they could be got out without disturbing the whole camp, so we began collecting those we could find awake or any who were sleeping in odd corners. This actually made twenty-two who got out their bicycles silently and moved off under Dick Coleman without ceremony. The rain had almost ceased by then, but it was still very dark, and if anyone had lamps on their bicycles they were unlit in the interests of caution. Only Dick Coleman knew our destination which he told me was the railway, and left me to look after the rear of the column while he moved off in front, taking the road from Finglas along by the Tolka river towards Blanchardstown. I learned afterwards that the object of the raid was to destroy the railway at Ashtown and thereby check the free entry of troop trains from the Curragh to the city; but the inevitable happened in the conditions in which we were travelling. Not very familiar with that road at the time, the party got lost, and finally returned to camp with its mission unaccomplished. For myself, I had even worse, or perhaps, better luck. About half a mile from Finglas the chain of my bicycle snapped and, by the time I, through groping about in the pitch dark, had realised that nothing could be done about it, the column had disappeared into the night. I could do nothing but walk back to camp where I had some compensation in the fact that there was now room to sleep in the shed. This I did so successfully that I never heard the return of the column or became conscious of anything until about six o'clock next morning.

While breakfast was being prepared I walked off across the fields in search of water to wash and, having completed the ablutions and being then alone, I had time to think as I

locked out over Glasnevin cemetery towards the city. The new day was grey and sunless and the morning air was cold. What was happening over there in the city? And was anything happening in the rest of the country? What do we do now? Must we wait here to be attacked, or should we not start some attacking on our own account, and if so, where and when?

It seemed strange to reflect on the queer unreality of our situation. We were now at war; our comrades in the city across the way had already been under fire and taken toll of the enemy, suffered casualties themselves, and the life of the city, we were told, was halted. No one moved about except the armed forces of either side, the streets at strategic points being blocked by barricades. But here in the fields, almost within rifle shot of it all, we were calmly waiting for breakfast while the men laughed and joked with each other. Conscious of the fact that we had left our homes, perhaps for ever, to take part in the fight, here we were waiting for something to happen; we did not know what, but it would undoubtedly be easier to do something, whatever it might be.

I watched some cows in a field nearby grazing away peacefully, while the birds chirped and sang as they fussed around in search of worms and grubs. A thrush near me tugged relentlessly at a long worm that had incautiously showed its head above the ground, and, as if to add a final touch of the bizarre to the picture, I noticed a woman coming from a house some fields away with a milking bucket in her hand, who, seating herself under a placid cow in the small field at the back of the house, began milking away unconcernedly. I went back to join in the breakfast, glad now also to join the atmosphere of goodhumoured joking, and feel the sense of comradeship that made the food taste even better to our keen appetites than it was.

We had now a hearty zest for the fray, so remarkable is the effect of food and comradeship, and were in high good humour

when a message was received by Ashe from James Connolly at the G.P.O. asking for twenty men to be sent in there from our camp, and instructing Ashe to take such action as he might find possible with the remainder to create a diversion outside the city. Everyone wanted to go to the G.P.O. as soon as we heard the news, but Ashe and the other officers of the battalion staff were in solemn conclave to decide what was best to be done, and in a few minutes selected Dick Coleman to command the party going to the city. All those who either had no bicycles or were not riders were selected to go, together with enough others to make up the number. The party marched off on foot without much delay under the guidance of the man who had brought the message out, and we watched them go with mixed feelings, sorry to lose them from our band and a little envious of their selection, yet appreciating that their's was likely to be a highly dangerous mission.

Some years ago (in 1925, to be precise) I compiled the following list of the names of those Fingallians who marched into the G.P.O. from Finglas Camp on Tuesday, 25th April 1916:

Captain Richard Coleman, Swords.

Den Brophy, Swords	Edward Lawless, Rathbeal
James Crennigan, Roganstown.	James Wilson, Balheary
Wm.(Beck) Wilson, Balheary.	Joe Norton, Mt. Ambrose.
Thomas Peppard, Lusk	John Clarke, Lusk
Jack Hynes, Lusk.	Fatk. Caddell, Lusk
Dick Kelly, Corduff.	Fatk. Kelly, Corduff.
Peter Wilson, Balheary	Wm.(Cooty) Wilson, Swords.
Jack Kelly, Swords	James Marks, Swords.
John McNally, Lusk	Wm. Meehan, Lusk.
Wm. Doyle, Swords.	

Of these men, one, Williar Wilson of Swords, (nicknamed Cooty), was killed in the defence of the Mendicity Institute,

where some of them were sent to reinforce the garrison under Sean Heuston. The remainder formed part of the garrisons of Kelly's shop at the corner of Bachelors Walk and the Metropole Hotel.

CHAPTER IV.Pages 64 to 81.

Dick Mulcahy and two others join us -

We move our camp to Knocksedan - Reorganisation

of the force - Raids on Swords and Donabate -

We get a copy of the "War News" from the G.P.O. -

Some more stragglers join us - Night move to

Garristown and fruitless raid on the barracks

there - Disaffection in camp and a purge of the

ranks - We again move camp to Borranstown.

CHAPTER IV.

Our immediate concern when Dick Coleman's party had left was the strengthening of the defences of the camp to compensate for the decrease in man and fire power caused by their departure, while the senior officers were discussing the ways and means of carrying out the latter part of Connolly's instruction. It was, therefore, about 11 o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, when a Volunteer officer in uniform, with two others in civilian clothes, came up to our outer defences on the east side of the camp and were conducted to Ashe, who appeared to recognise the officer.

What -- fortuitous circumstances guide our destiny! The officer who thus made accidental contact and remained with us was Dick Mulcahy, without whose presence with us on the Friday following, there might have been a very different story to tell.

Mulcahy had belonged to the second battalion which was raised from the north east quarter of the city, as also was Paddy Grant and Tom Maxwell, who were with him then. All three lived at the time about Sutton or Baldoyle and did not hear of the mobilisation of their battalion in time to join it before it went into occupation of Jacob's Biscuit Factory on the south side of the city. When they tried to join, they found themselves cut off by enemy parties. Hearing that there was some Volunteer unit holding a position about Finglas, they then worked their way across country towards us and finally made contact.

Elsewhere, I have written of the impression created at that time by Mulcahy's appearance amongst us, which was wholly favourable. We were naturally disposed, under the circumstances, to look favourably upon any new addition to our strength, and one who might know something of what was

going on elsewhere would be doubly welcome; but, apart from this one did not have to make a very long study of Mulcahy to appreciate that he was a man of coolness and capacity on whom we could depend in a crisis. As he talked and laughed with Ashe, my father and Dr. Hayes, it was clear to anyone watching that he was accepted by these on terms of equality and, from that on, he gained the goodwill and respect of everyone in camp as second in command and executive officer to Ashe. In the afternoon it began to rain heavily and showed signs of continuing like that for some time. Waterproof coats were not so much in general wear then, and consequently the men were getting very wet, so it was decided to commandeer a number of corn sacks from nearby farmers, which the men could wear around their shoulders. The man I went to near the village to look for sacks took an extremely unfavourable view of such cavalier methods of supplying our wants, but, by the time we had got the sacks, the rain had stopped and, also, the staff had decided to move back to Knocksedan.

We left Finglas about six o'clock on the evening of Tuesday, glad enough of any movement to relieve the chill of wet clothes. On arrival at Knocksedan a prospecting party was sent to arrange a camp site near Killeek. Meanwhile, outposts were set up on all roads, and it was in course of doing this in the northern approach that I passed two local farmers holding an earnest discussion on the road, the circumstances of which incident are outlined in Chapter II. Being near my home on this road, I took the opportunity of calling down there to ask my mother to bring some food up to three of us at Rathbeal crossroads. This she promptly did, and we sat on the roadside as we ate, watching the rolling countryside around us meanwhile for any indication of an approaching enemy, for we took our outpost duty very seriously.

On my return to Knocksedan, leaving the other two at Rathbeal, I found most of the men squatting or standing around in groups, and there was still no sign of the party returning that had gone to arrange a camp site. Ned Rooney and I, therefore, cycled towards Killeek to see what was going on there and then it transpired that some house that was thought to have been vacant now had a tenant, and an alternative was being looked over. This was a derelict farmyard which, however, still had roofing of sorts on the small dwellinghouse and stables, so after some delay, we moved back to Knocksedan to get the men moved up there. The camp was about a mile from Knocksedan crossroads and to the west of it. By this time it was getting dark and, arriving at Knocksedan, I found Jim Lawless trying to awaken a few of the men who had lain down on the hard roadside and were so fast asleep that it took quite a lot of shaking to waken them.

That night was very cold, and by the time all the men had been fed and housed, guards relieved, and so on, I again found that I had nowhere left to get under cover to sleep. I tried sleeping in Dr. Hayes's car, but found this unsatisfactory, and finally got Joe Taylor to make room for me in a cowshed where most of the men were.

Wednesday morning looked more promising as far as the weather was concerned. The early morning was bright and sunny though cool, and we felt inclined to laugh and make light of our miseries of the night before. Immediately after breakfast it was announced that our force was to be reorganised so as to form some kind of tactical unit. This, I imagine, was Mulcahy's idea, and indeed it was strange that no one seemed to have thought of it before, for, as will be appreciated, the non-reporting on mobilisation of some men, the sending of the twenty men to Dublin, and the normal discrepancy between the strengths of companies, combined to make the entire force just a heterogeneous collection of men, rather than an

organised force. An arbitrary division of the whole force into four approximately equal sections was, therefore, made, with one officer commanding each section, and the remaining officers constituting the headquarters of the force. In a general way the sections followed more or less on the lines of the existing companies, that is, the men of each company constituted a section, but some balancing up was necessary, so that each section would be approximately equal in power.

The whole force consisted of about fifty-one or two including officers at that time. It was formed into sections of 11 to 12 men with one junior officer commanding each section, while the remaining four officers formed the headquarters staff.

The commanders of the sections were:- No. 1 Charlie Weston, No. 2, myself, No. 3, Ned Rooney, and No. 4, Jim Lawless.

Ashe commanded the whole force with Mulcahy as his 2nd i/c. My father continued to act as quartermaster and Dr. Hayes as Adjutant and Medical Officer. It was explained to us that each section must be prepared to work as a complete entity, and on the programme of raids we would carry out the routine would be as follows:- One section as advance guard, one section as a main body with the commanding officer and staff, and one section to act as a rearguard. The remaining section would remain in camp to collect supplies each day, and generally do the necessary fatigue work; all section duties to alternate each day so that each would perform the function of advance guard, main body, rear guard and fatigue party in turn.

That day was my turn to act as advance guard, but the procedure of our work for the day did not bring the three sections together until we reached Swords. Briefly, the plan was to capture the R.I.C. barracks at Swords and destroy telephone and telegraph communication there; then to proceed to Donabate and repeat the programme in that village.

Although our camp was within three miles of the town of Swords, our up-to-the-minute intelligence of conditions there concerning the enemy was very vague, and it was felt that we should take no chances of walking into a surprise. It was for this reason, therefore, that it was decided to descend upon the town from three different directions, each section taking a different route converging on the town, and timed to arrive at about the same time. Actually, my section was instructed to take the south western approach, via Forrest Road, and to arrive a little ahead of the other two sections which were travelling to the west and north-west approaches. I think Ashe was with the N.W. section on the Rathbeal road, and I believe it was Charlie Weston's section which took the centre route along by the Ward River to Swords.

My instructions were to make a rapid and silent descent upon the town with the initial object of ascertaining whether or not the R.I.C. garrison was in a state of defence there. If so, I would dispose my section for attack in rear of barracks and send word to Ashe on the Rathbeal road, and, if not, I could use my own discretion as circumstances might seem to warrant, though I think it was conveyed to me that further action could wait until Ashe arrived on the scene.

It must have been about 11 o'clock that morning, or close on it, when my section left Knocksedan; the others leaving a few minutes ~~later~~. I think I already mentioned that all were mounted on bicycles, so, with loaded rifles slung across our backs, the silent columns took opposite routes, to converge some fifteen or twenty minutes later in Swords. The morning cold had gone from the air under the influence of a brilliant sun, and with very little wind, we felt quite warmed up when we reached the town. My plan, formed as we moved along, was to travel through the main street of the town at all speed, observing the barracks as we passed, and trusting to the

surprise and our speed to avoid casualties in case they should consider firing upon us. Just past the barracks, which was situated on the east side, and about the middle of the main street, is the chapel lane - a narrow opening which led to the R.C. church and to a grove of trees running behind the houses, including the barracks. We would be well placed there to prevent exit from back or front of the barracks, and their reaction to our arrival should show us what to expect from them.

Everything went according to plan. To my surprise, I saw, as I passed, the R.I.C. Sergeant, Sergeant O'Reilly, standing in a lounging attitude at the barrack door, his tunic half unbuttoned and his hands in his trousers pockets. He looked at us with a kind of mild curiosity as we flashed past him, and made no move to retire within. There was no appearance of defence about the barracks. The loopholed steel plates fitted to the upper windows were still folded back to the wall, and altogether I had a feeling that our movements were not taken too seriously by the police, or at any rate they were not unduly worried. Perhaps they could not believe that a lot of boys whom they knew well all their lives would dare invade the sanctity of the local seat of the law.

To wheel suddenly to our right into the chapel lane and dismount was the work of a moment; then eight men dashed for the wood to guard the rear of the barracks; one rider departed to meet Ashe on the Rathbeal road and inform him of the situation and the remainder watched the front of the barracks from the chapel lane corner. Sergeant O'Reilly still stood at the door, showing a sort of detached interest in the proceedings, and the townspeople came out to their doorways to watch and wonder what might happen next.

Feeling that something was demanded of me in the circumstances, yet not anxious to start anything before the others arrived, I walked casually towards the Sergeant, my

rifle hanging by its sling from my right shoulder, and laughingly bid him good morning. He answered me in a quite friendly way, but conveyed by his general demeanour that he felt a bit sorry for us making such fools of ourselves. Being satisfied, however, that no defence was intended, I strolled on further up the footpath to where a butcher's shop belonging to my father was situated and there, chatting with the butcher, I stood watching the Sergeant, also watching my own man at the corner of the lane below the barracks, and watching the corner of the "Green" for the appearance of the other sections with Ashe. I daresay I had less than ten minutes to wait, although it seemed a lot longer at the time, when around the corner swept the head of Weston's section, followed by Rooney's section, and Ashe, Mulcahy and the others.

What followed may have seemed like pandemonium to the onlookers, but was in fact a very well-ordered raid. The leading section stacked their bicycles on the street or against the houses and walked straight into the barracks, Ashe demanding its surrender even while the Volunteers were pouring into the various rooms, seizing carbines, revolvers, ammunition and equipment and searching the place for whatever else might be found of use to us. The men at the rear were withdrawn, and while those at the barracks were removing the steel shutters from the windows with crowbars and sledge hammers, the other section was demolishing the telegraph and telephone instruments at the post office, and we busied ourselves climbing the telegraph poles along the street to cut the wires which now formed a veritable wire entanglement on the roadway.

On the top of a pole at the corner of the chapel lane I had more leisure to examine the technique and effect of cutting the wires than I had had at Rogerstown on the previous Monday. I still found that I needed to cut on both sides of the pole to avoid what appeared to be a dangerous departure from the

perpendicular when a number of wires were severed on one side only; but I was also impatient to see what was going on below me, especially to handle one of the carbines I had hitherto only looked at in the hands of the police.

Six carbines and two service Webley revolvers with a plentiful supply of ammunition was the haul from the barracks, these things being a very welcome addition to our scanty armament. I got some of the revolver ammunition for myself, as I was already armed with a .455 Webley as well as a long Lee Enfield rifle. Some of the revolver ammunition I got was similar to that I already had, that is, the orthodox conical headed bullet; but a couple of packages of the ammunition had cylindrical flat-headed bullets of the dum-dum type which we were indignant about, and vowed to return sooner or later to where they belonged, but through the muzzles of the guns. The six policemen had made no attempt whatever at resistance, suffering in apologetic silence what must have appeared to them as the vandalistic destruction of their barracks, and ignoring the pointed remarks of some of the Volunteer townsmen engaged on it.

Some of our foraging party had now arrived in the town and were busy hunting up supplies. Up to now our one transport wagon, apart from Dr. Hayes's two-seater car, was a horse and dray belonging to my father which was driven by one of his workmen, Bill Norton, who was a Volunteer, but was rather old for active service. Bill was sent home from our camp on the following day as being too old to stand the rigours of a campaign, but his brother Joe had already gone into the city with Dick Coleman and served during the week there, being afterwards sentenced to a term of penal servitude for his part in the rising.

A supply of bread was the chief difficulty, as the city

bakeries which normally supplied the town had been disrupted in their work by the rising. This upset evidently had been rectified just before then, because, while we were still at work two large motor van loads of freshly baked bread arrived in the town from Kennedy's bakery on the north side of the city. We promptly commandeered most of this, loading the bread from one van on to the dray and taking the other load, van and all. This van was a Ford model T of the ton truck type, and Paddy Grant, one of the men who had joined us with Mulcahy at Finglas, was found to have a knowledge of driving such a machine, so one section escorting the food and transport prizes returned to camp at Killeek, while the remainder of us went on to Donabate to repeat the raid on the R.I.C. barracks there.

Much of the same procedure was adopted as in Swords, except that Weston's section led the way, as both he and most of the men of that section which included Bennie McAllister were familiar with the barrack surroundings, McAllister being a native of that village. The police here, however, decided to close up the barracks and defend it, so, without further ado, Weston called upon them to surrender and, when they failed to respond, opened fire on its door and windows, to which the police replied by fire from the loopoled steel shutter above the door. At this stage the remaining two sections were halted on the roadside at the railway bridge and were making arrangements for some demolition work on telegraph wires and the railway itself. The railway bridge was about two hundred yards from the barracks, and when the shooting started we did not quite know what was up. We had taken it for granted that the police in Donabate would adopt the same line of action as the Swords force; therefore, thinking that some new factor had entered the situation, we got ready for a general engagement by adopting defence positions, while someone went around the corner towards the barracks to investigate. But the firing stopped

abruptly after a few minutes, and then we learned the facts.

After a brief exchange of shots, one policeman had received a slight wound on the hand from a bullet coming through the loophole from which he was firing. This apparently convinced the police that their opponents were in earnest about the business, and furthermore, were sufficiently good marksmen to score a bull's eye on a two inch hole in a plate; so a white handkerchief was waved from the window and the door was opened. The barracks was treated the same as the Swords barracks; six more carbines, a couple of revolvers and further supplies of ammunition being obtained to add to our armament. In high good humour now, we set to work with a will to render the railway lines, switch points and other gear unserviceable, while others cut away at telegraph wires, smashed up instruments and generally enjoying the unique sensation of an orgy of destruction elevated for the moment to the plane of a necessary duty.

While Mick McAllister and others were hammering away with sledge hammers at the switch points down at the station, Bartle Weston and I thought we would experiment somewhat on the rails above the bridge with a few sticks of gelignite. We had learned all about the methods of destroying rails with explosives from British text books on field engineering, but the explosive in the text books was gun cotton, and we wanted to see how gelignite would serve the purpose. Well, we tried several charges in different ways and they failed to produce the required result, so, feeling a bit disappointed about this, though we had certainly learned something, we trekked backwards towards our camp at Killeek and a good dinner. We were as hungry as wolves, and the fatigue section anticipating this, and in view of the acquisition of supplies during the day, had made suitable arrangements to feed us on our arrival.

It must have been after 5 o'clock in the afternoon when we got back to camp at Killeek and, by the time we had eaten,

relieved guards to do likewise, and relaxed for awhile, it was getting near dusk. After a rather warm day the evening had not yet become cold, so we lay about on the grass or chatted in groups. Joe Taylor, Jimmy Kelly and I rode down towards Knocksedan crossroads where we sat talking on the wall of the bridge. There was a lot to talk about besides the event of the day with us. Miss Molly Adrian of Oldtown, who was an enthusiastic supporter of the Volunteers, had just arrived in camp from the G.P.O. and bore with her a copy of the "Proclamation of the Republic" and a copy of "The War News", as well as her personal story of the fighting in Dublin. She had ridden her bicycle through the deserted Dublin streets, argued her way through barricades manned by British troops, and on to Knocksedan to find our camp, bringing also quantities of concentrated food such as Oxo cubes, tied to her bicycle, which she distributed to the Volunteers. This was the first authentic account we had had of the fighting in Dublin, and perhaps for the first time we, that is the younger ones of us, began to realise that all was not going well, and that there was no sign of the rest of the country rising in arms. There was no very definite news of this, of course, but we began to suspect that Dublin only was fighting, and that if this was so, then the whole might of the enemy would be concentrated against us. However, we thought, the fight is only three days' old yet, and, in time, the rest of the country must rise to our assistance. So far, the existence of our particular force seemed to have been ignored by the enemy who, no doubt, had his hands full in Dublin city, but there was some rumour in camp that we might expect mounted troops to come in search of us at any moment.

Now arrived a new addition to our strength in the person of Mick Fleming who had come from Drumcondra to Saucerstown in search of us, accompanied by his younger sister, Monica (called Dot). The Flemings, who are originally from Shillelagh,

Co. Wicklow, kept a grocery shop at 140 Drumcondra Road, on the north side of the city, and all the family were strong nationalists. Their father, Michael Fleming senior, was a farmer who still continued his farming in Shillelagh with the assistance of his son, Thomas; while three other sons, James, Peter and Michael, and their sister ran the grocery business in Drumcondra. The family was wellknown to me and to my family as well as to Joe Taylor and Jimmy Kelly, so we naturally were more than pleased to see Mick and to hear what he had to tell us. He was very upset about his own position in relation to the mobilisation on Easter Monday. He belonged to the second battalion of the Dublin Volunteers, and on Easter Sunday had been sent around with cancellation messages. Somehow, he was in touch with those connected with the Volunteer Executive who tried to stop the Rising, and was used by them as a message carrier, and when later he realised that his battalion had gone into occupation of Jacob's factory, he felt that he had placed himself in the wrong with them and, anyhow, was unable to join them at will, because the enemy forces held the city bridges from about Tuesday. His sister (who afterwards became my wife) was a member of Cumann na mBán and was friendly with my two sisters, who also were members. They decided to accompany him in search of our band, and their brother, James, loaded a horse van with food supplies from his shop for them to take out with them.

Dot went on to Saucerstown with the horse and van where she remained with my sisters, available for any duty that might be required of them later, such as nursing wounded or bearing messages. On that evening also some other stragglers from the city units joined us - Jerry Golden of Drumcondra, and two others named Holohan and Walsh, and with this addition, as well as the additional arms we had collected during the day, we felt assured of further success.

That night, there was a conference of the senior officers at which it was decided that we should move camp during the night. I think it was felt that sooner or later the enemy would be on our trail, and we were now so long in the Knocksedan locality that we had better make a sudden and secret move to avoid surprise and to preserve our initiative.

The night was very dark, neither moon nor stars to be seen, and we were on the move in one column extended along the road in file, with our transport wagons in the middle of the column. Actually, one section was moving in bounds ahead of the remainder as an advance guard, and another moved in rear similarly, acting as a rearguard. The other two sections with the Ford van, Dr. Hayes's car, and the horse and dray sandwiched between them moved haltingly along.

We were keeping clear of all main roads, turning and twisting through devious by-ways, and though we knew our destination was Garristown, few of us recognised any point of the road until we reached Ryanstown, where I got my bearings from the house of my aunt with which I was naturally well acquainted. Just east of the village of Garristown we halted, and we were told that it was intended to raid the barracks there by night and to destroy telegraphic communications as had been done at Swords and Donabate earlier in the day. The twelve miles or so of our journey had taken about an hour and a half, so that it was now about midnight or half-past twelve, but the night had got a little brighter, or perhaps it was that our eyes had got more used to the darkness. A scout sent in to the town came back to report that the police had left the barracks, so, fearing the escape of our prize, we swooped into the town at once, bursting into the barracks to find only one unarmed policeman who remained as a caretaker; the others, he said, had been withdrawn to Balbriggan that evening by the District Inspector. We feared this was a ruse to prevent the arms falling into our hands, and

tried to get the truth out of the lone policeman by threatening him with drastic penalties if we found him lying, but he stuck to his story while we searched the barracks for the arms which we believed should have been there.

Meanwhile the others had been busy demolishing the telegraphic communications, taking the instruments from the post office and so on, but, disappointed with our last raid, we retired from the town to a deserted farmhouse at Baldwinstown, about a mile east of Garristown, where we camped for the night, having set a watch on the barracks at Garristown lest there should be any further developments there.

Since then, I have learned that Baldwinstown was once the home of John Carroll, who led the Fingal men towards Tara in 1798. Captured by the Yeomen at Garristown he was sent to Dublin for trial and was hanged on Queen's Street Bridge. Strange that our camp should be the site of his home.

The ferryard at Baldwinstown made a fairly comfortable camp - plenty of hay and straw for bedding, and sound buildings to house us, and, being exhausted by our efforts of the day, we needed no sleeping draughts, though guards and sentries were rigidly maintained.

It is difficult to establish what small things affect the morale of any force, or to try to set down briefly in black and white of what elements that which we call morale consists. We know what it does and what its lack entails; but try to analyse it and you find it built of apparently trifling things. There was no material reason for a high state of morale in our force up to now, if we discount the general patriotic spirit pervading the Volunteer organisation as a whole, and the natural comradeship existing among men who lived and worked and played in the same countryside. Our success in the small raids of Swords and Donabate had been somewhat offset by the failure at Garristown,

and what news we had from Dublin, though scant, was not encouraging; yet our morale was high as we lay down in camp that night at Baldwinstown. We had confidence in ourselves, in our comrades, in our leaders, in the justice of our cause, and, above all, a simple trust in God to direct us.

Because of all this, some whisperings and questioning that seemed to be growing in the camp on Thursday morning, came with the shock of a dreadful heresy to our ears. This was easily traceable to one or two men who had begun to voice conscientious scruples about taking part in an armed insurrection which, they said, not alone had not the sanction of the Volunteer Executive, but had been expressly forbidden by its President. They, therefore, questioned the right of the Volunteer officers under these circumstances, to take life or to bear the responsibility of others doing so. Their efforts to justify their attitude by argument was gradually creating a very uneasy feeling in all our minds, wondering how many others were thinking in this strain. Realising the danger of such talk, there was a hurried conference of the officers of the battalion staff and a parade of the whole force was ordered immediately in the field behind the house. There Ashe addressed the men and called upon those who felt any sense of grievance to stand forth and state it publicly. One man stood forth and proceeded to address the parade, setting forth all the metaphysical arguments he could muster against proceeding further in our participation in an unauthorised and illegal war. He said that he, for one, and those he was responsible for bring there, would take no further part in what he characterised as a foolish undertaking. Another man in the ranks who was from the same district supported this argument, and for a moment it began to look like developing into a violent situation. At this point Mulcany called attention and in a few well-chosen words summed up the position. Briefly recapitulating the aims of the

Volunteers, the duty of Irishmen, and the events leading to the rising, he went on to say that, feeling satisfied that most of us realised these things, he also understood that there might be some who had conscientious doubts and scruples, and that these would be allowed to leave camp and return to their homes without reproach. His words were a tremendous relief to our feelings, though we watched anxiously to see whether any others would join the first two. The cheer which greeted Mulcahy when he asked that those who were prepared to go on with the fight stand on one side was a tribute to the spirit of the men as well as to the confidence with which he inspired them. There was no hesitation about the division; the four or five men who had been causing all the talk, already had their minds made up to leave, and the rest of us needed no time for consideration. There was no recrimination or in fact any conversation between the two parties; those who had decided to go left at once, and the rest of us again felt that sense of homogeneity that seemed to have left us earlier that morning.

Some further reorganisation of our force now became necessary as, in addition to those four or five who had left camp as conscientious objectors, it was then decided to send home my brother Colm and Jack Gowan of Skerries, as being considered too young (they were about fourteen years of age at the time), and also Bill Norton, who was too old. We had also to include in the regroupment the three stragglers who had joined us the previous day.

After our midday meal, and while we were preparing to break camp, someone brought in a story that the arms which we had sought in the police barracks in Garristown were concealed in a certain dwellinghouse near the barracks; so, as we moved into the village, and while others were collecting foodstuffs from the shops, as he directed me to carry out a search of the house indicated, with some of the men of my section.

There was only a woman in the house and she, very frightenedly, denied any knowledge of rifles. Nevertheless, I had to carry out my orders, though I did so in a very embarrassed way, feeling horribly ashamed of prying into the presses, nooks and corners of the place, when one of our men came in to inform me that I was in the wrong house. That just about finished me. I tried to stutter an apology to the woman while I stumbled out of the room, and fled precipitately from the scene. As he remarked as I came up to him that he did not think there was any truth in the story of the concealed rifles, anyway. Actually, as we learned afterwards, the police with all their arms, except the one unarmed man, had been withdrawn to the District headquarters earlier that day, probably following the news of our raids on Swords and Donabate.

Soon afterwards the whole column moved on in the direction of Ashbourne, pitching camp at another disused farmhouse named Borranstown, about two miles south of Garristown. The small thatched dwelling house here was in a rather ruinous condition, yet it provided at least one room sufficiently serviceable to act as sleeping and dining quarters for the senior officers of our staff, and there, that night, by the light of a candle stuck by its grease to the board that did duty as a table, the staff discussed the situation and planned our movements for the following day. I learned afterwards that the plan decided upon was an attack on the Midland Great Western Railway near Batterstown, about ten miles from our present position. We had been informed that troops with field artillery were travelling towards Dublin from Athlone by rail, and if we could interrupt the line it might provide scope for our further activity in harassing tactics. For the rest of us there was plenty to do that evening before we settled down to rest for the night. Few of us were intimately acquainted with the topography of that part of the country and so it was necessary to make a

detailed reconnaissance of the immediate vicinity of the camp, arrange the posting of sentries and select defence positions in case of sudden attack and such details. Sleeping quarters here were better than we had enjoyed up to then, as there were good outhouses, and a large hay-loft which already had enough hay in it to make a comfortable bed sufficed to accommodate most of us.

An indication of recovered morale might be seen that night as we settled down to sleep. A barrage of good humoured wise-cracking was succeeded after awhile by a song (Doran's Ass) from Faddy Brogan, and when eventually silence reigned, except for sundry snores, I had a feeling that all was well after all, and I think that feeling was general amongst us. The night guard was the responsibility of Jim Lawless's section that night, and because of this duty, this section would not accompany us on the mission to Batterstown in the morning, but would remain to guard the camp and assist the Q.M. to replenish our supplies of food.

The night was dark and cool, with little or no wind, and except for the ring of concealed sentries, there was nothing to distinguish the camp when it had settled down from its ordinary everyday appearance as a derelict farmhouse.

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Surprise arrival of police reinforcements - Police
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crumbling enemy morale, surrender of eleven police -
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CHAPTER V.

Friday, 26th April 1916, was a beautiful spring morning, with a brilliant sun in a cloudless sky and a sufficient coolness in the light breeze to add zest to the joy of living.

Breakfast over and all other preparations made, three sections paraded on the roadside with their bicycles, all ready for the move to Batterstown at about 10.50 a.m. Our strength at this time was about the same as it had been on the previous Wednesday at Swords; the number who left the camp at Baldwinstown was about equalled by the number of stragglers who joined us on Wednesday evening. Three sections, therefore, represented about thirty-six men, together with three of the senior officers, making a force of thirty-nine all told. The remaining senior officer, the Quartermaster, and the other section were to remain in camp, as before stated.

Following our daily plan of alternating duties, Charlie Weston's section formed the advance guard, my section the rearguard, while Ned Rooney's section was the main body. We moved cautiously towards the crossing of the main Dublin-Slane road known as Rathcross, with intervals of about two hundred yards between the sections. The Rath crossroads is only about two miles from our camp at Borranstown, yet most of us were quite unaware of our position. Mulcahy had a set of maps, I know, and my father and few others were well acquainted with the local topography, but most of us were as much at sea as if we were in a foreign country once we had left the main roads. Ashbourne village is about a mile from the Rath crossroads, on the Dublin side, and if we had come that way it might have served to orient us on our relative position, so that when action started a little later there would have been less bewilderment. But perhaps I speak only for myself amongst the more ignorant of the band. At least Mulcahy and Ashe were

aware of our position and of the fact that within one hundred yards of the Rath Cross, on the Ashbourne side, was an R.I.C. barracks.

It seems very strange to think that we had stayed the night within a couple of miles of this barracks, without ever bothering to ascertain whether it was still occupied, or what its occupants were doing, but this is the fact. It was only when we began to move towards the crossroads that a reconnaissance of the vicinity of the barracks disclosed the fact that, not alone was the barrack occupied, but that it appeared to have been reinforced, and was being placed in a state of defence. I believe it was assumed by us, following our discovery of the evacuation of Garristown barracks, that all of these outlying barracks had been similarly evacuated. At any rate, up to this I had heard no mention of any attack on a barracks, nor was our column disposed in such a way as to deal with such a situation.

The first I knew of the attack was when we were halted on the road some hundred yards before reaching the main road, and inquiring the reason for the delay, I learned that Weston's section was attacking the police barracks. Ned Rooney's section and mine had come close together at this point, so, in discussion with Rooney, I learned something of the lay of the land and had him point out the barracks to me from the top of the bank on our left. This seemed to be a two-storey square house about two fields away to our left front, and I noted that it did not appear to have any windows facing north or west. While we were looking at it, some shooting started from the direction of the barracks, and just then a messenger from Ashe up on the main road came back to instruct us, that is, Rooney and I, to move our sections into a position in rear of the barracks, not to fire on it, but there await further instructions.

Had we then known it, we had just entered upon what was to prove to be our first real battle, to end in victory only after

five and a half hours bitter fighting. But, just then, we joked and talked of other things and enjoyed the bright sunshine as we lay against the side of the ditch we occupied, wondering casually, perhaps, what Weston and the others were doing up at the barracks. Meanwhile, what had happened to Weston's section? I only learned about that while we ate our second and last meal for that day just at nightfall. Two scouts, moving a little ahead of Weston's section - Mick McAllister and Jerry Golden - noticed two policemen in full battle array busily engaged in erecting a barricade of planks and barrels across the main road in front of the barracks while their carbines stood against the bank nearby. The two Volunteers rushed forward with rifles at the ready, each covering a man and demanding their surrender, while the police in amazed surprise gazed spellbound for a moment or two. The man McAllister covered then raised his hands over his head, but the other, a burly sergeant, made a rush to grab his carbine, disregarding the threatening rifle levelled at him by Golden. Golden's reaction was extraordinary and only to be explained by the fact that we had not yet been under fire or seen men killed in battle. Reluctant to fire upon the unarmed man, he dropped his own rifle and, running forward, grasped him around the waist before he could reach the carbine. Now, Golden was rather lightly built, and the huge sergeant whirled him around and would soon have put paid to his account but for the interference of McAllister. The incident provided our funny story that night in camp, Golden being ragged with comments like - "who do you think you are, anyway? Hackenschmidt? or - "Have you heard of the fellow who fell in love with the sergeant up at the barracks and threw his arms around him?"

But, to resume the thread of the story. The two prisoners were marched to the rear of our column and were for the moment placed under a guard of one man at a house about half a mile north of the crossroads. Ashe and Mulcahy moved up to the cross

with Weston's section and led this section up the field on the south side of the main road to a position in the ditch facing the barracks. They were then within twenty-five to thirty yards from the front door of the barracks and so within hailing distance; but the door was shut and the loopholed steel shutters on the window above it were also closed over. A call for the surrender of the place brought no response from within.

Ashe then climbed up on the bank in full view of the police and proceeded to make a more formal demand for surrender, pointing out that he had the place surrounded and that he would, if necessary, destroy the barracks. Perhaps this was a rather flamboyant gesture on Ashe's part, but one that had to be admired even by those who thought it a rash act at the time. He was undoubtedly a fine figure in his uniform, and he spoke with an authoritative assurance in his voice that no doubt inhibited the defenders from firing on him for a time; but an anti-climax was reached when at the end of his speech no move was made to comply with the demand, and the next minute some shots came in his direction from the loopholed steel shutters. Those who were close behind him in the ditch, and who all the time had been mighty sceptical of the wisdom of his presenting himself as a free target, now grabbed him by the legs and forced him to return to the cover of the ditch, while others opened fire on the door and windows of the barracks.

Now began a desultory siege of the barracks with both attackers and defenders husbanding their ammunition, only hazarding a shot or two now and then as an opportunity seemed to offer. It was only when this stalemate situation had gone on for nearly half an hour that it became apparent to Ashe that some positive action would be necessary to overcome the police resistance. Up to this time it was believed that the police would not persist in their attitude of defiance once it became clear to them that we were in earnest about the business; but

now their continued obstinacy was becoming irritating and some stronger measures must be taken to reduce it.

Amongst our scanty but miscellaneous collection of equipment we had two home-made bombs. These were two pound-size cocoa tins loaded with four 2-oz. sticks of gelignite and packed with shrapnel. A ten-second fuse tipped with quickmatch projected through a hole in the lid of the tin which was soldered on, and this fuse had, of course, to be lit by touching with a lighted cigarette before throwing. The man who had some experience or training in the handling and throwing of these rather dangerous weapons, our official grenadier, was Peter Blanchfield, one of the men who had joined us on the previous Tuesday or Wednesday. Blanchfield was now called for to throw one of his mighty 'petards' at the barrack door from the ditch on the opposite side of the main road in front of it. Few, if any, of the other men had ever seen one of these bombs exploded, and so no one quite knew what to expect from it, but it was with a keen interest those nearby watched Blanchfield as he peered cautiously above the bank to estimate the range and direction. They stood clear of him while he settled himself for the throw; then, the fuse is lit and, quick as a flash, the bomb is hurled high in the air and across the road, but, alas, not high enough. Someone whose curiosity got the better of his caution peered over the top of the bank to see the result and noticed with horror that the bomb struck the top of a bush on the other side of the road and there seemed a chance that the whip of the bush top might return the bomb to its point of origin; but no, it went through, though at a reduced velocity, so that it fell in the middle of the front garden. To the listeners crouched in the ditch the sharp percussive noise of the detonation, and the appearance high in the air of earth, stones and cabbage stalks was encouraging, while to the defenders cooped up in the house, and not knowing what devilment was being arranged for them outside, this devastating and unexplainable crash in their

immediate vicinity must have been quite demoralising.

Immediately following the explosion, and taking advantage of its surprise effect, fire on the windows and door of the barracks was redoubled, and very soon a white flag was seen fluttering from an upper window. Cease fire was ordered and as he called out loudly to the police to come out unarmed, with their hands held up, and waited to give them time to comply, assuming that a barricade had been built up inside the door, which would have to be removed before the door could be opened.

All this time Rooney and I, with the other two sections, had remained in the ditch on the north side of the barracks where we had been told to remain awaiting further orders. As time went on we were naturally curious to know what was happening and whether we had been forgotten in the excitement. Just then one of the men on the extreme left said he saw Mulcahy coming towards us along the hedge about 250 yards east of the barracks. The ditch we occupied then was about 550 yards north of the barracks, and, running down along this and scrambling up the bank into the field where Mulcahy was, I was just in time to see him about two hundred yards away and shouting something which I could not catch and waving his arm in some kind of signal which I failed to understand, he turned and walked back in the direction he had come, towards the main road.

Now I was in a quandary. I felt that some message had been intended and which I had quite failed to interpret, and, following him up part of the way, I decided that I had better remain with the section and send a messenger to find Mulcahy and get his instructions. So I returned and dispatched Ned Stafford with instructions to follow the direction Mulcahy had taken, but to be careful of getting in the way of the police fire or that of our own fellows. I had selected Stafford for this mission because of the fact that he was in Volunteer

uniform and so would be recognised by our own fellows at a distance. I could not foresee that this isolated scout would make serious trouble for Weston's section later on, and provide the number two funny story for the camp that night.

At any rate, I waited anxiously for some time, watching for his return, but Stafford seemed to have been swallowed up by the hedgerows, or, like the dove from the Ark, had gone to roost elsewhere, so I began tentatively to follow him, when a tremendous burst of rifle fire from a new direction north-west of the crossroads sent me running back to rejoin my section. Bullets were whistling and whining quite plentifully over our heads and now and then one struck up a spurt of dust from the ploughed field behind our line.

What could have happened now? we wondered. Surely this was some new and unlooked for development in the situation, and what should we do? There was now no time to go casually searching for Mulcahy. But here, what was this? Down towards our right flank two men of Weston's section were running headlong as they bent double in the shelter of the hedge bounding the Garristown road on which we had left our bicycles some time ago. One of these men, Christy Nugent, informed me when he could get his breath, and had regained his composure somewhat, that "hundreds of police in motor cars had arrived at the crossroads". Later, it transpired that what had happened was that Nugent and the other man had been left to guard the flank of Weston's line from the vicinity of the crossroads, but being interestedly engaged in watching the performance at the barracks, did not observe the approach of the police reinforcements behind their backs until the leading car was within twenty yards or so of the crossroads. Actually there were about twenty-four large five or six seater touring cars, filled with armed police, the number of which we estimated afterwards as about eighty.

Suddenly hearing the cars pulling up behind them, Nugent and his companion swung around to find themselves confronted with what must surely have seemed to them hundreds of police beginning to dismount from the cars and, realising their remissness in a flash, fired upon the leading car. Nugent, who was armed with that most treacherous of weapons, a Martini carbine[≡], found when he had fired that he could not extract the spent case to reload, and so fled in the direction he knew we were placed, followed by his companion.

Panic is a very easy thing to start when ignorance of the situation leaves one's imagination free to build the most fantastic fears.

We had evidence of heavy fire on our right flank, and now there was Nugent's story to add to our previous anxiety. It occurred to me then that if, in fact, the police were to advance upon us from where they were, they would meet the right flank of our line, enfilading our position from which we could bring no fire of any consequence to bear upon them. Whereupon Rooney and I, in consultation, decided to move our sections forthwith into the ditch at right angles to our left flank and fronting the field which had hitherto been in our rear, while, in the meantime, another messenger had been sent to find Ashe or Mulcahy and ask for instructions.

about this time, when the men had just got into their new positions and Rooney was trying to enlighten me on the lie of the country round about us, the position of the main road and so on, I noticed Mulcahy walking across the field in front of

≡ The Martini Enfield carbine was an adaptation of the older Martini Henry rifle. The Martini Enfield had the same lock mechanism but was modernised by the fitting of a barrel bored for .303 ammunition. This lock mechanism operated by an underneath lever seldom was effective in ejecting the spent cases; in most instances merely withdrawing it an eighth of an inch or so, when it must be further drawn by the finger nails. Often, however, as in this case, the extractor slipped off the rim of the case and then a ramrod became necessary).

the position we had vacated. He had by then reached the ditch at a point which had been the centre of our line. He was obviously looking for us, so I shouted and blew my whistle to attract his attention. Dick seemed quite casual and unperturbed in contrast to our near panic state, and already we began to feel ashamed of what then seemed our unwarranted fears. Crossing the ditch, he waved to us to follow him as he walked, or, as it seemed to me, strolled diagonally across the ploughed field in front of us, and in the direction of the gate leading on to the Garristown road where we had left our bicycles. We had been observing the occasional strike of a bullet in the ploughed field and would not have thought of crossing it openly up to this, but Mulcahy seemed blissfully unconscious of any danger and kept beckoning us to hurry on, so we could do no less than double across the field in his wake, arriving on the road breathless but pleased enough to have arrived without casualties.

Actually there was no aimed fire coming our way, but the police, who had not the foggiest notion of where we were, were firing wildly in all directions, but principally in the general direction of the broad vicinity of the barracks where they knew or guessed what their comrades were besieged. Some of this naturally came our direction, occasionally striking a puff of dust from the ground, but was mostly high.

Ashe now appeared on the road and, after a hurried consultation with him, Mulcahy informed us in a very assured tone that the police had not a chance of success. They had walked into a trap, he said, and we were going to rout or capture the entire force when our attack was launched, which would be when certain dispositions of our force had been effected. Mulcahy's words and confident manner completely restored our morale and we again felt slightly ashamed of our needless feeling of panic before his appearance on the scene.

It appeared significant at this point that Ashe, who was

nominally the officer in command, seemed to rely entirely upon Mulcahy's judgment and capability, accepting his advice without question, and allowing him to issue necessary instructions for our movements. This seemed perfectly natural at the time, and shows, I think, the confidence in him/^{with} which he had inspired all of us in the few days he had been with us. Even Ashe saw nothing incongruous in looking to Mulcahy for the solution of our difficulties in this emergency, and Mulcahy got on with the job coolly and confidently, without seeming in any way to usurp Ashe's authority as the commander.

Mulcahy's instructions to us were to the effect that it was intended to push in a vigorous assault of the police position from the crossroads and, for this purpose, he proposed to strengthen the party there under Weston by Ned Rooney's section and half of mine. I, with the remaining six of my section, was to be conducted to a position in rear of the police position on the main road. There we were to remain concealed until the attack was launched from the other side of the position, when our mission was to see that none of the police made good their escape.

Peter Blanchfield, our grenadier, with the one remaining bomb, accompanied my party, where it was hoped he would have a suitable occasion to use it should one of the police cars endeavour to pass our position. The others who accompanied me to the police rear were Johnny Devine of Lusk, Faddy Brogan of Lusk, Jack Rafferty of Lusk, Jimmy Connor, St. Margaret's, and a young lad named Teeling, also of St. Margaret's.

Ashe was our conductor to the position which we were to hold on the main road, about a hundred yards north west of the rearmost police car. He repeated Mulcahy's instruction that we were not to display our position by firing until the attack was launched from the crossroads. He also told us something of what had happened previously at the barracks, and we then

learned that the police within had appeared to be in greater numbers than was usual in such places, and that, although they had indicated their willingness to surrender before the arrival of the police reinforcements, the arrival of the latter decided them to change their minds, and now they were still holding on and were occupying a few of our men who had to remain to keep them pinned inside the barracks. To reach our destination we travelled along the bottoms of the ditches in single file, crashing through the briars and brushwood and wading in the water and mud. Ashe led the way, and was so confident of his direction and position, I presumed he had been that way before. Anyway, as I found afterwards, we were two fields away from the police position as we moved parallel to it, so there was no danger of being heard by them, though indeed had even a small party moved out that way before our arrival we were dead meat. Some of them did in fact move down in that direction later, but by then we had gained the ascendancy and they were the first lot to surrender.

Having reached our position and given us final instructions, Ashe returned by the way we had come. I had now to examine the situation in detail and make my own plans to carry out my mission. The main Dublin-Slane road, upon which we then were, is a wide straight road at this point, descending in a very slight incline towards the Rath crossroads. Immediately north-west of our position this incline culminated and dropped slightly in the opposite direction, so that at a point about seventy yards further back than we were one could kneel on the road and be out of view of the police position. The road boundaries are those common to Co. Meath roads: a low bank, about eighteen inches to two feet high, dividing a wide shallow channel from the road; this bank is gapped at intervals to allow water to drain from the road. The channel is no deeper than the road surface, but is about three to four feet wide and overgrown in patches with long grass and

occasional small bushes. Beyond the channel rises a steep bank, four to six feet high, which has a thorn hedge on the field side, and between it and the fields runs a deep and wide ditch, six to seven feet deep and six to seven feet wide at the top.

It was at a junction of one of the lateral ditches with the road ditch that we were placed, and at that point the high road bank was cut through by the ditch-meeting it. Looking cautiously over the bank and down the road I could see the end of the line of police cars; the last one about eighty to 100 yards away, and suddenly realising the need for silence to preserve the secret of our presence there, I called out a warning to the others to be quiet and only speak in whispers. My voice, however, was heard across the road, for, just then, a very tall man in civilian clothes stood up from behind a bush on the other side of the road upon whom I at once swung my rifle: but I held my fire as he seemed to be unarmed and had his hands raised over his head. There was a motor cycle standing close by which I had previously noticed; it was pulled up at that convenient distance and headed in the same direction as the police cars, so I assumed that this also was one of the police vehicles. Now, this tall middle-aged man seemed remarkably like a policeman to me, though he was in civilian dress and apparently unarmed. For a minute I felt that this was a trick and that I should shoot, but his quiet spoken and somewhat frightened protest that he was a friend who had tried to get to us to warn us of the coming of the police party partly convinced me of his sincerity. At any rate, I believed he was not connected with the police. I ordered him to clear off to a safe distance across the fields and not to appear again while the fight was on. He said his name was Quigley and that he was the County Surveyor for Meath. Later, I found that this was true, as was also the fact that he had tried to get to us ahead of the police to warn us of their impending arrival.

Mr. Quigley was subsequently arrested by the police and courtmartialled at Richmond Barracks, Dublin, on 7th to 9th June following for his part in the affair. His defending counsel was, however, able to secure his acquittal.

I began placing the men in what I thought would be the most advantageous positions to deal with the anticipated retreat of the police in our direction, and then realised the difficulty of this. We were so close to the road that we could only see the few yards of it directly in front of us while maintaining the safety of cover; on the other hand, if we got out on the roadside, this would only serve for one or two of us and would have no fire protection. It would, furthermore, give away the weakness of our position. I made a compromise for the moment by placing Jack Rafferty and Paddy Erogan close together on the top edge of the bank where they were covered from view from the police by the thorn hedge, though they had not effective cover from fire. They, being close to it, could see through a corner of the hedge right down to where the police lay concealed in the ditch. They were therefore in a position to warn us of any move from the enemy. Blanchfield with his bomb I placed against the trunk of a large tree which was broken off at a height of about 8 or 10 feet and inclined sharply towards the road. This, I thought, would cover him and enable him to bomb any car that tried to pass. Jack Devine took the front of the bank, while for Connor and Teeling, as there was no room for them at that spot, I left them to watch our rear. I decided to get across the road myself and see what could be done from that aspect. Moving down the field along the road ditch I came to a gate, some 60 or 70 yards from our position, through which I got on to the road to find that the slight hill crest would now conceal me from the enemy when I bent double. Crossing the road, therefore, I proceeded forward again, moving in the field on the opposite side of the road from our position. The bank on this side was higher, or perhaps the field was lower, and there

was a very thick and stiff thorn hedge growing from it on the field side. I could see pretty clearly ahead of me; that is, along the ditch, and was satisfied that there was no enemy on that side, or at least, none as far as the next lateral ditch, and by now I estimated that I must be about opposite our position across the road which I had just left, so I scrambled my way through the hedge and took a peep over the top of the bank. Yes, I was practically opposite the men I had just left, and they saw me all right, but this was a hopeless position to shoot from. There was no foothold high enough to stand on to shoot over the top, and the sharp thorns of the hedge could not be avoided. Besides, any movement made a noise of crashing sticks that could be heard above the din of musketry, so I gave up the idea of occupying that side of the road, and retraced my steps.

My reconnaissance had at least served some purpose for I now knew that there was no enemy on that side of the road, and in my peep over the bank I had also looked towards the enemy position, and now had a fair estimate of the extent of it, and how far the crossroads was from us.

Something else had also caught my eye; it seemed that there was some movement among the long grass and small bushes of the shallow channel between the cars on the roadside and the bank beyond, and I believed I could see someone sprawled under one of the rearmost cars, but obviously the bulk of the police were in the deep ditch beyond the bank bounding the road on the north east side.

It was a beautiful sunny spring day which, warm under the sun's rays, yet had a freshness in the air that gave a hint of vigorous growth. Yes, indeed, I might have reflected, there was also a hint of a new growth which was not vegetable, in the sound of rifle fire about us. The spirit of freedom had awakened and was coming into leaf; the age-old struggle

perennially renewed had truly begun in Fingal. I don't know that my thoughts were so coherent as I walked along the ditch on my way back, but the novelty of the situation did occur to me and set me wondering if the great battles we read about were like this - like this, I mean, in the sense that I had no active feeling of the great occasion. This was a job of work to be done, and the immediate presence of death in the sound of whining bullets overhead seemed hardly real. There was much more reality in the smell of the grass underfoot and in the unconcerned grazing cattle some fields away. This is not to say that I had no fear of death: everyone has, and I am no exception, but I suppose at that stage I felt I had the measure of the enemy. Mulcahy's words were still with me, and now I had seen for myself that we held the initiative.

Soon our attack must come to complete the defeat of the enemy, who probably could not know what the strength of our force was, and from his immobility, had most likely suffered in morale, if not in actual casualties. It was, therefore, with a feeling of increased confidence that I arrived back at our position of readiness, but to find that in my absence Jack Rafferty had received a serious scalp wound and Blanchfield had gone back to our dressing station with him, incidentally bringing his bomb with him. Now there were only five of us here and we were without our bomb. We hoped Blanchfield might return, but were prepared for his continued absence.

It was after two o'clock, about an hour after we had reached our present position, and it was becoming evident that inactivity was having a bad effect. My own confidence was becoming submerged in the feeling that we ought to do something - that something must have gone wrong with the original plan seeing that there was such a long delay - and, anyhow, the fellows at the Crossroads were having all the satisfaction of shooting while we sat and waited. The wounding of Rafferty

seemed to indicate that our presence there was no secret to the enemy, though, of course, it could be a chance shot.

We decided to investigate by creeping out into the roadside channel and were carefully examining the prospect of creeping closer to the enemy when a cry from Brogan "I'm hit" sent us hurrying back into the shelter of the ditch. Brogan was hit all right; he clasped himself around the waist and, when he removed his arms, there was a bullet hole in his belt and a more jagged tear in his tunic further back. His clothing was quickly opened up and, strange to say, there was no sign of blood, but there was a red weal just above his hip to show the path of the bullet which had, in fact, penetrated his belt in front and, travelling through his clothing above the point of the hip, barely touching the skin, had made its exit about six inches further back without causing any injury except to the clothing.

This was the deciding factor; now, clearly our position was known to the enemy; we would have a few shots on our own account and so add our small weight to the progress of the fight. Brogan went back to his original position and Devine and I got out on the roadside again, Devine lying in the shallow channel between the two banks, while I lay on the road itself in the lee of the low bank. There were no individual targets in view, but we agreed to spread our fire discriminately, Brogan reaching as best he could for the deep ditch in enfilade, and Devine and I raking the outer channel and the cars on the roadside. The rearmost car had its petrol tank behind and, a little later, it struck me as a good idea to put a few holes in this to prevent any attempt at a sudden evacuation; which I accordingly did.

The act of opening fire had a great restorative effect on the morale of our party; the long waiting had given us the jitters, and now we felt the relief of action. After a few shots I could see nothing useful to shoot at from the lying position

and got up on one knee which gave me a full view of the enemy position. From here I could rake the entire enemy position and I emptied my magazine in doing so. Devine beside me did the same and, becoming bolder, we advanced a little and stood up to empty another magazine. Resuming the prone position to reload, I thought some return fire was rather close and, suddenly, a bulley struck the roadside about a foot in front of my face blinding me with a shower of sand and small stones. Convinced that it had actually hit me, I rolled over and up the bank and scrambled for the ditch, where I was assisted by Brogan to regain ~~the~~ my sight with the aid of a handkerchief.

There seemed to be a hot fire now in our direction, and we waited to let that ease off before again attempting to go forward on the road. As we waited, our eyes and our attention were concentrated upon the enemy position, so that it was with startled dismay we heard Jimmy Connor's stage whisper behind us, warning us that some people were creeping upon our position from the rear along the road channel and were almost upon us. Rushing back to him I tried to climb the steep side of the ditch to look over, but found I could not see past a bush that projected towards the road at this point. To my horror, however, I could see through the bush the pink of human faces at a low level and moving rapidly from side to side, nothing else than a considerable number of men on their hands and knees creeping rapidly and purposefully towards us. Bending backwards over the upper edge of the ditch I fired my rifle at the first face next me and was knocked from the awkward position I was in by the kick of the weapon before I could fire again; but I emptied my magazine down the ditch and towards the road edge of it from where I stood in the bottom, shouting to the others to start clearing out and back the way we originally came. The face I had fired at was not more than twenty yards away at the time, and I felt that we were trapped unless we got out pretty quickly. Answering fire was now coming pretty thickly over us

from the new enemy, and I made the sad discovery that all my rifle ammunition was now expended. I still had my revolver, however, and about twenty rounds for that, and drawing it I moved back to the others, where inquiry elicited the information that none of them had much ammunition left, except Johnny Devine, and he was using a 9 m.m. Mauser rifle, the ammunition of which was of no use to the rest of us who had Lee Enfield rifles.

The situation seemed desperate, although it was clear that for the moment, at any rate, we had checked the advance of the enemy on our rear; but, equally clear was it, that our present position was untenable, and after a hurried consultation with Devine and Brogan, we decided to evacuate it. At this stage my attention was called by Teeling who, armed only with a shotgun, was crouched in the lateral ditch a few yards away. He indicated to me as I reached him that some of the new enemy were advancing on us from the field side of the road ditch, and, as I cautiously peeped over the parapet of the ditch, I was just in time to see a pair of heels disappear hurriedly behind a furze bush which projected somewhat from the hedge about sixty yards away.

Emptying my revolver in the general direction of this bush I called out to the others to clear out for their lives back in the direction we had come. Devine would hold out with rifle fire to give the others a start, and I would support him with my revolver which I continued to reload and fire. Teeling and O'Connor, followed by Brogan, moved down the ditch away from the road as we kept up the fire, but soon I noticed a halt in the retreating file and, shouting to them to move on while there was still time, I rushed towards the leader, Teeling, to find that, confronted with a gateway which blocked the ditch, he feared the momentary exposure necessary to cross it. Calling out for all of them to follow at the double, I jumped up and

plunged headlong into the ditch again, beyond the gateway, where I began to run along the bottom of the ditch. After a few steps I stopped to wonder what was keeping the others, and I heard a lot of confused shouting and talking, while all the shooting had stopped in the vicinity. This could only mean one thing, I thought; the police had rushed and captured our position, and the remainder of my party were now dead or prisoners.

It did not occur to me at the time to try to confirm this by getting up the bank to look backwards: satisfied that I was the only survivor, I considered that my immediate duty was to get back and report what I thought were the facts to Ashe. Arriving at the point on the by-road leading from Garristown to the Rath cross, at which we had received our instructions from Mulcahy some two and a half hours earlier, I found Dr. Hayes and was in process of telling my story to him when Ashe came down the road from the direction of the crossroads. Ashe accepted my story as fact which I believed it to be, and hastened back towards the crossroads with the intention, as he said, of ordering a general retreat. Seeking a replenishment of my ammunition supply, I found Ned Rooney who had come to Dr. Hayes to have a dressing on a slight wound over his eye, and he could only spare me five rounds which I charged into my magazine with the mental resolve not to waste this.

Discussing the situation with Dr. Hayes and Rooney on the spot, we decided that it might help the getaway of our force if we moved all the bicycles and Hayes's car which had been parked on the roadside near the crossroads. We found Bartle Weston nearby to help us at this task and, accordingly, the machines were all removed about 600 yards back in the Garristown direction, where a slight bend in the road promised concealment that would aid in their recovery when the men got back to that point. We were still engaged in moving the bicycles when Mulcahy appeared on the road at the same point and, apparently, from the

same direction as I had come, from the rear of the police position. Hayes began to explain the situation to him and as I came up to him, he turned to me to say that the 'enemy force' that had come up on our rear, on which we had expended all our ammunition, was himself with my father and Jim Lawless's section. Our fourth section from the camp at Berranstown had been summoned early in the fight and, as they did not seem to be appearing on the scene within a reasonable time, Mulcahy went to meet them and conduct them to the position which he knew I occupied in rear of the police.

While, however, Mulcahy knew the approximate position we should be in, he had not actually seen us there, as it was Ashe who posted us, and then so much time had elapsed that he did not know how the situation might have changed in the meantime. Because of the excessive delay already occasioned, he did not want to cause further delay by sending forward a single scout to make contact with us, but instead led the whole section forward towards us, he himself feeling out the way as he went. He told me afterwards that when I fired at the face in the bushes it was his face I fired at, and I thanked God for the awkwardness of my firing position, otherwise I could not have missed at the range. The fierceness of our fire convinced him that he had somehow made close contact with the police, and it was not until my figure in uniform was seen dashing across the gateway that he and his party realised that we were firing on each other.

The shouting I had heard as I ran from the spot was, in fact, Mulcahy's party calling out to Devine, Brogan and the others to identify themselves to them and stop their fire on themselves. He told us all this very briefly at the time, laughing as he did so at my evident discomfiture. Indeed, I never felt so ashamed of myself as at that moment. Up to then I had thought my actions and conduct logical and reasonable;

now I felt I had been a perfect ass, not alone in allowing myself to be carried away by needless panic, but in endangering our own and the lives of Mulcahy and his party, and wasting all our ammunition in so doing. Then, having done all that, I had come back to Ashe with what now was shown to be a cock-and-bull story, and so caused him to order a retreat. I felt like creeping away to hide from all of them though no one seemed to notice my shame.

Mulcahy, when he learned that Ashe had gone up to order the retreat of Weston's section, followed rapidly in that direction to stop the move, while Dr. Hayes moved back to his dressing station-cum-prisoners' cage at the cottage near to where we had moved the bicycles. I felt I had better follow Mulcahy and join in with Charlie Weston's section at the cross, though I was very conscious of being short of ammunition. My revolver ammunition was all expended and I had only five rounds of rifle ammunition; however, I hoped to beg a few rounds from someone, and, thinking over matters like this, I walked dejectedly along in the shelter of the bank on my right hand side, subconsciously aware of occasional bullets whining through the hedge and across the road.

One of our fellows was firing occasional shots from the shelter of a stone gate pier a little way ahead of me on my right and, as I came near him, the crack of a replying bullet on one of the bars of the iron gate brought me back to my senses with a jerk. Running forward, I found that the man was Matt Kelly of Corduff, who seemed to be having a private duel with some police on the opposite side of the field. He already had received a bullet wound in the left forearm and, while I talked to him, he took an occasional shot at what seemed to be the source of the enemy fire, and an occasional shot struck the gate pier or the bank in reply. I sent him back to Dr. Hayes to have

his arm attended to, borrowing an additional five rounds to keep up the fire. My morale was somewhat restored by the action of shooting and I was intensely careful of my aim because of my scanty supply of ammunition. I had located the point from which the fire was coming and, realising that there was no use firing until the enemy marksman was also in a position to fire, I dug my rifle down in the bank beside the pier and watched with my aim laid and finger on trigger.

A little thrill of achievement went through me when a moment later a slight puff in the line of my foresight showed that my estimate was correct and my bullet was sped even as his whined through the bars of the gate on my right. I fired again at the same place and round about it for a few minutes, but there was no further fire in reply, even when I moved my hat about over the top of the bank on the point of my bayonet, so I concluded that either my opponent was a casualty or had moved off elsewhere and I, being again short of ammunition, went back towards the cottage which served as the dressing station to get some more from Kelly, Rooney or Bartle Weston.

Having acquired a further five or ten rounds, I invited Weston to accompany me towards the crossroads with a view to getting in touch with Charlie's section, and we were approaching the gateway on the right, which I had recently been firing from, when a crackle of twigs in the hedge between us and the gateway made me glance sharply to the right. There, to my startled amazement, I saw the black figure of a policeman clambering up from the ditch behind, and standing up amidst the bushes of the hedge on top of the bank within ten paces of where I stood. I had my rifle hanging by its sling from my right shoulder and, consequently, could never have brought it into action in time had the enemy been anxious to shoot first. Weston, who was a little behind me and more to the right of the road, jumped immediately for the shelter of a gap in the bank near him and,

while I frantically unslung my rifle and brought it to my shoulder to fire, it gradually dawned on me that the policeman appeared to be unarmed and was raising his hands above his head while he called out to me not to shoot, that he wanted to surrender, an unseen chorus behind him in the ditch repeating the cry. While this incident takes a little time to describe, the reader should appreciate that all this happened in a split second, and my heart was still in my mouth when realisation of the fact that some numbers of the enemy were surrendering to the two of us penetrated my brain. Still fearing that there was some catch in it, I kept my man covered, and warning Weston to keep them covered from where he was, I, with a boldness I was very far from feeling, ordered them all to come out on the road with their hands up.

Eleven stalwart, mud-spattered and thoroughly demoralised R.I.C. men climbed through the hedge and formed up in two ranks on the road before me, and as they did so, I had time to note numerous particulars concerning them. Some of them were young fellows of twenty-six or seven or thereabouts, and some were middle-aged men of over forty. (I often wondered since what I, a youngster of barely eighteen years, looked like to them at the time). One man, a youngish fellow, had a rather bad scalp wound where a bullet had made a perfectly straight furrow, laying bare his skull from forehead to crown and right in the centre. I thought to myself irrelevantly: 'the scar that will leave will make a perfect parting of his hair in future'.

Another oldish man looked sick and frightened looking, and, noticing that one of his cartridge pouches seemed to have been struck by a bullet, I asked him if he was wounded, but he only shook his head sadly and made no reply. One or two others had minor wounds, but on the whole they seemed relieved to have achieved the comparatively safe status of prisoners-of-war, and trusted to the humanity of our treatment of them as such.

None of them carried arms, although their ammunition pouches showed that they had by no means expended their ammunition supply. When I asked where were their rifles, they replied that they had thrown them away at the other side of the field. At this stage, Bartle Weston came over and began looking in the ditch where they had left, for trace of the missing rifles or of any other police that might be skulking there, but there was neither the one nor the other, and, looking where they pointed to as the general direction of where they had discarded the rifles, I realised that this was probably the party that Matt Kelly and I had recently been firing at from the gateway.

I could not wait to march them back to the cottage before possessing myself of a more than plentiful supply of ammunition, filling my bandolier and all my pockets in the reaction from my previous impoverishment in this respect. Coming to the man who had the bullet hole in his pouch, I found that the bullet which penetrated the front of the pouch had been deflected by the cartridges inside, which were all bent up by the impact, and had come out at the side which was quite torn away in the process. He was unhurt, but evidently suffering from shock. The one who had the bad scalp wound was without his helmet which, no doubt, had been badly damaged by the same bullet. He was probably suffering some pain and was hysterically walking from one to the other asking how bad his wound was. One could understand his feelings, as, not able to see for himself, the blood and pain would make it feel as if his entire skull was open.

We marched them back to the cottage where Dr. Hayes attended at once to the wounded, and we stripped them of their equipment and the remainder of their ammunition.

Searching my pockets for a cigarette as I chatted with Bartle Weston, I pulled out my camera, a Vest Pocket Kodak,

which I had quite forgotten about. I did a little amateur photography at that time, and this small camera usually accompanied me in my travels. It was strange that the idea of a picture record of the day had not occurred to me before this, particularly as the bright sunny day was so favourable for the taking of photographs; but I suppose the more serious matter of fighting a battle had displaced all other thoughts up to that moment.

Ned Stafford, the man who, it will be remembered, I had sent earlier in the day to seek orders from Mulcahy, wandered into the cottage and assumed the duty of guarding the prisoners with Bartle Weston; so, lining up prisoners and guards in front of the cottage, I took what should have been a good picture of the group. I afterwards took some other pictures including a few shots of the final surrender scene on the main road, but I lost the camera with the film still in it when we surrendered on the following Sunday.

It did not occur to me just then to wonder where Stafford had come from at that particular time. Without thinking much about it, I had assumed that he had joined with Charlie Weston's section up at the crossroads. It was only that night in camp I heard the rest of the story from Weston and some of his men. It seems that when Stafford moved off in the direction I had indicated to him, following Mulcahy, i.e., southwards along the hedge east of the barracks, he failed to make contact with Mulcahy or anyone of Weston's section, and, being rather uncertain of the positions occupied by Weston's men, he stopped at a point of the junction of two ditches a couple of hundred yards east of the barracks, and from the shelter of the hedge and bank watched the performance at the barracks, without thinking further of his particular mission. When, later on, the increased fire following the arrival of the police reinforcements indicated a new twist to the proceedings, he did not know what

to think or do, and so remained where he was, taking an occasional shot towards the cars at the crossroads which he could barely see through the hedges from his position. Ned Stafford had been a Volunteer from the first formation of a company of that organisation in Swords, where he lived; his people were poor but hardworking labouring folk who struggled to make ends meet for a fairly large family. Ned had pinned his faith to the national cause and was one of the most constant attenders at Volunteer parades of all kinds up to that time, so that everyone looked upon him as an integral part of the force, where otherwise he would have been unnoticed. He was rather low-sized, flatfooted and of rather weedy physique, but his unfailing good-humour and cheerful optimism earned him the benevolent regard of all hands. As, I think, I already stated, he was one of those in Volunteer uniform (which, let me say, he had had to purchase from his own small earnings). The cap he wore was the earlier type of hard round peaked cap, which peak was of shining black patent leather which glistened in the sun.

Having taken up his lone post, as I have described, I imagine that Stafford fancied himself as holding the line against all comers - "they shall not pass" adopted as his private motto! When on receipt of my false alarm he ordered the falling back of Weston's section, this move had to be very cautiously executed under the fire of the enemy above the crossroads on the one hand, and the still occupied barracks on the other. Consequently, the section moved in extended file, creeping along in the shelter of the hedge and bank, until a gateway, lightly blocked with felled bushes, was reached. When the leading man, probably Charlie Weston himself, was passing this gateway, a bullet smacked through the bushes into the ground beside him; so, calling back to the others to exercise caution by crossing quickly one at a time, he waited to watch where the fire was coming from. Paddy Sherwin crossed next, and a bullet passed him by inches. Another

man tried to cross, running bent down, and he also was fired at but was happily missed. Someone was bound to get it eventually though, so Weston called a halt to any further move while himself and Sherwin tried to locate the point of what seemed to be a new enemy position. Suddenly Sherwin said: "By G., I see him". He had caught a glimpse of shining leather through the hedge on the opposite side of the field and was about to fire at it when Weston said: "Wait; let us both fire together", and they waited a few moments for the target to show up again. After a minute or so there was a further glint in the sunlight which brought eyes to sights and fingers to triggers, but, before they could fire, a tiny clear spot in the hedge showed the green of a volunteer tunic against the darker background of the hedge, and, to Weston's amazement and considerable indignation, in a flash, he recognised who the marksman was. "It is that b..... so-and-so Stafford", he told Sherwin, and warning the others to remain where they were, he circumnavigated the field and came up behind Stafford, who was coolly crouched behind the bank watching intently for the next figure attempting to cross the gap. From where he was, he could only see the men crossing the gateway as shadowy figures through the bushes, but, taking a snap shot at each one that passed, his aim was much too close to be comfortable.

He never heard Weston's approach until the latter was close behind him, so intent was he on watching for his next shot, and to Weston's vituperative explosion of wrath, he opposed an attitude of righteous indignation. "You can go to hell then" he said, "I'll fight no more", as he walked off down along the ditch in the direction of the cottage where he arrived as already mentioned here.

To those who knew Stafford, his determined holding of the gap, and placing the lives of each one in turn in jeopardy, and then his indignant response to Weston's tirade, was uproariously funny - after it was all over, of course!

It was at this stage that Mulcahy's countermanding order returned Weston's men to their original positions and about the same time also that Matt Kelly and I were sniping in the other direction from the gateway on the byroad. At about this time also, Jim Lawless's section with my father, Frank Lawless, having occupied the position in rear of the police that I had so precipitately left, were working their way carefully closer to the position, and had by then reached a point within ten or fifteen yards of the rearmost police car. It was then that I, having deposited my prisoners, photographed them, and replenished my ammunition supply from them, was jubilantly pushing up towards the crossroads to spread the good news of the cracking police morale, and to join in the final effort needed there.

I got to a point on the byroad about fifteen or twenty yards from the main road, where I found Tom Weston firing through the hedge on the right at a spot in the ditch behind one of the cottages fronting the main road. He told me there were some police firing from that point and that just before I came he had shot one that tried to climb in on the back window of the cottage. The man had got through, though he believed he had hit him in the process. I joined him in a few shots, searching all the brushwood cover in our immediate foreground with our fire and then moved forward a little further to see if I could get on to the main road with safety under the fire coming from the rest of Weston's men over the bank on my left hand side.

The bank on that side, however, became lower as it reached the main road, so that even on my hands and knees I could scarcely keep below the line of the spurts of fire I could see coming from the fringe of hedge topping the bank on my left. I kept close to the bank on my right and hoped that the fellows firing across the bank on the left of the road could see me as I shouted across to them that I wanted to come over, but there was no response to my call, or any sign of lessening in the

volume of fire, and as I huddled myself close to the right hand bank reflecting on the precariousness of my position between two fires coming from opposite directions, I had about come to the conclusion that I must go back a bit of the road and try to get up to Weston on the field side of the bank they were firing over. Before I could move, however, the firing died away suddenly, and simultaneously there was a cheer, and I saw John McCallister foremost, and others of Weston's men jumping over the bank on to the road with bayonets fixed on their rifles. Hastily fixing my own bayonet I rushed forward to join them in what I thought was the assault of the police position.

Twenty paces or so at the double brought me in a few seconds out on to the main road, and as I joined the others at the crossroads, I looked to my right along the police position on the main road where an amazing sight met my gaze. Dead and wounded police were strewn at the sides of the road, and the remaining police were coming out from the ditch with their hands raised above their heads. Coming down the road and herding before him the surrendering police was my father, with three or four of those who had come from the camp with him. Some of these were searching the ditch as they came along, to ensure that all the police had come out, while from our side there was an immediate drive to collect all the police arms and ammunition with the least possible delay.

Along the road stood the line of motor cars which had carried the police there, all large open touring cars, pulled up within ten or twelve yards of each other, the leading car about 50 to 70 yards from the crossroads. They had all pulled up in line close to the left hand side of their direction of travel, and the police on dismounting had practically all sought cover in the ditch beside them, where most of them remained for the whole time of the fight. A few there were with some of the drivers of the cars that considered they were

safe enough in the shallow channel between the bank and the road, but these had all been killed, while one sergeant had sought a fire position early in the fight, on the opposite side of the road in the recess formed by a water cutting in the bank. There he crouched, sitting on his heels as I came up, with his rifle across his knees, and getting no response to my order to him to get out on the road, I pulled him by the shoulder, to find that he was not only dead, but quite stiff. The body toppled over towards me and remained in its crouched form, still grasping his carbine with the right hand at the small of the butt. I collected the carbine and left him, going quickly up the road to survey the entire scene and to relate it in proper perspective to the position in rear further up the road, the extent of the police position and the crossroads.

About half-way up the road I met my father who, satisfied now that the job was done, appeared as excitedly jubilant as the rest of us, and I suppose, glad to see me still all in one piece. He began to tell me that poor Jack had been killed, and for awhile I did not realise that he was talking about Jack Crennigan. I had heard someone say as I came along the road that Rafferty had been badly hit and could not live, and, remembering that Jack Rafferty, who had been with me originally at the rear of the police position, had received a head wound during my temporary absence. I thought this was the Jack he meant; but, as he went on to explain how it happened, I realised it was Crennigan he meant.

Crennigan had been employed on our farm by my father for a number of years, and he and I had gone to school together, so, naturally, both father and I felt his death as that of one of our own family. It seemed, from what he told me then, that as they pushed forward towards the police position, Crennigan was following closely behind my father. A few yards away, but

concealed from them by the overhanging bushes of the hedge, they could hear a voice loudly berating the police for skulking in the ditch and calling on them to get up and fight like men. Moving out to get a view of the speaker, he saw a police officer (whom we subsequently were told was District Inspector H. Smith), standing on top of the bank and waving his revolver towards them, as he reviled the police for their cowardice in his effort to get them to stand up and fight the closing enemy. Smith was undoubtedly a brave man who stood there exposed, to show the police that they need not fear to get up there also. Hearing the movement of my father towards him, he fired at him on the instant, and his bullet, missing my father, penetrated Orennigan's heart, killing him instantly. My father's shot at the same time hit Smith on the forehead and smashed his skull. He still lay as he fell - as I came along - feet on bank and head near the edge of the roadside, and, although his brain matter splattered the grass beside him, he yet lived, his breath coming in great gasps at long intervals, in the minute or so I watched him. Then he was still, and the muscles of his face relaxed.

There was no time to think connectedly then, and after a moment I moved on. Afterwards, when I had time to examine my feelings and impressions of Smith's death, I realised that what at first glance may have seemed a callous disregard on my part was not so, and that, in fact, my silent gaze on the death scene constituted my tribute to the passing of a brave spirit. I neither lamented nor rejoiced in the passing. Here lay my enemy about to enter the portals through which we all pass sooner or later, and dying a soldier's death, with brave words on his lips and courage in his heart. One might even envy him, were the cause for which he died in accord with our ideals.

I have always thought that one's courage in the face of imminent death is the measure of our faith in the justice and mercy of God. The instinct of self-preservation is a natural

one common to all animal life, but human reason and belief in the Infinite transcends the primitive instincts, and, therefore, in the truly courageous man, is to be seen one whose faith in God is sufficient to permit him to confide his destiny trustingly to his care. On which side such a one may die makes little matter in this sense. All must die sooner or later but it is not the method, place or circumstance that counts, so much as the fact of meeting death bravely and with a smiling confidence in a merciful and just God, who credits the honest effort rather than the achievement.

The official British casualty list gave the names of two officers, two sergeants and four constables killed, in addition to three civilians who were drivers of the police cars, though two of these are stated to have been unconnected with the police but merely casual passers-by. This seems hardly likely in view of the duration of the fight (about 5½ hours). In addition to those killed, the names of fifteen police are listed as wounded in this action.

On the Volunteer side there were two killed - Jack Crennigan of Rogerstown, and Tom Rafferty of Lusk. There were five wounded whose names are given as follows:

Joe Taylor	- Swords	Matt Kelly	- Corduff
Jack Rafferty	- Lusk	Ned Rooney	- Lusk
.... Walsh	- Dublin		

Having collected the booty, represented by about ninety-five Lee Enfield carbines, and between 2000 and 3000 rounds of ammunition, some half-dozen .455 Webley revolvers with a supply of ammunition for these, and sundry rugs, belts, pouches, coats and suchlike items of equipment, the prisoners were all collected in a close body near the crossroads, under the one remaining police officer, surrounded on three sides by files of Volunteers. Here they were addressed by Ashe from the top of the roadside

bank north west of the C.R. Ashe's speech was short and to the point. We knew, and they knew, that there was nothing we could do with such a number of prisoners (about 75 not counting casualties), but, nevertheless, Ashe managed to be impressive and convey a hint of magnanimous forbearance in dismissing them to their homes with the warning that should any of them again be found in arms against the Republic they would be shot out of hand. While all this was going on, the wounded were being attended to by Dr. Hayes, assisted by Miss Adrian and, soon, other medical help was arriving to take over our responsibilities in this respect, as we began our move back to our camp at Borranstown which we reached a little before dusk.

While the dressing of the wounded and collecting of arms was in progress, I had taken a number of photographs of the general scene which, though the sun was setting should have been reasonably good pictures - what a pity the film did not survive, as I presume it did not, or the pictures would have been heard of ere now!

Back in camp there was much to do before we could enjoy a well-earned rest for the night. Having eaten nothing since breakfast we were mighty hungry now and, as all had eventually left the camp, there was no one there to cook a meal until we had all returned. Then again, the night guard on the camp was very important because we anticipated some immediate reaction of the enemy to our victory of that day. This duty devolved upon me on this occasion, and I remember how hard it was to keep awake and keep the sentries awake, as we were all so tired; but in the early part of the night a number of men came into camp, most of whom were Volunteers who had not answered the mobilisation call on Easter Monday, but now felt that their place was with us. A few others there were who had not been Volunteers previously, but who felt the stirring of the spirit now that war demanded a definite allegiance of them; some of these proved their worth in the subsequent years.

Jim Lawless, using some of his men and a few of the newcomers, relieved me and my section sometime in the small hours of the morning, so we were enabled to get some sleep at any rate. From what I saw of the camp that night I would say that it was remarkably quiet. There was, of course, a certain amount of chattering talk, with occasionally a loud laugh at the narration of some funny incident of the day, but, on the whole, men spoke quietly in small groups and, once fed, soon sought out a place to sleep.

Today had been our baptism of fire; five and a half hours of extreme nervous tension during which we had not eaten, and during which there was a fair amount of physical exertion, notwithstanding the static character of the fight. Now had come the reaction when body and mind needed rest. One could not bother to think very much except in a mechanical sort of way, and then only of the practical things that had to be done at the moment. Sleep tended to overcome tired bodies the moment they sat down anywhere. I recollect that in my own case I at one time dozed off standing on my feet on the road above the camp just before my relief came along.

It was not, therefore, until the following day that we could begin to review what had happened at Ashbourne, and to discuss some of the details between ourselves. It was only then that the full implications of the fight and our decisive victory began to take shape in our minds. We had come through the test of battle victoriously, and victoriously against a better armed and well-trained force of twice our number. This was something to be proud of, and something to live up to from henceforth. Our morale rose by leaps and bounds; never again would we be overawed by enemy forces; we had seen their feet of clay, and we had proved to ourselves that we were capable of upholding the fighting tradition of Fingal in our day.

any latent sense of inferiority was dissipated by this new conceit in our power over the enemy, and there is no doubt that had we been called upon for further action, this would have been undertaken with confidence and a highly aggressive spirit that was worth a reinforcement of three times our numbers.

Looking back on such conditions with the wisdom of after-knowledge, one tends to be cynically contemptuous, or at least patronizingly tolerant, of the boastful conceit of youth. But it is impossible to set old heads on young shoulders, and very doubtful if it would be desirable if 'twere possible. Wise and cautious planning can be no match in the long run for sincere enthusiasm, and the confident faith of youth in its own capacity.

CHAPTER VI.Pages 119 to 147.

The Spirit of the Rising - We move camp to Newbarn - We prepare for attack on our camp by enemy cavalry - An enemy emissary brings an astounding message from Pearse - From the heights of victory we plumb the depths of despair - Mulcahy visits Pearse in his cell at Arbour Hill Barracks to have the surrender order confirmed by him - Frank Lawless offers us a promise of future victory - Voluntary prisoners without a guard - Souvenirs - Prisoners under escort - Richmond Barracks - I become a casualty - The leader of the Rising - We pass through the ashes of a dead city - Aboard ship - Knutsford.

CHAPTER VI.

In recent years people have now and then remarked upon the very extraordinary thing it was, that a mere handful of ill-armed men, not much over one thousand in Dublin city and county, should challenge the might of a great Empire without the slightest hope of success, and with every prospect of severe punitive action by the enemy. No one could then see the course of subsequent events and, undoubtedly, the rising had not the support of one-twentieth of the people of Ireland when it began. These people are, however, looking at the situation in retrospect and are out of the atmosphere I have tried to picture in the foregoing pages.

To those who lived through these years there came inevitably the gradual education of realities and a certain disillusion of the romanticism of youth, but one could never forget the marvellous power, demonstrated through the earlier years, of pure unqualified idealism. Men like Pearse, McDonagh, McDermott and the others, were men of a high intellectual order, and I believe there was not a selfish thought among them. Speaking to P.E. Pearse one got a feeling of addressing a being who paid short visits to the earth, but had his normal habitation elsewhere. This might be deduced from his writings, but he actually conveyed that impression without words. After listening to him, addressing a meeting for example, one could have no doubt of the clarity and strength of his purposes, or the nobility of his soul.

Sean McDermott, Thomas McDonagh, Tom Clarke, Willie Pearse I had also known and spoken to on odd occasions, as also Michael O'Hanrahan, Con Colbert, Sean Heuston and others of the executed leaders. All had their own personal peculiarities and characteristics; but all, without exception, were governed by a simple honest adherence to the pure ideal of National Freedom. In not one of them was there a hint of mean

thought or ulterior motive, but on the contrary, it was abundantly evident that the normal self-interest or concern in personal affairs was placed in a subordinate position in relation to the pursuit of the ideal. I have referred by name to some of the national leaders and, of course, there were others equally sincere, equally devoted to the cause of national freedom, and below them, the lesser leaders and the rank and file who strove to emulate the shining example and follow the precept of those whose direction of the national Cause had to them the appearance of Divine inspiration.

This was the spirit that mocked at practical difficulties and set aside considerations of expediency; going down in the quicklime grave at Arbour Hill but to burst forth throughout the land a short time later with an added vigour which the ancient enemy could no longer ignore or resist effectively.

There are those, I know, that will consider this picture of a band of pure-souled patriots as overdrawn or exaggerated; looking at the evidence of materialism about them today, but the fact is that those who espoused the Irish national cause in the years before 1922, and took active part in the revolt against foreign rule, did so without promise of the success that was eventually achieved, and certainly could have advanced their personal affairs with much more assurance by co-operating with the enemy.

Now that the fleshpots are ours to control, perhaps contact with them has been a corrupting influence; or it may be that as we no longer have a yardstick to gauge the motives of our leaders we are therefore unduly suspicious of them.

To return, however, to the sequence of events.

Saturday morning we broke camp after breakfast and moved rapidly towards Kilsallaghan, near which a new camp site had

been selected in another unoccupied farmhouse at NewBarn. As my section was on this day doing its turn of camp fatigue duty, my chief concern was, therefore, the cooking of the midday meal at the new camp site, for which a sheep had been killed. I was not unfamiliar with the requirements of rough cooking, through my boy scout and Volunteer camp days, so the makings of a stew were soon assembled and a few large stable buckets, which served as our cauldrons, suspended over a wood fire. Possibly my timing of the cooking period was at fault, because I have a very distinct remembrance of all the mutton bones coming clean away from the flesh in the boiling. That it was a success, nevertheless, was, I think, proved by the fact that there were no complaints and, on the contrary, the two or three of us who were doing the cooking eventually found ourselves left without any dinner, as it had all been eaten. The situation was saved at that point, however, by the appearance of a girl who lived nearby (Miss Hickey, I think) carrying a bucket full of fresh eggs which she contributed to our commissariat, and this heaven-sent gift enabled me, accidentally, to try my hand at a few rough and ready omelettes.

The accident part of it was that I originally intended merely to fry a couple of dozen eggs, but as they got all mashed up and mixed together in breaking them on to the pan, I then decided to break and mix the next lot deliberately, frying it as a sort of pancake. We were as happy as a lot of schoolboys over that meal. Back of our minds was a swelling pride in the events of yesterday, and the situation of our new camp was somehow brighter and seemed more homely despite the fact that we had only a few small outhouses to sleep in. There was an abandoned dwellinghouse, but for some reason we did not seem to want to use this, perhaps because it was damp and bare, and the outhouses, with straw on the floors, had more atmosphere of being lived in. That they were still in active occupation

of one form of life we discovered that night when the fleas began their nocturnal repast on our unprotected bodies. Our settling down to sleep was, therefore, punctuated by scratching and turning and with muttered imprecations on the whole genus of the flea and our special persecutors in particular. That seems very funny to look back upon, especially Willie Dempsey's explosions of wrath on "those bloody bastards of flays", but it wasn't at all funny at the time when the same B.B.s. were successfully defeating our efforts to sleep, and there was little or nothing we could do about it, but hope that their appetites would soon be satisfied.

That evening Miss Adrian had come into camp with some dispatches, from whom, I did not learn, and I gathered that we had been informed that a cavalry force of the 5th Lancers was on its way to attack our column. It was after dark when we got this information, so we considered it unlikely that any attack would take place before daybreak. Nevertheless, the night guards were doubled and were doubly armed as well. We had now a variety as well as a more than adequate supply of arms, and men were torn between loyalty to the original weapons that had seen them through the fight at Ashbourne, and the handy and efficient police carbines of which we had so many.

Another consideration which weighed heavily was the advantage of a shotgun in night fighting where effective targets could only be discerned at a distance well within shotgun range. I saw the new guards going out to take up their positions surrounding the camp, and we who were about to undertake the struggle for slumber were somewhat amused though appreciative of the way they had solved the armament problem. Every man had a rifle or police carbine with a plentiful supply of ammunition and, in addition, carried a shotgun with a supply of buckshot cartridges therefor. Most of these men also carried a revolver of one kind or another, so that altogether a very hot reception was in store for any enemy who might try to take the camp

unawares that night. Naturally, everyone was keyed up in anticipation of attack, so it was no wonder that there was a false alarm during the night, one man challenging an imaginary enemy and getting no reply, fired, whereon two or three others followed suit. The mistake was at once discovered however, but not before the remainder of us had buckled on our equipment and were standing by for action. We had not actually gone to sleep at the time.

Next morning, Sunday 30th April, most of us were still asleep when a stir in camp brought us all out, wondering if the expected enemy was at hand. We had gone over in our minds the pros and cons of an attack on our position by mounted troops, and were confident of our ability to deal with the situation. The story of the futile dash of cavalry through O'Connell St. on Easter Monday, which had reached us, proved to our minds the ineffectiveness of cavalry against defended buildings, and we felt that they would be very little better in the countryside, where concealed riflemen could pick off the mounted soldier long before the latter could get to grips with his opponent. Of course, we had also considered attack by dismounted troops, but our morale was high and we felt that we were more than a match for anything less than four to six times our numbers. We were, therefore, in no sense fearful of the expected attack, but rather anxious to prove ourselves against the newer foe and hopeful that the weight of numbers would not be greater than we could deal with as effectively as in our first battle.

As we hastily prepared for action, questions unanswered ran from mouth to mouth - who had given the alarm? - or had there been an alarm? Where were Ashe and Mulcahy? Had anybody heard anything? From which side did danger threaten? All this occupied only a few minutes, but seemed ages until someone accosted Mike McAllister coming in from the road and he evidently had got hold of some kind of a rumour. He was quickly surrounded by eager listeners to whom he told the story that news had come in that

the enemy forces in Dublin city had surrendered. He could give no details, of course, and while we exulted for a moment we felt that this was too good to be true.

I walked quickly up the avenue towards the Kilsallaghan road to locate someone who could inform me of the situation, and about halfway up I found Ashe, Mulcahy, Doctor Hayes, and my father, together with the R.I.C. Sergeant from Swords - Sergeant O'Reilly - and another in civilian dress, whom I afterwards learned was a head constable or an inspector from Balbriggan. Ashe had a document in his hand and they were evidently examining and discussing this. I had a presentiment of bad news, no doubt from their appearance, so I was therefore prepared to some extent for the shock of Pearse's Order which was shown to me, ordering us to lay down our arms and submit to enemy terms.

Seemingly what had happened up to then was that a motor car approaching Fieldstown crossroads from the Swords direction was held up by our outposts, and its occupants, Sergeant O'Reilly, who was in uniform, and the others (the head constable and the driver) held under arrest until my father, coming on the scene immediately, heard their statement of their mission and escorted them towards the camp, while a runner was sent to acquaint Ashe of the occurrence. It was probably the statement of the messenger, who picked up the story the wrong way round that gave rise to Mick McAllister's rumour. Pearse's signature was all too familiar, and we really had very little doubt of the authenticity of the document, but somehow this seemed all wrong, and it was felt, or rather hoped, that this might be some ingenious trick of the enemy. We could not accustom ourselves all at once to the idea that we who were so far victorious in our fight should surrender even before we were attacked.

We realised, to some extent at any rate, the plight of the Dublin city Volunteers, surrounded as they were in burning blocks of buildings, but had vaguely hoped that the rest of the country would sooner or later enter the struggle, and so relieve the pressure of the enemy forces on Dublin.

This seemed to be the complete crashing of all our hopes; the shaming of all our boasted valour, and, with only a bare seven days' fighting to the credit of our organisation, it was unbelievable; and yet we felt it was true. We needed time to think, to consider the situation in all its aspects, and the various implications of the unconditional surrender ordered by Pearse. Doubt of the genuineness of the document was, therefore, expressed to the police emissaries who, after some further talk, agreed to take Mulcahy to Dublin to interview Pearse at Arbour Hill and have the order confirmed by him, Sergeant O'Reilly to remain with us as a hostage pending Mulcahy's return.

I did not actually witness Mulcahy's departure in the police car, and it was only in recent years I learned the reason for something that was a surprise to us on the identification parade the following day at Richmond Barracks. For some reason or other, Mulcahy took off his Volunteer tunic and donned a civilian coat for his journey to Arbour Hill

Detention Prison, where he was brought to Pearse in his cell, and had the surrender order confirmed by him. Subsequently, Mulcahy appeared with the rest of us at an identification parade in his uniform and the police did not identify him as the same man who had gone to Arbour Hill and classed him, therefore, for internment as one of the rank and file. Mulcahy's absence from the camp was not more than perhaps an hour and a half, but it seemed like several hours, during which everyone talked anxiously one to the other as they tried to grasp the realities of the situation. Gradually a spirit

of utter dejection settled over the camp and men spoke hardly at all.

It was at this time that a group of six or eight of us were standing in doleful silence, with an occasional outburst, expressive of the sense of futility we felt. My father came along from where he had left Ashe and Dr. Hayes on the avenue. He saw, apparently, that we were in need of some encouragement to raise us from our mood of despair. In after years I remembered his words of that moment, and wondered if he really saw as clearly into the future as the words and his manner implied - they were prophetic. He said: "Keep up your hearts. This fight will show Irishmen what can be done and has amply served its purpose. They may imprison us and, possibly, shoot some of us, but we have raised the flag, and it will not be long until all Ireland will glorify our deed and follow in our footsteps to the final achievement of Freedom".

These may not have been his exact words, but it conveys the general sense of his exhortation. We did not, of course, accept what he said at the time as anything more than wishful thinking, but somehow it did set some of us thinking on new lines and trying to cast our minds forward into a more helpful view of the future.

Perhaps some of us still preserved a kind of vague hope that Mulcahy's return would throw some new and encouraging light on the doleful situation, but we feared the worst and, by the time he did return, the camp had settled down into a dull apathy that covered, if it did not conceal, the tortured thoughts of its occupants. These thoughts were less concerned with our personal and material wellbeing than what we imagined to be the shame of our defeat. I remember someone asking me what I thought they, meaning the enemy, would do with us, and we discussed the probabilities of this in a detached sort of way,

remembering the long history in Ireland of savage punitive action by the same enemy in all similar circumstances of the past. We were naturally apprehensive of our fate and particularly the fate of our leaders, but I think I can truthfully say we were less concerned about this than about the apparent ruin of all our hopes and dreams of a free nation.

Walking aimlessly up the avenue with such thoughts running in a never ending circle through my head, I saw Sergeant O'Reilly sitting by himself on the bank while his guard stood dejectedly by. What did he think about it? He did not look much like a victorious enemy as he gazed sadly about him. I remembered that he also looked something like he did now when we raided and wrecked his barracks in Swords on the previous Wednesday. That Wednesday seemed such a long time ago; only four days, it is true, but so much had happened in those four days during which we had tasted the sweets of victory, and now we had reached the bitterness of despair. It occurred to me at the time that Sergeant O'Reilly might have been somewhat apprehensive of his own fate, held by us as a hostage for Mulcahy's return, and anything might happen to prevent Mulcahy's return. Perhaps I did him less than justice in this, however. O'Reilly was one of those, I think, who, finding himself at middle age in the service of the enemy now at war with his countrymen, was seriously disturbed by his latent sympathy with their efforts, but yet felt bound by his contract of service as well as his dependence on it for the welfare of his family.

Mulcahy's return to camp dispelled any vague hopes we may have entertained. We were told that the Volunteers in Dublin city had already surrendered unconditionally, and that the enemy authorities had now been informed that we also were ready to obey the order of our commander-in-chief to lay down our arms and await their orders. We sat and lay dejectedly about the farmyard, while against the low wall in front of the dwelling-

house were stacked the arms we had captured, as well as those we had struggled so hard to acquire in the years previous. Belts, pouches, bandoliers, ammunition, revolvers, and all such items were strown in one indiscriminate heap.

Here we waited all day for an enemy escort to come and collect us; while around us was the freedom of the green countryside. This thought must have struck many of the men, and many found it hard to understand the incongruity of it. So a few, including all those who joined after Ashbourne, left for their homes. Jimmie Kelly, Mick Fleming and I discussed this matter and could see no reason why we should not save some of our arms and make for the Wicklow Hills where Mick promised that he could find food and shelter for us among the people of his native county. So we packed a couple of revolvers each, with ammunition, and a few odds and ends, and were walking towards the gate of the farmyard wheeling our bicycles, when my father met us. "Where are you fellows off to?" he said. We told him our idea, and he listened for awhile then he put another view of the case. He opened by saying that of course we could do as we pleased, but should remember that we had as a body given an implied bond in our formal surrender, and that if we hoped to be treated by the enemy as honourable foes, we must honour our word by, initially at any rate, placing ourselves at their disposal. "Besides," he added, "the smaller the number that remain here, the harder it will be for them". He also referred to the hardships it would entail on the people at home consequent on the inevitable searching for the missing men.

We went back without a word and threw down our revolvers and our bicycles, lying down on a grass patch at the side of the stable where we gazed silently on the scene, until I saw a man standing beside the heap of ammunition, beginning to pick it up and throw the single rounds far away from him

across the field. Another joined him and I watched them take bandoliers and pouches and empty them into a pond that was on the east side of the house. It was a reaction equivalent to the old custom of breaking the sword before handing it over, and I realised then that the sight of that stack of arms was urging me to similar activity.

Just then, however, an R.I.C. Head Constable and a sergeant in plain clothes were escorted into the yard by Jim Lawless, I think, where they began to note down our names and addresses and to make notes in a book of the arms etc. strewn about, while they tried nervously to talk pleasantly to those around. Men who were passing aimlessly back and forward and gazing lovingly at the rifles took one up now and then, to have the last feel of it as it were, which seemed to make the policemen more nervous, though they did not say anything or try to forbid the handling of the arms, but they flitted backwards and forwards sometimes going outside the yard and then returning to carry on with their listing of material and noting of names.

I suddenly got the idea to hide one of the police carbines. Perhaps it would escape search or be found by someone who would treasure it as a souvenir. While the policemen's backs were turned - they were some little distance away - I picked up one of the carbines which had a scabbarded bayonet fixed on it and took it into a stable where I found an old cement bag in which I wrapped it, and walked off across the field east of the house. In this open country it seemed impossible to find any safe place to hide it, and certainly no place where it could be stowed safe from the weather. I had walked about half way across the field along the ditch and had given up as hopeless the task of finding a large enough rabbit hole or the like, when a lone thorn bush, the lower branches of which were close to the ground, caught my eye. The long grass grew up through the branches of this bush, so into the grass

under the bush I poked my sack-covered rifle and bayonet, with little hope that I should ever see it again; but it was still there when I returned from Frongoch Internment Camp the following Christmas, when I succeeded in recovering it and making it again serviceable. This weapon is now in the National Museum in Dublin.

Searching my knapsack for something or other, I then thought of filling this with my treasured belongings and also hiding it somewhere. Into it went, amongst other things, my camera with the film still in it of the pictures I had taken at Ashbourne, my Sam Brown belt, pouches and revolver, and a large watch which I had acquired from one of the police cars at Ashbourne, and my field glasses. This bundle would have to have some protection from damp apart from the heavy canvas web of the knapsack, so I selected the top of the garden wall which had a heavy growth of ivy at one place that quite concealed it. That was the last I ever saw of that, however.

While in Knutsford Prison some month or so later, I contrived to send home a message of where these things were, but they failed to find them, and when I came home myself I went to Newbarn next day and found the rifle and bayonet, but there was no trace of the knapsack, nor have I ever heard to this day of anyone that did find it, though I inquired, for the sake of the pictures in the camera. Lately, however, I recognised my field glasses in the National Museum, shown as having been presented to that Institution by F. Coleman of Swords and described as belonging to a Volunteer and found after the battle of Ashbourne.

I don't think it occurred to anyone to bother about food that day. Breakfast had been in course of preparation when the surrender order first reached us, and that meal was eaten in a mechanical sort of way. There was no dinner cooked,

however, perhaps because we expected the escort at any moment during the day; but I think it was really an indication of the depth of our feelings that nobody troubled about getting any sort of a meal all day long.

The escort arrived about 5.50 p.m. - a squadron of the 5th Lancers. Presumably this was the same cavalry unit whose attack we had awaited the night before, and now came to collect the bag without a fight. They were a rather truculent swaggering lot, and I looked at them with some interest, remembering that, as far as they were concerned, the boot might well have been on the other foot.

We were not intimidated either by their voluble oaths or their pennanted lances, but examined their horses and horsemanship with the critical eyes of countrymen to whom such things were familiar. I think the feeling was general amongst us that these fellows would have been sitting ducks to us had they ventured to attack our camp. I heard more than one cheery remark made to the escorting troops: "Pity you delayed so long in getting here", which was not in the least understood by the soldiers. We were lined up on the road in two ranks wheeling our bicycles and, after numbering off and turning into file, we moved off at a brisk pace with the file of Lancers on each side and the remainder bringing up the rear.

I shall always remember that five miles march to Swords, if only for one thing. The soldier on my right was a rather beefy red-faced sergeant, and his indignation at our preposterous attack on the Empire knew no bounds. Almost the whole way along he cursed us fervently and went into all the gory details of what he would like to do to us if he had his way. "Here I am" said he, "having come safely through two blankety years in the blankety trenches in France, come here for a blankety rest, and then run the chance of getting a blankety bullet from a lot of

blank-blank-blanks like you", and so on, ad nauseam.

I could understand how he felt even then. We could not expect such fellows to understand our views much less to appreciate them, and to his simple mind we were just a lot of damned rebels who should be butchered on the spot. This fellow was probably a good soldier, just then suffering the reaction of a week of the jitters. The ingrained habit of disciplinary training restrained him from venting his feelings in violent action, but the lack of training in mental discipline showed itself in his rather boring vituperation.

As the marching column swung around the corner at Killosoy I glanced to the left and, by habit, saluted the graveyard which overlooks the road. In the front of it stands the monument which marks our family grave and I wondered casually if my grandfather and grandmother, whose bodies lay there, could see this cortege pass and recognise in its ranks two of their sons and a grandson. They, at least, would know that we had tried even if we had failed to achieve.

For a moment, as we passed the gate of Saucerstown Lane, I felt something like a homesickness come over me. In the quick glance I had through the gate as I passed, I thought I caught sight of female figures just around the bend of the lane and peering furtively towards us. My sisters, Kathleen and Eileen, with Dot Fleming, no doubt; they had acted as a message centre for us during the week, and had had the melancholy task of arranging for the burial of poor Jack Crennigan. When would I see them and my home again, if ever, I wondered; but my tormentor riding along beside me soon took my mind off such thoughts. There was not a living soul to be seen along the way, and when we arrived in Swords it was dusk, and the town was equally deserted except for some activity about the police barracks.

Two or three motor lorries with open flat bodies, that is, without sides, were drawn up in front of the barracks and a lot of soldiers and police were standing or moving around while an officer was fussily giving orders.

"Stack your bicycles" we were told, and we stacked them at the side of the street, of which a short few days previously we had been in victorious possession. The barracks still bore the marks of our visit.

With little delay we were mounted on the lorries and instructed how to sit so that the maximum load could be carried. We were seated on the floor in lines facing backwards, each man sitting between the legs of the man in front of him and the foremost of each line propping himself by his hands on the floor behind him; two soldiers with fixed bayonets stood with their backs to the driver's cab, so that we could not use this to lie back against.

As I was among the first of those to mount our lorry, I found myself placed in the front of the near side which turned out later to be rather unfortunate for me; but long before we reached Dublin I found the strain of such a cramped and unsupported position intolerable, and sought to ease it by hanging my right leg over the side of the lorry. A lorry load of troops preceded the convoy and another brought up the rear and so we jogged along to what seemed like a dead city. Not a light was to be seen, nor a living soul except when a sentry held us up now and then at the various posts that the British troops had established through the city. Our route did not lie through the centre of the city or anywhere near where the fighting had been, but the sense of desolation was over it all. It was then dark and we had no idea of where we were being taken to, when we were halted for a few moments at St. John's Road, while the escort negotiated free passage for the convoy with the guard on the military stores depot there. Soon, however,

we found ourselves turning into the gate of Richmond Barracks at Inchicore, which apparently was our destination. Those in the leading escort truck conducted a parley with the guard, while the other lorries were halted close up behind them, and after a few minutes, the gates were opened and the convoy started to wheel through the massive ~~concrete~~^{granite} gateway.

. This was where the crowning misfortune of my position on the lorry was brought home to me with a shock; a very considerable shock, in fact, for the driver, misjudging the wheel in through the gateway, struck the nearside pillar with the forward corner of the body of the lorry. It will be remembered that it was on this corner of the lorry I was sitting with my back in the direction of travel, and my right leg dangled over the side while my arms supported my body from behind. My right hand, grasping the corner of the lorry, was therefore caught between it and the gate pier, the shock causing me to draw up my right leg instinctively. The lorry was only moving slowly, of course, and it stopped at once, backed out, and again essayed the entrance, this time successfully, and again we were halted opposite the guardroom, while a lot of loud talk and angry oaths betokened an attempt to fix blame on the spot for any damage that might have been occasioned to the gate pier or the lorry. Meanwhile, I was trying to inspect my own damage, but could not see very well in the dark. I had no pain yet, and a pair of leather gauntlet gloves I was wearing made it difficult to see the extent of the damage to my hand in the wan light of the guardroom door about twenty yards away. Holding it up between my eyes and the light, I could see that the small finger was mashed and useless and blood began to flow down my arm. My knee hurt a little and although there was a tear in the outside of the knee of my breeches, I could see that my leg seemed to work all right still.

Mick Fleming, who was sitting between my legs, tried to

examine my hand, and called Bartle Weston's attention to it. Both of them now called the attention of the soldier standing guard beside us on the lorry to the fact that I had lost a finger in the accident, but the latter was quite unperturbed by the fact, and remarked sourly that it was a pity I had not lost my blanket head. Obviously he did not propose to do anything about it, so we called out to an officer who was seen going from the direction of the guardroom and he came over to inquire what the matter was. Seemingly he was the Barrack Orderly Officer of the day, and, having seen for himself that I was in need of medical attention, he ordered me to get down from the lorry and accompany him to the guardroom. Going up the flight of broad steps leading to the guardroom, I felt a little dizzy and before I reached the top of the steps, passed out. Someone must have caught me as I fell, and I recovered almost at once to find myself being carried through the guardroom door where I was allowed to sit on a form, while a messenger was sent to find a doctor.

I remember that when I got off the lorry Dr. Hayes called out that he was a medical doctor, and offered to attend to my injury, but this would not be permitted. After a little while, as I had then recovered somewhat, I was brought by two soldiers down the block to a barrack room that seemingly acted as a medical dressing station. Here a cheery medical orderly received me and my escort and proceeded to air his grievances to his comrades. "Nice sort of a kip to be stuck in; sweet Fanny Adams in the place (he pronounced it "plice"), and when you want a doctor for a case like this here (indicating me) you may go and search the blanket town for one".

There did not seem to be much in it indeed; a couple of tables and forms and a shelf with about a dozen bottles made up practically the entire inventory of the contents of the room besides a basin and towel. The only light in the place was a

candle stuck on a table, but the orderly was struggling, as he talked, with an oil lamp which he eventually got to work just as the doctor arrived. My hand had now begun to pain me and, examining it in the comparative brilliance of the oil lamp, I saw that the small finger was in rather a mess, but that the remainder of the hand seemed to have escaped. The glove was still on it and could not be removed without tearing pieces of flesh with it and this was the beginning of the operation. The doctor was an oldish man and seemed to be a local civilian practitioner. He had little or no instruments with him and there was very little to be got in the barracks in that line, but he set to work with a penknife and a scissors to get the glove off at any rate, and, when eventually this was done, the orderly had succeeded in unearthing an ancient scalpel. This, however, failed to cut through the sinews of the broken finger and recourse was had to an oil stone to improve the edge which brought the desired result, and the orderly and the doctor congratulated each other on having the worst of the job finished now. There was some talk of the desirability of stitching up the wound, and I listened in a disinterested sort of way to the doctor explaining the details to the orderly. He could do no more with the facilities at his disposal, so it would have to do as it was, and he would have a look at me in the morning. It was bandaged up and I was fitted with a triangular bandage as a sling and given a sleeping draught which I saw I would need, as the throbbing pain was now intense. My escort now came forward with a stretcher upon which I was borne across the barrack square to the accompaniment of their jocular remarks to each other and to me.

I had suffered another loss on that stretcher journey across the square which, trivial though it was, saddened me when I discovered it. The khaki slouch hat I was wearing at the time fell to the ground and was picked up and carried by one of my

escort who returned it to me when we reached the barrack room which was to be our prison for the moment. Having thanked him for his care, I discovered when he had left that the silver F.F. badge which fastened it up at the side was missing, having been appropriated as a souvenir by my solicitous guard.

By a peculiar chance, I was given one of these badges by a friend of mine in Mitchelstown, Co. Cork, in 1938. He said it was given to him by a lady who had been nursing the British wounded in France in 1917-18. One of these had given her the badge which, he told her, he had taken from one of the 'rebels' in Dublin in 1916. It would certainly be a strange coincidence if this badge were the one taken from me at Richmond Barracks. But stranger things have happened!

The barrack room in which we were confined was just an ordinary barrack room on the ground floor, about the middle of the east block. The two windows facing west looked out on the barrack square, and on the veranda outside sentries paced up and down, warning us now and then to keep away from the windows.

There were other prisoners from the various city garrisons similarly housed in adjoining barrack rooms, but all the Fingal contingent, as far as I can remember, were placed in one room which was therefore very overcrowded. There were no beds or bedding; nothing except a few blankets, which scarcely allowed one each to the prisoners, but I expect that the sudden demand was more than the Barrack Quartermaster could supply, and other barracks would hardly help him out under the circumstances. A large iron tub in one corner of the room provided the only latrine facilities available to the occupants.

Such was our habitation for the next few days while we tried to adjust our mental focus to the situation and adapt our attitude to meet it. As I left the dressing station I had heard a lot of what was then, to me, unintelligible talk between

the doctor, the medical orderly and my guards, but, being in pain at the time, I did not even try to work out what it might mean:

"Where are you putting him?" (from the doctor)

"In with the blokes". (this from one of the guard).

I could understand that much, but then - from the orderly:

"Yer not putting the poor bastard on the floor?"

"Well, wot can we do about it?"

"How about a few biscuits?"

"Oh, we'll see wot we can scrounge".

"Biscuits", I afterwards discovered, were square mattress sections, three comprising a bed, and were so made for convenience in storage. They were so named by the troops because of their similar appearance to the hard tack, iron ration biscuit. So three "biscuits" on the floor in a corner of the crowded room was my bed, and I noted, before the drug began to take effect, how solicitous for my comfort was everyone in the room. I was a little self-conscious of the fact that they were all lying or sitting on the hard floor, while I enjoyed the comparative comfort of the "biscuits". By morning, however, numbers of them had more or less unconsciously moved nearer to where I lay, if only to use the edge of the biscuits as a pillow.

What a strange awakening that next morning, Monday 1st May, with promise of bright sunny weather which we could only enjoy through the window pane. Hunger, which we were to know in more acute degree later, gnawed at stomachs which had been too shocked for food on the previous day, and the strange and strident accents of the soldiers outside, made us more conscious of the loss of our personal liberty than did the bolted door and confined space of the room. The men were talking in groups about the room, some trying to examine the

topography of the barrack square outside through the windows, though at the moment there was little to be seen there, and I, very conscious of my hunger, lay gazing at the ceiling. The iron kit rack on the wall above my head caught my attention, and an odd brown projection on one of the bars intriguing my curiosity, I asked Mick Fleming to hand it down to me. This turned out to be a hard tack biscuit, the first we had ever seen, though we had heard of them, and I could scarcely wait while everyone examined it to try it as a means of satisfying the keen hunger I felt. It had to be broken, of course, by hammering on the heel of a boot and then everyone nearby tried a bit.

Very soon our breakfast arrived and then we realised that these same hard biscuits were to be our staple food for some time to come. About two or three of these biscuits each, with a bucket of alleged tea, constituted the breakfast for the room, and this was repeated for the evening meal; while, for dinner, a small (one pound size) of bully beef between each four was added to the tea and biscuits. As the morning wore on, a sign of recovering spirits was shown by Paddy Brogan - I think it was - singing a song quietly in a corner where half a dozen of them were sitting together. This departure received general approval, and others including Ashe were called on to contribute to the impromptu concert. Ashe had a nice singing voice, and I remember well the two songs he sang on that occasion. The first was a song in Gaelic called, in English, "Kilmurry", and the other was a popular favourite of his called "The Colleen by the Lee", the first verse of which went as follows:

"There are Colleens on the mountainside,
 And colleens on the plain,
 With winning smile to break your heart
 And coaxing eyes to chain;
 But place them all together,
 And there's only one for me;
 It is my little Irish colleen
 In her cottage by the Lee".

Perhaps we felt that it was unworthy of our tradition to exhibit any sign of defeat in our bearing before the enemy soldiers, and

perhaps we were beginning to feel the first consciousness of the necessity of continuing the moral fight from where the appeal to arms had brought us. This did become a very fixed purpose among the prisoners later on.

Sometime about the middle of that day we saw a tall, spectacled Volunteer officer in uniform, wearing field top boots and a slouch hat, and having a bandage around his neck, being marched under escort to the dressing station across the square which had been my introduction to the barracks on the previous night. This officer was identified by some of those in the room who knew him as Joe Flunkett, one of the signatories of the Republican Proclamation.

Later on that day, we were all marched across to the gymnasium where we were lined up against the wall on the right-hand side. Over against the wall on the left-hand side were about twenty prisoners, amongst whom I recognised Sean McDermott, Eamon Ceannt, Sean Heuston, Willie Pearse, Michael O'Hanrahan, Con Colbert, Tom Clarke, John McBride and Thomas McDonagh.

Michael O'Hanrahan, McDermott and one or two others were sitting on the floor with their backs to the wall, and the others leaned against the wall, except Ceannt, who strode up and down in front of them with arms folded, looking very much like a caged lion. Sean McDermott and Colbert smiled and nodded cheerily across to each one of us in turn, but it was clear to us then, that these men across the room had been selected from the general body of prisoners, and that the purpose of our entry to this building was for similar selection. This estimate was confirmed within a few minutes when a military officer conducted two or three R.I.C. sergeants towards us, who proceeded to walk slowly up and down in front of us, carefully scrutinising each one from head to foot. Then there was a consultation between them and the military officers present, and Tom Ashe, Dr. Hayes, Frank Lawless and Jim Lawless were picked out and ordered across the

room to join the select band on the other side, while the rest of us were marched back to our original barrack room.

I think it was while we were on our way back from the gym, marching in file across a small square or compound, that we saw P.H. Fearse accompanied by a guard of two or three soldiers walking around in a circle as if on exercise. He was in his uniform, wearing slouch hat and a military greatcoat, and looked solemnly at us as we passed by. Feeling that something was called for on the occasion, and as my right hand was in a sling, I made a rather awkward left hand salute to him as he looked towards us. Others apparently did likewise, because a harsh and peremptory order from our escort commander immediately followed - to lock to our front and double ahead.

That evening we spent in many earnest conversations, trying to assess correctly the happenings of the past few days, recounting the many incidents to each other which, up to now, there had been no leisure to discuss, and speculating on the probable fate of our leaders and ourselves. Distant shots had been heard during the night (Sunday) and that morning, some of the guard had told one of those in the room in reply to a question that "some of the bleeding rebels were still fighting in the city". For a moment we felt that we had been too hasty in our surrender. As we considered the matter, however, it was clear that there was no actual fighting going on, though some isolated Volunteer parties might not yet have been contacted regarding the general surrender. That evening, about dusk, the solution to the mystery appeared. A number of prisoners marched into the barracks almost entirely surrounded by a military escort, and the tall figure of Eamon de Valera appeared above them. I think it was one of the guard warning us to keep back from the windows who told us that the new batch of prisoners now standing at the north side of the square was the last of the

'rebel' parties to surrender, and had come from Boland's Mills in Ringsend.

How Mulcahy came to have been left amongst us when Ashe and the others were picked out at the gym. was then a mystery to us, and we had a feeling that though we must now depend entirely on his advice and guidance, we must be careful to make no display of his leadership lest we should draw the attention of the enemy to the omission in his selection of leaders. That night the men found it more difficult to sleep on the hard floor and I made room on my 'biscuit' mattress for as many as could get on to a bit of it. I'm sure there were at least six or seven of us huddled together on that bit of comparative ease and comfort which also served to keep us somewhat warm for the night.

Next day, Tuesday 2nd May, we were beginning to feel the lack of sufficient food and to experience the pangs of a hunger which the small ration we got merely served to intensify, or at least to keep active. But about 4.30 p.m. that evening an unusual bustle of preparation and shouting of orders outside gave us an indication that something was about to happen in which we might be involved. Questions to the guard elicited no information on the matter as, apparently, they were no wiser than ourselves regarding the intentions of higher authorities.

Towards six o'clock, however, or when we had been given our tea ration, it was clear that we were about to leave our present habitation, though for what fate or destination no one seemed to know. A little later we were formed up on the square where we were numbered off and names checked by a list and then a military fatigue party with a quartermaster sergeant began to issue additional rations to carry with us. He was quite decent with the biscuits, allowing an extra one or two here and there, and a small tin of bully beef between each two of us. That we were going quite a journey was evident from

the issue of rations and, either through information received from the soldiers, or intelligent speculation, the rumour went around that we were being placed aboard a ship for some overseas destination. Of course, this led on to more speculation, the most popular being that we were to be used as forced or slave labour units in France, where we would be compelled to make our contribution to the British war effort in expiation of our sins, and ~~and~~ we wondered if this happened would we be able to get to the German lines to continue our fight against the old enemy.

In after years the pro-Germanism of our cause was flaunted to the world by Britain, in justification of the execution of the 1916 leaders, and the savage attempts to curb the Irish will for national freedom in the years which followed. The fact was that we were pro-German, insofar as Germany was Britain's enemy, and we would have been pro-anything else that would oppose the ancient tyrant that held our country in bondage through the centuries. Irishmen in other ages had been pro-Spanish, pro-French and pro-American when these countries were at war with Britain, and so long as Britain maintained a foot within our shores, we would as naturally espouse the cause and accept the aid in ours of any active enemy of Britain.

"Better the devil you know than the devil you don't know" was a catch phrase of the time among those who accepted the British propoganda on the German atrocities, and, indeed, Ireland had had bitter experience of German mercenaries in 1691 and 1798 when they were employed by England to assist in the extirpation of the Irish race. Our simple answer to this was that if a German victory brought the substitution of one tyrant for another, then we would fight the new one just as bitterly and tenaciously until we had won our national freedom.

Dusk was falling as we marched out from the barracks, about 500 prisoners in column of fours with a file of escorting

troops with fixed bayonets on either side of the column. We marched silently along the South Circular Road to Kilmainham, where we turned left and passed under the archway of the Royal Hospital, passing through the grounds of this institution to St. John's Road at Kingsbridge Station. I often wondered since why we took this peculiar route from Kilmainham on to the quays at Kingsbridge, as it is only a few hundred yards from the gates of the Royal Hospital to the western end of St. John's Road. I could only conclude that someone in the Royal Hospital wanted to see the columns of prisoners, though I do not remember anyone in particular watching us there as we passed.

Down the north quays we swung, glad of the opportunity to exercise our cramped muscles, though the eerie silence of the city around us, echoing the march of our tramping feet, gave a queer sense of unreality to the scene. Not a light was visible though it was now almost dark; no sign of any living soul could be glimpsed even at the windows of the houses. It seemed indeed a deserted city. It was only when we got to Bachelors Walk, however, that a sense of tragedy added itself from the appearance of the shell holes in the walls of Kelly's shop, and as we reached the corner of O'Connell St. the scene of desolation that met our gaze there brought home a realisation of the tough fight made by the Volunteers in the city, which necessitated such wholesale destruction to compel their surrender.

The gaunt ruins of the G.P.O. were outlined against the twilight sky, and still smoking heaps of masonry were all that remained of most of the shops and buildings on either side of that once proud thoroughfare, while the street itself was littered with debris. But we could not stand to gaze; the quick glance as we passed was sufficient to imprint an indelible memory. Then on past the shell-holed walls of Liberty Hall and down the North Wall, where we were halted at the British and

Irish Steampacket Company's wharf sheds. Our escort appeared to have been of a different regiment to that which had supplied our guard at Richmond Barracks. These fellows, or most of them, displayed no sympathy with the ordinary human needs of the prisoners but, on the contrary, were brutal in their remarks and comments. Even the officer commanding the escort showed his ill-feeling towards us by refusing to allow us drinking water during the sea trip.

The holds of the cattle boat on which we travelled were pretty crowded and intolerably stuffy, but hatches were fastened down and we had to make the best of it. Guards stood at the narrow companion-ways blocking most of what little air could get in that way, and the final misery was the discovery after a little while that the water in the taps available to us had been turned off at the main supply. A number of us, being exceedingly hungry, had eaten the entire ration of bully beef. The salt of which began now to create intensive thirst, so a clamorous demand for the officer in charge brought this man to us eventually, but gave us little satisfaction to our demand for water. I think the water was, however, turned on about an hour later.

In contrast with this hostile attitude of some of the escorting troops was that of one of them, who sat in our railway carriage with us. There were one or two in each carriage with the prisoners. This fellow shared his cigarettes with us and, while the train was stopped at Crewe or Chester, or some such place, where V.A.D. ladies came running along the platform with tea for the troops, he claimed several cups from them which he passed behind him to the prisoners who would not be given the tea otherwise. We thanked him for his generous impulse, and forgave the others because of him.

We had landed at Holyhead during the night and, packed in a train, we were speeding along through the English countryside when day dawned again. We were still unaware of our eventual destination,

and fruitless speculation regarding it had given place to a kind of apathetic disinterestedness in our fate.

The station signboard "Knutsford" meant nothing to us then. Possibly there were some amongst us who connected the name with that of Oscar Wilde, but to the majority, there was not the vaguest notion of what part of England we were in, except for one clue - a notice board at the station was headed "Midland and Cheshire Railways", so we suspected this was somewhere in Cheshire.

The sun was rising as we formed up on the road outside the station, too early an hour for any curious sightseers, but we viewed ~~it~~ at its best and with appreciation this English Country town which bore on its face the stamp of centuries of assured and undisturbed occupation by its inhabitants. The impression I had was that the rich growth of spring in the hedgerows was as carefully tended as the neat dwellinghouses and trim lawns; the whole conveying a suggestion of smug affluence, where natural growths were only allowed when they conformed to the orthodox and pre-selected pattern. That kind of thing is common in city suburbs everywhere, but it was peculiar to see, what seemed at a casual glance to be, a suburb without a city. Possibly my viewpoint gave a distorted impression because of our unusual position as prisoners, and the fact that we did not pass through the town on our short march to the prison.

I have never since gone back to visit Knutsford, though I had often promised myself that I would. I am, therefore, writing of the impressions gained of it in the peculiar circumstances of my first and only visit thirty three years ago. Thirty three years is a long time across which to cast one's memory, but I have found that memories of youth are much

more lasting than those of later years. There are, inevitably, gaps or slightly hazy spots, and it is very strange indeed where these occur; but the incidents, places, people and things which made a positive impression in boyhood remain as vivid memory when the similar things of a later age have been forgotten.

I have tried as I went along through this story to give some kind of an outline of my thoughts on the relevant matters at the time. Perhaps because of a natural habit of introspection, I can often remember my thoughts at a particular time much more clearly than the physical details of my surroundings, and, in quoting such thoughts therefore, I try to give the atmosphere of the scene as I felt it at the time. It may be considered that this retrospection is merely the fitting of present thoughts on to the events and incidents of the past, but the reader may be assured that I am very conscious of that tendency, and though I may express it in the phraseology of more mature years, the idea so expressed is that of the time

Knutsford Prison is a typical test of this persistent memory of thought. While my memory of Knutsford station and the appearance of the village is clear, as is also what I thought about it at the time, I cannot recall our arrival before the prison gates or our entry to the building, perhaps because we did not know it was to be the end of our journey for the present. The first thing I do recollect about it was the flagged or tiled floors of the wings radiating from a central hall, the iron stairways with their polished steel rails, and the rows of cell doors all numbered in sequence. We had been searched when we arrived and the trivial contents of our pockets taken from us, but my clear memory only begins again after we had been locked away in our solitary cells, and I had then time to think and to arrange in order my mental assessment of the events of the past ten days.

CHAPTER VII.Pages 149 to 170.

The solitude of Knutsford Prison - Hunger as a daily companion - Rambling thoughts - We hear of the executions in Dublin - A Commission of Inquiry from the War Office - Bullying sergeants - Mass in Knutsford Prison - Letters from home - Visitors - The penalty of Gluttony - The medicine man - A welcome change in our conditions - Daily visitors - Plenty of food - Bearded faces are tidied up a little - We have a champion among the guards - We hear of Kitchener's death - Rumours of our removal to an internment camp - Alfie Byrne pays us a visit and confirms the rumour. - The difficulty of kissing a girl across a rope - First steps towards intellectual development - Prison as a melting pot.

CHAPTER VII..

All prisons are built on much the same plan, that is, wings containing tiers of cells, radiating from a central block which contains the administrative offices, kitchens, baths and the like. Knutsford had three tiers of cells; a narrow iron pathway running around the wing in front of the cell doors of the upper two tiers of cells, and communicating with the ground floor by iron stairways at either end. The balustrade along the gangway by the cells and the stairs was topped by a polished steel rail, while across the open space between the gangways of the opposite sides of the wings was stretched wire netting to discourage any ideas of suicide by jumping over the handrails on to the flagged hall below.

Seemingly this prison had up to the time of our arrival been in use as a military detention barracks, and there remained after our arrival a number of soldier prisoners who acted as a fatigue party to bring around our food, keep the handrails polished, and such like odd jobs. Each landing was in charge of a sergeant with a staff-sergeant controlling each wing, and these N.C.os. we found to be mostly of the bullying type. Of course they had been in the habit of dealing with military delinquents, and could not adjust themselves to look upon us as anything different. Indeed, their entire inability to understand us provided us with quite a lot of amusement as time went on. They belonged to different regiments and were detached for duty at the prison; some of them had had war service and some had not; the latter type were always the most objectionable.

The cells measured about 14' x 7' with fairly high ceilings and were lit by a small barred window set high up and glazed with heavy glass. At night, up to 10 o'clock, the light came through a small window at the door end, which admitted the light from an external gas jet, which latter was therefore not under the control of the cell occupant. In some of the

wings there were boarded floors, but in ours - C.2 - the floors of the cells were of yellowish sandstone flags, which made them very cold at night. The heavy iron sheathed door had a glazed peephole covered by a flap on the outside, and through this hole the guards on their hourly rounds took a peep at each prisoner to see, I suppose, that he was still there, and not engaged in any illegal activity. The click of the peephole flap every hour or so became at times very irritating, and, later on, numbers of the prisoners displayed their feelings on the matter by obscuring the glass on the hole.

The cell furniture consisted of the "bed", a wooden stool, a board about two feet square built into the wall in the corner next the door to act as a table, and two corner shelves set in the wall in the corner diagonally opposite the table. These shelves were for the purpose of accommodating the small tin wash basin, a three quart tin water can, dust pan, tin chamber pot and hand sweeping brush and scrubbing brushes. The other items completing the entire contents of the cell were two very thin blankets, a small pot of salt, some brown toilet paper and an official copy of the gospels.

The bed, so-called, consisted of three heavy boards, about one and a quarter inches thick, nailed on to three cross battens with about an inch space between each board. During the day this stood on its edge against the wall, and when bed-time came, which was loudly announced by the guards pounding on the cell doors as they passed along, one merely pulled down the plank couch and, wrapping the blankets around, mummy-like-, dropped down upon it.

Sleep in such conditions was only a comparative relaxing of the active consciousness, as both the cold and the hard boards kept up a persistently active sensation of discomfort that effectively defeated the claims of sustained slumber.

My wounded hand was another difficulty when trying to sleep, as it pained intensely if I tried to lie on one side or the other, and I had, therefore, to lie on my back, resting the hand on my breast.

It was hunger, however, that was the keenest and most constant torture of the many physical torments of this time. We were almost all pretty young then and possessed of the normally voracious appetite of youth, which the prison diet merely served to whet without satisfying. I suppose that if one were allowed to starve completely the pangs of hunger gradually die away, but we were given just enough to keep us in that state of acute hunger in which thoughts of food became an obsession of the mind.

I remember on more than one occasion, when trying to sleep on my wooden pallet and having achieved a fitful doze, I dreamed of a frying pan full of sizzling sausages, and woke to find the saliva running from my mouth on to the hand brush which I used as a pillow. I tried eating the salt which I wrapped in pieces of toilet paper, and drinking water afterwards, but it did not serve the purpose. I next contrived to pluck a pocket-full of grass and odd dandelion leaves during exercise and devoured this at my leisure in the cell. I was able to pluck the grass only because I was allowed, on account of my injured hand, to walk slowly in a centre ring with a few of the older and more inactive prisoners when on the hour's daily exercise in the prison yard. I had observed the odd tufts of grass and weeds growing at the edges of the cement rings upon which we walked and, watching my opportunity when the attention of the sergeant in charge was otherwise engaged, I could make a quick stoop on any succulent green that was near me.

The first day and, in fact, the first meal in the prison made us realise how scanty was to be our fare and gave us a new

sense of economy in relation to food. The two or three very small and rather poor looking potatoes I carefully peeled with my finger nails, but when I had finished the rest of them I then turned and eat the skins. I never bothered to peel the potatoes after that but ate them, skins and all, lest anything should be wasted.

Physical discomfort and disabilities are not, however, the worst features of the life of the solitary prisoner. One may learn pretty quickly under the duress of circumstances to adjust the bodily needs to the enforced conditions of life. The mind also needs something to feed on, and when one is suddenly cut off from intercourse of any kind with one's fellows (prisoners were not allowed to speak to each other) and, as books and writing material were not permitted, the mind soon begins to run in circles. Any kind of mental or even physical occupation would get over this difficulty, but sitting alone in a cell, even with the consciousness of others similarly situated all around, becomes pretty deadly after the first few days.

I read the gospels over and over again and I tried to analyse and dissect their archaic phraseology. Thinking over such things and trying to relate ancient to modern people and conditions did, I suppose, help to develop my mind, as well as help to adjust it to the new conditions of life. We were quite cut off from all communication with our homes and, of course, newspapers did not reach us; so that the only intelligence we had of the outside world was the occasional gloating remark of one or other of the prison staff that "some more Sinn Fein leaders had been executed in Dublin". Sometimes a whispered rumour passed among the prisoners as we lined up for exercise in the morning, but no one really knew what was the truth, or what was going on outside the prison walls.

When, eventually, we did learn the truth about the execution of the leaders, we felt the bitterness of our impotence and regretted our obedience to the order to lay down our arms.

I think it is true to say that a wise and magnanimous British policy adopted on the suppression of the Rising would certainly have killed its effect on the general population of Ireland, and also would have had the effect on the great majority of the prisoners of damping their ardour. Such a policy might not indeed destroy all thoughts of a separate Nationhood, but support for any second attempt would scarcely have been possible in the same generation. The executions, however, of those whom we looked upon as fellow prisoners of war, and whom most of us knew either personally or by repute as high souled intellectuals, showed clearly that the old enemy had learned nothing and forgotten nothing through the experience of the centuries.

Our national creed was confirmed in those few weeks. History was brought up to date in our minds by this modern demonstration of the ruthless methods of the past. Our own rigid and solitary confinement seemed also to show a temper that appeared sadistic. An example of this kind of thing occurred about a week or ten days after our arrival in Knutsford. Apparently as a result of questions asked in the House of Commons by Irish M.P.s., or otherwise, some British army officers with some civilians/^{arrived} at the prison, and the entire body of prisoners was paraded in the hall of one of the wings. There we were addressed in a somewhat belligerent fashion by, I believe, the Prison Governor, who was also an army officer. He informed us that the officers had come down, I think he said from the War Office, to hear any complaints we might have to make of our treatment in the prison. He said this in such a way as to discourage anyone coming forward to

complain, and he certainly conveyed the impression that this hearing of complaints was purely a matter of form, and not intended to redress any grievance that might exist. Nevertheless there was a hasty whispering amongst us which was promptly suppressed by the guards, and a number of prisoners held up their hands to indicate their desire to come before the Board. The names of these were taken down on a list by the various warder sergeants and we were then held there while the remaining prisoners were marched back to their cells. The atmosphere was intimidating and we were not so sure but that we would have been better advised to stay mute; but at least this was a new experience which gained us an hour or so away from the loneliness of the cell.

One by one we were marched into an office where the inquiring officers confronted the incoming prisoners from behind a table. "What have you to complain about?" was the question flung challengingly at me by the one I took to be the senior member of the Board. I had vaguely listed a number of things in my mind before I came in, but now, realising the futility of it, contented myself with the single complaint about the inadequacy of the food.

The reply to my formal complaint - "You are a damn sight better off than the chaps in the trenches in Flanders" - flung contemptuously at me - showed more clearly than anything else that if men like these had their way, we would be given short shrift.

A few days before this incident I had seen one of my comrades felled by a vicious blow from a sergeant who accused him of talking during a bath parade. We had to strip in an outer room and march in quite naked to the baths, and it was during this time that one of the sergeants, hearing a whisper in the ranks, wheeled and accusing the wrong man, as it

happened, knocked him down with a blow on the face. It was very hard at such times to keep one's temper, and it was only by the hope that one day we would pay it back with interest that it was possible.

There were other such incidents; one told in a hurried surreptitious whisper at the time concerned a prisoner named Kelly in a cell opposite to mine. This man was one of the London-Irish who had been in Kimmage. We all noticed one morning that he did not appear on exercise parade, and when he did on the following day or so, his face was bruised and swollen. We learned later that one of the sergeants had discovered that this man had retained his gold watch by some means contrary, of course, to the prison regulations, and on his refusing to give it up, three of them had gone into his cell one night and beaten him up. Having taken the watch, which they appropriated for their own purposes, they denied all knowledge of it. subsequently and poor Kelly had no redress, as his retention of the watch was contrary to the prison regulations anyhow.

The sergeant in charge of our particular landing, named Chiddy, was a weedy specimen who cultivated a huge black moustache with sharply waxed points, presumably to make up for his physical deficiency in other respects. He took a tremendous pleasure during his daily visits to each prisoner, in reviling us individually and collectively and gloating over what he would like to do with us if he had his way. This became a rather boring part of the daily routine until one day when, becoming exasperated by his stupid taunts, I suddenly got the idea of bringing this business to a head. He was walking up and down the cell, to and from the open door, swinging his bunch of heavy keys while he delivered himself of his usual tirade. I was sitting on my stool at the table near the door, resting my wounded hand on the table, and I estimated that my foot would just reach the corner of the open door. As he walked away from

the door, therefore, I stretched out my leg and pulled the door to with my toe, jumping up and confronting him at the same time. He wheeled about in a panic as I stood before him, and I realised at once that he was entirely at my mercy through his sheer funk. I enjoyed my ascendancy of those few moments while I watched him shrivel against the wall, and plead that he did not really mean any harm by his talk and that there would be serious trouble for everyone if I struck him. Then I laughed; I was really amused at his very sudden "volte face", but I continued to play on his terror, advancing slowly towards him with my wounded right hand behind my back and my left hand directed menacingly towards him, while I explained in a few words how he stood in my estimation. I stopped as I got within reach of him and wondered when it would occur to him to use the heavy keys in his hand as a weapon of defence. But, apparently, there was no fight in him. Even when I caught the breast of his tunic in my hand and pressed him against the wall, he remained limp, so, in disgust, I stood aside and ordered him out of the cell. He never troubled me again, although other prisoners told me afterwards that he was a regular pain in the neck to them through the same antics.

I learned afterwards of a similar incident that occurred on an adjoining landing. Another bullying sergeant picked on what seemed to him a very simple inoffensive prisoner, a Galwayman who, after listening, apparently quietly, to his spate of insults and disparagement, suddenly grabbed him in one hand and, closing the door with the other, he announced in a quietly gloating voice "and now, by J----, I'm going to kill you". The sergeant pleaded on his knees for his life, while the prisoner affected to consider the matter and, finally opening the door, he propelled the panic-stricken sergeant through it with a flying kick in the pants.

I suppose the reason for a lot of this sort of thing was that these Englishmen looked upon us as some kind of strange beings. In their eyes there must be something wrong with a people who would not accept the English ascendancy as a natural order of things, and welcome its benefits. The average Englishman of that time knew or cared very little about Irish affairs. If he knew anything at all about the historical relationships between the two countries his knowledge was based upon that residue of ancient anti-Irish propaganda which forms the modern Tory conception of these things. In this view the Irish race are of a lower order of mankind, ignorant, vicious and perverse, without gratitude for the many and earnest efforts of England to convert them to civilised manners and customs, and only to be dealt with as primitive savages. Such a person meeting for the first time, no doubt, an apparently representative body of the "native" Irish, and having in mind his preconception of them, was probably torn between what he had learned to believe and the evidence of his senses.

It was clear from the attitude of the prison officials towards us in the first couple of weeks that we were not credited with a very high order of intelligence. But from then on their bewilderment was apparent as they, in many cases, strove to undo the bad impression they felt they might have created in our minds in the beginning.

All this kind of thing formed the background of a dull daily monotony in which an inadequate diet and hard cold bed were the physical counterparts of intellectual starvation, and the emotional strain of complete separation from home and friends. At first there was a lot to be thought over to occupy the long weary hours. The rushing events of Easter Week and its sequel had to be recollected carefully and analysed in detail, and, having duly compartmented each incident, person or place, then the probable reactions of all this required some

speculation. After a day or two, however, this means of passing the time failed, and reading the gospels drove my mind along the path of philosophic speculation and gropings in the realm of theology. Such an interest, in such surroundings, might have been very good for a young lad such as I was, if I only had had some reliable guide and suitable reading matter to develop my mental faculties.

Pent-up emotions found vent at our first Sunday Mass in Knutsford. We were herded into the common church of the prison and there, for the first time since our arrival, we could talk in whispers to each other while the priest was robing. There was quite a good organ in the church and one of the prisoners, Michael Lynch of Dublin, was a proficient organist. His rendering of familiar sacred airs caused quite a thrill of emotion to sweep over us which reached a crescendo when he played "Faith of our Fathers". Here the lusty throats of one and all sung the words with a noisy fervour that might have been taken as much as a challenge to our captors, as a vow of fidelity to the faith:

"Faith of Our Fathers, living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword ..."

In the emotion of the moment we felt ourselves as the living embodiment of the spirit of that song. Undoubtedly the whole circumstances of that hour, our first Mass in captivity, the fervent rosary during it, the music and the singing boosted our morale and taught us how to regain our individual confidence. From then on, I know that I felt less the sense of isolation of the prison cell. Sitting there alone, I was more conscious of stout hearts close about me, and that whatever our fate at the moment, we could not be beaten eventually.

I think it was about the third week of our solitary confinement when a whisper went around among the prisoners that there was some move afoot to have the strict prison discipline

relaxed in our favour. About the same time we heard, from some of the guards, no doubt, that one prisoner had been allowed a visit from a relative. We had also been allowed to write a short letter each week to our homes, subject to censorship, of course, and to receive letters in reply. This helped tremendously to raise our spirits, for while very little could be written in letters subject to strict censorship, at least it made contact with the loved ones at home. Small photographs were also allowed to reach us from home, enclosed in the letters, and these became prized possessions as I can well remember of the one - the first I had ever had - of the girl who afterwards became my wife.

Sentimental trifles, perhaps, but we were young and romantically inclined, for all our serious purpose and the difficulties of our present condition. These girls who were as firmly attached to the cause of national freedom as we were, and had in many cases aided directly the preparation for, and the actual Rising itself, meant more to us than a poor picture, a keepsake, or a casually worded letter might seem to indicate.

One day, soon after we had returned to our cells after our morning exercise, perhaps about 11.30 a.m., the sergeant (Chiddy) opened my cell door and announced ingratiatingly: "You've got visitors to see you, come this way". I could hardly believe my ears and followed him with pleasurable anticipation to a small brick building situated in a detached position between another exercise yard and the main gate of the prison. Here I saw a number (about six or eight) people, seemingly from Dublin, talking excitedly to a number of prisoners, and regaling them with food of various kinds from parcels they had brought with them. Three or four of the prison staff were trying ineffectually to impose some kind of strict regulation on the mass interview, but at length gave up the unequal struggle, and one rather jolly sort of staff sergeant said: "Oh, I suppose you

had better make the most of a good time". Then he accepted a few presents of some of the food from the visitors, and we were free to make the most of our ten or fifteen minutes with the visitors within the room.

I had not recognised any of the visitors when I first came into the room, but Mick Fleming, who was in the cell next mine, then explained that his visitor was Tom O'Connor (late Chairman Dublin Port and Docks Board), and introduced him to me. O'Connor had come to see Fleming and some others, and they had suggested to him to ask for me. I'm afraid my joy at seeing friendly faces and hearing friendly voices was somewhat eclipsed by the sight of the food, and I tried to talk to them in the intervals of stuffing myself with slices of cooked ham, hunks of sweet cake and apples. I'm not sure but that there were sweets in between, and then we were given packages of cigarettes and matches to smuggle back to the cells, as well as some additional parcels of ham and cake.

I was only back in the cell when dinner came around, the usual half-pint or so of a watery stew, three very small and rather bad potatoes, and about a two-inch square of bread, so I eat that on top of what I had already had, and waited impatiently for things to quieten down until I might enjoy the luxury of a smoke.

The ventilator shaft was in the left-hand corner next the cell window and the air entry to it was a grid of small holes near the floor; so when things were quiet I lay down on my belly on the floor, and quickly lighting a fag, held it through one of the holes, while I blew the smoke from my mouth through another. What a disappointment! The taste was horrible, and, thinking that perhaps this particular cigarette or this package was tainted somehow, I tried another, but with the same result. I finished my smoke in the belief that it would taste better

the next time, but when I stood up I suffered all the nauseating sickness I remembered from my first smoke years before. My head reeled and my stomach heaved, though I had recovered sufficiently by teatime to eat that meal with a supplement from my small store of ham and sweet cake. I paid for my orgy that night, however; I had been suffering from severe costiveness since I came to Knutsford, and the unusual feast brought on acute abdominal pain and sickness. All night I rolled upon the floor in agony until relief came by dreadful purging and vomiting. All the vessels in the cell were filled before I finally had relief and, despite the sickening smell of the cell, I slept heavily on my plank bed for the first time since I had come to the prison. The next day I told this story to the medical orderly who came most days to dress my hand and, while he laughed at my discomfiture, I believe he had sympathy for me in my trouble and gave me some medicine to take for a day or two. This was a kindly sort of man and was, I think, one of the original prison staff, that is, he was not a soldier though he wore a sort of navy blue uniform with red piping. It was said that he was the official executioner of the prison, and when I asked him about this, he put my question aside with some facetious remark, but neither confirmed nor denied the allegation. I think he was rather sorry for what he knew must be the pain I suffered from my hand and, in dressing it, he was always most careful and competent. When small fibres of cotton wool jarred the severed nerve endings in the course of the dressing, he would explain why they were so sensitive and how this wound ought to have been treated when it happened.

At first, he used come to my cell to do the dressing, but later he was allowed to take me with a couple of others to his small surgery or dressing station where he and his assistant, a Yorkshire soldier, entertained us with their joking remarks while the dressing was in progress. The Yorkshireman was also

a simple and kindly sort of chap, and his quaint dialect was at first rather a puzzle to us to understand. I believe he purposely exaggerated it for his own and our amusement, but, at any rate, it was the one time of the day that the three or four of us looked forward to as a relief from the solitude of the cell and the rasping voices of the guards.

A short time after we had had our first visitors there was a noticeable change in the attitude of the guards, and there were rumours around that we were to be allowed free association with each other. This, in fact, came to pass a few days later when we were all assembled in the hall and informed by the Governor that the Government had agreed to relax the ordinary prison discipline, and to treat our confinement as internment. We were warned, of course, of the consequence of breaking the rules that remained, but we were to be allowed to associate freely in the exercise yard for, I think it was, two hours in the morning and two in the afternoon, and to receive parcels of food and clothing from our friends.

Now for the first time since the Rising we could freely exchange views and recollections of the eventful week, and learn for the first time of the events in other areas. There was wild confusion at first, of course; animal spirits had to be given full vent in all kinds of games and horseplay and, indeed, I regretted my inability to take full part in these because of my injured hand. There was great comfort, however, in being able to sit and walk around in the bright sunshine talking to the comrades I knew, or meeting other fellow prisoners whom I had not known before. New friendships were formed and old ones cemented there, and later in Frongoch, which formed the basis of the new revolutionary movement that grew rapidly in Ireland when we had regained our personal liberty by the amnesty granted at the following Christmas.

Visits of friends and relatives were now permitted pretty freely, and as every day there was a large batch of visitors, it was not possible to accommodate them during the visits in the small house already mentioned. Consequently, a rope was stretched from the corner of that building to the corner of another and the prisoners stood on one side while the visitors kept to the other. The visitors and their food parcels were, of course, examined as they entered the prison gates, so that there was little fear of them conveying arms or such like items to the prisoners. Nevertheless, the guards kept watchful eyes along the rope and tried to observe every detail of each fond embrace as the prisoners and their friends met and parted.

I'm afraid the appearance of most of the prisoners was quite a shock to the female visitors until they got used to the spectacle. Men they had known as smart and tidy fellows now appeared before them with grubby beards and, in some cases, rather ill-fitting or tattered clothing. The prison barber had scarcely helped matters in this way because, even if he wanted to, he could hardly have taken the time for model hair cuts. So to run a clipper over the head and sometimes over the face was all he could do. Some fellows decided at this stage to experiment in the growing of a full beard and, as up to then we were not allowed razors, the reader can best imagine the unkempt appearance of the general body. Perhaps this motley appearance was rather added to by the fact that some, including myself, were still in Volunteer uniform; others in breeches with civilian coats, and the majority ordinary civilian dress of various kinds.

Two fellows stick out in my mind in connection with this matter of dress - Commandant Brennan-Whitmore from Wexford, who had, however, fought in Dublin, and Jack McQuaid, a Dublin Volunteer. Whitmore, who had been wearing a navy blue serge suit when he came there, had this taken from him and put in the

fumigator on our first bath day. When he had it returned to him the fumigation had had such an effect on the dye as to convert large patches from dark blue to bright red, and when he appeared on the exercise ground he looked like as if he had had a pot of red paint thrown at him. He grew a fine dark beard which somehow or other he managed to keep trimmed and, altogether, was a remarkable figure.

McQuaid, on the other hand, was a young fellow about my own age, whom I had known in my schooldays. He had somehow lost his coat (civilian jacket) during the fighting in Dublin, or it had got destroyed, and he put on, in its place, the first thing that came to hand in one of the occupied buildings; a coat which was several times too large for him, reaching almost to his knees, and having the ends of the sleeves turned up several times. Notwithstanding such a generally unkempt appearance, it became gradually apparent about this time that the attitude of our guards had definitely changed to something like respect. Now that we could receive visitors and parcels, of course, the general appearance of the men began to improve, but I think that, quite apart from that, it had begun to dawn upon most of the N.C.Os. who formed the prison staff that we were not the ignorant rabble they had thought us to be at first.

I remember one fat old sergeant who was conducting me out to the visitors' yard one day squaring himself up beside me as we marched along, and eying me up and down over his shoulder. He was not quite as tall as I. With his most affable smile he remarked: "You'd be a fine boy in the Munsters. Too bad to see you locked up in a place like this". I gave him a look of what I meant as withering contempt, but, realising that he only meant to be friendly, said nothing.

There was one sergcant who was very friendly towards us and, apparently, his sympathy with us was quite genuine. He

learned when we were allowed to converse with each other that he was a Dublin man - "from Glasnevin" he told us, and that his name was Deane. Apparently Deane, although he carried out his duties meticulously, made no secret of his sympathy with us in the Sergeants' Mess. It appears that this led inevitably to a brawl in which Deane, who was a tall athletic type of fellow, beat up three or four of the others in a free-for-all. I do not know what the official result of this was, but some damaged faces appeared next day, and we never saw Deane again.

From then on the days in Knutsford passed easily and quickly ~~enough~~. We had enough contact with the outside world to keep us informed of events. We even got a newspaper now and then, so that the progress of the war in France was followed with interest. We were frankly pro-German in our sympathies, which was natural enough, and every British reverse we looked upon as a step nearer to our personal liberty and our national freedom. The news of the sinking of the "Hampshire" with the loss of Kitchener was cheered openly by the prisoners, who looked upon that British General as the symbol of Imperial aggression.

It is unnecessary to enter here into a discussion of the rights and wrongs of our beliefs at that time. I have stated earlier in these pages that the viewpoint of the extreme Irish Nationalist of the time was that any enemy of England was thereby Ireland's friend. We were, therefore, as pro-German then as the English were pro-Russian in the recent World War. Kitchener was probably a good soldier and was certainly a forceful leader who, to the English at that time, represented the battle flag of England in her deadly struggle on the continent of Europe. But for the same reason, we, who considered ourselves at war with England, cheered his death; not that we held anything against Kitchener as a man, but because we felt that his loss represented a major disaster to the enemy.

It was early in June when we heard we were to be moved to an internment camp. We welcomed this news for two reasons; first, because it promised something like freedom as compared with the atmosphere of a prison and that any kind of change was a break to the monotonous regularity of our lives there. Secondly, we believed that this process of internment conferred upon us the automatic status of "prisoners of war". I suppose in the back of our minds was the old contention, from the Fenian days, on the part of the British Government, to class all Irish rebels as "felons" and treat them accordingly, and, on the part of Irish Nationalists, to claim the right to honourable belligerency as members of a separate nation. So long as we were held, even under mild conditions, in a prison building, and sleeping in separate locked cells, we felt that our status was only that which it might please our captors to give us. But an internment camp seemed different and we felt that now there could be no ambiguity about our status.

We were very jealous of our status and, in our minds, it was very important how we as a body ranked in the public opinion of the world. Beaten militarily, we felt all the more the necessity to uphold the justice of our cause and thereby establish the claim of Ireland to separate nationhood at the Peace Conference that must follow the end of the war.

I think the first confirmation of the internment camp rumour came from Mr. Alfred Byrne, one of the members of Parliament for Dublin, who came to visit us at Knutsford about this time. Alfie was a well-known figure to most Dubliners, and it was characteristic of him to seize the opportunity of adding to his popularity with his constituents by visiting the Dublin men imprisoned in England. Alfie claimed the privilege of his membership of the British House of Commons in making this visit, and it was clear when he made his appearance in the prison, resplendent in top hat and full morning dress,

that the prison staff was duly impressed by his person and the condescension of his visit.

Mr. Byrne was not held as other visitors were in the separate visitors' yard, but was conducted by a pompous staff sergeant into the prisoners' exercise yard where we were all at play. No one took much notice at first of the top-hatted figure until the sergeant announced in a loud voice "Mr. Alfred Byrne, M.P." Then he was recognised and was greeted by a chorus of yells from bearded faces - "Ah, the hard Alfie", "Up Dublin" and the like. I think the sergeant was slightly shocked by such wanton familiarity as the crowd gathered around Alfie and received his bountiful distribution of packets of Woodbines, the while they plied him with questions.

In the course of this interview someone had asked him if he would bring a letter home for a prisoner, but he deprecated the suggestion that he should dream of conniving at such a breach of the prison regulations. However, in an aside whisper, he conveyed the suggestion that if a note were placed surreptitiously in the tail pocket of his coat, he could not know about it till afterwards. The hint was taken, and the tail pocket was so stuffed with hastily written notes as to make an obvious bulge, while Alfie stalked majestically towards the gate. Every one of these notes were duly posted in Dublin or in some cases delivered in person.

Lest perhaps this chapter may have tended to over-emphasise the more serious aspects of our life in Knutsford prison, let me hasten to add that, while our stay there began grimly enough, I have little other than pleasant memories of the latter end of that period. I suppose it is a natural function of the normal mind to put ugly or unpleasant experiences in the background of memory, and to reflect only on the pleasant things, until these latter begin eventually to fill the picture of recollection more or less completely.

There is no doubt that any prisoner's life is full of difficulties and restrictions, and we had all these, with the addition of uncertainty as to our fate and a bitter hostility from our captors. Nevertheless, after the cessation of our solitary confinement, and for the period when we were allowed to associate with each other and to receive visitors, it is the pleasant memories that predominate. Perhaps too, it is only fair to say that our jailers, when they at length began to realise that we were not quite the untutored savages they had imagined us to be, became less savage themselves. We heard no more of the hymns of hate that had been a daily affair at first, but on the contrary some of the sergeants became quite friendly.

Looking back now on that last few weeks in Knutsford, the main details of the picture that springs to mind are: The interesting fellows who were my companions and our daily discussions; the splendid girls who visited us, fed us, kissed us, and cut the buttons off our uniforms as souvenirs; the healthy animal spirits exhibited in the roughest of good humoured horse play, and - pervading it all - a grand spirit of unselfish good comradeship.

As may be gathered from what I have written earlier in this chapter, there were various factors contributing towards the raising of our morale from the zero of despondency when we first reached the prison to the feeling of assertive assurance which was common when we left it. One of the biggest factors was, I think, the women folk - both those who visited us and those who, unable to visit, wrote cheering letters of encouragement. When we began to realise that they looked upon us as heroes, naturally we began to act up to their estimate of us, in our own minds as well as externally; and, as this idea caught on, it rapidly became accepted as fact. However unheroic some of us may have felt, we could scarcely decline the role selected for us by those whose approval we

most valued, and from thenceforth we must act up to the part we had to play, even within the seclusion of our own minds.

Besides the sisters, mothers, sweethearts and wives who came over from Ireland to visit us and encourage us to hold our heads up, there were the girls from Manchester and Liverpool, most of whom we did not know and who did not know us individually, but they came day by day bringing parcels of foodstuffs which must have cost them a pretty penny, besides the trouble they took in travelling to and from the prison. There were humorous incidents almost every day which added laughter to our daily life; trivial things, perhaps, but yet part of the general picture. There was the day, for instance, when at the end of a visiting hour a tall good-looking girl from Dublin began in her enthusiasm to kiss us all goodbye. She was a member of Cumann na mBan and wellknown to a number of us. She tried hastily to bestow a kiss on each of us in turn, as we were being pushed by the rope towards the exercise yard, and away from the visitors who were held behind a second rope. Jimmy Heron at the end of the line was just late for his share, and their two heads stretching far out towards each other and just failing to make contact, seemed the essence of comic frustration, gaining a loud laugh from everyone including Jimmy and the girl.

Besides all this, there were interesting discussions day by day, where, sitting on the ground in the warm June sunshine, with our backs leaning against the redbrick wall of the prison, Tom Cotter and I, with sometimes one or two others, gave our novice minds free rein over political, philosophical and theological subjects. Perhaps our discussions were neither very learned nor very clever, and certainly our knowledge was very limited, but we were learning, and in the hard school of experience; all we needed for the moment was to know how to evaluate and relate to life in general each incident of our experience.

It may be noted that in my description of life in Knutsford I have made little mention of my comrades in arms from Fingal, and I hasten to assure the reader that this is not because they had lost any of their significance or fallen in my esteem. When we arrived in Knutsford, and, in fact, before our arrival there, the general body of prisoners had become split up into groups, the composition of which was largely accidental or following on our roll call in alphabetical order at Richmond Barracks. Thereafter the Fingallian prisoners met and discussed matters as individual members of the larger body of prisoners, rather than as a territorial group. We were proud of ourselves and of each other, from our achievements of Easter Week, and feeling no necessity to stand apart as a body, each individual formed his own circle of intimate friends.

We were all learning a lot from each other in the prison and friendships were formed more from intellectual affinities and common human interests than from arbitrary local association at home. Soon we were to leave Knutsford to become part of a still larger body of prisoners at Frongoch Camp, and so, while the Fingal Volunteers merged their general identity as a body in the general body of prisoners, each individual felt no less proud of the men of his home country. Each in his own way helped to sow the seed of Irish national ideals in the fruitful soil of his fellow prisoners from other parts of Ireland that was to reach maturity a few years later in the final struggle for our national freedom.

Chapter VIII.

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Frongoch Camp among the Welsh Mountains - Colonel "Buckshot" and Sergeant Major "Jack-knives" - We elect Administrative Officers and organise our domestic affairs - Frongoch becomes the University of Irish Nationalism - The I.R.B. appears within the wire - Father Larry Stafford is appointed Chaplain to the Camp and finds us somewhat difficult - The sitting of the Advisory Committee is mooted - A route march up the mountains - A trip to London - Wandsworth Jail - The Sankey Committee - Back in Frongoch we are fully occupied by Sports, Arts, Crafts and Study - The July and August releases make us feel lonely - A bleak outlook for the incorrigible.

Chapter VIII.

I think it was about the third week of June that the entire body of prisoners was paraded one day in the main hall of Knutsford Prison. There we were addressed by the Officer Commanding the prison, who informed us that we would each be served with an internment order, and were to be transferred on the following day to a prison camp in North Wales. He probably told us the name of the camp also, but the name "Frongoch" meant nothing to us then, and we returned to our cells that evening to pack our scanty belongings, which took three or four minutes, and then to lie wondering what new adventures lay before us on the following day.

My mind being fixed upon the eventual destination, I have only vague remembrance of the journey to Frongoch. I believe we were each served with a slip of paper which was a copy of a general order for our internment "during His Majesty's pleasure". Thereafter we marched in column of fours under the red brick arch of the main entrance gateway, and along the road in the bright summer sunshine, towards the little railway station that had been our journey's end a short while before. The military escort which accompanied us had, I think, only just arrived there for the occasion, and they were, on the whole, a jolly lot, looking forward almost as much as we were to the day's adventure, a train ride to, we knew not where, except that it was some place called "Frongoch" in Wales.

Every detail of that rail journey ought to have impressed itself indelibly on a mind that had for the past two months suffered the constriction of prison walls, but, strangely enough, I remember little or nothing of the journey until the point of our arrival, at the little wayside station near Balla, that was Frongoch. Here

memory seems to awaken again, or perhaps it was that my faculties of observation were dulled up to that point by the excitement of the trip, and that it was only the cold douch of our arrival that recovered the mental awareness of my surroundings. Under happier conditions, Frongoch might fairly be described as a beautiful little nook amid the well-wooded Welsh hills. There was no town or even village to be seen. The only buildings in view, besides those of the railway station, seemed to be the old distillery, which was one of the prison camps, and another camp of huts to the North of the station road. There were, I think, a few houses besides, some of which were quarters for the military guard on the place, and odd farmhouses might be seen away up the hills, but there was no population centre in view, and the general impression was that of a military establishment set up in rather pleasant country surroundings.

What became known as the South Camp was an old disused distillery, the buildings of which had been converted for use as an internment camp for German prisoners-of-war, and had, in fact, been in occupation by German prisoners up to a week or so of our arrival. ~~In fact,~~ ^{There} still remained in the hut that was used as an isolation hospital, four German T.B. patients, who were not removed until a short time after our arrival.

The distillery buildings formed a kind of quadrangle, which were again enclosed by a ten-foot barbed wire fence with double apron entanglements on ~~the~~ ^{either} inside, the space between the buildings and the barbed wire on the North and East sides, being the prisoners' exercise compound. The camp was roughly square, bounded beyond the wire by, the railway on the West side, the station road running between the two camps on the North side, the East side was taken up by military quarters, including the Colonel's house, the

view beyond stretching up on the wooded hillsides, while the South was bounded within fifty yards or so of the wire by a pleasant little river, which I am sure must have held a few trout. Later we found that, beyond the river which was spanned by a wooden footbridge leading from the Camp, there was a securely wired playing-field to which we were allowed access for a couple of hours daily when weather permitted. The double gate entrance to the Camp was at the North Western corner of the compound, and on the Western side of the compound, between the wire and the buildings, there were about a dozen wooden huts to serve as overflow sleeping accommodation for prisoners, when the malt-house dormitories would hold no more.

When we arrived, some time about six or seven o'clock in the evening, two or three of these huts were being used as reception offices, where we were searched, description and names written down, and we were each given a serial number. That number, by which I was to be known and identified for the ensuing six months or so, 744, is indelibly printed on my memory, though my numerical identification of a later prison camp has quite faded from my mind.

The ritual of entry to the Camp began when we were lined up in several ranks facing the East end of the huts, and the Officer Commanding the Camp, Colonel Lambert, proceeded to read out the rules and regulations under which we were to live in the Camp, emphasising his intention to see that the rules were strictly observed by us. The high note of his speech to every new body of prisoners arriving at the Camp, was to lay great stress on the fact that the sentries had orders to shoot to kill, any prisoners approaching too close to the wire, or attempting to escape. He said, "You will notice that the sentries are armed with shotguns, and", with

a pompous affectation of malice, "their ammunition is loaded with buckshot. I suppose you know what that is". From this, he was henceforth known amongst us as "old Buckshot".

The Sergeant-Major then took over, adding a few trimmings on the Colonel's injunctions, explaining to us the procedure of search which we were about to undergo, and itemising the things which we would not be allowed to carry with us into camp. He ended his few words to us with the advice that, "If you have any papers, documents or jack-knives, better tear 'em up", from which peculiar advice he received the appellation of "Jack-knives", and by this nickname he became known to the camp staff as well as to the prisoners. "Jack-knives" was really a kindly soul, who tried to hide his natural self under a gruff exterior. Middle-aged and tall, he wore a heavy dark moustache, and walked with an awkward kind of gait with his head and shoulders inclined forward. His blasphemous and blisteringly threatening language deceived no one, as we soon realised that this was merely the outlet or safety valve for his real anxiety, which was to keep everything running smoothly and everybody content.

Having passed through the "entrance" procedure, we were marched to one of the dormitories, in our case the ground floor one, or No. 1 as it was designated, where we were assigned beds, three boards on six-inch trestles with a straw-filled palliasse served this purpose, with a complement of fairly decent blankets.

There were some prisoners already there a couple of days ahead of us, from some of the other jails, Wakefield, Stafford or Wormwood Scrubbs, and these fellows, most of whom were known to one or other of us, told us all about the new camp routine and showed us where to find the dining hall and other essential places.

There was a roll call in the dormitories at nine o'clock (I think that was the hour) each evening, after which we were locked within the dormitories until roll-call again at 7.30 in the morning. In the meantime we had the comparative freedom of association with each other, and even though subjected to a continuous surveillance by roving Provost Sergeants and other N.C.O's, as well as officers of the Camp Staff, there was a certain sense of freedom in our new habitation. We elected our own Officers to control the discipline of dormitories, cook-house, dining-hall, and such like. Brennan Whitmore was Camp Commandant at first, but when the Camp had filled up there was a new election of officers, and Michael Staines, a Dublin Volunteer officer, was elected Camp Commandant. This procedure was, in fact, suggested by the military authorities of the Camp as a means of facilitating their administration, but with us it was accepted as a definite recognition of our status as a military body. There is no doubt that the work of administering the Camp was much simplified by allowing the prisoners to organise their own control and administration under that of the Camp Staff, but it is more than probable that this arrangement would never have been permitted if the British authorities could have foreseen that this very machinery was to form the organisation nucleus of the new revolution.

As the Camp rapidly filled up by daily draughts of prisoners from the various English and Scottish prisons, to which they had been sent initially from Ireland, we met many old friend and a lot of new ones. When the South Camp was full, having then over eight hundred prisoners, the North Camp was opened to receive further contingents, and when this was quickly filled it held between seven and eight hundred. So, altogether in the two camps there were upwards of sixteen hundred Irish prisoners, in conditions that made certain the confirmation of the creed of those

already steeped in the ideals of Irish independence, and the rapid growth of enthusiasm in those who hitherto may have felt weak or doubtful about the National cause.

Frongoch has since then been aptly termed the University of the Irish revolution, and so indeed it was. No more certain way of perpetuating the ideals of the executed leaders, and ensuring another and bigger effort to throw off the yoke of foreign domination, could have been imagined or desired by them. The police in Ireland had done their work well in selecting throughout the country the most likely disaffected persons, most of whom were Volunteers, but not all of them. These, lodged together in a camp with the leaven of those who had had their blood baptism on the streets of Dublin and elsewhere, were bound to be touched by the longing to emulate the heroic deeds of those who fought; and there were those amongst us whose intellects grasped the possibilities of this situation, and strove to make the best use of the opportunity so unexpectedly provided by the enemy.

It would be tedious to try to draw a more detailed word picture of the actual camp itself. What I have tried to do up to now was to give some description of the over-all impressions of the place, created in our minds when we first arrived there.

The sense of novelty in this new life, crowded as it was with new faces and widely varying types of our fellow countrymen, remained with us for the first month or so. By then we were becoming adjusted to the conditions, and life became a hum-drum routine for a while. Groups formed naturally here and there of intellectual affinities, common social, sporting and other tastes, and these families as it were, living individually in continual close contact, yet

blending easily and freely with the other groups, generated a feeling of unity in the general body of prisoners that materially aided adherence to a common objective.

Notwithstanding what I have stated here, regarding the single-mindedness of the general body of the prisoners, there was to be found, very naturally among such a number, certain types who did not mix readily, or whose dominant characteristics were incompatible with each other or with the general body. Such a situation must always arise until a formal code or conception of conduct establishes a fixed system. In fact, no incident of any consequence had shown itself that would indicate a serious clash of personalities, but perhaps the election of Camp Officers brought home to some minds the necessity for a governing body within the wire. A governing body that would be steadfast on the National aims, and that could be depended upon to guide and direct the attitude to be adopted, or action to be taken, by the prisoners from time to time.

A move was made, therefore, to contact the members of the I.R.B. in camp, and a meeting was held one day in a small dormitory or attic above the Canteen. I have only a hazy recollection of this meeting, but I believe nothing much transpired there. To begin with, no one knew just how many I.R.B. men there were in camp, and the attendance at the meeting depended on a man to man contact. Consequently when we appeared together at the meeting, there was some embarrassment by reason of the fact that everyone there could not be accepted as a member, except on the word of some one individual.

Some sort of a committee was, therefore, formed, and the meeting dissolved, leaving the committee power to make any necessary arrangements to keep the camp administration

within its control.

There was no further general meeting while the camp lasted, but I believe this committee augmented itself later, and expanded its outlook to comprehend the situation in Ireland following our release, which could be anticipated sooner or later.

All this time we were, of course, separated from our comrades occupying the North Camp. We had, however, found means of communicating with them, and receiving messages from them ^{through} ration parties and fatigue or working parties of the prisoners of either camp, who met outside the barbed wire in the course of daily duties. On Sundays too, the Chaplain had to say two Masses, one in each Camp, and the server was the same in each case. Tommy O'Connor, a prisoner from the South Camp, performed the duties of acolyte at both Masses, and incidentally made use of the priest's vestment box, of which he had charge, to convey letters from one camp to the other. For a short time after we arrived there, there seemed to be some difficulty in procuring the services of a priest for Sunday's Mass, and we had therefore a German priest for a week or two; evidently one who had hitherto been at hand to serve the needs of Catholic German prisoners, who had occupied the camp before us.

Very soon, however, a full time military Chaplain was appointed to the camp, in the person of Father Larry Stafford, who remained on duty there until our release on the following Christmas. I remember well the day of Father Stafford's arrival, and his efforts to make friends with the prisoners. The poor man failed entirely at first to appreciate our dislike to his appearance amongst us, dressed as he was in the full regalia of an officer of the enemy forces. I suppose we were rather shocked at the idea of a

priest in khaki, and for quite a time could not bring ourselves to look upon him as a real priest, though, of course, we knew he was.

Father Stafford was an Irishman who had volunteered for service as a Chaplain in the British Army on the outbreak of war, and had in fact been on active service in Gallipoli. Doubtless the British authorities assumed that, as a fellow countryman, he would be well received by us, and I think he himself was equally confident of his reception until his arrival in camp. The frigidity of the prisoners towards him must, however, have upset his aplomb considerably, and set him wondering whether he really knew his countrymen!

He was, in fact, a very well-intentioned man and a good priest, but having got off on the wrong foot with us, he made desperate efforts to recover himself and establish a friendly relationship. I was witness one day to an incident that made me feel rather sorry for him, and which, I think, brought home to him the cause of the unfriendly atmosphere which up to then he hardly seemed to realise.

One of the prisoners in our camp was William Sears, of Wexford, a veteran Irish Nationalist and proprietor of the "Enniscorthy Echo", an important provincial newspaper. Sears, who wore a flowing beard, was walking in the compound when Father Stafford was leaving the Camp, and, as the latter had known Sears in Ireland years before, he walked over to him, hailing him as an old friend and holding out his hand in greeting. Sears stood and looked him up and down disdainfully, ignoring the outstretched hand, and keeping his own firmly in his coat pockets, he said, "I don't know you. I have no friends in the ranks of the British Army". Trying to break down the barrier, Father Stafford then took hold playfully of the end of Sears' beard, and said something

like, "Oh, come come now", when Sears, sweeping the hand away with a lordly gesture, turned on his heel and left him.

He must have been very hurt by Sears' treatment of him, particularly as the snub was pretty public, and, indeed, I felt a little sorry for him at the time, but he took it well, and I think he began to appreciate the depth of National feeling amongst us, and to re-shape his ideas of approach. Certainly, as time went on he was admitted to more friendly terms, and he in turn discarded the khaki for a cassock as much as possible, so that, before we left the camp finally, he was accepted as quite a decent, kindly old fellow who did his job well, but could not be expected to view the prospect of Irish Nationalism through our eyes.

About a month after our arrival in camp, we learned of a new move by the British Government which affected us. Apparently by this time someone had seen that it was not a very good idea to hold such a number of Irish prisoners in these conditions. For one thing, the greater the number held, the less plausible was the British claim that "only an insignificant fraction of the population of Ireland favoured the Rising"; for another, which was our firm conviction at the time, if they could get any considerable number of the prisoners to plead that they were decoyed into active participation in the Rising by their leaders, this would go to justify the executions in Dublin after Easter Week.

For whatever reason, however, an Advisory Committee was set up in London, under the Chairmanship or Presidency of Mr. Justice Sankey (afterwards became Lord Sankey). All interned Irish prisoners were to be brought before this Committee and given an opportunity of establishing their "innocence of complicity in the Rising", and having their cases reviewed. Most of us took a cynical view of the whole

thing, and, as already mentioned, felt that this was a sinister move to use us as an argument in justification of the executions. Nevertheless, the prospect of a new adventure in the form of a trip to London was looked forward to with feelings of pleasurable anticipation.

In the meantime, a few other incidents worthy of note occurred. We had looked longingly towards the road which twined up the green hillside, so strangely like a spot in Wicklow, and an approach was made to the Camp authorities to permit us a route march, under escort of course, as a break from the monotony of walking around the compound. After some cogitation, this was agreed to, and so one day, to our immense joy, we turned out most of the younger prisoners and set off Northwards up the mountain road in column of fours, with a file of soldiers at six pace intervals on either side. One of the officers of the Camp Staff, an active sort of fellow, headed the marching column while a number of other officers and N.C.O's were distributed along and in the rear. The unfortunate escort - no wonder the route marches came to an abrupt end. All our pent up energy was put into the business of that march, and we whistled and sang as we bounded along (trudged is an inappropriate word in this case). Paddy Holohan, in the front rank, with his long legs meant to set the pace, and kept stepping on the heels of the Officer leading, so forcing him to keep up a fast gait. I think I have forgotten to state that the troops composing the Camp Guard were second line troops, all oldish men who were known as G.R.s. I am not sure whether the letters G.R. stood for "General Reserve" or for the name of the King, Georgius Rex, but we called them "The gorgeous wrecks", and they certainly looked like it at the end of that march. The poor old fellows were quite panned out. One, I remember, sat down

so heavily at our first halt up the mountain road, that his rifle went off in the air, and in his fright he gave himself a bad jab in the face with the bayonet fixed to it. I think there was one or maybe two other route marches, which, however, I did not go on, as my hand was giving trouble by having failed to heal, and the doctor, who was a local practitioner, was doing a job of cauterizing on it, and I had to be quiet in the meantime.

An order was issued that the wearing of Volunteer uniforms by the prisoners was no longer to be allowed, and that, in fact, those who had uniform were to surrender this in exchange for a civilian suit. Up to this I and a number of others were still wearing the uniforms we had on us during Easter Week, though we had, in the meantime, acquired some change of clothing. It had been a matter of pride with us to display ourselves in uniform at all times, but now we preferred to retain our uniforms hidden than to surrender them, and so collecting a very motley suit of tattered duds I handed in these in exchange for a new suit of "hand me downs", which type of clothing became known to us as "Martin Henrys". My uniform I still had with me on my release, and kept it until 1920, when it was taken from my lodgings, amongs other things, by friends just before a raid there, and hidden. Some years afterwards I tried to recover it, but it seemed to have disappeared.

There was a considerable amount of musical and other talent among the prisoners, and by this time various musical instruments had made their appearance. It followed, therefore, that a series of concerts should be organised, and we were permitted to hold these in the Dining Hall. This gave some scope to the poets and rhymesters in the production of the political satires of the time. "Whack-

fol-de-diddle" and the "Grand old Dame Brittania" became blended with the older patriotic ballads, while Jimmy Mulkearns, Paul Cusack and others provided uproarious comedy.

The movements to London then began. Draughts of about three hundred prisoners at a time were selected every week or so, and entrained for London, where they were lodged for the time being in one or other of the two London jails, Wandsworth or Wormwood Scrubbs, where the Advisory Committee sat alternately. I presume the reason for using the two prisons was for expedition in sending draughts of prisoners to and from Frongoch, and so ensuring a continuous sitting of the Committee.

A few draughts had come and gone before my name was called one day, and I set off on what was my first visit to London. The escort was apparently being continuously employed on this duty, or at any rate had escorted other draughts of prisoners from the camp. They were a pretty decent lot on the whole, so they chatted to us about the war and about ourselves, and swapped cigarettes as we travelled on, across England and towards the great metropolis that was the heart of the ancient enemy of our land.

I do not know what we expected to see when we got there, but I suppose one always gets an exaggerated notion of a place from reading about it, and the realisation is invariably disappointing. We had begun to get used to the Cockney accents, from listening to the soldiers of the escort and the people at various stations we stopped at, and the London terminus seemed little different from, say, Kingsbridge or Amiens Street, apart from mere dimensions. There was, however, a difference. This was a country at

war, and the absence of younger men and the preponderance of female workers was noticeable; and for another thing, there were a number of the renowned London buses drawn up at the platform to take us on the further stage of our journey. These old buses, solid tyred, slow moving, and with a double-decked tram-like body, were yet a novelty to us, although we had read of their excursion from Paris in the successful effort to stem the German advance on that city.

Leaving the station, my general impression of the city was one of drab streets and tawdry people. Heading for Wandsworth we, no doubt, took a route through unfrequented streets, and such people as we saw as we passed were either quite uninterested in the convoy or hurled abuse at us. It was invariably more or less fashionably attired elderly women who were abusive, and their grimaces were quite ridiculous.

It was late afternoon or evening when we arrived at Wandsworth Prison, where we were ushered into cells and given a meal, after which we were locked up for the night. The solitary cell was now a rather welcome change, for the moment at any rate. One could think in peace and quiet, and there were lots of new things to think about - the camp life - new friends - the apparent ^{spread} speed at home of National sentiment following the Rising - the progress of the war - and speculation on what appearance before the Advisory Committee would be like.

Next day prison routine began at the usual early hour. There was a certain familiar ring about this from our memories of Knutsford, but here there were subtle differences in the sounds. Whereas in Knutsford we had learned all the sounds of the prison so well that the moment we heard a

footstep or a bell, or a clatter of trays, we knew exactly who it was, or what the signal indicated, or what might be expected to follow. Here we could only guess, and as we had learned that there were a large number of "Conscientious Objectors" confined in the prison, a lot of the sounds we heard had to do with them. Later in the day we heard the "Conchies", as they called them, being put through a gruelling course of squad drill in the exercise ground outside our cells, the N.C.O's in charge fairly revelling in the sadistic joy of making life an "appropriate hell" for these poor beggars. I climbed up on my table and stool to get a peep through the small ventilator pane in the window of my cell, and for a while watched those near me being doubled up and down, turned right, left, and about, to the accompaniment of blistering epithets, when, in their bewilderment, they became confused in the rapid fire of apparently contradictory commands.

On the other hand, we found the prison staff of Wandsworth quite decent to us, perhaps because they looked upon us as fighters, however misguided, and, as such, superior to the "Conscientious Objectors" who, professing a repugnance to fighting in any shape or form, they looked upon and spoke of with contempt.

Somewhere about ten o'clock the sitting of the Advisory Committee began, and we were marched up in groups of twenty or thirty at a time to the main hall of the prison, where we waited while one at a time was presented before the august body. There was something of the air of the confessional about it, though I fear the element of contrition was conspicuously absent. We talked and joked with each other while we waited, the general feeling amongst us being one of good-humoured mocking towards the, doubtless very conscientious, body which awaited the hearing of our pleas.

My turn came eventually, and I was marched into a large room and loudly announced by a very pompous Sergeant.

Feeling very selfconscious, though with a deep feeling of my duty to display a proud and aloof bearing, I marched boldly into the centre of the room and halted, stiffly at attention.

[Behind a long table, extending practically the entire width of the room, sat a number (I think there were six or eight) of prosperous-looking, well dressed gentlemen, in the centre of which sat the one I took to be Sankey. The others wore either a very serious or a bored expression, but Sankey was smilingly affable, suave, and even friendly as he motioned to me to be at ease. My name, age, and activities during Easter Week he read out to me from a sheet he held in his hand, now and then requesting my confirmation or denial of these facts, and as he came to the end of the recital, he suggested in a sort of sympathetically confidential way, "but of course you could not know what you were being led into when you took up arms". This was it, I thought; we were right in our surmises as to the purpose of this Committee, so I left him and the assembled Committee in no doubt as to my past, present and future views on the British occupation of my native land. Respecting his very affable manner, I avoided hyperbole or flamboyant attitude, but told him quietly and firmly that when I had first joined the Volunteers in 1913 I had done so with the sole purpose of taking up arms against England sooner or later. I said that I had known of the preparations for the Rising long before Holy Week, and had helped to make them. I added some details that apparently had been omitted from the police record before him, and said that I felt proud to have been associated with the men they had executed in Dublin.

At this stage Sankey remarked laughingly to the man beside him, "Joseph is a bit of a firebrand", and then made

some joking remarks to me, as I went on to say that I hoped to see the day when another fight could not be quelled by England in a week. Sankey smiled and nodded to me to indicate the termination of the interview, and the pompous Sergeant again coming to the fore marched me out and another in.

Comparing notes afterwards with some of the other fellows it was apparent that Sankey's disarming manner had impressed most of them, so that a good many gave nothing but monosyllabic answers to questions, and left the Committee to assume what they pleased.

We were a further day or two in Wandsworth before the hearing of all those on our draught was complete, when we were returned to Frongoch by the same procedure and route as we had come.

The Camp was now a familiar place to our eyes, and there were the friendly voices of comrades hailing our return, to make the place seem homely. The staunch comradeship of our fellows did, indeed, infuse a great feeling of comfort, which made up to a great extent for the limitations imposed by our confinement within the wire, though, as time went on, it became harder and harder to be content with such limited liberty. To overcome such heartaching, those who could not give their entire energies to sports and games turned to arts and crafts or to serious study of one kind or another. There were amongst us some accomplished artists who had acquired the use of a small annex building as a studio, and with supplies of necessary materials they were allowed to procure, they engaged in the production of oil paintings of various kinds. Only once or twice I had an opportunity of watching these men at work, and would willingly have installed myself as an admiring spectator if I had been

given any encouragement. But artists are shy of onlookers, and no one was tolerated in that holy of holies other than the five or six who worked on the canvases. One day I did gatecrash, when I think it was Seán Keating invited Terry MacSwiney and some others to see something he had painted. I went in among the crowd and satisfied my curiosity by a close up view of some half-finished pictures, and one seemingly finished one which was a landscape of some sort, possibly a view from the Camp, some of which were well worth painting.

One other incident occurs to me about this studio which has a humorous twist. There was in Camp a member of the Citizen Army named Daly. Daly was a rather tough dock labourer (I think he was) pugnacious and voluble, he was nicknamed "The Blackguard Daly". One day near dinner time, Daly, carrying his mug and plate with him, as we all did going to meals, chanced to pass the open door of the studio where two or three of us had already stood to gaze at the canvases within, the wet paint of which showed a wealth of colour in the sunlight reflected on them from the ground.

Daly joining us stood in the middle of the doorway, in comically open-mouthed wonder as well as admiration for the efforts of the artist, while the latter (I forget now just who it was) becoming conscious of the concentration of Daly's gaze on the canvas, came towards him and asked him how he liked it. Daly made no reply for a moment or so, nor did he shift his gaze from the picture, until suddenly glancing down at the white enamel plate in his hand, he reached it towards the artist with the query, "here, would you paint me a bloody steak on that?" The artist was rather offended by Daly's facetious humour, but I think Daly only meant to be complimentary, which was why the whole thing seemed so funny to us at the time.

Through the dormitories one might observe industrious prisoners here and there, weaving complicated "Macrami" work items from gaily coloured string, while others bent over wood or bone carvings, some of which were quite beautiful in their representations of Celtic tracery, though the carvings were done with tools little removed from the bronze age equipment of the original producers of these designs. A broken dinner knife ground into shape on the sandstone window sill was, in most cases, the only tool available for such work.

In the sports field the athletes displayed their prowess. Organised team games were not so much in favour as the various individual games and competitions where anyone might try their hand at running, jumping, weight-throwing and such like.

Here I first saw a real champion hammer-thrower, Seán Hales from Cork, who in 1922 met his death by assassination. Hales was a fine big muscular fellow, and it was really marvellous to watch him swing and twirl about the hammer, our eyes watching it as it soared from his hands in a flight that looked like taking it outside the confines of the field. Again, to watch him pitch a fifty-six pound weight over the high bar made the thing look like child's play. The only one who could come anywhere near him with the hammer was Mick Collins. Mick could manipulate it well, and make an excellent throw, but he could not equal the length of Hales's throw. This, however, was a little later in the chronology of events, as Collins, up to the middle of August or so, was in the North Camp.

There were some others in the championship class at the weights whose names I have forgotten, one from Cork and another from Galway, and these, with Hales and Collins,

outclassed everyone else so much, that we left them their competition and developed one of our own.

Later, when my hand had quite healed, Seamus Malone and his brother Tom and a few others of us started a bit of wrestling, while Bob Haskins of Belfast, who knew something about the game, tried to show us something of the rules and science of it. The wrestling classes ended with a general degeneration into rough horse-play, where one needed all one's selfcontrol to take hurts in good part, when ragged by a boisterous group. Such groups formed themselves in each dormitory, and now and then assailed each other without warning. Obviously this would soon get beyond a joke and could not be tolerated, so the Camp Commandant issued an order forbidding these exhibitions of rowdiness, as not in keeping with the dignity of Irish soldiers.

All this shows, however, the manner in which the pent up energies of young fellows found outlet within the constricting routine of a prison camp. Muscular sports, creative effort in arts and crafts, and exercise of the mind in reading, music and discussion, all these served to occupy our time and preserve a healthy growth of mind and body.

All this time, since we reached Frongoch, we had constant communications with home and friends. There was now no unreasonable limit to the number of letters we could send and receive, though of course they had to pass the scrutiny of the censor each way. We were also receiving parcels of foodstuffs, clothing and the like, regularly from home, so that there was really little to complain of except the loss of personal liberty.

I think it was about the middle of July that the first

releases began, and for the following few weeks every other day or so a list of names was called out on a general parade of the prisoners. Those so called got a hurried few minutes to pack their belongings, and were then hurried on to the train for their homeward journey. About one thousand were released in this way, and as each group left the Camp to the cheers and farewells of those left behind, a certain discontent and unsettledness entered into the less fortunate. The Advisory Committee had apparently made its decision as to what was wheat and what was chaff, who were the sheep and who the goats, and now we were finding out gradually what this decision had been.

For a little while the thinning of the Camp population created a feeling of loneliness, friendly groups having been broken up, and dormitories more than half emptied; but much the same thing had been happening in the North Camp, and as the number of prisoners remaining in both Camps could now easily be contained in either, those from the North Camp were moved down to join us in the South.

The reunion of friends occasioned by this move rather made up for the sense of loss we had suffered through the releases of others. There was still, of course, a certain amount of homesickness when we reflected on the fact that it was now very unlikely that we would be released - probably not until the war ended, which appeared as a most indefinite date.

There was something else too. A few of our comrades, notably the Nunan brothers, had been identified while in London as liable for military service, and were now in prison undergoing all the rigours of punishment we had seen meted out to the Conscientious Objectors. Somehow we felt

that from henceforth life was not going to be so easy. Perhaps the enemy had awakened to his mistakes, and believed he could be more harsh and peremptory with the number of prisoners now held. For our part we had learned many a lesson since we first became prisoners, and were less than ever inclined to be docile.

Chapter IX.

Pages 195 to 215

Frongoch with a difference - The enemy attempts to conscript certain prisoners for military service -

~~-----~~ Leading prisoners are taken from the Camp and sent to Reading Gaol - Outline of daily life in Camp at this period - The Ash-pit Strike - Further enemy attempts at conscription of prisoners - The hunger strike - A new attempt to identify individual prisoners causes another strike - Stalemate - Some incidents in the daily life of the strikers - Release, and something of our reactions to the news - On the way home - Dublin once more - I recover some of my arms.

CHAPTER IX.

On the completion of the summer releases, about the middle of August, a new phase of our existence had begun, and the state of tension caused by a succession of events helped, at any rate, to relieve the monotony of our daily life, even if we did have to suffer the loss of some of the amenities we had hitherto enjoyed.

In Piaras Beaslai's book, "Michael Collins", a chapter is devoted to Frongoch, which gives a pretty accurate picture of the chain of events, and it is, therefore, unnecessary for me to do more than make brief reference to these, confining this part of my story to the personal matters not dealt with in Beaslai's general outline.

Up to then we had become accustomed to the fairly easy sort of life enjoyed by birds in a cage or animals in a zoo. Although we might at times long for the liberty of a previous existence and the society of friends at home, we realised that we might easily be far worse off, and so were resigned to an indefinite period of imprisonment.

I have already noted that the release of some of our comrades during the summer tended to unsettle our minds and make us less satisfied with the terms of our existence in the camp; but, besides that, there was another thing which occurred at this time which brought home to us a realisation of the fools' paradise with which we had surrounded our minds.

We had learned that during the sitting of the Advisory Committee in London, certain prisoners from the

camp who had been brought before it, the brothers Seán and Ernest Nunan, had been identified in London as "liable for military service", and, having refused to serve in the ranks of the British Army, were put in solitary confinement and treated to sundry other punishments in an effort to break their spirit.

The Nunans were two of the London-Irish who, having refused to serve in the British Army when the Conscription Act was introduced in England in 1915, came over to Dublin and formed what was known then as the Kimmage Garrison. Those Irishmen who had been employed in England, chiefly in London, Liverpool and Manchester (there were also some from Scotland) when they came to Dublin were already members of the Irish Volunteers. They were housed in an old house and mill at Larkfield, Kimmage, and their upkeep was undertaken by the Volunteer Executive. They were employed at Larkfield up to the time of the Rising in the manufacture of shotgun bayonets, the crude type of canister bombs, and buckshot ammunition for the shotguns, when they all took an active part in the fighting in Dublin.

That the enemy should conceive the idea of trying to compel these men to serve in his army and punish them for their refusal to comply, showed us that we could ill afford to be complacent. There were quite a number of prisoners in camp who were in the same category as the Nunans, and no doubt they also might be called upon for "military service" with its alternative harsh punishment.

A lot of talk went on amongst the prisoners about this matter, and various possible methods of countering any such move by the camp authorities were discussed,

without, however, coming to any general decision.

Another thing that indicated the gathering clouds was the selection of certain prisoners who were thought to be leaders, and their removal to Reading Jail. Trouble had developed in the North Camp owing to the refusal of the prisoners to carry out certain road making work, which they decided was unsuitable for them, and this resulted in the removal of the prisoners' Commandant, M.W. O'Reilly, to Reading. M.W. had acted as spokesman in the negotiations over this matter with the Camp authorities, and apparently it was thought by the latter that M.W. was the agitator responsible, and that his removal and that of any others likely to organise resistance would result in a more compliant body of prisoners. Michael Staines and J.J. (Ginger) O'Connell were among those taken from the South Camp, and as both Staines and O'Reilly had been up to then Commandants of their respective Camps it was clear that an enemy offensive of some kind was in contemplation. To the outside observer of our conduct, there was perhaps little or no change in our behaviour. Boisterous groups still romped about the compound, and the studious ones still were to be found poring over their books. In the heat of the midsummer day one could even find numbers of prisoners in deep slumber on their beds, despite the din of talk and play around them. One incorrigible practical joker was a man named Gallagher from Wexford, and I remember that it was about this time that he developed his great idea of searching out slumbering comrades, and if they slept sufficiently heavily, they found themselves when they awoke in the same predicament as did "Gulliver" when he awoke in Lilliput. I saw this great joke practised one day on Seán Russell, who had a fine beard,

very little sense of humour and was seemingly a very heavy sleeper. Gallagher began by sewing the legs of the sleeper's pants to the mattress of the bed and to each other with a large needle and thread. Then he went on to do the same up along the jacket, sewing the sleeves to the bed and to the jacket in whatever position they happened to be, and, as a finish off to the job, sewing the beard firmly to the vest. We waited to see what would happen when the sleeper awoke, but as there seemed no immediate prospect of this, empty cans were thrown along the concrete floor towards the bed. The frantic struggles of Russell were comical to watch for a while, as he had practically to strip himself to get free, but his berserk rage at the indignity would not allow him to see any humour in the situation. I think if he could have got his hands on Gallagher at that moment he might really have killed him.

After the evening roll call when we were locked within our dormitories, small groups sat around here and there on the beds talking or playing cards, while others read or lay wrapped in thought. Tattoo brought the garrison bugler out on the road between the two camps to sound the last post, and always, as with one accord, there was complete silence in the dormitories until the call had ended. I do not know why this should be, but that particular musical combination sounded on a bugle always seems charged with a special solemnity and significance. It is of course, I know, by its association with the burial of the dead, placed at once in the solemn class, but I think it is peculiarly apt and suitable either for the close of a life or the close of a day. We had not then much experience of the call as a funeral dirge, yet it was strange to note how the ribald

laughter and noisy tongues checked to a spontaneous silence on the opening notes of the bugle. In the pause that followed the final note, some humourists would try to introduce a facetious anticlimax by clapping and shouting encore, as if the bugle call were an entertainment number. Nevertheless it showed appreciation, and I am sure the bugler, and he was a good bugler, was pleased to hear his efforts applauded, even if applause was not in keeping with the circumstances. The Rosary followed in each dormitory, and was always said in Irish. If the responses lacked something of the intensity of our Knutsford days, they were none the less fervent for all that, and certainly these daily prayers were edifying and exemplary to those taking part in them.

Lying there in bed when the lights were out, there was comparative quiet. Odd voices spoke in low tones to each other through the dormitory, while outside the sentries in the elevated posts called out to each other at intervals "Number one and a-a-a-all's well" and number two took up the chant and so on to three and four right around the camp.

It was, I think, about the end of August or the beginning of September when the clash came, strangely enough on our initiative rather than by enemy act. At this time, the releases had been completed, the leaders picked out from amongst us and sent to Reading Jail, and the remaining body of about six hundred odd prisoners were located in the South Camp (the distillery buildings) the North Camp having been closed down. The daily work of the camp such as cook-house, dining hall and dormitory fatigue parties had the job of removing the ashes and other refuse to the dump outside the wire, which they did

with a handcart provided for the purpose, and of course they moved under armed escort when they went outside the gate. One day this party was ordered by the Orderly Sergeant when they had dumped their own rubbish, to collect and dump the refuse from outside the quarters and cook-house of the military guard. This they promptly refused to do, and were, therefore, placed under close arrest and sent to the North Camp, which was then empty. They were told, and this instruction was also conveyed to the remainder of the prisoners, that until they consented to obey all orders they would be denied all privileges such as letters, parcels, visits and the like, and as they had no canteen they could get nothing to smoke.

Each subsequent day a new fatigue party was ordered to remove the soldiers' refuse, and each day, having refused to do so, were sent to punishment in the North Camp. However, these daily additions to the penal settlement in the North Camp, especially as they knew beforehand that they would be going there, enabled a daily supply of cigarettes and tobacco to be sent to the delinquents.

This campaign went on until, at the rate of eight men per day, more than half the total body of prisoners was in punishment in the North Camp. The prisoners on punishment also refused to do any work in their camp except to prepare and cook their food. A fatigue party from the prisoners in the South Camp were therefore allowed to volunteer for the work, and in this way were able to keep up the supplies to their comrades and keep in contact with them.

It was this situation which really gave us the idea

that an organised non-cooperative policy was capable of defeating any enemy move to punish individuals.

It was about this time that another prisoner, Hugh Thornton, was called out, and somehow we learned beforehand that he was to be sent up for "military service". In any case, of course, we knew that he was one of those held liable. He refused to answer his name when called for on a parade, and the camp authorities were unable to identify him. This caused hurried consultations among the prisoners, one proposal being that another man would answer to Thornton's name and only disclose his real identity after he had left the camp, but Thornton considered that he should not allow another to suffer possible penalties on his account, and so surrendered himself to the camp authorities. Having refused to accept service in the British Army he was sentenced to two years' hard labour.

In the meantime the call for fatigue parties to deal with the refuse from the soldiers' quarters had ceased, and we learned that the whole question was receiving the consideration of the Home Office. Later, an order from the Home Office directed that prisoners would not in future be required to remove rubbish from the guards' quarters. Instead, however, of returning the prisoners under punishment to the South Camp, those remaining in the South Camp were now removed to the North Camp, but the privileges of letters, parcels, etc., were restored to all.

Almost at once, and before the new arrangement had the novelty worn off, another attempt was made to pick out two men for "military service". This time a trick was tried by calling out Fintan Murphy for release, and Michael Murphy for parole on account of the serious

illness of his wife, but as Michael Murphy was not married the device was seen through at once, and the men refused to answer their names.

An immediate roll call was then ordered, but only a few men who did not at the time understand the situation answered their names. Fintan Murphy was, however, known to some of the camp N.C.O.s by appearance, and he was picked out from the parade, but Michael Murphy was, apparently, not known, and so the method of narrowing down the problem next adopted was to pick out those that the staff could identify and send the remainder to the South Camp. From amongst the latter a man named Barrett was eventually selected as Michael Murphy, and he was sent off to London, where his identity was established and he was sent back to the Camp.

Meanwhile the men who had been sent to the South Camp went on a hunger-strike which lasted a few days until it was agreed to allow them to return to their comrades in the North Camp without revealing their identities.

We were not deceived by the apparent surrender to our demands by the enemy authorities, but felt that this sudden "change of *foot*" presaged a new line of attack. Sure enough, within a couple of days we noted the arrival of new troops, and these were younger men, obviously a company from some field unit arrayed in the full panoply of war. There was a hurried whip around the prisoners to encourage them to stand fast and answer no names if such were called for. A few began to argue the pros and cons of the situation, holding that such a campaign was futile, and that the enemy could always identify any of us they wanted to, by going to the trouble of sending

particular agents to the camp who would be familiar with the wanted man or men. However, there was no time given us to decide our attitude, as the compound was immediately invaded by the armed troops who were strangers to us and we to them. We were ordered to our huts and a sentry placed at each door to ensure that we kept within. Here the difficulty was that each hut had to make its own decision without reference to the others and there was very little time, as a roll call had already commenced in the first line of huts. Every kind of intimidation was used to persuade us to answer our names, but only about one-third of the prisoners did so, and the majority of these were old men or those not in robust health whom we had urged to answer for their own sakes, as well as creating the difficulty for the enemy of keeping the two camps open.

Beaslai says in his book that this division of the prisoners into two lots, those who would answer and those who would not, was deliberately organised by Mick Collins for certain reasons. If this was so, I can only say that I was not aware of it at the time.

As I had been in the South Camp from the beginning, and Collins was in the North Camp until the amalgamation following the summer releases, I had never met him until about mid-August. Undoubtedly the dominance of his character was evident even then, but he was not yet the famous man and accepted leader that he subsequently became. No leader could openly assert himself in camp without being at once removed to Reading as a danger to the authorities, and so what direction of policy there was amongst the prisoners had, of necessity, to be very secret. In fact, each group of prisoners, if not the

individuals, acted on their own, and it became clear very soon that the camp staff were having grave difficulty in carrying out their project. Even those who had previously been identified were mixed up with those who had not, and so the whole body had to be gone over. Sundry threats were used as to what would be done with those who refused to answer their names, and in a few huts men were pounced upon by N.C.O.s of the camp staff who knew them and called them by their names. In this way some were tricked into an admission of their identity, and, as already stated, most of the older and less robust men had been advised by their comrades to comply with the military request for names. The result of all this was that about one-third of the total body of prisoners were identified or had answered to their names, and the remainder were at once marched off to the South Camp, where they were placed under the same punishment conditions as previously.

As well as all of the "wanted men", all of the more important leaders, such as Mick Collins and Dick Mulcahy, were amongst those who were removed to the South Camp, and once there they assumed a more positive direction of affairs. I would say that it was perhaps from this point that Collins began to show his capabilities and very forceful character. He himself was closely associated with the London-Irish and so had a direct personal interest in this particular campaign, though I think that he himself was not one of those held by the British as "liable for military service". Those of us who knew Mulcahy better than Collins at that time looked to him for council and guidance, and as both Collins and he appeared to be good friends and to work harmoniously together, we felt secure in our leadership, even though the fact of that leadership was kept carefully concealed

from the enemy.

There was a definite change now in our attitude towards the camp staff, as well as in theirs towards us. It seemed as if they had been warned against a too friendly fraternizing with the prisoners, while we on the other hand felt that, now that we had committed ourselves to a policy of defiance, we should not weaken this by any appearance of friendly tolerance towards any member of the camp staff.

Secretly, of course, we were all very sorry for poor old "Jack-knives" who wore a more and more harassed look as he tried to carry out his daily duties. Accosting a prisoner now and then whom he knew very well, he would, addressing him by name, entreat him in blasphemous terms to have some ---- sense and answer his name. I strongly suspect that "Jack-knives" had by that time developed a secret sympathy, if not admiration, for us, and was really worried because we laughed at his genuine efforts to help and advise us.

Although we were now deprived of letters, parcels and all such privileges, the system of communication previously used between the prisoners in the two camps was again brought into service and improved upon. The priest's vestment box, the ration parties and other working parties, all helped to keep us supplied, to some extent at any rate, with cigarettes and tobacco, newspapers and occasionally a little butter. We could, therefore, learn something of the propaganda in operation outside on our behalf, both at home, in England, and even in America, and we could shape our attitude accordingly.

It should be remembered that England was then at a

critical stage of the war in Europe, and America was still a neutral State. Britain was consequently very sensitive to adverse propaganda in the United States, and the big Irish population in the United States was very concerned over the reputed conditions of the Frongoch prisoners. As Beasláí puts it, "the Frongoch internees had become a greater source of trouble and danger to the English Government in custody than they could possibly be at large".

The winter of 1916 was a very severe one, and while the prolonged frosts and heavy snowfalls provided the younger ones of us with something like winter sports to keep our spirits up and the blood running in our veins, the cold was very trying under the conditions ^{in which} we were then living, and it was difficult to get sufficiently warm to sleep at night. The diet being somewhat sparse at this time also increased the difficulty of keeping warm. The heating system in use in the South Camp was, I think, part of the original malthouse system, but it had been modified to produce the lower temperature required, and was not very effective. In any case, these very large rooms, two of them with concrete floors, were draughty and difficult to heat.

In this situation we had settled down to see it out to the bitter end. There was no sign of any surrender on the part of the military authorities, though, on the other hand, there was no new aggressive move by them. We were satisfied to accept any hardship they might inflict upon us rather than depart from the attitude we had taken up.

We had moved out of the ground floor dormitory and were now located in the upper three which had wooden

floors and were, therefore, to that extent more comfortable. Also at this stage we acquired a little more freedom, although surreptitiously, by the efforts of a Scottish lad; actually he was one of the Glasgow-Irish who had been associated with the London-Irish in Kimmage. It transpired that this lad was an expert locksmith, and with a small piece of wire could open most locks. So each night after we were locked within our dormitories for the night, and things had become quiet outside, Jock (I have forgotten the rest of his name) picked the lock of our dormitory and of the ones below and adjoining us, so that we could still come and go as freely as we might need during the night. I might say the practice was availed of regularly, visitors from one dormitory going to another for games of cards or chess, or just for a chat. Jock took a great pride in his ability to give us free egress and entry, and we in turn took a schoolboy delight in doing the things we were not supposed to do. As the month of December wore on we had heard some rumours of the agitation for our release then in progress at home and abroad, but I am afraid our minds had by then settled into a rather cynical disbelief in the efficacy of such efforts. We had no real hope that the British would even consider our release while the war was still on.

When, therefore, a few days before Christmas a very insistent rumour regarding our release began to buzz around, it was treated as the subject of some bitter jokes. We did not believe there was any truth in the rumour, and we resented anything that tended to raise false hopes and thereby create a despondency when the falsity became apparent.

In the afternoon of December 22nd, an order was

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suddenly issued by the Camp Sergeant Major, our old friend "Jack-knives", "that all prisoners were to assemble at once in the dining hall where the Camp Adjutant wished to make an announcement to us". There were, of course, various surmises on the purpose of this, or what the announcement might be, but I do not think anyone would allow themselves to believe that it might be good news. Judge therefore our surprise when the Adjutant announced that "an order had been received from the Home Office for our immediate release". [There was not a sound following the announcement, and I think the Adjutant thought that we had not understood the purport of his words. He, therefore, went on to explain more fully that this order required that our release was to be effected with such speed that we should all be home for Christmas. He seemed more than a little puzzled by our apparent lack of enthusiasm, and went on to explain some of the details of our leaving the camp, in the course of which he said that the men from the North, South and West of Ireland would be sent off first, on that night, so as to enable them to reach their eventual destinations in time. The remainder of us, who had not so far to travel, would be sent off on the morrow, and all that remained to be done was that we would separate ourselves into two groups according to these categories. Each man was to give his name and address and the station to which he was travelling, to the members of the camp staff who were present for the purpose. A hurried whisper went around the assembled prisoners. This, we concluded, was just another trick to identify us and separate the men they wanted from the remainder.

As Beaslai states in his story - "Collins acting spontaneously as spokesman for the rest of us pushed

forward towards the Adjutant's table, and replied in his usual forthright manner, "It's no use, you'll get no names or addresses from us".

It only then seemed to dawn upon the Adjutant the reason for our lack of enthusiasm, and in a very exasperated tone he said, "I don't give a damn about your names or addresses, all I am concerned about is to get you all to hell out of here". [To some more questions as to whether Michael Murphy and other "wanted men" were included in the release order, he said that all prisoners in camp without exception were to be sent home. We were still cautious, feeling that there might yet be a catch in it, so a series of hasty discussions began amongst us. I suppose it began to dawn upon the Adjutant at that stage that our scepticism was real, so he met us with the proposal that we should compile the lists ourselves, and hand them to the Sergeant Major as soon as we could have them ready. We could see no objection to this, and agreed to get the lists prepared at once, whereupon all military personnel cleared out, leaving us to our own devices.

There was a tense, though suppressed, excitement noticeable as the arrangements for the compilation of the lists were made. We dared not let ourselves think about it - not yet - there might even be a catch in it still - and anyway we wanted to show ourselves, and the others, that we could receive joy with the same stoical lack of demonstration as we had our sorrows, whatever we thought inside.

Back in the dormitories, our emotional state might be judged from the exaggerated pose of nonchalance adopted by some, while occasional outbursts of shrill laughter

indicated the tense hysteria of others. Men spoke to each other of irrelevant things, like whether there was any jam left for the tea, or discussed last night's game of chess, anything rather than the topic uppermost in everyone's mind. Inevitably, of course, our immediately impending release had to be spoken of at last, and now that we were beginning to get used to the idea, speculation was rife on the present conditions in Ireland. We knew, naturally enough, how our own friends and relations would receive us, but we also knew that the Rising and its aftermath had exercised a powerful influence on the people as a whole, and we wondered what this new Ireland would be like to live in. Such thoughts, however, were secondary to the great surge of joy in anticipating the reunion with the loved ones at home, and quite soon each man quietly moved off to commence packing up his belongings. Not that we had so much to pack indeed, but while dawdling over this, one could try to collect one's thoughts, and, oblivious to the babble of voices in the dormitory, dwell upon rapturous mind pictures of the immediate future.

In bed that night it was impossible to sleep until the small hours of the morning. Mumbled conversations and facetious remarks brought an occasional surly command from some earnest wooer of Morpheus to "put a sock in it and go asleep".

Outside, the sentries in the elevated posts still clanged at intervals, "Number one post and a-a-a-all's well", and so on around the camp. How peculiar, I thought, that no one had told them that they need not worry any more about keeping us safely penned within the wire. Tomorrow we would go free, and all the elaborate

organisation of the camp and its garrison, that up to now had seemed to us so permanent, would no longer have a purpose, that is, of course, unless it again became a place of internment for German prisoners. With such thoughts as these closed our last night in Frongoch, and, sleeping lightly, we were all awake to hear the opening notes of Reveille, which brought a mighty cheer from the dormitories.

There was no difficulty getting anyone out of bed that day, despite the cold, for the frost sparkled on the ground outside that morning, and in the wash-house, spartan toilets in the icy water were carried out with more than usual care - we must look our best for the homecoming. How now about these flowing beards that had been carefully cultivated for the past eight months. Pride of possession fought with secret doubts of the ability of those at home to appreciate the achievement of hirsute glory. It resolved itself by those who had good beards retaining them, until their arrival home at any rate, while most of those whose beards were of such a quality as to constitute a doubtful ornament, committed themselves to the ministrations of Jimmy Mallon, the camp barber, so that quite a few strangely unfamiliar bare faces began to appear amongst us during the morning.

I pass over the details of our entrainment, and the rail journey to Holyhead. There was little regret at leaving the camp where so much had happened to us in the months just past. We had not yet come to look upon it as a bit of our past, and I do not remember any head turned to look back at it as we marched out or as the train left the station. Our eyes were on the future and our minds concerned with thoughts of home.

The ship we sailed in from Holyhead was a cross-channel cargo vessel, possibly one of those with very limited passenger accommodation. At any rate, the vast majority of the released prisoners constituting the human cargo had to make themselves as comfortable as possible in the empty spaces of the cargo holds. As the ship was, presumably, specially chartered for the occasion by the British authorities, there being no other cargo aboard, and with no guards now to bother about, we would have been quite happy under much more uncomfortable conditions. I do not remember what time it was when we went aboard, but it must have been late in the evening, and it was much later that night when the ship sailed for Dublin. Being, therefore, pretty tired from the tedious train journey and the rather limited sleep of the previous night, we lay on the floor of the hold in all sorts of postures, and slept heavily until we had almost reached the entrance to Dublin Bay.

Awakening slowly to a consciousness of my bones pressing against the hard floor, I also realised that the place was intolerably stuffy; but above all that, I felt a great sense of hunger. We had eaten little all day except a few sandwiches and the like, and now I remembered that included in my kit bag was a tin of sardines I had packed against just such an emergency. Joe Taylor, Mick Fleming, Jimmy Kelly and I had been using each other as pillows, so I am afraid I rather disturbed the nest when I started to rummage in my kit for the fish. ["What the hell are you at?" - "Can't you be quiet?", came the half-awake grumbles from the others, as they found their critical position of rest disturbed. [Then as they came awake and watched me opening the tin, I invited them to join me in the snack, but whether their appetites were not as keen, or out of consideration for mine, they shook their heads. A few

yards away, standing against a stanchion, I noticed Joe Stanley watching me digging out the little fishes from the tin with my fingers and dropping them into my mouth as I lay against the kit bag. "Will you have some, Joe?" I called over to him, but he gave me a reproachful look as he moved towards the companion-way leading up to the deck. A number of others were also moving upwards, but it was only when I went up myself a little later to explore, that I realised they were all seasick. Apparently the appearance of my sardines had just about finished it for those who had been just on the border line, so I was not so popular with some whom I met on deck when I enquired how they felt.

It was then daylight, and the outlines of the Wicklow mountains could be discerned ahead, although in this grey light of morning the lighthouse beams of Baily, North and South Bulls, and Rockabill still flashed, and the smaller navigation lights twinkled on the buoys marking the entrance to the Liffey.

I felt that I wanted to stand high up on the bow of the ship and watch the land as it appeared to come slowly forward to meet us - to welcome us home. But it was too cold to stand for long, and the cold breeze with the tang of the sea in it was bracing and encouraging to action, so we began a vigorous pacing of the deck while we talked cheerfully of what lay ahead. Even the recent victims of mal-de-mer began to recover their colour and spirits as the ship now reduced speed and began nosing her way up the river.

We were docked at last, and the returning prisoners crowded the rails striving to get some glimpse of the

welcoming crowd on the street beyond the shed, behind which the ship had tied up. Then each man with his bundles and cases of personal belongings, strove to get first to the gangway as it was mounted, in order to be first ashore, while the crowd without were equally impatient to greet us, and pressed insistently against the exit door of the dockshed.

The rest may more easily be imagined than described. We were submerged in a riot of joyous welcome, each of us becoming the object of so much promiscuous handshaking, hugging, and kissing, that we were glad at last to get away. Mick Fleming and I, with his sisters and mine who were there to meet us, and also Jimmy Kelly and Joe Taylor, went to Flemings at 140 Drumcondra Road, where we breakfasted and spent some hours in the enjoyment of our new freedom before I went home to Saucerstown.

The following day I cycled over to "Newbarn" in search of the items I had hidden there on the day of our surrender. There was, indeed, no trace of my knapsack which had contained, amongst other things, my revolver and ammunition, field-glasses, and my camera holding the films I had used at Ashbourne. My sisters who accompanied me on this occasion indicated that they had recognised the hiding place of the knapsack from the diagram I had got smuggled out from Knutsford to them. They had searched for it at the time, also without result, so apparently it had been found by the police or someone else soon after the surrender. My chief regret about this was that the photographs I had taken at Ashbourne were lost. The unfinished film was still in the camera (a vest pocket Kodak) when I hid it in the knapsack, and, as I have never since heard of the pictures, I presume the finder either

did not bother having the film developed, or considered the pictures of no consequence.

My sisters had not, however, followed my diagram correctly regarding the hiding-place of the carbine, and indeed I had to think carefully myself before I felt sure of the spot at this time. However, walking across the field east of the house, I groped in the long grass about the butt of a lone thorn bush, and to my delight grasped the carbine with its bayonet all intact. Of course it was badly rusted, but around the bolt there was a superficial crust of rust which dropped off easily when tapped with the bayonet, and underneath this crust the metal seemed pretty clean and undamaged. The woodwork was very much swollen from the wet, and a rat or something had been gnawing the point of the pistol grip.

Sufficiently elated by my possession of the carbine to forget about the loss of my other property, I cycled the couple of miles home to Saucerstown with the gun openly displayed in my hand. Actually there was little risk of meeting a patrolling R.I.C. man at that hour, but, even if I should, I felt like flaunting it in his face. At home I set immediately to work on the gun, and as there was some suitable ammunition at home which had escaped the raids, I fired a few quite satisfactory test shots within the next day or so.

In the following month or two there was plenty to keep me busy in looking after the work on the farm. My father, with the other sentenced prisoners, was still held in prison in England, and I, therefore, had to do my best to get the work done at home and help ^{my father's} ~~me~~ executor in the administration of ~~his~~ ^{the} affairs of the place.

CHAPTER X.Pages 217 to 234.

Reorganisation of Volunteers and other national bodies - The National Aid - My position at home - a romance in the background - Sinn Fein takes the field in parliamentary elections - Hurleys become weapons of war - Release of sentenced prisoners - More electioneering - Visit from R.I.C. Sergeant to haul down my flag - Death of Tom Ashe in Mountjoy Jail - The Ashe funeral - Further Volunteer reorganisation in Fingal - A turning point in my career is reached.

CHAPTER X.

In the realm of national politics the first six months of 1917 was a period of adjustment and, one might say, of reorientation. The Rising had seemed to be the climax of the national effort when it came. Then followed a short while of despairing apathy, quickly replaced by a dawning realisation that the fires of Dublin did really constitute a Phoenix-like rebirth of the soul of the nation.

As, however, most of the national leaders who had escaped execution after the Rising were either imprisoned or interned, those who began the picking up of the threads of national organisations following the Rising did so with a feeling that their efforts were tentative, and subject to approval or otherwise by the prisoners on the release of the latter. Consequently, on the release of the Frongoch prisoners there was a certain amount of reshuffling in, for instance, I.R.B. and Volunteer Executive Committees, and, to some extent, this was complicated by the fact that the sentenced prisoners were still held in English prisons, amongst whom were practically all of the better known national leaders who survived.

But the march of events had thrown up some new blood, and this was therefore the period when new names began to appear among the names of those already wellknown in the direction of national policy. It was at this time, for instance, that the name of Michael Collins began to gain a significance that was later to develop into his acclamation by the Irish people as the leader upon whom the fate of the nation depended.

Collins had already become known to us in Frongoch, and from what we saw of him there, we had no doubt about his fitness for leadership, but, to the people at home, outside of his own immediate circle of friends, he was then only a name.

A new organisation had come into existence during the period of our absence. This was the National Aid Association, the original purpose of which was to collect money and distribute it to the families of those who had been killed or imprisoned and who were in needy circumstances. The original organisation started, I believe, by Mrs. Tom Clarke, was the "Prisoners' Aid Fund", but this was after a time amalgamated with the parallel organisation, "The National Aid", which was somewhat wider in its scope. Money for these funds poured in generously from the Irish people both at home and in America, and did, in fact, relieve the worst of the distress of families which suffered the loss of their breadwinners in the Rising. No doubt numbers of those who contributed money and gave their help to operating these funds were animated by purely humanitarian motives, but I would say that the majority wished to associate themselves in this way with the beliefs and ideals of the executed leaders. It followed, therefore, that the 'National Aid' became the interim centre of national thought and activity, and, its aims being legitimate or at least tolerable in the eyes of the British authorities, it became the cover organisation for the regeneration of the Volunteer movement.

The position of secretary of the National Aid Association having become vacant early in 1917, it became necessary to appoint a new secretary, and there were a number of candidates for the position. There was, apparently, some discussion by the committee on the question of selecting the most suitable candidate which was resolved by the proposal of Mrs. Wyse-Power that the applicants should submit themselves to a competitive examination. This resulted in Collins being the successful candidate and he was accordingly appointed secretary.

As secretary of the National Aid Association, Collins came directly in touch with people from all parts of Ireland, as well

as Irish sympathisers in England and America, and was thus in a good position to make a correct estimate of the value of the various factors bearing upon the national situation of the time. With such knowledge it then became possible to regroup a number of isolated efforts in both the military and political fields and to formulate something like a co-ordinated plan. Naturally, Collins did not work alone in all this; he had become a member of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. and had, therefore, the powerful support of that body. In men like Dick Mulcahy and Dermot Hegarty he had also good friends and able colleagues, so that by the end of 1917, the general framework of a unified national organisation was in being.

Meanwhile, the released Frongoch prisoners had spread to their homes throughout the land to act as a leaven of the new national spirit in their various districts. There was, naturally, a period of relaxation and merrymaking in which the festive spirit of Christmas was enhanced by the novelty of personal freedom and the atmosphere of lionization with which our friends surrounded us. After a little of this, the hard facts of bread and butter had to be faced. For some, their previous employment had vanished, and for others, their business had to be rebuilt; but in all this there was a grand spirit of friendly co-operation in the people as a whole, so that for many prisoners the apparent setback in their personal affairs was but the prelude to greater success in new spheres.

My own position in this respect was one of waiting for my father's release to clarify my plans for the future. In the meantime, there was a lot of work to do on the farm, so I got down seriously and with a lot of pleasure to ploughing and sowing. My father had appointed his friend and cousin, Edward Lyons, to manage the farm in his absence and, as Lyons lived in the city, I had now to do the work on the spot.

There were no such things as tractors in use then, so that

the ploughing was done by horses, but I enjoyed that season's work as never before, proud of my own ability to get the crop in and manage the place under the financial restraint imposed by the executor. However, I worked hard and looked forward with confidence to my father's approval of my efforts when he might be released eventually.

Perhaps it may be well at this point to give the reader some brief outline of my position in the family at that time, as I think this is necessary in order to understand what followed a year or so later. Our family was a large one; there were ten of us, six boys and four girls, of whom I was the eldest. Naturally, therefore, the education and provision of careers for all was my father's anxious problem. As I had shown a mechanical bent from my earliest years, it was decided, early in 1913, to send me as an engineering apprentice to the firm of William Spence & Son of Cork St., Dublin. Without going into all the details of this, let me say that for a number of reasons I found myself unable to stay with this firm, and so left it after about eighteen months. I loved the work and had learned a lot in the time I was there, and I must say that Spence's was probably the finest engineering works in Dublin at that time. Nevertheless, the atmosphere was uncongenial to the point of antagonism from the time I first went there and, when later my family and personal associations with the national movement was discovered, I suffered the sneers and insults of various members of the staff daily. There were other things that added to this, but the whole effect was to make my every working day something to dread, until I suddenly decided to end it and came home. Father was naturally very disappointed in me and I fear I would not make him appreciate the mental torture I had had to suffer.

This was the spring of 1915, and I was then only eighteen years of age, but realising as I did how I had failed him, I

yet would not under any circumstances go back to the life I had left in Spence's. We had some hard words then, father pointing out how many other members of the family had still to be provided for, but I assured him that I appreciated all he had tried to do for me and that I wanted nothing further from him except to be allowed to earn my keep at home until I could make other arrangements.

Soon afterwards I arranged to get employment as an engine room hand on one of the Cunard liners with the idea of either remaining at sea or of making my living in the U.S.A. Father heard about this when I received the papers to sign from the Shipping Agent, and he opened up the topic one evening when I came in to tea after haymaking.

"What's this I hear about going to sea?" he said to me, so I explained what I had in mind and that I had really meant what I said when I had told him some time previously that I was accepting responsibility for my own future. He pooh-poohed the whole thing and turned it nicely on me by saying that this was no time to be running out of the country which would want all its men very soon for the Rising we both knew was coming.

I was rather relieved in a way, because his attitude towards me seemed to indicate that he had forgiven me for what had gone before. As he said, there was plenty of work to be done at home, both on the farm and in preparation for the Rising, so I worked away, all the more satisfied that now we understood one another better. There was still, however, in the back of my mind the promise I had made to myself, rather than to him, that afterwards, if there was any afterwards for us, I would be no burthen on him, but would do something on my own account, whatever it might be.

Edward Lyons knew of this situation and, I think, judged me much more harshly than my father had done, and so this was

the condition of things at home on my return from Frongoch. My brothers and sisters were away at school except the younger two who were still at home, and the elder sister who helped my mother to manage the house.

Young as I was, I had formed a deep attachment for the girl who had captured my heart about the middle of 1915, and with whom I now shared all my plans. We hoped to marry some day in the vaguely distant future, so I had to figure out some way of earning enough to do this, while I, in the meantime, strove to keep the home farm going in such a way as to repay father something of what I felt I owed him.

During this first six months of 1917, though Volunteer units were reorganised and held regular training parades, this was a rather furtive business. There were very little arms to be got and, there being no immediate objective in view other than keeping Volunteer companies together, it was looked upon by those concerned as more of a gesture of defiance than anything else. The national movement, however, developed a new sphere of activity which occupied the attention of everyone at this stage. This was in the field of purely political action which up to then had been largely in the hands of ^{the} Irish Parliamentary Party (the Redmondites). The Sinn Fein organisation now began to occupy the forefront of the national effort which up to the Rising had been held by the Volunteers.

Arthur Griffith had founded the Sinn Fein movement in 1905 for the purpose of furthering advanced national views by purely political action, but the Irish Parliamentary Party had succeeded in dominating this field up to the Rising, when the revulsion of feeling among the people gave Sinn Fein its chance. Here was the opportunity to give the reorganised Volunteers something to put their hands to, so Sinn Fein Clubs were organised all over the country with the help and assistance of the Volunteers who policed the meetings, did the horse work

of elections and, incidentally, began to regain a confidence in themselves and their organisation. It was, I believe, what I will call this Sinn Fein interlude, that was responsible for the whole national movement, comprising many organisations, becoming known as Sinn Fein, and all nationalists as Sinn Feiners from then on.

I know of course that the misnomer was in use before the Rising by the enemies of the national movement who really did not know what signification attached to the name, but as during 1917 and 1918 all national effort was in connection with political organisation, elections being fought under the banner of Sinn Fein, the name became fixed as a generic term meaning extreme Irish nationalist of any kind.

Sinn Fein had decided to put forward candidates to contest parliamentary vacancies when they occurred on the programme of absenting themselves from the British House of Commons if elected. So, in February 1917, Count George Noble Plunkett was elected as a Sinn Fein M.P. for North Roscommon, and in May following, Joe McGuinness, who was then a prisoner in Lewes (England) Prison, was elected Sinn Fein M.P. for South Longford.

The results of these elections showed clearly how great was the swing over of popular feeling in favour of Sinn Fein as representing extreme Irish nationalism. The situation may have been envisaged by Collins and the other leaders before this point, but now it was obvious that if an all-out effort was made to take advantage of the wave of popular sympathy a strong Sinn Fein party of elected representatives might be achieved at the general elections which were due the following year. No one could be very sanguine about the result of the general election at that stage, however, and it is doubtful if the most hopeful could have foreseen how interim events would help to bring about a veritable landslide in favour of

Sinn Fein by the time the general election would take place in December 1918.

The scarcity of arms among the Volunteers made this organisation little more than a moral force to back the political demands at that time. Still, continuous efforts were being made, both by individuals and the organisation headquarters to rearm the Volunteers, and when one channel became blocked others were explored. Even what arms we had could not now be carried in public because of British proclamations against the carrying of arms, so Volunteers therefore took to parading and carrying out election duties armed only with hurleys carried on their shoulders. These ash sticks used in the national game of hurling could be deadly weapons at close quarters and, early in June 1917, Inspector Mills of the Dublin Metropolitan Police was killed by a Volunteer by a blow of a hurley on the head when he tried to arrest Count Plunkett and others who were speaking at a public meeting in Beresford Place, Dublin.

On 17th June 1917, the sentenced prisoners were released from Lewes and other English prisons, and Dublin gave them a royal welcome on their arrival. Westland Row station and its vicinity were thronged from an early hour to await the arrival of the boat train from Dunlaoghaire, and when it arrived numbers of the prisoners were carried shoulder high by the crowd on to the street to the accompaniment of patriotic songs and rebel slogans.

I hardly knew Father when I first caught sight of him. He had always worn a heavy moustache, but now this had been shorn off and his hair cut to the standard convict clip. I never got quite used to his appearance like this until his hair and moustache had grown again. There was the usual round of visiting friends and relatives with a great air of rejoicing in the days that followed, so that a week or so passed before

anything like a routine of home life was re-established.

I was anxious to show Father around the farm and gain his approval for what I had done since I got home. Also I wanted to talk to him about all that had happened since the Rising and hear his views on the political prospect. All this came in time, not on any particular day, but from time to time within a couple of weeks when I heard him re-state his unshaken faith in the cause of Irish Freedom and his confident belief in the successful outcome of the struggle in our time.

It was never his habit to use superlatives in praise of anything, and so when he said of my work on the farm that "it was not so bad" or that "he had seen worse", I took it as his highest approval of my efforts.

The East Clare election occupied the front of the political stage just then. De Valera, who was one of the newly released prisoners, had been nominated as the Sinn Fein candidate for this parliamentary by-election and, on 11th July, was declared elected M.P. for East Clare by a huge majority.

The election of de Valera in Clare and Wm. Cosgrave in Kilkenny a month later, showed more clearly than ever that popular opinion continued to swing over in favour of Sinn Fein. Even the existing members of the moribund Irish Parliamentary Party were no longer sure of their allegiance as, about this time also, Mr. Larry Ginnell, who sat in the British House of Commons as M.P. for Meath, renounced his connection both with the Irish Parliamentary Party and the British House of Commons; joining the Sinn Fein Party, he became another abstentionist M.P., so that now there were five duly elected members of parliament who refused to recognise the right of the British Parliament to legislate for Ireland and did not take their seats in the British House.

I had some slight opportunity of seeing the conditions elsewhere in Ireland when I visited the Galway Races about the last week of July in that year, 1917. Father had suggested that he and I would cycle down to Galway for the Races and, incidentally, renew acquaintance with some of the Western boys who had been our fellow prisoners. I need not dwell upon the details of that very pleasant trip further than to say that we both met numerous friends of our prison days there and were given a royal reception by them. Discussing all this on our return trip, we had a definite sense of assurance that the spirit of the Rising had indeed permeated the people. In the further stages of the struggle Dublin would not stand alone.

A British proclamation at the beginning of August 1917, which forbade the wearing of military uniforms and the carrying of hurleys led to numerous arrests throughout the country for contravention of this order. About the same time also, a swoop was made upon the principal speakers on the national political platforms throughout the country, so that now a new crop of political prisoners occupied part of Mountjoy Prison in Dublin. Included among these was Thomas Ashe, who had, since his release from Lewes been a very active speaker at political meetings during the Clare elections and in Fingal.

Seemingly, those in the British Government who were the advocates of "stern measures", were in the ascendant at this time and a new phase of repression was beginning. Strangely enough, however, this reappearance of the "mailed fist" but acted as a stimulus to the rank and file of the new Volunteer organisation. Here was something tangible to oppose. Those who had fought were willing to demonstrate again their disregard of personal danger, while those who had not been in action during the Rising were anxious to have the opportunity of proving their courage. Therefore, there was a marked improvement in attendance at Volunteer parades and at every political meeting, sports

fixture or such like, Volunteer units took over the duties of policing these functions, openly flouting the authority of the R.I.C. who might be present, or even intimidating the members of that force to the extent that they were only able to observe the proceedings from afar.

There was indeed very little arrogance about the police in Fingal at this time. Odd individual police might incline to be officious but, on the whole, one might conclude that a remembrance of the Ashbourne fight had given them a wholesome respect for the Volunteers of Fingal. So, while they tried to carry out their instructions regarding the enforcement of the British edicts issued from time to time, they also seemed to be anxious to avoid any open clash with the Volunteers.

An example of this attitude of the local R.I.C. comes to my mind, though it occurred a little earlier in that year, before the release of the sentenced prisoners from Lewes. It was the first anniversary of the Rising, that is, Easter 1917. On Easter Sunday morning I had planted a flag, the Irish tricolour, on a small pole on the lawn outside our house at Saucerstown. This flag was clearly visible from the public road and, apparently, someone had reported its presence to the R.I.C. barracks in Swords. A few days later the flag still flew there and I was in the house when Sergeant O'Reilly of Swords arrived on a bicycle. He told me that the presence of this flag had been reported to the authorities and that he had been ordered to remove it. Anticipating my refusal to allow its removal, he went on to say that his mission had nothing to do with his personal feelings in the matter. He respected my family, he said, and did not want any of us involved in any trouble, but asked me to consider his position. If he did not take some action to have the flag removed, he himself would be removed and possibly dismissed from the service, and force would be used to remove the flag. We discussed the situation in this way for

some time, at the end of which he made another appeal to me, on the grounds that as the flag had been flying for some days now, I could with all honour take it down if only to keep it for another occasion. I had some regard for Reilly, who had never been an officious policeman and, appreciating his dilemma, I agreed to accede to his request by taking the flag indoors. He thanked me for meeting his wishes in the matter and appeared vastly relieved as he departed, leaving me to wonder whether or not I had behaved as I should in the incident. I felt that I had pandered to expediency in agreeing to remove the flag. If it had been someone other than Sergeant Reilly who had come to command rather than request the removal of the flag, it would have been easy to oppose him even by force, but Reilly had made some effort to save my face and at the same time threw his troubles upon my shoulders.

While, perhaps, the attitude of Sergeant Reilly towards the resurgent national movement was not typical of the R.I.C. as a whole, yet I believe there were a good many of them like him. They had a secret sympathy with the national ideals, but felt that the fulfilment of these ideals was impractical. They were economically tied to the careers they had taken up, but hated the duty of political espionage and coercive action which such career imposed upon them.

From what I have learned since then, I believe that Mick Collins at that time, or soon afterwards, considered that it was possible to win over the R.I.C. as a body to the national cause and that it was for this reason the shooting of the police at Solohead and Knocklong through independent action of the Tipperary Volunteers was considered contrary to national policy at the time by the Volunteer Headquarters. Of course, after the Solohead ambush events followed each other in a fairly rapid sequence, so that whatever Collins and the other members of the G.H.Q. staff may have thought of that affair and its effect on the possibility

of inducing large-scale defections in the R.I.C., policy had then to be adjusted to meet the new war situation.

Returning, however, to the sequence of my story; the next event of national importance, which also had a local connection, was the death of Tomás Aghas (Thomas Ashe) on hunger-strike in Mountjoy Prison. About the middle of September 1917, the political prisoners in Mountjoy Prison had demanded to be treated as political prisoners and, on this demand being refused by the authorities, they declared a hunger strike as a solemn protest against the attempt of the British authorities to brand them and treat them as common criminals. The hunger strike had been in progress for about a week and, of course, national propagandists were making the most of it by ensuring that the conditions of the prisoners received wide publicity, both at home and abroad. As already noted, however, the "stern measures" junta held sway just then in Government circles, so forcible feeding of the hunger-strikers was resorted to, with the result that Ashe was killed in the process.

Apparently what happened was that Ashe protested against being forcibly fed and possibly struggled to prevent the tube being passed down his throat to the stomach. Whatever the proximate cause, however, the fact was that the tube was pushed down the windpipe so that the food, soup, or whatever it was that was poured into the tube flooded the lungs and thereby caused his death by asphyxiation.

Ashe was rushed immediately to the Mater Hospital, which is just across the road from the prison, but he was already dead when he reached there; he was probably dead before leaving the forcible feeding chair in the prison.

Ashe's death, tragic though it was, became another milestone in the march to freedom. The national leaders

determined to make full use of the occurrence to further the cause for which he had died. This occurrence was a tactical blunder on the part of the British authorities, which the Irish leaders were bound to exploit to the full; while, on the other hand, I fancy that the more moderate elements in the British Councils were not slow to point out this to their colleagues whose policy was responsible for the situation. This latter, however, is pure surmise on my part.

I learned of Ashe's death on the same evening, 25th Sept. 1917, and, having got in touch with some of the Fingal Volunteers and also the Dublin Brigade staff, it was arranged that a uniformed guard of honour of his old Fingal Battalion should be mounted over his body in the Mater Hospital pending further arrangements. The nuns and other members of the hospital staff were most co-operative, and so I, with about ten or twelve other Fingallians who could still boast of the possession of Volunteer uniform, mounted guard that night over the body of our dead commander. This also was dressed in the uniform he had so proudly worn at Ashbourne.

There was some difficulty in getting a sufficient number of uniformed men from Fingal to provide for guard reliefs, and, in any case, the city battalions were anxious to have the honour of supplying guards, so when the body was removed from the hospital to the City Hall on the evening of 20th, the guard of honour there was augmented by detachments from all of the four city battalions.

Ashe was no longer merely the commandant of the Fingal Volunteers. He had joined the ranks of the immortals and his name was written on the national escutcheon. The manner of his death shocked the feelings of large numbers of people who up to then had little sympathy with the national cause, while those who had already had some national leanings threw caution to the winds in their resentment of the outrage.

As the body lay in state in the City Hall, I was reminded of the previous lying in state where I had also been present as a member of the guard of honour. The lying-in-state and the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa in 1915 had been such an active stimulus to national thought and feeling that it, no doubt, paved the way for the Rising of 1916.

Here then was another such occasion, but in conditions where considerable progress had already been made in the development of a national consciousness. As Rossa's dead body had served to advance the Fenian ideals for which he had lived, even by one step, would not the body of Ashe move the people to yet another effort to reach the goal of freedom.

Thousands of people from city and country came to the City Hall to view the body of the latest martyr and to pay their respects. I am sure that amongst them were many who, coming for the satisfaction of their idle curiosity, went away convinced that a cause which claimed the adherence of so many reputable people, and where death was so readily accepted, was worthy of their respect, if not their active co-operation.

The public funeral which took place from the City Hall to Glasnevin Cemetery on Sunday 30th September 1917, was a re-staging of the O'Donovan Rossa funeral in its effect.

For the first time since the Rising, uniformed and armed Volunteers paraded through the streets of Dublin, while Trades Guilds and social organisations helped to swell the procession. So great were the numbers that the British authorities hesitated to take any action further than the posting of parties of police here and there along the route of march. These police, however, did not attempt to interfere with the procession on the way to the cemetery, though they did attempt to bar the way of the Volunteers on the return march.

The position must have been rather embarrassing to the

Dublin Castle authorities who on the one hand felt bound to enforce the British edict banning the wearing of uniforms and the carrying of arms, while on the other, it was manifestly impossible to take any effective action against such numbers without the employment of considerable military force.

It was not the policy of the Volunteers to invite a clash of arms just then. Volunteer arms were much too scarce to be really effective and the reorganised movement was still in its infancy. Yet the display of moral force, constituted by the public defiance of the British orders, and the numbers of the people who signified their attachment to the national cause by following the coffin of the dead leader, was a significant milestone in the long road to freedom.

As one of those who formed the guard of honour marching beside the hearse, I could not see the whole procession at any point, but from what I was told at the time, I believe that the procession was at least a mile long and that the groups of trades guilds and suchlike towards the end of the procession were unable to reach the cemetery grounds, which were densely packed before they could arrive.

A firing party rendered military honours at the graveside and the oration, if it might be called such, was given by Mick Collins. Collins merely spoke a few sentences to the effect that "the volleys just fired are the most fitting tribute to a dead soldier of Ireland" and that he did not propose to make any further speech on the occasion.

There was some apprehension at this point that the British authorities might try to disarm and arrest the firing party as some police parties had tried to force their way into the cemetery but had so far been prevented by Volunteer guards at the gates. The firing party, therefore, departed secretly and left the cemetery by a back way, while the remaining Volunteer

units formed up to march back to the city. Finding their route barred by a strong cordon of police at Binn's Bridge, they did not attempt to force a way through, but wheeling left down Whitworth Road, dispersed to their respective battalion areas.

From the beginning of the Volunteer reorganisation in Fingal, following the release of the prisoners up to the time of Ashe's death, the Fingal companies still constituted the 5th Battalion of the Dublin Brigade, but the battalion organisation was only nominal. Naturally, we were unlikely to place anyone else in Ashe's shoes while he lived, but on the other hand, he had, since his release in June, been seldom in Fingal for more than a day or two at a time until his arrest in August. The result of this was that the companies operated up to about the end of September as more or less independent units, there being no battalion staff formally appointed until about that time. Following the Ashe funeral, however, a meeting of the commanders of the companies elected Michael Lynch of Dublin as the battalion commander.

Lynch, who had previously been an officer of the 4th Battalion, and whom we knew as our organist in Knutsford, had, just before this time, been engaged in organising a new company in Finglas. Finglas is within the Fingallian territory, but no Volunteer unit had existed there up to that time. Lynch had gone out there from the city and organised this new company which then became added to the Fingal Battalion with Lynch (?) as the battalion commander in succession to Ashe.

At that time I was still a lieutenant of the Swords Company though acting as the company commander until Dick Coleman's release in June. At the latter end of that year I was rather preoccupied by schemes for my future career. It was no longer necessary for me to stay at home, and I was tremendously anxious to begin something for myself. Having then reached the age of twenty, I had my dreams of marriage and a home of my own, and with this aim I wondered how

to begin the task I had set myself. I had no money, nor had my father, as I knew the farm was considerably in debt, so I felt that I must depend entirely upon my own ability with the hope that luck would aid me. I did not mention any of these thoughts to my father then, but I'm sure he guessed something of what was going on in my head though he said nothing. Dot was a great favourite of his, and as he watched us going around together on all possible opportunities, it did not need much perspicuity to see in what directions my ambitions lay.

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CHAPTER XI.

Archie Heron from Belfast, had been a Volunteer in Belfast before the Rising. Having left his home in that city to take part in the Rising, which, however, proved abortive in the northern area, he came to Dublin and did not return to his native place. When I returned from Frongoch I had found him staying as a more or less permanent guest with my friends, the Flemings of Drumcondra. He had got a job as a shop assistant in the hardware store of Messrs. Gleeson O'Dea & Co. of Christchurch Place, and was otherwise active in Volunteer circles in Dublin in connection with the Volunteer reorganisation. Being also a member of the I.R.B. he was accepted by the provisional Headquarters Staff and acted as secretary of the first Volunteer Convention held after the Rising at Barry's Hotel in Gardiner's Place, Dublin, about the beginning of December 1916, and, I think, was also present at the subsequent convention held at Croke Park in October 1917.

As I was a frequent visitor to Fleming's, it followed that I got to know Heron pretty well. In fact, my two sisters Kathleen and Eiblin and the two Fleming girls, Dot and Kitty, with Mick Fleming, Tom Cotter, Heron and I, went around together to all kinds of ceilis and expeditions of the kind.

Discussing my problems with Heron, it was he who suggested to me that I might capitalise my talents in the mechanical line by starting a small business to deal chiefly with minor repairs. In O'Dea's shop, where he worked, he said that there were dozens of items of household machines, implements and fittings coming in daily for small repairs, and that the firm found its greatest difficulty in finding anyone to do such work satisfactorily. We discussed this prospect from every angle, estimating the various possibilities in it and, finally

to prove what he said, he promised to bring me some items to try my hand on, when, if I was satisfied that there was a future in it, we might go into partnership in opening a business.

From what small things large things grow, though not always in the direction we intend! The firm thus casually established became in due course the first I.R.A. bomb factory that made percussion grenades of the Mills type. There were, of course, a number of other factors combining in the lead up to this culminating point, but this was the ground work, the focal point at which the other influences should in due course meet.

The first few jobs we got in this way, I carried out at home in Saucerstown with the limited tools and facilities available there, and being then satisfied that the work afforded an opportunity, we next acquired the use of an backyard premises at 132 Drumcondra Road, Dublin. This was the rear of a business house then closed, which belonged to the Brothers Fleming, who allowed us to make use of the yard and sheds without charge until we got into a position to improve our business. Heron had no money, and what few pounds I could scrape together went to buy some small tools and light equipment. So Archie kept the accounts and fished around for work which we got chiefly from Gleeson O'Dea's and from Henshaw's, an adjoining hardware establishment. I did all the work without assistance except what Archie could give when he got home in the evenings and taking into account the small expenses we had, we found in a short time that the business showed enough profit to warrant expansion.

~~At first I stayed at Fleming's, but as they would not accept payment for my keep there, I soon found lodgings in the North Strand where I stayed for the following six months or so.~~
per one

(Insert at X, end of page 233.)

At first I stayed at Flemings, but as they would not accept payment for my keep there, Archie Heron introduced me to Mrs. James Connolly, the widow of the executed Leader, who lived at the time at St. Annes Rd. Drumcondra, and who kept one or two lodgers. I stayed at Connollys for a couple of months, but as they really had no room in the rather small house, I got alternative accomadation in the Ballybough district where I stayed for the following few months.

While I was staying at Connollys I made the acquaintance of a rather strange character who also stayed a while there, and with whom in fact I had to share my bed while he stayed. This was a man named Coates, who I understood to be an Englishman, but was never quite sure about his origin. He claimed to be a Socialist, a creed of which we understood nothing at the time, and preached in a quiet sort of way on the 'enlightened doctrine of Karl Marx'. Once I was invited by Heron to attend a lecture in the Trades Hall, Capol St., and there with some friends we heard, what I would now recognise as a propaganda speech, expounding the 'glories of the Communist State' under the name of Socialism.

We were not impressed by the lecture or the lecturer and, when some ^{time} ~~days~~ later, ~~perhaps~~ probably the following day Coates asked me what I thought of his lecture, I told him I thought it was a lot of rubbish, or something to that effect. Our relationship thereafter was somewhat strained though we still occupied the same bed, and I was glad to see the last of him when he left to go to England. I had changed my 'Digs' by the time he returned as I suppose he did.

The name of this man, Coates, came again to my notice recently in the course of a talk I had with Dr. Patrick McCartan. In the course of his official report on his mission to Russia in 1931 for the recognition of the Irish Republic, Dr. McCartan mentions the name Coates as given to him by Tchecherin, the Soviet Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who stated that Coates was ^{or had been} an accredited Russian Agent in Ireland.

Working early and late, I was almost entirely absorbed by my work and had, therefore, little time left to devote to Volunteer activities. I think it was about the end of 1917 or the beginning of 1918 that Heron and I first launched into business, but at any rate it was still the Spring of 1918, probably about April or May, that we located a vacant premises at 198 Farnell St. which we rented and put the sign "Heron & Lawless" over the door. We had found, just before this, that cycle repairs together with the sale of bicycles and their accessories paid better than the other work we did. Consequently, Farnell St. became a bicycle shop primarily, though I still handled any other repair work that came along. To be candid, I'm afraid I was always more interested in the work itself than the commercial value of it, with the result that I often devoted more time and pains to a job I was interested in than to work of more commercial value. I was adding to my knowledge daily by a variety of work, with the result that I preferred experimental work and processes to the methods and work that were pure routine.

Soon Heron left his employment with O'Dea's and came to devote his time to the business, but as he had little mechanical knowledge or aptitude, his work confined itself to sales, commercial contacts and bookkeeping. In consequence, we had to employ an assistant to help me with the work, and we also took on a boy to run messages and keep the place clean. The latter was Christy Reilly, a typical Dublin boy, who said little, did his work well, and had a lot more brains than anyone gave him credit for at first. Reilly, at a later stage, became one of the munitions staff and served in that capacity up to the Truce in 1921.

At the risk of being tedious I must give here some further details of the shop at 198 Farnell St., because later this became a very important munition factory and suffered two raids before it ceased to function as such. Some time

before we rented the shop from a man named Yule, the latter had used the place as a small brass foundry which manufactured plumbing fittings and the like. The foundry was in the basement, under the shop, and was a single compartment which ran back under the small workshop at the rear of the shop. There was a stairway leading from the shop down to the basement, and to a small outside yard, but there was no back entrance to the premises. All entry and exit was, therefore, through the shop door on to Parnell St. The workshop behind the shop was screened off from the public view from the shop by a light wooden partition near the back of the shop, and was raised above the floor level of the shop, so that there were a couple of steps leading up to it. Daylight was admitted by a couple of fixed skylights and otherwise the place was lit by electricity.

Having rigged up a blacksmith's forge in the basement, we tried our hands at the manufacture of such simple forged items as large door and gate bolts, cycle carriers and such things, sometimes doing the work on my own and at others getting the part time services of a smith at night. Owing to the war conditions existing at the time, all kinds of manufactured items of this kind were in short supply, and so we were well on the way to building up a good business though our total capital in the beginning was only £100 overdraft which my father and Batt O'Connor guaranteed to the bank.

At the back of the basement compartment was the remains of the old furnace, or rather a pair of them, which raised thoughts of my experience of such work in Spence's during my apprentice days. It would need money of course to rehabilitate these, and still more money to get together all the paraphernalia of a foundry, but the wishful thought never left my head, and I hoped to be able to do something about this sooner or later.

Meanwhile, I had been somewhat out of touch with the

Volunteer Company in Swords to which I was still nominally attached, though Heron had, through the fact that he was associated with Mick Lynch in the reorganisation, now become Lynch's chief staff officer in Fingal.

At the Volunteer Convention in Croke Park at the end of October 1917, Mick Collins was appointed Director of Organisation and soon afterwards some activity was evident in a regroupment of units and the creation of new formations. A certain amount of this was necessary to get over awkward administrative problems that had grown up, but also it provided scope for the building of new units. It was, therefore, about the beginning of 1918 when the Fingal Volunteers, hitherto constituted as a battalion of the Dublin Brigade, became an independent brigade known as the Fingal Brigade, and an effort was begun to build the existing companies up to battalion strength by the raising of new companies. Mick Lynch became the brigade commander and for a while Archie Heron acted as the brigade adjutant. Both of these men were actively engaged during the first few months of 1918 in attending meetings throughout Fingal held for the purpose of Volunteer recruiting.

As already mentioned, I was then nominally attached to the Swords Company, but my work precluded my constant attendance there and I was also loosely connected with the Dublin Brigade Staff. When, therefore, a call for Volunteers went around the Dublin Brigade, to go up to South Armagh, I was one of those who elected to go on this job in company with a number drawn from all the city units. There were, I think, two or three others from Fingal, but mainly the party of between 200 and 300 men was drawn from the city units.

This was at the end of January 1918, when Dr. Patrick McCartan was contesting the parliamentary by-election in South Armagh as the Sinn Fein candidate. The winning of these elections was a matter of high importance in the national programme, and there had been indications in South Armagh,

where both Unionist and Irish Parliamentary Party voting power was strong, that methods of organised intimidation were being, and would be used, to prevent the electorate giving its support to the Sinn Féin candidate. In these circumstances it was decided to send a body of Volunteers from Dublin into the constituency for the purpose of keeping order on polling day, and of lending a moral support to the national element there.

The party, under the command of the O/C. Dublin Brigade, Dick McKee, travelled by train to Newry on the day before polling day, which was February 1st, and there we were accommodated for the night in a large store in the middle of the town. We were joined at Newry by a party of Volunteers from Clare and Limerick under the leadership of Michael Brennan, so that the party was now between 300 and 400 strong. Some were armed with hurleys, notwithstanding the ban on the carrying of these weapons, but the rest carried stout sticks of one kind or another. A few were armed with revolvers, though this was not apparent as such weapons were carried in a concealed fashion. Mainly we were a moral force and as such were, I think, very effective in discouraging any thoughts among our opponents of using hoodlum methods against the Sinn Féin candidate. For example, the particular party I was with had been detailed to take up a position near the village of Claudy Milton and overlooking the polling booth. There we were in a position to take any action the situation might demand if any rough-house business began.

There were two or three R.I.C. men standing around the polling booth who ignored our presence as we did theirs. We believed that if any rowdyism began their action would be directed against us rather than against the instigators. However, everything seemed peaceful and orderly during the morning, and we began to feel that the danger to be feared in

this election had been much exaggerated. We were just finishing a midday meal of tea and sandwiches when Harry Boland arrived on the scene with a party similar to ours which he had brought with him from an adjoining village. He told us that he had received information that arrangements were being made by a large body of Unionists (Ulster Volunteer elements) to attack the Volunteers and Sinn Féin agents at Newtownhamilton, about five miles away. As there did not seem to be any call for our continued presence in Claudy Milton, our party, therefore, joined the others to begin a five mile forced march to Newtownhamilton, which we did in less than an hour.

There was a considerable air of tension in the town when we arrived, and posted at strategic points about the town we waited the attack which, however, did not materialise. There was, in fact, no disorder anywhere during the election which, I believe, was due to the presence of the Volunteers, and though in this case the Sinn Féin candidate was defeated by the Parliamentary candidate, Mr. Donnelly, the prestige of Sinn Féin was rather increased than otherwise by the demonstration of organised strength shown by the Volunteers.

A new factor which had entered the political arena in the early months of 1918 was the British National Military Service (Conscription) Bill which was then before the British House of Commons. The likelihood of this Act being made applicable to Ireland was a common topic of conversation on all sides, public opinion in Ireland being almost unanimous in condemning it. The Volunteer attitude in the matter was simply that we denied the right of England to legislate for our country in any way, and that an attempt to impose conscription would be treated as a declaration of war upon the Irish people.

The Volunteer armament was very poor, of course, but we felt that the solid determination of the whole people to resist the imposition of this Act would make its practical application impossible, and we felt confident of being able to add to our armament in the process, by the capture of enemy arms.

The Volunteer organisation became, therefore, ever more popular with the mass of the people as the conscription crisis approached. Men who up to then had sneered at all the national organisations and affected a mild contempt for the national ideals were among those who now flocked into the newly-formed Volunteer companies to begin training for the struggle they feared must come.

One of the new Volunteer companies formed at this time in the Fingal Brigade area was at Balgriffin, near Coolock, Co. Dublin. The brigade commander asked me to take over the organising and training of this unit as I was then living in the city and Balgriffin was within easy reach by cycle. So, for the whole of that summer of 1918, my energies were devoted to the initial training of the men from Balgriffin, Kinsaley and the surrounding district who went to form the Balgriffin company. The men who were later appointed as the officers of the company and who gave me most help in the original organisation and training of it were Mick Farnan, Billy McLernon and John McKenna; the two first named served at a later date as officers of the National Army in the civil war period.

The problem of obtaining arms of any kind was a serious one at this time. The Volunteers as a whole had progressed beyond the stage when any of them believed that men armed with pikes or such obsolete weapons could stand a moment against modern firearms. But the amount of arms obtainable by devious methods was only a mere trickle in comparison to the numbers of men to be armed, and so thoughts were turned to exploring the possibilities of manufacturing bombs on a big scale.

The first definite move on this, that came to my notice, was when sometime about July 1918, Archie Heron informed me that Mick Lynch had discussed with him the matter of making bombs, and that it had been decided to employ a man on this work right away. The only difficulty was to find a suitable place for him to work, where the matter of regular supplies of material would not occasion suspicion. Heron thought that our premises would suit if I would agree. I discussed this later with Lynch, who told me that he had been appointed Director of Munitions on the G.H.Q. Staff, and that he was anxious to get going at once in turning out a type of bomb that would need no expensive plant or highly skilled staff to produce, and he wanted these in large quantities.

It was in these circumstances that Mathew Gahan began work at our workshop in 198 Parnell St., sawing off four inch lengths of one and a half inch gun barrel (steel piping), notching these longitudinally and circumferentially with a hacksaw, closing each end with a screwed plug and drilling one of these plugs to take a fuse. It was the crudest form of a bomb and little removed from the cocoa tins we had used in 1916. As the work went on I became more and more convinced that something better would have to be tried, and I tried to gain support for my idea that the old foundry in our basement could be got into working order for this work if a small part of the money now being spent on the gun barrel bombs could be diverted to this work. Lynch thought my idea was a bit over-ambitious I suppose he did not at the time understand a lot of the technicalities involved and was, therefore, inclined to doubt my assurance that the project was well within the limits of practical application.

However, I believe he did mention the matter to Dick McKee, the O/C. Dublin Brigade, because a little later when I had outlined my proposals to George Plunkett, the letter went to

see McKee about it and on his return he told me that McKee was keenly interested and, I think, mentioned that Lynch had said something about this to him already.

Both George Plunkett and his brother Jack, who were frequent visitors to the shop, had a mechanical or scientific turn of mind, and expressed keen interest in my proposals which they understood and appreciated as quite feasible. I believe it was Georg Plunkett who convinced McKee that this proposition was sound and should be proceeded with at once; but at any rate it was he who accompanied Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy to the shop in Parnell St. one day where we had a full discussion on the whole business. I had not met Peadar Clancy before and he did not say very much during the talk. He had been appointed quartermaster of the Dublin Brigade some short time previous to this and it was in this capacity that McKee brought him along, so that he would be familiar with any commitments made on the spot.

McKee was already familiar with the general outline of the scheme and it only remained for me to confirm the facts and elaborate some details. George Plunkett was an enthusiastic supporter of the scheme and urged that immediate steps be taken to put it into operation, so I then told McKee that if he could find the money to foot the bill, work could begin right away to get the foundry into working order. I gave him some kind of a round figure estimate for this which was, of course, just a rough guess, and on a further discussion on the question of staff, he said that he would deal with this end of it, being in a position to locate and secure the services of the best and most reliable men.

I never knew whether McKee acted in this matter as O/C. Dublin Brigade, or on behalf of G.H.Q. As he left me that day, he said that he would send down Rory O'Connor, who was then the ^{assistant} City Engineer and who held the post of Director of

Engineering on the Volunteer General Staff, to examine the premises and give his technical opinion on the proposition,

A day or so later Rory O'Connor called to the shop and introduced himself to me with the remark that McKee had asked him to examine the premises, particularly to ascertain the feasibility of putting the furnace into working order. Apparently they had entertained some doubts as to whether the chimney flue, originally designed for ordinary domestic use, would stand the high temperature it might be subjected to in carrying off the gases from an iron melting furnace. This was the first time I had met Rory O'Connor, though I had heard of him, and knew that he was a qualified civil engineer and was so employed by the Dublin Corporation. He struck me as peculiarly ~~as~~ solemn and unsmiling, one might say lugubrious, and did not appear to listen to what I said when I began to explain the details of what I considered as my plan for a bomb factory. Taking him down to the basement, he cut short whatever I was telling him by asking where the furnace was and said he wanted to examine this. The furnace was in a rather dark corner at the back of the basement room, and I warned him that the foot grating which should cover the draught pit in front of the furnaces was missing, and went to look for lamp or candle to show him the way. But, disregarding my warning, he walked right over in the dark and fell head foremost into the pit. Having helped him out of this, we found that the only serious injury was to his dignity, and Heron and I had a quiet snigger behind his back.

For all this, O'Connor must have made a favourable report on his inspection, because, within the next few days, George Flunkett called in to tell me that arrangements were being made to go ahead with the work, and about a week later Matt Furlong arrived to begin getting the place ready.

I had never met Furlong until then, and I think it was Mick Lynch that brought him along and introduced him to me. Matt had apparently been instructed before he came to me as to the nature and scope of his work there, but I think he did not quite know where I fitted into the picture. This, however, is merely my surmise, as he was naturally a very reserved sort of fellow, but for a short time, a few weeks or so, he seemed almost resentful of my efforts to help and not inclined to welcome my suggestions made from time to time on details of the work. However, this odd feeling had passed away by the time the new furnaces had begun to take shape and the staff, which had now been augmented by the arrival of Tom Young and Sean O'Sullivan, worked earnestly and happily together as the fitting up of the factory progressed. ~~Scott~~^{Padely} McHugh (then under the name of Sean Kiernan) joined the staff a little later. Technical advice on the design and construction of the foundry was given by Tom Young's father, who was at that time in charge of the foundry in the engineering branch of the Dublin College of Science. Tom Young himself was a moulder by trade and I remember going with him one day to the College of Science where his father explained in detail the advantages of the steel cased furnaces in use there. We took the dimensions and detail of construction from there, and the pair of furnaces eventually installed in the Farnell St. shop were, therefore, faithful copies of those in use at the College.

A five inch screw cutting lathe of German make with attached motor was acquired through the efforts of George Plunkett from Messrs. Ganter, the watchmakers of George's St. This tool had been purchased or hired by the British authorities for war munition in the Shell Factory in Parkgate Street, and its return was at this time offered to Ganter's. Matt Furlong had worked at one time as a turner in the munition factory and knew this lathe which was a beautiful tool. So its purchase was effected.

Another motor, some shafting, a grinder and all the other paraphernalia were rapidly acquired or built on the spot and, before the end of 1916, we had made the first bomb castings and had got into systematic production of these weapons.

Some details of these bombs may be of interest as an historic record: I believe the actual design of the bomb was worked out by the G.H.Q. Engineering staff in accordance with the limitations of our plant and the only available high explosive which was gelnite. So, while the bomb followed in general principle the design of the 'Mills' bomb, it was slightly smaller in the body and had the striker mechanism projecting from the neck instead of enclosed by the body, as in the 'Mills'. It was of serrated cast iron and had no base plug or filler plug, the explosive being loaded through the screwed neck opening which was then closed by the brass fitting carrying the firing set. To avoid corrosion of the detonator by the nitro-glycerine of the gelnite, a piece of glass tubing was set in the middle of the explosive charge to keep the copper case of the detonator out of contact with it, the top of the explosive outside the edge of the glass tube being sealed with wax.

The firing set consisted of a brass casting screwed to fit the neck of the iron bomb case, and bored to carry the striker pin and its spiral spring. The lower end of this bore had the anvil carrying the percussion cap screwed into it, and at the upper end the firing pin projected in the cocked position, to be held by the trigger handle which automatically released it on throwing.

The percussion cap was a .22 rim fire cartridge emptied of its ordinary contents except for the fulminate mixture in its base, and drilled with a small vent hole in the middle of the base. This cap fitted to the anvil under the striker head had a length of time fuse pushed into it from below, the other

end of which carried the detonator.

As there was no bend in the fuse, such as is found in the 'Mills' bomb, it will be seen, therefore, that there was some risk of an accidental flash straight through from the cap to the detonator, and I believe this happened on a few occasions where these bombs were used. However, we did not find this out until afterwards, and later an improved type of bomb was made which was somewhat bigger and heavier but safer to use.

I should mention that although the bomb cases and fittings were made at the Parnell St. factory, they were loaded elsewhere. The assembled bombs without explosives were removed each evening, or alternate evening, by the members of the staff who hung them about their persons on a kind of harness covered by a greatcoat. Later, as the production increased, the output was removed to the dump at intervals by a Volunteer named Chris Healy who kept a pony and cart for legitimate hire work. This man also brought our supplies of foundry coke, so that the secrecy of our work was not endangered by any necessity to allow outsiders on the premises.

Sudden police or military raids had not then become such a common occurrence as they did later, but the likelihood of such a swoop was always there and we had, therefore, to make some provision against it. To bore an emergency exit into a neighbouring premises would be easy enough, but could not be done without exciting suspicion amongst the curious, and so we decided against this, but I fixed up a signal light in the foundry, the switch of which was upstairs in my workshop at the back of the shop. In addition I fitted a Yale lock on the door leading downstairs from the shop, and this door was kept locked at all times while the staff were at work below, the key being kept in my pocket. The other provision against a search raid was to excavate a cavern or receptacle in the

earthen floor under the forge bellows which would be capable of containing six or seven dozen bombs and suchlike incriminating items. This hole in the floor was covered by a steel plate, on top of which about a foot deep of the loose dry earth of the floor rested. To open, fill and re-cover the hiding place would take only a matter of minutes and we counted on the alarm signal light providing enough time for this. The earthen floor being loose and dry and strewn with moulding sand would show no sign of recent disturbance, and anyhow the hole was in a rather dark corner.

When work on the bomb factory began I got instructions from Dick McKee and from Mick Lynch that neither myself nor Heron or any of the staff would in future attend Volunteer parades or identify ourselves publicly in any way with Volunteer or other national activities. This was, of course, to avoid attracting unwanted attention to our real activities, but it embarrassed me quite a bit, as just before the famous December elections of 1918 I had bought a Ford car which I ran for hire, and the services of myself and the car were in constant demand for Volunteer and political activities.

My father had been arrested at the time of the notorious "German Plot" round-up in May 1918, and was still in Usk Prison in England. His letters to me, though they could ^{not} speak openly through the prison censor, showed that he and his comrades there were fairly well acquainted with the march of events at home. He, in common with a number of other prisoners, had been nominated as a Sinn Fein candidate in the December 1918 parliamentary election. Standing for one of the North County Dublin constituencies he was elected by a large majority as was also the other Sinn Fein candidate in that area, Jim Derham of Balbriggan. So Fingal had now two representatives in the first Dail Eireann which was formally constituted as the parliament of the Irish Republic following the elections.

Some time before the elections Father had written to me from Usk Prison to suggest that I should buy a motor car if I could get one at a reasonable price and telling me that he had instructed his executor, Ed. Lyons, to back the necessary overdraft in the bank for this purpose. He felt that an extreme effort should be made to win this election for Sinn Fein and thought that a further mortgage on his property was justified by the necessity. I suppose he had the idea that I would in this way represent his personal effort in the election by bringing around speakers to meetings, carrying voters to the poll and suchlike activity. Thus, my first car was bought - a 1914 model Ford with a pretentious coach-built touring body. Although nearly five years old, it was considered reasonably cheap at £220, as the war conditions had enhanced the value of secondhand cars owing to the scarcity of new ones.

After the elections I had still to recover the purchase price of the car, which I aimed to do by private hire work, and naturally my car was in demand from then on whenever the use of a car was required for Volunteer work of a special nature.

Apparently at this time everyone concerned was very confident about the assured secrecy of operations at the Parnell St. factory, and so no objections were raised to my participation in the election work, or to my later engagements with the car on Volunteer missions. The knowledge I acquired later gives, I suppose, the probable reason for this. Collins had by that time established his intelligence system within the walls of Dublin Castle and so felt assured that he would be advised by his agents if any suspicion fell upon any particular person or place of importance.

Collins himself had often called to the shop in Parnell St. in the earlier months of the career of that establishment to leave his bicycle for repairs or to collect it, but my

contact with him in the later stage was through his aide-de-camp, Joe O'Reilly, who was a great friend of mine and who called to the shop almost daily.

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Collins knew I had the car/Reilly to me on a couple of occasions to collect parcels going by train to or from the country, but following de Valera's escape from Lincoln Prison in England on 3rd February 1919, Reilly called to me to go to Clondalkin Monastery where Dev had arrived and to bring him into the city. We picked up Dev. at the Monastery as soon as it was reasonably dark and brought him into the city without incident.

I mention this matter because, 'as I learned in later years, the raid upon Collinstown Aerodrome was postponed by Collins until Dev. was got safely home and under cover. It seems that the raid had been originally planned for somewhere about this date, but Collins feared that the inevitable searches and holding up of traffic by military and police following the raid might possibly collect Dev. in the net and his recapture would injure our prestige.

It was early in March 1919, that Mick Lynch came in to me one day to tell me that a large scale raid on Collinstown Aerodrome had been planned and that he had the job of providing the necessary transport for the raiding party and for the removal of the booty of arms and ammunition it was hoped to get there. He had already secured a number of cars and drivers, but wanted some who knew the country thereabouts, so he asked me if I would go on the job with my car and said he would get Vincent Purfield of Balbriggan, and another officer of the Fingal Brigade as well. Vincent also had a Ford car and was familiar with the country. Some time later Lynch called to me again to say that the raid would take place on the night of the 19th March and on that night I was to

report to a house in Farnell Square, No. 46 I think it was, where I would get final instructions from Dick McKee. Somewhere about 10 o'clock on the night of the 19th I reported with the car and armed with my revolver to the Farnell Square rendezvous where I found about 20 to 30 fellows in a room on the ground floor. Some of these I already knew, more or less, but some were strangers to me. All, however, were thoroughly excited with the prospect of immediate action and gleefully compared the assortment of weapons they carried. An officer of the Dublin Brigade Q.M. Staff, who I think was ~~Mr. Gault~~ ^{Mr. Gault} began to serve out a new weapon to each of us in the shape of a trench knife, and this item was the centre of keen interest while we waited the brigadier's instructions. This trench knife was evolved in World War I. as a silent weapon for trench raiding parties, but this was the first time any of us had seen one. It consisted of a knuckleduster handle of an aluminium alloy, to the side of which was rivetted a six-inch knife blade, thin and sharp and slightly curved at the point. The knuckleduster handle gave this weapon a powerful and safe grip so that it could not easily be dislodged from the hand using it. I lost the particular knife I got that night in a raid on my lodgings some time later, but I since acquired another of them which I still keep as a souvenir.

McKee had come into the room while all this was going on and he first had a private conference in a corner of the room with Paddy Holohan and a few others who had been concerned in the preliminary arrangements and who would command the operation on the spot. He then spoke to the remainder of us, outlining the details of the job and impressing upon us the necessity of each man carrying out his instructions to the strict letter.

He gave us his blessing and wished us luck and then we were off, on what we quite realised was a rather audacious adventure, but had every hope of complete success.

Collinstown Aerodrome, now the Dublin Airport, was then a British military aerodrome guarded by a force of about two infantry companies, besides special personnel such as R.A.F. details. The building of the aerodrome had begun during the world war and was not quite complete when it ended in November 1918. Work on its completion was therefore still in progress and a number of civilians were employed on the building of huts, making of roads, etc.. Amongst those so employed on the work at Collinstown were a number of Volunteers including Peadar Breslin, Kit O'Malley and Paddy Holohan, and these men had seen the possibility of bringing off a successful raid from their inside knowledge of the conditions and routine of the camp.

Holohan and Breslin discussed this project with their battalion commander, Tom Byrne, O/C. 1st Battalion, and he, in turn, discussed it with the brigade commander, Dick McKee, and so the plans were made. As already mentioned, the date of the raid had originally been fixed earlier, but had been postponed by Collins until after de Valera had been safely hidden away, when the 19th March was fixed by McKee in consultation with Holohan and Breslin. Seemingly a false sense of security pervaded the camp authorities at this time, and the guard routine and procedure of admittance to camp was very casual except for one thing, which possibly helped to generate the false sense of security. Two big Alredale dogs always accompanied the night guard, and these were trained to attack any person attempting to enter the camp unless such person were in British military uniform.

Paddy Holohan says, in his description of the affair, that these dogs, or the disposal of them, gave the most trouble in arranging the plans for the raid. This was got over, however, by surreptitiously feeding them with meat containing morphia early in the evening of the raid, as Holohan and the other workers there left camp at knocking-off time.

It was an essential feature of the raid that there should be complete surprise of the guard consisting of about ten men and that, if at all possible, no shot should be fired that would alarm the general body of troops stationed in the camp. This was why the trench knives were issued to us, not merely as a dramatic effect detail, though indeed they had this effect on the guard.

Holohan and another man dressed in British army uniforms were to approach the entrance gate alone, posing as soldiers coming in off late pass, and would silence the sentry without noise while the rest of the party rushed the guardroom. Other details of the plan included the taking of two military motor vehicles (Crossley tenders) to bear away the loot, and the destruction of all other vehicles there to prevent pursuit.

I was not aware of the details of the plan when we started off. I just knew that some kind of a ruse was to be used to gain entry and that we were to operate in complete silence as far as possible. My job was first to drive a car-load of the raiders there, to help, if necessary, in getting out the arms we hoped to get, and then to drive the party back again to Dublin.

Some of those who got into the car with me that night were strangers to me. I knew Bill Collins (now Lt-Colonel Collins of the National Army), and Peadar McKuldy, but of the others all I can remember is Kit O'Malley, whom I only knew by sight at the time, but I know I carried five with myself making a very full load on the car.

So as not to excite suspicion by a number of cars travelling together, each car was given a different route. The one given to me was the Swords road to Cloughran, turning there to the road junction immediately north of the aerodrome which was the rendezvous. Vincent Furfield also travelled that

way, I think, because we both arrived pretty much together, while the cars that came by the Ballymun road arrived a couple of minutes later.

It was a bright moonlight night with a nip of frost in the air, and as Paddy Holohan says in his account of the raid, we dreaded the effect that the bright moonlight was going to have on our plans. One might as well approach the camp in plain daylight, except that the low hedges provided some welcome shadows. It was just about midnight when all was ready for action and the men began to move in file, bent double in the shadows on either side of the road towards the entrance to the camp. This entrance was approximately at the spot where the present entrance to the airport is, or perhaps a few yards further north. Purfield and I with the other drivers had been told to wait at the road junction with the cars in case there was need for sudden retirement if the alarm was given. But as after a considerable time there was nothing but dead silence, we began to move quietly up the road in the direction the rest of the party had gone, and had reached a point where we could see the gate and the guardroom when someone of our fellows came running towards us to say that the cars were to reverse up the road to the guardroom which was now in the hands of our fellows. We ran back at once to do this and as we began to move the cars up the road cautiously, we were using no lights, of course, someone else came running towards us who, I think, was Breslin or Kit O'Malley. He ordered Purfield and me to stay on the road to pick up the men, and the other two cars to back up to the guardroom to collect the rifles and ammunition. Clearly something had gone amiss at this stage, but we could not find out what it was. There was still not a sound in the camp and the boys who came out from the guardroom told us that the military guard were all tied up and gagged. Some minutes later the two cars which had backed up to the

guardroom squeezed past us on the narrow by-road, obviously laden to the full extent of their carrying capacity, with heavy cargo that we recognised in the glint of the moonlight as rifles and ammunition boxes. We gave them time to get clear of the precincts of the camp and when we could hear the noise of their engines dying away in the distance the remaining cars were packed with the members of the raiding party, including the loads carried there by the cars that had brought away the loot.

It was then we began to learn what the hitch had been. It seemed that the two military vehicles which had been counted upon to carry away the arms haul could not be started as, seemingly, the drivers had removed the magneto rings or something like that. Consequently, the quantity of stuff taken was limited to what two touring cars could carry and the remaining cars had to carry the men back to the city.

Nevertheless, a matter of 75 rifles, a number of Lewis guns and 5,000 rounds of ammunition and quantities of bayonets and web equipment were taken in the raid which cost not a single life nor was there a shot fired.

I think there must have been eight or nine of us filed into my car for the return journey. I know that there was not a spare inch of space left under the hood which was raised and as I moved the rear tyres rubbed the mud-wings and I wondered if the springs would last until I reached the city.

I went out on to the Ballymun Road and headed for the city hoping against hope we would beat the alarm and that no intercepting party would meet us on the way. Some of the fellows got off at Glasnevin to find their own way home from there, and with my lightened load I drove faster into the city where the others got off in ones and twos before I reached my garage in the lane behind Donnack St. There I locked up the car and got home to my gigs in Drumcondra as quickly as I could on my bicycle, taking care that my arrival there was unnoticed by any possible watcher.

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CHAPTER XII.

The material captured in the Collinstown raid had, by prior arrangement, been dumped in hiding places in the Fingal Brigade area. The rifles, or most of them, had been taken by Owen Cullen in a car belonging to Alderman Corrigan. to a point on the Ballyboghal-Naul road, known as the Nag's Head, where it was met by Mick Rock and a couple of other Fingal Brigade officers. Apparently this car had blown a tyre about that point, owing to the overloading of the car, and so the Fingal men took over the rifles with a horse and cart and brought them on to the dump at Walshestown, while Cullen turned west and headed for Garristown, driving the car on the rims for some miles. He abandoned the car on the roadside and walked back to the city, some fourteen miles distant, where he reported to the brigadier what had happened. On learning from McKee what had happened, Alderman Corrigan, who actually knew what his car was being used for on the previous night, reported its theft to the police authorities, and subsequently recovered it.

All this had, naturally, created considerable police and military activity in the area, and a day or two later I learned of another difficulty that had arisen in connection with the remaining part of the spoils of the raid.

The boxes of ammunition had been dumped in a derelict cottage between St. Margaret's and Dunsoghley, and this part of the loot was in hourly danger of discovery by the authorities as the house where it lay was adjoining the roadside and had neither doors nor windows. Any passer-by could, therefore, by leaning his head through a window opening, see what lay inside.

It was Mick McDonald who told me about this situation when he called into the shop at Farnell St. some day or two

after the raid. I knew Mick pretty well at the time, and knew that he was a member of the Dublin Brigade staff, so when he proposed that we would go out that night and recover the stuff and bring it into the city, the arrangements were made on the spot.

I picked him up at about nine o'clock that night at his digs off North Richmond St. There was another man with him whose name I forget now. We went first to St. Margaret's where we met some of the Fingal men who were responsible for the custody of this dump, and they piloted us to the spot where the ammunition lay. The loading of the car took only a matter of minutes, but when I saw how heavily laden we were, I feared that springs or tyres could never reach the city intact. To get a breakdown with such a load of incriminating material would be fatal for us, apart from the loss of the stuff; so we just prayed silently that all would go well. McDonald sat beside me with his gun held between his knees and as we got on the way he said with the intensity of keyed-up feelings: "Don't stop for anybody; we'll shoot our way through if we have to". The boxes were piled in the back, coming a little higher than the sides of the car; the back cushion being thrown on top of them. The third man sprawled on his belly on top of this, his back practically touching the raised hood of the car, clutching his revolver while keeping it covered from view. My own gun was also convenient to my hand, though I realised that if gunplay began we would at least have lost our cargo as well as the car.

All went well until we crossed the Tolka Bridge at Little Finglas and, as I raced the engine to try to climb the hill past Glasnevin Cemetery in top gear, we noticed a vehicle stopped on our right, without lights, and someone stood near it on the road. At first sight it seemed to be a military vehicle and the man standing by it being muffled up seemed to

us to represent the officer in charge of a search party. Besides this, he stepped out on the road as my lights approached and held up his hand as if to halt us, but we had no intention of stopping, and as we passed him, it was evident that he was merely a wayfarer in trouble with his car. It was no time for courtesies of the road, however, but we had had such a shock that not another word was spoken until we arrived at the dump, which was a house on a road off Clonliffe Road below the Distillery.

I was slowing to a stop at the gate of this house when McDonald, who had been anxiously casting his eyes about, nudged me to drive on quickly. He had seen what he believed were two detectives watching the place. Further up the road he got off and told me to cruise around until he had a look at the watchers; so I went for a slow drive up Richmond Road and coming down Clonliffe Road again, Mick hailed me to say that he had got rid of the watchers for the present. I do not know how he did this, as there was no time to ask questions. Three or four fellows appeared from the house and the car was unloaded in less than a minute. "Away with you like hell before those bloody 'G' men come back" said Mick in a stage whisper, and I waited for no second bidding. Driving as fast as I dared go up Ballybough Road I noted that the streets were by this time fairly deserted, and I hoped my passing would not be noted by too inquisitive eyes.

I suppose the thrills of the evening had made me rather self-conscious, and I was still armed, though now alone. Perhaps because of this feeling, I parked the car very hurriedly in the garage in the lane behind Dominick St. and I did not attempt to go near the garage next day until evening, when I had assured myself that no one was watching the place. I was about to take out the car then for some other job when, to my surprise, I found what appeared to be a full box of

ammunition in the back. This had apparently been overlooked during the rapid unloading in the dark the night before. Lifting it out, it felt very light and could not, therefore, be full of ammunition, though the lid was screwed on as if it had been unopened. I unscrewed the lid and discovered that the box was indeed full, but not of rifle ammunition. An inch or so from the top was a sort of spacer platform of plywood bored with holes close together, into which were fitted what, at first sight, appeared to be about a hundred twelve bore shotgun cartridges, base up. Lifting some of these, I found that the brass end of the twelve bore cartridge formed the upper end of a long aluminium tube of very light section. This tube had no opening at the other end, so I prized out the brass cartridge end to find that the tube was filled with a fine grey powder. I suspected that these were very ^rlight cartridges which, though I had heard about them, I had never seen before, and I confirmed this belief by igniting some of the powder, which burned with a characteristic magnesium brilliancy.

How I thanked my lucky stars that no one had come into the garage before I got there! The box carried various identification marks including the name Collinstown painted conspicuously on it, so I immediately reduced this to firewood and burned it in an old fireplace in a small room beside the garage. The contents I put into a sack which I brought down to the shop in Farnell St. and showed the things to Mick Lynch when he came in later that evening. He took one or two away with him to show them to Dick McKee, and the next day or so I gave a couple more to George Plunkett.

I had requested instructions as to what I was to do with these Verey lights, but was told to hold them for the present and so they were stuffed under the lower shelf of the counter in the shop, where they remained practically forgotten, until

found by Detective Officer Hally in a raid on the shop which took place about the end of May 1919.

Events were travelling fast at this period. Scarcely a day passed now that did not record some incident of more or less importance, which bore upon the Irish nation's assertion of independence despite all the British efforts to overawe the people by displays of force.

Dick Coleman of Swords, my old company captain, who was one of the "German Plot" prisoners in Usk Jail, had died in prison on 10th December 1918, and his remains were given a huge military funeral on arrival in Dublin. Another of these prisoners, Pierce McCann of Tipperary, died later, on March 6th 1919, in Gloucester Jail, and his remains were similarly honoured on arrival in Dublin by the members of the Dáil as well as I.R.A. units.

Following the December elections, the Sinn Féin members of Parliament, or those of them who were not in jail, met together at the Dublin Mansion House, as the first Dáil Éireann and elected a provisional government which thereupon commenced to function as such, notwithstanding all efforts of the British authorities to suppress such assumption of authority.

The result of the elections had shown that at least three fourths of the people of Ireland stood solidly behind the Sinn Féin policy of Irish independence and, of the minority, many were no doubt influenced in their voting by fear of British military power.

One of the first acts of the Dáil when it met was to ratify the proclamation of the Irish Republic of Easter Monday 1916. This may have been and, in fact, was looked upon at the time by most people as a grand gesture on the part of this 'rebel' parliament, but it was, in fact, the conversion of the

grand gesture of Easter 1916 into a de jure national government by a three-fourths majority of duly accredited representatives of the Irish people. It took quite some time for the implications of this astounding fact to sink in at home as well as abroad. There is an average type of mentality everywhere that sets great store upon legal and technical formalities, and to this type of mind arguments based upon pure logic or ethics are nullified by what they conceive as the sanctity of the established law. The law in this case means the current law of the land which had, in their eyes, a sacred character hardly accorded by them to the ten commandments but for the fact that the latter are, in theory at any rate, accepted by the various states.

In this sense, the declaration of the assembled, legally elected representatives of the people carried a weight of authority that swayed a mass of people at home and abroad, who, otherwise, had looked upon the various Irish national efforts to obtain freedom as unfortunate and even deplorable.

The air was further cleared by the Dáil's acceptance of the Irish Volunteers as the army of the Irish Republic, and its declaration that "a state of war exists between Ireland and England while British forces occupy our national territory".

This was about the end of January 1919, and it was from this date that the Volunteers became known as the Irish Republican Army, or more popularly, as the I.R.A.

From then on it became a constant source of surprise to us to meet, here and there, "highly respectable citizens whom we had known perhaps as loyal upholders of the British Empire, who were now ready and willing to give their time and their money and even to risk their lives and liberty in the service of the national cause.

Lest the foregoing should give the impression that there was a popular swing over to the national cause at this stage because a national victory could then be foreseen, let me say that the end of the struggle could not even be guessed at then. There was undoubtedly a strengthening of the national morale, but it was equally evident that the British Government had no intention of acceding to the Irish demands, and was prepared to use all the force at its command to stifle this impudent challenge to England's right to rule Ireland. The British Government was in fact at this time considering the ways and means of dealing with the Irish situation, and being concerned about the inability to obtain a sufficient number of recruits to sustain the strength of the Royal Irish Constabulary, were arranging a recruiting scheme to obtain these recruits in England. This may serve to give some sort of an outline picture of the general situation in the first months of 1919. I have not attempted to cover all the details, but merely to give an idea of the atmosphere surrounding my personal activities. These were the things we talked about as a daily topic. Our hopes and our fears were bounded by our intimate connection with the fate of the nation, and we estimated each other by the courage displayed in the day by day unfolding of that fate.

As well as the uncertainty of the general national outlook at this period, I had also reached a critical stage in my own affairs. The income from the remnant of the business in Parnell St. was not, keeping pace with the expenses and it was only by the ^{hire} work I did with the car that I was able to balance the budget. This, of course, reduced my ability to pay off the purchase price of the car. Heron and I had discussed this problem, sometime in February 1919, I think it was, and he then told me he had got an offer of a job as a labour organiser from the Irish Transport Workers' Union. In view of the situation existing, I agreed that he should

accept this offer, and so our partnership was dissolved as unceremoniously as it had begun. The only formality to be gone through was that Batt O'Connor, who was his guarantor, was released from his liability to the bank, and my father had now to take over full responsibility for my overdraft.

Heron's departure from the Farnell St. establishment eased the expense side of the account a little, but I could not extend my legitimate business there on account of the more serious business in progress in the basement.

Dot had promised to marry me as soon as there was any reasonable prospect of establishing a home of our own, but the prospect of reaching any such happy position seemed as remote as ever. In this, as indeed in all our prospects, our eyes were on the imponderable future with a strange confidence that everything would work out all right eventually.

The "German Plot" prisoners held in English jails had been released on March 9th, 1919, and when my father arrived home it was to find his own affairs in a rather worse state than he had left them. So, though none of us had much cause for joy, we took our troubles lightly. Dot and I drove to Saucerstown fairly often, and usually Father took the occasion to have me drive him around to see some of his friends and constituents. He took his parliamentary duties very seriously, and becoming a member of certain Dáil committees, of which I remember that Fisheries was one, we often toured the fishing towns of Rush, Loughshinny and Balbriggan, discussing the details of their business with the fishermen. At other times, a whole crowd of us descended on Saucerstown and, with my mother or my sister Eiblin at the piano, with perhaps Father helping out on his violin; we sang far into the night. Eiblin was working for Mack Collins at this time as his confidential typist in the office at

6, Harcourt St. and both she and Collins's aide-de-camp, Joe O'Reilly, often accompanied us on these trips, as well as Dot's brother, Mick, and sister, Kitty Fleming.

One day, towards the latter end of May 1919, when the bomb factory was in full and regular production, it was about midday on a Saturday, and the munitions staff in the basement was getting ready to shut down for the weekend, there were a large number of bomb cases on hand and these were being got ready for removal by the staff, who would carry them with them to the loading dump on their way home. I was in the workshop behind the shop busy trying to complete the building of a bicycle wheel before going home, and I had called Christy Reilly in from the shop to do something else. Suddenly I became conscious of a trample of feet through the shop and, looking up from the job I was so concentrated on, I saw that the shop was crowded with men whose appearance I recognised at once as 'G' men. The detective branch of the Dublin Metropolitan Police had certainly arrived in force; there were about 12 or 14 of them and they proceeded to swarm over the place, searching everything and everywhere, but paying me no further attention other than to post one of their number behind my back, who stood casually watching the work I had been engaged on when they arrived.

To say that my heart was in my mouth is to put it mildly. Acutely conscious of what was happening at that moment in the basement and that I had failed in my first duty of giving the staff due warning, I was utterly speechless and rooted to the spot. Furthermore, I noted that the 'G' man who had taken up a position behind me stood in such a position as to completely prevent any attempt I might have made then to switch on the warning light in the basement. I had no doubt at the time but that was the purpose of his position there, so, while my brain went in a wild whirl, I began to walk aimlessly about,

asking silly questions of each of the 'G' men in turn and getting no answers except, perhaps, a curt monosyllable. Detective Officer Hoey, who appeared to be in charge of the raid, then came towards me and asked me some questions, such as whether I was the proprietor of the establishment, my name, and suchlike queries, and I think it may have been the tendency and implication of such questioning that brought me to my senses with a jerk. My only hope lay in a strong bluff and I put all I had into this.

Putting on what I hoped was a convincing air of righteous indignation, I cut short his questioning with the demand:

"What is the meaning of this scandalous and unwarranted intrusion on my property? Is a law-abiding citizen not entitled nowadays to run a business without a lot of thugs like you fellows bouncing in around the place?"

"What are you looking for, anyway?" etc. etc.

At this stage they had divided up around the place and each concentrated on different parts of the shop and workshop, poking under benches, pulling out drawers and examining walls and ceiling.

It seemed amazing, but so far they had seemed to have made no attempt to get down to the basement. Actually some of them had tried to find the way down without asking questions but I had remained in the workshop in the faint hope of switching on the warning light, and perhaps my trade to Hoey discouraged them from asking me further questions for awhile. It began to dawn on me that this big dummy, who still stood with his back to the switch, was quite unaware of the purpose of the switch, and I tried by a line of sarcasm to talk him into moving a step or two:

"Why don't you go and help the others to mess up the place? Maybe you don't like getting your nice hands greasy," etc. etc.

but he just smiled tolerantly at me and did not budge an inch.

I was beginning to feel desperate, but still believed that my man at the switch did not realise what he covered with his big carcass. I got an idea I thought was worthy of trying at any rate. There were two steps up from the shop to the workshop, and the switch was around the corner of the wall at the head of the steps on the left hand side coming up. I walked quickly out into the shop and began to abuse the 'G' men out there in the same strain as I had spoken to those in the workshop. One of them, Detective Officer Hally, came up to me to ask very suavely if I would show him the way down to the basement. I turned on him with the remark that as he seemed to know so much about people's private affairs, he could bloody well go and find out for himself.

To my surprise, he seemed to accept the rebuke and turned towards the front of the shop. I, turning on my heel, made a slight run as if to go up the two steps at a bound and, stumbling by design at the top, cannoned off my dumb friend standing at the switch, thereby moving him about a yard or so. I opened up again on him for standing in my way, while I grabbed at the corner of the wall in an apparent effort to regain my balance. I tried to make it appear an unconscious action when I struck the switch in so doing, and could hardly believe it when nobody seemed to take any notice of the incident.

Looking out towards the shop at this stage, I could see the beams of the ~~evening~~ ^{warning} light in the basement shining up through the cracks in the shop floor and wondered if anyone had noticed how the appearance of this light had synchronised with my slip on the steps. Now all I had to do was play for a little more time, so I put my heart into the act of ^{the} self-righteous citizen who has put up with enough nonsense and feels entitled to order the intruders off the premises. I told Hoey I had had enough of this fooling around and would he tell me

plainly what they were looking for. I said I had work to do before closing time and would he please take his men to blaze out of the place and let me get on with it. I carefully refrained from going out to the shop as I could see from where I was that the entrance to the basement had not yet been discovered and that the stupid fellows were concentrating their search for this on the front of the shop, and even on the hallway next door.

Six or seven minutes had elapsed since the warning light had been switched on, when Hally came in from the shop to confess that he could not find the entrance to the basement. With him was another man whom I had been watching carefully for the past ten minutes. He did not appear to be a 'G' man and, while apparently not in charge of the raid, seemed to be in some position of authority above the others. He was of not more than average height - the 'G' men were all very tall, and he was of that clean cut square shouldered build that seemed to mark him as a military officer. He had a fresh complexion, sandy hair and very piercing blue eyes, and while he did not speak, his eyes seemed to ferret into everything. I noted him as probably the most dangerous of the party and so directed some more remarks of laughing ridicule in his direction, with the idea of getting him embarrassed, if possible:

"A smart lot of detectives you are, no doubt; have to be led to a door that's there before your eyes"!

"Where is it?" from Hally.

"There in the corner not two paces from you"

I replied, as I turned my back upon him and began to feel a certain enjoyment of the situation. I felt sure that by now the boys below would have everything ready, but I would take advantage of every second I could to delay the move to the basement.

Almost another minute passed before Hally again appeared before me, this time almost apologetic, to say that the door appeared to be locked and would I tell him where the key was. Remarking casually that some of the staff must have slipped, the catch of the lock by accident, I said I would get the key, and proceeded to rummage all the drawers of a desk in the shop, complaining the while that they had so messed up everything that it was hard to find.

I found the key eventually, which, as I well knew, was in my pocket all the time, and opening the door, I was about to precede them down the steps.

"Just a minute", remarked "Ginger", catching me by the shoulder. "I'll go first", and he stepped ahead of me down the rickety stairs, the others following in procession. I could see Matt Furlong with head bent in an attitude of concentration over some piece of work in the lathe as we arrived at the foot of the stairs. He raised his head inquiringly when the party appeared, but continued with his work when I, still playing out my act, waved airily to him to carry on with his job. Matt's attitude was quite perfect, but Tom Young at the moulding trough on our left was, I feared, overplaying his part. He was humming and whistling noisily while he energetically rammed a box of sand, and did not even turn around to see who was coming in. However, I don't think they noticed anything peculiar in this, and maybe my own perception was a bit strung up at the time. The detectives swarmed all over the place and began a detailed hunt in every nook and cranny, of which there were many in such a place. The heap of coke came in for attention from two of them who proceeded to turn it over with a shovel and this gave me an opportunity of complaining afresh that they were causing unnecessary upset to the work there and that they must shovel it all back again as they had found it

when they had satisfied themselves that there was no 'body' hidden under the heap.

Still covertly watching my "Ginger friend" I noticed him staring at something on the shelf over the mounding trough in front of Young and, following the direction of his gaze, I realised with something of a shock that the object of his attention was a 'sand print' of six or eight bomb necks. The bomb neck was, it will be remembered, the brass casting carrying the striker and ignition mechanism, which was screwed into the neck of the bombs. This item was, of course, cast separately in brass, and the wooden patterns were made up in pairs, a number of which were fitted into each moulding box. The normal method of beginning a sand mould of such an item is to embed the pattern to exactly half its depth in a temporary box of sand, ramming sand in a box placed on top of this to form the lower half of the mould. When the latter box is completely filled with sand, both boxes are turned upside down together and the temporary box, or, as it is called the 'print,' is left aside for use on a new mould, while the top half of the mould is completed by ramming more sand into a box frame fitted on top of the lower half in the place of the temporary print box.

This 'print' box, which stood on his side on the shelf, had been overlooked in the hasty stowing away of incriminating articles, and to my self-conscious eyes the clear sand impressions it showed could hardly be mistaken for anything but what it was. I had a wild notion for a moment of throwing something at it to break it up, but almost at once realised that this would merely draw attention to the fact that there was something to be covered up. 'Ginger' did not question me for a minute or so, though I stood close to him as he eyed the print from all angles before finally taking it down from the shelf. In that minute I had prepared my answer

and only hoped that proof of my statement would not be demanded. I tried to appear casual, and even helpful, as I answered the query: "What is this?". "Oh, that is used in connection with the making of castings for lavatory water cistern valves". It had struck me on the spur of the moment that a fair argument could be made on this line, provided that I was not asked to produce the order for them, or the finished articles, or anything like that. In order to forestall further questioning on this line I launched into a long dissertation on the technique of brass moulding, helped out here and there by Tom Young, who invited attention to a practical demonstration on the making of a mould for some innocuous object which he was busily engaged on.

It worked! Becoming bored with my long-winded explanation and Young's apparent anxiety to teach them the mysteries of his trade, they moved away with a shrug of the shoulders. Obviously our efforts at technical education was wasted on them, but had succeeded in driving the obvious further questions from their minds. They had found nothing so far and it was evident that they were becoming tired of the search at this stage when suddenly I was called from the shop above to come upstairs for a moment.

D.O. Hally had been doing some further rooting around the shop while we were downstairs and had unearthed the sack containing the Verey light cartridges from Collinsdown, which had remained stuffed under the lower shelf of the counter and forgotten.

My heart sank when I saw the sack and I wished I had remembered to put this in a place of safety. Hally was still suave and polite as he asked me: "Would you please tell me what these things are?". I said I had no idea really, but that I believed they were some kind of fireworks. I said, truthfully enough on this point, that I had almost forgotten

that the sack containing these things was there. I then went on to explain that a man whose name I did not know, though I knew him well by appearance, had come into the shop about ten days before, and offered them to me for five shillings. This man had described them as a rocket sort of firework, and when I would not buy, he had asked me to keep them for him until he came back, and he had not returned since.

Of course I had to describe this imaginary man's appearance in detail, which I did, while 'Ginger' fussed around with one of the cartridges, going through the same procedure through which I had gone myself when I found them in the car, to get some idea of the nature of them.

They had found something at last, and the search terminated at this point, while some private discussion in an undertone was carried out between Hoey, Ginger and a couple of the others.

I knew, of course, that they had now enough to make a case of some sort against me, but I still felt rather elated that they had seemingly failed to find any evidence of the real activity of the place. Therefore, when Hoey announced that he was afraid he would have to ask me to accompany them to the Castle for some further questioning, I felt almost amiable towards him and carried on an inconsequential conversation with him as the others all left the place, leaving the two of us alone in the middle of the shop.

I had now to think of my own predicament and my mind was going rapidly over the probabilities. It was certain that they would raid my lodgings while I was in custody, and I remembered that my revolver and ammunition, the knuckleduster knife of Collinstown fame, my old 1916 uniform, and a lot of documents and notes, as well as two of the first bombs made were in a box in my room. The bombs were unfilled ones which

I was keeping merely as souvenirs, but the whole lot was enough to get me at least ten years' imprisonment.

Christy Reilly was my only hope, if only I could get a private word to him, so I sauntered slowly to the door with Hoey and then, as if suddenly recollecting the fact, I stopped and said to him: "You may delay me a time at the Castle, and I must leave some instructions with the boy here to close up the shop and suchlike". As he began to follow me towards the back of the shop where Reilly was, I said, laughing back at him: "You know there is no back exit here". I began giving Reilly a mass of instructions on imaginary details, which I hoped he would recognise as such, and in a whisper, I added, as I ostentatiously gave him my private keys: "Go as fast as you can to my digs and get the place cleared out".

It was only when I heard the sequel that I appreciated what a loyal and intelligent fellow Reilly really was.

We had hardly turned the corner on our way to the Castle when Reilly was on his bicycle and away for Drumcondra, a good two miles away. He did not waste time knocking at the door of my digs in No. 152, as he knew there might be some delay in impressing the urgency of his mission on my landlady, who was a cousin of the Flemings. Instead, he went straight to Fleming's shop at No. 140, where he went direct to my fiancé, Dot Fleming, gave her the keys and told her that the raid was due any minute. She went immediately to Dillon's and between herself and her sister and the Dillon girls, my box was emptied of its contents, which were being carried out of the back gate just as the raiding party arrived at the front door.

Meanwhile I had arrived at the Castle where at first I was left in a room alone, but soon I was visited by, first, Hoey, then Hally, and then another man, all of whom tried by questioning me backwards and forwards to trip me in my answers.

Then Hoey became sneering and insulting with the obvious intention of making me lose my temper, and I thought the best counter to this was to pretend to lose it, so I became violently abusive while at the same time being careful to say nothing that might discredit the original answers to their questions. Presently I was put into a covered van again and brought to the Bridewell prison, where I was lodged in a cell and left to wonder what was going to happen next. Nothing much did happen except that my friends, the Flemings, as soon as they found out where I was, arranged to have food sent in to me as the prison fare was not very palatable. On the following day, Sunday, Hoey came into the cell to continue his badgering and questioning of me and again I called upon an extensive vocabulary of vituperation to get rid of his presence and to avoid answering any more questions. On Monday evening he appeared again in my cell inquiring, sneeringly, how I was getting on and merely laughed when I observed that his presence made a stink in the cell and that I would be much obliged if he would remove his ugly carcass.

"How would you like to go home?" he said, to which I made no reply, so he strolled off with some remark like: "You can go home if you want to" and left the cell door open behind him.

I still sat there wondering what this might mean, when the cheery and stout station sergeant came in to me to say that I was released and could go home now. Hoey had disappeared by this time, so I lost no further time in making my way to Drumcondra where I created quite a surprise by my appearance.

The raid, and my arrest, had naturally interrupted work at the bomb factory, as it was not considered safe to proceed with production until it became clear whether or not the place was suspected, or was under observation. Mick Collins, however, soon assured Mick Lynch that his information was that they suspected nothing in particular and that the report given by the

Ordnance experts at Islandbridge was that while the Verey light cartridges were undoubtedly R.A.F. stores, they could have come from a dozen different sources and so no case could be sustained against me in the matter.

CHAPTER XIII.

Parting company with the Parnell Street shop
I go into the motor business - An abortive raid
on a train at Ashtown Station - I meet some of
the Tipperary and East Limerick Volunteers and hear
something of their story - Appointed to the Fingal
Brigade staff as engineer officer - The new
political situation resulting from the formation
of An Dáil as the native Irish Government -
Military Intelligence on a superior scale is
developed by Mick Collins - the shooting of
Detective Sergeant Paddy Smith - War on the
G-men results in the collapse of this British
intelligence agency - Death of my sister, Ita -
Evidences of an impending enemy offensive - The
Sinn Féin Courts - My father and others arrested
in a British military raid on 76 Harcourt Street,
the office of the Dáil Ministry of Finance -
Sean Boylan claims my assistance in the matter of
transport - The capture of Ballivor R.I.C. Barracks.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Parnell St. factory was soon in full production again and the staff was augmented to increase its capacity. My continued presence there was now more of a danger than otherwise as we felt that notwithstanding my easy discharge from custody, there was a strong possibility that I would be kept under observation.

I had been negotiating for the renting of premises that I might use as a garage, as I had the idea of launching into the motor trade if suitable and cheap premises could be found. It would, therefore, be sometime about June of 1919 that I ~~leased~~ ^{rented} a premises at St. Ignatius Road, off Lower Dorset Street, and took another man, Billy Flynn, into partnership with me on this business. Flynn was then working as a motor mechanic and had worked as a mechanic in the Ford Works in Detroit, U.S.A. some time before, so I agreed to pay him a weekly wage of £5 plus an undefined percentage of the profits, if any, in return for the benefit of his experience and his work.

I spoke to Mick Lynch and also to Dick McKee about my situation, pointing out that the Parnell St. premises were a financial drag on me and that my continued presence there was no advantage to the work. McKee agreed that it was only reasonable that the I.R.A., whether the Dublin Brigade or G.H.Q. should buy out my stock-in-trade and allow me to sever my connection with the establishment and devote my time to my garage work. The result of this was that a valuation of the stock was made by Mick Lynch and me with, I think, Matt Furlong as the third member of an informal board. Something like £70 (seventy pounds) was paid to me for the stock and fittings of the place, which were placed at a minimum value as there was no idea on either side of making profit from the transaction.

I thought that it was intended then to change the name

over the door to indicate publicly, for the benefit of the authorities, that I was no longer connected with the place, but for some reason this was not done, and the sign over the shop "Heron & Lawless" remained until the destruction of the factory by the "Auxiliaries" in December 1920.

The garage in St. Ignatius Road had been a dairy yard for some time previous to my renting of the place and the buildings in it were cowhouses and stock sheds. My first job was to get a lot of work done to adapt the buildings for my purpose and, having no money, I had perforce to do this myself with the help of my partner and a small boy whom we hired as a messenger.

My father agreed to back me in the bank for an overdraft of £1,000, about £300 of which was already drawn upon, and with this set-up the new business was launched.

Private hire work paid well at that time, and so I bought another car, a 1910 model Rover, for which I paid £350. We also did quite a lot of repair work, so that very soon I had to take on a mechanic and, later, a man to look after accounts and office work.

From the beginning of this business my cars were in constant demand for I.R.A. work, and when more than one car was required at once for such purposes, I was provided with a Volunteer driver for the second car. I think it was about the end of June 1919 when Mick Lynch came to me one day to ask me to provide two cars for a projected attack on a goods train at Ashtown Station. I believe this train was supposed to be carrying arms and ammunition from Mayo to the Ordnance Depot at Islandbridge, and it was thought that the R.I.C. or military escort on the train might easily be surprised and the arms captured.

The arrangement was to hold up the man in the signal cabin just before the train was due and then set the signals against

the train so as to halt it at the station. The approximate time the train was due to pass had been ascertained to be about 6 or 6.30 a.m. but, of course, the time schedule of goods trains was seldom accurate.

A number of cars had been engaged to convey the party of about thirty men of the 1st Battalion to Ashtown, and these travelled by different converging routes. Owen Cullen drove my Rover car while I took the Ford and I think Pat McCrae was another driver on the job. The cars were left in a concealed place near the station when we arrived and, led by Dick McKee, we all moved quietly into a position behind a hedge which overlooked the railway line immediately east of the level crossing. Here we crouched while McKee gave last-minute instructions in an audible whisper that "when the train came to a halt we should rush upon it from both sides and overpower the escort before they had time to open fire or cause any alarm to be given". I think it was Paddy Holohan who had the job of dealing with the man in the signal box and when the sound of an approaching train fell on our ears, Paddy mounted the steps leading to the signal cabin and, holding up the signalman, told him what he wanted done. The signalman then told him that he was himself a Volunteer and that if he had been informed of what was afoot he could have made matters much more simple. As it was, he said, the train we were looking for had already passed some twenty minutes earlier than and the one now approaching was a passenger train.

At this stage McKee moved quickly towards the signal cabin to find out what had gone wrong and then, running back to where we were, he made urgent signs to us to conceal ourselves, passing the word along that the train approaching was not the one we were looking for. As the train passed us we could see a few soldiers leaning out of the carriage windows who gazed disinterestedly on us as we tried to shelter behind the hedge. Clearly, our presence there was no longer secret or safe and, after a few

hurried explanations between McKee and Holohan, Dick ordered the immediate dispersal of the party. Standing not on the order of our going, therefore, the cars loaded with men hastened back to the city, where the daily traffic was by then beginning to stir and, scattering through the streets, our passage was seemingly unnoticed.

I have commented upon the growing intensity of the national struggle with the coming of the year 1919, though confining my remarks to the happenings in and around Dublin. In so doing I might perhaps create the impression that I had considered events in other parts of the country of less importance. This is not so, however; I have so far avoided going into the details of events and incidents outside my personal experience, merely because this is a personal story, and the relation of events outside my special sphere would only confuse my aim in writing which is, as I think I have stated, to give a true picture of the events with which I was in any way connected, and to show by a certain detailing of my own life a sectional view of the period.

Events in the various parts of the provinces had, of course, a considerable influence on the progress of national affairs, and, naturally, being aware of these occurrences from day to day ^{our outlook} was to some extent influenced by incidents in Limerick, Tipperary, Cork and other places. It was comforting to feel that, unlike the situation existing in Easter Week of 1916, practically every county in Ireland was now showing the determination of its inhabitants to shake off the British yoke. Apart from this aspect of the matter there was also an occasional personal contact with the men from the country who came to the city now and then to consult Collins or other members of the General Staff, or for other reasons, and such contacts were productive of a mutual influence and understanding of each other. It was in this way I first met some of the men of the East Limerick and South Tipperary Brigades and admired their courageous spirit. Following

the rescue of Sean Hogan from a R.I.C. armed escort at Knocklong railway station in Co. Limerick, some of the participants in that famous exploit came to Dublin, on the run, and stayed with my friends, the Flemings of Drumcondra. Here I met Ned O'Brien and Jimmy Scanlon of Galbally and learned all about the fight at Knocklong, before they made their escape to U.S.A. Dan ^{Breen}~~O'Brien~~, Sean Treacy, Sean Hogan and dozens of others of the Tipperary and Limerick men made Fleming's their headquarters when in Dublin, and so I got to know them all very well as I was also a daily visitor to 140.

From various bits of conversation I had with the Tipperary men around that time I gathered, particularly from Sean Treacy, that the Solohead raid and the Knocklong rescue had been the spontaneous actions of the Third Tipperary Brigade and that General Headquarters had indicated its disapproval of such action being taken without its express sanction. Actually, I believe that the brigade commander and some of his staff were called up to Dublin to explain matters to Collins. Presumably the G.H.Q. attitude was that they deprecated the unauthorised action of any brigade or unit which thereby committed the General Staff to a premature policy of open war. But things were headed that way in any case and I fancy that Collins took the view that, although this might be an undisciplined act, it was well-intentioned on the part of those concerned, and we had better get on with the war now that it had begun. I met Robinson, Treacy and some of the other Tipperary men in Fleming's on the night of their interview with Collins and, from their joking references to the interview, I gathered that they had received a formal reprimand with one hand and a pat on the back with the other.

I think it was during the summer of 1919 that I formally reestablished my connection with the Fingal Brigade. Dan Brophy of Lusk was then the brigade commander and I became a member of the brigade staff as the brigade engineer. This appointment was

merely nominal, however, as we had no special engineer personnel and my particular job was, therefore, to give the benefit of my knowledge of such technical matters as might arise to the brigade commander and the other members of the staff who might require it. Dan Brophy told me, in course of a discussion on these things in recent years, that he had had a number of talks with Mick Collins during 1919 and 1920 on the question of beginning offensive operations against British forces and establishments in Fingal and that Collins forbid anything of the kind. He went on to explain to Brophy that it was necessary, in pursuance of the policy of the General Staff, to keep things quiet in Fingal so that there would be no excuse for the British to declare this a military area which would bring curfew and other strict controls into operation and so prevent access to the city by our own personnel through that area. Fingal, he said, was considered a very important line of communication between the General Staff branches and northern and western counties, and also acted as convenient retreat when men were hard pressed in the city. For these reasons, he wanted no major engagements to take place there without his express sanction.

This explained a lot of what we did not understand at the time; for, later on, during 1920, every proposal made at a Brigade Council meeting to carry out some planned attack on Crown forces was referred by the brigade commander to Collins for sanction, and always postponed or left in abeyance by the latter. I will refer to this again later in the story.

At this time - middle of 1919 - a lot of attention was devoted, by the Volunteers as well as the general population, to the purely political side of the national movement. People were beginning to adjust their minds to the novelty of a national parliament and government carrying on their respective functions despite the efforts of the enemy forces to discourage and destroy them. Mick Collins had become Minister for Finance in

the Government set up by the native parliament (An Dáil), holding this appointment in addition to his successive appointments as Adjutant General and Director of Intelligence on the Volunteer General Staff. Collins had separate offices and separate staffs to deal with the matters concerning his different appointments, in one of which my sister Eibhlín worked as his confidential typist, while my father acted at this time as the local agent and organiser of the Dáil Loan in County Dublin.

It is interesting to reflect upon the influence the floating of this loan had on the conduct and outcome of the revolution. That "money talks" is a commonplace truism, and certainly the acquisition of substantial financial resources by the Dáil, the bulk of which was voted to the Defence Ministry, brightened up the prospect of carrying on the war to a successful conclusion. Now it became possible to attempt large scale purchases of arms abroad and to plan elaborate schemes for smuggling such arms to Ireland; also, the hitherto irritating financial strictures limiting the hire of premises for offices, stores and the like, the hire of cars for various operations, and all the hundred and one things which needed money to carry out, could now be undertaken without undue concern regarding necessary payments.

But there was also a **psychological** factor involved. Volunteer units began to shake off the feeling of inadequacy that goes with poverty and a heightened morale could be sensed even among the general population. The flotation of the Dáil Loan was shrewd and opportune for, as well as relieving the forces of the revolution of the petty restraints of poverty, it provided a means whereby sympathisers both at home and abroad could, by their contributions, become positively identified with the cause of Irish freedom. This, in turn, extended the circle of friends and sympathisers so that there

was now an increasing clamour against the British denial of Irish rights, in the American press, and even some British journals began to express doubts of the wisdom of the methods used by their government in Ireland. During the following twelve months such international criticism increased daily and must have been a serious embarrassment to the British Government in their American relationship. At home, we chuckled to ourselves over every new article or news item on the "Irish situation" appearing in the American papers, copies of which found their way to Ireland despite every British attempt to keep them out.

The general situation here outlined as existing about mid-summer of 1919, might seem to indicate a certain complacency on the part of the national forces and their leaders, or that a period of hiatus had been reached in the struggle. Possibly there was something of a "mark time" in events about then, but, if so, it was only the calm before the storm. The organising, training and arming of Volunteer units had been going steadily onwards and, as has since been disclosed, Collins, as Director of Intelligence, had been building up and perfecting an intelligence system far more valuable than all our armaments.

Naturally, most of us knew very little of the details of this later activity at the time, but we did know it went on, and it is strange now to reflect on the absolute confidence we reposed in Collins's ability to defeat the British espionage system on its own ground.

Beaslay, in his "Michael Collins and the making of a new Ireland" has given some details of how the I.R.A. Intelligence system was built up, and the names of those who constituted the staff of that Branch. He also quotes the names of those who formed "The Squad" which was formed about July 1919 as the fighting unit of the Intelligence Branch.

I believe it was Collins's own conception of the best method of fighting a powerful enemy to attack him in his most vulnerable member 'intelligence'. Here the enemy's superior forces and armament gave him no advantage, but, on the other hand, brains and pluck had an advantage over the similar qualities in enemy agents by reason of the moral support and active backing of the Irish general public.

It was always pretty obvious that the Volunteers could not hope to take the field in large formations against a well-trained enemy force which possessed all the modern weapons of war; but Collins saw that a superior Irish Intelligence system was possible and, if by this the enemy intelligence system could be destroyed or rendered ineffective, then the blinded enemy forces might be defeated in detail.

I mention this here because we now know it to have been the keynote of the I.R.A. war policy at that period. Obviously this was something that could not have been made general knowledge at the time, and even the members of the Intelligence staff themselves could only guess at the general plan governing their daily work.

No doubt Collins discussed such matters of general policy with the other members of the General Staff and the plan had the full support of both the General Staff as a whole and of Dáil Éireann. To the average Volunteer or Volunteer officer, however, while we knew in a general way of the activity of our intelligence branch, we knew little of the details of its operations until and unless some of these details obtruded themselves on our notice. As I think I have already stated, we had the utmost confidence in the ability of Collins and his staff and knew that his agents ramified through Dublin Castle and suchlike enemy strongholds. Indeed, I now and then had

evidence of this when Joe O'Reilly, Collins's Aide, called to warn me of the intention of the British authorities to raid some house or arrest some of our people. Once or twice he called to assure me that the Castle had no information about some recent activity of mine.

On the night of July 30th 1919, at perhaps about ten o'clock, I stood at the door of 140 Drumcondra Road, talking to Dot when a volley of shots rang out in the direction of Millmount Avenue just beyond the Tolka Bridge. We had no idea what had happened, but in the few minutes silence that followed the shooting, Dot remarked: "that sounds like the direction of Millmount Avenue where Detective Sergeant Smith lives". A few inquisitive people began to drift towards the scene of the shooting and about twenty minutes later the Dublin Fire Brigade ambulance went clattering over the bridge. I walked down to Millmount Avenue myself then, as quite a crowd had collected there and was just in time to see Sergeant Smith being carried from his house to the ambulance. Joe Connolly, the ambulance driver whom I knew as a Volunteer, remarked to me, rather disappointedly, I thought: "I don't think he is dead yet", and the crowd silently melted away as the ambulance left with the wounded detective for the Mater Hospital. Smith died from his wounds a week or two later and a great outcry was made in the British controlled press about what was described as the brutal murder of a police officer.

In fact, as has since been disclosed, Smith had made himself notorious in his efforts to track down Collins and other members of the Volunteer General Staff, and had been warned that his life would be forfeited if he chose to continue on this work. When, therefore, the Intelligence Branch received further indications of Smith's continued activity on what was called political work, the order for his execution was given.

This was the first act of open war upon the British

Intelligence system. Up to then the Castle authorities depended mainly upon the police force to supply accurate intelligence reports on the various activities of the national movement, to identify the leaders and to trace their movements. In the country the activity of the Royal Irish Constabulary in this matter had already been, to a large extent, neutralized by a campaign of social ostracism, but in the metropolis certain members of the detective branch had continued this 'political work' under the guise of criminal investigation.

Certain members of the I.R.A. Intelligence staff were, however, also key members of the detective branch, and so Collins was kept informed of the day to day activities of that enemy stronghold. Any detective who undertook 'political work' was, therefore, warned of the consequences of continuing on this work. Most of them were sufficiently intimidated by the first warning, but a few continued their activity even after a second warning and were accordingly condemned to death, the executions being duly carried out by the members of "The Squad" at the first available opportunity.

I think it is well to make clear the fact that the shooting of the "G" Men, which began with Sergeant Smith, was not an indiscriminate killing of individuals. This was an ordered plan which aimed at the destruction of the enemy intelligence system and I am aware, from stories I heard then and since, that Collins held very strong views in the matter of unauthorised shooting. For one thing, it would endanger the lives of Collins's own agents within the enemy service if individual Volunteers, or individual units should take it upon themselves to act against members of the British services without express sanction from G.H.Q., but, apart from this practical consideration, there was also the question of maintaining control of the situation, and

the acceptance of responsibility for such acts on behalf of the duly elected Government of the people, An Dáil.

On the 12th September, Detective Officer Hoey, who had led the raid on the Parnell Street shop, was shot dead near the Detective Branch headquarters in College St. and, with the shooting of D.O. Wharton on St. Stephen's Green, and Detective Sergeant Barton in College St. within the following couple of months, the usefulness of the detective branch as a political intelligence agency had come to an end.

Our family suffered a bereavement about this time in the rather sudden death of Ita, one of my younger sisters. Ita was at school in the convent at Navan and was just then at home on the summer holidays. She was about seventeen years of age and a very vivacious girl with a splendid singing voice which we enjoyed when we visited Saucerstown, as we regularly did most weekends. She developed meningitis and was removed to Cork St. Hospital, where she died the following day or so - 7th August 1919. I visited her some hours before she died, but she was in a coma and obviously dying. The sisters at the hospital told us afterwards that she rallied a bit before she died and, sitting up in the bed, sang the 'Soldier's Song' right through in a clear and musical voice, after which she lay back and died.

It was evident in the fall of 1919 that the drifting period of the national struggle had also come to an end. Not indeed that the year 1919 had been one of inactivity on either side, but the year closed upon an increased activity of the protagonist forces and a mounting tension of the public mind, which betokened the gathering storm. Towards the end of that summer an indication of the British reaction to the situation was to be seen in a considerable reinforcement of troops and war equipment landed in Dublin from England. The official British figures given for the number of troops in Ireland in

countries of the world that the British claim of maintaining law and order in Ireland was but a cloak to cover an unjust aggression. This was the establishment of what were known at the time as the "Sinn Fein Courts".

The breakdown of the British police system, which had been chiefly concerned, in any case, with political espionage, gave an opportunity to criminally minded individuals to carry on petty thieving and suchlike crimes unhindered. Indeed, the position was that the more of such things that went on the better could the British authorities substantiate their claim that only they were capable of governing the country,

Apart from this aspect of the matter, there was also the point that if the British Courts of Law were to be recognised by Irish citizens in the matter of civil cases, the authority of the Dáil suffered thereby. Consequently, judges were appointed by the Dáil Ministry of Justice and the functioning of these Dáil Eireann Courts was ensured and their decisions enforced by the Volunteers, or, as this latter organisation was now more usually called, the I.R.A.

The British reaction to all this was to issue a Proclamation on 12th September 1919, declaring Dáil Éireann an illegal organisation. All the functions, therefore, of this elected parliament of the Irish people were banned and its members outlawed. Daily raids then began on all the offices and buildings believed to be occupied by the various Dáil departments and, where any evidence of such occupation was found, the clerical staffs were arrested as well as any others found on the premises. It was in this way that my father, Dick McKee, Dermot O'Hegarty and others were arrested in a raid which occurred on 11th November 1919, on No.76 Harcourt St. which contained one of Mick Collins's offices connected with the Dáil Department of Finance.

In this case, as was usual at the time, no specific charge was brought against the prisoners, nor were they brought to trial by courtmartial or otherwise. They were merely lodged in Mountjoy gaol where they were held for some months, while their identity was being investigated.

While father remained in Mountjoy I had to take on the management of his affairs. Actually, my sister Kathleen, who was living at home with my mother, paid the men's wages and looked after things there. But father made me responsible for the necessary financial accounting, giving him a weekly statement of accounts and progress of work with my weekly letter to him.

Sean Boylan was O/C. of the adjoining Co. Meath Brigade at that time, and as he called to the garage to see me now and then, I was not surprised to see him one day. Knowing Sean as an enterprising commander I was even less surprised when he told me that he had planned some attacks on R.I.C. barracks in his brigade area and wanted my assistance in the matter of transport. This was, I think, on 1st November 1919, and the attacks were planned to take place on the night of the 2nd. We agreed that I would provide two cars, and later a third was supplied by Jack Cotter (late Major Cotter of the National Army).

We got a driver for my other car and, on the evening of the 2nd, Hubert Kearns brought me the final word that my second car would pick up someone who would conduct the driver towards Dillon's Bridge to meet the party of Meath men who were to attack Dillon's Bridge barracks. I, with the other car, would go to Trim to meet Captain Mooney who would be in charge of the party which was to attack Ballivor Barracks. I did not know Mooney, nor was I familiar with the town of Trim, and the night was dark with a drizzle of rain falling. It would not do, under the circumstances, to drive around Trim making inquiries for the local Volunteer commander, so Kearns decided to accompany me.

I drove the reliable Ford car that had seen us through the Collinstown raid, reaching Trim without incident about 9 o'clock where Kearns located Mooney and his lads awaiting our arrival. I was introduced to Jack Mooney, a medium-sized stockily built man, who impressed me at the time as a capable individual with plenty of quiet self confidence. The only other one of the party I remember was a tall thin lad named Lawlor, who, I believe, afterwards became a member of the Gárda Síochána. Lawlor was excited at the prospect of a fight and kept talking a lot as we drove along. It was probably the others telling him repeatedly to shut up that impressed his name on my memory.

They piled into the car - four of them I think there were - and we set off for Ballivor, about eight miles distant, where some other local Volunteers were to meet us. I gathered from Mooney as we went along that he hoped to take the Ballivor R.I.C. barracks by surprise, but Lawlor's interjections indicated that he would be a very disappointed man if we did not have a fight.

Arrived at Ballivor we turned up a byroad to the right just before coming to the barracks. There the car was parked; the lights, which were fed direct from the dynamo in the old Ford system, going off when the engine stopped. The remainder of the party, some five or six men, met us there and Mooney then explained in a few quiet words what each man would do. There was a scout already watching the barracks and another man in close touch with him, so we were assured that all the police - five, with the sergeant - were inside and there was no sign of alarm on their part.

An advance party of three men including Mooney then moved softly towards the barracks, followed by the remainder about twenty paces in reere. The two men with Mooney stayed close to him, but out of view when he knocked at the barracks door and asked to see the sergeant. The young constable who came

to the door in response to the knock opened it cautiously a few inches and seemed about to close it again when Mooney drew his revolver and ordered him to put his hands up. I think that the constable became so flabbergasted at this that he just stood still in the middle of the doorway as if rooted to the spot. That hesitation was his undoing, however, for the men following Mooney, who had been watching the performance with taut nerves, moved up at once and one of them, pushing his gun past Mooney, shot the policeman dead. Stepping over the body the remainder surged into the barracks where the other police surrendered without a word.

The man who was shot was obviously beyond human aid and so there was nothing left to do but collect the arms, ammunition and equipment in the barracks and put as much distance between us and Ballivor as quickly as possible. We felt rather sorry about the shooting of the constable as we could realise afterwards that his hesitation was due more to his frightened surprise than any intention of resistance. But, then, if he had managed to delay the entry of Mooney and the others while the other police grabbed hold of their rifles, it might have been another story.

The captured rifles, ammunition and equipment was loaded into the car and as many of the men as we had brought who could do so squeezed in also. We drove back to Trim, where we left the men and the captured material, and headed for Dublin. Considering it advisable to avoid the main Dublin road, we turned east towards Fingal and, as it was then very dark and raining, lost our way among the byroads, so that it was in the small hours of the morning we arrived in Dublin without further incident.

Chapter XIV.

C O N T E N T S.

Pages 295 to 310.

Destruction of Dublin newspaper offices and the attack
on Lord French at the end of 1919 - Local Elections -
Purchase of a British Army motor truck - Roundup
of the Longwood gang by Meath Brigade - Arrest of the
murderers of Mark Clinton, in course of which we are
pursued by an armoured car - General situation in
Summer of 1920 - Appearance of the 'Black and Tans'
and the Auxiliaries - Destruction of evacuated R.I.C.
barracks, an incident at Raheny.

Chapter XIV.

An indication of the increased tension in public feeling at the end of 1919 might be judged from the raids on the newspaper offices and the attack on Lord French at Ashtown which occurred at this time. Though not immediately related, these things seemed to follow each other as a natural sequence, and showed that the Irish revolutionary movement had passed the stage of being mildly tolerant towards its enemies.

The Freeman's Journal, which was at this time one of the principal Dublin daily papers, had printed an article condemning the British attempt to dragoon the Irish people, and the British reply to this was a military raid on the offices of the paper, when the machinery was broken and dismantled so as to prevent further issues. Similar raids on offices such as the "Gaelic Press", which printed the strongly national papers, had been common enough, but this was the first time that what might be described as a sober and careful daily paper had been so treated.

The raid on the Freeman's Journal was on the 15th December 1919, and a few days later came the determined though abortive attack on the Viceroy, Lord French, at Ashtown Station. There was no relation between these events of course, but outsiders might be pardoned for thinking that this was the Irish reply to an attempt to muzzle their press. Actually the reason for the attack on Lord French was that he was the symbol and representative head of the usurping British authority and, as such, was

the enemy of the Irish people - to be destroyed at the first available opportunity. Several attacks were arranged before this date with the same purpose, but always French failed to turn up or his route was altered at the last minute. I knew nothing of the attack until a 'Stop Press' edition of the evening papers gave the particulars of it, when I learned with deep regret that not only had Lord French escaped uninjured, but that Martin Savage, one of the attacking party whom I knew well, had been killed by the fire of the escort. This news was bad enough as it was, but when on the following day one of the other Dublin daily papers, the 'Irish Independent', came out with a strong condemnation of the attack and of the attackers, it was more than the Dublin Volunteers could stand, so the destruction of the Independent printing works was ordered by the O/C Dublin Brigade, and the Volunteers carried this out at least as thoroughly as the British forces had destroyed the Freeman's offices a week or so earlier.

During the month of January 1920 the local elections for County Councils and Rural District Councils were held under the proportional representation system, and my spare time was pretty fully occupied in connection with this event. My father and the other T.D.s had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the business of securing the election of Sinn Féin nominees, and so the services of myself and my cars were in continuous demand to take parties around the country to address meetings, protect these meetings from police interference, and to make all necessary arrangements for a complete take-over of the details of local administration after the sweeping victory which was expected

at the elections. Petrol supplies were limited at the time, but from all kinds of unexpected places came donations of petrol to keep our cars on the road and thereby help to ensure our victory.

I think it must have been about that time that the system of military permits for motor vehicles was introduced by the British authorities, following which any car found on the roads without a permit to run it was subject to confiscation by them. I had, therefore, to apply through the police for permits for my cars to remain on the road, but had no difficulty in obtaining these through the influence of the Dublin County Council office, as I held a contract with the Co. Council for driving their pay clerks each week to pay the men working on roads and quarries throughout the country.

During the Spring of 1920, about April I think, there was a sale of surplus motor vehicles held by the British Military Authorities at Portobello Barracks, at which I purchased a "Reo" truck. This was a vehicle built to carry a 15 cwt. load at speed and had the orthodox hooded military body fitted to it. When I bought it I had no idea other than that it would earn some money in general haulage work, but as I began to use it without any alteration to its body structure, it became obvious that, as it would pass for a military vehicle it might have other possibilities.

It was very soon after I had got this truck and had got it into mechanical working order, that I had a visit from Seán Boylan, the Officer Commanding the

adjoining Meath Brigade This was early in May 1920. Boylan had come to me to arrange transport for a raiding party in his Brigade area, having been sent to me, I believe, by Mick Collins, with whom he had been discussing the project.

At about this period, Spring of 1920, an unlooked for feature had begun to appear in the situation. Certain criminally inclined elements of the population saw an opportunity for the free pursuit of their unlawful activities in the tense situation where the R.I.C. had been withdrawn from the smaller stations, and up to then the normal police functions had not been the special concern of the I.R.A. A number of robberies and crimes of violence which occurred about this time were, therefore, imputed by the British authorities to the I.R.A. forces, and General Headquarters of the I.R.A., realising its responsibilities in this matter, had issued instructions to Brigades throughout the country to undertake the normal police duties and responsibility for maintenance of law and order.

In Seán Boylan's Brigade area the residence of the Duc de Stacpool had been raided by a gang and looted of a considerable amount of silver plate. A quiet investigation by Boylan and his officers had now identified the members of the gang concerned, and his mission to me was to secure a suitable vehicle to carry out the arrest of the gang. The "Reo" truck was admirably suited for the purpose, its bodywork being quite untouched since I had purchased it, so that as well as concealing what it carried it would passⁱⁿ certain circumstances for an enemy military vehicle.

Boylan travelled with me to Trim, where at a crossroads before entering the town we picked up Capt. Jack Mooney and some others and headed at once for Longwood. It was my first visit to the town of Longwood, and I remember that the first thing that registered itself in my mind as I entered the town was the fact that there were two R.I.C. men armed with revolvers in their belts walking towards us down the street with all the assurance of possession in their gait. A hurried comment on this brought the further enlightenment from Boylan that the building which faced us at the far end of the street was the R.I.C. barracks. Our immediate destination was, however, a public house just off the main street on our left. Here, it seemed, some of the gang were to be found, and a Volunteer who had been keeping the place under observation before we arrived made a signal to us as we entered the town. As the truck swung abruptly around and backed up to the public house, the armed men in the back jumped to the ground and ran towards the public house door, where they were joined by local Volunteers who were there to identify the wanted men. While three or four prisoners were being handled unceremoniously from the bar into the back of the truck, I was somewhat amused to see the hurried retreat of the two R.I.C. men towards their barracks. They had looked with some suspicion at the truck as it came into the town, and certainly when it turned suddenly to the left and almost completed the circle at the pub the movement must have seemed rather peculiar to them. I'm not sure whether they could see the armed men jumping from the back from where they were, but they were alarmed because as we re-entered the main street and turned to the left towards the barracks

we could see the two constables finishing the last few yards to the barracks at a hundred yards sprint pace. They must have raised the alarm within as they reached the barracks because the door and the loop holed steel shutters on the windows were closed as we passed hurriedly by. In order to proceed on our way to arrest some further members of the gang at their houses, we had to drive straight down the main street towards the barracks, passing close by the front of it as we turned right. That was a most uneasy part of the drive as both Boylan and I who sat in the driver's cab, were very conscious of the loop holed steel shutters we were rapidly approaching, and knowing the police were alarmed we more than half expected a bullet to smash through our windshield. However, nothing happened, and it was with a considerable feeling of relief that we turned out of the town, and picking up a few more prisoners a little further on swung around towards Trim where Boylan and some of the escort left us. I had instructions from Boylan to take the prisoners and the remainder of the escort to Balheary in the Fingal Brigade area, where it had been arranged they would be held until their trial by a Republican Court.

On the way across to Fingal my luck ran out as I had a series of punctures, until finally I had expended all my spares, wheel, tubes and a repair outfit and finished up the last couple of miles with a rear tyre stuffed with hay pulled from a haycock in a field. From that experience I can say that hay cannot be recommended as a good or even a fair substitute for an orthodox inner tube. In quite a short distance the hay became pulped into a kind of meal which packed itself into a hard lump on one point of the wheel's circumference. The resultant

bumpety bumpety bump sort of progress was quite intolerable and so necessitated very frequent restuffing of the tyre. It was broad daylight when we reached Balheary and, in fact, not long before sunrise, as I have a clear recollection of doing a fresh stuffing of the tyre with the help of a couple of the Fingal Volunteers who had been awaiting our arrival as the first rays of the rising sun began its gilding of the surrounding walls and treetops.

The farmyard at Balheary was owned at that time by my father's cousin, Edward Lyons, who lived then in the city. Consequently the house, a ramshackle affair, was unoccupied, and it and the outer farm yard buildings were, therefore, quite suitable as a place to hold prisoners. I took myself and my tell-tale truck away from Balheary as quickly as possible and made my way painfully enough to Saucerstown, a couple of miles away, where its presence would excite no comment. There after I had had a couple of hours' sleep and something to eat, I got a conveyance to Dublin and was able to return later that day with the necessary salvage equipment to collect the truck.

A further Republican police incident in the Meath Brigade area which involved myself and the truck took place about a month later. This was the arrest of another gang which was afterwards proved to have been responsible for the shooting of a Volunteer Officer, Mark Clinton, of Moynalty. The daily newspapers at the time characterized the murder of Clinton as a purely agrarian crime and it had, in fact, some such significance, because Clinton, who farmed in the district, had taken over a farm from the Irish Land Commission which had been claimed

for division amongst certain local British ex-servicemen. Clinton was shot dead as he was ploughing a field on this land, and the newspaper report of the crime shocked a public that had begun to get accustomed to daily reports of violent death in one form or another. I think that what made this particular murder seem so savage was that as well as Clinton, the murderers also shot dead the two horses attached to the plough, leaving all three to be found in their gore sometime later.

Having carried out the necessary investigations, and having marked down those believed to be implicated in the crime, the Meath Brigade was now ready to arrest them and bring them to trial before a Republican Court. Seán Boylan, therefore, called to my garage one evening to say that he wanted myself and the truck for the job that evening. In an effort to control or prevent the movements of Volunteers during the hours of darkness, the British Military Authorities had during February, 1920, imposed a curfew regulation under which no civilian or civilian vehicle might be out of doors between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m., but at this time such regulation only applied to the City of Dublin. Nevertheless, any vehicle leaving the city late at night might not re-enter it until daylight the following morning, so that I knew when leaving the city with my truck that night about nine o'clock I would have to stay out until some time next day no matter what happened.

I picked up Seán Boylan at the appointed time and we drove on to Dunboyne and Trim, where we picked up an armed party of about ten or twelve Volunteers. Mooney

and Lawlor of Trim whom I had had with me at Balivor and more recently at Longwood, were among the party. Seán Boylan sat beside me in the driver's cab and directed me where to go in his laconic mode of speech. "Right", "Left" or "Straight on" when we reached a crossroads and "Pull up here" when we arrived, was almost the only conversation between us during the drive, and occasionally he rapped out a sharp command to those behind in the body to be silent. Having left Trim far behind us I had no idea where we were when we stopped at Boylan's command near some houses, where some two or three men were quickly placed under arrest, loaded into the truck and we sped on further north. Passing through a village I did not recognise, Seán informed me in reply to my question that it was Moynalty, which I knew vaguely was somewhere near the Cavan-Meath border. A couple of miles further on we turned left into a very narrow by-road and a little way up this stopped at the crest of a slight rise. Here the whole party dismounted except a guard on the prisoners already in custody, and as they moved off quietly towards some cottages a couple of hundred yards away Seán instructed me to turn the truck about while I waited, but without showing any lights. This was much easier said than done, however, as the road was very little wider than the width of the truck and there was no convenient gateway, but I managed somehow to get turned before the party could be seen in the clouded moonlight returning with another prisoner. This prisoner seemed to be tall and walked erect and square shouldered, while he alternately cursed his captors and vowed vengeance on others. Clearly this was a man of different mettle

from those we had taken earlier in the night. Arriving at the rear of the truck he refused to get into it, and had to be lifted while he struggled and thrown with more force than courtesy into it. I heard afterwards that he was a man named Smith. As we emerged from the by-road Seán ordered a left turn, then a right as we reached what appeared to be a main road running along on one side of a river valley. Looking at a map afterwards, I think this was the Blackwater valley west of Kells as our destination was Trim and Dunboyne. We were, therefore, at the moment on the south bank of the Blackwater heading towards Navan, and a glance at a map will show that there is a parallel road on the north bank of the river. At the time, however, I had no idea where I was but relied implicitly upon Boylan to direct me, without even questioning where we were heading for. We had our headlights on at this time and making fair speed, when I noticed a pair of powerful headlights moving in the opposite direction beyond the river. It was the first indication I had that there was a parallel road on the other side of the valley. Just as the car across the valley came level with us a third and more powerful light made its appearance above the headlights and swirled around quickly in our direction. "Switch off your lights" said Boylan, "it's an armoured car playing a searchlight on us". I, of course, had been keeping my eyes on the road we were travelling on, but he had been carefully watching the approaching headlights across the valley and had managed to identify the outline of a Rolls Royce armoured car as the crew began to manipulate a searchlight from its turret. "What do we do now" I thought, as I pressed on

as fast as I dared to travel in the dark. I suppose I must have said something like that to Boylan, because he said something to the effect that the armoured car was speeding away in the opposite direction with the obvious purpose of reaching a bridge where they could cross on to our side of the river. "Take the next turn left" he said, and we turned over another bridge and on to the road that we had seen the armoured car on. This could now be seen, or rather its headlights, in the distance speeding along the road we had just left on the south bank of the river, while we following in its wake were on the north bank of the river, still travelling without lights. The humour of the situation appealed to us in spite of its danger, my only worry being to avoid any slight accident that would immobilize our truck and so cause the enemy vehicle to catch up on us. When we came to the bridge where the armoured car had crossed to the south of the river. we followed in its tracks, arriving eventually at the point from where we had first sighted it. There was no sign of the armoured car then, so we felt somewhat uneasy. It might be lying in ambush for us or might suddenly appear coming towards us, so Boylan said "there is a small laneway on the right a little way down here, turn in there". A small laneway was right. I don't know how he picked it out in the dark. It was barely the width of the truck, and the overhanging thorn bushes scraped the sides as we moved carefully along it some fifty yards or so from the main road. There we waited in the darkness and in silence, listening for any sound that would announce the continuation of the search for us. But apparently the armoured car crew had given

it up. Perhaps they concluded that their first glimpse of our lights had been a mirage or a will-o-the-wisp. We drove on after about a half hour's delay, and taking a turn to the right arrived near Dunboyne without further incident.

We deposited our prisoners as well as the Volunteer party about a mile or two before we reached Dunboyne, where they were met by a local Volunteer party who were there to conduct them on foot to their destination. I heard long afterwards that a Republican Court had convicted and sentenced to death one of the gang charged with this murder. A number of other members of the gang were sentenced to deportation, and these sentences after confirmation by the Dáil department were duly carried out.

Leaving Dunboyne it was quite daylight but still rather early to re-enter the city, so as we came to Clonee Boylan, who was still with me, said, "turn to your left here" and we turned into a lane that led to a farm house. Parking the truck in the farmyard we went up to the house, where Boylan demanded admittance in summary fashion by rattling the latch and kicking at the door. The door was opened without much delay by the woman of the house, with whom Boylan seemed to be well acquainted, and he, walking straight past her into the kitchen, demanded breakfast at once for the two of us. I remember thinking that this was a rather cavalier way of treating people, but the old woman did not seem to mind once she had got over her first grouse at being hauled out of bed at such an unearthly hour. I gathered that Boylan had often stayed

at this house and that the people were loyal to our cause. Certainly we did full justice to a meal of bacon and eggs with tea and brown bread and butter before I continued my drive back to Dublin, where I arrived in the company of market carts and general traffic that effectively masked my return.

All during the Spring and Summer of 1920 the war tempo had been steadily increasing, so that afterwards it was hard to say at what point the condition of practically open hostilities began. The shooting of Jameson, the British secret service agent, early in March represented the establishment of an effective I.R.A. intelligence service, and its determination to blind the corresponding enemy service by destroying its agents as they appeared. The shooting of Alan Bell who had undertaken the mission of locating the holders of Dáil funds through an examination of bank accounts, also showed the watchfulness of the I.R.A. intelligence service. These and other such incidents also showed the efficiency of the G.H.Q. Squad which had come into existence for just such purposes, carrying out the orders of the chief of the intelligence service. The Irish railwaymen had refused to carry British forces or military stores on the railways, and a two day general strike in support of the political prisoners in Mountjoy, who were themselves on a ten day hunger-strike, brought about the release of most of these prisoners at once and the remainder a little later.

On the other hand, the British effort to rebuild her war machine and reduce the Irish people to subjection went ahead energetically. As the Irish sources of supply for recruits to the Royal Irish Constabulary had for all

practical purposes dried up, an attempt was made to recruit Englishmen to make up the deficiency, but this was only moderately successful. The type of recruit so obtained was very poor by comparison with the old R.I.C., and this new type of recruit merely had the effect of diluting what had been a good fighting force, as well as making the older members resentful of the newcomers. It was said at the time, with what truth I do not know, that numbers of those so recruited in England at that time for the R.I.C. were ticket of leave men or were released from prisons on agreeing to join the R.I.C. However that may be, some of them I saw on their way to and from their new depot which had been established at Gormanston Camp, Co. Meath, were a very weedy type. The difficulty in finding uniforms to fit them brought about the indiscriminate wear by these R.I.C. recruits of khaki trousers with black or bottle-green police tunic or vice versa, and it was to this element of the force the name "Black and Tan" was first applied. Before March was out, however, the first elements of a new enemy force arrived in Dublin, the R.I.C. Auxiliary Division, or as they became popularly known "The Auxies". Looking back on it now, one can date the beginning of what was to be the final phase of the struggle from the arrival of this force. The force was organised on the lines of what would have been recognised in the later World War 11 period as Commando Units, the personnel being specially selected and consisting mostly of ex Army Officers who on demobilisation after the war were ready to take on a well paid job that offered excitement. The men who composed this force were seasoned and tough fighters, and the particular form of organisation

was sufficiently loose in its disciplinary code to allow full scope to individual initiative. ~~throughout~~

Throughout the country there were continuous attacks on the smaller R.I.C. barracks and on R.I.C. patrols at the end of 1919 and for the first couple of months of 1920, and this activity, which provided much needed armament from the captured arms as well as training for local Volunteer units, compelled the evacuation of all the smaller R.I.C. posts about the end of January 1920. This evacuation of the smaller R.I.C. posts or barracks was really the first sign of an enemy retreat, and in the country where these ~~very~~ small posts were the eyes and ears as well as the very hands of the enemy power, such a withdrawal gave a local freedom that was at once apparent. In the metropolitan area there was only a limited withdrawal of these small posts, and the effect so noticeable immediately in the country was not so apparent. Nevertheless it was heartening to see a few small barracks, which we had grown to look upon as the strongholds of the enemy, evacuated and almost immediately afterwards sent up in smoke.

The Volunteer General Staff was conscious, apparently, of the significance of the gradual withdrawal of the minor enemy garrisons to the stronger posts, and lest the British authority should be tempted to reconsider its decision on this matter, instructions were issued to all Brigades to burn or otherwise destroy all evacuated R.I.C. barracks. The destruction of the evacuated R.I.C. barracks as well as Income Tax offices throughout the country, took place in the first week of April 1920, the occasion being fixed in my mind by my accidental presence at the burning of the

evacuated R.I.C. barracks at Raheny, Co. Dublin.

I had taken Dot out for a drive to Howth Head in an old Maxwell car which I had purchased a short time before that and had just then completed painting and doing it up. It was an open touring car of about 1916 vintage, and as the weather was cold I was driving with hood and side curtains up. Driving along on the return trip, it being then dark, I had lights on, but my lights were not very effective judged by modern standards and windscreen wipers were not then in common use. So when approaching Raheny village a man waved me to stop, I did not notice at first that he was armed, nor did I observe other armed men on the left of the road who jumped on the running board as I began to slow up. The Maxwell braking system of the time was not so good either, so that it took quite a distance to pull up after I had decided to stop and apparently the men on the running boards, unaware of my identity, were excitedly shouting to me to stop and were unaware that the stopping process was a rather long drawn out business with this vehicle. At any rate the man standing on the near side running board thought he would emphasise the imperitiveness of the order to halt by firing a shot, or it may be that with finger on trigger he did not realise he was squeezing it. The side curtains interposed a sort of sound barrier, so that though I heard the shot I could not make out what all the shouting was about nor could they hear me until I got out of the car. Then I discovered that these were men of the 2nd Battalion of the Dublin Brigade, some of whom I knew and who knew me, and that they constituted an intercepting party on that

road while other members of the Battalion burned down the evacuated R.I.C. barracks. Other parties were stationed on the other roads leading to the village so that the village would remain isolated until the work was complete. We sat down on the bank to wait while we chatted to the Volunteers who had held us up, and I tried to identify the man who had fired the shot. Not that I wanted to do anything about this except perhaps to tell him what a high powered ass he was, as I had by then discovered that his shot, from a .455 Webley, had made a hole as big as my fist in the side panel. Later I found that the bullet had gone clean through and lodged in the cushion of the seat Dot was sitting on at the time. In a short time we could see paraffin flames soaring skyward from the roof of the doomed building, and I volunteering to take as many of the Volunteers as could squeeze in back to town, I dropped these around Fairview on my way home.

Chapter XV.

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C O N T E N T S.

The first bus service to Howth Business difficulties
with the quickening of the war tempo A Lough Derg
pilgrimage Dáil Fisheries Committee My
sister Eibhlin enters Gloucester St. Convent Fingal
Brigade dissatisfied with its own inactivity The
sack of Balbriggan The arrest, trial and execution
of an enemy intelligence agent known as Jack Straw
Some recollections of my contact with officers of the South
Tipperary Brigade The Fernside raid and the following
rescue of Dan Breen.

Chapter XV.

The middle of 1920 saw the opening of a new phase in the British effort to destroy the Irish resurgent movement with the appearance of the Black and Tans and the Auxiliary Division of the R.I.C. Curfew, declaration of military areas and the permit system for all motor transport had an immediate reaction on business activities but particularly upon the motor trade.

Consequently, I was at my wits' end about this time to find ways and means of some sort to keep myself and my business from bankruptcy. To make further use of the Reo truck in its unaltered state following the Meath exploit was to invite trouble, and so I conceived the plan of converting it to an omnibus of sorts.

This was a time before motor buses had come into general use and the Dublin Tramway was practically the only means the city folk had of getting to the adjoining seaside places on Sundays and holidays. Dot and I had been in the habit of making the trip to Howth on such occasions, and observing the difficulties people experienced in getting a passage on the overcrowded trams, it struck me that one could make some money by providing a motor bus to ply between say Nelson Pillar and Howth Pier. The Reo was, therefore, repainted with a blue grey enamel, a detachable canopy with celluloid windows fitted, detachable upholstered seats fitted and retractable mounting steps fitted in rere. This equipment was all easily removable, so that the truck could be used at other times for ordinary

haulage work. I did not mind doing the driving myself for haulage work, but I employed a man who was recommended to me to undertake the dual duties of driver and conductor for Sunday bus work. This bus business went on for a couple of months, but the returns were disappointing. The fare was a shilling either way, and I had gone to watch the bus in operation both at the Pillar and at Howth on several occasions, noting that it was filled rapidly at each end. Nevertheless the cash returns showed clearly that the driver was dishonest, and I got rid of him just as a man who had seen the possibilities came along to purchase the truck. This was Tom O'Connor (late Chairman of Dublin Port and Docks Board) who then ran a business in Rathmines and was a friend of the Fleming family. I told him I did not want to sell the truck, but he was insistent that I should put a price on it so I accepted £500 as a cash sale which, as it showed a handsome profit, relieved my financial straits for the moment.

The foregoing serves merely to show how the current political situation of the time reacted adversely on commercial pursuits and how, on the other hand, the critical position of private affairs distracted individual attention from the national effort to some extent. Nevertheless there were numerous examples of people who, like my friends the Flemings, mortgaged their possessions to supply the needs of the fighting men, jeopardizing their personal fortunes in a willing contribution to the fight for national freedom, so that when peace came at last it was they who bore the reckoning, for in the slump period of 1922-4

recuperation was scarcely possible.

Midsummer of 1920 showed a quickening of the war tempo, to be seen in the daily newspaper reports of barrack attacks and disarming of patrols on the one hand and raids and arrests on the other. In Dublin City the seizure of Castle mails from the sorting office at the Rotunda Rink struck a serious blow at the enemy security. This and the shooting of Frank Brooke, a Privy Councillor whose special anti-Irish activities had been revealed through I.R.A. intelligence agents, must have shown to the Castle authorities that the I.R.A. intelligence system was in the ascendant, and that to pursue the war successfully they would have to institute a new system of their own. The importance of intelligence as a major factor in the national struggle was by this time fully appreciated by the rank and file of the I.R.A., all of whom had an unbounded confidence in Michael Collins and his staff of the H.Q. intelligence. Certainly the results to date had shown how a preponderant superiority on the part of the enemy in strength of men and material could be outweighed by a more accurate and up to date knowledge of his forces, movements and intentions than he could gain of ours. Beaslai's "Life of Collins" gives a lot of the detail of how Collins had carefully built up this system, and I only refer to it here to note that it was about this time, the middle of 1920, that Collins had become in the minds of the rank and file the mythical 'Scarlet Pimpernel' kind of leader who could be trusted to deal adequately with any situation that might arise and who had his fingers on the pulse of the enemy.

My sister Eibhlin worked as a confidential typist for Collins in some of his many offices but chiefly at No. 6 and No. 76 Harcourt St., which were mainly concerned with Dáil Loan activities. Naturally, however, as Collins's responsibilities were manifold, his offices as Dáil Minister of Finance, Director of I.R.A. Intelligence and Director of Organisation were wherever he happened to be at the moment.

Sometime towards the end of July 1920 my father suggested that as he, my mother, my brother Kieran and my sister Eibhlin had decided to go on a pilgrimage to Lough Derg, it might be a good idea if I would drive them up to Pettigo and that perhaps Dot would also come with us. So it was arranged without delay, and I prepared what I considered to be my most reliable car for the journey. In those days the roads were not what they are now, nor could motor cars be depended on to travel a three hundred mile journey without mechanical difficulties arising. The car, a fifteen H.P. Rover of 1909 vintage, was sound enough, but in order to ensure the passage I fitted four new tyres before I started. This, plus a spare wheel, two spare tubes and a tyre repair outfit would, I thought, see us safely over the trip. But the canvas built beaded edge tyres of those days were notoriously unreliable and I had to buy an extra tube by the time I had reached Enniskillen. All the way there and back there was a series of punctures and blowouts though otherwise the car behaved admirably. I noted as we travelled on the direct road from Dublin through Virginia, Co. Cavan, to Pettigo in Donegal that there was little sign to be seen of the war which the daily press reports showed to be widespread.

R.I.C. men in some of the towns we passed through looked somewhat suspiciously at the car as it passed, and possibly noted its registration number - RI 1276, but only once, in Enniskillen, was I asked to produce my military permit.

I was only the driver of this expedition and had no intention of becoming a pilgrim when the trip began, but as I would have to wait in Pettigo for two days to take the pilgrims home father prevailed upon me to come with them to the island and take part in the penitential exercises of the pilgrimage. We travelled home via Dundalk, and although we had a better road from Dundalk to Dublin did not escape a further series of punctures, arriving in Saucerstown rather late at night where we all stayed until morning when Dot, Eibhlin and I returned to the City.

I think it was about this time that father, as a member of the Dáil for North Co. Dublin, was appointed on a Dáil Committee set up to enquire into the fishing industry. He took his responsibility in this matter very seriously, and in the course of the following two or three weeks kept me busy driving him around the fishing towns and villages of Howth, Rush, Loughshinny, Skerries and Balbriggan. There he interviewed the fishermen to get their views and suggestions for improvement of the industry and examined their boats and gear. I believe that this particular Dáil Committee made certain recommendations which were embodied in legislation which, however, only came into effect after the signing of the treaty.

In August Eibhlin resigned from her position as Collins's typist in order to become a nun. She entered the

Convent of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge, Gloucester St., on the 15th August, 1920. Collins expressed his deep regret at the loss of her services and made her a personal presentation on leaving. Discussing his loss of Eibhlin's services with my father a day or so after she left, father suggested her replacement by one of the Lyons girls, daughters of his cousin Edward Lyons. Two of these girls, Ellie and Alice, were at business as stenographers, and as a result of my father's suggestion both of them were taken on to Collins's staff. They, at a subsequent period, accompanied the plenipotentiary party to London when the Treaty was signed, having in the meantime gained the confidence of Collins in their ability and trustworthiness.

The increase of I.R.A. activity throughout the country and the corresponding activity on the part of the enemy forces at this time made us begin to wonder what was wrong with our own Brigade area. Except for a few minor incidents such as the locally organised attack on the R.I.C. barracks at Rush, nothing very much was happening there and we felt that the laurels we had won in 1916 were sadly withered through the subsequent inactivity of the Fingallians. Actually the trouble was that the Brigade Staff was unsuitable as it stood. The Brigade Commander, Michael Lynch, was a City man who had undertaken the job of re-organising the Fingal area in 1917. He still lived in the City, and although he paid periodic visits to the units of the Brigade and presided at Brigade Council meetings, these latter were infrequent and no more than formal consideration of what was generally well known of the situation. Looking back on it now one realizes that all the members of the staff were

equally to blame, for no one was willing to take a strong lead to compel action but waited week in and month out for official orders to act, while daily we watched the enemy forces moving with complete safety through our countryside. ^{DERHAM} Jim Devlin of Balbriggan (who was the second T.D. for North Co. Dublin) discussed this situation with me on a few occasions and he undertook to talk to Collins about it. Dan Brophy was also in frequent touch with me and he also agreed that we would have to do something drastic to force the pace if the Brigade Commander did not act, though even at this late date we felt that action was impending and that perhaps we were just being impatient. The question of the Brigade inactivity was brought up for discussion at a Brigade Council meeting about this time, and the Brigade Commander informed the meeting that Collins had instructed him that no active operation should be undertaken in Fingal without his specific sanction. Afterwards some of us were rather sceptical of this instruction, but there seems to have been some grounds for it for in recent years I discussed the point with Dan Brophy and he told me that sometime about that period he had been in Collins's office - where he had gone with some dispatches or intelligence reports as he frequently did - and he made some comment to Collins on the dissatisfaction felt among the officers of the Brigade at the inactivity attributed to his orders. He said that Collins told him that he did not want the enemy to declare North Co. Dublin as a military area as this would effectively cut the City and, incidentally, the I.R.A. General Headquarters off from the north and

west of the country. Collins also said that the hinterland of the City was more useful as a quiet area where hard pressed City Units, or rather the individuals of such Units, could retire to rest or escape pursuit.

Nevertheless it was galling to watch the daily convoys of Black and Tans going to and from their depot at Gormanston, and the British Military Unit stationed at Collinstown Aerodrome had now established a post in the town of Swords where they had taken over the large vacant residence Swords House.

Peter White, who was the Company Commander in Ballyboughal, had the same idea as we had about the trend of events but Peter was less constrained by notions of discipline, and so with a couple of his men he went into Balbriggan one night in the middle of September where they shot dead District Inspector Burke of the R.I.C. and wounded a Sergeant. Balbriggan is within about three miles of Gormanston Camp, the Black and Tan depot at the time, and was also the district R.I.C. Headquarters and the town was habitually frequented by Black and Tans on local pass from Gormanston. Later that night, 20th September 1920, lorry loads of Black and Tans from Gormanstown descended upon the town of Balbriggan where they proceeded to set fire to the town. A woollen mill or stocking factory, the town's chief industry, was burned to the ground, and about thirty shops and dwelling houses were similarly treated. While this was in progress the Tans went around firing off shots indiscriminately and creating terror amongst the inhabitants, while a queer individual was observed conducting

an R.I.C. party to certain houses, including the houses of James Lawless and John Gibbon, who were taken out and shot dead on the spot. I am not aware of any special reason for the selection of the victims, except perhaps it was that Lawless was by his name identified by the enemy as one of the members of my own family. The peculiar individual already referred to here as apparently conducting the Black and Tan parties and pointing out houses for burning, had already been observed travelling the roads on foot in the guise of a beggar. Most of the beggars who travelled around selling studs and boot laces or collecting mushrooms or crab apples in season were fairly well known as individuals, but this was a stranger who appeared quite suddenly and who gave no plausible account of himself. He became known as Jack Straw, whether this was the name he gave himself or whether it was an appellation applied by the country people I do not know, but he was viewed with the suspicion that any such stranger excited at the time. After the sack of Balbriggan the story of his appearance there in company with the R.I.C. began to circulate and Volunteer Intelligence Officers began a check-up, but now it seemed the individual had disappeared. He was reported again in the district about a fortnight later, but no responsible Volunteer Officer could manage to get sight of him until one day Dan Brophy happened to be in Lusk on business - he was at the time employed as the driver of the motor van belonging to the Swords Co-operative Society - and he was told by one of the local Volunteers that the now notorious Jack Straw had passed through the town some ten minutes earlier heading towards Corduff. Brophy did not know Jack Straw

by sight and so he took his informant with him in the van and in due course passed and had identified to him the wanted man. Brophy drove on to Corduff where he called to the house of the Kelly family. Joe Kelly was the Brigade Intelligence Officer. There he found his brother Tommy Kelly, whom he informed of the situation and obtained a weapon and some cord to tie up the intended prisoner, and returning the road he had come he accosted the supposed beggar and invited him to accept a lift in the van, which he did. The prisoner was taken to Dempsey's mill at Grace Dieu, where Brophy handed him over to Willie Dempsey with very strict injunctions as to his safe custody. Willie, I believe, took this very seriously, and to ensure that he would not escape tied him to one of the heavy stanchions which supported an upper floor of the mill. Meanwhile Brophy made contact with the Brigade Commander and a formal courtmartial of the prisoner was arranged for that night at the mill. Brophy told me afterwards that he found it difficult to convince the Brigade Commander who presided on the courtmartial that the evidence against the prisoner was sufficiently conclusive to warrant his conviction as an enemy agent, but the court finally agreed on a verdict and Straw was condemned to death. The execution was carried out later by Brophy and Joe Kelly, and in the end Straw admitted that he was in fact a British Intelligence Officer and died bravely. When Brophy asked him whether he had anything to say before he died, he stood erect and folded his arms replying: "No, when I undertook this mission I was fully aware of what the end might be and now I accept my fate without complaint".

Jack Shields, another of the Ballyboughal Officers, had been instructed to prepare a grave in a field on the hill north of Ballyboughal near the "Nag's Head", but when the execution party arrived late at night they found the tools were there but no grave dug. The body was therefore placed in a dry ditch and the earth from the bank above thrown in on it. Cattle in the fields, however, stamped over the fresh earth within the following day or two and so exposed the body, which was removed by a searching party of Black and Tans a little later.

About this time, beginning of October, I had been meeting Seán Treacy, Dan Breen, Dinny Lacy and other members of the South Tipperary Brigade frequently at the house of my friends the Flemings of Drumcondra where I was myself a nightly visitor, and listening to their joking stories of incidents, episodes and narrow escapes I admired and envied them their carefree attitude which could make a joke of the most deadly situation. Treacy, in particular, had a rather impish sense of humour which showed sometimes in mock serious conversation or in relating a recent event in which he pretended to attribute a humorous intent to the enemy forces involved. But one recognised his intellectual superiority and his deadly seriousness of purpose behind the mask of ready laughter. Breen was his inseparable companion, so that it became so normal to hear that Seán and Dan had arrived that one could hardly visualise the one without the other. Dan obviously looked to Seán as the leader, one in whom he reposed absolute confidence, and he himself was prepared to go through "hell and hot-water" at Seán's bidding in support of the ideals they had both espoused.

Dinny Lacy was of a different type, without humour and rather narrow in his views, but withal very honest and sincere in his motives. He was very religious, yet quite ruthless in his dealings with the enemy, so that this paradoxical aspect of Dinny was often the butt of a joke by Seán Hogan or Treacy or Seán O'Meara.

On the night of 12th October a message reached Flemings from Mick Collins to warn Flemings that there might be a raid on the premises that night, and that Treacy and Breen who were in town should not stay there. The Tipperary men had not yet arrived at Flemings when the message came, so the Flemings arranged alternative accommodation in case they should arrive late. Actually when they did arrive it was almost the curfew hour, and they had only just time to leave again by the back gate and get to the house of Professor Carolan, "Fernside", on the Whitehall Road where their arrival was expected. But, all unknown, an enemy agent had observed their arrival at Flemings and had tracked them to "Fernside" where, in the small hours of the morning, a strong raiding party of military accompanied by an armoured car surrounded the house. The raiding party was commanded by a Major Smyth, who, with some others, hammered on the front door to demand immediate admittance, and when the door was not opened immediately broke in the glass panels just as Professor Carolan appeared to open it. The details of the fight that ensued are given in Desmond Ryan's article on the subject published in "Dublin's Fighting Story", but they are briefly as follows:

Breen and Treacy in bed in an upstairs room heard the commotion below, and hastily pulling on their pants they grabbed their guns as some of the raiding party attempted to enter the room. One of these was shot in the doorway and others fled down the stairs, being fired on by Treacy and then Breen from the landing as they ran. The bodies of Major Smyth and another officer, as well as a wounded soldier, were lying on the stairs and landing and Breen had been hit twice, though not seriously. Stepping back into the room to reload his pistol while Treacy replaced him on the landing, the latter suggested the window as a means of escape, though it was evident to both that the house was surrounded and that they would have to fight their way through the cordon at the back of the house. So while Treacy kept up the fire upon the raiders crouching in the hall below, Breen climbed out the window, dropping upon the glass roof of the conservatory below. He was in his stocking feet at the time, having had no time to dress further than a shirt, pants and stockings, so that his feet and legs were badly lacerated by the broken glass. A laneway ran along behind the houses and here there were soldiers posted to prevent escape by the back. Climbing upon the back wall of the small yard Breen saw one of these soldiers near him, who also seeing Breen opened fire on him with his rifle but without effect. Breen opened fire upon the soldier who, with his immediate companions, fled for safety, leaving the way open for Breen to cross the lane. Getting across another wall into the grounds of the nearby St. Patrick's Training College, he made his way across the intervening fields to the Tolka river, uncertain at this

time of where he was. Seeing a light in one of the houses on Botanic Avenue across the river - the backs of these houses being towards the river - he waded across and reached the house where the light was shining, which turned out to be the house of a Mr. Holmes who was a retired member of the Dublin Metropolitan Police. One would not have expected a sympathetic reception in such a house, but, in fact, the Holmes were very good about it. Mrs. Holmes risked the curfew ban by crossing the road to enlist the services of the district nurse who lived a few yards higher up on the other side of the road. Nurse Long came with her at once, and between them they did what they could to tie up Breen's wounds and stop the bleeding.

As soon as it seemed safe to travel after the lifting of curfew - sometime between 7.30 and 8 o'clock - Nurse Long made her way down to Flemings to convey the news of Breen's location and his condition, but on her arrival at Fleming's she found the place in occupation by a military search party and so passed on further up the road where she called to the house at the corner of Hollybank Road where the Dillons - cousins of the Flemings - lived. I was then in lodgings with the Dillons and so I heard Nurse Long's story at first hand. I had been until then unaware of the night's happenings, but realising the urgency of the matter I left at once without waiting for breakfast to get one of my cars from the garage at St. Ignatius Road to investigate the prospect of moving Breen to a safer locality. I drove via Glasnevin to the end of Botanic Road, where I left the car and proceeded on foot to Holmes's house where I was admitted without delay, and I saw Breen lying upon a mattress on the floor in a back

room. He was in terrible pain, unable to move, and his obsession was that Seán had been killed in the affray. He told me briefly and hurriedly what he thought had happened, and realising that I must get medical and other help I left in a minute or two and drove down town to the outfitter's shop in O'Connell St. known as Brennan and Walsh. Maurice Brennan and Tom Walsh were active Volunteers and their shop, with its central position, was a message centre and meeting place in connection with important Volunteer activities. I forget whether Dick McKee, the Dublin Brigade Commander, was on the spot when I arrived or whether a message was sent to him, but he arrived within a minute or so of my arrival, and having heard my story he arranged at once that Joe Vize, Maurice Brennan and Tom Kelly who were on the spot would accompany me to assist in the removal of Breen from the house to the car, and that he would arrange in the meantime for his reception at the Mater Hospital.

Of course the affray at "Fernside" received large headlines in the daily papers and there was intense military activity around Whitehall and Drumcondra Road, but, strangely enough, I had found everything very quiet at the Glasnevin end of Botanic Avenue which is scarcely half a mile from the Drumcondra end. Consequently, on my second trip I also went to Glasnevin, and finding things still quiet there I drove slightly past Holmes's house, where I dropped the others and proceeded to turn the car about. No time was lost by the other fellows in carrying Breen out, and having sat him up on the back seat I drove off immediately. The car I was using was my old Rover, an open touring car, and as the weather was fine

it would only attract attention to put the hood up. Consequently the whole load was on open view to the public, and Vize and Kelly tried to keep Breen propped up between them in as natural a position as possible. Breen, however, had been given several sips of brandy during the morning to help in sustaining his strength and to assuage the pain he was suffering, and now the movement had increased the pain and he was somewhat delirious. He tried to thrash his arms about and talk loudly so that the others had some difficulty to restrain him, but we trusted to our speed to avoid notice. Arriving at Doyle's Corner, where Phibsborough Road crosses the North Circular Road, a traffic policeman set his hand against us and for a fraction of a second I thought of driving past him, but suddenly I saw the reason for the hold up, a Crossley tender loaded with Auxiliaries was coming from the direction of the Park and proceeding along the N.C.Rd. in the same direction in which we intended to turn. They slowed almost to a standstill at the corner and, with rifles held at the ready, peered at the passers-by. I dared not look behind to see how things were at the moment in the back seat, and I thought wildly of what we should do when, as seemed then inevitable, they should show signs of enquiring who we were and what we carried. I could feel my gun, a .455 Service Webley revolver, pressing against my hip in my overcoat pocket, and wondered if I could draw it quick enough or if I should leave the shooting to the others and drive through them down Phibsborough Road. Such frantic though silent speculation only took perhaps a couple of seconds, though I could hear Maurice Brennan, who sat beside me, give vent to his thoughts through his clenched teeth

as all the time we tried to look unconcerned. However, the moment passed, for though we were stopped close up to the corner and the tender passed slowly within feet of us, its occupants gave us no more than a casually inquisitive glance. When they passed they were still travelling slowly and, as the traffic policeman waved us impatiently on, I had to do a lot of 'foostering' with gears and suchlike to allow the tender to get clear ahead.

Turning into Eccles St., I had begun to pull over to the steps of the main entrance to the Mater Hospital when I noticed two policemen standing ostentatiously before the door and at the same instant I caught sight of Dick McKee further down on the footpath beckoning us on. As I reached him he jumped upon the running board and informed us that the hospital was undergoing a search by police and military just then and that Mick McDonnell, who came up to us just then, would take us somewhere that we could hide out until such time as other arrangements could be made. McDonnell squeezed himself into the front seat and directed me towards North Richmond St., but as we emerged from Eccles St. to cross Dorset St. into Temple St. the same tender load of Auxiliaries passed down Dorset St. in front of us. For a moment I thought we had been caught in a trap, but again they were unobservant and as they passed we crossed the thoroughfare. McDonnell took us first to a small lane near Richmond St. C.B.S. where, however, we were unable to get the keys of a shed he had intended to put us into. He then told me that there was another place he thought would be suitable but he would first have to do a reconnaissance of the vicinity and get

the keys of the place, and meanwhile we would have to cruise around as best we could. Trying to keep clear of the main thoroughfares we found ourselves in Hardwicke Street where our patient, having by this time become quite delirious, was tending to attract attention by throwing himself around and shouting out every now and then. Some kind of an anaesthetic was essential, so we pulled into a small lane beside a public house where Maurice Brennan procured a small bottle of brandy, which was liberally administered, while the inevitable crowd of small boys began to gather around us, gazing in wide-eyed wonderment and speculating loudly on the cause of the trouble. Obviously the quicker we got out of there the better, so we lost no time in getting on the move again and a little later we picked up McDonnell, who escorted us to a shed in a lane behind the west side of Mountjoy Square. This shed was one of the old coach houses attached to the rere of the old Georgian mansions on the Square. In their heyday of another century these houses and their appurtenances had been pretentious places, but now fallen into decay and disrepair the coach houses, no longer needed for their legitimate function, were damp, dark and dismal storehouses of one kind or another. McDonnell opened the big double door and closed it upon us as we drove in, leaving us in complete darkness except for what light leaked in through holes and chinks in door and roof. There he left us as he went to rejoin McKee, and there we were to remain until he would let us know later what arrangements had been made.

Our feelings while we waited in that dark shed can

more easily be imagined than described. We knew very little of what had really happened during the night and morning, but felt sure that an organised search for Breen must be in progress. Dan in his delirium was all the time grieving over the loss of his best friend and gallant comrade Seán Treacy, and by this time further administrations of brandy were having little or no effect in keeping him quiet. We had been there for perhaps half an hour or more when sounds outside the door brought us to the alert, but we recognised McDonnell's high pitched voice speaking to someone with him as the door opened, and, wonder of wonders, his companion was the very man whose death Breen was lamenting. Seán Treacy indeed, as full of life and mocking humour as ever, though garbed in somewhat burlesque fashion with a coat several sizes too large for him, the sleeves of which were rolled up at the cuffs. The reunion between himself and Breen was an emotional climax, in which Breen was shocked back from his nightmare world of delirium to pleasant reality and Seán allowed his deep inner feelings to show for a moment. Treacy gave us a brief sketch of the happenings at Fernside, and said that when at his (Treacy's) urging Breen had left by the window, he himself kept up a covering fire for a few minutes to enable Breen to get clear and then left by the same window. He dropped unhurt through the hole Breen had made in the roof of the greenhouse and also made his way across the laneway into the grounds of St. Patrick's College. Seán, however, had kept his sense of direction, and remembering where he was likely to find shelter he cut across country towards Finglas, where he got food,

clothing and shelter at the house of Phil Ryan where Seán had often stayed before. Phil Ryan, who was married to an aunt of mine, a sister of my father, was a native of Co. Tipperary but had lived most of his life in Dublin. He was a very big man, over six feet in height and rather bulky, and as Seán arrived there clad only in his shirt and pants the rest of his apparel was supplied from Phil Ryan's wardrobe. Hence the rather ridiculous appearance of Seán when he came in to town in the morning and finally located Breen in the old coachhouse where we waited. Seán and McDonnell left us again after a short while, but our feelings were now considerably relieved, firstly because we knew of Seán's survival and secondly because from what he had told us there was no immediate fear from enemy search parties.

Sometime later, it must have been about eleven o'clock, McDonnell again arrived to say that the search party had cleared off from the Mater Hospital and the coast was now clear to get Breen in there. We drove up again to Eccles St. and were signalled to the door of the private hospital part of the Mater by McKee who, with Treacy, waited on the side-walk for us. I noticed in a hasty glance that there were some other Volunteers whom I knew standing here and there along the street, and guessed that McKee had arranged a protection party in case of any sudden return of the enemy forces. Breen was placed in a chair stretcher and taken inside and the car had driven off again in less than a minute, when I returned to my very welcome breakfast.

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That morning, following the night of the Fernside raid, as I already mentioned, Fleming's house and shop at 140 Drumcondra Road underwent a very thorough search by British military forces who arrested the two male members of the family present, the brothers James and Michael. Old Mr. O'Brien of Galbally, Co. Tipperary, the father of Ned and John Joe O'Brien, who was staying on a visit with the Flemings, was also arrested by the raiding parties and all three were lodged in Mountjoy jail. A third brother of the Flemings, Peter, escaped arrest for the time being as he was not at home on that night. When the raiders arrived, immediately following the Fernside fight, they did not wait to be admitted but stove in the panels of the hall door and admitted themselves. The first the occupants knew of the raid was the appearance of the raiders in their bedrooms. In the absence of James and Michael, the whole responsibility of carrying on the grocery and provision business now devolved upon Peter, Dot and her sister Kitty. In this they were given some assistance by their Uncle Tom Byrne who ran a grocery and provision business in Phibsborough. He engaged the services of a couple of paid assistants and ensued deliveries of goods from wholesalers. But from then onwards to the Truce, no male dare stay at Fleming's house, which was subject to frequent raids by night by both military and Auxiliary parties and, as permanent repairs to the hall door would not be permitted, the raiders let themselves in whenever they felt like it. In the course of such raids by military parties only an officer named Captain Carther who was, I think, a military intelligence officer, behaved objectionably towards the Fleming

sisters and their maid, though individual soldiers did some surreptitious looting; but on the occasions when the Auxiliaries made up the raiding party, they usually took whiskey and brandy from the shop and terrified the girls by their drunken and ribald behaviour. On the evening following the Fernside raid, that would be the 13th October, I went to Flemings after tea and stayed there to do what I could to help. Peter was staying away from the house at night and so left 140 as soon as the shop was shut - about 7.30 p.m. or eight o'clock. We had, of course, all been discussing the affair at Fernside, and what led up to it. It was clear that some enemy agent had been keeping the house under observation and the girls believed they had seen the man, who was described as always wearing a bow tie and standing around Drumcondra as if always waiting for someone. This man had excited their suspicion before the raid and had been mentioned by them, but now they felt sure that their former suspicions were confirmed by events. I believed that I might have seen the man referred to but could not be sure that it was the same man, so the three of us went out on to the footpath where we stood a while to watch for him. Kitty had walked down the road towards the Tolka Bridge and come back quickly to say that the man with the bow was standing on the bridge on the opposite side of the road. Dot and I then crossed the road and walked quickly towards the bridge so that she could identify the man to me, but whoever was there walked off as we approached and though Dot said she thought it was he, she could not be sure at the distance and we had no chance of seeing his face. We had gone in and were sitting in the diningroom about an hour later when there was a rattle at the letterbox on the hall door. There was no post

at such a time and, wondering what it was, we went to the door and found a telegraph form, roughly folded but without an envelope, in the box. On the form was scribbled in pencil -

"Tonight you have deeply insulted one of our members; tomorrow night you will pay dearly for it."

Black and Tan".

I opened the door quickly when we had read the note to see if I might catch sight of the messenger, but minutes had elapsed since the note was pushed in and there was no suspicious character in sight. We concluded that this note had reference to our attempt, a little earlier that night, to identify the man standing on the bridge. It was too near the curfew hour then to try to get in touch with anyone or do anything about it, and if the writer of the threatening note was to be believed, nothing was due to happen until the following night. We discussed the suggestion of moving up to Dillons for the night and leaving the house unoccupied, but the girls, Dot and Kitty Fleming, with their cousin Mag Byrne and the maid, decided that if a raid was made when the house was deserted everything would be looted, and that while there were four of them together they were not afraid of what might happen, and their presence might deter promiscuous looting. I was not at all sure what the night might hold in store for us, but concluded that I could not leave the house and that, under the circumstances, the least I could do would be to stay with them for the night, trusting that my presence might be some protection in case of a raid. We sat around the fire, drinking tea now and then and occasionally dozing, until morning. Outside on the street the occasional rumble of military lorries passing brought us to attention every now and we went occasionally to an upstairs front window to peer through the curtains,

fearing all the time to see our anticipations fulfilled. The best we could hope for was that the raiders would be a military party. We could expect nothing but the worst from the Auxies.

But the night passed and nothing happened. The grey light of morning, the lack of sleep and the ashes in the grate with butts of cigarettes I had thrown in it, all lent colour to the feeling of anticlimax that possessed us then. It seemed so unreal that we might easily have persuaded ourselves it was a bad dream, but for that telegraph form with its threatening message which lay open before us on the mantle shelf.

After breakfast I went down town in search of Dick McKee and found him at the 'Republican Outfitters' stores in Talbot Street. George Plunkett, Joe Vize and Paddy Daly were with him at the time and I have a vague remembrance that Seán Treacy may have been nearby, perhaps in the back of the shop with someone else. My recollection is that when I arrived they had just finished a sort of impromptu conference on something of importance and were about to leave. When I told McKee what had happened at Drumcondra and handed him the telegraph form with its threatening notice, he called the others back and we all discussed the matter for a few minutes. McKee decided at once that no British force, whether military or auxiliary police would be allowed to wreck their vengeance on Flemings with impunity. He said he would have the Second Battalion, the unit to which Mick Fleming belonged, mobilized for action. The woods and shrubs of the grounds of the Archbishop's Palace, adjoining Drumcondra Road, would provide cover for a fairly large body of men, and the aim would be to attack and wipe out any raiding party of the enemy that

appeared to carry out their threat. The question of whether the remainder of the Fleming family should evacuate the house and have it defended from inside, as well as from outside, was also mentioned, but McKee was in a hurry and said he would let me know the details later and what he wanted me to do. He told me to call back to the same place where he would see me about four o'clock that afternoon. I returned to my own place of business in Ignatius Road and later I called to Flemings to assure the girls that all was well and that I would let them know by tea time what they were to do. I took a tram down town to keep my appointment with McKee in Talbot Street and as I reached the corner of Dorset St. and Frederick St., I noticed a man sitting opposite me who seemed to be watching me, although he pretended to read a newspaper. I caught a glimpse of his face which seemed to tally with the description the Fleming girls had given of the man with the bow tie, and this man was wearing a bow tie. I moved my seat in order to get a better view of him but my intent scrutiny apparently embarrassed him for, as the tram stopped just then, he got off and, though I also got off quickly after him, I lost him in the crowd. I was rather uneasy then as I felt that if he followed me I might lead him to McKee, Clancy, Treacy and the whole lot of them. Meeting Paddy McCrea who, I knew, belonged to the G.H.Q. squad, I told him my dilemma while we stood in O'Connell Street near the corner of Earl Street. Suddenly we heard a burst of fire from rifles and pistols in the direction of Talbot St. some two hundred yards from where we stood, and people began to rush to the doorways of shops for safety. A burst of machine gun fire was heard coming from the same direction, followed by another, and then a Rolls Royce armoured car came tearing into O'Connell St.

from Earl St. and, wheeling North on the East side of Nelson's Pillar, began to menace the crowd with its machine gun. McCrea and I had backed into the doorway of a shop near the corner of Earl St. and tried to make ourselves as inconspicuous as possible, but suddenly I noticed a man on the outskirts of the crowd which filled the footpath, who seemed to be searching through the crowd with his eyes as he walked slowly along. He was the same man I had seen in the tram, the man with the bow tie, and now I felt sure that he was seeking to identify some of us to the crew of the armoured car. The car having moved slowly past us, now put on a burst of speed as far as the Gresham Hotel, then wheeled about and came back, again slowing down and mounting the broad footpath to push its way through the crowd, gun swinging from left to front and back again as the crowd fled in terror in all directions. McCrea and I began to walk as quickly as we dared, without seeming to run, towards the corner of Cathedral St. but as the armoured car seemed to pursue us along the path, having turned again at the Pillar, we turned about and walked past it close to the shop windows and when it again moved off towards the Gresham Hotel we turned again and ran for the corner. Having gained the shelter of Cathedral St. we put on a sprint up the lane behind the Gresham and were soon out of the danger zone.

Someone in the crowd had told us during the excitement, in explanation of the shooting, that there was a raid on the "Republican Outfitters" in Talbot Street, and we deduced from this that as some of our people would have been there at the time, they had probably opened fire on the raiders in making their escape from the place. We did not know then that in the course of that shooting one of Ireland's finest and bravest soldiers had died. Seán Treacy, who a couple

of days before had fought his way through the cordon at Fernside, having covered the escape of his wounded comrade, had gone down fighting on the street outside the Republican Stores. From what I learned then and since of the occurrence, it seems that when the raiding party, consisting of a couple of lorry loads of soldiers accompanied by an armoured car and carrying with them certain intelligence agents to direct their activities, pulled up at the Republican Outfitters shop, there were a number of I. R. A. officers in the shop, including Dick McKee, Paddy Daly and Seán Treacy. The others hesitated a moment before deciding how to make their escape, but Treacy walked out of the shop at once and, disregarding the raiders who were then jumping from their lorries, jumped upon a bicycle that stood by the kerb. It was not his own bicycle - he had come there on foot - and as it was much too high for him he had difficulty in getting a hurried start. A British intelligence agent with the raiders, named Christian, apparently knew Treacy by appearance and recognising him, ran towards him shouting to the others, "This is Treacy". Seán was hampered by the bicycle but managed to draw his pistol as Christian got close to him and, as he fired, Christian threw his arms about Seán, pinning down his pistol arm which Seán struggled violently to free. A few shots from the pistol held in his hand as they struggled kept the others at bay for the moment, while Seán made desperate efforts to turn the pistol inwards to his more powerful opponent. Christian had been hit by Seán's first shot and was beginning to weaken and when the others saw that Seán was about to get free of his opponent, they opened fire on him, taking the chance of hitting the other man. Some indiscriminate firing then took place and the accompanying armoured car joined in with a burst or two from its machine gun. In the meantime, while the attention

of the raiders was concentrated upon the tussle on the roadway between Treacy and Christian, the other I. R. A. officers in the shop slipped out one by one and walked quickly away from the scene. Treacy died where he fell, as I am sure he would have wished it, fighting bravely against overwhelming odds, and his opponent, Christian, also lay dead. Some other members of the raiding party were wounded, including a member of the Dublin Metropolitan Police who accompanied the party, and two civilians were killed by the indiscriminate fire of the British. The death of Treacy was a serious loss to the Irish cause; he had been the mainspring and inspiration of the fighting in his native Tipperary and in Dublin we recognised that we could ill afford to lose such a man, who united in his strong personality, brains and ability, with a courage and daring far above the ordinary.

A warning from Collins reached Flemings that night that it would be very unwise for any active Volunteer who wished to avoid arrest to attend the funeral ceremonies, so we dare not pay our last respects to the body of a gallant comrade and the necessary arrangements for the funeral were left in the capable hands of Joe Delaney of Heytesbury St., in whose house Seán and the others had often stayed. Delaney was a bookmaker, an oldish man, and had no apparent connection with the National movement, so that his interest in making the funeral arrangements would seem to the enemy authorities to spring from purely humanitarian motives. He was assisted in the matter by a number of the girls of Cumann na mBan, who constituted the bulk of attendance at the ceremonies in the pro-Cathedral and the funeral to Kingsbridge Station, from where the remains were taken by rail for burial in Killeacle.

Meeting Dick McKee again the following day at Brennan and Walsh's shop in O'Connell St., I told him the story of the man with the bow tie whom I suspected of having followed me on the previous evening and he gave instructions that the Second Battalion would supply a suitable man to accompany me to pick him up. Consequently, later that evening Dinny O'Driscoll reported to me and, armed with revolvers, we haunted the vicinity of Drumcondra Road for the following two nights, but failed to find our man. O'Driscoll then told me that he had got instructions from his Battalion that the suspect's identity had been established by the Battalion's intelligence officers and that he was quite innocent. Sometime later on, the Battalion intelligence officers, in conjunction with the G.H.Q. intelligence staff, did succeed in establishing the identity of the spy who had traced Treacy and Bréen from Flemings to Fernside as one Robert Pike, an ex-soldier who lived in one of the Tolka Cottages, near Fleming's back gate. Confirmation of Pike's complicity in this affair was obtained from inside information at the Castle, and Pike was duly executed outside the doorway of Fleming's shop in Drumcondra Road on or about 18th June, 1921.

Another loss had been sustained within these few days which did not appear in the daily papers and of which I only learned some days later from Mick Lynch, the O/C Fingal Brigade. This was the death of Matt Furlong of the G.H.Q. munition staff. Matt, it will be remembered, had been one of the first of that staff who began operations on the making of hand grenades at 198 Parnell Street and had, since the severing of my connection with that bomb factory, continued the work of supplying the needs of the fighting units with ever improving bombs. I had learned somewhere at the time, probably from Mick

Lynch, that experiments in the making of a gun or mortar capable of throwing a fairly ^{HEAVY} shell were being carried out, but did not know any of the details, or how far the experiments had progressed. George Plunkett and his brother Jack were in more direct touch with such matters, and as they paid pretty frequent visits to my garage at St. Ignatius Road, it may have been from them I learned of the mortar experiment. Afterwards we learned, generally what had happened, and in later years all the details were known. It seems that, the need of a portable heavy gun or mortar being increasingly called for in Bk. attacks, the G.H.Q. munitions branch began to explore the possibilities of manufacture and decided upon an attempt to copy the British Stokes mortar. This mortar and its shells were crude equipment judged by modern standards but nothing better was available at the time and the British military text books which could be got hold of with some difficulty gave something of the detail of their construction, as well as handling and use. Joe Furlong, Matt's brother, was also a member of the munitions staff, and was a toolmaker employed at the Midland Great Western Railway Workshops at Broadstone, and with Joe's assistance and utilising the facilities available at the Railway Workshops, Matt Furlong undertook the task of producing a workable mortar. Actually, I think Joe had the job of producing the mortar itself as suitable heavy lathes were not available elsewhere, and Matt made the experimental shells which could be produced by the available plant at Parnell St.

When all was ready, experimental shots with dummy shell proved the effectiveness of the mortar, but difficulty was experienced with the fuses of the live shells. The type of fuse was an instantaneous contact affair, safety during firing being ensured by a copper

shear wire, which, however, was found to prevent the firing altogether because it was not possible to ensure that the shell would strike the target exactly head on. Some more work was put in on this problem and having decided to try the shell out with a much lighter shear wire, Mick Lynch arranged a suitable venue for the test, near Ashbourne, Co. Meath, and himself, Matt Furlong, Paddy McHugh and Seán Sullivan took the gear out there in the small hours of the morning of 12th October - the same night the raid on Fernside had taken place - and as soon as daylight permitted the firing experiments began. It was found that the lighter wire made little difference to the certainty of the shell exploding on the target and a still lighter one was tried. As this also proved unsuccessful, Matt Furlong who was carrying out the firing with the assistance of Paddy McHugh, proposed that they should try firing the shell without any safety shear wire, as it then seemed to him that the light spring which held the striker pin of the fuse off its cap was capable of holding it during the shock of discharge unaided by any shear wire. Paddy McHugh says that he protested to Matt against this but Matt was determined to try it and told McHugh to stand clear and allow him to take the risk himself. McHugh went back a few yards to the ditch and when he saw Matt drop the shell into the muzzle of the mortar, he ducked for cover just as a crashing explosion close by told him that the shell had burst in the mortar. Poor Matt was very badly injured and the mortar barrel was shattered. They did what they could to stop bleeding and took him as fast as they could travel to the Mater Hospital where he died soon after arrival.

The search parties looking for Breen and Treacy at the Hospital found Furlong, whose injuries could not easily be accounted for and, for a while, they thought they had found their quarry, so that they were still in the Hospital

when I arrived at the door with Breen in the car.

About a week or so before the Fernside affair Jim Derham and Dan Brophy called in to the garage and we discussed the urgent necessity of having some effective action taken by the Fingal Brigade. There was a Brigade Council meeting summoned for Rollestown Schoolhouse on the following day or so and we agreed that we would, with the support of Mick Rock and others we could count on, press the Brigade Commander for a definite decision on this. Lynch must have had some inkling of our intentions before the meeting, because on this occasion he did not oppose our proposals so strenuously and a draft scheme for a full scale attack on Gormanstown Camp was drawn up. He undertook to submit this proposal to Collins for sanction, with his own recommendation for its approval, and in due course permission to go ahead with the scheme was given by G.H.Q.

Briefly, the details were as follows:-

The bulk of the available Black and Tan force would be decoyed from the camp by an attack on individual Tans in the town of Balbriggan, and the camp itself would then be attacked and burned by the main body of I.R.A. units ^{WHICH} ~~who~~ would be concentrated nearby. Each Friday night, which was their pay day, large numbers of Tans usually frequented the public houses of Balbriggan to which town they came by train from Gormanstown, some three miles or so up the line. On the selected night, Dan Brophy with ten picked men would wait for them on the road leading from the station, scattered in ones and twos so as not to excite attention, and on a signal from Brophy would open fire with pistols on every Tan within range, quietly making their exit from the town immediately afterwards. It was anticipated that this would bring an immediate response in the shape of a reprisal party

from the camp, and the I.R.A. units surrounding the town would lie low until the enemy forces had reached the town. The exit roads would then be barricaded to prevent them leaving again and sniping attacks upon the force would begin. In the meantime, the I.R.A. units lying in wait in the woods of Gormanstown would proceed with their attack on the camp from three sides, with the object of capturing and burning the place before the besieged force in Balbriggan could return.

Within the following couple of weeks we were busily engaged in making all the necessary preparations for the operation. A reconnaissance of the area was carried out one evening by the O/C Brigade with Jim Derham, Paddy Trainor the Brigade Adjutant and myself, during which we picked the sites for the barricades and, going to Skerries, confirmed that steel wire hawsers were available at the quayside there, which would be used in the barricade I was to erect on the night of the attack on the Balbriggan-Skerries road. A day or so later I drove the Brigade O/C in company with Eamon Price, who was then Assistant Director of Organisation on the G.H.Q. staff, and Dick Cotter out to Balbriggan, and we went over the ground again to show Price, for the information of the Gen. staff, what was proposed to be done. On that particular occasion I had borrowed the car of a client of mine which I had done some repairs to. It was a Buick, and being a pretty fast car I thought it would suit the occasion better than any of my own. We were on our way home, on the main road near Ballough just at dusk when overhauling a car in front of us it turned out to be a Crossley tender loaded with Auxiliaries. They were travelling at a fairly moderate pace, and as it was then too late to draw back without exciting suspicion, I passed them out on the straight before reaching Murtagh's public house.

They looked at us with some curiosity as we passed them and then immediately crammed on speed to overhaul us. We had heard them shout something as we passed, but pretended not to hear, and now we expected shots to follow but a turn of the road saved us for the moment, and no doubt they were confident that the superior speed of their tender would enable them to catch us up before we could get far. But the Buick had a bit in hand and I put my foot down along the winding road between that and the village of Corduff, so that the most they could get was an instantaneous glimpse of our car as we rounded a bend ahead of them all the time. Past Corduff, however, we would be on a straight road again and so, while still hidden from their view - both of us had put lights on at this stage - we turned abruptly to the right on to the by-road leading to Ballyboughal and dowsed our lights. We heard the tender roar past the road junction in our rear, while we drove carefully in darkness as far as Rosscawl crossroads where we turned left to get out to Balheary. Running a little in on the grass margin we got a slight bump and the engine cut out and it was found impossible to restart it. We waited a while to make sure that we were not pursued and then, as I was unable to locate the trouble in the dark, we abandoned the car on the roadside. The late Senator Counihan lived nearby and as he was known to be friendly - he was also a client of mine in the motor business - he lent us his car and driver to take us to Dublin. I recovered the Buick next day intact, discovering to my chagrin that the trouble of the previous night had been merely a loose battery connection.

A lot of assorted ammunition, bombs and a Lewis machine gun had to be got out to Fingal from the city within the following week or so as part of the preparations

to be made, and on one of these trips I had another rather narrow squeak. Paddy Traynor and I picked up a cargo of ammunition and bombs which were stowed in the back seat of my Rover car and we started for Naul one evening. Someone told us as we started that there was a military cordon holding up all cars on the Swords road at Whitehall so we cut across by Glasnevin on to the Finglas road and, seeing no sign of a cordon near the Tolka Bridge, considered we were quite safe. Approaching Finglas village where there is a long bend on the road, (exactly opposite the position we had occupied on Easter Monday 1916), I noticed a lot of market carts apparently stopped on the road and, fearing to pass them out on the bend, I slowed up as I came to them. Then starting to pass them out slowly, the rounding of the bend disclosed a military cordon ahead and the officer in charge, who was engaged in searching the carts, seeing me approach, waved me back to wait while he continued his search of the carts.

Not knowing quite what to do in the emergency I automatically put the car in reverse and began to slide slowly backwards until we were again obscured from the view of the military by the bend of the road. To my surprise, none of the military seemed in a hurry to come towards us, so I essayed a quick turning of the car on the road which I succeeded in doing without attracting attention, and moved very quietly off in the direction we had come. Paddy Traynor had been busy all this time, tearing up incriminating documents which he had in his pocket, though I pointed out to him that our cargo in the back of the car would be sufficient to hang us without any such thing as documents. We hit up along the Tolka river as far as Cardiff Bridge and by devious by-roads made our way to the Naul where Mick Rock awaited our arrival and

conducted us to the dump near Snowtown where our cargo was safely stowed.

To the best of my recollection the date fixed for the attack on Gormanstown Camp was the night of Friday, 26th November, 1920. A lot of the arrangements had been made but some details had still to be completed. Dick McKee was interested and was to arrange to send us out a machine gun team to help, but 'Bloody Sunday' and the arrest of McKee and Clancy intervened and the Fingal Brigade Commander sent word to all concerned that Collins wished to have the attack on Gormanstown postponed as he planned a rescue of Dick McKee.

The story of 'Bloody Sunday' - 21st November 1920 - has been given in detail in 'Dublin's Fighting Story' and other publications, so I need only refer briefly to it here. The G.H.Q. Intelligence Branch had discovered that the reorganisation of the British Intelligence Service had taken the form of sending over to Ireland a number of British Army officers who had been specially trained and organised in groups. These would land in Ireland independently in ones and twos and go into lodgings, having no direct or apparent contact with the British authorities in Ireland. Inside agents of Collins had, however, succeeded in getting hold of a list of the names and addresses of these men and, having had the facts checked and the individuals located, orders were issued to execute all of them on the date fixed - 21st November. Fourteen of these agents were killed on that day and three others escaped with wounds, but owing to certain misunderstanding of orders, a number of others were not attacked and so escaped the same fate. The survivors either fled the country or sought the shelter of Dublin Castle, and in either case their mission had been defeated before it had

well begun. An All-Ireland football final was being played that day at Croke Park in Dublin, and as a reprisal for the shooting of their agents, lorry loads of military and auxiliaries surrounded Croke Park while the game was in progress and, without warning, opened fire with rifles and machine guns on the crowd and the players on the field. One of the Tipperary players was shot dead on the field and thirteen other civilians were also killed. Eleven were seriously wounded and fifty-four others received wounds and injuries of one kind or another.

In the course of the executions of British agents being carried out that morning, the alarm had been given in one case at Lower Mount Street, and several tenders loaded with Auxiliaries surrounded the house and attacked the I.R.A. party as they tried to leave the house. In the ensuing fight on the streets two Auxiliaries were shot dead and one of the I.R.A. party, Frank Teeling, was wounded and captured by the British force. Teeling would have been executed by the British authorities but, sometime later, he, with Ernie O'Malley and escaped from Kilmainham Jail. The temper of the British forces on that day, 'Bloody Sunday', may be judged from the Croke Park and other such incidents which occurred during the same day. Tenders loaded with Auxiliaries drove madly around the streets all day, holding up and searching the passers-by and in some cases firing shots as they drove along. In Lincoln Place a number of civilians were held up and searched, then ordered to run, and were fired on as they ran, a clerical student who was amongst the number being killed in this incident. I was out of town that day, as our projected attack on Gormanstown was due to take place on the following Friday and, thus, I only learned of the day's occurrences on my return that night.

Next day, Monday 22nd, I learned that Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy had been arrested in a raid the previous night and later that day Mick Lynch called to me at the garage to say that he had been with Collins who had directed him to postpone our attack on Gormanstown as he was organising a rescue of McKee and Clancy and did not want any other big operation at the same time which might confuse the arrangements. I sent word to Brophy about this and he arranged to make contact with the others to suspend the arrangements for Friday night's operation. But the next day brought news of further disaster: Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy had been murdered by their captors in Dublin Castle, and so the rescue plans were too late and, as our operation orders had been cancelled; nothing could now be done for another week. Particulars as to the assistance required from the Dublin Brigade would now have to be arranged through someone else besides Dick McKee.

When about a week had passed without further word from the Brigade Commander concerning the postponed attack on Gormanstown, I got in touch with him, but he was rather evasive, I thought. He said something to the effect that he would have to see Collins first to enquire if it was all right to go ahead with the job now and promised to let me know within a day or two what the instructions were. At this time there was a considerable increase in I.R.A. activity all over the country and the Dublin Brigade units were in action almost daily in attacks on patrols and posts. The apparent quiescent attitude of our own Brigade area was therefore becoming unbearable, particularly as, in the week following 'Bloody Sunday' the Black and Tans from Gormanstown had burned Taylor's licensed premises, the house of Tommy

and Mary Duff in Swords - illtreating these old people in the process - and James McCann was shot dead in his home in Rush and Patrick Matthews wounded in Skerries by the same crowd of 'Black and Tans'. A weekend intervened and on arriving home to my lodgings late on Sunday night I found a message from Lynch awaiting me. It was an instruction to call to his house on Richmond Road with a car at seven-thirty the following (Monday) morning and, accordingly, I arrived with the Rover and armed with my revolver at his house as instructed. I had assumed that this was some operation or other and was not disillusioned when he came out of the house accompanied by his wife, dressed for travelling and carrying a couple of cases. Such camouflage was often used to divert suspicion and even when the destination, 'Westland Row Station' was given, I still thought that this was part of a plan for some coup or other. I did not ask questions because of the presence of the lady and my attention was concentrated upon getting to Westland Row without mishap in the shortest possible time. Arriving at the departure platform at Westland Row, I was dumbfounded to learn from him that he and his wife were going to England for a few days' holidays and when I began to protest against his leaving the Brigade at this critical juncture, he said that nothing could be done for the present and rushed off to catch his train. Dumping my gun at the garage, where I usually kept it, I went back for my breakfast and feeling in a most despondent mood tried to get in touch with Brophy and Derham to let them know what had happened. It may have been the following day or the day after that Brophy and Derham with, I think, Tommy Peppard of Lusk, called in to the garage and we had an informal discussion on the whole situation.

It was now clear that if anything was to be done in Fingal we must do it ourselves, but Derham undertook to have a word with Collins first in case there was anything in the situation more than appeared on the surface, and in this way some more days passed away. It was not the beginning of December: Derham had not been able to discuss the matter with Collins who was a tremendously busy man at the time, and we decided to go ahead with the arrangements on our own, leaving the fixing of a definite date until later. I have mentioned previously that I held a contract from the Dublin Co. Council to supply two cars each Wednesday to take the Co. Council Pay Clerks around the county to pay the roadmen and quarry workers. Usually I drove the car which covered South Co. Dublin myself and left the North Co. car to an employee, as I feared that as I was well known in North Co. Dublin, it would draw undesirable attention on myself to be seen frequently in the neighbourhood by day.

On the Wednesday which was, I think, 8th December 1920, I decided, however, to drive the North County car myself as I wanted to make contact with some of the Fingal officers regarding the reorganisation of the proposed attack on Gormanstown. On reaching Swords, the pay clerk was engaged in paying the men who were assembled near the courthouse and, leaving the car there, I strolled up to the Cooperative Stores for a word with Jimmy Kelly who was the Manager. Jimmy told me that Brophy was out with the van but he would get him to call to me on the following day at the garage in Dublin. We spent another few minutes discussing the possibility of having repairs effected to a parabellum pistol of which Jimmy had lost a small but essential part, when a small boy poked his head into the shop to say that there was a soldier looking for the driver of my car down at the Courthouse. Jimmy,

having looked down the street, informed me that it was the soldier driver from the local military post, known locally as "The Billet", who was standing by my car alone and as he was a rather harmless kind of individual I thought I had better go down and see what he wanted. I was unarmed at the time and so, apparently, was the soldier, so I was not very surprised when he told me that his officer would like to inspect my military permit for my car. Knowing that this was in order, I accompanied him towards the gate of "The Billet". A well set-up man of military appearance, though in civilian attire, stopped me at the gate and having enquired if I was Joe Lawless of Saucerstown, informed me that I was under arrest. I was so surprised that my presence of mind deserted me for the moment and, merely playing for time, I asked him who the blazes he was. He told me his name was Captain Small, and with this I recognised my captor as the local Military Intelligence Officer who, we had been given to understand by our own intelligence people, was a clever and dangerous man. Small did not appear to be armed, though I noticed that he kept one hand in his jacket while speaking to me, and the armed sentry at the gate was an interested spectator a few yards away. I palavered with Small about the difficult situation he was making for the Co. Council Pay Clerk, and requested that at least he should allow me to remove my car from the side of the street and, to my surprise, he agreed to accompany me to the car and stood by while I put it into the yard of the courthouse. On the way to the car I thought furiously how I might have a sporting chance of escape and, apparently observing my preoccupation, he suddenly ordered me to stop and hold my hands up. His own right hand was deep in his jacket pocket and having satisfied himself that I was unarmed, he walked behind me for the rest of the way. In the guardroom of "The

Billet" I was held for about an hour and my mood of utter chagrin at my easy capture was not improved by the jeering comments of the soldiers around the room.

After a delay of about an hour I was placed with an escort of soldiers in a Crossley tender and taken to Collinstown Aerodrome where a temporary internment camp had been established. I was unaware of the establishment of this prison camp at the time, and only learned of it when I became an inmate on that day. My sense of frustration was increased rather than lessened on arrival at Collinstown, to discover that during the same morning Jim Derham, Charlie Weston and a number of important officers and volunteers of the Fingal Brigade had also been arrested. That night and the following day Dan Brophy, Jimmy Kelly and a number of others were picked up and joined us in the Camp. All of the Brigade Council Caucus, except Tommy Peppard, was now under lock and key, the Brigade Commander being still on holidays, so there was little hope that anything effective would be done in our Brigade area. We discussed this quietly amongst ourselves and our feeling then was that the accuracy of the British selection seemed to indicate a betrayal by some unknown within our ranks. Actually, and on more mature consideration, I think it was due to clever work and accurate deduction on the part of Captain Small. We agreed, however, that whenever it might be found possible we would get a message out to Peppard, urging on behalf of all of us that he would reorganise the Brigade Council which should select a new Brigade Commander and start the fight in our area.

I did, in fact, contrive to send out a letter to Peppard from Arbour Hill Barracks about a month later,

Chapter XVII.

C O N T E N T S.

Some details of the internment camp at Collinstown
News of the discovery by the Auxiliaries of the bomb
factory at 198, Parnell St. Embarrassing compliments
by the British Intelligence Officer A curious
discovery of recent years bearing on the Parnell St. raid ...
Some notable fellow prisoners Conditions in Arbour
Hill Detention Barracks Identification parades at
Arbour Hill My father, brother Colm and two uncles
become fellow prisoners The grave of the executed
1916 leaders at Arbour Hill The establishment of
surreptitious lines of communication My election
as Prisoners' Commandant following removal of several
batches of prisoners to Ballykinlar Camp A
gentleman's agreement with the Prison Governor
Prisoners as British hostages An odd memory of a
discussion with Dan Brophy The Adjutant of the
Fingal Brigade is thrown amongst us after serious
ill-treatment by the Auxiliaries A demand for my
body by the Auxiliaries is refused by the Prison Governor ...
Reference to the Terenure Ambush of 29th January, 1921.

Chapter XVll.

When the temporary internment camp at Collinstown was filled up, which was within a week or so, there were about one hundred to hundred and twenty prisoners in it, and about half of these were men arrested around the North City area. Besides those who were active Volunteers, there were, of course, numbers of sympathisers, and even those who were entirely out of sympathy with the national movement, rounded up in this sweep by the British. The internment camp at Collinstown consisted of four or five wooden sixty foot huts of the standard British Army pattern. (We had previous experience of them in the North Camp at Frongoch in 1916). A space, including that occupied by the huts, of somewhat less than half an acre was enclosed by a double apron fence of barbed wire with a high wire fence in the middle, guarded night and day on all sides by armed sentries - the entire area being floodlit at night by electric lamps set up on poles around it. Our friends and relations called to the camp while we were there, bringing parcels of food and clothing which were given to us, but visits were not permitted except in a few special cases where the prisoners or their relatives claimed that they had been arrested in error. In such cases, having signed a formal guarantee of 'loyalty' and good conduct, they were released after a few days, during which time, I presume, enquiries had been made regarding the bona fides of their attestation.

A daily visitor to the camp was the local military

Intelligence Officer, a Major whose name escapes my memory now, but he had only one arm, the empty sleeve of his tunic being pinned up. He was a very affable kind of individual, a pleasant conversationalist and, therefore, we considered him dangerous. He spent at least an hour each morning moving freely among the prisoners, talking easily and lightly to any who would engage in conversation, and offering to help any who had any special difficulties. In this way he soon got to know all of us by sight and name, and though we tried to avoid him as much as possible it was very difficult in the restricted space and hard to rebuff his very charming manner. The attitude of the soldiers of the guard towards us was reasonable, though strict in their attention to their orders. Consequently we got odd newspapers from them and so could learn what went on outside from day to day. I had a bit of a shock therefore when one evening a Sergeant coming into the camp with our rations showed us a copy of the 'Evening Herald', which had blazoned in big headlines something to the effect - "Capture of I.R.A. bomb factory at 198, Parnell St., the premises of Messrs. Heron and Lawless". Checking back on the date since I have fixed the raid as having taken place on the night of the 11th/12th December. Saturday was the 11th and so the raid probably did not get to the papers before the following Monday, which was the 13th. I had been arrested about the 8th December, and my recollection is that I had only been a few days in Collinstown when I learned of the raid on the Parnell St. bomb factory. On the following afternoon the one armed Intelligence Officer paid a visit to the camp

and began as usual to move around through the prisoners, engaging those he accosted in casual conversation. I was avoiding him like poison in view of the news for fear of my name being associated with the name on the raided premises. I watched him from the corner of my eye as I pretended to read in a corner of the hut and got up to move out as he came towards me, but he caught me by the arm and immediately began talking of the Parnell St. raid. I tried to look impassive, and to conceal my feelings answered him casually, saying I was going out to stretch my legs. He came with me, however, and when we got outside the hut he told me that he had been to Dublin Castle that morning and had seen the plant and samples of the products there which had been removed from the Parnell St. factory. He was enthusiastic in the admiration he expressed for the skill and ingenuity he had seen displayed in the production of these bombs, and the bombs themselves were, he said, most excellent productions. I was fearfully embarrassed but when the point cropped up denied strenuously that the name over the door had any connection with me. He assured me that he was not talking officially about the matter and did not expect me to identify myself with the factory under the circumstances, but wished to offer his sincere congratulations on what he called a very fine job of work. He left me at that to ponder on whether I might now expect to be tried by courtmartial as the proprietor of the bomb factory, or whether the man was really sincere in his comments notwithstanding the nature of his employment and his natural loyalties.

From the newspaper account of the affair at the time, and for many years afterwards, I had understood that the discovery of the Parnell St. factory by an Auxiliary patrol was a purely accidental occurrence. In recent years, however, I came across evidence to show that the raid on the premises was the result of information supplied to the British authorities in a rather roundabout fashion. As I have mentioned elsewhere in this story, Collins's agents within the walls of Dublin Castle kept watch on the British secret files, and when they found anything of importance made copies or extracts of the matter concerned which were passed on to Collins. A few years ago I had occasion to examine some files of Collins's papers now in the military archives, and came across a typewritten sheet, evidently part of some such information, that had been passed to Collins from one of his agents in the Castle. A paragraph from this sheet is quoted here as a matter of interest: -

"Capt. Henry, Royal Sussex Club, Eastbourne, recently returned from Killaloe, obtained information from the Paymaster, Killaloe, and also from one of his father's water-bailiffs (Capt. Henry's father owns some bogland at Killaloe) that a bicycle shop in Parnell St. has been used for the manufacture of arms etc. He sent the information to London, from where it was reforwarded to Dublin and a successful raid on the premises made. Capt. Henry has been well rewarded".

How anyone in Killaloe should have known anything about the Parnell St. factory is a matter for conjecture, but it seems clear from this that in view of the information they had the British authorities bungled the job badly, as they failed entirely to capture any of the staff, who were functioning in new premises within a short time of the Parnell St. raid.

I heard no more about the matter for the time being and was beginning to settle down to the restricted life of the place when we were moved to Arbour Hill detention barracks about a week later. All the time we were in Collinstown there were new prisoners being thrown in amongst us each night following on raids being carried out, or, in some cases, people being arrested by military night patrols. Two of those I remember being introduced to us in this way were Emmet Dalton (afterwards Major General Dalton of the National Army) and Peadar Kearney, the author of the National Anthem. Dalton had served during the World War as an officer in the British Army, and subsequently secured his release from Collinstown by a plea of mistaken identity and a display of his British Army discharge papers. In fact, Dalton had become an I.R.A. officer, and it was he who, at a later stage, masqueraded as the British officer commanding the captured armoured car which entered the yard of Mountjoy Prison in an attempt to rescue Seán MacEoin who was held there under sentence of death. We arrived in Arbour Hill Barracks a few days before Christmas and found numerous friends who had already been prisoners there for some time. We were not charged with any specific offence, nor were we served with internment orders, but merely held in custody at the pleasure of the British military authorities. The mode of our captivity was, however, similar to that of an internment camp in so far as that our cells were left open during the day and we were free to visit each other, and for a couple of hours each day we were allowed to take free exercise in the prison yard, though always, of course, under the direct supervision of a number of

warder N.C.O.s and overlooked by armed sentries on the roof and above the walls of the prison yard.

Arrests were going on continuously and almost every day a new batch of prisoners arrived, so that in order to accommodate the numbers we were compelled to sleep two and three in a cell. We could, however, select our own companions as cell mates, which made the position tolerable. Leo Henderson, an officer of the 2nd Battalion Dublin Brigade, was the prisoners' Commandant when we first arrived in Arbour Hill and held this position for a while afterwards. But Leo was not very popular among the general body of prisoners, who disliked his pompous and autocratic attitude, and very soon a general meeting was held one day during exercise in the prison yard and Con O'Donovan was elected to rule in his place. The job of the prisoners Commandant was to act as spokesman for the general body of prisoners, establishing a liaison between the British Commandant of the prison and the prisoners in such a way that the best possible conditions were obtained for the prisoners, and a sort of voluntary rule of discipline was adhered to which rendered it unnecessary for the British officials to interfere in our domestic affairs. Con O'Donovan carried out his duties very successfully while he remained in the prison. He held the confidence and received the support of all the prisoners and was trusted by the British Commandant to carry out the gentleman's agreement reached between them. The secret of Con's success in the job was that he was open and quite candid with both the other prisoners and the British military authorities. Consequently he was trusted by both sides,

and while his orders were generally obeyed by the prisoners, any reasonable demand he made on their behalf was met if possible by the Military Commandant. Our friends called daily to the prison, and while visits were not permitted except in very special cases, they brought parcels of foodstuffs, cigarettes and items of clothing, and sometimes we could see them from the upper cell windows facing the road when we would wave a greeting. Hand waving from the windows was, however, frowned upon by the authorities, N.C.O.s being sent out in such cases to chase the visitors away, and finally the upper cell doors were locked during the day when the prisoners left them in the morning. I think it must have been early in January, 1921, that we first heard of the opening of an internment camp at Ballykinlar in Co. Down, and about the same time efforts were being made to identify amongst the prisoners members of the parties engaged on the execution of the British Intelligence Officers on Bloody Sunday. It became a frequent occurrence to find ourselves suddenly locked into our cells and a number of prisoners (twenty to thirty) paraded in the prison yard facing an old laundry building that stood in the middle of it. Batches of ten prisoners at a time were stood in line facing this building, the windows of which were obscured by blankets draped on the inside in which small peep holes were cut, and the prisoners were made to wear number boards hung about their necks. A detailed scrutiny was thus made by the invisible people within the building while the lines of prisoners were turned this way and that. It

was in course of one of these parades that Paddy Moran was identified by someone and was later tried, convicted and executed for complicity in the shootings, though Paddy while he was a Volunteer, had, in fact, nothing at all to do with the affair. One prisoner who was paraded with me before this window on a number of occasions was Jimmy McNamara. Jimmy was a Clareman who worked as a bar assistant in Mooney's public house in Parnell St. and belonged to the 1st Battalion Dublin Brigade. (He is now in the U.S.A.). McNamara was a man I had known as a Volunteer from pre 1916 days, and I believe he told me at this time that he actually had been on one of the execution parties on Bloody Sunday. I feared, therefore, that he would be certain to be identified, as having a rather pale face and flaming red hair anyone who might have seen him on the occasion could not fail to remember his appearance, but as it happened he was not identified. About this time - while these identification parades were going on in Arbour Hill - my father, my brother Colm, and my uncles Jim and Ned Lawless were arrested and arrived in Arbour Hill, and soon afterwards the removal of batches of prisoners to Ballykinlar Camp began. The prison was so crowded at this time that there was very little room for exercise in the immediately adjoining prison yard, and so the authorities decided to allow us access to another enclosed yard which was empty of buildings. Within a day or two of our being allowed into this outer yard we learned - probably through a whisper from one of the British N.C.O.s - that it was in a corner of this yard

that the executed 1916 leaders had been buried in a quick lime grave. The precise spot had also been indicated, though there was no sign whatever that any grave existed there. As soon as this became generally known among the prisoners we congregated around that corner of the yard, which was the north east corner (now railed in) to recite the rosary each day for the repose of their souls and for the triumph of the cause for which they had died. After about the third or fourth day of this we were informed by the prison authorities that our daily rosary in the corner of the yard was looked upon by them as a political demonstration and that it would not be permitted. From then onwards we were not allowed into the outer yard and the temper of the prisoners began to show itself in promiscuous destruction of prison fittings and furniture. Paddy Daly, the O/C the G.H.Q. squad, was a prisoner in Arbour Hill at the time, though, of course, the British authorities did not know him for what he was, and Paddy, Jim Derham, Dan Brophy and I often discussed the possibility of escape. When we were allowed into the outer yard we realised that if anything could be done it would be from there, as the outer wall was not so high and the inner wall being higher gave protection from the sentries on the roof of the prison building. There were, of course, sentries in elevated posts surrounding the outer wall, but we were beginning to feel that these might be taken care of by a couple of parties of our people on the outside when most, if not all, of the prisoners could escape over the wall before any effective action could be taken by the guard or stand-to party. However, these embryonic plans were thwarted by our exclusion from

the yard. We had found means of surreptitious communication with our people outside through the medium of a couple of warder N.C.O.s who were not averse to accepting a bribe to bring letters out to a public house at the corner of Arbour Hill and Manor St. which they frequented in their off duty hours and which was then owned by a Miss O'Sullivan. Miss O'Sullivan was a sympathiser of ours and had established contact with my friends the Flemings, through whom she passed on all messages she received from the prisoners. One particular N.C.O. was a Welsh Sergeant named Clements who was very friendly towards me, and having tested him in the transmission of some innocuous letters found that I could trust him so long as he was well paid. Rory O'Connor who was also a prisoner there at the time, was always working out escape plans on his own and writing letters to Collins which he gave me to have transmitted. Rory was a solemn, unsmiling egotistical sort of person whom we looked upon as a little mad and did not take him too seriously, but these letters of his were, I felt, dangerous, and while all the indications were that they got through safely I was always afraid that Sergt. Clements would as easily betray us as he betrayed his paymasters. This came to a head one day when I discovered a cryptic note in a letter from Dot, per Clements, enquiring whether my father had got the £5 which he had asked for and which had been enclosed in a certain letter to him given to Clements. Father had not received the money so I taxed Clements with the theft, which he denied, but my suspicions were strengthened and I so informed Dot

when I next wrote to her. Knowing the implications of such a breach in the safety of our lines of communication she, very properly, placed the matter in the hands of the G.H.Q. intelligence branch through Charlie Dalton, one of its members, and as a result it was arranged that three or four of them met Clements in O'Sullivan's one night, and having given him a very thorough interrogation gave him a bit of a hiding and threatened him with certain death if he did not play straight in future. Poor Clements was terrified and came to my cell next morning with profuse assurance of his innocence of evil intent. He still denied that he ever opened any letters to or from me, but declared his willingness to continue as my messenger and to submit to any test of his loyalty I cared to make. He therefore continued to carry letters to and from me while I remained in the prison, but I never afterwards wrote anything in my letters that would have any serious consequence if discovered.

Batches of prisoners had their names called out daily, and having been sent off to Ballykinlar they were as constantly replaced by new arrests. When Con O'Donovan was in turn sent off to Ballykinlar, sometime about the end of January, I was elected Commandant in his stead. The other candidate for the appointment was Rory O'Connor, who mooted around the claim that as a member of the I.R.A. General Staff he was the senior officer in the prison. However, as I have already mentioned, the general body of the prisoners did not quite trust Rory's mental balance, and on my election I did my best to soothe his wounded pride by telling him that it would not do to give away his important position to the enemy by electing

him as Prisoners" Commandant. In accordance with the practice, my name was, following the election, submitted as the Prisoners' Commandant to the British governor of the prison, a Major Corry at the time, and on the following morning I was paraded before this officer in the governor's office. Corry I found to be a decent soldierly type of fellow, who, I think, did not quite relish his job as prison governor under the circumstances. I imagine that while he would carry out what he conceived to be his duty meticulously and efficiently, he was not altogether convinced of the justice of the British operations in Ireland and had, therefore, a certain secret sympathy with the prisoners under his control. He began the interview by saying: "Now look here Lawless. I want you and I to understand each other clearly". He went on to explain that as a soldier he would carry out his orders however unpleasant they might be, but that as a man he had his private feelings and was rather sorry for our plight. If, therefore, I would help him to keep things running smoothly, he in turn would do everything that he was permitted to do to make our lives in the prison more tolerable. He mentioned, for instance, the considerable and deliberate breakages of gas fittings by the prisoners, pointing out that while he had had these replaced once already further breakages had taken place since then, and that he was not prepared to make further replacements unless I could guarantee that no further wanton damage would be done to them. Reasoning this out with me, he said that he could understand the general feeling of resentment amongst the prisoners towards their imprisonment, which showed itself in such deliberate

damage to prison property, but that it was up to us to control such feelings. If he left things as they were, which he might reasonably do, it was the prisoners themselves who suffered most by not having light to read at night. I thanked him for his frankness and said I thought I understood his views. I said I respected him as a soldier and a man, but that he also would understand that I must look upon him as a member of the enemy forces which made war on our people. I told him that I accepted his assurances in the spirit in which they were given, and assured him in turn that I would carry out my part of this gentlemen's agreement so far as lay in my power. Thereafter we had very little difficulty while we remained in Arbour Hill. Corry was true to his word, and I, following Con O'Donovan's example, took the general body of prisoners into my confidence and explained the situation to them as it had been put to me by the governor. The prisoners accepted a certain voluntary code of discipline, and so life settled into a hum-drum pattern within the prison. There were, of course, unusual events now and then which threatened to upset our placidity. We got the daily papers and from them we could learn something of the day to day progress of the war outside. Then as batch after batch of prisoners left for Ballykinlar others took their places who, having been arrested more recently, could tell us something of the current situation. We were, therefore, not entirely surprised when, following an order on the matter by the British high command, military parties began calling to the prison to collect prisoners, whom they carried as hostages with their patrols through the city streets. The prisoners were carried

handcuffed in the lorries of troops, the orders being that if the lorries were attacked the prisoners would be shot on the spot by the escort. They always selected some prisoners whom they considered of some importance, and Joe McGuinness who was T.D. for a Longford constituency, was one of those brought out on a number of occasions. No shooting of prisoners did actually occur while I was there, perhaps because the lorries carrying the prisoners were not attacked.

Most of the prisoners who had been in Arbour Hill with me when I first arrived there had gone to Ballykinlar, including my father, my brother Colm and my uncles Ned and Jim. The Ballykinlar camp had been filled up we learned from the newspapers and from letters from our friends, and a second camp at Ballykinlar was now filled up. I was, therefore, one of the few 'oldest inhabitants' of Arbour Hill, and we wondered why we were being held there when all of our contemporaries had gone to Ballykinlar. Dan Brophy had been my cell mate until he left for Ballykinlar, and some of our intimate discussions have remained fresh in my memory since then. We were young then of course, and with all the enthusiastic idealism of youth, but allowing for all that it does seem now that the realisation of the freedom we were prepared to shed our blood for has fallen far short of what we had visualised. We spoke of the ancient sagas of the Gael, the Red Branch and the Fianna of old, and we tried to conjure up mental pictures of the various Irish armies through the long history of our land in their victories and their defeats. It seemed marvellous that the will to be free had survived the struggle of centuries to show itself as such a

united and earnest effort in our own day. One night as we sat talking in this strain, when all was comparatively quiet in the prison and only the fitful light of a flickering gas lamp shining through the 10 by 6 inch window near the door illumined the cell, Dan said suddenly "What sort of an army would we have nowadays if we succeed in gaining our freedom?". We thought over this in silence for a while and then began to discuss the matter as if it had been placed in our hands to arrange. We gave place to practical considerations, conscious in our youthful wisdom of the ordinary defects of human nature, but the picture that emerged as we argued over such details as uniform, armament, organisation and training was an idealized military body in which the loftiest ideals were harmoniously blended with modern scientific efficiency. (We might even have achieved something like that but for the civil war).

One day towards the end of January four or five new prisoners arrived from the Castle where they had been in the custody of the Auxiliaries, and amongst these was Paddy Traynor, the Adjutant of the Fingal Brigade. Paddy sought me out soon after his arrival, and although I had already heard something about his state I was shocked at his appearance. His eyes were blackened and his lips swollen, and his mental state was one of complete hysteria. I gathered that he had been held by F. Company of the Auxiliaries at the Castle for some two or three days since his arrest, and each day they had beaten and threatened him with torture and death in the effort to extract information from him. In the end he

was on the verge of insanity and told them something, though what exactly he told them I could not quite make out from him. He put his head on my shoulder and blubbered like a child, seeking my repeated assurances that I would not blame him for anything he might have told the Auxies about me. I tried to question him to get some details of what he had had said or what had happened, but this only threw him into further spasms of protestation that he meant no harm and that he tried to keep his mouth shut and that he could not bear to think that he might have been the cause of injury to me. I did, however, get some inkling that he had in some way identified me with the Parnell St. factory, and whatever they had said in reply to this indicated to Traynor that they meant to get their hands on me and deal with me as McKee and Clancy had been dealt with by them. I could do nothing then but assure Paddy that his fears were exaggerated and that I did not or would not blame him in the least for anything he might have said under such duress. After a few days in the prison surrounded by the atmosphere of careless hilarity affected by the general body of prisoners, he recovered his mental balance to a large extent but then he kept aloof and seemed to avoid me. I tried to talk to him, to give him further assurance that he could not be blamed and, to get something further from him as to what had happened to him at the Castle, but he avoided answering my questions and, seeing that such talk only upset him, I left him alone.

I suppose I was apprehensive of some immediate reaction from Traynor's interrogation for a few days, but had put the matter from my mind when one morning while we were still locked in our cells, there was a

commotion at the front door of the prison. My cell was at a corner of the upper landing overlooking the door ^{the} in/front hall below, and pushing back the peep hole cover in the door - the glass covering these holes had been broken by the prisoners - I saw a very tall Auxiliary involved in some argument with two of the prison N.C.O. warders, while some other Auxiliaries stood outside the gate covering the front door entrance, and I could hear the exhaust of a motor apparently backed up close to the door. I had seen this tall Auxiliary before and knew him as the notorious "Tiny", to whom numerous murders were ascribed. Tiny was seemingly trying to bully his way past the two N.C.O.s who sought to impede his progress, while another N.C.O. had sped past my door towards the governor's office. A soldier who stood in the middle of the hall with a rifle and fixed bayonet had come to the 'on guard' position, as was the formal practice, when the front door opened, and he remained in this position while the argument progressed. This seemed to irritate Tiny who by this time was close to the sentry, and making a rude remark he stretched out his hand suddenly and grasping the fore end of the rifle swung the sentry off his balance. An officer of the prison staff then appeared on the scene and amid a torrent of violent language Tiny was conducted to the governor's office, from which the muffled echo of a lot of further loud talk could be heard. A little later Tiny was escorted to the front door and could be heard as he passed near my cell door vowing vengeance in sundry dire forms on someone unnamed. I noted the revolver butt protruding from his great coat pocket and his evident alcoholic condition

as he passed down the stairs, and thought that it would be very unpleasant to fall into the hands of such an ugly customer.

The sequel came a little later. As the cell doors were being opened Sergt. Clements came in to me and said: "~~My~~ Joe, did you see that bloke that came in here a while ago". I replied that I had been an interested spectator of the performance in the hall below. But Clements interrupted me by saying "He was looking for you". He went on to tell me that Tiny and his party had arrived at the prison with a demand that one Joseph Lawless who was a prisoner there should be handed over to them forthwith to be taken to Dublin Castle for questioning. The governor, Major Corry, refused to hand over any prisoner without an official order from his own higher authorities. In any case I think he did not like the Auxiliaries very much, and certainly in this case Tiny's conduct would, I imagine, offend Corry's sense of correct soldierly conduct. Sergt. Clements told me that there was quite a scene in the office and that the governor told Tiny what he thought of him in no uncertain terms and then ordered him out in peremptory fashion. When the Auxie party left the prison it was presumably to obtain the necessary official order to have me handed over to them, and I like to think that as my personal relationship with the governor was one of mutual respect, he may have telephoned his own superiors when Tiny had left, to protest against handing over prisoners to any such unscrupulous ruffians. Whether that was so or not of course I do not know, but there was also another event which occurred that evening

which may have had the effect of distracting the attention of the Auxiliaries from me to something more urgent. This was an ambush of military forces in lorries, by Dublin Brigade I.R.A. personnel at Terenure, in the course of which several bombs were exploded in the lorries filled with British troops and, numbers of these were killed and wounded. The date of this ambush is recorded as 29th January, 1921, and my recollection of the event is coupled with Tiny's demand for me on the same day as outlined above. Some time that same evening a couple of the warder N.C.O.s who were quartered in the military barracks across the road (now Collins Barracks) told us all the gory details of what they had seen and heard in the barracks when they went to their tea. One fellow had apparently been in barracks when the lorries returned after the ambush, and his description of the state of blood and gore of the lorries left little to the imagination. When the news of the action reached the Castle, which I suppose it did within twenty minutes or so of the opening of the attack, every Auxiliary in Dublin as well as other forces, sped towards the area and spent the day and night terrorising the inhabitants of the locality in the effort to locate any of the I.R.A. participants. For whatever reason, I did not at any rate hear anything further of the demand for my removal to the Castle, and my natural feeling of apprehension had died away by the time we left Arbour Hill for the Rath Internment Camp at the Curragh, some time about the end of February, 1921.

CHAPTER XVIII.

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CHAPTER XVIII

It must have been about the first or second week of March 1921 that we were moved from Arbour Hill to the Curragh. Looking up some old letters of mine which Dot had preserved I found one which seemed to have been written from the Rath Camp immediately, or within a day or of my arrival there. This was dated 3rd March 1921 and so establishes the approximate date of our arrival, which I had thought to be about a month later.

We were paraded that morning in the main hall of Arbour Hill Prison and a list of about a hundred and fifty names called out, which represented more than half of the prisoners left in the prison at the time. The Governor then read to us the terms of our internment order and we were informed that the place of our internment was to be the Rath Camp on the Curragh of Kildare. Through the narrow iron gate covering the doorway of the prison we could catch a glimpse of the awaiting escort and hear the buzz of their vehicles as they pulled into position near the entrance. Rory O'Connor, who was one of the batch of prisoners ready to move, sidled up to me and in a solemn whisper asked whether I had made any plans for a mass escape during the move to the Curragh. I said I had not and, trying to reason with him, explained that we were certain to be heavily escorted, so that it was not possible to make any pre-arranged plan. I assured him that, of course, if any opportunity showed itself on the way we would do what we could about it when the chance arose. He then took up the heavy attitude with me and, speaking as a member of the General Staff, warned me that it was my duty as the prisoners' commandant to organise an escape. Poor Rory was evidently still suffering from the snub to his dignity of my election as commandant against his candidature, and I regretted the necessity for a further snub when I replied that the matter rested safely in my hands. It was clear, however, that Rory was likely to cause trouble and I discussed

this quietly with Peadar McMahon and a few others while we waited. We concluded that nothing was likely to happen until we arrived at the Curragh, but then we would be in a position of a new community and Rory would most likely try to gain an ascendancy and have himself elected as camp commandant. We agreed that we would not allow this to happen, but I said that I would not stand as a candidate for election and suggested Peadar McMahon as more suitable. Peadar tried to persuade me to accept election to the appointment, and only agreed to accept it himself on condition that I would act as his vice-commandant or second in command.

All this may sound a bit like parish pump politics, but the position was that the general body of prisoners would accept any reasonable rule of leadership provided that there were no divided councils. If opposing factions were allowed to arise then the men would be unable to decide what was the right thing to do and a division in our ranks would thus be exposed to the enemy. It was therefore up to the senior I.R.A. officers among the prisoners to make the decision and present this to the general body - for rectification in the form of an election.

The reasons which influenced me to refuse nomination as camp commandant were my inherent dislike of the petty duties of office and the feeling that I should not seek to find a position of eminence in the comparative safety of a barbed wire enclosure that I had failed to do by military action before my arrest. I did appreciate, however, that some reliable person with a sense of responsibility must take on the irksome duties of camp commandant, and realised that Rory O'Connor was not a suitable person, but I really felt that Peadar McMahon, being somewhat older than I and mentally well-balanced, would be the most suitable selection.

Any ideas of escape en route were quickly dissipated as we

were lined up on the roadway outside the prison and the line of lorries for our conveyance pulled up to where we stood on the footpath. The escort consisted of a full company of troops, a platoon in front, a platoon in rear, and the remaining platoons divided amongst the lorries on which we were to travel. In addition to this there was an armoured car in front of the convoy as well as one in rear, and a couple of tender-loads of Auxiliaries cruised around the convoy until we were clear of the environs of the city. From there on to the Curragh an aeroplane from the military aerodrome at Baldonnel flew in circles above us keeping watch for any possible attempt at rescue. When we entered upon the Curragh Plain, near Ballymany crossroads, the aeroplane landed ahead of us and, the convoy being halted, we watched the pilot coming across to have his duty order signed by the officer commanding the convoy.

This, my second view of the vast Curragh Plain, impressed itself upon my mind in a peculiar way, perhaps because of my position then as a prisoner destined to become a forced inhabitant of the plain for some unknown time to come. People who have lived their lives in more or less enclosed places, particularly in cities, are, I think, bound to get a certain agaphobic feeling of isolation when they first find themselves in a wide open space unbounded by walls, hedges or fences of any kind. But I had also another feeling, induced by the view of the barracks and other military establishments set upon the ~~road~~ ridge in the middle of the plain. Here seemed to be the unassailable heart of the powerful enemy of our nation. Here were military forces in strength, protected from assault by their very isolation as well as their strength, and from where they could sally forth at will to crush the puny efforts of the native people.

I did not at the time, of course, arrange my thoughts as I

have written them here, but ^{this} represents the feelings we had and explains why there was little conversation between us as we were driven through the Curragh Camp, past Harepark Camp and halted at last, to dismount outside the newly erected internment camp just west of the Gibbet Rath.

The Rath itself is a circular mound about a hundred feet in diameter standing on the ridge just west of the Curragh Camp but within the confines of the plain. Hereabouts, on 3rd June 1798, an insurgent force - pursuant to an agreement made between them and General Dundas, the Officer Commanding the British forces at the Curragh - assembled to lay down their arms, and, having done so, were attacked and ruthlessly slaughtered by the Fencible Regiment known as "Lord Jocelyn's Foxhunters" which formed part of a force under Major-General Sir James Duff. Duff, commanding a column of some 600 troops just arrived from Limerick, had been sent to receive the surrender of the insurgents but, disregarding the terms of General Dundas's agreement with them, began a wholesale butchery of the unarmed men after they had laid down their arms; over two hundred of the unarmed insurgents were killed in the affair.

The Rath Camp was, therefore, perhaps, an appropriate place to house the insurgents of another generation. The spirits of those who fell there might be comforted in the presence of their successors, and we might be consoled by the thought that the temporary sacrifice of our personal liberty was not as great as theirs.

The camp was built to accommodate about 1200 to 1400 men and was laid out on the same lines as all such hutment camps I have seen. It adjoined the road leading from the Curragh Camp to Kildare town and consisted in the main of four lines of sixty-foot wooden huts, the lines being lettered A, B, C and D

from west to east, and the huts numbered in sequence from A line to D. Cookhouses, baths, canteen and stores were placed in the centre of the camp with a large hut to act as a hospital near the roadside of the camp, while dry latrines and wash-houses were placed between each line of huts. A new roadway had been made from the entrance gate up the centre of the camp with branches leading between the hut lines and connecting with the centre road. A clear space of about two acres remained within the wire at the southern side of the camp which served as a general exercise ground and on the west side of this clear space was the British Administration Office of the camp where the British commandant, his adjutant and quartermaster had their offices and stores. There were also punishment cells in this block of buildings. The barbed wire fence surrounding the camp was an elaborate construction consisting of two tall fences, about six feet apart and extending outwards and inwards from there were barbed wire aprons enclosing a mass of tangled wire. The space between the tall fences was kept clear of grass and other vegetation by lime spread upon it.

Elevated sentry posts stood at each corner of the wire fencing and electric flood lights shone upon it during the hours of darkness. A hut which acted as a guardroom stood near the entrance gate between the wire and the road and the remainder of the troops engaged in the guarding and administration of the camp were quartered in a hutment camp about 200 yards on the south side of the internment camp.

I think we were the first batch of prisoners to arrive at the new camp, the construction of which was not quite finished when we arrived. It is possible that some few may have arrived before us on the same day or the day before, but my recollection is that we went into occupation on the first line of huts and began immediately to elect our own commandant

and administrative officers. Peadar McMahon became the prisoners' commandant and I his vice-commandant, and each hut had its hut leader. Later we appointed an officer in charge of each line of huts who formed with ourselves the Camp Council. We thought it peculiar when we first arrived that we were urged by the military authorities to proceed immediately with the election of leaders, and when this had been done, to find that they were so solicitous as to provide specially arranged quarters for the prisoners' commandant and his staff. They refused, however, to recognise our military titles as commandant and vice-commandant and insisted upon addressing us and referring to us at all times as "Internee Supervisor" and "Assistant Internee Supervisor".

Peadar and I were very pleased to find that a small part of the No. 1 Hut - next to the British Administrative Offices - had been very nicely partitioned off for our accommodation, the remainder of the same hut being similarly well finished to accommodate the remaining camp officers. Here we had the benefits of select company, some privacy and, in that way, somewhat more general comfort than was enjoyed by the other prisoners. We only discovered the reason for this solicitude when we had begun to take it for granted. *

The camp was filled up rapidly by almost daily arrivals of batches of prisoners from centres all over the country, but mostly from Dublin and the midland counties. As I have mentioned, the construction of the camp was not quite completed when we arrived there, and for some time afterwards there were civilian tradesmen, working under military supervision, engaged in completion of bath houses, wash houses and suchlike. The military party superintending these operations kept the prisoners away from the work in progress and prevented contact between them and the workmen who were local men employed by

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(Page 378A follows here.)

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Sometime in the middle of that summer, when a prolonged period of intense sunshine had baked and shrivelled the ground, a few of us were lying on the parched grass at the back of our hut one day. Idly gazing at the ground, someone suddenly noticed a slight depression which formed a narrow line running from the direction of the Camp Administrative Offices towards our hut. Speculating vaguely as to what this might mean, it gradually gained a sinister significance as we realised that neither water nor sewage pipes could be the cause of the mark as neither of these services were installed in the huts. Lying closely together so as to conceal our purpose we, therefore, began a small excavation with a penknife, discovering about six or eight inches down what appeared to be a pair of insulated telephone cables and, having severed these, the hole was carefully closed again.

Following the mark, we then traced the cables to the side of our hut where, concealed in a carefully prepared board of the inner partition, we found two microphones. One had been placed at the head of our bed to catch our bedtime conversation I suppose, and the other above a table, where presumably we might be expected to hold secret meetings.

Other microphones were then located in the outer part of our hut and, I think, in one of the other huts nearby, all of which were removed, and I kept two of them as souvenirs until I had to abandon them on my escape. I do not know whether the enemy intelligence staff learned anything by this means, but they took no action about the destruction of the system.

the Royal Engineers. These men were issued with identification passes to enable them to enter and leave the internment camp and they had to produce these passes to the guard at the gate when passing in and out.

A few weeks after our arrival in camp a prisoner named Dan Ryan came to me one day to tell me that he had managed to establish contact with one of the civilian workmen, a carpenter, who had suggested a means of escape for any two prisoners who cared to avail of it. This workman was either a local I.R.A. man or a sympathiser, and his plan was that two of his mates would not come in to work on a Saturday morning, but would leave their tools and overalls behind on the Friday evening and give their passes to this man to bring into camp on the Saturday. It seemed a slim chance, but yet we were not long enough in camp to be very well known by sight to the guards, so I thought I should take it. I thought it only fair, however, that I should inform Peadar McMahon first and, on discussing the proposal with him, he recalled to my mind the fact that there were two men in camp who expected to be courtmartialled and condemned to death and that we should give them the chance of escape that now offered.

Mick Ryan and Larry O'Neill had been wounded and captured in an engagement with British forces in Carlow and had been lodged in the internment camp hospital to recover from their wounds before being tried for their lives. O'Neill was fairly recovered by the time this escape proposal arose, but Ryan, who had his shoulder shattered by machine gun fire, was still CONFINED to his bed in the hospital. Nevertheless we felt that we could get him ready to make the attempt in about a week's time and, accordingly, I asked Dan Ryan to make this arrangement with the friendly workman. When the week had nearly elapsed we were doubtful whether Mick Ryan would be quite fit to make

the attempt so I asked Dan Ryan to see if it could be arranged to postpone the escape for a further week, but the following day, Saturday, we learned that Dan Ryan and Rory O'Connor had availed of the chance themselves and walked out of the camp in company with the other workmen dressed in overalls and carrying some tools. The guard at the gate had examined the passes they produced to him and allowed them through without comment. The escape of the two prisoners was discovered at roll call that evening and from then on there was a considerable tightening up of security measures, so that no similar attempt was found possible for a long time.

We made one or two attempts later to get Mick Ryan and Larry O'Neill smuggled out in the baskets of hospital laundry, but something went wrong each time and, before any successful attempt to get them out could be undertaken, they were removed to cells at the adjoining Harepark Camp to await their trial.

Although the camp was quite full at the time, further batches of prisoners began to arrive during May and June and the building of a second internment camp was begun on the west side of the existing camp and adjoining it. In the meantime, the new prisoners were housed in marquee tents pitched in the spaces between the huts.

Life in the camp followed very much the same general pattern as that already described in Frongoch so it is unnecessary to set down a lot of repetitive detail. There was this great difference, however, between Frongoch and the Rath. In the former we were in a foreign land in which we could count upon no friends around us, and our effort in the Rising was spent for the moment. In the Rath we were still in our own land with friends close to us on every side and the fight was still in progress throughout the land.

Our thoughts were bent on escape and I think it is true to say that our prime motive in the wish to escape was that

we might justify ourselves in our own eyes by striking an effective blow against the enemy who was now our captor. We felt daily the galling frustration of our bondage as we read in the newspapers the events and incidents of the war, which by this stage seemed to have penetrated every corner of Ireland. Occasionally I had a letter from my father in Ballykinlar and learned how my friends there were keeping, but the censorship prevented anything but personal matters being written in our letters.

An odd memory of the camp that persists with extraordinary clarity after all the years is that of the trumpeters of the Huzzar Regiment which was our garrison. About six of these carried out daily practice during the summer mornings beside the great mound of Gibbet Rath, a couple of hundred yards from the east side of our enclosure. The music of the various trumpet calls in blended harmony was something new to our ears. In contrast with the strident tone and limited range of the bugle calls to which we had become accustomed, this sounded really beautiful and, added to the scene of a rising sun flashing upon the highly polished brass trumpets, as the trumpeters' arms rose and fell in unison, gave a sharp thrill to the very appreciative audience within the wire enclosure. The various trumpet calls of British cavalry regiments have become familiar to my ears since then, and I still appreciate their musical arrangement, but the notes of a trumpet always recall to my mind those days in the summer of 1921, when the thoughts that arose at its sound took us far beyond the wire and away from the age in which we lived.

The prospect of digging a tunnel under the barbed wire had been earnestly considered from soon after our arrival in camp, but the practical details were difficult to solve. Several groups of prisoners applied themselves to this problem, however, and sometime in May we had actually the construction of three

tunnels in progress, one heading westward from the north end of A. lines, one near the hospital which was ambitiously aimed to go under the main road, and one heading eastward from the south end of D. line. Each of these tunnels had been started independently by small groups of prisoners and, although most of us knew what was going on, the work had, for reasons of secrecy, to be left entirely to the groups concerned. A certain rivalry grew up between the groups and, discussing the matter, the camp council decided that the tunnel in D. line should be proceeded with in an organised fashion and the other two abandoned.

Quite a large quantity of timber was required in the construction of a tunnel for shoring up the roof and, naturally, this could only be obtained by surreptitiously removing odd boards here and there from huts and other structures in such a way as not to excite suspicion. Obviously, material for three tunnels could not be found in this way as easily as for one. In fact, it was found that bed boards provided the most suitable material and as many men preferred to use two boards instead of three to sleep on - allowing the straw filled mattress to form a hollow in the middle - a considerable number of boards were made available in this way.

As the methods adopted in the digging of this tunnel may be of some interest to the reader, I give hereunder what I knew and heard about it at the time. The main architect of this tunnel was a man from Arigna who, being a miner, knew something of the methods of burrowing underground. I have forgotten his name, but he, with a number of his comrades from the west and middle west of Ireland, were quartered in D. line, having been some of the later batches arriving in the camp. The plan was to take up and divide one of the floor sections of an upper hut in D. line, replacing it so as to afford an inconspicuous and

and easily removable trapdoor in the floor of the hut. The huts were built upon piles which raised the floor about twelve to eighteen inches above the ground level, the boards of the hut walls being carried down to the ground level to prevent excessive draught through the floorboards. The digging was done entirely at night after roll call, when it was unlikely that the occupants of the hut would be disturbed without warning. A vertical shaft was sunk first, going down some ten to twelve feet, and the spoil from this was distributed evenly on the remaining space under the hut. A makeshift ladder was provided to enable the workers to get up and down this shaft and the sides were held against collapsing by timber batons jammed into it. The horizontal shaft was intended to be driven eastward for about eighty or ninety yards to a spot covered by a clump of furze bushes, as it was hoped that the exit amongst the furze would be most likely to escape observation by the sentries in the elevated posts. A couple of the strong canvas mail sacks were abstracted from the camp post office from which smaller bags were sewn, and these were used, tied in pairs to a rope, to haul the excavated earth from the working face of the tunnel to the end of the vertical shaft. From there the bags of earth were carried up into the hut, when the space under the floor had been filled, and this, stored for the time being in fire buckets, suitcases and suchlike receptacles, had to be carefully and unobtrusively distributed in handfuls all over the camp next day.

Ventilation of the tunnel while it was being worked on was something of a difficulty with the limited resources available. As the man working on the tunnel face almost filled the space with his body he obviously could not survive very long there unless some fresh air were pumped in to him. So, as the tunnel gained in length, a few lengths of old water piping were found, in some cases by removing these from the cookhouse fittings

and with roughly made bellows and canvas packed joints in the pipe line the difficulty was surmounted.

Progress on the tunnel was necessarily slow as, despite all the surrounding organisation of the work, only one man could work on the tunnel face and get the earth back to the end of the shaft. There was therefore a lot of impatient anxiety amongst the prisoners who awaited the outcome, and a fear that the longer we delayed the escape the greater the danger of discovery of the tunnel by the ever-watchful British Provost Staff.

The truce of July 11th 1921, came when the tunnel was in progress, but as the truce made little difference to the conditions of the prisoners it merely made us more anxious than ever to escape while conditions outside were favourable to our getaway after leaving the precincts of the Curragh.

The general feeling we had at the time was that the truce was most probably a temporary respite and that, when negotiations broke down, the war would begin with redoubled effort on both sides. Naturally, we discussed the situation daily amongst ourselves and occasionally attracted one or other of the British officers attached to the camp into some casual conversation on the matter. In our discussions we could not visualise the British Government consenting to any measure of freedom that would satisfy our national aspirations, while on the other hand we knew we could not and would not abate our demand for the recognition of Dáil Éireann as the only lawful government of our native land. I think the British garrison had much the same feelings about the unlikelihood of the truce eventuating in anything except a resumption of hostilities. Certainly there was no relaxation of discipline within the camp, and the adjutant, a certain Captain Vinden, who was a particularly obnoxious type, went out of his way in many matters of detail to let us see that the truce had nothing to do with us, and that he at any rate still looked upon us as malignant enemies whom he might punish at

his pleasure. I had a few passages with Vinden in my position as Internee vice-Commandant, or supervisors as they called us. I was acting commandant in the absence of Peadar McLiahon who was ill on one occasion and came before Vinden in connection with an ultimatum he had delivered concerning a shortage of dinner knives. He became incensed with rage because I persisted in treating his orders and threats with an affectation of levity and we wound up the interview by a frank exchange of our opinions of each other which could hardly be described as complimentary.

The officer commanding the camp when we went there first was a Colonel Pratt and he was replaced later by a Colonel Osborne. Both these officers gave no personal cause for complaint against them. They carried out their duties in an impersonal fashion and had very little contact with the prisoners. I had occasion to come before Col. Osborne in connection with a general order issued by him which I had formally challenged, and I found him a pretty reasonable sort of man to deal with. This challenge of mine had to do with a typed order received from the British camp commandant and which was headed: "Extract from Royal Warrant, Maintenance of discipline among Prisoners of War". I was acting Internee Commandant at the time and thought I would start a sort of legal argument as to whether such an order had any application to us in view of the official denial of our prisoner of war status, or, alternatively, that if formal recognition of our P.O.W. status was now extended, then we wished to claim all the privileges of such, as guaranteed by the Hague Convention. Having written to Col. Osborne to this effect I was later paraded for interview with him at his office. He told me that he had received my communication to him and appreciated the arguments made in it. He said, however, that all he could do was to forward my letter

to his higher authority and did not imagine that it would have any effect upon the official British view of Irish prisoners. Thanking him for his courtesy I said that I had quite realised what the position was and that I was sure he would understand that until a satisfactory reply was received to my letter we could not take any notice of the British orders affecting prisoners of war. Such minor verbal skirmishes, though of no great importance in themselves, lent relief to an otherwise deadly monotonous existence. My main reason for quoting the letter incident is that the original typewritten document signed by Col. Osborne, and carrying the pencilled draft of my reply on the back, is one of the few documents of the time that still remain in my possession.

Looking at it now brings back to my mind vividly the circumstances surrounding its issue which was, in fact, the escape of a number of prisoners via the tunnel. My letter to Col. Osborne is dated 27th September 1921, and my recollection is that this date was within a fortnight or so of the escape of the prisoners, so the date of the escape should, therefore, be about the second week of September.

It had been arranged, quietly of course, that when the tunnel was estimated to have reached a point corresponding with the clump of furze on the surface, work on a vertical outlet shaft would begin, but this should not be pushed right through to the surface until the order to begin the escape was given by the Internee Commandant and Camp Council. The tentative arrangement was that the occupants of the particular hut in D. line, where the tunnel began, would begin the escape in an orderly fashion, the occupants of the other huts in that line and in the other lines would then, under the orders and direction of the hut leaders, move secretly and silently from hut to hut until they reached the tunnel, so that most if not all the prisoners in camp would escape if the exit end of the

tunnel did not come under observation.

My information at the time was that it would take about another week to complete the tunnel as arranged and so neither Peadar McMahon nor I, nor in fact any of the camp officers had any inkling of the sudden decision of the tunnel workers to break through to the surface regardless of the point reached. Actually the point reached was about twenty yards short of the objective, but as it was outside of the arc of light surrounding the barbed wire fence, and the night was dark, it was not easily observable by the sentries in the elevated posts.

The hut leader in the tunnel hut, realising when he learned of the breaking out of the tunnel, that this was an undisciplined action, sent a messenger creeping over to our hut to give the alarm to the camp officers. This messenger, reaching our hut, shook up Joe Vize, who promptly accompanied the messenger back to D. line with a view to stopping any individual attempts at escape that would prejudice the grand scheme planned. When he arrived he realised he was too late, as not only had the tunnel been broken out, but several men had already gone through and apparently made good their escape. Excitement among the adjacent prisoners was intense and it was only with the greatest difficulty that men could be restrained from fighting for precedence in the tunnel shaft. Realising that he could do little at that stage to mend matters, Vize went through the tunnel himself and, as no other messenger reached our hut, the first we knew of the matter was when about six o'clock next morning armed troops poured into the camp and surrounded all the huts. The prisoners were held within the huts for two or three hours while they were counted, recounted and names checked, and until a thorough search for further tunnels had been carried out.

A more detailed check of the names and identities of the prisoners who had escaped was carried out later that day

when every prisoner left in camp, except those confined to hospital beds, was paraded on the football field and held there for some hours while the identity of each man was checked against a list. We were also informed that privileges in the way of letters and parcels would be curtailed or withdrawn on account of the escape, and on the following day or so a party of sappers began the digging of a ten-foot deep trench around the camp inside the wire. This was intended to cut through any undiscovered tunnels and to discourage any further effort in this line.

The disappointment of failing to escape after the build up of anticipation was heartbreaking, so it was little wonder that we re-examined every prospect carefully. A prisoner named Tom Glennon, a Belfast, or at any rate, North of Ireland man, came to me one day early in October with a suggestion that he thought it was possible for about two prisoners to escape in the swill cart, if we could find the money to bribe the soldier who brought it into the camp. The swill cart was actually a small donkey cart which came daily to the camp to collect the cookhouse refuse which was purchased for pig feeding by a local contractor. The boy who drove the donkey was not allowed into the internment camp, but handed over his equipage to a soldier at the gate who led the donkey inside the wire and, when the cart had been loaded at the cookhouse, took it outside again to the waiting boy.

We were not permitted to have money in our possession in camp. All money sent to us by our friends was held against our individual accounts by the camp authorities, and we were issued with printed chits of various denominations from a penny upwards to the value of the money held against our accounts. These chits were the internal currency of the camp and were negotiable for the purchase of cigarettes and grocery goods at the camp canteens. Notwithstanding this arrangement, however, some money did find its way into the camp by devious

means, and I knew that one prisoner, our chaplain, Father Paddy Smith from Tullamore district, held a few pounds which could be made available for any escape project.

I spoke to Father Smith about it and he agreed to lend me ten pounds to bribe the soldier, while Glennon spoke to the soldier and ascertained his willingness to be bribed. We then raided the censor's hut and appropriated two large canvas mail sacks and, thus equipped, we waited for the following evening which was Sunday.

After Mass I spent the time in disposing of my spare clothing and other belongings, after which we made final arrangements for our getaway when the swill car should arrive. It usually came after dinner and it was, I think, about six o'clock when it arrived on that day. We had arranged that two other prisoners who were members of the cookhouse staff would conduct the actual financial arrangements with the soldier in such a way as to keep some hold over him until we were clear away. What they did was to give him five pounds down on his agreement to the arrangement, the other five to be paid to him when we were safely outside the gate.

The arrangement with the soldier took only a few minutes while the latter was partaking of the usual cup of tea inside the cookhouse, and the loading of the cart was delayed by a lot of shovelling of swill from one container to another until the pre-arranged signal was given from inside the cookhouse. Glennon and I were in a fever of excitement for fear that something would go wrong at the last minute, while quite a large group of prisoners had collected around the cookhouse door to watch the proceedings and give what help they could, if only by concealing the movements around the swill cart with their bodies. Getting into our mail sacks we curled ourselves up on the floor

of the donkey cart while our comrades began at once to empty barrels of swill on top of us. The thick canvas mail sacks kept the slush from our clothes and, to enable us to breathe, we had a lot of old cabbage leaves piled above our heads in the front corners of the cart. The limited air supply and weight of the swill pressing down on our lungs was well-nigh intolerable, so I began to wonder if we would be able to survive long enough to get through the gate. Glennon apparently had the same thought. I heard him groaning once or twice and, though feeling no better myself, I mumbled to him to be quiet. He said that he could not stand it, and was about to get out of the cart when it at last began to move as the soldier took the donkey by the head. The slight movement of the cart improved our air supply somewhat, and, with a last appeal to Glennon to be quiet and stick it out, I gave my attention to systematic breathing while listening for sounds that would enable me to identify what was going on around us.

The progress of the donkey seemed terribly slow but at least we could now breathe more easily until at last we were halted and we heard our soldier shouting "Gate". Other footsteps, with a great rattling of keys, indicated the opening of the double gate by the sergeant of the guard, and, being halted, the breathing problem had again become difficult. The system required the sergeant of the guard to lock one gate before opening the other, which meant that he had first to open the outer gate and lock it again when he came inside. Then he had to open the inner gate, admit the donkey cart with its load and escort it between the gates, lock the inner gate again before opening the outer gate to allow himself, the soldier and the donkey cart out on to the road, after which, of course, he locked the outer gate from the outside. To our keyed-up nerves the seemingly excessive delay was almost more than we could stand. Knowing that the cart was now under the immediate

eye of the sergeant and possibly other members of the guard we dared not make the slightest move nor make the slightest sound in our efforts to breathe.

I imagine that the soldiers' nerves were also rather taut at this point as, if we were discovered, he would certainly suffer a heavy punishment. With a loud "Giddap" and a tug at the donkey's bridle, he tried to move the cart quickly as the outer gate opened, but the donkey's feet slipped as he tried to start the heavily laden cart and he was almost on his knees when the soldier, grasping the point of the shaft, helped him to his feet. That was a bad moment for both the soldier and ourselves, but it was quickly over and in another minute we heard the soldier say to the two small boys who waited on the roadside: "Hi, you nippers'. take your bleeding donkey and 'op it". We were outside the wire and on our way, but what a slow and tedious way it was, as the donkey ambled along and the two youngsters chattered to each other as they walked beside the cart. Suddenly one of the boys exclaimed: "Where's the shovel, it's been left behind". The other boy climbed up on the load of swill and began walking around on it, apparently searching for the missing shovel and incidentally treading on our prone bodies underneath. He must have recognised that the lumps he could feel under his feet were rather unusual for he got down suddenly and, having whispered something to the other, they were both silent for a minute or so.

We could hear a heavy footstep with measured tread coming along the road behind us and gradually overhauling the slow moving donkey. This sound was ominous enough, but when the donkey was suddenly halted as one of the boys announced to the other: "We will have to go back for the shovel" it seemed the last straw. Poking my head carefully up through the cabbage leaves I said, with as much menace as I could put into the words: "Drive on and not a word out of you". The boy I spoke

to looked at me in open mouthed amazement, but the other one who apparently was the one who had walked over us, addressing his pal, said: "Now, I told you there was someone in it". The boy I had spoken to was at the donkey's head and, quickly recovering from his astonishment, he said quietly to me: "There is an officer coming along the road behind us". It was his footsteps we had been listening to for some minutes and the footsteps were now within fifteen or twenty yards of the cart. I repeated the order to drive on and ducked back into my cover of cabbage leaves where I listened anxiously for the footsteps to overhaul and pass the cart as the donkey ambled slowly along.

The boys acted like men, now that they felt they had a part to play. They chattered away gaily to each other while the footsteps of the officer closed upon us, passed us out and faded away ahead. Apparently, he was not interested in boys or swill carts for he spoke no word to the boys as he passed and they never stopped their chatter to each other.

In the darkness of our hiding place we had no idea where we were, or where the cart was heading for. My quick look at the boy leading the donkey was insufficient to orient myself further than to know that the buildings and barracks of the Curragh Camp lay ahead. We travelled on for awhile like this, until the cart stopped abruptly and one of the boys coming close to where my head was said: "I'm afraid to bring you any further". Raising my head cautiously, I inquired where we were and he told me we were at the western boundary of the Curragh Camp which he had to pass through to his home.

Taking a quick look round I saw no one in sight and, as Glennon also emerged from his cabbage leaves, proposed that we leave the cart at this point and make our way on foot across the open plain. We climbed out of our bags easily enough, but some of the more messy element of the swill, boiled potatoes

pieces of fat meat and suchlike had got into our hair and around our necks and faces and we found it necessary, therefore, to make ourselves a little more presentable on the spot. While we were thus engaged - the swill cart had passed on into the camp - a dispatch rider on a motor cycle came towards us from the Curragh Camp, but as we stood close in to a wooden fence, he passed without seeing us. His passing warned us to cut short our toilet however, so, not waiting to put on the collars and ties which with some foresight we had carried in our pockets, we started off in the general direction of the Curragh Racecourse, the grand stand of which acted as our landmark.

I could hardly restrain Glennon who wanted to run, in order to put as much distance as quickly as possible between us and the internment camp. Realising, however, that two figures running across the open plain would appear much more suspicious to any casual observer than two people strolling quietly along, we walked until we reached the main road which crosses the plain between the towns of Kildare and Newbridge. Once on the road we walked faster as we headed for Newbridge, meeting no one until we left the plain at Ballymany crossroads. Here we began to meet soldiers and N.C.Os. in twos and threes returning off local leave pass to Newbridge, and with something of a shock I recognised two N.C.Os. who belonged to the staff of the Rath Camp. Fortunately, however, they were slightly inebriated and never even glanced at us as they passed, but we decided that it was high time to improve our appearance by washing off the traces of swill and putting on our collars and ties. We climbed over a fence near Moorefield crossroads at a place now occupied by a row of cottages and, using the long wet grass to clean each other, fitted the collars and ties. Feeling less remarkable we then walked unconcernedly through the town of Newbridge and entered the Central Hotel to which we had been directed before we left the camp by a fellow prisoner who knew

CHAPTER XIX.

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The Truce situation and the effect of its prolongation - Mick Collins, the great figure of the hour - some indications of narrow views and fallacious beliefs on the national problem - My acquisition of a new gun which is swapped for Sean Treacy's parabellum - Interview with O/C. Dublin Brigade at Plaza Hotel - I find myself with a bankrupt business on my hands - The signed Treaty becomes a matter of heated controversy - Some reflections on the political hysteria of the time - I join the newly formed National Army - Dinny Lacy and the Volunteer Convention of March 1922 - Talk with Liam Mellows - Taking over motor vehicles from British forces at Collinstown - Talk with Seán Lemass - I resign from the army because of personal differences with my superiors - My father's death - Interview with Chief of Staff (Eoin O'Duffy) - The attack on the Four Courts opens Civil War - I rejoin the army.

CHAPTER XIX

The feelings of joy in regaining my freedom; of reunion with my loved one, and the rejoicing of my friends was, in itself, overwhelming, so that my memory of those first days of freedom is confused and sketchy; to make it more confusing still, there was the strange atmosphere of the Truce which took me some time to grasp. To learn of these conditions from the newspapers, as we had done in the Rath Camp, was one thing, but to experience them was another. The mental habits of years cannot adapt themselves to a new orientation overnight, and it took me some days to accustom myself to going around with a feeling of assured safety while publicly acknowledging my identification with the national revolutionary movement.

Fleming's house in Drumcondra was more like a barracks than a simple provision shop. I, naturally, spent a lot of my time there, while all that time there was never less than eight or ten I.R.A. officers of the South Tipperary, East Limerick and other southern brigades coming and going. They stayed overnight or for a few days and, as three or four left for the country, others arrived to take their places. Officers of the Dublin Brigade and of the G.H.Q. staff came in with them or called on them there from time to time, so that there was little privacy and no unoccupied corner in the house during all that time.

All I.R.A. officers carried guns, as a matter of pride as well as precaution, usually in holsters slung on belts under their civilian coats; so in Fleming's during mealtimes it had become a normal thing to see Parabellum or 'Peter the Painter' pistols ornamenting the sideboard, or at night, to see these hanging in their holsters from the ends of the beds.

The I.R.A. as a whole was making the most of the 'lionizing' its members were receiving from the civilian population, and was particularly appreciative of the new tone of respect towards it in its erstwhile enemies among the population. I suppose we felt that this all helped in the establishment of a solid national front against Britain, for, in our hearts, we hardly dared to hope for more than a respite from war. We could not visualise Britain agreeing to a settlement that would recognise our national sovereignty and we knew we could agree to no less. We were learning, too, that we had friends in the most unexpected places; not those who had enthusiastically espoused our cause since the Truce, but others who had worked for us secretly during the war years and only now allowed their sympathies to become known.

The great figure that had emerged from the war, the one that dominated the situation by his personality and the reputation he had gained, was Mick Collins - The Big Fellow - as he was affectionately known to all of us. The term did not grow from his mere physical size, though he was something above average in stature, but from a recognition of the fact that in intellectual power, courage, vision, energy and ability he stood high above those around him. Collins was a strong man mentally and physically - I had seen him in Frongoch as the only one among such a large number who could compete on anything like equal terms with Sean Hales at throwing the hammer or the fifty six pound weight - and Hales was a champion weight thrower; but in any company, his personality dominated it, not in an egotistic fashion, but from his sheer force of character which impressed itself on his listeners without apparent effort on his part to be impressive.

Day by day the conviction grew that the I.R.A. had been victorious in its fight and a morale that had sunk pretty low under enemy action and lack of munitions at the date of the

Truce, was now boosting into a misleading conceit that was to have disastrous consequences a little later. I write now with a hindsight of events, but remembering the temper of the time, I have no hesitation in saying that the armed opposition to the acceptance of the Treaty by a large section of the I.R.A. was due in a large measure to the long truce period, from July to December, during which the realities of the situation as they existed before the truce had become obscured by the unreal and unstable truce conditions.

There were, of course, other factors operating during that period which also had their important bearing upon the situation and its outcome. There were personal prejudices and petty jealousies which paved the way for the subsequent rift in the hitherto solid national front, but as these things have been written of since by pens more able, and from more intimate knowledge, suffice to say that we were aware of the existence of such differences of opinion, or perhaps I should say lack of trust, in certain leaders, but did not concern ourselves about such things at the time. We could not conceive at the time that any loyal adherent of the national movement, much less any leader, could possibly place personal feelings or opinions above the wellbeing of the national cause.

Popular interest and political activity centred around the sittings of An Dáil. As a nation we were enjoying the novelty, for the first time in centuries, of a native parliament functioning freely and in the open, and, though we did not realise it at the time, the differences of opinion and outlook referred to above were laying the foundation for the separate political parties of later years.

The mental attitude of a number of I.R.A. officers, especially some of those I met from Cork and Tipperary, was noticeably intractable. Realising in retrospect that their fight had been wonderfully successful against great odds, and

forgetting the critical condition of things immediately before the truce in their new-found power, the overall national and international position was judged by them from the standpoint of their own local situation.

Some effort was being made by General Headquarters to establish training camps in all brigade areas during the truce period, in order that the time could be usefully employed in training men in tactics and the proper use of weapons and, more important still, to instill some sense of discipline. The difficulty here, however, was that competent instructors were scarce, and the political hysteria of the time prevented wholehearted application by students or staff. Nevertheless, these camps did good work as far as they went, and served the secondary end of keeping officers of the I.R.A. concerned with the practical matter of improving their fighting efficiency, rather than contributing to the political difficulties of the time.

At the time of my arrest in December 1920 I had owned two weapons, the R.I.C. carbine I had saved after the surrender of Easter Week, and a .455 Service Webley revolver I had purchased through my brigade in 1918. The carbine I had left in Fingal, where it had come into the possession of Philip Coleman of Swords, and the revolver, which was hidden in the garage at St. Ignatius Road, I had managed to convey information about from Arbour Hill, had been given to someone to make use of. One of my first concerns, therefore, after my escape from the Rath Camp, was to arm myself. Philip Coleman acknowledged to me that the carbine he had was mine and promised to keep it safe for me if I would leave it with him for the time being. I agreed to this, as a rifle was not so useful to me for the moment. I wanted a pistol of some kind, preferably a 'Parabellum' which appealed to me then as an idéal weapon. This make of self-loading pistol

was of German manufacture, being one of the officially authorised pistols issued as part of their equipment to officers of the German army. After the first world war numbers of these weapons found their way to England and from there to Ireland where they were prized by the I.R.A. in common with the other German type pistol, the Mauser, known as the 'Peter the Painter'. A member of the G.H.Q. Purchases Staff - Joe O'Sullivan - who travelled regularly between England and Ireland as a courier, was also a constant visitor to Fleming's of Drumcondra. Joe and his brother, Sean, had worked for years in Manchester, but returned to Ireland about the time of the Rising of 1916, and Sean became, in 1918, one of the first of the munition workers in the bomb factory in Parnell St. I spoke to Joe about getting me a gun on his next trip to England and he told me he thought he could get me a short Parabellum for £5, so I gave him the money and within about ten days he came into Fleming's one night and informed me that he had the gun. He handed me what seemed to be a brand new short Parabellum, which I had scarcely taken possession of when Dan Breen, Jerry Kiely and some others who were there at the time passed it from one to another in critical examination and admiration. Breen seemingly decided right away that he must have it, and began striking a bargain with me. The gun he had already was a long Parabellum, a weapon with a 6-inch long barrel, and while he hated to part with this, which he told me was the gun Sean Treacy had used at Fernside, he was so anxious to get the shorter weapon that he offered to swop with me.

With some regrets I agreed to the swop and Sean Treacy's gun passed into my possession where it has since remained. Treacy had two guns, both Parabellums, and usually carried both of them when engaged on any mission of importance, but on the night of the Fernside raid, Seamus Robinson told me

recently, Treacy, having left his own guns elsewhere, borrowed Robinson's gun, a long Parabellum, when he left De'laney's of Heytesbury St. that evening to go to Fleming's of Drumcondra. It was, therefore, Robinson's gun that Sean used at Fernside, and which Sean gave to Breen at the Mater Hospital to protect himself against a possible surprise enemy raid on the hospital. Robinson told me he had never seen the gun after Treacy took it from Heytesbury St., so I accept that what Breen told me at the time he gave it to me was correct and that the gun now in my possession is, in fact, the gun Treacy used in the now famous fight at Fernside.

Some weeks after my escape from the Curragh, having decided to sever my connection with the Fingal Brigade, I went to the Plaza Hotel in Gardiner Place, which was then the open and official headquarters of the Dublin Brigade, and sought an interview with Oscar Traynor, the Brigade Commander. I told Traynor that I wanted a transfer to the Dublin Brigade and the reasons which urged me to make the request. I told him how we had tried before my arrest to force our Brigade Commander to take action, and that while the Fingal men had been all the time willing and anxious to take a foremost part in the fight, they had been side-tracked and prevented from doing so by the man who should have taken the lead and urged them on. I explained that I had written my views on this pretty plainly in a letter I had got smuggled out from Arbour Hill, when I urged Tommy Peppard, to whom I had written, to get rid of Mick Lynch and appoint a Brigade Commander who would fight. Peppard had, however, by some chance, shown this letter to Lynch and so, having learned of this on my return from the Curragh, relations between Lynch and me were rather strained. I said that, because of all this, I could not serve with the Fingal Brigade as long as Lynch remained as Brigade Commander, but was satisfied to accept any appointment in the Dublin Brigade where I felt I

could be more useful.

Traynor's reply astounded me. I had thought he was listening carefully to my rather long explanation of the circumstances, but his reply indicated that if he heard he did not appreciate a word of what I had said. He said: "If you want a transfer you must make an application for it to your Brigade Commander". "But, don't you understand" I said: "my Brigade Commander is the man I have been speaking about and with whom I refuse to have any further relations". But he only repeated his original direction to me to make a written application to my Brigade Commander. I was so enraged at my reception by Oscar Traynor that I'm afraid my further remarks were scarcely polite and I left the office. Though I did not realise it at the time, this was my first introduction to 'red tape' which, in the years since then, has so bound Irish civil and military departments alike that spontaneous or reasonable action seems no longer possible.

Looking at all this from the retrospective standpoint, it seems clear now that we had been unduly impressed by the routine administrative details of the British administration, both civil and military, and in setting up our own corresponding offices, we strove to imitate as closely as possible the 'red tape' of the British systems in the mistaken belief that we thus gained in efficiency.

When, after the signing of the Treaty, our people began to take over the various State departments, we took over the ponderous British system more or less intact, and from then on proceeded to superimpose our own efforts in circumlocution on the already unwieldy system.

One of the South Tipperary Brigade officers, with whom I had become very friendly during the truce period, was Seán O'Meara, who was Brigade Communications Officer. O'Meara was a very fine type of fellow, sincere, courageous and well-

balanced, and with him principally, I discussed my own problem arising from the snub I had received from the O/C. Dublin Brigade. Needless to say, I did not make any application for transfer following my interview with Traynor. I knew that I would be welcome as an ordinary Volunteer with any of the Dublin units, or I might ask Collins or Mulcahy to give me a suitable appointment in Dublin or elsewhere. From the stories of the fighting I had heard, I realised, however, that I needed some experience and I decided I would go to Tipperary when the first indications of the collapse of the negotiations were to be seen.

In the meantime, my motor business was practically bankrupt and I had to give all my attention to this to see what arrangements, if any, could be made to wind it up and pay my creditors.

Since my arrest in 1920 the business had gone steadily downhill, the income gradually drying up and the expenses increasing. I had not the good sense to see that I should have shut it down after my arrest and accept whatever loss was involved then. Instead, I tried to carry it on by keeping on the entire staff of three employees and, in addition continuing a payment of £5 per week to the wife of my partner during the internment of the latter in Ballykinlar.

James Fleming had offered to keep an eye on things for me and to handle the bank account, but naturally, as he knew nothing of the ins and outs of the business, the whole thing just drifted from bad to worse. The world slump, which followed the first World War, was just beginning to be felt in Ireland, this did little to help matters with me. We did not even realise then that the inevitable post war slump in trade was upon us and, consequently, did nothing to avert its effect by reducing stocks, with the natural result that about a couple of months later I found myself with liabilities of about

£1,260 above my assets. If the business could have survived for a further couple of years by the introduction of new capital it would have been on the way to prosperity, but my father, whose affairs were in an equally bad way through his series of imprisonments, could not help me. He suggested that I seek a commission in the National Army which was then in course of formation (February 1922) and arrange to wind up the business as best I could.

The return of the Plenipotentiary Delegation from London with the signed Treaty between Ireland Britain gave rise to a further wave of hysteria among the general population. It seemed almost too good to be true that the wars of centuries, culminating in the terroristic campaign we had experienced, had ended at last in a measure of freedom that afforded ample scope for full achievement. The feeling of relief and of satisfaction among the people showed itself in the first few days by spontaneous enthusiasm, but before the Dáil Debates on the ratification of the Treaty had begun, a definite split in the ranks began to show itself.

A fanatical section of Volunteer officers headed by Cathal Brugha, the Minister for Defence, demanded the rejection of the Treaty in the Dáil, and this section was supported by de Valera, the President. The factors I have already mentioned were now looming large in the national situation and at the time of the Treaty Debates in the Dáil, about December 1921, partisanship was the animating cause of heated discussions throughout the land. Leaders in whom we had trusted up to now were either impuned or upheld with fanatical devotion and little exercise of reason or logic.

By and large we were all desperately anxious to do what was right. In later years we may have become cynical, but then we were devoted to the cause of national freedom, and were only confused to know what was truth and right amid the spate of controversy and dispute. To hear Mick Collins, the greatest

figure that had appeared amongst the Irish people in many generations, denounced as a traitor sounded something like blasphemy. Those of us who knew Collins, even slightly, knew that the motives and actions imputed to him were impossible to a man of his character and, on the other hand, those of us who had any previous knowledge of men like Rory O'Connor and de Valera were not impressed by their pose of pure-souled patriotism. I had had a slight experience of Rory O'Connor in Arbour Hill and the Rath Camp and put him down in my mind as a crank. As for de Valera, I remembered the story my father had told me after his release from Lewes in 1917. We were swapping stories of our experiences of imprisonment following the Rising and, in the course of this, he remarked, in connection with some mention I made of de Valera: "Dev is a bad yoke". I thought such a remark astonishing, at a time when Dev's name had reached the high point of honour in the national esteem. But, knowing the usual shrewdness of father's judgment of people, I asked why he had come to such a conclusion and accepted his explanation with some regret for the fallen idol.

The gist of the story was that, while they had been in Dartmoor Prison they were for a long time held in solitary confinement, but after a time were then allowed free association between themselves during the day time. Immediately following the permission to associate, the prisoners decided to elect a commandant from amongst themselves who would act as their spokesman and hold the reins of discipline. Eoin McNeill, who was one of the prisoners, had fallen from grace in the national esteem through his mistaken efforts to prevent the Rising taking place, but most of his fellow prisoners did their best to show him that they did not blame him for this, and that they realised, though his aim was a mistaken one, that he had acted conscientiously and in the belief that he thus served the national cause

to the best advantage. A group of the more important prisoners decided that it would be a suitable gesture, in order to reinstate McNeill in his own as well as the national esteem, to nominate him for election as commandant of the prisoners in Dartmoor. Most of the prisoners agreed to this course, but de Valera would have none of it. He claimed that as the senior surviving Volunteer commander he was entitled to the honour of the position of prisoners' commandant, and that, as McNeill had by his action in connection with the Rising placed himself outside the ranks of those who fought, he could not hold the position. Tom Ashe, I think, disputed Dev's claim to seniority in rank, claiming that he was himself at least equal in rank, and so the matter, instead of being an agreed arrangement, became one of partisanship and dispute. McNeill, when he became aware of the business, demanded the withdrawal of his own name as a candidate and, to prevent any appearance of a split in the ranks, supported Dev's claim for election, which was accordingly admitted.

Since 1916 Dev had taken no part in the fighting, his role being purely political, and I was aware, through my contact with officers of the General Staff and others in the intervening period, that though Dev's name was hailed by the general public as the figurehead of the national movement, his peculiar personality had been more of an encumbrance than a help to Collins, Griffith and the others. There were others, however, who adopted the anti-treaty standpoint whose sincerity was apparent and whose views I held in respect, and this situation was what made it so difficult to see clearly what was right and what was wrong amid the perfervid outpourings from press and platform and in the heated discussions of daily occurrence in almost every home. The psychological explanation of all this hysteria is, of course, that each of us had set his course in the sphere of national politics by the various national leaders as the fixed stars in his firmament.

The stability of these, so far, had seemed to prove their immutability, but suddenly their divergence threw doubt upon the reliability of all, and finding ourselves thrown back upon the resources of our own minds - as it were, in a dangerous uncharted sea without a pilot - we were rather frightened at the prospect.

In such a situation few are competent to make a calm and logical analysis of the various factors and personalities involved, and fewer still can come to a definite decision as the result of such analysis, until they are assured of some support from their fellows for their conclusions. So, loud talk and wordy argument took the place of reasoned thought in most cases, and the alignment of the I.R.A. on the Treaty -v- anti-Treaty issue was decided largely in arbitrary fashion by incidental factors which had little to do with the issues at stake.

In my own case my views were influenced by the respect in which I held such men as Mick Collins and Arthur Griffith, who were also supported by my father. But beyond that, I listened to the arguments advanced against the Treaty by its opponents and, while I did not doubt the sincerity of the individuals, I was not convinced of the logic of their case.

I had joined the newly-formed National Army early in February as a captain of the Mechanical Transport Corps, but in my frequent visits to Fleming's of Drumcondra, I continued to meet the officers of the South Tipperary Brigade, all of whom were avowedly anti-Treaty. Naturally this led to discussion on the question and, while neither side could convince the other, I think we all agreed to admit each other's sincerity and personal right to act according to our convictions. Dinny Lacy, however, was rather a bigot in this respect and much less inclined than the others to be tolerant. I remember on one occasion, when we sat around the diningroom table in Fleming's after a meal one night, the discussion had become sharper than

usual, and in reply to some remarks of Lacy's, I stated my views rather strongly. I knew he could not refute my statement by any reasoned argument, and his reaction was characteristic of him. His eyes narrowed to slits as he looked intently at me, and, saying something to the effect that the views I had stated were traitorous, I could see his mind registering the resolve that he, at any rate, looked upon me as an enemy, to be shot if certain circumstances arose. When I left the room later, Sean O'Meara followed me to the kitchen to warn me that I should be careful of Dinny, who was a dangerous man. He had been watching the passage of words and looks between us and thought that perhaps I was unaware of the kind of man I was dealing with. We laughed over the incident when I told him that I was very well aware of the effect of my words on Dinny and had, in fact, challenged him deliberately and in confidence of being able to defend myself with words or guns.

I regarded Lacy with a lot of respect, as a somewhat paradoxical character; one who was quite ruthless and regardless of human life in his devotion to his conception of the national ideals, yet intensely religious and simple in his way of life. He was really a zealot of the Cromwellian type to whom all things and people must be reduced to right and wrong, black and white. There were for him no intermediate stages or shades and there was little sentiment when person or thing, though otherwise admirable, seemed to him to conflict with his conceptions of right. An example of this was his reference to de Valera on the same occasion or about the same time. Dev had become the champion of the anti-treaty bloc in the Dáil, and so was hailed by the supporters of that party as its chief. But about this time Dev introduced his now-famous Document No.2 as an acceptable alternative to the Treaty. This proposed Treaty differed in no way from the already signed articles, except in phraseology and the omission of reference to the King

as head of the State, and so was not taken very seriously by the Dáil. To Lacy, however, such thimblerrigging was incomprehensible and he condemned Dev. with a characteristic comment: "This beggar, de Valera, will have to be 'plugged'". Lacy's death during the subsequent civil war was regretted by friend and foe, as all who knew him recognised the simple sincerity of his motives, however wrongheaded his actions.

This condition of things was bad enough in the political sphere, but the I.R.A., the guerilla force which had done the fighting and still had arms in its hands, was, of its nature, identified with the political partisans of the dispute. In this lay the danger that was recognised by thinking men of either side and so an effort was made to stabilise the military end of the situation by the calling of a convention at the Dublin Mansion House in March 1922, where representatives of all the I.R.A. brigades of Ireland would decide the attitude of the army on the political controversy and place its control on a firm basis.

The convention, however, proved itself to be a fiasco. There was evidence of efforts to pack the convention with delegates who were not freely elected in accordance with the agreement on the matter, and it was clear when it began that the lines of cleavage were already drawn, and that there was little hope of reasonable argument or agreement on the main issues at stake. Civil War began to be spoken of vaguely, as a sort of stiffening of the arguments for and against the Treaty, but I doubt if any of those who used this phrase had any conception of the horrors of civil war. Though it was spoken of so glibly, I do not believe that any of us thought seriously that such a thing could really occur.

I listened to numerous discussions on the political crisis at Fleming's, where some of the convention delegates were staying, or had called in. Amongst those was Liam Lynch, the

the commander of the 1st Southern Division, and some of his officers, as well as the usual Tipperary contingent. Lynch, I thought, was concerned and somewhat perturbed at the trend of events, but the others spoke lightly of their intentions to use fair means or foul to compel the general acceptance of their anti-treaty views. It was here I learned how they had endeavoured to pack the convention and thereby use it to forward their plan of gaining control of the army. When it became apparent that their plans were unlikely to succeed, their interest in the convention lessened, and from the flippant remarks made about it, it seemed clear that they did not feel bound by anything that happened there unless it accorded with their own views.

I was an officer of the newly-formed National Army at this time and, although on fairly friendly terms with the anti-treaty officers, I mingled with them at Fleming's, they referred to me jokingly as a Free Stater and obviously regarded me as one of the enemy.

I do not remember that anyone tried to influence me, directly, regarding my political views, but a certain amount of canvassing went on at this time by those seeking support for their own views. On one evening when I left Beggars Bush barracks after duty and travelling up Nassau St. on the upper deck of a tramcar, I was greeted by Liam Mellows, who came over to sit beside me with the interrogatory remark: "I thought you were sick?" I was in the uniform of the National Army at the time and understood his remark as meaning that he had thought my sympathies lay with the anti-treatyites, and was surprised to see me in uniform. I pretended obtuseness, however, and replied that so far from being sick, I never felt better in my life. He repeated his remark then with emphasis on the final word and I replied that I believed that there were a lot of sick people going around just now, but

that, fortunately, I was not among the number. The remainder of the journey to O'Connell St. was passed in rather awkward silence with an occasional irrelevant remark.

The British evacuation of the country had been in progress for some time - since the formal ratification of the Treaty by the Dáil; in fact, and by 1st March 1922, most of the British barracks, military posts and other government institutions in the Irish territory had been taken over by the forces of the Provisional Government, although a few such places were still held by British maintenance parties for the purpose of winding up accounts and checking over equipment and material handed over to the Provisional Government. I had experienced the thrill of presenting myself in command of an armed party at Collinstown Aerodrome, where I handed a requisition for some 400 motor trucks from our Quartermaster General endorsed by the British Under Secretary, Mr. Cope, to the British Commander of the Aerodrome. Here, where I had so lately been a prisoner, I experienced the very pleasant feeling of a new-found power in the British acknowledgment of our legitimate authority in our own land. The British officers we had to deal with were pleasant-mannered and anxious to facilitate us, and were indeed curious to see and talk to those who had so lately been their unidentified enemies.

We felt the sense of impending tragedy in the division on the treaty issue, and yet could not visualise the ending in civil war. We really believed that the patriotic fervour that pervaded the national movement through the war years would not permit partisan rancour to go to the length of actual war, though, indeed; had we been wiser, we should have seen where events were inevitably leading.

I discussed the situation with Sean Lemass (lately Minister for Industry and Commerce) one evening as we left Beggars Bush Barracks after duty. Sean was also a captain in the newly-

formed National Army at the time, and as I had known him for some time before as a studious and earnest minded sort of fellow, I was interested to hear his views and have his opinions on mine. I do not now remember much of what was said between us except the final sum up. We took a tram to College Green and walked up Dame St. to Capel St. where Sean lived at the time, and so earnest was our discussion that we passed his house and travelled half way up Capel St. where we finished our talk standing on the sidewalk. We had, I suppose, gone over the details of the situation and examined the protagonist arguments as best we could, but we were agreed upon the summing up which was something as follows:-

Rightly or wrongly, for good or ill, the Treaty had been signed and ratified by An Dáil which represented the Irish people. The Provisional Government and whatever Government succeeded it must accept the duties and responsibilities of governing, and to that end must establish a disciplined armed force of which we were at present members. We, as representing the old I.R.A., the militant national body, felt that we were best qualified to organise, train and direct the national forces, which we could only do if we remained within the force. Collins had said publicly that he "accepted the Treaty as a stepping stone to our complete freedom", and so it would be our fault if we failed to use the freedom it gave us to attain the remainder. Now for the first time in centuries we could openly organise, train and equip an army, and we should not throw away this opportunity on the mere academic argument that our full national demands had not been met at the moment. Finally, I said that if we, the old I.R.A. officers, should decide to take our stand on the abstract argument against the Treaty and walk out of the army, then the Government would have to replace us with whatever material came to hand, and there was plenty of alternative

material in the ex-British officers and opportunists of all kinds, who would then become the directing influence in an Irish army to which we would become mere spectators.

Sean said: "I think that is the proper way to look at it; we'll stay in the army and do our best to exert our influence from inside, and we shook hands on that fact. Yet, within a couple of weeks we had both left the army, he to join the anti-treaty forces who had taken possession of the Four Courts, and I to essay a return to civilian life and have a try at rescuing my motor business from bankruptcy.

When I first entered the army in February 1922, I carried my Volunteer rank of captain and served with this rank under Jimmy Fitzgerald, who was appointed by the Q.M.G., his brother-in-law, as Director of Transport. Jimmy Fitzgerald, who had on his staff his two brothers, Theo and Willie, seemed to look upon the newly-organised Mechanical Transport Section as a proprietary establishment, and it was not long before we began to have serious differences over the administrative details. In a couple of interviews with the Q.M.G. I explained the difficulties, which he promised to have adjusted, but the only result was that I found myself posted to a minor appointment as Transport Officer in Marlborough Hall (now Colaiste Caoimhin), where I was entirely cut off from the rapidly expanding Transport H.Qrs. at South Wall.

Some time towards the end of March 1922, I felt I could stand the situation no longer, and rang up the Q.M.G. to request an interview with him to enable me to state the situation, but he seemed cool in his tone, and suggested that I should forward any complaint I might have through my superior officer, who was the Director of Transport (Jimmy Fitzgerald). On the spur of the moment I then said I wished to resign my commission and to this he replied that that was all right, I could hand in my uniform to the Barrack Q.M. at Marlborough Hall.

I did not, in fact, hand in my uniform, nor did I hand in any formal written resignation, but I walked out of Marlborough Hall that evening and did not return. A day or so later my father called to see me at the garage. He had heard that I had left the army and was seriously disturbed about this, as he naturally concluded that I had been influenced by my anti-treaty associates and had gone over to that side. I think he was relieved to some extent when I told him that I had no intention of siding actively with the anti-treaty junta, but, knowing my financial situation - and he told me something of his own which was little better - he pointed out that I had wantonly thrown away what promised to be a career for which I was fitted, and he did not see how I now hoped to marry - which he knew was my inmost hope - in my present situation. I realised that I had played the fool, of course; in the light of calm reasoning my action seemed to be that of a petulant schoolboy, but my pride would not allow me to openly admit my error and seek re-appointment in the army. In this state of mind I threw myself frantically into the impossible task of regenerating my business, hoping that some stroke of luck would help me to achieve a measure of financial stability, but I was fighting against the post-war slump which had about reached its lowest depth at the time.

I was not entirely cut off from contact with a army and political events during this time, however, as numerous friends called on me from time to time, some of them army officers, and others of the anti-treaty forces. The latter had about this time entered into occupation of the Dublin Four Courts, which became their military headquarters, and although a series of negotiations went on in an effort to reconcile the differences that existed, it seemed evident that the anti-treaty attitude had hardened, and their popular support had grown from the efforts of the Provisional Government to appease.

Peadar McMahon (now Secretary, Department of Defence) was in close touch with me at this time and was aware of the circumstances that brought about my resignation from the army. Peadar was then staff officer to Eoin O'Duffy, who was Chief of Staff, and anxious to help me in my difficulties. Before I left the army I had discussed these with Peadar on a number of occasions, and he told me that he had spoken to O'Duffy about it and that the latter was sympathetic. After I had left the army, Peadar told me that it was a pity I had been so precipitate, as he believed matters would have been put right by the intervention of O'Duffy.

On the 17th April 1922, I received the greatest shock of my life when I learned of the sudden and unexpected death of my father. He had received a fractured skull in an accident with a young horse which he had been training to drive in harness on the previous evening. He had been rushed into a Dublin nursing home, but never recovered consciousness and died that night. It was my uncle, Jim Lawless, his brother, who brought the sad news to me at my lodgings in Botanic Ave. before I was out of bed that morning. He announced to me as I awakened to his entering the bedroom: "The Boss is dead". We had always known him amongst ourselves as "The Boss", for he it was indeed who had guided and directed all our lives, and it was he who raised the flag of Irish Freedom in Fingal and kept it flying through the dark years of war. The sense of his loss was quite overwhelming and I had not recovered from the shock when the funeral was over, and I had to try to adjust myself to life without the reassuring feeling of his support.

As his eldest son and an executor of his will, I had then to give what help I could towards the straightening out of his affairs and arranging for the completion of the education of the younger members of the family, five of whom

were still at school.

The public funeral from the Pro-Cathedral in Marlborough Street to the family burial ground at Killoossey was a huge affair attended by Mick Collins and the Ministers of the Provisional Government, as well as by de Valera and other members of the anti-treaty party. De Valera and Arthur Griffith stood opposite each other across the open grave in what was, I think, the last occasion they stood together in agreement, as Griffith's own death followed soon afterwards.

My father's death had, apparently, the effect of bringing my own affairs under discussion, as soon afterwards, Peadar McMahon called to see me to tell me that Eoin O'Duffy would like to talk to me if I would call over to Beggars Bush Barracks, which I agreed to do on the following day. O'Duffy asked me if I would like to return to the army and I replied that I had never really wanted to leave it, but had felt compelled to tender my resignation in protest against the conditions I found I had to work under. We then discussed the whole situation, particularly the administrative muddle that I complained of in the Mechanical Transport branch. I was not really blaming the individuals with whom I had clashed, so much as the lack of general staff direction and conception of the requirements, and O'Duffy agreed with my views. He said he would like me very much to resume my commission, but asked me to give him first a little time to arrange a complete reorganisation of the Mechanical Transport Corps when he would ask me to undertake its direction. Having shaken hands on this proposal I returned to see what could be done about winding up my motor business. I was also concerned in helping to forward some negotiations instigated by Jim Derham, T.D., with a view to relieving my father's estate of some of its debt.

Meanwhile, the political situation was rapidly deteriorating, and the new army was very much involved in the effort

to restrain the irregular forces of the anti-treaty party which had taken possession of various barracks and posts throughout the country. Their headquarters at the Four Courts in Dublin was in fact challenging the authority of the Provisional Government and the National Army.

O'Duffy's time and attention were, therefore, fully occupied with the day to day occurrences, and although I waited impatiently for some word from him recalling me to the army, I did not, for the moment, consider that I ought to get in touch with him again.

The daily papers grew full of reports of incidents where the newly-formed State forces clashed with the irregulars and only the earnest endeavours of the peacemakers seemed to prevent these growing into active civil war. One such incident, which appeared a serious affair, was at Limerick, and this demanded the personal attention of the Chief of Staff, Eoin O'Duffy, who remained in Limerick for some time. Some kind of peace was patched up there but only to be followed by further incidents in Dublin, where Colonel O'Connell of the army General Staff was arrested by the Irregulars and held at their headquarters at the Four Courts. All this, aggravated by inflammatory speeches of daily occurrence, could only lead to one result, and yet we deluded ourselves that it would never go to the length of actual civil war.

So, it was with quite a shock I awoke on the morning of 28th June to the sound of heavy gunfire in the city, and soon learned that civil war had indeed begun with the attack on the Four Courts by the forces of the Provisional Government. Amid a lot of hysterical speculation on what exactly had happened and was now happening, I felt that I must find out the truth of this at once. The city was alive with rumour and counter-rumour and business had come to a standstill,

but throughout the city could be heard the sound of field artillery pounding away at the Four Courts, while rifle and machine gunfire filled the intervals. Having learned something of the facts of what was happening, I sat in my office at the garage in a state of mental upheaval. I felt that in such a cataclysmic state of affairs I could not take active part on either side, and yet there must be something I ought to do if I could only get my mind clear as to what that was.

I began cleaning a rifle, a .44 Winchester which belonged to Ernie O'Malley and which I had got from his brother, Cecil, to see if I could make some ammunition for it. Actually, I had been able to make up some rounds, but the propellant explosive I had available to load them with - cordite - was unsuitable and ineffective. So, cleaning the rifle was, I suppose, a purely psychological reaction from my pent-up feelings, as there was nothing I could have done with it, anyway.

While I was so engaged, Conor McGinley walked into the office. Having found himself in a somewhat similar mental state to my own, he had called around to me to discuss matters, and found me, as he thought, preparing to enter the fight then in progress in the city. He said: "Are you going down to the Four Courts?" meaning to inquire if I intended taking active sides with the besieged irregular garrison there, and when I denied any such intention, we began an intensive discussion on the whole situation.

I had known Conor for a long time as a Volunteer and a member of the I.R.B. and regarded him as an earnest and sincere sort of fellow whose patriotic motives and feelings one could not doubt. It was, therefore, in a way, reassuring to find that he was as troubled as myself and just as unsure what was the right thing to do in the circumstances in which we now found ourselves. Our discussion was, therefore, an earnest seeking for the truth rather than any effort of either of us

to convince the other or score in argument, and I know that its effect on me was to set my mental processes in some sort of order. We eventually agreed that civil war was an evil thing, that we should do nothing to spread or prolong, though Conor remarked, in reply to some views I had expressed, that if I really thought on those lines I should, to be logical, return to the army of the Provisional Government. This thought remained with me when he had left, and with a truer mental perspective I later that day decided that that was precisely what I should do.

I made my way towards Portobello Barracks the following day to offer my services in any capacity, and meeting Peadar McMahon, who had just then been promoted to the rank of Commandant General, he arranged that I would be allowed to resume my rank of captain and requested that I should accompany him to the Curragh as his transport officer. I arrived at the Curragh on or about 10th July 1922, in command of a convoy of some thirty vehicles laden with arms and equipment, which material was for the equipment of the new units then being formed under the title of the Volunteer Reserve. The realities of civil war had now to be faced. Although I had no heart in the fratricidal struggle, I realised that I must make my contribution towards the supremacy of the Government of Dáil Éireann as representing the democratic majority of the people of Ireland.

Signed: Joseph V. Lawless Col.

Date. 9th December 1954

Witness: James J. Larkin

