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Chapter One.

Na Fianna Éireann (or Irish National Boy Scouts) was a couple of years in existence when, in 1911, I wended my way to No. 10 Beresford Place, Dublin, there to join one of its sluaighthe (or branches). The name of this branch, which met in one of the rooms overhead, was called Sluaigh Emmet - sometimes termed North Dock Sluaigh.

I had previously become aware of the existence of this boys' organisation, by reports in the public press, by seeing them on their several route marches and at public processions and demonstrations. It made a very special appeal to me, and of course boy-like I readily succumbed to the feeling that I could do worse than joining an organisation of boys with a true Irish outlook and pledged to work for Irish Independence, which was its principal aim and object. I own that I was particularly attracted because it was distinctly Irish, non-political and non-sectarian, its main characteristic being to inculcate a love for Ireland and for things Irish and national. Though quite young at the time I possessed not a little knowledge of Irish history, which I had acquired by reading various books and tracts, such as Speeches from the Dock, stories of Sarsfield and the Wild Geese, books on the Insurrection of '98 and various accounts

of '48 and '67. Indeed most of my knowledge of Ireland's history had been obtained from the numerous magazines, periodicals, journals and tracts which my good father, then a few years dead, kept apparently as heirlooms. These consisted of such treasures as "The '98 Centenary Records" which were accounts and narratives of the United Irishmen; the speeches and lectures of Father Kavanagh on the Ninety-Eight men; numerous copies (practically a complete file) of the "United Irishman" issued in the early nineteen hundreds during the Boer War, which extolled the deeds and valour of the Irish Brigade under Major John McBride fighting on the side of the Boers; the many anti-recruiting handbills, issued and circulated during that eventful period. My father too had often related stories of Parnell; he himself was a Parnellite and a member of the Irish National Foresters. These had made deep impressions on me. Hence it was not unreasonable that the idea of doing something for Ireland in a boy's way, and among boys, added zest to my desire to join Na Fianna Éireann.

Here was a chance for me to show that I was Irish and that I longed to see Ireland free; "The Complete Independence of Ireland", this was the Fianna ideal. It soon became mine, and found me responsive to everything that it stood for and proclaimed. As the name implied Na Fianna Éireann was synonymous with the Fianna of Fionn or boy-troop of Éireann. Fionn - the ancient boy warrior, who, it is told, kept the foreign invaders in check on the shores of Ventry until he had rallied the Fianna. Na Fianna Éireann of this our time, modelling itself on the saga history of Ireland and its ancient

predecessors, was striving to build up a boy corps or army in defence of Ireland. It was doing so through the medium of the Boy Scout idea, or rather taking advantage of the Boy Scout idea in pursuance of a well considered plan to create an Irish boys' organisation, pledged to Ireland and to Ireland only. True, this Boy Scout idea had "caught on" in Ireland, as witness the large number of troops of Baden Powell Scouts existing in Dublin and a few other centres in Ireland. These donned khaki shirts, and khaki hats so typically British in more senses than one. We on our part had found in the Fianna a weapon to "combat the anglicising influence of the Baden Powell Scouts".

The founders and promoters of the Fianna while embracing the scout idea, and accepting the principle of scouting were no imitators of the Baden Powell Scout organisation. It (The Fianna) had no room or thought for many of the fol-de-dols, ribbons and decorations so characteristic of the Baden Powell scouts; we could have no use for such meaningless designations as cubs, wolves, etc. impregnated in the latter organisation. The Fianna was fashioned on a semi-military basis, fabricated on a pattern that was truly Irish of the Irish, and, having its foundations firmly established on Irish soil, sought to cater for Irish boys in accordance with the cultural and historical background centred in the past This was a significant move, a unique occasion, a very important task. Already, in its couple of years' existence, the Fianna idea had received ample support, and was progressing along favourable grounds. It had taken up the cudgels to weild, as it were, a mighty war against the forces of anglisation and West Britonism,

which in this case was represented by the Baden Powell organisation, then showing signs of flourishing in England, and making no little headway in our country at the time.

If the Fianna had its roots deeply set on Irish soil, its rivals, the Baden Powell Scouts had its eyes, ears, heart and very being centred on England, where its headquarters were situated. It imitated and was responsive to the teachings and commands of its parent body in London, to whom was given full and filial obedience. The Baden Powell Boy Scouts in Ireland were true protégés of their British associations; they were one in allegiance, tradition and in many cases in flesh and blood, because of their English birth, English extraction or English proclivities. As such they could not claim or demand that they were anything but an English organisation; they proclaimed themselves in favour of one flag, one king and one empire, and had little, if any, use for such things as Irish Nationhood or Ireland's will to be free.

The Fianna had thus become a strong and an aggressive counter-blast to their rivals, the Baden Powell Scouts in Ireland. True, it adopted the idea of scouting, but not the trimmings and still less the policy and patronage associated with their rivals whom we looked upon with disfavour, suspicion and antagonism, believing them to be, as they boasted themselves to be, "English Scouts". The Fianna groundwork had been well prepared; it was growing strong, secure and prospering.

From my initiation in the Fianna Sluaigh I had, common to all its members, to plan dressing myself a la mode, and to secure equipment, so necessary if one were

to be termed a fully fledged Fiannuidhe. Every facility was accorded for doing this - an easy method to procure one article at a time was established, by means of which one could pay weekly into a uniform fund, and so dress oneself as per amount subscribed. This method of dressing oneself was tiresome and required much sacrifice and self denial to many of us who were "just ordinary boys" who would hardly be said to possess much of worldly goods or treasures. In addition to these payments, we had to have available a few coppers for outings and camping to pay for the little extras that might be required on occasions.

Was it not a labour of love to save for our uniforms of which we were so proud to wear. I think the first thing I secured was a haversack, next a belt, then a hat, and by the time I had these secured I was beginning to "look up and take notice". For while I was engaged in paying for these I had passed from the stage of recruit, and had learned my drill and to step out - quite an achievement in itself. I had also gone through a kind of quick course in semaphore and morse signalling which I liked very much. When eventually I obtained my full uniform and equipment I felt I was well on the road to destiny!

Our uniform at the time was of the boy scout pattern, a/tunic blouse, short pants and felt hat, light green turned up at the side (Boer style). The blouse had two breast pockets, shoulder epaulettes, loose turned down collar, and was of a green linen or flannel material. The hat was green in colour to match the blouse; the pants navy blue cloth; long black stockings turned down

below the knees. The aforesaid uniform was, if not spectacular, at least nice when it was new but not so when it was weather beaten or over washed, and to ordinary sized folk like me could be easy fitting and cosy; but pity the very tall members who found it hard to be fitted on the standard sizes available, or due to shrinkages in washing had to be contented with showing more limbs and angles than what were required.

On the night of my initiation into Sluaigh Emmet at No. 10 (by-the-by we always referred to our parade hall as "No. 10") I got a severe shock, and was surprised to witness an "all in" fight, for that was what it appeared to me, between the two brothers, Paddy and Garry Holohan. There they were on the floor "hammering it out". I did not know at the time whether it was a real or imaginary fight, but to me it had every symptom of a complete "set to", for they appeared to be in deadly combat, each striving for mastery of a situation that was anything but pleasant. Fortunately this did not continue for long; soon amends were made, and the row as soon forgotten, but not before many pleadings had been made by some of the elderly high lights who I perceived were holding a meeting in an adjoining room. Then our Capt., Mick Lonergan, appeared on the scene, and all were as quiet as lambs. I got over my first shock with flying colours, without any heart-breaks or headaches.

Our programme of training consisted of military drill, first-aid, signalling, scouting and map reading. We also indulged in physical and swedish drill. In addition one of our members taught, or tried to teach us shorthand. He was Dinny Gregan, a young man who, I

I was given to understand, was a clerk in the Land Commission. The outdoor exercises were the practical application of scouting, reconnaissance and tracking. In the winter we had route marches, in the summer camping out and manoeuvres.

The personnel of our Sluaigh consisted of mainly working class boys, many of them apprentices to various trades, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, painting, printing etc. Our Capt., Mick Lonergan, seemed to be the best placed of the lot, and apparently living comfortably. He was so neatly, so tidily dressed, indeed he was outstanding, not so much because of his dress but because of his military bearing and generally good form and make up. He was a very active dashing type of character, especially when he was dressed in his neat and evenly fitting uniform - so distinctive, so elegant, so truly military. A fine genuine, manly type was Micheál. On or off parade he was still the same; or rather should I say, on parade he was the real officer type, who knew his work and knew how to get others to learn theirs. He was our senior in age, in position and presumably in intellectual gifts. Yet his general behaviour and conduct towards us never showed the strain of being high-headed or hard-hearted, but on the contrary consideration and regard of a very high order. Not only was he impressive, but he gave every example of kindness, consideration and nobility. His very presence too acted as a tonic to us, inspired us and made us feel a certain kinship to him.

Mick Lonergan was known to be a keen student of American military training, American army and American Boy Scout movement. Indeed, the impression one got of

him was that he modelled himself on those patterns. We could always feel proud to acclaim him as "Our Captain". Though older than most of us he had a heart as young and gay as any; yet one could ever look up to him because of his talents, and the interest he took in us, his boys, and also because of his eminently commanding ways. He set many examples, taught many lessons, in cleanliness, in discipline and attention to detail. His was a keen, practical, military mind that soon mastered the technique of drill. It was his pet hobby which he had learned from A to Z. Under his care one could easily advance in that onerous and exacting sphere of the "soldiers' trade".

We were soon to be accorded a new aspect of Lonargan's inventive genius. That was to come about by the changing of our uniforms. It was contended at the time that he devised and arranged the new style. I have already described the old type; the new one was to be more striking still, and distinctly military in style and appearance - an absolute departure from the ordinary boy scout pattern! Mick was a clerk in Clery's drapery store in O'Connell St. There he procured/dark green hopsack material, made by Dripsey of Cork. This material was used to make the new tunic type shirt, to consist of a front panel breast-piece, on each side of which were placed a row of brass buttons, four to each row. At one side of this panel was the opening, button holes being provided there for the purpose. A high collar band that closed at the neck by means of hook and eye fasteners kept the collar which was attached to the shirt in position. Epaulettes on shoulders, long sleeves with tight wrist bands. This was the ordinary

Fianna uniform shirt worn by all ranks of our sluaigh; changes of the epaulettes and wrist cuffs alone denoted rank; squad leaders brown, section leaders red, Lieutenants blue, and so on. Our captain, of course, had a different shade of green for his tunic, which was even of different and finer material. It was through his efforts that a lady dressmaker living in Marlborough St. made the tunics, the charge being 1/6 each for making, excluding cost of material. We also were provided with a new style of hat - this time a flat rimmed Austrian green felt hat, of the Canadian Mounted Police type which cost us 1/6 each. There was no change in the style or make up of pants, though gradually the older and taller boys donned knickerbockers and knee breeches, any dark kind with long stockings. At later stage navy blue puttees replaced the stockings.

How proud we all were when in course of time, every one of us were so attired. Our Captain too was proud of us, proud of his handiwork, and we were prouder of him who in his new outfit was the ideal officer. Micheál was of medium stocky build, wide shouldered, who could look smart in any outfit. But he looked superb in this one which seemed to be well tailored, the tunic set off by a neat tailored pair of riding breeches, tan laced leggings and soft tan boots.

Among the boys who formed our Sluaigh Emmet at that time were the brothers Paddy and Garry Holohan, the brothers Joe, George, Eddie and Matty Connolly, Jack Poole, Mick Mackey, Tommy Meehan, Danny Gregan, Fred Holmes, the brothers Fran and Willie O'Brien, Peadar Browne, Peter Byrne, Tommy McGrane, Seán Burke, Jimmy Seville, Willie Kinsella and others.

Chapter 2.

A word here may not be amiss. Concerning the house in which our Sluaigh had quarters, No. 10 Beresford Place, which was then situated beside the loop line railway that traversed the space between Tara St. railway station across the river Liffey and the west side of the Custom House and continued its course to Amiens St. station. It was the headquarters of the Dockers' Union, Mr. Jim Larkin (senior) being its leader and spokesman. That house and the environs became the scene of great industrial activity, and many a bitter strike or lock-out was conducted from it. The industrial strife associated with the coal and quay workers was becoming of all too frequent occurrence. Mass meetings were often held in the square of the Custom House outside, while inside No. 10 organisation was going apace. Sometime in 1912 or 1913 this Trade Union transferred to more commodious premises, a large house at the corner of Eden Quay and Beresford Place. This house became "Liberty Hall", the headquarters of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Our Sluaigh had accordingly to vacate No. 10 and soon we secured accommodation in Liberty Hall. It must be understood that there was no connection between our Sluaigh and the Trades Union concerned, as our removing from one premises to another under their control might indicate. We were governed by our own Executive who had often held meetings in No. 10. Among those who attended same were Paul Gregan, an old man who always impressed me as being one of the Fenian men his son George, as well as Eamon Martin, Bulmer Hobson, Countess de Markievicz, Padraic Ó Riain, Con Colbert, Liam Mellows, all of whom were elderly and yet all keen

promoters of the ideal for which the Fianna stood.

To revert back to the industrial situation at the time in question. The Dublin Port was becoming the arena wherein was fought many hard, bitter battles between the workers on the one hand and the employers on the other. Stoppages, strikes, lock-outs were becoming the order of the day. The culminating point was reached when, in 1913, an almost practical close down of industry in the port and a good part of the city occurred. What were termed the unskilled workers of Dublin were in the throes of an industrial upheaval, the biggest and most colossal port strike, port lock-out in Dublin industrial history. It was a fight to a finish by the organised Employers' Federation and the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. At the head of the former was Mr. William Martin Murphy, practically the wealthiest man in Ireland, a veritable king in industry, who was a strong power in the realms of the press, on railways and in many business enterprises, from whose source flowed the 'Irish Independent' and 'Evening Herald' newspapers, the Dublin United Tramways' Company, the Drapery establishment of Clery's and the Imperial Hotel, the Great Southern and Western Railway, to mention but a few of the many concerns upon which he bestowed patronage and support. On the other side of the picture was Mr. 'Jim' Larkin (senior) who had come on the scene during the past few years, having spent a good deal of his life at the other side of the channel. 'Jim' spoke with a distinctly English accent and, in consequence, was often dubbed an Englishman and 'English agitator'. Neither one nor the other was true, however, judging by the proof of birth which he published in his paper 'The

Irish Worker" edited under his name. The "Irish Transport and General Workers' Union" was becoming a force in industrial life, and had thrown down the gauntlet of war, accepting battle on terms that were hardly favourable to them. The result of this was that the commercial life of Dublin was brought to an almost standstill while the two forces waged their war of attrition, a pitiless, merciless and vindictive class struggle, with many and varied ramifications and dangers.

It was this upheaval which gave birth to the "Irish Citizen Army", commanded by a Capt. White, an ex-British officer and son of a veteran hero. Capt. White became the Citizen Army drill master and officer. It had been organised to protect Labour meetings and Labour personnell against the often wanton and savage onslaughts perpetrated by the police authorities who sometimes used their power and their batons on slight provocation, and for small reason. Every strike, every lock-out, and every industrial stoppage of labour produced its quota of scenes and recurrent police intervention, attended by baton charges carried out against the strikers and working class people. The port of Dublin, "the old spot by the river" as the area surrounding the Custom House proper was called, was a regular cauldron from which emitted the blood-heat flame of social discontent that was to test and affect the Labour content in factory, workshop and office within and without Dublin city. How often had I witnessed the huge demonstrations, the "mass meetings" outside Liberty Hall or in the space of ground at the back of the Custom House; how often had I accompanied Larkin's band and other bands sympathetic to Labour through the city,

or to the workers' rendezvous, Croydon Park (so recently acquired by "Jim" Larkin as a recreational ground for members of his Union, and which had become the training centre for the Citizen Army) admired their drilling and their drill displays as their leader Capt. White, with the assistance of a few stalwart members who were ex-British Army soldiers, put them "through their paces". They may not have looked like soldiers with their ordinary working-class attire and carrying wooden broom handles, but one thing could be said in their favour - they were taking this drilling business seriously, and they were benefiting from their training and sense of discipline which was all to the good. Their presence at Labour demonstrations and rallies and meetings had a marvellous effect pn the morale and general well-being of the working-class movement, for though only a small force it was exercising a power for good among a class of people who could easily be goaded or driven to extreme courses, not that the working class as a rule were anything but law-abiding or outside the influence of the law. Of the Irish Citizen Army it could in truth be said, it brought a new, an important lease of life to the Labour movement in Dublin, and brought out the best talents and characteristics in men who were fighting a warfare for better social conditions. The role which the Citizen Army played in that situation was one which embodied orderliness, discipline and restraint, and it is to their credit that the men of the Citizen Army were worthy of the trust imposed on them and obeyed to the full the orders of their commanding officer and N.C.O.s.

During this period I became attracted to the working class struggle; my leanings were toward Labour. I knew quite a number of men of the Citizen Army - some of our Fianna boys had gone over to that body when the Citizen Army formed their corps of Boy Scouts, such as three of the brothers Connolly, Jack Poole. I became a regular reader of the Labour weekly, "The Irish Worker", edited by Jim Larkin, which was a virile, pungent and outspoken organ of working class views and news. It carried a quotation from the writings of James Fintan Lalor which ran: -

"Who is it speaks of Defeat?
I tell you a cause like ours
Is greater than Defeat can know -
It is the Power of Powers".

I began studying the Labour movement, and often attended lectures dealing with social questions which were often given at the Ancient Concert Rooms in Brunswick St. (as it was then known, now Pearse St.) under the auspices of the Socialist Party of Ireland. Many of the Labour Leaders and Social workers spoke at these lectures, such personalities as James Connolly, Walter Carpenter, Tom Lynn and even an odd Nationalist like Thomas McDonagh. It was brimful of interest to me. There were other occasions too when one could allow full play to the enthusiasm to assimilate the labour and other problems of the day by listening to the almost unending flow of oratory which reverberated the Custom House square, under the loop line, where one could listen to the speeches of the different types of people who used this place for airing their respective views, such notabilities as Sheehy Skeffington, Seán Milroy, Bill Partridge, Jim

Larkin, Jim Connolly, the Countess Markeivicz, Thomas Foran, Miss Helena Maloney, Thomas Farren, Thomas Johnston, Thomas Lawlor, Bill O'Brien, Peter Larkin, P.F. Daly, Tom, Walter Carpenter, oratory on such subjects as Womens' Suffrage strike meetings, Labour rallies, Nationalists' meetings, meetings of protest against the visit of England's King etc. Meetings that were held - meetings that were proclaimed, and some of them held, or tried to be held, in spite of the ordinances of the British law. They were such exciting times. On many occasions the police - the Dublin Metropolitan Police - came into conflict with the people assembled there and then pandemonium reigned supreme. How often had I witnessed the onrush of the police, as with drawn batons they made for the platform or the vehicle from which the speeches were made, the resultant stampede and scene of confusion as they tried to disperse the crowd or arrest the speakers. No kid glove methods were employed to give effect to their orders. The safest course for one to pursue in such a melee was to steer clear of the police and of their batons, had one the sense or intuition that they intended to intervene or stop such meetings.

Dublin city during the period of the Big Strike of 1913 was a "veritable hell". Passion and hate ran amuck. Even one's home was not a haven of peace or a place of safety. The wild orgies of destruction, the fierce baton charges, the sham battles indulged in by the strikers against the police and the stoning of the newsboys who backed up the strikers caused many a frightful fierce stampede, and in not a few places. The centre of the city was unhappily the arena of such outbursts, such displays. I experienced many a

thrill if not many an exciting moment, having been caught in many a baton charge or a sham battle in various places. One of these was on a Sunday. The police were in force in O'Connell St. - every corner of every street and laneway was guarded by police. Suddenly the cry was heard, "a baton charge", and immediately there was utter confusion. The whole street, or the people who were, unfortunately, traversing it, was set in motion. People ran hither and thither, the police on their heels chasing them. No time to ask questions, how or why this happened? I found myself, like other folk, running away from a group of policemen who were behind us wielding their batons. Discretion being the better part of valour, I made to get into one of the side streets and away from the excitement and, of course, the batons. But at every point that I tried to breach there was a sturdy posse of police in possession to drive us back into O'Connell St., and worst luck for some, into the line of fire of the police batons. The area around the Pillar was the worse place that day - even citizens on the footpath, regardless of age or sex, were belaboured by the police. In desperation after many fruitless efforts to get through, I, with some other people, made a dash for Prince's St. Oh, horror of horrors! We were met by an almost 'Charge of the Light Brigade' as the police bore down on us, while behind another set were thinning off our rear. During this scene of desolation, I had enough presence of mind to slip on to the footpath, mingled with the people there while the police had their hands full mopping up the people. The doctors and chemists were busy that day. The next day Alderman Dr. McWalter at the Corporation raised his voice in protestation

against the savage conduct of the police on the occasion in question.

Another exciting scene which I witnessed was a "set to" between the newsboys and a body of police. A possé of mounted Royal Irish Constabulary (members of whom had been drawn into Dublin for police duty) were lined up along the side walk between Elvery's and Chancellor's in Lr. O'Connell St. There were also groups of D.M.P. men about at various corners. Some of the newsboys got to teasing the horses and throw stones at the R.I.C. men. The D.M.P. men sought to drive off the newsboys, charging them across the street into Eden Quay. More stone throwing - this time against the pursuers, repeated charges by the police - the boys could not be thrown off. Viewing the scene from a safe distance - from the corner of Bachelor's Walk - I soon percieved that the group of policemen were sandwiched in between two groups of newsboys, who were giving them quite a rough time, until they were reinforced by another group who eventually drove the rear attackers away, thus extricating the first body of police from a delicate situation.

O'Connell St. was also the arena for another "hell let loose". Jim Larkin, the Labour leader, had arranged to hold a meeting in O'Connell St. on a certain Sunday. Dublin Castle intervened, and proclaimed the meeting. Larkin, however, protested that he would hold the meeting, and so he did, for he appeared rather mysteriously on the balcony of one of the windows of the Imperial Hotel over Clery's and spoke a few words. The police charged in and he was arrested. Prior to this date, arrangements had been made by Larkin's men to have an

outing and sports in the grounds of Croydon Park. I was present there that day and enjoyed the outing. Returning home in the evening, I heard stories of the scenes that had been enacted in O'Connell St. on that afternoon. Larkin was true to his boast that he would be in O'Connell St. dead or alive. The following day's paper gave lurid sensational accounts of the day's proceedings. That day became known as "Bloody Sunday" among the working class.

A public Inquiry was instituted by the Castle Authorities, as a result of the weight of public opinion expressed in not only Dublin and Ireland but also in England, protesting against the excesses of the police on that day. The powers-that-be, the British Government, had no other alternative but to comply to the demands for a sworn Inquiry, which if it secured nothing else threw light on the domineering and high-handed action of the police authorities in batoning everyone appearing in that street, without regard to age or class, or whether quietly passing through or assembled out of curiosity arising out of the occasion, many of whom were returning from Church Services at the time, only to find themselves caught in the police net from which there was little or no escape from the batons in the hands of the skilful and brutal minions of the British law.

In that wise the "Big Strike" of 1913 continued with unabated fury, each side endeavouring to bring the other to their knees.

Chapter 3.

Our Sluaigh of the Fianna did not, however, remain long in Liberty Hall. We found premises in Nelson St.Hall, which led into the grounds attached to St. Jospeh's Church, Berkeley St. We, in the meantime, had "lost" our Captain, Mick Lonergan, who had gone to the United States, his place being taken by Frank Reynolds. He in turn was later placed in charge of a new Sluaigh which had been formed in Sandwith St. and known as the Wolfe Tone Sluaigh. Garry Holohan was now our Captain.

An Céad Sluaigh (the first Sluaigh or Corps had headquarters at 34, Lower Camden St. It consisted of, among others, Padraig Ó Riain, Eamon and Christy Martin, Seamus Pounch, Harry Walpole, Fred Shelly, Andy Dunne, Liam Mellows, Barney Mellows, Joe Smith, Billy Christian, Eddie Murray, Tommy Crimmins, Tom O'Donoghue, Jack and Percy Reynolds, Theo and Leo Fitzgerald, Tony O'Carroll, George Campbell, Con Colbert etc. Some of the above were also members of the Fianna Pipers Band, such as Tommy Crimmins, Tony O'Carroll, Billy Christian, Tom O'Donoghue, as well as Jack Murphy and Joe Coffey.

Socials and ceilis were held in that hall, which was also the rallying point for most of the Fianna parades, demonstrations etc.

Con Colbert later took charge of a Sluaigh at Inchicore. Eamon Martin became Officer in Charge of Wolfe Tone Sluaigh at Sandwith St. at a later period. Leo Henderson was in charge of Fairview Sluaigh. Paddy Daly was Officer of Dollymount Sluaigh.

Garry Holohan later became Officer of a new Sluaigh formed at

Skippers' Alley, situated at the rere of the Franciscan Church, Merchants Quay. These premises, formerly a store, consisted of a large overhead loft which the Michael Dwyer Gaelic Club reconditioned, making it suitable for ceilis and other fixtures.

To throw a little light on our thoughts at the time or period! In 1912 or 1913 there was introduced into our Sluaigh a lethal weapon that was to "revolutionise" us - to wit a French Bayonet. Someone, I think it was Peter Byrne who lived in Marlboro Street and later joined St. John Ambulance Brigade, had the brain-wave that it would go well with our uniforms, make us look more military. Imitation being the highest form of flattery, the weapon was adopted as part of our equipment. Now we had side-arms! These bayonets were useful adjuncts to us in many ways, but chiefly they enhanced our status and made us feel like the real thing. We had no care that they were illegal by British standards; even the thought that they were such gave us a thrill. Strange how the minds of young rebels work! Even at this period many of us were thinking in terms of becoming armed, some did. We knew too that this was illegal, for the British law forbid Irishmen, or Irish boys, having or bearing arms except in the service of the Crown. A few of us - to be precise, Peadar Browne, Tommy McGrane and myself, set about procuring revolvers. Peadar informed us one night that everything was alright, that Mr. James Whelan who carried on a Sports Outfitters, Tobacconist and Newsagency business in Upper Ormond Quay had agreed to secure same and was willing to accept from each of us payment at the rate of a shilling per week, each revolver cost fifteen shillings So far so good. The three revolvers arrived in due

course - short 38 calibre 5 cyclinder revolvers - which were big enough for us with a double fill of ammunition to fit. Apparently we were moving up the line!

The Fianna was making headway in other directions. The uniform adopted by our Sluaigh had not been accepted by the other Sluaighte, some of whom clung to the kilts, particularly an Céad Sluaigh, Camden St. As time want on, however, our style was in whole or in part adopted by most of the other branches. Our time too was well spent in camping during week-ends in the summer, and also attending aeridheachtanna, and during the winter months we participated in several anniversary processions, one of which was to Glasnevin in honour of the Manchester Martyrs. Our annual pilgrimage to Wolfe Tone's grave at Bodenstown was to us an event of first rate importance. The promoters of the pilgrimage, The Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee, provided us with free travel facilities. We always sought to make a "gallant show" in the march from Sallins to the graveyard. Such pilgrimages were held, and succeeded in keeping the national spirit alive. Facility was afforded us to attend at the Manchester Martyrs and Emmet Commemoration Concerts under the auspices of the same body, the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee, where we sometimes acted as stewards or as guests, also the several functions and rallies organised by the Sinn Féin organisation, including Aonach na Nodlaig which was sponsored for the purpose of the Irish Industrial Revival and to encourage support for goods of Irish manufacture. The Aonach - as it became known to us - was held a short period before Christmas-time in the Rotunda or Mansion House; all classes of goods were on exhibition and for sale or for

booking orders, from the modest Irish manufactured Christmas cards to the aeroplane. Apropos of the latter, it may be interesting to recall that at one of the Aonachs there was displayed an aeroplane made by a Mr. Ferguson. Many visitors to these early exhibits became victims of the Christmas card craze, and the fact that the cards were so strikingly and artistically Irish went a long way to encourage the idea. Works of art, craftmanship and manufacture of various ranges and stages were lavishly displayed. Aonach na Nodlaig, from its humble beginnings became a regular institution which people of national spirit looked forward to. It became, also, congenial rendezvous for those who were nationally minded as well as those who had the interest of the Irish Industrial Revival at heart. It also afforded the occasion for meeting fellow workers in the Irish Ireland cause.

Then again our services were often requested to participate in a band parade through the streets of Dublin to advertise some function or event of national concern. In this we often accompanied St. Laurence O'Toole Pipers' Band. Besides these engagements we attended inaugural meetings of new Sluaighte - one had been formed in Sandwith St., another in Dollymount, one in Emmet Hall, Inchicore, at Glenageary and Cullenswood, Ranelagh. The Dublin Mountains was generally the venue for our camp - at Balally and Ticknock where the Countess Markeivicz owned a cottage; at Glendue, Kilmashogue, the Hell-fire Club, and sometimes the north side at Malahide or Baldoyle. Our main camping spot was at St. Enda's, Rathfarnham, whose headmaster Padraic Pearse we learned was a great friend of the Fianna.

In the grounds of the Hermitage, as it was generally described, we loved to wander and muse on the man, Robert Emmet, and his lover Sarah Curran. Even many of our days' outings brought us there when we would spend many happy hours at the flowing brook at the back of that picturesque house. We often met Padraic and Willie Pearse, Con Colbert, Thomas McDonagh and the boys attending the College during our visits to St. Enda's.

In our days' route march we often took in many of those places, and march home late at night after covering ten or fifteen miles. These marches gave us great scope for exercising our limbs and our lungs. More often they provided the opportunity to sing the songs of the Gael, as swinging in martial tread we let our voices ring, sometimes to the accompaniment of mouth organ, bagpipe or even the modest tin whistle.
In addition to these we had a bugle band established in our sluaigh. Particular care was taken that only songs of an Irish and national character would be rendered. Music hall songs or those which might, even in the slightest way, be termed English were taboo. Such a one as -

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again
Hello! Hello! Hello, Hello, Hello,
Here we are etc. etc."

might be termed silly, but at least they were not controversial. Then again

"We all marched up the hill
And we all marched down again".

But the one song which none of us would term offensive ran something like this:

"One man and a dog went to mow a meadow,

One man and a dog - went - to mow - a meadow",

and making the necessary inflections, pauses, and repetitions to bring the number of men and dogs up to any given number. I have often known this to have been continued for a mile or more of a country road as a kind of endurance test or vocal competition. Often, however, more serious songs were sung on the march: "Step Together", "Clare's Dragoons", "The Bold Fenian Men", "Ireland Boys Hurrah", etc.

The first time I heard the strains of "The Soldier's Song" was sometime in 1913 or 1914, when we were marching on the mountains. This song became our principal marching song:

"Soldiers are we! Whose lives are pledged
to Ireland,
Some have come from the land beyond the waves.
Sworn to be free etc".

It also became our favourite song at concerts, céilis and aeridheachtanna. Another song that came into prominence with us was:

"Oró sé do bheatha bhaile,
Oró sé do bheatha bhaile,
Oró sé do bheatha bhaile
Anois ar theacht an t-Samraidh."

A favourite song of ours was "The Dawning of the Day", the author Brian O'Higgins, and "Twenty men from Dublin Town", not to forget our own "Marching Song of the Fianna" by the same author , the first lines of which ran: -

"Hark to the tramp of the young guards of Éireann,
Firm is each footstep; erect is each hand.
Soldiers of Freedom! unfearing and eager
To follow the teaching of our hero's dead.

Chorus

On for Freedom na Fianna Éireann,
Set we our faces to the dawning day,
The day in our own land when strength and daring,
Shall end for evermore the Saxon sway".

Evidence was not wanting that we were anything but a national movement. We carried out socials and céilis at which nothing but Irish songs and dances were permitted, and afforded us opportunities of spreading the good work anear and afar, by gaining friends among even those older than ourselves, and among the cailíní. Some such friends were men like Mr. Buggy, Mr. Heffernan, Mr. Seamus McGowan of Drumcondra Sluaigh, Mr. Sutton, Mr. Devereux, the Fenian veteran Tom Clarke, Seán McDermott/and many of Madame's lady friends and co-workers in the National and Suffragette movements. We received in return generous patronage and help in the many functions run for the benefit of the Fianna organisation. Madame, who stood out as it were alone in rank and prestige, was our main support. Whatever our shortcomings in worldly wealth or influence were amply counter-balanced by the quality and value of friendships made and reciprocated. We were making a deep impression on the national consciousness. Even British newspapers, and the British House of Commons, were paying us attention, not, of course, for our good, but to prove that our Fianna organisation was disloyal and anti-British, which forsooth it was, and we never claimed it

The O'Rahilly

to be otherwise and were inordinately proud of the fact. These papers, and a few British military personages, were interested in trying to get the British government to suppress us, and for the sole reason that we were rivalling the Baden Powell Scout organisation in Ireland and alarmed that the Fianna was making rapid headway.

Perhaps I ought at this stage to make reference to the importance of a signal service rendered by the Fianna in the sphere of propagation, sedition and disaffection - or to be more exact the disemination of Republican and Separatist doctrines. This was by way of rendering assistance in the dispatch and sale of "Irish Freedom", edited by Seán McDermott. The distribution office was at No. 6 Findlater Place. "Irish Freedom" was published monthly. It gave extensive space to the Fianna, reporting on its activities and publishing articles in Signalling, First-Aid, Camping, Map reading etc., Headquarters and Sluaighte reports. We in turn came to look on it as a kind of official organ. This put us on a new plane. It revolutioned our movement which advanced with the spread of this paper throughout the country - new branches were springing up in various parts of Ireland. "Irish Freedom" paper was now a couple of years in existence (it was I think started sometime in 1911). I had been a constant reader from its first number, and on one occasion had entered a competition conducted by the paper under some slick title as a "Young People's Corner" for an essay on an address to the King of England. (By the same token, George V had about this time been crowned King of England and plans were being made for his Irish visit). I was, however, highly commended for

my attempt.

"Irish Freedom" had, of course, a stormy passage due to its anti-British and anti-Redmondite policy. It preached Republicanism, the Republicanism of Tone and Emmet - the doctrines of the men of '98, '48 and '67, the doctrine that the only cure for Irish ills, the undoing of the conquest of Ireland by England was by recourse to the policy of Separatism and armed revolt. It was consistently detrimentally opposed to the policy of the Irish Parliamentary Party as led by Mr. John Redmond, not so much because of their advocacy of Home Rule as that they were becoming Imperialists and were pandering too much to English parties and English statesmen. It spared neither them nor the British administrators in Ireland.

This was a bold policy to pursue at a time when Redmond and the Redmondite party were in the ascendancy, at a time when the whole country or that vast majority of the politically minded Irish people were being told and believed that Home Rule for Ireland would be secured at a "no far distant date" - "sooner perhaps than the most sanguine could believe". Hopes on that score were indeed very high. Who could dare question the propriety, the policy, the utterances of "the Party" who professed love for Ireland and sought to obtain from an unwilling England a measure of native government. Who could sit in judgement to accuse or condemn the Party because it offered loyalty to the Empire and were prepared to accept Home Rule as a final settlement of the Irish question? None other than the man who edited and the men who promoted the printing of this paper "Irish Freedom". A bold policy indeed, and one

that was bound to cause a certain amount of flutterings and bring on them not only the curses of the Parliamentarians but also the undisguised wrath of the Castle authorities and British government in Ireland.

"Irish Freedom" pursued a strong, virile, aggressive course, aimed at weakening the influence of the Redmondite Party and for the submersion of the British rule and authority in Ireland. It hit hard, deft blows against both the Parliamentary Party and the British Government. It gave no quarter, it sought none. Even its posters portrayed a note of defiance and of hostility to the British administration; one of these "Damn your concessions, England", and "an open letter to King George V" printed at the time of the latter's visit to Dublin 1912 or 1913, which were the titles of leading articles, could easily have led to its suppression and jail for its editors. The British government did nothing of the kind. "Irish Freedom" was permitted to go its way in comparative peace although it preached "not peace, but the sword". But Dublin Castle sought other ways for curbing the activities of "Irish Freedom"-by the medium of the Post Office the circulation was interfered with. Then again the office in 6 Findlater's Place, now Cathal Brugha St. was under surveillance of the detective force, well posted and quite alert. These petty annoyances did not, however, prevent the total circulation of the paper, but they created certain difficulties which had to be faced and overcome if the paper was to survive. Possibly many efforts were made in the direction to keep it going, among them the utilization of a few of us members of the Fianna to help in the folding and posting

of bundles of papers for country dispatch. A group of us were given a number of copies to post in various parts of the city. We were trusted and, apparently, trustworthy.

Chapter 4.

As already mentioned our route marches on the Sundays took us to various places, principally the Dublin Mountains. These meant full days' outings, starting early in the morning and finishing late at night. We never used trams or other modes of travelling on our way out, and only on rare occasions on the return journey. Sometimes when camping at Ticknock we might avail of the train from Harcourt St. Station to Dundrum and vice versa, but on days set aside for outings unless we had an uncommonly strenuous time we would depend on "shanks' mare". Distance seldom upset us as we boasted the fact that we were young and active. Besides we were always sure of a halt on the way for refreshments and a rest of sorts. Rathfarnham and Dundrum were deemed to be two such places. We had what we would call half-way houses in both villages - shops where we could buy minerals, sweets and maybe cakes. Oh! The joy of spending our few coppers on minerals etc. in Keeley's at Rathfarnham or other shops which we were wont to frequent at Dundrum. Then "falling in" after our "tuck in" or apetiser we would be safe for another few miles. When reaching Glendue, Kilmashogue, Bohernabreena, The Pine Forest, Hell Fire Club or Ticknock, our favour haunts, we set ourselves the task of lighting fires and, brewing tea, enjoyed an alfresco meal. This over we engaged in many exercises, climbing

the mountains, scouting, tracking etc. After a few hours spent in this fashion we would reform and prepare for the return journey. Now for the real thrill, perhaps the most exciting and truly invigorating part of the outing, down hill. It was poetry, music, romance to the soul marching down the mountainside in the dusk of a fine summer evening, our steady tramp, tramp, tramp breaking the peace and quietude of the countryside. Below us, nestled in a hollow, our own beloved Dublin reflected in the red or crimson glow of the setting sun shining out in splendour; away to the east the lovely entrancing Dublin bay sentinelled by the lovely Hill of Howth and the even lovlier Wicklow Mountains. What a pleasing and engrossing picture for eyes to feast on, a panoramo of beauty, a landscape of fine art and glowing charm - Dublin and its environs. A trained eye could easily discern the different landmarks, Kingstown (now Dunlaoghaire) harbour, the gateway to Dublin, the port of Dublin flanked on the one side by Clontarf and Sutton and on the other by Merrion and Blackrock; to the west the great expanse of woods, pastured lands and snug looking villages, with the fifteen acres situated in the Phoenix Park looking more like a huge billiard table. In the city itself one could easily pick out the most imposing, dominating building, the Custom House, Phibsborough Church, the Augustinian Church in Thomas St. Kilmainham Jail, the Four Courts, Mountjoy Prison, and nearer Rathmines Town Hall, the Pro Cathedral, these and a hundred other sights all looking their best in the setting which nature provides.

But even as nice, as captivating a sight was to be seen in the twilight; Dublin lighted, as it were, by a million lamps. It was enough to put one to silence or

into an ecstasy of wonder and delight. Seen from the mountains, this most enthralling and bewitching scene is more reminiscent of a scene from the medieval places! Behold the spectacle! Dublin, the town of the hurdles, (Ye city of bellowing slaves), the Dublin of the heroic mould, the citadel of foreign domination, the capital of a brave historic nation looked majestic, resplendent in perspective. Over the city appeared as it were a cloud of light, a soft bright glow, and radiating from it and round, in various angles and forms, little dots of light that stretched in many directions, some to link up with others placed in residential areas, or coming to an abrupt halt were lost to view. East to west, north to south and vice versa, a similar picture painted itself. The sight was most impressive from the line running east to west or west to east. From the former point one could perceive the distant Bailey lighthouse at Ben Éadair (Howth) sending out its beams of light in regular sequence across and around Dublin Bay supported by the Poolbeg and the Kingstown (Dunlaoghaire) and other lighthouses in the near or distant spaces, flicking and flashing their signals of warning to the mariners of the sea and sending reflections across and about the shimmering waves. Look at the Hill of Howth (Ben Éadair) the little specks of light that can be just barely be seen resembling glow worm in the darkness, and from them follow the line westward through Sutton, Dollymount, Clontarf, reflecting on the waters below, and into Fairview where it gets lost in the greater volume that converges and mingles with the more dense array of illuminating lighting peculiar to the city, or taking the line from Kingstown (Dunlaoghaire) Harbour, or beyond towards Killiney, follow the coastline citywards and you

behold a sight equally enchanting and like the other spectacle the line merges into the greater density of light of the city. Continue a straight course along any of those points north or south of Anna Liffey towards the Phoenix Park and Inchicore and even a slight distance beyond each and you will readily admit to have witnessed a brilliant, a beautiful sight, as taking in the great expanse of water which is Dublin Bay and the landmarks surrounding it you have followed a stretch of the environs of Dublin and of Dublin itself split in half by her river Liffey. Could words describe the grandeur, the truly magnificence of that fairy-like illumination? How often had I viewed this same scene from the mountain top in daylight and had often seen our beloved Dublin even on a bright sunny summer day shrouded in an almost pall of smoke, sometimes looking dark and dismal, forbidding, if not entirely foreboding, and other times seeming to be clear, inviting and beautiful.

Who could not be impressed by such a scene, or variety of scenes, of the Dublin of 1912 and 1913 - the Dublin by lamplight, to be exact, the Dublin of gaslight and incandescent burners which threw a soft, gentle glow of light, limited in scope and range and within a short compass. The whole spectre when seen from a distance, and especially from high altitude, resembled a scene in Fairyland - an unbelievable spectacle to us who could never picture our Dublin in such romantic light. Yet there it was before us freely open to view, dimmed only by the dim, dark spaces which here and there broke the trail of light travelling towards us from the city to the miles and miles of space that separated us from it. There was something spectacular, elevating and romantic after all about a Dublin that was illuminated at

at nightfall. The route march home on such occasions, on any occasion for that matter, was ever a treat and always made us feel happy.

We had other happy moments too. The annual Árd Fheis or Convention was a big event in our lives. Then we would meet boys from various parts of Ireland and have our big "pow"wow" in the Mansion House, Dawson St. Each sluaigh sent its delegate or delegates, and on each occasion our photograph was taken by the reputable Keogh's of Dorset St. In the night time a céilidhe or reception would be held. One of the best of these was held in Madame Markievicz's house, Surrey House, Leinster Road, Rathmines, another in the Plasterer's Hall, Essex St. and Banba Hall, 20 Parnell Square. These were great occasions for us and our girl friends. At one session of the Árd Fheis a proposal was put forward to include girls into the Fianna. It emanated from the Belfast Fiannaidhthe. Already it seems there was such a branch in existence there. The proposal was, however, defeated. A strange feature of it was that some members of the girls' branch visited Dublin, were entertained by or with the Fianna here, even camped out at such a place as Balally, Ticknock. Two of these were Nora and Ina Connolly, daughter of James Connolly, the Labour leader. There were two or three other girls there as well.

In one of the official photographs taken in 1913, appears the Countess Markievicz, Liam Mellows, Bulmer Hobson, Eamon Martin, Con Colbert, Seamus McGowan, Gerry and Paddy Holohan, the writer etc.

Another photograph taken at the Annual Árd Fheis in 1914 showed a large group including the Countess

Markievicz, Pádraig Ó Riain (our General Secretary), Eamon Martin and his brother Christy, Seán Heuston, Barney Mellows, Paddy and Gerry Holohan, Percy Reynolds and his brother Jack, Mr. Sutton, Joe Robinson, Peadar Brown, Tommy McGrane, Tommy Crimmins, Thos. O'Donoghue, Willie Christian, myself, Seán Burke, Willie Christian, Dan MacArt, Andy Dunne, Ross Mahon, delegates from Limerick, Cork, Wexford, Belfast, Glasgow. Liam Mellows was absent owing to his being on Fianna and Volunteer organising in the country.

At this Árd Fheis Madame Markievicz made one truly magnanimous gesture - she offered help to any member of the Fianna who might be in trouble or need of any kind. She even offered the hospitality of her home, or financial assistance should be availed of. Madame's gesture was very much appreciated by all. Only one possessing a big generous heart and a kind nature could pay us such wonderful attention and show such grand generosity. As it was her home was ever open to "the boys" - "her boys" as she so proudly called them. She lavished on them much of the world's goods, and better than all, consideration, a kindly, generous interest in their affairs. She was known to help the sick, to give financial assistance to the needy, to render advice and help to the talented. Nothing was too big or too small for her attention and care. She loved "her boys" - boasted of it. Her happiest moments were when she was showering her solicitude on one of our sick members or encouraging Andy Dunne, who had a sweet, soft tenor voice, to take lessons in singing. She even wrote songs for him . And was she not happy in her cottage at Balally on occasions when the Fianna shared

her hospitality to camp there! Balally, below the Three Rock mountains, the place for laughter, gaiety and happy hours well spent. But one day during the summer of 1913 a sad tragedy occurred there, in the quarry a little distance above. A boy, one of the locals by name Doyle, swimming there got into difficulties. The alarm for help was raised. Immediately we went running up the mountain to the spot. After frantic strenuous efforts to save him, in which the Fianna boys Joe Smith, Harry Walpole, Eddie Murray and Tommy Crimmins so nobly participated, Tommy Crimmins after labouring for three hours succeeded in bringing Doyle's body to the surface. Crimmins was acclaimed the hero of the day and Madame Markievicz presented him with a testimonial for his good deed. All the above boys were members of An Céad Sluaigh.

Nineteen thirteen saw the Fianna bristling with big business. We were getting strong numerically and becoming better trained. Our week-end camps were being made occasions for training purposes. We even carried out a system of posting of guards night and day. We had, too, the usual Sunday Church parade, the inspection beforehand and the march to the nearest church. Our own Bugle band or an odd Fianna Pipers' Band would help us on the way. When camping at Ticknock we generally marched to Dundrum - sometimes to Sandyford - for Mass. Madame, though not of our religious persuasion, not infrequently accompanied us when she was staying at Ticknock. Some of us young people often wondered at her doing so. Madame was in our minds a truly strange lady. Some of us might think she was forward - even her smoking in our presence often shocked some who themselves thought no lady should smoke, at

least not in public. Sometimes some of the boys were not even pleased at her wearing our uniform tunic. She generally walked beside us and not in the ranks. Yet withal she was a truly unique, distinctive personality, full of energy, talented, brimming over with enthusiasm for the Fianna idea. Even Bulmer Hobson walked beside us too, and he was a man!

Chapter 5.

The Irish National Volunteers were inaugurated at a public meeting of Dublin citizens in the Rotunda Rink, Dublin, in November 1913. The Fianna acted as stewards that night. The hall, spacious as it was, was packed to capacity. The greatest enthusiasm was recorded. An attempt, however, by a section of Labour supporters to interfere with the meeting created much excitement. They apparently took exception to one of the speakers, Laurence Kettle, because of his so-called anti-Labour sentiments or tendencies. The din at times was terrific, which bewildered and amazed not a few of the many thousands present. It caused much speculation as to the cause of this sudden wanton outburst. To those of us Fianna and a group of men who were acting as marshals of the huge throng, the disturbance came as a great surprise. At first it was thought that some anti-national element was seeking to break up the meeting. One could not expect opposition from any other quarter. When, however, the word went round that it was the "Labour crowd" who were demonstrating, and that the demonstration was directed against one or two individuals on the platform, some little relief came to the assembled throng, but not before the interrupters had made their protests and departed. The meeting

continued to the end, the large concourse of people acclaiming the formation of an Irish National Volunteer Force. Thousands of men enrolled that night and specified drill halls arranged in various districts where men were advised to take up drilling. I joined a Company that drilled in the Gaelic League Headquarters 25 Parnell Square but did not continue membership, rather I remained with Fianna.

All shades of national opinion were represented at this meeting, Parliamentarians, anti-Parliamentarians, Home Rulers, Republicans, United Irish Leagues, Separatists, Gaelic Leaguers and Sinn Féiners. The rumpus caused by the group of Labour supporters did not seem to have any appreciable effect on the gathering in so far as to interfere with the purpose for which the meeting was convened. Nobody, of course, could have foreseen or anticipated that any opposition would be forthcoming from Labour. To say that this outburst represented the true mind and opinions of the overwhelming body of Trade Unionists would be stressing the point very far indeed. The fact emerged, however, that the Volunteer movement became from this moment a reality; that the men of Dublin, consisting of all classes, of all denominations and grades, had enthusiastically acclaimed its birth.

The Fianna, too, welcomed the institution of the Irish National Volunteer Force and gave it every assistance from the beginning, playing a particularly useful and energetic part in its training and growth. Its help was invaluable at the time. Many Fianna officers and members became drill instructors, first-aid and signalling instructors, some joined units of the

Volunteer Force. This was as it should be. The Volunteer Forces needed their help in these spheres. True there were many men who linked up with the Volunteers who had service in the British Army. Many of them were utilised as instructors. Some of them even were created officers of units in the early stages.

The Fianna had already reached a high standard of efficiency and was progressing by leaps and bounds. It was able to seize this opportunity of giving practical help to the Volunteers. Particularly was this so in the Dublin area. At a later stage Fianna officers/trained units of the women's section, the Seamus Pounch and Seamus Kavanagh Cumann na mBan. Volunteer Headquarters paid the Fianna high praise and patronage. Many Volunteer officers in turn showed appreciation, and in many instances collaborated with Fianna personnel. The Fianna during this time retained its own individual and distinctive status; were at one with the purpose, aim and necessity of the Volunteers. It was complimentary to note that most of the Volunteer Executive were already friends of the Fianna and were alive to the value and quality of the assistance that the Fianna could render in the situation. But that depended on the Volunteers being a truly national force. This the Fianna possessed from the beginning. The Volunteers aimed to "defend the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland". We may not have had any sound reason for doubting the sincerity of the large number of men that flocked into the Volunteer movement at the time. But this we knew - they were a mixture. The political situation at the time was responsible, we knew, for some of them taking kindly to Volunteers. Many people were disgusted with the dilly-dally methods

of the British Government in not putting the Home Rule Bill into operation; some joined the Volunteers out of disgust of Parliamentary procedure; many by way of protest against the actions of the Orangemen in forming an Ulster Volunteer Force against Home Rule; and quite a few who availed of the existence of the Ulster Volunteers to create a Nationalist Armed Force. All knew, however, that the only thing that counted at the time was to build up a real live Nationalist Volunteer Force.

Already the Carsonites and the Ulster Volunteers had put the established ban aside, even challenged ordinary British law and got away with it. That challenge, instead of being met by the application of the full rigours of the British law, was connived at, nay condoned by high personages of the Crown. Not only that, it received quite an amount of approval and blessing from political parties in England, and even members of the British Cabinet and Bar, some of whom were vociferous in their opposition to Home Rule and in praise of the establishment of "Carson's Volunteers These Volunteers had already used the threat - "that Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right"; and the solemn determination which gave rise to the Orange Government to resist Home Rule produced a situation which put the British Government into a dilemna - with only the choice of granting Home Rule to Ireland, as it was pledged to do, against the wishes, the threats and the guns of the Orangemen, or else acquiescing to these same wishes, threats and guns again of the Orangemen, to turn somersault even against better judgement, most solemn undertakings and off repeated promises to refuse to put the Home Rule Bill into

operation. It looked at the time that the latter course would be adopted by the British Government, thanks to the Carsonites, who by their drilling and possession of arms bluffed the British Government into adopting this weak kneed policy.

It can be readily understood that the Irish Volunteer movement sprung up at a most propitious time and under extremely grave circumstances. A new factor entered into what was then the "Irish situation". Special significance could be readily given and recorded to the fact that for the first time in over a hundred years, Irish citizens, whether as Unionists in the north or as Nationalists in the north, south, east and west of Ireland, were learning the "soldier's trade", drilling and arming in broad daylight without let or hindrance of the British administration of Ireland. The real novelty in the situation was that heretofore only people who took the "Saxon Shilling" could be soldiers or practise soldiering. Undoubtedly the Orangeman, knowing his rights and obligations under the British Constitution, had given a new headline to Nationalist Ireland and, incidentally, placed the one Flag, one King and one Empire - the British Constitution and British Government into a sorry mess. However, the situation was tackled by the British Government, certain repercussions were bound to be felt, not only in Ireland but also wherever Irish people were domiciled. The British Government would find it hard to appease and placate the Irish "beyond the seas", mainly the multitudinous groups and those of Irish extraction in the United States of America, not to mention in the British Colonies, and, nearer home, in

England, Scotland and Wales, who, feeling that Ireland was being cheated out of Irish self-government were showing signs of active resentment. The idea of volunteering had stirred the imagination of quite a large section of Nationalist opinion; had opened up a new vista and created a new element of danger to the British Government, the full significance of which could hardly be gauged, or even conceived, at least on the surface. A new force was coming into the realm of Irish politics! In the presence of the two Volunteer forces - the Ulster and the Irish National Volunteer Forces - what could, what would the British Government do? It had the power, and the machinery of the law, to suppress either or both of them. The strange inexplicable thing was that the law - British law - did not take such a course. The failure to suppress the Ulster Volunteer Force, who were now a considerable time in existence, breaking the law by drilling and arming and showing "dragon's teeth", could be deemed to be a fair indication of the impotence and difficulties of the forces of the British law and order. Even one of the most responsible spokesmen of the Ulster Volunteer Force and of the Ulster Orangemen, and a lawyer of great repute, Sir Edward Carson, K.C., had, in referring to the course which his Ulster Volunteers had taken, and were taking, openly and in the face of British Constitutional law, declared, "there are illegalities which are not crimes".

No one could question Sir Edward's great loyalty to the British Crown. No one could say that he was illegal, that he was a man who would willingly consent to breaking British law, which was bread and butter to

him; who even could question the loyalty of the many notable Lords and distinguished personages, English as well as Irish, or the loyalty of myriads of officers of the Crown, from Field-marshals to Subalterns, Privy Councillors, King's Counsellors, Solicitors, Naval Officers, who were giving personal active support, patronage and training to Sir Edward Carson's men. Having failed to take action against those people and the movement they encouraged and sponsored, the British Government showed supineness and weakness. The advent of the Irish Volunteers did not improve matters or solve the problems with which the British Government was faced. But it did nothing, or next to nothing, to curb the actions of the Ulster Volunteers.

The reverse was the case in relations between the British Government and the Irish Volunteers. Almost as soon as the Irish Volunteers were launched the British Government put on an Arms Embargo proclaiming the importation of arms into Ireland. This could have only one meaning - that the British Government did not want Nationalist Ireland to be drilled and armed, certainly not armed. It caused Irishmen to realise that the British Government, while permitting the existence, the drilling and armed displays of the Orangemen, did not consent to the formation of the Irish Volunteers. The fact that there were "thinking Irishmen" in Ireland at the time was evidenced by the writings and writers of "Irish Freedom". In its issue of December 1913 the writer under the title "from a Hermitage" put forth the following graphic points:

"..... But modern Irishmen with eyes open have allowed themselves to be deprived of their manhood;

and many of them have reached the terrible depth of degradation in which a man will boast of his manliness, for in suffering ourselves to be disarmed, in acquiescing in a perpetual disarmament, in neglecting every chance of arming, in sneering (as all Nationalists do now) at those who have taken arms, we in effect abrogate our manhood. Unable to exercise men's rights, we do not deserve men's privileges. We are in a strict sense, not fit for freedom; and freedom we shall never attain.

.... and I know of no other way than the way of the sword; history records no other, reason and experience suggest no other, ...
....I regard the armed Orangemen of the north-east Ulster as potentially the most useful body of citizens Ireland possesses. In fact they are the only citizens Ireland does possess at the moment; the rest of us for the most part do not count...."

".... I do not content myself with saying in general terms that the Irish should arm. I say to each one of you who read this that it is <u>your</u> duty to arm.

.... If you cannot arm otherwise than by joining Carson's Volunteers, join Carson's Volunteers. But you can, for instance, start Volunteers of your own".

By way of resumé, "Irish Freedom", which had during the past few years been preaching for a more virile, a more manly policy than passing pious resolutions, and talking politics and clap-trap, was in the forefront of the new Volunteer movement. Even the writer of the above

anticipated the formation of that movement. In June 1913 he wrote in the same paper:

> "This generation of Irishmen will be called upon in the future to make a very passionate assertion of nationality. The form in which that assertion shall be made must depend on many things, more especially upon the passage or non-passage of the Home Rule Bill. In the meantime there is need to be vigilant. .....as long as Ireland is unfree the only honourable attitude for Irishmen and Irishwomen is an attitude of revolt. It is base for us to be quiescent",

and in the next month's (July 1913) issue he repeats the point of "asserting our Nationality" and then goes on:

> "....the assertion must be made in other ways; I believe that if we <u>who hold the full national faith</u> have but the courage to step forward we shall succeed more easily than most people suppose in gaining the people's adhesion to our ideals and our methods - lesser ideals having proved unattainable and wiser methods more foolish".

Of the Orangemen, the writer of "From a Hermitage" in November 1913 ("Irish Freedom") declared: -

> "Personally I think the Orangeman with a rifle a much less ridiculous figure than the Nationalist without a rifle; and the Orangeman who can fire a gun will certainly count for more in the end than the Nationalist who can do nothing cleverly than make a pun. The superceded Italian rifles which the Orangemen have imported may not be very dangerous weapons, but at least they are more

dangerous weapons, but at least they are more dangerous than epigrams..."

"Sir Edward Carson is a lawyer with a price".

"The rifles are bound to be useful some day. At the worst they may hasten Sir Edward Carson's final exit from Ulster; at the best they may crack outside Dublin Castle. The Editor of "Sinn Féin" wrote the other day that when the Orangemen fire upon the King of England's troops it will became the duty of every Nationalist of Ireland to join them; there is a deal of wisdom in the thought as well as a deal of humour, or negotiations might be opened with the Orangemen on these lines; You are erecting a Provisional Government of Ulster - make it a Provisional Government of Ireland and we will recognise and obey it....

"It is unquestionable that Sir Edward's Provisional Government would govern Ireland better than she has been governed by the English Cabinet; at any rate it could not govern her worse. Any six Irishmen would be a better government of Ireland than the English Cabinet has been....

...."The case might be put thus. Hitherto England has governed Ireland through the Orange Lodges; she now proposes to govern Ireland through the A.O.H. You object; so do we. Why not unite and get rid of the English? They are the real difficulty; their presence have the real incongruity".

In"Irish Freedom" of January 1914 the same writer has this to say:

"It has penetrated to this quiet place that some

of the young men of Ireland have banded themselves together under the noble name of Irish Volunteers with the intent to arm in their country's service. I am inclined to doubt the rumour. It has an air of inherent improbability. I could have believed such a report of any generation of young Irishmen of which I have read; but of the generation of young Irishmen that I have known I hesitate to believe it.....

The improbability is increased when I come to examine the details of the report. Thus a provisional committee including University professors, schoolmasters, solicitors, barristers, journalists, aldermen, public servants, commercial men and gentlemen of leisure, is spoken of....

....Consider the dislocating effect of such a movement. In the first place it would make Home Rule now about to be abandoned in deference to armed Ulster, almost a certainty; in a second place, should Home Rule miscarry it would give us a policy to fall back upon...."

In February the same writer wrote thus:

"...It would appear that the impossible has happened... and that the young men of Ireland are learning again the noble trade of arms. They had almost forgotten that it was a noble trade..... The fate of the Irish movement in our time will very likely be determined largely by the way in which the Volunteer movement develops:...."

An article by Professor Eoin MacNeill in an Claidheamh Soluis, the official organ of the Gaelic League, under the caption "The North Began" made a plea for the formation of Irish Volunteers. Pádraic Pearse in a speech at New York in March 1914 put the case thus:

> "They had given the Irish faction, which is used as a cats-paw for one of the English parties, two years to organise and arm against that Home Rule Bill which they profess themselves so anxious to pass; to the Nationalists of Ireland they did not give two weeks".

and then going on to praise the spirit of the Irish Volunteers he said: -

> "I think I can speak for the young men of the Volunteers. So far, they have no programme beyond learning the trade of arms; a trade which no man of Ireland could learn unless he took the English shilling. It is a good programme; and we may well commit the future of Ireland to the keeping of the Volunteers. I think I can speak for a younger generation still; for some of the young men that are entering the National University, for my own pupils of St. Enda's College, for the boys of Fianna Éireann. To the grey-haired men whom I see on this platform, to John Devoy and Richard Burke I bring then this message from Ireland: that their seed-sowing of forty years ago has not been without its harvest, that there are young men and little boys in Ireland to-day who remember what they taught and who, with God's blessing will one day take - or make - an opportunity of putting their teaching into practice".

Before the Irish Volunteer Movement was initiated the promoters of "Irish Freedom" had advocated the formation of "Freedom Clubs" throughout Ireland. Under the caption "The Coming Revolution" in its issue of November 1913 appeared the following:

"There will be in the next few years a multitudinous activity of Freedom Clubs, Young Republican Parties, Labour Organisations, Socialist Groups, and what not; bewildering enterprises undertaken by sane persons and insane persons, by good men and bad men, many of them seemingly contradictory, some mutually destructive, yet all tending towards a common objective and that objective: the Irish Revolution!

....We have allowed ourselves to be disarmed; and, now that we have the chance of re-arming, we are not seizing it. Professor Eoin MacNeill pointed out last week that we have at this moment an opportunity of rectifying the capital error we made when we allowed ourselves to be disarmed; and such opportunities, he reminds us, do not come back to nations.

.....I am glad then that the North has begun (quoting Eoin MacNeill's caption) I am glad that the Orangemen have armed, for it is a goodly thing to see arms in Irish hands. I should like to see the A.O.H. armed. I should like to see the Transport Workers armed. I should like to see any and every body of Irish citizens armed. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, to the sight of arms, to the use of arms....

There are many things more horrible then bloodshed; and slavery is one of them".

One could not be other than impressed by the tone and temper of "Irish Freedom" since its inception and especially the few months preceding the rise of the Irish Volunteers. It was playing a particularly important part in advocating the use of arms and the establishment of a physical force policy among Irish Nationalists. When the "impossible" happened, and Irish citizens enrolled in the ranks of the Irish Volunteers, that paper threw the full weight of its power and gifts in support of that movement and behind the men "in the gap of danger".

Chapter 6.

The Fianna stands in the battle-gap.

In the February 1914 issue of "Irish Freedom" there appeared an article "To the boys of Ireland" which ran:

> "We of the Fianna Éireann at the beginning of this year, a year which is likely to be momentous in the history of our country, address ourselves to the boys of Ireland and invite them to band themselves with us in a knightly service. We believe that the highest thing anyone can do is to serve well and truly, and we propose to serve Ireland with all our fealty and with all our strength. Two occasions are spoken of in ancient Irish story upon which Irish boys marched to the rescue of their country when it was sore beset - once when Cuchulainn and the troops of Ulster held the frontier until the Ulster heroes rose, and again when the boys of Ireland kept the foreign invader in check on the shores of Ventry until Fionn had

rallied the Fianna; it may be that a similar tale may be told of us, and that when men come to write the history of the freeing of Ireland they shall have to record that the boys of Na Fianna Éireann stood in the battle-gap until the Volunteers armed.

We believe, as every Irish boy whose heart has not been corrupted by foreign influence must believe, that our country ought to be free. We do not see why Ireland should allow England to govern her, either through Englishmen, as at present, or through Irishmen under the appearance of self-government. We believe that England has no business in this country at all - that Ireland, from the centre to the zenith, belongs to the Irish. Our forefathers believed this and fought for it; Hugh O'Donnell and Hugh O'Neill and Rory O'More and Owen Roe O'Neill; Tone and Emmet and Davis and Mitchel. What was true in their time is still true. Nothing that has happened or that can ever happen can alter the truth of it. Ireland belongs to the Irish. We believe, then, that it is the duty of Irishmen to struggle always, never giving in or growing weary, until they have won back their country again.

The object of Na Fianna Éireann is to train the boys of Ireland to fight Ireland's battle when they are men. In the past the Irish, heroically though they have struggled, have always lost, for want of discipline, for want of military knowledge, for want of plans, for want of leaders. The brave Irish who rose in '98, in '48 and '67 went down because they were not <u>soldiers</u>; we hope to train Irish boys from their earliest years to be soldiers, not only to know

the trade of a soldier - drilling, marching, camping, signalling, scouting and (when they are old enough) shooting - but also, what is far more important to understand and prize military discipline and to have a military spirit. Centuries of oppression and of unsuccessful effort have almost extinguished the military spirit of Ireland; if that were once gone - if Ireland were to become a land of contented slaves - it would be very hard, perhaps impossible, ever to arouse her again. We believe that na Fianna Éireann have kept the military spirit alive in Ireland during the past four years, and that if the Fianna had not been founded in 1909, the Volunteers of 1913 would never have arisen. In a sense, then, the Fianna have been the pioneers of the Volunteers; and it is from the ranks of the Fianna that the Volunteers must be recruited. This is a special reason why we should be active during 1914. The Fianna will constitute what the old Irish called the Macradh, or boy troop of the Volunteers, and will correspond to what is called in France an École Polytechnique, or Military School. As the man who was to lead the armies of France to such glorious victories came forth from the military school of Brienna, so may the men who shall lead the Irish Volunteers to victory come forth from Na Fianna Éireann.

Our programme includes every element of military training. We are not mere "Boy Scouts", although we teach and practise the art of scouting, physical culture, infantry drill, marching, the routine of camp life, semaphore and morse signalling, scouting in all its branches, elementary tactics, ambulance and first aid, swimming, hurling and football, are all

included in our scheme of training; and opportunity is given to the elder boys for bayonet and rifle practice. This does not exhaust our programme, for we believe that mental culture should go hand in hand with physical culture; and we provide instruction in Irish history, lectures on historical and literary subjects, and musical and social entertainments as opportunities permit.

Finally we believe with Thomas Davis "that righteous men" must "make our land a nation once again". Hence we endeavour to train our boys to be pure, truthful, honest, sober, kindly, clean in heart as well as in body; generous in their service to their parents and companions now, as they have them generous in their service to their country hereafter. We bear a very noble name and inherit very noble traditions, for we are called after the Fianna of Fionn, that heroic companionship, which according to legend, flourished in Ireland in the second and third centuries of the christian era.

"We, the Fianna, never told a lie
Falsehood was never imputed to us",

said Oisin to St. Patrick; and again when Patrick asked Caoilte MacRonáin how it happened that the Fianna won all their battles, Caoilte replied:

"Strength that was in our hands, truth that was on our lips, and purity that was in our hearts".

Is it too much to hope that after so many centuries the old ideals are still quick in the hearts of Irish youth, and that this year we shall get many hundred Irish boys to come forward and help us to build up a

brotherhood of young Irishmen strong in limb, true and pure in tongue and heart, chivalrous, cultured in a really Irish sense, and ready to spend themselves in the service of their country?

Sinne

Na Fianna Éireann.

This address, we learned afterwards, was penned by Padraic Pearse. The response to this appeal was truly heartening. There was a large influx of new members to the Fianna, our own sluaigh was literally swamped, so much so that we had to form special groups for recruits. Besides, we, of the Fianna, were keeping pace with the progress and training of the Volunteers, which force in the short space of a few months was showing signs of advancement in numbers and efficiency, and was spreading rapidly throughout the country. In this latter connection a few of our Senior Officers - Bulmer Hobson, Eamon Martin, Con Colbert, Liam Mellows, Padraic O'Riain were working on the Provisionall Committee of the Volunteers; many other officers of the Fianna were in command of Volunteer Companies, some of the older boys were helping the Volunteers in various ways thus giving proof of the pioneer spirit and their desire to assist in the task of creating a Volunteer army pledged to the service of Ireland.

For four years the Fianna stood in the "battle-gap awaiting the coming of the Volunteers, thus paving the way in true pioneer spirit for the birth of the new army of Ireland. During that short span many a Fianna boy had reached manhood, and this, and the training which the Fianna gave them, was to be of incalculable and invaluable

assistance in the part they were to play; not only in their own Fianna movement, but in the Volunteer force as well. The founders and promoters of the Fianna had planned well; were reaping the harvest of their seed-sowing Circumstances in the early months of 1914 were favourable to them; were also favourable to the Volunteers. The Fianna had reached the point of being not a mere boy scouts organisation but a progressive semi-military body; having gone through several evolutionary stages to attain that position. Many of the boys and young men were, in consequence, fitted to take a very active part in forwarding the interests of the Volunteers. It was inevitable then that these two martial forces should be set on the high-road to Destiny; whatever that destiny was to be no person could foresee. But one thing was assured - the young men were volunteering; and this volunteering and the Volunteer spirit were the only things that mattered.

It may, perhaps, be necessary to pause in the narration of the historical events of the period in order to refer to the founders, promoters and highlights of the Fianna. First of importance, the name of Countess de Markievicz stands out pre-eminently among the group of people who saw the necessity for the formation of this exclusive national boys organisation. "Madame" to us boys of the Fianna exemplified all that was good and noble in Irish womankind. We considered her to be a fine lady. Every succeeding year had helped us to look upon her with greater kindliness, respect and esteem, which she in turn reciprocated to the full. She was known and respected in our movement, and in various other national and social organisations, as a lady of great merit and distinction, one who had made

many friends and acquaintances by sheer hard work and good example. No cause was too big or two small for her. She had many sympathies, for many causes and for numerous people. In every movement in which she was associated she gave of her best; nothing but the best would or could please her. Perhaps the most notable exhibition of true lady-like greatness and charity was to be found in the service she rendered to the poor and needy during the big Industrial Strike of 1913 when she conducted a food kitchen in Liberty Hall for the victims of that holocaust. Her's was a character that could rise to great heights in the social scale and yet be humble in the service of people who were down and out. It did not take any effort on her part to be this - to serve fellow-beings. She was not the type of person who could sit snug and self-satisfied amid the welter of sadness, hunger and suffering which came in the trail of that tremendous conflict. She had to be up and doing to lend a hand in any work which she considered it her duty to attend to. It didn't need any condescension on her part to perform such work, as she had not to come down from any high pedestal to reach the lower strata whom she willingly succoured and assisted since many years before she had cast aside all semblance of aristocracy. In her desire to help ordinary folk she was showing natural and human sympathy. She strove to do good anywhere, everywhere, and always. She was as happy with the poor, working with and serving, women and children at Liberty Hall as in the company of the elite. The poor people profusely thanked "The Countess" for everything she did.

The boys of the Fianna had got to know "Madame" real well during the past few years. She was

lovable, of a quiet, gentle disposition, effusive and excitable at times, one who was versatile in temperament and in talents - poet, artist, actress, orator, lecturer, writer etc. I remember seeing her working on the designing and painting of the Fianna flag (of Irish poplin, St. Patrick's blue, upon which was painted in gold and sunburst, surmounted in bold gilt letterings, Na Fianna Éireann). I was convalescent in her home, whither Madame had brought me, sometime in 1914. She also executed works in water colour, pastel drawing and oil paintings. She wrote much poetry, one of her special compositions being "The Battle-Hymn" written for Andy Dunne, of the Fianna to sing. She was an actress of high merit in the Abbey Theatre and at dramatic entertainments in Liberty Hall and on several concert halls and assemblies. She shone out brilliantly in rendering recitations, some of them her own compositions. In her home, Surrey House, Leinster Road, Rathmines, were to be seen marvellous works of art - pictures, sculptures, ornaments, books, and a well stocked, magnificent library, a special nook where one could sit in comfort to indulge in the luxury of a quiet read or study. The rooms of her home were simply littered with treasures; one wondered at her carelessnes in leaving them so loosely around. Madame had, however, implicit trust in all the people who frequented her house.

Especially she trusted "her Fianna boys", many of whom were regular and almost nightly visitors there. I doubt if anything was ever disturbed or molested, though many of these boys were simple, poor folk, some might even be termed wild. Then she had quite a large clientéle of people of various walks of

life and attainments. During the time I was there she shared her hospitality with a large number of celebrities, some of them in the Citizens' League, the Women's Suffragette Movement, Sinn Féin, the Labour Movement, so wide were her attachments and beliefs. High tea was generally served in the garden at the rear of the house - she entertained us quite royally. Of Madame it could be said that she couldn't do anything by halves. She lavished care and attention on everyone within her orbit. I had personal experience of this particular trait in her character, for having learned that I was ill she visited me in my humble home and offered her home for the period of my convalescence. She would not leave until my mother and I promised I would come. I failed on the first occasion, but no excuse would satisfy her and eventually I had to yield. Thus I spent a good week or fortnight enjoying a lovely home and a lavish board. Everything that I wanted, and more than I wanted, was there for the asking. Truly Madame was a superb benefactress to me and to others whom I had learned had been befriended by her.

Madame's house, Surrey House, was the rendezvous of the élite and of the simplest folk. One could safely say that it was the busiest house in that select neighbourhood; visitors and guests always coming and going. It was hardly ever free of them. Seldom a night passed without its quota of Fianna boys showing up for a sing-song or other form of revelry. It was mostly frequented by members of an Céad Sluaigh of the Fianna, her own foundation branch. It was said that the house, and those who frequented it, were looked upon with deep disgust and condemnation by the inhabitants of that most law-abiding and respectable

locality, and if rumour was right they were of a brood more respectable than national a class, in the main, who were unconcerned with, and even antagonistic to such "silly thrash" and "nonsensical tripe"as National Independence or Social Reform. So the existence of such a noisy place as Surrey House, with its noisy callers and its equally noisy musicians and songsters, disturbed the peace and quietude of Rawthmines. By the same token, songs were written and sung in honour of the same Rawthmines, immortalising it as a district of Britons, shoneens and Castle-hacks. Surrey House was an intrusion and a challenge to the dignity and respectability and "loyalty" of Leinster Road. But Madame, the care-free, fond of fun and loving Madame, who years before had thrown to the winds the shackles, trammels and trimmings of a high social order had of her own free will and tuition come to earth to share the lot of those people of no property, or little property, and conceived it her duty by voice, pen and, if need be, by other stronger means to further any good cause, whether for the freedom of her country, the emancipation of her sex and the betterment of the lot of the workers and of the poor. She had no use for the toadyism and anglisation of the Royal Irish, whose stock in trade was imitating and mimicking the British and showing themselves to be not Irish but more English than the English themselves.

The work Countess Markievicz liked most was centred and had its being in the Fianna. She was its figure-head, and, as one, perhaps the big brains of the movement. Were she a boy or a young man, she should have ranked high, possibly have been accorded the status

of a Boden Powell, the head of the English scouts, or, by way of comparison, have been the modern prototype of Fionn of the Fianna, or as a James Stephens of the Fenian organisation - a leader of boys or a conspirator among men. Notwithstanding the limitation due to her sex, she fitted into the sphere wonderfully well, because as a promoter and figure-head she guided the destiny of the Fianna, inspiring when she couldn't lead, setting an example if she could not command. Madame, however, could not be a mere looker-on. She had to show her true colours and this she did right nobly, fearlessly, consistently - thus giving practical unmistakable emphasis to her belief in the things which she aspired to and upheld. She tried to keep near to the things she espoused, rendering support and offering encouragement at every and on all occasions. One thing the Countess had in abundance - namely moral courage. She would throw herself wholeheartedly into any good cause, whatever or however the hazards or difficulties; she had no concern for danger. She expressed her mind openly and freely in giving expression to her principles and tenets so dear to her, and however unconventional or unpopular they might seem to be or be taken by other people. Yet she had no hatred - no hatred but one and that the hatred of a patriot for the oppressor of her country. I doubt if she had any personal enemies. She lived her part well, she lived her life well, in these four years. She found all the happiness she wanted, the happiness to serve Ireland, which she wished to advance and put on the high road to freedom, and throwing herself wholeheartedly into that fight it was as it were a second nature to do nothing less than her best.

Her talent and her intellectual gifts were ever at the service of "the cause", a literary article for this or that journal; a song for this or that concert, possibly a sketch for some; preparation of a concert programme; scenery for a play; providing a speech or giving a lecture. She was fortunate in her friends, in her collaborators, her fellow conspirators and in the movements with which she was connected. She showered affection on everyone in the national effort. How she lavished kindness and caresses on her dog Poppit - "my dear Poppit" as she endearingly called him. He was everywhere with his exceedingly thoughtful and respectful mistress, ever at her side. How often were we made aware of Madame's approach at sight of Poppit. He was part of the Fianna too- even though some played rude tricks on him at times.

Another prominent personage in the councils of Na Fianna Éireann was, as already mentioned, Bulmer Hobson. Bulmer was a journalist, at least I formed that opinion by reason of the information gleaned that he was the Dublin correspondent of the "Gaelic American", an Irish American publication. This paper was the advocate of Fenianism or Clan na Gael organisation of America. It expressed national, republican and separatist views. It is worthy of note that "The Gaelic American" circulated in Ireland during that period and was playing a part in the events of which I write. Those of us who from time to time secured copies of this paper could not fail to notice the column contributed by Hobson, and to deduce that he was very much in the forefront of political affairs.

Here was a man who personally appealed to me in a very special way, not so much because he was one of the leading lights of the Fianna or in the national limelight, or even because he performed any great deeds, or outstanding in talent, wisdom or fame, but chiefly on account of his easy going gentle manner, his pleasant and agreeable disposition. He was years ahead of us in age, and miles beyond our reach in intellectual and, possibly, other attainments. I could be pardoned at the time for picturing him as a Wolfe Tone or Robert Emmet - why I formed such opinions I could not explain. In my boyish imagination, the fact that he was eldest of the young men who, with Madame, were guiding the affairs of the Fianna sufficed to impress me that he was more than an enthusiast - he was the very incarnation of the spirit of the movement. But Hobson was less demonstrative in a public sense than Madame, yet he seemed to get on well with the boys and was all in all with the senior members of the Fianna.

Another notable character was Con Colbert, that small stocky, muscular young man. He was the very personification of the Gael; spoke the language of the Gael with notable frequency; everything about him was Irish. He always dressed in kilts on parade or assemblies. Here was a bold, serious, determined type. So my first impressions! In course of time, however, I had reason to form the opinion that notwithstanding a seemingly hard exterior or appearance, he was of a gentle kind and considerate nature. He carried himself with a proud, confident and military bearing, and took his work very seriously. Zealous and enthusiastic in our cause, he expected all similarly engaged to be

likewise. He was reputed to be one of our best officers, had great command of himself and was always worthy of being obeyed. Con was not the type that could be satisfied by doing things by halves or any old way. He sought perfection in every part of his work on behalf of the Fianna. So sincere was he on the question of the native language that he used issue commands in Irish. The first time I heard these was in Camden St. Hall when Con was drilling some of his boys.

Liam Mellows was another outstanding figure. Not only that, he was the most likeable and best beloved of the whole group of young men that guided the fortunes of the Fianna. He, too, was typically Irish, a hundred per cent every time, and a keen student and exponent of the language revival. Liam possessed the gentlest, kindliest and gayest disposition yet. He was at home in the company of the boys - seemed to be especially endowed by nature to attract and to charm boys to his side. One could never picture Liam being sad or morose - he never seemed to show either of those characteristics - rather the opposite, for he liked quiet, simple fun and merriment; even helped in entertaining us on many occasions to a good Irish ballad or a rousing marching song. His singing of "Boolavogue" or "The Bog down in the Valley" were always delightful. He prided himself on his playing of the violin, and many a céilidhe and entertainment owed some measure of success to his rendering of selections of Irish music. He generally wore kilts, which suited him to perfection. Though in his teens, he had an almost girl-like personality and even quiet manner, an open countenance set off by a high forehead and a thick

almost golden sheaf of hair. By occupation a clerk in a commercial office, he would at once strike one as being fitted more for Holy Orders. One of the most notable features of Liam was that he took Fianna work very seriously, so seriously, indeed, that he undertook about this time, 1913 and 1914, to resign his ordinary employment in order to go about the country organising Fianna branches, and it was said that he did this for the merest pittance. He also organised corps of Volunteers in various parts of the country.

On route marches Liam was ever in the forefront to entertain us to a "bar of a song", and many a good stretch of road was shortened as a result.

Then there was Eamonn Martin, who appeared to be cast in the same mould as Liam Mellows - a quiet, easy-going, simple type. Eamon was of strong muscular and medium build, fair haired, a Celt to the finger tips. He too dressed in kilts, which were always becoming to him, and spoke Irish and, as we perceived, a good dancer. A tailor by trade, he was deeply sincere and enthusiastic, a very likeable person among the boys as he could make and hold friends.

Padraic Ó Riain, our General Secretary, was a particularly capable officer, practical and intelligent, one who had a great aptitude for work and could get things done well and expeditiously. He was sometimes easy to provoke, when he would bawl and rave and shout his head off, much to the merriment of those who knew that his bark was worse than his bite. Some even would call him sévere and a bit too hard, as his manner at times gave the impression that he was such. Yet

he was neither rough nor vindictive, but rather exacting and commanding from the point of view of duty and discipline. At close quarter he was as nice a type of person as one could hope to find and be associated with in a good cause. Notwithstanding his quick and at times caustic tongue, he was of a kindly, pleasant and gay disposition. He, too, dressed in kilts and was proficient in the native tongue. One could not fail to be impressed by his smart alert appearance, for he was always spic and span in dress with true soldierly smartness which set him off as a distinctive personality. Padraic (Pawric to us, his associates) discarded the kilt for the new double-breasted tunic which at this time was being more universally adopted.

Chapter 7.

Early in 1914 there came to our sluaigh of Na Fianna Éireann a young man named Seán MacAodha (Seán Heuston). It was a very pleasing and propitious selection. Soon we were training under him in Dun Emer Guild in Hardwicke Street, now our drill centre. From that moment its activity increased immeasurably. From the first Seán captivated the hearts and won the affection of us all, which was not surprising when one considers that he was endowed with a pleasant, easy and simple nature, a bright and lovable disposition which, coupled with his natural understanding of boys, made such ready appeal to us. He soon became our ideal Captain. At first, however, when it was hinted that we were to get an officer from Limerick, many of us thought that the newcomer was to be none other than a slow easy-going (raw) fellow from the country. To our

joy, however, we learned later that Seán Heuston was Dublin born, and if he had Limerick associations it was due to his being employed there. Actually he was a clerk in the Great Southern Railway and had spent a number of years in the city of the "Broken Treaty" in that capacity. So Seán came, as it were, among his own.

From the beginning of his work with us Seán gave promise of being a worthy successor to our former Captain, Mick Lonergan, from whom we had learned quite an amount of drill etc. Seán, however, could not be a second best. Hence he sought and attained perfection in everything that he put his hands to or gave his mind to. He was systematic, lucid and exact in every sphere of military training - sparing no effort, and least of all, no time in drilling and instructing us in the arts of the soldier's trade. His knowledge of the various military subjects surprised us not a little. Where and how he acquired this were questions which many of us asked. It took time, however, to find out that he was a keen student of military training craft and technique extending over a number of years, especially during his stay in Limerick where he was associated with the Fianna Company, and he possessed many books, manuals etc. on various military matters. In course of time we benefited, our Sluaigh and the Fianna in general, by that expert knowledge in many ways, and not the least by Seán conducting officers and N.C.O. classes and specialised training of which he showed himself to be a keen and enthusiastic advocate.

It was noteworthy also, that Seán Heuston became

Capt. of "D" Coy 1st Battalion Dublin Brigade Irish Volunteers. This Coy met in the Columcille Hall, 5 Blackhall Street, and the notable thing about it was that this Company was regarded as Headquarters Company because of the great part it played in that connection. It did not, however, lose its identity with the 1st Battalion. In this way Seán Heuston, our Fianna Capt., had a double role to play in forwarding the interests of both forces.

To come back to the activities of our Sluaigh of which Seán was Captain! He was not long in our midst when we came into possession of a new, our first, trek-cart, and it was said that Seán planned and designed it. It was an important addition to our stores, our commisariat;- which comprised camping gear, first-aid, signalling and other accessories. This trek-cart would overcome much of the difficulties we usually had to contend with in transporting these stores when required from time to time. The fact that it was simply constructed, light and easy to manipulate, made it all the more acceptable to us. Of its construction, I might mention that the trek-cart was a two wheeled vehicle, fitted with a T shaped centre shaft, the body itself being about 4 feet by 2½ feet and the length of the shaft about 3 or 4 feet. The body was roofed by a brown waterproof hood fixed at the sides, back and front by patent attachment easily removable. There were two ropes, also detachable, a loop on each end. These loops were arranged so as to facilitate their being passed over the head and on

to one shoulder and then across the body and underneath armpit of opposite shoulder of the person using it. These ropes, one for each side, could be affixed to the cart wheel, and were capable of being used for pulling the cart forward or in reverse position to hold it back as when travelling down hill. The cart was of the collapsible type, could be assembled and dismantled in a few minutes by means of using nuts and bolts and slotted wooden panels easily adjustable and without the use of tools. Seán took a particular pride in this handiwork, and in the training of the "crews" to man it. This meant specialised drill, and a different form of words of command for the drill. It was the only one of its kind in the Fianna - perhaps in Ireland - and this, and the fact that it was manufactured in Dublin by Irish workmanship added immensely to its importance. We, too, in Seán's Coy of Fianna had every reason to be proud of it, and it was to be expected that we would vie with one another to become members of the "crew" to man it on outings, processions, marches and camping expeditions. Of the crew required for the purpose, it may be necessary to mention that two boys were placed on each rope, and two on the shaft, which formed the front portion of the cart,-six boys as a "crew". In this wise the cart was pulled, not "shoved". Relays of six were always available to relieve the pulling party as required.

Came 26th July 1914, what came to be known as the "Day of the Howth Gun-running". We had been mobilised for the early morning at Dun Emer Guild/ Hardwicke Street - a picked body of senior Fianna boys drawn from different Companies of the Fianna, in full uniform and carrying rations for a

days outing. Of course, we had reason to wonder at the nature of this - we couldn't even guess where we were going. Only a days outing! Our trek-cart was in commission too, and, strange to relate, was heavily laden. It contained, as our Captain modestly informed some of us enquiring ones, "Only minerals", and to the equally inquisitive ones, Seán again modestly and politely said, "We are going on a march to Lucan". Seán's broad smile could be so disarming and bewitching, as we had every reason to know "only minerals" and "for a route march to Lucan" did not seem to convey very much to most of us. However, we soon proceeded on our way - down Temple Street, into Gardiner's Place, along Mountjoy Sq., and into Fitzgibbon St. Lo and behold, we literally ran down the hill in Fitzgibbon St. passing the police barrack there and on to Jones' Road. We wondered why the cart was allowed to proceed so unusually fast down hill without causing the boys on the ropes to come into reverse, which was the normal procedure and done by the four boys retiring to the back portion of the cart and straining at the ropes so as to prevent the cart from going down hill beyond walking pace. Again that broad, disarming smile from Seán!

We continued on until, having passed the bridge spanning the river Tolka at Ballybough, we entered Phillipsburgh Avenue, turning into a small avenue, Windsor Villas, on the right entered Father Mathew Park. Here we found that quite a large number of Volunteers were already assembled and undergoing various military evolutions. A short time afterward the Volunteers marched out of the Park and our group of Fianna accompanied them down Phillipsburgh Avenue

into Fairview. Strange we didn't "wheel right" and take the citywards route which would be the normal direction for our journey to Lucan! Rather we were turning our backs on it. Seán again beamed his broad disarming smile when some wag of a Fianna boy remarked that we were going a strange way to Lucan. This, of course, provoked someone else to remark, "Lucan looks lovely" which at the time was an endearing, enticing form of words used to boost up the place.

However, we continued along the former sea front road at Fairview, then known as "The Sloblands", into Howth Road, and after quite a spell of marching reached the coast road beyond Raheny. Nearing Kilbarrack we were granted a rest period which was well earned after the few miles of steady marching on a warm summer day. The respite was not for long, however, and we were soon on the march again. The village of Sutton looked lovely; indeed, every part of the country since we left Fairview was superbly splendid as we passed by going onwards. Near the railway station at Howth our Fianna group, which up to this was in the middle of the Volunteer column, was given an order to "right incline, double march" and brought in front of the Volunteers. In this fashion we entered Howth village and passed the sea front until we came to the corner of the road on the right which leads to Howth Hill where we were halted.

We perceived Seán Heuston in deep and earnest conversation with Bulmer Hobson. Then Seán called Paddy Holohan and myself and gave us orders to run as fast as we could along the pier, and if we saw a white yacht to blow our bugles as hard as we could. Paddy

and I ran that long stretch of ground up to almost the mouth of the harbour where the lighthouse was situated. There before us was the "white yacht". Paddy, by the way, had beaten me to it. He was taller, head and shoulders over me, and had bigger strides. Instantaneously the Volunteers were rushing up the east pier, our own trek-cart rumbling along faster than I had ever seen it go before. Then a movement from the yacht when a man and a woman commenced handing out articles wrapped in straw, which when torn away revealed to our astonished gaze rifles, rifles and still more rifles. Oh, the thrill of it! We were gun-running! Who could blame us for being excited? We were frantic, hysterical with joy at the drama that was being enacted at that moment; the undescribable scene of pent up emotion at first sight of that precious cargo. Some men cheered, some wept with joy; some others too overcome by emotion went pale with excitement. But only for a flash - because there was work to be done, and that quickly.

Our group of Fianna boys, with our trek-cart, were assembled in direct proximity to the yacht, receiving the rifles and passing them along the lines of Volunteers that stretched along the pier in human chain fashion to receive them. Another group commanded by Seán Heuston were loading the trek-cart with boxes. Some Volunteers were loading motor cars that had come on the scene. With willing hands, eager and willing to work hard, the task of unloading was quickly accomplished, although many of us wondered where all the rifles came from. We could hardly imagine that they could have come out of such a tiny affair as this

yacht appeared to us to be. It was a sight worth beholding - the excitement, the wonderful organisation, the superb discipline and good order of the Volunteers and the Fianna, all of whom laboured as hard as humans could in discharging the cargo, having but one thought - to succeed in the coup of gun-running.

An effort was made by a group of coastguards to raise the alarm or otherwise interfere with the good work of discharging the cargo. A few of them rowed across the harbour towards the yacht. They soon retired, however, having been summarily warned, and we were left to work out our slavation. They alone could not have stopped that work. Perhaps they realised this.

We had reason to be happy when eventually we were informed that the guns were unloaded, and we were re-formed on the pier for our homeward journey. At last we were armed. Irish Nationalists were armed at last. What an extraordinary spectacle to witness, as we marched away carrying with us the guns as the price of our labour and the kind "God speed you all" of the good people of the yacht, especially the lady member who was most vociferous in expressing her pleasure at the good day's work.

We Fianna boys were very proud of our part in this enterprise which we considered was a great privilege. The fact that we were trusted on an exploit of such daring and importance caused us to be "all out". It proved, too, that if we enjoyed the confidence of the Volunteers, (this was mainly due to our officers) whom we surmised were "well in the know" and earned the confidence of the Volunteer Authorities. These were

our thoughts as we swung out of the pier. We were startled to see before us a group of Volunteers lining the approach to the pier and they armed - with huge truncheons! Here were, we learned, the "minerals" we had carried in our trek-cart on our outward journey. Yes, some of the "knowing ones" remarked "these are the minerals". Seán Heuston, our Captain, could well afford to smile. Anyway they served a purpose in the day's work. The thought of their possible usefulness added to our elation, as with our trek-cart, now laden with boxes of ammunition and we carrying the big Mauser rifles beside it, we hastened our steps citywards. It was a happy, joyous and proud throng, this contingent of Volunteers and Fianna now marching with rifles in their hands, and right joyously we gave vent to our feelings as we sang and whistled on the way. Many a laugh we Fianna boys had over the brave appearance of strength which some were trying to show in carrying the heavy rifles, which on every mile of the road were becoming heavier. Fortunately for us, the relays of crews for drawing the trek-cart eased the burden of carrying the guns, for then they could be put in the cart for relief. Thus we progressed along the coast road passing Sutton and beyond.

But alas! The homeward trail was not to be uneventful. As we came to the end of the coast road at Raheny where the tram-line and not the road continued its course into Dollymount, we espied a large force of police - members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police - on trams. Were they come to intercept us? They, however, made no such move, but having got off the trams they marched by our side along the country roads

through the village of Raheny, past Killester, into the Howth Road. So far so good.

Their presence, even some of their efforts to keep pace with us, was the occasion for much banter and fun on our part. Many of them before they had traversed a mile of ground were looking the worse of the wear, panting and sweating in the effort. Our youngest Fianna boys that day, having already traversed nigh thirteen miles were showing more alertness and freshness than they. On we went, passing the Clontarf Railway Station at Howth Road where we caught sight of Fairview by the sea, towards which we appeared to be going. But no! As we came to Claremount Road on our right we turned, and to our astonishment saw in the distance what appeared to be a group of British soldiers stretching across the road at the corner of the Crescent, a road that connected with Malahide Road and Howth Road. What was the cause of our change of direction? We sensed danger ahead; this was made evident to us by the strange remarks that we heard and the acceleration of the pace made by the advancing Volunteers then moving towards Malahide Road.

This apparently was a ruse. We soon reached Malahide Road still marching. Then suddenly there was a halt and we , the Fianna contingent, placed as we were in the centre of the Volunteer column, wondered if anything had gone amiss. The reason for the halt was communicated to us. There seemed to be quite a deal of excitement in front which lasted for a short space of time. Then suddenly the ranks of the Volunteers in front were broken and falling back, leaving us, in charge of the trek-cart, exposed to the view and

attention of the onrushing police. We could then see below the road the group of British soldiers with fixed bayonets, the police in front with batons in their hands. Shots were ringing out. I could see some of our Fianna officers on the wall of the O'Brien Institute, which stretched along the right side of the road down to Fairview, firing revolvers. Pandemonium reigned. In the midst of this we, Fianna boys, had a stiff time to keep off the Volunteers who were clamouring for the ammunition from the trek-cart. The police menacingly were approaching our group. We had to beat them off as best we could with our clubbed rifles, which for many caused quite an effort.

Suddenly an order was issued. It was our Captain Seán Heuston's command to us to retire. The trek-cart was turned around, and we drew ourselves and it back the road. Just in time too. We passed the rear column of Volunteers as we moved away from the scene towards Donnycarney. Turning into Puckstown we entered a field where we placed the cart in a secluded spot. In order not to attract undesirable attention, we took the special precaution of taking off our tunics and hats and hiding ourselves in the field. Fortunately we were far removed from prying eyes. Later due to Seán Heuston's effort, a lorry from Thompson's carriers of Brunswick St. (now Pearse St.) came and we loaded the boxes of ammunition, trek-cart and our rifles into it. This eased the situation immensely for us . Seán reformed us and we again moved back the way we had come, along the Malahide Road, passing the scene of the affray of a few hours previously, where to our surprise there were a good number of people. We were accorded an odd cheer as we passed on our way

citywards. We arrived at our Hall in Hardwicke St. without further incident.

But apparently our work was not yet finished for many of us were posted by Seán to perform various duties, delivering despatches, collecting rifles which had been deposited in the fields adjacent to Malahide Road and storing them in safe places in and around Dublin etc. I was posted to Mr. Tobin's house at Hardwicke St., a place of great hustle and bustle on that night. Before going on our several special duties we were given time to go home and change our attire, and during this respite we had opportunities to digress the news of the startling events of the day - news which the newspapers had broadcast in special "Stop Press" editions. Some parts of this news were unknown to us then, especially the shooting by the King's own Scottish Borderers of civilians in Bachelor's Walk. We learned too, that we had suffered casualties in the fracas at Malahide Road, some Volunteers, including Captain Judge of "C" Coy 1st Batt. being wounded by bayonet thrusts and other injuries.

Great prominence was given the enterprise of the successful gun-running coup at Howth; how the British warship engaged in patrolling in Dublin Bay was by a clever ruse diverted to Wicklow, and that the Volunteers had cut telephonic communications with Howth and took other "unlawful" steps to neutralise intervention on the part of the British authorities. Further, was the news that some of the Volunteer leaders parleyed with the British military and D.M.P. officials on the rights of the Volunteers to march into the city. This ruse, it was stated, enabled the Volunteers in rear to effect

their diversion and, at least, the safety of the arms. The awful blood-bath indulged in by the British soldiers at Bachelors Walk was vividly portrayed, showing at a glance that, disgusted at their failure to disarm the Volunteers, they returned to the city and, confronted with a mild scene of booing, they had opened fire on the assembled unarmed people with such fatal consequences. Dublin and Ireland were indignant at this exhibition of the British soldier rule; the Dublin Brigade of Volunteers and Fianna by their presence at the removal of the remains of Mr. Pidgeon, one of the victims of the Bachelors Walk massacre, gave silent, disciplined testimony of wrath and indignation. Truly we had our first baptism of fire.

Some short time after this another gun-running was effected, this time at Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow. On this particular occasion many officers and boys of the Fianna were engaged. Our Sluaigh of Fianna had been detailed to camp out at Oldbawn, Tallaght. We afterwards learned that a successful landing of arms had been carried through, and that Seán Heuston was one of the principal characters in the affair. Others were Eamon Martin, Garry Holohan and Barney Mellows.

Chapter 8.

Then came August 4th 1914 - the outbreak of the World War. England declared war against Germany and in defence of little Belgium. What was to be our part in this conflict? How were the Irish Volunteers to exist in a situation in which Ireland, linked to the British connection, was being appealed to to throw her full weight on the side of England? The testing time

for the Irish Volunteers came with the declaration of war by Britain. This "testing time" came in several ways. The first recording was heralded by the demands of Mr. Redmond to control, or share control, of the Irish Volunteer force. He sought power, as a question of right, to the selection of nominees of his own party and affiliations on the Executive of the Volunteers. This was eventually denied them, the original Executive fighting him tooth and nail and refusing to agree to his proposal. The Irish Volunteers, who up to this had been united and combined as one body, were soon to be divided. The war accelerated it, and from the division was to arise two forces - one the original "Irish Volunteers and the other the "National Volunteers" controlled by Redmond, J.D. Nugent etc. When the split in the Volunteers occurred the World War was nigh two months old. In that time the Irish politicians had made overtures to Britain offering Ireland's support and appealing to Irishmen to join the English army to fight for the freedom of small nationalities, mainly Catholic Belgium. Accordingly, Mr. Redmond, backed by his Irish Parliamentary Party became recruiting agents for England, and thousands of Irishmen were influenced to join up "for their King and country". Even the English Premier, Mr. Asquith, to show his great love for the Irish and their desire to fight for England as stated by the aforesaid Irish politicians, visited Dublin and held an "admission by ticket" meeting in the Mansion House at which all the "loyal" people of note, even the baton-men of the A.O.H., were present to back up their leader Mr. Redmond who particularly distinguished himself that night. Mr. Asquith at this meeting referred to Ireland as "the

one Bright Spot" among a number of other wily platitudes about Irishmen being such gallant fighters etc. Hence Ireland was thrown into the vortex of the war while the Volunteer movement was split asunder.

No such split or contest occurred in na Fianna Éireann, however, which was not influenced by the actions of the politicians, by the advent or the cause of war, or anything else except the complete independence of Ireland. Unlike the Volunteers, the Fianna was more nationally contained, consisting only of those who stood for Ireland first, last and all the time and true to the Fianna faith and ideal. The ordinary boys of the Fianna had neither time nor thought for the political clap-trap of the wily ones who preached that the blood of Irishmen should be shed on "far foreign fields from Dunkirk to Belgrade" in a cause that was not Irish or concerned Ireland. Hence we laboured on, working after the split as before it, with the original Irish Volunteers.

Among the boys of the Sluaigh of which Seán Heuston was Capt. were 1st Lieutenant Paddy Holohan, Seán Burke, Tommy Meehan, James Cerrigan, Seán O'Neill, Jimmy O'Hanlon, Section Leaders Tommy McGrane and Peadar Browne, Seán Conway, Dermot O'Sullivan, The Brothers Dermot and Donogh O'Moore, - Ridgeway, the Brothers Jack and Peter Byrne, Patk. O'Connor, Jimmy Cashin, Patrick White, Willie Murphy, Eddie Connolly, Jimmy Seville, Joe Cullen, Dan Mac Art, Ross Mahon, Joe Cullen. The writer was 2nd Lieutenant.

~~Garry Holohan was an officer in charge of a unit of Fianna at Skippers Alley.~~

Sometime, I think the late summer of 1914, the Dublin Fianna fulfilled an engagement at Castlebar on invitation of the local Sluaigh. Entraining at Broadstone Railway Station, after a pleasant journey we arrived late at night being met by several bands and escorted to a hotel where we dined on the best. That night we encamped in the grounds attached to the college. The greatest treat was in store for us when next day, Sunday, a huge procession of Volunteers from all quarters of the county, numbering several thousand, paraded in the town and marched to the Mental Hospital Grounds where a Volunteer Rally, Sports and Review were held. Our group of Fianna boys gave a display in trek-cart drill, signalling, first-aid and ordinary drill. The local inhabitants hospitably treated us and bore all expenses of our travelling etc. Capt. Seán Heuston was in charge of our party.

On another occasion we had a similar privilege to give a special display as above; that time, under Capt. Seán Heuston, we travelled to Courtown Harbour, Co. Wexford, on the invitation of Mr. Seán Etchingham. An aeridheacht was held there. We came back to Dublin that evening by the Dublin South Eastern Railway train. From that evening onward we had reason to make fun of the Dark, Slow and Easy Railway Company, for during our night travel it was true to that designation.

An event of unusual importance to a group of us Fianna boys - an event that proved our versatility - was that day when Mr. John Redmond reviewed his National Volunteers, now separated from our Irish Volunteers. This review was held in the Phoenix Park, after which

they marched, via the Southern Quays, to the Parnell Monument, O'Connell St., where Mr. Redmond and other speakers addressed them. They mustered in strength that day, having travelled from every part of Ireland. Our Fianna business had no relation to attending the event. Rather were we engaged, on Sean Heuston's orders, in obtaining information on the strength, the number of arms and the differeng types carried in the parades. We worked in pairs, stationed along different parts of the quays, each group was required to ascertain particulars under the various categories. Another Fianna boy and I were on duty at Guinness's wharf. That night Sean Heuston had information galore concerning the "other side", or Redmondite Volunteers, which they were then called.

Sometime in 1914 or 1915 James Connolly, the Labour Leader, gave a lecture to Fianna officers and N.C.O.s on street fighting. He impressed us as one who knew the subject thoroughly. Apparently he had given it careful, exhaustive study, judging by the sure easy way he disposed of his lecture, which was given, as far as I can recall, in No. 12 Kildare St. This house had formerly been the headquarters of the Volunteers, and when the "split" occurred the Redmondite section were evicted and it was seized by the original Executive. Regular guards were posted to protect the building. On one occasion I did duty there for one night. This house was not, however, held for long, for a new headquarters was opened in No. 2 Dawson St. In passing, it should be mentioned that the five Fianna Officers - Liam Mellows, Padraic O'Riain, Bulmer Hobson, Eamon Martin and Con Colbert - remained true to the original Volunteer Executive.

Towards the end of 1914 our Sluaigh of Fianna was fated to remove to new premises - this time to 28 Nth. Frederick St., a house rented or owned by the Ancient Order of Hibernians (American Auxiliary Division). Two other organisations, namely the "Hibernian Rifles" and the "Clan na Gael Girl Scouts", the former commanded by a Mr. Scollan, the latter by Miss May Kelly. Each of these groups had identical national aims - hence our Fianna group felt in good company. The place was a hive of industry, usually of a military nature, drilling, rifle exercises etc., with a number of musical and dance social evenings thrown in to break the monotony. Our Fianna Company, we were now styled such, in conformity with [redacted] military standards and the like, drilled in the rear of the building in what were stables and yards with loft overhead. We were quite happy there. The house was commodious. But the quaintest portion of it was the passage-way which connected from the back parlour to the stabling behind. How often did we enjoy marching through that passage in single file, no other mode was possible; even enjoy the sense, the thrill of delight which our steady tramp, tramp, tramp of marching feet and the din of the voices of some of the boys who loved to hear the sounds echoing through, to be answered by those on the other end. We took particular pride in our premises, even to the extent of washing it regularly. As well as that, orderlies were appointed to do duty each week, charged with the task of opening up the premises and keeping it tidy before and after parade. Certainly Seán Heuston, our Captain, saw to it that we would spend our time well and in true military fashion He prepared routine of training and duties in advance, and displayed the notices in a prominent position in the

building as well as communicating them to us at regularly appointed periods. He even gave a hand in sweeping or washing the place. No one was more thorough or cleaner than Seán. Every drill night Seán inspected us, insisted on cleanliness, tidyness. During our stay here, our Company increased to enormous proportions, new blood coming in, including quite a force of juveniles. Indeed, so great was the number of these that a new section had to be formed under Section Commander Peadar Browne. Poor Peadar! He had more than his hands full trying to train them, the bantam section was/what they were jokingly called. It was more than enough to test one's patience, but Peadar bore it manfully. None other than he could have managed them, although in the doing he fell in for quite a good deal of banter over his bantam section. Tommy McGrane was one of the Section Commanders. Much of our training was done in the open, quite a lot of it in the streets nearby.

Seán Heuston was particularly keen on night manoeuvres, route marches and street fighting. In our drill hall he taught us the rudiments of battle formations. In the streets outside he made us go through the movements, deploying extended order movements, taking cover and going into action. Many and varied were the looks of consternation and surprise on the faces of the poor pedestrians at seeing us "only Boy Scouts" going through these exercises. Many a start we gave them, too, as for instance, when marching along a street, Dorset St. or North Circular Road, in response to an order from our Captain to "Take Sides" we would break ranks and fly to both sides of the

thoroughfare, throw ourselves on the ground and make believe that we were coming into conflict with an opposing force. Other times we would perform extended order evolutions from marching formations, this time by whistle or hand signals, amazement in the faces of the onlookers notwithstanding. Practising soldiering was no easy task for us then, but we loved it - couldn't get enough of it. Sometimes policemen on their beat gazed open-mouthed at what they must have termed our peculiar "antics".

Then came the occasion of an important competition of picked trained sections of the Dublin Companies of Irish Volunteers to be held at St. Enda's College, Rathfarnham - a trophy for the best team. A group of Fianna boys were trained by Seán Heuston. Every night he put us through an elaborate extensive programme, a programme that was to include from battle formations to the care and treatment of the wounded. It was hard work enough, rehearsing, rehearsing, rehearsing. Some of those nights our "antics" were witnessed by one of the plain clothes detectives. One time he got in our way and some of the boys bounced into him, just after we had received the order from our Captain to deploy. Poor man! He must have thought that we were attacking him, but no, we were only practising our movements for the forthcoming competition. A couple of days before this event, Seán announced that another officer was to take his place. I was selected. The task was to memorise in the short space at my disposal the many terms and signals, to know all the movements, all the evolutions, which were mapped out on our programme. Seán had told us that his own

Company of Volunteers were competing also. Our final rehearsal was carried out in Clonturk Park.

The appointed Sunday arrived when we were required to show what we were made of. It would be true to say that it was a big day in our lives. As well as numerous units of Volunteers and our group of Fianna, the Irish Citizen Army competed. It was a very keen competition, quite a great amount of hard work must have been put into the training of the different contesting groups. James Connolly and Thomas McDonough were the adjudicators. The winning team was a section from the 4th Battalion. Our Fianna group was, however, highly commended. A feature of our display was the interest that James Connolly took in the various evolutions that formed our programme, even to the extent of asking individual boys questions on the different aspects of the work.

Mention has already been made of the point that the Fianna was becoming "militarised". This matter had been raised by one of the delegates at a session of Árd Fheis, who, in turn, expressed his mind against it, but his complaint did not, however, get much backing. One proof of the military spirit that had overtaken the Fianna was invariably borne out by an incident, small one perhaps but still significant, that occurred, which had reference to the arming of the Fianna. The scene was St. Stephen's Green, where on a certain Sunday a procession was to be formed which was to consist of various national, social and cultural bodies. This procession was to march to Glasnevin to commemorate some national historical event. Our Company of Fianna marched to assembly point, "The Green" as it was commonly known at the time, in order to

participate. Our our arrival there, we found a big muster of other Units of Fianna, some of whom were in possession of arms. Enquiries revealed that these rifles were the property of the Fianna. Some of our Company members raised a storm, demanding that they too be armed. "Alright", said our Captain, Seán Heuston, "we shall see what can be done". Immediately, we were marched away and brought to the Fianna Hall in Camden St. where to our greater surprise we were issued with a number of rifles. (These we learned had been smuggled into Ireland from America).

Back we returned to St. Stephen's Green to take our place in the huge concourse that made up the procession. None were happier, none were prouder than our little band on that occasion, not even the Volunteers with their big, heavy"Howth rifles", a name that was generally and fondly applied to the rifles that had been "landed" at Howth. The spectators that lined the procession route looked to us bewildered at the sight that they beheld, as we, stepping along in military precision, carried for the first time in public our small .22 bore Springfield miniature rifles, and carried them as gallantly as our elders in the Volunteers. Such people little knew, however, that we were expert in the knowledge, the use and the handling of rifles, even of the bigger and more formidable types. If there were any people present who elected to laugh in derision at the "pop guns" we carried that day, perhaps they, in their ignorance, would like to be aware that "these little fellows" were wiser in their generation than what they were given credit for.

The presence and the possession of these rifles put the Fianna on a new footing. No more broom handles, no more dummy rifles, thought we. Up to that time we had been trained, indeed well trained, with such makeshift "rifles", practised every movement of arms drill and bayonet fighting with them. They had, it was true, stood us in good stead when nothing better was available for training purposes. We were an "army" now; we proudly thought ourselves soldiers as very deliberately we fashioned our ways on the new weapons. These were intended for the grown up boys, not the real juveniles or senior boys but the "in-betweens". Many of the senior boys, especially those who had participated in the Howth gun-running exploit, had come into possession of a number of rifles. The Howth rifles that we Fianna boys had transferred for safety into that lorry at Puckstown had been stored away under Volunteer control since that day. We felt it was our right to have them, considering the lengths we had gone to to protect them, and our Captain undertook and eventually succeeded in securing them. In this way quite a few of the members of our Company and of other Fianna Companies were armed. The "French bayonets" which we had been carrying for so long as part of our equipment were made adaptable for fixing to the rifle. A small bayonet to fit the new Fianna rifle was made - a bayonet that was the queerest thing imaginable. It caused us many a hearty laugh and gave rise to an amount of fun. "Butter knives" and "Putty knives" they were in turn jokingly called.

Since the formation of the Irish Volunteers the Fianna enjoyed greater prominence and popularity.

On many of the big Volunteer manoeuvres, Fianna members, often times specially selected, acted as guides or scouts to one or both group of contestants. One of the most notable of these occasions was the huge Dublin Brigade all day manoeuvres on the Dublin Mountains - the supposed attack on the village of Stepaside. A few of us, Peadar Brown, Tommy McGrane and myself accompanied the 1st Battalion. We knew the mountains almost inside out. Our task was to lead the Battalion which formed part of the attacking party from Rathfarnham through the most secluded spots. That was a particularly pleasant, though tiring, day. When the manoeuvre was over we marched all the way home. We won the friendship of many a Volunteer officer and rank and filer that day.

Besides these big contacts with the Volunteers we had always, and at any time, the privilege of participating with Seán Heuston's Company of Volunteers (D Coy 1st Battalion). We soon became quite familiar on that account with many of the members of that Company. Only one stipulation was enjoined us; that no Fianna business was on that day. This D Coy was seemingly the smallest Company in the Brigade; what they lacked in numbers they gained in efficiency. Seán, we could see, was as popular with this Company of Volunteers as he was in the Fianna. Perhaps his popularity with his Company of Volunteers arose from the same causes that had their fruit in the Fianna - sheer hard work, a pleasant disposition and an indomitable spirit. A lesson, typical of Seán's go ahead methods, was brought home to many a Volunteer on the occasion of an "outing" in which the 1st Battalion

Volunteers were engaged. Seán was given charge of the Battalion that day. We moved off from Parnell Sq. bound for Finglas. It was a test march to find out how soon we could cover the few miles of ground in military order. From the beginning we kept up a more than usual quick march, accentuated by alternative double time bursts. A number of police accompanied us, for no useful purpose, as we often contended. The greatest test of endurance for us was when we had covered the best part of the journey and were "on the straight" along the Cemetery Road where we were given no respite, but urged on quicker and quicker. Gradually men were falling out through sheer exhaustion, winded, unabled to keep up the pace. Even the police felt the strain and failed to keep up to us. On and on we went, amid the puffings and blowings of the Volunteers, intermingled with many imprecations and growls. Worse than all, the police, not to be failed, came on an outside car, which they had procured in the meantime, along the road. They must have thought this double quick march was staged for their benefit or that we were up to some fool business or "unlawful" enterprise. They must, however, have gloated over our fast mutilated remnant of our army as seen from their outside-car. Finally, we reached, or should it be said, some of us reached Finglas Bridge, having accomplished the journey in record time, where we entered a field of high prominence overlooking the cemetery and the road and practised the out of field engineering and trench making. The police, in the meantime, had been refused admission to the field. Many and varied comments were made that day about Seán's "wild" action, some not so very complimentary. "Why did they put him in charge,

anyway?. "Hope he doesn't have us any more on such wild chases". "That pace was enough to kill a horse". But many things have a happy ending; and so it was with us when, eventually, in a more leisurely and conforming pace we arrived back in town and felt not a whit worse for our experience.

The election of a new Officer Board of the Fianna in 1915 was an important step forward, not only from the point of view of organisation and administration, but because it stabilised affairs generally. Seán Heuston was appointed Director of Training .

Chapter Nine.

Soon afterwards there was published and issued a "Fianna Handbook" which was a concise and comprehensive military manual, designed for use as a text book in the Fianna for all training purposes. This book supplied a long felt want in a military force that was progressing yearly. The subjects treated in it comprised Infantry Drill, giving all the commands and movements, Morse and Semaphore Signalling, First Aid, Camping, hints on Scouting, Map reading and Map making. Many of these articles, except Infantry Drill, had already been published in the paper "Irish Freedom". It was sold publicly and secured a good circulation. Many Companies of Volunteers, too, adopted it for training their men. Seán Heuston prior to its publication and afterward worked in Fianna offices in D'Olier St.

In this house was situated the office of "The Irish Review", a monthly literary and cultural magazine that had become famous by its publication of an extraordinary article entitled "Ireland, Germany and the Next War". Many other notable, eminent and divergent personalities contributed to that magazine. Even many of the outstanding Volunteer Officers - Patrick Pearse and Thomas McDonough - regularly contributed poems and anthologies. Other publications on a variety of subjects were issued from No. 12. Seán Heuston spent much of his time there. On many evenings I met him at Kingsbridge as he was leaving his office, and we both proceeded to that place. He always had a spate of writing to do, and we sometimes discussed Fianna and our own Company affairs. On one of those visits I received from him many copies of the "Irish Review". Rumour had it that he had a good share in the work of publishing "The Fianna Handbook".

Though he attained prominence in the different national spheres, it could not be said that he was a "lime lighter" or pushed himself to the forefront; rather was he by nature unassuming and reserved. How often had we noticed, rather ruefully and not a little sadly, his coming on parade without his full Fianna uniform. To our amazement he would display his hat which we often perceived he had tucked away under a loose rainproof coat that he usually wore or covered in brown paper. His light raincoat covered his uniform, tunic, haversack, waterbottle etc. Seán always wore knee breeches and substantial woollen cycling stockings. His raincoat would then be tucked away in his haversack when on parade.

After parade Seán returned to civilian attire, returning home as he came. He wore strong easy fitting boots of a military type, such as were made by Malone's of Nth. King St. This question of being well and suitably shod was one of Seán's big points; so strong was it with him, and of such importance, that he was never known to suffer from foot ailments or tiredness, which, as he often impressed on us, could be so easily attributable to indifferent footwear and want of proper hygiene. Many a lecture he gave us on these same matters. He also was a fluent speaker of the native language. We were given a proof of this one night when a blind man, a friend of the Fianna and other national bodies, named Frank McGinty came to our hall and engaged Seán in conversation for a considerable time, much to our great surprise, for although we knew that he possessed a good knowledge of it we hardly thought that he was so fluent.

The Fianna visited Limerick with the Dublin Brigade Units of the Irish Volunteers on Whit Sunday 1915. The Dublin Volunteers made this visit on the invitation of the Limerick Volunteers and for the purpose of meeting Capt. Monteith, a former officer of the 1st Battalion who had been forcibly ordered by the British authorities to leave Dublin and to reside in Limerick. Other notable Volunteer Officers, including our Fianna Officer and Organiser, Liam Mellows, were similarly deported from Dublin, but they, unlike Monteith, were ordered to live in selected places set aside by the British authorities of all places in England. This move was aimed to thwart the efforts and the progress of the Volunteers. The 1st

Battalion Dublin Brigade felt keenly the loss of Captain Bob Monteith, who had been a tower of strength from the inception of the Volunteer movement. The fact that he was a military man, had served a considerable period of time in the British Army, had voluntarily come over to the Volunteers, had been dismissed from his governmental position and then violently exiled from his home, relatives and friends added zest to the desire of his former comrades to pay him this honour. It could be truly said that few men gained the confidence and fealty of their fellows so easily or as freely as he. Here was a man unknown to them up to nigh two years ago, a man who had lived in anything but national environments and perhaps least credited, because of this, with any spark of nationality. It had happened before in Irish history that out of strange places, and from unlikely environments, men have come forward to take their stand on the side of those whose watchword was Ireland - only Ireland. So in Monteith's case.

He came to the Volunteers as a soldier. In his associations with the Volunteers he acted the part of a soldier. It was his make-up and he threw himself boldly, resolutely into the training of the Volunteers, especially the 1st Battalion, as few men would or could. He too had high ideals - fixed and firm ideals for Ireland's freedom, the soldier's ideals to train men to be soldiers, and training them as such to fight for the ideals that men proclaim to be just and noble. As a result of his indefatigable labourings, his thorough-going system of training and his magnanimous and magnetic personality, he was idolised by all who had the good fortune to be associated with him in the

Volunteer movement. In a word, he was looked up to principally by the officers and men of the 1st Battalion Dublin Brigade of Irish Volunteers.

Our visit to Limerick, or should it be said our stay and our appearance in that city, was on that auspicious occasion productive of the greatest exhibition of hooliganism and rowdyism. Part of our programme consisted of a march through some of the main streets. During the course of this, in passing through one of the thoroughfares, a drunken mob consisting of men and women assailed us, Volunteers and Fianna alike, threw missiles at us, spat at us, cursed us, and some even attempted to break our ranks and snatch the rifles we were carrying from our hands. But for the superb discipline and restraint of our men and boys, and the equally cool heads and steady nerves of our officers, much bloodshed would have ensued. It, however, to an extent helped to mar what might have been a pleasant historic march. We felt grossly abused. Many of the Volunteers, and indeed the Fianna, under the terrible provocation would have welcomed the order from their commanders to quell the disturbance, but to the credit of all no such order was given, with the result that we had to put up with, bear and grin as the saying goes, whatever the mob meted out to us and take them in as calm and orderly a manner as possible. Bad as were these scenes, they would have been nothing in comparison to what might have happened had the Volunteers got out of hand and retaliated by using their guns on the mob. Fortunately better counsel prevailed. We all gave a sigh of relief when we got through that troublesome

street and entered quieter quarters.

We spent the further few hours of that day adjacent to the Dalys' home. The Dalys' name stirred up memories of other times and other men. John Daly of Limerick, the veteran Fenian, was beloved by the Volunteers and Fianna, not alone because of the past but also on account of the part many of his family and relatives were playing in our movement. The Commandant, Ned Daly, of the 1st Battalion was his nephew. Tom Clarke, the veteran Fenian who was then deep in the Volunteer movement, was married to John Daly's niece. Besides, John Daly himself, though then advanced in years, approved and supported the Irish Volunteers, the Fianna and any movement having for its aims the complete independence of Ireland.

The Fianna party present at Limerick that day were the guests of the Limerick Fianna, whose grand hall was put at their disposal and right royally we appreciated their kindness. The Volunteers, too, were accorded facilities to use the hall until the evening when they entrained for Dublin. Our Fianna party remained overnight and slept in the Fianna Hall. The next day, after we had spent a fairly hectic night's "rest" that was punctuated by periods of intermittent bed-time "battles", growls, singing and revelry as we were wont on such occasions, we were treated to another sample of Seán Heuston's Spring-cleaning methods. True to form, he procured a brush and set about making the premises tidy, while we standing by sought to regale him to mild fun and merriment, all of which Seán took in his usual good natured way. Example being better than precept, we soon followed his lead and had

the place put into ship shape, after which we were allowed our freedom to go anywhere we liked. Some of us toured the lordly Shannon, while others went sightseeing, even to the extent of viewing the mob ground of the previous day, and that without molestation, as it had returned to normal. Stranger than all, many of the towns-people expressed indignation and regret for the scenes of the previous day, some declaring that these were caused, not by local people as a whole but by an imported organised party consisting of supporters of Britain and Redmondites. Our leaving Limerick, after our not unhappy two days' stay there, was the occasion of a hearty send-off by our friends and hosts - the Limerick Fianna and a good sprinkling of Volunteers. Truly, Limerick was beautiful!

The Irish Volunteer movement at this time was going through an anxious and difficult pass, due to many causes. One was the war situation in which Ireland was held to ransom and her people expected to throw themselves on the side of England against Germany. The British Government in return for the measure of Home Rule, which had been placed "on the Statute Book", there to remain until "after the war", sought the young manhood of Ireland to enlist and fight in the British armed forces. Mr. Redmond and those around him acquiesced in this, with only one difference; the British wanted Irishmen to fight for them - would like to get them by any means, even by compulsion.

The Redmondites advocated the voluntary enlistment of Irishmen to fight for England in Irish Regiments - propagating the idea of giving these same Irishmen plenty of green flags, harps and shamrocks, and Irishmen to officer them. In either event they were to be under the control of the British Treasury. The threat of Conscription hung over Ireland; its application depended on whether Ireland rose to the occasion and made a substantial voluntary contribution of man power to the British War Effort or not.

Arrayed against Conscription and voluntary or any other form of enlistment into British forces were the Irish Volunteers and kindred national forces. "Ireland", they declared, "needed Irishmen at home in Ireland". "We serve neither King nor Kaiser" - this slogan, enunciating the Irish-Ireland outlook of these forces, was displayed on a streamer outside Liberty Hall, which as well as being the Headquarters of the Irish Transport Union was also headquarters of the Irish Citizen Army. But at this time thousands of Irishmen, on the advice of the Redmondites and otherwise, had joined the British forces, misled by the Redmondite slogans of "fighting for small nationalities". In many instances "economic pressure" was brought to bear, to induce enlistment, by commercial people and institutions; large numbers of young men were dismissed from their employment in the good cause of serving England. While these things were going on, Ireland, "the one bright spot" was being asked to furnish "more and still more men" to beat the savage Hun. Propaganda, threats, coaxings and inducements were the order of the day. The attitude of the Irish Volunteers, who preferred to remain in and to serve Ireland, was assailed from many quarters, even to the extent of their

dubbed "pro-Germans" and in receipt of German gold. Some of the Irish newspapers backed up the campaign of vilification and abuse of the Irish Volunteers for these and other reasons, in order to prove that the Irish were loyal to England and desirous of England's victory in the war. Yet, in spite of the incessant campaign of shoneenism displayed by the Redmondites and the so-called Irish newspapers, the Irish Volunteer movement held on, oftimes under great stress and manifold difficulties.

During all this time British authorities kept a very watchful eye on the Irish Volunteers. Already by means of forceable deportations of some of the officers of the Volunteer movement they had struck hard and heavy blows. It looked as if the full rigours of the British law would be applied to counteract and nullify the influence and prestige which up to then the Irish Volunteers wielded. The British authorities knew when, how and whom they could strike effectively. They singled out those whom they considered to be the dangerous ones - and they were for once right in their choice. They planned well; in hitting at the dangerous ones their plans miscarried, for in stifling them, dispossessing them and deporting them the longed for break up of the movement did not materialise. They cracked the shell and left the kernel intact!

That they should have singled out Liam Mellows and the others for deportation, on the score that they were dangerous men because they were officers of the Irish Volunteers, was a new weapon placed in the hands of those who sought the destruction of the Volunteers. The men concerned considered themselves honoured as a

result. This could be said of at least one of them, Liam Mellows, who was one of the most indefatigable and consistent workers in the Volunteer movement. As an organiser of the Volunteers, which he combined with organising the Fianna, there was hardly any village of note that was not visited by him, and from which many recruits were forthcoming. It was not surprising that when repressive measures were to be taken, Liam would be among those singled out for punishment. Verily, the British knew their opponent!

It must be understood that during the period under review Ireland was living under conditions of virtual military rule. The common ordinary law in Ireland had been from the day when Britain entered the European War in August 1914 superceded by war-time regulations known as Defence of the Realm Acts. Freedom of speech, the freedom of the Press, freedom of assembly, and all the inherent rights of the citizens were prescribed by these harsh repressive British laws and ordinances. Special Courts were inaugurated for the specific purpose of dealing with all of those Irishmen and women whose utterances and actions were not favourable to the British cause in the war; in which case, and cases, full liberty was afforded to all and sundry, propagandists, politicians, recruiting agents etc. whose desire it was to see Ireland and her young manhood "fighting for Ireland's battles" in foreign lands, Flanders and elsewhere. Such silly rot as recruiting and training young Irishmen into Corps of Irish Volunteers for service in Ireland alone was neither encouraged nor condoned. The public Press, with few exceptions, were behind the British in the war and gave every encouragement to the policy of recruiting Irishmen for English service.

The Irish character was aroused at the operation of the Defence of the Realm Acts, even to the point of ignoring them, breaking them and even making fun of them. Humorous songs were written and sung about "D.O.R.A."(Dora), some Irish wag having already described it by incorporating the first letter of each of the words, Defence of (the) Realm Act. Such songs were sung at Volunteer rallies, at concerts and Aeriadheachtanna. "Your King and Country needs you", a recruiting slogan used by the British to entrap Irishmen, became the title of a satire that was sung up and down the country by Irish Volunteers and kindred people. Another song - "Sinn Féiners, pro Germans, alive, alive oh", sung to the air of "Cockles and Mussells alive, alive oh", was also a favourite wherever Irish Volunteers and Fianna gathered and marched.

In implementation of the close and active connection existing between the Fianna and Irish Volunteers, the Fianna authorities in the year 1915 adopted a new scheme whereby the senior members of the Fianna were encouraged to link up with the Irish Volunteers. This order had the effect of a large number of Fianna boys joining Volunteer Companies. Three of us, Peadar Browne, Tommy McGrane and myself accordingly joined "C" Coy, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, which at the time paraded at the Irish National Foresters Hall, 41 Parnell Square. This Coy was commanded by Captain Frank Fahy who had superceded Capt. Michael Judge of Howth Gun-running fame and who at a later period discontinued serving when the "split" occurred.

There was one special condition attached to our transfer to the Volunteers, and that was to the effect that

we continue membership of the Fianna and that we would only attend Volunteer parades etc. if and when we were free from Fianna business. Such an arrangement worked well. In course of time some, including myself, threw themselves entirely into Volunteer work. I found a new outlet for my energies as from the outset I was placed in charge of the Company rifle range to instruct and supervise shooting practice. This was carried out in the basement of "41". We fired with a .22 bore miniature rifle, the cartridges for same being distributed by the Company Adjutant, John E. Lyons, and payment made to him at the rate of a penny for five rounds. Every parade night, which was generally on Thursday of each week, would see a number of men testing their skill. This work had its humorous side. The portion of the basement set aside for shooting - a long narrow passage - could not boast of any form of lighting, at least not where the target was, and so we had to procure candles, one of which had to be placed very near the target area. That was where the fun arose, as generally the rifle shots fired close to it snuffed out the candle. It was trying, yet funny, having to work under such conditions. But why complain when man had to be trained to shoot?

Another place where target practice was carried out was in Father Mathew Park, Fairview. There we would repair on Sunday and enjoy the more congenial atmosphere and facilities for firing our allotted rounds of ammunition. Added to this was the pleasure of finding myself among new enthusiastic comrades, with whom I was getting quickly acquainted. Although at this time I severed direct contact with Fianna activities, yet I had not lost my interest in and concern for its

welfare. Friendships arose, however, in the new sphere, and a new interest in the affairs of "C" Coy opened up when in a short time I was made one of the Company mobilisers. Fate also brought me to share the companionship of many men, but in particular two - Frank McNally and Dinny Holmes - with both of whom, especially the former, I became closely associated, very fondly associated.

An event of unusual importance to the Irish Volunteers and kindred military forces was the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa, the veteran Fenian. He had died in America but his remains were brought to Ireland to be buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. This gave added impetus to the Volunteers. A public lying-in-state at the City Hall was accorded the remains; armed uniformed Volunteers and Fianna furnished guards of honour around the bier and the building, which was visited by tens of thousands of Irishmen and Irishwomen full of sympathy and honour being extended thereby. Then came the day of the funeral when thousands of people from the four quarters of the world came to pay respect. Most important and impressive of all was the presence of fully armed detachments of Volunteers from all parts of Ireland. Dublin was one armed camp and all the time the other forces (British) in Dublin Castle looked on at the sights that were being enacted before their eyes. Our own 1st Dublin Battalion under Commandant "Ned" Daly attended in strength that day. When "the greatest Fenian of them all", "the unconquerable Gael", he whom the ballad writer mused:

> Robbed no man, and spilled no blood,
> But they sent him off to jail,
> Because he was O'Donovan Rossa,
> And a son of Gráinne Mhail

was laid to rest the Irish Volunteers and other Irish militant forces paid him full military honours. Our Commander, Pádraic Pearse, delivered the graveside oration in the most moving, impassioned and solemn terms. No other man in the Volunteers was as fitted to render such signal homage and pay such effective tribute to Rossa than he who spoke in the name of the young manhood of Ireland and the new army of Ireland, the Irish Volunteers. To those of us drawn around the grave of the patriot dead it was a sad and touching moment. No monarch, few statesmen or warriors could be more fittingly honoured. Even the simplest and the commonest folk amongst us felt impressed, nay elevated and inspired, by the truly wonderful pageantry of this spontaneous demonstration. He, the dead Gael, had come home to rest in his native soil. Pearse standing there, dignified and respectful, in close proximity to the grave brought us in spirit into communion with the dead warrior. His every word, his every gesture, intoxicated us, awed us and inspired us. We seemed to sense the meaning of it all - this wonderful tribute to the dead, the touching eloquence of Pearse at the grave, the presence and purpose of the Irish Volunteers - "the new generation that had been baptised in the Fenian faith and tradition". Even the echoes of the "Last Post" and the rifle volleys fired as a soldier's tribute over his grave were less impressive and least expressive than the words spoken by Pearse on that eventful occasion.

We were now at the end of another year. The Defenders of the Realm and the Defenders of Small Nationalities were still busy seeking whom and what they would destroy - in Ireland of course. The entrance of the new year 1916 found the Irish Volunteers and Fianna

alive and showing signs of growing pains. It was noticeable, too, that the police authorities were paying greater attention than ever before; detectives in plain clothes and uniformed police were allocated to the work of keeping under strict surveillance the halls in which Volunteer parades were held, or where individual officers or special men congregated, and all Volunteer outdoor marches and other activities. Indeed many of the police detectives, throwing discretion to the winds, made it their business to be literally at the entrances, nay, on the doorsteps of Volunteer rendezvous. Some of them at least didn't seem anxious to conceal their identity, or even their mission of watchfulness, and the most brazen thing of all was their seeming delight in saluting according to the courtesies of the times individual Volunteers visiting the various haunts with a "Good-night Jim" (or Pat or Seán as the case might be), which seemed so strangely out of place under the circumstances coming from such a source. Yet, there it was! Somtimes, however, they were brought on a wild goose chase in order to decoy them from their vantage points of watchfulness, and then as was generally the case, eluded. It must be admitted, however, that that type of ruse did not always work out in our favour, although a few did.

One such instance may be cited. The story is told that one night Seán Heuston, who had been transacting Fianna or Volunteer business at Volunteer Headquarters, 2 Dawson St., came out carrying a neatly wrapped parcel which in length and appearance resembled a rifle. He was immediately shadowed by a detective. Seán it seems had deliberately planned the ruse in order to take the

detective away from No. 2. The latter personage fell into the trap and Seán rather joyously brought him for a good walk from College Green along the many streets that stretch up to James' St., then turned down Stephen's Lane, turning out at the Kingsbridge and along the south side of the Liffey. Arriving near the Queen St. Bridge Seán threw the parcel over the wall and into the river. His delight in doing that on the detective who had doggedly trailed him can be better imagined than described. It was only then that the detective realised that he had been fooled, and, alas, before he had recovered his balance Seán had boarded a tram on the North Quays, leaving the detective to bewail his utter humiliation.

There were other occasions when Seán Heuston foiled the efforts of detective officers "to keep him under cover". Seán was always acutely suspicious and alert to the point of extreme awareness of being shadowed. Hence he set out to play them tricks. One never knew when he would play these, which took several forms. But two of the most common types in which Seán excelled could be mildly described as a runaway boarding of fast moving trams or in playing his game of hide and seek in busy thoroughfares. Not uncommonly he utilised the maze of streets and alleys that he knew so well and were of inestimable value in shaking off would-be pursuers. More often he would rather suddenly "dive" around a street corner, walk a short distance and then as suddenly turn back. In that way he would come face to face with his pursuers should any such be on his heels.

Around this period, also, the police were very busy in trying to recover British Army service rifles that

had been lost, stolen or bought from members of the British garrison stationed in Dublin or soldiers on leave from the war fronts. Many of these had "fallen" into the hands of the Volunteers by devious ways and for different sums of money - sometimes a few drinks, other times a few pounds, or for neither one or the other but by means of forceful persuasion. Sometimes an innocent visit of a Volunteer to within the precincts of military barracks resulted in a rifle being found, and quite a few were passed through barrack railings or over the barrack walls or in pre-arranged rendezvous outside. Many a Volunteer could tell exciting tales of such "lost, stolen and found" British service rifles and how they found their way into the service of Ireland. But some of the lost rifles were re-captured by the police and punishment was duly meted out to the "avaricious" Irish Volunteers in whose possession they were found.

On St. Patrick's Day, 17th March 1916, an event of great importance took place in Dublin. It was the parade and review of the Dublin Brigade Irish Volunteers in College Green. A scene that was reminiscent of another memorable occasion when another set of Irish Volunteers paraded in the same place. It was a far cry between the days of Grattan and that March day 1916. The contrast was also more striking, more pronounced. Then. Ireland had the semblance of a parliament of its own; even allowing for its many severe disabilities, and that it was prescribed in various ways, but in 1916 the Parliament House did not exist - it was the Bank of Ireland and Ireland was governed from London where the Home Rule Bill, the charter of self-government resided nice and smug on the Statute Book. Then again Grattan's Volunteers were fully regimented, accoutred

and armed, could drill, parade and arm in public and, unlike us, lead cannons to back up their demands. However, on this day in 1916 there was a big muster of Volunteers. Our first Battalion, under Comdt. Ned Daly, paraded at Parnell Sq. and were marched to the church of SS. Michael and John in Essex St. for Mass. That was an edifying sight and occasion, after which we marched along Dame St. and formed a hollow square in front of the Bank of Ireland in College Green. All traffic was held up while we went through our various movements, which lasted for nearly two hours, after which we marched back to our several rendezvous. All the men on parade that day were thrilled to the quick at that magnificent, imposing assemblage, even more so by the wonderful array of modern service rifles on parade, one Company of the 2nd Battalion in particular being conspicuous in that respect.

Came a Sunday in April when, acting on instruction of our Battalion Commandant, we were mobilised at Father Mathew Park. We had previously been informed that the police contemplated raiding it. The Volunteer plan was to forestall that raid, which did not materialise though a large force of police were assembled outside. After waiting for a couple of hours they departed without making any effort to raid. We accordingly followed suit, none the worse for the tension and excitement. This experience brought home to many Volunteers the dangers and vicissitudes of the moment. The air was filled with rumours - strange ugly rumours concerning the Irish Volunteer movement, Dublin Castle and the Irish "situation" at the time. The average Volunteer had no doubt in his mind on that score because there was ample evidence available to lead one

to conjecture that "things were moving on". Few could say how or why, except to point to the seemingly watchfulness of the police and the interests they were taking in Volunteer activities during the period. Individual Volunteers might accordingly be pardoned for being "on edges". We were, as could be well understood, anxious if not wholy inquisitive for information. My good companion, Frank McNally, whose confidence I had gained since I joined the Volunteers was always to the fore with news as he seemed to know quite a number of "big shots" on our side, many of whom were "in the know" in Volunteer circles. Frank was well versed in Volunteer affairs generally. I had, then, reason to think, judging by what I then learned, that the Volunteer movement was, if I might be pardoned for again using the term"on edges", and that the situation was frought with great possibilities and consequences. We had occasion, oh, how many times, during our habitually long walks together on week nights or Sunday afternoons of discussing current topics, and in particular the Volunteer affairs, and he, who was both candid and sincere, left no doubt in my mind about the serious trend of events. Of course I sensed that myself, and for more than one reason.

My position as a mobiliser in the Company - I was only one of several - had to an extent opened up my mind to unusual activities. It was noticeable that there was quite a spate of mobilisations carried out of late. The testing of the mobilisation scheme, with a view to securing the most rapid and effective attendance of the Company members at various times and centres, was one indication that conveyed to my mind that unusual things were afoot. These were called "test mobilisations" and

had no relation to ordinary drill parades or routine. An acquaintanceship between myself and a fellow mobiliser, Seán Kennedy, sprang up about this time. Then the feverish activity associated with the arming and equipping of our Company! Of course this was always carried out but it appeared to be more pronounced since the St. Patrick's Day Review. Shooting practice was also accelerated, greater scope was given to revolver and bayonet exercises. Another sign of the times was the innovation of carrying out night manoeuvres in the streets. One of these was conducted on a Saturday night around Stoneybatter, Arbour Hill, Oxmantown Road and North Circular Road , using the Colmcille Hall in Blackhall St. as Battalion headquarters for the operation. This was something new and unusual in our mode of training.

Our men were responding to these several forms of activity wholeheartedly and uncomplainingly. Indeed, they could not get enough to satiate their appetites, so keen and enthusiastic were they in Volunteer work. Again orders had been issued to the Irish Volunteers to take greater care for the safety of their rifles, and on a particular occasion at a public meeting held in the Anicent Concert Rooms in Brunswick (now Pearse) St. Eoin McNeill, the Volunteer Commander in Chief had expressed strong words on the score that the Volunteers would "protect their arms with their lives". As a dire direct warning to the British authorities, he declared that if force was used to disarm us, the Volunteers on their part would sell their lives dearly in order to frustrate any such move to disarm them.

How often did we, Frank and I, settle the affairs of Ireland, and always in the way that was fair and

equitable to Ireland. Any two Volunteers could do, and perhaps did, the same thing. Anyway, why should the British be here at all? Would we have to fight? If so, how and when? Ever and anon the adage "England's difficulties are Ireland's opportunites". The Irish Volunteers were a thorn in England's side. Everything pointed in the direction of a tussle, the nature of which few could foresee or comprehend. Would our movement go the way of the Fenian movement, the '48 movement and the '98 movement? Who could hazard a guess? Frank, however, always was in possession of real live information and that from reliable sources. Such news impressed me, for it appeared he was in the way of knowing many important personages in the Volunteers whose names became familiar to me by constant repetition. He would relate to me tit-bits of conversations which he had with such people on political and national affairs and generally Irish Volunteer affairs. He was, we both were, rankers - belonging to the predominant majority of Volunteers - rank and filers, and yet, common to all such folk, we were alive to some of the things going on and did not conceal our anxiety lest by chance or ill-luck that movement would be crushed. Thus we mused, argued and conjectured.

The following few days, the days of Holy Week, were given over to preparation for the field-day and manoeuvres that had been planned to be held on Easter Sunday. There was great anticipation for this event in our Company as well as all Companies of the Dublin Brigade Irish Volunteers. At our Company rally on that Thursday - Holy Thursday - night, April 20th, we received our final orders. Yet more striking than all, a special command not to leave Dublin unless for very urgent reasons was given to us. It was enjoined on us to keep as near home as possible,

and should we have to leave home, we were to leave news of where we could be easily found. Special care was to be exercised in protecting all arms and equipment entrusted to us, with the special proviso that they should be left in good working order. As well as these orders, the mobilisers were instructed to keep in immediate touch with the men in the event of a special mobilisation in the meantime. Many a Volunteer thought these orders - or some of them - unusual, and all were inquisitive.

On that same Holy Thursday night, during and after our drill parade there was brisk activity in our Company. The officers and adjutant were busy in distributing revolvers, various types of ammunition and equipment, to the men. Besides these things, groups of men were busy coming and going on various errands. A group of us were dispatched to Lieutenant Joe McGuinness's drapery shop in Lower Dorset St. on the task of transferring parcels of equipment etc. to "41". Arriving back, the stuff was duly distributed. Men were fitting on equipment, looking over revolvers, checking ammunition etc. Many of us were startled by the big quantities of material that changed hands on that night. We had reason to feel that we would not be the worst equipped Company on the following Sunday.

The next day, which was Good Friday and a holiday for quite a number of us, was given up to keeping in contact with each other. This was easy to do for outside religious service we had no means of disporting ourselves. Many Volunteers found the occasion a good one for looking over and cleaning their rifles and revolvers and seeing that their equipment was in good

serviceable order and put into safe quarters, which were the wisest precautions to take at the time. Many of us sought companionship of fellow Volunteers and thus repaired down town where we opined there would be sure to be a few of "the boys" to whom we could share confidences and, of course, discuss the "latest news". On this Good Friday it was quite a simple matter to meet fellow Volunteers in the principal streets and particularly at the Pillar. We were all eager for news. We had of late become addicted to the question "Any news?", so much so that there was no great impertinence or novelty in asking it then. Some had news which many of us were already aware of; others related news of strange happenings - or were these only rumours? They were of a mixed variety, extraordinary, and some seemed to be very far-fetched. Some of the Volunteers, who claimed that they were well "in the know" declared that there were strange things in the offing. Could they not argue with great gusto the strange "stand to" order which had been issued to us the night before? Was it not strange and unusual? But then some Volunteers were alarmists at times! Some even saw danger and feared danger when there was no apparent sign of it. There was sometimes the trouble that they knew too much or too little.

Truly we might and could be bewildered. Indeed many of us were, and for, as we thought, just cause. Of a surety the "stand to" order was a conundrum if ever there was one! Some considered it to mean that there was some trick in it. Some even thought that the British authorities were contemplating taking steps against us to put our movement out of commission, to disband us, to disarm us. Quite a likelihood too, and always a

possibility - perhaps more of a probability at such a time than ever before. It was so bewildering, so confusing. What if some of the rumours were true?

Easter Saturday - another day of rumours. Verily some of these rumours had a happy or unhappy knack of adding to our bewilderment and our confusion. Strange rumours about the war - German submarines in large numbers operating in the Irish sea - peculiar tidings concerning Volunteer affairs and supposed activities of Dublin Castle authorities. What was going on in the south of Ireland - in Kerry? Strange news about the motor car that went over the cliff at Killorglin. The sad news had been circulated that poor Charlie Monahan had lost his life in a mysterious motor fatality on Kerry coast. We felt sorrow for his loss. Some of the men who claimed to know things suggested that he was on Volunteer business. But some asked, "Why did he go there - why? Charlie was a good soul, a true and brave Volunteer, an expert mechanic and wireless operator who had come home from America.

Meanwhile the order about the big Field-day and manoeuvres for the following day held good. We mobilisers had confirmed that, and the men on our lists were notified. Our Battalion was to parade at Colmcille Hall. Still the inevitable question "any news"? which passed from Volunteer to Volunteer until it became threadbare and boring in the extreme. We didn't seem to be able to get away from using the words with greater frequency during the past couple of days. Everyone was eager for news, always in search for news and still more news. On this day we had more than a sufficiency of it, much of which was baffling and uncomprehensible. Volunteers spoke in whispers, in

secret, earnest conversation, one with another. It had become a common thing for them to act thus so that their words and opinions and the many confidential types of work in the Volunteers would not reach unfriendly ears. Even rumours they thought should not be too openly or too freely spoken. The element of mystery - or was it mystery - attaching to the various scraps of news or rumours seemed to be all too evident and found obvious responses in the conscious or sub-conscious minds of men who exchanged confidences in a situation which some people might term mystifying. There seemed to be no way of getting to the bottom of or to understand these strange rumours. Even as we eventually returned home, up to the fateful moment of going to sleep that night, the news and rumours which we had heard during that day disturbed us not a little.

The longed for Easter Sunday morning arrived at last. Undoubtedly every individual Volunteer would be astir early. I was and many a comrade living close-by was. Returning from early Mass I became suddenly aware of the cancellation of our programme for the day. The newsboys were more loud, more vociferous in advertising their sales of papers. The days issue of the "Independent" gave the news that Eoin MacNeill had countermanded the orders for that day - the proposed Field-day and manoeuvres for the day were cancelled. Was it true? Why should it appear in the public press anyway? Surely a strange procedure from the usual practice! Confusion confounded! Here was mystery - deep, hidden, peculiar mystery. Why should our plans be countermanded? Why should we be demobilised in this way? What was the compelling reason for it? These and a score of other questions flashed

across my mind - must flash across the minds of every individual Volunteer on hearing or reading this extraordinary news - the countermanding order.

What could any Volunteer do in such circumstances - obey McNeill's order? But what about the other order about "keeping in touch with one another", or better still to wait for Company orders. They would invariably be forthcoming if there was any alteration in the plans for the days work. Reason dictated that a good Volunteer would fall back on this procedure. It had been our guiding point, our guiding star, from the beginning of our career in the Volunteers. In the meantime, why not get into touch with some other member or members of our Company to find out what's what?

Strange as it may seem I was soon to receive orders from the Company Officer Commanding, Capt. Fahy. That order in effect cancelled the days programme and we were advised to await further orders. My position as mobiliser required me to notify a certain group of men of the changed plan. Before doing so I got into touch with another mobiliser of our Company, Seán Kennedy, who lived in a street nearby. He, too, had received the demobilisation order. Then to business we both went to acquaint our men, some of whom were in their homes and some absent for various causes. Any whom I met were alarmed, excited, bewildered by the news - especially McNeill's orders in the papers. Some even were in uniform ready to obey the original order for the days work and all were anxious to know the reasons for the cancellation.

There was alas nothing to be done that day. Volunteers sought the company of fellow Volunteers

again to ask the fateful question "any news?" I met more Volunteers down town that day than ever before. The same tense, anxious atmosphere prevailed as on the previous two days. This bombshell of cancelling our orders had a very shattering effect on us. The men showed it in their faces, expressed it in words that betokened unreality, uncertainty and portensions. Some even spoke in terms that signified real or impending danger. Most Volunteers were wondering why and for what cause the original plan to carry out a days manoeuvre was cancelled in this fashion.

There stood McNeill's countermanding order cancelling the Volunteer Field-day. No matter how we would debate, discuss and argue the point, the fact remained that we were definitely forbidden to move. Then on top of all this was the demobilisation order which had been issued by our respective Volunteer Unit Commanders. One mystery on top of another. What could we think? What could we discern of a situation that had us baffled, mystified and embarrassed? What kind of situation were we in that could give rise to such strange extraordinary and sensational moves? These and scores of other questions we asked ourselves; other Volunteers asked one another or asked themselves. We seemed never to receive a fitting answer so mystifying was the whole thing, and we always came back to McNeill's cancellation.

It was a tragic and painful situation we Volunteers felt ourselves in that day, without real authentic information as to the reason for the calling off the manoeuvres. We had, however, enough sense left to know that there must have been good reason for that. How could we know what it all meant? We knew, however,

that somehow, sometime, an answer would be forthcoming when the mystery - if mystery it was - would be resolved, in which event we would be better able to judge the wisdom or unwisdom of the whole proceedings.

Perhaps the answer was to come to some by strange paths or in strange ways - "await further orders". Had these words any fateful important meaning. They might mean anything or nothing. Supposing they were intended to mean something, what could that something mean for us ordinary Volunteers? Here was presented another mystery. Yet the order said "await further orders". Probably the issuing of the further orders might clarify the situation.

That night a new element of mystery was introduced into the already over-laden atmosphere of suspicion, anxiety and speculation then prevailing. This was given emphasis by a meeting of our Company officers and N.C.O.s called by Capt. Fahy which was held in the MacHale Branch of the Gaelic League in their rooms at the corner of Blessington St. and Berkeley St., over J.J. Walsh's premises. The Company mobilisers, myself included, were also present. There was a ring of importance attached to this assembly, which many of us present regarded as unusual, if not to a degree ominous. Ostensibly intended to check up on the mobilising system as carried out that day, we mobilisers were required to give a detailed report of our own and the men's compliance with the demobilisation orders. This was regarded as a test mobilisation to find out if all the men of the Company were duly contacted, and also to ascertain the length of time it took to mobilise all the men. Another important feature of the meeting was the repetition of the enjoiner

to hold ourselves in readiness for "further orders".

After the meeting we had time for mutual conversation between comrades on the strange events of the day. The most inquisitive amongst us sought the company of confidents or those whom we considered well in the know in order to obtain a true account of the political situation. Indeed, as an index of this natural desire to communicate with one another, several groups were to be seen in earnest conclave. I found myself in one of these groups and in the company of a few men whom I had long since regarded as trustworthy and reliable in the sense that they knew something from the "inside" of the movement. What scraps of information I picked up therein convinced me that we were in some kind of a jamb. Further to that there were strange hints about "fighting". This word played tricks with me when eventually I left the company of my friends on that Easter Sunday night. Here again was yet another mystery thought I.

Chapter 10.

The next morning which was Easter Monday, 24th April 1916, started with an air of mystery - the mysterious movements of Volunteers and the mysterious rumours of the Volunteers mobilising and of the Citizen Army being mobilised. Volunteers and members of the Citizen Army in the street where I resided were astir, and, if I was not mistaken, engaged on some mission or other. What would be their business? Curiosity aroused me, with the result that I contacted a fellow mobiliser, Seán Kennedy - for the purpose of finding out if he had any orders regarding our Company. He had no news, however, except that he had heard from a neighbour in Jervis St. that B Coy was being mobilised. We wondered what was on now - would our Company

be mobilised. I returned home to learn that a man had called. My orders were to mobilise men to be at Colmcille Hall at 10, full arms and equipment. It was close to that time now. I again got in touch with Seán Kennedy who had similar orders and I left word that I would call for him when I had completed my rounds, allowing, as I thought, ample time for him to mobilise his men, most of whom lived on the south side. Hence this mobilisation was to test our speed and endurance. Certainly it did so in my case for I had never yet been put to it to carry out an order that required to be executed so quickly and urgently.

It usually took well over an hour for me to complete the mobilising of the men on my list for I had to cover a fairly wide area. On this occasion I had to perform the work in a shorter space of time. No dilly dallying, no little chats as formerly. Just the plain orders and away. I doubt if anyone was more relieved than I when it was finished, although in the process I had to "use" one of my brothers to notify one of our men who, I feared, was a bit out of reach for me. Then to get myself ready - uniform, equipment etc. When this was accomplished, taking leave of my mother I went to Seán Kennedy's home, and he having to undergo the ordeal of leave taking we both proceeded on our journey. We were going out to fight for Ireland! We both had enough information to suggest that although our mobilisation orders did not mention it, this hurried gathering of the clans denoted fighting.

We hurried on, making a short detour in our journey to avoid passing the Bridewell police barracks, on our direct route to Colmcille Hall. Arriving at the

latter place, we beheld a large muster of men of the 1st Battalion, including a fair mixture of officers and men of our own (C) Coy. Commandant Ned Daly, our Battalion O/C, looked as usual so spic and span, every inch an officer and quite in command of himself. The same could be said of all the other Battalion Staff officers - Eamonn Morkan, Eamon Duggan and our own Company Officer, Frank Fahy, and Lieut. Joe McGuinness. There was a certain quiet dignity about them all. One could not fail to notice the hub-bub prevailing in the hall; men were to be seen engaged in looking over their rifles and revolvers, adjusting and arranging their equipment, sorting out their various possessions of ammunition and placing them into bandoliers, pouches, haversacks or ordinary coat pockets. Quite a deal of ammunition and equipment was being distributed to supplement existing individual stocks. Rifles too passed hands; rifles of various demoninations and calibres. What a miscellaneous selection of material was "on parade" that morning, and the human element of a mixed brand too.

The men were entering and had entered into this form of activity as if it were just "ordinary routine" - with gay spirits, good humouredly, and orderly in the extreme. Some of these they had, time and again been in the habit of doing preparatory to going on marches and manoeuvres. But on this morning there was more animation, greater bustle and flurry than was in evidence on any previous occasion. There was a feeling too of restrained excitement, of controlled emotions; the very atmosphere breathed of something that was hard to define or explain. It would be hard to assess the relationship between the men and that something were one to judge by exterior signs or appearances that could be so

deceptive and puzzling. One would of necessity have to search deep and far into the hidden recesses of mind and heart to reach a solution of the problem that many of these men were nursing and had made their very own. For in the midst of this busy scene there lurked the premonition that some big move was afoot and that this sudden mobilisation was of a different kind and nature. Perhaps not all those Volunteers who were assembled there were fully aware that their presence signified anything out of the ordinary. Some there were, however, who knew that they were assembled for the purpose of playing a man's part - a soldier's part - in the affray that was inevitably to accrue.

At last everything is ready. The men are in harness - armed, accoutred, and having been put through the usual military evolutions, brought into line. Then our Commandant, Ned Daly, faced us - addressed us:

"Men of the 1st Battalion:

I have an important announcement to make.... to strike a blow for Ireland...The Irish Republic.. will be... proclaimed..to day.. We rely on.. you men.. to do..your..duty.. and. give. loyal obedience.. to your officers.. If there.. is any.. man.. here.. that is not.. prepared .. to take.. the risk.. let him fall out of the ranks. We will not think any the worse of him".

All present showed signs of deep emotion, were spellbound by this announcement. Only for a split second after they had been addressed by their beloved O/C did the full consciousness of the dramatic import of the words become perceptible. During this time a strange uncanny silence prevailed. Suddenly as if by common accord the spell was broken, restraint and quietude was thrown aside. and a period of excitement ensued. Not a man moved out of the ranks - no one refused to go into the fight. As

if by magic life and movement came to the men! They gave unmistakable approval to the announcement. "Thank God the day has come at last" was given utterance to by many a Volunteer that day. The tension was over and men, many of whom were up to now preoccupied with their own thoughts and anxieties, gave vent and expression to their feelings in regard to the task awaiting fulfilment - the freeing of Ireland.

There was little time to spare for any prolonged demonstration or excitement, but full use was made of it to commune one with another in true Volunteer spirit and camaraderie so fondly born and tenderly nursed in a movement that had been initiated to uphold and defend the rights and liberties of the Irish people.

At last the bubble was burst! Was this the solution to the mystery or mysteries of the past few days? What bearing could this new move have on the previous cancellation order by McNeill and the subsequent demobilisation order by our Commanders? Were these part of the same mystery? Who could tell - who bothered to know at a time when we were going out to do and dare. We didn't even give a thought where and how the fight was to be waged. Our loyalty and trust were reposed in our commanders whom we idolised and respected.

Then a few more military movements in that Colmcille Hall and we were paraded outside in Blackhall St. where we were formed up in marching order and soon received the order "Quick march". Into Queen St. we went, turned left into Arran Quay. On reaching a point further down we entered Church St. where our "C" Coy was halted and the rest of the Battalion continued marching ahead along that street. We were soon brought to the

realisation of the importance of this move when Capt. Fahy and Lieut. McGuinness, in seemingly great haste, sub-divided our Company, and appointing N.C.O.s to certain groups ordered the taking over of various positions in the area. One group under Peadar Clancy was to take over Church St. Bridge; the group in which I was placed, under Sergeant Mark Wilson, was entrusted with the task of occupying position from corner of Hammond Lane to Sharkey's Iron Foundry which commanded Chancery Lane and embraced a line of houses between these points. Another group was sent to both the front and east end of the Four Courts. We weren't long in position when a deal of excitement arose due to a big burly policeman endeavouring to pass through our lines. When challenged he refused to halt or surrender. A scuffle ensued and the brave bobby was overpowered, but not before he had received a slight revolver shot in his elbow. In the midst of the melee he could be heard to say, "I'm as good an Irishman as any of ye". We admired his pluck but not his indiscretion, and because a good deal of valuable time was wasted in dealing with him at a time when there was every likelihood of the British troops coming to engage us. Every moment was valuable to us to erect obstructions and barricades across street corners and selected places, to occupy commanding buildings, to have men placed in the most advantageous way possible, and mainly and principally to occupy the Four Courts which we had learned was our garrison post.

As it was our position was precarious; situated as we were then we were merely a stones throw from the nearest barracks - the Royal Barracks - which distance could easily be covered in the space of fifteen or twenty minutes. Assuming that the British were early

apprised of our activities, we had reason to feel apprehensive that they were then on their way to tackle us. We assumed, also, that the movement of the policeman in question had relation to the spreading of the alarm and for that purpose he was making towards the Bridewell Police barracks which was situated within fifty yards of the nearest point where some of our men were stationed. Here our men were in an exposed position. It was fortunate that while this melee was going on some other men of the Company had gained access to the Four Courts. We could see some of them in the west side - the Records Office side. Sergeant Tommy Allen was in charge. Seán Kennedy, too, was there. Later another group entered the north side of the building facing the Bridewell, Seán Flood among them.

Prior to this a regular fusillade of shots had been heard, apparently a short distance away. We had reason to think that these heralded the approach of the British. Our group, or some of them, at the top of Chancery St. were in position behind what was intended as a barricade but was only an obstruction which had been hastily placed there, consisting of various odds and ends of material taken, or as we termed it commandeered, from nearby premises. There we were in various attitudes, some kneeling, some standing, and the wisest lying prone on the ground awaiting the "attack", while in some of the houses behind us other Volunteers were in position. We must have looked a strange motley of soldiers there with our miscellaneous array of guns, dressed in various fashions, some in Volunteer uniforms and others in their "Sunday best" attire, accentuated by a not too pronounced military order, deportment or even aggressiveness. It might even be perceived that we lacked training in manning a position

if notice was taken of the poor or indifferent show we made in taking cover. But then, to give us our due, we were not veteran soldiers or war veterans but only plain Volunteers governed by certain limitations in training and in armaments. We had our anxieties - indeed more than our share - for none of us knew for certain whether we would be able to stand up to this test. Besides few, and very very few indeed, knew or could guess what our reactions would be in a real fight. Few had even fired a single shot out of the guns they were carrying.

A very strange thing occurred applicable to some of the previous remarks. I happened to be one of the unwary ones situated in the aforementioned position. As I knelt all alert and attentive a shot rang out, fired by one of our men from behind where I was placed. I felt a burning sensation in my right ear and presumed I was hit. The shock almost sent me reeling. Imagine my plight and feelings when I discovered that the "marksman" had been so benevolent as to place the muzzle of his rifle on my shoulder, which he considered was a good resting position, and without further ado popped at - above all things - a horse that was bearing mad on us. Fortunately I was not injured, but the side of my face was "blacked" with powder from his Howth gun. I made a vow from that time on not to afford resting facilities for any gun or gunner, and I was happy to breathe a prayer of thanks that the poor horse was spared even less discomfiture than I was. By the by, the horse belonged to "them Lancers down there", which was the description given by a woman who passed shortly afterwards.

That first alarm, caused by the shooting which

sounded so close, the reason for which was not quite clear to us, and the presence of that horse and a few others - army horses at that - prowling in our vicinity engendered in us the feeling that the British were on the move to attack us. It was later intimated that there was a troop of Lancers in Charles St. They had taken refuge there after being attacked by our men a while before. In the flurry and excitement of the initial stages of our activity we hadn't time to think of anything except the question, a burning and pertinent one at that, would our forces be afforded sufficient time to gain and consolidate their prize - the Courts? We were now quite a reasonable period in action, holding a line from Church St. bridge along Church St., and as far as we were concerned in our little space no sign of a British uniform or force was to be seen. The die was cast! The crack of rifle and machine gun fire could be plainly heard, which seemed to indicate that the British had come into action in various parts of the city. We were not in a position to discern the correct location of the firing. The only thing that mattered was - we were in this thing and that being so would have to face the job which we had set out to do.

Whether due to early shooting or a matter of military arrangement, the group of which I was a member were moved into adjacent houses, some of us placed in rooms over a public-house in Church St. This building was behind the obstruction which we had hastily erected and manned sometime previously. Further, it was situated almost opposite the Records Office and gave a good field of fire and view of Chancery St. Certainly it was a better proposition for us than the street below, and while these dispositions were being effected additional Volunteers,

some in uniform and all armed, were moving along Church St. or from other directions to supplement our small forces. A fair deal of excitement was caused me by seeing a few of my former Fianna comrades, Eamon Martin, Garry and Paddy Holohan/included, and Paddy Daly passing by, coming from the direction of the Quays. I learned that they were returning from a special mission concerning the destruction of the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park that day. Enquiring as to the whereabouts of Seán Heuston, I was told that they didn't know. He might be further on, in which direction they went.

Prior to this I had seen my redoubtable companion - Frank McNally. His rifle slung on his shoulder, he had walked all the way from his home in Ballybough, a good couple of miles distance. It was all hours when he was informed of "the scrap". There were mutual warm handshakes and exchange of hearty greetings and a lively sense of being together again, but not for long as Frank was soon afterwards brought into the Courts. He related to me some news of affairs "down town" which impressed me that others besides ourselves were "out" in the fight. News too was leaking out from various sources of activities in other parts, especially in O'Connell St. where the "Shin Fayners"(Sinn Féiners) were fighting, and later some women and girls carrying quantities of household articles and sports goods passed us. We did not know for sometime that looting had broken out in that vicinity.

We were not destined to be long in our new post. This time we were moved into the Four Courts to take up position in the Land Registry opposite the Bridewell police barracks. A few of us, however, found ourselves

placed in a green grassy patch at the end of that structure. A huge railing divided us from the street. We didn't feel anything secure in our new position although we had a certain satisfaction of being able to lie prone on a slope that continued around the building. This gave us a good view of the approaches leading to our position and afforded us a fair amount of cover. Behind us were other members of our group under Sergt. Wilson. Later that evening, when darkness was falling, we were transferred there. Oh, what a relief!

Our immediate concern was the group of Lancers who were sniping at our building, and other buildings in the Courts, our men replying to same from their different types of guns. The different sounds caused us many sensations until we got used to them. What a vast difference between the dull heavy report of the "Howth" gun and the sharp ringing sound of the Lee Enfield, or the different music rendered by the Martini Lee Metford and Snider rifles. Ping! Plonk! and so on. Even so we felt safer there. In our former positions we had spent many an anxious moment. We had learned in lectures and read in text books that the real testing time for a soldier was prior to his baptism of fire, the initial stages of a conflict, after that, provided he had "guts" enough to carry himself through, he was considered a campaigner. We were of that mould? Even a soldier was not free from the sensation of fear, cowardice and other unmanly failings. We were less so? We who had never been under the baptism of fire before in a big way! After all we were only human and less regimented than the average soldier. We were in the raw state - only Volunteers limited in numbers, in training and equipment. How could we be expected to be ultra brave, be expected not to show

signs of fear and dread in the midst of danger and possibly imminent death which was lurking at every corner in this conflict. After all we poor mortals were victims of many weaknesses. Some there were who showed great bravery and great command of themselves. Could I allay the thoughts that surged on me from time to time about physical incapabilities to govern the slight tremors of dread and fear - or was it fear or only weakness - that assailed me. I owned to that weakness in the early stages of our going into action, but it was only of a temporary nature which when passed had left me in full command of my normal faculties. Outwardly I knew I showed no other sign but that of bravery and a keen sense of doing my bit faithfully and well. My testing time had long since passed away, leaving me nothing the worse for the experience.

The seizure of this building in which we were placed was the complete act for occupation of the Courts, which consisted of a big area. It was now our fortress if the Volunteers who seized it and controlled it were to have a say in the matter. The fact that it was spacious - indeed too spacious for the number of men garrisoning it - did not in the slightest degree detract from its importance as a military post that could be put to good use if and when required. Hardly more than a hundred men were in occupation of it on the first day. Much had been done to put it in a state of defence, doors barred and barricaded, windows barricaded, the various entrances close and blocked, sniping posts established at various vantage points, special precautions taken to defend entrances at which points sentry groups were placed and other groups

to support them. Places considered vulnerable to attack were specially guarded. In this way quite a number of men were utilised. Other arrangements had to be made such as garrison groups in the various buildings, cooking, feeding and commissariat, first aid post, quartermaster and armourers' stores. Then men had to be allotted to guard prisoners, which on the first day amounted to a few. These were a few of the matters that had to be attended to from the first and continued during the occupation.

Our garrison officers were evidently alive to and showed great activity in making the best possible use of the place and the men under their command. From the moment of the entry into and occupation of this huge pile, a system of inter-communication between the various posts was put into operation. It devolved on the respective individual post commanders , who were mostly N.C.O.s, to ensure the proper and effective working of this system in order to keep in touch with their headquarters which had been established in the main Courts building. Early on Tuesday my N.C.O., Mark Wilson, conducted me through the net-work of corridors, stairways, rooms and buildings, including one of the Courts proper - upstairs, downstairs, across landings, into and out of rooms, offices and aforementioned Courts. He wanted me to become acquainted with the lay-out of the section which divided us from Headquarters. I was to be a runner for carrying messages.

What a maze of intricacies! Truly a job and a half! I sensed that to carry out this task properly I should have to know the place thoroughly so as to be able to move freely through it at all times, and particularly during darkness for lighting of every description was prohibited

in any part under our command. Oh what an effort it cost, entailing as it undoubtedly did the loss of direction at times until one got used to it and cat-like found ones way easily. It also afforded me several thrills and many surprises. One of these, or should I say a number of these, related to the wide awakedness or alertness of a couple of our sentries posted midway between our post and headquarters. They were stationed on top of a stairs which I had to negotiate on my rounds. How often was I unceremoniously challenged, "Halt. Who goes there"? That challenge in the stillness of the night was disturbing. Woe to me if I attempted ascending the stairs before disclosing my identity. I had to get used to it and to the challenger who as often as not was Mick Howlett. I wished he would have a few winks now and then, himself and his aggressive gun.

Somehow I always felt a thrill when passing through one of the Courts. How desolate it looked in daylight, how gruesome in the darkness of the night. Even my stealthy footsteps made thunderous sounds which echoed and re-echoed, as I thought, far and wide. In the daytime when passing that way I could not resist looking at the judge's seat or throne or whatever you call it, and taking a glance at His Majesty's Coat-of-Arms, but at night no such things were in evidence - the place seemed to be dead. What a sensation indeed to be there at the "bar" with no other "brief" than a message from my post commander on a matter saying that "his liege subjects" were without grub since such and such a time, or tendering or requesting some military news of importance.

On one occasion when bearing a message from Sergt. Wilson I was taken in hands by Lt. McGuinness. He was a

lively active character, full of vigour and resource and always attentive to details concerning the work in hands. He could be found somehow and somewhere. Generally I reported to him. On that particular day Lt. "Mac" caught me by the arm and said, "You're just the man I want. I have a little job for you to do". With that he conducted me to a room overhead. This room was the second nearest to the corner at the Winetavern St. Bridge end and it faced Keegan's gun shop. Pointing to a pile of tin cans arranged on the floor, he said cooly and casually "We're expecting an attack by the British. These "bombs" are to be used if they attack", then taking one of the tin can bombs in his hand he demonstrated how they could be lighted and exploded. "All you've got to do", said he, "is to light the fuse, count five and throw the bomb quickly out through the window". How awfully simple, thought I. Yet I did not like their appearance. I did not even wish to have anything to do with them for I was torn between disliking them and doubting their effectiveness, principally the latter. But there was the command. It had to be obeyed. Infernal bombs! How they teased me, intimidated me, frightened me. Along with the aforesaid instructions, the good Lieutenant informed me that broken glass had been strewn on the street below as a means to warm them of the British approach to the position. Crinkled glass makes sounds when trodden on.

In the next room were my "C" Company companions, [illegible], Frank McNally, Seamus Byrne, George O'Flanagan and Jack Murphy of the 2nd Battalion and Con Donovan and Bon Carroll of some other units. Was I glad to see Frank - I hadn't seen him since Monday. He and they were covered all over with dust. Their room had, it seems, been subject to a good deal of "peppering"% It could be said in truth that they from an 18 pounder fired from Wood Quay, the far side of the Liffey

weren't of the down-hearted type - they were brave, humorous and chatty. Everything comes to an end, however, and so to my surprise, and partly to my regret, I had to leave good company and, as I thought, very doubtful bombs, and on the orders of Lt. McGuinness returned to my former post. But I carried back with me brotherly affection and good wishes in plenty.

Out little group, situated as we were at a point that afforded entrance to and exit from the Courts, was very busy at times. New Volunteers arrived for duty, dispatch bearers, officers and men moved hither and thither from there to the Father Mathew Hall which was our Battalion Headquarters, and vice versa. Even our wounded passed this way. One of these was poor Sergt. Tommy Allen. He had been seriously wounded in the early part of the week. It was with a pang of unutterable sorrow that we beheld him being carried on a stretcher bound for the Richmond Hospital. It was said that he was dead before he left the precincts of the Courts. Tommy Allen dead! He was one of our best, always so active, always so reliable as a man and as a Volunteer. His friends and confidents were legion, and he was beloved by all members of the Company - the "C" Coy he loved. Tommy was our first serious casualty. We felt the loss as a personal and national calamity.

Revolutions, insurrections and wars have sad and humorous flashes. One of the humorous ones which I relate centred around the figure and personality of one of our Volunteers, Seán Flood. Here was a dashing young fellow, about six feet high, alert, nimble and eager, one whom you might not seek to associate with a scrap, to wit an insurrection. He had often "popped" in and out

through that particular entrance. Dressed in white woollen sweater, khaki whipcord breeches and leggings, he looked anything but our type of Volunteer. He looked smart and business-like however. At the time in question, he had come to the gate claiming admittance, carrying, of all things, a nice fat lamb. This we learned had been commandeered from some butchers shop nearby. "Ma, ma", cried one of the funny ones of our party, to be replied to by a big round smile and laugh from Seán. Certainly he appeared to have the knack of carrying the poor beast, for it didn't take a feather out of Seán as the saying goes. Whether he "butchered" it or cooked it I was not made aware, but it must have been good food for the garrison.

Another time Seán was going out on some other errand - some said jokingly to collect chickens - a few of us were detailed to accompany him, to take up position across the roadway running from near the north east corner of the courts to the corner of a by-street that connected with Beresford Street. Less than a hundred yards away from where we were placed was Charles St. where the Lancers were in position. We were in a very exposed position there, having to "hug" the ground as there was no time to erect any form of protection. There was an exchange of "complimentary" fire between us and the Tommies while the Volunteers at our post supported us with covering fire. Seán's party made contact with another group of Volunteers on duty at a barricade outside Fenlon's store, Mary's Lane. To our surprise Seán did not return with any chickens, much to the chagrin of at least the funny one.

Things by that time had reached a certain pitch which seemed to suggest that the British were taking

energetic steps to dispute our mastery of a situation which on the first day had, by reason of our surprise coup, secured a foothold in Dublin. Our forces had since adopted a defensive attitude, content to hold what had already been won, indeed won at small cost in men and material. Obviously we were not a huge force, judging by the small number of men that gave response to the roll call on the Monday and the all too few men in the Courts and, from what we heard, at other points held by our Battalion in the area. Neither had we an over sufficiency of war materials. Few of us could boast to the possession of more than fifty rounds of ammunition, fewer still possessed more than that number. Consequently care had to be taken to "nurse" our stocks as no guarantee could be given of any replenishment. Such even were not our only sources of trouble - insufficient irregular food and want of adequate sleep were two other factors that we had to contend with. Yet we went our way smilingly, uncomplainingly, oblivious of every hardship but the desire to serve the cause. Many of us wished for a good sound night's sleep - lucky if we got forty winks in the turmoil going around.

News and rumours circulated freely and gratuitously. One of these referred to the "Germans being on the Naas Road and marching on Dublin". That news gave us a thrill. Every moment we expected to hear of their presence in Dublin, fighting by our side. Hours passed, days passed, and we found ourselves fighting our big fight alone and no Germans to be seen or heard except the too frequent repetition that they were "on the Naas Road". When it became known to some that they were too long on that road some of our men indulged in wisecracks and merriment over the rumour. Of course the entry of a German force in

Ireland at that time would have been welcomed by the Volunteers and would have gone a long way in swinging the pendulum in our favour, in a military sense, by adding to our numbers and increasing our armaments.

Various other forms of news reached us, in particular the documentary sheet "The Irish War News" as issued by our supreme authority, the Headquarters of "the Army of the Irish Republic". That was our new designation. We were no longer Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army or Hibernian Rifles - all these were welded into the one armed and trained force known as the Army of the Irish Republic or Irish Republican Army. Surely a colossal achievement to combine these separate and distinct forces into one Army. We learned also that a Provisional Government of the Irish Republic had been set up - Ireland was declared a Republic. Póblacht Abú! The General Post Office in O'Connell St. was Headquarters of the Army of the Irish Republic. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic was signed by Thomas Clarke, James Connolly, Pádraic Pearse, Joseph Plunkett, Thomas McDonough, Eamonn Ceannt and Seán MacDiarmada. Though no mention was made of the Fianna or Cumann na mBan, we knew that members of these bodies were giving service. Some of the Cumann na mBan were in the Courts and at Battalion Headquarters, Father Mathew Hall, in Church St., engaged in first-aid, cooking and other capacities.

News was filtering through concerning the fighting in other parts of the city. Civilians passing by and Volunteers who were on outside duties gave us many snatches of various kinds and forms. One day, Tuesday, a man whom I took to be Mr. William O'Brien, the Labour Leader, cycling past our post related the progress of

the fight - that our forces controlled the G.P.O. and that there was heavy fighting in the City Hall. This convinced us that Dublin was in our hands. But what of the rest of the country? Why was there no news of the other parts of Ireland?

Then came Wednesday, a day of intense activity. All were required to be on the alert due to the very marked increase of shooting going on in various parts of the city and near us as well. Sometimes it was spasmodic firin then a burst of machine gun fire, or a regular cannonading of both resembling a pitched battle being fought somewhere. Now and then the sound of explosion, some slight, some heavy, the latter sending a tremor through our building or ourselves, or perhaps would take us off our guard. One wondered what these were and their possible location. An odd lull would come into the proceedings at one point, with increased shooting at another or other spots. Between each such burst might be heard a dare-devil single shot - a sniper's shot perhaps - a challenging one or a defiant one sent in true "here I am, get me" style. Would it ever cease. It came and went like the sea waves, ebbing and flowing, flowing and ebbing, with little respite. Would our time come too? We could not afford to waste our ammunition; it was against orders to do so. We had no idea how long we would be required to support the Republic in arms. One thing we were cognizant of - just one thing - to hold our position. This was the main consideration. This we were doing, so far, so good.

That same night (Wednesday) we were witnesses of a new and perhaps extremely frightful feature in the long series of thrills associated with the fighting then increasing in intensity hourly. That was the burning of

the Linenhall Barracks, which consisted of a number of buildings of various sizes adjacent to the Kings Inns or "The Temple" as it was more commonly termed. This place, which was British Government property, had been utilised from time immemorial for several purposes and in quite a number of capacities, serving in turn as a Military Barracks, a recruiting station for postulants to the British Army, a military pay-office, and years previously as a centre for an Exhibition under the patronage of Lord and Lady Aberdeen, the former being the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland appointed by the British Government.

Though the Four Courts was a good quarter of a mile distance from Linenhall Barracks, we knew enough at the time that it was in close proximity to the Battalion fighting zone situated at the far or upper end of Church St. and that portion of North King St. which led into Bolton St. Indeed portion of the Linenhall barracks was within hailing distance to several of the posts held by our men there.

During the course of the fire we were duly informed that the place was being destroyed on our Battalion orders and for sound military reasons. Concerning the fire itself we knew not how or by what method it was kindled. We had only the means of viewing its burning from a safe distance. What we did behold, however, was awesome, fearsome and amazing - a spectacle beyond description and comprehension. It resembled a huge burning furnace, a veritable inferno. The belching flames that shot skyward lit up a wide area, our own area included, and transformed an otherwise dark night into uncommonly lurid brightness, brighter even than daylight. That

lighting effect was detrimental and threatening to us who were following the course of performing our duties in the darkness and under the cover of night. Goodness knows we had many troubles to contend with in groping in the dark or semi-darkness, but in consequence of the fire these troubles were magnified considerably and we were freely presented with a too generous illumination which we dare not avail of at the peril of our precious lives. Discretion in such circumstances was better than valour. Accordingly our best and safest course was to lie low, to see without being seen. While it lasted a certain feeling of uneasiness and anxiety predominated, accentuated by the thought that our post and other posts in the area were exposed to view. Besides, we saw that our humble, slender and not too secure system of window barricading was insufficient to keep out the light which penetrated many crevices and openings into the rooms we were occupying. Thus movement on our part was difficult where such had to be done, especially in relieving sniping posts or changing guards the greatest care and caution had to be exercised. When eventually the fire burned out many a person gave a tremendous sigh of relief.

On the Thursday our little garrison was allotted the task of taking over the Bridewell police barracks. During the previous few days many Volunteers wondered why this place was not occupied by our forces. Possibly it wasn't considered to be of much military importance whether occupied or not previously. It was the fortunes of war that an alteration in that plan should be made and become effective by the presence of Lieutenant McGuinness who came to our post and announced the decision that it should forthwith come under our control. He, accompanied by our post commander, Sergt. Wilson, and some dozen or

more of us took over the buildings. To our surprise the place was empty. It wasn't until a considerable time afterwards that some of our men came across a number of policemen huddled in a portion of the detention prison. They certainly looked the worse of the wear, dishevelled and hungry. Thus we acquired an additional block of buildings consisting of a court-house, a police barracks and a prison, and a few prisoners on our hands to feed.

This acquisition was not of any great military importance as a defensive position or post, for most of it was low-sized, cramped and sheltered from view at both ends. The only field of view we had was the rear of the Four Courts, garrisoned by our own forces, and an oblique view on its north east corner due to the position of a line of houses situated on the eastern part of our building. However, ours not to reason why; hence to your tents O Israel! We were placed to garrison it. Meanwhile we secured a little "booty", to wit a few revolvers of various calibres and an odd rifle.

By this time many if not all of us were feeling the worse for a good sleep. Some were indeed lucky to have got an odd hours slumber off duty, but the average among us had lost the sense of sleep. There were times when sleep would overtake us. Such occasions were when one was standing or kneeling at a window on the look-out for enemy movement. Then one might unconsciously dose off, oblivious of everything going on round about and suddenly wake up with a start wondering the why and wherefore of his presence. It was an awful predicament to be in - this human element that seemed to lull one, particularly during the night. Just a few times I had seen others while on duty at a window "napping". I myself fell a

victim to the same on that night in the Bridewell for I was 'dead beat' and unable to keep my eyes open for any other length of time. It might have lasted for seconds or minutes. When I came to I found myself standing at a window grasping a rifle, the muzzle of which was securely resting on portion of the barricading. Naturally I upbraided myself for the weakness and promised that I would not commit this error so easily again.

The following night our policemen prisoners were taken from our custody and brought to our Battalion headquarters at the Father Mathew Hall to be released as well as a group of soldiers and British personnel captured at the Linenhall barracks. Fighting had increased considerably in Upr. Church St. area, and reinforcements being required a number of the men, in charge of Sergt. M. O'Flanagan and including his brother Paddy, were dispatched there. Commandant Ned Daly visited us during this occasion, looking as he always was - the perfect officer and soldier. Carrying a service rifle slung on his shoulder, he conducted the police to safety. The transference of some of our men to re-inforce the position in King St. convinced us that the British were making a big effort there to obtain a foothold in our area, with a view to crushing us. We had heard accounts of the wonderful deeds of heroism and daring of the Volunteers there, who were contesting every inch of ground and fighting like battle seasoned soldiers. Judging by accounts given us of the fighting there, and the continuous fusilade of shooting coming from that direction, it was obvious that our men were going through a gruelling time. The chances were that we might at any moment be attacked.

Indeed it was hourly expected, especially since the day the British used artillery fire on the Four Courts, the south-east corner of which received a pouncing, and the increasing rifle and machine gun fire portended such a move. So we were held on the alert, always ready for any call and for any emergency. We had grown accustomed to the hide and seek tactics of the other side, and in turn had played not an inconsiderable part in the sniping "feats" appropriate to the occasion. There were, however, times when we couldn't give blow for blow owing to our limited supplies.

It did not require much reasoning on our part to realise the gravity of our position. There was every indication of impending danger; one such was the very threatening and serious movement being put into motion by the British on our positions at Nth. King St. This move, if successful, would imperil us who garrisoned the Four Courts proper. At the moment that position was not being assailed by means of a movable attack, like as was going on in King St., though it was under constant unceasing sniping fire. The expectations were that a similar move might be made sooner or later - might be launched from the Mary's Abbey direction. Every hour that passed brought us immeasurably nearer to the fateful climax which was bound to be reached in order to decide the issue of this struggle. Likewise every hour that passed increased the tension then prevailing among us.

We had our orders, which could be summarised in very simple words "lie low", hold your fire for the right moment, be vigilant, alert and well prepared. Everything depended on us to give of our best in any situation that might arise. We also had reason to be assured that our

comrades in the opposite buildings were alive to the situation, as we were, on that day - Friday.

Still the British made no attack on our positions. All through the day there was much coming and going of Volunteers in the vicinity of the Courts. Perhaps the attack will be launched in the darkness of the night! But the hours sped slowly and menacingly. The dawn of another day was ushered in and still the long anticipated order to get going in earnest was not issued. No such form of battle materialised, much to the surprise and wonder of most of us. What did occur was a strange lull in the fighting. What could this mean? It was unreal, unbelievable, that a sudden, an almost instantaneous cessation of hostilities should ensue at a time when many of us were thinking of, and were posed for, a big "show down". This new phase was in vivid contrast to the warlike activity of a few moments previously. What did it signify?

Perhaps we should not have been so unduly alarmed or unreasonably anxious about this new turn in events - the changing of the scene from lull to storm, from storm to lull. After all we had gone through several periods of such during the past six days and nights, periods of intense activity followed by periods of quietude and vice versa. Yet none were so perfect or so pronounced as this one. It gave one an uneasy troublous feeling and got on one's nerves. Why should such happen at a time when there was no indication that the climax had been reached or that one side or the other held the battle in their hands?

Everything seemed to be moving in cycles. Rumours held sway, rumours of various types, various kinds, rumours of the sore trial of our Volunteer comrades at King St., rumours of the British gaining ground and moving in, of our men falling back, fighting all the time against heavy odds and a good deal of sacrifice, news of the continual movement of Volunteer officers through the rear entrance of the Courts (we could see some of this ourselves), rumours that our men along Church St. were also getting it hard, some were being forced back, rumours of a "last stand in the Courts", rumours of a truce. Then, at the height of all these nerve wrecking evil tidings, we are rudely brought to our sense of the reality of things and ordered to "report ourselves at the Courts". Thus we move again, back to our former positions and yet beyond it to the Courtyard. Here we witness an extraordinary spectacle. Quite a goodly number of Volunteers are already there. Here for the first time during that week we met comrades of whom we had had no tidings, some whom we knew were "out" and others whom we couldn't ascertain were in the fight or not. Greetings were brief and sparse. The weight of the rumours and the news forbid anything in the nature of gaiety and jollification. None showed the least eagerness for enthusiasm or animation. This was a sad and doleful scene.

The men too looked sad, dispirited and very much out of place. At other times, and in other circumstances, they were known to be so different, bright, joyous, good humoured, fond of raising fun or making a pun. But these things were for other days and other occasions. Yet withal, and in spite of all, they showed strength and

character, each man of them, those who had already assembled and those who were assembling. We were coming in, singly, in pairs and in groups, coming from various posts and positions in the vicinity. All looked as if they had gone "through the mill" during the past few days, some worse than others. It was in their faces, their general appearance, and even their clothes showed signs that they had been campaigning. Some were unwashed, unkempt, dust from head to feet. Some were even unrecognisable in their "war paint", their uniforms or their "Sunday best" being spoiled by the grime, rents and bulges of a service that was neither too kind or too personal.

Why? Ah, why? We were afraid to ask it. That word formed in our hearts and was on our lips - why? During this period of confused and of enforced humiliation we were brought to our senses by the issuing of orders of our officers. We were again on parade. Then Commandant Daly moved in front and faced us. He spoke slowly and distinctly. We listened attentively, hardly breathing lest we would miss even a solitary word: "Commandant Pearse orders.. unconditional surrender... to save...women and children.. Dublin". Commandant Daly praised us for the part we had played in the fight. No matter what may happen to us we had done our duty and redeemed Ireland's name. So the mystery was solved. We must surrender - unconditionally surrender. So that's it in its bold bald nakedness. Could it be possible that there was nothing else to do but to capitulate. It was too true. "Better to have fought it out" some one said. Were we beaten, over-awed, over-powered? Our minds lingered on the words, unable to make sense of the thing. We are dazed, dumb-founded and perplexed.

Yet surrender it was to be. Men bore it in their faces, mad with the very thought of it. This was the end, the tragic ending to a gallant fight, and possibly the end of us and our proud associations. No rumour was more true, clearer or better founded. Sad and bitter the news came to us that day. Here we were, Volunteers from our own C Coy, Volunteers from our 1st Battalion, Volunteers from other Battalions who had linked up with us in the fight, and even civilians with no past connections with our movement who had thrown in their lot with us in the venture to make Ireland free. Here were our officers - our loved and loyal officers - Commandant Ned Daly, Eamonn Morkan, Eamonn Duggan, Piaras Beaslaoi, Liam O'Carroll, Dinny O'Callaghan, Capt. Frank Fahy, Lt. Joe McGuinness, Peadar Clancy. They did not look happier than we. Sadness predominated the scene.

Oh, the striking contrast between this "gathering of the Clans" and that of a few days previously. Then we were called together to "go out" and fight. We had obeyed that call with a light heart. Alas our recall to the Courts on that Saturday April 29th 1916 signalled our surrender, to give up the fight. Much had happened in the meantime to support the idea that Irishmen could fight in Ireland and for Ireland. The doubting ones have been abashed and put to shame that dared to accuse us of being too cowardly or too respectable to fight. No more "down on your knees, you half baked rebels" and the other foul insulting epithets about us playing soldiers. That is all finished now. We had fought - we were beaten; we made the bid and whatever the cause of our failures, cowardice was not one of them.

Chapter 11.

Even in the moments of our misery as we stood there not one word of regret was uttered for the part they had taken in the fight. Rather did the men regret its sad termination in that way. They were beside themselves with anger, indignation and resentment. They knew, however, that they had no other choice but to acquiesce. Their course was run. We had lost the fight. It was a bitter pill to swallow. The full consciousness of our failure came to us when, as a proof of our token to surrender, we lay down our arms, some even threw them not too gently or too carefully in a pile on the ground, while others broke them or tore parts of the mechanism from them. That completed, the British soldiers arrived and formed a guard around us. A word of command then and we were marched out of the Four Courts into the street outside and across Winetavern St. bridge. At this point a few civilians and soldiers were assembled down Essex Quay. We marched across Grattan Bridge into Capel St., Parnell St., and coming to the Parnell Monument we turned into Upr. O'Connell St. where we were halted. Here we were searched, our small arms and equipment being placed on the ground. Then an inventory of our names, addresses and other particulars were taken. That completed we turned about again and marched into the green sward in front of the Rotunda Hospital under the watchful eyes of a group of policemen and soldiers. There we remained that night, cold, miserable, hungry and tired, and the canopy of Heaven for a roof. Volunteers from the G.P.O. area were there also. We numbered a few hundred, including some members of Cumann na mBan. What solace, or comfort, could we have in such a tiny space couped up,

cramped and resting at all points.

We must have looked frightful, judging by the curious peering of the soldiery. During the night some men were taken away from the group and brought to other places near hand. Oh, the agony of that night vigil, no privacy, no sympathy - nothing but threats and orders to keep in the grass - an odd kick if you didn't. We were glad when morning came? Glad even to be on the move again. We knew not in what direction we were to follow or the rendezvous. We were marched through O'Connell St. - O'Connell St. that was - past the G.P.O. which was still burning, across the city under heavy guard, up Cork Hill, Christchurch Place. We were not too kindly treated at one point there. Some women even spat at us, abused us and cursed us. On and on, our legs so tired after our week's ordeal we were unable to keep continual pace. At last we halted outside the Richmond Barracks, Kilmainham. When eventually we were marched into and rested in the Barrack square, we were guarded, ironically enough, by the Royal Irish Regiment, the men of which were none too fraternising or considerate and adopted the domineering and threatening attitude of being bosses of the show and showered on us much abuse, insolence and ill will. Brian O'Higgins was beside me as we stood in that barrack square. Brian O'Higgins - who amongst us was not familiar with Brian, his personality and his poems? The gay, brilliant, versatile Brian na Banban whose verses and songs had stirred us to such depths during the past number of years. Few men could be so sincere, more loyal and so true than he. Every line of his verses, ballads and ditties breathed of love for Ireland and love for the Gael. He could pen a song, make a pun in verse

and give vocal and musical expression to his compositions on concert platform. He was the soul of humour, the very personification of wit, anger and patriotism, which he welded into his poetical art with a practical and original flare that was compelling, impressive, endemic in the extreme. We had reason for considering him our Poet Laureate, our Poet of the nation. More than either of these, he was our Poet of the Revolution, Poet of the Insurrection. Unlike most poets in the world, excluding some of our own such as Pearse, McDonough and Plunkett, he combined the role of the pen with that of the sword and rifle, for he lived his part as poet, patriot and soldier.

Who among that throng of prisoners did not know Brian by his songs? And what a variety of songs he penned; songs of many types, themes and forms. Could I but recall many of these, the humorous ones in particular would act as a tonic. His ditty composed at the time when Lady Aberdeen was carrying on her "holy" anti-consumption crusade, which cost many a poor factory girl the loss of a job, was full of satire and humour:

Goats' milk will end all the rebelly schemings,
The storing of rifles, of guns and of pikes;
It will quieten our fears, our hopes and our dreamings
Of Irish and Orangemen lining the dykes.
The hens and the chickens may go to the dickens,
The cats and the kittens an anthem will sing;
And the first thing the babies will lilt in their cradles
Will be "God save our gracious and glorious King.

Chorus.

So hurry up boys, the wars are all over,
Rush to the barracks and get out your pay;
Nothing to do but to sit in the clover
Milking a goat at a shilling a day.

or his breezy satirical ballad on the"Dear D.I.", depicting the story of the loss of an "address":

In a place they call Dunmore,
Where rogues and rebels swarm by the dozen and the score;
Where they look on every peeler as a Dublin Castle spy
And hate the very swagger of their own D.I.

And where it was and where it is and where it will remain,
Is a puzzle making porridge now of every peeler's brain;
The ladies all are puzzled and the gentry curse and cry
Because the "thing" has gone forever from the Dear D.I.

But in more sober, more patriotic vein, Brian's "Dawning of the Day" which was a favourite marching song of the Fianna:

Freedom's bright and blessed Day,
  Ireland free from Saxon sway,
Lift your hearts and pray God speed us,
  To the Dawning of the Day.

Who had not heard of his Eight Millions of Englishmen, portion of which ran?:

Eight millions of Englishmen,
  Of mafficking manly men,
  Of beef-eating bulldog men;
We're shy of the guns
  But we'll beggar the Huns
Eight millions of Englishmen.

Who among the Fianna boys didn't remember him for his "Marching Song of Na Fianna Éireann"?:

On for Freedom na Fianna Éireann,
  Let we our faces towards the dawning day -
The day in our own land
  When strength and daring
Shall end for evermore
  The Saxon sway.

Strong be our hands like na Fianna Éireann,
  That won for her glory in days that are gone;
Clean be our thinking and truthful our speaking
  That we may deserve her when the day is won.

So there was Brian in the flesh and, like us, a prisoner. He looked as carefree, sustained and brave as ever he was, showing no sign of a tremor, no trait of concern or nervousness, indeed less than any of us. But he did look a bit shaken, tired and spent. We all did after the ordeal of the week's fighting.

We had an endless wait before we were ushered into rooms in the barrack building. It was exhausting, humiliating, cruel. Some of us hadn't eaten a morsel of food within twenty four hours, some longer; hadn't known sleep for the past six days, no change of clothes in the same period. What a happy respite even to sit on the bare floor to rest for a while. Some even chanced to sleep, unable to remain awake any longer. Not much rest was forthcoming for detectives were busy picking out men from the group and taking them away. How our hearts ached for them. God only knew where they were going.

A strange murmur of voices sounded through the room. Starting from a distant corner, it gradually rose in audibility until at length it reached the ears of all assembled. Then a flutter spread through the room as men changed their positions and knelt in prayerful attitude to recite Mary's prayer - the Rosary - while our guards looked on wondering what it was all about. It was the one bright speck in the scene that gave us new vigour and increased courage.

We were detained some hours in that place. Our cup of sorrow and desolation we drank to the dregs. What care we what they do to us. After a long lapse we were given our first meal, a tin of bully-beef (pressed beef) between two persons and some war biscuits, hard, dry, insipid substance that tested ones gums and one's teeth if not one's digestive organs. That is the stuff the soldiers have to live on when on active service. Poor fellows! Some called the biscuits dog biscuits. Perhaps the 'dish' was better than starvation, not to mention the fun some of our men got out of trying to

unloose the bully beef from the tins. By the time we had digested the contents an acme of relaxation was granted us but that was not to last for long. Some other move was afoot and so it happened that we were conducted from the room and lined up in the Barrack square. But not all the men got that far for another weeding out of the good from the bad had been carried out as we were leaving the room. As we reached the door a couple of detectives gave us "the look over", closely examined us and put us some questions. Thus the segregation was effected. We knew not where the "bad ones" went or why they were held back, but we surmised that if the powers that be deemed them to be "bad" they were being detained for some special reason. It was only when we assembled in the square that the full import of the move dawned on us - our leaders were not present.

Another long delay there. Then we were got into marching order and with the inevitable guards we passed through the gates on to the streets again. Back towards the city again, along the quays. Would there be an end to this marching and counter marching. We were weary and worn out with the strain. We had to struggle on trying to keep step and some semblance of military bearing and precision. The Anna Liffey appeared long to us that day. We eventually reached O'Connell Bridge, and moving on tramp, tramp, passed the Custom House, wended our weary footsteps towards the North Wall. At last we were halted at one of the shipping sheds. Why here above all places? We boarded a ship that was berthed there and were safely and gingerly placed in one of the cargo holds - packed like sardines. Just a human cargo which when set right formed the right type of ballast for voyaging. Our

curiosity grew to suspicion.

We were being exiled. We knew not where the British were taking us or what they intended doing with us. We didn't even care one way or the other. Anyway Irish rebels had no choice in the matter. We deemed ourselves in a sore sorry plight. Pity we didn't expect; we didn't ask for it, we did not get it. One thing stood us in good stead - it was our mental balance. It somehow helped us to make light of our dreadful position and to show, even if we did not appear so, a resignation to our fate. We asked ourselves many questions. Our comrades asked questions of us: "What do they intend doing with us? Are they going to sink us in the Irish Sea? They could do it and say that a German submarine did it! Wish they would, couldn't be much worse than this. Supposing a German submarine does sink the ship. Then the Tommies will be "in the same boat" as us (meaning in the same fix as us) came the rejoiner. In that event would they try to save us?"

Our appalling misery was not in the slightest degree lessened by the sneering threatening attitude and behaviour of our guards. The atmosphere in that ship's hold was intolerable, unbearable. It stank in one's nostrils. We again said the Rosary - our only solace now. The ship began to move. We were on the way. Some of our men asked for a drink of water. A soldier hinted at the kind of water he would give him - a .. bullet. After a long delay a bucket of water arrived, but alas, we had no drinking receptacle. Drink it from the bucket? No. To ease the situation somebody produced an empty 'bully' tin to serve the purpose. The ship was well on its way plunging ahead,

we being tossed and rocked alternatively. It rocked some of our men to sleep. I awoke, or rather was awakened, and thought the ship was stopped. I wondered for what cause and learned that we had arrived at some port. We were disembarked then. Somebody said it was Holyhead. We were then conducted on to the platform and our party divided in two. The party of which I was a unit boarded the train on the right, the other party on the left side of the platform. More delays and many more orders issued. There were armed guards everywhere in the train, in corridors, in each and every compartment. English conscripts! We were not conscripts. Some of the guards were human, had to "do their duty and all that". Some showed pity, others harshness. Why should we mind, for after all we were only prisoners. The train was making headway. Some of our men knew some of the places through which we passed and said it was north Wales. The train stopped. We moved on to the platform, formed up and were marched under our strong armed escort into what seemed a nice residential district. It looked nice after our experience of the last couple of days. A group of people were assembled outside a big building where we were halted. They apparently did not relish our presence there. They looked and expressed themselves in unmistakable tones, unfriendly and aggressive. Our English guards had to show sternest measures in keeping a passage for us Irish rebels as we were moved into a gateway inside of which was a nice well-kept lawn and a prison. Knutsford Jail was its name.

Knutsford jail on Monday the first of May 1916 looked to us Irish prisoners just what it was - a prison.

We didn't know anything about its geographical position, and, what was more to the point, cared less. Of course in other circumstances we might have cared to know all about the place, its history as a prison as well as all matters appertaining to the town or district of Knutsford in Cheshire. But prisoners like us had limited powers of observation and prescribed rights to ascertain such particulars. Hence we had no option but to wait and see, to learn and to wonder, leaving the future to furnish the required data on the subject. Suffice for the nonce to appraise that we entered the portals of that 'stately' institution on that May morning, and when all the usual formalities of handing over and receiving us prisoners were duly arranged we were presented to the interior. Horror of horrors! There it was, a prison, or to be more explicit, the "wing" of a prison, a substantial sized structure that communicated with the main hall or dormitory that communicated with other "wings" and so on and so forth. The wing in which I was "lodged" was well apportioned and spaced to admit of an equal number of rooms called cells, which continued from the ground floor up to the fourth storey or landing. There was a profusion of iron grills, iron railings and iron netting on the aforesaid landings and on the stairways which communicated to them. Everything seemed symmetrical and strangely orderly, even the heavy iron, or was it steel doors were more so. The whole lot when viewed from a prospective prisoner's angle looked what it was - durance vile, forbidding, threatening and melancholy.

In accordance with the usual traditions and normal routine of the institution, each of us were assigned to separate cells. From now on we would be recognised not by

our personal names only but by an alphabetical and numerical marking which ran something like this: a letter of the alphabet indicated the wing, a number indicated the particular landing and similarly a number was used to denote the location of the cell. As an example, if a person was described thus: B four six or C one nine the solution to the problem meaning B Wing, fourth landing and sixth cell, or C wing, 1st landing and ninth cell respectively. Thus I was allotted to one of the cells on the third landing B wing. The next and not the least important stage of our entry into possession of our new tenancy was soon vouchsafed us when each individual prisoner was ceremoniously locked safely in his cell. But before that had happened a simple formality had been introduced to make him aware of prison regulations and the dire penalties attaching to insubordination etc. We were, of course, to be under strict military surveillance and equally strict military control and discipline and no horse play would be allowed. We plainly perceived that the military caste controlling this guest house of His Majesty were the very essence of candour and thoroughness for they provided for everything even to the tiniest morsel of food, to the barest personal necessities, to the simplest of furniture and the absolute regulation of our time by day or night.

It was quite a simple affair to place one in a cell, and as simple a matter to feel that when there one becomes master of all he surveys. But it comes as a shock nevertheless to find oneself for the first time in such surroundings. It had that effect on me. One felt that the world had somehow ceased to be, that human kind no longer existed, that individualism as a quality of human progress was a thing of the past and that the only

value of one's relationship with life was represented by a card index system epitomised by a medley of alphabetical and numerical signs. To be suddenly thrown into a cell and to become aware of your insignificance and helplessness was forsooth an experience of no small moment. To look around and behold your small, compact "home" consisting of four bare walls, at one side of which was a big ponderous door and opposite it a window, big inside but tapered to small dimensions on the off side, with tiny panels of glass to permit light. Next to the door was a slot panel for serving meals. What thoughts could enter one's mind in the presence of this accentuated nothingness and shabbiness. With what concern could one feel the too meagre possessions with which the cell was endowed, the bed which consisted of three loose boards resting on two trestle frames that were intended to keep the bed about four inches from the ground, no mattress, spring or pillow, and for covering two army blankets; a built in table near the door and a stool to sit on. Our haberdashery consisted of a plate, a mug and a wooden spoon and a bed chamber. Truly an abbreviated assortment of personal ware.

Our regular routine of duties consisted of rising early in the morning, partaking of simple ablutions and as simple breakfast, cleaning and tidying of cell, inspection, and throughout the rest of the day other meals which were termed dinner and tea. We had no exercise and only saw some of our comrades on such rare occasions as parade to the toilets. Nothing to read, nothing to do but tidy the cell and pace up and down and across the allotted space of our cells. That pacing was laborious, maddening to a degree except that it helped to keep one's blood circulating to keep life and fitness in one's limbs.

This continual form of exercise got on one's nerves at times - one performed it mechanically, by impulse rather than design. At other times it had the effect of soothing the evil workings of one's mind, helped to keep one's thoughts and mental facilities alive and active. It became as it were a common ritual that had to be performed, that must be carried out in face of the ordeal of "close confinement". It was not confined to one cell or perhaps to one prisoner - this cell walking. My comrades on both sides of my abode, Seán Kennedy and I think Seán Hynes, were likewise addicted to the habit. Possibly each of us pursued this course rather than indulge in sitting down and brooding over our hard lot. Occasionally one would hear the strain of an Irish song or air, a few bars, and then the coarse command, "Stop that singing". The silence, dread and drear, of the day or evening was often broken by the melodious warbles of the whistling fraternity whose "Lark in the clear air" or "Cualin" would cause a flutter in our heart-strings and á thrill to run through our fibres, only to suffer the same sad fate of other performers, "Stop that whistling" from the altogether too assiduous sentry outside or his confrere military warder inside the prison. For no such exhibitions of vocal or musical talent and no noise whatever was permitted to disturb the grave-like gloom and calm of our majestic prison.

Time had little meaning to us. To our jailers it was of absorbing and paramount importance that recorded the rendering of some service or some service rendered. The jailers worked according to schedule, every minute, every hour of the day. Our working periods were few and far between and such had only relationship to such simple

matters of washing our hands and faces once a day, of cleaning our cells, of folding our blankets, of keeping our food and other utensils clean and of eating our meals, all of which tasks could easily be disposed of within the space of a couple of hours leaving four or more times that length of time to our dear selves and our thoughts and wandering the length of our cells. Time then for us was a nightmare. Nay more it was a misnomer, a hideous sham and a veritable riddle. Situated as we were under such a strict code of close confinement, few means were available to know the time of day, dates or months, excluding, of course, the regular sequence of meal hours, hours for rising and hours for retiring and a few minor regular performances. Outside of these we had to rely on some method of measuring time, one of which was by means of the sun. This was fascinating work indeed. Otherwise hours appeared like days and days like weeks.

To the credit of our jailers then we had more time on our hands than was good for us. They always made it a rule to observe that we did not fritter away our own time on any form of recreation, pursuit, or even to sleep in the daytime, anything that was not in accordance with regulations. Not that one could get much bodily comfort in resting or sleeping on bare boards which served as a bed. It was quite an ordeal enough to have to suffer pains and aches during the night without having to share similar hardships in the daytime. Oh such dire, such cruel punishment! A couple of nights of this "blissful reposing comfort" was ample time to blacken and bruise even the most hardened, seasoned human flesh and send pains and aches through every bone and muscle in the body until one felt the very personification

of the rheumatic sufferer embodied in the slogan of a then patent medicine advertisement "every picture tells a story". To add to our bodily aches we had no recourse but to suffer the thing in patience or impateince,with good grace or no grace at all, and hoping in the meantime that we might preserve our flesh at the expense of our bones although there was no guarantee that that would be secured on the hard and fast diet so liberally served to us under various guises and in devious forms.

This dieting, or dietary scale, was seemingly a prison tradition handed down through the ages like an old piece of furniture or a family heirloom from father to son and his heirs and successors. Indeed it was worse. It was the very opposite of anything imaginable or understood in the fine arts of cookery or domestic service or science. For breakfast we had a mug of tea, a plate of skilly and a junk of bread. I could never find out what happened to the tea, whether it got lost in the kitchen wash up or was incorporated in it. I never tasted anything that less resembled tea than this concoction. In the initial stage of one's incarceration a bad or indifferent brew of tea might be overlooked and passed over with the fervent hope that the next one would be better. But when the error was acutely repeated day in and day out one prayed that all kinds of things would happen the brew before it reached the humble board of the prospective diner. Along with it not having the slightest taste of tea it never released a single tea leaf as proof of its incarceration. Perhaps it had a guilty conscience - or was it shame - to preclude itself from association with a concoction that traversed its good narcotic name and shed no lustre on its reputed fame as mankind's best and beloved stimulant. As regards

the skilly, the best that could be said of it was that it was a cross between what we Irish call gruel and a double dose of some sticky sodden pulp with a very faint flavour of meal of a kind perhaps hitherto unknown to us. Whatever its building qualities it gave bulk even in a small way for it was only served in small quantities and perhaps filled a gap. Regarding the bread, suffice it to say it was neither white nor brown but of a kind of dark colour.

Another strange concoction, or to be more explicit other strange concoctions, which served portion of our dinner could be summarised in the words soup and hash. The soup was watery, thin, and if at all flavoured hardly tasted so. Generally it was served with beans, big broad beans that seemed to look at you and say "I dare you". Of the potatoes they were generally too bad, or one bad out of two supplied. They were generally cooked to the point of soapiness. The tastiest of the dinner variety was the hash which consisted of perhaps anything or everything edible from over stewed pieces of meat and condensed vegetables of hardly discernable types. Yet it was palatable, not because of its known or unknown ingredients, but because it wasn't heavily laden with fat or oil of any description. The meat that was served with the soup was a something that no Irishman or Irishwoman would pass over as Irish beef of the bovine brand. This prison variety was a substance that however it was cooked was streaky and not juicy to the point of our Irish prime beef. One could only say of the owner of that pelt, What did you do to deserve all this? To finish up the round of the days dieting came the cocoa which was easily more palatable than the tea.

Knutsford prison was nothing if not orderly and well governed according to English prison standards, even to the extent of providing for all necessaries for all conveniences. What we lacked in bodily or mental comforts and preoccupations we lacked also in so far as having association with our fellow prisoners. We also wouldn't be permitted to communicate with our people at home in Ireland. This was the greatest torment of all. We knew not when permission would be given for us to write home. We had not seen our people since Easter Monday. Oh if they only knew where we were imprisoned. But rubs are rubs and orders are orders and prison routine says "thou shall do this", "thou shall not do that", all of which seem to savour of a new version of the Ten Commandments. Prison regulations omitted nothing - not even the medical examination which it dutifully enjoins on its subjects to undergo. Hence it came to pass that the prison doctor arrived at one's cell and, accompanied by the warder (in this case an army Staff Sergt.) and an armed soldier placed at the door, proceeded to take soundings and to examine the prisoner. You divested of your clothing and then the doctor in the fulness of his authority queried, "Are you lousy? Any bugs, vermin or lice?" Having completed his job he proceeded to the next cell and you were left there wondering whether the other prisoners would feel sad or happy at his mission.

Weeks went by and still the same humdrum existence with only one thing to bring brightness to us - we were permitted to attend Mass in the prison chapel. It was the one joy in our period of incarceration so far. Prior to this an inventory of the religion we practised was made. The majority of the prisoners were Roman

Catholics, a few Presbyterian and Church of Ireland. Those of us who were Catholics were visited by a priest to whom we made our confessions. The Sunday for the celebration of the Mass arrived and we were marched under guard to the Chapel. Oh joy of joys! What exquisite happiness to be able to attend the Divine Sacrifice again even in such circumstances. We were conducted to our seats. Our military warders sat in high seats at every second row. From their high and mighty eminence they could watch our every movement, keep us orderly and insist that the rule forbidding us to communicate with one another was strictly observed. They little thought that we were overflowing with happiness to see our friends. Words could not have expressed our feelings better. They might close our lips but they could not close our eyes. Was it not good to see the comrades we knew intimately; good to see them in the flesh again, to know that they were alive and apparently standing up to the ordeal of watchfulness. The guards could not see everything, couldn't watch everyone. So we did communicate - by the medium of our eyes - and were thereby content with what we saw of our comrades. It was thrilling, secondary in importance to the celebration of Mass in which we dutifully participated with all due devotion and piety. We had reason to be very grateful and happy for this great and wonderful privilege. Even the fact that we were prisoners and under the charge of guards in "Our Father's House" did not in the slightest degree lessen the importance of the occasion or our undebtedness to the Giver of all things, the Source of all goodness, of light and of grace, to permit us to be present and offer up our prayers in our moment of sorrow and tribulation.

During the celebration of the Mass several hymns were played on the organ. We were unable to respond to many of these because the music was unknown to us though in some cases we knew the words of the particular hymns. It was only when our Irish hymn "Hail Glorious St. Patrick" was struck up that we felt our vocal organs coming back to life and vigour. The close solitary confinement we discovered had destroyed our sense of speech. We were happy to hear our own voices and the voices of our comrades again. How often during that silent agonising period had we reason to think ourselves dumb, compelled as we were to abandon talk unless when spoken to by those exercising authority over us. But, Thank God, we were enabled on that Sunday morning to open our throats and sing in no unmistakable way the praises of our national spirit. Indeed the hymn seemed propitious and suitable to our predicaments and environment. It afforded us a means to open our hearts in prayerful supplication to one whose "words were once strong against Saton's wiles and an infidel throng" to "come to our aid, in our battles take part". Oh how lustily and determinedly we entered into the singing of that hymn and that portion in particular. It seemed that these words had a personal appeal to each one of us, and the fact that it was our Irish hymn and that we were prisoners in an English prison and guarded by Englishmen encouraged us to "take the roof off". We also gave full vent to our feelings in the hymn "Faith of our Fathers" and many a tear stood in the eyes of these hard boiled rebels, these felons of our land.

This account would not be complete without mentioning that the organist was none other than our fellow prisoner Micheal Lynch of SS. Michael and John's

fame. Micheal could and did strike a chord of joy and pride in us before and after the Mass by introducing a few notes of Irish music and got away with it. In consequence of this he brought many a smile to the lips and vigour to the hearts of many of us and we blessed the day and blessed him for same.

Strange things were happening in our jail. A couple of innovations were introduced. One of these was the issuing of a religious manual "Think well on it". This consisted of a daily lesson of meditation. It was very welcome for it supplied a long felt want for something to do, something to read or something to think about. We had more than our share of living within ourselves, and twenty four hours of the day of lone companionship without outdoor exercise, fresh air or communication with even one of our comrades did not tend to improve our mental or bodily health. Hence the book "Think well on it" which obviously was intended as an antidote to our "criminal" habits cut much of our time in parading aimlessly the length of the cell and preserved our mental facilities from the evil onslaughts of the demon of prison gloom and silence.

Then again individual prisoners were on occasions requisitioned or in other words ordered to wash the landings. What a relief to be out of the cell even for a half hour or so. I was one of the selected ones for that task. The rule of silence never relaxed, the guards saw to that. But sometimes you would meet a guard who was not over officious. At the time in question there was one such who tried to be nice to us. He kept a little out of ear range, so in consequence I had a few words in undertones with some of my friends as I washed in front of their respective doors. Even I learned a

a few things in this way about things in Ireland and some of the executions. Some of the soldiers had imparted the news while we were denied correspondence with the outside world.

One day a very strange thing occurred. Our cells were opened and we were ordered to stand to attention in our cells but facing the cell doors. Naturally one wondered what this was for. In a few moments our Staff Sergeant Warder gave an order which brought us to the landings. Then we were marched along the landing and down the iron stair down to the ground floor, keeping three feet apart. To our surprise we were brought to the exercise yard and put on the concrete paths which wound around in circles. How often were we reminded to "keep your three paces apart", "no talking" and "look to your front". We marched and marched the short space of ground as many other prisoners had done in the past and will do in the future. Sentries, armed and threatening, occupied places a few yards apart. We enjoyed the fresh air, the exercise such as it was and more than all the company of our friends. Notwithstanding the rule of silence broken snatches of conversation were carried on at points where there were no guards. There were several such rings in use at a time, rings within rings, and men marching in them. This gave us an opportunity to see quite a number of men and perhaps say a word or two to some of them. But always in whispers. In this wise we marched the ring for half an hour - truly a concession - and so our twenty four hours solitary confinement was cut by a half hour, leaving twenty three and a half to ourselves and our thoughts.

Six weeks is a long time to spend in prison in circumstances like these. Six weeks and then one day a strange, an utterly strange and positively puzzling thing happened that turned sadness into joy and darkness into light. We were performing our customary pacing of the ring in the exercise yard, stepping out in not our best marching order for we were none too robust and strong after our period of inactivity and under-nourishment, trying to keep a kind of military order three paces distant from each other and observing the rule of strict silence when we could not help it. As we marched in that fashion for a while a change in procedure became apparent. One of the military Staff Sergeants paced the ring with us. At a given moment he put a question to you: "Do you want to speak to one of your friends?" Naturally you do, but before you answer yes the thought comes "Was this a trick? Why should he ask this question in view of the regulations concerning the observation of silence? One hesitated to answer. He insisted, repeating the question and trying to assure you that you can speak. Taking a bold shot by answering in the affirmative the warder tells you to fall in with your friend. The marching continued. You greeted your chosen friend; he greeted you. Meanwhile you noticed that the same procedure had been adopted in a few other instances. More and more men fell out. Suddenly the yard resounded to the babel of voices, a strange shuffling movement ensued, a loud cheer rang out that sounded like an Irish war-cry and lo, the ranks broke. A change came over the scene of restrained silence and the men who up to a brief period before were tongue tied fell on one another, hugged one another in sheer delight and jubilation.

There was a magnificent spontaneity about the manner and the spirit of unrestrained unrehearsed greetings in our case. Oh celestial joy! We were alive again in the company of our friends. Oh welcome joy, our speech was not gone. What inestimable happiness to hear your own voice, to hear the voices of your friends again and yet how utterly impossible it was to give personal greetings to all your friends all at the one time. You felt caught in the maze of hands; you felt overpowered with barrage of greetings and lost in the midst of the groupings that had formed in different places in the yards. You wanted to see everyone, speak to everyone; especially you claimed renewal of friendships with those you knew most, and in the midst of all this flurry and excitement you either lost your head or failed to locate the object of your quest. When eventually you found them, in all probability they had the same story to relate, that they were caught in the maze and barrage too. Talk about the return of the prodigal son. This was it multiplied a hundredfold or more. Before we had all our say we were reformed and marched back to our cells.

Chapter 12.

Our prison life had taken on a new aspect and we looked forward to the morrow for a continuation of our social intercourse and communion of spirits with our friends. These brief talking sessions afforded us opportunities for the interchanging of news and exchange of views on many matters that affected our personal and national interests. We learned quite a lot about the course of our recent fighting and particularly news about current events since we left Dublin. The news of the

executions of our brave leaders had filtered through, news that was accepted with sadness and pride and with feelings of personal bereavement for many of these men were looked upon more as brothers than leaders. Who amongst us could think of them in any other sense? There was a union and a oneness between us which even death - the soldier's death that they got - could never sever or destroy. Our love for them had grown with the years. Who could have anything else for good men and true? We could thank God for knowing them. There were few among us who did not know at least one of these executed men. Some knew many of them, others knew them all intimately. Their execution proved beyond doubt that they were <u>great</u> men, <u>noble</u> men, <u>true</u> men. Their enemies saw to that. We on our part could think of what they were to us and what they were to Ireland. Everything they did and every service they gave was for Ireland's welfare. Pearse, the kind, the gentle, the loving man of many parts and talents, the writer, the poet, the teacher, the seer, the soldier, the leader - he could be the humblest of the humble and the most exalted - who could rise to great heights and eminence, or in humility accept a minor role. Patrick Pearse you were our Leader. In your name and at your call we hazarded everything. We trusted you and you trusted us. We mourn you but not with useless tears or any outward sign of bereavement. We thank you for permitting us to know you, to trust you and to love you. Could we have done anything less knowing that you inspired us, showed us the road to travel and trod that hard and bitter road with us as a soldier and a friend.

Tom Clarke (Tom to us who knew him) - the father of them all, the grandest, noblest felon of our land, he who had suffered his gethesemene in English convict jails, who bore it all for Ireland, giving the best years of his young life for his Fenian faith and passed through the crucible of sorrow, suffering and mortification, weakened in body but strengthened in spirit - he who was a born conspirator in a good cause, a man who did not know the meaning of the word fear, who disdained the word caution, who prized honour, service and duty as the three most exalted and exalting virtues for a liberty loving Irishman, who would rather rot in jail than sell his own or his country's right to be free, he who had already made enough sacrifices for Ireland and yet would not be satisfied until he fired another shot, he who ended his days in old age fighting as he wished to fight and dying as he was proud to die - facing the firing squad.

James Connolly, the Labour agitator and Leader, the man who combined socialism with nationalism, the internationalish and the nationalist, the man who preached the rights of man and the rights of Ireland, he who could lead men in industrial conflict and lead soldiers in battle, a man who could hover high over his fellows, whose whole life was spent in the service of the under-dog, the ill-treated and the sufferer, who sought neither richesnor glory for himself and got none, for the principalities and powers of his generation were wiser, richer and saner than he and yet he had enough wisdom, richness and sanity in his small stocky frame to give in Ireland's service. Many an Irish Volunteer may have misunderstood you, may have questioned your patriotism and your tact, may even have doubted your

right to butt in on things national which Volunteers held sacred, but you have given proof of your greatness, your love for Ireland and her cause to be free. Irish Volunteers salute you. The Army of the Irish Republic pay homage to you.

Seán MacDermott. How few of us did not know "poor Seán", for this was how he was described. Poor he was in physical strength for he walked with a limp for years previous to the Rising. But that infirmity did not in the slightest degree prevent him taking a man's part in the national movement and especially the physical force part of it. He was no laggard, no weakling or a type that had to be coaxed to do things. Rather the opposite, he who knowing things had to be done made it a rule to set about doing them, and by these means encouraged or pushed others to the same course. Yet one could hardly associate him with taking a major part in, for instance, an armed insurrection. He was so gentle, so lovable, so gentlemanly. Indeed how often was it said "he was as gentle as the gentlest maiden, as docile as a child, quiet living and quiet mannered. But he was a fighter. His was the mind behind "Irish Freedom", the paper that had paved the way for the coming into being of the Irish Volunteers that led the way for the armed conflict consummated in Easter Week, who preached the doctrine "not peace but the sword" and the policy of a free independent sovereign Irish Republic. He was the sower of the seed and the reaper of the harvest, and right royally he signed his name to the parchment of life that was to cost him his death.

Thomas McDonagh, the gay young poet whose verses I had read in the Irish Review, Eamon Ceannt, Joseph

Plunkett - three of the seven signatories! . They must have been great men to have linked themselves with the other four. Other names were mentioned as having been executed, our own Commandant Ned Daly, Seán Heuston, Con Colbert, Major John McBride, Michael Mallin and Willie Pearse.

The first three whose names have already been recorded gave many of us a shock, especially the men of the 1st Battalion, a large proportion of whom were prisoners in Knutsford, and the members of the Fianna who knew the worth of these great men. It was hard to get particulars beyond that they were shot. Oh it was a big price to pay. It was a colossal sacrifice. Various rumours were about - these always seemed to dog us everywhere and at all times. Our communication with the outside world was very limited and such occasional letters as we were allowed to write had to be brief and, of course, proper. Besides, any letters sent us from home were censored and bore the stamp marking "Passed by Censor". We could not therefore expect to get much news through such channels. Would that we could.

It was noticeable that quite a number of what we termed prominent men in the Volunteers were also prisoners in Knutsford, such as Dick Mulcahy, M. W. O'Reilly, Eamon Morkan etc. We had reason to marvel at their escape so far and wondered how they slipped the net of police surveillance and detection. The fact that they were dressed in officers" uniform lent special colour to the idea of a charmed life in each individual case, but that in itself did not tend to guarantee immunity against future action by the British authorities in respect to their and our treatment as prisoners.

Likewise, not knowing the minds of our captors we could hardly essay whether they or any of us would be brought to trial later on. Suffice it to say we relished the thought and we were glad of the presence of these men.

Rumour had it that Dick Mulcahy was one of the prominent officers in the Ashbourne fight, an operation commanded by Thomas Ashe that reflected a noble feat of arms for the handful of Volunteers engaged. Some of us also had cause to wonder how Eamon Morkan, the confidant and staff officer immediately associated with the late Commandant Ned Daly, was not on the tried and sentenced list. Surprise or wonder, we were more than thankful that he was spared from the grim holocaust and none the less solicitous for his and our future welfare.

Another concession accorded us was the issuing of a mattress to each prisoner. This looked as if the powers that be were anxious to make up for some of their omissions or shortcomings. It was about time anyway that they condescended to do the big and useful thing. Perhaps by now we had become used to the boards. They were coming on, so some of our wags declared. Truly they were for gradual changes were being made to improve things in our favour. The period allowed for exercise or mingling with one another was also extended and the introduction of physical culture training at the expense and under the guidance of the British Military N.C.O. was appreciated by the men who responded manfully to the occasion. Even this caused rumours - somebody suggesting that it was intended as a means of getting us ready to fight for England at the front. On the part of the prisoners the Rosary was recited en masse during

exercise. At first the guards and warders did not know what it was all about. This had a strange sequel. The evening when the death of Lord Kitchener was announced the Rosary was recited. Strange as it may seem the soldiers believed that we had prayed in thanksgiving for the poor man's death. Still withal the recital of the Rosary had a deep impression on some of the soldiers when they got to know that it meant praying and quite a few of them sought to obtain the Rosary as they called our beads. They thought there was something of a charm about them and as they were apparently non-Catholics they were anxious to procure one for they might be sent to the front anytime. It's strange how human hearts can be stirred sometimes.

Parcels too started to come our way from home and some from quarters unknown to us. We had in the meantime learned that Knutsford was only a few miles from Manchester. Our own people sent us in articles of clothing and the many accessories men in our position might be in need of. I remember getting in some eggs kindly sent by a lady whom I had never known and who in her great generosity enclosed a note wishing me every luck. That lady was, I think, Mrs. McKean of Clareville Road, Dublin. She even inscribed good wishes on each egg. Others of our men also got eggs, books, parcels from unknown donors. We were getting to realise that we were not forgotten. There were even good Irish people in Manchester who came to our help in this way and in another of which mention must be made now. Visitors were permitted at certain times. This often caused embarrassment to us. It did cause embarrassment to me on one occasion. After that I was quite fortified.

This is how it happened. A visitor arrived at the prison requesting to see a certain prisoner. You, the named one, are brought out to an enclosure. To your surprise you are confronting a perfect stranger, one whom you have never seen before. "That's your visitor" the warder says. You must make a bold front and get over the preliminaries as quickly as you can. It even might be a nice girl or an aged lady - not necessarily always. You couldn't beat these Manchester Irish girls, women and men. We blessed them for the many kindnesses shown us. They behaved wonderfully and the prisoners knew it and appreciated all that was done on their behalf.
I remember one time when out on this visitor business Larry Ginnell was there. He was a member of the Parliament and he made it his business to pay us many visits. If ever there was a human post man Larry was surely so. As a matter of fact he was a public benefactor for he brought many uncensored letters out of the prison. He did this in a very novel and unexciting way. He wore his long frock coat. In one of the "tails" was a good sized pocket. He had a habit of being in a group; while he was engaged in conversation his pocket was availed of for letters. Of course he never saw them going in but he knew he was made the medium for the underground traffic. No man could enjoy a situation like this better than he for he was an Independent member of Parliament and not a friendly one to the British Government. He couldn't hope to carry this out indefinitely so one time he was caught, so it was said, and his visits cancelled.

So sudden and unexpected did these strange innovations and concessions occur that we wondered what was in the air and the significance attaching to them.

We even had visitors from the War Office. These English never seemed to be able to pronounce their R. and S. What fun we made of this. Their failure to speak English the way the Irish speak it often evoked a broad smile from some of our men at the expense of the visitor. But off parade and among ourselves it provided quite an amount of mirth and mimicking of the men from the War Office. At every visit we were regaled with the question "Any complaints"? This in course of time became a kind of parrot cry. The person having a complaint was required to step forward. Most of the complaints centred around "tea" - tea that was not tea. Our visitor, who was always a military officer of high rank, generally would not appreciate the point of our complaint not knowing our taste and habit in respect to that precious beverage and although the complaint was repeated time out of number nothing was done to accede to our request for proper unadulterated tea of the consistency and flavour to which we were normally accustomed. Our real complaint was that we were not getting tea at all. Obviously there was no other option but to nurse our complaint and to drink or not drink the stuff as we thought fit. Many complaints were also made about the food in general, but beyond the usual comment "That I shall put it before the proper quarters" very little, if any, improvement in the quality or quantity of the vitamins was effected.

It must be said, however, that the granting of the few concessions in our regard contributed to make our life in prison a little tolerable and agreeable. The big fly in the ointment was the matter of the rule of silence and discipline as applied to us when inside the precincts of the prison proper. No relaxation of these

regulations would be permitted or condoned. Even the fact that we were dubbed prisoners of war, our correspondence from and to the prison bore this appellation and we were recognised by the authorities as such, we were not allowed free intercourse, communication and association except during the short periods of exercise in the prison yard. For the greater part of the day, and all night, our cells were locked and we were kept inside. The point put up by the authorities was that there were other prisoners besides our type in the prison, and in consequence were they to allow us full scope and liberty the discipline of the other portion would be jeopardised. We knew nothing and cared less for the niceties of prison etiquette, status or routine. We desired the full observance of the rules governing our status as prisoners of war. Either we were prisoners of war or we were not. Of course we knew the British claimed we were only rebels caught in arms levying war against lawful English authority. We were nevertheless thrown into jail without trial and without any prospect of trial. What was our status if not prisoners of war? Why were we here controlled by the British army authorities under orders of the War Office? If we were not prisoners of war then we were not civilian prisoners - neither were we convicted prisoners for we had not been tried or sentenced.

Was it any wonder that we thought the English could do queer things in their treatment of Irishmen whom they classed as rebels. They could hardly see our point of view in claiming that we were prisoners in name as in fact and that we had just rights to be accorded treatment as such. The next thing to that would be treatment as

political prisoners. Even the suffragettes, the women warriors, secured that status for themselves. Why not we also - provided we were not prisoners of war. Your English jurist must have been in an 'Irish stew' in planning what they would do with us wild Irish, and we were so wild, so truculent and so haughty you never knew what we would be up to next. What a sad reflection on your intelligence, your sense of fair play, that after seven centuries of your ruling of Irishmen and Irishwomen you failed to understand and to know us. Even you could not understand our complaining about food etc. and our demands for better treatment and condition when we should be begging for mercy and seeking our liberation on any terms. They hardly knew that some of the complaints, not all of course for many were quite genuine and put forward in good faith, were made for the fun of the thing, just for a laugh, knowing quite well that they would not be entertained or granted. Even incongruity and humour can creep into the prison sphere sometimes. But our species of Irish humour could be so baffling, so beguiling, when directed against your so superior, so distinguished and so high and mighty English dignitary! How often did yon Irishmen - the easy going so-called crazy and illiterate Paddy - chuckle up his sleeve in making some complaint or other, oblivious of your misery or discomfiture and not even caring whether the complaint was granted or not.

It must be said in fairness that not all those placed in charge over us or looking after our welfare were so dumb. There were three types of nationalities attached to the prison regime - Scotch, Irish and English. The first two might not always fall for our palaver, ráiméis or leg-pulling. They could see a joke sometimes

and sometimes again they would have to fall over it before they could understand some types that fell from the lips of some of our men. When they did "get it", meaning the gist of the jokes, there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth, a volley of oaths and much threatening for the same. Now in charge of our wing there were two Sergeant Majors - one Scotch and one Irish. Though they had much in common, being good, strong and burly soldiers, they temperamentally and diplomatically were miles apart. Both, of course, had our interests at heart, to wit to keep us safe and sound as prisoners. Neither would tolerate monkey-tricks or horse-play. Everything under their charge had to be so so. They each made it their business to see that you got enough rope that was good for you, for your health and your pains, nothing more and certainly nothing less. Each saw to it that you did not turn to the right or your left or behind for that matter, insisting that you should always look forward to the front - even if that meant into space - and always according to rules and regulations, you know. But they differed somehow in their way of commanding. The Irish variety, perhaps like ourselves, was quick tempered, mischievous, haughty to a fault, hot and bothered sometimes over trifles, such as for instance trying to prove that he was "a better Irishman than any of you". The other, the Scotch variety, hadn't to trouble himself on that score, but he had the extraordinary distinction of being too fond of showing his authority, a blend that was truly in keeping with the huge bundle of keys that he, in his graciousness, carried for "our good".

The facilities granted us to mix with our comrades during the short periods of exercise, affording, as it did, a certain amount of liberty, within bounds, was

nevertheless frustrated by the longer periods we were forced to endure behind the locked doors of our cells, thus emphasising that there were two sets of regulations governing our conduct and status as prisoners of war or whatever title applied in our case. It went further than that, for it aggravated a situation which under the special circumstances of our incarceration was never and could hardly ever be considered just or fair. The prison authorities must often have felt themselves in a dilemna when confronted with the problem of trying, if they ever tried, and there was some slight reason to assume that they did try but failed in the attempt, to mitigate the hardships imposed on us by the ordinary prison code and failed to accord freedom of movement, freedom of intercourse within the boundary of the prison as prescribed by the usages and convention associated with the treatment of prisoners of war. As we understood the matter they were hopelessly at fault in granting only piecemeal concessions when it suited their purpose, and they were not prepared to go the whole hog even to please us. They held the ring and we, who were only to them just Irish prisoners, were required to acquiesce in their regulations and the arrangements made to maintain the strictest form of surveillance and control over us by means of the system of isolation and close confinement. Indeed as far as we could discern there was never a happy medium between the two courses, with the result that we wondered, as we had just cause to, whether they desired to continue treating us in the dread form of prisoners of war and ordinary convicted prisoners.

It is not always easy to know the military mind on such matters. It was hard for us to know the English

military mind when confronted with the task of deciding our rights and our privileges. Ordinary convicted prisoners and common criminals for that matter were not deprived of all rights and privileges when undergoing punishment for their crimes. If, as was declared, we were prisoners of war then there was no reason why we should be so wantonly and so unreasonably confined to our cells for the major portion of the day and all the night, and even then it was questionable whether our cells should ever be locked. The fact remained that in spite of repeated agitation and notwithstanding numerous complaints to the officers from the War Office on the matter, no proper amelioration resulted and we had no reason to hope that these people would ever treat us similar than their inveterate enemies, the German prisoners.

This remained a burning question with us. It must have been so with our British captors. We could not measure their minds, or know their plans in respect to our future existence as prisoners. But a time came when the matter reached a culminating point, settling once and for all the vexed question of our status as prisoners of war. We were to be interned - in other words we were to be thrown out of jail and placed in an internment camp. We were duly informed of this and as further proof of it each prisoner was served with an Internment Form. The respective internment form was worded thus:

> "Notice with persons with respect to whom an order is made under Regulation 14B.
>
> "Notice is hereby given to the above named that an order has been made by the Secretary of State under Regulation 14B of the Defence of the Realm Regulations directing that he shall be interned at the place of

Internment at Frongoch.

The order is made on the ground that he is of hostile associations and is reasonably suspected of having favoured, promoted or assisted an armed insurrection against His Majesty.

If within seven days from the date of his receiving this notice the above-named prisoner submits to the Secretary of State any representations against the provisions of this order, such representations will be referred to the Advisory Committee appointed for the purpose of advising the Secretary of State with respect to the internment and deportations of aliens and presided over by a judge of the High Court, and will be duly considered by the Committee. If the Secretary of State is satisfied by the report of the said Committee that the Order may, so far as it affects the above-named prisoner, be revoked or varied without injury to the public safety, or the defence of the realm, he will revoke or vary the order accordingly by a further order in writing under his hand.

Failing such revocation or variation the Order will remain in force".

Now, thought we, the question of our status as prisoners of war was unmistakably sealed, settled and delivered. D.O.R.A. had promulgated it, had willed it and guaranteed it, and it was exercised under His Britannic's Majesty's prerogative. To make it all the more sublime we were duly apprised in plain language that if we appealed within seven days against the order banishing us to an internment camp, our appeal would be

sympathetically considered and we might in consequence be released or not released, whichever was the best thing that could happen in our cases. But that depended on a few little factors which inevitably came into the reckoning, one of which was the matter relating to a good, proper and relenting disposition on our part. Here was where the Irishman's sense of humour and pride shone. The wise ones among us gave careful consideration to that 'blessed' document, opined that the purpose behind the order was to get us to admit that we were bad boys, or if we were not very bad boys that we were dopes led astray by clever tricky leaders; that we were walked blindfolded as it were into a fight against our wills and better judgement, and that if any of us thought that by reason of a sense of honour or because of comradeship we had already paid the price of our folly and wickedness, all things considered to be fair in love as in war, then it was possible, indeed necessary, that we should relent and take advantage of the opportunity thus afforded and secure a clean slate. Obviously the British made a bad shot there because the prisoners whether wise or unwise, learned or unlearned, showed neither sign and gave no approval to avail of the seven days' wonder preferring to see the matter out. In point of fact they preferred to wait and see and were in no mood to disclaim their share in the insurrection or to renounce their leader or their cause.

So it came about that the order for our internment at the place of Frongoch was to be put into effect. With great expectancy and deep anxiety we looked forward to the time when we should bid adieu to our prison abode and get away from the network of iron grills, iron bars and iron doors, seek new adventure and excitement in a

more liberal and freer admosphere for in our minds we pictured an internment camp where prisoners would be provided with good food, be nicely housed and afforded middling good comfort. Even above and beyond these corporal things we looked forward to the greater freedom of leizure and recreation which we understood to be the accepted rule in respect to the internment code. Our main consideration, however, was the desire that we would be given greater scope and better opportunities of meeting larger numbers of our comrades, some of those whom we had not seen since before the Rising and some whom we had not seen since the first day or subsequent days. We were naturally excited at the thought and prospect of meeting these and the larger number of our Volunteer comrades - our Irish Republican Army - hoping, of course, thereby to obtain news of current events. We were avaricious of always seeking knowledge from newcomers of the recent trend of affairs in Ireland for the little we had heard had awakened our curiosity and encouraged us to seek more.

Tidings had reached us of the opening of a Dependants' Fund for the relief of distress among our people. We had reason to know that many of our dependants were hard hit on account of our long captivity. Yet few of our men complained although all were anxious and troubled about the matter. Then again we had heard news of a turning of the tide, that the Irish people had as if by a miracle largely turned over on our side due to the excesses and executions perpetrated by the British authorities. We had read the letter of the Bishop of Limerick, Dr. O'Dwyer, flaying General Maxwell who was Commander in Chief of the British Forces during the Rising, and we also read the sermon which Father Barrett O.P.

delivered in which he eulogised us, our leaders and our cause. The story of the brutal military murders at Portobello Barracks also reached us. These and a number of other matters interested us. Our main concern, however, was that we were not forgotten and that there were people in Ireland beginning to realise that we stood for something worth while. A new wave of nationality, a new interest in things national had come to light in our absence.

The day for our transference to Frongoch arrived and this movement started in small batches. I was among one of the early groups that found ourselves placed on a train under heavy guards and whisked through a good part of North Wales until we reached a small railway siding at Bala, near which was our destination. It was quite a thrill to pass through the lovely countryside of Wales, part of which was so much like our own lovely Ireland, and note the peculiar names on railway station, names which we in our ignorance thought so peculiar. How we tried to pronounce them. What a thrill indeed to feel that we were in a Celtic country inhabited by a Celtic people who had withstood the ravages of time to preserve their own national characteristics, traditions and culture. What a delightful experience it would have been to us were we journeying in better and freer circumstances to make human contacts with a race which we had learned was akin to our own. How often was one forced to make comparison between our own hard lot, the hardships imposed on our dear land so cruelly and arbitrarily deprived of not merely independence but national culture and tradition as well, and their lovely Wales which remained true to

everything that was racy of the soil, nationhood and national consciousness in the face of and proximate presence of an all pervading and overpowering foreign culture. Yet we could not help thinking that the country of Wales was less free than that which we aimed and desired our Ireland to attain. Why was it that the English exercised such unremitting and deliberate care to prescribe our national institutions, customs and culture, while at their doorstep stood Wales, a country that was permitted and encouraged to live its own life somewhat free of interruption and oppressions? We pondered on these questions and thoughts as we made our forced journey on our way as prisoners to the Welsh portion called Frongoch.

At last we reached our destination. What a strange sight it was indeed! There before us stood a building that resembled a distillery - it was a distillery some time before - flanked by several other structures and away from them a few wooden huts. These were surrounded by barbed wire fences and sentries posted at regular distances. The aforesaid posts were built on the camp and afforded a good field of view of a goodly portion of the enclosure. The sentries were on duty at these posts and inside the enclosure could be seen a number of Volunteers. These latter were the first consignment delivered some days prior to our entry. Some short, or long time afterwards, for strange as it may seem it generally takes time to comply with the formalities associated with the handing over of our bodies, goods and chattels, into "safe" keeping, we were dutifully ushered through the entrance and directed inside. More formalities: and where should we find oursevles but in the distillery portion of the camp, having in the meantime been handed over to the "custody" of fellow beings and prisoners. Then we were allotted to our "digs" and

assigned our beds and bedding and all the parapharnalia too commonly recognised as personal property for our use during our habitation in the place. Of course, we had been again card-indexed as per regulations, each prisoner being designated a number which, at the peril of the loss of letters, parcels, etc., he was required to cherish for the period of his internment.

It would not be fair or true to say that our new abode was such as one would choose to inhabit and still regard as a home. The only fanciful and beautiful feature attaching to it was that it was termed a dormitory - our bedroom was called a dormitory. It was hard to know how they arrived at calling it such a name for in reality it was an over-sized loft. Better to have named it "sleeping quarters", "class room", or - but why go on trying to fit a name to suit it? Anyway the distillery part consisted of three such rooms. Ours was large, low-size and dark. Its size was considerably reduced by the number of beds that it contained for it boasted of a big clientele - altogether too big for its cubic space. This was particularly noticeable and felt during very wet weather when we had to "stay at home" or at nightime, the essential condition being that one must sleep. On rising in the mornings one felt heavy, listless and headachey - a feeling akin to suffering from the effects of the night before, or left over spasm so common among people who dissipate and in consequence are liverish, an overdose of foul air, an underdose of fresh air, and a feeling of congestion were the three most potent agencies that contributed to the ailment of which we were victims in the "hole of Calcutta" so fittingly described by one of our many wags. They had originally been grain lofts during

the period of the existence of the distillery and prior to our entry had been used to "house" German prisoners of war. The only cure for keeping oneself in middling good health was by remaining out of it on all but sleeping hours.

Our wishes to meet others of our comrades was to a large extent fulfilled, and during the first few days of our stay one "bobbed" into some acquaintance or other. Sometimes we found it a big drawback in recognising many of our friends because they wore beards, and were attired a la mo mode as interned prisoners, some in Martin Henry suits and military Ammunition or Army boots, though some wore the tattered or faded remnants of Volunteer uniform or portion thereof - puttees or leggings. Such a mixum gathering of Irishmen from the four ends of Ireland, for strange as it may seem, though the Rising proper was only carried out in Dublin, Enniscorthy, Galway and Dundalk, the British took good care to rope in numbers of suspects and those they considered dangerous men during the Rising and subsequent to it. They had as a result their hands full with prisoners from all quarters. Frongoch then was the mecca, the enforced mecca, for such who "were reasonably suspected of having favoured, promoted or assisted an armed insurrection against His Majesty"; and in consequence many new arrivals were seeking shelter day in and day out until at last the camp could boast of having a "full house". The inhabitants had come from myriad jails in Ireland and England - to mention but a few, Wandsworth, Wormwood Scrubbs, Wakefield, Knutsford, Stafford, Woking, Reading, Arbour Hill, Galway, etc., so here we were forming one community - those who fought in the Rising co-mingled with those who for some reason or other did not fight then. Here was as complete a mixture - some would call it a conglomeration - of

Irishmen as could be found in any sphere or any place under the sun. It was rare as it was extraordinary - nay it was well balanced, complete and orderly - everyone giving of their best to make the stay as happy and comfortable as was possible under the circumstances.

We soon picked up the threads of our former lives and associations with good friends and accomplices, renewing old acquaintanceships, rehearsing old events and episodes of common interest and took up the trend of affairs, political and national, so sadly severed by our imprisonment. That got easier as Irish papers and periodicals found their way into the camp, the sermon by Father Barrett, O.P. in America, and the recent issue of the "Catholic Bulletin".

The "Catholic Bulletin" at the time published biographical accounts of the executed leaders. These could be termed personal and intimate narratives of the men concerned. To say that we were stirred by the splendid portrayal of good and righteous men would be to use quite a mild term. The few copies that were available in the camp were eagerly sought after, read, and even copied. It would be safe to say that we felt highly honoured by these grand and edifying tributes to our dead leaders at such a time when our fortunes could not be regarded as being in the ascendant considering our plight and whatever hardships may have to be faced before reaching the stage of our liberation.

Perhaps I may be pardoned for inserting here the accounts as they relate to Heuston and Colbert, because of my more intimate association with them over a number of years.

Seán Heuston, the "Catholic Bulletin" wrote, was born in Dublin on 21st February, 1891; was educated at the Christian Brothers Schools, Great Strand Street and O'Connell Schools, North Richmond Street. In 1907 he

secured an appointment as clerk in the Great Southern and Western Railway Company (now Córas Iompair Éireann) and was sent to Limerick. In 1910 he organised a sluagh of Na Fianna Éireann there. In 1913 he returned to Dublin and early in 1914 became Captain of the North City of the Fianna and in the same year became Captain of "D" Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers. On Easter Monday, 1916, at the head of his Company, he seized the Mendicity Institute building on Usher's Island. After the surrender he was tried by courtmartial and executed on May 8th, 1916.

In his last letter, written to his sister, an Irish nun, he wrote:

Kilmainham Prison,
Dublin.

My dearest M_____

Before this note reaches you I shall have fallen as a soldier in the cause of Irish freedom. I write to bid you a last farewell in this world and rely on you to pray fervently and get the prayers of the whole community for the repose of my soul. I am quite prepared for the journey; the priest was with me and I received Holy Communion this morning. It was only this evening that the finding of the courtmartial was conveyed to me. Poor mother will miss me, but I feel, with God's help, she will manage. You know the Irish proverb: "God's help is nearer than the door". The agony of the last few days has been intense, but I now feel reconciled to God's Holy Will. I might have fallen in action, as many have done, and been less prepared for the journey before me. Do not blame me for the part I have taken as a soldier: I merely carried out the duties of my superiors, who have been in position to know what was best in Ireland's interests. Let there be no talk of foolish enterprise. I have no vain regrets. Think of the thousands of Irishmen who fell fighting under another flag at the Dardanelles attempting to do what England's experts admit was an absolute impossibility. If you really love me, teach the children the History of their own land and teach them the cause of Caitlín Ní hUallacháin never dies. Ireland shall be free from the centre to the sea as soon as the people of Ireland believe in the necessity of Ireland's freedom and are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices to obtain it. M_____, pray for me, and get everybody to pray for me.

Your loving brother,
Jack.

Liam Staines, a member of F. Sluagh of the Fianna, serving under Captain Seán Heuston in the Mendicity, was severely wounded.

Cornelius Colbert, wrote the "Catholic Bulletin" was born at Monalena, Co. Limerick, in 1893, and educated at the Christian Brothers Schools, North Richmond Street, Dublin. He became one of the founder members of Na Fianna Éireann at its inception in 1909 in Dublin, being quickly promoted Captain of a Sluagh in which capacity he worked with incredible energy in imparting instruction to the boys under his charge, in signalling, scouting, etc. Later he became Captain of the Inchicore Company, Irish Volunteers. Pádraig Pearse always spoke of him as "Gallant Captain Colbert".

During the Rising of 1916 he commanded the garrison of Irish Volunteers at Marrowbone Lane area, taken prisoner at the surrender, he was executed on the 8th May, 1916. On the Christmas previously he had written to a fair friend:

"May sharp swords fall on Ireland
May all her hills be rifle foe lined
May I be there to deal a blow
For Erin, Faith and womankind.

. . . .

And may the song of battle soon
Be heard from every hill and vale
May I be with the marching men
Who fight to free our Gráinne Mhaol.

. . . .

Ar son Éireann agus ar son Dé
Dílís bíomar bailighthe."

He concluded a letter written from Kilmainham to his sister on the eve of his execution:

> "Perhaps I'd never again get the chance of knowing when I was to die, and so I'll try and die well. I received this morning and hope to do so again before I die. Pray for me and ask Father Devine, Father Healy and Father O'Brien to say Mass for me, also any priests you know. May God help us - me to die well - you to bear your sorrow. I send you a prayer book as token."

"Con Colbert" said Eamon Ceannt, "abstained from meat all through Lent." Of his last moments, Father Augustine, O.F.M.Cap., wrote:

> "While my left arm linked his right and while I was whispering something in his ear, a soldier approached to fix a piece of paper on his breast. While this was being done he looked down and then addressing the soldier in a cool and normal way said, "Wouldn't it be better to put it up higher, nearer the heart?" The soldier said something in reply and then added, "Give me your hand now". The prisoner secured, confused, and extended his left hand. "Not that" said the soldier, "but the right". The right was accordingly extended and having grasped and shaken it warmly, the kindly human-hearted soldier proceeded to gently bind the prisoner's hands and afterwards blind-folded him. Some minutes later my arm still linked to his, and accompanied by another priest we entered the dark corridor leading to a yard and, his lips moving in prayer, the brave lad went forth to die".

He was second in command of the Marrowbone Lane garrison, taking charge of the surrender.

I also include "New York American": In the Leading Article of May 13th, 1916, it wrote:

"Thank God for Freedom Martyrs in every age and clime". Among Irishmen there were up to a few days ago, many who, if not loyal to England, were at least loyal to the cause of the Empire, and wished it to be victorious in its war. To-day we think that the Irishmen in America who are not burning with resentment against the British Empire and praying for its defeat and humiliation are very, very few indeed.

It was evident to any man of sense, the moment the British Government began the bloody work of reprisal upon the Irish prisoners of war, that it was making a blunder as stupid as it was. We hoped then that the outburst of horror in America as well as among humane Englishmen would open the eyes of the British Government and cause the shooting of British prisoners to cease. But the hope was disappointed.

The British Government has its military murderers steadily at work, and each day's cable has brought word of fresh executions, of killings, that would shame savages, of wounded and shot, shattered prisoners being propped up on their broken limbs long enough for their executioners to riddle again with bullets their poor mangled bodies.

No wonder that every Irish heart thirsts for vengeance - no wonder that the British propagandists who have prostituted american journalism and free speech to the unpatriotic object of dragging their own country into the war to do England's fighting, have been shamed into temporary silence. We should think that even if these bootlickers, to say nothing of decent Englishmen, would blush to pronounce the name of Belgium again, would never open his mouth to talk of 'antracities' or 'humanities' again. With the blackened walls and tumbled ruins of Dublin echoing the volleys of firing squads, shooting down surrendered prisoners whose crime was to love their native land and yearn for its independence and liberty, we hope, for decency's sake, we shall hear no more snivelling in America over broken stained-glass or shattered statues in Rheims or Louvain.

With the blood of Irish prisoners and patriots reddening poor Ireland's soil in streams, we hope, also for decency's sake, that we shall hear no more of England's passionate and heroic sympathy for the rights and liberties

of small peoples. With the spectacle of sorely wounded men propped up on their broken and shattered limbs to be shot to death, we hope, again for decency's sake, that there will be a final end of the cant about Britain waging war for humanity's sake.

We trust that from Mr. Wilson down to the "Providence Journal" there will be an end to the snivel and cant and humbug which has been so effectively belied by the governmental and military reprisals and cruelties and murders in unhappy Ireland. We hope that the American people will never again be deluded to the point of willingness to waste American wealth and American blood in the contemptible role of cats-paws to pull England's chestnuts out of the fire and ashes of a selfish and unsuccessful war, fought under the pretence of the independence of little peoples and of the rights of neutrals and of the humanities.

Those Irish scholars, poets, patriots and martyrs for freedom's sake, whose mangled bodies lie in bloody graves in shot, riddled and flame-swept Dublin, are the witnesses who give the lie to all the cant and humbug that England's American tools and propagandists have dinned into American ears to win America to plunge into England's war. In that sense these have done a noble service to America, as well as Ireland, by the sacrifice of their lives. In the very instant of their deaths America drew back from the insidious and unpatriotic propaganda of armed alliance with England. We are confident that from this on, that wicked and morally treasonable propaganda has no further power of mischief. The American people will never permit themselves to be dragged into Europe's war as the ally and saviour of the murders of Ireland's patriots and martyrs. The very stones in the streets would cry out against such an alliance with a government that has shot down men for doing

exactly what our own forefathers did when they pledged their lives, their fortunes and their honour to the support of the Declaration of American Independence.

The signers of that Declaration would have met the same fate at the hands of the British Government that the signers of Ireland's Declaration of Independence have just met, had the British armies been able to overpower our forefathers in America. One could almost believe that those fathers of ours would rise from their graves to rebuke their degenerate sons who would ally themselves to the slayers of men who were brave enough and devoted enough to risk their lives and stake fortunes and their sacred honour in the great cause of human liberty.

The American who applauds the butcheries, the American who has no sympathy for these victims, the American whose heart does not go out in compassion for Ireland, and whose heart does not burn with indignation against those who have again trampled her liberties under foot, and poured out the blood of her children as a sacrifice to subjection and oppression is not fit to enjoy the liberties and to wear the bright badge of free citizenship which our forefathers gained for us with arms in their manly arms.

Thank God that such men are not many amongst us, that the degenerate crew is far more confident of its noise than its numbers.

Thank God, that the real heart of America beats true to the cause of human liberty everywhere, that it sympathises and applauds above the graves of Irish martyrs for freedom's dear and holy sake as warmly and as gratefully as it remembers and applauds above the graves of all those who on many fields of battle and through many years of agony and endurance bought with their blood their children's heritage

of American freedom.

Thank God for freedom's soldiers and freedom's martyrs in every age and clime for Washington, for Tone, for Emmet, for Bolivar, for Lincoln, for Pearse and those who died with him.

And shame befall the false American who cannot repeat the Invocation to Freedom and to freedom's soldiers and martyrs with all his heart and with all his soul."

We compared notes with our confréres on the several aspects of the fight during Easter Week, and interesting ourselves in the individual narratives of the several participants of various commands and posts, kept ourselves from brooding too much over our then fate. That was easy with men of common interest and among those of identical points of view and outlook in life.

Of the many units of the Dublin Brigade our own First Battalion and "C" Company were very well represented in the two camps: Our Company Adjutant John E. Lyons, his son Charlie; Sergeant M. Wilson; Sergeant P. Byrne; Frank McNally; Seán Kennedy; Seán Hynes; Patrick O'Neill; John Ellis; Andy and John Birmingham; [illegible]; Tom Cassidy; Patrick Hughes; Tommy Munroe; Jack Richmond; John Lynch; Charlie Purcell; Paddy Swan; Seán Flood; Joe Musgrave; Joseph Bevan; Seán Farrelly; [illegible] Mick and Frank O'Flanagan; Mick Howlett; Seumas Byrne; Joe Kelly; Jimmy McArdle [illegible]; Patrick Byrne; Frank Pollard; Stephen Pollard; P. Nevin; Seán Quinn; George Whelan; Bob Lagget; Joe Sweeney; John Madden; Joe McDonough. All those had participated in the fight, most of them in the Four Courts, excepting Andy and John Birmingham, Patrick Hughes,

/Charlie Molphy, J. Lynch, H. Manning, Charlie Purcell, John Madden,/ who served in the G.P.O. area. Very likely there were others of our Company who were prisoners there, but the foregoing were men whom I was well acquainted with.

"C" Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers.

List of Men who served in Easter Week, 1916: Four Courts Area.

1. Allen, Thomas, Sergeant; promoted Lieutenant. Killed in action.
2. Byrne, Patrick J.
3. Byrne, Patrick, Sergeant.
4. Byrne, Séamus
5. Bevan, Joseph, and his two sons
6. Bevan, Thomas)
7. Bevan, Charles)
8. Brabazon, Joseph wounded in action.
9. Bridgeman, Edward
10. Cassidy, Thomas
11. Clancy, Peadar, Lieutenant.
12. Cooling, Joseph
13. Cusack, John
14. Coyle, William
15. Dowling, Thomas
16. Derham, Michael
17. Ellis, John
18. Fahy, Frank, Captain.
19. Farrell, Michael
20. Farrelly, John
21. Fisher, John
22. Flood, Seán
23. Grimley, Michael
24. Hynes, John
25. Howlett, Michael
26. Holmes, Denis part of week.
27. Hendrick, Edward
28. Kennedy, Seán
29. Kavanagh, James
30. Kelly, Joseph
31. Kenny, John
32. Ledwith, Peter
33. Leggett, Robert
34. Lyons, John E., and his son, Adjutant.
35. Lyons, Charles
36. Macken, Patrick
37. Musgrave, Joseph
38. Munroe, Thomas
39. McGuinness, Joseph, 1st Lieutenant.
40. McNally, Francis
41. McDonough, Joseph
42. McArdle, James, and his brother
43. McArdle, Patrick
44. McKeown, William
45. McDonnell, Thomas
46. Nevin, Patrick
47. O'Neill, Patrick
48. O'Flanagan, Patrick killed in action and his two brothers,
49. O'Flanagan, Michael
50. O'Flanagan, Frank

51. O'Brien, Patrick
52. O'Brien, Jack
53. Pollard, Francis, and his brother
54. Pollard, Stephen
55. Plunkett, James wounded in action.
56. Prendergast, Seán
57. Quinn, Seán
58. Richmond, John
59. Reid, John, Sergeant.
60. Swan, Patrick
61. Scully, Micheál
62. Smart, Thomas
63. Sweeney, Joseph
64. Tobin, Liam
65. Walsh, Thomas
66. Wilson, Mark, Sergeant.
69. Whelan , George
70. Yourell, Thomas

Men of "C" Company in Other Posts.

71.	Brooks, Fred	Mendicity.
72.	Birmingham, Andy, and his brother	G. P. O.
73.	Birmingham, John	G. P. O.
74.	Hughes, Patrick	G. P. O.
75.	Keating, Con	G. P. O.
76.	Lynch, John	G. P. O.
77.	Molphy, Charles	G. P. O.
78.	Manning, Henry (wounded)	G. P. O.
79.	Madden, John	G. P. O.
80.	McCrane, Thomas	Jacobs.
81.	Moore, Edward	G. P. O.
82.	Purcell, Charles	G. P. O.
83.	White, Michael	G. P. O.

Men from Other Units included the following:

Operated in the Four Courts.

George O'Flanagan, 2nd Battalion (brother of Patrick, Michael and Frank).
Seán O'Carroll, of "D" Company, 1st Battalion.
Redmond Cox, of "A" Company, 1st Battalion.
Seán Farrell, Na Fianna Éireann.
Patrick Daly, Na Fianna Éireann.
Barney Mellows, Na Fianna Éireann.
Jack Murphy, of the 2nd Battalion.
Con O'Donovan sentenced to death, commuted to 8 years.
Edward Reyner, Fianna.
Patrick Mooney, 4th Battalion.
Arthur Merlan, 4th Battalion.
Ambrose Byrne, 4th Battalion.
Doyle 4th Battalion.
Larry Murtagh, Andy Dowling, 4th Battalion.

also civilians:

Mr. O'Neill, Shoemaker of Merchant's Quay.
John O'Brien, sentenced to death, commuted to 7 years.

Members of Cumann na mBan in the Four Courts.

(This list is incomplete)

Miss Molly Ennis.
Miss May Carron
Mrs. F. Fahy (wife of Captain Frank Fahy)

(The foregoing list was compiled in later years from, say 1934).

A lot of other information was gleaned concerning a number of our Company officers and men who had been courtmartialled and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

Captain Frank Fahy, sentenced to death, commuted to penal servitude for 10 years.

Lieutenant Joseph McGuinness, sentenced to death, commuted to 10 years.

Sergeant-Major Jack Reid, sentenced to death, commuted to 10 years.

Lt. Peadar Clancy, 10 years, sentenced to death.

Liam Tobin, 10 years, sentenced to death.

Tommy Bevan, 10 years, sentenced to death.

Charlie Bevan (brother of Tommy), sentenced to death, commuted to years.

Tom Walsh, sentenced to death, 10 years.

Michael Scully, sentenced to 10 years.

Fred Brooks (who had fought in the Mendicity under Seán Heuston), sentenced to death, commuted to years.

Dr. Paddy McArdle.

Mention must be made here of some of our company casualties - two killed in action: Sergeant Tom Allen and Volunteer Patrick O'Flanagan; and wounded - Joe Brabazon, Jim Plunkett and Henry Manning. There were a number of men of whose participation in the Rising it was impossible at the

time to ascertain, but according to the list then available, our Company had furnished a very large percentage of the effective strength of the Battalion. (See list, pages 196 to 198).

Concerning the camp at Frongoch it must be said to the credit of the prisoners that it was well run, which reflected greatly on the Committee of Management and the prisoners themselves. This Committee or Camp Council consisted in the main of Volunteer officers whose responsibility it was to maintain order and discipline and to provide for all internal matters respecting the welfare and interest of the internees. The camp was conducted on a semi-military basis, various officers being assigned to certain types of work in charge of a number of men. Thus we had O/Cs. of various services, such as cook-house, dining-room, wash-houses, etc., as well as hut headers and dormitory leaders, etc. The Camp Council undertook and carried out plans for the government and administration of the camp, the other ranks and the internees subordinate to them. No sounder and certainly no more practical policy or principle could have succeeded, and it is to the credit of all that the utmost harmony and willing co-operation prevailed from the start of what was an experiment - an unusual experiment for us. The nucleus of government or camp organisation was established from the first and as the numbers of internees grew, so, too, proportionally the various services were enlarged. It was all to the good, thus proving that our men could rise to any occasion as required.

All available accommodation in the South Camp being filled to capacity - and in places like the "dormiroties" to more than capacity - there came times when arranging and

re-arranging necessitated the movement of men from one place to another. On one of these occasions I was transferred to one of the huts. The Hut Leader was Micheál Staines, a former 1st Battalion man. I got to know him through Seán Heuston and believed him to be a member of Seán's Company of Volunteers. Micheál was a very energetic, hard-working genuine type of Volunteer when I knew him. In the camp he was the same - always up and doing, attentive to any duty to which he was assigned, and solicitous for the welfare of the men under his charge. One thing that stood in his favour with the men was, he was just natural. There were men of different counties in the hut that was to serve as my abode; men from Kerry, Dublin, Galway and Wexford - mostly from Dublin: George Fullerton, Tom Maguire, O'Reilly Joe Foran, Mick Spillane; Seumas Mallin of Kerry; George Fitzpatrick or Fitzgerald, Jim Whelan, of Wexford. These and the other men formed what we were pleased to regard a happy family.

Life in the camp became in course of time a mere routine. Various educational classes were formed, study circles, concerts and various forms of recreation. But these after a while became boring and men were inclined to fall back on themselves and on the company of one or a few more/ of their intimate friends. Even life that is too regular or too easy can become boring, and some men would prefer a game of cards or chess, to read a book or to have a bit of fun or frolic in preference to any concert or play. These, of course, came under the heading of individual likes and dislikes, and even facilities had to be provided for some of them or at least tolerance shown towards those who desired things other than as arranged. Our community perhaps then was no different than any others outside, consisting as it did of every type of people, with varied interests and of

divergent talents. Pity the poor Camp Council that had the task to provide facilities and to lend encouragement for the entertaining, education and recreation of such a mixed population. If ever a Camp Council deserved and won praise the one at Frongoch did. They secured it through sheer hard work, by good planning and by sound administration. Theirs was no easy job that could be or would be performed in slip-shod fashion. It had to be done always, day in and day out, without respite or postponement. Failure to comply on the part of any man - the ordinary internee - did not necessarily imply failure on the part of the Council, each member of which had to share responsibility for the proper discharge of all duties within their several immediate spheres. The best thing that could be said in favour of the Council was that they did their work well; and in respect to the internees - what we might term the rank and file of the camp - they were not so very remiss in giving their support and encouragement to all the great efforts made for their welfare, comfort and happiness.

During the period of our internment in Frongoch we had opportunities to ascertain information concerning the part which other counties played or did not play in the Easter Week drama. Evidence was available that gave ample proof that in only a few places outside Dublin was fighting carried on. Enniscorthy, Athenry, and Dundalk, Maynooth, and Ashbourne were actively engaged in the fight or gave active assistance. The McNeill countermanding order was generally held to be the principal cause for the rest of the country units not engaging in the Rising. One very striking feature, which seemed to be stressed by all and sundry, was that most of the country units were on the move on the Sunday (the day of McNeill's order) and some on, or from the Friday or Saturday. In some instances several units were

almost in the initial stage of acting on the plan for the Rising when McNeill's order arrived, and as a consequence the men were disbanded or demobilised pending further orders. When finally Pearse's order arrived, if and when such occurred, additional difficulties were encountered because of the spate of conflicting orders, the confusion which these caused and the then weakened or weakening state of the respective units. Indecision and disorganisation were regarded as the prime cause for inaction or non-participation in the Rising. Judging by the lurid and perhaps true, accounts related by some of our country cousins, the full strength of their support would have been forthcoming had not the countermanding order been issued. Their subsequent inaction for the rest of the week while the Dublin Volunteers were fighting could be generally summarised thus. Some units acted on the countermanding orders regardless of whether they received or did not receive Pearse's order to come into the fight. Others on receipt of Pearse's orders sought to get on the move, but were unable to do so as the British forces, police and military, were on the alert by that time and had taken appropriate steps to demilitarise actions on the part of Irish Volunteers throughout certain parts of the country. Much valuable time had in the meantime been wasted. Unhappily the question of their coming into the fight passed from their grasp into the hands of the British forces. Wholesale arrests were made of all those officers and men alike who were known to be members of the Irish Volunteers, the result being that before the fighting died down in Dublin and the few other affected places in the country, the toll of prisoners captured by the British amounted to several thousands. Towards the end of the week that number was complimented by the number of men captured at the surrender of the different fighting areas.

Among the mixum-gathering of men incarcerated in Frongoch Internment Camp, were a large number who felt sore and downcast for being denied the chance to fight. Complaints there were that in some cases the officers, not the men, were at fault in not rising to the occasion. As against that was raised the question that the men, confused as they were by the entirely conflicting orders, were not as alive to the situation as they should have been. Under all the circumstances it was fairly obvious that allegations of this kind would be made, one side against the other, and becoming noise after the events, when remorse, or a feeling that they "slacked it" set in. The fact too, that men who did not participate in the Rising were sharing the rigours of internment with men who did participate added a certain spice of piquancy to the proceedings of mingling the might-have-beens with the has-beens. So it was, however, that men who had fought in the Rising, and those who did not so fight, held in a way common ground - as prisoners.

Was it not difficult to accuse some of the men for not being out fighting when the knowledge of the confusion caused by the countermanding order, as issued by McNeill, was even felt in Dublin where proximate contact with the leading lights, and General Headquarters itself, was in some measure established? How could we view the men who had not participated as being slackers or cowards in the light of the information that was now available to us, which suggested that whatever failure there was, could only be traced to or attributable to misadventure or a misunderstanding of the true situation as it appeared to be at the time? Could we lay the charge of cowardice against the bulk of the men, or even/ /against some of the officers of whom it was said that they had tried to act, but were unable for some reason or other, to act on the appointed day for the Rising, or after the

receipt of the news that the Rising was to take place or was actually on? The case of Kerry and the southern counties might be referred to as affording some cause for not engaging in the fight owing to the change of plans, the confusion caused by the Casement affair and the failure of the German ship, Aud, that appearing off the Kerry coast was unable to land the so valuable arms cargo, which apparently was closely linked with the general plans for the Rising. Nevertheless more than one very useful purpose was served in interning men of such varied types as combatants and non-combatants, the main one being that of understanding the main points and to gain knowledge of the men, as well as the difficulties with which they had had to contend during Easter Week. One very striking and significant feature emerged - the men who had participated in the Rising were generally regarded by those who felt themselves cheated from doing so, with genuine respect, and in many cases with undisguised and absolute reverence akin to hero worship, many very typical examples were given of that respectful and reverential spirit by the establishing of intimate good fellowship and the cultivating of friendships which their mutually enforced domicile, together so significantly engendered. So it was that their period of internment served to be but means to an end towards bringing out the best in human traits of characters and of natures of a common stock, even though a marked dividing line seemed to exist and pretended to turn them against each other. Whatever other human frailties were exhibited or adversely affected them, none but the soundest sense of regard for each other were necessary assets in keeping a proper balancing account between those who were creditors and those who were debtors in the recent uprising in Ireland.

Our stay in Frongoch provided us also with a means for seeking and obtaining intelligence of the course of events since the Rising proper. Naturally we were thirsting for news of our former friends and associates who were separated from us since. The influx of new entrants into the camp not infrequently aided us in the matter. We sought other items of news and even clamoured for sight of and reading of papers and documents that in one form or other found their way into the camp. How attentively we studied them - nay literally devoured them, read and re-read them, and in many instances wrote copies of some of them for future reference, or to circulate them amongst our interned friends, so keen was our desire to supplement our hoard of knowledge for the things we held so dear and the cause we cherished. Did we not learn quite a lot of news, thereby? News of Bishop O'Dwyer's stand against the orders of General Maxwell, of Father Barrett's striking discourse extolling the bravery and attitude of the men of Easter Week, of the high praise of many a professed antagonist for the spirit, charity and chivalry displayed by our men during the occupation of the Dublin buildings, and the humane treatment accorded to prisoners. But above and transcending all these, was the important and sensational news that the Irish people had or were turning in our favour as a result of the brutal executions of our leaders after their surrender. We thus learned that the tide was turning. Even from the "floor" of the British "House of Commons", much stinted praise for the humane behaviour of the "rebels" (we by the way were regarded by the British as 'rebels'), found echo in the reading matter surreptitiously imported into our internment demesne that made many of our men rub their eyes and search their consciences in wonderment and not a little wistfully as to whether they were reading

rightly or if they were after all on the right side of the barbed wire enclosure.

~~About this time copies of the "Catholic Bulletin" issued by Bills, Dublin, found their way into the camp.~~

Of course, it would not be right to paint a false picture of affairs in Frongoch, or to convey the impression that everything in the garden was lovely. That would be erroneous. After all where could you get a perfect community? Certainly not in an internment camp, and for several reasons. We had our minor clashes, difference of opinions, arguments, and growls. These we had at various times and in many ways. But the main bone of contention centred around not so much the Council but in relation to certain individual members thereof. It concerned in the main the question of ranks and also the individual status in respect to the part certain people played in the Insurrection. These were considered big issues especially among those who had participated, who held that no man who did not hold a rank outside should be permitted to hold office on the Camp Council or in charge of the different service groups and that a man who failed to turn out in the Rising should not hold any office in the Camp. Signs were not wanting that given time, these differences would be composed, if other and no less important matters were not brought to the fore to obscure the issue. One of these 'other important matters' was the demand made on us by the British authorities to present ourselves before the Advisory Committee then sitting in London for the purpose of considering appeals. Some of us were not long in Frongoch when this move was started, and as a consequence groups of men were being despatched for the journey thither. This move was intended to give effect to their Regulation 14B as embodied in the Internment Order recently issued to us. We thought this a strange and sinister

move, aimed to catch us out on the question of our complicity in the Rising, and for the purpose of obtaining much needed information in relation thereto. In view of the fact that the vast majority of the prisoners - one could say in truth all the men who had participated in the Rising - if reports were true, and we had no earthly reason to doubt their veracity, had refused, or ignored the request to make an application for an appeal against their internment, this Advisory Committee was just eye-wash and a sham. It puzzled us quite a lot for it opened up the question as to the relativity of our refusal and the strange action of the British to make it appear that we had availed of the machinery set up by them to investigate our claims, when we knew, as individuals, that willing consent was absent on our part, to such proceedings. What were we to do in the circumstances?

Before an answer could be given in the question certain considerations had to be given to the matter in all its aspects and implications. The average internee looked upon this latest move as something clever and subtle. The implication was that we each and all signed the application and that we desired to appeal against our internment. In other words, we, those of us who refused to appeal, were automatically put under a cloud of suspicion or doubt among our comrades. That was the main implication contained in the move: it affected to put us in the wrong among our fellows, that contrary to our open declaration that we ignored or refused to have anything to do with the appeal of our cases we in secret acted differently and so lent ourselves to be favourably disposed to the plan adopted by the British authorities. It was subtle from the point of view that it introduced the question of a plea of clemency, because as it was contended by many of us who had

participated in the Rising to make an appeal meant turning one's back on former associations and associates, and in turn threw oneself on the good grace, and at the mercy of our captors. Would it be that the British were at their "divide and conquer" business again?

We knew, of course, that there were quite a number of men who had been arrested on suspicions and that many men were arrested, not for what they did but what they were unable, or omitted to do, during the period of the fight. Indeed quite a number were arrested before the fight, and some in places where no fighting occurred; many of them after the event. These may or may not have appealed and perhaps with good reason, against their internment, on the grounds that they were not in the Rising. To the credit of some of these it must be said, however, that a not inconsiderable number actually refused to appeal, preferring to take their chances with their compatriots, content that they by their refusal were doing something for the cause'; and as some of these were sore over being denied the privilege of fighting, they would stand four-square with the fighting men.

This move by the British authorities did not permit of discrimination; it put us all, those who participated in the Insurrection in the same category with those who were non-participants, also those arrested on mere suspicion, and, if there were any such, those who refused to fight when the opportunity came or was available. Apparently we were all to be forced to attend this Advisory Committee, to give countenance to proceedings that were thrust on us, whether we appealed or not. That in reality was the position we were placed in, some of us more than perhaps others. How we debated the

question in all its aspects.' discussed this point, argued that and all the while keeping our thoughts clearly centred on a possible course of action to meet the contingency of our attendance at the Advisory Committee.

There was one possible implication contained, as we thought, in the proposed investigation of our cases. That was, as has already been mentioned, the question of complicity or non-complicity in the Rising. Dove-tailed into that was the bigger issue as to whether those who participated in the Insurrection, a word mentioned in the Internment Order, gave free consent or willingness to the fighting and/or whether they were dupes, played on by clever scheming leaders for ulterior motives. In other words, not only our cases were being investigated but also the question of our relationship with our leaders. Obviously we were asked to disown our leaders, to turn against the cause we had expounded and fought for. This question seemed always to protrude itself into the realm of things and caused us quite a deal of worry.

One thing we were assured of, the British authorities had their plans well set, and we, against our grain and, as far as the fighting men were concerned, our free will and better judgment were given no choice, or afforded no alternative but to allow ourselves to be bodily carried to the scene of the investigation then sitting in London, - Judge Sankey, presiding, assisted by Mr. Mooney, M.P., and others. It was a bit of an experience to travel by train under a heavy escort backward and forwards through England until at times, as one of our witty ones said "we resembled a travelling circus". Obviously we hadn't yet reached the stage when the word "finis" could be applied to our romantic careering around England, at the taxpayers' expense and

the bountiful benevolence of "Mother England". This ajourneying was to bring us from the farthest corners of North Wales down the length of England to one of His Majesty's prisons situated in London where we were required to spend possibly a day and night or vice versa as guests and return back to Frongoch, a distance of several hundred miles.

Actually the men who had participated in the Insurrection had decided not to co-operate in any way with the Advisory Committee. We had no optionbut to adopt an attitude of strict passiveness to the proceedings. We would refuse to tender evidence that would incriminate ourselves or our associates - if anything we reserved the right to refuse to give evidence at all as to the part we played in the recent fighting. There was one thing the men were particularly agreed on, namely, that they would not by word or deed give the impression that they were dupes, or that they were false to their leaders living or dead. For preference the men desired to make no statement at all that might be interpreted that they were fed up with their lot, and desired only to turn over a new leaf. The big difficulty with which we were faced was that no hard and fast rule could be applied when there was no indication as to the scope and nature of the investigation. This, we knew, could only be obtained by personal contact. Could we but know the minds of the Advisory Committee, to know the course they pursued; what they knew about our personal history or political activity and their dispositions towards us, we might have some grounds to work on. Some of this information was vouchsafed us by some of the men who had returned from their "visit" to London, information that was to act as a kind of headline, only a kind of but not a general guide to some of us.

The group, of which I eventually was a member, was brought to Wormwood Scrubbs Prison, having enjoyed the omnibus drive through part of London. On the occasion of our "interview" or investigation, a legal gentleman who claimed he was acting on our behalf, offered us advice, which few, if any of us wanted. Many stories could be told of the system adopted by the investigation. In many instances they did not know a lot; in some cases they were in possession of a lot of data concerning some men. Most if not all their information was presumably obtained from police and/or military reports. In the case of prisoners caught in the fighting, quite a deal of evidence was available, the main one being that you were taken a prisoner, having apparently borne arms against His Majesty.

The scene, inside the room in which the Advisory Committee held its session, impressed one by its orderliness and quiet dignity. It was much nicer, airier, and comfy than the dormitories in Frongoch. The members of the Committee, too, seemed quite happy, charming and gracious. They might even disarm you with their smiles and good nature as they bid you "to sit down and make yourself comfortable". Many of the questions asked might not be of a serious nature - concerning your name, address, occupation, if married, age, purely personal. Such preliminaries over, other more serious questions were put, questions relating to your membership of the Irish Volunteers. "You were mobilised on Easter Monday and you were taken a prisoner at the Four Courts on the Saturday - Have you any statement to make? "No." "Are you sure?". "That will do, thank you", and you are ushered out of the "holy of holies". Of course the questioning varied in different men's cases and the circumstances responsible for a man's internment. As regards the men who had participated in the Rising they had

quite enough information at their disposal to declare them fit subjects for continued internment. And so the ordeal of investigation went on, during its course releases started. This caused no little surprise but greater surprise of all was the strange variety of men that were released. Some of them were men who had had a good record in the Volunteers. Was it possible they were being released? We even wondered was a mistake made in their cases or was it a trick, to cause us to doubt such great men. Each batch of releases had a fair quota of such. Maybe, we mused, the move is intended to release all in stages? The question was asked, who next? Some of my particular companions were released in this way. Then came my turn, and on a July morning I packed up my belongings, bid goodbye to my pals and wended my way to the assembly point outside the camp enclosure to liberty. Before doing so, I had made arrangements to smuggle out of the camp my uniform. A fellow prisoner, Mr. O'Reilly of the North Strand, kindly helped me by taking my tunic and wearing it inside his shirt. One of our officers, Dick Stokes, was deeply interested in the ruse. We had to undergo searching before entraining. I was able to give Dick the signal "safe through". So my short period in Frongoch ended, and though I was naturally glad of the change I was sorry to leave behind such good loyal companions. Unfortunately many of these were destined to undergo a longer period of internment.

Chapter 13.

The British Government had, it seemed, struck a new note of clemency in favour of the internees. We wondered why. Many hundreds of men were in consequence released, when towards the end of July a sudden stoppage occurred.

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The number of internees was about halved. What might have been a magnanimous gesture of goodwill was turned into a pitiable and shameful act of discrimination and pettiness, as future events in Frongoch demonstrated. Public opinion - Irish opinion - we learned, had become vociferous of late in demanding the release of the prisoners, had possibly forced the hands of the British Government to the point of releasing some of the internees. The British Government met the demand half way, but was not prepared to close the chapter entirely. Hence "for public safety" reasons Frongoch Internment Camp remained in existence for quite a large number of Irish prisoners.

Politically and nationally the Irish people had suddenly changed. On returning home one became aware of a new political atmosphere. What a change indeed! The tide had turned in favour of us, in favour of our cause. It was particularly in evidence when we arrived in Westland Row. It looked as if the whole population of Dublin had come to welcome us home. How heartening, if indeed embarrassing, to find ourselves ~~treated~~ overpowered with greetings, to feel ourselves treated not as vanquished but heroes and victors.! This had happened and was happening at every landing place, port or railway station on the return home or expected return home of "the poor prisoners". Such it was. Pearse was right - his prophecy had come true, even in the space of a few months. Many people who had hated us, had come to admire us, to Fionise us. Was it not hard to understand the Irish temparament? The people too had learned to sing <u>our</u> songs - songs of praise "for the gallant men of Easter Week" and "the Felons of Our Land". <u>Our</u> songs, <u>their</u> songs, <u>Ireland's</u> songs. It was truly inapplicable and hardly understandable this strange spontaneous swing over to our side. But there it was, true

and unashamed, and undoubtedly Irish. This sudden conversion engendered in us a feeling that all was not lost after all. True, many of our best men, our gallant irreplaceable leaders were dead, many were undergoing severe trials and hardships in English convict jails, hundreds of good Volunteers, officers and men, were still interned, and, judging by all accounts, likely to remain for some time longer, but there was satisfaction in the thought that a "new spirit" had come into Ireland, a new spirit with great potentialities, hope and promise.

But all was not happiness or tending to happiness for the released prisoners, many of whom came home to endure other hardships, such as the loss of their former employment, of domestic trouble and distress. We, those of us who were thrown out of employment, were the victims of imperialism, victims of commercial jingoism and anti-nationalism. There we were thrown out of the frying pan into the fire. Quite a large number of men were so sadly circumstanced. What could be done about it? Undoubtedly, efforts had been made, and were being made, to relieve distress among our dependants, but the assistance given only touched the fringe, leaving a void between succour and support. Due to the absence of enough money to meet such a situation the Dependents Fund, which had been set up after the fighting in Easter Week, was incapable and unable to make ample provision to tide our men and their dependants over the difficulties then pressing heavily on them. Credit, however, was given by the men for what had been done, was being done in their behalf. An effort was made by the Dependents Fund people to obtain employment for our unemployed men. A labour Bureau was opened in a house in South William Street for the purpose, with very little result. There we moaned our sad economic lot, groused, agitated, played cards and horse-played to book. Many grandiose

schemes wereput forward by the men for starting community farms or opening community business, but these got nowhere. Nevertheless, grants-in-aid were given to some to open small businesses, and for several other reasons. It was a truly saddening and disheartening prospect for many deprived as they were of their daily means of subsistence; it was hardly less so when men, some of whom were good craftsmen, changing over to "any kind of a job", some of them "blind alley" occupations. There were so many instances of this, some taking up work to wash dishes in a public institution, another man going as porter in a hospital charged with, among other duties, of carrying dead people to the mortuary. How he loathed the job! Some others of us, about nine, being sent to Co. Tyrone to do lumbering work of which we knew nothing. Another man, a clerk, accepting a job as a farm hand, board and keep, et cetera.

While these things were happening a new call was sounded - not really a new call, but made new by reason of the strange circumstances of the times we were living in - that was the call to return to our units and set about re-organising. That call found many of us ready and willing. So that within the following couple of months, towards the end of autum 1916, the Dublin Brigade was re-organising. The difficulties confronting us were many and varied. Many companies were handicapped for officers, some for men, as quite a number of both categories were unfree. Our own Company suffered the loss of our Company officers who were in jail. A start had to be made; it was made and so we came together again. What a difficult task it was, confronted as we were with many problems of a perplexing and tantalising nature, one of which was the lack of drill halls, and another that we had to work not as

previously openly, but in secret, underground and undemonstrably for it was incumbent on us not to do anything that would jeopardise the possibilities of releases for our men still in jail and internment. Consequently we had to strike a new note, a novel one, but one born of necessity Public halls and public buildings we could not use, under the name of Volunteer units. Instead we adopted other titles, clubs of one kind or other - football, athletic or dramatic clubs. Our Company bore the title "the Thomas Allen Athletic Club". But most of our assembling and meetings were carried out in the Phoenix Park. Thither we would go on certain week nights or Sunday mornings, always taking with us a football for "practice" after a bit of play and then we would rest and hold our meeting. We could not engage in drilling or military training then. The men responded well to this although it was not all they wanted. Soon, however, we were on the road to recovery. Mark Wilson became our Company Captain.

By such means we had our Company together when the General Amnesty which set at liberty the men interned at Frongoch was effected at Christmas time 1916. This gave additional impetus to the re-organisation of the Volunteers, with the result that the next month, January 1917, saw some of the fruits of the previous couple of months' labour. Our Company was in line with others in that respect, although we suffered the loss of our principal, all our officers, by reason of their being in jail. However, we had to make do, the officers so elected at the meeting in January, undertaking to relinquish positions on the release of other officers. Similarly the Battalion and the Dublin Brigade staffs got functioning again. Enthusiasm flagged a little due partly to the economic depression that had overtaken some of our men, but in the main the majority returned to their former allegiance and

work with increased vigour and unbounded zest. A good deal, if not much, of the glamour and fascination of former days had gone by the board. Our work and activities were less spectacular and exciting than that to which we were accustomed. How could it be otherwise when we could not work or show ourselves in public? When our best policy was to keep law, and away from the public gaze, especially the altogether too sensitive prying eyes of the Castle Authorities, driven as we were by the peculiar circumstances of the time and the fear that were it known that we were so engaged in volunteering, an injury might be done to and militate against, the prospects of the release of the sentenced prisoners.

All the while other elements were working in our favour. These had a political tendency. One of these was the Roscommon Election; the standard-bearer Count Plunkett, whose son, Joseph, was one of the Signatories of the Proclamation of Easter Week and who had been executed. This election was being fought by the Count in the interest of the "new spirit" - the Republican spirit - the spirit of the "living Republic". Besides it gave the Volunteer Movement a new fillip; hundreds of Volunteers as such backed the effort up in every way. Another favourable element was the surge of the young men to join the Volunteer Movement as notified to us by many of those serving in the ranks. The greatest care had to be taken in respect of newcomers; only those sponsored by Volunteers were admitted. In many instances these new arrivals were brothers, relatives or close friends of Volunteers: our Company benefitted by this infusion of new blood.

Later came the Longford Election and the Clare Election: Ireland politically was on the march.

The Volunteers, seizing this opportunity, afforded by these elections, threw themselves into the public manifestations exhibited which to them meant the continuation of the work left unfinished in Easter Week. Volunteers from Dublin mingled with Volunteers from other parts of Ireland to render assistance in both places as canvassers, election agents, drove motor cars from Dublin and elsewhere, any and every work that was considered useful. It was no uncommon sight to see our motor cars bearing the "I.R.1916" registration plate, a practice that was contrary to the law. The assistance rendered by the Volunteers had important bearing on the results of the election, and their presence influenced and won many people to their side. Hence, side by side with the Volunteer activity the political movement Sinn Féin proceeded apace. Unfortunately, the political issue had to be fought out against Irishmen and it was not to the credit of the Irish Parliamentary Party backed up by the twin organisation "The United Irish League" and the "Ancient Order of Hibernians" (Board of Erin), choose to make the pace and run the political course. Yet there was much in the issue involved to suggest that most of the propaganda on our side, and indeed the very essence of these elections were directed against the British Government and British Authority, and in favour of the Easter Week Rising, and those who participated in it. "Sinn Féin abú", "An Poblacht abú", "Up Sinn Féin", "Up the Republic", "Remember Easter Week" and "Up Dublin" became common slogans on such occasions and in many other places as well. They rang far and wide in Ireland. The tide was turning.

Vindication of the men of Easter Week, vindication of what Easter Week represented was boldly and resolutely

expressed at election meetings. The voices of the people of Ireland were being raised in behalf of Ireland's sovereign right to be free - her right to be an Irish Republic. The torch was lit and there were few hamlets, villages, parishes or towns in Ireland where a republican, flag - the green, white and orange flag - was not in evidence. What matter if some called it "the Sinn Féin flag"; whatever name was applied, it <u>was</u> the flag which the Volunteers raised in Easter Week. What matter if the Volunteers were styled "the Sinn Féin Volunteers"; the intention was good and laudable enough. We in the Volunteers, in the Army of the Republic, might have reason to rile against such a description, but we knew that the intention behind it was <u>Us</u>. Such descriptions of us often caused us many a hearty laugh, for we knew that many of our Volunteers were not and would not be Sinn Féiners as such and had no association with the political entity called Sinn Féin. Of course, we had enough sense to know that the titles, Sinn Féin this and Sinn Féin that, were used by certain politicians and certain journalists to disparage us, and in many instances were applied for ulterior motives. Even the Rising of 1916 was broadcast by these same types of people as the "Sinn Féin Rebellion" or the "Sinn Féin Revolt".

Coming at such a time and such a way, the elections gave a decided urge to the Volunteers themselves to be up and doing, stimulating them, rendering encouragement to them in the efforts that were being made to put the movement on a sound footing. Greater than all these they focussed attention on the republican cause and the plight of the prisoners who then were in convict prisons - the felons of our land - as most of the candidates selected were volunteer officers, participants in the Rising, and in jail. Slogans like "Vote for McGuinness,

the man in jail for Ireland", "Vote for De Valera, the man in jail for Ireland" and in the case of Joe McGuinness the slogan "Put him in to get him out" had a popular appeal and was appropriate to the time. Also the fact that these men, if elected, undertook to abstain from Westminster gave emphasis to the demand for complete independence, to fight Ireland's fight at home rather than on the "flure" of the British House of Commons. This was an important, a necessary step forward in the direction of the goal of independence which negatived the then Irish Parliamentary Party in going a-begging for Home Rule and satisfied to leave it there "for the duration of the war". The said war was going into its third year.

In the case of the Longford Election, a new element had been introduced which had an important contributory effect in deciding the issue. That was the spirited and and highly sensational letter of His Grace, The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Walsh. In his letter, which was published and widely circulated as election literature, Dr. Walsh referred to Ireland "having been sold" by the Irish Parliamentary Party. These were strong words. The publicity given to this pronouncement broke the bonds that united the Irish people to their political representatives, and gave the republican cause material that was to play a part in future election campaigns.

In this (Longofrd Election) 9th May, 1917, McGuinness, the Sinn Féin candidate, was serving a sentence in Lewes Jail for his part in Easter Week Rising. Mr. Patrick McKenna was the Redmondite candidate.

A poster depicting a man dressed in convict garb, was extensively circulated. Beneath this appeared the slogan "Put him in to get him out".

McGuinness on a recount was elected by a majority of thrity-seven.

By the election of Count Plunkett for Roscommon, Joe McGuinness for Longford and Eamon De Valera for East Clare, the republican movement and cause was put on the political map. The Volunteer Movement had in similar manner come to the fore. When eventually in June, 1917, the British Government opened the prison doors and Dublin and Ireland rejoiced at their homecoming, we in the Volunteers felt that we were on the march again. In consequence of these releases a re-shuffling took effect in the Volunteer Movement. This was inevitable if the Volunteer Movement was to become a living progressive force again. There was an urgency about the matter, in consequence of which elections were held soon after the releases in various units, Company Officers installed and Battalion, Brigade and Headquarters Staffs appointed. It must be noted that the procedure for selecting officers and N.C.Os. was by election - every Volunteer could go forward for election of officer, and every Volunteer had the right to vote for selecting those who were to command their unit. That practice prevailed since the inauguration of the Volunteers. Up to date it had proved to be a good and a bad system. It didn't always work out that the most popular man so elected was necessarily the best or most reliable officer. The Rising of Easter Week was an example of the greatness and the weakness of the system. Then, the majority of the officers turned out to fight, but some, perhaps a small number, failed to do so, thus causing a certain amount of havoc to their men and their units. Admittedly the countermanding order was responsible in part for the failure. Normally the arrangement of election worked out satisfactorily, when the men so selected were the "right stuff". In any event it

was considered the most democratic, if not the most military, way of providing leadership, by and with the men's consent.

By some chance or mischance a new factor had set into the order of things. Due in a large measure to the new political situation then accentuated by the several victories at the polls, the re-organisation of the political organisation, Sinn Féin, the assimilation of prominent Volunteer Officers into high positions in that organisation and the possibility of future elections, parliamentary and local, many former officers of the Volunteers opted to leave the Volunteer Movement on the grounds that they were taking up political work and activity. Not all, however, for some others preferred to combine political and volunteer work. Our Company was, unfortunately, placed in the position in which our former principal officers , Captain Fahy and Lieutenant McGuinness, refrained from going forward for re-election - obviously they would have been the men's choice. This was a big blow indeed. We were all sorry, and we hated their leaving us. We had, however, the consolation that they would bring into the political field the spirit and principles of the Volunteers and we knew that in their new capacity as in the old they would serve Ireland faithfully and nobly. As a token of our appreciation for their great work and service in our Volunteer Company we made each suitable presentations thus attesting our personal appreciation for work well done. So very reluctantly and sadly we were compelled to submit to the inevitable. At that election the choice of Company Captain fell on Peadar Clancy. He had been promoted a Lieutenant in Easter Week when he was in command of Church Street bridge. For sheer pluck and initiative his name

and fame shone out in brilliant colours. Coupled with these military virtues was his untiring zeal, unflagging energy and a wonderful sense of leadership. The defence of Church Street bridge was one of the epic exploits, second in importance to the famous Battle of Mount Street Bridge. For the space of six days and six nights Peadar and his men kept the British at bay. No British soldiers came across that bridge. He won admiration for his achievements in Easter Week. It was reasonable, then, that he should be selected as the Company's principal officer. Seán Flood became 1st Lieutenant and Frank McNally, 2nd Lieutenant, John E. Lyons as Adjutant and Mark Wilson as Company Quartermaster. The following were elected N.C.Os.: Patrick Byrne, Thomas McGrane, Seán Kennedy and the writer. But Peadar Clancy was not destined to remain long in occupation of that position, for soon after he took up the post of Captain to "G" Company, 1st Battalion. He was followed later by Frank McNally who was transferred to "F" Company, becoming Company Quartermaster there. Soon after that late Seán Flood became Company Captain, the writer 1st Lieutenant and Seán Kennedy, 2nd Lieutenant; Patrick Byrne, Thomas McGrane, Denis Holmes and Seán Bermingham as N.C.Os.

The political arm, Sinn Féin, had by this time become a practical force, and the Irish Volunteers as the military arm, though each was administered, controlled and governed as separate and distinct entities, were playing their part in shaping the course of events. Some of the higher officers of the Volunteers and others of lesser ranks worked in both capacities, rendering aid to the Volunteers and Sinn Féin alike. There was a real understanding between the two organisations which permitted each maintaining its own individual status and

independence on matters appertaining to organisation and activity; yet there was a genuine collaboration in several spheres. It was conceded that the Volunteers' point of view and ideals had a big influence on Sinn Féin policy. As Volunteers viewed the matter it was the only course possible or considered feasible if full effect was to be given to the declared aims of both, namely the aims enshrined in the proclamation of Easter Week - the establishment of the Irish Republic. It must be understood that the Sinn Féin organisation since its re-organisation about the time in question had adopted this as /its principal aim. Hot-foot on the heels of the released prisoners came the announcement that the British Government was to seek a new expedient to "try and settle the Irish Question". This was the setting up of what was then termed "The Irish Convention". The first meeting of this august body met in Trinity College on July 25, 1917, under the chairmanship of Sir Horace Plunkett. Representatives of the various Irish political parties, including Sinn Féin, were invited to send delegates. Sinn Féin, however, refused to recognise it - actually boycotted it. To the most casual political observer this convention represented nothing except an expedient, intended as it was to throw the blame on Irishmen for not settling "their own affairs" and to make it appear that the British, the sponsors of the expedient, were actually bursting all over to do justice to Ireland, when in point of fact the real reason was to undermine the Republican Movement and spirit which was so vocative of late as the previous elections had demonstrated. At the back of the idea was the all pervading and all important subject, that of the Irish contribution to the war - in other words, the threat of conscription, which as some publicists and

politicians, Irish and English, hinted might follow should the convention fail to agree. The real humour of the whole affair was the fact that the British already had some years previously "settled" the Irish Question by passing and putting on the "Statute Book", the Home Rule Act, the ideals of the Irish Republic thus entirely abrogating its former pre 1916 aims and settled policy.

If the Volunteers and Sinn Féin were re-organising, so too, the British Government through the Castle Authorities were not slow or inactive in Irish affairs. Through the medium of the Defence of the Realm Regulations and other laws they set into a policy of repression, persecution and prosecution, arresting and imprisoning Volunteers and Sinn Féiners alike, on the flimsiest charges and for all kinds of offences. Many such were arrested for making speeches, for drilling, etc. The Volunteers were again drilling quietly and quasi secretly. The Sinn Féin halls in many instances afforded shelter for Volunteer meetings, parades, and drilling. The British authorities were on the alert, their police and detectives showing particular interest in Sinn Féin and Volunteer activities. Sinn Féin halls and other public halls were continually under their surveillance and largely through their efforts the jail doors were flung open to receive Volunteers and Sinn Féiners, with the nett result that many good men in both were to find themselves, some for the second time, guests of "His Majesty".

These arrests, if they weakened the numerical strength of the Volunteers, helped in an extraordinary degree the republican cause. The threat of conscription which all through the war years was held over Ireland, contributed to swell the ranks of the Volunteers.

Towards the end of the autumn of 1917, that threat became more and more pronounced, with the result that the Volunteer Executive alive to the possibility of its enactment by the British Government felt compelled to impress on all units the necessity of treating the matter as one of supreme military and national importance. Recruiting and training increased, and every effort was made to secure much needed arms and war material. All Companies, including our own, worked at fever pitch in preparation for a slow down on the conscription issue.

Then came the hunger-striking in the various jails, the prime object of which was to force the British Authorities to grant "political prisoners" status, to our men who had been jailed for political offences. The British refused to comply to these demands, put into force the "cat and mouse" act and instead of releasing men who were in imminent danger of death through the long and tedious fast resorted to the policy of forcibly feeding the prisoners. Cruelty and callousness could go no further, for, as a result of the process of forcing food on weak and determined men, a tragedy occurred which brought shame and dishonour to the perpetrators, and admiration and honour even unto death to the victim who had been so mercilessly treated. The victim was Thomas Ashe, one of the noblest, bravest and staunchest Volunteer Officers of the period. When, at last, the British Government eventually released him and had his emaciated body placed in the tender care of the medical fraternity in the Mater Hospital, the tragedy was consummated, and Ireland and the Irish Volunteers were left to mourn the loss of a brave and devoted soldier. His death, perhaps more than his life, was a complete vindication of a true son of the Gael. It produced an opposite effect to that intended by the British Authorities.

Ireland awakened to a new life, a new resurgence. Indignation, resentment and protestation were expressed by the people of Ireland against the machinations and wickedness of the British Authorities. Ireland, politically, militarily and nationally was stirred to the depths by the great martyrdom of one who, during the testing time of his great fast, penned the beautiful edifying poem "Let Me Carry My Cross for Ireland, Lord", thus attesting his desire for self-immolation "Greater love than this no man hath than that he lay down his life for his friend". Thomas Ashe exemplified that fittingly by his ready and willing sacrifice. No clash of arms, no military achievement of our making could have produced results so advantageous to our cause better than the death of this true and gallant Volunteer Officer. His death secured amelioration in the conditions relating to prisoners.

"Nationality", December 8, 1917, reported:-

"The demands of the prisoners recently released from Mountjoy and Dundalk were that the agreement embodying the terms arranged with the Lord Mayor of Dublin should be printed and issued forthwith, that the dietary scale should be similar to that in force at Mountjoy from September 30th to November 12th, that visits be given every day, including Sunday, and, that these terms be extended to all Irish political prisoners. Mr. Austin Stack who desires this should be known for the benefit of future political prisoners, encloses the following copy of the demands made in Mountjoy :-

1. Improvement in diet in quality and quantity.
2. Unrestricted conversation.
3. Work optional.
4. Republican prisoners not to be at any time, or in any place, to associate with ordinary criminals.
5. One letter and one visit per day.
6. Unrestricted smoking.
7. Newspapers, books, and writing materials.
8. Parcels from friends.
9. Facilities for associated study and for class work.
10. Cells not to be locked until 9.45 p.m.; lights in cells until 9.45.
11. Association of work, or otherwise, throughout the day.

The death of this one man shook the very foundation of British influence and power in Ireland. May more, its effect was felt, beyond the confines and territory of Ireland, wherever Irishmen and Irishwomen were found. The news of the murder of Thomas Ashe reverberated throughout the world. Instead of weakening the Irish cause, that tragedy and that martyrdom proved that the cause of Ireland had men to defend it and men to die for it. Perhaps Ireland needed that sacrifice at such a moment of her destiny to prove to the world in the words of Davis that "righteous men shall make our land, a Nation once again". Public and national conscience was aroused to fury at the cruel action of the British Authorities in provoking his death, and at the same time rendered homage to the martyr. Dublin, which Mitchell in his scorn, taunted "ye city of bellowing slaves" rose to the importance of the occasion

by fittingly honouring "the dead who died for Ireland in the lone prison cell, far far apart from each kindred heart, of death pangs none can tell". Dublin, during the period of his lying-in-state at the Mater Hospital and the City Hall, the funeral and burial - gave signal and unmistakable proof of its sorrow for and pride of "poor Thomas Ashe."

For the second time within its short existence the Irish Volunteers openly officiated at the grave of"an unrepentting unconquerable Gael" - O'Donovan Rossa in 1915 and Thomas Ashe 1917. Each gave public testimony of the existence and strength of the Volunteer Movement. But the funeral of Ashe epitomised not the burial of a man of a dead generation but one who represented a living generation of men who had fought and suffered and were fighting and suffering in Ireland's cause. In token of this the Volunteer Executive availed of the opportunity to come into the open again. It was not surprising then that on the day of the funeral of Thomas Ashe, October 1917, the Dublin Brigade, the county Battalion, and some country units of the Irish Volunteers were on the march again. Our Battalion was assigned the task of guarding Glasnevin Cemetery; assembling at Whitworth Road, we were marched there. A number of men of the Battalion, including a few of our Company, had been detailed for duty as firing party, in which capacity they had orders to accompany the remains from the City Hall through the city of Dublin to Glasnevin. Many of the men at Glasnevin were armed with revolvers that day. These, and the other men were placed at selected points and for certain duties, one of which was to protect the firing party from their arrival at, to their departure from the cemetery. All the entrances were guarded and men detailed to keep watch on police, detectives, who very likely would be present, as they were especially on the road outside,

and the entrances to the cemetery. Would the British interfere with the funeral because of the military display and the firing party marching through the city with rifles? There was an air of great expectancy prevailing in Volunteer circles that some attempt at interference would be made. To all intents and purposes we were breaking the law, and breaking it badly and severely for D.O.R.A. was still in existence, which definitely prescribed everything appertaining to military formations, the issuing of military commands, possession of and carrying of firearms, of illegal assembly, the according of military funerals and display of illegal flags on coffins, from houses or roof tops. Processions, demonstrations, meetings and funerals of a rebelly or seditious nature were tabboo. We of the Irish Volunteers were an illegal body: all our acts, works and pomps were illegal and contrary to British law. Naturally we were on tip-toes that day during the couple of hours we were on duty until the funeral cortege reached the cemetery. What a seemingly unending procession - Volunteers, clergy, public representatives, public bodies, Trades Unions, political, cultural and national organisations of every creed, politics and class - every walk of life was represented. It compared, if it did not exceed in numbers, the O'Donovan Rossa funeral.

Our eyes and attentions were directed to the firing party - we had our duties to perform. Three volleys rang out, that echoed and re-echoed through the gloom and silence of the cemetery. We wondered would the British intervene at the sounding of these shots. No! The final stages of the burial were gone through. The Volunteer firing party withdrew, dissolved in the midst of the flutter that the rifle shots had caused, as if the earth had opened and swallowed them. Mysterious departure indeed!

Later when the Volunteers re-assembled and marched through the old gates of the cemetery, that self same firing party minus their rifles, took their places in the ranks as we were marched citywards. The rifles were safely got away, much to the bewilderment and confusion of the police who were stationed outside the cemetery, with as we were informed, orders to seize them.

By the same token, it was revealed afterwards that the British authorities had planned taking action against the Volunteer military display and armed firing party. They refrained from doing so due no doubt to no sense of condonement or mercy for the participants. Had they moved that day, Dublin would have been the scene of much bloodshed. Their inaction, however, was a Volunteer gain, which had a tremendous effect on the Irish cause in general and the Volunteer Movement in particular. For one man lost, the Volunteers gained hundreds of young men. Recruits poured in in increasing numbers, some Companies including our own, receiving more than its quota. This caused us many heart burnings and many anxieties for up to the time we were finding it hard to provide accommodation for the regular members of the Company as drill halls were not easily available. Fortunately soon after we secured premises kindly put at our disposal by two Sinn Féin Clubs, the Patrick O'Flanagan and Seán McDermott, respectively. The former occupied a house in Capel Street, the latter in St. Margaret's Place, North Circular Road. A number of us, officers and men were identified with these Clubs in one capacity or other. At the time Volunteers were advised by Volunteer Authorities to render assistance and if possible enrol in Sinn Féin on the understanding, of course, that such work would not interfere with their volunteer activities. Indeed many Volunteers identified themselves with Sinn Féin in order to advance the interest of and

gain new members for the Volunteers.

In making "parts of ourselves" which obviously was the procedure we had to adopt in trying to carry out training for a company that had increased almost a hundred per cent, three distinct groups had to be formed - one for the regular company and two groups of what was termed the auxiliary company. This gave work for all the Company officers and N. C. Os. a couple of nights a week. In that way we carried on for a number of months, by which time the Auxiliary Company had passed the recruit training stage. Then in 1918 a new Company, consisting of the auxiliary unit was formed - this became "H" Company, 1st Battalion. Our Company supplied many first officers and some of its N. C. Os. Seumas Kavanagh became Captain of that new Company, Tommy McGrane, 1st Lieutenant, both of whom were attached to our Company; also Bob O'Flanagan, Frank Flanagan, Matty McGrane, Joseph Sweeney, Seán O'Neill, Tom O'Brien, John O'Connor. Of Tommy McGrane it may be repeatedjoined "C" Company in 1915 with me, having served in Jacob's in Easter Week, escaping at the surrender. Seumas Kavanagh held the rank of Captain in another unit in the Volunteers prior to and up to Easter Week. Since his release from internment he had been associated with our Company - an officer without a command - a spare lance as it were. He, like Tommy McGrane, Bob O'Flanagan and Seán O'Neill, had been members of the Fianna, the latter two in the unit in which I had served.

As mention has already been made of the Seán MacDermott and Patrick O'Flanagan Sinn Féin Clubs, it may be necessary here to make a few observations. Since the re-organisation of Sinn Féin, arrangements had been made to form cumainn or clubs in every parish - in Dublin in every ward. Generally the clubs were named after Irish

patriots and it had become a regular practice to name them after deceased Easter Week participants. Thus clubs bore the names Roger Casement Cumainn, James Connolly, the Brothers Pearse Cumainn, etc. The Seán MacDermott Cumann was so named after Seán MacDiarmada who was a signatory of the Republican Proclamation of Easter Week and who was executed by the British on May 12th, 1916. The Patrick O'Flanagan Cumann was named after Patrick O'Flanagan, a member of our ("C") Company who was killed in action in 1916. He was one of four brothers - Michael, Frank and George - that answered the call to arms on Easter Monday morning, and all served in the Four Courts. On Friday night of that week Patrick was one of the party led by his brother Micheál, that was sent to reinforce the Volunteer position at North King Street and Church Street. In the bitter street battle ensuing Patrick was killed. The formation of that Cumann took effect in rooms over the shop owned by Maurice Collins in Parnell Street. Collins was a 1916 man, having served in the G.P.O. during Easter Week. Joseph Stanley, proprietor of the "Gaelic Press", who had been interned in Frongoch after Easter Week, became President of the Cumann, Mr. Christopher O'Flanagan, father of the patron, Vice-Chairman, Mr. Thomas Hoban and Mr. Charles Leydon, Hon. Treasurers, and Mr. James Doyle, Hon. Secretary. Joe Stanley, through his printing press, had and was rendering important service to the republican cause in turning out seditious literature and publications, song sheets and pamphlets, and because of that was not very much in the good graces of the Dublin Castle Authorities. Joe Stanley was proprietor of the"Gaelic Press", Upper Liffey Street and its printing establishment in Proby's Lane adjacent thereto. He also carried on a shop "The Art Depot" in Mary Street for the sale of Irish literature, publications, photographs, song sheets, etc. That shop was raided by

police on Dublin Castle orders on at least one occasion. Volunteers and members of O'Flanagan Sinn Féin Club assisted in salvaging and clearing some of materials prior to a projected raid. Joe became almost one of the first recruits to the auxiliary unit attached to our Company of which mention has already been made. Likewise, Seumas (Jim) Doyle, a veteran election worker, joined the auxiliary unit about the same time. Joe Stanley became at a later date a Lieutenant of "H" Company. Other members of the O'Flanagan Club that joined that auxiliary unit were, Tom O'Brien, the brothers Pierce and Tommy Hoban, sons of Thomas Hoban, one of the Treasurers.

Later that Cumann transferred to Capel Street. It boasted a large membership of Volunteers, men of various Companies of Volunteers like Joe Kinnerney, Guss Byrne, Mick O'Brien, Mick Douglas, Matty Molloy; of men of "G" Company, 1st Battalion, and members of the 2nd Battalion - Seán Kennedy, Frank O'Flanagan, the writer and Denis Ryan, and others of our ("C") Company.

Mention must be made of the secret military organisation, the I.R.B., which continued in existence after the Rising. I was initiated into this body early in 1917 by Frank McNally. To my surprise and amazement many members of the "circle" were dear companions of mine in the Volunteer Movement, some holding important posts therein. The I.R.B. was a live organisation with deep-rooted ramifications in the Volunteers, in Labour, Sinn Féin organisation, the Gaelic League, Gaelic Athletic Movement and Citizen Army. It was generally a recognised thing that officers, and where possible, N.C.Os. of volunteer units and especially the higher executive ranks should in turn be I.R.B. men. In this way the military

purpose and republic object of the movement remained secure. To be a good Volunteer was synonymous with being a good member of the I.R.B. and vice versa. Hence in the re-organisation of the I.R.B. and the Irish Volunteers a new chapter was about being written.

A convention of the Volunteers was held in Jones' Road in October 1917. Representatives from all units in Ireland were present. Our Company was represented that day.

On 27th October, 1917, Volunteer Joseph Norton of the Fingal Brigade was buried at Swords. Some members of the Dublin Brigade formed the firing party, including Tommy McGrane of our Company. In addition to other units our ("C") Company met at Kilmore Cross and marched to Swords to attend the funeral.

Of "Joseph Norton", the 'Catholic Bulletin' in a biographical sketch, wrote:-

"Early in 1914 he was among one of the first to join Irish Volunteers. On Easter Tuesday he promptly offered his services, Arriving with his comrades at the G.P.O., they were charged by Commandant James Connolly with the perilous enterprise of relieving the besieged Mendicity Institution held by Commandant Seán Heuston. They reached their destination through a very hail of machine-gun and rifle fire, but being cut off from headquarters after twenty-four hours' desperate fighting, were obliged to surrender. The death sentence passed on Norton was commuted to three years penal servitude. From the date of his release his health failed perceptibly, until on November 28, 1917, he succumbed to a severe attack of penumonia."

Reporting on the funeral of the patriot the "Irishman" of December 8th, 1917, mentioned:-

"The remains of the late Mr. Joseph Norton who was sentenced to three years imprisonment for his connection with the Insurrection, was interred in Swords on Sunday . . . . . There was a large representation of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. - over 1,500 attending. The Cyclist Corps of the City Regiment was in full attendance... Cumann na mBan, Citizen Army, Fianna and some of the men who were with deceased in Lewes Jail. The firing party was selected by the Dublin Brigade. After the internment three volleys were fired over the grave and the "last post" sounded. The cyclists numbering a thousand, caused a sensation as they marched through the city and dismissed in O'Connell Street. The marching contingent dismissed in the suburbs."

The year 1918 was ushered in with the cloud of conscription hanging like a pall of death over Ireland. Nothing short of a miracle could avert the terrible menace. There was every indication that the British Government were prepared and determined to impose it by force, if necessary. So threatening and dangerous was the situation at the time that very special orders were issued by the Volunteer Executive concerning the matter. These orders definitely established the fact that the Volunteers would oppose conscription by force of arms. The temper and the patriotism of the Irish race aroused to high fever pitch by the threat was such as to give promise that not only the Volunteers but a united people would not readily submit to be "taken by the scruff of the neck" to fight another country's battle. So serious was the situation and so imminent the danger that Volunteer units were automatically placed on a war footing virtually on "active service". Full preparations were accordingly made to meet it. Each man was served with emergency rations, first-aid

field dressings and military equipment. Every available military weapon was placed at the disposal of the men. But by far the biggest and most important step was taken when, on the orders of Volunteer Executive, a complete recasting and re-grouping of Volunteers was carried out. This entailed the putting into effect of a new mobilisation scheme which could be termed a street and area operational zone for assembly and fighting. In the Dublin Brigade area a full census of Volunteers was compiled, and the city divided into districts. All men residing in these respective districts were formed into units under officers also residing therein. Each such group was required to be self-contained and capable of functioning in all military spheres. Officers, however, could be drafted to adjoining areas to command or supplement the personnel there. The underlying principle of this grouping and concentration of men was to ensure that men would be on the spot to take action at a moment's notice. Heretofore, Companies were constituted irrespective of their location beyond that the said Company was assigned to a particular Battalion which alone had a fixed area assigned it. Each Company had its own distinct mobilisation system. The Company personnel resided not necessarily in any particular area and were generally scattered at various points of the city. In illustration of the point, in our Company we had men residing in all parts of Dublin - in the north at such places as the North Circular Road, Glasnevin, Drumcondra, Ballybough; in the south at Rathmines, Donnybrook, etc., but quite a large number lived in or near the centre of the city.

In the new emergency scheme the principal operational plan was/to be centred in the residential area of each man. Each Battalion officer, Captain and Junior, was supplied with the names and addresses of the men in the areas to which they were

assigned. Besides these arrangements there was instituted a plan for the making of a survey of food, provisions, and stores within each area. Lists were compiled and recordings made of all forms of transport, commissariat, building suitable for occupation or as military posts, barracks and building occupied by the British, and all property including railways, bakeries, factories or business concerns that might serve military needs. In order to secure information on these matters each Company was allotted a specific area known as the "Company area", and the men utilised to the full to fulfil the duties incumbent on them at the time. Such work, however, takes time and much checking and cross-checking had to be done before a very reasonable report could be furnished.

If we were showing a certain measure of success in certain spheres, such as organisation and administration, and aided by a loyal and enthusiastic personnel, there was one weakness in our armoury and that was arms. These were coming in slowly, coming to us in various ways and by devious devices. We had a fair number of small arms, and but a few serviceable rifles, the latter purchased at high cost or otherwise obtained from British soldiers very cheaply. This was our big problem.

Obviously as far as the Dublin Brigade of the Volunteers were concerned, in the event of conscription being imposed, it looked as if Dublin was to have another show down with arms. Our training at the time consisted of street and house-to-house fighting, and our men were advised to make themselves familiar with every part of their immediate districts. We took to training our men in rifle shooting in out of the way places in small numbers. Much of our drilling was carried out in similar

manner. Risks had to be taken to do these things as there was always danger of police intercepting us or interfering in our work as they were over vigilant at the time. Special precautions had to be taken to guard against surprise, cyclists being employed, or men to act as scouts in order to afford protection to the party drilling or at rifle shooting. Generally we operated in the fields at Finglas, Ballymun or Santry. The rifle for the firing practice consisted of a .22 miniature which had to be carried secretly to the "range". Sometimes our drilling and manoeuvres were carried out in such places late at night or unreasonable hours in the morning. The ordinary inhabitants got quite used to our comings and goings especially at Finglas. Once in the fields we felt ourselves miles and miles away from civilisation, and taking necessary and reasonable precautions, safe, and with plenty of space to move at will, in the event of the upholders of law and order making a descent on us. These manoeuvres or firing practices gave the men a great thrill; they always felt that they were "getting somewhere" instead of being couped up in small rooms training under extreme difficulties.

Thrills there were in other ways too, not the least of which was the business of transferring rifles from one part of the city to another. One had to have strong nerves and as the saying goes "hard neck" to carry out this work around this time - we had special men for this work - men, who were tall, active and of course, reliable. One of these was Ned Dolan. Such men had many thrilling experiences out-witting the police and bringing the guns to safety. So important was the work and so useful the men engaged on it, that the Company provided an overcoat sufficiently large for the rifles to be concealed beneath it and without hindering the movement of the carrier.

Often the men had to traverse a couple of miles on such work. In every instance the "carrier" was protected or guarded by a couple of other men, armed with revolvers. Quite a considerable number of rifles were transported in this way, not alone in our Company but other Companies as well. Sometimes a rifle or rifles had to be transferred for training purposes at company parades or for firing parties, of which the Thomas Ashe was one. There were a few occasions when different men were assigned to the job. One of these concerned the bringing of a rifle to the home of one of our men in which three of us were involved. Tommy McGrane was the "carrier"; Seán Kennedy and myself, the protectors. The night was dark but we had to pass through a part of Dublin that was fairly well lighted - from Parnell Street to Gardiner Street. We chose the main thoroughfares for most of the journey. As Tommy was just medium height and the rifle of a large pattern, certain chances had to be taken. He placed the rifle hanging inside his trousers, the butt placed under his arm pit, to discover, alas! that he could not walk in comfort. He decided to go temporarily lame, helped by Kennedy. In this fashion we travelled and travelled slowly, especially when passing "Bobbies" (a name applied at the time to policemen) of which we met a few on our journey. The "carrier" played the part well of the "poor lame man" although it was no cake-walk for him as several times the rifle slipped down protruding below the ends of his trousers, and in the process scratched his leg which had to be treated on our arrival at the appointed rendezvous.

Other men too had occasions for thrills of one kind or other, for instance in raids for arms which around this time was conducted in order to replenish stocks.

Some of these were "fools errands" as was discovered when the attempts were made. These raids were not of a haphazaard nature or carried out on the off chance of success. They were the outcome of information sought and information obtained. Sometimes the information was genuine enough, but when the party detailed for the work arrived to seize them the guns or munitions were not to be found. They had departed elsewhere, perhaps some other Company had been on the job and seized them, or they had been taken over by the authorities. One such raid was that carried out by our Company on Alexandra Basin for rifles. When our party arrived what should they learn but that another Company had carried out the coup! Then again, information would be forthcoming that another unit was already in the field for the self-same raid. Then preference had to be given to the party first on the job. But not all raids were unsuccessful; and Companies, even our own, secured an odd rifle or some munitions as a result. Successful or otherwise, these raids necessitated a good deal of planning: the amount of men required, the placing of the men and their several duties, detailed orders to each man as to what was required to be done, arrangements for their assembly and departure. Time, secrecy and surprise were very important factors in such operations.

Chapter 14.

As has been already referred to the Irish Volunteers were playing a big part in Irish affairs, military and political. They were more than merely stepping out - they were in the van of the march for Irish Freedom. A peculiarly new opportunity was given in January and

February, 1918, to come into the open again. This was the occasion of the South Armagh Election when Patrick McCartan, the Sinn Féin Republican standard-bearer was contesting the parliamentary seat against Mr. Donnelly, the Irish Parliamentary Party candidate. In that election the Unionists and Nationalists combined in trying to defeat McCartan at the poll. It was a bitter hard fought contest, so bitter indeed as to call for the intervention of the Volunteers. Hundreds of Volunteers were despatched from Dublin to do guard, protection and other duties, most of whom were armed with revolvers. Prior to this, several Committee rooms had been smashed; election agents, many of them Volunteers,Officers and men, attacked and beaten, and electors sympathetic to the republican cause molested by Orangemen and Nationalists alike. The Volunteers were sent from Dublin in different groups and at various stages of the contest, especially the last week of it. Four of us, namely, Emmet Sweeney, Frank Carney, Dinny Holmes and the writer, were despatched to Dundalk, arriving there and reporting to Mick Brennan, the Co. Clare officer, and Peadar Clancy. Frank Carney and myself were sent to Crossmaglen. The few days before polling day we spent in canvassing, etc. and we were each night lodged with a Mr. Hearty, whom we learned was a returned Irish-American, and who had a beautiful house a short distance outside. On the early morning of the polling day a contingent of Dalcassians - men from the Co. Clare - numbering nearly a hundred strong, under Mick Brennan, arrived. They certainly were a hefty lot - few of them less six foot tall, having marched all the way from Dundalk, a distance of several miles. Were we happy and overjoyed to see them? These men and other Volunteers already there were divided into groups; officers appointed over them and placed in advantageous positions convenient to the polling booth and

the roads leading to the town. We had no sooner taken up our allotted positions when a large force of R.I.C. armed to the teeth, arrived on the same mission "to take over the place". As proof of their intention "to take over" they set about showing their authority by jostling the Volunteers from their positions. The Volunteers resented this action and when things assumed a very serious aspect one of the Volunteer Officers, Captain Thornton, went to the police barracks close by, interviewed the Inspector of the R.I.C. to object to the improper conduct of the police towards the Volunteers who were there in no other spirit but that of peace protectors. From that moment the Volunteers were not molested by the police. A short time afterwards an incident occurred which might have led to serious trouble. It appeared some supporters of the opposing political candidate staged a scene which called for the intervention of the Volunteers. That scene might have resulted in bloodshed but for the cool heads, steady nerves and fine discipline of the Volunteer Officers whose tactful handling of a delicate situation had the effect of restoring calm before harm was done. Even the police authorities were amazed at the forebearance, discipline and tact shown by the Volunteers, and it was noted that they relented somewhat in their attitude towards us. The prompt action displayed by the Volunteers "nipped in the bud" a possible source of danger and annoyance, and served as an example to evil-doers, with the result that the Volunteers were looked upon with respect for the remainder of the day. Other scenes there were, but these were of a "minor" character and easily dealt with by our men. After a few hours' stay some of the R.I.C. party left the arena and the area, and we felt ourselves honoured to be regarded as the defenders

of the peace, which we undoubtedly were, politicians notwithstanding.

We had good reason to assume that the real cause for our success lay in the direction of our strength that day. Had we been smaller, less disciplined and organised, quite a different fate might have befallen us, for we knew that there were "ugly people", political tools, on the opposing side available to make the time hot and heavy for the Sinn Féiners as we were called. Many tough fellows from Belfast had been imported into the constituency, and we had reason to know that a combination like the Molly Maguires and the Carsonites were capable of many things besides passing resolutions as the election campaign had demonstrated before the advent and presence of the Volunteers.

When the polling booth was closed that night a number of us were detailed to accompany or escort the ballot boxes to Newry. This business of guarding the ballot boxes had become a regular ritual with the Volunteers on such occasions. Thus two escorts were provided, the R.I.C. and the Volunteers. The Presiding Officer and his staff, as well as agents of the respective candidates, with the ballot boxes, plus the two escorting parties, formed quite a formidable procession, numerous cars being in requisition for the job as we wended our way through miles and miles of country to the rendezvous. The big thrill was passing through Unionist strongholds, our tricolour - the Republican Flag - waving gaily and gallantly from our cars. It was quite late that night when our party arrived in Newry where the boxes were safely deposited and our Volunteer party were conducted to a public hall which served as quarters for the Volunteers. Here we met scores of Volunteers from Dublin and men who

had been on duty in different parts of the constituency. All were in great form and had different tales to tell of their experiences. Leo Henderson was in charge of the "barracks". Captain Frank Daly of "B" Company was one of the officers. Here we, Carney and myself, picked up Emmet Sweeney and Dinny Holmes, also Tom O'Reilly of our Company. We spent the night there. The next morning before breakfast time Tom staged a little scene by way of a ruse to get out of barracks for a good meal as he was mad hungry and he didn't feel like partaking of the barrack "board". Agreeing to accompany him, Sweeney, Carney, Holmes and myself were escorted to the door. Approaching the Volunteer guard Tom requested "Pass prisoner and escort" and before we knew what it was all about we had "broke barracks". Repairing to a nearby side street we found ourselves in a café, styled "A Soldier's Café". Here were we, soldiers of another Army, enjoying a good substantial breakfast at a moderate fare. Even the uniforms of some of our party and our tri-coloured ribbons which we wore in our hats, contrasting with some of the pictures on its walls, after which we four of us were photographed.

On that afternoon we departed from the "barracks" and marched to the railway station. On the way we were met by a hostile group that seemingly was bent on giving us a "warm and not too pleasant send-off". We were belaboured with stones and iron bolts on the way, indulged in by men and women alike. We had been tested in worse situations than that, and to the credit of the officers and men of the Dublin Brigade after a few skirmishes and charges we reached the train in good order. The return journey was uneventful until we reached Amiens Street where lo, and behold! a concourse of people several thousand strong, this time our friends, were assembled to greet us home. What a contrast to the scenes enacted by our Newry cousins!

As we marched away citywards we felt after all that our failure to return McCartan in the election was indeed compensated by the presence of our own good supporters in Dublin on the occasion of our homecoming.

The important part which the Irish Volunteers played in that election could not be better described than the tribute paid that body by "The Irishman" of February 9th, 1918:

"The Irish Volunteers' Return from South Armagh Election".

"The methods employed to ensure that England should win South Armagh we have described as blackguardly. The word is strong, but not strong enough. Again and again the lives of the Sinn Féin leaders and workers were endangered, always from behind hedges and mostly in the dark. Several attempts were made on the life of Countess Markievicz and it was only defective markmanship that on numerous occasions prevented Sinn Féin speakers and organisers being seriously maimed. A regular reign of terror was instituted against voters suspected of Sinn Féin sympathies. So dangerous did the conditions become that at the request of Sinn Féin the Irish Volunteers adopted the unprecedented course of sending detachments of trained men into the constituency to protect both organisers and voters. But for these and the salutary effect produced by their splendid physique and discipline many of the Sinn Féiners would not have got away with their lives. This may seem an exaggerated statement to those who had not experience of South Armagh. But it is the plain blunt truth. But for the presence of the Volunteers the bulk of the 1,305 electors who voted for McCartan

would never have been allowed to reach the poll..... "

Writing of the scenes on arrival of the Volunteers, the same paper said:

"As the four thousand Irish Volunteers with twice the number of cheering citizens marched through the streets of Dublin on Saturday night on the return of their comrades from Armagh, I heard one spectator say to another "You would think they had been victorious". It was not a question of thinking. They were victorious.....

"President De Valera had narrow escapes; Seán McEntee was wounded and Frank McGuinness of Longford, driving to his hotel from a meeting at eleven o'clock at night was rendered unconscious by an iron bar hurled at the car from the shelter of a ditch. Harry Boland was similarly in danger of his life and ss was Seán O'Mahony and several others. Only two assaults were made in the open - one where a Hibernian attempted to drive a pike through De Valera, and the other on Countess Markievicz at Lislea, on which occasion a huge paving stone only missed her by inches, and the advancing Hibernians, sorry that she had escaped, pelted her with sods and mud that a gentleman of the party had to draw a revolver to save her. This was only one of many attempts on Madame. Some of the A.O.H. apologised for the Lislea affair.....
The Belfast batonmen are... mercenaries, pure and simple, hired as required and ready (for a plentiful supply of drink and 5/- a day) to do any little job .... from breaking up a meeting to waylaying a person politically obnoxious to their employers. Armagh had them last week and such a reign of terror did they establish, such unparallelled intimidation did they

employ, that Sinn Féin was compelled to ask the Volunteers for Volunteers to protect its workers and its voters. But for the presence of the Irish Volunteers in Armagh the Sinn Féin casualty list would have been a heavy one. The clean manly courage of the patriot was pitted against the bullying methods of the hired riffian and mercenary, skulked and fled when faced with the man.

Caisibre MacColm."

Apropos of the reign of terror "Nationality" of February 9th, 1918, reported:

"In Crossmaglen alone was there a majority of catholic voters against Sinn Féin. There for three weeks a reign of terror had been instituted by Devlin's Ribbonmen and Carson's Orangemen against the voters with very good success..... The ambushes laid at night along the road by Messrs. Dillon's and Devlin's followers were imitated later on by the followers of Sir E. Carson."

The "Dundalk Examiner" reported:

"When Mr. Fearon who presided at a Sinn Féin meeting at was returning home on Sunday night he was set upon and savagely beaten. His purse was also taken from him."

"When Mr. De Valera was motoring to Crossmaglen on Sunday a supporter of Mr. Donnelly, marching in an A.O.H. procession, thrust a ten-foot pike through the wind-screen and inflicted a gash on Mr. McEntee who accompanied Mr. De Valera."

"When an Armagh contingent of cyclists were leaving Crossmaglen on Sunday they were set upon by a band of rowdies and assaulted with stones, so they had to return. The police who were present in force took no action, and Mr. Brennan ordered a charge by one of the Companies of Volunteers. The stone-throwers scampered across country. The windows of MacCartan's Committee rooms in Crossmaglen were broken on Sunday."

"Messrs. James and John McQuill, Dundalk, who had charge of the arrangements for the convoyance of supporters of Dr. MacCartan, were arrested this Wednesday morning by 18 members of the R.I.C. and removed to Mountjoy."

"The Belfast Newsletter" in an editorial January, 18th, 1918, said:

> "All the time there are tens of thousands of young unmarried men in Ireland drilling in view of another rebellion and it (the Government) refuse to take them,"

The Irish Unionist amendment proposing to apply military conscription to Ireland was (says the

"Independent" of January 1918). rejected in the British House of Commons by 138 to 47 votes.

"Ireland", said Mr. Archdale, "was living under the protection of the British Army and Navy, and was it fair that she should only contribute 2 p.c. to the fighting forces as against 60 p.c. from England? The only effect of exempting Ireland was to throw many thousands of able-bodied young men into the ranks of Sinn Feiners, an avowedly pro-German and Anti-English organisations."

He admitted that the application of conscription might cause a little trouble but asserted that if it were not extended a great deal more trouble might result after a bit. The amendment would only mean that there should be equality of sacrifice which would bring into the army 150,000 of as good fighting men as could be found in the world.

Mr. Coote denied the allegation that Ireland would not submit to conscription and said if the Government had not quailed before threats the Easter Week rebellion would never have been heard of. When the rebellion did take place Mr. Asquith who was then Prime Minister, went over and patted the rebels on the back. By so doing he had encouraged the spirit of rebellion.

Mr. McKearn contended that it would take six soldiers to arrest one conscript. The mass of the population were Sinn Féiners and that meant that they were also pro-German.

The "Times" (according to 'Irish Independent' report) said:

"An Irish settlement is essential as an Imperial necessity. The Irish question is hampering the Cabinet in all parts of the world in its conduct of the war, as instanced in Australia, America, Russia and amongst the allies generally."

The "Irish Independent" of February 4th, 1918, reported:

"President Wilson received Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington at the White House, Washington, on January 11th, where she presented a petition signed by many prominent Irishwomen asking that the United States recognise the political independence of Ireland".

Ireland in Congress - Miss Rankin's Resolution: (Editorial "Butte, Independent, Harrison Ave., Montana, January 5th, 1918):

"Miss Rankin is certainly in distinguished company when she raises her voice in Congress for the recognition of Irish Independence. She has with her in this demand not only the President of the United States but all the allied statesmen of the Entente who have over and over again declared their determination to liberate the small nations. The great majority of the people of Ireland have testified in the most unmistakable manner that they

are not satisfied and never will be satisfied with any English form of Government and that the establishment of an Irish Republic alone will solve the question. Moreover, President Wilson, Miss Rankin and every member of both Senate and Congress as well as the great mass of the American people are aware that Ireland has contributed far more than any other small nation in the upbuilding and development of the American Republic since its inception to the present time. The Irish the world over are deeply indebted to Miss Rankin for her noble championship of their cause at a time when those in this country who are more concerned for the welfare of England than they are for the best interests of America, are with lying lips scurriously defaming all who raise their voice in behalf of Irish freedom from the withering and despotic yoke of England. During Senator Walsh's last visit to Butte, the editor of this paper laid this aspect of our cause for entering the war before him and urged upon the Senator with all the emphasis at our disposal the crying urgency of the Irish claim to national recognition and independence. The Senator was sympathetic and thanked the writer for placing the attitude of Ireland before him."

"New Ireland", February 2nd, 1918:

"The Election (South Armagh) has nothing to do with Westminster. Sinn Féin does not give a thought to that contemptible talk shop. The Irish Party too, is not pouring out money and energy in order to secure one more orator in the English Parliament.

> The Westminster policy is as dead as a door-nail, and the Party know it..... Talk of Westminster is simply bluff and claptrap. As far as Ireland is concerned, parliamentarianism with its jobbery, its speeches, its Statute Book and the rest is dead and buried; never again to be resuscitated. The issue in South Armagh is this: "What do you want instead of the rule of Westminster and the Castle?".
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> . . . .

Of the Irish Party that journal wrote:

> "..... There are indeed several gentlemen now strutting and speechifying in the country who arrogate to themselves the title of Irish Party. They flatter themselves. We hoped in vain that these men would see that their work was done, that their weapons were useless for this great international struggle which promises Irish freedom. They will not see, they persist in intruding themselves between us and our destiny, they are seeking to save England from Irish America, and to separate us from our fellow-brothers, workers across the seas..... The choice lies between two demands - the message of T.P. O'Connor or the embassy of Dr. MacCartan. Which of them speaks for Ireland? The man who sailed in an English cruiser, who probably boasted of Lloyd George's contribution to the Party funds, who has never dared to address an open meeting of Irishmen in the streets, who from his shelter - the Knickerbocker Hotel, libels his fellow-countrymen, spread lies about German gold, cables home false news about his "success" (which is now flatly contradicted by the English Press), the man who despatched secret service money to John Redmond in

order to win South Armagh.

Mr. Donnelly stands for the man who despatched T.P. O'Connor on his dirty errand; his return for South Armagh would be hailed by T.P. O'Connor as Ireland's endorsement of his mission. Of course that would be a lie for South Armagh is but one constituency and without the Unionist vote and the undemocratic register the Party would not have a ghost of a chance even here. He is chosen not to make speeches in Westminster but in order to pretend to America and to the world Ireland is behind the Party which cringed and whined to Asquith and Lloyd George, which accepted quarter Home Rule for three-quarters of the nation. Dr. MacCartan stands for Ireland with the awakened cause of nationality and manliness ..... "

On February 19, 1918, the British Government issued an order against the carrying of arms, followed by a proclamation on March 13th, prohibiting band parades. In the meantime a new move to combat conscription was initiated which became known as the Mansion House Conference. This body consisted of representatives of various political parties - Sinn Féin and the Irish Parliamentary Party and also Labour, presided over by Cardinal Logue. Arising out of their deliberations the 21st April, 1918, was agreed upon as the date for signing an anti-conscription pledge. These were to be signed outside church doors. Labour to go one better in emphasising their opposition to the enforcing of conscription, carried out a one-day strike on the 23rd April, on which day the Irish Volunteers rendered help in seeing that the strike was enforced. But apparently the British Government was not in the mood to acquiesce to Irish demands, for on May 11th it

was announced that Field Marshal Viscount French was sworn in as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and the Right Hon. Edward Short, K.C., M.P. as Chief Secretary, which appointments lent colour to the belief that the British intended to go ahead with their plans to force young Irishmen into their armed forces. These appointments suggested to the Irish mind, and to the Irish Volunteers in particular, that the British authorities planned to introduce conscription and to enforce it by all the military force at their command. Viscount French was known to be favourable to the strongest possible measures to bring Irishmen on the side of England in the war, were one to judge the appointment as a military necessity which had much to commend itself from the British point of view, not merely to bring in recruits as to destroy the Republican Movement then showing signs of virility, and development, despite all efforts and laws to curb its growth.

There was one bright spot on the Irish horizon which even threats, proclamations and ukases failed to dim. That was the wonderful solidarity, the extraordinary unity and magnificent spirit of the Irish race in the face of impending danger. Standing unflinching and erect behind the Mansion House Conference - behind their Bishops and their leaders they awaited the coming storm, if come it must with resolute calm and composure, trusting in the justice of their cause and their rights as freedom-loving people. Behind that Conference, nay superimposing it, stood the Irish Volunteers on guard, watching and waiting for the zero hour of trial and danger, which seemed to be fast approaching. The Irish Volunteers had no misgivings and no doubts that if Britain sought to impose conscription militarily she would apply it with full vigour and with maximum force, showing neither mercy nor

consideration on leaders or people who would deign to oppose its operation. Furthermore, the Irish Volunteers, indeed republicans generally, believed that as a military measure it should have to be met militarily - no other course was possible or feasible should the British apply force. Yet there were some people outside the Volunteer Movement, whose plan of campaign suggested the adoption of passive resistance or non co-operation much on the principle of "conscientious objectors", arguing that if all the young men acted in that way the British Government would be easily beaten. In other words, the British could conscript but the Irish would not serve or fight for them. The Irish Volunteers had only one mind on the subject and that was summed up in the slogan "No conscription - shoot straight".

Obviously the British military mind was made up on the matter. There were hints that the whole problem was to be placed in military hands; hints even that as a first step the country would be put under martial law. Another hint was that economic pressure would be brought to bear on young men in order the more easily force them into the British armed forces. There were many loyal employers and loyal business establishments willing and capable to co-operate in such a plan, as evidence their treatment of Irish Volunteers after the Rising, not to mention that some of these had during these war years "encouraged" their employees to "join up", and any that did not do so were shown the door in a quiet unobtrusive way on the grounds that "owing to the war they had to economise", etc. Such things were possible in a country that had been made a plaything of during the war by some politicians, publicists and commercialists who were true Imperialists and well disposed towards fighting other people's battles,

remained at home in luxury and comfort. These people had not missed any opportunity to do "their bit" by voice, pen and finance, their big regret being that "the fighting Irish" did not flock to the colours in greater numbers. To make matters worse for them, the Irish appeared to have gone mad, politically mad, and totally indifferent to the allied cause of fighting for civilisation, humanity and the defence and liberties of small nations.

Heretofore these same exponents of Britain's war policy had used their power and influence to win voluntary recruits. In season and out of season they had advocated the establishment and maintenance of the "Irish Regiments" in the British Army, appealing for men to keep the gaps filled/trying/ to prove that it was Ireland's war, and in consequence the Irish race should consider it a high honour to fight and die in France or Flanders for Ireland's cause. Their one regret was that voluntary enlistment had failed as a policy and an expedient to bring in the much needed recruits which British politicians, war lords, and the press held to be necessary as Ireland's contribution to the war. A vicious, anti-Irish campaign was conducted by the English press by English publicits and propagandists to discredit Ireland and the Irish people.

A week after the appointment of Viscount French as Lord Lieutenant, to be precise on the 18th May, 1918, the British Government discovered a "German Plot". In consequence of that discovery they instituted widespread raids throughout Ireland and captured and imprisoned a large number of prominent republicans, many of them high placed Volunteer Officers. Obviously the British had taken the cue from their own Press, publicists and propagandists. These had been propagating the bogey that Sinn Féiners and the Republicans were pro Germans.

One such example of that was afforded by an interview given by Sir F.E. Smith to the "Boston Post", January 14th:

"The Sinn Féin (said he) is distinctively pro-German and part of the pro-German propaganda."

Was it not very significant that this move should be made at a time when the anti-conscription movement and the East Cavan Election were in full blast. Significantly the British authorities arrested election officials, agents, speakers and workers who were then engaged in the latter place working for the candidature of Mr. Arthur Griffith, the republican candidate, thus inflicting a serious blow to election plans. Many of those arrested were indispensable from the point of view of election procedure and organisation. Substitutes were obtained and election work continued, the members of the Irish Volunteers lending a hand in the different phases of the work.

This election contest was hard and bitter, though not so disorderly as South Armagh. Starting in the latter part of April or early in May quite a good deal of work was done when the German Plot was discovered. Workers for the election poured in from every part of Ireland, the vast majority of these being active Volunteers. In response to the request of one of the election agents, Joe Stanley, I repaired to a place called Shercock, there to take over the local committee rooms. Stanley, by reason of his business in Dublin, was unable to devote all his time to the election work and had to be content with paying week-end visits or hurried calls there. He was a good task master, an active indefatigable worker, a forcible platform speaker;

in short a very useful man. On one occasion he entertained an election crowd by his rendering of a newly composed ballad which he, it was said at the time, was regarded as the author. The title was "Brittania to East Cavan":

East Cavan, dear, I'm proud of you.'
Says the Grand Old Dame Brittania.
I know you'll vote red, white and blue
Says the Grand Old Dame Brittania.
You wont believe the Sinn Féin lies
And you'll give Lloyd George a grand surprise
He'll send conscription in disguise
Says the Grand Old Dame Brittania.

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In Parliament there's a quiet nook
Four hundred pounds and a fishing hook,
Come along and see the Statute Book
Says the Grand Old Dame Brittania.

This ballad was circulated as election literature and was sung at many of the election rallies in at least our part of the constituency.

The spirit of the local Sinn Féin and Republicans of Shercock and adjoining areas was indeed magnificent. They gave ample proof of their enthusiasm and patriotism in every phase of the contest, all were eager and zealous in trying to get "our men in", that no value was placed on time or labour devoted to the performance of whatever duties required to be performed. The fact that the election campaign was being conducted at such an important epoch in Ireland, history had the effect of spurring our supporters and workers to increasing

intensive endeavours and even at great sacrifices to themselves conduced to pub East Cavan, one of the gaps of the North, in step with East Clare, Roscommon and Longford. No words of praise or commendation would adequately do full justice to as fine a body of men and women as those whose lot it was to give proof of their nationalism and nationhood, which was typified by that election contest. All were truly wonderful - Mr. Leavey, the President; Mr. Owen McEnroe, the Secretary; Mick Sheridan, Mr. Fidgeon, the Smiths and the O'Reillys, and all the various clansmen of the several districts, Kilann, Knockbride, etc. Mr. Leavey had been a former Justice of the Peace. He resigned that position as a protest against the British Government's treatment of Ireland. Mr. Fidgeon, a reputed businessman, in whose home Joe Stanley and I stayed, was as fine a type of Irishman as one could hope to find within the four seas of Ireland. These two men and indeed Mr. McEnroe, Secretary of the local Sinn Féin Cumann, who was proprietor of a drapery store there, were men of straw and prestige in the locality, as also in the local Sinn Féin which then showed signs of great activity and virility, and stood well up to the strain imposed by the election. As regards the rank and file they too gave of their best, and were ever ready to perform any work allotted them.

Several other people from other parts of Ireland rendered assistance: Seumas Brennan and Dinny Holmes from Dublin, and Mr. Pinkman, a clerical student from Belfast, who proved his worth and value in the election Committee Rooms, and at a time when help was urgently needed. Besides the election opened up the possibility of extending the range of the Volunteer Movement by organising a company in the district. So Dinny Holmes and myself set to work and in a short time after

preliminary training the Company was put on a regular footing, and the fact notified to G.H.Q. in Dublin. Dinny also kept in touch with a Company of Volunteers in County Monaghan. After a little while we assisted in forming a branch of Cumann na mBan in Shercock. Holmes was by this time getting busy in training the various groups, in which all and sundry co-operated in every conceivable way. Ample facilities were given the men to step it out to the several election rallies at Baileboro, Cootehill and other outlying places, armed with hurleys, which by the way was quite an innovation to many and in which Mr. Leavey came to the rescue by allowing one of his lovely trees to be felled for the purpose. These men made a gallant show and that at a time when the carrying of hurleys was prohibited, when drilling and marching of Irish Volunteers was declared to be illegal, and when in the heat of the election fray a "German Plot" was made the excuse for arresting and deporting many of our best in the Republican Movement.

Synchronising with the announcement of the German Plot, a big election rally was held in Baileboro. Our contingent of republican supporters, with the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan duly participated. A large force of R.I.C. were on duty when we arrived, a number of whom accompanied us to the meeting rendezvous. Our advanced column of Volunteers halted on orders of D. Holmes. Immediately some officers and men of the R.I.C. made a move in his direction. The Volunteers formed a cordon around him. As I issued orders to the group of Cumann na mBan a similar scene occurred. Obviously the police intended giving effect to their law prohibiting volunteer drilling, etc. In the face of the threatening attitude of the assembled Volunteers the police hesitated.

To our surprise, Holmes and I were surrounded by Volunteers and ushered away from the precincts. Later we rejoined the contingent and returned to Shercock. The next day information was conveyed to some of our supporters that the Sergeant of the place had gone into Cootehill to make a report. Holmes in the meantime had returned to Dublin on business arranged some days previously. I was advised to keep low. That afternoon it was arranged I should go to Cootehill. A car would picke me up a couple of miles on the main road. My presence on that road would not attract much attention as I was accustomed to walk there on many an afternoon. On that occasion I met the R. I. C. Sergeant who was cycling from the Cootehill direction. Beyond a "Good evening" he showed no unusual interest in myself or my actions. Thouhgt I,"maybe he is like the good puss that prefers to play before destroying his prey". Soon however, I reached the place where the car was waiting, and travelling the remaining journey I arrived safely and well into Cootehill where I reported to Sinn Féin Headquarters at the White Horse Hotel, saw Joseph Dixon, Solicitor, who seemed to be in charge, who informed me that the place had been raided by the R. I. C. the night before and many of our leading men were arrested.

Hearing my story he though Cootehill would not be my best place and suggested my going to Kilnaleck which I declined. Later he informed me that there was a meeting of Volunteers arranged to be held at Killann. "Would I go there?" I agreed, and was soon safely delivered there. Now Killann was only a couple of miles from Shercock and in that police district. I received many offers or invitations to several houses, eventually agreeing to stay with the Smiths at Knockbude. I did not wish to leave the constituency until after the electio

My presence in that neighbourhood was a closed secret as the following incident will prove. The following night a caller arrived inquiring for a Mick Malone (this name I had adopted). My good friends were suspicious. The stranger informed them that he was living in O'Reilly's and that he would call in the morning, which he did, and so Dinny Holmes and myself became re-united under strange circumstances. He had arrived from Dublin the evening before and our friends in Shercok anxious for his safety and aware of the risk he was running (which he had no prior knowledge of as the machinery to give effect to the ukesa of law and order had been set in motion during his short absence) smuggled him to my domiciliary rendezvous. How he must have ranted and cursed against the mystery surrounding my change of name, for none of my new neighbours, to their eternal credit, appeared, even professed, not to know, although in fact they did know my real name, or to divulge it to a stranger! Was not that true neighbourliness and absolute friendship?

For the space of a week or two we were kept well in touch with election work, and thanks to the more than generous attentions of the Smiths and the O'Reillys lived on the fat of the land, being treated more like prodigals than fugitives. We had many reasons to pray blessings on these people and their households. All were wonderful, not alone in their many kindnesses but in their superb patriotism and doing everything for their "love of the cause". These people, indeed all the grand people of Shercock and vicinity, who were engaged on our side in that election, not alone warmed to us but treated us royall Their big boast was that we were from Dublin - "men from Headquarters" - as they so often proudly acclaimed us, which gave them great satisfaction and us the feeling that

we were being hero-worshipped. One of the best passports to their hearts and their homes was the knowledge that one was out in Easter Week, which they considered to be the greatest achievement. The election opened up for them possibilities for becoming enrolled in units of Volunteers and Cumann na mBan and they had gone eagerly, sincerely and enthusiastically to that work.

Came the polling day, and I had the task of looking after the transport of electors in the neighbourhood of Knockbride, taking up duty, on a miserable wet day at _____ Cross road, a few miles from Shercock. That night we obtained various snatches of information, some of which suggested that our cause had gone well. Enquiring of one old man "How did things go on to-day?", we received the perhaps strange reply: "Rotten, it was the worst election day I ever had". Inquisitive to find out why that was so we were cooly informed, "It was too quiet - not a row all day"; our good friends, so we were told, had gone into "town expecting some (trouble) even carried a stout ash plant, just in case, you know, and came home without having to use it once". He was truly bewildered if not shamed at the quietness of the proceedings, saying it was not like the old days when elections were breezy affairs. We knew that as far as Sinn Féin and the group of Volunteers were concerned such "quietness" meant order and discipline, and these had been maintained up to the last, although the Molly Maguires and the Orangemen were not an insignificant factor in the area, helped of course by their compatriots from nearby County Monaghan.

Next day, our election work over, we decided to return to Dublin, Dinny cycling and I to make my way to Kingscourt by train. Skirting Shercock, our danger point, I arrived at Leavy's home. Mr. Leavey was game enough for

any task. He brought his pony and trap to meet me at Fidgeon's place which was situated on the Kingscourt end of the "town". We travelled that good six miles; he with pride and honour to do anything for his friends, and I, - well, I only wished the pony could fly.' Several times we got a jolt to our nerves - I did, but not Mr. Leavey, for he was as calm and cool as if he was only on a day's outing - as motor tenders passed us on the road going towards our destination - tenders of armed R.I.C. released from their election duties returning to their various stations. Luckily they had no interest in us beyond expecting us to keep the road clear. What a wonderful man was Leavey? A former "man of the law", he proudly boasted, along that Kingscourt road, that he had given his J.P. ship "over to him"/his meaning pony, and he never for a moment regretted his action for resigning: "it was the least he could do for the country". From my slight knowledge of him gained by personal observation and from other sources, he weilded a power among our republican friends in that portion of East Cavan and won esteem and favour accordingly. I was downright sorry to part company with him as the train in which were a hundred or so R.I.C. men steamed out of Kingscourt Station to bring me homeward; sorry to to have parted company with good supporters of our movement there, having spent six weeks among them, six weeks that caused me to have and to hold a very good opinion of them.

East Cavan Election 1918.

In a pamphlet entitled "Father O'Flanagan's Suppressed Speech", issued at the time of the East Cavan Election:- The following is a verbatim report of the speech delivered to 10,000 people at Ballyjamesduff on

Sunday, May 26th, 1918, by the Rev. M. O'Flanagan, C.C., Crossna, Vice-President Sinn Féin. The Censor refused to allow even one word of the speech to be published. Father O'Flanagan, who received a great ovation, said:

> "Men of Breffni . . . . . Within the last few days England has started one of the many campaigns against Ireland, and the first action in the campaign is the effort to fill the whole world with a poison-gas of lies and misrepresentation..... They cannot calumniate us to-day by calling us pro-Irish and therefore they try to do it/ by calling us pro-German. They are trying to persuade the world that this quarrel that exists to-day, and is acute, between Ireland and England is a quarrel that began since Germany was discovered four years ago ..... but the quarrel between Ireland and England will go on until Ireland is completely separated from England under that beautiful tricolour flag of the Irish Republic. They imagine they can poison the Irish people by their campaign of lies, by telling the world that the source of the inspiration of this movement of ours comes from the banks of the Rhine and not from the banks of the Shannon..... and this little Welsh thimble-rigger has got his supply of thimbles on his little table. One one you have printed Home Rule; on another of the timbles you have printed the Convention and on another you have Devolution; and he is not content with these thimbles. They are not enough to hide his false fear of self-determination and national liberty.

He is taking up another thimble now which he calls Federalism, and he imagines that he will be able to persuade the world that under some of these thimbles will be found the solution of the Irish question..... The solution is quite simple. All they have got to do is to take back their French and their Shortt and their soldiers and their police and their judges and all the parapharnalia of their law and get bag and baggage out of Ireland and leave Ireland to the people for whom God Almighty made it.

"The last act of the drama of reducing Ireland to slavery was proposed a few weeks ago, and they were in the hurry of their lives in passing it through and putting it on the Statute Book. It seems to me from our experience in Ireland of their Home Rule Bill of four years ago, and their Conscription Act of some four or five weeks ago that if you want to get rid of a nuisance the best way to treat it is to put it on the Statute Book. They rushed it pell-mell through the House of Commons and they sat up nights in the House of Lords, and they had the Commissioners and King George waiting in their robles until the House of Lords had passed it through in order to put the King's signature upon it; and one would imagine that it was going to be in full force the next day. All the time they were wondering whether it would be met by passive resistance or active resistance. Well, my friends, we are quite prepared to meet it with passive resistance as long as it remains passive conscription. (Cheers).

"..... My friends, thank God, there is one Nation in Europe that has got leaders who are not sitting safely at home but who are encountering as

much danger as the rank and file of their followers. Eamonn De Valera and Arthur Griffith are not sitting safely in some office, protected by the lives of millions and gambling in other people's lives, but they are making their own. Eamonn De Valera two years ago was saved - oh! I believe it was a miracle of God! - to be the leader of the Irish race. We therefore have leaders who sympathise with the people, men who will not risk the life of any man unless it be absolutely necessary in the cause of Irish liberty. We have men who have not translated the world into terms of machine guns, poison gas and high explosives, but who still believe that the world was made for those living in it..... Ah!, yes, they can drown our voices. They can prevent De Valera from coming here to speak to the people of Cavan for some time longer anyway They can stifle the voice of Arthur Griffith and compel some other pen in Ireland to write articles in "Nationality". But, men of Cavan, they won't be able to stifle the united voices of the writers of Cavan. That will be one flashlight that will shine up in the sky over Ireland and that will be seen by the Irish in America and Australia and in every part of the world. Therefore you have got an opportunity such as seldom comes to any constituency in Ireland. We got it in North Roscommon a year and a quarter ago..... and I tell you we were threatened with bitter things in those days. If we voted for Count Plunkett we were told that we would bring turmoil and bloodshed on the country. We were told that conscription would be put into force immediately, that we would vex John Bull and that if we vexed John Bull that he was an awful fellow, and what would he not do with us.

Aye, and we were told that by those members of Parliament who are coming down here feeding you up with lies ..... and we are here today amongst a people who in a few days more when this election will come on will send in trumpet tones throughout the world the same demand for Ireland's complete independence that has come already from Roscommon and Clare, Longford, Kilkenny and Tullamore, and, please God, I hope there will not be found in Cavan any man selfish, any man stupid enough not to see that the strength of Ireland's case against conscription rests upon the fact that Ireland is a Nation and that it is only as a Nation that we can refuse conscription. It is only because we are a nationality that our young men can go forth, with a clear conscience, look up into the face of Almighty God and say that they are prepared, if necessary, to shed the last drop of their blood upon the Irish soil rather than be swept away to be the bond slaves of the Imperial plotters. They talk of their plots, but they are the plotters. Ireland is a Nation. They are criminals to come to Ireland at all. Their Lords Lieutenant and their Chief Secretaries are criminals against humanity by daring to come in and try by force to run a country against the will of the people who are governed ..... as a Nation, and only as a Nation, are we right in resisting conscription, and as a Nation we cannot have any parleying any longer with any foreign Parliament. We must turn our back upon Westminster and proclaim our right before the whole world..... Is it going to do it by voting for this man O'Hanlon, or is it going to do it by voting for that Irishman who, for the last thirty years has been planning and writing and labouring in obscurity and in voluntary poverty in

Dublin to save country? But, thank God, at last when the soil was enriched by the blood of the men of Easter Week, his crop burst forth and filled Ireland from end to end with its present golden harvest.

"Now I will tell you one thing about Arthur Griffith. At the time when the North Roscommon Election was coming along, last January twelve months, we had no organisation in the country. That was several months before the present Sinn Féin organisation was formed. There was no branch of that organisation to take up the fight anywhere and we had no money to run it with - not one red cent of this German gold that is pouring over Ireland these years past (laughter) was available at the time of the Roscommon election, and as a matter of fact it was only the other day that I succeeded in paying back the last of the money for the Roscommon election . Even since I was not able to pick up any of the German gold (laughter). Arthur Griffith had come out of prison or internment about two or three weeks before the North Roscommon Election came on and a number of friends of his got together and subscribed £150 to re-start "Nationality". As soon as James O'Kelly, the member for North Roscommon, died, Arthur Griffith came to a friend of mine and he said: "Here I have this £150 to re-start "Nationality" and you can have it for the North Roscommon Election". Well, thank God, we were able to get along without it because we got two other men to give us £200 apiece, and we left Arthur Griffith his £150, and so he was able to put "Nationality" on foot again, and we had the first copy of it out to celebrate the victory of North Roscommon. (Cheers).

> And, I might tell you for the last five or six months I have had a number of young people from Crossna giving plays up and down the country in order to make up the last £400 which was paid last week. I have given you just a little picture of the truth about Sinn Féin, the truth about the motives and the principles of our organisation and what is more important for you, men of Cavan, a little of the truth about the real Arthur Griffith."

The story of the German Plot and of Sinn Féiners being in receipt of German gold was a bit fantastic. It was even too poor as an election dodge, although sad to relate the Irish Parliamentary Party clung on to that form of propaganda, had even been using for a considerable time back the bogey that Sinn Féiners were pro-Germans. One found it hard to believe that the Castle Authorities inventing a discovery of such descriptions for the mere purpose of permitting the Irish Party to win the Election. But the fact emerged that their swoop on the republican leaders and election staff had the effect, to some great extent, of upsetting the election machinery, thus giving the Parliamentary Party lee-way, and that at a time when the election was as its highest pitch and tempo. Were it not for Father O'Flanagan, who stepped into the breech and spent himself in the election fray, irretrievable harm might have been done the Republican cause. Other men, too, came to the rescue, including very many Volunteer Officers and men. This German Plot canard had a notable effect on republican adherents in East Cavan and sent many men into the arms of the Volunteers and women into the ranks of Cumann na mBan and caused many Sinn Féin clubs to be formed in the county.

Most people, especially Republicans, saw in this move by the British Government, evidence of the stage being prepared for conscription. Many other phases of British military policy, which many held to be dovetailed into the framework of conscription, were in evidence: Raiding of premises used as Volunteer drill halls or lecture rooms, raids on Volunteer drill parties in the open. In Dublin one such raid had taken place around March of that year on a Volunteer engineering class held at 28 North Frederick Street, when 28 men were arrested, among whom was one of our Company, Mick Howlett. These arrests caused a serious setback to the Dublin Brigade, but only for a short time, as it opened the way for a more perfect and permanent unit, the formation of what was to be known as the 5th (Engineer) Battalion. This unit was from selected men from various Companies, our own ("C") Company supplying Tom O'Reilly, Seán O'Connor, Mick Derham, Ned Kelly and John Cusack. Heretofore the Engineering Unit or Engineering Class had not the status of a separate or distinct entity, the members attending same retaining their association with their own particular Companies. But at the formation of the 5th Battalion men were regularly transferred from their former Companies and became recognised members of the 5th. Instead the matter was so urgent and important that men had to be furnished to the new unit, in some instances forceful persuasion had to be applied or expressed to obtain compliance with the order.

Of the men arrested on that occasion the "Irish Independent" of 23rd February, 1918, reported :-

"Independent", 23 February, 1918.

"28 Bench Warrants issued.

Twenty-seven of the men who had been arrested in premises in North Frederick Street failed to appear in the Metropolitan Police Courts to answer to the charges - and Mr. Drury, on the application of Mr. Devitt for the Crown granted a warrant for their arrest. A warrant was also issued for the arrest of Mr. O'Connor, who though arrested on the occasion of the raid and charged at Mountjoy Prison, has not been summoned."

These men, after some time were re-arrested and sentenced. During the period of their imprisonment they engaged with other Volunteer prisoners in a hunger strike.

Victory for Hunger-Strikers: "Irishman", 9th March, 1918.

"Despite Mr. Duke's announcement that Irish political prisoners, who went on hunger-strike, would not be forcibly fed, and would not be released citizens Hickey and McCarthy were last week released from Cork Prison."

"Citizen J.J. Joy, "Irishman", 9th March, 1918, states, who endured a week in Tralee Jail rather than pay a fine of 1/- for collecting for the Thomas Ashe Memorial Fund without a permit, got on his return an enthusiastic reception at Listowel from the Volunteers of Dingle."

"Citizen J. McMahon, Mullingar, who had been sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment and was subsequently released on hunger-strike, was accorded a most cordial welcome on reaching Mullingar."

Mountjoy Prisoners: "Irishman", 9th March, 1918.

"It was reported on Monday morning that several of the republican prisoners in Mountjoy were in a serious condition. Two of them still refuse food and are in a very weak condition."

"Dundalk Prisoners: "Irishman", 9th March, 1918.

"The three hunger-strikers in Dundalk Prison are in a very weak state and are at present in Prison Hospital. On Saturday night the Dundalk Volunteers marched to the prison and afterwards to the Market Square where a meeting was held. Over 4,000 people were present and were addressed by citizen Hughes, Chairman U. D. C., and Captain F. Thornton."

"Recently ("Nationality", March 9th, 1918), "the authorities in Ireland got a couple of ordinary criminals to go on hunger-strike and released one of them. The idea was to confuse the minds of people as to the object and moral justification of hunger-striking. The hunger-strike was entered upon to compel political prisoners to receive political prisoners' treatment instead of being treated as criminals. After the death of Thomas Ashe the English Government through the Lord Mayor of Dublin agreed to accord the treatment of political prisoners to Irish political prisoners. The Government has as usual broken its agreement and attempted to restore the old conditions - hence the hunger-strike. It must be clearly understood both in Ireland and outside that the reason why Irishmen are dying of hunger-strike in prison is because six months after entering into the Mountjoy agreement the English Government has broken it".

On the 15th June the British Authorities declared 14 counties prohibited areas.

Obviously the military mind was at work with every tendency to over-awe the Volunteers and to overcome resistance to conscription. Daily and weekly raiding and arrests mounted up. Undeterred by these activities and their attendant dangers the Irish Volunteers pursued their normal routine of parading, training and arming. Great care had to be taken to provide protection for the units when parading in halls or in open country: vigilance, protection and efficiency were the three most essential requirements at that time. We could not afford to relax our endeavours or slacken our work in any way. To do so would have been tragic and harmful for the movement generally and might have led the British military mind to conclude that we were showing signs of weakening in sight of impening dangers and trials. In consequence of increasing raids by large forces of police, assisted at times by the British military, a new force was established in our Battalion, the forming of a Battalion Cyclists' Corps. This corps was recruited from the several Companies forming the Battalion, the members so serving unlike those initiated into the 5th Battalion, retaining their membership of their Company units. The purpose of the Cyclist Corps was to render protection to Battalion, to perform despatch work and engage in specialised cyclist training. Individual members of that unit were allotted to special tasks, such as orderlies and special despatch carriers: Two members of our Company, Charlie O'Hanlon and Frank Weafer being assigned the task of delivering messages from our G.H.Q. to Maynooth, Celbridge, etc. once or twice weekly.

During all this period, indeed at all times since the inception of the Volunteers, despite the silly talk and innuendoes that the Republican movement was being supported by "German gold", our men had to pay their threepence per week contribution and also subscribe towards an arms fund according to their means and their inclination, even when no hope could be held out, or no sign or prospect of their receiving such arms or equipment. This was always a big problem, nay a sad and major problem for Company officers who were always at their wits end to arm and equip the men under their charge It was not one that could be settled in any specified manner if it could be settled at all, for we were only a voluntary force with no regular military establishment or arsonal from which to draw our supplies. We had to be content with the small and very meagre amount of arms and materials that came our way by adventure raids or purchase. Many of our men cheerfully and hopefully subscribed over and above the valueof the war materials supplied them; some even could not be supplied at all and had to be content to wait for some "turning up later on". Thus our Volunteers were paying their way in Ireland's cause, which payment carried with it the task of liberating Ireland, and in so doing taking all the risks and bearing many hardships in what was then, according to the British Authorities an illegal organisation engaged in illegal drilling, etc. It was not even safe to be found in possession of a Volunteer Membership Card, to sing "rebelly" songs which had been declared illegal, with sad results for some who rendered vocal and tantalising expression to the art at concerts, many of which were then held in Dublin at least under Volunteer auspices, but not under Volunteer names. In this respect the various Athletic Club titles proved of enormous value as indeed

the holding of concerts at the time helped to keep the republican spirit alive, and brought much needed funds to Companies, as well as augmenting funds for dependants of our men in jail.

Concerning the Volunteers incarcerated in jails, it was reported on the 24th June that republican prisoners in Belfast Jail had revolted. This news awoke the Irish people to the seriousness of things within the confines of prison walls. It was but natural that we in the Dublin Brigade should feel anxious in view of the fact that some of the men revolting were members thereof. The bigger aspect, however, was that the prisoners felt called upon to take this action out of protest against the unsatisfactory nature of their incarceration.

Previous to this about the month of March, Ireland went wild when the news was flashed that a number of Volunteers escaped from an English prison. Arising out of this was the startling appearance of Seán McGarry at an assembly in the Mansion House at which some of us of the Dublin Brigade were engaged as stewards and guards. This was a feat of unusual daring. The detectives present at the hall showed signs of restiveness and the Volunteers had the task of affording protection to Seán when leaving the premises.

A new repressive measure was put into effect by the order, issued on the 10th July, proclaiming national organisations, meetings and hurling matches. This bold stroke was intended to kill the republican movement, and to deny the people their right to free assembly, free and open expression of opinion, to enjoy and amuse themselves in whatever way they chose. The purpose of prescribing

hurling matches resulted from the vicious and spiteful propaganda indulged in by the English Press, which depicted the Irish as being more concerned with looking after their forms of amusement instead of fighting for King and country. Not only that but it was hinted that the Irish were getting and taking life too easily, by disporting themselves through a medium that was neither Imperial nor warlike enough to suit the taste, and obtain the approval of their defamers. In the main the ukese of prohibition had as its principal object the curbing of too open association and contact between people of similar national tendencies and patriotic sentiment.

The only effect this proclamation had on the national organisations was to add to their prestige, to re-animate and to solidify them. This was so as far as the Volunteers were concerned. It put our men on their mettle, brought home to them the seriousness of the political situation and demonstrated that the British sought to clear the decks for imposing conscription. Their strength lay in the interests of Ireland in which they were bound in maintaining the Volunteers as a national force. Consequently the only answer Volunteers could give to this, as to previous proclamations, was to carry on. Hence the order was disobeyed, and the Irish Volunteers, redoubling their efforts, by intensive sustained training, became more vigilant if not more determined. Greater precautions had to be taken to protect gatherings of Volunteers by means of scouting and intelligence parties, tasks that had to be performed in all weathers and on various occasions, when units were engaged at drill, training or manoeuvres. No change occurred in the Volunteers that would give the impression that the movement was dead, rather the opposite. The same could be said of Sinn Féin, which continued

functioning despite the proclamation, backed by its many Volunteer members and high Volunteer personages on its Councils, constituency and branch Committees.

A day came when, in defiance of the aforesaid British proclamation, 1,400 hurling matches were played throughout Ireland. This was on the 4th August. The Irish Volunteers were in demand on that day, performing guard duty at various venues, the Dublin Brigade rendering service in that connection. Similarly Sinn Féin on the 15th August held open-air meetings in every parish in Ireland in defiance of the proclamation. Irish Volunteer protection was again afforded. In this respect our Company performed guard duty for a meeting held at Little Denmark Street, and though a few police were present on the occasion no effort was made to enforce the British law.

One of the most startling and perhaps humorous incidents of the year occurred in Dublin with the seizure of a large number of pigs at North Circular Road. This consignment was being driven to the North Wall for shipment to England. On the order of Diarmuid Lynch, Sinn Féin Food Director, a party of Volunteers of the Dublin Brigade effected the capture, and drove the pigs to a dairy yard situated at the end of Lower Sherrard Street, where they were killed by Volunteers skilled in the art of pork butchering. This was a big task which took several hours to complete, under the protection of units of the Volunteers, our own Company being well represented. When the "fell" work of butchering was accomplished, the poor victims were despatched to a certain bacon curer, amid scenes of great enthusiasm and animation.

The English Press raged and howled at the Sinn Féin Director in whose name the seizure was made against the

Volunteers who executed the order, and against the British authorities for permitting such a thing to happen. Owing to the adverse economic plight of Ireland at the time when, if Ireland's manhood was not supplying cannon fodder in the war, the British authorities were extracting more than their share of Irish livestock and produce, there arose a cry from many parts of Ireland for land to till, land settlement and land distribution. Sinn Féin as the popular and national movement gave its support to this agitation, if not in its entirety in so far as it was feasible and equitable. As a national movement it claimed that we should have in Ireland enough food to sustain and maintain a larger population. Land was plentiful; most of its produce at the time was being exported to England, in consequence of which the native population had to subsist on a meagre ration. Here was a strange economy! It bred agrarian and political unrest, creating a situation in which Sinn Féin set up machinery to give effect to the demands made on it by substituting a land code and food controlling policy for the country.

During the summer months many units of the Dublin Brigade encamped in different parts of the county. Our own Company conducted a camp at Ticknock on the Dublin Mountains. By this means we were enabled to carry out certain forms of training. The R.I.C. from Dundrum paid us a few visits apparently anxious to ascertain if our camp was being run for or we engaged in unlawful pursuits. But such vigilance or interests on their part failed to catch us napping; in their presence we were so law-abiding and docile, hardly the kind of people that would do any harm to the powers that be, and whose only care was to have a good time. So bluff won the day!

The Annual Convention of the Irish Volunteers was held in the Columcille Hall in the month of October, 1918. The greatest secrecy had to be observed concerning this assembly, and special precautions taken to afford ample protection at the hall and immediate neighbourhood. Police barracks and military barracks in the vicinity were under the surveillance of picked men, our Battalion furnishing quite a number of these.

Seán Ellis, who had been a loyal member of our Company, died on the 7th November. He had served in the Four Courts during Easter Week Rising and was interned in Frongoch. A cabinet-maker by trade, he carried on business with his brother Samuel, who was a 2nd Battalion man and had also served in the Rising. Seán was a great favourite with the members of "C" Company. His funeral was a very representative one, the Company rendering military honours. Another death, that of Volunteer Gleeson, which took place at the Mater Hospital, was recorded. Volunteer Gleeson was attached to the 2nd Battalion. At the removal of his remains to Fairview Church and funeral the next day, the Dublin Brigade paid him fitting honours.

By some strange working of fate, these sad deaths caused the Volunteers to come into public view, thus emphasising that despite all ordinances and proclamations against them, the movement still lived. Another such death was to still further give proof of this. That was the death and funeral of Dick Coleman. His sad death in Usk Prison, England, brought home to the Irish people the sorrows and trials of the "felons of our land". The Dublin Brigade took charge of his remains on its arrival in Dublin, and the funeral from Westland Row Church.

That funeral was as impressive and representative as that of Thomas Ashe fourteen months before, rendering full military honours, and supplying a firing party for the occasion. This military exhibition on the part of the Volunteers, the attendance of numerous bands and other illegal associations, was a direct affront to the British authorities and even was risky for all especially the Volunteers. The rifles for the occasion had to be transferred secretly the night before by Volunteers, some of our Company being engaged in this work and on the firing party. As in the case of the funeral of Thomas Ashe, the previous year, our (1st) Battalion were on duty at Glasnevin Cemetery.

"The Catholic Bulletin" of the time furnished the following particulars of the life of Richard Coleman.

He was born in Swords, Co. Dublin, in the year 1890, and comes of an old Co. Dublin family. Many of his relatives have been identified with the teaching profession, his father, lately deceased, having been teacher at the Swords School, and his grandfather and grandmother on the maternal side, were also teachers in the Swords parish. He was educated at Swords School and afterwards at the Christian Brothers Schools, North Richmond Street, Dublin. Always of a devout disposition he early aspired to a religious life, and for a time directed his studies to that sphere; eventually, however, competing for and obtaining an appointment on the Midland Railway at Cavan. His desire for the religious life having again asserted itself, he entered the Novitiate of the Christian Brothers at Baldoyle, subsequently joining the Christian Brothers College at Marino, but finally returning to civil life.

He joined the Volunteer Movement at its inception in Dublin and founded the first volunteer body, established in Fingal the Swords Company of which he was Captain, as well as being Adjutant of the 5th Fingal Battalion. His activities as a Volunteer organiser in the surrounding districts attracted the attention of the special correspondent of the "Daily Mail."

With the Fingal Volunteers he took part in the Howth gun-running. Commandant P.H. Pearse wrote him a warm letter of congratulation on his handling of the men under his charge at manoeuvres held previous to Easter Week, 1916. At the Rising he mobilised the Swords Company, and joined Commandant Thomas Ashe, volunteering later, in response to a request for assistance from Commandant Connolly to lead a number of men to Dublin. On reaching the G.P.O. he was entrusted with the command of a section to attempt the relief of the Mendicity Institute. As they set out, Commandant Connolly remarked: "You will hardly get there, but try your best". After a most venturesome experience under intense fire from rifle and machine guns, they reached the rere of the Mendicity to find the entrance covered by rifle fire. By dashing one by one at the word of command, the whole party got in without mishap. Soon the Mendicity was surrounded by overwhelming forces, and the garrison eventually had no option but to surrender. Richard Coleman was duly condemned to death, his sentence being commuted to three years' penal servitude. He was with Heuston and Major MacBride at their last moments.

He was imprisoned at Dartmoor and Lewes, being released under the general amnesty; took part in the Clare Election. After his release he was sentenced to

six months' imprisonment for drilling at Kilbane; was on hunger strike at Mountjoy when Thomas Ashe met his death, and in the subsequent hunger strike at Dundalk. His health, impaired by these terms of imprisonment, was only partially restored when he was again arrested at the general round-up in May 1918, in the alleged German Plot. He was imprisoned at Usk, his fifteenth prison, where he died of pneumonia following influenza.

The cessation of hostilities of the European War heralded by the Armistice of November 11th, 1918, found Ireland still struggling for independence for the right to self-determination. That night and a couple of nights afterwards, the pro-British element gave vent to their feelings and Dublin witnessed unusual and disorderly scenes. War-minded individuals of both sexes tore through the principal thoroughfares, sporting their war colours, and literally painted the town red. This was the first jingo exhibition during the war. The occasion might have been relegated to the limbo of things, were it not that advantage was taken to demonstrate hostility towards republicans and the republican cause. Numerous attacks were made on individual republicans by groups of warrior Union Jackers: even ordinary citizens, for no other "crime" but that they didn't sport the British colours were attacked on the streets. These demonstrations begot counter demonstrations and before the night of the 11th was spent Dublin was a city of free fights, baton charges and general turmoil. The Trinity boys came into prominence on the British side, and many a young man of military age who had bravely sheltered behind the walls of that Imperial dynasty, beribboned himself in loyal colours and showed loyal blood in their efforts to prove their loyalty to"King and Country". Then came the "Nationals"

on the scene, marching and counter-marching and singing Irish songs. There were many "bold" scenes as the two rival college groups came into collision.

Obviously the pro-British section of the population was in the mood to show strength and vigour in demonstrating a la mode the Imperial victory. The wild 'uns of the female species, those who were classed as recipients of "the funny money" so lavishly provided by the British to the dependants of men serving in their forces, were particularly vociferous and provoking on that night, and staged many a scene that was neither edifying nor pleasant. There were times when they outstretched ehemselves in the attempt to molest and belabour people of republican sympathies. News travels fast in Dublin and responding to the stories that were put into circulation, groups of Volunteers made the streets of Dublin their rendezvous in order to afford protection to republicans set upon by the mobs.

On the next night the riotious scenes were re-enacted. Peace in Europe brought rioting to Dublin, and/hooligans gave/ and police full scope for their several acts to produce results in keeping with their impressive tendencies. In many instances the police scored victories, but not always at the expense of the loyal demonstrator, many of whom were too slick to fall victims of police batoning. One noticeable aspect of these demonstrations, one which republicans could not fail to observe, was engendered by the feeling that ~~that~~ the pro-British element made the occasion one to show their teeth as well as giving expression to their existence and strength, to such an extent as to convey the impression that they were the only people that mattered. Honour, where honour is due, it must be recorded that all those people who had found themselves on England's side in that war, paraded in the

fashion so described for the mere sake of flaunting their colours on the face of, or showing hostility to, republicans as such. There were cases of people who had been in receipt of war money, who were well disposed towards the Volunteers and Republican Movement. There were even families that had given a father, husband, son or brother to fight on England's side, were friends of the republican cause. Indeed many other families had one or more of their menfolk in both the Volunteers and the British forces. In some instances Irishmen had been entrapped to join up by vapouring of clever politicians and the wily propaganda, or due to compulsion by astute employers or economic pressure. These but emphasised the point of a house divided against itself - politically divided because of the mixed variety of soldiering spirit inocculated into the realm of household bliss, in which belligerency or belligerent neutrality played a part in an issue of an Irish problem, an Irish question.

To the most casual observer Dublin on the occasion of the signing of the Armistice, 11 November, 1918, was gone all English. Dublin then was en fete, beflagged and decorated without any regard to labour or expense. There were very few business premises, institutions or houses in the centre of the city that had not its Union Jack, or other British flag, some more than one, bunting or other forms of decoration. In other parts of the city and suburbs the display was hardly less pronounced, even to the extent of putting "Ireland's immortal green" in the background, or if anything in the nature of an "Irish flag" was displayed any old type filled the gap, the green flag with the harp, with the crown predominating. Such an exhibition of flunkeyism and loyalty exasperated republicans especially in view of the

efforts being made to destroy the soul and spirit of the Irish Nation to be free, for beneath the surface of the celebration of the Armistice there lived a movement that was seeking to put to the test the war policies of those who claimed that that world war was being fought for the rights of self determination for small nations. Alas the unwary, the unenlightened might perceive that the ending of this world catastrophe, with its glorious victories and celebrations, were to learn something yet about the Irish situation that would afford them food for reflection.

That point was reached when near the end of December of that year Sinn Féin won a complete victory at the polls, when 73 republicans were elected, thus eclipsing the Irish Parliamentary Party. The Irish Volunteers, both as individuals and as a body, threw themselves wholeheartedly into that contest by canvassing, by performing clerical work, acting as election agents, providing drivers for cars, and in protecting meetings. Most of the Sinn Féin candidates were Irish Volunteers and 1916 men. The victory was all the more marked because it was regarded as a "khaki election", in which soldiers were permitted to vote. Here was a peculiar situation. The elected representatives were pledged not to sit in the British House of Commons, which was up to then the normal course, providing thereby the basis of the union between Ireland and England. By this means they refused to subscribe to the Oath of Allegiance to his Brittanic Majesty, his heirs and successors, and by reason of this refused to accept payment of £400 per year which stipend was allocated to members of Parliament.

"What will Sinn Féin do now?", was being asked by many people, to which Sinn Féin replied: "We will stay at home in Ireland, and abstaining from the British

Parliament will set up a constituent assembly in Ireland to look after Irish interests". Thus it came to pass that the elected representatives of Ireland met at the Mansion House on January 9th, 1919, and brought into being Dáil Éireann - the Parliament of Ireland. The dreams which adherents of the Sinn Féin policy had dreamed pre-1916 had become a reality. It was "a wild fantastic dream" that had been laughed to scorn by the wiseacres - the "practical" politicians, the know-alls and wonder-workers, as an experiment that had nothing to commend itself as a parliamentary assembly. The tantalising part of the dream was that these "wild men" in Sinn Féin, these same men whom the "practical" politicians had for so long stigmatised as disciples of red "ruin and rebellion" clung to the idea that the institution of such an assembly was feasible and proper under the circumstances then prevailing.

On that January day Sinn Féin or to be more precise republican parliamentary representatives, victors in the recent election backed up by the Irish Volunteers set their seal to the institution of a Parliament and gave moral and physical expression to the ideal of self-determination, the rule of law which in the words of the immortal Lincoln meant Government by the people, for the people, and in the interest of the people. It was an experiment that had been tried with success in Hungary, this idea of withdrawing our parliamentary members from attendance at a foreign assembly. The start was made in Ireland: the only question was, would it succeed?

All eyes were turned on this first meeting. The gentlemen of the Press were there in large numbers. Men and women from every part of Ireland were present in

such numbers as to pack the Mansion House and to leave a large overflow in the streets outside. Fortunately admission was limited to ticket holders, otherwise the place would have been unreasonably packed, for many of those people outside had certain claims to be provided entry. Even the British authorities were conspicuously present, outside, in the physical form of police special detectives and soldiers in full war-paint. The presence of the latter was considered by many as a sign that the law was to be invoked to the detriment of an illegal assembly - in other words, that steps would be taken to prevent its functioning. Such did not happen, however, and they had perforce to while the time away listening to the rebelly songs of the people outside.

In the order of things, the Irish Volunteers which consisted of a large force of selected men of the Dublin Brigade, performed duties within and without the building as stewards, guards, etc. For the space of several hours we remained on duty and when the business of the day was concluded some of these men were assigned to various tasks, some of which related to getting important men safely away and protecting them to their places of residences, not necessarily their homes as some of them because of the heavy hand of the law had not lived "at home" for quite a time. This precaution was especially taken to protect high-ranking Volunteers, who by reason of their new fame as parliamentary representatives, exposed themselves to arrest by the British. So came into being Dáil Eireann - Ireland's Parliamentary Assembly - with its "Declaration of Irish Independence", its message to the Free Nations of the World, and its Democratic Policy".

As an event of political and national importance this inauguration of an Irish Parliament struck a note of

defiance to and disregard of English rule. In the military sphere the Irish Volunteers had taken, and proposed taking, strong aggressive action in pursuit of a policy to secure armaments and military equipment. By means of an intelligence system in which every man co-operated, likely places where arms or war material were stored, became suspect with the result that raids for arms were made on houses, institutions, etc. on the orders of the I. R. A. Every Company carried out its quota of such raids, ours ("C") being no exception to the rule. In many instances these raids were made in order to prevent the weapons being delivered up to the British authorities. Sometimes the matter resolved itself into a question of which would get there first - the first on the scene was generally the victor. By such raids many additions were made to the arms' hoards, and alas! not infrequently, these additions were only suitable for the scrap heap or for exhibiting in a museum as souvenirs of a very remote past. But such were the uncertainties of time and place and circumstance in relation to which the Irish Volunteers were then seeking to become an armed force under great difficulties and stress.

This matter of raiding for arms occasioned the exercise of extraordinary measures by the Volunteers, thus bringing them in close contact with the police and military authorities. One of these was the raid for explosives at Solohead, Co. Tipperary. This extraordinary and sensational event created difficulties for the newly established Dáil Éireann. The question uppermost in the minds of the Volunteers was: "Would the Dáil consent to these acts?" Even a greater matter that required immediate elucidation was the relation of the Dáil to the Irish Volunteers.

One of the first acts of the Dáil was to take responsibility for the activities of the Irish Volunteers. In doing this full recognition was accorded to the Volunteers as the army of Ireland. This was followed by the declaration that an oath of allegiance to Dáil Éireann as the lawful government was and is hereby subscribed by each serving and future member of the army of the Republic, bearing true faith and allegiance to Dáil Éireann as by law established "without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion". Thus, the official sanction of the title the Irish Republican Army.' and the discarding of its former title Irish Volunteers. This action by the Government of Dáil Éireann presupposed ready and willing obedience by all men of the former Irish Volunteers. There were instances, however, where the taking of the oath caused the possible severance of good trustworthy men from the Volunteers. At first it had a mixed reception. Some men required explicit understanding of the actual relations between Dáil Éireann. One big point that seemed to puzzle not a few was that which seemed to suggest that Dáil Éireann or the Government of Dáil Éireann was taking over our Volunteer Force; according to the oath we automatically became subservient to such a government, and by so doing parted with the freedom and control of the Volunteers from its original source; that if Dáil Éireann went wrong politically or nationally the I.R.A. as a military force would follow suit.

This was strange arguing for Volunteers - the rank and file especially being the severest critics of the change of authority and control. They had reasons to argue thus. Heretofore the Volunteers were governed by a Volunteer Executive, elected at annual conventions.

Would this procedure be followed if Dáil Éireann exercised authority? The big contention was that the said government of Dáil Éireann might not be so solid on the question of the ideal of complete independence, the establishment of the Irish Republic. Where would the Army of the Republic stand in such an eventuality?

In the end the Irish Volunteers agreed to the new order of things and from that moment we became sworn members of the I.R.A. under the authority of Dáil Éireann, with an established status as a fighting force, a consideration of supreme and vital importance at a time when strenuous efforts were being made to come to handigrips with the British authorities and vice versa when they were doing their utmost to destroy the Republican Movement. Of course, neither the imposition of the oath, nor even the coming into being of the Dáil were of themselves causes for the intensification of militant activity on the part of the republican forces. Already these were under way and were becoming widespread in one form or other throughout the country. But when the Dáil placed their seal of assent to the warfare being waged by the I.R.A. the full signification of the war for Independence became manifest. From that time, if not before, we in the I.R.A. had no doubt as to the part we should have to play in the struggle; in like manner the British Government realised that the task of ruling Ireland would only be achieved by force, and force alone.

It was not surprising then, that in the course of time, the main topic of news featuring Irish life was centred around militant activities of both the I.R.A. and the British forces. The British Government did not relax any of the wartime regulations in relation to illegal organisations, illegal assemblies, drilling, arming, and

seditious speeches, etc. Every time the Volunteers attended parades, every time they paid their subscription or subscribed towards an arms' fund, every time they drilled, or were being drilled, armed or trained or marched or manoeuvred, they were guilty of an offence against the law. Every time they spoke of, acted in, condoned or encouraged the alleged military force to wit the I.R.A., they were commissioning crime and merited punishment. Hence the full rigours of the law were applied to stamp out "poisonous insects", to destroy the forces of anarchy and sedition. To achieve these ends widespread raids were carried out by the Crown forces on private dwellings, public halls and I.R.A. training centres or rendezvous, raids for arms, raids to effect arrest of members of the I.R.A., raids for many reasons and on many pretexts. Nothing daunted the I.R.A. continued its work, training, arming, carrying out manoeuvres, raiding for arms, for equipment and military stores, and greater audacity than all made an appeal to the citizens for the Arms' Fund, collecting money from door to door in at least the city of Dublin. Even the I.R.A. planned and carried out escapes from jail. While on this subject it might be well to refer to the sensational escape of Barney Mellows, Joe McGrath and two others from Usk in January, that of President De Valera, Seán McGarry and Seán Milroy from Lincoln Jail in March, 1919.

An event of no little political importance was planned co-incident on the escape of President De Valera. That was the project to present him with the keys of the city of Dublin on behalf of the Dublin Municipal Authorities. This token presentation was to be made at Mount Street, where he was to be welcomed and conducted ceremoniously to the city. Elaborate plans were made for the occasion. The Dublin Brigade were especially mobilised for the occasion.

Everything went well until a certain moment when the British Government, through its agency Dublin Castle, issued a proclamation forbidding the function in the interest of public order and safety. The question many members of the I.R.A. pondered was, "Would the proclamation be defied and in what way?". For answer, the arrangements were cancelled and the I.R.A. demobilised. That eleventh hour cancellation was looked upon by many members of the Dublin Brigade as a "climb down" and many of our republican supporters felt the humiliation of the whole affair. One thing stood out very clearly, however, and that was the prepondering strength of the British forces as they took possession of the locality and fully prepared for every eventuality.

The British Government reacted to the new "Irish situation" occasioned by the establishment of Dáil Eireann by the appointment of a new Chief Secretary for Ireland in the person of the Right Hon. Ian MacPherson on January 20, 1919, an appointment that signified more and intense repressive measures to govern Ireland. Raids, arrests by Crown forces followed in rapid succession. The I.R.A. taking up the challenge brought a new weapon into play; on the 28, I.R.A. prisoners for the first time refused to recognise the jurisdiction of the English Courts to try them. From that moment the I.R.A. authorities specifically ordered all ranks to adopt a similar attitude in future trials. From that moment members of the I.R.A. at their trial used the form "as a soldier of the Irish Republic I refuse to recognise the jurisdiction of this court". Similarly civilian supporters of the republican cause used the form "as a citizen of the Irish Republic I refuse to recognise this court". Thus was coined a new phrase to devote factual and resolute opposition to British rule.

Ireland's fight for self-determination did not go unheeded for in the United States, in Australia and in England, wherever Irish people were, an agitation had sprung up, indeed had been maintained since 1916, to support the Irish cause. The Irish in America were particularly alive and active. Arising out of their activity an american delegation consisting of Messrs. Frank P. Walsh, Edward T. Dunne and Michael J. Ryan, visited Ireland on May 2nd, on their way to the Peace Conference at Paris. Their visit to Dublin was the occasion of a huge demonstration amid scenes of great and tumultous enthusiasm, the I.R.A. sharing with Dublin citizens in paying them honour. During their stay in Dublin they attended a Dáil session as privileged guests. Apropos of their visit it was said at the time that Mr. Lloyd George found them "very high-class men" and even facilitated their journey to Ireland, but nevertheless their visit was condemned by the bitter anti-Irish political element in England and among their brethern in Dublin Castle. Then, on the 26th May, Ireland reacted by sending her case for Independence to the Peace Conference. To further emphasise the Irish demand for Independence the American Senate on the 6th June requested American Peace Delegation at Versailles to secure a hearing for Irish representatives. By this means our national leaders sought to make Ireland's demands an international rather than a domestic issue.

On the 21st May, Mr. J.J. Walsh and 30 other Republicans escaped from Mountjoy Jail, engineered by I.R.A. outside, whose skill and initiative were thus clearly demonstrated. A new impetus to the republican cause was the launching by Dáil Eireann of a National Loan.

The I.R.A. rendered every assistance to promoting the sale of these bonds, individual members subscribing towards it. In this connection reference must be made to the fact that that loan was subscribed in full, even our people in the United States viewing with us in Ireland to make it a huge success. The British looked none too kindly on that transaction. In a raid made by British forces on Sinn Féin Headquarters, 6 Harcourt Street, Dublin, monies that had been deposited on behalf of bond subscribers, in the case of the Sinn Féin Bank, which had premises there, were seized. An instance of that seizure affected the bond holders attached to the O'Flanagan Sinn Féin Club. A sum, a hundred pounds or more, had been collected from members and sympathisers, in weekly instalments. That was a very fair amount for a group of people who did not possess an abundance of wealth. Those of us whose main task it was to direct and supervise that Club collection knew what sacrifices many members made to subscribe to the loan. Special priase must be accorded to Mr. Thomas Hoban, the Cumann Treasurer, whose indefatigable labours in that regard helped to make that collection the success it was.

Then came news that De Valera was in the United States conducting a campaign for American support of the Irish cause. News too of sensational occurrence in Dublin: the shooting of detectives in Dublin. On the 13th August, Dáil Éireann called on public bodies to sever connection with British administration. On the 10th September the British Government retaliated by suppressing Dáil Éireann. On the 6th October, republican prisoners revolted in Mountjoy Jail, followed on the 16th by a hunger-strike, and two days later a general release from the same jail. On the 29th nineteen newspapers were suppressed and the same day large numbers of arrests in

Ireland: 11th November, Dáil members arrested at 76 Harcourt Street: on the 26th, Sinn Féin proclaimed by the British Government and on the 15th December the "Freeman's Journal" was suppressed.

These were all front line news for recording the progress of events in the Ireland of 1919. But the year was not to pass out without one further sensational occurrence to the list. That was the attack on Lord French at Ashtown, Co. Dublin, on the 19th or 20th December. By means of an ambush prepared and carried out by picked men of the I.R.A. it was sought to eliminate the head of British Government in Ireland. Fate, however, decreed otherwise - Lord French escaped death, but one of the best of the I.R.A. attacking force was killed. He was Martin Savage of the 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade. It was a bold and daring attack that came within an ace of being successful; its failure was due to misadventure. By a clever ruse Lord French travelled in a different car than the one which the attackers believed him to occupy. Unquestionably that attack shocked the administrators of British Government in Ireland. It proved to them that there were dangerous men in Ireland. Furthermore, it proved that the I.R.A. were in the field, prepared to fight for its existence, in the face of adversity, raids, arrests and repressive measures.

Chapter 15.

That year then was a particularly active year for the British and Irish forces. The events recorded above formed but a fraction of I.R.A. activity which never ceased. We of the Dublin Brigade had become accustomed to our work. They were of a mixed variety: every Company had its

share of activities just as every Company had similar duties to perform in such matters as training and administration and in affording protection to their men and materials at all times. There were occasions when additional work was placed to the care of Companies. Such happened in our case. Around this time the 1st Battalion Companies were given the task of providing protection to the Executive during regular meetings of that body held at Parnell Square. That duty was performed over a long period, the men being armed with revolvers and grenades for the purpose. It was deemed highly important work, each Company, including our own, of the 1st Battalion, being allotted certain positions in the neighbourhood of the meeting place. Another form of activity in which the Companies were engaged was street patrol duties. Each Company operated in its own Company area, carrying out intelligence and observation duties, watching and reporting the movement of British troops, combining this work with that of specialised scouting and communication. In the initial stages of this work small numbers of men were employed; after a while the entire Company was employed on the work, even at the expense of other forms of training, so important was it considered to be at the time. Many a Company meeting night was devoted to this work, the members working generally in pairs, being stretched out over a large area, and other men forming lines of communication between them and Company Headquarters for the purpose of carrying messages. After a short while the men became specialised in the work and learned and reported much valuable information of the activities of the British.

Our men, too, had become accustomed to the duties connected with affording protection to the Company during the course of parades and training in halls or in the county Dublin. By means of a screen spread around the place where Company or any portion of it was situated, these men, whether on foot, or using bicycles, were ever alert and painstaking and it is to their credit that we officers, were always well informed of every movement of British forces in the vicinity - nay could always feel a certain measure of safety by reason of having provided that form of protection.

It was during that year that the Dublin Brigade was showing signs of particular activity. A new unit sprang into being, which was to play a big part in forcing the pace in military operations. That unit, which consisted of selected men of various Companies, was under the command of Brigadier Dick McKee and Vice-Brigadier Peadar Clancy. Only men who were easily accessible and available for duty day or night were accepted. Our Company supplied its quota of men for that work. It was to be a fast moving and quick striking force, organised to perform duties of a special character, outside of ordinary Company routine or activities. Our service with that new force did not entail severance with our own respective units. Time and again we were mobilised for "special jobs", paraded and dismissed with the remark "the job has been called off". Were we not "the folorn hopes", a description that had been applied by one of the men because of our futile enterprises. But a time came for testing the mettle and nerves of the men composing the unit.

Plans had been prepared, and about a dozen of us were mobilised and ready to effect the rescue from

police custody of a prominent officer of the Dublin Brigade - Commandant Ted Kelly, O/C. the 4th Battalion. On the occasion in question Commandant Kelly was being tried at Green Street Courthouse. It was believed that after the trial he would be conveyed in the "Black Maria" in a horse-drawn caravan from the Courthouse via off Upper Dorset Street St. Mary's/Place to Mountjoy Prison. The plan aimed at holding up that "Black Maria" at what is known as the Black Church in St. Mary's Place; overpowering the police guards and effecting the rescue of Kelly. Another Manchester rescue! All the men detailed for the work were in position to carry out what appeared to be a simple laid plot. A few men were placed in a laneway that entered that thoroughfare where the Christian Brothers' Schools were situated. These men were in possession of a handcart on which were workmen's tools. The idea was to wheel, or set in motion that handcart just at the moment when the "Black Maria" would turn a double corner, create a diversion and so cause the police to slacken speed. Immediately a couple of us were to present revolvers at the driver and deal with the horses while the men who were with the handcart dealt with the policeman seated behind the "Maria" and extracting the keys from him, open the door and release Kelly. An alternative plan was to burst in the door by means of crowbars and hammers which were part of the handcart cargo. Other men were in position to carry out supplementary action.

A considerable period elapsed; we were all tense and anxious for the sight of our quarry. Would the "Black Maria" ever come? We tired of the long waiting, the delay, afraid our presence there for such a long time might create suspicion at various points around the church and in the vicinity. Others of our men were in

position as protecting force. The time lagged on. The trial should be over now .... the car must be on its way ..... Why is it so slow in coming ..... other days it would be earlier ..... What could have happened ..... ? Then the news came. "Ted has been brought another way - this time under a strong military escort". Luckily we heard that news in time before the "Black Maria" hoved in sight. As it was it passed the spot where the attack was planned to take place, continued on its way, the cries of a few women prisoners being conveyed therein, seeming to mock us for our misadventure. The bearer of the message that put us wise to the clever ruse adopted by the British authorities was Tom O'Reilly who had been detailed for duty at the Court and to inform us when the "Black Maria" carrying Ted Kelly was on its journey. Some others who were present on duty that day were George Fitzgerald of "A" Company, the brothers Paddy and John Doyle, Dinny Holmes, Paddy Stringer, Peadar Meehan, etc. the latter three men who were members of "C" Coy.

Another occasion of a "forlorn hope" had relation to the projected hold-up of a party of R.I.C. at Harcourt Street Railway Station. The R.I.C. were conveying explosives to some part of the country. A group of us were mobilised one night at 144 Great Brunswick Street. Peadar Clancy detailed our orders which set out that, early next morning a number of our men with himself in charge, were to present themselves at the station, purchase tickets, individually, of course, and go to the platform. While this was going on a number of other I.R.A. men were to take up positions at the entrance to the railway, while a motor car was to be in readiness at Adelaide Road for the purpose of transporting the seized explosives to safety.

My task was to assist in affording protection to the motor car and prevent any possible police intruder raising an alarm. The main plan was to surprise the R.I.C. party and overpower them; as it was they were in larger numbers than was anticipated and distinctly on guard and quite vigilant. Peadar sizing up the position and realising the difficulties of carrying out the task in the absence of effecting surprise in view of the small number of men under him decided to abandon the enterprise.

There were other occasions when this special unit was called upon to carry out certain duties or activities, some of which proved to be "forlorn hopes", and others meeting with partial or complete success. While not anticipating events, the recording of which must follow in proper sequence, that unit was destined to play a very important part in the continuing activities under various dates and in different ways. Included in the group were, George Fitzgerald, Frank Bolster, Joe Dolan, Paddy and Seán Doyle, Billy Baxter, Dave Goulding of "H" Company, Jimmy Carrigan, Denis Holmes, Kevin Barry, Tommy Merrigan, Seán Brunswick, Bertie Ryan, Peadar Breslin, representatives of various Companies of the First Battalion. Many of these men were associated with a series of exploits, not the least of which were jail escapes, seizure of mails, raids for arms and munitions, under Brigadier McKee, Vice-Brigadier Clancy and Rory O'Connor.

During that year also the I.R.A. had been engaged in the manufacture of hand-grenades. Many workshops were secretly turning out bomb casings and their component brass and metal fittings. Other men were responsible for making striking sets, fixing fuses, and regulating the insertion of gelignite, which was the explosive material used in the grenades. A few of our Company members were engaged on

the work of filling or preparing these bombs - Dinny Holmes, Patrick Macken, John Farrell. These men worked in their own homes and at specified places; at least Holmes was full-time employed. So important was their work that they were not required to attend Company parades, although none of these men held rigidly to that as an excuse for non-attendance with the Company. As can be understood the work of grenade making by these men was known to the Company Officer and not always to all the Company Officers. Some of these men worked under the Battalion Quartermaster or/and the Director of Munitions. Through their untiring efforts and the painstaking work of the various staffs working in the several depots, a good supply of grenades had become available. Several processes in the manufacture of these grenades had to be tried out before success was attained. The result was that a substantially perfect bomb was completed.

The manufacture of these grenades was no easy task, as special improvised moulds and patterns had to be provided in a small way at first, then as experience and skill ripened, improvement and development accrued and larger amounts were perfected. Skilled men, such as iron moulders, brass finishers, metal workers, etc., all members of the I.R.A., were in demand. Some of the work entrusted to these men was carried out in the workshops where they were employed or otherwise.. The work associated with the filling of the grenade - the packing of the gelignite - was of a tedious, trying and sensitive nature - sensitive especially in the initial stages when it had to be handled and cut to required size and form. The "fumes" or odour emanating from it generally caused a feeling of sickness, nausea and

headaches of a very exceptional type, but after habitual work on the "stuff" one became immune from such distressing symptons. I had known cases, indeed I had personal experience of this: the strange part of it was that when a person got used to the handling of this substance one could literally do anything with it short of causing an explosion without causing any sensation affecting one's health or peace of mind. That is not saying that the substance could be or should be handled carelessly. As it was highly sensitive and dangerous, the greatest caution had to be exercised in manipulating and rendering it capable of service. To this end great care had to be taken for its storage as it was sensitive to temperature and climatic elements. This question of storage always presented a problem of particular magnitude and importance - when the stuff was in its raw state and capable of being tucked away by itself, or alternatively, when it was contained in the bombs, and were placed in dumps of various types and characteristics. The latter course did not always promise guarantee for preserving the "life" and durability of the explosive. Rather the opposite, when they were stored in places or dumps that were none too dry and otherwise unsuitable for such a commodity. The big difficulty, indeed the main difficulty, was that they had to be stored away in that state.

In many instances, particularly in the initial stages, individual members of the I.R.A. and trusted supporters of same, provided storage spaces for munitions of one kind or other - in houses, yards, gardens or stables - any place deemed safe for such a purpose. Such were provided and availed of mostly for the purpose of keeping the materials from falling into the hands of British raiding parties, then quite busy and attentive

in the matter. In many instances the dumps were in out-of-the-way places, as hard for the I.R.A. to get at as for the English to find. Consequently the stuff could be considered safe but not always in good condition. Not infrequently, however, were they stored in relatively easy to-get-at places, in which case they could be kept under observation and ordinary precautions taken to look them over at certain times. This called for ingenuity and enterprise. But even the best and most concealed dump could not be considered entirely safe from raids. Hence the generally accepted plan was to store munitions in places that provided safety even at the expense of durability, in all cases taking reasonable precautions to pack them in the neatest and tidiest way possible to counteract dampness and provide against exposure from the weather. Even the most reasonable provisions for safeguarding the materials were not always successful, and the British boast that they captured arms and munitions in raids and searches, even allowing for a certain measure of exaggeration, were proven to be true in too many instances. Much of the seized goods were secured after a good deal of trouble and labour, for the I.R.A. were sufficiently wide awake at the time not to leave such material in a convenient accessible place for raiders. Any who acted otherwise were infringing orders of the I.R.A. which specifically enjoined care and precaution in the matter of providing protection for all war materials in their custody.

It must be understood that the I.R.A., by reason of its limited authority and sphere, and not least the absence of possessions and buildings for storage,

depended in a large measure on its own members and supporters to afford facilities for the dumping of arms etc The utilisation of halls and buildings for drilling and meetings of the units, as well as the purchase of war material, even to the smallest detail, (not the least were the "home-made" grenades then produced by the I.R.A. authorities and rifles and revolvers passing into Company possession) had to be paid for out of funds subscribed by the members - a few pence per week being the minimum sum subscribed in that way. Of course, each Company unit as well, endeavoured to supplement such funds by means of concerts, dances, raffles etc. In addition, Companies were required to subscribe towards Battalion expenditure. The acquiring of such funds for such purposes was always an acute problem for Companies. It was particularly so in 1920 when, due to the intensified activities of the British and because the I.R.A. had to remain discreetly an underground force and not publicly show itself, functions in support of the I.R.A. as such could not be publicly advertised or promoted. Efforts had, however, from time to time been made to solicit subscriptions to a common arms' fund. In respect to this matter mention must be made that we - the I.R.A. - could always rely and always secured ready and willing public support, as when Companies in their own particular Company areas/conducted from time to time house-to-house collections for the purpose. In other ways too, ample public support was rendered, such as subscriptions and donations on a weekly basis to the funds for providing financial assistance to the dependants of the prisoners et The White Cross was the medium at this time for such praiseworthy humanitarian work, the I.R.A. and its auxilliary bodies, including the Cumann na mBan, markedly assisting thereby.

As a movement that had to work underground we were required to protect any materials entrusted us, at any cost. Not all men of the I.R.A. were able to store munitions, however, but those who performed the service did it out of downright love for the cause regardless of risk or any token of inconvenience. In this way they performed a double service by giving themselves to the I.R.A. and by minding the precious materials. It must be understood also that this minding of munitions involved the safety of one's household. There were even instances where wives, parents and other relations were "in on the secret" of munition minding. Lucky for the man who was so circumstances, and they were legion. But there were cases where men had to play hide and seek with their own families, prudence or perhaps over-prudence suggesting such a course. It was an age of psychology, a time when one's safety and the safety of the war materials depended on keeping one's own counsel, which consideration was the best course to pursue as it was equally necessary to refrain from sharing secrets as much as possible in such matters as these.

Many chapters could be written on this subject and innumerable instances could be given on the relatively fine spirit and patriotism of many a parent or relative who stood in on this work and respected the secrets entrusted to their care. No cause could be better served - no more honourably discharged by human kind. Without their help we in the I.R.A., as an effective and live organism might not have withstood the onslaughts of England's might and machinations then provokingly exhibited in devious ways for what they declared the preservation of law and order.

Thus the I.R.A. were well and truly served by good friends and loyal supporters who never failed in any circumstance or for any reason in fulfilment of any task entrusted them.

This matter of the storing of munitions caused many officers a good deal of anxiety. It was bad enough having to allot individual items to members of units, but when it came to arranging safe storage places for large quantities of munitions difficulties of a very perplexing character presented themselves. Material was accumulating - at least that was so in our Company - by the addition of the new grenades. In consequence of this provisions other than the utillisation of the several storage places or dumps in private houses had to be made. Arrangements were made to provide various dumps for Brigade, Battalion and Company munitions, in some instances to provide one or more for such units. This provision did not necessarily imply as far as Companies were concerned, of putting "all the eggs in the one basket". In many cases they were intended to supplement existing arrangements, the dumps already available by members and friends being continued as independent ones. Already some individual members of the I.R.A. possessed either a revolver, rifle or shot gun of different patterns with a quantity of ammunition for same. But there were other materials, the latest arrival being grenades that were deposited in various places. This gave rise to the necessity for extending dumping facilities.

The year that had passed had seen our Company strong, well-trained, and having carried out many activities besides those already listed. A raid for

arms at Alexander Basin brought us a number of rifles. A raid at Ballsbridge for motor cycle combination, in which about ten men of the Company under Capt. S. Flood armed and carrying petrol journeyed from the north city by tram brought us into close proximity to the Beggars Bush Military Barracks and the Ballsbridge Police Barracks. We also paraded in groups under arms on Armistice day proved unsuccessful. and night, protecting national buildings in Parnell St. and carrying out police patrol duties. During the year two members of our Company had passed to their eternal reward - Charles Lyons, son of our Adjutant John E. Lyons, and Joseph Bevan, (father of Thomas and Charlie, both of whom underwent imprisonment in Lewes prison after the Rising) who served in "C" Coy from the inception and participated in the Rising under Capt. Frank Fahy at the Four Courts and was also interned at Frongoch. Imprisonment left a mark on his health for he died in Pigeonhouse Sanatorium. Charles Lyons, Charlie as he was commonly called, served in C Coy from the inception of the Irish Volunteers. He participated in the Rising 1916 at the Four Courts, being interned in Frongoch subsequently. The Company rendered to each of these full military honours and supplied a firing party at the graveside. Joe Bevan who was the father of three boys and two girls, all of whom were serving in the Republican forces - the girls in the Cumann na mBan, an auxiliary to the I.R.A. - could be said to be a forceable and yet humorous character. The story is recorded that at a time when the wearing of Volunteer uniforms were banned Joe, for a wager, walked from his home in Geraldine St. to Hoban's shop in Parnell St. and returned to his home in the uniform he had worn in Easter Week. In point of

fact he did this in a quite matter of fact way, much to the surprise of many of his friends and the chagrin of those who challenged him.

In recording the progress of events associated with the War of Independence as conducted by the I.R.A. up to date, it must be borne in mind that the political and military situation in Ireland had reached a point where the only thing that mattered was to carry on, to brave the difficulties and to force the pace. There was no question of going back - I.R.A. orders suggested instead an intensification in all fields of activity. We had braved 1919 and had been dealt a few hard blows - if seizures of war material and arrests of our men could be termed heavy blows. Raids by the British forces on an unprecedented widespread scale had become the order of the day, which indicated that the British authorities played hard to crush the I.R.A. and in so doing sought to make a bold bid to come to physical handgrips with a force that was elusive and baffling. But the British with all their power, brains and state craft misjudged the men who were arrayed against them. Never before had Dublin Castle failed on the task of governing in the face of such determined political and national opposition of the rebelly Irish. Never before had men, calling themselves soldiers - soldiers of the Irish Republic - showed such grit and determination in defiance of "the law" and for the purpose of keeping alive a state of anarchy bordering on open rebellion as British ministers alleged. In misjudging the I.R.A. the British Government fell into the trap of misjudging the Irish race.

Suffice it to say that entering into the year 1920 the I.R.A. had found their sea legs. Already there were signs of increasing militant activity. In Dublin alone regular nightly patrols were conducted and our men were operating in Company areas. The work connected with furnishing armed protective parties to guard the Executive, Brigade and Battalion meetings at Parnell Square had become a regular feature of routine events with our Battalion and Company. Events had moved fast in the country for on the 13th January four counties - Clare, Wexford, Waterford and Kilkenny - were placed under martial law. Information had become available of the burning and the capture of numerous police barracks. In connection with these happenings it is well to mention that in several instances officers of the Dublin Brigade were utilised for these attacks on R.I.C. barracks and on many occasions took command of the local or other units engaged in that task. Rumour even suggested that our own Captain, Seán Flood, engaged in such operations at the time. The destruction of the R.I.C. barracks constituted a major operation for in the process of their elimination a gradual weakening of the influence of the British authority resulted. Consideration must be given to the point that the R.I.C., a well trained semi-military and armed police force, formed the eyes and ears for British rule in Ireland. That force was more potent, influential and trustworthy than a similar number of British soldiery. Well the British knew that without a native constabulary the Irish could not be governed except by the naked sword, for the main source of strength inherent in the R.I.C. was not so much due to their training or their armaments but that they

sprung from the native population. In other words they lived, loved and had their being in the native order. Proverbially they were masters, rulers and guardsmen to keep the Irish quiet, subservient and law-abiding.

Whilst these militant events were occurring due to the pressure being exerted by the I.R.A. throughout the country, the political barometer indicated a favourable turn in the fortunes and prestige of the Republican cause. The city and urban elections held on the 15th January 1920 demonstrated an overwhelming victory for the Republican party (Sinn Féin). That victory of the polls was all the more marked because for the first time in electoral history the system of proportional representation was applied. It must be understood that this system of voting was devised by the British Government in order to prevent the Republican movement obtaining an overall majority as happened at the parliamentary elections 13 months previously. The British Government were in no mood for having another Irish landslide. In reality the local elections proved a boomerang to British hopes and British intrigues. Whatever doubts they may have had about the true feelings of the Irish people on the political issue prior to these elections must have been rudely shattered in the presence of the victory - the democratic expression of the Irish people to be free.

The contribution which the I.R.A. personnel and authorities of the Dublin Brigade gave in this and in previous election and elections, parliamentary or

local, was very marked. Indeed without such help Sinn Fein, the political arm, could hardly have succeeded, Most, if not all the candidates were I.R.A. men and had been out in the Easter Week Rising. In the electoral area College Green Constituency in which I resided, Sean T. O'Kelly (now President of Ireland) was our standard bearer, and thus it came to pass that I had at each election acted as one of the constituency canvassing agents (on the orders of the constituency), helped and assisted by large numbers of other I.R.A. members of the O'Flanagan Sinn Fein Club or otherwise. Many of those belonged to 'C' and 'H' Company and some in other Companies of the 1st and 2nd Battalions.

The British Government's answer to these political happenings, however, was none other than "firm rule" and still more "firm rule".

On the 31st January 1920 British forces raided the shop of Heron and Lawless in Parnell Street, Dublin. The I.R.A. were carrying on a munition factory there. The British found some bomb castings and equipment. The find was a serious blow to the Dublin Brigade and the I.R.A. generally at a time when the flow of grenades to Companies was being accelerated. Many men surmised that the place had been given away by some local informer, though there were conjectures that it was just an ordinary raid and that the British "fell" on the stuff more by chance than as a result of information sought or obtained.

Around this time a new force had been instituted in the I.R.A., namely the Republican Police. Dail Eireann had meanwhile established Republican Courts.

thereby holding up the functions and affairs of the alien (British) Courts and administering a ready made code of justice. As the ordinary police governed by Dublin Castle were being undermined by the Republican influence and activity and loosening their grip on matters appertaining to common law and jurisdiction, the initiative to create a rival police force was a sign of the changing times. It was an expedient both novel and extraordinary. Since 1916 the R.I.C. and Dublin Metropolitan Police had devoted particular attention to political affairs. They were more concerned with curbing the power of Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. than in grappling with criminality and lawlessness. They had as a result permitted ordinary crime-doers, criminal gangsters and robbers a certain measure of freedom to pursue their lawless associations. This could, at least, be said of Dublin where within the previous twelve months the robber element had had full sway, the ordinary police holding aloof by omission or commission from exercising their authority on behalf of law and order. Within that same period, and before, that force worked, acted and sought the destruction of "illegal organisations" of which the I.R.A. was declared to be one of the worst offenders. That same police force had been conspicuous in tracking down Volunteers, in carrying out raids on I.R.A. men's homes and on premises where I.R.A. were suspected of meeting or drilling. They (the D.M.P.) had been busy in making swoops on I.R.A. engaged in training and manoeuvres in the Dublin suburbs and had, and were, acting as guides to the British soldiers on raids and searches with such vigour and constancy as to take up almost their whole time on political

"crime" rather than any other type of offence within the common law.

In instituting a rival force the I.R.A. took a bold step. As far as Dublin was concerned it was a very necessary one. The diminishing power of the Dublin Metropolitan Police Force had created a situation whereby robbery and those who lived on robbery thrived. Much of this robbery was perpetrated allegedly in the name of the I.R.A., the robbers claiming association with the I.R.A. and in many instances getting away with it and the booty as well. Efforts had been made by the I.R.A. in Dublin to deal with the several gangs that were plying their robber trade so well and so effectively. Many I.R.A. officers had conducted groups of their men to the thieves dens, arresting numbers of them. Peadar Clancy was foremost in this effort to put down these gangs. Some of those arrested were brought to trial, sometimes brought to an unknown destination and, as happened in a few instances were ordered to leave the country. There were hints too, which suggested that the lash was used against some of the worst types of evil doers or leaders of the gangs. While these measures were being taking much valuable time and energy that could otherwise be used for purposes connected with I.R.A. affairs were unhappily fritted away.

Thus came into being the Republican police, a force under the aegis of the I.R.A. and Dáil Éireann and operating under the authority of officers specially appointed for the purpose. This force had a supplementary or auxiliary status and was composed in the following manner. Each Battalion formed a

a police unit under a Battalion Police Officer. At a later date the scheme admitted of the appointment of a Company Police Officer and a couple of men to work under his orders. The Company Police Officer in turn was under direct orders of the Battalion Police Officer, and the latter under Brigade Police Officer, much on the same principle as the Intelligence system or special services like First-aid and Signalling. As the Intelligence officers devoted their services to things military, the Republican Police engaged in work of a purely civilian character except that it operated within the framework of the military - the I.R.A. machine. The Battalion Police Officer was a member of Battalion Staff under the Battalion Commandant's control.

Not all the work entrusted to the Republican Police was concerned with robbery or robber gangs. Among their other functions they had to contend with not a few domestic problems, such as trying to compose family differences and squabbles etc. But let us not anticipate events. Much of their work centred around the functioning and administration of the Republican Courts set up by Dáil Éireann which they helped to support and maintain. These Courts, working under great difficulties and in defiance of British law, depended on secrecy and good-will as between the various classes that composed its personnell or those who made use of the machinery on matters concerned with questions of law; justices and members of the legal profession and litigants respected and gave dutiful obedience to its authority even though some of the latter practiced in the alien courts.

Around the period under review the British had

their hands full with Irish prisoners for on the 12th February it was reported that the Irish jails were overcrowded. As a proof of I.R.A. activity curfew was instituted by the British in Dublin on the 23rd of that month between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m. Then on the 5th March came the startling announcement from Dublin Castle of I.R.A. attacks on R.I.C. barracks. On March 7th the British ordered disclosure of Bank records, appointing later on in the month Allen Bell to pursue the foul work. That personage became records examiner of British Intelligence. The purpose of this move was to ascertain and seize funds connected with national organisations, Sinn Féin, the I.R.A. and Dáil Loan. In the south of Ireland terrible scenes were happening. Many houses in Cork city were wrecked. This was followed on the 25th by the arrival of the Black and Tans in Ireland, a new force, that had been recruited in England from ex British soldiers in order, as the British Government stated, to supplement the existing R.I.C. force. Its basis was purely military. It was intended to be a military establishment trained and equipped to deal in a military fashion with the Irish problem, or rather to deal with the I.R.A. by force of arms.

The full significance of this new force became apparent when a few days later, on the 29th, Sir Neville Macready was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, followed by the appointment of Sir Hamar Greenwood as Chief Secretary for Ireland. These appointments signalled the advent of stronger and harsher military measures against the forces of disorder and anarchy - as the I.R.A. were termed by

the British. We in the I.R.A. had no doubts what these strong measures portended. We could not fail to notice that the military jack-boot was very much in evidence in the work-a-day life of the country called Ireland, and what was more pertinent to the point the British military and political machine by the expedient and their new appointments were in process of overhauling for a new offensive - or was it to be the old offensive with new and fresh leadership and personnel? There could be no question about the British Government's intentions in the matter of ruling Ireland by the strong arm of the law - the inauguration of the Black and Tans afforded complete proof of that. In connection with this appellation - Black and Tans - it may be necessary to mention that it was derived from their sartorial attire which consisted of a mixture of, in some cases, khaki tunic and black R.I.C. trousers or black R.I.C. tunic with khaki trousers. The name was applied by some Irish wag. That name was accepted by the Irish people as the fitting title for a force that had been thrown into Ireland to settle the Irish mess. At a later period a shorter term - the Tans - was used, particularly by Republicans, to describe the force.

Everything pointed in the direction of stirring times ahead, for the I.R.A. particularly, and for the Irish people in general. The new policy adopted by the British authorities gave to the Black and Tans virtual authority over the lives and fortunes of the people of Ireland. That policy incorporated reprisals, murders, burnings and innumerable forms of savage activity. Frightfulness and terror became the order

of the day; destructions and killings became common throughout the land by night. The Black and Tans carried these to a fine art. In their wild mad careering through Ireland they shot up, blew up and burned out peasant homes, business stores, creameries and industrial concerns. The assassination of officers and members of the I.R.A. and of Republicans was instituted in order to strike terror into the hearts of those who were defying British authority. These assassinations initiated by the murder of Lord Mayor MacCurtain in Cork, were declared to be "unofficial acts" when proof was established that they were perpetrated by members of the armed British forces. When no such proof was forthcoming efforts were made to foist the crime or crimes on the I.R.A., the implication being that the I.R.A. had imposed the punishment because the victim was regarded as an unworthy I.R.A. man - in other words a traitor. The British authorities, advised by Hamar Greenwood, were in the mood to grapple with the I.R.A., and in so doing had no desire to call halt to the orgy that they had involved but rather advanced the plea that the situation in Ireland called for strong, very strong measures.

Meanwhile the I.R.A. were showing signs of activity. On April 4th the Dublin Brigade burned numerous Income Tax offices in various parts of Dublin and on the 5th hundreds of R.I.C. barracks were destroyed. Then on the 7th news was flashed broadcast that 70 I.R.A. prisoners in Mountjoy Jail had started a hunger strike. That place became a mecca for Republican Dublin, for on the 12th Dublin citizens thronged outside that prison keeping vigil during the

day and up to curfew hour, prayers being continuously said for the"poor prisoners". Organised labour declared a general strike throughout Ireland in support of the hunger-strikers, closing down all but essential public services. A fortnight later, on the 28th April, 350 Republican prisoners were on hunger-strike in various jails in Ireland.

Events were moving fast. The inquest on the death of Thomas MacCurtain, Lord Mayor of Cork, had been held, and on the 18th April a verdict was given laying the murder of that I.R.A. officer against the British Premier. On May 1st the "Irish Times" in an editorial declared that "the Crown forces were being driven back by an advancing enemy". As if to give proof of this declaration, several sensational happenings were reported during that month. On the 7th Cloyne (Co. Cork) R.I.C. barracks was captured by I.R.A., on the 20th dockers in Dublin refused to handle British war material, their places being taken by British troops, on the 28th Kilmallock R.I.C. barracks was attacked by I.R.A. and on the 29th railwaymen refused to handle war material destined for the British forces.

The Dublin Brigade was again to come to the fore. On the 1st June a skilful and daring raid was successfully carried out at the King's Inns when a British military guard was pounced upon by selected men, mostly of the 1st Battalion, disarmed and their rifles taken safely away. In this operation our Company was well represented, about eleven of us participating. Assembling at 46 Parnell Square ,Vice Brigadier Clancy allotted officers and men to the various groups.

About 30 men were so detailed, formed into 3 or 4 groups, an officer in charge of each, every man armed with a revolver. The position of the King's Inns was such that entrance could be effected from three points - two of which through wicket gates from the Constitution Hill which led into what was known as 'the Temple', a space used as a public park, and the other entrance from Henrietta Street through a large iron gateway and small gates on each side. These led into an enclosed space that stretched for about 50 yards until it met another iron gateway and side doors of simila design through which pedestrian traffic passed into "the Temple". These centre gates were not frequently used for vehicular traffic. Inside and to the left at the gate leading to the "Temple', was a doorway that afforded entrance to the guardroom, a couple of rooms away on the ground floor.

In giving us our orders Vice Brigadier Clancy had advised that the operation depended on surprise and speed. He allotted us seven minutes in which to carry out the job, the timing to commence from our arrival there and our getaway. On the previous day we had been mobilised for that action. We missed it because it was raining. Naturally we smiled at the remark "it couldn"t be carried out because it is raining". Peadar caught our smiles, and by the time he had explained the why and the wherefore of that we were convinced that there was logic in not making the attack that day. Hence it was postponed then. All the men who had been present then were on duty on the 1st although Peadar had offered to excuse any man who felt he would be unable by reason of his employment

to attend the second day in succession. Many of our men had borrowed a few hours leave. Some had slipped out from their work hoping, if such were necessary, to cover up their absence by some plausible excuse. So keen was enthusiasm and such a fine sense of desire to participate in the enterprise that no man felt inclined to call off or withdraw from it.

Fortunately for us the weather on that second day was warm and sunny. We had perforce to wait for a spell until information concerning the activity or inactivity of the British garrison was forthcoming sufficient to set our plans to the test. At last we were given the order to get going. Every man knew what was required to be done - each group had its allotted task. The first group to leave No. 46 was entrusted the task to deal jointly with such members of the guard who were lolling about and playing truant to their lady friends (a common procedure adopted when the weather was fine for those off duty) and likewise to deal with sentries, overpower them and make for the guard-room where the war material was situated. Special men of that first party had been detailed to disconnect telephonic and alarm apparatus. On the heels of that party was another group charged with the task of effecting entrance to the rear door of the guard-room, timed to synchronise with the movements of the first party thus ensuring the essential element of surprise. Another party, that to which I was assigned, was given the task to look after affairs outside, to form a screen of protection at the various entrances and afford cover for men and materials. Some of this party also were to supervise the loading

and dispatch of the captured war material into a motor car or cars that were to be available for service on the occasion. In addition, another group of our Company were on duty at points at the end of Henrietta St. and byeways, whose duty it was to afford additional protection to all the party, give timely warning of the approach of the enemy should such be sent to the scene, and also to assist in helping men to get safely away after the raid.

Arriving at the rendezvous, everything worked out according to plan; the first group meeting opposition successfully accomplished its initial task, the second group fared differently, lost direction by entering the wrong door and suffered the loss of valuable time in finding the right one, the third and fourth group were already in position even to the point of closing the gates at Constitution Hill. Would the raid be successful? Minutes rolled by, minutes that seemed eternal. Those of us outside wondered how the raid was progressing inside the building. Before we knew what was what the stuff was being brought out to the motor car, rifles, ammunition, equipment and a machine gun. For a moment we nearly forgot ourselves, being beside ourselves with joy and excitement at the sight of the captured booty, especially so when Kevin Barry, wearing a "tin hat" and carrying a machine gun came out to the car - joking all the time. Others too flushed with the sense of success bore their trophies outside, returning for more. In this manner every trace of war material was accounted for and the car bearing these sped on its way, followed in quick succession by the several groups beating a hasty getaway down the street in a more mysterious way than

when we had previously arrived.

In the excitement of the raid many a man had lost count of time, but as it was we had performed the task a minute or so short of schedule. One of the party had even forgotten to dispose of a telephone receiver and wiring which he unknowingly held firm in his hand as he ran down the street, and through other streets, before he discovered the omission. Many thought the distance down Henrietta St. increased tenfold and all were relieved to get into other thoroughfares. Time was a big factor then, for at any moment the British would be on the scene from the nearest barracks at the North Dublin Union, a few minutes motor drive from the King's Inns. The enterprise was not without its humour too. In "falling in" with one of our men in a laneway some short distance away I had referred to the raid being hard going. Quick as lightning my friend humorously remarked, "a bottle of stout would go down well with it now". One could guess by the way we put the road under us that nothing would tempt to tarry us and such guessing would be right that time, for our main concern was to get as far away from the scene as we possibly could before the "powers that be" got moving. And we did, some of us to the point of boarding trams or by commandeering an odd bicycle to take us to less troublous quarters.

Undoubtedly our Vice Brigadier, Peadar Clancy, by good timing and careful planning of the enterprise achieved notoriety among us all - the coup, thanks to him and to those who collaborated with him, was successful to the minutest detail. Brigadier McKee also had assisted in the planning of the coup for he

was present in 46. Its success gave a new fillip to many who had become too used to folorn hopes and had had quite a number of previous disappointments to record. In this instance the men who participated could afford to be elated for scoring a success without suffering any loss or even inflicting loss on the British garrison, as the intention was to capture munitions and "not to shoot unless in extreme circumstances". A greater cause for elation was the fact that the men were under orders for two days and fully prepared for any risk. To some it meant the loss of several hours' wages, to others a day or two had to be sacrificed. Another matter that was worthy of consideration, upon which and because of which the success of that coup was largely due, and that was leadership. If any man was worthy of the title of leader that man was Peadar Clancy. He perhaps could lay worthy claim to full honours for its success. He may or may not have been the brains that conceived it, but it could be said that his personality, his fine manly character and extraordinary methodical grip of military tactics, combined with a keen sense of placing men to the best advantage, conduced enormously to the success of the exploit, perhaps as much as the bravery, dash and daring of those who carried it out. His was the cool reasoned mind capable of planning any type of activity, but he was at his best in detailing orders and giving instructions in such affairs as these. In this respect one felt safe and sure of doing things in accordance with his direction. It is not given to many people to possess great powers of leadership and command. He possessed them in a marked degree, and not these alone, for he had the power of communicating

his own intrepid spirit and unbounding enthusiasm to those whose lot it was to share in any enterprise planned by him.

Was it any wonder that men of the Dublin Brigade who had had experience of his leadership, worshipped him? It could be truly said that one could go gladly and with confidence into any peril directed or commanded by Peadar, for he always planned for success. More than that, he planned for the safety of his men. Every detail however slight was weighed, every possible contingency was considered, but always it was a fundamental law with him to register surprise, to strike at the right time and in the right place, and by utilising the minimum of men and material to apply guerrilla tactics to every form of military activity.

Peadar Clancy was not alone in the class of guerrilla leaders of the period as far as the Dublin Brigade was concerned. Another man of similar qualities leadership and daring was Dick McKee, our Brigadier. He and Peadar were a complete pair militarily; each had the same military outlook, were guided by the same principles to fight whatever the cost, but never give in; each were "go ahead" at all times just as they were influenced and influenced others to be up and doing, seeking to put into practice what had become to be known as the "hit and run" policy of the I.R.A. Each was refined, quiet, reserved, dignified and of lovable and gentle disposition. Peadar was held to be the more "up and at them" type of military strategist, due perhaps to the feats of daring with which he was accredited and which had become legendary. It had even been whispered by some who had a fair measure of

contact with him that he had become harsh or a kind of hardened. Yet were one given the task to prove the veracity of the assertion, the not improbable result would be to find him self-possessed, impulsive and consciously determined. These latter qualities could with equal force be applied to Dick to a greater or lesser degree consistent with his work and his activities as a leader of men at a time when the race was to the strong and the active, and the only qualifications incumbent on leaders of the I.R.A. was to pursue a strong and aggressive policy. These two formed a faithful, perfect and almost true to life kinship, to the advantage and the edification of the Dublin Brigade, the members of which regarded them as worthy to command and equally worthy of respect, devotion and obedience.

With reference to the raid on King's Inns, an incident centring around the personality of our Company Captain Seán Flood may be worthy of mention. He was present at 46 on the two days referred to. In assigning officers for the various groups, Seán's name was not mentioned. He was naturally beside himself with anger and disappointment. He fought the issue with the Brigadier and Vice Brigadier. "Why am I left out? Why can't I go on the job?", he argued, pleaded, raged with all the force at his command. It was a sad heart-rending sight to see him, tears in his eyes and showing signs of extreme distress and embarrassment. He felt slurred, put aside as if he were not worthy to engage in the undertaking. To those of us who knew his invaluable worth and his sterling qualities, who appreciated the fact that he

was eagerly bent on taking his part with the other participants, the deprivation occasioned acute sorrow and genuine hardship. The decision not to let him go on the job was, we were assured, not intended as a slight on his person or his courage, that the only reason for taking this course was because he was so conspicuous in appearance and build, that he might be too easily traced and tracked where people of more ordinary sizes might escape recognition. This was not Seán's way of looking at things. He preferred to take equal chances and risks in any chosen activity and to perform the most menial task if such were required of him as an officer or as one of the rank and file, regardless of the consequences or oblivious of any danger resulting therefrom. We all felt it was hard for him to knuckle down to the conditions imposed, but true Volunteer that he was he accepted, with some reluctance on his part, the inevitable course. This was a disagreeable as it was an unfortunate choice, but in acquiescing he came out of the situation with flying colours, feeling secure that he had lost nothing in the affection and confidence of all concerned, whether officers or men, all of whom regarded him in no other light than as a good, brave and loyal I.R.A. officer.

At this point it may be necessary to refer by way of illustration, to the very delicate subject of performing I.R.A. work free from detection and recognition by the common public. Actually all our successes were linked up with, and dependent on complete secrecy, with no special leanings for the limelight. We were an invisible force. As such we had to exercise caution, circumspection - if that is the right

word - to keep out of the public gaze as much as possible. "The less they see and know, the less they will be able to talk about" was a wise axiom. There were too many agents of the British in our midst to permit loose movement or loose talking. But to return to the illustration of the point. It so happened that on the occasion of that raid a few of our men heard their names mentioned by some civilians living in the vicinity just as they (our men) were getting away from the scene. What if British agents were about at the time and made use of the information? What if the civilians themselves might pass on the information to the Castle? Such things were possible. There was even danger that such people might be too talkative about what they saw of and whom they saw in the raid. Consequently a word to the wise was deemed advisable, for before many hours had elapsed ample warning was issued to them in order to prevent the information falling into the hands of the enemy. In other words the civilians concerned were warned to keep their mouths shut.

The next day, June 2nd, came news of 10 R.I.C. barracks seized by I.R.A., followed by the destruction of Cappawhite and Drangan R.I.C. barracks, the disarming of British troops in Middleton, Co. Cork, the destruction of King St. barracks, Cork, on the 4th, 5th and 30th respectively, while on the 3rd the British reported that Republican police were functioning in 21 counties. Dublin again came into the news for on the 30th June curfew was altered from 12 p.m. to 3 a.m., and on the 6th July the Black and Tans made their first appearance in the streets of the metropolis. Everything pointed in the direction of an intensification of British

military activity in Dublin Brigade area. The British were sparing no effort to secure the defeat of the I.R.A. and the inclusion of the Black and Tans in their plan of campaign indicated the employment of more cruel, repressive measures. We in Dublin were to witness the perambulations , suffer the affronts and bear the blows of a force that had already, in the short space of its existence, engraved the words "law and order", of which they were proclaimed the almighty defenders, in a profusion of Irish blood. The main questions that concerned us members of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. were: Would we be able to withstand the new assault of what appeared to be the foreign legion? How would we re-act to the situation that afforded full play to the would be military overlords and/which gave them complete leave and licence to conduct token warfare within or without the law?

Instead of striking terror into the I.R.A. the advent of the Black and Tans into the Dublin arena produced the opposite effect. Came the 15th of the month when a raid was made on the Dublin G.P.O. for English mails. A large number of the Dublin Brigade, specially selected men, carried out this raid which was regarded as successful. The G.P.O. was then housed in the Rotunda Rink to the rear of the Rotunda Hospital. In this way much valuable information concerning British agents and supporters of and informers for the British regime was secured. Around this time reports were circulated that the British Courts were unable to function. Dick McKee took up duties as Director of Training and was engaged in printing an t-Óglach, the I.R.A. official organ.

That paper was of invaluable assistance to our movement in more senses than one. It was mainly devoted to military matters - instructions on various subjects of training, the art of war and military technique. Besides, it kept the political aims of the I.R.A., the complete independence of Ireland, ever to the forefront and went a long way in contributing to the progress and well being of the I.R.A. force as a whole. Without such a virile and patriotic agency the I.R.A. would have found the task of continuing the fight not alone more difficult but acutely distressing. It acted as an antidote to other papers and agencies that were equally virile and less patriotic and more desirous that the I.R.A. should play with resolutions than to engage in revolution. An t-Óglach then, circulating privately within the confines of the I.R.A., depended on the support of men of that force as it bridged the gap between the official British reports and the ordinary newspaper accounts of the political and military course of events of the time. In point of fact it exercised a strong and sustaining influence among all ranks of the I.R.A. out of all proportion to its diminutive size or its literary merit or of the printers . Whatever its other imperfections, it stressed the need for and upheld the fight then being waged by the I.R.A. It kept the flag of Ireland aloft, thereby winning a place and name as a revolutionary journal, perhaps the only revolutionary organ in the world supporting a guerilla army.

Chapter 16.

A new innovation in the domestic affairs of the I.R.A. and Sinn Féin was introduced about this time in the establishment of a secret post office service. Several shops in the Dublin area were designated as posting centres where letters could be left. A team of "postmen" which consisted of selected men of the I.R.A. or boys of the Fianna looked after the delivery service. One of these posting centres in our area was at Maurice Collins's tobacconist and newsagent shop in Parnell St. Maurice had been a civil servant who had suffered dismissal because of his patriotic activities - he had participated in the Rising and was then actively associated with the Volunteer and G.A.A. movements. That posting service received good support from the Volunteers and other groups of Republicans. Besides that, there were instituted by the I.R.A. and for I.R.A. purposes, call offices, shops or houses where letters or messages could be left in safety to be called for on behalf of certain I.R.A. personages or parties. These arrangements had been made for dual reasons, one of which aimed at boycotting the English postal system, and the other to counteract the espionage carried on in that service on the orders of the British authorities. It was known at the time that letters addressed to persons connected with the I.R.A. and Republican movement were tampered with in the post. Things had reached the stage when precaution became virtually necessary in order to deny to the British access to important documentary evidence of the I.R.A. and Republican activity and to secure a relatively safe and secure mode of communication.

The call offices, apart from the Republican postal service, played an important part in the administrative sphere and operational activity of the Dublin Brigade. Their functions were mainly military, while that of the Republican post were regarded as of a purely civilian and utilitarian nature. Another point of distinction was that the former was conducted secretly within the I.R.A., the latter semi-publicly among Republican people associated with Sinn Féin clubs and I.R.A. members.

It was extremely difficult to maintain an "illegal postal service" during a period of intense widespread raiding by the British forces when such places as described were being subjected to searches for one reason or other, or on the pretext of raiding for wanted men, for arms or for seditious papers or documents. While on the subject of seditious documents and papers, it might be well to refer to the fact that newsagents and people purveying in the printing and sale of papers or publications were often visited by British Crown Forces in order to seize offending printing matters. National papers, song sheets, patriotic post cards and other types of literature deemed to be "seditious" were confiscated, the publishers and vendors having to suffer in patience the loss of their wares and the forms of annoyances associated with the searching of their premises. As a rule these raiding parties were none too gentle or gentlemanly, were sufficiently officious and methodical to leave the places so visited a dishevelled mess. It happened in quite a considerable number of cases that the "finds" were of such importance in the

eyes of the British authorities as to warrant the arrest of the owners of the premises and consequential punishment for being in possession of, or for selling, illegal and seditious documents or publications. Were they caught trafficing in, or conducting an illegal postal service the punishment would be invariably greater. Yet notwithstanding risks and difficulties there were many such men and women who accepted this or any service if it could be of any assistance in the fight that was being waged on behalf of Ireland.

During this month also the English Government declared war on the Sinn Féin Courts, many raids being made on same by British soldiers and Black and Tans. The net result of this was to cause the Courts to be held in greater secrecy. In this connection the writer had the privilege of attending one of these Courts in the Technical Schools, Parnell Square, during the hearing of a case in which a business man claimed compensation against another for a breach of contract. One could not fail to be impressed by the proceedings, dignity, good order and decorum, with a total absence of that pomp and ceremony so associated with the English product. In that instance everything was simple and business-like. Even the ordinary legal gentlemen whose calling permitted them to engage in the English courts, were quite at ease though engaged in "illegal practices". That case was amicably settled.

Towards the end of July 1920 an event or happening of startling political importance occurred. That was the wild and outrageous excesses of the Orangement in the north of Ireland inflicted against

Irish nationalists. The Pogrom commenced, causing the deaths of 19 and the wounding of 50 people. Dublin became the city of refuge for many of the northern residents who had to fly for their lives from the Orange hordes. So serious was the position that Dáil Éireann issued a decree against the imposition of a religious test and Sinn Féin organisation declared a boycott of Belfast, and so at a later date the I.R.A. were called on to carry out the duties of enforcing the boycott of Belfast and northern goods. This gave rise to the terms "boycott patrol" and "boycott duties". In this particular sphere the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. played a very big part. Every Company was entrusted with the task of warning shopkeepers not to stock or sell goods of Belfast or northern origin, not to display or advertise same etc. A preponderatingly large number of shopkeepers in Dublin willingly acquiesced to the demands made on them and fell in with the idea of the boycott.

The carrying out of these orders imposed increasing demands on the officers and men of the Dublin Brigade, being taxed to the utmost, especially in the initial stages, in securing the maximum degree of compliance by traders and the consequential institution of proceedings against those who refused to comply. Our men then had the onerous and difficult task of obtaining a survey of places where the offending goods were displayed or sold, noting the delinquents and reporting same to higher authority. This information was easily obtained where the trader or business establishment openly defied the ban and carried on their trade openly and publicly, a procedure which few of these people or persons resorted to. Not

uncommonly the defiance took the form of pretending not to deal in boycotted goods while secretly doing so. Our duties were to track down the secret trafficing in such goods, to pit our wits against those who in that fashion sought to weaken the boycott weapon; just as much was it our duty to take necessary action against those who openly and avowedly deemed it good business to continue trading in the same without any regard for the national or even religious interest involved. Little did those people realise that their efforts in that direction would hardly be a paying proposition when the full force of a highly concentrated active and progressive Intelligence system which the I.R.A. had built up was brought into full play.

Much of our work was rendered easy by reason of the assistance that families of I.R.A. men gave in the interest of the boycott. Other classes of the community also helped, among them friendly disposed people, those who were shocked by the outrages carried out in the north and quite a large number of shopkeepers of whom a considerable number were supporters of the Republican movement. We had every reason to expect, and actually succeeded in getting in various ways and through devious channels first hand information of trading devices of clever business people who set themselves to carry on business as usual with their northern counterparts. In almost, if not in all streets, members of the I.R.A. lived; there were very few business stores or establishments that had not an I.R.A. man as an employee. Many I.R.A. men had contacts with firms, agencies and factories in the north in their several capacities as travellers, agents or

traders. With the help of such a combination as these the I.R.A. would inevitably succeed. Even without such combination - though the task might be more laborious and difficult - a certain measure of success was bound to result. Not the least noteworthy assistance was rendered by the ordinary day to day shoppers, many of them members of our own families and friends of the movement who were only too glad to get a rap at the Orange bigots.

When eventually open trading in the boycotted goods was found to be unpopular and a bad paying proposition an underground traffic was tried. Many clever devices to set at nought the boycott were initiated by some business concerns. Among these was the diverting of the goods to England to be re-transhipped to Ireland. Great care was taken to conceal manufacturer's name and source of origin, the main purpose being to create the impression that they were not Belfast or Northern but English goods. These and other devices put the Intelligence system of the I.R.A. to many a sore test, with the result that the work of enforcing the boycott extended beyond its initial scope and range. Hence measures were taken to deal with such goods in transit from or stored in shipping sheds, railways, stores or trains. Raids by I.R.A. which resulted in the destruction of the prohibited goods became common, causing extreme losses in money and material to the parties concerned in the traffic.

Such a matter as the Belfast boycott agitation was regarded as illegal by the British authorities whose interest in regard to the Orange "lambs" enabled them to institute the full rigours of the laws against

all and sundry who fell into their hands while engaged in enforcing the boycott. However, the eyes and limbs of the law could not watch and guard every place at a time when they had more than their share of work to content with in dealing other blows against the resurgent I.R.A. Hence the law, the British law, was frustrated in trying to neutralise or stop the I.R.A. boycott activity, while the ukase of Dáil Éireann, backed by the I.R.A. and supported by a very large percentage of Irish people, prevailed.

It must not be thought that everything was plain sailing for the I.R.A. Such a view was far from the truth. It caused many embarrassments and inflicted suffering on quite a number of our people inside Ulster - of Nationalist and Catholic beliefs - and, perhaps, those who were unaffected by the pogrom employed in firms that traded with the rest of Ireland. Then again our own people outside of Ulster employed by Ulste r firms or agencies for their wares, had their livelihood seriously affected by the boycott. The latter class of people were our most embarrassing and sorrowful concern. It was reasonable to suppose that such people would feel the burden imposed by the boycott and its attending dislocation of a trade that hitherto flourished and progressed with the passing of time in the south east and west of Ireland. The responsibility rested on the Orange promoters of the pogrom for the losses incurred from the boycott weapon so successfully used by the I.R.A. Strange to relate the rigours of the law were not applied to the Orange bigots, true upholders of the Union whose much vaunted loyalty had caused numerous deaths

and much suffering to many an Ulster family. Within recent years they had been pampered and literally spoonfed by the British Government. They were a highly privileged class. When the history of the period under review is written, as it must be written, the part which these bigots played in that pogrom will be recorded in the light of the horrors, infamies and humiliations that they so cruelly caused.

On the 29th July 1920 an incident of great national importance occurred. Archbishop Mannix, the beloved patriotic Prelate of Melbourne, was prohibited from landing in his native country - Ireland. The British Government, piqued by his outspoken utterances on the oppression of, and atrocities committed against the Irish people and in favour of Irish self-determination, re-directed the ship in which he was a passenger to an English port rather than to an Irish part. This extreme act denied the Irish people the privilege of paying him full honours.. Plans had been prepared on a lavish scale to celebrate his visit, his home-coming among his own beloved kith and kin. As it was, the hill tops around the coast of Ireland were lit up with bonfires, flags were displayed in token of welcome. Even Dublin citizens lit bonfires on the streets, rejoicing in the event. In many instances they defied the curfew by remaining on the streets singing Irish patriotic songs and making merry around the improvised bonfires. That night, however, the Crown Forces inflicted a toll of death on some of the merry-makers, tore like mad into the streets where the fires were alight and by means of gun-play wreaked vengeance on any who were foolhardy enough to be abroad. The operations of the

curfew each night resulted in the arrest of numbers of people who, in many instances, unconsciously forgot time and misjudged distances and, in consequence, took chances in trying to evade the nocturnal patrols of British soldiers and Black and Tans, whose especial care it was to keep the citizens indoors during prohibitive hours. In point of fact, the problem of trying to beat time was perplexing and aggravating. It was not the only serious disturbing problem confronting the citizens of Dublin. In many ways it made inroads on their private and family lives, increasing their difficulties on occasions when people were sick and efforts had to be made to obtain attendance of doctors or to seek entrance to hospital, not to mention the anxieties and embarrassment caused to nightworkers and the inevitable uneasiness and fear associated with the absence of members of their households who had to remain put in other people's houses rather than face returning to their own. But even greater than all these was the continuous movement of British forces, the movement of men, motor convoys, armoured cars, the playing of huge searchlights on streets and houses, the too constant repetition of military commands to "keep inside", to "put out those lights", the not too infrequent shooting, the numerous raids on houses, causing a turmoil and uproar in a street or streets nearby. Sleep and quietude became for some hard to secure.

But to us in the I.R.A. the curfew was not merely vexatious but potentially threatening. It meant in a sense that we were static while the British remained cock of the walk, as it were complete masters of the situation, holding the city and all

contained therein literally in the hollows of their hands. This control caused us not a little uneasiness and quite a measure of embarrassment. It was a sore point with us and one that was often debated - whether measures should be taken against them during curfew. The one redeeming factor militating against our taking offensive action was that we could afford to sit low, and that being an invisible army scattered throughout a large populous area like Dublin, it was not inconceivable that by an element of good fortune we could escape the worst hazards of the operations of curfew. Military action on our part, it was generally contended at the time, might not have got us anywhere. On the contrary, it might have increased our difficulties and caused untold sufferings to not only our men but also the civilian population. The main consideration, however, was that our own headquarters gave no direction and issued no orders that would indicate that we should engage militarily in such a course of action.

In other respects the Irish situation had reached a phase of unusual disquietude. The policy of the British to impose reprisals on Ireland for every attack on Black and Tans and British military had little, if any, effect in weakening the resistance of or slackening the pace and tempo of the military operations which the I.R.A. conducted throughout various parts of Ireland. Then in early August Sir Hamar Greenwood as Chief Secretary of Ireland introduced in the British House of Commons a Bill "for the restoration of law and order in Ireland". This Bill was accordingly passed on the 9th August. It

meant in practical effect the placing of the British military junta in complete charge of the destiny of Ireland, to be governed, controlled and legalised by force and force alone. In this wise the forces of disaffection and disorder - to wit the I.R.A. - were to be extirpated, debased, or otherwise brought to atonement for their cruelties and unlawful acts. Almost coincidental with the passage of that Bill was the publication by Dublin Castle of the "Weekly Summary of Outrages", a copious and highly descriptive documentary of the happenings, events and episodes associated with the warfare then prevailing in Ireland. That publication was intended to serve the purpose of depicting the I.R.A. as a murder gang engaged in a criminal conspiracy, - not for any good or honourable reason or because they were patriotic or had love of country. In short, the I.R.A. aim was to destroy the established law. Strangely enough the British measures to maintain law and order lacked every essential condition but soldiers and Black and Tans, bullets, petrol and reprisals, jails, burning of creameries, shooting up of towns and villages and secret dead-of-night murders.

One of the new laws sanctified by the Restoration of Law and Order in Ireland Act, ironically enough, abolished inquest on those who met violent deaths. No longer would it be possible to lay a charge of murder against the forces of law and order; no longer would a jury of citizens be enabled to hear evidence and to find the cause of death of the victims of the war then raging, like those who returned murder verdict against English ministers as in the late Lord Mayor MacCurtain's case. The law decreed that

Coroners' Courts in such cases were illegal.

Things were not going well with the British cause in Ireland if one were to judge by the statement of Hamar Greenwood in the British House of Commons that 556 R.I.C. and 313 magistrates had resigned within the previous couple of months. Besides, everything pointed to a complete collapse of the R.I.C. as a police force. Gradually they had been driven from their barracks in the country. They no longer functioned as a selective and high rated force. Indeed in many places the Republican police reigned supreme. Even the endeavours of the British authorities to transfuse new life and vigour into the R.I.C. by means of the enlistment into the Black and Tans did not produce anything like the same standard of police efficiency and stability so long associated with the former force. It must not be thought, however, that the R.I.C. entirely and completely ceased to exist. They were, it is true, denied the advantages and use of hundreds of barracks scattered throughout the country. As a result, and to meet the new situation that was thrust on them by the destruction of their buildings, they withdrew to the large towns or county establishments, from which they operated by means of mobile movements. The ordinary routine of police work was largely discarded and replaced by the new methods of contacting and bringing the I.R.A. to justice.

We had come to realise that the Black and Tans and those who remained members of the R.I.C. were designed and acted as a military force. We knew that greater efforts and possibly bigger sacrifices

would be required of us in the future because of the presence of the Tans in the Dublin Brigade area. To think otherwise would be courting disaster. We were not so simple as to imagine that we could escape immunity from the devastating effect of their varied forms of activity, for it had become commonplace that the Black and Tans were capable of frightful ferocious excesses, in the pursuit of which they had the backing of the British authorities. Every deed, every misdeed performed by that force was approved and glorified by officialdom in Dublin Castle and London. Hence the Black and Tans were not slow to take full advantage of their much landed mission of restoring law and order.

Judging by the colourful accounts of their exploits in other parts of the country, which were so freely circulated at the time, we had every reason to anticipate a step up in military operations in Dublin. The one essential to meet the growing dangers which their presence foreboded was to hold our heads and to cling more resolutely and determinedly to our movement of resistance, in the full consciousness of measuring up to meet whatever blows they sought to deliver against us. The main consideration was - would the Dublin Brigade of the I.R.A. withstand the shock of the latent Black and Tan military operations? Any wavering on our part was bound to react to our disadvantage at a time when we were not unfavourably circumstanced, were we to judge by the increased activity in our force, the splendid enthusiasm and the magnificent loyalty displayed by the men.

Obviously the scenes of battle were changing and changeable, varying in form, degree and intensity according to their relative importance or quality as military operations. Daily, if not hourly, the several activities carried out by the I.R.A. and the Crown forces bespoke an almost nation-wide warfare. Towns, villages, even the most remote hamlets became arenas for raids, ambushes and reprisals, producing or reproducing a trend of affairs akin to an upheaval of not alone the political but also the social structure of that country called Ireland. The impact of that warfare was felt in many quarters and among many people. One time they emanated from I.R.A. sources; attacks on R.I.C. barracks, resulting in many instances in their capture or destruction, ambushes on Crown forces, capture of mails, boycott raids, shooting of spies etc. Other times the Crown forces engaged in multitudinous forms of activity, which included the shooting up of towns and villages, the torturing of I.R.A. prisoners, the burning of creameries, the slaying of Republicans in their homes at dead of night, the harassing of I.R.A., the incessant raids and searches of public buildings and private dwellings. In their blind folly they struck at everything and anything Irish, showing little discrimination between, and as little regard for, the various component classes of Irish life. The worst offenders in respect thereto were the Black and Tans, whose deliberate insensate policy it was to bring horror and destruction throughout the length and breadth of Ireland.

Credit where credit was due, the ordinary British soldier, if harsh, rude or overbearing at times showed at least a fair measure of discipline and

restraint. They too, in quite a number of instances, took the law into their own hands and dealt out justice with an iron hand and by means of the military jackboot. But, unlike their brothers the Black and Tans, they carried out their policy of aggression if not tenderly and kindly, at least generally openly. At close quarters the Black and Tans were found to be what the British Government intended them to be - cruel, domineering, oppressive, whose one distinguishable role to fame resided in their proficiency in the use of arms and their previous war service. Every one of them were renowned veterans of the previous world war. In other words, they were two-gun men, which was conceived to be the one prepossessing essential to their glorified adventure in Ireland. The fact that they were armed with rifle and revolver added piquant flavour to the relish of their congenial lawful avocation of dispensing appropriate medicine to the I.R.A. gunmen in particular, and the "Shinners" in general. In that task they adopted as sound military policy the rule of shooting first and asking questions afterwards; in the meantime doping their consciences that they were doing "a hellish good job" into the bargain. They had been, and were accorded by their English paymasters, full liberty and license to pursue their course of restoring law and order with a crudeness, coarseness and vindictiveness that was unprecedented in the history of the English conquest of Ireland.

Up to this time the full force of the reign of terror as practiced and carried out by the Black and Tans

in other parts of Ireland had not reached Dublin. We had been spared many horrors and many excesses. True the Dublin people had undergone no less terrifying and mischevious ordeals, the continuous raiding, holds up and searches day and night, the presence and employment of a virtual army of spies, agents, Intelligence officers, becoming as deadly as even the worst form of military operation designed against the I.R.A. Dublin, the seat of British administration, was also the pivotal point from which radiated much of the hellish and inglorious activities of the Black and Tans. In their efforts to destroy the national movement, in their frantic endeavours to put down the I.R.A. they outstretched themselves, and, in so doing, caused an alignment of an almost unanimous people against them and in sympathy with the Irish Republican cause. Yet another instance of that was portrayed by the action of Irish railwaymen, who, following the lead of the Dublin dockers, refused to handle munition for and of the British forces, and also refusing to work trains carrying soldiers. Two thousand of these railwaymen were accordingly suspended. A very significant feature about this action was that many of the men were members of a trade union whose headquarters was in London. Quite a large number of railwaymen were I.R.A. men. It proved beyond any shadow of doubt that the British authorities had more than the "gunmen" of the I.R.A. to contend with, and that indissoluble bonds of unity existed among the various sections of the Irish population. Besides which, it demonstrated that labour by its own free will and choice, stood four square in favour of the fight being waged by the I.R.A.

The acceleration in the frequency and tempo of the raiding by the Crown forces was indeed a source

of worry to many an officer of the Dublin Brigade, worry for the safety of the men as well as the safety of war materials. Hence we find Companies around this time setting about obtaining likely safe places for storage - for dumping their stores. In many instances more than one dump was secured for the purpose. Our Company was no exception to the rule. We had quite a miscellaneous assortment of rifles, revolvers, a fair amount of grenades, ammunition and equipment, much of which was scattered around in various hiding places. The more serviceable types of revolvers were in the keeping of selected men of the Company. All such material was under charge of the Company Quartermaster, whose special duty it was to keep an accurate inventory of the names and addresses of the men responsible for the safety of same. This arrangement of spreading out our collective stores had been proven satisfactory up to a point. Occasionally we had had to make changes in the arrangements in respect to the safe custody of some portion of our munition stores, especially in the case of small arms, which from time to time had undergone many stages of distribution and re-distribution, the object in view being to provide for their proper safety and place them in the hands of the men for whatever forms of activity our Company might be engaged.

Fortunately we secured suitable premises for storing the Company's munitions - a stable with overhead loft to the rear of houses in Botanic Road. This place afforded us more than ample accommodation for the purpose in view. Of course the lady-owner of the garage or stable was not aware of our intentions. It would not be quite politic to tell her. Our

Captain - Seán Flood - rented it. He even planned to use it for a horse and car, the proprietor of which was a Volunteer who, by the same token, bore the same name and who was to take up residence there. To our great surprise our friend would not live there so that part of the arrangement went by the board, but the place was, however, used for stabling horse and van belonging to one of our men. The building itself was a substantial one, and boasted of a good concrete floor in tiled fashion.

Our job was to excavate a hole in the floor of sufficient depth and width to hold a large number of rifles and other accessories. This opening was concreted bottom, sides and top. A concrete trap door wrought and tiled to match the floor, with a special gadget for opening and closing it, was constructed. The work of constructing this "dump" was laborious for we had to work without attracting undue attention and with as little noise as possible. Besides, we were anxious to get the job done quickly, and it would not be good policy to show that we were engaged in making alterations in any way. In this we were very fortunate, as we were also fortunate in having the service of one of our members who was an inventive genius for such work - Seán Nathan. When finished it looked to be the perfect dump. We had, in consequence, no fear whatever that it could be easily, if at all, detected, although to us who had performed the work it was the embodiment of simplicity. Seán also, by means of crafty touches of carpentry, made slotted recesses and compartments in several of the wooden rafters for holding revolvers - ingenuity personified - much to the surprise and satisfaction of our Captain, Seán Flood,

and those of us in on the secret of the work in question.

We were not a bit too soon in completing the dump, for around this period we had on hands quite an amount of war-like materials, a good portion of which we considered should have to be called in for reasons of safety. Many of our men were unable to provide ample safety for at least the larger types, such as rifles and shot guns, especially those who lived in tenement houses or in lodgings. Anyway there was no great demand for the use of such articles just then. Hence the safest course was to deposit them in the dump. Not so with the more serviceable types of small arms - revolvers - and ammunition, which were often in requisition on sudden demand for one purpose or another. These latter were distributed among the men. A certain number of grenades were similarly distributed or placed in other dumps where they could be easily obtained for service. By these provisions we felt fairly secure.

About this time also a special dispatch service was inaugurated under G.H.Q. orders. The object of this was to maintain communication with outlying commands. Certain men were detailed for this cycle dispatch work, among them Charlie O'Hanlon and Frank Weafer of our Company. Such distant places as Clondalkin, Dunboyne and Maynooth were visited once or twice a week, as well as bearing dispatches in the city. This was very exacting and laborious work which called for speed, courage and ingenuity of no mean order. These men, together with a number of others of our Company - Joe McDonough, Peadar Meehan, Joe Musgrave,

James Finnerty, Jim Downey, Andy Birmingham and some others were attached to the Battalion Cyclist Section, a composite force which consisted of men from and of the various Companies. It had been formed not as a separate unit, but rather for the purpose of performing cyclist training and certain types of cyclist activities, such as, scouting and doing observation duty on barracks. None of the personnel attached thereto lost membership of their original Unit or Company in which they continued parading and drilling.

Over a good part of 1920, as on the previous year, General Headquarters from time to time issued orders to certain men of the Dublin Brigade not to sleep at home, as raids were expected to be made for their arrest. In consequence of this many officers of the Dublin Brigade had movable residences. Our Captain, Seán Flood, was one of these. Some others of us on an odd occasion had to do likewise. One of our men, Ned Dolan, had been assigned to the duty of communicating orders to that effect to various men in different parts of the city. Not infrequently these precautions were found to be unnecessary. Still we could not afford to run the risk of disobeying orders. One of the big difficulties was to obtain at a moment's notice shelter in a friendly atmosphere. One one occasion I had to recourse to Ned Dolan's home on the Royal Canal, Phibsboro Seán Flood was also there. He, it appears, was more than a casual there. When the danger passed over naturally one returned to normal ways of living. A very strange thing happendd in the vicinity of the Dolans' home. One night as Ned was coming home he was attacked by a couple of men. Fortunately he escaped injury, though he was hard put to it to make good his

escape. Whether this had any connection with Seán Flood's temporary abode nearby we could not surmise, but many of us had the feeling that the attackers may have planned a show down or murder of himself or Dolan. For a few nights afterwards we had the place under observation but could not contact the would-be assailants. Another mystery that we were unable to solve was a strange letter that Seán Flood had received. It suggested that it would be to his interest to meet a friend at a particular date and time in Poplar Row. Seán took some of us into his confidence on the matter. We debated the question as to whether he should or should not put in an appearance there, but finally decided against the course, fearing that it was a trap to assassinate him. It must be understood that during this period letters of a mysterious type, and some of them threatening death to the recipients, were in circulation and sent through the post to reputed men of the I.R.A. and Republican personages. There was every reason then for exercising caution and vigilance and to take every reasonable precaution for one's personal safety at a time when the agent provocateur and assassin, spy and informer, were straining every nerve to put the I.R.A. out of commission.

Evidence was not wanting to prove the existence of the agent provocateur. One instance of it was brought to light on the 16th September when the secret service agent, Hardy, was publicly exposed by Arthur Griffith. This man, tool of the British Intelligence Service, sought contact with Michael Collins for allegedly innocent reasons which were neither innocent

nor friendly. By a very clever ruse he was led, not into the presence of Collins, but rather before the august and highly sensitive presence of representatives of the public press. What an awful moment, a cruel blow and dynamic exposure for a man who, flushed with the prospect of achieving fame as an Intelligence officer, found himself face to face with his own evil and criminal past. His contribution to the defence and preservation of law and order suffered from the shock of the exposure, the impact of which must have been felt in Dublin Castle and Downing St. It brought home to the Irish people, as it also demonstrated to the I.R.A., that the British authorities were prepared to go to any extremes in order, as they so blatantly declared, "to destroy the forces of murder and lawlessness". Dublin became about this time the home and the refuge for a large force of British Intelligence Officers then living under assumed names in various hotels, guest houses and apartments. These fulfilled the duties of spies and were considered to be members of the British 'Murder Gang'.

The full significance of the presence and activity of that "Murder Gang" was illustrated by the perpetration of the slaying of Mr. O'Carroll of Manor St. One of his sons, Liam, was Adjutant of our (1st) Battalion; another, Peter, was a member of "A" Coy of the same Battalion. Not finding the boys at home, the "Murder Gang" struck at the father, and in doing so brought sorrow and desolation to a good and patriotic Irish family. This was but one of the many terrorist operations indulged in by the hidden forces of the Crown, many of whom wore civilian clothes and carried out the fell deeds under the cloak of complete

secrecy. Here was a menacing, a disturbing situation, which was aggravated by the information that people going home late at night were held up and searched by men considered to be members of the British armed forces who wore no uniform or insignia suggesting their membership of such forces.

Meanwhile the Dublin Brigade by means of operations that were diversified and consistent, showed no sign of slackening or singularly out-witting the innumerable hordes of touts, spies and agents and an occupational army and police force who were highly trained and skilled in pursuit of a settled policy of achieving victory to their arms. Some daring exploits were carried out by units or specially selected groups of I.R.A., which included the disarming of military policemen on College Green, the seizure of the mails from England to Dublin Castle, and the hold up and attempted disarming of a military convoy at Church St. This latter episode happened on the 20th September 1920 outside Monks's bakery, then situated between Nth. King St. and Lisburn St., a couple of hundred yards distance from a strong British garrison post at the Nth. Dublin Union. That military party, armed and in a motor lorry, had come from the Marlboro House, Glasnevin, to draw their customary supply of bread. The I.R.A. party that had come to carry out the coup to disarm them and seize their arms were drawn from H Coy 1st Battalion, under the command of their Capt., Seumas Kavanagh, and almost a score of other ranks. It appears the attackers were unable to effect surprise because of the preparedness and alertness of the military party. An almost pitched battle, sharp and furious, ensued. In the melee one of H Coy's. members

was seen to be under the military lorry, apparently taking cover there from the crossfire between his friends and the British soldiers. He was unable to extricate himself from that precarious position. Some of his comrades who beheld him in that sorry plight could not render him any assistance as the British soldiers had by that time complete control of the situation. Besides, the allotted time for carrying out the operation had expired and the men were, in consequence, required to withdraw from the scene, for at any moment the British military at the North Dublin Union would put in an appearance.

Though not a member of H Coy, I and my companion Seán Kennedy were sufficiently in the confidence of some of its members to be aware previously of the operation. In view of that we made it our business to be conveniently situated in the neighbourhood in case we could be of assistance in getting any of the raiders safely away. As it was, we were of some use. The sound and intensity of the firing conveyed to our minds that some mishap had occurred. That was proved correct when eventually we met several of the men returning from the raid. No need to ask questions, for deep concern was on their faces. "The thing failed. Kevin is taken - he's a prisoner. Kevin is gone - captured" were the first words with which we were confronted. The failure of the attack was as nothing in comparison to the loss of their dear comrade Kevin Barry. His name was to be in our memory, in our conversations for a long, long time. To the members of his own Company he was a boy Volunteer, brave, jovial and endearing. Those of us who were fated to know him

on many a stunt were singularly gifted, for despite his youth he was the essence of manliness, full of daring, zest and vigour in a great cause. In the midst of the calamity that had befallen him, one's thoughts turned back through the few years of his service in the I.R.A., reflecting in particular on the first night he joined our Auxiliary Company, through several stages of training and later passing into "H", there to follow up the good work. One had only to be on the several jobs with him to appraise his worth, his courage, his constancy. He always wanted to do things requiring dash and initiative in any sphere of activity. In the short space of a few years he had been entrusted with many a task and a number of operations. The trust reposed in him was never abused, as those of us who had the good fortune to be associated with him on some of the activities can testify.

It was cruel to think of him a prisoner; to think that he could not make a bold bid to get away. Many strange stories were in circulation, some hinting that he was wounded and others that his gun got jammed. At the time we had no means of finding out how he got into such terrible difficulties. We could only surmise that something unforeseen occurred - something beyond his control must have happened to cause him to become a prisoner. It was beyond the power of his comrades to render any assistance, although some of them, when they became aware of his absence and his plight, offered to go back to rescue him, even at the peril of their own lives. But such would have been foolhardy, as the British Tommies had then charge of the situation and little time was available to continue a forlorn fight as at any moment the reserve of British troops

in immediate vicinity might appear on the scene. Greater sadness and desolation was to come to his comrades later when the British announced that Kevin Barry had been tried by courtmartial and sentenced to death - to be hanged on 1st November 1920. But between the date of the promulgation of the death sentence and the day of Kevin's execution, many strange and startling things were to happen within I.R.A. circles to give encouragement to the hope of effecting his escape. Plans were prepared by G.H.Q., transmitted to selected officers and men, and everything set in motion for what was considered the most daring and sensational rescue bid in I.R.A. history.

Mountjoy prison where Kevin Barry was incarcerated, was at that time a veritable military fortress, well and heavily guarded. It was known that Kevin Barry was under close observation and surveillance day and night. He was never alone or unguarded, even during the periods that were allotted for visitors. Notwithstanding these disabilities, and despite them, the urge to rescue him was strong, nay imperative. It was not surprising then that on Saturday afternoon the 30th October 1920, two days before the appointed date fixed for his execution, a selected group of men of the Dublin Brigade were mobilised. Meeting at the premises of the Irish Typographical and Printing Union in Lower Gardiner St., the aforesaid men, who were armed with revolvers and most of whom consisted of men of the 1st Battalion, included men of Kevin's Coy (H), such as - Tom O'Brien, Dave Golding etc., as well as Patrick Kirk, Jack Poole, Dinny Holmes and myself of C Coy. Holmes and I were not, however, picked for the

enterprise. Peadar Clancy, the Vice Brigadier, outlined the plan which we understood had the authority and approval of G.H.Q. That plan suggested cunning, boldness and daring. Briefly it consisted of a mere handful of trusted men to operate in pairs, most of whom were detailed to present themselves during visiting hours outside the gate at Mountjoy Jail. Many intending visitors would, it was presumed, be congregated there, and, in consequence, a few men here and there might not cause any undue suspicion that a project for Kevin's rescue was afoot. One or two of our men were to seek entrance with a relative or relation of Kevin Barry. The plan presupposed that these would be admitted. It was known that each prisoner was allowed a certain number of minutes for conversing with visitors. Kevin meanwhile was to be informed of the rescue plan; his co-operation was essential for the success of the undertaking. He may or may not have had prior knowledge of that.

At a certain fixed time another of the party at the jail entrance were to seek admission as prospective visitors. It was incumbent on them to get inside the gate, to engage the attention of the governor, and, by means of a ruse, ask permission to visit some supposed prisoner. The Governor, it was assumed, would have been involved in an argument on the matter of the physical presence of, shall we say, Prisoner X, and naturally as a good efficient governor, by means of interrogation etc. go to at least a little trouble to prove that no such prisoner was incarcerated there. At this stage, which was in fact the most important part of the work, he was to be stuck up and the gate keys taken from him. Reference must be made here of

The /existence of another entrance to the prison proper of which the main door was but an subsidiary. The latter consisted of a huge heavy iron double gateway which led into an arch, at the end of which stood a grilled railed gate. Small wicket doors were situated in both. These were in use for admitting visitors.

Having overpowered the governor and guard, assuming there were such, the plan of rescue rested on the assumption that everything had gone right at the other end - inside the place reserved for visiting. Kevin, supported by his accomplice, would then have been on the move making for the aforementioned geteway. While these things were happening the other couple of men outside would be on the alert by providing protection and generally backing up the efforts of their comrades more proximate to the danger zone. The whole project up to this depended on the element of surprise, speed and sheer good luck. Not the least difficulty with which the men engaged in it were concerned was the danger that during the period of holding up the Governor or taking possession of the jail entrances, the alarm would be raised. Our men in the archway would be under view, as even Peadar Clancy had explained the likelihood that that armed British sentries were posted overlooking that point. If their curiosity was not aroused all would go well, but this depended on a big IF which the men readily understood would be the case. The main consideration was to get Kevin across the jail grounds to the entrance or exit, a distance of a good fifty yards. Everyone knew that once he (Kevin) got going nothing short of bullets would stop him to get outside into God's daylight and liberty.

Another portion of the plan was to rush Kevin along the avenue that led to the prison on to the public thoroughfare at the North Circular Road to a motor car that was waiting with engine throbbing at the corner of Goldsmith St., adjacent to Blacquiere Bridge, where two trusted I.R.A. men, Dave Golding, the driver, and Jack Poole, both of them armed, were posted for his coming. Then he was to be conveyed to an undisclosed destination, some of the men to accompany him there.

That was the bold plan. Charlie Byrne, an officer of the 1st Battalion, was given the task of commanding the party so detailed. All and each of those men were prepared to sell their lives dearly to liberate their beloved comrade. They realised that it was going to be a difficult proposition to carry out that operation successfully. Previous to the final detailing of orders, those of us who had been "turned down" or otherwise debarred from participating in the enterprise, had left the meeting place. But we knew enough of the plans to convince us of their importance. Not through any idle curiosity, Dinny Holmes and myself wended our way in the direction of the prison - or rather a very safe distance away - at Blacquiere Bridge, Phibsboro". To our surprise, Tom Byrne who was Commandant of the 1st Battalion, was also there. We paid him no attention. Perhaps he had some particular mission there; perhaps he, like us, was anxious to help in some out of the way fashion. After a short period of time we learned that the rescue attempt was called off. Later the information was forthcoming that the relatives prevailed against our men making the attempt. There were even rumours that Kevin might be reprieved because of his youth.

One thing stood out very clearly; the men who had gone on that undertaking, and had actually taken up their positions at the prison entrance and in its vicinity, felt cheated from doing something for their comrade - Kevin Barry - and disappointed that their plans were not put into operation. They each and all had a quiet sense of optimism of accomplishing their purpose. The abandonment of the project was very keenly felt by them, but under the particular circumstances it was quite unavoidable. Disappointment, dejection and sorrow overcame them as they came away from the prison haunted by the cruel bitter thought of the approaching doom of their beloved comrade.

As has already been mentioned, there was an air of expectancy in some quarters that the British Government might at the last moment exercise clemency on behalf of Kevin. Many good meaning people felt and expressed the hope, nay the probability, of such a prerogative of mercy being granted. There was no apparent ground for such hope, nothing beyond wishful thinking to indicate any change of heart on the part of those whose purpose it was to restore law and order in Ireland, a process and a policy that sought to destroy types like Kevin Barry for daring to contest their authority to rule Ireland in the British interests. One thing stood out crystal clear, and that was that the British authorities showed no sign of wavering on such an issue of clemency. They were prepared to show a bold front in the face of the determined opposition of the I.R.A. and the Irish race to their rule and their authority. On the reverse side of the picture there were many people who would not take a hazard on

or bring themselves to the point of anticipating the abandonment of the execution. Of that number were included Kevin's own comrades, the officers and men of the Dublin Brigade and G.H.Q. of the I.R.A., who, though suffering a set-back on the failure of the first attempt at rescue, sought to make another and an equally daring and desperate effort.

Hence on the following day (Sunday) a group of men were mobilised, assembling in a house in Nth. Great George's St. Among that group were members of Kevin's Company (H), two members of C Company - Frank Carberry and Dinny McGrane and others. Not being one of that party I knew not the plans beyond the consciousness that another attempt was to be made. It was not, however, gone on with, and the men who had waited for a considerable time for the order that would have put them into action were dismissed. The second try failed. It looked as if mischance or misfortune were playing a major part in thwarting the efforts of the men who planned and those who sought to carry out the plan of liberation.

Obviously the word 'finis' was not uttered or expressed by the I.R.A. authorities, for during the next few hours a certain trend of activity was started. A special urgent mobilisation of various Companies of the Dublin Brigade was ordered. Each such unit was ordered to parade their men that night. These were to be armed with revolvers - grenades were to be available and distributed to selected men. Nearly all the members of our Company (C) paraded at Wilson's, Nth. Frederick St. Our Captain, Seán Flood, as per orders, reported to G.H.Q. for receipt of final instructions

of the rescue plan. Amid a scene of great animation, excitement and expectancy we awaited the return of our Captain, in the meantime paying just attention to our stock of munitions, seeing that the revolvers were in good condition, attending to each individual supply of ammunition and preparing the grenades for action. All these occupied our time fully. Our Q.M., Charlie Murphy, had more than his share of work in this respect. With assistance from the other officers and N.C.O.s the business of demand and supply was expeditiously arranged.

We had enough sense to realise that this was to be the rescue - this the big effort. Our part in the operation was unfolded by our Captain. It consisted of holding an area from the corners of Nth. Circular Road - Berkeley Road to Leo St. and behind to Eccles St. and laneway that was situated below the Mater Hospital and ran into Dorset St. Other units, too, had allotted tasks. In all, several hundreds of men were to be employed on the operation, and what an operation it was intended to be!' A select group of men picked from the 5th Engineers' Battalion had detailed orders to blast, by means of explosives, one of the walls of the prison. By this means entrance to the prison proper was to be effected, to secure Kevin and bring him to safety. No bolder, no more desperate plan could be devised. Every point had, we understood, been carefully considered; every man and every unit requisitioned for the operation was made aware of the rescue plan. One of the weakest points in the projected plan was the large number of men required. To employ less would apparently prove ineffective.

Yet the fact of the assembly of a few hundred men in the neighbourhood did not suggest that we were going about this business in the way in which we were accustomed. The whole affair resembled, or was liable to be construed as a miniature uprising. Desperate ills require desperate remedies; that sufficed for the employment of such large numbers of men, each to operate on a well chosen and properly arranged plan of action.

It so happened that our Company, detailed in the fashion already described, had been entrusted with the task of keeping watch and ward at points leading to the front entrance to the prison - to afford protection and to deal with enemy forces coming on the scene of operation. We could safely estimate that that would be their first re-action supposing news of our assembly or of the actual operation reached them. We also were required to afford cover for the men actually engaged in carrying out the rescue proper, as well as supporting other groups on our flanks or in the immediate neighbourhood. Quite a heap of difficulties could be anticipated, not the least of which was the likelihood, even the proximate possibility that the presence of such a great number of men so convenient to the prison might be spotted, with disastrous results for the men and the proposed rescue. In order to reduce to a minimum such a contingency occurring, we had planned on the principle of keeping low by using our men in small groups at likely danger points. Some, we knew, would have to be in the streets, but plans had been prepared to post some at unconspicuous places inside the walls of the Mater Hospital and stretched along the Nth. Circular Road in front of the main prison entrance

and others in Eccles Lane.

More than an hour had elapsed since the time of our assembly in Wilson's, and we were awaiting the return of our Captain with orders from our G.H.Q. to go into action. The suspense was terrific, unnerving if not totally unbearable. Were it not for the almost good humour and enthusiasm of our men, and the scene of activity and fuss, we might have got on edges. Time flagged on. At last Séán arrived. The expected moment had come. The Company was called to attenion and Seán, our beloved Captain, with visible signs of emotion and tears in his eyes exclaimed: "The job has been called off". Called off. How? Why?!. The effect which this announcement had on the men was indescribable, stunning, startling. They took it in deadly silence, each of them looking stupified, spellbound by the awful failure to stop the terrible tragedy which Kevin's execution on the morrow portended. Disappointed, disgusted and sore they were. "Headquarters called it off" Seán announced. When the silence was broken many a tear was shed. Many a word of sorrow and pity was expressed for poor Kevin Barry - and the common understanding was now that nothing short of a miracle could save him from his fate.

Seán Flood, our Captain, also told us, as if in answer to the question that lay heavy on every man's mind 'why the cancellation of the rescue plans?', that there was unusual activity on the part of the British forces in the neighbourhood of the prison that night. Even while we were assembled in Wilson's waiting to take up position, several lorry loads of Crown forces passed by going in that direction. We had no means of

knowing the character or purpose of their activities. If fate played tricks on us in frustrating our efforts in this sad business, it showed no great unkindness in saving us from much suffering and sacrifice on that occasion. Had we been on duty in the vicinity of the "Joy" our seemingly large numbers might have been scant, indeed totally inadequate to succeed in the planned operation and deal with the large forces that the British could bring against us. Once they became aware that something was in the air we would have to face a very grave situation, and possibly have to pay a big price whether the operation was successful or otherwise. Besides, we were not fitted, from the point of view of armaments, to overpower them or even hold them in check for a lengthy period. Yet we could not escape the thought - had we been so placed and the operation got underway, we should have had no other choice but to render an account of ourselves. Then it would be a case of doing our best to attain our object.

We officers had no doubt in our minds but that the men, each and all of them, were sufficiently brave, enthusiastic and determined in the face of the dangers and difficulties that were liable to accrue from their action in trying to rescue their comrade from the veritable brink of the scaffold. To many of them that operation would have been their first, the real test of armed service, of being on a big job, and, perhaps, the first time they would have to use gun or grenade or come under fire. All were eager and willing for the chance to prove themselves in an undertaking of this sort, even with the odds against them. Denial of the chance to assert themselves made them bitter, sad and

disappointed; none the less so because what seemed the last opportunity to rescue Kevin had passed and we had no other recourse but to await the passage of time when - oh, the cruel thought of it - he the young, gay and valiant one would inevitably pass into eternity, a memory and a symbol of resurgent Ireland. If, perchance we rilled against the cancellation of the rescue plans, and for being so cruelly robbed of the chance of attaining our object, we had reason to apprehend and appreciate that nothing short of over-powering strength and preparedness on the part of our enemies would have caused our Headquarters to abandon the enterprise. We had cause to bear our humiliation, our sorrow and failure in no less a philosophical manner as those in higher ranks had to bear theirs.

Fortune seemed to favour the British on that occasion - that and a substantial measure of good luck. Had they information that we were on the move and prepared to make our big effort? Who could tell? Their presence, their activities and movements in the immediate vicinity of the prison may or may not have had any relation with or bearing on the projected rescue plan fostered by the I.R.A. At the time such manifestation of armed might could be taken to indicate that if they were not actually aware of such activities on our part, they were seeking by the exercise of precautionary or protective measures to guard against any contingency that might be liable to arise on the eve of the execution. Their show of strength could as easily have been attributable to the demonstration of the fact that they were masters of the situation and in accord with the military conception of taking nothing

for granted - and granting nothing - at a time when anything could happen to militate against the agencies of law and order. Perhaps such activities on their part were more co-incidental, just ordinary patrol movements, than those with which we had become accustomed, though, as far as could be perceived, on a far bigger scale. Some such activities were normally carried out to and from the prison, more by way of military routine duties, for purposes connected with the garrisoning, supervision and maintenance of the guards stationed there. Why then attach over-rated importance to their movements on that particular night, or even assume that such activities related to their prior knowledge that the I.R.A. were planning to effect the rescue of Kevin Barry.

The next few hours were sad and anxious ones for Kevin's friends. Many an I.R.A. man, in sorrow and trepidation, as well as in anger and disgust, felt crushed by the cruel ordinance that aimed at terminating a brave young life. Nothing, apparently, could be done to save him from the awful doom that awaited him. On that fateful November morning the nationally minded and patriotically inclined citizens of Dublin vied with the officers and men of the Dublin Brigade in paying homage and respect to or on behalf of "poor Kevin Barry". Long before the hour fixed for the execution, hundreds of people, men and women, assembled outside the Mountjoy bastille in the avenue and road connected therewith, making the rounds of Mary's Rosary, and in other pious exercises offering prayerful supplication for his spiritual welfare. In the nearby churches large congregations engaged in the Holy Sacrifice or made visitations to offer a humble prayer or

ejaculation for the same purpose. In this way many of us who found ourselves in the vicinity of the prison, or those otherwise engaged, united with the sacrificial act of our dear comrade.

In executing Kevin Barry the British government added one more martyr to the long scroll of Ireland's glorious dead. His death, perhaps more than his life, proved his worth, his faith and his principles. His was the noble life, the manly part which even a felon's death could neither besmirch or destroy. If there was any consolation in his tragic passing from this vale of tears, it was to be found in the happy thought that he would die gladly and nobly with the courage of his race, and that he would go with soul undaunted to his doom. His Volunteer instinct, his Volunteer training and his Volunteer pride could essay no other consumation to a life that had served Ireland so well and so bravely. He who could pen the words: "Fight on! Live on! Live on for the ideals for which I am about to die" was no less brave than the man called Pearse, the Manchester three, Tone, Emmet and all the brave heroes who "in spite of dungeon, fire and sword" proved their manliness and their sacrifice. 'We salute you Kevin, in tears, in prayers and in praise for your life among us and for your passing away. We shall miss your comradeship, your gaiety and the measure of your service in our good cause. May we be no less true, no less brave than you whatever the prize and whatever the course to be run' were the thoughts subscribed by many of his comrades.

His death caused a void in our ranks and produced a wonderful effect on our movement. Around his heroic

sacrifice the songster and the ballad singer weaved the story of his life, of his service as a Volunteer and his glorious death. Ballad sheets were printed in laudation of "Kevin Barry" and sold in the tens of thousands - not merely sold, but sung at all times and in all places. The young people, particularly, fell prey to the strain of the ballad or song. One of these became quite commonplace for it depicted him:

"Only a lad of eighteen summers
And there's no one can deny
Kevin Barry gave his young life
For the cause of Liberty".

Another composition entitled "The prison grave of Kevin Barry", printed and published from the "Gaelic Press" (proprietor Joe Stanley) was more expressive of the fame and memory of the martry: It ran:

"He is dead to-day, and the cold, cold clay
Of a prison grave-yard sleeps.

Chapter 17.

In the sequence of events associated with the capture, the imprisonment and execution of Kevin Barry, time had been stripped by almost six weeks. During that period many things had occurred in the political and military sphere to give semblance to the idea that a state of guerilla warfare and its concomitant attributes prevailed over a large portion of Ireland. Events towards the latter part of September were more startling than at any previous occasions. Such highlights as the sacking and wrecking of Balbriggan, the murder of Seán Lynch at Exchange Hotel in Parliament St., the wrecking of Carrick-on-Shannon and Tuam, the burning of Mallow, in each case by the Crown forces,

epitomised the carrying out of a reprisal policy by and with the authority of the British government. Many other activities, also of a sensational nature, were recorded: Republicans murdered in Belfast, the ambushes by I.R.A. at Kanturk and Roscommon etc. Then on the 13th October 1920 the raid by British forces on Professor Carolan's house at Fernside, Upr. Drumcondra took place for the purpose of capturing the illusive and intrepid Volunteer leaders - Dan Breen and Seán Treacy. That raid cost the loss of some British officers, the death of Professor Carolan and the escape of the much wanted men, Breen and Treacy, both of whom were wounded, the former seriously. These men had been "on the run" for a considerable period, due to their guerilla exploits in their native Tipperary, and innumerable attempts had been made to apprehend them, a large sum of money being offered for their capture.

The newspapers of the following day gave sensational and graphic accounts of the raid and of the running fight that ensued. The main concern among I.R.A. circles was that the "birds had flown". One could not help feeling apprehensive on the score that they had been tracked to their lair and had only escaped capture by sheer good fortune, fighting their way to safety. The affair had set the machinery at the disposal of the British forces into full gear, and in a few hours time set into motion a full cycle of events and activities as alarming and exciting as the exploits at Fernside.

On the following morning (14/10/"20) the British forces made a descent on and conducted a raid on the Mater Hospital. That move was to be the forerunner of startling and indeed tragic happenings, involving

certain categories and personages of the I.R.A. in Dublin with the cross current of events that had their origin in the raid and shootings of the previous night. It was a strange, inexplicably strange, fate that led me into the presence of Brigadier Dick McKee that morning - the 14th October. Meeting him in O'Connell St. and replying negatively to the question as to whether I was doing anything special, he requested me to go to the Mater Hospital where, he informed me, a big raid was going on. He enjoined me to keep a sharp look out on what they were doing, and also instructed me to obtain the service of any Volunteer that might be in the vicinity. I was told to keep him informed. Messages were to be sent to him at Brennan and Walsh's shop, 5 Upr. O'Connell St., which was owned by Maurice Brennan and Tom Walsh. I readily sensed that something out of the ordinary was taking place, but its full significance was not brought home to me until a few minutes afterwards, when, arriving in close proximity to the Mater Hospital I was face to face with the Crown forces then engaged in their work of raiding. Fortunately I was not long there when I came across a few Volunteers of whom I was well acquainted - Seán Brunswick, Bertie Ryan, both of F Coy, and Mick Douglas of G Coy 1st Battalion. It didn't require much talk or persuasion to obtain their help and co-operation.

We noticed that the Crown forces had the approaches to the Mater well and sufficiently guarded and they formed a complete cordon of the area, while armoured cars were continually patrolling the streets and some of them occupied important points therein. Selecting a suitable position at the corner of Sarsfield

Street and Berkeley Road, I was enabled to keep the main entrance of the Mater under observation while the other Volunteers moved contiguous to the cordon of soldiers and likewise watched the movements associated with the raid. We obtained quite an amount of information thereby, every important item of which was duly conveyed by means of cycle despatch to our Brigadier. One spicy bit of information related to the raiding party not being hospitably received and, in consequence, suffered a rebuff temporarily, because there was not enough dash and force in them to cause them to proceed with their business. Our main concern was to find out if they made any captures. Actually we feared for the safety of Dan Breen and his companion Treacy, and every hour that passed seemed to add to the apprehension we felt - that one or both of them would fall into the raiders' hands.

After making several journeys to Brigadier McKee, who, in the meantime, had moved to Peadar Clancy's shop (The Republican Outfitters) in Talbot St., one of the despatch bearers brought back news that an attempt would be made to ambush the Crown forces on their return from the scene of the raid. Preparations were well in hands, and a special hurried mobilisation had been issued for selected men for the ambush party and, as the bearer of the information stated, there was great activity at Peadar's shop. A request was made to us to arm ourselves and to hold ourselves in readiness for further orders.

These further orders never arrived. Neither did the prospective ambush take effect. After a protracted raid, lasting several hours, the British raiding party prepared to leave the Mater and its vicinity without

captures. Any moment something might happen; but no, other information was conveyed to us of a not too pleasant or agreeable nature - that terrible things had happened in Talbot St. resulting from a raid carried out by British troops on Clancy's shop. Shooting had ensued, and the information conveyed to us indicated that at least one I.R.A. man was killed. Poor Seán Treacy was slain, fighting to the last. There were also casualties on the British side, apparently caused by Treacy who conducted a lone combat in seeking to make good his escape.

Seán Brunswick, dispatch bearer from our group at the Mater, had come on the scene simultaneous with the arrival of the British forces in Talbot St. He had been caught in the midst of the affray, witnessed the ensuing fight, the death of Treacy and the withdrawal of the raiding party. These bore Treacy's body away, also took two or three of our prominent I.R.A. leaders as prisoners. Of Peadar Clancy and Dick McKee, our Vice Brigadier and Brigadier respectively, very little information could be obtained, except the merest surmise that they, by some means or other, got away - eluding the British soldiers in the early stages of the raid or during the turmoil caused by the shooting.

Indications were that that raid on the Republican Outfitters' shop nipped in the bud the preparations for the proposed ambush of British troops returning from the Mater Hospital. Contiguous with that raid was raised the query: "Did the British suspect that some such move was afoot? Or was it mere coincidence that they should appear at such a moment? It was hard to conjecture at the time, if the raid had any more

significance than any other raid that had been carried out on the premises from time to time. The nearest one could go to solve the clue was the possibility that the shop was under close observation by English secret service men that day, as it ever was. The shooting at Drumcondra on the previous night had caused the British to be vigilant and, assuming that the spotters were on the job, the coming and going of men through the doors of the shop in Talbot St. may have afforded evidence of more than usual trading there. To the trained sensitive eye of an intelligence agent, such unusual activity at such a venue was, to say the least, suspicious; even some of the men making calls on the shop may have been suspicious and, perhaps, known to be so. We who were engaged a mile or so away from Talbot St., on a task that was gradually being dovetailed into a large scale operation, surmised that the raid there related to the plans for mobilising I.R.A. men for the projected ambush. Unfortunately, too much use was made of the Republican Outfitters as a rendezvous for the purpose.

We were aware that the plans for the ambush were well under way. Men were being prepared for it. This was never an easy matter for the I.R.A. then. Such men and material were not requisitioned or available by the pressing of a bell or the blowing of a trumpet. They had to be located, in perhaps various parts of the city, brought to a selected venue and, after being instructed in the nature of the job, sent to the respective zone of intended action. That entailed much trouble, time and energy. Yet it would hardly be otherwise in an army like ours, that was neither full time nor fully fledged plying the soldiers trade. Hence the several handicaps to which we were addicted, and, in particular,

the difficulties of bringing men into action as on that day in October.

Whatever the reasonings on the question connected with the raid on the Republican Outfitters, one silent fact emerged, and that was, such a move prevented the carrying out of the ambush. The more one thought of it, the more convincing did it appear that the movements of the men at, and the activities connected with that shop may have put the British authorities wise, whether the outcome of chance, by design or only coincidental, to the point of taking some kind of appropriate action against them. Their raid on the occasion may have been an ordinary one. Yet there was something in it to indicate that it was a move to get at certain, if not all, the men then on the premises and to arrest them. That was how many of us who were conversant with events that day viewed it, and not without good solid reason or careful deduction. The sad painful sequel to the raid - the death of Treacy, under such tragic circumstances seemed to provide adequate confirmation that the presence of such a large number of prominent men of the I.R.A., or certain individuals of them, was for no good purpose, and so presented a favourable opportunity for some move like that to be made by the British to overcome them. Perhaps we could be pardoned for clinging to the idea that the whole episode was mystifying, of which there remained nothing but a mystery.

Coming down town later when the British forces had vacated the Mater and all chance of making any attack on them had vanished, we leared quite a lot of news. Dick McKee, Peadar Clancy and others had escaped, rather miraculously. There was great

animation and excitement among the populace in Talbot St then. All the talk was on "the poor man that was killed" - Seán Treacy, the indomitable brave fighter and soldier of the Irish Republic. He died as he had lived - fighting - and according to Seán Brunswick who was a witness of the fighting, he gallantly fought 'till death. His name and fame, allied to that of Dan Breen, had become cherished as much in the Dublin Brigade as in their own beloved Tipperary Brigade. Death, cruel inscrutable death had ruthlessly broken a physical and earthly link between them; the death of one and the serious wounding of the other had closed part of the chapter of adventure, exploits and activities associated with these men, leaving one to be mourned for a great loss and the other to mourn a sad loss of a dear comrade.

During that period under review Ireland's cause was being fought out within the lone drear cell of an English convict prison. The Irish people, at home or abroad, had their eyes steadfastly fixed on the enduring agony and proffered martyrdom of Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, as he pursued his prolonged feat in profession of his Republican faith and principles and in bitter protestation against British rule in Ireland. Arrested on 12th August 1920, he had been brought to trial on the 16th, sentenced and consigned to Brixton jail and on the 25th October he died. In his martyrdon MacSwiney portrayed all that was noblest, all that was real and all that was true in Ireland's inherent right to freedom. He proved the wisdom, the greatness and the grandeur of the principles of freedom which he propounded, wrote and advocated. Had he not declared - and in his declaration patriotically affirmed - as a maxim of national faith

and national devotion:

> "It is not to those who inflict the most, but to those who endure the most that victory will be won".

There was a sublime heroism in the long drawn-out endurance of one who was a veritable incarnation of endurance, of an endurance that had to be borne every minute, every hour and every day of that fast, far away from the comfort and the comforting care and folds of his loved ones, far away from the land he loved but too well. Only the physical presence and the spiritual ministrations of his beloved friend and confessor, Father Dominic, contributed to mitigate the agonies, the sufferings and torments to which people undergoing the pangs of hunger-striking are heirs.

The world had looked on - much of it in wonder and admiration at the sacrifice offering, the martyrdom and the tragedy of Brixton jail. In all parts of the globe, wherever Irish men or Irish women were to be found, few there were who did not shed a tear and offer a prayer for "Terry". Even in the land of the stranger in England itself and in the various parts of the British Empire, there were Irish people, English people and those of other races who lamented the passing of that brave hero. His sacrifice stirred up deep emotions in the hearts of liberty-loving people everywhere, and brought the name of Ireland to every clime, every sphere and among the nations as perhaps no other episode or event ever succeeded in doing heretofore. Terence MacSwiney in life was the embodiment of the undying unquenchable spirit of freedom and the will to be free. His martyrdom testified that he was an untameable and

unconquerable Gael. The effect produced by the consummation of that drama of suffering among the Irish people at home was truly exemplary, inspiring and edifying.

Truly the national conscience was stirred as never before - stirred even to greater depths of emotion and pride than that produced by the death of Tomás Ashe - the first I.R.A. man to accept martyrdom by hunger-striking. Like Ashe, Terence MacSwiney's weakness symbolised Ireland's strength. The movement for independence, and all it represented and contained, grew in popularity, favour and prestige as much as (and on account of) the pursuance of hunger striking as a weapon of warfare against English rule. Indeed, the fight for freedom then being waged in Ireland stepped a pace further and received added stimulation by the fight and sacrifice of MacSwiney in Brixton, England. That fight was conducted by various methods, diverse ways and strange phases in which hunger-strikes, jail escapes, ambushing, boycotting and innumerable forms of guerilla tactics each played a part in a systematic plan of campaign. It was always a fight of sorts in which an individual, a few people or a group were engaged for some set purpose. The Irish people, the majority of whom formed the Republican cause, were at the time in sore distress and sad bereavement at the loss of MacSwiney; the I.R.A. no less distressed and bereaved accepted his death as a token sign of service and sacrifice, being highly edified and inspired thereby, accepting it as the price that had to be paid in the cause of liberty.

It was the price which the policy of the British

government encouraged; it was the price the British government extracted in its insensate and insensible policy to drown the desires of the Irish people struggling to be free. It sought to beat the I.R.A. through the self-imposed fasting and emaciated form of MacSwiney. It had shown a firm hand in governing Ireland, had pursued a strong policy to beat the 'Murder Gang' - to wit the I.R.A. - and in so doing produced a second Murder Gang of its own design and under its own aegis, which begot murder, arson and many other abnoxious acts, and by its very firmness and harshness made MacSwiney and others great in the eyes of the Irish people.

It refused to show leniency, preferring to accept the unequal combat of the lone hunger-striker in Brixton, and deemed itself incapable, as it was unwilling to temper justice with mercy, By that very act of omission or commission, the British government brought home to the people of Ireland, to the Irish race everywhere and the I.R.A. particularly, the wisdom of MacSwiney - that victory was to those who endured most and not to those who inflicted most.

Even in death MacSwiney was no less great and no less dangerous than in life, and the British government, still pursuing its strong policy, forbade the mortal remains of the martyr of Brixton to pass in funeral procession to Dublin. The ship that bore him was directed, on the orders of the British government, direct to Cork rather than, as had been arranged, calling at Dublin. In this way the larger portion of the Irish people were precluded from paying him fitting and appropriate honours, honours that would have done

justice to the memory of a great Irish patriot and would have demonstrated the strength and solidarity of Ireland. Obviously the British were in no mood for a large scale demonstration - as the journey from Dublin to Cork would afford. However, Ireland was represented at the funeral in Cork. Large contingents of the I.R.A. from various parts of Ireland, some of them dressed in the uniform forbidden by the British, marched in the cortege, vying with members of the Dáil, religions, members of the public bodies, the professions, trades, associations, national educational and cultural organisations. No monarch could have received such funeral honours.

November 1920 was destined to be a fateful eventful month. In the country the operations of the I.R.A. Flying Columns were operating on a wide scale, so much so that on the 2nd it could be reported that ambushes took place in 20 counties. Murders, too, of many I.R.A. men were committed by Crown forces, a number of them in Co. Kerry. Then came the report of the murder of Father Griffin of Galway, committed on the 15th, a deed that went far to shock the religious and national conscience in Ireland, as it brought home to British administration the full import of a cruel and dastardly reprisal policy. Even decent public spirited Englishmen were to be found to condemn a policy that produced such heinous wicket crimes. That such things could be, and were done, was ample proof that only rule by the gun was possible, and English governmental chiefs, amongst them the then Chief Secretary of Ireland, Sir Hamar Greenwood, accepted it as a natural course to restore law and order in a country in which such a state of affairs existed as to call for force and still more

force all the time. One thing he and those who backed up, connived at and encouraged assassinations failed to grasp - that the perpetration of such deeds only strengthened the resolve of the men of the I.R.A. to continue the fight. No other course was possible or feasible.

Dublin, though escaping much of the ravishes and abominations of the reprisal policy, was none the less, so, to speak, in the news. Certain important things were happening in the Dublin Brigade. One of these was the formation of the Squad - a full time force operating directly under G.H.Q. orders and control. Another was the intensification of the duties of patrolling (in operation for a considerable period) which had been stepped up considerably in recent months. These functions had been normally carried out by Companies, while no time was lost in training our men in the use of revolver and grenade, and the detailing of men on such work as intelligence and observation duties. These latter consisted of seeking information of people known or suspected of helping the British, seeking information of places and things inhabited or used by British agents, noting their movements, customs and characteristics and reporting same to Headquarters. While on this point it may be necessary to mention that according to the scheme of organisation a system of intelligence was considered of vital importance. So much so that each Battalion was required to appoint what became known as a Battalion Intelligence Officer, whose especial duty it was to deal with all matters apertaining to that important branch of military work, assisted by the Companies.

The armistice celebrations on the 11th November 1920 gave the pro British element another opportunity to give vent to their Imperial feelings. Dublin was again the scene of great excitement. On that day some of us were on duty at various national halls, and that night patrolled the central parts of Dublin. These celebrations generally led to wild scenes, baton charges, and not infrequently to attacks on Republicans or property owned by Republicans. The presence and use of the Volunteers on defensive duty on such occasions minimized, if not prevented, such wild demonstrations from becoming too distinctly anti-Irish, and prevented the orgies from having greater sway than the wild 'uns wished for.

Then came 20th November, That night and the early hours of the 21st was the occasion for startling and sensational events. A large number of British Secret Agents were shot by orders of the I.R.A. Executive. These agents were special military intelligence personnel, most of whom, if not all, were former British Army Officers specially selected for the most onerous and dangerous work of collecting and reporting information concerning the I.R.A. and I.R.A. activity. Heretofore such work had been performed in Dublin by members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police and detectives connected therewith. Many of these had been shot for engaging in such work, only those escaping who were not regarded by the I.R.A. as doing political work. Ordinary police work was carried on in a more or less routine manner by day, though generally speaking, by means of the curfew regulations, the military authorities governed by night. The British authorities in instituting the special intelligence service sought

to recover old ground by placing the men outside the precincts of barracks, where like ordinary citizens they could live, move and have their being freely and without sufferance. They could not fail to appreciate the risks they were running. Undoubtedly it was a serious threat to the existence and working of the I.R.A. The destruction of many of these Intelligence Officers over a wide area of Dublin effected in a large measure the full exploitation of that system of espionage, and caused the Castle authorities to return to the previous order of things by controlling it and conducting it from the barracks.

The shooting of those Intelligence Officers produced other reactions. One was the arrest by Crown forces of our Brigadier and Vice Brigadier, Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy, and with them Conor Clune, all of whom were taken prisoners in a house in Gloucester St. They were conveyed to Dublin Castle. It was unfortunate that their arrests should coincide with the shootings of the Intelligence Officers. Then on the 22nd came the report that the three had been shot while trying to escape, but it was generally believed by I.R.A. men that they were murdered because information crept out from that citadel of infamy that they had been brutally and savagely treated. Evidence of this was visible on their bodies which were handed over for burial later. Sorrow for their suffering was no less poignant than sorrow for their loss, which was regarded as the biggest blow the Dublin Brigade had received since 1916. We thereby lost two of our best Commanders, Dick and Peadar, (this was how they were affectionately called by the men of the Dublin Brigade) who had borne

the brunt of many hard times and many daring exploits since the Volunteer movement was initiated. Both had served in the Rising and had since risen to the height of eminence in the movement. They might have been twin brothers, so closely matched and so akin were they in many characteristics and ways. Under their leadership the Dublin Brigade progressed enormously, each of them contributing a personal share in its workings and acitivities, organisational and operational plans, and every matter that called for ingenuity, dash and vigour.

No wonder then that we of the Dublin Brigade who knew and respected these men, reeled under the cruel blow and felt its full weight and impact, showing evidence of our sorrow and our desolation. Would the Brigade withstand the shock, the terrific blow, the cruel loss engendered by the deaths of two great and noble men? It was a most bitter trial; an equally severe ordeal pregnant with grave possibilities and potential dangers. Whatever the outcome of the struggle in which we were engaged, one thing was certain - the Dublin Brigade would miss and mourn the loss of Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy.

(Dick McKee was 28 years of age. He took part in the Rising, was interned at Frongoch and later served a term in Mountjoy. He was a man of fine physique, active, and standing over 6 feet tall.

Peadar Clancy had taken part in the great hunger-strike in April 1920 while undergoing sentence in Mountjoy Prison. He was released with the others who were sent to various city hospitals).

It took the Dublin Brigade sometime to recover from that blow. It must not be inferred from this

that it sat down during the time. It would be wrong to convey such an impression, much less to hint such a thing. The transition between the deaths of these two officers and the appointment of their successors, was a time of great travail and of strange difficulties for the Dublin Brigade. Many there were who doubted whether the Brigade would be able to right itself from the shock, or even replace their loss of the two foremost men. To give way to the one, or to neglect the other course, tended to fall into the British plan to destroy our movement. Each would be contrary to their wishes and would, in any event, have been inexcusable blunder at a time in our history. Consequently, successors were appointed to their positions - Oscar Traynor as Brigadier and Seán Mooney ? as Vice Brigadier.

The other reaction to the shooting of the British Intelligence Officers was the cold blooded massacre of unarmed harmless citizens attending a Gaelic football match at Croke Park. The British authorities showed their hand by that savage, vindictive and unwarranted action. The wild orgy of descending in warlike array, and by way of a punitive expedition to "shoot up" a peaceful and happy gathering of citizens, players and spectators alike, and by opening destructive fire on them with revolver, rifle and machine guns, was a poor method of getting their own back for the loss of their fallen comrades. It was a sad reflection on the custodians of law and order that they should select an occasion like that to vent spite and spleen against people who were only engaged in a game of sport. Here we saw members of the Crown forces at their worst.

The match was only a short time in progress when a British aeroplane flew over and encircled the pitch. Then, as if from nowhere, came the surging mass of Auxiliaries through the gate entrances, bursting their way through the spectators, shooting as they came. Soon the people scattered in all directions amid the din caused by the stampede and accelerated by the sound of machine gun fire which resembled a miniature battle. It was my lot to be a witness of the initial stages of the British attack. Situated on a small rise of ground from which the canal entrance and the bridge at Jones's Road were in view, I and a few companions, Dinny Holmes, Paddy Kirk, Bob Kirk, Seán Nathan and Frank Carberry, beheld the Auxies approach and found ourselves in the field of fire. We were unarmed, and were only present for the sake of the game.

Sweeping all before them, the Auxies came uncomfortably too close to our position. Murder was in their faces as they used their rifles at point blank range, many of them from their hips. The scene of confusion and excitement caused by this sudden visitation of crazy armed men could be better imagined than described. Most of the spectators fled towards the east entrance gate that led into Clonliffe Road and Foster Avenue. Here many were trampled to death, men and women alike, while the Auxies popped off a number of others, even one of the players, Paddy Hogan of the Tipperary team. My companions and I dropped over a convenient wall into Belvedere Grounds, and in doing so got separated, and happy to relate, safely away. Thus the day became known as "Bloody Sunday".

A little personal note may be appended relative to our presence at that match in Croke Park on that November day. Prior to the occasion, we had been speaking to Comdt. Byrne, who had expressed his opinion against our going to Croke Park. "Something might happen", he mused. We, of course, on our part could not have anticipated such wild happenings, and as there was no order against our going there, did not see anything remiss in continuing our support of Gaelic games and, in turn, enjoying ourselves. Certainly we were wiser and, of course, sadder men after the event.

Even the blood bath, the bloody holocaust of Croke Park, did not seemingly provide ample satisfaction for the Crown forces, for that night Dublin was to witness many a wild scene as lorry loads of Auxiliaries went mad careering through its streets, shouting as they went on their lawfull or, mayhaps, unlawful missions. Many a man whom misfortune placed into the not gentle or tender hands of the Auxies that night had reason to feel anything but elated for the experience of being put through the mill and otherwise being shown what was in store for the I.R.A. Murder Gang.

Chapter 18.

Hardly had the excitement produced by these several happenings subsided when, towards the end of November and early in December, a tremendous round up and arrest of members of the Dublin Brigade was effected. This was occasioned by, as was so freely stated at the time, the seizure on the part of the Crown forces of a list, or lists, of names and addresses of I.R.A. men.

The general opinion was that the record, or records, had been discovered in a raid on the home or domicile of a prominent I.R.A. officer. That it was of some substantial importance was amply borne out by the results accruing from the round up when several hundred members of the Dublin Brigade were arrested in one night. Their homes were visited and searched, the menfolk questioned, and so thoroughly informed were the British authorities that in many instances the suspects could be told their ranks and the units to which they were affiliated. These raids and arrests were not confined to any one district; they covered a wide area in Dublin and were carried out during curfew hours, which had been extended from November 23rd and by which citizens were required to be off the streets between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.

Some couple of days before that big raid on the part of the British, our headquarters had issued orders to certain officers and men, especially officers, not to sleep in their own homes. Obviously our headquarters expected such a move. Many of us had become too accustomed to orders of such a nature during the previous year or two. It was not always easy or found practical to acquiesce in these orders for one reason or another. Sometimes one could not secure alternative accommodation at the time or within the notice specified, unless one happened to be in the fortunate position, a not altogether likely possibility, of being well acquainted with friendly people possessing spare space. On an average, friendly disposed persons were willing and prepared to take such chances, even at the risk of their own individual freedom and personal inconvenience, and

though the law imposed heavy penalties for harbouring I.R.A. men, especially some who were regarded as being dangerous or wanted men, some continued to take the chance.

It even happened, too, that certain expected raids did not occur, in consequence of which many I.R.A. men got into a happy-go-lucky stride, even to the point of make-believe that some of the orders prescribing sleeping away from one's own home were only false alarms. Such they appeared to be on divers occasions when nothing happened. Some even took the chance of non-compliance with the orders, or a particular order, not uncommonly to their own undoing and resulting in their capture and imprisonment or internment. Then again, due to the intensified widespread nature of the raids, there was the danger of being captured in other districts. For that matter, one might luckily escape by staying away from home for a night, or a period, and, perhaps, when it appeared safe to return might be caught in their own homes. There was, of course, always the possibility of such a contingency occurring. My own experience at the time may be cited.

A couple of nights before the big round-up of I.R.A. men in Dublin, as referred to above, I had been sleeping away from home and, in so doing, obeying the orders issued by I.R.A. authorities. I found myself housed in a building in St. Stephen's Green which was being run as a commercial training college, the caretaker of which happened to be an uncle of a good friend of mine who was a member of H Company. Nothing untoward occurred on the first night. On the second night, however, our quietude was suddenly, nay ruefully, broken by the unmistakably intense activity of the British

forces and the too noisy and incessant movement of military lorries, armoured cars and patrols operating closeby. We had a feeling that raiding on a big scale was taking place. How convenient to our abode we could not hazard a guess. We considered ourselves in no good position then. What if the place in which we were domiciled was raided? Naturally we could have proferred some excuse or other for our presence there - blamed the curfew for it and insisted that we had overstayed our time in the house that night. We might even have got away with that plausible excuse - provided no suspicions attached to our being associated with the I.R.A.

Our friends, however, to their great credit and wonderful spirit showed up very well during the occasion. We had enough reason and sense to realise the injury that would befall them were we arrested on the premises, presuming that the implication of harbouring I.R.A. men could be sustained. The likelihood that our arrests, under such circumstances, would jeopardise them, cause our host's dismissal from his position as caretaker, with the attendant possibility of his and his family's eviction from their home, went a long way to cause us embarrassment and culpability in a situation that was neither pleasant nor agreeable. The hours rolled by slowly - aggravatingly slow. With the advent of dawn came the happy relief that the British were not raiding within the proximate ambit of our new found domicile.

We had reason to be elated for that small mercy. How fortunate that the British were so near and yet so far away from us. About 50 yards distance divided us. We were sufficiently near enough to discern that they

were in great strength and that they were apparently engaged in a big operation - having taken in a big area which seemed to border one side of Stephen's Green, along that side wherein was situated St. Vincent's Hospital. Baggot St.& Leeson St. were invested by British troops conducting a huge search. They were all the night at it and, if one could judge rightly, they were in no great hurry to leave, as they moved from house to house searching for warlike material and for wanted I.R.A. men. That it was a thorough and systematic raid in which hundreds of soldiers and auxiliaries of all stations participated, none could deny, and it was plain to be seen that the British were gaining in experience in the art of raiding other people's homes and possessions - an experience and an art that was fast becoming a second nature to them.

The methodical investing of areas for the purposes of conducting raids and searches had become quite a regular feature of the forces of law and order. There was,also, something resembling a sense of mystery surrounding these sudden perfunctory swoops. They, the British, made it their especial business to impose an element of mystery and surprise about their every movement and activity. Their nocturnal visitations took them in turn to several sections of Dublin and, working piecemeal in that fashion, had turned up quite a piece of the metropolis for contrabands of war and I.R.A. men. They seemed to work on a systematic plan - making a descent in one area of Dublin one night, the next night another,perhaps a distant area, another night changing to another district and intermittently coming back near to the former scenes of their activities. One never was sure as to when or where they might make

a plunge on any occasion, night or day.

In the particular instance referred to, my pal and I felt somewhat lucky in escaping the cordon on the night in question - were more than thankful for our own safety, and particularly so because of our kind host and hostess who had so nobly befriended us. On the following night I took the risk of sleeping at home, partly out of commiseration for those good folk and because I was prevailed upon by my mother to remain put. Insisting that I "was quite safe here", and that the place would never be raided, I had no choice but to acquiesce to her demands to surrender to her pleadings. Possessing a deeply religious faith, she even expressed her conviction that they would never have the power to enter our home.

That night I had only been in bed a short time, and half asleep, when - horror of horrors! - the British descended on our neighbourhood. There could be no mistaking their purpose or their mission. Laud knocking and thumps on hall doors, the issuing of sharp peremptory military commands, the playing of searchlights on the street and houses, and the hundred and one noises associated with military movements and cars produced in one the feeling that a big raid was in progress. How big I couldn't at the time fatham, but I knew enough to feel that the street in which I lived was invested with British soldiers and Auxiliaries. They entered several houses in different parts of the street. Here was a case of "out of the frying pan into the fire". Escape was out of the question. They were at the back of the house... They were in the house next door... It did not appear to be a house-to-house search. They

seemed to concentrate on certain houses which they entered. They even took men from these, possibly making them prisoners. I knew some of the houses which they entered contained I.R.A. men or Citizen Army men. Hours and hours passed by, and all the while the British forces kept moving from place to place, with an occasional lull between as indicative of their having entered one of the houses and putting same through the ordeal of searching and probing. At length it was over. The investing troops departed, having apparently succeeded in their quest.

The morrow's news recorded the sad tidings of a large number of I.R.A. men having been arrested, among them three or four men residents of the street in which I lived. One of these was a member of our own C Coy, who was ill and under the doctor's care, Bob Kirk. Nor was that all, for on further inquiries the sad information was forthcoming that a large number of Company members had been arrested - which included one of our officers, Lieut. Seán Kennedy. The 1st Battalion suffered heavily from this big round-up, each Company being appreciably weakened thereby. Fortunately only a few officers of the Battalion were so captured. That was the one redeeming feature of the whole episode. It seemed strange too, that among those arrested were some men who had ceased to be effective and active members of the I.R.A. for years; but against this, as far as our Company was concerned, the members arrested were all active bona fide members.

Apropos of that raid and round-up, it might be mentioned that in many instances the Crown forces professed to know quite a deal of information about those

whom they took prisoners, in some cases, particulars essaying their rank and their Company or units. Some of these may have been guesswork. However, there was enough to give one an uncanny feeling that they possessed some little information out of the ordinary. Efforts to trace the source generally revolved around the probability of their having captured some list or lists of names and addresses of Volunteers. Where and how they secured them mystified many of our people. The most obvious query which any of us could put was: How far did that round-up correspond with the maximum total of prisoners required by the British authorities? Was that all they set out to arrest, or all they knew of? The only possible clue to the solution seemed to rest around the likelihood that from the point of view of dealing a telling blow against the I.R.A., it was reasonable to assume that the Crown forces would not act spasmodically or deal piecemeal with them. Indeed, as a matter of policy, they required and worked for the total elimination of the power and influence of the I.R.A.

But then their plans might have miscarried to some extent and a certain measure of failure might have attended their round-up - in either of which events they would try again. One fact emerged and that was, that the British would not be guilty of hesitancy, restraint or solicitude in dealing with members of the I.R.A. It therefore devolved on them to put the I.R.A. out of action in the swiftest possible time, and there was every indication that they were doing their utmost by means of these mass raids and arrests to do so.

One could not help surmising the real intention and policy of the British authorities in conducting such

a large scale round-up or of their general approach to crush the I.R.A. Considering the colossal forces at their command, the extent and mode of their activities in their several aspects, it would be totally erroneous and indiscreet to accuse them of seeking anything but the most successful outcome of their policy and efforts, and this in view of the fact that up to date there was a big list of men for whose capture the 'Hue And Cry' had been raised and upon whose heads various sums of money were offered. Hence it wasn't unfair to deduce that the extreme limit had been reached to rope them all in. Time was proving that such deductions and reasonings were relatively right, because though the Crown forces did not lessen in the slightest degree or scope their warlike operations against our forces, even to the extent of involving the civilian population then growing as accustomed to their martial perambulations,raids, hold-ups and searches as the I.R.A.

The ordinary civilian population accepted the annoyances, the upsets, inconvenience and even hard knocks with unusual fortitude, patience and good grace, so much so as to cause bewilderment and confusion to the British forces as it must have angered and perturbed the British administrative authorities. In endeavouring to deal specifically with the I.R.A., to fight and to crush them was not an easy task while the civilian population, or a large proportion of it, stood as it were in the way of almost every British move, every British activity. Forming as it were a screen or shield against the stupendous onslaughts delivered by the British, the civilian population in the main lent

support and gave encouragement and a large measure of succour to the I.R.A., not without risks or unattended by dire punishment and losses for so doing, and that despite the overwhelming strength and almost crushing ordinances and actions imposed by the British at the time. Particularly was that so in the cases of those of our friends, adherents and supporters who stood by us through thick and thin, oblivious of their own risks and dangers and showing concern for our welfare and the fight we were waging for freedom.

If we were receiving heavy blows and undergoing severe trials, of which the aforementioned raids formed not the least of our troubles and anxieties and had a perceptibly weakening influence on our organisation, both as regards numbers and potential, so too in reverse manner we stoicly and bravely accepted these as inevitable conditions, or in the form of warfare in which anything was possible or probable. We had to content ourselves with things as they were and not what they should, or what we would like them to be. Daily, hourly, our destiny, the destiny of the I.R.A. was being shaped! Events, over which we had no control, contracted to circumscribe our movements and to frustrate our efforts and it was no easy matter for us to keep abreast of the times. Truly we, every member and every Unit in the Dublin Brigade, were going through a trying and tempestuous period. There was ample evidence that that big round-up of recent date had seriously affected our administrative and operational machinery, resulting in a certain perceptible measure of disorganisation and

serious loss of a large number of men, the majority, if not all, of whom would have been considered to be more effective and useful outside rather than inside prison bars or internment cages. Our own Company was no exception to the rule but, unlike some other Units, our losses in officers were relatively small in comparison. We, however, lost the service of one of our officers, 2nd Lieutenant Seán Kennedy, and Quartermaster Charlie Molphy, as well as Volunteers Peadar Meehan, Peter Bowes, George Bould, Charlie O'Hanlon, Bob Kirk, Seán Farrell, Paddy Macken, Paddy Swan, George Whelan, Larry Wilson, Joe Brabazon, Dinny McGrane, Ned Keane, Jimmy McArdle, Tom Cassidy, Joe Conroy, Con and Joe Mulligan. Our former Quartermaster, Mark Wilson, was already under lock and bars doing a prison sentence. Fortunately, though our losses in prisoners were substantial, they did not represent an eighth of our Company's effective strength, for at that period our membership totalled the one hundred and thirty figure, a figure which, since our re-organisation in 1917, had been, we were proud to boast, maintained with few defections and many new entrants. In respect to new entrants, it may be pertinent to mention the influx of transferred Fianna boys to our Company - a movement of new blood that had been going on by an arrangement agreed to between General Headquarters of the I.R.A. and the Fianna Executive. As boys reached the eighteen years mark, they were duly drafted to I.R.A. Companies. At the time in question - towards the end of 1920 - quite a few of that category were transferred to "C" Company, such as, Gerry Grennell, William Carroll, Patrick O'Toole, Anthony Madden, William Curry and George Bould. These boys played a role in the

affairs of the Company no less effective than their new confréres. Due to their training in the Fianna, their services were particularly useful in the sphere of intelligence and such duties as observing and reporting the movement of unfriendly people and enemy suspects and movement of transport. The fact that they were "only boys" increased their value and provided them with a freedom of movement and accessibility into realms of things which other people, their senior, could not pry or operate. These boys were ever ready, day or night, to perform any work requiring their attention or assistance. Several instances could be advanced in proof of their service, one of which, I make bold to cite, concerned the secret use of private cars by the British authorities.

Information had been conveyed to our Captain, Seán Flood, that cars belonging to a certain business man, who carried on his business affairs in the vicinity of Dorset Street, were used during curfew hours for transporting British personnel. It had even been suggested that they had been in use during raids conducted by the British on the homes of I.R.A. men. A careful, thorough check-up was instituted by day and by night which lasted for over a period of weeks. At length proof being forthcoming concerning their illicit use in the British interest, a raid was carried out by a group of our men on the premises referred to and/the one of carswas accordingly burned and destroyed.

During the period under review, Captain Seán Flood had occasional absences from his beloved Dublin and his equally beloved Company. He was on confidential and highly secret work connected with

I.R.A. affairs in England. Sharing his confidence, though not of course being intimately aware of the full significance or scope of his confidential work, I had enough imagination to appraise the value of the service he was rendering in enemy territory and, owing to his varied absences, the duty devolved on me to guide the destinies of our Company. How far his services were related to the series of retaliatory actions that were, or had been carried out by the I.R.A. in England, we had no reason to know or assess. One of these actions concerned the burning of property to the value of a million pounds in Liverpool towards the end of November, 1920. Those of us who knew Seán's spirit and character had no doubts in our minds but that he would give a good account of himself in whatever work he was assigned. The climax of his service in our "C" Company was reached eventually on foot of some of the strange happenings in England when news came of Seán Flood's promotion to the rank, as we understood it to be, of O/C Britain. That news came to us in a not pleasant but a strange way. On a certain night in, I think, December, 1920, two of us, namely Frank Carberry and myself, met Seán at the house, 6 Whitworth Place, where we assumed Seán was staying. In taking us into his confidence, he communicated the information of his new appointment which, in short, entailed his severance of the command of our Company. We knew enough of him to appreciate that such a course caused him sorrow and heart-burning. It meant, so to speak, breaking a tie of friendship and of collaboration that was directly personal as it was deeply selective. Even his "brave show" by which he sought to maintain a

calm serene exterior was as unconvincing as his naive and modest remark, "You will be able to keep the Company together". Could we have probed the innermost recesses of his mind, perhaps a different story might be unfolded.

Our conversation that night was mainly devoted to our Company affairs, on every aspect of which he was quite familiar, and it was a delight to listen to him furnishing the several details on such subjects as organisation, armaments and routine matters. His greatest concern was, and in which he expressed full confidence, namely, that the Company would continue the good work and survive. Qualifying his confidence was his so simple remark, "You will be able to carry on the Company with two officers", this, after he had notified us that I was to take over the command of the Company and Carberry was to be 1st Lieutenant, the orders for which had been made by G.H.Q. Seán's reference to orders of G.H.Q., by which we were appointed officers, came as a surprise to us because, up to that time, the method of selecting officers for Company units was by way of election in which the members voted for choice of candidate and in the case of Battalion staff on the votes of Company officers and so on. That procedure had gone by the board and in future appointments would be made by G.H.Q.

In detailing the two of us - Carberry and myself - as officers of the Company, Seán Flood had in mind our recent losses due to the recent raids. Some necessary adjustments had been made to fill the positions rendered vacant by the arrests of Lieutenant Kennedy and Quartermaster Molphy and, in consequence, Sergeant

Dinny Holmes had been created Lieutenant and Volunteer Seán Nathan as Quartermaster respectively. Shortly afterwards Lieutenant Holmes was arrested and lodged in Mountjoy Jail. Our N.C.O's consisted of Patrick Byrne, Patrick Kirk, William Maher and Mark Kelly, each of whom had charge of a section, four of which made up the Company, two a half-Company. One of those sections consisted of men attached to special services, such as, Signalling, First Aid, Machine Gun and Armoury, under Sergeant Kelly, ~~while another under Sergeant Kelly~~, while another under Sergeant Kirk was composed of men specifically trained in the use of grenades. All the men were trained in the use of rifle, revolver and grenade, especially the two latter on which we had concentrated most of our time and attention for a number of years previously. In the peculiar situation existing at the time herein related, the main concern, as Seán Flood emphasised, was to keep the Company going. There were always difficulties in the way of doing that. We had reason to anticipate as great if not greater difficulties in the future. Somehow in the past we had met and overcome difficulties, mainly through the indefatigable labours and the persevering nature of our guide and Captain, Seán Flood. He had been a tower of strength to us and our Company and had proved himself to be not only our Captain but also our counsellor and friend, one whom we could look up to and rely upon at all times and in every situation that had arisen during the arduous and multitudinous stormy period of our existence. Always at the helm he had captained our Company through trials and dangers, never flagging and never tiring in his devotion in leadership and the spirit of adventure and service for a cause which he so

nobly espoused and consistently served. In our estimation, Seán Flood was the very incarnation of everything that was noble and beautiful in our independence movement. The closer one got and the more intimate one became acquainted with him, the more one loved him, for Seán could be humble and exalting without being a bore or a top-hat for he possessed a charming, happy and free disposition, a gay and gentle nature and a winsome and radiant personality, all of which went a long way in winning him many friends, many associates and not a few confidents. If perchance we erred in hero-worshipping him or in being too ready to place him on a high eminence, the fault, if fault it could be, lay not so much with us for so doing. The fact that he endeared himself to us, that we knew his worth and qualities as a Volunteer and as our officer, mattered much to us who loved him and were inspired by him in the work which he and we were engaged. He was suberb and at his best in the conduct of training, administering and controlling our Company, sparing neither time nor labour, indeed making many sacrifices to make us good efficient soldiers of the Republic. None perhaps were more cognisant of these than those of us who, as junior officers or N.C.O's, came into very close association with him. But there were others, outside the realm of our Company, who appraised his work and his worth and, if the appointment made by G.H.Q. at the period in question displaced him from our Company affairs, the high honour conferred on him served to show that he was held in great esteem and trusted to fill an important position of trust away from the immediate scene of his recent labour and work. That appointment reflected favourably on our Company,

though at the time those of us who knew or sensed the importance of the mission to which Seán had been called felt a very personal and keen loss by his severance from our Company affairs. We could hardly forbid ourselves grumbling against the ordinance that seemed to conduce to weaken our Company at a time when his presence and his leadership was so essential and desirable. But he on the night of his leave-taking, though showing concern and expressing sorrow for his resignation, gave no countenance to our growls or our condemnations. Duty to him was a far too precious quality to be localised, circumscribed or even circumvented. The call of duty and the rendering of service he held to be too sacred and important to permit of personal feelings or individual choice. One had either to lawfully and unhesitatingly obey or get out, and so it was no surprise to us that he freely accepted the commission to serve elsewhere and wherever he was designated if by so doing obedience to duty directed such a course of action a matter of necessity.

One very sad and saddening feature of Seán Flood's passing on to new spheres and activities was epitomised by the almost hush-hush and secrecy involved. It pained us - we knew it pained him - to part in that rather unorthodox, unceremonious way without taking personal adieux of his beloved comrades, his confréres of his Company. It was not politic or possible to do otherwise but to communicate his thoughts, his regrets and good wishes through us to them. He was so nice about everything, so considerate, so natural, and kind in every way as to make the task on our part an easy one to carry on "the good work in the Company". The

one jarring disparate note in the whole affair concerned our inability to take the Company into our confidence and communicate in full detail everything concerning Seán Flood's retiral and new appointment. We could not do so. Seán could not do so, for obvious reasons, prime of which herebefore mentioned centred round the point of secrecy and high affairs of state. Hence, many Volunteers were unaware at the time of the reasons for the absence of Seán Flood from the Company. Even the full implications contained in our appointments - I as Captain and Frank Carberry as 1st Lieutenant - may not have been clearly understood or imagined. Perhaps the fact that I had from time to time been acting in the capacity of O/C during Seán's temporary occasional absences, helped materially in allaying suspicion that anything out of the ordinary was happening. We on our part, however, had no choice in the matter but to draw the curtain down on a scene that was the acme of mystery and contained an element of melodrama in which Seán played the major part and we a minor role in pursuit of a settled policy to do what was considered best in a grand plan to win laurels for our side in the cast. As we came away from him that night, what other thoughts could we reasonably have, or entertain, but that we had parted with one who was a brave man, an efficient Volunteer officer and a dear friend.

Towards the end of 1920 the Irish political situation and particularly the military situation, as it affected the I.R.A., was sufficiently grave and menacing. On the one side, the Crown forces lost no opportunity to strike terror and to cause devastation wherever and however they went, and following up every

advantage to gain mastery over, as they so blandly declared, the "I.R.A. murder gang". They had a will and a way for doing even the most unsavoury and despotic things. Pride of place for most of the "terrible happenings" of the period was accorded to the Black and Tans and to the Auxiliaries, the "Auxies" as we of the Dublin Brigade termed them. Pent up for fight and obviously eager for adventure in any shape or form, these had become past masters in military and unmilitary activity - reprisals, secret shootings, waylaying of citizens and I.R.A. men alike, arson and brigandage had become an official and unofficial part of their profession - testifying to what extent men who were acclaimed by their astute paymasters to be soldiers and policemen could go to crush the spirit of a people fighting to be free. On the other side, the I.R.A., pursuing a policy of passive and active resistance and adopting guerilla warfare tactics which, in our parlance, signified "hitting and running", kept the British on the move, perplexed and always guessing as to every and any move intended or directed. In the form of military activity as pursued by the I.R.A., we had grown accustomed to the employment of the small groups or parties, utilising them at various times and in devious ways according to circumstances and object in view. We had reached the stage then of being on our toes and poised for action, for orders had been issued to the Dublin Brigade to get going on plans to ambush British forces in the streets. It was reasonable then to assume that a trial of strength was being forged in order, one way or the other, to create a decision in the military sphere.

The adoption of the policy of street fighting and street ambushing in Dublin was indeed an extreme and important step in the vital course of stepping up and accelerating the pace to wage guerilla warfare against an enemy that was well habilitated and strongly entrenched to meet opposition from our side, but it was an inevitable course which had to be faced and met if we as a fighting force were to bring any substantial weight against them. Up to the period under review, the Dublin Brigade had conducted a form of warfare that had only indirectly affected the British military machine. The innumerable perfunctory raids in pursuit of exercising a boycott on goods of Belfast and, in some cases, of English manufacture, raids for arms and on the mails, the shootings of British agents, detectives, spies and informers, the many measures to demonstrate the power and influence of the I.R.A., short of shooting unfriendly persons, by tying them to railings, of employing "tar and feather" methods and the affixing of labels to them bearing the warning, "Spies and informers beware!", or despatching them to unknown destinations, in banishing them from Ireland and the hundred-and-one other forms of activity aiming at the destruction of enemy stores and property, the burning of buildings and vehicles, were but preliminaries to a more extensive and intensive form of warfare.

Anything was possible and potent in a situation in which we were then placed. Outside our several forms of activity, the major portion of our forces in Dublin had been playing a passive and generally non-active part in the fight. In many instances, Company units were tied up and had limited scope for action

except occasional outbursts. In saying that, let it not be thought that Companies were totally inactive, to the point of being mere spectators of a game that was being played for big prizes. Such was impossible at the time and for obvious reasons, between one thing and another, Company Officers had to face up to many difficulties and tackle many problems outside the realm of actual fighting. Without elaborating these, it may be pertinent to refer to the question of supplies as one of the serious problems in which many Companies were involved. Over the period of years since 1916 that problem had caused concern and worry to many a Company officer. Never adequate or substantially sustained, our supply of war materials had not been such as to provide anything but a fraction of our demands. The amount of up-to-date, effective weapons were only sufficient to arm in a modest way a mere group in each Company and, when it is considered that of late Companies had had to part with a number of their stock of service rifles, small in numbers at any time, for use of the Flying Columns then operating in the various parts of the country, the problem permitted of no easy solution. It must be understood too that the general conception of bringing the war to Dublin centred round the possibility that we of the Dublin Brigade would employ <u>all weapons</u> in the course of the fighting, as visualised. Any other opinion or conjecture would, and was, deemed inadmissible, unsustaining and importune.

That the course promulgated by our G.H.Q. and about to be put into operation in Dublin suggested the idea that <u>only small arms and grenades were to be used</u> came as a surprise to many of not alone the Company

officers but men also. No question, however, was raised to the principle as such of the policy of street fighting as a part of the guerilla warfare, although to an extent opinions differed, not as to the necessity for some such course, but on the score of whether we could wage that form of warfare with the measure of success as anticipated. The more reasoned and relative argument against such a course concerned more the question of means and methods rather than the purpose aimed at. Other considerations were not altogether unrelated to the many questions raised and arguments advanced on the pros and cons of such fighting, the main one being the element or possibility of the involvement of the civilian population and the inevitable risks and dangers, even injury and death, through the pursuing on our part of street warfare. The position, as we found it, was that in trying to fight the British we should also have to contend with a non-combatant and, in the main, a non-aggressive element, a civilian population, the majority of whom were not altogether unfriendly to us and to the national principles of freedom for which we were fighting. Truth to tell, there were many among us who could not feel other than lenient to and sorrow for such people, and the fact that there were included in that category those who were our own kith and kindred aggravated the situation and narrowed the choice considerably, if choice there were, on an issue in which our sole policy was directed in hitting our enemy by any and every means at our disposal.

From whatever angles we viewed the matter, danger to our own people was interlocked with the possible and

proximate dangers to the British forces against whom we were specifically contending. In striking at them we would run the chance of inflicting greater or lesser injury on the other. The position was like as unto two boxers in a ring with a third party standing between. Neither could fight the other contestant while the, shall we say, in-between party remained proximately present in that position. Every step taken, every blow delivered or sought to be delivered, increased the chance and possibility of harming the in-between, or proved ineffective in the desired direction of securing victory to either of the combatants. Unless a means could be provided to, as it were, neutralise the non-combatant element, the course of the fight between the two contestants would degenerate into wild flashes and punches without regard for the safety or welfare of the misplaced and unfortunate in-between.

That might or might not be a fair analogy to make in the situation into which we were heading, but it was not an unreasonable representation of some of the difficulties that were linked with the problem connected with the street fighting to which we were committed. Stress must be laid on the point that it was no easy or pleasant choice to make when we realised and appreciated the full implication of the dangers the civilian population would be exposed to. We had no means to remove those dangers unless by holding our hands and refusing to fight the British in the way planned. The general concensus of opinion among officers and men of the Dublin Brigade favoured a more aggressive forward move to the courses hitherto carried out and it was generally conceded that G.H.Q. was alive to every contingency, capable of and willing to develop the

fighting as circumstances permitted.

In viewing the policy and in considering the possible ramifications and difficulties connected with the plans for street warfare, it might be well to take into account the relative reactions of the rank and file of the I.R.A. to the course proposed. In the main, it was received in the spirit as being a necessary evil and that no other course was possible, or could be regarded as effective in the then serious situation prevailing. Many there were who, if we were to give credence to individuals' conversations and expressed views, regarded the course in the light that we might weaken the civilian population or alienate those of our friends rather than the British force and, as a result, be a boomerang to us instead of an advantage to our cause. There was a genuine fear that our maximum effort to intensify the fighting in that way might produce minimum results, were the civilian population to be exposed to and compelled to bear harm and injury disproportionate to that inflicted on the British. Appreciating the uneven contest in which our forces and the native population, or that large portion that remained faithful to us, were so closely entwined, reason suggested that they would regard with apprehension the possible repercussions which action of that kind might have on our cause. Few among us were so highly enamoured of the new plan as to accept it as being the best, or the only solution to our problem to wage absolute war on an enemy that was showing its strength and putting great efforts into their "drives" in order to over-awe and to destroy us. Yet, short of sitting down and taking the medicine that the British prescribed, some form of aggressiveness and aggressive action was

generally conceived to be desirable.

Naturally our principal concern was for our own side and, as we were engaged in and conducting a people's war for a people's right to be free, it followed as a corollary that we were bound to give consideration to the welfare of the civilian population, and a /concern that was governed by what might be termed the uncertain quality and undefined factor of the people's reaction to the policy of street fighting. We had the very unpleasant feeling and unwholesome forebodings that they would on occasions be exposed to trial, danger and harm during ambushes, that as often as not they would be in the danger zone, not once or twice but many times, presupposing that those ambush attacks would become the order of the day, and that, as a result, their presence might naturally affect the fighting quality of our men or the course of the guerilla warfare. The issue indeed was such that, had G.H.Q. of the I.R.A. not decided it for us by the issuing of direct orders, no such action would have accrued, out of consideration for the safety of our people and because we felt our hands were tied by the civilian population, sometimes baulking our every move and very frequently standing in the way of our fight against the alien foe.

Heretofore, as has already been mentioned, activity in Dublin consisted of raids, street patrols, etc. With the turn of events, the bold course of conducting warfare in the streets of the metropolis became settled I.R.A. policy. Already in the country what were designated "flying columns" had been instituted and had shown many forms of guerilla warfare, such as, ambushes, some of them on a big scalé, and

other types of military operations. Their exploits and their daring had been published in 'An tOglach', our official organ. We in the Dublin Brigade learned many lessons from the accounts circulated from time to time concerning them and, in consequence, many a stout heart envied them for their good luck in being able to operate so freely and so independently wherever they liked. We knew that many of those flying columns consisted of "wanted men" and men "on the run", those who were wanted by the British for committing "certain crimes". The fact that the flying columns were full time and always on the move had a certain appeal to many men of not alone the Dublin but other Brigades. That they were keeping abreast of events, no one could gainsay or question.

In Dublin, however, a different situation had to be faced and was being met in a totally different manner. Hence, the adoption of the plans whereby Companies were required to engage in ambushing British forces. Hence it was that Company officers made careful and minute analysis of their personnel and potential, selecting the types of men and material requisite for such action or actions. In this respect, special pride of place was given to the utilisation of revolvers and grenades, which we were given to understand were to be the main weapons to be used in our form of warfare. In the country the flying columns operated with rifles and/or shotguns, revolvers and grenades. They were <u>always on duty</u> and operated in open country, so that the use of the rifle was necessary and feasible. The same conditions did not apply in our particular cases, for we had contracted and restricted scope for any weapons other than small arms and grenades. Besides, our G.H.Q. made the order so and, choice or no choice, we had no option but to

obey and bring the war to Dublin.

From this time onwards the presence of ambush parties on the streets of Dublin became quite a regular feature of I.R.A. routine, our Company like other Companies in the Dublin Brigade being no exception to the rule. In the initial stages, they were a movable force operating in the same fashion as a street patrol, moving around or within their respective Company areas in which they by then were familiar. Sometimes in groups of four, six or eight men, they operated in the night, or selected nights on request of the Battalion or at the discretion of Company officers, but generally the latter case applied, with the result that such activities became Company affairs.

Then came the formation of the Active Service Unit in the early part of 1921. Under orders of the Dublin Brigade Headquarters, that unit was to be formed on lines similar to the flying columns, with the difference that the A.S.U., unlike the flying columns, were to be full time in the sense of being self-contained and a distinct paid force, would operate in the day time and be off duty in the night. Many of those could, when off duty, return to their homes and be, or pretend to be, "good citizens". The plan of campaign envisaged them as operating in the day while the Company units operated in the night time. When the A.S.U. was being formed, Company officers were notified to furnish the names of men considered suitable. The important condition attaching to membership of that body was that the men so volunteering should resign from their ordinary civilian employment, profession or trade. Payment in lieu of wages or salary would be made at the rate of £3.10.0. per week.

The selection of men and the actual formation of the Dublin A.S.U. was held on a Saturday afternoon in a hall in Oriel Street when about fifty aspirants paraded in the presence of Brigadier Oscar Traynor. Of the number, three of our Company men were selected: Seán Quinn, Dermot O'Sullivan and Jim Carrigan. Though Lieutenant Frank Carberry and myself offered our services and were present at the meeting, we were not accepted for reasons that, as the Brigadier explained, "we had other important work in our Own Company". To the men duly selected he explained the purpose for which the Unit was being formed, emphasising that from that day they were on active service and would serve under special officers appointed to conduct the new force. Captain Paddy Flanagan became O/C of that Unit.

That innovation, the establishment of an Active Service Unit, was aimed at putting into the fight in Dublin a new and increased system of guerilla warfare or rather to accelerate the pace and supplement the activities of the various Companies of the Brigade. It did not mean and was not intended to take complete charge of all activities and operations in the Dublin area, or to supplant the Companies in any way. The main purpose sought was to provide and produce continuity in operations and an extension of the periods in which operations, activities, ambushes, etc., would be carried out. In that way provision was made for the utilisation of the A.S.U. at periods when Companies were generally unable to operate, except on rare occasions when men were available, or made themselves available on some pretext or other, or due to unemployment. Company officers not infrequently found difficulty in securing the services of men in

their command for the purpose of carrying out some stunt or other, unless such was planned well in advance and with careful thought and consideration. In many instances men had feigned illness or taken absence from their work for the purpose, in some cases losing a half-day's or full-day's pay for their pains. There were even instances where men slipped out from work without being detected by their foremen or employers. As the work connected with the arrangement and provision of ambush parties progressed, Companies - at least, our Company - found that a few other men could be utilised on a Wednesday and Saturday afternoon because those days were half holidays in certain business establishments. Even at best the Companies could not carry out the orders to put the maximum effort into the fight, however we sought at the time to do so. Many other things and circumstances militated against this, the principal of which were the difficulties of placing armaments at the disposal of a large number of men, or of different groups of men, and, as was too manifest, the non-availability of officers and N.C.O's for operations outside their ordinary civilian working periods.

This was where General Headquarters, understanding the true position of affairs in Company units and desirous of extending the scope and tempo of the guerilla campaign in the Dublin area, decided to meet the situation by bringing into being the Active Service Unit. In that way a new field of activity was opened bare for exploiting. The fact too that the A.S.U. could operate in any part of Dublin or County was a consideration of great and prime importance, thus affording them greater scope for activities than that

possessed by ordinary Companies. Operating under direct orders of Brigade and G.H.Q. as a separately and distinctively special unit under the command of selective officers and N.C.O's, that body, from the first period of its initiation, set a sharp and quick pace to the fight in Dublin. By so doing, the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. could report that hardly a day passed without some form of activity, ambush or raid having been attempted or carried out, thereby winning a name and a fame to which they were justly entitled, and perhaps becoming the envy of their comrades in the gap of danger and of other units as well.

Concerning the personnel of the A.S.U., a brief summary of some of their names may be permissible. They were drawn from the various Dublin Battalions and comprised quite a good number of men of our 1st Battalion, men like Frank Flood of "H" Company, Paddy and Seán Doyle of "F", Bernard Ryan of "F", Christy Fitzsimons, Tom Flood and Tommy Bryan of the 2nd Battalion to mention but a few.

Corresponding with the institution of the A.S.U., the Companies became likewise active and were on the move for the purpose of ambushing British troops. The former system of movable patrols or ambush parties was replaced by that of stationary positions. Generally street corners were availed of for the purposes of attack. Surprise and speed or, in other words, "hit and run" tactics were considered essential conditions for successful operations. The number of men and amount of material varied. The plans also varied in regard to the nature of the projected ambushes and the circumstances governing them. As has already been mentioned, prime consideration was given to the employment of revolver and grenade. Sometimes unarmed men would accompany the active ambush party - such men might be utilised for

scouting or to assist in getting men safely away after an ambush. Even the smallest ambush party entailed a certain amount of careful planning and direction in order to get the number and type of men required at the selected spot and at the time arranged. Consideration had also to be given to the amount and type of materials to suit the particular operation as well as arrangements for their safe withdrawal and the safe depositing of armaments after it. In every respect, the onus rested on Company officers in all matters relating to the selection and disposal of the men to be engaged and the site for the proposed operation. Great scope was thereby given within the framework of the somewhat limited scope of Company areas to develop the fighting.

In the initial stage of posting men to ambush parties, many difficulties had to be faced. Company officers - and this was so in regard to our Company - were confronted with the problem of sorting and arranging the men for the allotted task or tasks. Our Company could not perhaps be regarded as any exception to the rule whereby certain specific types of men were selected for such particular forms of duty or activity. This was not as easy as one might suppose or anticipate when consideration is given to the point that anything in the nature of undue discrimination had to be shown in favour of any certain category of men in a unit. It was a big responsibility to place on Company officers, yet it had to be met in some way or other, as it was not possible to bring in <u>all</u> the men <u>at the one given time</u>, for reasons already explained, such as, sparcity of materials, and certain experimental trials had to be made, as well as from the point of view of gaining

experience. Selection had to be made on the basis of employing a few of those in the Company unit who had been tested on other "jobs" or "stunts". Such jobs or stunts consisted of raids, etc., of various kinds and descriptions, in which our men had given previous service.

Discrimination there was then, but only on that particular score and not for the purpose of showing that only the few men were worthwhile, or to show any special favour for some, thus casting doubt on the many members of the Company. We appreciated that in each unit there were a number of men that had already been tested and tried in several activities. Other considerations had to be given, among them being the availability of the men, their efficiency and, of course, their physical make-up. The greatest concern was on the question of the men's reaction to the exacting duty of ambushing and how they would stand up to it. We realised that the form of warfare prescribed would put severe strain on the men's patience, courage and spirit, greater perhaps than any other type of action to which some had become accustomed. On two of those qualities, we had no earthly doubt - courage and spirit they had in ample measure - but patience of the type required for ambushing signified something that had to be acquired in the hard school of experience. The main essentials were to hold one's nerves in check, to control the natural tendencies to give up, and to be unyielding in the midst of visible or invisible dangers.

In every plan that was devised to strike at the foe, we had always to take into account the human factor and the possibility, nay, the probability of our men

having to remain on duty for unreasonably long periods. Even an hour or more on such duty was trying in the extreme, though such might not be thought so in ordinary circumstances. But to men stationed at the one position where danger always appeared imminent, and when they were taking many risks in doing so, the time factor as well as the human factor was not merely important but often nerve-wracking. It was this that tested the men's patience and gift of perseverance. To while away the time, to stay put, without attracting undue attention or suspicion as to the purpose of their mission there, were not easy matters to accomplish as the ordinary civilian became bomb-minded or ambush-minded.

Our men also had to be sensitive to the perambulations and activities of the British forces in order to bring off an attack against them when there were reasonable chances of doing so, or alternatively, to disguise their purpose or "fade away" when unreasonable forces appeared on the scene, for the British, in pursuit of their incessant policy of making swoops on people in the streets by their "hold-ups" and searches, might alight from their cars and pounce on our men as a matter of "doing our duty, Paddy" and apart from them having any knowledge of the intentions of our men. In any of these eventualities, the onus resided in our men to be extremely patient, alert and quickwitted.

The greatest care had to be taken by the men to appear unsuspicious without attracting unnecessary attention in the vicinity of the operation and to, as it were, look as peaceable as any ordinary citizen. These were not easily accomplished as the public suspicions became aroused by the presence of us, strangers, in

the locality in which we operated. Every known subterfuge had to be adopted and great care taken to guard against detection, surprise or capture. Occasions there were when the presence of too many civilians and children frustrated the possible launching of a stunt or, as happened on one occasion, a group of men sought to beat up some of our men who were operating in Capel Street, waiting to attack a party of plain-clothes R.I.C. One of the civilians, the ringleader of the group, attacked one of our men with a knife. Other men supported his efforts. Immediately a wild scene ensued firticuffs being used by our men to ward off the attack and it was only when the ringleader was "laid out" on the ground that finis was put to the affair. Fortunately, guns were not used by our men. Ironically, the leader of the would-be assailants was not alone friendly to our cause but a member of another section of the Republican forces. A strange feature about this business was that the civilians in question thought one of our men was a Black and Tan and, stranger still, the party of R.I.C. after our men had had to decamp, passed by the place some time later that night.

In connection with the latter body, our organisation from time to time became aware of their activities and their deeds. They were Sergeants and policemen from different parts of Ireland. These R.I.C. men, known as the Igoe Gang, were regarded as being part of a murder gang whose special task it was to deal with wanted or dangerous I.R.A. men. Moving freely around and through the streets of Dublin in groups and always armed with revolvers, they sought to pick up men for whom they were looking. They operated

in patrol fashion in pairs, each of which were divided by several yards. Sometimes they occupied both sides of a street. They bore the name of being "tough", good shots and good fighters and quite desperate men. On the night in question a group of men from one Company had been detailed to occupy selected points on their patrol route to attack them with revolvers. Fortune and good luck, however, favoured them that night as, we had been aware, favoured them on previous occasions. Somehow or other, these men appeared to be elusive, having many of the advantages in being able to move when and where they liked without the visible signs of the trappings of war, uniform or even military order. Hence the difficulty of meeting and attacking them. The name and fame of that R.I.C. group became legendary among many I.R.A. men, especially in Dublin, a source of annoyance and anxiety especially to those of them on the run or wanted, many of whom were serving with the Dublin Brigade.

The part which the Dublin Brigade was playing with the operation of the A.S.U. and the Companies in various areas had as its main consideration the pinning down of as large a force of the Crown forces as possible in Dublin, so as to prevent their use in other parts of Ireland. These were deemed to be containing tactics. Consequently, every action on our part in the Dublin command helped to keep more soldiers and auxiliaries, a force of ex British officers stationed at Beggars Bush Barracks, of the British forces here at a time when their services were needed in other parts. The task was not an easy one viewed in the light that Dublin was the the seat of British administration in which its army, general headquarters and military machine were

largely situated. The methods and scope for fighting were dissimilar to those operative by the self-contained and easy movements of the flying columns in some areas in the country where the Crown forces were less static and where mobility and space, rather than numbers, counted for much in the general plan of operations as carried out by I.R.A. commands.

The guerilla warfare being waged by the various elements composing the Dublin Brigade was reaching a vital pitch and intensity as the men became familiar with the duties involved and the civilian population had hardened to the continuance of street fighting. Contrary to our expectations, doubts and fears, the citizens of Dublin bore the strain with great fortitude, spirit and courage, and were even getting accustomed to pitched battles and ambushing. Those among them who were friendly to our cause opened their hearts and their homes to men on the run, wanted or hard-pressed I.R.A. men. From time to time General Headquarters supplied I.R.A. officers with lists of friendly doctors and chemists to whom wounded men could be brought for treatment. Hospitals to which the friendly doctors were attached, friendly nurses and members of the staff were listed and circulated to officers in whose areas such were situated or practised. This course was made imperative by the action of the British authorities requesting the reporting by doctors of wounded men treated by them. To the credit of the medical profession, that decree was resisted.

Apropos of the help forthcoming from some of our friends may be cited the following incident that occurred in our Company some time in 1920. A special

parade had been called by our Company Captain, Seán Flood. The men paraded at 41 Parnell Square. Only those who were in possession of revolvers were present, some 20 or so. The object was to inspect the revolvers to ascertain if they were in good condition and to call in some of them for transference to other men. There was a fear that, because of enemy raids, the guns might be allowed to get into bad condition. Such was found to be groundless. During the inspection one of the revolvers - an automatic - got jammed and unfortunately, in the course of trying to have it righted, it fired, the bulled penetrating through the table around which our men were seated, whizzing between some men and lodging in the foot of another. To say that it caused excitement would be using a mild term. Along with the fear that the man was badly injured was the danger that the shot might be heard in the street below or in the house.

After applying first-aid of a kind to our wounded man, a motor, the property of the Battalion, was secured and despatched to the Mater Hospital. The good Sister in attendance said, "You're Thomas Smith", (some name was mentioned other than his right one) and it was the one he became known by. It was so funny but it was safe and good.

Then again a list of friendly people and houses was compiled and distributed to the respective officers of Companies. To those people and places men went in need of shelter or for the treatment in an emergency and for the rendering of first aid and recuperation. Most of the houses available to such necessitous cases were inhabited by members of the Cumann na mBan, the women's

auxiliary force attached to the I.R.A. but not a few were placed at our disposal by relatives of our own men and sympathisers. By such means, the I.R.A. in Dublin could be said to be well served in the way of medical attention and habilitation. Besides these several categories, friendly shopkeepers and friendly shops were put to advantage. These were availed for storing munitions, for the acceptance and delivery of messages and despatches. The shops were styled call offices. In some instances, guns could be dumped for a short period, in others deposited indefinitely. These served a very important purpose during the period and, in the extreme, played a big part in the activities and affairs of the I.R.A. Some of the proprietors, proprietresses or assistants of such shops or stores were not attached to the I.R.A. or kindred organisation in any way and nothing but sheer patriotism guided them in rendering service in that way. That fact was indeed a big consideration and allayed suspicion that they were friendly to or helping the I.R.A.

These were not the only people who gave help, succour and encouragement to the Dublin Brigade. It embraced all and many types, professions, trades and callings. Numerous examples of their splendid patriotic spirit were demonstrated. A few random instances, of which the writer had personal knowledge, may be cited. A railwayman working on one of the trains plying between Dublin and the south of Ireland called to Hoban's, Parnell Street. He had, so he said, an important despatch from an I.R.A. officer which he instructed to pass on to our Headquarters. The bearer of the despatch was trustworthy and no time was

lost in having the letter duly delivered to the right quarters. In another instance a man had been released from Mountjoy jail. Previously he had undergone hunger-strike, as a result of which he required a period of time for recoupement. Besides that there was the fear that he would be re-arrested, a not unusual procedure adopted by the British at the time. Luck favoured him and, unlike some others, he was not re-arrested at the jail gates. Brought to the home of The Healy's good friends of the I.R.A./living on Phibsboro' Road, he was given food and shelter. After two or three weeks there, he undertook his journey to the country for the purpose of resuming service in the I.R.A.

Many an officer and man were familiar with the many and varied cases of kindness and generosity on the part of our friends and supporters among the civilian population. Every such gesture was appreciated by the men of the I.R.A. It must be understood, however, that every such transaction required the exercise of caution, discretion and secrecy between the people who rendered assistance and our own forces. Such people and places were not confined to any one area or section of Dublin. Our 1st Battalion had them in good number, all of which were utilised in various capacities as circumstances demanded. The risks those people ran, the difficulties they encountered, or the penalties involved, had no meaning for them when the only thing that mattered was the desire to "help the cause". Many of them could have been rich indeed had they acted treacherously and betrayed those men whom they harboured to the British authorities. There were many tempting baits and inducements but, in no instance, was the trust betrayed

or any overt act of treachery established. The integrity, sincerity and loyalty displayed by the people concerned helped immeasurably the I.R.A. Without support of that kind the I.R.A. would have been unable to continue the fight, or would have been very much hampered in its work, had it to rely exclusively and only on its own adherents and auxiliaries to provide safety and asylum to its wounded and wanted soldiers, as it was the assistance given by these people that was no less beneficial and praiseworthy than that accorded by our own.

Many other forms of support were given us by the friendly civilian population, not the least of which was financial assistance. Every appeal that had been made to them on behalf of the I.R.A. had received generous response. That was true in the early part of 1921 as at any other period of our existence. Indeed, through those several years they had contributed generously towards our arms funds and prisoners' dependants' fund. Of the latter it might be mentioned that many instances could be given of their self-sacrifice and kindness in coming to our aid for the sake of the women and children victims of British aggression. With the arrests, imprisonment or detention of such a large number of our men, the responsibility of providing for their dependents was growing apace. The fund to alleviate distress put a hard strain on the I.R.A. authorities and those who were charged with the task of dispensing it. In this connection the Irish White Cross played a magnificent and generous part towards the end in view, judging by the reports of the collectors who voluntarily gave their time and labour in soliciting subscriptions from the general public for the dependents' fund.

Great praise must be given to the Cumann na mBan for their meritorious work in that humanitarian work, making house-to-house collections for the purpose. Over a long period of time some of the collectors had worked up a regular clientele, making at least weekly calls on them for their contributions, or by means of street collections, raffles or drawings. Their work did not end there for, in many instances, these people had also to attend meetings of the Dependents' Fund as well as making visits to the homes of the dependents each week, for the purpose of disbursing the sums of money allotted to them and to report on the circumstances and wants of dependents.

In many cases the funds available were inadequate to bring sufficient succour to distressed people. Notwithstanding the splendid generosity of our friends in the United States of America, Australia and England itself and the subscriptions raised in Ireland, much poverty and privation were apparent. As most of the men of the I.R.A. were ordinary workaday people, depending on a weekly wage for a livelihood, the loss incurred by the relatives of the prisoners was incalculable and grave. Even in the face of real hardship, the people involved showed great spirit and a wonderful sense of duty and devotion to their menfolk and the cause generally. They bore their losses and their sufferings with the same fortitude, valour and devotion as the prisoners themselves. In so doing, they won the admiration and commendation of not alone the men of the I.R.A. but of the friends of Ireland everywhere. All were splendid; some perhaps more than others excelled even the men in courage, patience and resignation, not

only through that terrible phase but also during the previous five or six years. There were many who had had to face that terrible ordeal not once or twice but several times, when their loved ones had been snatched away from them and imprisoned for periods long or short because of the part they were playing in the independence movement. Due to the wonderful spirit of such brave women, the men made light of their sufferings and their burdens as prisoners or internees.

Of course, the men who had been arrested and incarcerated maintained their status and membership of the I.R.A., for, even as prisoners, they were required and generally did conform to military discipline. Theirs was perhaps the lesser but not unimportant role. They were only hors de combat in respect to active association in the fight that was being waged outside. As it was, they performed onerous and satisfactory service which called for heroism, constancy and patience of no mean order. Like us who were carrying on the fight outside prisons and camps, the prevailing standard of service permitted of neither laxity or inactivity. They and we had duties to perform in our own respective spheres and circumstances and were required to preserve the ties of camaraderie and to maintain the Volunteer spirit on any and every occasion. Each were tested in several ways, at different times and under diverse conditions. Theirs was none the less a supreme test of faith, devotion and loyalty to the ideals to which they had subscribed. By their behaviour, their every word and example would they be judged, but the main consideration suggested that they uphold our cause inside prison wall and behind barbed wires, and that

they continue to commune with their confreres who were conducting active fighting outside. In these respects the men were up to expectation. Their conduct as sentenced prisoners or internees was exemplary, praiseworthy and noble.

From the first moment of their arrests, the men behaved wonderfully and well. They had stood up to the many trials that had been imposed on them. Evidence had been forthcoming that at the period of their arrests star chamber methods had been conducted in many instances in the face of the most painful personal punishments and direct threats. Many stories were in circulation concerning the harsh treatment inflicted on some of our men at arrest or at various barracks, etc., to which they were brought after arrest. Physical violence was resorted to against some of the men in order to extract information from them both as to their own connection with the I.R.A. and their knowledge of associates and officers. Only men of great spirit and noble character could have survived the terrible ordeals and cruel torments of the fitful, artful application of "third degree" methods and "star chamber" practices which had become a not inconsiderable part of the policy of the British authorities to destroy the I.R.A. Never before perhaps were the men of the I.R.A. put on their mettle and never did they prove themselves to be truer men and truer patriots than during that eventful epoch.

The severance of the link that bound the individual Volunteer to the I.R.A. as produced by these arrests and eventual captivity had the opposite effect to that intended by the British. There was no gainsaying the fact that the loss of such men was indeed very keenly

felt by the I.R.A., not merely on account of the numbers involved as because of the influence it had on the fighting potentiality then showing signs of stiffening in the face of stern repression and utter violence exercised against our movement. One redeeming feature of the situation as represented by the arrest and incarceration of our men became clear. The men so affected were regarded as passing from one sphere of activity to another. True, the incarceration was the less spectacular of the two forms - the activity outside and inside the precincts of jails or internment camps - but it had its compensations, its value, just as it had some contributory effect on the general plan of resistance. Any weakening on the part of these men would have had damaging, deleterious repercussions on the fighting quality of our men outside. Instead, the two formed a united bloc against their assailants and their aggressors.

That there was no cessation in membership and comradeship between the two categories was proved to be a self-evident fact. Just as we outside maintained our association with the I.R.A., so in like manner the men in captivity were activated by the same motives. Jail or internment did not break their service nor destroy their discipline or esprit de corps. In every instance, they put themselves under the care of officers, or persons delegated to act as officers on their behalf, in the various camps to which they were assigned. Their domicile, therefore, conformed in every conceivable way to the high standard of service and duty to which these men were heirs in a good cause. The additional proof that these men were sound and loyal lay in the fact that, though being given every opportunity and encouragement

by their jailers to appeal against their internment, very few of them sought that means to secure their liberty.

Another aspect of the position of the Volunteers in captivity was that their names were never erased from their Companies' roll of membership, although for the time being they were considered to be casualties. It was noteworthy that Company officers submitted the names of the men of their units as they were arrested and, at later periods, to G.H.Q. for purposes connected with the dependents' fund and in order to keep a check up on general affairs of their continued service in our force.

Around the time in question the mounting roll of men of the I.R.A. captured by the British created many problems for every unit, large or small, in the Dublin Brigade, as it must have to other Brigades throughout the country. Up to date, the numbers incarcerated must have numbered tens of thousands. These included sentenced and unsentenced prisoners imprisoned and interned in various places in Ireland and England. So great were the numbers of arrests that the British had had to put all the prisons to use and, in addition, to create many large internment camps to contain them. Hence the names Ballykinlar and Curragh Camps became also household words. Such enormous losses on our part, though having a weakening effect on the numerical strength of the I.R.A., did not tend to have any great effect on the morale and fighting quality of those remaining outside.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 755(4)

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 755 (iii)

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 755 (Section 3)

Witness

Sean Prendergast,
'Upton Lodge',
30 Grace Park Terrace,
Drumcondra,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Fianna Eireann, 1911 - ;
Member of 'C' Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, 1914 - .

Subject.

National events from 1911 to the commencement of the Civil War, 1922, including the Rising of Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.260

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 755 (iii)

Chapter 19.

Once the first shock of the intensification of the guerilla warfare, and particularly the street warfare, and the subsequent onslaughts of the Crown forces had been encountered and felt, the Dublin Brigade could be said to be feeling its sea-legs. We were meeting the worst period in our existence then and, as a consequence, we as individuals entertained but one thought to strive by might and main to give of our best in the fight. No other course was open to us, due in a large measure to the strain of the times we were living in, the pace of the game that was set and sometimes by the force of circumstances, if not more often by military expediency, policy or endeavour. One time the forces of the Crown demonstrated their strength and prowess by sheer brute force, the next the I.R.A. by ruse, subterfuge or stratagem engaged in some daring exploit, the urge in each case being to exact an influence on the situation then prevailing. Meanwhile the General Headquarters of the I.R.A., forcing the issue, sought an intensification of guerilla warfare, issuing orders from time to time to keep up the pressure. 'An tOglach', the official organ, which was being circulated weekly during the period instead of fortnightly as previously, expressed the minds of G.H.Q. and, seeking in every way to stimulate enthusiasm, gave first-hand accounts of actions and episodes as the fight progressed. Exploits of daring they were which were depicted in glowing colours and by way of imparting military knowledge and to encourage the military spirit. Lectures were given to Company officers on the more important ambushes as carried out by some of the flying columns. By that means and in other ways, every opportunity was availed of to speed up activity.

As already referred to, in Dublin, street ambushing and the preparation for it became the main form of operation. Each company was required to provide for its own system of ambush groups, acting separately and independently of other units or parties. Generally Companies were only permitted to operate in their own allotted area and were given a certain amount of scope and liberty subject at first to certain limitations, which suggested that no operation of a military nature, ambushing especially, was to be carried out within the immediate neighbourhood of certain buildings that were being utilised as Dail Eireann or I.R.A. Offices or places otherwise frequented by leading officers of our G.H.Q. In some instances special permission of G.H.Q. had to be obtained beforehand for the carrying out of an ambush in such areas. These arrangements generally worked out well and up to a point were reasonably good. It became a kind of unwritten law to respect territory that was considered to be invulnerable to our side, so signally implied in those orders. Company Commanders in subsequent action sought to maintain the status quo - by no means an easy matter to do when military strategy or urgency demanded otherwise. Without overstressing the point it might be well to record that there were hardly any Battalion areas and certainly few Company areas that had not got some such places - dumps and buildings. Certainly our first Battalion had quite a number of them; and the very fact of their existence did not in any way lessen the difficulties for Battalion or Company Commanders who had to keep these things in mind when planning any form of action or operation.

We had, during that period, contrived to keep

abreast of the times and in conformity with our orders endeavoured to extend the scope for street ambushing. In order the more successfully to utilise our men to the full, graduated systems of posting parties for such operation had to be devised. The ambushing parties were of variable sizes and dispositions depending in many instances on the type of operation intended. These were placed at suitable points generally on the main thoroughfares, through which British Crown Forces patrolled or moved, in motor tenders of various denominations and makes. In some cases the latter moved singly or in convoys of two or more cars at a time. Sometimes they operated as patrol parties, but, not uncommonly, they were passing through from points to point on some military errand or mission. Besides they were sometimes fast moving high powered cars many of them being most up to date types, Lancia, Crossley, and Rolls Royce tenders then the acme of perfection and reliability which were particularly used by the British Auxiliaries. The larger three to 5 or 6 ton lorry was used by the British Army personnel.

Our form of waging street warfare necessitated the use of grenade and or revolvers. In the case of the latter a more limited but not less important use was adopted. Sometimes they were employed to break up an ambush attack; at other times their use was intended to support the man or men whose task it was to deliver the grenade attack. Very often men armed with revolvers were placed with men armed with grenades or convenient thereto in order to act as protection when the attack was delivered. Sometimes the grenade men were armed with revolvers.

In allotting men to the duties of street ambushing the greatest care had to be exercised to pick those who had specialised training in grenade throwing and aim delivery. This involved a certain amount of skill, much labour in training and a full understanding of grenade technique. Regarding these several matters it could be said that our (C) company had reached a fair state of efficiency during the course of the previous four years and especially within the two years before by means of lectures, demonstrations and practice. Few, if any, of our men were unfamiliar with that subject. Not merely that but we had what might be termed, an intimate association with manufacturing of the misile in its various composition, stages and assembly, by reason of the fact that some three of our men had given time and labour on same. Two of these, Paddy Macken and John Farrell were, unfortunately, interned in Ballykinlar at that period. The third, Danny Holmes was a prisoner in Mountjoy Jail. They each had devoted various numbers of years at that work, working under the Battalion Quartermaster and or the Director of Munitions. Part of the specialised training which our Company had gone through was conducted during 1919 and part of 1920 by a former British Army grenade instructor whose services were availed of by our former Captain Sean Flood in order to perfect our men in the use of same. This service, it must be understood was supplementary to the training which we had received or were receiving from Captain Flood and at least the two junior officers and two of the N.C.Os. Dinny Holmes and Patrick Kirk. The instruction imparted to us by our ex-British instructor concerned the use of the "Mills" which was a British Army pattern grenade. It must be recorded too that this redoubtable instructor, as well

as another, also an ex-British Army Sergeant who was "teaching" us the use of the British Army Service Lee Enfield rifle, were not duly members of the the I.R.A. The Grenade Instructor knew little of our own "Number Nine" home made bomb. He was wrapped up in the Mills and we though partial to our own type were not unduly unreasonable in "taking in" the training he imparted for we were quite adaptable to the possible use of one or the other whichever such became available or feasible In taking advantage of these men who acted as instructors the golden rule had been observed to just keep them at that as they were not considered as members of the Company. It is only fair to them to record that the persons referred to rendered us some valuable help in their various capacities though some of it was a repetition of the training we had already undergone in previous years.

Hence, it was to be expected that, in the early part of 1921, we were not behind in training or efficiency in the several spheres of military science. Some there were who made claim to the boast that our Company was one of the best in that respect. However, that may or may not be. We could undoubtedly assert that we had learned well and had been taught well in the use of such weapons as rifle, revolver and grenade. Experience and adaptability in their use would do the rest.

As times went on the Companies increased the scope and character of their ambushing plans and instead of one ambush party being on duty for one night or one place, two, three or more were planned, until every Company Area became a possible danger zone. It must not be thought, however, that every such ambush party came into action all at once or on any one occasion.

That generally depended on the activities of the British Forces and especially the movements of British Motor detachments. How often had men who had been out on ambushing parties for an hour or more in the night time reported to their Company Officers that no British activities occurred in their vicinity, or on the other hand that too great activity was noticeable on the part of the British. There were occasions too, when the British Forces were showing activity not at but in the vicinity of positions where our men were stationed awaiting to carry off an ambush. Not infrequently other Companies might have become engaged in an ambush near where our men were situated, in which event discretion was the better part of valour. In either eventualities safety lay in beating a hasty retreat or to lie low; though generally the former course was considered the most adviseable in the circumstances, as our plans were specifically made to deal a blow at a given point and any sudden alteration of that plan, without careful consideration or proper direction might not have the maximum telling effect desired. As we planned to ambush the enemy at a given point or points we in all cases selecting the locality and time for such in the full light affording the best possible advantage, reason, sound military reason dictated that we, rather than they, should set the pace in all operations of that nature.

In many instances we were groping in the dark when we could not foresee or even hazard a guess on the score of the enemy's plans, movements or activities in a given district or at any particular time. There were occasions when parties of British soldiers or auxiliaries moved along the route of the ambushing party or parties as a big convoy consisting of quite a number of motor vehicles, sometimes protected by one

or more armoured cars; of such size and disposition as to be invulnerable to the modest attacks that our men were preapred to deliver or to tackle. This was hardly to be wondered at when consideration is given to the fact that only a small number of men of the I.R.A. units armed only with grenades and or, revolvers were on duty on such occasions, thus precluding the possibility of engaging in a big attack against a force that was proximately their superior in every sense of the word. Besides the presence of armoured cars with the convoys or transports presented a problem with which our grenades and revolvers were not capable of dealing - unless we desired to make undue sacrifice of life - the lives of our own men and incidentally the civilian population in the immediate neighbourhood of the action - considerations which were of prime importance to us in the circumstances. That is not suggesting that no action could be taken against such large forces but the mens orders were to attack single lorries plying in their immediate vicinity.

The mobility, speed and characteristics of the armoured cars and even some of the motor lorries, some of which were armoured, afforded a certain greater amount of protection for the British Forces travelling a la mode. Add to that the feature that they generally operated in populous areas on the main thoroughfares and you get a fair picture of the difficulties facing the I.R.A. in pursuing action against them. Besides being afforded a certain measure of protection that way they also had quite a considerable measure of security; for only the best aimed grenade was capable of being landed into their cars when travelling at the speed which habit or orders directed them. But not

always did they move so expeditiously. There were occasions when they moved with caution and not in haste.

In the course of time the British Forces came to realise that danger lurked at any or every street corner in Dublin. We, however, knew differently - knew in particular that not every street corner was useful in the military sense for knocking up the enemy. Even some of them that were suitable were not availed of for many reasons. The compelling point in our ambush operation was to get the British when they were least on guard - to surprise them. The British Forces may have surmised that every civilian was a potential ambusher. Thus they sought to be always on the alert and were none too squeamish in their actions to eliminate them when occasion made such a course imperative.

We in the I.R.A. recognised that a fair proportion of the civilian population did not favour or support our form of warfare, although in the main many of them, due to fear of the consequences, suffered in tolerance to the ordeals imposed or resulting therefrom. With all this and despite it the I.R.A. had had to plan and take into account, as far as possible, the interests, the safety and convenience of the civilian population. Many an ambush plan had had to be scotched or scrapped because of the apparent or actual presence of people other than our own armed parties. Not so the British who worked on the principle of "business as usual" or duty first last and all the time. Unlike them we were faced with other difficulties of an individual and personal nature, one of which was the dreadful possibility of causing bodily injury or even death to the members of our own families owing to ambushing on our part. We could not even warn or

appraise them of the dangers of being in certain districts or streets where ambushes were liable to be carried out. Not that the rank and file were always aware beforehand as to the location or time of ambushes as news of these were generally only issued a short time before the enterprise and seldom over a long period and perhaps the night previous. The men were under a rule of secrecy not to give knowledge of it to any one. Actually their own personal safety depended on them adopting a non-communicative attitude in that matter.

Generally each ambush party was commanded by an officer or N.C.O. After a short time on duty in that sphere of ambush parties the men accepted as a mere matter of routine any variation or alteration in the plans accruing only in so far as the inclusion or dropping of a man on the operation. Every intended action was governed by the nature and extent of the area to be covered and the particular scope of the projected ambush or ambushes.

The importance of that form of warfare can be best guaged by the fact that our own G.H.Q. issued numerous orders from time to time, expressive of the desire to intensify our actions against the British. In like manner the Dublin Brigade authorities and our 1st Battalion O.C. - Paddy Holohan - stressed the importance of getting on with that phase of fighting. At weekly meetings of our Battalion, Officers of Companies were particularly prevailed on to get the men out on ambushing and we were urged, nay, appealed to, to show that our Battalion was alive and doing well in that sphere. There was always the urgent necessity to do so. Indeed it had been commented on by our Commandant, P. Holohan, that there was a feeling

abroad that our Battalion was behind in the ambush warfare. We were not doing enough.

These urgings and admonitions sorely aggrieved some of us Officers particularly when we knew that our commands and our men were on the spot and doing their best in the conditions then prevailing. For reasons already enumerated - the sometimes short time at our disposal between the period of the termination of our ordinary avocation or working hours and the coming on of the Curfew - and the sometimes appearance of British Forces when our men were on duty - largely nullified our efforts. But, if there was just cause for complaint on the score that Companies were not doing enough in the way of activity the words of exhortation and admonition on the part of the higher Officers, our own Commandant included, affected to bring into play a more active and a more sustained effort into the fighting.

As against that it could be said by at least some of the officers of Companies that the fault of not showing results was not due to any laxity on their part or on the part of the men under them. Rather was it due in many instances to circumstances over which we officers and the men under us had no control. One factor that materially helped to stulltify our efforts in the direction desired was that of the difficulties which some Companies, as indeed was the case with our own company, were confronted with not being able to use some of the customary halls for meetings and where we were able to do so could only muster a small group of our men at any given time and that only occasionally and spasmodically. In consequence of this we had to content ourselves at great risk to meet or assemble at points outside - in private dwellings or in the streets or alleys. We had

always the task of keeping contact with our men and our men with us for purposes of posting men to ambush parties and issuing of current orders. Many of our usual haunts were forfeit or if used at all could not be used regularly owing to repeated raids or danger of raids by the British. Such buildings as the Foresters Hall No. 41 Parnell Square, The Banba Hall, 20 Parnell Square, The house at 44 Parnell Square, the several Sinn Fein Clubs and Gaelic League Halls in our Battalion area which had been constantly in use for parades of various companies became out of bounds or had to be utilised sparingly. Some of them had to be used not always for purposes of training but as assembly points for Companies or parts of Companies, for meetings of the Battalion Staff, Battalion Council Meetings, or for special classes. In this connection it must be mentioned that even in the worst period of the fighting, 41 Parnell Square and the Banba Hall were open houses for Battalion Council Meetings although the risk of capture was ever present.

We had to be always on the alert in anticipation of raids by the British during the progress of our meetings. Precautionary measures aimed at securing protection had to be adopted for Battalion Council Meetings. A protective party of men from 'I' Company Battalion Cyclist Company generally was on duty outside the meeting place to give warning of the presence and movement convenient thereto. Similar precautions had to be taken by companies when meeting in large or small numbers. Up to that time the Battalion Council Meetings were luckily held in regular sequence, the officers attending escaping the attentions and raids of the British though we had many uncomfortable moments and a few nerve testing experiences. Companies too had been

favoured with good luck, the only one unfortunate example being "F" Company which was found off guard when raided and suffered the loss of a goodly number of their men at a meeting in a hall in Buckingham Street.

In mentioning the matter of the utilization of the various buildings for I.R.A. purposes it was as it were generally accepted policy to disguise the fact that we were I.R.A. Units. Not infrequently they were booked under such harmless titles as athletic clubs, football teams etc. These subterfuges and tricks helped us in no small measure to preserve the integrity of our units from the inroads that had been, were being or were liable to be made in pursuit of British action against such places. Small wonder then that we had come to realise the direful, threatening nature of the position we were in and that we should take appropriate steps to protect our units and our men by any and every means at our disposal.

We had to take chances and put discretion to the wind at times in using some of the above mentioned premises or any premises and run the gauntlet of discovery and capture. Perhaps the hall, 41 Parnell Square, and the Banba Hall, 20 Parnell Square afforded us a partial security on the ground that the former was one which was let and used by numerous public associations, societies and clubs and the latter was a Trades Union Hall. Each of them let out their halls for dancing etc. By that means we might be safely nestled within each foundation and perhaps because we had not many alternative places to meet. Even these did not always afford security against alarms and tidings of approaching and impending danger as English parties appeared in the vicinity on some mission or activity. We had always

to be conscious of the risks we were running on such occasions and might have no other option but to hold on, or on the other hand effect to gracefully retire from the scene.

The arrangements of only being able to assemble a few men at a time was a regular nightmare to many of us officers who had a large number of men to contend with. That was so in the case of our Company. It was less so in the case of officers with a small roll of membership. The particular circumstances of our Company in that respect was that of being confronted with a perplexing problem whereby all the members could not be paraded on the one occasion or in one building without imperilling their personal liberty. We could have carried on better were we able to meet together in that way and so do our work much better and more expeditiously instead of having to do it in parts and in a round about fashion.

At the end of February 1921 the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. was militarily still in the field or rather on the streets of Dublin bombing the British forces whenever and however favourable opportunity occurred to do so. There was no lessening in the manifold difficulties that our men had to face in the bombing attacks which were being carried out during that period. Not the least difficulty and annoyance was the variation and extension of the Curfew hours. In that way we were denied certain useful periods of time for our military activities, and consequently felt ourselves tied to shorter hours for so doing. The British in a sense benefited by the imposed curfew as they strained every nerve to overcome our powers of resistance by curtailing valuable time, every moment of which was conceived to be

of relative importance.

Adjusting our plans to beat the Curfew hours and still strike telling blows against the British became a problem that tested the mettle and character of officers of Company Units. The men in a self-sacrificing spirit likewise adjusted themselves to the time factor in order to keep pace with the increasing tempo of street ambushing and the devised plans for them. Every company in the Dublin Brigade area was more or less poised for assault. Our own "C" Company contributed its share in the general plan. The main concern was to come into action and show results always. That word always did not however occur in every instance for the simple reason that ambush parties owing to extranious circumstances, were unable on many occasions to deliver and bring off an ambush operation in proportion to the plans that were afoot and the number of ambush parties and men that were employed every night in the week. Reports of abortive ambushes, of ambushes that might havebeen, and sometimes the sparcity of enemy movements during the allotted time at their disposal for that duty were not uncommon features; indeed in some instances were too common and commonplace.

Our Company, as indeed other companies as well, had quite a toll of misadventures and misfortunes on that score. The amount of time and labour expended was often spoiled as a result, much to the chagrin and disgust of the men themselves who felt deeply upset for being frustrated in carrying off their several coups. Of the men it could be said they were splendid and though facing up to grave trials gave much of the spare time they possessed, and lived up to the best traditions of the Dublin Brigade. It was found too and many a

Company officer could give testimony to it that the men placed on ambush duty behaved wonderfully whether they succeeded or failed in coming into action. It was felt that in many cases the fault was not theirs for not being more fortunate in their quest for hitting hard decisive blows.

Many accounts could be recorded in proof of the heroism, fortitude and constancy of such men whether acting in small or large groups or parties. In that respect mention might be made of individual cases of bravery of those who showed signal courage in the midst of danger. Such cases were not rare among the Dublin Brigade. Less rare too was the enthusiasm of the men to volunteer their services. These cases concern our Company but they may be typical of other Companies in the Dublin Brigade. As already mentioned certain types of men were regularly utilised for ambushing. Other men feeling peeved or slighted sought similar consideration and service, beseeching Company Officers to put them on that work and activity. Citation of a few cases by way of example may suffice. Take the case of one of our Company members who was lame. He (Sean Morrissey) could march as well and as fast as any others in the Company. Added to that was his regular attendance at parades, route marches, field manoeuvres and patrol duties. His physical infirmity did not cause him to sit down when there was the question of serving his country. He became one of our Company Signallers of which he soon became proficient. Even that did not satisfy him; he wanted to be on ambush parties and to take part in ambushing. Another, a young lad, Eddie Flood who was a brother of our former Company Captain, Sean Flood, sought to prevail on us to put him on ambush parties. The fact that already his family -

there were five of them in the I.R.A. - did not deter him from making the effort to do big things. Strange as it may seem his big complaint was that he had been "kept in the background too long". He deduced, or blamed the fact that he was in the same Company as his brother Sean our former Captain. Indeed he had often murmured against being held down in such a way. The new urge was to kick the traces which Sean's absence helped to undo. Piteously he pleaded for an active part in the armed activities of the Company. His wish was granted.

A third case concerned a group of men of the Company attending the first aid class, showing thereby a willingness and solicitude to engage in the fighting That in short was the keynote of their demands.

Cases of elderly men who had big domestic responsibilities - fathers of large families and the like - some who were not considered active enough for the quick movements of street warfare and those who in one way or another showed signs of physical weakness, apart altogether from those who were impatient or "jumpy" as well as some who were undergoing military specialised training in other spheres which were sought to be retained at all costs created problems for Company Officers. In several instances men in these categories felt it hard to acquiece to any form of inactivity or to remain inactive when there was work to be done, especially when some of their immediate comrades were being availed of for such duties. It followed then as a natural consequence that, if at all, these men could only be used sparingly. But time and circumstances change and so it was that as the guerrilla warfare in Dublin developed use was made of some of these men in some capacity - Company Officers always keeping in mind the importance of maintaining as far as possible the fabric of the specialised training services of first

aid and signalling.

Much could be written on the score of the many willing volunteers for duty on ambushing. Old and young the active and the not so active vied with one another for the work. The older they were the more insistent were their pleadings and demands to partake in the work to be let do things "the same as the young fellows" as some of them put it, but that work was generally more for the fleet of foot, the young and the active, a fact begot by experience as many had learned. "To hit and run" quickly was ever the safest course to pursue on such occasions. Speed in bringing off an ambush and getting away were vitally essential conditions and considerations in that type of warfare then becoming fast and furious. If there was any choice it was and had to be in favour of the young fast-moving and least cumbersome among our men and if perchance we, the Company Officers, deigned to waive the point to admit the inclusion of others who were a bit elderly and less active, only considerations of extreme necessity prompted and advised the course.

Besides the many difficulties, as set forth in previous paragraphs we had to contend with, not the least was the activities of other ambush parties adjacent to or in the immediate neighbourhood where our men were situated. Company Officers never knew and were never appraised what other Units contemplated to do or were doing. Anything could be happening fifty, a hundred or more yards away. As activities were conducted at the discretion of officers of Company Units and independent and distinct from other Units, arrangements by way of liaison did not exist nor were any efforts made to acquaint them of any such intended action or actions. The possible effect of such was that it created at times

overlapping and/of cutting across other people or other units work, not to mention the likelihood of clashing all of which accentuated the many other difficulties confronting ambush parties. Many lurid examples could be given of the operation of such plans or of the ramifications and dangers of such a proceeding in which recourse was had to the quantative nature of providing bombing and ambush parties rather than to the qualative selecting and arranging of them in such a way as not to trip up others on the same duties.

Pertinent to that whole question of widespread bombing as conducted by units of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. against the British forces and by way of illustration several ambushes that were carried out in our First Battalion area may be cited. Some such occurred quite adjacent to our Company operational zone at a time when our men were on duty for ambushing. These were the the respective ambushes at North King Street in which men of 'B' Company were involved; the ambushes conducted by 'H' Company at Parnell Street and by the same Company at Upper end of Capel Street; the ambush engaged in by the 5th Battalion at North Frederick Street which, without minimising their importance from the military standpoint conduced to neutralise the power and effectiveness of our men on the several occasions and caused them to retire from their positions before the arrival of possibly large reinforcements of British forces. Any other course would have left us as it would leave others similarly placed in a very invidious position indeed.

Similarly any action carried out by our unit effected other neighbouring units and in consequence cut across their plans. The results accruing from these were not always satisfactory. Where such conditions prevailed

many other difficulties were bound to arise. We had no means of changing the procedure without infringing the effectiveness, the initiave and the movements of Company Units or in upsetting the independent discretionary powers residing in Company Officers to do their work in their own particular way and without let or hindrance from other officers or commands. They, like us, had no other option but to accept the rules of the game that was being played on the streets of Dublin.

It was plain as the months progressed that we were all set for a long and tedious ordeal of attrition. This was made evident by the issuing of larger supplies of munitions, particularly grenades, an odd revolver and some revolver ammunition. Our Battalion Q.M., (Joe Corless) and his assistant were busy men indeed, each working like trojans to keep pace with supply and demand. Joe was, if anything, a trustworthy and efficient Q.M. We doubted if a better could be found for the job which of late had reached enormous proportions. Complaints, there were, by the score, on the question of supplies; none could be raised against our Q.M. or his worth and work. It was through no fault of his that supplies were not always available. When forthcoming they were distributed to the various Companies by means of a workable system which in the interest of all he had adopted as a kind of fixed principle.

He had an unenviable task of looking after the Battalion Stores, being responsible for the procuring, the distribution and safety of all warlike material entrusted to his care. As regards the latter the question of storage was indeed a vital one. This was where our Company rendered very special service. We placed our Company Dump or part of it in Glasnevin at his disposal.

our Company Q.M., Sean Nathan working in close co-operation with him, the two of them collaborating in various capacities and on the broad basis of partnership in respect of the utilisation and occupation of the premises. Regarding the occupancy of the premises only one severe condition was enjoined. The Battalion Q.M. was prevailed on and agreed to maintain the strictist secrecy as to the nature of the dump and to treat the place as private where only the smallest number of people were to be permitted to use it. These conditions were made necessary for reasons of security and to spare the dump from being discovered and raided by British Forces.

Our Battalion Quartermaster's job was not made anything lighter by the several difficulties associated with the safe transporting to that and to other rendezvous. Such difficulties would have daunted other men but not Joe. He possessed a latent characteristic for doing things as they should and must be done possessed not merely a dogged pertinacious will but a stout heart which admitted neither defeat or frustration His was a coolness, a sangfroid and a resourcefulness of no mean order or degree. The part which he played in his particular sphere and at such a time could be regarded as marvellous in the extreme. If ever a man was brave and devoted and trustworthy he was. More than that he was a man of many parts, versatile in speech and manner, a sometimes cold rigid disposition, at other times fulsome and exuberant and full of gaiety. He was one not easy to be taken in or beguiled who prided himself and others asserted it, as possessing a keen business instinct and acumen, who showed himself to be shrewd in all his transactions, a man hard to bargain with, and one who could, and would, hold out for the

last cent and possibly get it. These descriptions could aptly fit him in his capacity as Battalion Q.M. But neither of these detracted from his many other good qualities and characteristics as far as work for the Battalion was concerned.

Apropos of the hard bargaining on the part of the Q.M. I had known men who in their dealings with him had boasted that they had "wiped his eye" (By-the-bye "wiping his eyes" or "eye-wiping" was regarded as a mild form of extracting a mead of gain or privilege. In the particular instance referred to the words meant that some material or financial point had been scored over him and to his(the Q.M's disadvantage). A simple bargain indeed! One, however, had only to consider the Battalion Q.M. being so easily hoodwinked or fooled True there were occasions when hard-bargaining were secured between him and the Company Quartermasters and some particularly outstanding gain resulted, but generally speaking the Battalion Q.M. true to the dignity and responsibility of his office conformed to the ideal of getting and giving value for the money involved or expended. The same applied to Companies It is not to be regarded as unlikely that he sometimes felt that others (that is Company Quartermasters) were trying to get more than their share of and value for the war material passed around. That was his sphere to share and transfer materials to Companies; none could deny that he carried out that task in the letter and the spirit.

If ever a man was charged to perform an onerous and important task that man was Battalion Quartermaster Corless. It is in no small measure due to him that the Companies in the Battalion were, from the point

of view of armaments served well or as well as they could be considering the not too plentiful supply available at the time. Unfortunately there was not always enough to go round and no Company could boast to have enough. Grenades were in plentiful supply due in the main to their being I.R.A. manufacture. Rifles were being taken from Companies for transference to flying columns in the country, the Battalion Quartermaster and Company Quartermasters co-operating in the transaction. An arrangement was in operation whereby companies passing over rifles in that way received payment in exchange or in lieu of small arms or revolvers. These several transactions involved additional work on the Battalion Quartermaster and the respective Company Quartermasters. As against that it provided us with more suitable material and reduced our stores of big materials made room in our dumps for smaller items such as grenades etc.

The importance of a good Quartermaster - Brigade, Battalion or Company - at that juncture was a prize equally as valuable as a fighting man or good Commander. In every respect our Battalion Quartermaster fitted into the order of things in every conceivable way. Even in his own right he was a leader of men in so far as his position rendered such possible for he had delegated powers and functions derived from the Battalion Commandant which gave him certain authority over others - his subordinate Company Quartermasters. They were his sole charge as far as commissariat stores and finance were concerned. He was responsible for arming of each Company, was required to keep a register of all war materials in each Company, was responsible for their safety and storage, and in turn required to furnish reports of all these matters to the Battalion and

Brigade. He had to keep records of all fresh purchases and acquisitions of munitions to Companies and Battalions. Truly an unenviable job which none but a real "live-wire" could be expected to fill.

There were indications too that the British were in no better plight than we were during that most exciting period. Due to the ever-growing bombing attacks and other activities which the I.R.A. were carrying out on a wide scale the British had to adopt new and more vigorous measures. It would be fair to assume that these several and multifarious I.R.A. attacks increased rather than diminished their (the British Forces) difficulties. Obviously they were learning the lesson that the guerrilla warfare as pursued by the I.R.A. in Dublin was more deep seated and devastating than they were inclined to at first admit or to anticipate. They had come to realise that to succeed they should have to put into commission greater potentalities of men and materials, newer devices and a stiffening up of the measures to deal with the menace that the I.R.A. had created and were continuing to sustain They also knew and appreciated the value of time as an important factor in the prevailing situation.

Hence there was nothing unusual - indeed it was to be expected that among some of the measures open to the British to adopt and exploit would be additional armoured vehicles, high powered military cars, wired in cage like lorries and special crews to man them. They went further by making increased demands on their auxiliary force - the semi-military cum police force that they had brought into being and which consisted in the main of ex-British army officers of various ranks.

Additional demands were made on their Intelligence Agents and they introduced the use of foot patrols of British Army and Auxiliary personnel. The latter was a new inovation devised to counteract the operations of our ambushing parties most of which were being employed to attack motor transport.

The wired-in caged motors were humoursly referred to by children and not a few adults as "monkey cages". To us they represented something more sinister and dangerous. Designed by the British in their great extremity to ward off the effects of bomb throwing attacks these contraptions resembled circus or commercial vehicles rather than military conveyances. The big difference and one that was very pronounced, underlying the use for which they were intended was that the "cargo" was, or were real live, highly trained and well-equipped warriors, who were always on guard to deal with any would-be attackers. Regarded by the British as invulnerable targets they served the purpose to prevent bombs (or grenades) from entering and exploding within them, for the aforesaid wire construction covered the front, sides and roof, leaving only a small opening in the rear to admit of ingress and exit for the occupants. Thus they acted as a barrier against our attacks.

Undeniably the British made good use of their preponderous reserve of men and materials. We, on our part, were governed by the principle of utilising small groups and the smallest amount of men in any selected operation. In that sphere we were the attackers, they were the attacked. We provoked the offensive. They were on the defensive. Ours was more a "war of nerves" in which wits, cunning and speed, rather than big battles or campaigns sufficed, or were sought to suffice to wear

down the morale and discipline of the "big battalions" arrayed against us. But these were signs that the British were learning something of our tactical operational measures and as we could discern, tried to imitate us, by employing small groups on their expeditions or patrol enterprises. Like us they had to be alert cautious and show initiative if and when opportunity occurred. Unlike us, who were an invisible force, they operated as an army which was always in view and so open to attack.

Sometimes their strength and the consciousness of their own greatness lured them into a false position and goaded them to take unnecessary risks. But not for long or continuously did they act so. Experience was teaching them that even with all these important attributes credited to them, including the highly prized potentialities so much in their favour they were unable to sway the course of the fighting and to win, Their difficulties were no less real and troublesome than were ours. The variety and extent of our armed activities was causing them much concern, for they knew not when or how attacks would be delivered against them, by reason of their fighting against an invisible guerrilla force that had its roots firmly set on native soil - a force that was making the pace and selecting the ground to suit the specific type of warfare. Go where they would or in whatever formations they choose, danger and the possibility of danger in one form or another appeared to loom in sight and ever an anon there always appeared the spectre of what they had ever regarded as the "I.R.A. Gunmen" on the horizon, however insignificant those self same "gunmen" and their attacks were.

Here was a type of warfare that did not always

conform to regular and orthodox military standards, that was not influenced and perhaps was not always governed by strongly built bastion structures or mechanical appliances or equipment or even well regulated positions. Little value was placed on the ordinary codes of warfare as they apply to belligerents. We were rebels, murderers, unlawfully at large and fighting unlawfully!!

A word here to the unenlightened. It must be borne in mind that the I.R.A. during the first three months of 1921 had not thrown into the warfare all the men and resource at its disposal. Only a small proportion of men and material was being employed. Our tactics and our policy at the time were directed to wear down the British forces. No effort had been made by our authorities to bring all our forces into action at any one time. Indeed such would have been impossible, it would have been suicide to do so unless we wished to stage another Easter Week. That seemed hardly likely. Newer methods of warfare had overtaken us and were being availed of and put into practical use.

Certain thoroughfares in Dublin had become prominent in the military sense due to the number and intensity of street bombings. One of these was the 3rd Battalion Area and on Redmonds Hill and Wexford Street in the south side, a short narrow street that divided Aungier Street and Camden Street. Those streets were habitually used by British forces plying from the city to Portobello Barracks and vice versa. Several streets jutted from the north entrance of Redmond's Hill, Digges Street, Bishop Street and Peter's Row, at the southerly end Cuffe Street. The strange feature about Redmond's Hill was that it was a bottle neck. Ambushing at this

point was carried out with such recurring frequency as to cause it to be regarded and called "the Dardanelles".

Mention must be made of other personalities who were officers of the 1st Battalion Staff. In that connection the name of our Commandant, Patrick Holohan, stands out pre-imenent and as a shining light as supreme head and leader. Already his name, his personality and some of his work has been dealt with - especially in regard to some aspects of his association with the Fianna from 1909 to 1915, his part in the Easter Week 1916 Rising and his imprisonment in 1918 or 1919 for singing "seditious songs". "Paddy" as he was more commonly called by those of us who were close and intimately associated with him had recently taken over charge of our Battalion having succeeded our former Commandant Tom Byrne. Prior to his elevation to that post he had served in 'F' Company as Captain. It could be said that from that period he was deeply engrossed, firmly attached to and immensely proud of his Battalion - nay more, he moved, lived for and had his being centred therein. His was a type of personality that was strong virile and expressive which backed by a robust physical and mental framework sought to dominate or to influence the shaping of events and of men in the colourful exciting periods of the times. Casual acquaintanceship with him produced the inevitable verdict that our Commandant was an eegoist, one who was himself always and ever. On closer intimacy and more intimate association Paddy appeared a more normal, sociable and lovable character. If perchance he was an egoist or possessed the ego spirit as some people declared the fact of his rank in the I.R.A. and perhaps outward appearances and speech rather than his nature contributed somewhat to create impressions that he was such. In a more general way his lofty appearance, his way of

addressing men and his virile, straight to the chin approaches conduced in no small way to the beliefs or fancies that Paddy was anything but one of ourselves. That he was a type that went straight to the point and was direct and incisive in commanding or giving commands none could gainsay. In plain words he commanded and he commanded surely, personally and determinedly. These were his main military characteristics.

To those of us whose knowledge extended for ten years or more impressions gained went far to assess that Paddy loved soldering. He had grown to love all the work in the Fianna and Volunteers - every aspect, training organisation and operational. All were dear to him as his continued service proved. He brought that love with him when he became our Commandant of which it could be said he was at home, a man reigning over men. To some Paddy was rough, robust and stern; could one forget that even these things were qualities in an officer and all of a sort that sometimes produced good soldiers. In a bigger sense he was a "go-getter" and "up-and-get-them type that always wanted to do things and to show results wherever or however they would be attained. Few could be more an officer than he for he had many attributes in his favour as Commandant of our Battalion.

In a personal or individual sense Paddy Holohan was a good friend, a loyal comrade and a true associate. As an officer he was a firm and strong disciplinarian His was not a hard nature to understand once you peirced a not too hardened exterior which was seldom invulnerable to a good deed or a kind word for he was in ordinary civilian life gayest than the gayest. Many typical examples of these trends in his make up and general characteristics may be accounted here. In the

Fianna (pre 1916) days Paddy could throw himself headlong into any danger, row or fracas in which politics or political feeling were contributing factors to stir up occasional outbursts of excitement. At such times he could display the utmost contempt for and utter disconcern of the consequences of his actions. In play, in sport or in revelery, Paddy could "go all out" and be "in the thick of it" even if by so doing he imperilled his limbs or his liberties. How many a time did he come off second best on the hurling field which brought him a fractured collar-bone or other injury. How many times did he engage in tearing down Imperial flags that were freely and provokingly displayed on the occasion of the English King's visit to Dublin in 1912 or some other British event or festivity; in the many clashes that occurred at British recruiting meetings held during the 1914 and 1918 World War; or the wild scenes of orgy fostered by British supporters during armistice day celebrations? Then he would display a reckless abandon which his physique and his size went far to emphasise. (Paddy was 6 ft. high and of strong well proportioned build).

Easier for him to throw hisweight about than to recover his balance. Not that he was always displaying his physical prowess and human faculties for purposes of creating or seeking trouble. They were only incidental to a nature that was truly vigorous, fairly excitable and mainly expansive but a nature that was given to fun, frivolity and enjoyment in whatever way and by whatever means they could be sought. He could as easy be "the fun of the party" at a ceilidhe or soiree as in doing a turn on a concert platform. In either event he could be seen and heard to advantage

at Fianna or Volunteer functions rendering the every famous Wexford Insurrectionary Ballad "Kelly the boy from Killan" or the more recent "Blood and Tears" song "Vengence" (which had become popular after 1916). Even on one occasion he made bold to entertain concert-goers by a violin recital; who could deny that he made a brave show even though he was only an amateur having but a few months tuition to his credit and the audience were not over cynical or severe. Then you found him as he was a big boy and one that refused or did not know how to grow up in the sense that some grow to maturity by stages or through the passage of time.

. Another member of the first Battalion Staff that fitted well into his post was George Irvine the Battalion Vice-Commandant. He was an intellectual and a dreamer, in the sense that all our greatest Irish Irelanders were dreamers in that they strove for and cherished dearly the ideal of the Gealic State. He was the embodiment of nobility, of honesty and of honour. Senior in age and with few exceptions in rank as a Volunteer Officer, his strength of years of service in our cause had been marked with ability, impersonal loyalty and sheer hard working enthusiasm in any work he gave aid to. George had some years previously come to our Battalion from the 4th Battalion in which he had served as a Captain prior to and during Easter Week 1916. He was closely associated with many distinguished officers - Eamonn Ceannt, Con Colbert, John McBride, Pearse etc. For his part in the Rising he was sentenced to death.

Quiet, reserved and taciturn he had a depth of character out of the ordinary. He brought tact, devotion, and enthusiasm into his work as Second Officer of the Battalion. He was assiduous in all matters appertaining.

to the welfare of the different special services and much of the success, especially the continual existence of these classes was due to his labours. That duty he pursued with vigour and zest and with undiminishing perseverence, unique as they were supreme. So absolutely and so resolutely did he perform that duty that he was looked upon by some of the tank and file as a hard task-master, a stern disciplinarian and one who was too severe and exacting in his work. Little was it known and perhaps less was it appreciated that our Vice Commandant was acting under orders and that at times these same orders signified that the services he be maintained at all hazards.

His actions then in that regard were not only typical of the personality of the man but of our movement which prescribed duty and service as being sacred and lofty. They proved the good qualities of an officer whose main concern was for the things that were, should be and must be, and not the go as you please, happy go lucky approach to the things that matter. We officers knew his worth, his qualities and his service, and knowing them regarded him as a very efficient, practical and beloved associate and one who did his duty at all times faithfully energetically and efficiently, quietly and without fear or favour.

No Battalion could exist in the midst of danger and difficulties without the services of a good Adjutant Ours in the person of Paddy Byrne lived and flourished in the dark and evil days of 1921. Here was a patient diligent and conscientious worker, the penman of the Battalion, who was the essence of good fellowship, good order and a great favourite among the officers of the Battalion. His find personality was stamped on every work he performed and in everything he put his hand to.

In the onerous and ardous duties attaching to his office he showed many outstanding characteristics not least of which was a great aptitude for work and care and attention to every detail of duty. So ponderous and difficult was the work at times that not a few officers wondered how he could cope with it. None but a man who was steadfast and persistent and in love with his work could hope to succeed in the face of the enormous difficulties in which he sometimes found himself The "written word" to him was no less a symbol of duty than the gun was to the combattant. Laborious work it was too - the compiling of records of the Battalion, the issuing and despatch of orders from the Battalion to the various Companies; the circulating of orders from G.H.Q. and from the Brigade Commands, and the maintenance of contacts between Company Adjutant and in general the Companies. Everything and anything that was clerical came under his aegis and without his service our Battalion Commander and our Battalion could not for long exist.

Thus was our Battalion staff - Commandant, Vice-Commandant, Battalion Adjutant and Battalion Quartermaster The Battalion Council consisted of the various Captains of Companies, Battalion Intelligence Officer, Battalion Police Officer, Battalion Armourer and the two Officers from the special services - First Aid and Signalling.

Chapter 20.

The streets of Dublin became veritable battle centres where many bloody encounters were fought, spasmodically at first, but later in growing fury and memontum. As time progressed and as experience was gained innumerable operational exploits became acceptable features of I.R.A. activity. Of the men, especially the men of our Company, who participated in ambushing a few, general reference must be made. Here were youths and young men ranging from 18 to 30 years. These only possessed a limited and in many instances little knowledgeable military training, certainly not anything like the training of those arrayed against them. One of their big advantages in their favour was that they were disciplined and orderly to an uncommon degree. More than that they were game and eager to fight. No need to apply force to make them do so; no endeavour, no sacrifice was too great for them; they would go to any length to prove their loyalty to and their faith in our cause. Any enterprise that called for dash, initiative and daring commanded their support. Indeed the weakness of our position was that they could not be allutilised together. One could write at arms length on that subject to explain the feelings and desires of the men in that regard.

It could be claimed with some truth that the members of our Company excelled in the use of grenades, because of the specialised training they had received, and that we were fortunate in having men (particularly one of the officers) of the Company giving full time service, under direction of the Director of Munitions - Seán Russell - to their manufacture. Consequently we had

more than a passing interest in the matter. Every available moment had been availed of to perfect our men in the art of throwing that missile. And the rather funny way we sometimes practised the art? How often had we assembled in some field at Finglas or Ballymun in the north suburbs of Dublin, and amused ourselves throwing stones, as if we were boys? But the stones we threw were of a selected size, shape and weight - the nearest to a grenade. Hours and hours were devoted to that task. Thus many of our men became adept and skilful in lobbing or throwing them.

In course of time we built up quite a considerable number of squads or groups for duties connected with ambushing, adding to the number as time went on. Sometimes part of a half Company or part of a section with appropriate officers and N.C.Os. would be detailed.

The requisite amount of material had to be furnished for these: truly a trying and arduous task or series of tasks for Company officers and the Company Quartermaster, trying and arduous from the point of view that in many cases the men had to come from different parts of the city, and the materials had to be in many cases transferred from man to man or from dumps to men prior to the occasion. The Company Quartermaster had no easy or pleasant job, as such entailed more than ordinary care and management. The difficulties were not as pronounced in the case of men and there were some, who could keep an odd revolver or grenade in their homes. Some were able to keep a quantity on chance as it were. But where it was not always found possible to use men and materials of that category, recourse had to devolve on the Quartermaster for arranging the best possible alternative plan for keeping supplies available and

convenient and always with a view to their being wanted at any given moment.

This was where a good Company Quartermaster was highly desirable and necessary. Fortune favoured us in that connection. Ours was a man who was attentive, alert, and resourceful. Company Quartermaster Seán Nathan gave early promise of all the qualities of a wartime Quartermaster. He was second to none in the Battalion. For one thing he was gifted with a knowledge of the use of tools and he lacked nothing in ingenuity and craftsmanship for the safe disposal of all materials entrusted to his care. Such were the workings of an acute alert mind that he wouldn't "keep all his eggs in the one basket". He provided several alternative places as temporary dumps to give effect to the requirements of always having materials on hand for emergencies, always of course, keeping in mind and using our big Company dump, which by the way was a considerable distance away from our customary field of operations.

He had fitted up a place in his own home in Lower Dorset Street for storing some of the materials, provided another spot in Joe McDonagh's shop in the same street, and secured the ready help of a friend of our cause, Miss Nelly Doyle, who had a dairy shop opposite to MacDonagh's, where he could hand over and deposit some of our munitions, otherwise he could not have carried out his work. Patiently, persistently and painstakingly he worked, and never showing a care and seldom worry in the doing. So thorough, methodical and exact was he that he could easily lay his hands on the material required. He was a type that had through a course of personal mental training acquired the habit of remembering things. We had only to

acquaint him of the amount of material required, the men for whom such was required, specify the time, and lo! it was done prompto! In the peculiar circumstances in which we were placed and especially his own situation in regard to the separated points of the dumps, it was nothing short of marvellous that he could perform such difficult tasks. Even his own wife was a great help to us in innumerable ways; indeed some of his daughters too. Often Mrs. Nathan helped in transferring rifles, revolvers and grenades from place to place, even vied with her husband in giving service to Ireland in that and in other spheres. Her help and indeed her pram was of great use in that work.

That Company Quartermaster Nathan was keen, alert and adaptable, we had every reason to observe and attest. His mind was ever working in the directions of procuring, distributing and minding of materials. It was a pleasure to work with him; none but those who worked intimately could assess his qualtities and greatness as a Quartermaster. There were alsways certain risks that he had to run which few could undertake so joyously and even jokingly or in such a matter-a-fact way. He was always at his best in times of difficulty or when he was wanted most. Time and labour meant nothing to him. He had a hard job, but he tackled it in the way that was dear to him, the hard way. He wanted no sinecure - he got none. His greatest asset was that he had an unusual aptitude for the work allotted to him. He inordinately liked handling "stuff", our war stuff. He loved to have scope for putting things "safely away". He was afforded ample facilities and opportunities for that when he took over our dump and prepared others of lesser but useful qualities.

Seán was clever and shrewd in many of his transactions in the purchase and procuring of munitions, considering himself an able skilled bargainer. It was his big boast. Generally and not infrequently he was entitled to some measure of praise in that regard. How many bargains did he secure from "P.J." (That was the title he applied to Battalion Q.M. Corless). Though there were others who made bold to declare that "P.H. was too cute - he is not easy codded", nobody was more insistent on that than Nathan.

If there was one thing that Nathan excelled in it was in quick incisive memory. It was his masterpiece. There was a certain degree of adaptability in the way he managed to keep records of Company stores, equipment and funds. They were mystifying to everyone but himself. He put his knowledge of repairing houses and installing of various houshold accessories or gadgets to good use in preparing safe dumps for large or small amounts of our stores. How he gloated over the tricky traps and devices to conceal same; and rightly, as it brought out the best in the man. So thorough and secure were they that in at least two of the places that he had prepared or had some hand in preparing, searches by enemy forces failed to unearth the contraband stuff. One of these raids was on MacDonagh's shop; another was during an exhaustive investing of a large area which took in Nathan's home. The latter exhibition of massed raiding might have had disastrous results for our Quartermaster and our Company. Even on one occasion our dump at Glasnevin was raided by British forces, fortunately without serious result, for which we had to appraise Nathan for his handiwork.

Nathan also prided himself on being able to cover up his work without leaving any traces or suspicions that he was engaged in any type of what the British would call "unlawful actions," a no easy thing to do during that period when there were so many pitfalls and dangers of commission and omission. There were always likely prying eyes; there was always the danger of inconsiderate or loose talk to be reckoned with, and one had to work carefully and in devious ways to convey the impression of being a good citizen. Truly, Seán Nathan and his wife were wonderful. Indeed it could be said that she was more wonderful than he in the sense that there was no obligation on her part to do the work. That brave woman took great risks, oblivious of time and danger, without fear or question. The Nathans' home was ever at our disposal for the affairs of the Company, meetings of Company officers and rendezvous for Company members for transferring of munitions. It was a vital and necessary part of our existence and life as a Company, for from that place radiated as it were, many forms of activity associated with our Company. Time without number we had held Company council meetings there. How often was their home in requisition when no others were available? How many of our men passed through the portals of that dwelling on one occasion or other to be met with the welcoming words "Come in"? How many guns, revolvers, quantities of ammunition, or grenades were handled, cleaned, and transferred to or from there? Even repaired and overhauled, oiled and put into service! Who could record the hundred and one transactions associated with his work, financial and material? His knowledge or his memory was hardly ever at fault. One had only to tell him to do a thing, whether it was in the nature of attending a meeting

or to providing men with guns, and as sure as day it was done, and the principal trait of all he wasnever known to fail in the latter part of his work.

Intelligence and observation on the activities of British forces and those who worked in and for the British regime formed an important item of work in our (First) Battalion, in the interest of which selected men were assigned. Thus it was that Tom Walsh became our Battalion Intelligence Officer. A Corkonian, Tom had lived many years in Dublin, where he became deeply absorbed in the Irish-Ireland movement, being closely associated with many of the highlights of the Gaelic League and Volunteer Organisations, and in a very particular way with the late Peadar Clancy in our Company of Volunteers, and later as a business partner in the Republican Outfitters in Talbot Street. That partnership had been dissolved and during the period under review he was co-owner of a similar business establishment trading under the title Brennan and Walsh, 5 Upper O'Connell Street. (By the same token his partner in that venture (Maurice Brennan) was also deeply engrossed in the I.R.A., being at the time on the staff of the Dublin Brigade. Intelligence Officer Walsh, like Brennan (who was an "F" Company, 1st Battalion, man) had participated in the Rising of 1916, both having been tried by British courtmartial; Walsh was, I think, sentenced to death, later commuted to penal servitude, he having served with the Four Courts garrison under our then Company Captain, Frank Fahy. Part of the sentence he served in English prisons and he was released at the general amnesty in June, 1917.

Tom Walsh was a great favourite, of a simple, lovable and winsome disposition, a nature that showed outward signs

of fussiness and exciteability to a degree that one would associate with being highly strung and "nervy", and a concern for getting some affair in which he was interested done quickly. His very speech, his every action suggested impatience; not uncommonly, however, he was cool, calculating, exact in all work of the I.R.A. He could rise to great heights within the range of business or political affairs. In council and in the affairs of his business he was energetic, practical and prepossessing, and exhibited that sense of proportion of keen judgment, of fine business acumen which singled him out as a person of no little importance. Warm in his affectations for things Irish and in the affections he had for the cause and those who rendered it service, he won the equally warm affection of all whom he came in contact with. They were legion and varied, and consisted of no one particular class, but many from the humble layman to the professed ecclesiastic as co-workers in our cause or as clientelle in their business concern respectively. Much of that business suffered as a result of the part he and Maurice were playing in the National Movement, but Tom Walsh and for that matter Maurice Brennan were not the kind of people who would sit down and moan over their losses, but, instead, gave much of their time and attention to I.R.A. affairs. Few men possessed such latent talents for observing and obtaining information in a greater degree than Tom Walsh.

Our Battalion Police Officer was Mark Byrne of "A" Company; the Battalion Armourer, Seán Derrington of "D" Company, the late Seán Heuston's Company. Seán Derrington had served in the Mendicity during the Rising of 1916, being subsequently sentenced to death by the British For several years prior to and up to 1921 he had filled the

position of Battalion Armourer. No better could be found, he being adept and skilled in the work. He imparted training and knowledge to others, instructing special classes in the same.

Vincent Gogan, our Battalion Officer of First Aid or Medical Service, was a member of, I think, "B" Company, with which Company he had served a number of years. He participated in the Rising of 1916, sparing no effort to train others in the special class-he had made a particular study of medical work, being a most efficient instructor and leader.

Our Battalion Signalling Officer who was responsible for that service was Jimmy Mason, a member of "B" Company, and also a participant in the Rising of 1916.

Among the officers of the Battalion of the period, were, Peadar McMulty, Captain of "A" Company; Phil Leddy was also one of the officers of same; Frank Daly, Captain of "B" Company; "D" Company, Peter O'Connor; "C" Company, the writer; "E" Company, Willie Corri; "F" Company, P.J. Ryan; "G" Company, Bob Oman; "H" Company, Seumas Kavanagh; "I" Company, (Cyclists), Jerry Golden; "J" and "K" Company, Val Forde, Mick Fitzpatrick; "L" and "M" Company (Blanchardstown), Andy Dowling. Of that number Captain Frank Daly was senior in rank. Prior to the Rising of 1916 he had been officer in charge of the Engineering and Armouring class, which at the time met in General Headquarters, No. 2 Dawson Street. He was assigned a special task in the plans for the insurrection, namely the demolition of the Liffey Junction, which task he endeavoured to put into effect with a small selected number of men attached to his engineering unit, among whom was one of our Company members, Mick Howlett.

Of the other Company Captains I knew that Bob Oman, Jerry Golden and Andy Dowling fought in the Rising, with the 1st Battalion, Captain Seumas Kavanagh who was then an officer of the 2nd Battalion ~~and who~~ served in the Stephen's Green area under Commandant Michael Mallin of the Citizen Army, and Countess de Markievicz: He was formerly of the Fianna: Jerry Golden then a member of "B" Company, 1st Battalion, had served in the early stages of Easter Week at Cabra or North Circular Road railway bridge until the position became untenable when, escaping capture, he linked up with Commandant Thomas Ashe of the Fingal Brigade, and later that week participated in the famous "Battle of Ashbourne". For his complicity in same he was tried by British courtmartial and sentenced. Released on the general amnesty in June 1917, he renewed his service with the 1st Battalion becoming in course of time officer in charge of the cycling class. In 1920 or early in 1921, a special Cycle Company designated "I" Company, was formed, with Jerry Golden as Captain. That unit was composed of selected men of the various Companies in the Battalion, each Company having to supply a certain number of men. Among that number our Company supplied the following, James Finnerty, Joe Musgrave, Charlie Purcell.

Previous to the formation of "I" Company, the Battalion becoming a regular unit, it was known as a Battalion Cyclist class, to which the Companies were required to send their quota of men for training in scouting and various military duties. The significant thing about that former class was that the men retained membership of their own particular Companies, and were amenable to the orders of their own respective officers. But the new venture caused a severance in the membership of men of the Companies, and established the new force as a separate Company.

To return to the narrative. The imposition of the 9 o'clock curfew put us at a great disadvantage, because it lessened the time at our disposal for carrying out night ambushes or other operations. Thus we had but a bare hour and a half for such work. Notwithstanding the many difficulties connected with that curtailment of time and the risks they were running, the men responded well to all the demands made on them, and gave many examples of courage, of patience and of resolve in the discharge of any duty entrusted to them. One of the most notable examples of their wondrous spirit deserves comment. That refers to their individual or personal reactions to the trials imposed on them by reason of the intensification of activities. It could be said of most of the men who were giving service that while on duty they took their work seriously and were obedient to all orders; off duty, many of them were sociable, gay and full of life.

It might be a bold assertion to make that the men of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. were otherwise; to even assert that they were a hundred per cent sober, to the point of being strictly temperate. It would be no exaggeration to say that a very large proportion of them, by choice, custom or restraint, abstained from intoxicating drinks. Some there were who loved their drink and the company associated with drink. The exception to the rule were men who only indulged in small quantities and that only on rare occasions. Cases there were, a fact that cannot be regarded as uncommon in ordinary human society, of men who did and would get top heavy at times, but few people could admit that any of our men were drunk or resorted to drink when on duty. There were very few instances of men who put drink or the

indulging of drink before their duties in the I.R.A. The writer, who was associated with a very large number of men of his own and of other units, was afforded many opportunities to know a good deal of the conduct, habits and characteristics of a very large section. It would be true to say that drunkenness was not practised on a large scale or among any large group in the I.R.A. at the time. Indeed it could be said for many of the Companies in our Battalion for most of the officers and men forming same, that drunkenness was an unknown quantity and that any cases that occurred were few and far between and only occurred when the men were off duty.

Even when things were hottest, the average man's behaviour was exemplary, and many of them combined duty with pleasure. Their leisure hours, as when off duty, were spent in various kinds of recreation, fun and enjoyments. Why should they not have occasion to revel and enjoy themselves? They would have a "good time" with or without the serious work which their service in the I.R.A. connoted. They had not parted with their native wit and native humour even in the worst or most menacing situation. These had helped to sustain them in the past: without them they could hardly exist in the struggle then prevailing. They would have their moments of good humour, funny jokes, of mirth and revelry. Fondness for pleasant companionship, for the bright congenial atmosphere of the céilidhe hall or dance halls, in some cases dark, smoke invested billiard saloons and the equally dark confines of the picture houses were "aids" to keep up the spirits. Not that our men were habitually downcast, gloomy or morose, or that they required such "aids". Rather were they availed of to keep as near to their former ways and modes of life and also for the purpose of keeping contact one with another.

Not always were such places safe from the prying eyes and the raids of the British forces. In some cases men took chances or risks in attending dances, in playing billiards and the like. Some favourite resorts for some of our 1st Battalion men and members of the A.S.U. were the Savoy Billiard Rooms beside the Gresham Hotel in Upper O'Connell Street, Wilson's Billiard Rooms and Tobacconists in North Frederick Street, Mattassa Coffee and Ice Cream Saloon in Marlboro' Street, to mention but a few of the normal haunts. The latter place was a particular rendezvous for large numbers of I.R.A. where, nightly and on Sunday mornings, the inevitable cup of coffee or bovril, a glass of minerals, or a portion of ice cream were tempting baits to lure many of us to steal a few peaceful moments in company with some of our confréres. If the walls of that place could only speak, what stories would be unfolded, what pictures would be painted, what history would be made! On such moments we were not conspirators or conspiring. We loved the company of our friends and, of course, we liked the various appetisers. Thus many a happy moment was spent with an abundance of right good humour and banter and jolly companionship.

During that time Mattassa had a large clientelle of I.R.A. One could always hope to find a friend there - I.R.A. men like Frank Flood, Jimmy Carrigan, Seán O'Neill, Tommy McGrane, Frank Carberry, Dinny Holmes, Seán Nathan, Paddy Kirk, Tom O'Brien - oh, their names were legion. That place had sad as well as pleasant memories. One of the saddest centres around one of those whose name has been mentioned before - Frank Flood. The night before the fateful ambush that was to cause him his death, Frank had been in company with a few "of the boys" in

Mattassa's. The next day he was in charge of an ambush party - being a Lieutenant in the A.S.U. - awaiting to attack British forces at Clonturk Park. The plans miscarried and Flood, Paddy Doyle, Bertie Ryan, Thomas Bryan and Dermot O'Sullivan were taken prisoners. They were tried by British courtmartial and sentenced to be hanged. Of the number Dermot O'Sullivan, who was under 18 years of age, was reprieved. They all were former 1st Battalion men. All had been on a number of stunts during the previous few years.

Of Bertie Ryan, reference has already been made in connection with certain activities on the day Seán Treacy was shot. He was a fine simple, quiet sort of boy, full of enthusiasm for our cause and always wanting to face danger; jollity, gaiety and fun he dispensed in a boyish way; one who was seeking to do men's work and could do it in a way all his own.

Paddy Doyle whose association with quite a series of activities under the late Vice-Brigadier Clancy, and in other capacities, had an abundance of dash, enthusiasm and valour to sustain a spirit that was always active, that wanted to keep on the move and do the things nearest to hand. More than that he disdained inactivity and would take on the impossible task.

Frank Flood - the gay, exotic, and lovable Frank - was hardly out of his teens at the time when he threw everything to the winds and joined the A.S.U. Like the rest of the men and boys who had volunteered for that unit he did not believe in giving half-hearted service. Of Frank, it could be said, that he had a charming manner, an amiable disposition, an exuberant demeanour, all of which contributed to win him hosts of friends and well-wishers, who felt the magic of his company and prided his

friendship, ever true, and always endearing. It could be said likewise of him that he was every inch a boy and showed a natural boyishness, one who revelled in boyish pranks and found outlets for his boyish flights of fancy and good humour. But in the realm of man or of man's work Frank could take his place with the best, as his most intimate associates, particularly those who were allied to him in I.R.A. affairs, were aware.

No lesser tribute could perhaps be lavished on Tommy Bryan, who like Paddy Doyle, were the only two married men of the group.

The sense of tragedy that surrounded these young I.R.A. men who were awaiting death was felt in I.R.A. circles in Dublin: their execution on March 14th, 1921, came as a staggering blow to us all. It was a big price to pay for freedom. Two other I.R.A. men had been added to the list, making six executions on the one day: Frank Flood, Bertie Ryan, Paddy Doyle, Tommy Bryan, Thomas Whelan and Paddy Moran. To those of us in "C" Company, who had such close affinity with Frank Flood and his company - for were we not the parent Company? - the noble martyrdom was accepted as a personal bereavement as it was to his former comrades in "H" Company and the A.S.U. their hour of travail.

While the above was being enacted other strange and startling events had occurred. One of these referred to an outrage that was perpetrated on a member of our Company. On a night in February, Seumas (Jim) Murphy and Willie Gannon were passing along Talbot Street when they were held up by British Auxiliaries, questioned and searched. The same procedure was gone through with other civilians. Murphy and another man were arrested and brought in a lorry to Dublin Castle. The next morning

their dead bodies were found in Clonturk Park. It was stated at the time that tin cans were placed on their heads as they were being shot. Of Seumas Murphy it could be said that he was a particularly earnest, sincere and noble character, one who was popular with a large number of us, officers and men, and beloved by a large circle of friends and admirers. He was a provision assistant employed at Messrs. Whiteside, South Great George's Street. Reliable, energetic and willing, he was as good as any in our Company. He always took his I.R.A. duties very seriously and could easily fit himself into the run of things because of his keen alertness to what was required of him and his desire to do things. No wonder then that he was freely availed of to render service on patrol duties or with some of the ambush parties detailed by the Company. Sad to relate on the night of his arrest he had just parted with a few of his comrades of the I.R.A. then playing billiards at the Oxford in O'Connell Street, little dreaming that it would be his last meeting in this earthly life. There he had repaired after being on some duty with his Company.

Dublin in March, 1921, bristled with excitement because of and due to the armed activities of the British and the I.R.A. forces. Events were moving swiftly; ambushing by the I.R.A. on British lorries became quite an ordinary feature of the day or night proceedings. During that month efforts had been made by G.H.Q. I.R.A. to speed up activities, particularly to increase bombing attacks. The result was that Companies to carry out these orders put more men and more ambush groups into commission. Such was the case in our First Battalion; every Company was meeting the situation in one way or other. Our Company was no exception to the rule.

Night in, night out, our men in small or large groups occupied positions at selected points, poised for attack. In many instances, however, failure, inexorable failure, stalked the footsteps of the men engaged in that way. Forlorn hopes, disappointments, misfortunes trailed them. Then at last a something occurred and there was recorded the news that our men had come into action. That action was brought about in the following manner.

On that night in March an uncommonly large number of our men were placed in position to attack a convoy of British soldiers proceeding from Gormanston Camp to Dublin Castle. Our information was that three or four lorries would use that route. Plans were accordingly made to deal with that number. The men selected were divided into two groups, one of which occupied the corners of the junction of Ryder's Row and Capel Street; the other was situated at the Technical Schools, Bolton Street. This grouping was devised in order to catch the convoy inside the belt, the front lorry or lorries to be dealt with by the men at the former position, the last one by latter group. The topography of the locality favoured somewhat such an operation in that it afforded certain facilities for attack and retreat. The street running from the Technical Schools took a sharp bend on entering Capel Street. That bend, it was contended, would be of assistance to the men at the Technical Schools, presupposing the lorry would turn it at the moment of the attack. Thus protection from retaliatory fire from the British soldiers would be provided. The man in the forward position were differently circumstances in that they were more liable to be exposed to view and possibly to fire in certain eventualities. Their main concern was to attack when the front portion of the convoy were entering the narrow portion of Capel Street, running from

Ryder's Row and Parnell Street, their original direction. That arrangement was made on the assumption that the British would not use Ryder's Row as an alternative route, should they be attacked sooner.

It so happened that the large convoy as expected did not appear. Instead only one lorry came. Carrying out their orders the men situated at the Technical Schools permitted it to pass on its way. As it approached to enter into the narrow portion of Capel Street it was bombed by the party stationed there. Retaliatory fire was opened by some of the soldiers as they sped their way onward.

By way of explanation it may be necessary to mention that that ambush had been arranged in order to test the effectiveness of the grenades. Many complaints had previously been made by several officers and men of the Battalion that the grenades were defective, that on several occasions they failed to explode. As our Company had a particular interest in the manufacture or assembling of grenades, some of our men had, and one was then so employed, we undertook, to give them a try out. Not alone that but the opportunity was availed of to test them with a shortened fuse, viz. a three-second instead of a five-second one. In making that alteration care had to be taken by and instructions issued to the men to throw them quickly. By that means they should explode on reaching the target, and would obviate their being thrown back at the attackers or on to the road before exploding. That experiment was proved successful that night and we adopted the short fuse for future use.

A rather strange feature of that ambush that night was the use that was made of a member's house for the

storage of some of the material, and the distribution of some of the revolvers and grenades. The men had almost come into action immediately they had taken up positions. In as short a time they were speeding in their several directions to get out of the area, a not very difficult task as there were ample laneways and bye-ways to favour their get-away. A very special precaution had been taken that night to provide facilities for the care of possible casualties. A hackney cab, owned and driven by a member of "H" Company, Jack Flood, had been engaged and was waiting at the rere entrance of Williams and Woods, Jam Factory, in Loftus Lane. He had detailed orders that in case any of our men were wounded they were to be taken to a house at Upper Gardiner Street, where one of our men, Martin Finn, lodged. Such wounded were to be given attention by Martin who was then studying medicine at the National University. Another of our men, Frank Carberry, was present there to render help. Fortunately, such was not required, but Jack Flood, or the "Brasser" as he was generally called, helped in getting others away to safety.

Whatever effect the bombing had on the British forces that night could not be definitely ascertained, but unofficial information - of a nature that was regarded as reliable - indicated that they suffered many casualties in dead and wounded; though in the British report of the affair, as indeed in every case when attacks were made on British forces, little, if any, mention was made of casualties. Thus the British drew a veil of secrecy over the bombing operations as carried out by the I.R.A. In some instances their official reports mentioned "our troops returned the fire and one (or more as the case was) of the attackers was seen to fall", or "our troops suffered no casualties".

Brevity was the acme of wisdom on such occasion. It was notorious that groups of soldiers from the North Dublin Union Barracks as a retaliatory measure descended on the locality the next night and broke many windows in business establishments in Capel Street. Notorious too was the fact that the British extended the curfew hour from 7 p.m.

One outstanding effect the operation had, was that it brought complete confidence to our men, some of whom, other Companies' officers and men, had laboured the point that the grenades were unreliable. Our demonstration had proven the opposite. Agitation had been going on among some of the Battalion officers against their use with such vehemence as to cause an inspection to be made of the various Companies' supply of grenades by Battalion Quartermaster Corless and our Lieut. D. Holmes. The result of their findings revealed that in many cases the grenades were defective because of bad storage, dampness and want of proper care and maintenance. Little wonder then that, as was asserted, they failed to explode, as happened in some case when men of other units sought to effect an ambush and left themselves in a very serious predicament. It was quite possible indeed that in many instances such material had been hastily"dumped" in places that were not easily accessible or suitable. Sometimes they were stored for long periods without being given adequate attention, and as a result the gelignite got out of form and the priming sets became faulty. The continual raiding by British forces aggravated the problem considerably. Thanks then to the discovery of the faults - the men in our Battalion were spared many moments of doubts and possibly serious mishaps.

The innovation of shortening the fuses in grenades, which we had found to be effective, added considerably to

give additional confidence to the men, particularly those of our own Company. No longer would men feel doubtful on the score of their landing in or at the target; no longer would they have a fear that they would be thrown back at them. The short period between their being thrown and their explosion - even the possibility that they would explode near the target area - were considerations of great importance to the men engaged on ambushing. That was a decided advantage over the previous system. Then it was problematical whether, at short range, the bombs would burst before the moving lorry had passed as had happened in a number of cases with other ambush parties. Short as were five seconds, a car travelling at normal speed could easily steer clear of the danger zone by a dozen or more yards. But at three seconds, unless it was travelling at break-neck speed less favourable chances to beat the bomb or escape the bombing were there.

In no instance were the British asleep on their work. Rather the opposite could be demonstrated. Seldom were they sufficiently off guard to permit attacks to be made on them indiscriminately. They used the many advantages they had to the extreme limit of durability. One of these advantages was mobility, and the use of motor transport, which stood them in good stead not infrequently. Thus many difficulties were presented to the I.R.A. It required much ingenuity, watchfulness and skill on the part of our men in trying to dodge them when not on duty or if on some duty unconnected with bombing, not desiring to be held up, searched and possibly arrested. For even during that time various other forms of activities were carried out by men of the I.R.A. whether armed or unarmed. Such things as carrying dispatches, of transferring

warlike material from place to place, and men moving to and from ambush points, were typical forms of activity that called for the finest qualities in men. The British forces were ever busy making sudden unexpected swoops and searches on motor cars, trams, cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles of all kinds. One never knew when or where they would operate in that fashion, or whom they would search. Innumerable instances could be cited in proof of the thorough-going manner in which these forces engaged when carrying out such raids and searches. One such may be given. Two of our men unwittingly were caught in a cordon that seemed to have been mysteriously formed, as they were walking along a certain thoroughfare. Halted, they were ordered to put their hands up, then searched. Not satisfied with the customary searching of their pockets, they were required to sit on the pavement and to take off their boots and socks, which the British soldiers thoroughly examined. Luckily, they were not accosted some short time previously when one of the party was carrying copies of An t-Óglach intended for distribution in our Company. Other cases there were too of men who had "narrow shaves" in such contingencies. Here is one of a very unusual type. It concerned a man who was carrying a small quantity of grenade cases, neatly wrapped in paper, when he was held up. Placing the parcel on the ground, he submitted to the searching. When completed the British Tommy told him to "beat it", which he did in quick time, bringing the parcel with him, while all the time his heart was thumping rather wildly.

These hold-ups and searchings had also many humorous sides. There was the story of an I.R.A. man who made it a habit to carry a racing form book. On one of the many searches he had been the victim of, that precious book became the object of very careful scrutiny. The

British officer requested to know what it was. "A Racing Form Book", replied our worthy fellow. "What! another one of those beastly things? Do all the men here have to have these?". The strange thing was that the man himself knew nothing about horses, but here again it was prudent to carry something and a racing book or a copy of the "early bird" was better than nothing. Such tricks came easy to men who had cunning enough to play them.

Yet another incident, in which an I.R.A. man figured. He too was armed with some racing paper or other. In the course of questioning he mentioned he was an ex soldier. "What!", said the British soldier who was paying him all attention, "another bally ex Army man! Blimmie, they must be all ex soldiers around here". It transpired that quite a large number of men who had been held up by that group of British Crown forces claimed to have been former members of the British Army. Incongruity again. Many of the British Army personnel who formed the Army of Occupation in Ireland then, particularly the younger fry, must have considered it very strange indeed at the large number of ex Tommies in Dublin who were non-combatants. Many of these expressed their mind freely and openly on the way they were being treated by the Crown forces. No different treatment was meted out to them than to any other citizen. Perhaps it was because a large number of them were not taking sides in the troubles, and that the fight was between the British and the "Shinners".

We in the I.R.A. knew that the average ex British soldier was neutral at the time and wanted to remain so. Further we knew that there was a fair number of them sympathetic to our cause for several reasons, one of which was because of the brutal atrocities and the harsh inhuman reprisal policy carried out by the British

Authorities. Quite a number also were members of the I.R.A. or were related to I.R.A. men. These factors were in themselves of some importance at the time.

In many instances ex British soldiers were shown little concern and small consideration by British forces operating or raiding or hold-up parties. Sometimes they were as badly treated as I.R.A. men were themselves. Perhaps the British soldiers found it hard to differentiate in a situation where any civilian might be a potential I.R.A. man and that they had no other recourse but to treat all citizens alike. They had apparently no room for gentle behaviour or kind persuasive methods when the prize of their goal was the destruction of the I.R.A.

Strange as it might appear the ordinary citizen by then had become somewhat used to the various activities of the British forces - their raidings, hold-ups, searches, curfew, patrolling and the various movements of British soldiers and auxiliaries in their armoured cars, motor lorries and cages, gallavanting at dead slow or break-neck speed through the streets of Dublin. Equally they had become used to some of the I.R.A. activities: had become wide awake and alert to the series of bomb attacks which were becoming alarmingly incessant. So war-minded had some of them become that when caught in an ambush they threw themselves on the ground or in some other fashion took cover for their own protection. Such precautions went far to cause them little injury during a bomb attack by I.R.A. or the returning rifle fire of the British forces afterwards. In many instances a good deal of civilian casualties were caused by rifle shots fired by the British after an attack, with disastrous results for the citizens.

But even in the most extreme dangers the people seemed to carry on as if nothing unusual was happening around them. Indeed many of them exhibited a sang froid that was neither depressing nor slavish. However difficult or disturbing the trend of affairs, they carried out their day-to-day duties and avocations in as near to their ordinary form and concept as was possible in the circumstances. It is not to be understood, however, by this that the average citizen had not to undergo hardships, inconveniences and trials in one shape or other, or was even able to keep adrift from all the things that were happening in their midst. Such would have been utterly impossible. Very few people could remain or were unaffected by the activities of one or other of the combatant forces. What safety had they in the streets, what peace and quietude had they in their homes, what comfort had they on public or private conveyances or in public buildings? Even during curfew hours was there any respite from the attentions and annoyances provoked by military movements of men, motors and search-lights, the all-too numerous banging on doors, shouting of military commands and movement of troops, heralding a stampede or a raid in the immediate vicinity or on their neighbours' house? How many citizens were caught on the stroke of or during the curfew hours and thrown into military lorries, deposited in jail for the night? How many had to undergo insult and indignity when the business premises or institution in which they worked, the pub, library or the club which they frequented for a drink or a read or a game of cards, were raided, sometimes allegedly for wanted men or arms, but oftimes just because of orders received?

Sometimes these several activities occupied a few minutes, sometimes an hour or more, or all through the

night or the best part of a day. Not uncommonly some of the raids carried out by the British lasted a full day and night or vice versa - sometimes longer - as when they cordoned off large areas of the city, thereby cutting normal communication between the different sections of the populace, so that those who were "roped in" had to remain put not knowing what was happening outside and those who were outside had little knowledge of what was going on inside. Yet the people behaved magnificently, giving many examples of calmness, fortitude and in many cases good humour, through what must have been to most people, a distinctly nerve-wrecking ordeal.

Their acceptance of the situation as it then was, had a very heartening effect on us who were no less desirous to bear the burdens of the conflict patiently, obediently and trustfully. Our task and our duty demanded personal compliance. There was no obligation on their part to comply with anything that was detrimental to their own individual lives or liberties. Except among those who supported our policy and who backed up our every effort in the fight was anything in the nature of obligation required. It was a noteworthy fact that many who were least our friends, or considered to be so, were more desirous to remain neutral than to lend their aid to the British against us. Some perhaps were silent and unprovocative through fear, others by choice, or being the most discretionary role to play between the "two sides". None could gainsay that the lot of those people who were not parties to the fight, was anything but an unenviable and sad one. Many there were who had no relish and were unwilling to be brought into the maelstrom, who wanted to be left alone, to live

and let live, as they would say. Such an attitude of mind was quite understandable - in Dublin at least - where the population was cosmopolitan, consisting of varied species and of different castes although the majority of people were sound on the question of Ireland's right to be free, as the previous general and local elections since 1918 demonstrated.

There were other elements and individuals less national-minded, and not a few that were distinctly hostile. Among those were the type that lived by and wanted the British connection always and at any price. Some of them, putting discretion aside, engaged in rendering service to the British against the I.R.A. That was done in several and devious ways; by spying, giving information and by rendering active service. The two former courses were more generally adopted. Many of the raids carried out by the British on I.R.A. men, homes, premises, etc.; many arrests and deaths of I.R.A. men were traced to the spies and informers with disastrous results to the latter, who in innumerable instances were shot by orders of the I.R.A. authorities when their deeds and misdeeds were discovered.

Sometimes information leaked out to the British due to indiscreet talk, gossip or idle boasting of I.R.A. men or their friends. These were of rare occurrence and were never on a large scale. In very rare instances was any real injury done our cause. Our G.H.Q. had had warnings issued on that aspect of men openly discussing or speaking too openly of I.R.A. affairs. It was hardly likely that the British, even with their highly-trained, sensitive and large Secret Service, their Intelligence Officers, spies and informers, gained very much for their pains, though they tried to imply that there was a

leakage at I.R.A. source. Indeed, not infrequently, British officers informed I.R.A. whose homes they raided and who were placed under arrest because "they were given away by their friends". There was no evidence forthcoming to prove the truth of the allegations that they were betrayed by any of their comrades in the I.R.A. It could be more reasonably assumed and believed that the proffered information came from hostile neighbours or those who spied on their movements. Who could believe, who among the I.R.A. could believe, the story that there were informers in the I.R.A.? Here was a popular movement that depended on and gained support from the Irish people; a Volunteer force whose existence was known to the British through their police force, whose members had from time to time appeared in public, training, drilling and marching, even participating in public processions, and as a result could not deny that they were I.R.A. men, as they had come under the notice of police and spotters whose special duty it was to keep them under observation and to apprehend them when necessary.

Perhaps it might not be deemed inadmissible to digress on the partly open character of the I.R.A. Since its inception in 1913, it had appealed to and received support from the manhood of Ireland. These men had voluntarily given service, time, money and labour in proof of their beliefs. Its popularity over the period of years had not decreased, rather was it in the ascendant "in spite of dungeon, fire and sword". Its adherents not only gave moral but physical service in proof of their loyalty, belief and faith in the ideals it stood for and the cause it championed. THE I.R.A. was a

partly open and partly secretive force; partly open in so far as it was known to exist, and that there was no intent intention to disguise its existence; partly secret because of its functions and the exercise of its policy as a military force. It was not a secret body in the sense that the United Irishmen of '98 or the Fenian Brotherhood were secret. Much of the work of the I.R.A. was secret in order to make their actions effective, but there was little exclusively secret in regard to its actual existence. In many instances I.R.A. proclaimed themselves such at British courtmartials and in public courts through their public profession of membership of "an illegal organisation", a term applied to the I.R.A. by the British, produced sentences for certain periods. I.R.A. men were not found to be afraid to profess that they were "soldiers of the Irish Republic" or "soldiers of the Irish Republican Army" before their execution. Largely the thousands of our internees then languishing in internment camps proclaimed that they were I.R.A. men, and the Internment Orders issued by the British and served on them specified that they were so interned because they were regarded as members of the I.R.A.

If there was any evidence of the existence of spies or informers in our ranks it could not have been of any great consequence or importance. In the absence of first hand information on the point we could as safely dismiss the allegation as being unsustainable in law or in fact. Even allowing that the British obtained some measure of information from idle gossip and captured documents, who would be so bold or so dense as to admit that they were of such a nature as to cause a complete breakdown of the I.R.A. framework? If the British were in possession of such valuable information why could they not lay hands on

the high lights of the I.R.A.? If they knew so much as they claimed to know, why were so many valuable men committed to internment camps when, according to all the canons of English law they should have undergone the rigours of convict prison life or become victims of the hangman's handiwork. Such questions could naturally spring to our minds as we thought of the insidious implications underlying the allegation that there were spies and informers in our ranks.

A more sober and careful analysis of the theory that the British received information from I.R.A. sources could be gleaned from the fact that not only was their information defective but also that despite every attempt on their part to produce a common informer they had signally failed to do so. Not that they did not want or did not seek the services of such people to suit their own ends and to all the more successfully destroy the power and prestige of their enemies, the I.R.A. Their failure arose not for want of trying to obtain information but rather because they were unable to get people, and particularly the kind of people who would be in a position to part with first-hand information to come forward to help them. In theory and in practice they failed for the simple and explicit reason that the men of the I.R.A. remained solid, sound and true, to their comrades and their ideals. Even the British could not deny that they had made every effort and availed of every opportunity to secure information about the I.R.A. and of members of the I.R.A. They had not been remiss in applying extreme measures to extract information from prisoners. Every known and unknown device was resorted to: by means of a carefully planned and cleverly devised interrogation, through the medium of coaxing, persuasion

and sympathy or as was more frequent and persistent application of force, of threats and abuses. Many and varied were the stories of the cruel deeds that were perpetrated on I.R.A. prisoners for the purpose of obtaining information. How many of them were brutally treated, wantonly bludgeoned and mercilessly outraged, because they refused to tender information about their comrades, the officers and men of the I.R.A.? How many had been driven insane or near to the point of insanity by the infamous and inhuman beatings they had received from their captors or interrogators? How many others had borne the marks of violent treatment they had received rather than consent to be informers? These facts stand out in bold relief as a beacon of light to disprove the allegations that the I.R.A. or men within the ranks of the I.R.A. were so false to themselves, their comrades and their country as to turn traitors in the interest of an alien government.

In the sphere of the military conquest of Ireland, the British were not making much headway. The Government of Ireland by England was carried out, not in strict accordance with the normal processes of law and order, but rather by means of a military junta, and that mainly because of military necessity. Virtually the country was governed by military law. In many cases martial law was in operation. Especially was this so in many of the Southern Counties, where military areas had been established. The reign of British militarism was thereby supreme. Dublin, the capital of Ireland, though the seat of the Government of England and strangely the seat of the Government of Dáil Éireann, the Irish Republic, though not completely immune from much of the hazaards of the British military law, was bearing a not inconsiderable share of the guerilla fighting.

CHAPTER 21.

In recording the history, the workings and exploits of the I.R.A. during the years under review, the association of the I.R.B. as a contributing factor to the general plan must be considered and analysed. Since the formation of the Irish Volunteers the I.R.B. had played a prominent part in the Irish political and military sphere. Prior to 1916 Rising as the proclamation of the Irish Republic, signifying the establishment of a Provisional Irish Government, so boldly averred that "secret armed revolutionary body" the I.R.B. had supported and upheld the Irish Volunteers since that time it had supported the efforts of and exercised a profound and effective influence on the military affairs of the I.R.A. Its ramifications were widespread and varied for, while giving absolute and complete attention to the I.R.A., it influenced the policy of the political wing, Sinn Féin, and also the Trades Union movement. It had representatives on the two former bodies. As regards the latter organisation, it did not claim to have any great influence beyond what might be called a watchful brief aimed at trying to bring labour closer to the national ideal and to prevent it going international.

At the period under review the I.R.B., by means of a special group within its ranks, was playing high in the affairs of the labour movement in Dublin. Not high in the sense of securing control, but in the influence it brought to bear on various unions. That was done in several ways. Numbers of I.R.B. men held various offices in the trades union movement as branch presidents, secretaries, treasurers, or as members of committees. The ordinary rank and file members of unions were encouraged to go forward for elections as officials or members of committees. In so doing, they would be advancing the interest of the I.R.B. in creating

a liaison between their own and the labour movement. The grand plan envisaged the labour movement rendering full support to the Republican movement.

Not always, however, was it possible to wield sway over the labour movement, unless they (the I.R.B.) could bring strength of numbers and the right type of men for the various posts. In many instances men who were associated with the I.R.B. were in the minority in their various trades union branches and, try as they would and did, they were unable to rise to any responsible position there. The few men who held responsible positions were not always effective in pursuit of further advancement in the sphere of higher ranks which, it might be contended was the prize to the goal aimed at.

It must not be thought by the foregoing that labour was so self-centred and distinct as to be exclusively un-national or anti-national. The opposite could be advanced, for in the many crises of the previous years - particularly since 1916 - Labour had rendered assistance in the national fight for independence. Who could forget Labour's contribution to the anti-conscription movement in 1918 by enforcing a one-day strike in protest to the British plan to conscript Irishmen into the British army, and in lending aid by means of their representatives on the anti-conscription conference for the same ends? Who could forget Labour's opposition to and protestations against the Black and Tans and British military governmental rule; their one-day strike in favour of our I.R.A. hunger-strikes? Could we forget the noble part Labour played during the munition strike when railwaymen and dockers refused to handle warlike stores intended for use against the national movement, and when the former refused to carry British forces, not to mention the other forms of aid and succour that they freely gave to I.R.A. men and the I.R.A. body? These are by way of commentary and in order to bring to light the inherent link that existed in one form or other between Labour and Nationalism.

The move to exercise influence in the Labour Movement intended by the I.R.B. to maintain and sustain the closest affiliation with the national fight being waged attained some measure of success, insofar as I.R.B. personnel and the large number of I.R.A. men who were members of the trades unions were enabled to do so by their voice and their votes on various committees and groups therein.

The I.R.B. exercised particular influence in the I.R.A. sphere of organisation and it could be said that the predominant numbers of officers of the latter body were I.R.B. men.

Sometime in the latter part of 1920, or early in 1921, some of its "Centres" adjourned sine die their meetings. The reason advanced was the difficulties arising from holding them in the face of the raids by British on public buildings and the growing pace of the fighting, in which many disciples of the I.R.B. were engaged, while a large number were in jail and internment camps.

Our "Circle", up to its curtailment in late 1920 or early in 1921, met in Room 8 at the Foresters' Hall, 41 Parnell Square, the "Centre" being Martin Conlon; among those who comprised the centre were Sean McHugh, Michael O'Flanagan, who was general secretary of the Printers' Trades Union, Paddy McGrath, Tom "Boer" Byrne, Oscar Traynor, Frank McNally, Sean Kennedy, Luke Kennedy, Mick Doherty of Citizen Army fame, Michael Scully, James Stritch, who was prominent in the Foresters organisation, Joe Kelly, Paddy McArdle, Joe Brabazon, Paddy Hughes, Dick McKee, Charlie O'Hanlon - to mention but a few. Very strangely, the printing trade was very conspicuously represented.

Intelligence - April 1921.

Junior members of the company, many of them ex-Fianna boys, played a particularly useful role under our company intelligence officer, following up clues about suspected spies and informers and any particulars required by our G.H.Q. The co-operation of the company was always given to matters of information sought or suspected, unfriendly people, their activities and movements. Company officers were not necessarily aware of every activity of even their own company intelligence, as the company intelligence officer operated as a separate independent entity yet sufficiently within the frame-work of a complete whole. This procedure had been devised in order to leave company commanders free for other military duties instead of having to be concerned with such intricacies and difficulties. In more ways than one that arrangement made the company intelligence officer a free agent to pursue his duties under orders of battalion intelligence officers.

That system worked perfectly; its success was in no small way due to the importance of the office and the fact that the company intelligence officer was recognised and acted as a member of the company staff and council. Regular attendance at council and company meetings ensured complete collaboration with company and battalion affairs. It could be said that intelligence played a tremendous part in the guerilla war; the company intelligence as a unit played a part second to none to any of the other branches of our activity. Just as it was pre-eminently and predominantly essential in this phase of our guerilla warfare as a concomitant factor to the military machine of the I.R.A. without which we could hardly have been able to withstand the onslaughts of a mighty foe or have been able to maintain our existence as a living, virile force.

Reverting to the matter of the holding of our company council meetings, it is necessary to mention that much use

had to be made during that period of private houses for the purpose. Fortunately, facilities were available to us to use such places as Sean Nathan's home, McDonough's shop - both in Lower Dorset Street - Bevan's home in Geraldine St. and Tom O'Reilly's home in 25 Parnell St., to mention but a few. The latter was more commonly availed of, the back kitchen affording us every facility, comfort and a reasonable sense of security at a time when few places could be regarded as completely safe from molestation of raiding British forces always showing signs of activity in the streets. How many times were we interrupted by the sounds of military lorries and armoured cars as they rumbled along the street outside, and the warning that the 'soldiers' or the 'Tans' were in sight. Then the inevitable pack of cards was ever at hand, or we had to appear as if we were 'just visitors' to the household. On such occasions it was always good policy to be in possession of some substantial alibi. Anyway, we seemed to be always fairly safe in any of our haunts unless some 'nosey parker' noticed our entry to or exit from such places; chances had to be taken, using our brains and a certain degree of discretion to allay suspicion.

These company council meetings continued uninterruptedly during the months of 1921 as on previous occasions no matter how or by what means the larger body - the company - was meeting. It was one means to keep the company in being, by maintaining contact with the various members of the company staff and N.C.Os. We had always work to do of a routine nature, administrative work, as well as matters relating to the planning of operations, the recording and issuing of orders from the battalion, the brigade and G.H.Q. for regulating meetings of various groups in the unit and business passed on via the company adjutant, company quartermaster, company intelligence and police officers. Sometimes we had to furnish detailed reports under different headings to various higher commands and deal with cases of men being transferred to us or in process of being transferred to other units. It must be

mentioned that recruiting as such had been largely curtailed, except in very special circumstances. That order, however, did not apply to Fianna boys who had reached the age of 18 years and were being absorbed into the I.R.A.

In many respects our meetings also were mainly concerned with work connected with the quartermaster, such as arms, ammunition replenishment and the purchase and disposal of same, always live matters requiring immediate attention.

Regarding the measure of help which the I.R.A. in Dublin received, of which the use of premises was but a single feature, certain salient facts can be recorded. Among the large sections of people who embraced and worked for the political arm, Sinn Fein, were many who, although not rendering active military service, gave succour and support to the fighting men. Some even underwent suffering, imprisonment, and shared sacrifices for so acting. Their services in that regard were no less important and real than if they had served in our ranks. No greater proof could be given of the indissolubility of the unity of forces that existed between the component parts of the national movement without which the best and most thorough national effort would have been of little consequence in the stupendous task of meeting British militarism. Every I.R.A. unit in Dublin had its quota of such men and women supporters who were ready and willing to perform service in different ways. Their numbers were legion and of various types and categories. Take the cases of business proprietors whose premises were freely at the disposal of I.R.A. units and officers and for I.R.A. purposes; numerous cases could be cited, but in the interest of brevity two must suffice now. One refers to a Miss Nellie Doyle who carried on a dairy and grocery shop in Dorset St. During the hard and difficult days of the Tan struggle in 1921 her business place was a veritable halfway house for the storage of some of our company munitions as well as being the safe repository for odd revolvers which I.R.A. men, finding themselves temporarily in a tight corner, could safely

leave them to be collected at other less difficult times. Generally, however, our Q.M. had full access to that shop for warlike purposes; the good lady, out of sheer regard for our cause, not alone not raising any objection, but willingly admitting to the course, whenever necessity warranted that the place should be used as a munition dump or storage for same.

Another such case, too, concerns another friend of our company - that of Mr. Tom Hoban, the owner-proprietor of the tobacconist and newsagent shop, 26 Parnell St. That shop and house was utilised for many and various purposes connected with the Sinn Fein Movement and of I.R.A. affairs. From the early days of the republican movement his shop was a 'marked' one - marked by the British for raiding in quest of unlawful publications, or the seizure of warlike materials. H. Coy. and our own C.Coy. of the 1st Battalion, I.R.A. had prior claims on the use of the premises for meetings of various groups; the former unit using the premises as a store for dumping arms. The fact that three of Mr. Hoban's sons belonged to H.Coy. and that some of its officers and N.C.O.s., as well as some of us in C.Coy., were his intimate confidants and customers, went quite far in securing his very generous help for our cause in the many difficulties that from time to time perplexed us.

During one of the many raids and searches that were made on the premises, munitions - presumably belonging to H.Coy. - were discovered by the British forces, with the result that he received a jail sentence which he was doomed to serve in Bedford prison in England. Even during his incarceration "26" continued to be used as a meeting place of the various I.R.A. groups referred to. Our own company on many occasions held company council meetings there.

Mention has already been made to another safe quarters for meetings of our company council, namely, Tom O'Reilly's

The month of April 1921 was no less an active month, as far as I.R.A. guerilla warfare was concerned. Every group and unit of the Dublin Brigade appeared to be on the alert for whatever type of operation was placed to their keeping. Accustomed as the men were to street warfare, they had settled themselves down to the prevailing order of things which prescribed that greater endeavours were to be made in bringing extra pressure into the fight. The British authorities, also, were no less desirous to make their presence felt, by increasing the pace and tempo of their activities in order to secure victory over the I.R.A. Forced as they were to adapt themselves to defensive tactics by the employment and use of smaller units, the guerilla campaign as conducted by the I.R.A. in Dublin went very far in undermining the discipline and effectiveness of the British armed forces. In their pitiable plight, much of their strength in men and materials became of little use and were often sadly unavailing, however, they strove to bring them into effective play against an invisible force such as the I.R.A. were deemed to be at the time, and when, on certain grounds and in certain circumstances, some measure of equality existed between a belligerent I.R.A. man and his opposing number in the British Forces, although of a truth the British soldier had greater advantages and suffered lesser disabilities than the average Volunteer of the I.R.A.

yet, notwithstanding these important factors, even the fact that they were better trained and equipped than the I.R.A. had little effect in bringing additional material aid to bear on the situation. Their (the British forces') main concern was to hold their heads, to maintain a good fighting morale, bearing and discipline. In the latter qualities the I.R.A. could be said to excel. It might be commonplace to state a fact that during that period the men of the I.R.A. on service were highly disciplined and orderly.and obedient. The fact that they were so added enormously to the process of fighting and served to stimulate them to greater efforts. No force was exercised, no force was needed to get I.R.A. men on operations. Those who undertook the work did so from the point of view of duty and many of those who were not placed on that work could not be said to be anything but willing to do so if they were called upon to do so, or as opportunities eee occurred. Some could not be employed on ambushing for reasons already advanced. Time was playing a big factor in our scheme of things, and the element of time then was a vital matter in excluding some men.

Here was where time played us tricks. Most members of our company ceased work at six o'clock. Allowing for a meal and a brush up, few could be on duty before 7 or 7.30 p.m. Curfew was on at 9 o'clock. Assuming they had to get to a selected point to be armed and given orders as to the duty to which they were assigned, and adding a few extra minutes for getting to the seat of operation, they could only be on duty for a half hour or so. There was always the thorny problem of men residing far away from the company area. Other companies were similarly circumstanced. Care, too, had to be taken and time given, that the men so armed from selected arms receiving centre, would return same immediately after duty. The difficulties, as we found, were not lessened when it is considered that, as often happened, such arms receiving and

deposit centres were far removed from the spot of the projected ambush or other activity. Considerations like these had not to be made in the case of a few of our men who were exercising the personal custody of arms and responsible for their safety in their own homes, workshops, or otherwise. Company officers had always to keep these things in mind when preparing activities. Generally, the system worked well when the one group of men were employed on such work, but when the occasion arose of supplementing the number by the inclusion of a fresh man or more, we had to face up to the obvious difficulties as they appeared.

By this time we had reached the stage of meeting trouble by the forelock. In common nautical parlance, we had found our sealegs. More than that, we were becoming balanced, confident, and were using our senses and our talents to bend to the work so as to get things done in the quickest and best way possible.

In our company there were quite a good number of men who were adept in the handling of arms, of firing a revolver or in throwing a grenade. Many of our men had already seen service in one capacity or another; there was a large and growing number of these whose service had been availed of too in connection with ambushing. The procedure to use the same type of men on all company activities had to be replaced by a system which aimed at bringing more men into the conflict. The regular placing of men in allocated positions for engaging in ambushing became a regular feature, and the time of officers and N.C.Os. was large used in that direction. There was hardly a night in which an ambush party, or ambush parties were not on duty at some point in the company area. The reaction of the men to the work was such as to cause no strain or anxiety to the officers and N.C.Os. concerned.

That some men benefitted more than others by the experiences and the testing time connected with that very

exacting type of duty none could deny. That could be confirmed in the case of men who might be termed the élite of the company. These were regarded as the nuclei of the active personnel; not that they were classed as the best in the company, although much credit must be given to them and a certain amount of honour bestowed, because they formed our main striking force, owing to their being easily available and always willing and ready for action whenever and however required. These men had many calls on their services, their time and their labours. Would it be thought surprising that in the course of time some of them would be looked upon with very special favour to be often requisitioned for a large measure of company activities? Many considerations of a perplexing nature had to enter into the reckoning of placing men according to their capabilities, their physical and mental reactions and their personal conduct in the midst of danger. It had to be a process of gradual development, of men becoming familiar with - because of their constant engagement on - the duties associated with guerilla warfare. True, many of these men had been, as it were, hand-picked and specially selected from the initial stages, and as they were found suitable, were retained for subsequent service.

This process of making selection was the prerogative of the company captain assisted in some cases by his junior officers and N.C.Os. and, sometimes, the company council. In that matter the company officer had full discretionary and plenary powers. No slur was intended, or could be entertained on the qualities, the courage and sagacity of the other Volunteers who were not called on to perform the same work, or take the same risks. Some men there were whose services could be rarely utilised - tram drivers, tram conductors, and men who worked in the provision and pawnbroking businesses. The latter, whose working hours extended late into the night, were availed of on occasions of half-days, generally on

Wednesdays. In the case of the former, their free hours for night duty varied. In the case of First Aid men and signallers company officers had to use caution and discretion. The men forming these services could not be as freely or as frequently if at all
utilised as other men in the company. To add to the dilemma in which company officers were driven, the aforementioned services were regarded as non-combatant, in the sense that great efforts were being made to maintain them at effective strength and in keeping them at their specialised training. Because of these things, and particularly by reason of their bearing the name 'non-combatant', some of the men riled against the order that kept them out of the fight. Already company officers had found it difficult to get men for such as First Aid men and Signallers
work and a certain measure of pressure had to be applied to those
initiate them into services and keep them on the job. Thus company officers had more than one cause for headaches besides the actual fighting propensities of the company.

We generally found it easier to get men to volunteer to use a gun or a grenade than to learn how to save life or to use signals by means of flags or Morse code. Only in the most extreme or urgent cases were the personnel of such services employed on other operations. But in some instances a few of these were utilised in some capacity or other.

Stress has already been laid on the difficulties some of the companies were confronted with in connection with their ambushing plans. It could not be said that every time men were placed in ambush position that fighting ensued. Indeed, the contrary was the case. There were times when it looked as if Dublin was sitting down on the job, when an odd ambush or operation could be reported. Contrasting the great spate of activities on the part of other units in the country where things on a big scale were happening and had happened, we in Dublin could be termed idling and inneffective. For exploits of daring, the various flying columns had become legendary ;

lurid accounts of these several engagements were published in An tOglach, our official organ, for our edification and interest; many of these became subjects for lectures to officers.

If, on the surface, Dublin did not show any great achievements in the course of the fighting, the fault could not be said to lie in every particular with the officers and men of the Dublin Brigade. More commonly could the cause be found in the changing tactics and dispositions of the British armed forces adapting themselves to a new code of military technique and newer formations and movements.

Then, one Saturday afternoon, a very special and urgent order of the Dublin Brigade came into force, and every unit mobilised to take up positions for the purpose of "hitting up all enemy transport" or, in other words, "everything on wheels". This was a tall order, and certainly the biggest one we had so far got; and, if we could judge rightly, was intended as being the biggest exploit in the guerilla warfare in Dublin. That it was s strange order and a startling one, no one could gainsay. In actual fact, it was tantamount to taking almost complete physical possession of Dublin's main thoroughfares and trying to deny use of same to the British. It was a bold stroke! Every company furnished its own particular quota, big or small as their circumstances and equipment permitted, in the big plan of operation. Ours was no exception to the rule. On that day, 4th April 1921, our company mustered about 30 men, which number was divided into two ambush groups, one of which was placed in Up. Dorset Street, the other at Phibsboro Road. Most of them were stationed at the former place. That force consisted of scouts, some revolver men, grenade men and a First Aid man. Holding the thoroughfare from a point near Wellington Street where one of our scouts was placed, to Henrietta Street, a distance of approximately 600 yards, the plan was this. Two men, armed with grenades and revolvers, were situated at

the corners of Granby Row and Dorset St. Above them at the Black Church in Mary's Place two other men were placed, one armed with a revolver, the other a First Aid man. Two or three revolver men occupied the corner of a laneway resting on Dorset St., a little to the left and on the far side of the street in which the bombers were. About fifty yards further on two of our scouts were in position. Additions to that were two revolver men who were situated at Henrietta St. and Bolton St. corners, and another who was acting as a scout occupied a point in Dorset St., midway between where our grenade men were in position and the corner of Wellington Street. That, it will be seen, was an uncommonly large number of men to be put into action.

This force was only a short time in position when a British military dispatch bearer who was riding a combination motor cycle, and accompanied by an armed companion in the sidecar, came into sight. As they approached our men at the corner of Granby Row fire was opened on them, to which the soldiers replied and an almost pitched battle ensued. In the meantime the soldiers had swerved to the right as if to turn into St. Mary's Place. Almost simultaneously with that move one of our men had thrown a grenade. The driver of the cycle seemed to be wounded, but without slackening speed, shot clear away. In the melee, which was over faster than the telling of it, one of our men was wounded in the forearm by a revolver bullet. He had to be helped away from the scene by two of his comrades and brought to Hoban's in Parnell St., nearly a quarter of a mile away. Blood was oozing copiously from the wound. Then the real trouble began, to obtain medical aid. A doctor was requisitioned, who, alas! on seeing the nature of the case, felt perturbed and refused to attend him. It took a good deal of persuasion to even get him to condescend to give advice as to how his wound was to be treated. Fortunately, one of our officers, Lieut.Kirk, already skilled in first aid, took charge of the case, and

after careful attention, extending over a few weeks, the wounded man was made right and nothing the worse of the exploit. One difficulty the man had to contend with - he endeavoured to perform his ordinary employment, for fear of awakening suspicion.

By a strange irony of fate, we were the recipients of a mild form of reprimand for the attack, by the brigadier, not so much for attacking the cyclist as for having had to use a grenade for the purpose. Strangely, also, as was learned afterwards, the brigadier was passing at the time of the action and almost came into the line of fire. Such were the peculiar vagaries of our guerilla warfare, that one never could anticipate what form the attack should take or who might be endangered thereby. The throwing of the bomb in this instance might not have occurred but for the fact that the Volunteer had released the pin from the grenade at the signal "Enemy coming" and after he being wounded and after the revolver duel, he could hardly have done otherwise for his own safety.

In the latter connection we had been brought face to face with the possibilities, if not the probabilities, that at sometime, and due to our active part in the fighting, injury would be meted out to our nearest and dearest in our own families or among our comrades, should they unwittingly find themselves at the wrong moment in an ambush zone. We might not, indeed it was considered discreet not to tell them or anyone outside the engaging fighting groups the likely places and times when an ambush was to be effected. Thus there was imposed on us a double ordeal of anxiety for our own welfare and the dangers that our relatives and friends would assuredly run during the conflict. We had, it seemed, to take our risks and whatever chances might result from our actions. In respect of this matter I relate a very sad fatality in which the wife of an I.R.A. man was killed in one of these ambushes. It appears that on the day "H" Company carried out an ambush at the corner of Capel Street and King Street, the British forces, returned the fire, just at the moment when a woman living in the vicinity on hearing the shooting ran out of her home in quest of one of her children then playing in the street. Very ironically the deceased was a wife of Tom O'Brien then Quartermaster of that Company.

The other action, in which some men of our company were involved that day, related to an attack on a motor car in which were travelling British soldiers. The scene was Phibsboro Road. Six or eight of our men, under another Lieut., were on duty there, a few of whom, as in the case of the former group, only came into action. It must be stressed here that no fault could be attached to the men for not being able to show bigger results. If fault there was, it could only be apportioned on the theory that not the plan, and certainly not the men, failed, but rather that little opportunity presented itself to execute belligerent action, either because the enemy was exercising caution that day or was not showing any great measure of activity in or around our company area. At other points in the city several groups of I.R.A. came into action, but there were quite a large number of areas where no operation was carried out for reasons already voiced. We could not, of course, hazard a guess whether the big plan to ambush right, left and centre in Dublin was a proven success. But we had enough sense to know that even the smallest action, raid or ambush was of some significance at the time. It proved that the British Crown forces, contrary to their propaganda pretensions and beliefs, had not the Irish situation so well in hands, and that there was quite a large number of the I.R.A. available to do those things and to take the risk of doing things, however much the inconvenience or the sacrifice.

Disappointments there were - such perhaps were inevitable in the game we were playing - but they were of a nature that cut to the marrow. How often had we to listen to men giving vent to their feelings when anything went wrong, or when they were not given bigger or greater chances to fight? How often had we heard men mourning their disappointment that such and such an action, ambush or operation did not materialise? How often were we made aware of their sorrow that they were not able to bring off a successful coup or coups? How often

did the men worry over the half-successful effort and apologise that they did not win out, or for not doing more? Every time and always the question a rose: "Wonder will this thing succeed?" or "what a pity this or that ambush did not come off". Even the remark: "better luck next time" seemed not to fit in with their sad mood resulting from previous misadventures or periods of ill-luck, as they termed them. Was it not passing strange th that things could go awry despite the most careful planning for successful action for which few of our men could be held accountable when one considered their splendid spirit and indomitable courage at a period of great trial. The greatest praise is due to these men whose lot it was to be engaged in any of the spheres of endeavour which military necessity and the cause of freedom, which they served, entailed; men who, even if they were only called once in a time to brave the hazards and face the trials of an ambush operation, deserved praise for so doing. What words of praise could adequately apply to men who, of their own individual and voluntary choice, and because they wanted it so, were on duty night in and night out, in all weathers and regardless of dangers, and without murmuring, remorse or grumbling. Many an officer could testify that although the number of men involved or utilised on any given action was relatively small, the specific importance of the enthusiasm and determination which these men brought into that work was of the highest order and meritorious in the extreme. The only fault any of them had was that their efforts were not always attended with complete success; all the greater praise is due to them when it is considered that we we were then very much up against it; indeed, there were obvious signs that we were going through our hardest time.

Each succeeding day and week of April brought us deeper and surer into the maelstrom from which escape was impossible, unless, by weakening our efforts or slackening the pace that

had, up to then, been set, the word "enough" was inscribed on the chapter of blood, tears and desolation. But with the advent of a new month that word was neither spoken or hinted. Instead the month of May was heralded in by a more intensified movement on the part of the I.R.A. "to get on with the work", the one and only purpose being to make further inroads on the policy and influence of the British forces and to make their efforts to govern Ireland a costly, nay, an impossible one. None among us, at least few officers, could admit that our task was to be anything but a hard and hazardous one, and we could never foresee or anticipate events or the shape these might take from hour to hour, or from day to day. We had only to confine ourselves to immediate current affairs and seek to make the best use of the opportunities as they appeared or were presented to us. Never was our task an easy one. There were times when what appeared to be insuperable barriers baulked our every move, and when even our best and most carefully prepared plans were upset for want, not of men, but other and more select types of weapons when our bombs and our revolvers and our methods of placing men in our customary ambush formations could not be made full and effective use of.

Perhaps at this stage it might be of historical interest to reproduce the following, as taken from Hansard Parliamentary Debates in the British House of Commons, Monday, 25th April, 1921:

"The Attorney General for Ireland (Mr. Denis Henry) answering Mr. Hogge, stated:

> "There were more casualties among soldiers and police in the nine months following July 1920 than in the nine months preceding.
>
> In answering to the latter part of the question I regret I cannot give any date for the cessation of these murderous attacks on the gallant forces of the Crown".

Answering Mr. T.P. O'Connor, Mr. Hogge replied:

> "The total number of casualties during the last few days (weekend) were 4 police Killed and 7 wounded, 3 soldiers wounded and 3 civilians killed. Two cadets were killed in Belfast and 2 civilians named Duffin and ..... I am still awaiting particulars of the latter occurrence".

Lieut-Commander Kenworthy asked the Prime Minister if his attention had been called to statements in the Press that certain Hon. Members of this House, including the Noble Lord and Member of Horsham (Lord Winterton) and the Hon. and gallant member for Bury St. Edmonds (Lt.Col. W. Guinness) have been in communication in Dublin with the Dail Eireann during the week ending the 16th April; whether he is aware of such communications between the Hon. Members and persons whose arrest is sought by His Majesty's Government; and whether the Hon. Member consulted his Majesty's Government before entering into communication with the Government of the insurgents in Ireland?

The Prime Minister:

> "I can only say I know nothing of such communications".

Answering Captain Redmond, who asked the Chief Secretary whether ... he will say how bloodhounds were brought over to Ireland by the military, Mr. Henry replied:

> "as the Hon. and gallant member is no doubt aware the provisions of the Diseases of Animals Acts (Rabies Order) under which the prohibition order in question was made are not binding on the Crown. There was therefore no contravention of the Order in its non-observance in this case, and the reason for its non-observance was an over-riding public interest (namely, the bringing of criminals to justice in order to suppress murder".

From Parliamentary Debates in British House of Commons, 26 May 1921:

The Prime Minister (Mr. Lloyd George) answering Lieut-Commander Kenworthy, who asked whether he has addressed any further invitation to the leaders of the Sinn Fein party in Ireland to negotiate a settlement with His Majesty's Government; or what progress has been made to date:

"Mr. L. George: No, Sir, The attitude of the Government was defined by me in my speech to the House on the 28 April last. The offer I have repeatedly made has not up to the present led to any response ..... I do not see what further steps can be taken. A public offer was made in the House of Commons and has undoubtedly been conveyed to these Gentlemen and they have made no response; at least if any response has come it has not reached us".

Lieut-Comdr. Kenworthy: "Has not the position been altered by the recent elections held in the south and west of Ireland. Does that not give a new negotiating body, and cannot we address ourselves to that body in the interests of peace?"

Lord H. Cavendish-Bentinck: "Does not the Right Hon. Gentleman think that the increasing lawlessness in Ireland demands some more useful policy than that of pure drift, which is the policy adopted by the Government?

The Prime Minister: "No, on the contrary, we do not propose to drift. If it demands anything further it is an addition to the forces of the Crown there to cope with it.

Lord Cavendish-Bentinck: "Does not every day prove the increasing importence and hopelessness of the present Government in Ireland?

The Prime Minister: "Quite the reverse".

Use of bombs, etc.

While naturally we were very much concerned with our form of fighting from the point of view of effectiveness other things were happening in our midst to prove that the I.R.A. was still alive in Dublin. Of these happenings two very important factors predominated at the time. One of these was the appointment of two ex-American officers - Major Dineen and Capt. Cronin to the I.R.A. training staff. These officers had arrived from America and, with our then Director of Training - "Ginger" O'Connell - set in motion training company officers, classes being held in a room over Gogan's in Marlboro St. by the two former officers in the use of the Thompson sub-machine gun in which they were particularly expert. It is noteworthy that about that time and from that time the "Thompson" came into prominence as a favourite weapon of the I.R.A. In this connection it is well to note that already we, the I.R.A., possessed various other types - possibly every

conceivable make - of revolvers, not a few of which were the famous "Peter the Painter" automatic revolver and rifle combination, and other automatic revolvers of various calibres two of the most used were the parabellum and the .45 ordinary long or short type; but that did not preclude the use of the several "38's, automatics or plain types, revolvers on occasions.

Of the many daring exploits of the guerrilla warfare none were so sensational perhaps as that which occurred about this period when a British armoured car was seized by a dare-devil group of I.R.A. men under orders of G.H.Q. The scene was the Corporation Abbatoir in North Circular Road, beside one of the British Military Barracks and convenient to several others. On that occasion the armoured car "crew" were over-powered and the I.R.A. men drove the car to Mountjoy Jail for the purpose of effecting the rescue of Commandant Sean MacEoin "the hero of Ballinalee" as he was then popularly called. MacEoin had been sentenced to death in connection with an ambush which he had successfully carried off against British Forces. The I.R.A. men who sought to rescue him were dressed in British Army uniforms and made demands on the Jail Governor to hand over MacEoin, by producing faked documents, which purported to specify that on British Authority he was to be transferred elsewhere. But the ruse, brave and daring, failed, and the redoubtable rescue party had to withdraw in, of course, the armoured car, which, driven to Clontarf was abandoned and found later by the British.

We had not long to wait for another eventful and extraordinary event in the annals of I.R.A. activity in Dublin. That event was the destruction of the Custom House on May 25th 1921, an operation that was planned and executed for the purpose of paralysing the British civil machinery of Government. The task was entrusted to the Active Service Unit and the 2nd Battalion, assisted outside by several groups drawn from the 1st and other Dublin Battallions some of which - our own company included - were to act as a defensive force to be engaged in other capacities near or a distance from the scene of activities. One very important duty that fell to a few of those outside units related to the occupation of certain city fire stations, a precaution that had been taken in order to prevent the fire brigades from being employed to save the building. The operational plans resided in the O/C.Dublin Brigade, Oscar Traynor, who exercised power delegated to him

from G.H.Q. arranged and selected the various officers and units to have the work expeditiously and completely executed. These plans, if somewhat detailed and comprehensive, were simple, concise and definite. Every conceivable aspect of the enterprise had been carefully considered and obviously minutely planned.

The evening before that date the order had been issued to the various units that had been selected to arrange for the allotted quota of men and possible amount of material requisite for the operation. The next morning, as per instructions, I appeared at the brigade headquarters - the Plaza in Gardiner's Row, there to receive final orders from the brigadier. In disclosing the general plan, he stressed the main points, notably the time element, such as being on the spot at "zero" hour, and the time fixed for completing "the job", as well as detailing the possible points of danger from enemy action between these times, and the measures to be taken to deal with the British should they appear on the scene at any of the points where our forces would be operating. One could not fail to apprehend that this was nothing less than a big occasion and that nothing less than complete success was expected, were we to judge by the hub-bub and the scene of animation that prevailed at the Plaza. Even the brigadier, who generally looked the most unconcerned and the coolest of men, showed evident signs of excitement and enthusiastic anticipation on the outcome of our efforts. His every movement, word and gesture suggested a personal interest in the affair and that all of us, officers and men participating should regard it in the light of being of tremendous importance. It did not take many minutes of his presence to convince us of that.

Our company's part in the operation was intended to provide protection and cover to the party specifically selected to set fire to the building. Thus we were detailed

to occupy positions in the street outside in order to prevent enemy forces from taking action against the men inside. Our orders were to provide 12 men all of whom were to be armed with revolvers, and some with grenades. These were to occupy a position extending from Liberty Hall to the railway arches where Lower Abbey St. links into Beresford Place. On inquiry as to the advisability of using the overhead railway as sniping or grenade positions, or other buildings for similar purpose, the Brigadier conveyed the news that G.H.Q. was against such a move.

Zero hour was fixed for 1 p.m. Sharp on time the operation commenced by the men who had been selected moving into the building as unconspicuously and as unconcerned as if they were only engaging in ordinary business affairs. No apparent hurry or excitement could be noticed by the average citizen passing at the time. Even the presence of a heavy motor lorry outside the main entrance of the Custom House that faces Lower Gardiner Street did not seem to be out of place in the truly artistic setting of that palatial and beauteous architectural masterpiece some fifty or more yards removed from the public thoroughfare. These things were occurring as our men were taking over their allotted positions. Previous to that the men of our company had paraded in Tara Hall, where they were given orders and furnished with requisite arms for the purpose, the latter portion of which was entrusted to our company Q.M.. From there we moved, in small parties, to take up position as follows: Two men-William Gannon and Andy Mulhall - were placed under the arches. These were armed with revolvers and grenades. Two - Frank Carberry and Frank Brennan - were placed on the footpath at end of the railings of No. 11 and beside end of Brooks Thomas, while further up at another part of Brooks Thomas between Lr. Abbey St. and Beresford Place were between Lr. Abbey St. and Beresford Place/ three more - Martin Finn, Jim Plunkett and Nicholas Tobin - were placed. Across the Beresford Place road at Tuck's corner/ were the 2nd Lieut. Paddy Kirk and myself and on our right, at the corner of the laneway in Beresford Place beside Liberty Hall were Eddie Flood and Paddy Leonard commanded by 1st Lieut. Dinny Holmes.

In detailing our orders the brigadier enjoined that we were not to interfere with British forces unless they were in the vicinity for the purpose of taking action against our men. We were, in short, not to take armed action against any enemy force, if they appeared to be passing through on the several missions associated with their activities. In other words, we were to "lie low" and not to do anything that would convey the impression that anything strange was afoot. Should however British forces appear on the scene we were to permit them through our lines and "give them everything we had" if they showed signs of engaging in action. According to the brigadier's calculations, the operation was timed for 25 minutes in which time the building was to be ablaze and the men safely outside. Everything going well it should terminate at 1.25 p.m.

The time selected for the operation was a fortunate one, it being lunch-time. Thus, we had no great difficulty in concealing our identity or the purpose connecting our presence in the locality, for we had ample knowledge at our disposal that the open spaces and the thoroughfares surrounding the Custom House were the resort for workmen from the quays and neighbouring business establishments to spend portion of their lunch time in lounging about, or in other words, taking things easy. Thus to all outward appearance our men could be classified as being of the usual motley of people congregating there . Who could even suspect that we had any evil intent or design on man or beast or anything that day? Certainly, if appearances meant anything, some of the members of our company group put on a great masquerade by dressing a la mode working class, even to dungarees and not over-genteelish clothes. To such an extent indeed as to cause a fair share of laughter and jokes among their comrades. So unsuspicious were we in dress and demeanour that few, if any, people paid us any great attention.

Not that all our plans or some of the activities associated with the operation did not excite some degree of curiosity among spectators, or excitement on our part; indeed, the opposite could be proved, suspected or imagined. One of these occasions was when some of the main party were entering the building and when the petrol tins were being taken from the lorry and brought in through the Gardiner St. entrance. Was it not a case of "guilty conscience" that caused our hearts to give a sudden flutter, or the strange feeling that everyone around was aware that the I.R.A. were going to burn the place? The feeling passed away as quickly as it came, as no undue curiosity was aroused and the people passing at the time went their way oblivious of what was taking place in their midst.

Another such occasion arose when something bordering a scene occurred outside a door facing Abbey St. A policeman who was walking by that place, as if going in the direction of Store St. Barracks, had suddenly halted and seemed to be meeting with some trouble with a man/an I.R.A. Sentinel there. This caused many eyes to be directed to that quarter. Some folk passing by halted showing a certain curiosity in the proceedings.

Almost simultaneously with that 'scene', another and more serious one was enacted about 15 minutes past one. Smoke and flames were seen to be issuing from one of the top corner windows nearest the railway. To say that it caused a sensation would be but mildly describing it. Passers-by stood in alarm, their curiosity deeply aroused. Our men outside urged them to keep moving. During this time our brigadier and Captain Paddy Daly were standing at the footpath at the corner of Abbey St. in sight of the flames. A few minutes afterwards a motor tender in which were armed Auxiliaries turned Eden Quay corner, passing Liberty Hall into Beresford Place, followed by another carrying a similar cargo. On they came, at a slow pace. The first one turned under the railway arches

as if going towards Store St. Just at that point one of the Auxiliaries was seen to be standing up in the car a revolver in hand pointing towards the smoke and flame then emitting from the window of the building. The car stopped dead just as a shot rang out, followed by a loud explosion which, we guessed, was caused by a grenade having been hurled at the car/ by one of our men The impact of the explosion literally threw the occupants on the floor of the car or on to the roadway. The other tender also came under fire, but some of the occupants sought to rush for cover and in so doing ran the gauntlet of revolver fire directed by members of our party and men from the doorway of the Custom House. The strangest part of the proceeding was that the cars had come to the position where our grenades were situated, and the latter had no great difficulty in finding their target. Indeed, they had only to 'lob' them in at the short range available. It was quick and furious action.

The Auxiliaries who had escaped injury took up positions behind pillars supporting the railway or the upright pedestals that were interspersed around the space that formed the north-west and western side of the Custom House. (These pedestals had been constructed for holding swinging chains.) In a thrice all was excitement as rifles and revolver shots rent the air, and billowing smoke of the burning building and flashes of flames could be distinctly seen mounting. Without actually watching it, one had the feeling that a good part, if not all, of the work of burning was accomplished. In the midst of the fusilading, one of our men was seen running for sheer life followed closely by an Auxiliary, along Abbey St. passing Brooks,Thomas, and towards Northumberland Square. Not more than six paces divided them when, suddenly, the Auxiliary fell on the pathway, stretched as if dead, and Andy Mulhall - the man being pursued by the Auxiliary - escaped through a prearranged line of retreat through Brooks Thomas

into Marlboro St. Certainly, luck favoured him on that occasion and, as I perceived, he was doubly favoured by being able to perform a good sprint.

While this was being enacted a new element of danger to our forces had arisen. Already I had moved a short distance round the corner into Abbey St., my companion, Lieut. Kirk, having separated when the moment for action arrived and just in time, for the space on the corner where we had formerly been situated had come under fire. A short time before the previous episode, machine gunfire was heard. It was not easy to locate from whence it came, but we were not left long in doubt. The presence of a double-turretted armoured car in our vicinity provided a clue, as its hotchkiss gun came into play. Here was a big danger now to our men outside and also to the men inside the Custom House. It raced madly through the thoroughfares that surrounded the buildings, through Beresford Place from Eden Quay to Gardiner Street, backwards and forwards, firing all the time. Alternately it stopped at different places for the space of a few moments only to move on again to some other point, ever alive, ever threatening and deadly. What could our poor revolvers do in such an awful position?

Prior to that I had seen one of our men, Frank Carberry, near the railway arch and he almost sitting with his hands raised over his head. Could he be wounded? The presence of the armoured car in my immediate proximity occupied my closest attention. Greatest shock of all - the car turned the corner at Beresford Place and came into Abbey St. Meanwhile the firing, especially the small-arms fire, had diminished. The streets were deserted except for a few people who had taken shelter in the gateway entrance to Tucks. Charred and burning pieces of paper were falling on the streets and smoke filled the air as I dashed into Dunlop's hallway.

Just in time, too, for the armoured car had just stopped outside and remained a few moments, then departed. Instantly I felt the urge to escape - to make a dash for freedom. Running along Abbey St. was a matter of moments. I arrived at the lower end of Marlboro St. Just as I reached the Abbey Theatre entrance a woman nearby shouted "Don't go on to the quays, mister, the soldiers are there".

Vainly I sought to link up with some of our men. Could it be that they were all casualties? None were about. Disconsolately I moved away, retracing my steps, and gingerly skipped across Abbey St. into the other part of Marlboro St., making for McDonough's shop in Dorset St., the place where our men were to report after the operation to dump their guns. Soon I was at Mountjoy Square and, looking down on the Custom House, instantly proved that the job was well done. Joe McDonough had no news of any of the men. Could it be that all the others were prisoners or casualties? The thought was not a very wholesome one for either of us. Even yet there was work to be done if it was true that none of our men had escaped. To acquaint their relatives and take dangerous material from their homes in case of raiding by the British; but proof was soon forthcoming that Frank Carberry was a prisoner. He had been one of the best of our trusted and tried men. The "Littler" as he was affectionately called and partly designated because of his small stature would be sorely missed. We shall miss him in the future. But what of the others? A check-up revealed that Frank Brennan had also been captured - all the remainder of the company group had escaped without a scratch. A few of our revolvers were lost in the action; some others had been traced in the vicinity and recovered later by our men or by members of other units of the Dublin Brigade.

There was, however, great satisfaction in the knowledge that the operation was a complete success from the purely military and political aspect, although we had every reason

to feel sorry that the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. should have to pay a big toll to achieve such gigantic results. Thus, we had to mourn the deaths of gallant fighters - Sean Doyle, Daniel brothers and Paddy Head the/Stephen/O'Reilly and Paddy Dorrins - members of the 2nd Battalion - a number of wounded and several score of prisoners. These losses could in all seriousness be regarded as a dire calamity to our cause, not alone because we were robbed of the sterling services of so many fighting men, but also on account of the possible reactions which such might have on the course of further fighting in Dublin.

The British forces, particularly the Auxiliaries, suffered many casualties, though they in their official report disguised their losses, information became available to the I.R.A. authorities that quite a number of them were killed and wounded.

A night or two afterwards, the brigadier, Oscar Traynor, conveyed through our First Battalion Commandant, Paddy Holohan, a special message of commendation for the part our company group had played in the action. Our men highly appreciated that they should be the object of laudation from such an exalted source. None could deny them the signal honour of paying tribute to their heroism and absolute obedience to orders. Each and every one of them deserved every praise for they had given full proof of the trust that had been reposed in them. The marvel was that any of them escaped alive from the trying and troublous ordeal and that they had rendered a good account of themselves.

Of course, many stirring accounts were given concerning the highly exciting exploits and experiences of some of our men. Mention must be made of one such case: The person referred to had already disposed of his grenade by throwing it at the Auxiliaries and likewise had expended his four rounds of revolver ammunition. His next plan was to get away. Behind

him was, strangely enough, No. 10 Beresford Place, into which he dashed, much to the amazement of some women who were congregated there as the place was a dispensary. A woman, presumed to be the caretaker, brought him aside, took his revolver from him, then got a girl whom he took to be her daughter to link him outside. In the meantime, she had given him a bottle of medicine. The good girl escorted him through the cordon of British soldiers which had been drawn across the lower end of Gardiner St. Thus, he got safely away. The next day, or night, he returned to the house and recovered his revolver.

The effect which the operation of the destruction of the Custom House was truly electrifying and gave great heart to the men of the Dublin Brigade, for it represented what might be termed a major action and perhaps the biggest in the guerilla warfare. It bespoke a departure from the employment of small groups, and possibly a stepping up of our methods for waging our warfare. Even the newspaper reports of the "startling occurrence" conveyed the telling news that something more than an ordinary raid had been carried out. Indeed, it was evident to all and sundry that a good deal of fighting had ensued and all Dublin knew that, for the shooting had been heard some distance away. News travelled fast and far those times and it was reasonable to suppose yhat nothing was lost in the telling, some of which were only conjectures and had no relation to facts. While on the subject of news and conjectures, it might be well to refer to the matter affecting the presence of the first two lorry loads of Auxiliaries, Had they any prior knowledge that the building was being burned by the I.R.A.? Was their presence on the scene ceincidental or according to design? Were they on ordinary patrol duty that brought them in the vicinity, or were they merely passing on their way to some other point, or on some other duty? These points were debated by several of the participants afterwards. They were questions that puzzled not

a few. There was some evidence to prove that the first group of 'Auxies' showed surprise when they beheld the smoke and flames coming from the building. The fact that they came to a halt so far away from the building might indicate that they were not in possession of information concerning the I.R.A. action. While that was evidently true in many respects, the question of their having some kind of information on the point could not be entirely ruled out. It was even contended by some that they could have been so informed by various channels and in devious ways that something strange was going on there. One could argue that there were several means available to do that - could even infer that the police authorities at Store St. Barracks communicated the information. Indeed, that was held to be the most likely source for spreading the news on account of it being within a couple of hundred yards' distance from, and which by reason of its location commanded a view of the northern portion of the Custom House. Much of the activities connected with the operation of burning that building, and certainly, the fire itself could hardly have escaped their notice, unless and this was the big conjecture - they were asleep to all that was happening so close to them.

We knew already that no help to stop the fire could be forthcoming from the fire brigades, as units of the I.R.A. from the several Dublin battalions, as well as a group from "H" Coy. and I think "B" Coy. 1st Batt., occupied the several stations. Likewise, it had been hinted that telephonic communication would be locally disconnected. If information was conveyed, it must have been by some other names, such as through secret service channels or from a distance outside the danger zone. The main point of the conjecture was when the British authorities became aware of the I.R.A. operation. As it was, fifteen or twenty minutes elapsed before the contingent of 'Auxies' appeared. Already the fire was 'well on' and they themselves were powerless to stop the men inside the building from continuing burning the building

When the bigger reinforcements of British troops arrived, the building was a veritable cauldron and a complete devastating fire, which even the best efforts of the fire brigades, when they were allowed by the I.R.A. to intervene, were of no avail. Thus, one of the important 'pillars' of the British administration in Ireland went up in fire and smoke, becoming thereby one of their most potent losses.

Many stirring and exciting anecdotes were related afterwards by individual participants of that epic drama - tales depicting extraordinary deeds of valour, of qualities of endurance and of faithful obedience to duties under the most adverse and difficult circumstances. Herein were displayed every latent talent of daring grit and abandon in the teeth of a blazing inferno inside, and the death-dealing rifle and machine gun cannonading outside the building. Death stalked them everywhere and whenever they turned. Every second and every minute of the time they gave to the task of burning that huge pile lessened their chance of survival or even escape. Yet they held on grimly and determinedly to complete the work to which they were allotted, until there was hardly any other prospect left to them except to perish in the flames they had set alight, or to run the gauntlet of the merciless gunshots of the British forces, who by that time had practically sealed off their remaining avenues of retreat. A dreadful and disconsolate situation like that called for more than ordinary cool heads and steady nerves. Some there were who threw caution to the winds and, taking their lives in the hollow of their hands, made a desperate endeavour to fight their way out, and in so doing faced imminent death from enemy gunshots. Luck favoured a few in that bold way to escape. Others, of whom Doyle and O'Reilly were two, fell in the attempt to run the gauntlet, while at least one - Tom Ennis - was seriously wounded, but got to safety notwithstanding. But most of those

men who had engaged in the burning were hopelessly trapped within. When they were eventually extricated they became prisoners, because they could not give a proper account of themselves. Some of these were given away by some of the staff and others were suspected because they smelled of or bore traces of petrol on their clothing. There were some few, however, who sought refuge in subterranean passages or swam the Liffey to safety.

Admittedly the British lost very valuable material potential, but as against that, the I.R.A. had weakened itself, or become weakened as a result of the destruction of the Custom House. The attempt had cost us dearly in the loss of life and the number of our men that had been captured by the British. When consideration is paid to the point that most of the men engaged were what might be termed the "big guns", or actual fighting potential, such losses could be regarded as serious and disturbing. As against the successful completion of a most important operation - and no one could doubt that it was other than a big achievement - we were debited to the extent of having a very weakened active service unit which, together with the losses incurred by the 2nd Battalion of the Dublin Brigade, was bound to have serious consequences in the conduct of our guerilla campaign. Was it any wonder then that a certain degree of disorganisation resulted from the enforced defection, due to their military activity, and that plans should have to be got under way to reorganising the active service unit, in order to bring it up to fighting strength?

With that aim in view, Volunteers were solicited from units in the Dublin Brigade and the A.S.U. accordingly reformed as an effective fighting unit. Included in the number were two members of our company, William Gannon and Eddie Flood. These and all men were required to be transferred and to be supplied with revolvers and ammunition. It became an accepted condition that aspirants to that unit should be well-trained and, of course

capable of engaging in various activities. It so happened that the application of that system resulted in a nett gain to the A.S.U. and loss to the various companies of quite a large number of active Volunteers. Such was the system, however, that the company commanders had had to part with some of their most active men after having brought them through the several laborious stages of training and providing them with experience in ambushing and other forms of activities. Plainly, there was no alternative to the procedure of maintaining the existence of the A.S.U. as it was generally conceded to be our front line force, specifically charged with the task of fighting. No other recourse was possible to companies except to replenish with suitable man-power for the proper discharge of their particular distinct and essential duties. It fell to the companies then supplying men to the A.S.U. to fill in the gaps created thereby, by posting other men to the positions rendered vacant. Of course, the companies had possibly greater scope for this than the A.S.U. as the former had generally more men than it could conceivably actively employ. Most of the men gave a clue that they desired to be transferred to the A.S.U. and it must be said that they looked upon it as a duty and, in their own words, "If I don't do it, someone else will". The feeling which prevailed amongst some of them that was they should be given a chance in a bigger and a more sustained way of proving themselves. There was never much difficulty in getting volunteers for the A.S.U. Of the men who were already serving in the A.S.U., or those who sought transference there, few if any of them showed manifestation of heroics or tendency to 'show-off' their prowess or their valour. Only one predominant passion was manifest. They were actuated only by the desire to do whatever was needed in the new role. Even the question of payment for their services could not be regarded as the all-pervading element to their willingness to do things in

as precise a manner as that to which they had served in their former, and parent, company. For one was to the other part and parcel of the same thing, in the sense of passing from one sphere of influence or from a lower to a higher plane in the military scheme of the I.R.A.

During the course of its few months existence and activities the A.S.U. had become a force to be reckoned with and had proved itself a live and potent guerilla group. Already it had dealt many telling blows against the British. On the other hand, it suffered vital losses in killed, wounded and executed. Every such loss had to be met by initiating new men into the service. At no period of its existence was there such great need for this than after the Custom House operation. Judged in the light of the serious dilemma in which it then was, it became imperative that a critical adjustment would have to be made to put the A.S.U. on a sound and effective footing. Time was an essential factor then, as it ever was, in a situation that called for quick decisions to keep alive a force that had suffered a severe but not irretrievable setback. Any slackening in our activities might tend to give the British the impression that they had whipped us and that, having 'shot their bolt' the I.R.A. forces, as represented by the large number of prisoners, were weakened thereby. The I.R.A. sought to prove otherwise.

The big question of the moment was the supreme urgency of keeping the fight going with, if possible, greater energy and in a more marked degree. It was vitally necessary to do this in order to mislead the English and to create doubt in their minds that they had so many of our best men in jails. We knew otherwise, but felt that our best plan was to show a bold front in order to prove that we still had large forces at our disposal to continue the fight. In what other way could we assert this except by rehabilitating the A.S.U.

the A.S.U. and planning to bring it into play on an effective military basis. Thus, the A.S.U. in its rejuvenated state, took up the threads of its former life and functions so ruefully interrupted by the debacle in which it found itself after the Custom House burning.

Another form of activity in which the Dublin Brigade engaged around that period related to a widespread raid carried out sometime in May 1921 in connection with the Belfast Boycott. On that day certain offices and commercial firms were visited by select men from various units, our own C/Coy. included, and goods and records of sales were seized, on the orders of our G.H.Q. Information had been conveyed to various commands that efforts were being made by the business fraternity, with some measure of success, to smuggle in goods of Belfast or Ulster origin in order to beat the boycott imposed by Dáil Éireann and enforced by the I.R.A. After inspection by the competent higher authorities of the I.R.A., the seized records and invoices of sales were returned, peremptory warning being issued to those who were found to be trading in such contraband goods, or trying to evade the ordinances prescribing same. So thoroughly efficient was that particular branch of the service associated with the Belfast Boycott plans, and so alert were our men generally on all aspects of intelligence work, that few if any moves could be made without the knowledge reaching I.R.A. quarters and appropriate action taken in the matter.

Curfew in Dublin at 8.30 p.m.

In a summary of activities of the Dublin Brigade, An tOglach stated "that for the month of May 97 distinct operations were carried out. These included the destruction of the Custom House. There were 27 attacks on enemy forces in lorries and seven armed conflicts with enemy forces. There were 23 captures of enemy stores and other enemy goods, bicycles, telegraphic and telephonic apparatus etc. by means of raids and hols-up...."

About this time also the British adopted and operated a system of foot patrols, which caused us much concern as it appeared to be the most effective move to counter our activities. Thus we were brought to realise that some other effective form of warfare was desirable.arising out of the new situation. Many officers of our battalion advocated the use of rifles for sniping on these British formations as the most practical method of countering/enemy foot patrols. and ambushing The chief point underlying their advocacy of that new form of warfare was that selected buildings commanding strategic positions in or on various main thoroughfares should be made use of and occupied for short periods, that these buildings should be occupied by I.R.A. sharpshooters who would be required to fire a few rounds and then withdraw from the scene. A bold plan enough, and one that was an actual replica of our regular 'hit and run' tactics. As an idea it had much to recommend it and seemed to possess many favourable features. But the idea was scotched in its infancy by our authorities, on various grounds, one of which was that it might expose the civilian population to greater trials, inconveniences and losses. Another aspect that was stressed was that at the time in question only a small number of service rifles were available for such duty because of the fact that the Dublin Brigade units were under orders to pass these on for use of the flying columns. Besides, it was not intended to create the impression, as such a course of fighting might be construed to be, as something resembling an actual uprising. The result was that we had to remain largely ineffective because of having to place greater reliance on what was, up to then, our normal system of fighting - the employment of ambushing parties, armed only with revolvers and grenades - while the British, exploiting the military position, made our work harder and more troublesome. A good deal of our ambush plans were frustrated thereby, as these foot patrols were difficult to avoid and were not so

vulnerable to attack as troops in lorries, for they moved in extended order through the streets holding up and searching pedestrians.

One never knew when or from what direction they would appear; no street could be regarded as safe from their presence, their attentions and their movements. Sometimes they appeared to spring up from nowhere in particular, but always and ever they were prominently active, astutely suspicious and most eminently efficient in the discharge of the varied duties which that form of activity entailed. So thorough and attentive were they in that specific sphere that much of our plans to bring off ambushes became surfeit or were retarded in consequence. Every ingenious device and trick had to be resorted to by us in order to baffle them, to avoid them and to reduce their power to entrap and overawe us. A more than ordinary perception of danger forced us to conduct a regular battle of wits against them, pitting our brains against their tremendous show of strength if for no other reason than to neutralise their efforts to exploit the situation thus created; while at the same time we sought to prove that even in the face of such enormous difficulties our will to wage war remained unaffected. Yet the dangers were there in the streets and by-streets of Dublin. We were always more than conscious and visibly aware of them. It would have been the height of folly to ignore them, or to treat them as if they did not exist, when we knew but too well that they were proximately present in the form of a foe that was neither lenient or generous in combatting us. Indeed reason dictated that we should face up to these dangers and the consequential difficulties that were bound to arise from the operations of the foot-patrolling system which the British had so craftily devised for the purpose of preventing or circumventing ambushing by or on our behalf. The all-important essential method of approach requisite to meeting and baulking the

aggressive spirit behind that subtle move suggested, nay demanded, that we should regulate our conduct and movements in the full consciousness of ever-growing and imminent danger.

Adaptability and originality were always our strong points in the past. Every situation that had arisen, and every move made by the British, whether provoked by force or imposed by law, had little if any effect in weaning us away from our cause, or the course that had been set for us. It was ever our pride that we were as clever, as tenacious and as elusive as the British, or as they gave us much credit for. Up to date we had been quite successful in overcoming many of the obstacles placed in our path by the British or resulting from circumstances connected with the varied nature of the warfare in which we were engaged. By adapting ourselves to the changing circumstances we were thus enabled to keep abreast of the times, even though the task was neither an easy or a pleasant one. In the prevailing conditions imposed by the new form of military tactics, and which the cleverly devised machinations of the British had so singularly aggravated, it took more than a modest effort on our part to continue the warfare in the form and at the pace in which we had become accustomed. It was a time when a greater degree of caution, ingenuity and circumspection was called for, and had to be applied by us whenever and wherever the I.R.A. affairs, or matters associated with I.R.A. activities entailed our movement through the city streets so desirable.

On such occasions, especially when armed, our men showed neither undue concern or disquietude, except from the angle that greater opportunities were not afforded them to be more active in the sphere of ambushing. There had been a noticeable decrease in the volume and extent of motor transportation by the British forces of late, particularly during the night time when our men were on duty. Like us, they seemed to be playing the role of hide and seek; like us, they were exercising caution, and seeking not to exposd themselves except for good reason. Not that they remained inactive or passive all the time. Seldom, however, was their activity of such a nature as to facilitate action being taken by our forces at the times and in the places selected; they were often too numerous or too strong or active to be attacked by our men. We had to contend with the ever-increasing difficulties of trying to dodge them, to frustrate their every move and all the while seek to pursue our course by continuing the fight.

That was how matters stood all during the month of June, 1921, as units of the Dublin Brigade continued the fight by whatever means and methods were available to do so. The A.S.U. were likewise showing signs of activity, having become reorganised and recovered from the effects of their previous losses. Our difficulties had not lessened with the passage of time. Then came the fourth of July. To mark the anniversary of American Independence, President de Valera had issued a request for a display of flags. Needless to remark, advantage of this was taken to fly, not alone the American but also the Irish flag. In many instances the Irish tricolour was predominantly displayed from many windows and roof-tops, principally in the poorer quarters of Dublin. The British occupying forces were none too pleased or happy at the "disloyal" exhibitions, so much so that not a few attempts were made by them to interfere with the display and to forcibly cause the offending Irish flags to be removed, in many instances having to use force to remove them themselves or else to stage demonstrations to show their disapproval of the whole idea. Of the many thoroughfares selected for the latter course, Dominick Street became a danger zone. When night fell, British forces, particularly the "Auxies", descended on the neighbourhood and went "tearing mad", shouting and shooting.

It so happened that of all nights, our Battalion Council meeting should be held in one of the houses of that street, number 40 to be exact, which was situated opposite the Dominican Church. The room, or rather the bath room, at the top of the first flight of stairs, served as a kind of munition depot where daily one of our Company officers, Lieutenant D. Holmes, carried on

work of preparing grenade sets and making revolver ammunition. On that particular July night all the Battalion staff and Company Captains were present. We had just barely got down to business when the report was delivered by one of our scouts stationed outside anent the enemy activity. Prior to that we had heard the heavy rifle shooting. We had enough sense to realise that it was quite convenient to our meeting place and associated with a possible move to capture us. Our meeting was brought to an untimely end, after having transacted our business in the shortest time possible. Then we were instructed to hop it. Safety lay in moving out of the building unostentatiously, one at a time, for fear of attracting undue attention from unfriendly sources, for in the course of our work we had to guard against the prying eyes and ears of secret and open enemies. In that wise, we made our exit while the British forces of law and order engaged in bringing terror to all and sundry in that vicinity.

We prided ourselves in escaping that night, happy at the thought that our meeting place was not discovered. Others too were likewise pleased, not the least of those being our Director of Munitions, Seán Russell, the good Volunteer Jimmy Grace, who lent the place for I.R.A. purposes, and Holmes who even afterwards used the place for "making things". Its loss would have been a serious handicap to the I.R.A. Frequently I visited that workshop and had a fair idea of what was going on. Indeed on more than one occasion, I had been brought face to face with some of the work that was carried on there. Once in particular, when Dinny was demonstrating rather proudly

the quality of the home manufactured revolver ammunition, in a matter-of-fact way he placed one in the cylinder of a revolver and, before either of us realised it, presto a shot rang out! - and I felt a sudden warm feeling in my right ear. Fortunately nothing untoward occurred except that the bullet embedded itself in the door behind. There could be no gainsaying the fact that it was good stuff - the misadventure proved that much at least. Fortunately too the report was not heard outside.

In connection with this matter of the manufacture of revolver ammunition, it must be mentioned that the .45 calibre had fallen into short supply. That type was in almost general use and there had been a considerable expenditure of the ammunition during ambushes. Thus the problem was created to meet the deficiency by cutting down another class of ammunition of the same bore, the lead portion of which being made in a hand mould, in order to fit it to the revolvers as mentioned. No greater proof of ingenious skill could be provided than this minute and meticulous mode of craftsmanship. It afforded proof too that, even with primitive tools and working under extremely adverse conditions, such things could be fabricated and accomplished. This was a far cry from the home-made grenade that was and had been in use in many an ambush or operation in Dublin and throughout different parts of Ireland, as well as the numerous experiments, fittings and accessories that had been brought into the field of engineering and chemistry.

During the following days of July rumour was rife that "something was going on behind the scenes".

Parliamentary Debates in the
British House of Commons,
Wednesday, June 22nd, 1921.

Sir James Baird answering Mr. Briant:-

"In view of the grave danger which would in many cases ensue to persons giving information, the practice is not to supply interned persons with a formal statement of the evidence against them. If they apply to the advisory committee the evidence against them is indicated, as far as possible when they appear before the committee, and they are given the fullest opportunity of answering it. They are heard in person by the committee at the internment camps."

Mr. Henry answering Mr. MacVeigh:-

"Patrick Rafferty (arrested near Newry in March) is serving 3 years for the possession of ammunition and seditious literature, including an I.R.A. pamphlet on night firing and is in prison in England."

Similar rumours had been rife for a considerable time previously which suggested that "peace feelers" and possibly "peace negotiations" were afoot. In connection with these important moves, it may be relevant to mention that the names of influential English personages, English noblemen, members of the British Parliament, Church dignitaries, etc., were designated as being linked in the endeavour to stop the fighting in Ireland. Many of these people had been shocked by the atrocities practised by the Black and Tans particularly and the cruel methods of the British administration in Ireland generally. These excesses and abominations had already evoked a wave of indignation among liberty-loving people of various types and classes in England, Labour leaders and Trades Unionists included, who had expressed their indignation and disgust of British government policy in the British Parliament, on public platform and in the British and Anglo-Irish press. We had no reason to assume that any accommodating spirit towards the several peace feelers, intermediaries or pour parlers had been exercised or encouraged by our political or military leaders, although rumours, strong and persistent, had been going the rounds that the peace move had been in swing the previous Christmas, Lord Derby's and Archbishop Clune's names being mentioned therewith. The rank and file could hardly be aware and certainly were not made aware of such things, if there was any foundation in fact for the suggestion that negotiations of some kind or other were going on. Certainly was that true up to the time when, like a bolt from the blue, sensation was caused by the publication of a very strange message from one of our military leaders, Mick Collins, which opened many people's eyes to the

revealing knowledge that some form of negotiation was going on under the surface. His message, "Stop talking and get on with the work", could only have one meaning for us, namely, that which indicated that we were still waging war, and yet we could hardly forbear the thought that there "was something in the rumours after all".

Like a bolt from the blue also had come the startling news when on the 8th and 9th July reports were issued intimating that a Truce was declared between the British Government and Dáil Eireann. That Truce, we were informed, was to operate on Monday, July 11th.

On Monday, July 11th, 1921, at twelve noon the guns ceased firing and the British forces and the I.R.A. for the first time in five years became non-combatant and non-aggressive. On that day the British Chief Secretary for Ireland (Sir Hamar Greenwood) stated:-

> "The truce was agreed to on Saturday; it officially became operative at 12 o'c. to-day.
>
> Unfortunately the shooting of a policeman in Belfast on Friday night precipitated one of these deplorable riots which I think tarnish the good name of the Northern capital of Ireland. I share with him (Mr. Devlin), and all the world shares, the feeling of relief and hope engendered by the peace proceedings in

Ireland, but the police in Ireland remain under the Imperial Government until, under the Government of Ireland Act, they are given over to Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland."

The British Chief Secretary (Mr. Lloyd George) announced in the British House of Commons:-

"I have had a telegram from Mr. de Valers.

'Telegram received. I will be in London for Conference on Thursday next.'

The telegram which I sent has already appeared in the papers."

Thus we were brought to the full realisation that something had been going on behind the scenes. Plainly there was no reason now for disbelieving Dame Rumour or the propagation of news which, perhaps good meaningly, if indiscreetly, could claim affinity to sources that were definitely "well-informed" or emanating straight from the horse's mouth. The truth was out at last. Belligerent actions between the Irish and the British forces ceased. Guns, revolvers and grenades were accordingly silenced and, in their stead, a new method of approach to a political settlement of the "Irish situation" was imposed, or superimposed, as a necessary condition to end the warfare in Ireland. It was a simple enough expedient, that idea of a peace conference, which no person in his right senses could find fault with, to rile against or condemn.

Officers and Men of "C" Company, 1st Battalion,

Dublin Brigade, I.R.A.

on 11th July, 1921.

Captain :	Prendergast, Seán
1st Lieutenant :	Holmes, Denis
2nd Lieutenant :	Kirk, Patrick
Company Adjutant :	Richmond, John
Company Quartermaster :	Nathan, Seán
Intelligence Officer :	Finn, Martin
2nd Lieutenant :	Kennedy, Seán (Interned)
Section Leaders :	Byrne, Patrick
	Kelly, Mark
	Maher, William
	Tighe, John
Police Officer :	Dowling, Thomas
Quartermaster :	Molphy, Charles (Interned)

Volunteers :

Allen, Con
Bevan, Charles
Byrne, Jerry
Brabazon, Joseph (Interned)
Brennan, Frank (Interned)
Brooks, Fred
Birmingham, Andrew
Bannon, William
Bowes, Peter (Interned)
Buckley, Edmund
Bould, George (Interned)
Carroll, William
Cassidy, Thomas (Interned)
Cooling, Joseph
Curry, William (Interned)
Cahill, John
Cregan, Christopher
Courtney, Michael
Conroy, Joseph (Interned)
Carbery, Frank (Interned)
Crowe, Joseph
Corcoran, Seán

Volunteers :

Darcy, Patrick
Durkin, P.J.
Donnelly, James (Interned)
Doyle, John
Duignam, Patrick
Dolan, Edward
Downey, James
Daly, Patrick
Farrelly, John
Farrell, John (Interned)
Finn, John
Foley, Frank
Flynn, Patrick
Fulham, Joseph
Gregan, Eamonn
Grennell, Gerald
Gallagher, Felix (Interned)
(Alias Peadar Meehan)
Gorman, Thomas
Howlett, Michael
Hollywood, Matt
Hanafin, Tim
Hanafin, Con
Hughes, Patrick
Healy, Christopher
Hahesy, Thomas
Kelly, Joseph
Kelly, Joseph
Kavanagh, James
Kavanagh, Seumas
Keating, Patrick
Kinsella, James
Keane, Edward (Interned)
Kirk, Robert (Interned)
Killeen, James
Ledwith, Peter
Lynch, Bernard
Leonard, Patrick
Kambe, Patrick
Manning, Henry
Macken, Patrick (Interned)
Moriarty, John
Mulligan, Con (Interned)
Mulligan, John (Interned)
Molloy, Joseph
Moore, Maurice
Madden, Anthony
Myles, Charles
Morrisey, Seán (Interned)
Myler, Seán
Mulhall, Anoy
Mongey, Laurence
Maree, John
McGuinness, Séamus
McDonough, Joseph
McArdle, James (Interned)
McArdle, Patrick
McArdle, Edward (Interned)
McGrane, Denis (Interned)
McManus, Thomas
McEvoy, Patrick
McGrath, Michael
Nevin, Patrick
Nalty, John

Volunteers :	O'Reilly, Christopher	(Interned)
	O'Shea, Patrick	
	O'Connor, Patrick	
	O'Connor, John	
	O'Hanlon, Charles	(Interned)
	O'Brien, Patrick	
	O'Toole, William	
	O'Keeffe, James	
	O'Sullivan, Denis	
	Poole, John	
	Plunkett, James	
	Plunkett, Peter	
	Reilly, Bernard	
	Ryan, John	
	Stringer, Patrick	
	Swan, Patrick	(Interned)
	Sweetman, Joseph	
	Smart, Thomas	
	Sheehan, Michael	
	Scully, Michael	
	Tobin, Nicholas	
	Tallon, Michael	
	Whelan, George	(Interned)
	Walsh, Desmond	?(Interned)
	Walsh, Patrick J.	
	Weafer, Frank	
	Wilson, Mark	(Imprisoned)
	Wilson, Laurence	(Interned)
	Yourell, Thomas	

The following Volunteers had been transferred previously from our Company to and were then serving in the A. S. U. :

Carrigan, James
Flood, Edward
Gannon, William
Quinn, Seán
O'Sullivan, Dermot (was in prison).

In the intervening days between the promulgation of the terms of the Truce and the actual day of the Cease Fire order coming into effect, no appreciable abatement of activity or action was noticeable on the part of the British forces. Likewise the I.R.A. remained on guard and continued activity in the several capacities to which it had hitherto been involved. On our part, we continued to send out and place men on ambush duty, raids, etc., if for no other purpose than to take advantage of every available moment and keep the war going up to the twelfth hour. While these activities were continuing, one could not fail to comprehend the profound importance of the occasion which the declaration of the Truce and the notification of the proposed Anglo-Irish Conference had imposed on our military force, the I.R.A. In the short space of the intervening days, it was not even possible to conjecture, indeed it could not be reasonable to assess, the true state of feelings of our force in its entirety or even to sense the reactions of the average man of the I.R.A. to what was then regarded as a most sensational and historical event. No means were available to do so, and the fact that there existed a wonderful sense of discipline and regard to duty, which each man voluntarily and patriotically accepted as a condition of honourable service, precluded such being ascertained. It was always possible, however, for those who were officers or well known, provided they moved freely around within the compass of certain circles, groups, or in their own units, to obtain a fair insight into, or an understanding of, the thoughts, the feelings and characteristics of the average man that comprised our movement. In that way, "a thing or two" had been learned and appreciated in the past.

As regards the situation that had been created by the Truce declaration, the least that could be said was that it found most I.R.A. men perturbed, surprised and not a little speculative as to cause and effect. To say that it was received with mixed feelings would but mildly describe the reactions of the men of the I.R.A. to the Truce. Doubts and suspicions there were among many a s to the purpose and the nature of the Truce itself and on the specific ground that it might be merely a breathing time, of long or short duration, in which advantage might be taken by the British to rehabilitate themselves and strengthen their forces in Ireland for a renewal of the conflict. Some there were who feared that the Truce was only a trap designed to break our discipline, to take us off our guard and cause us to weaken our hold on things generally. But, in the main, the majority looked upon it in the light of being a military order and as such deserving respect and compliance.

When the psychological moment for the cessation of hostilities arrived, we became aware, through the medium of detailed orders from the higher commands of the I.R.A. of the fact of our continued existence and that we were expected to take up the trend of the work that had to some extent fallen into abeyance during the campaign. We were again to function, to parade and train; this time without fear of interference, arrest or punishment. Active units of the Dublin Brigade went into camp; men of the flying columns in the country returned to their former commands and homesteads under orders that they continue service in the new form as directed. A new wave, or rather a return of the old spirit of enthusiasm beckoned us on to reunite and strengthen our forces. Officers of units were particularly desired to redouble their efforts with a view to conducting extensive and systematic training of their men. Our own (1st) Battalion opened a camp in Mulhuddart, Co.Dublin, where men of the various units went into training. Towards the

end of July our company had established a permanent camp at Portmarnock. All classes of military subjects were taught. Certain numbers of our men spent their spare time and even their holidays there. Every weekend the company reported there for the various duties and, during the week nights, the work of training was carried on at the camp and the company venue, Tara Hall, to which we had returned in force after the signing of the Truce. General headquarters had encouraged the idea of training camps. Then it was that the functions of soldiering became understood. The lull in the fighting gave us a breathing space for officers and men to improve their knowledge of military technique, inculcating a finer sense of discipline and elan of the units. Much had been learned and much gained from the exploits and experiences of the recent warfare. Every day and every week of the Truce was well spent in toning up the spirit, character and finesse in men as ~~to~~ in the units. Particular care was taken to bind the partly shattered organism and to tighten up the military machine, by instituting a rigorous system of training, re-arranging the various groups composing the units, and attending to the different administrative and routine matters that were all too plentifully and all too urgently thrust on us. Specialised classes in first aid, signalling, machine gun, armouring and training were re-arranged. Police and intelligence groups consolidated, all units availed of the occasion to make the best use of the time at their disposal, urged as we were by the feeling or premonition that "the conference" might not be successful.

In the midst of that acceleration the pace to perfect our military training and secure general fitness of our men, the officers of companies were prevailed on to keep on the move and not to weaken in their efforts, to maintain complete control of their units. Classes were also conducted for officers and N.C.Os. Weekly meetings were held for company adjutants and quartermasters; likewise, company captains attended weekly

(Note: See Company Roll on Pages 540 to 543, inclusive)

meetings of the battalion council. Thus we returned to our former organisational system, the captains alone having had to surrender most of their spare time in trying to meet the demands placed on them. But if the period was one thet imposed certain strains on us, it found us only too eager and too glad to do our best in the circumstances, our only regard being to give loyal and consistent service to our men and those who exercised authority over us in the interests of our country.

During what might be regarded as a period of quiet and tranquillity everything in the garden was not lovely. How often has the best prepared plan of mice and man been brought to naught, or been hampered or frustrated by some act or acts of indiscretion on the part of those on whose shoulders rested the responsibility for initiating and completing a perfect job? This is by way of preface to an affair in which the writer and his company became involved during the Truce period. It arose over the question of our camp at Portmarnock. We had been installed there for well over a month when orders were issued by our battalion O/C. Comdt. P. Holohan to "break camp and to proceed to the battalion camp venue, Mulhuddart". Sadly upset and chagrined, not so much at the issuing of this peremptory order as that its terms implied the conclusion of our company venture, we dallied in giving strict and immediate compliance to the demand imposed on our company. Acrimonious controversy accordingly ensued. The Battalion O/C. took umbrage at our unaccommodating attitude. To hold out on a matter of principle of company requirements and company independence could only be registered as dissentients to the battalion plan. Our actions were rather guided in the light that as a unit we were carrying out all orders respecting training, claiming also that we had been first to set up training camp. Stress was also laid on several responsibilities, not the least of which entailed the renting of the site and our possibly increasing liability and expense in transporting our stores. These, however, were considered of little consequence in the matter of obedience

or non-obedience to orders. Small wonder, indeed, that soon afterwards our Portmarnock camping expedition came to an end and the company returned to the city. Small wonder, too, I became suspended pending courtmartial on a charge of insubordination and non-compliance with orders.

It did not take long to set up a court of officers to try the case; neither were they long in deliberating and imposing sentence. The inevitable verdict specified that I be suspended from duty for a month. That sentence was not a happy one for me for many reasons, not the least of which it put our company wrong with the battalion, and established the first real break in my service over a long number of years. Each of these were hard to endure. Perhaps we had erred in permitting the matter to reach the point where retreat was impossible; but we had acted in what we conceived to be the best interests of our company, and because these interests suited our members. It must be admitted that the whole affair was viewed by the members of the company with misgiving and not a little resentment so much so that they refrained as a company from participating in the battalion camp.

By a strange coincidence my period of punishment terminated a short time before the day fixed for the battalion review, which signalised the conclusion of the battalion camp at Mulhuddart. We, or to be more precise, I, had in the meantime returned to the fold, all disabilities and acrimony being passed away. None perhaps was so happy as I; and the battalion commandant who, credit where credit is due, acted as if nothing had arisen to spoil an otherwise long and pleasant association. Thus our company paraded at Phibsboro' on that fateful Sunday in September and set out on lorries to the rendezvous, Mulhuddart. Six or seven hundred men were on parade that day. The inspection officer was the Chief of Staff, 'Dick' Mulcahy, who, taking advantage of the occasion, addressed us. In solemn and earnest

tones he exhorted us to bend ourselves to the task of being well drilled and well prepared to resume the fight. His reference to the possibility of us going into the fight again synchronised with the sensational news that was in circulation at the time of an almost rupture in negotiations at the Peace Conference in London where, during the past months, efforts were being made to 'make' an Irish settlement. Up to date, however, the question of Ireland as a Republic or a Dominion, had not been composed and, if rumours were true, there was a rift in the proceedings. In such a circumstance our Chief of Staff advised us to prepare for the worst, by becoming specialised and perfect in the use of arms and grenades, for we might yet have to resume the fight. The knowledge thus imparted to us gave additional impetus to the rapid intensification of our endeavours to train our men, as it brought home to us the uncertainties of political affairs as they related to the London Conference.

From that moment, a fresh spurt was given to perfect our organisation and our training. Such was true of all units in the Dublin Brigade. Training, more training, and still more training became, as it were, the accepted watchword. Never in the history of our force was enthusiasm higher or the will to do things exercised so freely and persistently. These and the utilisation of suitable and better facilities for training greatly contributed to the urge to be ready for all contingencies. Every moment was valuable, and every moment was put to good use. Fortunately we had a greater degree of freedom in conducting our training, especially indoors since, for the first time within nigh eight years, we were afforded immunity against enemy raids or actions directed against us. In that way we could plan without fear of being interfered with and always with the possible assurance of carrying out the allotted programme as arranged. Besides, we were also enabled to train

with the appropriate materials such as rifles, revolvers and grenades instead of improvised makeshifts, or rough and ready substitutes.

Crises followed crises in the political domain of the London Conference. The Irish barometer became as variable as the autumn weather. With the approach of early December the mist cleared somewhat, when, lo and behold! there came a day, it was the sixth day of that fateful month, the news fell upon us and upon the world that "a settlement had been, at last, reached". Glaring newspaper headings, reports and posters flashed the s ensational tidings anear and afar. They told the story of a Treaty agreement having been signed by the Irish and British plenipotentiaries - a Treaty of Peace - a Treaty guaranteeing Ireland's Freedom, a settlement of the age-long quarrel between Ireland and England, were rapturously displayed and as rapturously applied to the document labelled "articles of agreement". The publication of the Treaty terms or "articles of agreement" brought to light the salient and salutary fact that Ireland was being accorded "Dominion status within the Empire". Soon afterwards the Dáil was summoned, and met and deliberated on the Terms and, for the first time, in years those who stood for republican principles showed signs of disunity and unrest.

From that moment the seeds of disunion became rooted in the hearts and minds of those who had hitherto stood in the gap of danger fighting for an Ireland one and indivisible. Disruption and dissention in the Dáil rapidly spread outside. After days and weeks of harsh and rancorous discussion, the Dáil adjourned for the Christmas recess, agreeing mutually to reassemble to still further debate the question in the following month. In the meantime, the doors of the prisons and internment camps were flung open and our dear comrades of the I.R.A. and kindred republican movements returned as freemen to a country that was beginning to be swept by a

desperate and cruel whirlwind of political passion and animosity. Rejoicings there were, and justly so, for their homecoming. Even though the occasion and the circumstances responsible for their liberation were such as to cause great happiness to fall on all those immediately concerned, there was hardly one among them who was not apprehensive of the dark and darkening clouds that then hung over the Irish scene. Under such sombre conditions their personal liberation and the welcomes and festivities associated therewith lost much meaning and lacked true balance when viewed in the light that the move to release them was intended as a means to create a good atmosphere for the success of the Treaty cause. Therefore, they came amongst us in the midst of political turmoil unlike their parting when all within and all of the republican fold were one in faith as they were one in fealty, and where unity and a high resolve to win complete freedom were appropriately applied in the face of an alien despotism that stood as a bulwark against us and the cause we espoused.

Not that they returned in an unfriendly or politically biassed manner different than when they parted. Rather the contrary was the case. They, like us, had mixed feelings and held divergent opinions on the Treaty issue which, to say the least, only served to supplement the already existing political rancour so cruelly and so wantonly invading the regions of our military force, and causing other difficulties to accrue to their and our undoing. Every unit - our own was no exception to the average - became belligerent to the point of taking sides, and it became only a question how many or how few/were in favour of or against the Treaty. Every unit, in the Dublin Brigade at least, was similarly circumstanced in regard to the major national situation, involving, as it was bound to involve, the I.R.A. no less than the other component parts of the republican movement into a first rate debacle with or without the inclusion of the returned and liberated prisoners.

While the political instability caused by the signing of the Terms of Agreement for a Treaty had brought discord in an otherwise united nation, I.R.A. affairs remained somewhat unchanged. Training continued as heretofore. Our comrades who had been recently set free returned to their respective units. All would have been well then if the storm arising from the London agreement was less threatening and not so foreboding; but, alas! when on the 7th January 1922, the Dáil voted by a majority of seven for a ratification of the Treaty, the storm burst furiously, menacingly and indiscriminately throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. Its repercussions were particularly felt amongst those who through dark and evil days had given service in the I.R.A. forces and the Sinn Fein organisation. If it brought a measure of freedom to Ireland, it also brought about a cleavage in these worthwhile national organisms. Its evil effect was less noticeable perhaps in the I.R.A. than elsewhere, although signs and symptoms were in evidence which set the minds and frayed the tempers of individual officers and men on the merits or demerits of the Treaty. There was a certain uneasy feeling which indicated that all was not well or could continue to go well in the armed forces, while its political and national arm, Sinn Fein as well as Dáil Éireann, were going through a supremely tempting and troublous crisis.

Fortunately, the high degree of discipline in the I.R.A. prevented an immediate disruption. But the same could not be said of the Sinn Fein organisation, especially in Dublin, where the serpent of disunity had from an early period shown its ugly fangs emitting venom within the body politic and leaving its poisonous stigma in the minds and in the hearts of many people. I had a proximate knowledge of this by reason of my being one of the paid organisers of Sinn Fein then operating in Dublin city. In that capacity I visited various

cumainn (or clubs) of the organisation, met and collaborated with officials and members, made contact with existing branches and sought to organise new ones. A particularly sad part of my work related to the endeavour to keep existing cumainn from splitting on the Treaty issue. Mixing among the different groups and classes which composed the organisation one would easily get to know their minds and their allegiances and judge accordingly who was for and who was against the Treaty. At the time of which I write - before and for a short time after the ratification of the Treaty by Dáil Éireann - it was a common policy, indeed a definite rule prescribed by the Dublin City Executive, to keep clear of the issue and to refrain from debating or voting on the matter at meetings of the cumainn. It was held to be such a delicate and controversial subject which sorely threatened the very existence and welfare of the movement that anything resembling a showdown was deemed inadvisable. But all that time disunity had raised its ugly head and men and women members of cumainn professing pro-Treaty or anti-Treaty opinions were giving vent to their feelings in either regard. Hence the condition imposed on me to exercise restraint on the grounds of national unity.

The work which I then had to perform in that particular sphere, though quite difficult at times, had certain pleasing and useful aspects; not the least of those was concerned in the gaining of many friendships and the winning of many confidants and confidences. I considered myself fortunate, nay, highly honoured, in being so well circumstanced, my rank in the military force contributing in no small degree to the attainment of their trust and the ratio of importance which some well-meaning people regaled me. Another pleasing feature about the work was that it brought one in contact with a large number of members of the I.R.A. who held various positions in Sinn Fein cumainn and in some instances largely controlled some of them. My visitations to these were regulated by the

Executive consisting of the principal officials of the various constituencies. That work was purely organisational, to keep in touch with the different groups, to attend their meetings and to summon meetings where none were held, or infrequently held, to resurrect redundant cumainn and to infuse new life into dying ones. In a word, an organiser was required to secure revival and to assert activity. Thus he was granted an expansive field in which to exploit his talents, his capabilities and his skill within certain limits and governed by certain well-defined conditions.

It was not always easy to attain to great eminence in the field of organising during that period of stress when those who had formerly been true and abiding friends were fast becoming suspicious, if not antagonistic, to each other, on account of the political tension then prevailing. Other circumstances and considerations militated against producing satisfactory results. During the latter stages of the guerilla warfare and the activities of the British forces, many of the cumainn had fallen into disuse or functioned in a small way or with only a few members. Meetings were seldom if ever held. Some of the cumainn had suspended work or ceased to function altogether for other causes, principal of which was that many of their officials and members were serving with the military arm in the fighting, while not a few were 'on the run' or prisoners. Even during the relatively peaceful period of the Truce many found it hard to continue membership of their Sinn Fein Cumann, as a good part of their time was taken up with training in the I.R.A. Other men who were less active in the I.R.A. were able to devote a good deal of time and attention to cumainn affairs. Many of these difficulties were got over during the Truce and most of the cumainn in Dublin city had got into a composed and effective state immediately prior to and up to the ratification of the Treaty, only to face another and more awful ordeal, that of the probability of disunion.

Here was I labouring in two spheres, each of them calling for tact caution and in many cases much diplomacy. These were difficult at a time when everyone in both the I.R.A. and Sinn Fein were considered to be for or against the Treaty. Particularly so was it in my case, as I was personally against the Treaty terms, although I accepted and exercised the role of peacemaker in the interest of unity in our own company and in Sinn Fein. I looked upon the Treaty with disfavour for the reason that it was less like the independent Irish Republic we had declared our allegiance to and more like the Dominion Home Rule which we had for years disfavoured, because of the Oath of Allegiance to the British Crown; the office of Governor General, and that Ireland was to have two parliaments instead of one, as well as the clause which gave England the right to make use of the harbours and ports of Ireland in times of war, etc. I was not alone in this, as practically all the principal officers and the majority of N.C.Os. and men of our 1st Battn., as well as all the officers and N.C.Os. and most of our company were of the same mind.

The bitter and frenzied debates in An Dáil had upset and disturbed the minds and weakened the loyalties of many men in the I.R.A. and in Sinn Fein and kindred bodies like the Cumann na mBan, the Citizen Army and the I.R.B. We found ourselves wondering whether the attainment of the Treaty, which conferred on Ireland the status of a Dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations was going to disunite our militant forces, the I.R.A., or whether, alternatively, by some contrivance or other, the I.R.A. could maintain its unity and its entity within the ambit of the Treaty. Some there were who considered that we could "work the Treaty" and at the same time keep the I.R.A. intact and, by so doing, prevent a complete disunity of the country. How seriously and how energetically we laboured these points in the belief that the unity and integrity of the army would be secured no matter how the people acted on the Treaty issue! But, alas, the political situation

outpaced us, if it did not, as it were, engulf and ensnare us. Perhaps we received support or encouragement for our ideas from the assertions made by some of the politicians who supported the Treaty that it could be made a "stepping stone to the Republic". The high-minded wordy duel in the Dáil, however, succeeded in achieving two things - it won the Treaty and lost the unity of the country and the people of Ireland, Sinn Fein and the I.R.B. Of its effects on the I.R.A. and I.R.B. more anon.

As regards Sinn Fein, it could be said that the Treaty position brought it, as a powerful political and national organisation, through gradual stages of inactivity to absolute stagnation. That was so in the case of Dublin city. There the membership of the cumainn rapidly decreased and those who remained members became less enthusiastic, less vigorous and less attentive than heretofore. It was difficult to break down the barriers that contributed to its undoing; suspicion, distrust and even hatred had crept early and unmistakeably into the councils and among the personnel attached to the different cumainn. Anyone with any sound sense of reason and judgment could perceive that the organisation and its members were going through a period of travail, and a process of disintegration for which there could be no redress unless the Treaty, which was the main cause, was eliminated. Plainly, we were witnessing the death and destruction of one of the most potent political and national movements in the annals of Irish history.

Was it not a poignant and a saddening thing to contemplate the passing of such a grand and patriotic organism into oblivio Here was a movement - nay, more than a movement, a veritable institution - being condemned to extinction and death at the hands of their friends and so-called protagonists and devotees, Sinn Fein, that had withstood the test of time and of trial, of vituperation and of persecution, that had stood

four square against alien laws, tyrranical governments and military governors; that had braved the bullet, the bludgeon and the prison cell, by means of the ballot and the exercise of free speech in its fight for Irish self-determination and the will of the Irish people to be free, was to die an ignominious death. Sinn Fein as an organisation that had rallied Irishmen and women everywhere and won their support, their esteem and loyalty of the best in Ireland, won them mostly on the principal and sole reason that it stood by the Proclamation of 1916 and the establishment of the Irish Republic. For this reason was it pledged and gained strength during the previous six years; in this faith it lived and had its being beside and in harmony with the militant force, the I.R.A.

Was it possible that a movement like Sinn Fein should now so easily crumble to pieces and put "finis" to its own work when the ideals which it so proudly enunciated and so nobly affirmed had fallen into disuse because the Treaty was a "compromise" and a stepping stone to the Republic? What other fate could befall it when those who were its most enduring friends and trusted leaders lent themselves to perpetuate disunity because the Treaty was "the best that could be got under the circumstances?" Was it not a humiliating condition to impose on an organisation and a class of brave men and women who were left with no other choice but to break away from the heroic traditions of the six glorious years of endeavour and sacrifice and that the Treaty settlement was considered to be a fair price to pay for the disunity of Irish men and women. Was there any way of averting the tragedy that was being enacted under our very eyes, the tragedy of men and women who were firm and loyal friends in a great ennobling cause being rent asunder and thrown at each other's throat? Was there any reason or logic for such a course.

In the face of the undercurrent that was furiously sweeping the Sinn Fein movement and its allied forces to perdition, there were many people, friends of each of them who were making gigantic efforts to prevent a total split. Even that was not an easy task, since the Dáil had split on the issue of the Treaty and, in consequence, had, by a vote, elected a new Dáil, thus displacing the leader of the Republican Dáil, President de Valera, for a President who had pledged himself to implement the Treaty. That lead was bound to have serious repercussions in the political and military movements. It seemed only a matter of time when the Sinn Fein organisation would follow the same course. Nothing short of a miracle could prevent it from collapsing. As far as my knowledge and experience was concerned, Sinn Fein in Dublin was far on the way to disunity at the time of the ratification of the Treaty in January 1922. It would not be safe to make a bold assertion that at that time it would have been impossible to compose the differences that had arisen. There were, as we too well were made aware, many people in our midst who had goodwill and were well disposed to the movement and were seeking to hold it together. Their point of view was that it would be tragic for the country if disunity was effected in the national movement. But such unity was dependent on the issue of the Treaty or the issue of the Republic, since the movement up to and including the period of the Treaty ratification was linked to the idea of the "living Irish Republic" and, in consequence, had not found cause to make changes in that regard.

How could unity and amity be maintained under such adverse national circumstances when men and women, devotees of a popular and patriotic movement were fighting out the issue within the clubs? How could unity be maintained when their leaders, who were their, and the country's accredited and trusted leaders, were at loggerheads on the vext political issue? Was it not asking too much that the rank and file should continue in unity when their chosen leaders were throwijg discretion to the winds

and, by unseeming bad taste and vicious invective, were lending themselves to the promotion of a deadly, a vicious and a cankerous growth in the body politic. How would or how could the rank and file respond to such a situation when those whom they loved and trusted showed such small regard for their feelings or their patriotism as to expose the national movement to disruption, and in turn, disturb the ideals which up to that time were considered to be sacrosanct, sacred and securely fixed. Was it not expecting too much of human kind to expect forbearance, tolerance and the exercise of charity in a crisis wherein was enshrined the fate of not alone the country, but also the destiny of their own beloved movement to which they had given such loyal service in both spheres. These, and perhaps a legion of other questions were asked by many people who regarded Sinn Fein as being of supreme national importance in the national entity known as Irish Ireland.

It was unfortunate, as it was manifestly nauseating, that no other appropriate answer could be given to the many questions that arose as a result of the political tension and uneasiness imposed by the Treaty position except to produce chaos within the national forces. Every moment that elapsed only served still further to bring ruin and disintegration among those whose lot was cast within the Sinn Fein fold. One had need to be closely and intimately associated with the men and women adherents of that organisation to obtain a clear picture of what was going on behind the scenes, and of the havoc that was being wrought within the confines of the different cumainn. In that respect, I was not uncommonly circumstanced in being "in the know" of things and of gauging the reactions, opinions and feelings of quite a large number of people. How many times had I had reason to report unfavourably on the conditions of the cumainn within the Dublin area? Not infrequently had I stressed the point that disunity existed and was stultifying activity and progress. Particularly was that so after the Dáil had decided to ratify the Treaty.

Then the various cumainn showed evident signs of approaching disruption not by one gesture or action but rather for want of either. No such thing as a complete cleavage occurred for the simple reason that none was encouraged and none was sought because certain efforts were being exerted to avert such a course as would cause absolute disunity among them. It looked at times, however, as if nothing short of a miracle could keep them together. The issue of the Treaty was not at the time as clear-cut in the Sinn Fein cumainn as it had been in the higher councils of the organisations and in the Dáil. Besides no vote was taken on the question for fear of creating a split.

It would be hard to say at that juncture whether the majority of the members of the Dublin cumainn favoured the Treaty or were against it, for the reasons above specified. The nearest anyone could go in estimating an approximate figure would be to say that opinions were fairly evenly divided in the various cumainn in the comhairle ceanntair and in the combined constituencies council that governed the Dublin city area. Some of the cumainn, however, were predominantly pro-Treaty, others anti-Treaty, while not a few were more concerned in not showing their true feelings on the issue, they being more concerned in keeping the movement intact, rather than precipitating a crisis. Of the latter class I would make bold to say that most of them would have made no end of sacrifices towards that end, Credit where credit is due, it must be asserted that even those who professed themselves Treatyites and anti-Treatyites could not be regarded as averse to the true interests of Sinn Fein, or were not prepared to do a lot to prevent a crisis that threatened to engulf it, When, at that stage, decisive action on that question would have achieved no good purpose, and when, as was then the case, efforts were being made to effect a compromise that would keep united all those who subscribed to Sinn Fein policy and principles.

Oh, the wickedness and the machinations of man! The time came when the cleavage occurred and men and women took sides on the issue, despite and notwithstanding the immense endeavours of some well-disposed people to patch up the rented fabric that once had withstood the tempests of the previous troublous years. Then a curse came on us when our leaders became disunited, dividing on the Treaty issue and, in consequence, forming separate camps. Then we became aware of a house divided against itself. For the first time in nigh six years our united front was broken, not by dungeon, fire or sword, but by the process of a Treaty that was regarded, and vauntingly extolled, as being the harbinger of peace and freedom for Ireland! Paradoxically in the exercise of securing such a measure of freedom, no other choice was possible except to break the common bonds that preserved unity among our leaders, united us to them and they to us. Thus a real stumbling block to the continued maintenance of unity in Sinn Fein was erected.

One of the reasons that militated against reconciliation among adherents of the Sinn Fein organisation was not so much leadership as an excess of leadership. That fact that it and the kindred bodies, such as the I.R.A. and, even to an extent, the I.R.B. were controlled and governed by the same individual leaders went very far in producing unsatisfactory results; the fac fact that the same Tom, Dick and Harry (these terms are used advisedly) were members of the executives of each, and in many c cases ministers and members of Dáil Éireann as well were factors that aggravated the tension that prevailed therein and among those who were members of such. In many instances policy was subordinated to the question of personality, when the only thing that mattered was the popularity and influence of the leaders, or some of them, and the use these could be put to in order to secure support to their side. Only too well were these availed of and demonstrated. Perhaps it was human that people should regard their leaders with awesome reverence and render to them filial devotion because of their truly grand and patriotic past.

Hence the fight ranged around the names, the fames and glories of individual leaders according to the whims, the fancies and the follies of their respective protagonists.

But the achievements, adventures and greatness of any one leader or set of leaders were stressed to the full. These might, in ordinary circumstances, have been of some value in holding the people together to keep them united and to spur them on to greater endeavours. Such had been the case up to the Treaty position. Since then, however, leadership had fallen into disrepute, if it had not fallen into disuse, where it was not already over-stressed or over-emphasised because of the trend to disunity which seemed to overtake some of our leaders at that particularly sad time. Under these awful circumstances, the plain people of the Sinn Fein organisation broke the bonds that had previously served to unite them to their leaders; they, too, following their leaders' actions, became Treatyites or anti-Treatyites.

While these things were happening, the Sinn Fein cause and movement in Dublin declined. Insuperable difficulties arose, due mainly to the Treaty issue, which tended to kill initiative and activity and to bring the different cumainn to stagnation point. Some of these ceased to function, while others that could be regarded as existing were only barely able to function, or to hold themselves together, in some haphazard fashion. My work, as indeed my position, as organiser, in consequence, showed evident signs of deterioration in the face of a similar fate that was speedily pulling down our national structure and changing everything, brought us to the verge of utter and hopeless disruption. In many instances, meetings were held infrequently if at all. Any of /the few "live" cumainn that existed were neither lively nor beneficial except in the sense, and for the purpose of providing opportunities and scope for ventilating opinions on the Treaty issue, Much of my work was directed in trying to keep them from so acting, as a matter of common policy

and because cumainn were precluded from taking decisions on the question of the Treaty. So utterly impossible had things become, however, that no great need existed for keeping in office an organiser - to wit, myself - at a time when organising was at a very low ebb and was so hopelessly dependent on the existence of a virile and progressive movement, which Sinn Fein could, unhappily, not be regarded as being at the time in question. As my salary was paid from a common pool, in which each cumainn subscribed a quota, and as many cumainn had fallen on hard times, my departure was assured. Hence, I had perforce to break what was not a wholly unpleasant or unpleasing association among those whom I had ever regarded as dear friends and faithful collaborators in a good cause. In parting thus I could not fail to be aware that our Sinn Fein movement in Dublin was going through a period of sad and unrelenting distress of which disunity formed the major part.

Perhaps my enforced disassociation from Sinn Fein affairs in the sphere in which I operated was not altogether of a very disturbing nature when it is considered that most of my duties were concerned with keeping the peace so that the various contestants would not fight the issue out, within the cumainn. Mine was no easy task, and the fact that I held decidedly strong anti-Treaty views which I was precluded from airing because the conditions of my office prescribed that I act with circumvention and restraint and required that I should not take sides, gave me an experience that was both salutary as it was peculiar. But then I was no worse placed than in the position I already exercised in the military force, where I also had to hold myself in check in the interests of unity which, as in the case of Sinn Fein, was being so ingloriously undermined by the political fury and passions then raging over the Treaty question.

In my association with Sinn Fein in Dublin I had been brought into close contact with many ardent lights in the

various comhairle ceanntair or cumainn, notabilities like Larry Raul of the South City Cumainn, Harry O'Hanrahan, Dick Davys, Christy Healy of the Inns Quay Cumainn, Mick O'Brien, Secretary of the North Dock Cumainn, Peadar Doyle of the Kilmainham Cumainn, Owen Porter, Secretary of the Wood Quay Cumainn, Dominick Owens of the Rotunda Cumainn, Tom Hoban and Seamus Doyle of the North City Cumainn, Nicholas Lennon of the Arran Quay Cumainn and Mrs. McKean were but a small number of the hosts that comprised the movement then. Other personalities were the various deputies of Dáil Éireann for the Dublin constituencies, Liam Cosgrave, Phil Shanahan, Liam Staines, Sean T. O'Kelly.

Due to the conditions prevailing at the time my work as organiser could not be considered as secure and 100% beneficial by reason of the curbing influences and checks which had been brought to bear in connection with my organising work. Not less dissimilar were these applied in the I.R.A. where regard for the interest and wellbeing of the military forces was considered to be above the issue of the Treaty, and where through the medium of superb discipline and a high sense of patriotism officers and men were enjoined to exercise the greatest caution in preserving unity within its ranks. On the officers particularly devolved, as a question of duty, the task of trying to keep their men and their units free from the political bickerings and unrest then so apparent outside.

The altogether tragic, poignant and disturbing evils of disunion, resulting from the Treaty position, having affected the political organisation, Sinn Fein, was bound to become manifest in the militant arm, the I.R.A. The big question that arose was: whether we as professing soldiers could weather the political storm better than the pronounced political adherents? Unquestionably, from the moment the Treaty was

signed, and especially since the date of its ratification, the I.R.A. became somewhat involved in the trend of national affairs of which it shared partisanship and was, partly or wholly, interested. Obviously no better proof existed than the fact that some of its leading officers were signatories to, and voted in favour of, the Articles of Agreement. Other officers as members of An Dáil had also voted for the Treaty. On the opposing side were ranged leading officers who, in similar capacities, voted against the Treaty. In that way, and by that means, we were involved in the political conflict that was being unleashed or raging in our midst.

That conflict of opinions and diversified actions of some of the leading lights of the I.R.A. were contributory factors in sowing the seeds of disunity and disruption among us. There seemed no way of escape from the impending doom into which our treasured movement was being so cruelly and so swiftly plunged. Here was a force, an invincible, virile and sensitive force, that had borne the full blast and the weight of the war for independence; that had boldly faced every situation and stood up to every test and trial against superior odds, in many cases overwhelming odds; that had relied on its own strength, initiative and courage of which it possessed much; that had not been broken or beaten in the warfare or by the process of jailings or internment camps; now about to fall a victim to the more deadly and devastating form of conquest, disunity! As many of our G.H.Q. staff were members of the Government and of the Dáil and, of course, on the high council of Sinn Fein and I.R.B. it was hardly possible that the I.R.A. would entirely steer clear of the dangers that were inherent in the receding political situation - or to escape from the even more deadly and devastating evil - that of a split within the I.R.A.

True there was a strong feeling among a fairly substantial number of men of the I.R.A. that, however much other groups and

organisations, or even the Dáil itself, should disagree on the question of the Treaty, the I.R.A. as a militant force should not split, but rather remain intact in the interests of the nation. Many amongst us argued the question from a purely military and national angle. There were even some who were solely concerned to keep the I.R.A. free from the political rancour and unrest which was then only too manifest outside our force. A split among the I.R.A. was then generally regarded as the greatest evil in an uncertain and difficult period. That seemed to be the only sound logic, at a time when bitter acrimonious wrangling was being indulged in by politicians in the Dáil on public platforms, in the council chambers, and last and by no means least, the public press. The greatest harm accrued from the speeches of political groups and the propaganda indulged in by the press, the latter particularly being predominantly pro-Treaty, had by then thrown its full weight into the fray against those who professed republican or anti-Treaty views.

Concerning the actions of the Irish public press during the period under review, the salient fact emerged that if anything, they persistently pursued a policy of strict partiality and partisanship in support of the Treaty, savouring of a too spacious and an over solicitous regard for the things that were nearest and dearest to their own agelong political hearts. They got to idolising some of our soldiers and our political leaders, eulogised them for their manly and heroic deeds and generally accorded them veneration and the highest form of hero-worship. Did it not sound highly exalting to have such men written off as national heroes and brave warriors and to have them regaled as the men who won the war? Did it not appear that, after all, the "pen was mightier than the sword?" Could we of the I.R.A., or some of us, be blamed for examining our consciences on that rather strange and surprisingly sudden conversion for which the Treaty was directly responsible? But was it conversion or merely self-interest

that caused such a press to lionise their would-idols and to lavish on them bouquets and paeans of praise for their great deeds of valour during the fight of the preceding few years? Miracle of miracles, the press took up the cudgels of the fight at the point where the fighting men left off, and fought it over again by a spate of special articles and selected writings in praise or some, not all, of those who had rendered service in that manner, all of which helped to widen still further the gap that already existed in the I.R.A.

Perhaps our memories were at fault or playing us false in the situation then. Perhaps we had forgotten the part the Irish public press had played during the period when our men were fighting for their lives and in defence of an ideal without and despite the help of the journalistic scribes who seldom if ever raised their voices or used their pens in our defence or in defence of our cause. Perhaps we had forgotten that on occasions our movement had had to take hostile action against some of them because of some indiscreet or insulting reference to our men and our cause, when such action on the orders of the I.R.A. authorities consisted in raiding newspaper offices and printing works and by smashing certain portions of the machinery therein left no doubt in the minds of certain newspaper managers that the fighting men would not be trifled with. Such courses of action were seldom carried out by the I.R.A. Verily our memories were short and our intellects dull were we to be forgetful that the same newspapers supported every cause but that to which we gave allegiance supporting in turn the British sponsored convention; Recruitment for the British forces during the 1914-18 World War, as well as the British side in that war; condemned the insurrection, the leaders who promoted it and were executed for it and wrote of the rank and file as "poor deluded dupes"; a press that was purposely anglophile, and mainly concerned with the "predominant partner" and favoured the connection with England as being the

the only thing that mattered and was worthwhile for Ireland.

In throwing their full support on the side of the Treaty the public press, especially in Dublin, aided disunity in the ranks of those who had kept alive the spirit of nationality throughout the previous six years and went very far in setting Irishmen against each other. Were the matter of Irish unity and of I.R.A. unity in particular, or even for that matter the deciding of the Treaty issue alone, left to the national combination of men and women that comprised the national movement, the chances for composing the differences might not have been so difficult. Heretofore we of the national movement had paid scant attention to, and had accustomed ourselves to disbelieving the average Irish papers. We generally gave them a wide berth, or where for want of alternative organs for news tolerated them, as being the best of a bad lot. We considered ourselves to be strong enough in our own convictions in our opinions and our aspirations as to remain immune from their denationalising influence. How proudly we boasted that not all the press of England or Ireland could win us to their viewpoints, or cajole or mislead us. We looked to our own consciences, our own hearts and hands in matters appertaining to national affairs and the cause of freedom for Ireland. We had learned our lesson from the past, and we prided ourselves as being so fixed in our purpose and our principles that not even the press could turn us from our straight course or affect our ideals in any degree. We had given our allegiance to Ireland, to our movement and our people, and however the tide would ebb or flow, press or no press, we would continue to carry on without the help of a press not one of which (in Dublin at least) in those past years had favoured republicanism, or the cause or fight for the Irish Republic.

The Irish movement of the past few years had had to rely on a few weekly, bi-monthly and monthly journals, papers and periodicals for national news. Some of these were published under exceptional difficulties and had had bad times, through the exercise of a severe and strict censorship, seizures and stoppages. Many other obstacles were placed in their paths by the British administration in order to reduce to a minimum the power and influence of a truly national and republican press. It had become a kind of settled policy for them to institute repeated raids on offices of these papers, arresting and imprisoning editors and staffs on divers charges, but not uncommonly because they printed and published matters of a seditious nature. But such manifold difficulties and disabilities were accepted by those who supported the national cause, as part of the price that had to be paid in the interest of the nation. Meanwhile, we had grown accustomed to be unrepresented, ignored or misrepresented by the ordinary so-called public press which gave true emphasis to our weakness and our great loss in not having a press of our own. Mention must, however, be made of some of the organs of national and republican opinion which circulated from time to time during the past number of years, such as "Nationality", "Sinn Fein", "United Irishman", "New Ireland" etc. Some of these had been suppressed. Some, even after suppression, appeared under different titles. There was one other paper, however, which survived the tempest; that was "An tOglach", the official organ of the I.R.A. Secretly printed, it circulated secretly among I.R.A. men. Its editor was an I.R.A. officer, and it was printed by I.R.A. men. Perhaps none of our republican papers had such an exciting history to record as "An tOglach". It was in exietence in 1922, having served the cause of the I.R.A. and the national and republican ideal over a number of years in which it gave faithful and loyal service, sustaining us at all times, but particularly during the most trying periods of the fight from 1919 onward. As a small broadsheet

it was mainly devoted to military matters, furnishing hints on training, tactics and strategy and suchlike, as well as articles describing the exploits and achievements of the I.R.A. Its leading articles were words of wisdom for us, whether these were of a political, national or military tinge, relating to the Irish and the I.R.A. cause. Undoubtedly "An tOglach" was most eagerly sought paper among I.R.A. men who unhesitatingly subscribed their twopence to procure a copy fortnightly over a number of years, but weekly within the previous eighteen months or so of its circulation.

One very important feature concerning the printing and circulation of "An tOglach" was the interest the British authorities took in trying to locate its printing press and to destroy it lock, stock and barrel. Try as they would they were unable to do either although no easy task was set for the promoters and printing staff to keep it in circulation during such troublous times, as the period of the guerilla warfare. Yet, its influence never waned, but grew stronger as the fight got hotter and many an I.R.A. man undertook many s acrifices even imprisonment or the risk of imprisonment on its behalf, and because it was esteemed as "our paper" and bore the imprint of a truly national and republican mouthpiece. That was its profession, its aim and its purpose, which it had fulfilled to the letter and in the spirit of our fight for Irish independence. It could not easily depart from that course without doing irreparable damage to itself, as the mouthpiece of the I.R.A. and in defence of the Irish Republic.

While on the topic of "An tOglach" and its views and news on the national issue it might not be irrelevant to refer to a complaint that was made by one of my associates. It was during the Truce period and a short time before the Treaty, when negotiations were in full blast between the Irish and British plenipotentiaries. The complaint was that the words "Irish Republic" or "the Republic" were not being used or

had not been in use in any of the leading articles for some time previously. The alleged omission caused him some heart-burnings. He produced one copy particularly, the one that he took especial notice of, and examining it, we found that no mention was made of the magic words, although terms like "independence", and "freedom" were used. So keenly suspicious was he that he allowed himself to think that there was some subtle meaning in the whole subject, even to the point of suggesting that something short of a republic was in the offing. Further to that, and to give additional emphasis to his suspicions, he expressed the opinions that the politicians - those of the Sinn Fein type who were not "whole-hoggers" for the republican ideal - would let us down. He had, it appeared, formed those opinions on the previous Christmas when, as a prisoner in Mountjoy jail, he and others incarcerated there, had become aware that secret negotiations were going on with some of our leaders. He based his misgivings on conversations he had with some of the political personages imprisoned there, and, as he declared "I have been suspicious ever since". His reasoning, even if true in its entirety, could hardly be subscribed to by many of us who considered that complete unity reigned supreme in our national movement.

CHAPTER 24.

Reverting to the I.R.A. and I.R.A. affairs after the retification of the Treaty by An Dáil, very special stress must be laid on the formation of the Provisional Government, which had come into being for the purpose of "implementing" the Treaty. Positions held formerly by the Dáil Cabinet as the government of the Irish Republic fell into the hands of those whose plan it was to work the Treaty. Thus, the President of the Irish Republic and of An Dáil, Eamon de Valera, was dispossessed. Similar action was taken against other Ministers who held views repugnant to the Treaty and in favour of the

Irish Republic. As a result, the Dáil Cabinet became the Provisional Government, and An Dáil an instrument for upholding the Treaty position. In ordinary circumstances political changes of such a character would not in themselves have been abnormal where the ordinary processes of constitutional law were available to or availed of to impose governmental authority. But no such normal position existed then in a country like Ireland, which up to that time was governed by a predominantly one-party legislature when ministers and deputies held only one exclusive political view and took their stand on the fundamental right of complete freedom. These had been elected from an exclusive political and national movenent and received backing by a voluntary and volunteer army that was oath-bound to defend and uphold the existing Irish Republic and the Government of Dáil Éireann which at the time was the Government of the Irish Republic.

If chaos reigned in the political and national organisation, Sinn Fein, no less chaotic conditions prevailed in the I.R.A. consequent on the outvoting of the former Government and Dáil which the newly proposed Provisional Government superimposed in the interest of the new order. The climax was reached when not alone Sinn Fein but the I.R.A. showed symptoms of splitting on the Treaty issue, thus accelerating the division in An Dáil which, as the days passed, found echo if not imitation among a people who hitherto had remained firm, solid and undaunted on a common platform and in pursuit of a common ideal. The stage was soon set for the grim tussle between the various opposing political leaders and as an inevitable consequence within the various groups that comprised the national movement - the politicians occupying the arena, while their followers in support of either side in the fray cheered those whom they favoured and cursed those whom they disliked, in the interest of or against the interest of the Treaty. To make matters worse, the I.R.A., that had ever

stood in the battle gap as the protector, the guide and the rallying centre in every other contingency succumbed under the common deadly virus of political discontent that fast invaded its otherwise well-protected armour and thus was bringing it to its own sad and merciless doom.

Time, and possibly circumstances, however, were to play a part in deciding the inevitable fate of the I.R.A. Before that was consummated the I.R.A. position deteriorated, and drift, rather than progress, fashioned its policy or became its only policy in a period of disillusionment and of uncertainty. Could it be otherwise when two, not one governmental authorities sought to exercise authority in national, political and military affairs, and a divided parliament addressed itself to a divided people, a divided country and a divided army? But out of the chaos created by such a sad and saddening situation a group of T.D.s. and of I.R.A. leaders came into being for the purpose of trying to preserve the unity of the I.R.A. and to prevent a split among I.R.A. men Such a move had Dáil consent and support, it being generally contended that the national interest demanded that the I.R.A. as a military force should not be split on the Treaty issue, and because such would be a national calamity, and fraught with grave dangers to the national cause.

We had not then, fortunately, reached the stage of going for each other's throats. Instead, we in the I.R.A. were labouring on and trying to maintain, as our orders enjoined us to maintain, unity, if at all possible under such conditions as prevailed then. The thoughts uppermost in the minds of most officers and men, their feelings and desires, lay in wishing God speed in the endeavours to avoid a cleavage or a parting of the ways that would bring their honoured force to a sad end. Events, however, were taking very peculiar turns.

~~Events, however, were taking very~~

One time there would appear to be a reasonable chance of agreement. Another time the opposite would be reported and then we drifted back to where we were and what we were - a divided and dividing force. Nevertheless, the I.R.A. still continued training, drilling and parading. Discipline was in no way impaired; orders were carried out as heretofore even though a difference existed among them on the vexed question of the Treaty. Besides, other things were receiving attention by the I.R.A. during the time. One of these was the plans for taking over military barracks and establishments which, towards the end of January, were being vacated by the British forces. New groups were formed from the ranks of the I.R.A. to "take over" these institutions. In Dublin a Guards Battalion had been formed from the survivors of the A.S.U. These generally were engaged on that duty, supplemented with others from various units of the Dublin Brigade. The formation of parties to garrison such vacated barracks etc. created problems for many an officer who was called upon from time to time to supply various categories of men for the purpose, and parting with men from their own to another jurisdiction, and perhaps separate force under different appointed officers. To all intents and purposes the I.R.A. functioned inside and outside the barracks. But it took a lot of persuasion to convince some officers and men that everything from the I.R.A. point of view was going well and according to plan. Not infrequently one heard remarks that a new army was being created. Time alone could answer that question.

To all intents and purposes the parent body, the I.R.A., remained outwardly intact. Inwardly, it encouraged and ordered men to be initiated into the new formation. These men automatically became a full-time fully equipped, uniformed and paid force. All was well, as we worked under the one direction - the I.R.A. authorities - who held jurisdiction

over all men whether they were voluntarily serving outside, or paid for serving inside the barracks. The same applied to the cases of officers appointed to command the said groups, serving as full-time in the vacated barracks etc. That some such arrangement had to be made for the purpose of facilitating the speedy departure of the British forces was accepted by all ranks in the I.R.A. as not only necessary but highly imperative, and the fact that the active service unit was availed of as a medium to provide the machinery for such a procedure could only be regarded as conferring a high honour which, as a force, it richly deserved. Not uncommonly, then, in the initial stages of that work, the average I.R.A. officer and the rank and file warmly applauded the men who took over from the British the places that had been in former use against native rights and national liberty.

In ordinary circumstances arrangements like these would not have occasioned any trouble or be thought to be fruitful of dangers; that is, providing that everything was as it should be, the proviso being that by doing so we were adding laurels to, or securing advantage to our force and our cause. But in this particular instance there seemed to be a vast difference between the plans to initiate the scheme and its actual operation. Not at first, perhaps, but as things developed was its weakness unfolded. Let us digress for a moment on the procedure of recruiting the new formation that was charged with the task of garrisoning the evacuated British establishments. In the beginning the Guards Battalion took over from the British. During the Truce that force - the A.S.U. of less than 100 men - had been in training and it was said that every man Jack of the force was a potential officer. As the scope of work associated with taking over garrisoning the different places extended, that force had to be augmented from company units. Thus, transferences occurred on, of course, a voluntary

basis the names of men so desiring to transfer having to be endorsed by their respective company, battalion and brigade officers. Another media was the preparation of a "roster" in which case a list of prospective transferees were prepared in advance. Beside men being required for garrisoning duties, other categories were sought and obtained, such as motor-drivers and motor mechanics, machine gunners, fitters, tradesmen of various denominations, etc. The requests for these also came through ordinary recognised channels from G.H.Q. to the company via brigade and battalion. That procedure was a normal one, backed by years of experience.

Everything being equal and properly apportioned, the scheme seemed to be a workable and useful one. But, as it extended, some strange facts emerged. Then it became evident that the men so transferred were helping to build up a new and a powerful edifice, on the foundation and from the materials of the old, the former structure. In many instances that transference of men in increasing numbers had a weakening and stultifying effect on companies, so much so, that company officers became alarmed and expressed anxiety lest the existing framework would suffer damage as a result of their dwindling membership. To add to the alarm, was the feeling that a new army was being formed, within the old one, and that to the advantage of the former and at the expense of the latter. Even comment was raised that men were to consider themselves under a new command, if credence was to be given to the allegations that were being made by some of the transferees on that point; at first they had been transferred as a kind of "loan" whereby the men involved would still consider themselves linked to their former units, associations and friendships. One particular stipulation, however, remained and that was that should circumstances demand such a course, the men by order of officers would return to their former units.

The procedure adopted in recruiting men for barrack duty was not generally applied to officers except in a few cases , as most of the officers appointed were made up from the Guards Battalion. In that way a new set of officers were added to the list of those already serving. That was a paradoxical situation at a time when recruitment for the I.R.A. was in suspension ow ing to specific orders as issued from G.H.Q. It followed that when the drain on company units caused by transferring numbers of their men elsewhere could not be made good by the infusion of new blood at the time; so that company officers had to make do with those who, for one reason or other, remained with their former units. As for the officers, many of these preferred to remain as they were. Some, however, made the change by going into barracks and in quite a number of instances gained higher ranks thereby. But even these were not perturbing, so productive of evil, or harmful to either one or the other, once evidence of good faith and of good intention were guiding principles to the proferred change, to s erve in the new way for the old cause. To serve in the new way for the old c ause! There was the enigma which the then position of I.R.A.affairs caused confusion to grow and foster as the ugly symptoms of disunity, which even the excitement and glamour of becoming full-time soldiers had not diminished, but r ather was increasing despite the best efforts to breech the gap which the Treaty issue had so cruelly opened.

Of the officers and men who availed of the opportunity to join the new formation some were known to have very strong leanings towards the Treaty. A similar story could be told of a large proportion of the Guards Battalion. But the issue was not then as clear cut as that, because no such condition was imposed but that which insisted that they like the rank and file were obliged in adopting the new role to play truant to the old, the parent force. While these movements of officers

and men were going on, the impetus to put the Treaty in a secure position and the plans to establish the power and prestige of the Provisional Government grew apace with certain peculiar indications that seemed to suggest that the new force was being moulded to a pattern designed and fabricated to serve not the old but the new order. Not that all those who transferred in a proper way were involved in the political issue for or against the Treaty, or felt ourselves glamourised by the change; yet the feeling and the symptoms were manifestly present, especially after the first month or so of barrack life and barrack order.

Glamour there was, too; the glamour associated with getting into and appearing in uniform, of coming out from their secretive places and secret doings, and moving into the limelight amid the plaudits and acclamation of admirers of whom a large number showed a more than ordinary zeal for giving vent to their Treaty sentiments, which every succeeding demonstration in taking over vacated barracks so liberally bestowed. Certain types, mark you, of our men felt that glamour; but not all those who 'went over' in that way were unduly affected thereby. The occasion was such an auspicious one that some resigned their employments to take up regular soldiering; others who were unemployed got a certain preference. It meant to some of those who transferred a new vocation - possibly a new life in taking up the soldiers trade and once they recovered from the tiny heartaches and heartbreaks in leaving their former comrade-volunteers and company units, they tied themselves completely to the new formation. But not all the transferees acted thus, for quite a number of them who changed over maintained their old traditions, old associates and old associations, and did not forego to attend, whenever it was reasonably possible for them to do so, their former units, thus preserving their individual and personal identity with the parent body. The desire to

"keep in touch with things" governed their actions in that regard, which was their right and their privilege to exercise as no rule existed to deny them admission and they were free to come and go to our assemblies and parades whenever they chose, there being enough brotherliness and camaraderie between us to encourage their and our mutual relationships, as each party was fulfilling a purely military task though perhaps in different ways.

How often did we hear the remark "Isn't it grand to have a regular army - to feel that we can come into the open and carry on as proper soldiers? Isn't it grand to see 'our lads' taking over from the British and going into barracks away from the rut of our former existence and not always pleasant atmosphere and environments connected with our former training or training halls?" What other answer could be given to such questions but "Yes" and that a conditional "Yes" - because as yet we were not out of the wood; indeed, there was the likelihood that we would not be out of the wood until the Treaty issue as it affected the I.R.A. was satisfactorily settled that would preserve it as a military entity and as <u>the</u> Irish army. What other army could be visualised or spoken of? Surely not a new army to replace the old Volunteer force; surely 'our lads' were none other than those who had taken pride in calling themselves soldiers of the I.R.A.; they were the men, and that was the force which was entitled to the proud name of Irish army - no others were available and no others were entitled to the honour or to be utilised for such a grand purpose. There were even officers and men in the I.R.A. in Dublin who envisaged the position whereby the I.R.A. as a whole would be maintained as the standing army of Ireland. In our own battalion there was a considerable number of these of which the writer was one, who held that the paramount issue should be to preserve the unity, integrity and authority of the I.R.A., however the people might decide politically on

on the question of the treaty, but keeping in view the fundamentals, our oath and our duty to the Republic.

Why should we be asked to act as if the I.R.A. and the cause it and we espoused were to be regarded as of no avail, and that we should help in producing a new force that was to act as the I.R.A., the real I.R.A. Could we not at least hold the I.R.A. as a rallying point to prove our course and so lessen the effect which the Treaty position was having on our people, on our institutions, organisations and our own particular force? Difficulties had to be faced and overcome if the new force was to be curbed in abrogating the functions of the parent force or to make it appear that the former and not the latter was less capable of becoming the Irish army under the Treaty. But the main question was, could the I.R.A. exist for long, if it could exist at all, in such a mischievous and darkening situation.

As time went on anxiety grew as to the future policy and existence of the I.R.A. The increasing demands for more and more men to be transferred into garrison groups considerably reduced some units of the Dublin Brigade, and it looked as if these were to have only one function, to act as recruiting agencies for the purpose of transferring men to the other formations. There were signs that the new groups were assuming proportions and gaining authority much beyond what was intended or envisaged. Circumstances were playing a part in that. The drift in political affairs, the chaos and tension which was undermining the national movement and, in particular, the I.R.A. were decided aids in accentuating suspicion and distrust among the men outside, and centring around those inside the different barrack groups. A good deal of whisperings were heard from, and assertions made by, both parties on one or other aspect of the functions, authority and growing strength of the latter force. Not uncommonly one heard some member of either force complain that all was not going well, or did not appear to be

going on well between the new formation and the parent I.R.A., some alleging that they were being weaned away from their old traditions etc. Indeed, it was not unusual to hear the boastful assertions of some that they were potentially, if not actually, members of a new force, and that they were glad of it. The rift or strained relations then existing among the higher officers and communicating down to the lower ranks in the I.R.A. on the Treaty issue could be said to be responsible for a good deal of the unrest that unfortunately prevailed among all ranks in whatever sphere they served.

Rumours and speculations were rife concerning various phases of activities, promotions and general conduct of the garrison troops, all of which were pertinent to the points whether in fact a new force was being created, or that a cleavage was being fostered by them to split the I.R.A. as a whole, for political ends. In the light of the information that was in circulation at the time from those who were serving in the new formation, it appeared that one or other course was being promoted. There was even the suggestion that undue advantage was being taken of the, as then, division that existed in the I.R.A. on the Treaty question for as much political as for military purposes. One could not always remain dumb and mute to the persistent and foreboding complaints that were commonly aired by interested and involved persons of one group or other. Not the least of these complaints related to the types of officers and of certain of the rank and file whose selection to the garrison groups gave scope for acting for and propagating views in the interest of the Treaty. But these, though significant in many ways, were of less consequence and importance than the political help and encouragement that was accorded to the barrack groups by political-cum-military leaders associated with the Provisional Government and concerned in implementing the Treaty. What better chance, what more fertile ground could have been

available to them to carry out such a policy.

While these things were being complained of, discussed and alleged, the I.R.A., as such, was going through a very serious period of disquietude, uneasiness and a good deal of disorganisation. The Dublin Brigade was no exception in that respect. Discipline, always of the best, remained undisturbed. But politics was making inroads on its policy and influencing off icers and men alike. Hope, the hope that had ever been a dominant and prepossessing virtue among our brave men, was fast receding, and it was no uncommon thing to hear men say "the game is up - we are no more". Unity, the grand and wholesome unity that we so long prized and that had brought us through many trials and much turmoil, was gradually fading away, leaving little goodness and less of value to replace it except the foul devouring viper of discord and disharmony among those men who were regarded as being the nearest thing to the brotherhood of men. One of the reasons that militated against hope and unity was the failure of the many attempts that had been made to keep peace in the I.R.A. and among the men of the I.R.A.

Such was the position towards the middle of March 1922, when enough was known, or was to be known, that a cleavage was imminent in our ranks, despite the efforts of many interested people, politicians and I.R.A. officers. The bubble burst eventually, causing the I.R.A. that was once a unified, self-contained and mighty military force to become a wobbling, a tottering and a decadent faction against which many a hand was to be bared in defiance, in division and anger because politics willed that such was wise in the national interest! No longer was it a question of one I.R.A. command or one I.R.A. authority to govern and control a single organism. Now there were two, or the making of two, military forces each bearing the title The Irish Republican Army, or I.R.A. for short, as we were all too commonly aware

or apprehended. Even the British view somewhat corresponded to our own when in the British House of Commons on the 21st March 1922, Mr. Churchill, in reply to a question raised by Sir J. Butcher, said;

> "I must refer my friend to replies on this subject (I.R.Army); more particularly to my reply to a supplementary question addressed to me by him on the 14th February. The force known as the Irish Republican Army and the force which is being organised by the Provisional Government for the preservation of law and order are, as I have previously explained, not identical; but the Provisional Government, as I understand from time to time, use the so-called Irish Republican Army in areas where this force acknowledges their authority, to assist them."
>
> The latter part of the question:
>
> "Whether he will suggest to the Provisional Government that this description of the forces employed by them for keeping order should be discontinued at the earliest possible moment" does not arise.
>
> Sir J. Butcher: "Does not my Right Hon. Friend think that it is extremely undesirable that a Government which is not a Republican Government should utilise forces which describe themselves Republicans?"
>
> Mr. Churchill: "No, sir. I think in the difficult circumstances prevailing in Ireland the Provisional Government are doing their best".

Of course, we in the I.R.A. had not to seek information outside our own sphere. Our knowledge of current political and military affairs made such a task not one whit more interesting or desirable. Already during the previous month many strange and many startling things had occurred. These could be classified under various headings: The clash between the I.R.A. and the Ulster Specials on the Border; the introduction of curfew and martial law by the I.R.A. in the southern counties; the reinforcement of the British forces in the Six Counties; the renewal of the Belfast pogroms; the suspension of the British evacuation of the 26 counties; the holding of the Extraordinary Ard Fheis of Sinn Fein in the Mansion House when the Treaty was debated and the split in the organisation took definite shape; the Dáil agitation for reimposition of the Belfast Boycott and last but not least the holding of the banned I.R.A. Convention in the Mansion House

The latter event clearly demonstrated the existence of the "split" in the I.R.A.

Other issues were being fought or agitaged within the I.R.A sphere. One of these arose over the procedure connected with the taking over and occupation by the I.R.A. of the vacated military barracks. That subject became quite a controversial and contentious one especially among different battalions of the Dublin Brigade and went side by side with the procedure of transferring men from their former units becoming merged in the new formation or garrison groups. In our own 1st Battalion many a voice was raised by some of us officers in protest against the weakening effect which such transfers were causing units and in advocacy of the plan to permit our battalion to garrison barracks that were within our battalion area, the Royal Barracks (now Collins Barracks) at the Esplanade, and the Marlboro' (now McKee) at the Phoenix Park. We were bold enough to hope and to plan and the assumption that at least the latter barracks would be given to our care and in the belief that the best interests of the I.R.A. would be accordingly served. We, of course, relied on the case that unity would result and prevail in the I.R.A. As officers we were bound to safeguard the interests of the force, equally as much as it was our bounden duty to be interested in the welfare and discipline of the men under our commands. In making our case for "going into barracks" in that way, we made no special claims for preferential treatment as against other battalions which, as we were aware, were similarly agitating to be permitted to occupy barracks in their own respective zones. It was never, however, our intention and we had no function to refuse to obey orders as issued by our superior officers, but we had at the time in question sound reasons for complaint against the influences that were being exercised against many of our men who were then serving as full time soldiers, which, if all the news we were hearing was correct, was putting them in an awkward and

demeaning position as soldiers of the I.R.A. and was bound to create a split among us. Thus at every meeting of our battalion council the subject was debated, and our Commandant, P. Holohan, who supported our idea and viewpoint time and again, sought to impress the "higher-ups" but without result.

Our plan, if it wasn't the best that could be devised, could not be regarded as being the worst in the interest of I.R.A. unity. Neither did it appear an unreasonable request to make towards keeping company units united, integral and independent instead of making fish of one and flesh of another in the matter of rendering service, of sharing honours and out of sheer loyalty to the I.R.A. in general. Appropriate to the issue was the query: "If we are one, why cannot we act as one and not as two forces whereby we who are outside the garrison groups are being made to feel that our cause and our interests are different, just as the matter of our service appear to be different and of less consequence than theirs? As it was the whole business was tending to drive a wedge between us and to weaken us, whatever the reason assigned or howsoever the object in view. The arguments advanced by officers of our battalion could not be said to relate to any other but the interests of the I.R.A. as a whole a nd for the sake of the unity of our country. Individual interests or personal aggrandisement were neither desired nor advocated in putting forward this alternative plan to the one then operating. Most of the Company Captains had open minds on the question of giving whole-time service in the barracks - some indeed hardly favoured the idea but would have acquiesced should the battalion go in en masse. Others would prefer to serve in a voluntary capacity, assuming that some such system was adopted whereby a containing force would be maintained full time in the barracks and the rest be permitted to undergo training on a volunteer basis. A few officers would, in the event of the country attaining freedom, prefer to retire to their civilian status, to engage in their day to day avocations, trades or professions.

Our plan, however, never went beyond the stage of discussion within the battalion council and, as our commandant informed us, beyond the brigade council. None of us could fathom or surmise where we, that is the men of the I.R.A., would eventually find ourselves, if a matter so simple of adjustment could not be easily or satisfactorily arranged. It was strange, too, that the brigade command, knowing all the points in connection with the matter, as we assumed they knew then, could not bring influence on the situation, or was it the case that such a move had progressed beyond the limit of reason or etiquette, in which event greater difficulties would arise from changing the procedure that already prevailed and the course already in operation? So it appeared: and so we drifted on - as two forces - the main cause of which was predominantly and specifically the Treaty issue which, at that period, was a live and perplexing one for the I.R.A. and was bringing us, and the country, to engage in a split.

During all the time, since the signing and ratification of the Treaty, the political-cum-military leaders exercised more than their share of influence, generally for political purposes; the two conflicting groups of leaders who fought for or against the Treaty in the several arenas so familiarly connected with the independence movement in the Sinn Fein organisation, the I.R.A. and the I.R.B. But it was mostly in the I.R.A. that the political warfare was then waged. Perhaps this was inevitable as we were so completely and so singularly tied to the political chariot that was then being led and conducted by clever astute political drivers. Inevitable also, perhaps, from the point of view that our army, the I.R.A., was in a sense a political force, that pursued a political policy and served a political ideal. Politically disposed, politically inspired and politically led, our army and our cause was political. Besides these things we had given our allegiance "without mental reservation or purpose of evasion" to the

political institution Dáil Éireann as our governmental authority. Was it any wonder then that when political disunion occurred within the political camp as such the I.R.A. would escape even a portion of the consequences of that deadliest of all national disasters? Certainly the political upheaval that arose in the last few days of March 1922 testified that the I.R.A. was immediately and proximately split in twain.

Every avenue had been explored to preserve unity; many approaches towards keeping the I.R.A. intact had been made by the"Unity Council" that had been set up for the purpose, and if, at times, credence could be given to authoritative information, these efforts were producing good results. Much irreparable damage had already been done among officers and men in the I.R.A. that nothing short of a miracle could save them from the consequential split. Most of our troubles were from within and principally were caused by or encouraged by high placed officers, with an odd assortment of lesser personalities as backing for team work and team spirit, with and without help from the rank and file. Very little of this was known to the civilian population who looked upon the matter from a pro-Treaty or anti-Treaty angle and in which politics alone was the only consideration. But to many of us in the I.R.A. the matter was primarily and fundamentally a military one in which the status, the existence and wellbeing of our force were involved. Similarly, the ordinary civilian population, though aware in an abstract and detached sort of way that a state of disunity existed in the I.R.A., had not the means and possibly not the will to ascertain particulars of its existence beyond what they read in the public press, or from the lips of the various political and military leaders. In many ways they could be pardoned for their seeming ignorance of their uncommon blindness in and their total partiality in I.R.A. affairs in view of the fact, or in face of the great visible movement of the khaki clad British troops then

evacuating Ireland, leaving in their place the green clad soldiers of the I.R.A. as the military custodians of the new order.

But to the men of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A., and especially to the officers, the situation was known to have taken a serious course, when on the 2nd April, we paraded and marched to Smithfield for the purpose of being reviewed by our brigadier, Oscar Traynor, there and then to reaffirm publicly our oath of allegiance to the I.R.A. and the Irish Republic. That parade and review synchronised with the order recalling the men who had been transferred to the full time garrison forces to rejoin their former units. Judging by the huge concourse of officers and men on parade that day, the Dublin Brigade had not decreased to any great extent, although not all the men who were on barrack duty responded to the call. Some who did returned to the barracks after a while. Other men who failed to come out on that day did so later. From that moment transfers stopped. To add to that, the various units had made decisions on the question of not only the Treaty and regarding the Provisional Government with the result that supporters of the Treaty and the Provisional Government threw their lot in with the new army, and those who were against the Treaty and the Provisional Government remained with the parent force, the I.R.A. In that way each man proclaimed his allegiance, each knew where he stood and on which side his leanings were.

In our First Battalion practically all the company captains and most of the minor officers and rank and file remained with the old force. Enthusiasm never waned even during the previous few months; activities never slackened; the men by their continued and punctual attendance at parades etc. displaying wonderful fortitude, good conduct and exemplary discipline. To the credit of all, officers and men alike, politics as such was not made a subject for discussion or decision, although at that stage it was hardly possible to evade the question whether

one was in favour of or against the Treaty!. seeing that some of us had taken our sides against it, and the others were for it, in different capacities and categories. No longer was it possibleto disguise our views, our allegiances or our status.

Whatever doubt there was on these points were allayed when twelve days afterwards the Four Courts were seized and occupied by our, the I.R.A. Executive forces. That night, several companies, including our own company of the 1st Battn. moved to take possession of the buildings, on the orders of the Dublin Brigade authorities. After securing possession of the premises permanent guards were posted and a garrison post duly established. The Four Courts then became the headquarters of the I.R.A. Executive, most of the personnel of which took up residence there and carried on I.R.A. business from that source. Undoubtedly the occupation of the Four Courts was the culmination of the impasse in which the I.R.A. found itself at the time, due in the main to the wrangling that was going on in regard to the control of the armed forces, between variou interested pro-Treaty officers on G.H.Q. When efforts to reach a settlement that would bring unity to the I.R.A. had failed, the higher officers on G.H.Q. who clung to the original I.R.A. decided the question and made the break. Anyway, the seizure of the Courts was a startling and sensational move, whether it was intended as a move to force an issue on the Treaty, or merely a form of demonstration to illustrate the gravity of the "army situation". To us in the I.R.A. it represented a complete break and an alignment against the Treaty, that brought, or was bound to bring, us face to face with the possibility of an alignment of the two distinct armed and militant forces.

Other buildings in Dublin were likewise seized, or to use a more common term "commandeered" by I.R.A. units; such places as the very British Kildare St. Club, the Masonic Hall in Molesworth St. and the Orange, or Fowler, Hall in Parnell Sqr.

These became military posts. In the latter place facilities were provided for the meeting and training of various companies of our 1st Battalion, each company being required to perform all night guard duty rotationally, day guards being provided from the battalion of men who were unemployed and otherwise free for same. Regarding the Fowler Hall, it could be early discernible that our presence there was hardly in keeping with such an anti-Irish and British Imperialistic institution. The Orange Order, we had every reason to apprehend, had been the controlling and compelling force in previous years against Irish Independence, and publicly and religiously fomented the ghastly pogroms in the north of Ireland, with such dreadful toll of death and destruction of property of Irish Nationalists. Heretofore, the Fowler Hall escaped the operations of the Belfast Boycott campaign as conducted by the I.R.A. and other national bodies in the other Irish counties. Ironically the Orange Order premises became, from the day of its seizure, a centre for the reinforcement of the Belfast boycott.

Our uninvited incursion into the realm of Orangeism at that time provided food for thought undisturbed by the sombre, dark and weird "Black Chapter" chamber, and the strange paraphernalia and regalia associated with that oath bound secret society. Some of the men made great play with these, looking funny in the extreme which seemed in contrast to the seriousness of the political and military business we had in hand. Perhaps the horse-play, the funny theatricals took men's minds off the more serious aspect of the work. Everything connected with the 'holy of holies' was illuminating and enchanting, not excluding the precious roll of members of the Black Chapter. Strange revelation of all very Irish names and some Catholic names were included with those of big business magnates and ordinary workaday artisans, some of the latter with residences in poor tenement localities. The fact that Catholics and ordinary working-class people were members of

an Orange Order was puzzling in the extreme. Small wonder that some of our men said "we are learning things!" Was it not an extraordinary phenomenon to behold: one of the outposts of the Orange Lodges being used as an armoury and garrison post of the I.R.A. and for activities repugnant to Orangeism. Truly a strange retribution enough! Strange happenings too, but strange and sensational as they were, Fowler Hall was turned into a domicile for a large number of Belfast refugees who, on account of the Orange pogrom fled from their homes and sought shelter in other parts of Ireland. Perhaps no better shelter could be provided except in the haunt, the very nerve centre of the Orange Order in Dublin, on the premises of the would-be pogrom collaborators. Was it not passing strange that in that peculiar place the refugees should be succoured, fed, clothed and protected by the men of the I.R.A. when they and we were so much despised, vilified and condemned.

The action of the I.R.A. in seizing and occupying these buildings caused flutterings in governmental circles in Dublin, Belfast and London. The Provision Government, the British-sponsored 'Northern' Government and the British Government were alike shocked at the news - the British Government and the Provisional Government were particularly alarmed on the score that such action might have serious consequences for the Treaty cause. In any case, the spokesmen of each contended that such happenings were lawless, provoking and outrageous, and were intended for the purpose of imperilling the Treaty. But, amid all the thunder let loose by political/partisans, the I.R.A. continued to hold the sforesaid buildings. Obviously we had taken on a new aspect of work, our 1st Battalion units, including our company, being as active as any other in the training sphere. Truly we were stepping out, but in so doing it was hard, at times, to comprehend the scope or the trend of events that were being enacted, or the road along which we were being led. We knew, however, that we had parted the ways, but few knew how far

we should have to travel to emerge into the light. Perhaps it was destined that we should, sooner or later, traverse that road. Would our men respond to the course that had been taken? not a few of us officers asked ourselves, or asked one another, whatever doubts we had on these points, were quickly allayed by the men, a large proportion of whom reacted nobly to the new and serious advances, and gave earnest proof of their approval of the course that had been taken.

Some little explanation may be given here relative to the latter statement. On the occasion of the "calling out" of the men of the I.R.A. who were serving in the barracks; many of such men reported back to their former companies. Opportunity was given for the officers and men to register their votes for or against the existing I.R.A. On the strength of the opinions on the question the men remained or resigned from their companies. Of course, the question of the Treaty was in a sense involved in the decision. In our battalion and indeed in our C/Company, the majority voted for the original I.R.A., a bare minority voting against. Hence the position became, as many thought, clarified. Some of those who resigned had been, or later became associated with the Provisional Government forces. What a hoax, indeed! It proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the edict of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. did not run smoothly, nor was it effective in securing absolute compliance, among men who up till then were regarded as being loyal and trustworthy Volunteers. The most inconsistent and peculiar feature of the whole affair was the meagre response exhibited by the officers then serving with the "other" or garrison force, in striking contrast to the rank and file, who in fairly large numbers 'came over' or came back to their former units and associations. It was then realised that the endeavours to create a new army, under the aegis of the Provisional Government, had, to some extent, succeeded, and

that the 'split' in the I.R.A. was, in part, established. That became more pronounced when some of the men who had come out returned afterwards to the barracks by which process they turned their backs completely on the original I.R.A. and became instead part of the Provisional Government forces.

Such action was hard to reckon with, or even to understand, from colleagues and brothers-in-arms, in a great and glorious cause, in which they and we had engaged. No aspersion is intended on them, for any action they took on that occasion, if it could be shown that they were fulfilling a duty for purely patriotic, rather than selfish personal motives. Excuses could be made, and were made, on several grounds, among which utilitarian and economic factors were not the least important, to sway men in coming to such decisions and to act thus. Those who were unemployed, or had previously resigned their former employment on entering the garrison groups were deserving of consideration and, indeed, commiseration. But not all those so involved in the transactio were in such sad plight, or impecuniously circumstanced. With some it was a matter of politics, the upholding and predominance of the Treaty was their main concern, and accepted as a matter of principle for the same reasons and purposes that the political "Treaty" leaders accepted the new order. In other and more appropriate words, their support of the Provisional Government forces and of the Treaty could be summarised under the hypnotising pointer "What's good enough for Mick is good enough for me".

Nor was the matter finally disposed of in that way or on that occasion when the men had decided the question of renewing, or dispensing with, old allegiances, for even afterwards a number of men of company units, including our own 'C' Coy. of the Dublin Brigade, tendered their resignations on several grounds and for various reasons. Neutrality, the desire to be neutral, was the chief excuse put forward for

severing connection with the I.R.A. Some men resigned through disgust at the army 'split'; others that they did not wish to be involved in a fight against former comrades. Most of the resignations effected in our company, of men who were not otherwise on the other or Provisional Government forces, were in truth related to that of remaining neutral, and in the fear that an armed conflict would ensue between the two forces. Gradually our units were being depleted, some companies suffering worse than others by the consequential defection. Sadly we parted company with a good number of such men who resigned that way, to continue to exercise their privilege to be neutral although,to many of us who remained to see the thing through,the parting in some individual cases was not a pleasant one. Our company, our battalion and our brigade were going through a crucial and difficult crisis, thereby, perhaps greater than any we had faced and overcome in the past, not excluding that other split, in 1914, when for political ends the Irish Volunteer movement was, but for proper guidance and the right national spirit, undermined. Was it not strangely ironical that the same process was at work: one group seeking to gain control; the other trying to maintain control of the one body and when that failed two forces came into being?

CHAPTER 25.

In the description of the various evolutionary stages connected with I.R.A. disunity and of the I.R.A. split, only matters as they affected the Dublin Brigade have been treated. A slight departure may be admissible at this stage to study briefly the course of events in the period under review. Looking back in retrospect to the time when the British were undergoing the process of evacuation, we find that in many parts of Ireland the handing over and occupation of vacated British barracks, stores and establishments was not conducted

in the same way as it was in the Dublin command. Generally, local units performed those operations. Thus it happened that units and commands that were avowedly I.R.A. and anti-Treaty gained, in many instances, complete control of such places, particularly in most of the southern counties, as in a few other areas in other counties that rule prevailed. There were, of course, many places where power was equally or unequally divided between the two conflicting groups; in some instances the majority of the officers were Treatyites; in others the majority were anti-Treatyites. The same applied to the rank and file. In such circumstances no one idealogy and no one command held sway, Differently disposed were those officers and men who were predominantly on one side or the other where not alone numbers but equipment materially assisted them.

Dublin, however, was paradoxically differently defined and, of course, differently circumstamced in the matter of securing and of holding vacated barracks, etc. where a one-sided force held an advantageous position of being on the spot, well-armed as a result of the change over, and thereby strongly entrenched. The fact that many of the officers and men of that force made power their principal objective in the service of the Provisional Government and in the interest of the Treaty were considerations of no mean importance. In the discharge of their function to build up a new army they held a distinct and distinctive position, and nothing was permitted to move them from their course, least of all persuasion to return to their former units, once their minds were made up to otherwise act. Bitterly we confessed our weakness in permitting the new formation to grow, to prosper and to flourish by transferring men from our units. Obviously we failed in undoing a wrong that had been committed with our consent and connivance.

The accession to power and prestige which the new full-time and well-paid new force attained were largely the result of patronage and the securing of appointments on a lavish scale,

There were ample opportunities for higher and better promotions for existing or former officers of the I.R.A. and even rank and filers were promoted officers and N.C.Os. at, in some cases, short notice. Many of these appointments would not have been available had the old order remained, or possibly had the split not come and the single I.R.A. force functioned there would have been more than enough and to spare of officers to fill the vacant positions. Such a condition did not apply in the case of the then Provisional Government forces which, starting from scratch, built up from the material that became available, created appointments and thereby made it worth while for officers and men to serve. One other feature, and one that had an important bearing on the situation, was enshrined in the word influence, the measure of influence that former officers of the I.R.A. would exercise in winning numbers of men to the new force was always a consideration that merited higher promotion. Any officer with a pull over his men was generally considered a good man to have; that course had worked in a number of units of the Dublin Brigade, before the actual split, but there were instances where it did not work according to plan, so deep and cross-grained were opinions divided on the political issue.

We had knowledge of such things happening within the previous couple of months; cognisant of their import and conscious of their implications, tendencies and ramifications in the force that was then considered to be one and indivisible Unhappily when the boomerang of the split actually struck we were incapable, or too late, to ward off the blow, or to do little to avert the dangers that met us more than halfway, of the distance that lay between our survival and our eclipse. Our strongly built, highly sustained and cleverly devised structure toppled down on us, smothering us in the debris that resulted from the undermining influences of our erstwhile friends and collaborators, and leaving us little space and

as little scope for recovery from the devastation that had been so cruelly and so carefully wrought. Hence we lost them, the I.R.A. lost them in the confusion that had arisen since the signing of the Treaty and all that emanated therefrom.

With the passing of the days and weeks the I.R.A. Executive forces, mainly through the occupancy of the Four Courtd, became a thorn in the side of those who sought to implement the Treaty; and many an anxious, jealous and hateful eye was turned on them from the governmental regions of London and Dublin. The remaining British military authorities at Parkgate and the British administrators at the Viceregal Lodge (now Árus an Uachtaráin) were no less anxious and troubled by such portentious and dangerous moves. Even at that period the British evacuation was still in the suspension stage, so much so that some of the most important military barracks in Dublin - the Royal (now Collins) Barracks at Benburb Street; the Marlboro' (now McKee) Barracks at Blackhorse Lane, as well as the Headquarters of the 'Irish Command' at Parkgate remained under British control. The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland as the King's representative, and the British commander-in-chief still functioned, due, as it was declared, to the unsettled state of the country, but principally because of I.R.A. activities and the growing tension occasioned by the political and military unrest of which the Treaty was in a large measure responsible. Such activities were mounting and consisted of raids for materials for the manufacture of munitions - a grenade factory having been fitted up in the 'Courts' - raids for motor cars and lorries, and armed swoops for the seizure of Belfast goods - owing to the reinforcement of the Belfast Boycott. These did not show sign of diminishing but rather increased the tension, frayed the nerves and sharpened the tempers of Treaty promoters in Ireland and England, while at the same time they gave ample proof to all and sundry that the I.R.A. was still living and showing strengt

If any one form of activity conduced to create such an apprehensive situation, the capture by the I.R.A. of the official motor car belonging to the Lord Lieutenant and its safe custody in the "Courts" could be regarded so, although in plain fact the occupation of the "Courts" was primarily cause enough for disquietude on the part of the anti-I.R.A. partisans.

Around that time, full play and vent was given to varied political and militant designation and titles; such as the "Regulars" and the "Irregulars", the "Treaty" and "Anti-Treaty" forces, the "Treaty" and "Republican Army" forces, the "Provisional Government" and the "I.R.A. Executive" forces. Similarly, the use of the "Beggars Bush garrison" and the "Four Courts garrison" became quite commonplace by constant usage and repetition to denote those who supported and those who rejected the Treaty respectively. The latter descriptions applied to the source of military authority, as each of these was generally regarded by the different adherents as General Headquarters. Only people who were actually intimate and proximately connected with one or other side of the contending forces could assess the real significance of the terms or of the moves of which both were parties, which in more senses than one were secretive and potential and showed the way the wind was blowing!

Many strange and startling incidents occurred during that time to bring home to use the serious importance of disunity. One such incident occurred on the occasion of the removal of the remains of one of our former company officers, the late Joe McGuinness. A section of our company, fully armed, paraded at the deceased's home to provide a guard of honour on the removal of his remains to the pro-Cathedral. We felt we should pay him that mark of respect because of his last service with our company up to and including Easter Week 1916. To our surprise, another group under Brigadier Paddy Daly of the Provisional Government forces, were present for the same purpose.

That night, unhappily, a wordy duel ensued between his side and ours, in the presence of the bereaved widow. Blows or shots could have been exchanged between us then. Rather than having an ugly scene under such sad circumstances and over the remains of him whom, though his views were pro-Treaty, we esteemed, we gave way feeling, it must be owned, none too pleased for doing so. The Provisional Government forces did the honours while our men, though furious at being deprived of paying their mead of respect in that fitting way, acted as an independent entity, taking perhaps a lesser, but as it turned out to be a not totally insignificant part in the cortege. Never before in my long experience with our company had I found it harder to control men, nor was I so hard put to it to order them, or for they to obey the order to continue as if nothing untoward had happened. Indeed many of them would have rather had it out with them - to fight the others on the spot! To add to our embarrassment was the thought that the "other fellows", the Provisional Government forces, would regard the matter as being a victory for their side, and the fact that practically all our company were present that night and that special permission had been obtained from our I.R.A. headquarters to so attend and for the section to carry rifles inflamed us. In connection with the matter of our company's public display of arms for the occasion, it is well to mention that I had had to interview our leader, Comdt.General Liam Lynch, at headquarters in the Four Courts for permission to do so. It took more than mild persuasion to obtain his consent and he only agreed on the understanding that extraordinary precautions should have to be taken to protect them. Even the point that the deceased was not a serving member of the company, or on the anti-Treaty side, was of secondary importance. Liam, as far as I could ascertain, was particularly impressed by the efforts made by Joe McGuinness for I.R.A. unity during the previous months.

It is not appropriate to this limited narrative to recount the nature, scope and extent of the multitudinous incidents and events of a militant character which were of such common occurrence not alone in Dublin but in other parts of Ireland. Almost daily the public press had something or other to record, all of which, or any one of which was sufficient to prove that there was a "push on" by either of the forces to gain control not alone of the military, but also the national situation, especially during the month of May, when feeling was at fever point. Then it was a matter of "having and holding". Each sought to carry on in its own way, holding strictly to the motto "Here we are - we are what we are, and what about it?". To make matters worse and more confusing, the Provisional Government forces acclaimed themselves to be the I.R.A. "We are the real I.R.A. We stand for the Treaty - yes - but we are not anti-republican". Individuals would even assert: "I know the Treaty falls short of the republic that we fought for, but it seems to be the best bargain that could be got. Why not accept it and work for the republic?". On the other hand, those of us who were on the republican side made no other claims than that we were the I.R.A., we had not sought to make any change or revision of its policy or ideals. To us the I.R.A. was the same then as ever it was. We disliked the Treaty because it was not our idea of a republic - the Treaty was not the republic - it was a compromise.

Some there were among us who would have consented to work the Treaty if by so doing they could be assured that the principles and ideals enshrined in the I.R.A. oath of allegiance were maintained, the oath of allegiance to the Irish Republic. What guarantee had we of this when the Treaty prescribed a penalising oath of allegiance to a foreign monarch, his heir and successors, maintained and glorified the person and office of the English King's representative - a governor general - and provided limited status within a truncated and divided Ireland under the caption of a Dominion status. Better no Treaty than

one that displaced the republican status. These, in short, were the gist of the arguments advanced by the elements composing the two rival militant forces; and no amount of persuasion could alter in the slightest degree the opinions formed by either. As in the political sense, so also in the military sense the matter of the Treaty was made an all-important and vital issue. There was no happy medium, no half-way house between the two courses. Neutrality or passiveness did not count at all - the field was left open to one side or the other to explore and exploit. Individually we could not, perhaps, play any great part in face of such a dread and colossal dilemma; yet, as individuals, we wielded a power and possibly used our power behind the scenes, in which the chief actors, our leaders, received our support and our approbation in the drama that was being staged before our very gaze, to the accompaniment of the grand chorus "the gods" and the plain people, who were our supporters and lookers-on alike.

At this stage the issue was clear-cut and properly defined. No longer was it possible for Treaty promoters and supporters who had up to then been leading officers on the I.R.A. staff or on dividional or brigade staffs to exercise authority presumed to be in the interest of I.R.A. policy or for I.R.A. purposes. Their choice had been to "get in or get under" to stay true to their I.R.A. principles or to forsake them. They had chosen the latter course on the plea that they represented and were of the I.R.A. In reverse their opinions and their outlook were alike repugnant to the cause for which the I.R.A. stood. Even their profession to make the Treaty a stepping stone to the Republic falsified them, as it did not cut ice with those of us who clung to the original I.R.A., and for more than one solid reason, but particularly on the grounds that the Treaty abrogated the republic and the republican status, and because, within the framework of the Treaty, no such thing as a republic existed, or was permissible or possible. Was it any wonder that men who still adhered to the I.R.A., officers and men demanded

"Scrap the Treaty and maintain the republic". "We do not want any compromise that falls short of our demands to complete and absolute Irish independence". "Get back to where we were, even if it means toiling in blood and sweat, or immediate and terrible war with the English. Better those things than that we should accept and maintain a false peace or a false freedom".

Events moved swiftly in the military sphere when the conference of the divisional officers of the I.R.A. Executive forces was summoned and held in the Four Courts, Dublin, in late May or early June 1922. The night before the conference the Corporation Fish Markets, adjacent to the Courts were commandeered and occupied by units of the 1st Battalion, including our "C" Company, armed guarded being posted therein. The spacious premises, during the couple of days was crowded out with cars of all makes, Lancias, Crossley and Rolls Royce tenders and touring cars, and a big array of armoured cars, fully manned and fully armed. From all parts of Ireland they came, the southern divisions being well and greatly represented. It was enough to make us Dubliners envious, as we could not lay boast to many such, outside the few in the Four Courts garrison which then possessed only one armoured car. We had more than a variety of miscellaneous types, a good number of them crocks, "tin lizzies" of their day. During our stay there, parties of our men were sent in relays to the Globe Hotel in Talbot St. for refreshments. Expectation ran high that the Provisional Government forces would attack us on this and during our guard duties, but such did not, however, occur; we were left to "paddle our own canoe" in our own way, although in investing the place much inconvenience was caused to business - men and provenders in the fish trade. This visit of our "country cousins" gave us many a thrill, to fraternise with them and to gain some insight into the course of events in the different parts of the country from whence they came. Judging by what information was imparted, our cause had many supporters,

some places particularly boasting of a hundred per cent adherents to our force; others less but all of them vigorous and sincere. Information was also gleaned that some of these had complete control of barracks, in other words, were effectively well placed and well armed as a result. The fact, too, that many of these men had served in the "flying columns" increased our curiosity and our admiration and gave us the idea that all the best fighting men were not "on the side of the Treaty" as some politicians boasted and wished us to believe. Why should we not be envious of them, such as were in a strong and flourishing position, when we considered our own weakness and our inadequate equipment, or compared our financial and material condition with the "other side", the Provisional Government forces, then revelling in comparative luxury, enjoying substantial remuneration and generally good positions. They, unlike us, were amply fed, clothed and housed, not to speak of the wherewithal to ply their soldiers' trade. Of their policy or their politics we had no envy, and only viewed their possessions in the light of being a positive and alarming danger to our cause. However, when eventually the convention of divisional officers was over, we had learned enough to convince us that no change of I.R.A. policy was possible or could be entertained. We still stood firm to the principle of the Irish Republic and were unshakeable in our opposition to the Treaty.

From that time onwards the Four Courts assumed a new character and attained a new significance . It became the virtual, nay the actual, pivotal point from which radiated the passion and flame of I.R.A. vigour and activities. Around it and emanating from it, events of historical nationa political and military significance were shaped. But the occupation of the Courts meant more than these things - it represented a challenge to the existence and the authority of the Psovisional Government as such, a threat to the Treaty

and all it represented. As such it was accepted by those who sought to "work the Treaty". But to us in the I.R.A. it was the touchstone, the mouthpiece, the very citadel and core of our authority. It was the interpretation of our opinions and all we stood for, the old creed, the old ideals and the old sentiments so dear to and so revered by us. As a symbol and a warning it inspired us, making us feel as if we were again on the move as of yore, having passed the period of drifting and of doubting and entering at last into a clearer and a nobler atmosphere. For good or ill we were facing, realistically and fearlessly, up to the situation, having, as we thought, bid goodbye to the talk of peace among brothers, and of secret negotiations to maintain unity, when neither peace nor unity was possible in the I.R.A. on such promises as expediency, compromise or subterfuge. Apparently it had to be so this way. Far too much ground had been lost, overmuch wealth in manpower had been squandered, and more than enough prestige had been sacrificed during the previous few months to our, the I.R.A., decided disadvantage; that were we to continue in that way, there would be little worth while, or even little left, of us as a military force to exercise authority over more than a "corporal's guard". Of course, we who professed to be still soldiers of the Irish Republican Army had had to put up with much abuse, insult, contempt and condemnation because we opposed the Treaty.

We were derided for holding to the name of I.R.A., laughed to scorn because we claimed to be Irish Republicans, derided and laughed at by those who had been our former associates and accomplices. To these we retorted that they themselves were no longer soldiers of the I.R.A. and so it went on as was customary of the occasion, time and circumstance. They, the militant personnel of the Treaty forces, were so insistent on applying the name "Irregulars" to us and of using it so unsparingly and so vociferously that it was small wonder for their believing that we were so. The strange part about the whole affair was

that we did not change anything in the national sense, except to change partnership with them and to refuse to change over to the Treaty, which changed the course and the cause connoted by the term "the living republic". As they had compromised the republic for the Treaty why should we have to fall into the same error? We had, we knew, parted with many good companions., loyal friends and gallant comrades-in-arms. That severance was no great joy to us, at least. Our parting was neither personal or concerned personalities; it resided in a national issue, a vital and important issue for our country's welfare and its inherent right to be free.

If there was any hint of or any outburst affecting personalities in the controversy or quarrel then raging, such was of minor significance in comparison to the Treaty issue Undoubtedly and specifically it played a major part in the then political and military sphere in influencing us in the I.R.A. to take sides, one way or the other in regard to its enactment and authority much though the presence and introduction of personalities became the stock-in-trade of Treatyites,leaders and supporters to the discomfiture and disedification of their republican adversaries, they were of secondary importance to the vital issue as to whether the Treaty should, or should not, be. Speeches, propaganda and, in many instances, the Press, copiously consigned I.R.A. leaders and those who stood for I.R.A. principles to the infernal regions, among the legion of the lost the wicked and the unrepentant, because they would not be realist: good patriots and honest-to-goodness citizens under the all-powerful all-mighty Dominion status form of independence! Human nature being heir to many blemishes and prone to many imperfect-ions, it was difficult for us to avoid retaliations at the affronts and the thrusts that were levelled against us and the principles that guided our force, the I.R.A. and in defence of our leaders against whom it could not be said that they acted other than true in the fight for Irish freedom.

We had, of course, in the span of the existence of the national movement, learned many things, not the least potent lesson being that not always the best orator or political agitator was the noblest, the bravest or the most sincere. Popular public opinion had not always been right in acclamation of their heroes, or in condemnation of the unheroic. We had enough horse-sense to realise that public opinion was capable of being swayed or influenced by many of the stories in circulation about "the men who won the (Irish) war" by much of the vehemous rhetoric and some silver-tongued plamais that clever men and clever brains could so freely circulate at a time like that when, as we learned to our cost, a good deal of the true to life characters and caricaturing though festooned with glory and in adulation were only of moment in furtherance of the Treaty cause. Even there was no omission in producing bogies or bogey-men - the republicans were generally regaled as such. In other words, were we to believe some of these highly featured stories, these same would-be"defenders of the republic" were only showing and perhaps only pretending love for the republic when they were more solicitous to destroy the Treaty, as if that was not cause enough to bring them to their downfall; anyway they were only an insignificant minority.

It is not always easy to engage in a wordy duel with an armed man. Neither is it easy to persuade any other man who is blinded by passion that he is wrong or going wrong in life's pathway, or that he has taken the wrong side in a political controversy or in a political upheaval. Supposing one tried to do either, what would be the natural, the human retort? Only mind your own business, leave me alone and I will mind my own. And so it was in 1922 with the men of the two conflicting militant forces. Former friends, they had now turned against each other, having, in common parlance, 'found each other out'. Far easier to overcome the assaults

and the opposition of an avowed enemy than to conciliate or placate a one-time friend, especially when he is armed. The former, under certain circumstances, might be prepared to give and take, or to cut their losses by concession or compromise; the latter seldom deigns to concede anything, to admit anything, for fear of affording an advantage to an opponent or to their own subsequent loss or disadvantage. That could, in some degree, sum up the position then. But, mark you, only in part, because there were other features, of a no less virulent, dangerous and explosive type present to contend with in the relations that existed between us. One of these was the 'whispering' campaign, the most deadly as it was the most evil and cruel form of assault, against which no defence could be sustained, and no endeavours made to offset it. Already that form of warfare had got full play, proper range and ample scope against the I.R.A. and the men of the I.R.A. Travelling far and wide it lost nothing in its telling, still less by repetition. It neither respected people or causes, for it was not represented by any code of honour, or any semblance of decency. With its poisoned fangs and equally poisoned darts it struck at anyone, anything and everything that stood in its path or against whom there was a grudge or an adversion. Setting out to achieve one purpose it inflicted injury, pain and wounds in order to destroy, if need be, its victims. The victims in this case were the leaders and men of the I.R.A., expecially the former, the officers against whom the malicious circulation of evil reports was more generally levelled. This was carried to extreme limits.

Of all the charges made against our leaders none was less true than that they were fraudulent in their claims in regard to 'standing on the solid rock of the republic'. That was bad enough and equally reprehensible, but when they were accused of having themselves let down the republic, or denounced for believing that the republic existed, then it became evident

that a new offensive weapon was being fashioned, to counteract the achievements and the glory that hallowed the name and fame of those who, no matter what their other faults were, proved themselves to be good men and true. But not the least charge against them was that they were disgruntled and disappointed men because of their failure to seize and wield supreme power; they were not even men enough to admit their own weakness, to admit their own powerlessness in maintaining the republic and to drive the English out of Ireland, even to admit the impossibility of continuing the guerilla warfare. They, the officers of the Irish Republican Army, so it was hinted, were now s howing a heroic desire to 'die for the republic' when, on account of the Treaty, the British were evacuating the country. Why not admit the stupidity and hopelessness of your task and throw in your lot on the side of those who brought you the symbols of freedom? These and many other arguments, charges and whisperings were advanced to laud the Treaty and hamper the republican cause.

It was bad enough to accuse the I.R.A. of being ultra-republican, but to charge them with being more warlike during the peaceful than in the more dangerous and troublous times against the British was just going a bit too far. It was, if anything, a too serious and a too sweeping charge to make or uphold. How could such charges be maintained in view of the fact that most of the leading lights, holding executive officers ranks in the I.R.A. forces were men of proven ability, bravery and élan, and had given military service when and where it was wanted. Such men as Liam Lynch, Liam Deasy, Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellowes and Sean Russell, to mention but a few of the many stalwarts of the I.R.A. could hardly fit into the category of 'peace-time fighters'. Other officers of lesser rank, as well as numerous rank-and-filers had seen service in flying columns in active service units or with their own units. Even to taunt these as 'Truce Volunteers' was downright arrogance, insolence and utterly untrue. Those who made them

were either fools or knaves, yet they knew the charges to be false. Unfortunately sufficient emphasis was given to their circulation that many people, who were not in a position to know better, fell to believing the falsehoods. Shame on the traducers, the vilifiers and the calumniators who lent aid or utterance to such foul, vicious and debasing sentiments. Whatever were our other individual failings, we of the I.R.A., it could be said in truth, were neither insincere in our beliefs or professed other than the right attitude to the republican ideal in 1922, as we had exercised in the previous years.

In the preceding paragraph reference has been made to the term 'Truce Volunteers'. Apropos of that description an explanation may be necessary. It refers in reality to men who joined the I.R.A. during the period of the Truce, in other words from the 11th July 1921 to the date of the signing of the Treaty on 6th December 1921. In a more loose sense it might apply to the time, say, up to April 1922, when the split crystallised. Those who used that term had one specific point in mind - to prove that they were not part and parcel of the I.R.A. The charge was made in the derogatory sense that the men so joining at that period were 'peace-time' soldiers and in the belittling sense that they were not fighters. Worse than that was the charge that such men were enrolled members illegally - or, if that is too strong - 'came in' when the fighting was all over, or when they themselves thought the fight was over and so as to share the kudoes of victory with the men who had won the war! In other words, they joined for ulterior motives, or they were false members. Such charges are untenable and, of course, unworthy of the men that made them. The nearest approximation to the truth is that the men offered their services and were accepted in the s elf-same way and by the same procedure as any other entrant. Their application for membership had to conform to certain standards and go through the accepted and ordinary

channels before they were admitted to membership of the I.R.A. In most of the period referred to the I.R.A. was an unbroken and undivided entity. Consequently, the regulation governing new recruits applied; proposals before entry had to pass from the company unit or group to which the aspirant sought to be attached on to the Battalion, to the Brigade, thence to the Division (where such existed) to General Headquarters, and before the recruit paraded with his selected unit, approval had to be accorded in every one of those branches passing from the G.H.Q. down to the Company via the intermediate commands. Then the next requisite was the men took the oath of allegiance, the same oath that all took who joined the I.R.A. Hence the accusation that such men were false members because they happened to join at that period can be dismissed, with an apportionment of blame to those who made it or fell victims to making the change.

While on the topic of "Truce Volunteers" it might not be out of place to refer to matters relating to recruiting during the disputed period of the Truce. In our Company as well as receiving a few recruits, we also benefitted in obtaining men who had been transferred from other units and from the Fianna. All such were bona fide transferees and had received the imprimatur of the various component commands. If they were new to us, at least they and their service were not new to the I.R.A. as a whole. Other Companies could, perhaps, tell similar stories. Perhaps their short period in the various units lent colour to the accusations that they were new or "Truce Volunteers" of whom a no more harmful or malicious charge could be assigned. But such charges as these riled many of us officers at the time, especially when we knew them to be false; all the more so when the charges

were made to belittle and defame us and the cause we cherished and made us all appear as false members of the I.R.A.

Why should the Treaty side in the conflict get all the glory and we on the I.R.A. side all the abuse, with hardly ever a good word in our favour? Could not we, equally as much as they, cite the cases of men, our men in the I.R.A., who had suffered in the cause, men who had helped to win the war, fighting through the guerilla campaign, suffered in prisons and internment camps, being "on the run", who had given time, labour and sacrifice as proof of their devotion, provided aid and succour without fee or reward, their losses being greater than their gains. These were as numerous on our side as on the Treaty side, perhaps more, perhaps less; we could be sure of either as no compilation or records of such things were made at the time? Why should they, the Treaty forces, claim a monopoly of great men and great deeds, and sing all the paeons of glory when these were shared by others - the men in the I.R.A. forces? Assuredly our complement of the old crowd, the old force and the old tradition was considerable, whatever we lacked in finance, pomp and power. Ours was a less frugal, a less spectacular and less inviting hoard; yet whatever volunteering we had to do was performed freely, gratis and for nothing, exception to the rule coveing men who formed the Four Courts garrison and were permanent guards at the Fowler Hall and a few other places.

Of the latter groups only a nominal sum was allocated for their services. Many of these men were unemployed, some as a result of resigning to join the garrison or barrack groups from which they had come out

when they were called on to do so. All could have been more liberally treated had they been on the other side. It must be stated here that all the men concerned were contented with their lot, with or without payment or with small payment for that matter.

During that time the whole edifice representative of the Irish national resurgent movement was toppling to the ground. It had its repercussions in the numerous supporting organisations scattered throughout different parts of the world - in America, among the association for the recognition of the Irish Republic - in England, among the Irish Self-Determination League and kindred bodies - as well as in Australia, Canada and South Africa, the impact of disunity and dissension were felt. Obviously much of their and our hard work and unremitting endeavours were lost in the maelstrom of party strife which the Treaty occasioned. In Ireland, however, the word "lost" had an appropriate meaning. Nationally, Ireland had lost its Dáil, its constituent assembly or parliament; politically, Sinn Féin, the popular independent movement, had lost its unity; and as if our losses of these were not sufficient we, of the I.R.A. measured its losses in a divided high command and down to the humblest Volunteer, thus accentuating, not brotherly love but brotherly hate. For the first time in "six glorious years" we had two armies. While these things were happening the people, the ordinary folk, in Ireland were reacting in a kind of mixed way to the situation thus created. The press in Dublin at least, since the signing and the ratification of the "Treaty of Peace and of Freedom" waxed particularly eloquent in its favour, and was instrumental in moulding public opinion, some of its so-called republican opinion in the same cause and for the

same object. It could be said of the time that no opportunity was lost in winning adherents to the Treaty in the matter of the presentation of glowing tributes to those sponsoring and supporting the Treaty, as against those whose policy it was to render it null and void. That same press exploited the Treaty, the split in the Republican Movement, with special regard the split in the I.R.A. and drove bigger and greater wedges into the gap which, without their help, was already sufficiently open and was opening daily. It drove itself and the people headlong into a controversy, a conflict and an arena that were already charged with dynamic potentialities, generally using its great influence to asperse, condemn and vilify Republicans, the Republican ideal and Republican Army and republican cause.

As has already been seen that was no new policy for the Anglo-Irish press with which Ireland had been cursed for the previous seven years. Never had it been national in the sense of being republican. It could hardly be expected to be so in 1922. Nothing but a miracle could have made it other than what it was; forsooth, miracles seldom, if ever, happen in newspaper offices. How silly of us Republicans, to expect a miracle to be performed in favour of the press at that period of our sad and saddening plight? So in its absence, Republicans, and principally the I.R.A., had to bear the cruel oblique, harsh criticism and unjust attacks of a press that was pitiless, remorseless and bitter, beyond reason or proper proportion. Perhaps we were succoured by the thought and the feeling that our Irish press was "agin" us. It was sad to reflect that not all the people knew "their" press as we knew it, in respect to its want of national and republican principles

in the past years. The newspapers saw to it that Lloyd George's threat of "immediate and terrible war" was prominently and sensationally portrayed and propagated. Never before was the need for a real, live national and republican press felt than at that time in May 1922, especially such a press that would stand by the I.R.A. in the face of every opposition with which it was confronted and had to contend with then.

Yet, notwithstanding the harm which the press did or sought to do to our cause in that period, a slight ray of hope shone that, like a candle in the darkness would bring a flicker of light and succour into our political sphere. The pact entered into between our leaders, or to be more explicit, between the leaders of the contending political parties, and argued by Michael Collins as the principal Treaty leader, on May 20, 1922, gave such a ray of hope that a measure of peace was possible in Ireland and among Irish people. But elements outside of Ireland looked upon such a move with distrust and suspicion. Chief among these elements were highly exalted English politicians and members of the British Cabinet. They viewed the pact with misgiving and declared it to be an act, or a deal, contrary to the spirit and letter of the Treaty. That objection from such an influential and powerful source seriously affected the pact arrangements. By a very peculiar turn of fate the vapourings and threats of that outside influence carried the day. London's objection to the pact that had been intended to bring peace to a distracted and disturbed Irish nation, unfortunately found an echo among Irishmen, an echo strong enough and vicious enough as to cause a halt to be made in the advance of a people to unity.

As regards the move itself, of which the "pact" was the symbolic representation, it could be said in very truth that it bore the stamp of being genuine in conception, in principle and in every other humane and national essential. No other "Gentlemen's Agreement" could have been capable of being acceptable by the common fold than that, for it appeared to be an honest and a proper attempt, a means to an end, to preserve the status quo, the hegemony and real stability of our popular movement and to provide for a common policy a common platform on the basis of "agreeing to differ". In that light it gave satisfaction and excited elation to most, if not all, those who had the true interests of our country at heart, among them Republicans equally as much as the Treaty-ites, and many a prayer was uttered that it would prove a blessing in the midst of imminent and threatening dangers. Yet it was generally conceded that the pact suffered many limitations, such limitations as the Treaty imposed, that were of themselves directly antagonistic to the very essence of Irish unity, of which it had no specific regard except and only on the principle of its implementation as an instrument to achieve its purpose to set up and to exercise governmental authority in its own right in order to assert the supremacy of the Treaty above and before other considerations. (By the bye, the General Election "Southern Ireland" was in the offing, and according to the decision reached by the leaders, that election was to be conducted on a highly agreed basis, which permitted that, irrespective of their individual views for or against the Treaty, candidates presenting themselves for election went forward on a single party panel. Hence the term a pact election or an agreed election).

At its best the "pact" could be regarded as an honest-to-goodness attempt or arrangement to keep the two conflicting elements - the Treaty-ites and the anti-Treaty-ites in the National Independence Movement - from getting out of hands or going at each other's throats, thereby causing "fratricidal strife", a term that was then being freely used on political forms and in the public press. At the most it might serve as a makeshift, or improvisation, much in the same manner as a seamstress would patch a garment with materials of different textures and varying colours, or make a patch-work quilt or other accessory consisting of numerous sizes and assortments, according to design and pattern. All would be well if the "pact" worked out according to plan. Then, it would not leave us in any worse plight but on the contrary; if the right spirit was shown, it should produce satisfactory and, mayhaps, lasting and beneficial results, pay good dividends in the interest of the national movement and of the country generally.

Republicans welcomed it for many reasons, but especially because it gave promise of affecting complete unification of the tangled mass within the political, national and military structure. Were it to undo the harm that had already been wrought and to re-conciliate those who had been so cruelly estranged, Republicans, no less than Treaty-ites would have rejoiced. So it might have been had not a spanner been "thrown into the works" to destroy what appeared a promising enterprise.

Oh! the wiles, the inconstancy and the wickedness of mortals! Ere the "pact" was a month operating it was disowned, disavowed, torn to shreds like as unto a "scrap of paper" that had lost its meaning and its purpose.

On the 14th June in Cork City, Mick Collins publicly gave voice and desire to the declaration that the people should register their votes in the election in favour of Treaty candidates - in other words, to make the election on the 16th a party issue. No other meaning could be taken from his pronouncements but that he intended the pact to be broken at that General Election for the Parliament of "Southern Ireland".

The ruse to end the "pact" succeeded. Taken off their guard, the republican section were amazed, bewildered, and indignant at the turn of events. To them it meant a deep thrust against the letter and spirit of the "pact" agreement, conscious that the time available did not permit of redress they found themselves between the "devil and the deep sea" wherein all the fond hopes that were cherished to bring the distressed ship of unity to safety, went down with disaster and woe for them but not so the Treaty-ites - they won the day. The triumph was as much a British gain as it was an Irish loss, because the pact was broken at the behest of British politicians even though it was disowned by Irishmen, not only one Irishman but others as well. And in its defeat we learned that the Treaty did not imply that regard for a pact that would give equal power, rights and status to Treaty-ites and anti-Treaty-ites - those who stood for the Treaty and those who stood for "<u>the Republic</u>" - was not possible nor feasible. For inherent in the operation of such a pact was the fear, the Englishman's fear, that republicans might thereby gain a longer lease of life under a coalition government in which the Treaty would be secondary consideration to the advancement of their ideals - the existence of the Irish Republic. Ah, no! the latter was not to be, because the British political leaders declared against such a course.

They were listened to, they were appeased, whatever the price and however the sacrifice. The Treaty-ites prevailed, the pact was no more and in its passing perhaps the only real and genuine prospect of conciliation among brother Irishmen was cast aside.

To Republicans and especially to the I.R.A., the breaking of the pact had one meaning and that was that hope for unity was dead, or if not dead, swiftly dying. Was this to be the end of all the endeavours that had been made to preserve that comraderie and brotherliness that had been born in travail, that lived in travail, fought and suffered in travail? Nobody knew, and nobody was in a position to know. But one thing was abundantly clear: we were consigned to the parting of the ways, after having reached within sight of the goal, by, alas! many torturous paths. The ordeal and the sacrifice had been hard to endure but the price had been paid in blood, in tears, in suffering. It had taken us six glorious years to advance on the road to freedom. Six years - and now we were to be brought to a halt, or if not halting, go ahead, heeding or unheeding one or other of the signposts that pointed in various directions, one towards the new rendezvous - the Treaty; the other, the old to the Republic. Some there were who came up to the parting of the ways, and looking at the markings thereon, and the roads, asked the question: why should we have the choice, the personal choice in deciding which road we desire to travel? After all were we not always in step with, did we not always walk with these our comrades-in-arms? Was not the pace and the road always marked out for us, and as good soldiers did we not always accord to everything set out for us to do? These and a multiplicit of other questions sprang to the lips of men of the I.R.A. then at the cross-roads when the pact was broken and dishonoured.

The course of events changed rapidly; likewise tension increased, signalled by the parting of the ways which the millification of the "pact for peace and unity" made possible, whereby no avenue of retreat was left open to those who decided to carry on for the rest of the journey. Many of us Republicans, as a matter of necessity, and because of fixed principles clung tenaciously to the things and the cause that claimed our old allegiance. Anger and distrust replaced brotherly love and the brotherhood of man overnight in reward for the cleverly devised, and as it turned out to be, easily wrought coup d'etat which certain politicians had so cruelly and so wantonly accomplished at the expense of the Republicans. Unquestionably, the Republicans in the Sinn Féin organisation and the I.R.A. forces, and even the I.R.B. suffered a serious and a rude setback. The plighted word of some of our former respected and trusted leaders became forfeit on account of their recent nefarious and shameless actions. Conscious of being thwarted in our good intentions, and our honest endeavours to find a common platform for all sides in the political and military dispute, we were wittingly or unwittingly reduced to the position of playing second fiddle to those who had scored a march on us by skilful stratagem and a skilful technique.

Some few days after the General Election the authorities of the Four Courts garrison participated in a pilgrimage to the grave of Wolfe Tone at Bodenstown churchyard, making the journey by motor. Other groups from different units in the Dublin Brigade, including some members of our Company and the 1st Battalion, participated, though unhappily our particular party, meeting with engine trouble at Leixlip, were late in

arriving for the graveside ceremony and came on the scene when the main party were returning to the city. That assembly of armed I.R.A. men had more than sentimental reason in honouring the "Father of Republicanism" whom Davis immortalised when he penned the praises of Tone :

> "For in him, the heart of a woman combined
> With a heroic life and a governing mind
> A martyr for Ireland . . . . . "

It was the first "spiritual communion" with the patriot dead, for some of us, since 1915 as, owing to the existence of the annual banning by the British authorities in the intervening years, few people made the pilgrimage. Small as the contingent was that June week-day it was none the less impressing because it was an honest and sincere symbolic act of reverence to the best traditions of Irish separatism and the principles of Irish republicanism as upheld by Tone and appraised by Pearse as "the greatest republican of them all"(meaning the dead generations of Irish patriots).

Renewed in national vigour and by increased national inspiration we returned to our respective duties, whether to man the military post, or, as in some of our cases, to watch and ward over our Companies. Indeed, it was always a case of watchfulness, wondering what was going to happen next. Sometimes we had strange premonitions of dangers and trials which rumours never seemed to allay. Other times we fancied that things political would take a turn for the best and old estranged comrades-in-arms return to mutual and lasting companionship "never more to part" and "never more to roam". Yet all the while the air was thick with gossip,

suggesting that some moves were in progress to patch up the difference between the I.R.A. and the Treaty forces. On other occasions different news was in circulation that no such thing was possible and that our break could not be mended. In other words, no agreement was in sight or was possible.

In connection with the foregoing certain observations may be necessary. At the time in question there was a feeling that negotiations were going on between the two contending Army Councils. How often at 1st Battalion Council meetings were Company Officers informed by the Commandant of the facts and of the principal points in dispute? We considered ourselves fairly well informed on the subject and perhaps at times optimistic that a settlement would be reached. Did we not hear of the crux on the question who should fill the post of Minister of Defence, or the other crux in regard to the appointment of Chief of Staff for a unified armed force? These, it appeared, were in the melting pot, the thorny points that had to be pruned or cut away before real progress could be made in the efforts to find a real and practical solution to the problem of unity. Was it any wonder then that some of us officers entertained hopes of a satisfactory outcome to the proceedings, in the belief that even at that apparently difficult period, such a happy ending would or could accrue to save both sides from greater and graver consequences.

One other possible encouragement to our hopes for unity lay in the project (whispered about during the time) of an armed move across the border. Here was sensationali of a very peculiar order. The move or project suggested that the I.R.A. and the Treaty forces had combined to create hostilities in the six counties, that guns and men from the rest of Ireland, including the Dublin Brigade

and other units of the I.R.A. were being put into service for that expedition and it was even whispered that Mick Collins approved it and collaborated with the Four Courts Executive in its favour. It was even hinted that it was to take the shape of an armed incursion on Orange domain as a reprisal for the pogroms and the other ugly forms or repression practised there against nationalists and principally against republicans. Those who were supposed to be in the know, implied that it had secretive official or quasi-official sanction of the Treaty-ite and anti-Treaty-ite forces, although the full responsibility for the projected operation was to be borne by the latter regardless as to whether it imperilled the Treaty or otherwise.

Such a move had it the backing of these forces, implicitly suggested the existence of some form of unity, especially if the rumours circulated had an atom of sense that rifles were being "swopped" between the Provisional Forces and the Executive or Four Courts garrison, so that in the event of a miscarriage in the operational plans the rifles would not be traced to the Treaty side. No such cover up was necessary, we were told, in the case of the personnel, who comprised a combination of both forces. Quite a number of men known to us in the Dublin Brigade, inclusive of 1st Battalion men, were linked with that alleged enterprise and actually left Dublin for service in the North. Few, except those specifically placed on the job, knew much of the details beyond odd hints that some such move was afoot. But when eventually news became available that some kind of armed action had accrued, and when it was reported that a number of officers and men from this side of the border, including Seán Flood, were captured, that some credence was attached to the previous rumours and hints. It is important to note that

Seán Flood had since his return from Britain been Vice O/C. of the Leitrim Brigade, and with him were arrested officers and men , officers of other units, including the Tipperary Brigade. These were taken to Derry Jail,later to Belfast, tried and sentenced, Seán receiving ten years penal servitude, the others varying terms.

As part of the action or operation referred to above, hostages, consisting of prominent Orangemen were taken, others escaped capture through the fortunate (for them) circumstances that arms were not to be used. Some little glimpse of the operation was brought to light when in the British House of Commons the following information was imparted:

Around this time some of the buildings that had been seized and held by the I.R.A. in Dublin were vacated. Apropos of these events the "Derry Journal" of Monday, June 5th, 1922, under the caption: "Republican Forces leave Kildare Street Club", reported:-

> "The Kildare Street Club, Dublin, which has been in possession of the Republican Army Executive forces, was handed over to Sir Frederick Shaw, the Chairman of the Club, and Mr. D.H. Bayley, the Secretary, on Saturday afternoon by Brigadier-General Oscar Traynor. A large crowd watched the guard march away from the premises. Sir Frederick Shaw afterwards said that a cursory examination showed that no structural damage had been done, and nothing had been taken away, but things were topsy-turvy. He added that it would be some weeks or months before the date of the re-opening of the Club could be decided".

From that moment both sides played their cards to secure the quickest and the best results, the republican forces showing particular vigour and activity in setting the pace in the race for survival and supremacy, which by reason of their entrenchment, or because of it, became imperative. The motto "To survive or perish" was most applicable in their case. Obviously the Provisional Government desired the latter course to happen, as by that means the ground would be free for them to exploit in the interest of the Treaty. The prevailing situation gave rise to the question: Was the task an easy one to secure, in view of the assumption of authority shown and wielded by the I.R.A.

in Dublin and in other parts of Ireland? Time would answer that question.

Every move taken by one side or the other was put to advantage by the other by means of counter-moves, designed for the purpose of gaining a decision on the relative issues involved. Any course was possible then, if the strange and startling incidents that were happening around us could be taken as a true index of the possibilities and potentialities of danger betokened. Innumerable reports of strange happenings in the country were becoming quite serious and of frequent occurrence, so grave indeed as to warrant the assumption that bigger moves were to follow in rapid succession. Where those moves would lead to, none could forsee or prophesy. Suffice to say that the pace quickened daily as the Treaty forces and the I.R.A. forces activated according to set plan or improvised purpose to make their preserve felt in the then threatening situation. There was enough and to spare of activity in Dublin alone to cause concern for either sides, but of major importance to the Treaty forces was the immediate menace which the continued occupation of the Four Courts, Fowler Hall and other buildings by the I.R.A. seemed to imply.

Chapter 26.

Bombshell as the violation of the pact was, it was of slight significance in comparison to the one that was timed to explode some twelve days later - the bombshell that was to usher in the advent of a civil war - that "fratricidal strife", that "war of brothers" - to avoid which the pact was solemnly consummated. It, the beginning of the Civil War, came about following a sequence of events that were both startling in their nature as they were extraordinary in their character. Whatever other causes or other motives, the main reason for the initiation of the civil war centred round and had their bearing in the Four Courts. British pressure was very strong. British politicians and the British Press demanded that a strong hand should be used to prevent its continued occupation - that the I.R.A. should be ejected from the place. Eventually a something happened to set the machinery in motion for the attack to commence.

It started in a very small and a strange way from a point far removed from the actual building. A very, what might be termed, ordinary raid by I.R.A. was being conducted at a motoring establishment in Baggot Street. During the course of the raid Treaty forces appeared on the scene in great strength, and without further ado seized the I.R.A. Officer Commandant Leo Henderson. It was declared in I.R.A. circles at the time that the raiding party acted under orders which precluded them from using their arms other than for intimidation purposes. The incident produced results the direct opposite to that intended, for soon after the I.R.A. retaliated by arresting one of the Treaty Officers, Commandant General "Ginger" O'Connell, and detained him as a hostage for

Henderson. These incidents caused a wild furore in both armed camps; so important were they considered to be as to almost out-rival any other militant events so far. Each of them was capable of supplying enough tinder to the fire that was already alight, and the passions that had been aroused, to cause an extensive conflagration. There was also enough inflammatory material present to force an issue on the duel that was being fought out on the question of rightful authority and to exploit which any excuse might be regarded as sufficient to avail of a minor opportunity in order to secure a major advantage.

These happenings also caused a stepping up in activities of the respective forces. The I.R.A. forces particularly re-acting to the situation in such a way, as to afford proof that they were unyielding to the demands made by the Treaty side for the liberation of O'Connell, while putting forward counter-demands for the return of their officer Henderson. Viewed then in their purely military aspect these demands and counter-demands represented more than mere incidents; actually they could be regarded as ultimatums for other and probably greater military courses of action. Here was a situation that was pregnant with forebodings of very serious consequences to either one or both of the forces involved in what appeared to be a gigantic tussle to dominate a position by the application of might and fixed ideas of a "No surrender" policy to guide the course of events as they were or portended to be at the time. While these things were going on and perhaps because of them, events of no lesser importance were being shaped behind the scenes, especially among the rank and file of the I.R.A. Their re-actions to the new situation could be summed up in such a way as to suggest that such things

were bound to happen - they are inevitable. Better to face up to them now whatever the dangers or the consequences.

We knew not how the ordinary members of the Treaty forces regarded these tidings, but we had reason to assume that their attitude was similar to ours, and that they viewed the matter in no different light. Furthermore, we had enough sense to realise that they were desirous of coming to deadly grips with us; that they were impatient, as they were enraged, that the I.R.A. stood in their way or in the working of the Treaty, knowing that if such happenings as these continued, and the I.R.A. exercised any degree of effective authority their prospects for coming on top would be neither easy nor promising. In the long run they should have to grapple with the "Four Courts crowd", the "Irregulars". But the question was: How could it be done better than in this way? Why not have a show down now?

Both sides had by then stepped up in activity and were showing a certain amount of aggressiveness and martial spirit in pursuit of their respective policies to win through. That was no less noticeable with the Treaty forces as their adversaries the I.R.A. judging by the many exciting episodes in which either were parties to. The Treaty forces as the self-acclaimed "Regular" forces (which title the I.R.A. disputed) gave many examples of their "martial spirit" when on several occasions they "shot-up" the Fowler Hall during their fast-motorised escapades, at one time wounding an I.R.A. man as hewas leaving the building. So serious had things become that the permanent guard apprehended an onslaught, many alarms having been raised that such was a possibility. Then again, the Treaty forces had I.R.A. halls under

surveillance by means of an intelligence system reminiscent of other people and of other times.

The Four Courts during that time was a veritable fortress. Armed guards were always on duty at the entrances, windows and other vantage points. They, Headquarters staff, workers and technicians, lived and had their being there. New designations were added to our military vocabulary - the Four Courts garrison - the Fowler Hall garrison, etc. and so on. These buildings were prepared for a siege, barricaded, sandbagged and fortified with rifles and an odd machine-gun, the Courts particularly so. In other words, it resembled a military establishment. Guards were posted at regular periods, with full ceremonial and in strict order. There was no entry to or exit from it only by the production of a pass issued by the garrison O/C. unless in very special cases or exceptionally well-known figures. Everything concerning it, emanating from it or centring round it was purely and principally military; nothing was left to chance, as a military post and general Headquarters. It also housed the personnel of other special services - transport, munitions, Belfast boycott, engineering, armouring and so forth. In other words, it was the core, the very essence of I.R.A. activity and of I.R.A. administration.

The men comprising that "garrison" were drawn from the Dublin Brigade, of various Companies, and engaged in different spheres of activities besides military personnel - motor drivers, mechanics, fitters, engineers and tradesmen, and professions of varying denominations, and those with none, doctors and chemists, University graduates and teachers, butchers, cooks, labourers, and types and grades beyond description. They were not all

picked men, in the strictest sense of the word, as in an army like ours, not all men could give all their time in that way, but generally the special type were selected for and engaged in the work, priority in many cases being given to such men who had the time and the aptitude for the allotted tasks. Possibly every unit, company and battalion, was represented there, some in a large or a small way, as was found fit or proper. Our own "C" Company was represented by Seán Myler, William Gannon, William Bannon, Seán Corcoran and Con Mulligan. Each Company was responsible when transferring men to the "Four Courts garrison" to supply each with a rifle, revolver and ammunition for same. Thus the garrison was armed; thus it became the best armed and best equipped unit in the Dublin Brigade. Few, if any, units could claim to be so well contained, armed and equipped as it. Indeed it could be said of most Companies that in transferring the men they bore twofold losses - men and materials - which we had perforce to bear at a time when not only men but materials were of equal necessity outside the Courts. Thus the same process of transferring munition from Companies started in 1919 continued. How we envied the Four Courts garrison? How often had officers, of our first Battalion, groused over the transaction, by which we were being drained of our resources, with little, if any prospect of making good our losses, although in the main we were never adverse to supplying them during the former guerilla campaign, as we had little need for their use in Dublin then. But, during 1922, for more reasons than one, we would have appreciated possessing more than we could afford to transfer instead of being left with a miscellaneous assortment of guns. Groanings and moaning, however, went unheeded; possibly they were not taken

notice of at all, and many a Company Captain had to suffer in patience - all the while carrying on, and obeying orders which had to be obeyed in any event "for the sake of the cause".

These things had long since resolved themselves when events of a more serious and dangerous nature occurred - the order to battle was sounded, and both armed camps were thrown into the throes of civil strife.

SIGNED Seán Prendergast
(Sean Prendergast)

DATE 3. 11. 1952
3.11.1952.

WITNESS M F Ryan Comdt
(M.F. Ryan) Comd't.

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