ROINN COSANTA

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 779 (Section 2)

Witness

Robert Brennan,
42 Lower Dodder Road,
Rathfarnham,
Dublin.

Identity.

Acting Comd't. Wexford Brigade, Irish Vol's. 1916;
O/C. Sinn Fein Press Bureau, 1918-1921;
Under Sec. Foreign Affairs, Dail Eireann, 1921-'22;
Irish Minister at Washington, 1938-1947.

Subject.

Text of his book "Allegiance" with some additional notes.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.537

Form B.S.M. 2

Without a pause, or the suggestion of a smile, the other replied:

"No, but it is how that it is the way ~~it is~~ that there are three ribs broke in it."

The efforts of the fellows to get around the silence rule were ingenious but not usually successful. Etchingham, however, seemed to be very lucky in this respect. One was not allowed to speak even to a warder, except on a matter of discipline, but there was a loophole here which Patsy took full advantage of. He was always asking the warders for guidance on this, that and the other, and he got in a lot of conversation.

One day, during lockup, we had the usual visit from a Visiting Justice. He happened to be a gentleman named Colman, of mustard fame. He appeared at the cell door, preceded by a warder and, announcing who he was, asked if there were any complaints. Usually the answer was in the negative. Etchingham, however, noticed that Mr. Colman was attired in riding garb and when the usual question was put, he said:

"No, it's not what you might call a complaint but I'm worried about a colt."

"A colt, what colt?"

"Well, it's a colt they have at home and I'm afraid

they'll sell it. You see, its a thoroughbred, and I think the people at home don't realise its value."

He launched into an account of the pedigree of the colt and he named nearly every Grand National winner in the preceding twenty-five years. There followed a long discussion between Colman and himself about famous horses and jockeys. This was a subject dear to Etchingham's heart, as he had himself been a professional jockey in his early days. It appeared that the colt in question might be sold for twenty pounds, whereas it was worth certainly twenty times that sum.

"But why don't you write about it?" asked Colman.

"Well, I can't. I'm not entitled to a letter for four months."

"But the Governor would give you permission for a special letter."

"Oh, I dunno. I doubt it and I don't like to be turned down."

"Well, I tell you what I'll do. I'll see the Governor myself and get the necessary permission for you."

"Good man!" said Patsy, that's fine. " Maybe I'll do as much for you some day."

Thereupon Etchingham got permission for a special letter. The reply, when it came, required an answer, and the

correspondence continued for quite a long time.

One day nearly a year later, when we had been transferred to Lewes jail, I asked Patsy how the matter of the colt had fared.

"What colt?"

"The colt you were writing home about."

"Oh, that colt, well, as a matter of fact, I sold that colt myself fifteen years ago."

Phil MacMahon was always getting into trouble for talking. He used to think up the most atrocious conundrums and he had to get them across to someone. One day he was trying one on Austin Stack, but because of the vigilance of the warders, he could only say two or three words at a time between long pauses, so we had gone half a dozen times round the circle before Phil got it out. It was:

"What has become of all the young men who used to move in Gaelic League circles?" Answer: "They are now moving in prison squares."

I heard Austin say with a groan, "Great God Almighty!"

We were allowed two books from the Library every week. We were even allowed to select our own books but that did not necessarily mean we got the books we selected. In fact, I hardly ever got the book I wanted. Austin Stack, apparently,

had the same experience, for one day when I was on orderly duty, I saw written on his slate: "Give me any two books you like except novels written by Miss M.E. Braddon."

On another occasion, Dick Hayes was in a towering rage. He and I were scrubbing the corridor and he managed to tell me the cause. Someone at home had sent him a copy of Francis Thompson's "Hound of heaven". The chaplain had stopped it and when Dick asked him why, he had replied:

"Wasn't Francis Thompson one of the fellows who were shot in the Rising?"

We had been about four months in the place when we scored a victory. My officer friend came into the workshop and down to our counter in a state of suppressed delight.

"There's a hell of a row going on," he said as soon as we started working. "It seems that the 'Cork Examiner' has published a letter, two columns long, giving particulars of your treatment here, with the most minute details. It must have been written by one of the prisoners, but the mystery is how it got out. Do you know?"

"I do," I said, "but I can't tell you."

"It's great work," he said, "it has never been done before in Dartmoor. Tommy is in a fearful wax."

Tommy was Principal Warder Stone. He was one of the

vainest men I have ever known and he seemed to have been created for his post. For instance, he always knew when one was going to talk. Often, just as I was about to do so, I would hear his voice behind me:

"Now then, Brennan, keep that tongue of yours quiet."

This morning, he came over to me as soon as my instructor had gone.

"Look here, Brennan," he said, "I've always tried to treat you fellows decently, haven't I? I never had a man up for report."

This was quite true and I admitted it.

"Well," he went on, "some of your fellows have been up to tricks. There has been a letter published in the Irish papers and it must have been written by one of the prisoners. Do you think that's fair to me?"

I expressed my surprise at the news.

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Is that a fair question," I asked. Do you think if I did know, I would tell you anything about it."

He went on to say we were not treating him fairly and that if he were removed from the "party" and if, for instance, the Wasp replaced him, things would not run so smoothly.

"That's quite right," I said. "Maybe some of us would

like that."

"You don't know what you're talking about. They can ride you to death if they try."

"Maybe."

"Are you going to write anything about this place when you get out."

"I might."

"I hope you'll be fair to me."

I suddenly remembered that Etchingham was dying to get off the hard bench where he was sewing, so I told Stone that Etchingham was planning to write a book on the place. Next day, Etchingham was taken off the bench and put to work at a sewing machine, out of which he seemed to get a great deal of enjoyment.

As for the "Cork Examiner" letter, it had been a painstaking and prolonged job. Itwas deLacey's idea. We had no pens, pencils, ink, or paper and a letter had to be written, and in spite of three personal searches every day, a cell search every night, a special cell search every week and surprise searches now and then, it had to be kept carefully until it could be smuggled out by a visitor. It seemed impossible, but we managed to do it. Three or four paces behind my counter there was a sort of sentry box which was

used by the Principal Warder now and again when he had to sign reports. There was a bottle of ink there but even if I could get into the place unobserved, I could not take the ink bottle because its loss would be noticed before our plans were complete. So we decided I should take the ink and not the bottle, if I got a chance. We had to have a container. At the time, we were supplied with half an ounce of margarine with breakfast and this was served in small tins little bigger than a thimble. DeLacey held back one of these tins and he concealed it in one of the watering cans which were carried over each morning to supply drinking water to the workshop. He went into the recess in the workshop to fill the watering can and he left the margarine tin concealed in the place. Diarmuid Lynch retrieved the tin and left it on his counter behind some bags. Gerard Crofts carrying supplies of canvas from Lynch to me, brought the tin with him. As there were three warders on duty all the time watching us, we had to be careful at every step. I worked very hard cutting material till I had a huge pile on my counter then, under cover of these, I took the tin and crept on my hands and knees to the sentry box, poured the ink into the tin and crept back. We then had to reverse the process and we did this so successfully that the ink lay in the bottom of the watering can in

the recess in our hall that night. Just before lockup, when the cell search was over, deLacey suddenly remembered he had got no drinking water for the night. He asked Stone to let him get some and the latter agreed. DeLacey brought his can to the recess and brought back the little tin containing the ink in the bottom of it, pretending it was full of water. He had managed to manufacture and conceal a nib from some materials in the drawer of his counter. He wrote the letter that night. We had to keep it for nearly three weeks until Diarmuid Lynch had a visitor. It was explained to Diarmuid that he would see his visitor in a room but that he was on no account to approach him. Diarmuid was searched as he left the exercise ground for the interview, and he was searched again before he entered the office. In a corner of his pockethandkerchief which he held aloft in his hand during the search, he had the precious letter. As he entered the office and saw his friend, Diarmuid conveniently forgot his instructions and he stepped impulsively forward.

"Why, hello, Seumas," he cried, as he shook hands with the visitor.

"Now, now," cried Stone who was superintending the interview, and the two men parted. The letter, however, was now in safe hands.

One immediate effect of the publication of this letter was that the officers showed more respect for us.

CHAPTER XII

Two by-elections held in Ireland early in 1917 were lost by the Irish Parliamentary Party and won by Sinn Fein, a clear indication of a profound change in Irish public opinion.

It was nearing the end of the year when there occurred a major incident. Some of us had been getting six ounces of bread extra because we had been losing weight. We shared this boon by passing the extra loaf every alternate day to someone who was not on the special list. One day when we returned from the workshop, de Valera stepped into his cell, seized his extra loaf and tossed it across the dim hall into Jack Macardle's cell on the opposite side. Jack was waiting for it and caught it neatly, and the two doors closed. Usually, this procedure was pretty safe as it was very gloomy at that end of the hall. However, this time a lynx-eyed warder, who was very officious and who was standing on the bridge on an upper floor, saw something passing through the air and he raced down and opened Jack's cell just as the latter had taken his first bite of the loaf. Jack and Dev

were hailed before the Governor and sentenced to three days solitary confinement on bread and water. Dev promptly went on hunger strike.

But for one or two friendly warders, we would not have known of this, for both men had been removed to another wing of the prison. Some of us wanted an immediate general sympathetic strike. I heard that Austin Stack was against this and in the next line-up I managed to get beside him. He was dead against the idea and warned me not to go further with it. The time had not arrived he said. I always found it very difficult to get Stack to take action in such cases but when he did, it was even more difficult to get him to stop.

On the following day, two other men were absent from the line-up, Dr. Dick Hayes and Desmond Fitzgerald. We learned later that, with Dev, they had been removed to another prison. There was no little feeling over the dispute as to whether we should take action or not. We did nothing, but discipline became noticeably more slack and our fellows grew more daring.

One day an entirely unpremeditated demonstration on our part threw the whole prison system out of gear. There was more than a touch of frost in the air as we went round the exercise ring. Some of the younger prisoners found the lagging, dragging pace too slow and there were audible

exhortations from some of them to "step out". Suddenly, I saw one of the men taking a sudden short run and getting in front of the man who had been ahead of him. I saw a puzzled look on the warder's face. He knew something had happened but could not make out what it was. Then the same man did the same thing again. His example was followed by Frank Thornton who passed me and stepped in front of me. I made a run and regained my place. Like a flash, the movement was taken up all round the ring and soon, to keep our places, we were all running, the older men retiring to the inner circle. It started with a trot, but in a little while we were all racing madly, yelling and shrieking like Wild Indians. It was a spontaneous outlet of emotions pent up for months. The warders, aghast and panic stricken at this unprecedented conduct, retreated to the various exits from the exercise ground and summoned the armed guard who were usually on duty only during fog. The guards came running, muskets in hands, but we paid no attention to them. We continued galloping round and round till we got the signal to fall in and we did so amidst boisterous laughing and cheering. When we got the order to march off someone cried "Double" and we ran to the workshop followed by the panting warders.

That was definitely the end of the rigid silence rule. My warder was jubilant when he came in.

"The news is all over the place," he said. "The Irish are up. There is terrific excitement."

Half an hour later Stone came in. He was very agitated. He strolled around for a while and then came over to me.

"Say, Brennan," he said, "can you tell me the meaning of all this?"

"It's only a bit of fun," I said, and added: "We're getting tired of the place."

"Was this thing prearranged?"

"I'm sorry, I can't tell you."

"You mean you don't know."

"I mean I'm not saying."

"Are you one of the leaders?"

"You don't expect me to answer that."

"Is there likely to be another outburst?"

"That wasn't an outburst. You'll know what an outburst is when you see one."

"I've tried to be good to you fellows," he said. "I think I'm entitled to some co-operation."

In the afternoon he came back again, and asked was there anything I could suggest to ease the situation.

"You could bring de Valera back," I said.

"I can't do that. I've nothing to do with it. Is there anything I personally can do?"

"Well," I said, "you might prevent murder by removing some of those warders."

"Which of them?"

I indicated the three warders then in the room. One of them was the man who had reported de Valera and Macardle; the other two were fond of making trouble.

"Are there any officers you would prefer?"

This was going too far. I might get some of the decent ones victimized.

"Any of them," I said, "so long as you take those three away."

The three warders were taken off that evening and we did not see them again. They were replaced by three easy-going men who did not seem to mind our talking so long as there was no superior officer about. One of them, indeed, used to keep watch at the spyhole in the door and warn us when the Principal Warder was coming. Things were much easier from that time on.

Early in December, they told us we were being removed to another prison where we would have the special privilege of being allowed to talk during exercise and of sending and receiving fortnightly letters. Up to that time, we could

receive one letter every four months. We were told we could travel in civilian clothes if we gave an undertaking not to try to escape. We refused to give the undertaking, so we made the journey in convict garb and in chains, five men to a chain. It wasn't a comfortable journey and it lasted a long time, right across the South of England. Whenever any man had occasion to go to the lavatory, all five men on his chain had to go with him as the warders carried no keys to the chains. My warder had told me that if he was not sent with us, he would leave the prison service. He did not come with us and he left the service. A few years later, he was arrested in a round-up of Sinn Feiners in London and sent with about one hundred prisoners to Mountjoy Jail in Dublin.

Our new abode, Lewes Jail in Sussex, seemed to be a beautiful place after the experience of Dartmoor. The cell floors were of wood and there were hot water pipes and, though they were never hot, they looked good. The lighting of the cells, too, was infinitely better. I had been only a short time in my cell when the door opened and a man in civilian dress entered. He said he was the Governor and he hoped I would be comfortable. This, I said to myself, is a policy of killing us with kindness. The Governor was a very quiet, gentle-spoken man and though he seemed to be young, his

hair was quite white. We learned later that he had spent three years as a spy in the Mahdi's camp while the British were conquering the latter's territory.

The Governor asked if I needed anything. I asked for writing materials and a typewriter.

"A typewriter!" he exclaimed. He could not have been more surprised had I asked for a machine gun. He said he would ask permission to give me the writing materials but he knew the typewriter was out of the question. In reply to his queries, I told him I wanted to write a few stories and we got talking about books. He told me he took a keen interest in mathematics and said he was worrying over a problem which had appeared in the Cambridge magazine. He had been over a month working at it and he had found a solution which he knew must be wrong because, if it were right, the ice age must still have held Sussex as late as the ninth century which, of course, was absurd. He asked me if I were good at mathematics.

"I'm not bad," I said, "but I don't think I could solve your problem. There is a man here, however, who could I think. His name is de Valera."

He hurried off to Dev's cell. Next day I asked Dev how he had got on with the problem.

"I solved it," he said, "but it took me over an hour."

"But the Governor said he had been over a month at it."

"Yes," he said, "and he might have been at it for ten years if he had continued to forget, as he did, that the square root of a positive may have a plus or minus value. He thought only of the plus value."

"I'm glad you sent him to me" continued Dev, "because he is going to let me have Poincare's work on Quaternions in four volumes. I have been wanting it for a long time."

"Quaternions," I said, "I can't remember what they are but I think they were invented or discovered by Rowan Hamilton."

"That's right."

"Well, what are they anyway?"

"It's hard to explain," said Dev, "but it's like this. You take a point in space - or say, take a point in a room. In the ordinary way, you can locate that point if you know its distance from two walls and the floor or ceiling. Now, quaternions will indicate the location of that point by one symbol instead of three measurements."

This left me up in the air so I changed the subject to talk of Rowan Hamilton himself. He was that rare genius who was an infant prodigy and who remained a prodigy when he was

no longer an infant. He might have been but was not a hateful child. Born in Dublin in 1805, he read Hebrew at the age of seven. Before he was twelve, he was not only a master of all the European languages and of Latin and Greek, but ~~held~~ he had a knowledge of Syriac, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Hindustani and Malay. At ten, he knew nothing of mathematics but happening on a Latin copy of Euclid, he studied it and within two years he had mastered not only it, but every work on mathematics then written. He was self-taught. In his eighteenth year, he entered Trinity College and in all the examinations he took first place. Apart from his languages and mathematics, he twice gained the Vice-Chairman's prize for English Verse. He was an orator, scholar, poet, metaphysician, mathematician and ~~national~~ natural philosopher. When he was about twenty he was made Astronomer Royal for Ireland and he took up this position in Dunsink Observatory, where he remained for the rest of his life working out many mathematical problems of the most abstruse kind. He foresaw clearly, though he did not name it, the theory of Relativity later set down by Einstein. One day, in his old age, walking down the road near Dunsink, he came on a ancient villager sitting on the bridge wall. And the ancient villager said:

"What is it you are doing today, Mr. Astronomer Royal?"

"I am," he said, "multiplying the North-East by the South-West."

When I told Dev this, he said:

"And that is exactly what he was doing."

Nearly thirty years later, in 1943 to be precise, I had occasion to call on Albert Einstein in Princeton University. I had been commissioned by the Irish Government to invite him to the Colloquiem about to be held in Dublin under the auspices of the Institute of Higher Learning. The great man came into the room where I was waiting, dressed in an old tweed suit, the coat of which was buttoned high across his chest. He wore no collar or tie and his heavy boots were actually tied with pieces of twine. His kindly Hebrew eyes twinkled under a mass of grey hair ~~with~~ which pointed to the four winds. He was pleased to receive the invitation and sorry he could not accept it because his health prevented him from travelling. I told him the story of Dev and the prison Governor and he was highly amused. We talked of Hamilton and I told him he had said on one occasion that he was multiplying the North-East by the South-West and that how Dev had said: "that's exactly what he was doing". Dr. Einstein said: "Of course it was," which again left me up in the air.

In Lewes we met many old friends because all the Irish prisoners from Portland, Dartmoor, Maidstone and other prisons, were brought together there. There were over one hundred and thirty of us. We talked all the time in spite of all efforts to stop us and we made wonderful plans about how we were going to carry on the fight when we got out. In addition, we were all studying various subjects, particularly languages, French, German, Spanish, Italian and, of course, Irish. Pearse Beasley held examinations for the Fainne.

It is curious that after the silence of Dartmoor I should have so quickly tired of talk but after a few days in Lewes, I welcomed the evening and the silence of my cell. I had got my writing materials and I completed two full length mystery novels[1] before we left the place.

We were split up into various parties assigned to carry out the work of the prison. There were about thirty of us in the workshop where we made hearth rugs and doormats, the former on looms, the latter on upright frames. Etchingham was given a loom and the warder instructed him how to make the rug.

"Do I have to make that?" he asked, looking at a

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1. These were later published, one "The False Finger Tip" by Seamus Kearney and the other "The Toledo Dagger" under my own name.

completed rug.

"Yes," said the warder.

"I'm afraid they've selected the wrong man," said Etchingham, "I've only got five years to do."

Vincent Poole, a Citizen Army man almost precipitated a general row within the first few days in Lewes. He was in the workshop with us and he began to sing "The Green Flag". When the warder had checked him a few times, he suddenly got up from his seat and yelled at the warder:

"What's this about? I might as well be in jail."

Whereupon he was brought before the Governor and sent to the cells. He went on a hunger strike. He even refused to let the warders enter his cell and when they tried to put him in a straight jacket, he beat them. A section of the prisoners wanted a sympathetic strike in his favour but de Valera had had a Prisoners' Council selected and they decided against it. There was a very strained atmosphere, however, until Poole was returned to us.

In the workshop, after a short while, discipline became so lax that we strolled about where we liked and there was very little work done. Most of my time was spent in Slattery's loom. He was giving half a dozen of us a series of lectures on science and chemistry. After his lecture,

we would adjourn to Jack Plunkett's loom and he discoursed on Dante and Italian literature. There were individual talks on such subjects as hand carving, poster illustrations, gardening, music, etc., and I gave a series of talks on bee-keeping.

On the exercise ground, Eoin MacNeill was giving Sean MacEntee, Con Donovan and myself a series of lectures on ancient Irish History. Without a textbook, or even a note-book to which to refer, he gave us a series of sixteen lectures in the most complete detail, covering some ten centuries of history. One day, our lecture was rudely interrupted. One of our comrades, [redacted], who had more curiosity than tact, pushed his way in between MacNeill and myself. He put his arm very familiarly around MacNeill's shoulder.

"Say, Mac," he said, "why did you stop the Rising?"

MacNeill stopped and glared at him. Then putting his hands on the other's chest, he pushed him away with no little violence.

"Go away from me!" he cried, and the man went off looking very much astonished.

Principal Officer Stone had come with us from Dartmoor and the poor man was very much distressed at the lack of discipline in the new prison. His vanity, however, was still

colossal. One day he conducted half a dozen of us to the baths for our weekly immersion. Etchingham was in the next bath to mine and he was giving me an account of the death of poor old Mrs. Webb in Gorey.

"She was a hundred and three" said Etchingham, "and I saw her dancing a jig last year."

As there was a four foot wall between us and as the noise of the lads splashing in the baths was considerable, he had to talk very loud. Stone intervened:

"Now then, Etchingham, not so loud."

"I'm only telling him," yelled Patsy, "about old Mrs. Webb. She has just died at the age of a hundred and three and I saw her dancing a jig last year. Now, what do you think of that, Mr. Stone?"

"Well," said Stone, "some people carry their years well. What age would you think I am?"

"I suppose you'd be around thirty-five," said Patsy.

"You wouldn't think I'm fifty."

"Why, Mr. Stone," said Patsy, sitting up in his bath in his amazement, "nobody would ever take you to be more than thirty-five. You're a wonderful fine man."

"Oh, you should have seen me twenty years ago. I tell you the girls used to look at me."

"I'm sure they're doing that still," said Patsy.

"And even though I'm fifty, there are very few of your fellows would give me ten yards in a hundred."

"I bet they wouldn't. Do you know, Mr. Stone, there must have been a great moon the night you were born."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, you know, we have an old saying in Ireland 'no moon, no man'."

Afterwards, Seumas Doyle said to Patsy:

"I never heard that old saying 'no moon no man'."

"Neither did I," said Patsy.

After a while, I was transferred to the cleaning squad and life became much more interesting. There were five of us and Harry Boland was our leader. We took our orders from Harry and not at all from the warder, though we never had any trouble with the man generally in charge of us, a little fellow named Gallop. Amongst other unofficial duties, Harry supplied us with extra bread. We had our own men working in the kitchen and every morning, knowing the time the cleaning squad was passing the kitchen window, one of them was waiting with a string of a half a dozen six ounce loaves. As Harry passed the window, the loaves were shot forward and Harry took them and slipped them under his jersey. It was so quickly

and so neatly done that even I, who was following Harry, failed more often than not to see the operation. As opportunity offered, Harry divided the loaves amongst us and we concealed them under our oxters. One day, because someone was ill, Dick Hayes was assigned to our squad. We had passed the kitchen window and we were swabbing a little yard when Harry pushed a loaf into Dick's hand. Dick held the loaf in his hand and gazed at it as if it were some strange insect.

"What am I to do with it?" he asked blankly.

Before Harry had time to [redacted] reply, the warder strode across, looking very angry.

"What's up?" he asked.

Harry grinned at him.

"Dr. Hayes is a new comer," he said.

The warder turned to Dick.

"Put that thing under your jersey," he said drily.

One of the things the cleaning squad had to do was to purloin an Irish newspaper which, by the time it passed through over one hundred hands, was in shreds. We got the newspaper from the Priest's room. Each morning, the five of us went down to clean the entrance hall on which opened the offices of the Governor, the Priest and the steward.

We swept the hall as a preliminary to scrubbing it and I had to fill the coal scuttle in the steward's room. I had also to create a diversion so as to enable Harry to get into the Priest's office unobserved. Gallop always fell for the ruse. He had got very chummy with us and he had even picked up a few Irish phrases, such as, "Dun and doras", "Eist do bheul," etc.

One morning I went as usual into the steward's room and upset my bucket of coal with a clatter. Gallop came to the door.

"What's the racket?"

"I spilled the coal."

"What's wrong with you? You're always spilling something."

"Well, this is not the sort of work I'm used to."

Gallopreturned to the hall and I followed as soon as I had cleaned up the mess. I took my brush and started sweeping.

"Bfuil se agat" - (Have you got it?) I said to Harry.

"Ta," (I have) he replied.

Gallop had heard me. He walked over to Harry and tried to repeat the phrase I had used.

"Will shay gut?" he said.
Harry laughed.
"Ta," he said.

Gallop went into the Priest's room and saw that the

newspaper was gone. He turned towards us and said:

"Ta, by God!"

He did not give us away, however, and we continued to get the paper until the Priest forestalled us by having it delivered elsewhere.

Harry had the first look at the paper as, of course, he was entitled to. One day, as we were all returning to our cells for dinner, he astonished us by yelling from his doorway:

"Russia is out of the war, boys. That's one leg off o' the pot."

The place rang with cheers and cries of "up the Rebels!" We had another demonstration when Joe McGuinness, one of our fellow prisoners, was elected M.P. for Longford. That night we celebrated the victory with a concert to which nearly everyone contributed. The singers, standing on stools in their cells, sang out through the windows. Some of the efforts were deplorable but we had a few good voices, including those of Gerard Crofts, Seumas Hughes and the brothers Tommy and Charlie Bevan who had been with the Carl Rosa Opera Company. Crofts had the cell immediately beneath mine and every night he would give us a few songs from his vast repertoire. His voice was never very powerful but he was a

real artist and he could make any and every old song sound beautiful.

Fergus O'Connor was a prisoner who was always planning some trick or another. If when you pulled down the lever on your loom all the intricate threads snapped, or if you found the mouth of the bag you were making sewed up, it was ten to one that O'Connor was the cause of it. One day I saw him going about from place to place in the workshop with a ball of jute. There were a dozen huge, upright wooden frames for making jute mats lined along the workshop floor. Fergus put the ball through the tops of one frame after another till the whole lot were linked by the cord. Then he tied the string to the end of a long heavy form. I was surprised that Hawke, the very officious officer who was on duty, did not spot him and I wondered what the outcome would be. At last, Hawke spoke to Fergus asking him why he was not making his mat.

"I had to get some jute," said Fergus and, at the same time, he jerked the cord behind his back. Down went the heavy form with a clatter and down with it went all the big frames from one end of the room to the other. The noise was terrific. When it subsided, Fergus said to Hawke:

"Now look at what you're after doing."

CHAPTER XIII

In April 1917, the U.S. entered the war pledged to the principle of government by consent of the governed for all nations great and small. The British endorsed this principle in words. Their treatment of Ireland was becoming embarrassing in view of these words.

Food is an elemental thing and, I suppose, its most frequent symbol is bread. It was a tiny loaf of bread which had precipitated a crisis in Dartmoor and again in Lewes a similar loaf was the beginning of a lot of trouble. Harry Boland and Dick King one day passed through the prison kitchen in charge of the warder Hawke, whom none of us liked because he was always looking for trouble. There had been two six-ounce loaves on the kitchen table before they entered. They were gone when they left. They were missed almost at once and the warder in charge rushed up and told Hawke, who ran immediately to King's cell. He found King eating one of the loaves. Harry and Dick were had up before the Governor and sentenced to three days in solitary. As they were leaving the Governor's office, Harry turned and said to the Governor:

"If any ten of your men can put me into a solitary cell,

I'm willing to go there."

He hurried to the end of the main hall and stood with his back to an iron-barred gate.

"Now," he said to the Governor and the warder who had followed him, "send for your ten best men."

There was a hasty conference and it was decided that Harry and Dick should go to their own cells. When I was passing Harry's cell, I shouted encouragement to him.

"Go away," he said, "don't interrupt my thoughts. I've started the contemplative life."

This was funny coming from Harry than whom there were few more active or vigorous. He went on hunger strike. The chaplain, on a visit to him, absentmindedly offered him a chocolate.

"Get thee behind me,Satan," said Harry, with a grin which was always infectious. The chaplain grinned also.

When Harry and Dick rejoined us, we decided to worry the warder Hawke till he died or resigned. We got our chance a few days later when Hawke was on duty and it came to the turn of Harry and myself to bring round the breakfast which normally consisted of a loaf, a pint of cocoa and a pint of porridge. However, because we were on half-bread rations, owing to the shortage caused by the war, we were given a

kippered herring three times a week.

There were thirty-four men in our cell block and an equal number of loaves came up from the kitchen in a wooden tray. Hawke walked in front and Harry followed, pushing the tray along the handrail. The warder opened a cell door, took a loaf from the tray and handed it to the prisoner and passed on to the next cell. As he did so, Harry took a loaf in his right hand and jerked it behind his back into the cell past the head of the astonished prisoner. The movement was as quick as a flash. It had to be, because immediately following Harry came another warder and myself. I was toting a big bucket of cocoa from which my warder measured out a pint for each prisoner. Harry repeated the operation several times. When he got to the home stretch, Hawke looked at the tray.

"Why," he said,"there are only three loaves."

"That's right," said Harry, "and there are two, four, six, eight cells to do." He looked at Hawke with his sunniest smile. "It doesn't seem possible."

"There were thirty-four loaves brought up," said Hawke, "I counted them."

"Something wrong with your arithmetic," said Harry.

Hawke had to send down for five additional loaves. This

meant serious trouble for him.

When it came to serving out the kippers, Harry took the tray. Hawke went in front, as before, and opened the cell door. Then he lifted the kipper on a spoon and transferred it to the plate the prisoner was holding. Before the prisoner had time to close his door, Harry had taken a kipper by the tail, slung it round his back and into the cell as before. He had to be more careful this time, as Hawke was watching him closely. Nevertheless, he managed to get rid of four of the ~~fishes~~ kippers. To say Hawke was flabbergasted when he reached the final cells, is to put it mildly. He gazed at the tray, gasping like a fish himself.

"What's wrong?" asked Harry innocently.

"There are only five kippers."

"Well?"

"We have to do nine cells more."

Harry looked up and counted the cells.

"Begob that's right," he said, "that's funny."

"But I counted thirty-four," said Hawke.

"Nonsense," said Harry. "Where are they?"

Of course, Hawke had to send down for more ~~fishes~~ kippers, which was another black mark for him.

The climax came when we were serving the porridge.

Harry had gone back to his cell and I was lugging the bucket of porridge around. The warder served this by plunging a long-handled scoop into the porridge and measuring out a pint into each prisoner's mug. When we came to Harry's cell the latter, instead of presenting a mug, had one of the pint dinner tins. Hawke ladled out his porridge and the tin was only three parts full.

"Excuse me," said Harry, "this tin holds a pint."

"What do you mean?"

"It's only three-quarters full and I'm entitled to a pint."

"Well," said Hawke, "I was never very particular before, but I'm going to be now."

"There's no need to grouse about it," said Harry.

"That's right," I said, "every man is entitled to a pint of porridge."

"You keep out of this," said Hawke to me.

"Come on," said Harry, "be a sport."

"I'll show you," said Hawke, and the fool of a man instead of filling up the tin and leaving the matter so, took the tin from Harry and emptied it into the bucket with the idea of measuring the exact fill of the scoop. Of course, by this time, the tin was slippery and it escaped from Hawke's

fingers and fell into the bucket.

"Now," said Hawke, glaring at Harry, "look what you've done."

"You mean what you've done," said Harry.

Hawke began to sweat as he fished the tin out of the bucket of porridge. By the time he got it out, he had some porridge on his sleeve, on the breast of his tunic and on his chin. The warders always tried to keep their uniforms spick and span and, of course, the poor man was, by this time, in a terrible rage. His language was unprintable.

"Now, now," said Harry, reprovingly, "that's not nice talk."

"And all for nothing," I said. "I've never before heard it disputed that every man is entitled to a pint of porridge."

"If you say another word -" said Hawke to me, and stopped.

"But I'm only saying," I said, "that every man is entitled to a pint of porridge."

"Shut up," said Hawke.

"As a matter of fact," I said to Harry, "I think it is on your cell card in there."

Harry went back into the cell and took down the card.

"Here it is," he said. "Look, read it for yourself, Mr. Hawke. Breakfast one pint of porridge, and that shows Mr. Brennan is right. Every man is entitled to a pint of porridge."

Harry finally got his pint of porridge and we moved on to the next cell when Hawke had done his best to remove the stains from his tunic. The next cell was occupied by Willie Corrigan.

"Isn't that right,Willie," I said.

"What?"

"Every man is entitled to a pint of porridge."

"Oh, sure," said Willie at once, "every man is entitled to a pint of porridge."

"If you don't stop that at once," said Hawke to me, "I'll put you back in your cell right now and report you to the Governor."

"All right," I said, "you'll be quite within your rights, but I'm sure that the Governor will hold that every man is entitled to a pint of porridge."

We continued round the cells and if I repeated the phrase once I must have said it fifty times. Finally, Hawke could stand it no longer. In a loud voice he commanded me to "shut up."

Stone had come into the hall downstairs. His tenor voice came floating up.

"What's the matter, Mr. Hawke?"

"It's nothing, Mr. Stone," I said, "only a misunderstanding. Mr. Hawke doesn't seem to realise that every man is entitled to a pint of porridge."

"Why, of course," said Stone, "every man is entitled to a pint of porridge."

Hawke applied for a transfer that night and we never saw him any more. Years later, when I was Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Harry was the Irish Envoy to the United States, he used to send me long official reports. At the end of every one of them, in his own hand-writing, were the words, "Every man is entitled to a pint of porridge."

It is curious to recall now how easily and naturally de Valera stepped into the leadership. Apart fromthe fact that he was the ranking survivor of the Dublin officers, he became the leader of the prisoners in Dartmoor from the day he gave the salute to MacNeill. In Lewes he became the leader of us all,without any consultation, debate or election - there was an election later, but long before that he had become "the chief". Whenever any proposal was made or dis-

cussed, the first question everyone asked was : "what does Dev think of it?" Even at that early stage, there was the contradiction that though we found him tantalisingly conservative, we were all looking to him for a lead. We finally got it from him.

The officials in Lewes found that the more concessions we obtained, the more liberties we took. In the workshop particularly, after a little while, no one paid the slightest attention to an order from the officials. For instance, Tom Doyle, one of the Enniscorthy prisoners, was making jute door mats on a frame. He discovered that some balls of jute were a shade darker than others and by skilfully utilising the two shades, he produced a mat which had a neatly designed harp in the centre. The difference in shades, however, was so delicate that the design could be seen only from certain angles. Tom was very proud of his artistry and he lingered over the last remaining rows of his mat. We were all wondering if any of the warders would notice the design. One day, Stone came along and saw it. He was aghast. He asked Tom what was the meaning of it.

"The meaning of what?" asked Tom.

"That design."

"Where?"

Stone brought him to a point from ~~where~~ which the design was plainly visible.

"That's curious," said Tom. "It must be in the blood. My great grandfather was a famous harper."

The Governor was brought on the scene and the mat was sent to the scrap heap. Tom started another one and this produced a shamrock and at the same time it was found that ~~all~~ the mats the other fellows were making all had various emblems, such as round towers and wolf dogs, some of them very bad. The lads blamed the whole thing on the prison officials who failed to supply jute of a uniform shade. The mat making was stopped.

Some of the fellows started growing moustaches. The prison officials objected, to no effect. Before the matter came before the Governor, Dev heard about it and he ordered the moustaches to be removed. He said if there was going to be a row it would be about something worth while.

When the election of a Council was held, Dev's selection as chief was almost unanimous. Only Tom Ashe and a few others opposed him. He did not at all resent the opposition but when the election was over he did very strongly object to the efforts of the minority to nullify the decisions of the Council. His attitude then, as later, was that of a constit-

tutional autocrat. He would allow the greatest latitude in discussion and, generally, he managed to talk us all into his way of thinking by his clear, commonsense arguments. When, however, he was likely to fail in this, he did not hesitate to throw his own personality and worth intothe balance against all opposition. In other words ; "you can talk about this as much as you like, the more the better and from every possible angle. In the last analysis, if you don't agree with me, then I quit. You must get someone else to do it." And they never could afford to let him quit. Many years later I was present on an occasion when there were two thousand delegates from all over Ireland gathered at a convention in the Mansion House. Dev was in a hopeless minority on the question at issue. That question was the introduction of special legislation to grant a pension to General O'Duffy who had been relieved of his position as Police Commissioner. With the exception of the half-dozen people on the platform, everyone of the two thousand people present was against the proposal and the speeches in opposition were greeted with general applause. Dev was, or seemed to be very angry when he rose to speak. He said that in the ordinary course, O'Duffy as a Civil Servant, would have been entitled to a pension. Because,

however, certain legislation had not been enacted, he was not so entitled at the moment. Were they to be mean enough to take advantage of a flaw in the law because they did not like the man in question. There was some applause at this but it was very half-hearted. Then Dev threw down the trump card I have seen him use so often. He said, in effect : "you are perfectly free to have your way in this matter but you will have it without me. You can get someone else to take my place." And, because they knew they could not let him go, knew that he was a head and shoulders over everyone else, they had to let himhave his way.

Matters in the prison reached such a stage that the authorities decided to call a halt. We were lined up in the Central Hall and a man from the Home Office read a document which was to the effect that we would still be allowed the privilege of talking during exercise but that otherwise we should conform to the prison rule of strict silence, and all orders of the officers were to be obeyed without question. When the visitor finished reading the document, Dev started to reply. He meant to voice a demand on behalf of all of us that we should be treated as prisoners of war but, before he had said three words, the visitor sharply interrupted and said

no one was entitled to speak on behalf of the prisoners and that if any of us had any representations to make, we should individually ask for an audience with the Governor. We were then marched to our cells.

That evening, I got a note in Dev's perfectly neat handwriting to the effect that the time had arrived to make a formal demand that we be treated as prisoners of war, or political prisoners, and that he intended to present this to the Governor at our next parade. If the demand was denied, we should refuse to work as convicts or to associate with convicts. We had been expecting some such move as this, as we had previously learned he had been in touch with the people at home and they had agreed to the proposal. Next morning, we were all agog as we were marched out to the exercise ground. When we were lined up for searching, word passed along the line that we were not to march off till Dev had given the word. The Governor evidently expected some trouble for he made one of his rare appearances on the exercise ground. He looked rather pathetic in his light grey suit, his white hair and his still young face with the pallor of death as always. The search over, the ranks closed. Stone gave us the order to march off. We stood still and I saw Stone's face tense and white. Dev stepped forward and handed the Governor a paper.

"I am demanding," he said, "that we Irish Volunteers should be treated as prisoners of war."

The Governor took the paper and did not reply. Dev went on:

"We refuse any longer to accept the status of convicts."

The Governor still said nothing and Dev stepped back into the ranks. Stone and the Governor exchanged a few words in a whisper. The hundred and twenty odd prisoners stood in absolute silence. Stone turned to the warders.

"All right," he said, "take these men back to their cells."

So back to our cells we marched and we were not let out again. On Saturday, however, we were asked to give an undertaking that if we were allowed to go to Mass on Sunday we would not avail of the opportunity to try to escape or to make a demonstration. In accordance with our new policy, we refused to give this undertaking, though the loss of Mass was a very serious matter for the men, most of whom received the Sacrament every Sunday. This incident was subsequently distorted out of all shape and was quoted by the Home Office as evidence of our ungodliness. When I got to Parkhurst jail, a week or so later, the Chaplain there gave a fantastic account of the affair and described de Valera as an atheist and an anti-Christ. As a matter of fact, on that Sunday morning when

we were supposed to be so ungodly, we all answered the Rosary given out by a man in each cell block.

On Monday, we got word from Dev that he had given the prison authorities three days to meet our demands. At the end of that time, if we were still locked in, we were to start breaking up the prison, beginning with the windows the first night, the spyholes in the doors the second night, the lamp screens the third night, and so on. On the night the ultimatum expired, I gave the signal for our block by singing "God Save Ireland", which was enthusiastically chorused by all the lads in the wing, after which we proceeded to break the windows, amidst a great deal of noise and cheering. The people of the town, hearing the commotion, assembled around the jail. On the second and third nights, we carried on as instructed, and then we were left to our own devices as to what to break next. We started taking the brick walls apart - a slow job for the first brick but easy after that - and before I left, three of the cells in our block had been made into one by the removal of the walls.

Jimmy Brennan, who had been acting as the priest's orderly, had been ordered to carry on with his usual duties of serving Mass and looking after the church. One morning, he returned with the news that Dev, Tom Ashe and Eamon Duggan had

been removed from the prison. On the following morning, we heard Harry Boland's voice in the hall.

"I'm off boys," he cried.

He stopped at my cell door.

"Keep the flag flying," he yelled in at me.

"I've no flag," I said.

"Keep it flying whether you have or not," he shouted, and we all gave him a great cheer. He refused to go on a chain and they handcuffed him after a terrific fight. He was whirled off to Maidstone prison in Kent in an open car. He had previously written a note to his mother and he tossed it from the car.

"What's that?" asked Stone who was sitting beside him.

"Your death warrant," said Harry.

The note was picked up by a woman walking the road. She read:

> "If it is a mother who finds this note, will she send it to my mother, Mrs. Boland at 15, Marino Crescent, Clontarf, Dublin, to tell her that her son Harry is being taken from Lewes jail to God knows where."

The woman sent the note to Mrs. Boland and said she had a son fighting at the front and she had sympathy for another mother whose son was in peril. The note was printed on a handbill in Dublin and circulated throughout Ireland.

Harry was only half an hour gone when my cell door opened and two warders advanced cautiously into the cell holding a wooden barricade in front of them. Behind them came two others with batons aloft. The two latter suddenly pounced, one from each side, and grabbed me. The others dropped the shutter and caught my legs. We all went down in a heap.

"Let me up," I said, "and I'll walk."

They let me up and I walked. I yelled encouragement to the others as I was marched out. I got a glimpse of Eoin MacNeill as I passed his cell. The dignified historian and University professor was sitting up on the window sill with his feet out through the window. He had put his bare feet out through the bars and then put his boots on so that he could not be dragged from the cell.

Down in the office, five of us were put on a chain and taken in a bus to the railway station. While we were sitting in the railway waiting-room I saw a man on an opposite seat whom I took to be Michael Staines, but as he took no notice of us, I allowed I was mistaken. It was Staines, as we learned shortly. He had been sent from Dublin to watch developments. As soon as the train started, Tommy Bevan who, with his brother Charlie, was on the chain, produced, from some mysterious hiding place in his clothing, a tuning fork. He

struck this on the chain and carrolled:

"Doh, mi, soh, doh, what's it to be boys?"

We started a chorus and when it was concluded one of the warders, an old man named Dyan who was in charge, said it was very good.

"You can sing as much as you like in the train" he added, "but when we come to a station you'll have to keep quiet."

He was a very decent, kindly, old man who had clearly selected the wrong profession. The other warder was a big healthy, burly fellow. One day when he had been more than usually officious, Harry had told him quite truly that he should have been at the front. He did not like us. I told Mr. Dyan that he was a very decent man and we did not want to get him into trouble but we were going to sing at every station we came to.

"Don't," he appealed, "I'll have to report you if you do."

"Sure you'll have to report us," I said, "if you don't do it, we'll report ourselves. We don't know where we're being taken to but we're going to let everyone know who we are."

The poor old man was terribly distressed but his appeals

were in vain. The train pulled up at a station and we alighted. It was a huge place with a vaulted roof. One of the fellows saw a name.

"It's Brighton," he said.

Dyan said we would have to go around to another platform.

"All right," I said, "give us the note Tommy."

We had agreed on "God Save Ireland" as the only Irish national song the English would recognise. Tommy gave us the note and we burst into song as we marched up the platform. There were only ~~five~~ Seven of us but we sounded like ~~five~~ Seven hundred in the great vaulted chamber. People came running from all sides and before we got round to our proper platform, the warders had to force a passage for us through the crowd. We got into the train. Then I saw Staines again. An excited little man with a Cockney accent was asking him questions about us. The little man forced his way to the carriage door and asked if we were Irish prisoners.

"Sure we are," I said, "we're here because we were fighting for the freedom of a small nation, as you're supposed to be doing."

"It's a bleedin' shyme," he said, "I'll get you some newspypers."

Several people had crowded close to the carriage and

Paul Calligan slipped a note to Staines. One of the warders pulled down the blinds but through the slit I saw the man with the Cockney accent coming back with the newspapers. I thrust my free hand out and took the papers. The burly warder snatched at them but I managed to get them behind my back. We had a grand struggle during which the blind flew up. The spectators crowded round, crying out what a shame it was to beat a manacled prisoner like that. The train started off just as the warder retrieved the newspapers and received a chorus a boohs from the crowd.

Poor old Dyan mopped his brow.

"It's hard lines on you, Mr. Dyan," I said, "now, you see, you'll have to report us."

"It's awful," he said.

"Don't worry, I replied, "they are going to wallop us in the new place, anyway, because we broke up Lewes jail. What is coming to us from your report won't make it any worse."

Towards evening, we arrived at a city. We alighted and were hurried along a platform to a steamer. Lounging about were many men in uniform who jeered at us. We boarded the steamer and Dyan hurried us below decks. We passed a woman, leading a child. She was pregnant and, as we appeared, a look of horror came into her face. She drew

her child back as if she feared contamination. To her we were criminals, enemies of society, outcasts. The steamer was a small boat, a tender plying between the mainland and the Isle of Wight. We sat on a bench by the wall in the bar-room which was crowded with men in uniform, the blue of the sailors, the khaki of the soldiers.

"What's it to be?" asked Tommy Bevan, producing his tuning fork.

"Let them have it," said his brother Charlie, "The West's Awake".

So we gave them "The West's Awake".

"Sing oh hurrah, let England quake,
We'll watch till death for Erin's sake."

From the time we started to sing, the others had fallen silent. They glared at us malevolently. As we finished the chorus, a British non-commissioned officer came forward belligerently.

"I'd like to kick your heads off," he said, "I'd like to take you on right now, you dirty swine!"

"I'm on a chain," I said, "if I wasn't, you wouldn't say that to me."

A redheaded soldier stepped in front of the officer. He spoke in a rich Dublin accent:

"I'm not on a chain," he said, "why not take me on?"

The N.C.O. turned to say something to him. "Come on," cried the red-head, "take me on."

At the same time he swung and struck so violently that the N.C.O. was lifted clean off the ground before he fell. In a moment there was pandemonium.

Mr. Dyan hurried us from that part of the ship.

CHAPTER XIV

Tom Clarke, one of the leaders of the Rising who was executed, had previously endured fifteen years of English convict life. He once said to the writer: "If they ever put you in, do everything they tell you to do. If not, they will kill you or drive you insane."

The Isle of Wight was flooded with late evening mellow sunshine. We drove through a countryside of green hedges, pleasant and peaceful, snug and prosperous. There was no sign of war, nor of any trouble at all until we came to the gates of Parkhurst Prison. We marched through an exercise ground of vast extent, black and white, black asphalt, white washed walls.

The doctor was a Dublin man who thought the tuning fork was a great joke but that our prison conduct was a ghastly mistake. As he plied his stethoscope, he said to me:

"You'd better take it easy here. It's not a bad place. If you go against the rules, they'll break you up."

Outside in the hall while I waited for the doctor to finish with the others, I sat beside a grizzled, elderly lag. He talked through the side of ugly, thick lips. He learned I was one of the "Sin Fin" and asked why we had broken up

Lewes jail.

"We didn't like it," I said.

"You'd better like this place," he said, "it's easy here, but they'll kill you if you kick up. Chum of mine got rough and after six weeks of it they took him off to Broadmoor - (jail for insane criminals). This is the easiest place of them all. I know. I was in Portland and Dartmoor."

"What's your sentence?" I asked.

"Life." There was a swagger in his voice. "It was over my girl. I didn't mean to do her in."

I learned later that it was a very brutal killing. He would have been hanged but that there was a doubt about provocation. He said they were thinking of letting him out to join the army. He knew the so and so army he was going to join.

"But I imagine you're over age," I said.

"What do you think I am?"

"Well, say sixty."

"I'm not forty," he said. "I was twenty-four when I came in."

As compared with Lewes, the cells in this jail were poor, grimy and ill-lighted. We were again in a wing long disused. By climbing on my stool to the window, I found my eyes on a

level with the ground where twenty or more prisoners were marching around in a ring. There were some strange specimens amongst them. One, who bore ankle irons, carried the spare of the chain on his arm. Another, a very tall personage who thought he looked distinguished, wore a monocle. Yet another was skilfully juggling a number of stones which he had picked up. He had as many as six in the air at one time. The warders were bored. They paid little or no attention to the lags. My door opened and I climbed down off my stool. The visitor was an aged, weather-beaten chaplain. He told me he was Father Conway.

"You're an Orangeman, aren't you?" he said. I replied that I was not. He was surprised not by the reply, but by the mildness of it. He thought I should have hit the ceiling at the suggestion. He told me his father had been born in Ireland but he had never been there himself. The Irish, he said, were a great people in their loyalty to the faith and in the honour in which they held the clergy. He had heard we had had trouble in Lewes but, no doubt, that was because we were treated badly. We need have no fear in Parkhurst because we would find things fairly easy. I thanked him and he left.

A warder opened the door and beckoned to me with a jerk of his head.

"Hair cut," he said.

"Who's cutting it?" I asked.

"Wot?" His eye-brows went up in surprise.

"I said who's cutting my hair?"

"Why," he said, "we've a special barber all the way from London, come specially for you."

"What I mean," I said, "is that I will allow only one of my own comrades to cut my hair and we must have a machine of our own not used by the convicts."

"Well, I like that," he said, "come along."

"Sorry, I can't," I said.

"You know it means a report."

"Sure," I replied.

He closed the door. I had not told him that one of our fellows had contracted a loathsome disease in Dartmoor from one of these clipping machines.

That was Saturday. On Sunday morning we went to Mass. There were only twelve of us, I found, in the prison. Someone whispered that the others were scattered in various prisons throughout the country. All twelve of us were seated together in the front pews. When we marched out of the church, we emerged on the vast exercise ground. There were about fifteen hundred prisoners lined up on parade and, for

the first time, we had a view of the funny sailor-like uniforms worn by the preventive detention prisoners.

George Plunkett, who was behind me, whispered:

"We're not exercising with them."

"I know," I said, and asked if he would give us the order to fall out.

"No," he said, "you're first in the line. You give it."

We were marched across the square and into line with a section of the convicts. It was a beautiful, sunny morning and the Governor, wearing a new, gaily ribboned straw hat, was standing out in front. As we came to a halt, I said to the warder in charge of us:

"I want to speak to the Governor."

The warder said: "No, no. You can't do that. You put your name down."

I shouted at the Governor: "Mr. Governor," I said, "I want to speak to you."

As if moved by a machine, the heads of all the convicts turned in our direction. The Governor frowned and glared at me.

"All right, officer," he said, "carry on."

"Extend on the left," said the officer, "unbutton."

I stepped forward and turned to face our men. They were standing stockstill and they seemed to be far more at their ease than I felt.

"Irish Volunteers!" I cried, "two paces to the rear! March!"

They fell back and I regained my place. The Governor was waving his arms.

"Officers!" he cried, "surround those men!"

The other convicts were moving restlessly and chattering. The warders came running with batons swinging.

"All right," I cried to the Governor, "I'll march them off."

"To the separate cells," cried the Governor.

I gave the boys the order to march and, led by a warder, we passed the long lines of astonished lags. Some looked frightened, some delighted, and all terribly excited.

My separate cell was almost completely dark. The only light came from a square of thick pavement glass, high up in the rear wall. There was no furniture and nothing moveable. A raised portion of the floor was the bed and a circular block of wood sunk in the floor served both as stool and table. After about an hour's solitude, I rang the bell. A warder peered in through the spyhole.

"What about something to read," I asked.

"Nothing doing," he said, "you can ask the Governor when you're brought before him."

"When will that be?"

"Can't say. Tomorrow maybe."

I spent a gloomy Sunday.

In the afternoon a warder came and told me to undress. He took away my clothes giving me instead two sheets and a blanket. When I asked him for an explanation, he merely said it was half-past four.

"Time to go to bed?" I said.

"Just that."

He was a large plain-faced, unimaginative, taciturn man. He double-locked the door when he left. No matter how I manipulated the bedclothes, the boards were still hard and they got harder as the night went on. At six in the morning, a different warder opened up and handed me my clothes, taking away the sheets and blanket. Then he gave me a small basin, made of papier mache, and poured a pint of water into it. He handed me a slice of soap and a dry towel. He was facetious.

"Hope you enjoy your bath," he said, adding that I had better hurry up, as he would be back for the basin, etc., in a few minutes. Answering my question about the basin, he

said it was made of papier mache so that I couldn't break it and cut my throat.

Shortly after breakfast, the usual cocoa and bread, - the last I was to enjoy for some time - the Governor came in. I knew it was unusually early for such a visit.

"I'm sorry you made that demonstration yesterday," he said. "May be if I had had a word with you beforehand, it might have been avoided. Do you realise it is a serious offence?"

"I expect so."

"You could be charged with mutiny," he said, "and that would mean the lash, but I'm not going to have that done. In fact, if you agree to abide by the rules and get your men to do likewise, it may be possible to overlook the whole thing."

"I'm sorry," I said, "but I can't do that. We refuse to be classed as criminals any longer."

"I have nothing to do with that. I have to carry out my duty."

"And so have I."

He said he was anxious to avoid punishing us and warned me that we did not realise what we were in for if we continued to disobey the rules. They had but to carry on the ordinary

machinery of the prison and, in six weeks time, we would be dead or insane.

"Now, where did I hear that before?" I asked myself, and I added aloud, "Why, the old lag said the same thing."

"What old lag?" he asked.

"Never mind."

"Have you thought of your wife and children?"

Una had given birth to a second girl, Maeve, when I was in Lewes. But how the mischief did the Governor know anything of my wife and children? I did not then know that alarming reports of the outbreak in Lewes Jail had appeared in all the Irish papers, or that the relatives of the prisoners had been instructed to send telegrams to the various prisons. To the Governor's query I replied:

"I'm sure they would disapprove if I adopted any other course."

The Governor, looking very worried, went away. A few minutes later, my warder appeared and put down my boots at the door.

"Exercise," he said.

"Are we to exercise with the convicts?"

"Why not?"

"Sorry," I said, "I can't do that."

Two hours later, I was brought before the Governor and charged with refusing to obey orders. He said in a mechanical voice:

"Three days confinement, No. 1 diet. Two hundred and forty marks remission. Three months class."

On the way back to my cell, I asked the warder to explain the sentence.

"No 1 diet," he said, "means bread and water."

"And the remission marks?"

"You lose remission marks. You'll stay in a month longer."

"And the class?"

He indicated the red star on my cap. "You lose that too. For the next three months you will not be a first class prisoner."

I tried to enjoy my first meal of bread and water, and I'm afraid I failed. The old priest, Father Conway, came in. He thought our demonstration on the exercise ground was funny, but now that we had made our position clear, we should conform to the rules. Seeing he was making no impression, he asked me who "this fellow de Valera" was. I told him and asked if he knew where de Valera was.

"I don't know," he said, "and I don't care. "Imagine,"

he continued, "a man with a fine Irish name like Brennan being led by a fellow called de Valera."

I asked him what he had against Dev and he said he was an atheist and an enemy of religion. He had prevented us from going to Mass in Lewes jail. I tried to give him the facts but he would not listen to me and he lost his temper. In return, I had the ill grace to quote the Commandment about bearing false witness against one's neighbour. As he continued his tirade against Dev, I said:

"Our fellows are in a tough spot here. You could do a good deal to help us, but if you keep on like this, you can only make our condition worse, and it would be better if you would stay away."

The poor old man left.

Later, the chief Warder came in. He was in a very sarcastic mood. He said:

"Am I right in thinking you are the fellows who want to break up the British Empire?"

"Sure," I replied.

"Think you can do it?"

"Certain."

"You refused to have your hair cut?"

"Yes."

"Still refuse?"

"Yes."

"You won't change your mind?"

"No."

"All right. I'll have your hair cut for you."

So he sent in four hefty warders and I was foolish enough to resist them. We had a rough and tumble on the floor and the warders got their uniforms all dusty and rumpled and, of course, that made them mad. They finally got my head on the block and held it there while one of their number got the machine into my hair. Then instead of cutting it, he prised the hair out. In fact, he nearly scalped me. Then they went into Colm O'Geary's cell next door and I knew, by the sounds, that the process was being repeated. I was pretty well exhausted by the struggle and I lay down on the floor but I sat up when I heard the door opening. It was the Chief Warder.

"Well, we cut your hair," he said.

"You did," I replied and, reflecting that the war was going badly for them, I added: "Wouldn't you like to cut Hindenburg's hair?"

His language was awful. I waved to the warder standing at the door.

"That will be all for today," I said. "Take him away and look him up some place far from the society of decent men."

The Chief Warder went out. I heard his footsteps echoing down the hall. The warder opened the door and put in his hand and grasped mine.

"Blimy, sonny," he said, "I'd give ten years of my life to say as much to that swine."

We were only ten or twelve days in Parkhurst but they were easily the worst days I had had. One morning, when I had got my third sentence - we were taken to the Governor every couple of days - the doctor came in and spent a long time examining my heart.

"Part of the plan to break down resistance," I said to myself. He said I was making a mistake in refusing to take exercise. I needed fresh air and exercise. I told him we had refused only because we would have had to associate with the convicts. That afternoon the warder brought my shoes.

"Exercise," he said.

"Not with the convicts."

"No," he said, "come along."

He brought me outside into a small exercise ground. The air was like wine. Two of our lads, Brady, a man of sixty,

and Norton from North County Dublin, were already there. Brady came over to me and we walked around chatting. Norton joined us.

"None of that," said the warder.

We ignored him. He came over to us and said if we didn't obey the rules against talking, we would have to go in.

"All right," said JimBrady, "we'll go in. We might as well be in jail as where we are." So in we went.

From an old ventilator in the wall of the cell I fished out a large number of buttons which some misfortunate prisoner had concealed for some extraordinary reason. I drew a checker board on the floor with the piece of soap they gave me in the morning. By beating the soaped design with my jacket, I got some semblance of black squares and white. So, with the buttons I played games of draughts against myself but this form of amusement grows monotonous because you know every move the other fellow is likely to make. I tried making up Limericks, but this was tantalising, because having completed three or four, I could not recollect the first and best ones. Then, though I fought hard against the thought, my mind reverted to the big intellectual men of the Fenian period who had been driven mad in prison. Was I really mad already? I got on my knees and I realised it was

the first time in my life I had really prayed. Two hours later, I lay flat on the floor, bathed in perspiration, but happy. There had come into the cell a real Presence who brought peace.

Shortly afterwards, a young priest came in. He was a Cork man, named Aherne. We had quite a chat and he asked me to be patient with Father Conway because he was an old man and he did not understand us. He said two of our lads had been brought to hospital but all the others were in good form.

That night I woke up suddenly and the black mood was on me. I was going mad, I thought. I jumped up and paced up and down the cell. I felt the walls were too close to me and tried to push them back. I fell on my knees and tried to pray but my thoughts raced round and round. After some time I found I was sitting on the plank, talking aloud to myself.

"Get hold of yourself. Quick, quick! Hurry up! Get hold of yourself!"

"I wish to God I could. I can't!"

"Of course you can. Get hold of something which will take your mind away fromthis."

"Impossible. The machine which would enable me to do so is out of gear."

"It is not. You could not talk like this if it was."

"Is that true? Is that true?"

"Of course it is. Now transport yourself to another scene. Make up a story."

"About what?"

"About anything."

"No, not about anything."

"Well, something real then. What about that series of sketches about your childhood?"

"Yes, yes. But I can't write them down."

"No need. They will stay with you. Anything you compose now will stay with you. Go ahead. Go back to John's Gate Street in Wexford and the Chapel Yard thirty golden years ago."

"All right, here goes."

(The reader who wishes to get on with the prison story should turn to page 397)

CHAPTER XV

In 1917 Lloyd George set up a Convention to "find a solution to the Irish Question." This was really a ruse to deceive American opinion, as Lord Birkenhead later admitted. To give the scheme an appearance of reality the remaining Irish prisoners in convict prisons were released.

One day I was conducted to the Governor's office, without knowing why. I had received a sentence on the previous day and, generally, two or three days elapsed between sentences. The warder did not know why. As we walked through a long hall, a door at the other end opened and five prisoners filed in, followed by a warder. As they approached, the warder halted them and made them face the wall, this being the usual practice when two parties of prisoners met. One of the five prisoners, a very tall, dark man, whom I took to be a Hindu, turned his head as we approached. He waved his arms in the air and cried out, apparently as an encouragement to me:

"Hi! Hi! Sin Finn."

His warder raised his baton and struck him on the back of the neck and the man howled in pain. My warder hurried me on. In the hall outside the Governor's office there were two of our fellows. Jack Plunkett and Jack o'Brien, in

opposite corners facing the wall, each with a warder in charge. O'Brien, who had been in the British Army, happened to be in Dublin on leave when the Rising broke out, and he promptly joined up with the Volunteers.

"Hello, Bob," called Jack Plunkett.

"Hello, Jack," I replied.

O'Brien turned round. He looked sick.

"When are we going to break up this joint?" he asked.

"Take it easy, Jack," I said, "I'll tell you when."

I was pushed into the Governor's office and halted inside the door. The Governor's desk was behind a screen. Outside, I could hear Jack Plunkett whistling the 'Soldier's Song'. Jack O'Brien started to sing it. I heard the warder cry:

"Stop that! Turn your face to the wall."

"I'll turn my face where I like," said O'Brien.

The Governor came from behind the screen, his face red with anger.

"Stop that damn row," he shouted. Seeing me, he beckoned me over and resumed his seat.

"I sent for you," he said, "I want you to stop all this nonsense. No, wait," he went on, as I was about to speak, "I want you to realise the Government has good intentions so far as you fellows are concerned. I am not in a position to

tell you what they are, but I do know you will not have to serve your five years."

He waited.

"I could have told you that long ago," I said.

"But you don't know they have ordered civilian clothes for you. That's a good sign, isn't it?"

I said nothing though, of course, I felt considerably relieved.

"So now," said the Governor, "I want you to behave yourself for the rest of the time you are here and get the others to do the same. Have I your word for that?"

"I'm sorry," I said, "but we'll carry on just as usual."

"You know what it means?"

"I'm learning."

"All right," he said, "you can go."

The argument between the two Jacks and their warders was still going on.

"Good men," I said, "keep it up."

Before I reached my cell, my escort said:

"Blimey, but you're a rum lot."

"You think so."

"You're upsetting the whole blooming place."

"No."

"Swelp me. The separate cells are full up."

This was good. If the fifteen hundred prisoners were feeling our influence and getting out of hand, they couldn't keep us long. I was in a mood to cheer and I enjoyed my bread and water dinner and sang all the afternoon. Next day, I was up before the Governor again, this time on the usual charges of refusing to obey orders, etc. The charges were duly heard. The Governor again talked to me seriously.

"I think you should know," he said, "that you won't be long here."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"Yes, that's right. I don't suppose it will be more than a couple of months or so."

"Good."

"So I hope now you'll see reason. Naturally, you will want to be in good shape when you are getting out, and I'm asking you to forget everything that has happened and make a fresh start. I'll wipe out all the penalties if you give me your word you will obey the prison rules for the rest of the time."

I was sorry I couldn't, I said.

"Not even if I say you are going out in a month or so!"

"No."

"All right," he said, "three days No.1, 240 marks remission."

Back in my cell, I was just sitting down to my bread and water, when I heard the cell doors being opened. The young Cork priest opened mine.

"Great news," he said, "you are going out. I'm so glad. Please don't make any demonstration."

"Why, of course not," I said.

"I'm thinking of the convicts," he said. "They're in a bad mood and a demonstration might start a riot."

I stepped into the hall. Our fellows were lining up. The Governor came down the stairs at the head of the wing and, without any preliminaries, said:

"I have to tell you that Mr. Bonar Law announced in the House of Commons last night that you are to be released immediately. You leave at once for Pentonville Prison in London, where you will be fitted with civilian clothes. Goodbye."

He turned his back and walked off. The lads stood completely motionless, without a sign of jubilation or even excitement. The chief warder stood in front of us, literally gnashing his teeth.

"Back to your cells," he said, "you leave here in ten minutes."

Maurice Brennan who was beside me said: "Well I tell him what we thought of him?"
"No not worth while" I said

Back in my cell, I reflected how simple life could be if

Maurice Brennan who was beside me said: "Well I tell him what we thought of him?" "No not worth while" I said

we were satisfied with only the things we need. We had nothing to pack. In our pockets were all we were allowed to carry, a rosary beads and a pocket handkerchief. I rang my bell and the warder appeared.

"Could I have a prayer-book?" I asked.

"A prayer-book?"

"I want to take one out as a souvenir."

"Sorry," he said, "I can't let you have one. You ask the R.C. feller." He meant the Roman Catholic chaplain.

"But I won't see him. There's no time."

"All right," he said, "I'll see."

He went off and brought me a prayer-book. I thanked him warmly. I knew he was making himself a party to the ~~hideous~~ heinous crime of purloining prison property.

"It's all right, sonny," he said, "I'm glad you're going out, but I'll miss you. I won't ever forget how you took that swine down" - a reference to my encounter with the Chief Warder.

So we marched out into the wonderful sunshine of the Isle of Wight and to a railway station. In the train somebody produced cigarettes and I smoked one, but there was no taste to it. I wondered why I had suffered so much from being deprived of tobacco fifteen months before. We all laughed

and sang songs, somewhat hysterically, all the way to London. Here, a surprise awaited us. Night had fallen. We were put into buses with glass sides and, as soon as we emerged into the street, we became aware of a hostile crowd who pelted our buses with stones. This occurred at various points along the route to Pentonville prison. There were curses and cries of "Down with the pro-Germans". x One of the warders whispered to me that the crowd was infuriated because there had been a Zeppelin raid on London the night before, but he did not explain how the crowd knew of our arrival in London and of the route we were to take. The demonstrators were thick outside the gates of Pentonville.

This prison is a filthy place, at least the wing in which we were located is. Many of the fellows spent the night packing the floors stark naked, because the place was crawling with vermin. Next morning, at Mass, we saw all our old comrades and heard an Irish priest deliver a fine sermon on the purpose of life. Soon afterwards, we all met in an exercise ground, where there was no restraint of any kind. We were being fitted out with civilian clothes, amidst a lot of noise and laughter. As each piece was fitted, we handed over the corresponding convict garment, but I managed to smuggle out my convict cap, as did some of

the others. J.J. Walsh surprised us by bringing out his whole convict garb under his new suit. A few of us managed to make our way to the spot where Casement was buried and we knelt to say a prayer.

Our reception in Dublin was so overwhelming that some of the lads collapsed. It was during the excitement of that first day home that I first saw Mick Collins. I had heard of him before. Tom Ashe had, in Lewes jail, shown me a letter from him, dealing with future policy. It had seemed to me amateurish and pretentious, and I said so. Later, Joe McGuinness told me several times I should know Collins who, he said, was a tremendous fellow. When I first saw Mick, we had just had a group photograph taken on the Mansion House lawn. I heard my name mentioned and, turning, I saw Seumas Doyle talking to a quick-moving, energetic, vigorous, hefty young man with a heavy jowl and a face which was too pale. His quick eyes darting here and there, he brushed back a look of hair from his forehead, and asked:

"Where is he?"

Seumas indicated me. The man came over to me and said:

"You are looking after the Wexford fellows?"

"If Seumas says so, yes," I said.

He had a roll of notes in one hand and silver in the

other. He said that the fares to Enniscorthy amounted to so much, and I found out later the sum was correct to a penny. He added that he was giving me five shillings, in addition, for each man, to cover incidental expenses. As he handed me the money, he looked into my eyes as if appraising me. With a quick smile, he shook my hand and turned to someone else. I noticed the tremendous strength of his shoulders.

"Who is he?" I asked of Seumas.

"Michael Collins," he said.

"I don't like him," I said.

"Neither do I," replied Seumas.

This initial dislike of Collins, I never quite got over. I tried to do so later, because I had a lively appreciation of the great work he was doing and of the risks he ran. His energy was terrific and his self-confidence unbounded. Though he was dynamic, he was never flurried. He built up from nothing at all an almost perfect intelligence department. His secret agents were to be found later in almost every British institution up to the highest level. Against odds which would have disheartened most men, he carried on the heavy work of the Finance and Communications departments. His memory for detail was faultless and his office system, harried though it was by having to remain underground and subject to constant

raids, was well nigh perfect.

Any one of his departments - Intelligence, Finance, Army Organisation or Communications - would have taxed the ability and time of a very able administrator, but Collins managed them all without apparent effort. Not merely that, but because he was impatient of delays, he encroached on the domain of nearly every other government department and thus spurred his colleagues to greater effort. I knew all this and yet I could not bring myself to like him. Perhaps it was because he was ruthless with friend and foe; because he could brook no criticism or opposition; or because he was vain and loved power.

Some of his admirers gave Collins all the credit for such success as we had. I think this is a pity. It is true that without him Sinn Fein could not have achieved the success it did ~~at~~ in the time it did, but this is not less true of Eamon de Valera ~~and~~ or Arthur Griffith. For instance, Collins could never have brought about the unity of the Republicans in 1917, or that of all classes in the nation in 1918, as de Valera did; nor could he have voiced the nation's will so brilliantly and so persuasively as did Arthur Griffith.

Collins had really little political savoir faire, and this was clearly shown when, after 1916, he almost wrecked his own cause by trying to capture a young and fast-growing

national movement by secret devices. He had great faith in the secret conclaves of the few, as if he despised the intelligence of the many.

A few weeks after our release, I went to Dublin and stayed a few days with the Bolands. I found the brothers sharply divided on the question of Mick. Jerry said he was a braggart and a bully.

"He's nothing of the kind," said Harry.

"You haven't seen as much of him as I have," said Jerry, who had been interned with Collins. "In the camp, if he didn't win all the jumps, he'd break up the match."

Jerry got up and, imitating Mick, strode about the room boastfully, heaving his shoulders and tossing his head.

"Never mind," said Harry, "he's young. He'll get over that. He's a great fellow."

This attitude of Harry's puzzled many of his friends. Intellectually, he was far in front of Mick and in political acumen, he was also far ahead. I judged that Harry, who had never aspired to be a leader, but who did like to be a good lieutenant, was at this stage courting Mick so as to form a link between the I.R.B. and Dev, to whom he was already devoted. But, that Harry became tremendously attached to Mick later on, there is, of course, no doubt.

Dev, at this time, was forming a platform wide enough to hold us all together and he had early decided to bring MacNeill back into the ranks, to the dismay of all those who thought the Professor should be ostracised for the part he played in Easter Week. "Don't forget," said Dev, "that the clergy are with MacNeill and they are a powerful force." Similarly, Dev was working night and day to get Brugha and Griffith in step. They had been at daggers drawn before Dev came out of prison, so much so that Brugha had threatened that if Griffith stumped the country for Sinn Fein, he would get the Volunteers to stop him. This, during a violent scene at the improvised national executive headquarters. Because of Dev's attitude towards the moderates, some of Collins' adherents were already sneering about the "constitutionalists". Of course, little of this appeared in public. To them there was presented a united front. At the Clare elections all sections were on the Sinn Fein platform. There were hectic discussions as to what policy to present at this election. Dev settled the matter by coming out openly for the Irish Republic without qualification. He said to me, "Some of the young fellows have told me it is a time to be cautious, to go slow. The old men, on the other hand, said 'make no mistake. Nail your colours to the mast'. I

listened to the old men. No one need ever tell me to go slow. What I want is someone to tell me to go forward."

I told him that Griffith's motto was 'moderation in everything'. He said:

"That's funny. It's my motto, too."

During the summer, the Oireachtas was held in Waterford and we all foregathered there. Dev outlined a plan to save the language by working outward from the Gaeltacht through the Breac-Gaeltacht to the English-speaking districts. The plan was on military lines. Diarmuid Lynch, who had come down from Dublin, had a message for me. The Supreme Council of the I.R.B. had decided that they were going to control the Volunteers. So that there would be no mistakes in future, we were to see that our secret men would control all possible units. I told him I was against the plan because it would bring about that dual control which had been disastrous in Easter Week. We all had learned that de Valera and Cathal Brugha had decided (separately) not to continue membership of the I.R.B., and thought it should be disbanded, but Collins was keeping it on.

The Sinn Fein Ard Fheis promised to be the battle ground between the moderates and the extremists and we all knew the test would be decided by whether de Valera or Griffith won

the presidency. Before I went to Dublin for the Ard Fheis, I got an order from the I.R.B., to see Collins before the Convention. In one of the houses on the west side of Parnell Square, I found a regular queue of men from all parts of the country. Mick, sitting at a table, handed me a typed list. It was the ticket the Wexfordmen were to vote for the National Executive. One of the Louth men who filed out of the room with me, began to laugh and when I asked him why, produced another list which he had got from Darrell Figgis. Griffith headed the latter list; Dev headed the list Collins had given us. At the Ard Fheis itself, Harry Hanrahan exposed the whole procedure of the rival caucuses, amidst almost general applause. It was apparent that most of the delegates had decided to ignore both tickets and to vote for the people they knew. The big test, as between Dev and Griffith, did not come, however, because, to the surprise of practically everybody, when the question of the election of President was reached, Griffith rose and proposed Dev, whom he described not merely as a great soldier but a great statesman. We then discovered that Dev had found a formula to satisfy Brugha (who wanted a clear-cut declaration for the Republic) and Griffith (who had been insisting on the old Sinn Fein programme.) Dev's formula

declared the object of the organisation was the achievement of the Independence of Ireland as an Irish Republic and added that when that had been achieved, the people would decide on the form of government they wished to have. In his speech, Dev said that if they decided to have a king, he would not come from the House of Windsor. The election of the Committee was a defeat for Collins, as most of the men on his list were beaten. ~~He was not returned himself~~ He was almost defeated himself!

The Volunteer Convention, which was held later in the year, gave the I.R.B., another opportunity for a trial of strength and this time they were more successful. They captured nearly all the Council seats. The main item on the agenda was the election of a Volunteer executive. I put forward the contention that the whole procedure was wrong. What we should do was to elect one man who would select his own headquarters staff and control the policy of the Volunteers. I proposed Dev for the position. Thus, there would be no danger of dual control or confusion. Dev got up and asked me if what I intended was that this man should have the decision of peace or war. I said 'yes'. Dev said he would not take a post of such responsibility for all the wealth of Ireland and thus defeated my attempt to set up the first dictatorship in Western Europe.

CHAPTER XVI

In the face of the determined opposition of Dublin Castle, Sinn Fein in 1917 and 1918 built up a political organisation such as has never been equalled, as well as a Volunteer force which lacked only arms to make it an effective National Army. Despite warnings from America the British Government decided to apply the Conscription Act to Ireland.

The extraordinary change over in public opinion was obvious to all of us as soon as we returned from England. We had left an Ireland beaten, baffled and sullen. We came back to a land proud, gay and resurgent. It was a beautiful summer and the countryside seemed to have especially clothed itself in the national colours, orange, white and green. The police were kept busy hauling down the national flag from impossible positions on telephone poles and buildings. I had gone back to my old job as a reporter and it was a particular delight to report the rescinding of the resolutions which had been passed by the various public bodies the previous year, condemning the Rising. During the whole summer we laboured hard on the national plebiscite demanding that Ireland's case should be heard at the Peace Conference.

I was soon to discover that my fears regarding the

interference of the I.R.B. in the Volunteer movement were justified. I had refused to take command of the Wexford Brigade, because I thought the job was too much for me, but I took over the Wexford Battalion. Pending the usual elections, I appointed temporary officers, ~~amongst them being Sean Sinnott as Vice-Commandant.~~ one of the lieutenants refused to carry out the orders of his superior officer because the latter had not been with us ~~There was a section against him because he had not gone out in the Rising, but my thought was that we should all get together for a resumption of the fight.~~ in Enniscorthy in the Rising. ~~One of the company commanders who had been in Enniscorthy with us, point blank refused to carry out Sinnott's orders and~~ He told me he was taking his orders from individuals in Enniscorthy. I suspended him but he was subsequently reinstated by an officer from Headquarters while I was in Cork jail. Similar events were happening in other commands and those who wished for a single control for the army were becoming very downhearted.

One day I woke up in a cell in Cork jail and my first words were:

"'Clare to God, here I am again!"

I had been arrested the previous day on a charge of parading men in military formation and dressing in uniform. Count Plunkett had visited Wexford and I had paraded the Wexford Battalion in his honour. Sean Sinnott and Pierce Byrne were also in custody. On the way to Cork prison, we

taught our police escort some rebel songs. It was dark when we got to the prison and, as I was being escorted to my cell, I was surprised to hear a reel "The Soldier's Joy' being played on a mouth-organ. Down at the end of a long hall, I saw figures dancing in a dim light.

"What's that?" I asked.

"They're having a dance," said the warder as he opened my cell door.

"Who are they?"

"The prisoners - your chums." n Seeing my astonishment, he added: "Oh, they have a good time here."

"Can't I join them?"

"Not till tomorrow."

He went off, but almost immediately the door was opened again and another warder came in.

"Are you from Wexford?"

"Yes."

"Will they win on Sunday?"

I guessed immediately he was talking about the Wexford football team which had held the all Ireland championship for three years and which was playing Dublin for the Leinster championship on the following Sunday.

"No, they won't," I said.

"Why not?"

"They're not training."

"God blast them," he said, "sure they could bate Dublin with one hand."

His name was Kavanagh and he hailed from Gorey. I found next day he was distrusted by the prisoners but I told them I would depend on him for anything we wanted done. As it transpired, I was right.

Next day, we were introduced to the other prisoners. There were about sixty of them, mainly from Cork and Kerry. They had a limited form of home rule in the prison. There was no work and from early morning till dark there were football and handball matches in the narrow exercise ground, as well as Gaelic classes. At night, there were dancing, story-telling and singing. Most of the excellent food was sent in by the prisoners' friends. All the men were awaiting trial and, as soon as the trial was over, they were transferred to some other prison. Two days subsequent to our arrival, the officer in charge elected by the men was brought down for preliminary trial and, as it was expected he would be removed at once, there was a new election and I was placed in charge. My lieutenants were three men who were subsequently to meet tragic deaths at the hands of the British: Terence MacSwiney

who died in Brixton Jail after a hunger-strike which lasted for seventy-three days; Tomas McCurtain, the Lord Mayor of Cork, who was murdered in his own house by the Black and Tans; and George Clancy, ~~Lord~~ Mayor of Limerick, who met a like fate. These dread events could not be foreseen, however, and we had a pleasant time enough in Cork Jail until news came in that Austin Stack was leading a hunger strike in Dundalk Jail with a view to securing political treatment. Immediately, his fellow Kerrymen amongst us began clamouring for a sympathetic hunger strike on our part. Before that happened, however, a number of us hadbeen brought down for a preliminary hearing of the charges against us. A young military officer presided and took down the evidence. He had a very nasty temper which he could not control and we did not help him. One of the prisoners rolled the charge sheet he held into a cylinder and, pretending it was a bugle, he put it to his lips and began to hum the "Soldier's Song". We all followed suit and we gave a fair imitation of a bad brass band. The officer yelled at us to stop but we merely changed the tune to "Kelly of Killann". The little man began to take it out on the police witnesses. One of them was testifying that he had heard me giving military orders to the battalion and had seen me dressed in a uniform and

wearing my overcoat in review order.

"What do you mean by review order?" asked the officer.

"Oh, just review order."

"Oh, just review order! Well what is just review order?"

Apparently this was a police term not known to the military.

"Well, review order."

The officer laid down his pen and glared at the policeman.

"How did you get into the police force?"

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"Where are your brains? I'm trying to write this evidence down and you are talking jargon. Will you explain what is meant by review order?"

"Well, just -" The policeman stopped in time and swallowed hard. The officer looked as if he was going to explode.

"It was this way, sir. His overcoat was rolled up and placed over one shoulder."

"Oh, is that all?"

"No, sir. It was under the other."

"Under the other what?"

"Under the other oxter."

"My God! Is there any superior officer here?"

"No, sir. I'm in charge of the Wexford witnesses."

"God help us! What am I to write down?"

"That's for you to say, sir."

Of course, all this contributed greatly to our merriment. We re-enacted the scene for the crowd that night.

The strike situation was becoming serious. In vain the leaders pointed out that we had no grievance. We had no excuse for a strike. The Kerrymen, however, demanded a poll on the question and we were forced to concede it. Sixty per cent voted for the strike. I ordered that it should be a real strike and that all food should be removed from the cells, this because there were rumours that a previous hunger strike in Cork jail had been a fake. From one cell thirty-six pounds of butter were cleared out. There were ordinary prisoners in an adjoining wing of the prison and they got the food. One of them ate so much during the transfer of the food that I thought he would die. He was so stuffed that he was hardly able to breathe and he could not speak at all.

All the leaders had been against the strike but, of course, they accepted the decision loyally. Terry MacSwiney, finding some of the younger men indulging in their usual wild

football games, advised them to desist and conserve their strength. "This may be a fight to the death," he said, "and we must stick it as long as possible." He was a very serious, quiet man but he had a keen, if slightly sardonic sense of humour. He had no ear for off-colour stories. One night one of the Limerick men, McInerney, staged an impromptu court scene involving a breach of promise action. It was extremely funny, if somewhat coarse. I noticed that Terry stole away in the middle of it. I found him in his cell painstakingly writing in the dim light in one of his many neat notebooks. It was an unfinished poem and he read it for me.

"You're not enthusiastic," he said, when I did not comment.

"I'm not a great judge of poetry."

"That means it's very bad," he said with a wry grin, "just as I thought," and he tore it up.

One day when the strike had been going on for three or four days, I found him in his cell with his bare feet on the cold hot-water pipes.

"What on earth are you doing?" I asked.

"Hush," he said, "the doctor is coming round. I want him to find my feet cold. It's a sign of heart disease."

He laughed heartily. In an adjoining cell, MacCurtain

was in bed, reading a story by Maurice le Blanc. He was a very cheerful man, full of quiet fun. When I asked him how he was feeling, he pretended I was the doctor.

"Oh," he said, "I'm terrible bad, doctor. The aches and pains I do be having would kill a mountainy pony. And there's a fluttering around my heart that wakes me up in the middle of the night." He suddenly grew serious and asked if I had been in to see George (Clancy).

"I'm going in there now."

"I'll go with you," he said.

Clancy had not been in good health when he came in, notwithstanding which he taught language classes all day. He was one of the best Irish teachers I had ever met and, in his enthusiasm, he worked terribly hard. He had had one bad fainting fit and he could not sleep. We found him in pretty low spirits, idling over a newspaper. MacCurtain did not ask him about his health but, instead, said he wanted to take down a story George had told a few nights previously. George immediately began to tell the story in his beautiful Gaelic blas. He had heard it from a woman in Kerry. It concerned a hard-hearted woman who refused shelter to the Blessed Virgin, the Child and St. Joseph when they were travelling the roads. The woman's husband surreptitiously followed the travellers and brought them back to the shelter

of a hut.

"An fear min agus an bhean bhorb a chur Iosa Chriost in a luighe sa colg." (The gentle man and the rough woman who put Jesus Christ to lie in the straw.)

MacCurtain was busy with his pencil and pad and George went on to another story. His woes were forgotten and I could not help thinking that MacCurtain was a good physician.

The prison doctor was very nervous and so was the Governor. They feared that they might have on their hands another tragedy like that of Tom Ashe who, a few months earlier, had died in Mountjoy jail as a result of forcible feeding during a hunger strike. We played on their nerves by pretending all sorts of illnesses. When the strike was only five or six days old, we arranged that one of our fellows should collapse and be carted off to hospital, but before he could do so, another man actually did collapse. The doctor, in a panic, recommended our immediate release. We were served with notices that we should all return within a month but, of course, no one paid any attention to these.

Shortly after I got back to Wexford, Una and I returned from a walk one evening and, on opening the door, were confronted by our small maid with a poker in her hand. She explained that a policeman had called and she had driven him out. She was still explaining when there was a discreet

knock on the door. On opening it, Police Sergeant Collopy pushed his way in, closed the door and brought me to the rear of the hall. He produced from various pockets three hundred rounds of .303 ammunition.

"I was down in Cork today," he said, "and that God damn fella Kavanagh made me take this to give to you. He got it from a soldier. Now, will you tell him not to use me again. I tell you flat, I won't do it."

He was referring, of course, to the Wexford warder in Cork jail.

"Indeed you will, Sergeant," I said, "don't worry."

"But suppose I'm caught."

"No one will catch you. No one will know only you and me and Kavanagh, and he won't talk."

"What are you going to do with this stuff? You're not preparing for another rising?"

"Sure we are."

"Glory be to God!"

Shortly after the new year, I attended a Sinn Fein Ard Comhairle meeting in Dublin. During the proceedings, Dev called me to the chair and told me they were thinking of establishing a Sinn Fein Press Bureau. He asked if I knew of any newspaper man who could take charge of it. The

salary would be all they could afford, about three pounds a week. I promised to try and think of someone. Outside the Mansion House, I met Desmond Fitzgerald. I asked him if he would like the job and he said he would jump at it. So I advised him to go and see Dev. That night, when I got back to Wexford, I mentioned the matter to Una.

"Are you sure he didn't mean you?" she asked.

"Good Lord no," I said, "if he did, he would have said so."

Thinking over the matter, however, I concluded he might have meant me so, next day, I wrote him and said if he wanted me I was at his service. At the same time, I wrote to Fitzgerald telling him what I had done. A couple of weeks later, I was notified of my appointment and I packed for Dublin. On the journey north, my fellow passengers and I had an opportunity of seeing Sinn Fein in action. At Wicklow Station there was a great crowd of people cheering. The demonstration was in honour of Tom Cullen, the local Volunteer Commandant, who hadbeen arrested that morning. There was an escort of police to take him to Dublin. They boarded the train, but it did not start. The driver, fireman and guard all refused to work a train carrying prisoners. We were held up for six hours while the authorities and the railway

executives stormed, and all Wicklow town was en fete. Finally, the prisoner was taken by road and the train proceeded.

I was only an hour in No. 6 Harcourt Street and I had started working in the Secretary's office, when Dev sent for me. He said I was to work in his office because he did not want "them" to control the publicity. "Them" meant not so much Griffith as Darrel Figgis plus Griffith. Figgis was getting a strong hold on the Sinn Fein organisation through the fact that he was General Secretary. He was a right-winger and Dev did not want the publicity run by either the right or the left wing. He asked me if I had any idea as to how publicity could be secured. I said that the first thing should be a weekly column of Sinn Fein notes and news supplied to all the provincial papers, and the next a number of brief pamphlets setting out various aspects of the Sinn Fein case. He said, "all right, go ahead." I wrote my first column and handed it to him. He immediately took up his pen and began to make alterations. He took so long over it that I began to lose patience.

"Don't do that," I said, "just tell me what's wrong with it and I'll rewrite it."

"There's a lot of overstatement," he said. I prefer understatement."

I rewrote the column, leaving out many of my adjectives and superlatives but, even then, he got busy with his pen again, this time on the diction. I endured this for a long time and finally blurted out:

"Look here, Chief, I'm writing journalese not literature. We have to post this today if it's to be in time for this week's papers."

"All right," he said, smiling at my impatience, "let it go."

I was to learn that he never saw a draft submitted by anybody but he must alter it. Every day, for a couple of weeks, we had the same set-to, and then I decided to get out the stuff and not let him see it till it was in print. I was gratified by the results. I had expected that not more than half a dozen provincial papers would use the material. In the first week we had thirty papers and the number gradually increased.

One day Una, who with the children had joined me in Dublin, came into the office to see me. She sat on the table at which I was working. Dev came in suddenly. He frowned severely on seeing, what he thought, was one of the girls from the Cumann na mBan office, which was on the same floor. Una, in spite of all her troubles, still looked

about nineteen. Dev came right to the point.

"Look here," he said, "you shouldn't be coming in here."

"Why not?" she asked.

"Do you know Mr. Brennan is a married man?"

"Well," she said, "I ought to," and she explained the situation. He laughed heartily and ever afterwards, whenever he met her, he recalled the incident with glee.

Conscription was in the air. The British Government rushed a conscription act for Ireland through Parliament and the Irish Party left the House of Commons in disgust and returned to Ireland. Dev seized the occasion at once, in a typical manner. He saw Larry O'Neill, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, and had no difficulty in persuading him to call a conference in the Mansion House to which he invited leaders of the Parliamentary Party, of Sinn Fein and of Labour. It was an immediate success. As we devotees of Sinn Fein expected, de Valera dominated the proceedings, as William O'Brien, M.P., later disclosed. Everybody in the country was against conscription but there was a big difference of opinion as to how the menace might be met. A large section of the clergy, backed by the press, was calling for passive resistance. Dev drew up a pledge to be taken by the people in every Parish on the following Sunday. There was no mention of passive

resistance in this. It pledged the people to resist conscription by the most effective means. Dev pointed out that this phrase would leave the fighting men free to fight and the English would pause, knowing what to expect, whereas if the English thought they were going to meet only passive resistance, they would go ahead with their plans and the result would be a fight anyhow, since many were in no mood for passive resistance. He got his pledge through the conference unaltered and then rushed a deputation to Maynooth, where the Bishops were holding their annual meeting. By using the same logic, he dissuaded the Hierarchy from using the "passive resistance" phrase and get them to substitute : "the Irish people have the right to resist by every means that are consonant with the law of God." The conference decided that the LordMayor should go to Washington to present Ireland's case against conscription to the President and Congress of the United States. Dev set to work drawing up the case and Father Tim Corcoran, S.J., sat in with him on it. I spent a great deal of time in the National Library fishing out material to annotate the case. It was unfinished when Dev was arrested, as I showed in my preface to the pamphlet "Ireland's case against Conscription," by Eamon de Valera.

As the members of the deputation filed out of the Mansion House we put them into the waiting cars. When there was only one car left we found to our dismay that John Dillon and Tim Healy would have to share it. Well aware of the bitter feeling that existed between the two men Harry Boland approached Tim and said:

"I'm afraid you'll have to share a car with Mr Dillon. I hope you don't mind".

"Well" said Tim "as the Yank said 'I can eat crow, but I don't hanker after it'. I guess I've got to eat crow this time."

It was feared that the Bishops might counsel passive resistance to meet the menace but their statement banished these fears. It said "The Irish people have the right to resist by every means that are consonant with the law of God".

Every Sunday morning I went in to No 6 to have a look at the mail. On one such morning I found a young man standing outside the door. He had a bicycle with a sack strapped on the back of it. As it had been raining heavily he was wet through. When Joe Clarke the caretaker opened the door to us the young man entered the hall and said he had cycled 45 miles from a village in Offaly.

"We had a meeting there last night" he said "and we decided to meet the menace of conscription by passive resistance and (pointing to the sack) they sent me in for a bag of bombs."

Joe, without commenting on their novel idea of passive resistance, gravely explained that we had no supplies of bombs ready to hand and advised the young man to get in touch with the leaders of the Volunteers in Edinderry.

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The Volunteers in general were hoping that the British would go ahead with their conscription plans. They would have cheerfully faced a fight in which they would have the backing of the whole Irish people, but there was a great deal of misgiving when

The Mansion House Conference was still sitting, when rumours began to fly that the Volunteers would strike first, without giving the British time to complete their conscription plans. One day, I called on Michael Staines, then Quartermaster General, to see about getting some guns for Wexford. A chance remark of his suggested that some action was imminent.

"When is it to be?" I asked.

"Oh, possibly next week."

"That's curious," I said, "Dev doesn't know anything about it."

"How would he know?"

"Well, he's the President of the Volunteer Council, isn't he?"

"I know he is."

I retailed the conversation to Dev who, very much perturbed, sent for Cathal Brugha, the Chief of Staff. The latter damned the I.R.B., and went off to have a showdown with Collins and Staines. If any action had been intended, it was called off.

CHAPTER XVII

The Conscription Act for Ireland was passed by the British House of Commons on April 16th, 1918. The Irish closed their ranks, resolved to fight. In the upshot the Conscription Act was never enforced and the will of the Irish people for the first time in almost a century and a half prevailed.

For a few days before the event, there had been rumours that wholesale arrests were to take place. Collins, who had already set up the nucleus of his Intelligence organisation, said that the arrests would take place on the 17th or 18th of May. The matter was discussed at the Sinn Fein Executive and it was decided that the members should not go into hiding, or resist arrest, but every member appointed a substitute. On the night of the 17th, under pretence of the discovery of a German plot, the British Government made nearly a hundred arrests. They included Dev, Griffith and, indeed, nearly the whole Sinn Fein Executive, as well as many leaders of the Volunteers in Dublin and throughout the country. I thought I was on the list for arrest, but I did not know it for certain till some six months later. The following night, the substitute Executive for Sinn Fein met, and I was asked to take on the position of Director of Elections, in addition to that of Publicity. Thereafter, began the

busiest period of my life. I worked sixteen to eighteen hours a day, Sundays included, for the next six months. There was an enormous lot of work to be done in setting up the election machinery and in writing and editing vast numbers of handbills and pamphlets. I was lucky to enroll Frank Gallagher for publicity. He was and is a prodigious worker, painstaking and sincere and already he had a vast quantity of publicity material ready for the printer. He and I turned out handbills by the score and many pamphlets but we produced only samples for the constituencies. They were to be printed locally. The election machinery turned out to be so efficient that, when I entered Gloucester jail six months later, and while the election was still three weeks off, I was able to give the prisoners there an exact forecast of the results. The credit was not mine. It was in a large measure due to the splendid election scheme which was the work of James O'Mara and Dan McCarthy, and which was based on a directorate system. The Sinn Fein executive for each constituency appointed a Constituency Director of Elections, who became responsible to the General Director of Elections at Dublin Headquarters. The Constituency Director set up his staff consisting of five sub-directors in charge respectively of finance, organisation, canvassing, publicity and transport. This organisation was

was repeated in each geographical subdivision, right down to the townland or street. Once it was set up, it worked almost like clockwork. The responsibility was placed on an individual and the old vexatious committee system, with its divided responsibility and endless talk, was eliminated. Every week I received reports from one man in each constituency - based on reports from his internal organisation - covering all the activities I have mentioned, so that at any moment I had only to glance at a page in a penny copybook to see how a constituency stood. The work of setting up this organisation was carried out by four men whom I selected: Paddy Ryan, Jim Flood, Seumas Doyle and Eamon Donnelly, their areas roughly corresponding to those of the four Provinces. As we did not know when the election would be called and, as time was all important, we gave them six weeks to get the job done. On their first visit they got the constituency headquarters to elect a director, instructed him in the scheme and saw that he appointed his staff. One day only was allotted for each constituency. On his return visit, if the local Director had not made good, it was understood he would be replaced. Only in two cases was it necessary to supplant a director. The country was so enthusiastic that there was no lack of workers. In addition to preparing the way for the election

by publicity, canvassing and collecting the necessary funds, the machinery was being set up to get the voters to the poll and to see that they were protected by agents and sub-agents in the polling boothe.

Almost every day, James O'Mara came in for a few hours and his help and suggestions were invaluable. For instance, when the organisers had got the machinery set up, I thought I should make a general tour of inspection, but I feared leaving headquarters for so long.

"All right"
"That's good," said James, "we'll have the comstituencies come to you instead. Don't write. Send them wires."

So wires were sent to the various constituency directors to attend at 6 Harcourt Street on a certain day. James was responsible for the hocus pocus which followed. He would meet the Director at the door, signalise he was to be quiet and lead himto a corner desk. The man, learning he was brought to Dublin merely to make a report, was invariably indignant and then James would caution him to be quiet again and would enable himto hear what was going on at my desk, where another Director faced me. He would overhear some such conversation as this:

I: "Well, letus see now. You have all the sub-directors appointed. What about your canvass?"

Director: "We haven't started yet."

"Say, how long is it since you were appointed?"

"Three weeks."

"And you haven't even started your canvass?"

"Well, we only got the last of the district men appointed yesterday."

"Look here, do you think you've years to do this job?"

"Well, we could start the canvass tomorrow."

"You're losing too much time. Send a wire and start it today."

"All right, sir."

"When do you think it could be completed?"

"Well, say a couple of weeks."

"Too long."

"Maybe with a hell of a push we could have it in ten days."

"All right. I'm marking the date with a red line. You'll give me the figures by that date. Now let us get on. Finance: You'll want £700.

"Yes."

"How much have you got?"

"Well, we haven't -"

"Good God man! Don't say you haven't started. Why there are men who went through blood and fire to free Ireland

and ~~here's~~ you're getting a chance they never got. Look here, do you want to keep on this job? You can get out of it you know.

"Oh, for God's sake, sir, don't do that. Look, I'll get the collectors out first thing in the morning. I'll have that £700 inside two weeks or die getting it. Give me a chance."

By this time, of course, James's friend was reduced to a pulp. Invariably he appealed to James to let him go before facing me, promising he would come back in a week with a fine report, but James was adamant and the poor man had to go through the same ordeal as his predecessor at my desk.

It was wonderful how this worked and the men went back to their constituencies galvanized into activity and filled with burning ardour to get the work done.

A few weeks after the German plot arrests, O'Leary Curtis, an old friend of Griffith's, came to me with a strange story. A fisherman, walking on the strand in a remote region in Mayo, had been hailed by a man in a boat who, speaking with a foreign accent, had told him that there were a number of rifles in a cave in the vicinity. The man in the boat then rowed out to sea. The fisherman went to the cave to investigate and saw the rifles there. He hurried to a man in the nearest village whom he knew was connected with the Sinn Fein movement

and told him the news. This man, without making any investigation on his own account, had come direct to Dublin to report the matter but, owing to the arrests, he had been unable to make any contacts and he was shy of coming to Sinn Fein headquarters. In the street he had met O'Leary Curtis, whom he knew, and had told him the story, giving him a section of an ordnance map on which he had marked the location of the arms.

I hurried off to Collins with the story and the map and a few weeks later Mick told me they had got a few rifles, about twenty, as well as some ammunition, in the place indicated, but he did not know what the explanation was.

Shortly after this event, I had a mysterious visitor. She was a large, blonde lady, about thirty years old. She asked if I were Mr. Brennan and, when I said I was, she said she would like to see me alone. I nodded to ~~Nick~~ Micheal Nunan, who was in the office, to leave us and when he did so, she locked the door.

"I have to be careful," she said, "I have an important message. I come from German headquarters in ~~Belgium~~ Stockholm."

She mentioned her name and said she was the wife of a well-known supporter of Sinn Fein in Belfast. She asked if she could be put in touch with the headquarters of the Volunteers. I told her I might be able to do this but I should know more about her mission. Thereupon, she opened a little case she had and set up a very small, but powerful microscope. She extracted from beneath the buckle of her garter a tiny scrap of

film, not more than a quarter of an inch square. She put this on the plate and asked me to look into the microscope and read it. It was a typewritten sheet of paper containing fourteen questions, concerning such as, what was the strength of the Volunteers in Ireland, their armaments, their strength in England, and so on. The sixth, or seventh question was whether the Volunteers in London were in a position to destroy power plants and railway junctions in England. The document stated that for every such attempted act of sabotage, the sum of one thousand pounds would be paid, and for every such successful attempt, the sum of five thousand pounds. This struck me as being so stupid, that I jumped to the conclusion that my visitor was a British, and not a German agent. Anyone should have known that, at that time, we were willing and anxious to carry out all the sabotage we could in England and that money would not be an additional inducement. Without saying anything, however, I went through the whole list of questions, making a mental note of them. The lady then told me she had a formula for a secret ink, which she was anxious to hand over to the proper person. I told her to go back to her hotel and await a message from me.

I reported that evening to Mick and I told him of my suspicions. He said he would see the lady next day and I sent Micheal Hunan to conduct her to the house Mick had selected for the meeting. This particular house had not been raided up to this time, but a few days later it was visited

and, thereafter, it was systematically raided every other day. Of course, this tended to strengthen my suspicions, but when I next saw Mick, he told me that the lady was a bonafide agent of the Germans and that he was using the invisible ink she gave him.

During this period, though he was very much on the run, Harry came bustling into the office nearly every day, if only for a few minutes. Sometimes he was disguised as a priest and he loved the masquerade. He was always in the height of spirits and his coming in was like a breath of fresh air. He had a desk but he never sat at it for more than a minute or two. He was very much interested in seeing that the right men - the fighting men - would be selected for the various constituencies, and I knew he was working closely with Mick on this. Mick also came in now and again, but only when it was absolutely necessary. He wore no disguise and he was always taking a chance for we all knew the office was closely watched. He was an untiring worker. No matter how much he was on the run, he was in his office at eight in the morning and he opened all the mail himself. So thorough-going an intelligence officer was he himself, that he opened all letters which passed through his hands, whether they were for friend or foe. I remember that, at a later stage, Miss

Fitz, (Anna Kelly) made a bitter complaint because letters written to her by Frank Gallagher from Mountjoy Jail, which came by the underground route, had been opened by Mick. When I mentioned this to Tommy Dillon, he grinned and said:

"Well, Mick is the Director of Intelligence, isn't he?"

Whenever Mick and Harry wanted to attend a meeting of the National Executive, the meeting was not in 6 Harcourt Street, but somewhere else. One such meeting was held in a building at Croke Park, the Gaelic Athletic Association Headquarters. Mick and Harry were nearly an hour late. They had come by a roundabout route to avoid the police touts.

"Hurry up," said Mick, dominating the scene as he entered. "Go ahead with the agenda. We may have to get out quick."

We raced through the agenda, but once or twice Mick held the business up because he did not like the decisions.

"I thought you wanted the business done in a hurry," said the Chairman, Alderman Tom Kelly.

"I want the business done right," snapped Mick.

"This proposal of yours," said Tom, is going to mean a terrible lot of work for someone. Who's going to do it?"

"I'll do it," said Mick.

He was ready to take on any amount of work at any time

and he did it all efficiently.

Tom said, jokingly: "That's right, we'll leave it all to the gunmen."

The term "gunmen" was being used by everybody, themselves included, to indicate the Volunteer Chiefs, or those who believed in physical force. The speaker had meant the remark in a complimentary sense, but Mick was on his feet.

"Never mind that! I won't stand for any jeering remarks about the Volunteers. They know what they're about and they'll do the work assigned to them. They deserve something better than cheap sneers."

He pretended to be in a towering rage, but it was obvious he was only playing to the gallery.

"Keep your hair on," said Tom Kelly, "there is no one sneering at the Volunteers, or anyone else."

Mick was on his feet again, but he was interrupted by a young man who came in hurriedly and whispered something to him.

"All right," said Mick, and beckoned to Harry. He turned to the Chairman:

"I'm sorry, Tom, we have to get out."

As Mick and Harry went out, still whispering to the young man, a member of the Executive whom I knew to be panicky jumped up and said:

"Let's break up the meeting."

"Why?" asked Tom, cooly.

"The police must be coming."

"Well, let them come."

"But they'll take us all."

"Sure they will," said Tom, "next business."

The business proceeded for a while and The same member whispered to me:

"Would they think bad of me if I left?"

"Not at all," I said and I turned to the Chairman. "Mr. Blank has to go. Isn't that all right?"

"Sure it is," said Tom, go ahead."

The man got up, bowed awkwardly and left. The rest of the business occupied nearly an hour but the police did not come and there was no sign of them as we were leaving. Mr Blank came in to me next day. He was very much abashed.

"What did they say about me?" he asked.

"Not a thing."

"You despise me, don't you?"

"Good Lord, no, not at all."

"I can't help it," he said, "when I get in a panic like that, I have to run away."

"Sure you have," I said. "If the rest of us don't run away, it's because we haven't got the courage to.

He said he would be my friend for life.

Harry came in one day with a letter he had received from Austin Stack, who was in Belfast Jail. It was to the effect that if we did not have a candidate for Leix or Offaly, he would suggest that we should put forward the name of a young fellow who came from the area and who was, at that time, also in Belfast Jail. He was a lawyer named Kevin O'Higgins and he was a nephew of Tim Healy. None of us had ever heard of O'Higgins but when the Leix Director of Elections came up to see me, I sold him the idea after considerable persuasion and Mr. O'Higgins received the nomination and the seat. In view of later developments, it seemed ironic that but for Austin Stack, Kevin O'Higgins might not have been in public life.

CHAPTER XVIII

America had entered the war on the stated principle that its outcome should ensure self-determination for all nations great and small. The British had, willy nilly, pledged themselves to the same principle. The Irish now looked to the Peace Conference where they hoped to show that the demand for the Irish Republic was backed by eighty per cent of the Irish people.

A paragraph in the newspapers one day, concerning the scarcity of silver coins of certain denominations in England, put an idea into James O'Mara's head.

"Look here," he said, "we'll make England shell out silver to us. Get your men in the country to whisper there's a silver shortage coming. The people will draw silver from the banks and stow it away. The English will have to send silver over to save the banks."

So the word went out. The result amazed us. Within two weeks there was a serious silver shortage all over Ireland. The banks announced that large quantities of silver coin had been sent in from England but these, also, quickly vanished. A week later, it looked as if business was going to be paralysed because of the scarcity of silver. So we decided to call off the dogs and, in a few days, everything was normal again. I asked James why he had done this. "It's no harm to try out everything," he said, and added: "So long as you don't let it get out of control."

When late in June, I returned from the Cavan by-election, which we won easily, I was able to show O'Hara that the result approximated very closely to the returns we had had from the constituency and this meant that, if our other returns were equally accurate, we would sweep the country in the General Election.

"That's right," said James, "the election is as good as won. And," he added, "the Germans are losing the war."

"Think so?"

"Yes. The Americans are only getting into their stride."

He went out, but he came back in a few minutes and asked:

"What next would you do if you had won the election?"

"Get a couple of men over to the Continent to prepare the way for our being heard at the Peace Conference."

"How much would it cost?"

"They would have to stay an indefinite time, one in Geneva and one in Paris or the ~~Hague~~ Hague - say £1,000 each."

In the afternoon he came in and laid a loosely-tied paper parcel on my desk.

"There's eighteen hundred pounds in English banknotes in that," he said.

He pulled an old black cotton glove from his pocket. It was bulging and heavy.

"There are two hundred sovereigns in that," he said. "That makes two thousand. Get your two men out and tell no one where you got this money."

He gave me a sideleng, quizzical look, turned on his heel and went out.

I got down to the problem at once. I had to find two men who could get out and who could, without carrying any documents, present a convincing claim as to why Ireland's case should be considered by the Peace Conference. The problem of getting the two men out was a difficult one; any chance of getting passports in the usual way was out of the question. I consulted Frank Gallagher. He told me that Rory O'Connor had a blank passport which he had had forged the previous year. He brought me this, but when we examined it, we decided it would be dangerous to use it as it was not sufficiently convincing. Paddy Sheehan, at that time de Valera's secretary, suggested that P.S. O'Hegarty would be a good man to send

out. I asked P.S. if he would go and he said he would think it over.

On the following day, Harry sent me word that Mick Collins wanted to see me that night in Gavan Duffy's house. I went along and was surprised to find that, in addition to Mick, there were present Harry, P.S. O'Hegarty and Paddy Sheehan. Mick lost no time beating about the bush. He said:

"P.S. tells me you want him to go to the Continent."

"That's right."

"To prepare for the Peace Conference."

"Exactly."

"Well, I think that's nonsense and he agrees."

"I don't think it's the time," said P.S.

"How are you going to finance them?"

"Well, P.S. probably told you."

"He said you had two thousand pounds. Where did you get it?"

"I can't tell you that."

"How do we know but it came from an enemy?"

"You'll have to take my word for that. I know the man is a friend."

"What's the mystery about then? Why can't you tell us his name?"

"He asked me not to."

"That's very funny."

"I don't think it's funny. I don't know why you asked me to come down here. If P.S. won't go, I'll have to get someone else."

"Don't you think the National Executive should have something to say to this?" He turned to Sheehan. "The Executive hasn't considered it?"

"No," said Sheehan.

"It's curious," said Mick, "that you haven't brought it before the Executive."

"Not at all," I said, "it's just what you would do in the circumstances. It will probably take me a couple of months to get my men and have things in ship-shape for them to go. I will then report to the Executive and I've no doubt I'll get their sanction. If I reported it now, the whole thing might get out and then the scheme would fall down."

"Who gave you the money?"

"Listen, Mick. There's no use in you going on like this. I'm not going to tell you or anyone else."

Harry spoke for the first time.

"Look here, Bob," he said, "Mick thinks, and we agree with him, that we want the money worse for guns."

"Is that it?" I asked Mick.

"Sure, what else?"

"Well," I said, "you can't have it. I got the money for a certain purpose and it's going to be used for that purpose."

"This is God damn nonsense," said Mick.

"Another thing," I went on, "if you want to, you can stop this. I know that. But, if you do, I'll give the money back."

They argued with me for over an hour, without getting any further, and then Harry said:

"What's the use? He's not going to give in. Let him have his God damn Peace Conference. Come on and have a drink."

On the following evening, to forestall any repercussions from this meeting, I reported my plan to the Executive and asked them to refrain from seeking any details till I had the plan ready. They agreed.

A few days later, Frank Gallagher introduced me to a man who, he thought, would fill the bill as one of our emissaries.

I shall call the man Jean Christophe. I had known him by repute as a scholar. His father had come from the continent to Ireland at an early age, and had spent his life in Dublin in a professional capacity. I found that Jean was extremely shy, sensitive and serious minded. He was whole-heartedly on the side of Sinn Fein and I found he was also extremely well informed on the question. I agreed with Frank that he was the right man, particularly as he could speak several European languages and, above all, because he was in a better position to get out than anyone else. It seemed that Arthur Balfour had taken an interest in his work on ancient Latin and Greek manuscripts and that they corresponded from time to time. He anticipated he would have little difficulty in getting Balfour's help in securing a passport, ostensibly to pursue his studies in Paris and Rome. I gave him a great deal of material bearing on Ireland's case for independence and asked him to study it so that he could afterwards write an appeal to the Peace Conference on the subject.

I had occasion to see Mick the following day. I told him I had found one man to go to the continent and I asked him pointblank if he would put any difficulties in the way.

"Not at all," said Mick, and asked who he was. I told him.

"Let me see him before he goes," said Mick. I said I would and I arranged the meeting next day.

A day or two later, I accompanied Frank to his digs again to see Jean Christophe. The latter told us he had seen Mick and then he asked me this question:

"If any instructions I get from Mr. Collins cut across yours, what am I to do?"

I asked him what he meant.

"Your instructions," he said, "are that I am to enlist all the help I can in the cause of Ireland, to find out where the Peace Conference is to be, to try and influence by letters and interviews representatives of other nations at the Peace Conference with a view to having Ireland's representatives admitted. Now Mr. Collins has asked me to do as follows: If I find there is no chance of Ireland's voice being heard, I am to write a letter to him to say there is no chance and to advise a Rising in Ireland as a demonstration to impress the Peace Conference."

Frank and I were dumbfounded, but we both impressed on Christophe that he was to carry out his first duty. As to the second, so far as we were concerned, he was to use his own judgment.

I did not see Christophe again till the Spring of the

following year when I had returned from Gloucester Jail. One day I was sitting in my office in Harcourt Street, deep in conversation with a visitor. Cathal Brugha came in and entered a little room off mine, which he sometimes used. Someone else came in and went into the same room shortly after. I did not notice who it was but, sometime later, the same person returned and passed close to my desk. Something in his appearance caught my attention. He seemed to be in a daze. As he went through the doorway, I saw it was Jean Christophe. I got up and went to the door but already he had vanished down the stairs. I went into Brugha's office.

"Was that Jean Christophe?" I asked.

Brugha glowered at me.

"It was," he said, "what about him?"

"What about him?" I asked, recalling some loud voices of a few minutes earlier, "you were having a row with him."

"Why not?" said Brugha, "the fellow is an English agent."

"He's nothing of the kind," I said.

"No," said Brugha, scornfully, "maybe you don't know what he did. He had the cheek to write from Paris to say there was no chance of our being heard at the Peace Conference and that the only thing for it was a Rising."

"Well," I said, "he got instructions to do that very

thing from Collins."

"And what right has Collins to give instructions like that. This is this damn I.R.B. again."

"That's not the point," I said, "the point is that Jean Christophe was merely carrying out his instructions and you've no right to call him an English agent."

"Haven't I? Who but an English agent would write a letter like that?"

"But, Collins told him to do it."

"And what right had Collins to do that?"

And so it went round and round in a circle.

I wanted to go and see Jean Christophe but I did not know where I could find him. Next day, however, Frank Gallagher came in and told me that Jean Christophe was in the depths of despair because Brugha had called him an English agent. He feared he might be shot. I told Frank of my conversation with Brugha and I undertook to see Mick. Mick, however, dismissed the whole thing with a wave of his hand.

"To hell with him," he said.

"Wait, now, Mick. I gave Jean Christophe certain instructions. You gave him others. He carried out my instructions all right. So I've been told. He carried out yours too."

"He bungled the whole business," said Mick.

"How?"

"Never mind."

"Do you know," I said, "that Christophe is in despair, that he's afraid he'll be shot because Brugha called him an English agent?"

"Brugha is talking through his hat. And tell that bloody fool there's no fear of his being shot."

"Couldn't you tell him that?"

"I've plenty to do. Go to hell!"

I reported this conversation to Frank and he went off to see Dev, but the latter refused to interfere.

Jean Christophe left Ireland and so far as I know he never came back.

Late one Sunday night a visitor arrived at my house after I had gone to bed and I had to get up to receive him. It was Eamon Donnelly, our election organiser for Ulster. He had heard that the National Executive had decided to allow certain constituencies to go by default, constituencies in which there was such a strong Unionist vote that we had no chance of winning. The moment he had heard this he had set out hot foot for Dublin to see me.

He said the policy of not contesting every seat was all wrong. If we were to present our case to the Peace Conference we should be in the position of giving that body the entire

Irish vote for the Republic. We could not do that if we denied the Republican voters of any constituency the right to vote. Moreover, we would by implication be conceding to the Unionist faction the right to rule a section of the country which should be subject to rule by the whole Irish nation.

I told him that the decision of the Executive had been taken because the ~~fighting~~ contesting of the Unionist held seats would run into many thousands of pounds, that there was no chance at all that the funds could be raised locally and that the cost would fall on the National executive whose exchequer was already excessively strained.

We argued for more than an hour and, finally, Donnelly won, as I knew all the time he would. I told him that I would not only bring his plan before the Executive but that I would back it for all I was worth.

On the following night I raised the question and after hours of debate and in spite of the most violent opposition (mainly on financial grounds) the proposal to contest every seat was carried.

To most Irishmen, the partition of the country was and is a hateful thing. To Donnelly, it was more than that. It was nothing less than monstrous that an Irishman should not be free to travel in his own country, north, east, west and

south without let or hindrance. From 1920 when the partition of Ireland was first effected to the day of his death, Eamon Donnelly worked day and night to right this wrong. In 1931, I think it was, I saw him angrily face his old friend, de Valera, at a Fianna Fail Ard-Fheis in the Mansion House on this issue. He thought that Dev was not moving fast enough in his endeavour to end the monstrosity of the partitioned Irish Nation.

I am not one of the foolish people who think that partition has any future. I think it will end sooner than most people imagine. It is, as Donnelly held, a monstrosity and in nations, as in nature, monstrosities are short lived. When it is ended and the unity of Ireland has been achieved, I am sure that the contribution Eamon Donnelly made towards that end will not be forgotten.

Donnelly was one of the quickest witted men I have known. I have heard and could give many examples of this trait of his. I will give only one. There was a monster demonstration in Ennis on the anniversary of de Valera's dramatic arrest there by the Free State forces. There were people from every county there. Donnelly and I were strolling through the streets and I introduced him to a lot of people, including three Wexfordmen, two of whom were lame. The third had a

slight limp. Donnelly turned to me and said:

"Every bloody one of these Wexfordmen is lame because their grandfathers were wounded in 1798."

On November 11th, 1918, the screaming of sirens and the pealing of the chimes of Christ Church Cathedral announced the armistice. As if at a signal, Grafton Street became bedecked by Union Jacks. Crowds of separation women - the women who were drawing separation allowances because their husbands were in the British forces - poured into the streets and formed processions headed by the Union Jack. In a little while it became less an expression of thankfulness for peace than a jingo demonstration against Sinn Fein Dublin. A dense crowd, singing British war songs, collected in front of Sinn Fein headquarters and attacked the building. The police made faint-hearted efforts to disperse the mob, which grew larger by the hour. In the evening, reinforced by many hundreds [illegible], they attempted to set fire to the building. A section of the third Battalion of the Volunteers was called out to defend the building and a very lively fight ensued. The Volunteers saved the building and extinguished the fire, beating back the attackers. A few companies of British military then came along and occupied the street.

Next day my office was a wreck. Though I was on the

third floor, every window had been smashed and the place was miserably cold. My files were scattered all over the floor and trampled on. As I was trying to restore some sort of order and, at the same time, take in the contents of the morning mail, Seumas O'Kelly came in. When Griffith had been arrested, Seumas, who was the Editor of the Leinster Leader, had come up from Naas to edit Griffith's paper, though the doctors had warned him that Dublin was dangerous for him because of the condition of his heart. Seumas was in great distress. He had just come through Grafton Street where, he said, the Union Jacks flying from the top windows were so huge that they slapped the passers-by in the face.

"I thought I'd never again see the like of that in Dublin after 1916."

To distract his thoughts, I gave him a bundle of draft handbills which a correspondent in Tipperary had sent me. They were very striking and were curiously worded. Harry came bustling in, giving an amusing and highly exciting account of his hand-to-hand encounters of the night before in the defence of the office. Seumas enjoyed the recital. He then handed me one of the handbills and said:

"This fellow must have been reading Whitman."

He then made a curious sidelong movement and placed his hand on the table, closing his eyes. I jumped up.

"Is there anything wrong, Seumas?" I asked.

"I'm all right," he muttered between clenched teeth.

Harry ran over and caught him in his arms as he went sliding to the floor. He was unconscious but breathing heavily. The ambulance came and took him to the hospital where he died during the night.

In the afternoon, I went out to see and condole with Seumas O'Sullivan, the poet, who, at that time, was still working in his chemist shop in Rathmines. I knew that he was Seumas O'Kelly's closest friend in Dublin. We talked of our dead friend and we both cried without shame.

CHAPTER XIX

Under the Defence of the Realm Act, the British Government was empowered to arrest and detain without charge or trial any person committing, or suspected of committing or of being about to commit an offence against the State.

One day about three weeks before the election, I was working on a huge pile of letters on my desk, when the door opened and a tall man, whose sinister face seemed familiar, looked in. He was breathing fast, as if he had run up the stairs. Micheal Nunan, who was working at another desk, looked at the man and said aloud:

"G-man."

The man, whom I now recognised as Wharton, one of the most active of the G-men, entered the room and closed the door behind him. He came over to my desk and started examining some of the papers on it.

"What's up?" I asked.

He gave me a side long, jeering look, but did not reply. Just then, one of the girls from the lower office ran in, crying:

"There's a raid, Mr. Brennan. They're all over the -".

She saw the G-man and backed out leaving the door open. Across the landing I could see anotner G-man in the opposite

room. Wharton went over to him and they held a whispered conversation. Then he returned to me.

"Your name is Brennan," he said.

"Yes."

He went over to a map on the wall and pointed to Wexford.

"Do you know this area?" he asked.

"A little," I replied.

"No one is to leave this room," he said and went out.

"Do you think he's on to you?" asked Micheal.

"Not at all," I replied. I wasn't uneasy as I had been coming quite openly to the place every day for over six months and, if I hadbeen wanted, they could easily have picked me up at any time. My appointment to a position at Sinn Fein headquarters had been no secret as the Wexford Corporation for some strange reason - the majority of the members being anti-Sinn Fein - had passed a resolution congratulating me on the fact and this had been published in the Dublin papers.

"You wouldn't think of trying the roof?" said Micheal.

"That might work," I said, "if they had not seen me here, but I'm sure there's nothing to worry about."

In a few moments Wharton came back with Inspector Smith.

"I thin k we want you," said the latter.

"For what?" I asked.

"Never mind," he said, "come along."

"I think you are making a mistake," I said, but without any conviction.

"I suppose you are aware that I am the Director of Elections and that -"

"Shut up," he said and pushed me out of the room. Micheal ran after us with my hat and coat. When we reached the street, they hoisted me into a covered lorry and Smith, Wharton and another detective clambered in. The staff had all assembled on the front steps and Joe Clarke, the caretaker, called for a cheer for me, which was heartily given. A number of people came running from the direction of Stephen's Green, some of them shouting imprecations at the G-men. Someonehurled a stone which struck the side of the lorry and I saw a man in handigrips with two uniformed policemen.

"They're getting rough," said one of the G-men, drawing his revolver.

"About time," I said.

The third G-man turned to face me, an ugly sneer on his lips.

"You don't think they'd hurt us," he said.

"I don't know about you," I said,"but I wouldn't like to bet on the chances of your two friends here."

"Shut up," said Smith, glowering, and I thought it wise to take his advice.

I did not mean to be prophetic but Wharton and Smith were both shot down in the streets within a few months, the latter fatally.

After a few hours in a grey, dark cell in the Bridewell, I was removed to Arbor Hill Prison where, as I shortly discovered, I was the only civilian prisoner. All the others were soldiers belonging to various regiments. I heard them being paraded in the hall outside my cell and marched out. I found out from the Orderly that every day, loaded with full kit, they were brought on route marches through the country, as part of their punishment. I had been in the prison a couple of hours when a young lieutenant, with a wisp of a moustache, came to my cell and told me I was allowed to smoke for half an hour each day, if I so wished, and that I was to have half an hour's open air exercise each day, but if I attempted to speak to any of the other prisoners the exercise permit would be cancelled. The young man seemed extremely bored.

"Where am I to smoke," I asked.

"You can come along now," he said and led the way to a reception room near the front entrance. It was across the hall from the room where, four years earlier, I had interviewed my brother-in-law, Jim Bolger.

The officer gave me my cigarettes - everything had been

removed from my pockets in the Bridewell - and I asked him to have one. He declined to take it but helped himself to one of his own. I stood at the window looking out on the front yard and entrance gate and we talked, or rather I talked, for though he was civil enough, I found it hard to drag a word out of him. For his edification, I told him that the prison we were in had had an association with Irish rebels for at least a century and a quarter and that Robert Emmet had been confined there.

"How jolly," he said.

Thus encouraged, I proceeded to give him some more items of Dublin history, but he was not responsive. I changed the subject and asked him how he liked the Phoenix Park.

"Rather jolly," he thought.

I advised him to take advantage of his stay in Dublin and g- to see the museum, particularly the gold ornaments, some of which dated back to the ninth century.

"How jolly," he said.

It began to dawn on me that he was not giving me and my subject the attention that was necessary and I thought he might be in love or something. I asked him how he had liked France and I know the answer before he had given it. It was rather jolly.

I went on talking. I spoke of England and Francis Thompson and Shelley and Henley, of the Sussex Downs, the beauty of the Thames at Richmond, of Kew Gardens and Epping Forest. I even dragged in the Devon Tors and Eden Philpots and the Isle of Wight. Did he not think them beautiful?

"Jolly good," he said.

I refused to be discouraged and kept on. I spoke of madrigals and catches, of maypoles, coffee-houses and Dr. Johnson. I lamented the passing of the stagecoach. Suddenly, out of the blue sky, came the remark:

"I'd rather like to go to Russia."

I was so surprised that I almost stopped talking. Russia at that particular moment was not exactly a pleasant place. Red armies and White armies and allied armies were making havoc of the place.

"Why?" I asked.

"It would be jolly," he said.

So I talkedof Russia, of the Czars, of the Steppes and Siberia, of Mackensen's brilliant strategy at the Mazurian Lakes, of the Ukraine and Kurdistan. I told him of a book written by an American on a journey he had made from Haifa through Asia Minor and Persia and up through Turkestan. He did not appear interested, so I switched back to literature and the arts. Had he read Dostievsky? He had not.

Turgeniev, Tolstoy and Maxim Gorki brought no awakening of interest. I spoke of the ballet, of Pavlova and Karsavina. I even tried a feeble joke about the last mentioned lady, saying that she really came from Cahirciveen and spoke Russian with a Kerry accent and that the stage name she had taken - Caherciveena - had been changed by the Russians to Karsavina. I thought he would say it was jolly funny, but he didn't. Finally, when I had said everything I could think of regarding Russia, I asked him point blank why he wanted to go there.

"It would be jolly to get out of this hole," he said and looked at his watch. He had let me smoke for an hour and had not bothered to notice that I had transferred several cigarettes and matches to my pocket.

In the exercise ground, next day, I had to walk to and fro on a cinder path. My guard was the original sergeant-major type. In an open shed near by, several military prisoners were at work cutting up timber for firing. They were curious about me, but cautious. The one nearest my path had a horrible scar on his face and neck, as if he had been burned by acid. After three or four turns, I approached my sergeant-major.

"This walking up and down is a silly business," I said. "You walk up and down with me and we can talk."

He fixed me with a belligerent eye.

"You carry on," he said and added, as an afterthought, "or you can go back to your cell."

The prisoners grinned and I returned to my path. At the western end, it led past an iron-barred gate, leading to a large grass plot with a few trees. On the other side of this plot beyond the prison wall, I could see a few houses like artisans' dwellings. I wondered whether the people who lived in those houses were with us. After a while, my sergeant-major went over to talk to the guard who was in charge of the military prisoners. As I passed near the bench where 'scarface' worked I dropped a cigarette and when I turned at the end of the path I saw it had disappeared. As I came back again I heard the old familiar prisoner's whisper:

"You're a toff. Got a match?"

On my next journey, I dropped a couple of matches and I noticed down the line of the prisoners a quickening of interest. I had made up my mind that I had lost my freedom too lightly and that I should use such material as was at hand to try an escape. When my half hour was up, my guard came over.

"Time to go in," he said.

"Look here," I said to him, nodding towards the iron

gate, "will you tell me why that place is locked up?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because," I said, "I've an idea they dug a grave in there for me."

"Nineteen sixteen?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, "were you here then?"

"I'll show you something," he said and pulled from his pocket a whistle on a chain. "Pearse (he called it Perrse) gave me that. Come here. You can see from the gate where they are buried. I was here at the time."

He pointed to a distant corner of the plot, but I could see nothing only the green grass. I knew, of course, that they had all been dead before being brought to Arbor Hill but I refrained from asking how a dead man could have given him the whistle. When I got back to my cell, there was evidence that my friends had discovered my whereabouts. There was a "sent-in" dinner on a tray with a cloth, but though I searched every morsel of food, there was no sign of a message. About an hour later, the orderly opened my cell door and told me there was a visitor for me.

"Who is it?" I asked.

"Search me," he said. He brought me to the end of the corridor where my young lieutenant was waiting.

"We'll go in here," he said, shewing me into a larger and airier cell.

"Who is the visitor?" I asked.

He consulted a slip of paper.

"Youna Brennan," he said.

I was about to correct his pronunciation when Una came in, looking very thin and pale. Her fourth baby was only a few weeks old. My young lieutenant very kindly walked to the other end of the cell and turned his back. She told me she had found out where I was after endless enquiries all day and all night and that Countess Plunkett, finding her almost exhausted from the search, had insisted on driving her around in a cab which was waiting outside. Having failed to get any information from the police, or at any of the military barracks, she had finally called on Major Friend at his old headquarters and he had permitted the visit. She brought me some clean underwear and a suitcase, fearing I might be deported. I tried to reassure her on this point, but I knew my voice carried no conviction. Before we realised the interview hadbegun, it was over and she had gone.

Next day, I tried to further my plansfor escape. Passing the wood shed, I dropped a few more cigarettes and, as my sergeant-major conversed with the other guard, I drew nearer and nearer to the wood shed in my peregrinations.

"Any news?" asked scarface and as I returned again and again I told him what I had heard from the orderly that there was an idea they would be all sent to Russia.

"Why?"

"They're sending a lot of troops to Russia."

"Why?"

"To stop the revolution."

"To fight?"

"Of course."

The conversation had to be resumed next day.

"We're not going to Russia."

"You'll have to go."

"No fear!"

"What are you going to do?"

"You tell us."

"Listen. You are marched out every day.... with full kit.... When the gates are opened, throw yourselves on the guard - disarm them....

"If we had a few of your fellows in here! We can't trust the crowd here."

"You can trust a few.... Get me out of my cell.... I'll lead the way to the city... and find shelter for you."

I had some hopes for success but, as it happened, the

attempt was never made. On the following day I was allowed out for exercise but, in the afternoon, I was told to pack my bag and I was brought to a rear entrance to the prison and put into a van. Three soldiers, a sergeant and two privates got in with me. They had great difficulty in preventing their fixed bayonets from buckling against the roof. Through the little window I could see we were being driven through familiar Dublin streets and that we were heading eastward for the docks. At O'Connell Bridge we were held up for the traffic.

"Where are we going?" I asked the sergeant.

"You'll find out," he said, and the two privates laughed. Through the little window, I scanned the faces of the good-humoured people passing by in the street but there was not one I knew. Not one of them gave more than a passing glance at the military van. At the North Wall we went down the companion-way of an ancient steamer and I was hurried below - much further below than I had ever been before. My three guards and I found ourselves on the bulkheads of the boat. There were two other military men with another prisoner in uniform. I gathered that he was a Canadian soldier who had been arrested for deserting. The wretched place we were in was semi-dark and there was little head-room. It was difficult

to find a position on the curving timbers which one could maintain for even five minutes without suffering extreme discomfort. There was little conversation because neither the soldiers, nor the other prisoner, gave me any encouragement to talk. After what seemed hours, we became aware that the ship had put out to sea and after a while she began to pitch badly. We all got very sick and we kept on being very sick. The Canadian, after one very violent bout, revealed a rich fluency in bad language. He consigned the ship to the bottom of the sea, and the Army, the Allies and the British Empire to the bottommost pits. To show his impartiality, he consigned the Germans there too. The English soldiers were too sick to take any notice of him. After what seemed a very long interval, during which I must have dozed, I heard my sergeant say that he was dying and he certainly looked very bad. He was a small thin man with pale, sandy hair which did not tone with his now green complexion. The place stank. I pointed out to him that at least we were all entitled to some fresh air and that he ought to bring us up on deck. He was afraid some one, whom he called the R.T.O., would report him.

"What you want," I said, "is a drop of whisky. If I could get on deck I might wangle a drink."

He shook his head dolefully. I went on to point out we

were now somewhere in the middle of the Irish Sea and that there was no chance of my escaping. It took me a long time to win him but, finally, he agreed to allow his two men to conduct me to the lower deck. They were not to go out on the deck themselves but were to allow me to do so. I promised I would keep within their view. The air itself was intoxicating after the foul atmosphere down below. The boat still pitched heavily and the clear, salt spray stung my face. There were a few soldiers clinging to the bulwarks here and there and fewer civilians and none of them took any notice of me. Nearly ten minutes passed before a steward happened along. I spoke to him and my heart beat faster when I heard his grand Dublin accent.

"Listen," I said softly, "I'm a prisoner. They are taking me over to somewhere in England. My guard is over there by the hatch."

"Great God above," he said, and then quickly: "What do you want me to do. I'll do anything I can. My brother Jim - Jim Doherty, maybe you know him, was put in 1916. Maybe when we get to Holyhead I could help you to escape."

I explained that all I wanted at the moment was some whisky. He was doubtful if he could get it; on account of all the military on board the bar had not been opened.

"Never mind, I'll manage something," he said, "even if I

have to break open the bar."

I handed him a pound note and he seemed doubtful about what he should do with it as he went off. He was gone for what seemed a long time and I could see that my guards were getting fidgetty. At last, my friend reappeared and, with a jerk of his head, he went down the hatch and we followed. He drew me aside and handed me a full bottle of whisky, giving me back my pound note at the same time. "Tony, - he's the barman," he explained, "got it for me and he wouldn't take a penny for it when he heard it was for you."

I protested but he refused to take the money.

"Are you sure we couldn't try a getaway at Holyhead?" he asked. "I've lots of friends there."

I said 'no' and tried to express my gratitude. He undertook to call to No. 6 Harcourt Street next day when he got back to Dublin and tell them that he had seen me.

No conjurer pulling a rabbit out of a hat ever created a greater sensation than I did when I produced the bottle of whisky in that filthy hole. I became a benefactor to the race. At that time, no soldier travelling could be served with a drink and war conditions still prevailed. My guards became my warmest friends and even the Canadian began to feel a little less unfavourably disposed towards the human race.

We boarded a train at Holyhead and I promptly fell asleep. Some hours later, my sergeant roused me when we had to change trains. The new compartment we got into was crowded and it was obvious that the other passengers were puzzled by our appearance. It looked as if I was a prisoner but they could not understand the friendly terms my guard and I were on. A brisk little man, sitting directly opposite me, was bursting with curiosity. He took advantage of something I said to ask if I came from Ireland and when I said "Yes", he declared he was glad to hear that conditions were improving over there and that my countryman, de Valera, was about to be released.

"It's the first I heard of it," I said.

"I'm sure I read it in some paper yesterday," he said.

"I must tell him that," I said, "I'm on my way to join him, I think."

"Oh!" said Mr. Brisk, his eyes popping. He opened his paper and began to read.

A man in the corner who had a beard like Charles Dickens', turned to look at me.

"You mean you're a prisoner?" he asked.

"Yes. These gentlemen are my escort."

"What is your sentence?"

"There was no sentence."

"No sentence! What were you charged with?"

"There was no charge."

"But, but, there must have been a charge in the warrant."

"There was no warrant."

"What about your lawyer?"

"I was not allowed a lawyer."

"Were you not brought before a judge or a magistrate?"

"The secret police arrested me, threw me into prison and the military shipped me off to England. Even now I don't know where I'm going."

Another man spoke up.

"But they must have something against you," he said.

"Of course they have," I answered. "They know I'm a Sinn Feiner, like nearly everybody else in Ireland - just as they know you're a Sinn Feiner - meaning England for the English.

"Why, its outrageous," said the man with the beard. "These are the methods of Czarist Russia."

Mr. Brisk had lowered his paper. He eyes popped from one of us to the other.

"Is this true?" he said tothe sergeant.

"You bet it's true," said the sergeant. "You ain't got no idea wot it's like. If a kid sings "The Soldier's Song" down in O'Connell Street the 'ole bloomin' garrison is turned out. Ain't that so, Jimmie?"

Jimmie, one of the other soldiers, nodded gravely.

"It's God awful," he said.

"I tell you," said the sergeant, "it ain't no bloomin' holiday."

Mr. Dickens was blazing with indignation.

"Would you mind giving me your name and address, sir," he asked.

"Certainly," I said and gave him the particulars. "I would be glad if you would send my wife a postcard to say you saw me. She doesn't know whether I'm dead or alive."

"I'll do that with pleasure," said the man, "and, moreover, I'm chairman of the shop stewards in the factory I work in in Leeds and I'll bring the whole thing before them and we'll see what our M.P. has to say about it. It's enough to make any Englishman ashamed."

My sergeant, thus encouraged, gave horrid details of the night raids on the dwelling houses.

"It's a bloomin' nightmare," he wound up. His hearers clicked their tongues in sympathy and I began to feel like a martyr.

CHAPTER XX

In the General Election of 1918, Sinn Fein which was pledged to the establishment of an Irish Republic, won 73 of the 105 Irish seats. "No English Party", says Dorothy Macardle, "had ever received a majority so overwhelming as the Irish people had given to Sinn Fein. It is doubtful if in the whole history of parliamentary institutions a decision so nearly unanimous had been given to one party."

Very late that night we arrived in Birmingham, where we had to wait several hours for a train. The station was crowded with soldiers, all returning from the front. I brought my escort to the buffet to treat them to a cup of coffee. Some of the milling soldiers there recognised my sergeant and there were enthusiastic greetings, introductions, enquiries, reminiscences. My sergeant, still under the influence of the man from Leeds, began to tell them all of the iniquitous work the troops were required to perform in Ireland.

"Why, look at this man," he cried, pointing dramatically at me, "'E's a white man, ain't 'e? Don't tell me, I know it. He and my mates know it. Well, 'ere 'e is going to some bloeding prison in England and 'e don't know where, but I can tell him now, it's Gloucester. Well, 'ere 'e is,dragged out of 'is bed, away from his wife and kiddies, and all for wot? Nobody knows, because see there's no trial, no warrant, no sentence, no judge, just like Russia and the Czar. Well,

if that's plying the gyme, I'm a mug, we're all mugs."

All this, and much more, he shouted out while I, very much embarrassed, stood there surrounded by sympathetic Tommies who all agreed it was 'a God damn shyme'. By and by, his friends had to rush off to catch their trains and there were boisterous goodbyes which I had to share.

The four of us sat on a bench on the platform and smoked. It was one o'clock in the morning but there were lots of people about. The excitement over the end of the war was plainly still in the air. Some girls were ostentatiously parading up and down in our vicinity and, after a while, the two privates joined a couple of them and chatted a while. Then, with apologetic glances at the sergeant, they moved on up the platform where it was dark.

The sergeant told me his life story and there wasn't much to it. He worked in a wire factory, was married and had two children, a boy of five and a girl of six. They were the grandest kiddies in all the world. The wife was a topper. When he was called up her heart was broke but she took it like a hero, she did. And she was true to him, she was. He was going to make up to her for all she had been through since he was called up. Luckily, he had missed being sent to the front, not that he would have shirked it. Luckily, too, he

had been promoted sergeant only two weeks after being made a corporal. He wasn't going back to the wire factory but he was going to start a wire factory of his own - in a small way, of course, at first. There was nothing about wire making he had to learn. And he was going to give his little woman a good time to make up for -

For some time, a comely maiden had been giving both of us the glad eye. She was strolling up and down a few yards in front of us and I could see that my companion was finding it more and more difficult to keep his mind on his story.

"Nice piece," he said.

"She looks inviting," I replied, speaking the literal truth.

"I wonder if you wouldn't mind," he said.

"Not at all," I replied.

The lady received him almost with open arms and the two of them adjourned to the nether depths of the platform. So here I was left alone and desolate on the platform of Birmingham railway station with no one to look after me. I stood up to stretch my legs and stroll about. Gradually, I approached the entrance to the station. There was only a ticket checker at the entrance to what seemed to be an overhead bridge which led, I supposed, to the city. At the farther end of the bridge there were two military policemen.

There was nothing, apparently, to prevent my walking out. I tried to recall the address of the only man I knew in the city - my old friend Peter Moloney. Do what I would, I could only recollect the word Edgbaston. Now, I reflected, if I go out I will find myself in a strange city with no place to go, very little money, and an accent that will betray me if I ask questions. Within a few minutes my absence will be noticed here and the alarm will be out.

I turned and went back to the bench, ~~[illegible]~~ ~~generally, for I knew that that crept me from walking out was not any one of the things I had thought of, but this puny wire worker whose future I could wreck, whose puny plans for his life's factory would be shattered.~~ I smoked three cigarettes before the sergeant came back. He was almost running.

"Oh," he said, "you're 'ere. I was afraid you might think of skipping."

"Well," I said, "as a matter of fact I did. I went out and came back again."

"Good 'eavens, why?"

"I don't like Birmingham."

"You're a toff," he said.

When we got to Gloucester it was five o'clock in the morning. It was very dark when we left the station. The station master had told us that it was easy to find the jail.

We had only to walk straight ahead, take the second turn on the left, and first on the right, and there we were. The streets were woefully dark. The war ordnances forbidding street lights were, apparently, still in force. We took what we thought was the second turn on the left and first on the right but there was no jail. I was lugging my heavy bag and they were carrying full war kit and when we had been walking for nearly half an hour without coming on the jail, we were all rather cross. The darkness was stygian. One of the soldiers suggested getting back to the Railway Station, so we retraced our steps but we could not find the station. If we had been in darkest Africa, we could not have been more utterly lost. The first rays of dawn were beginning to show when we came to a canal bridge.

"I'm not going any further," I announced and made my way down to the bank of the canal. The others followed and discarded their kits and threw aside their guns. We all stretched out luxuriously on the slope and soon the soldiers were fast asleep. Half an hour elapsed while the sky brightened and the sun rose pink, crimson, golden. I looked at my companions. The younger of the two privates was only a boy. Instead of being in this drab uniform, he should have been off skylarking or playing football. The second was mean, thin-lipped and crafty. He had contributed nothing

to our conversation during all the time we had been together. The sergeant was sleeping soundly, no doubt dreaming of his wire factory. Again I considered leaving them, but I banished the thought. Already I was bound up with them for all time. I might escape for the moment but -

A man carrying a lantern still lighting came over the canal bridge. From my angle, he seemed cowled like a monk.

"Hey!" I called and he stopped, staring at us.

"Do you know if there's a jail about here?"

"Yeh," he replied and pointed over my head. "You can see it from here. It's just around the corner."

"Thanks," I said, and turned to find the sergeant sitting up.

"The jail is just around the corner," I said.

He woke his companions and they donned their kits. I got my bag and we tramped around the corner. Right enough there was the jail with a big, open space in front of it. The sergeant worked the big knocker, awakening echoes in the empty space. After a little while, a wicket door opened high up in the wall over the great iron-studded door.

"Yes," said a voice.

"I have a prisoner here," said the sergeant.

"You're too early," said the voice and the wicket was slammed shut.

The sergeant knocked again - the sound of the echoes on the great square was dismal. The wicket opened.

"It's only six o'clock," said the voice. "We don't open the prison on Sunday till seven," and the wicket was slammed again.

"Well, that's the limit," I said, in a rage. Already my companions were preparing to squat down on the ground, presumably to wait for the place to open. I went at the knocker and banged it. There was no answer, but I kept up the bombardment. Several minutes elapsed before the wicket opened again.

"Open the door," I yelled, "I'm not going to wait here another hour."

"Sorry," said the voice, and the little door was shut once more.

"You'll be sorrier before I've finished," I shouted and began on the knocker again.

"Take it easy," remonstrated the sergeant from his position on the ground. "It's no use. They won't open up."

I kept on knocking while I yelled at the sergeant:

"It's not good enough. We did find this damn jail and now they won't let us in."

Suddenly the incongruity of the position began to dawn on me and I was about to desist when the little door opened

again. The voice was thoroughly angry this time and it advised me to go to a warm place.

"We can't stay out here till seven," I cried.

"Well, go round to the police station," said the voice, "it's just around the corner."

"Come on," I said to my escort, and led the way to the police station. A very large and imposing sergeant beamed on us when we entered the day room, in which there was a huge fire. The soldiers lay down promptly and went to sleep again. The police sergeant asked me if I was a Sinn Feiner and his pronunciation was perfect. I mentally noted the fact that he was Irish and began indulging in the old trick of discovering his native place from his accent. He told me I would find congenial company inside, that Hunter, Griffith and McEntee were fine fellows. He knew one of the warders, who spoke constantly of them. When, in answer to his question, I told him my name, I noticed a curious flickering of his eyes. I made a long shot.

"Wasn't your mother's name Brennan?" I asked.

"How did you know?"

Suddenly I had placed his accent. It was Geashill.

"Are you long over here?" I asked.

"Thirty-two years."

"Did you ever go back to the old spot?"

"How did you know I came from over there at all?"

"Tell me," I said, "I never can remember, whether Geashill is in Leix or Offaly."

"Why it's in Offaly, of course, - now how the mischief -?"

His amazement was comical.

"Well, that's the best - tell me, how did you know?"

"We've a good Intelligence Service," I said. "Who is the warder you're so great with?"

"Come, come, none of that," he said.

"Never mind," I said, "if I get a chance of passing a letter out to you, you'll post it for me."

"Listen, sonny," he said, "it would be too dangerous for me. I've only a few more years to put up to get my pension."

"None of the fellows will give you away," I said. "Can't you trust your warder friend?"

He put his fingers to his lips, as footsteps sounded outside and two policemen entered. They wore storm helmets and one carried a lantern. They exchanged heavy greetings with the sergeant and seemed to take no notice of me or the sleeping soldiers. One of them made laborious entries in a heavy report book, while the other sat at the fire apparently sunk in deep contemplation. I tried to talk but I got no encouragement and, after a while, the sergeant, who was uneasy,

glanced at the clock and roused my sergeant, telling him that it was nearly seven and that by the time he got round to the prison, the gates would be open. They were indeed open when we got there. My sergeant was plainly affected when we said goodbye. I followed the warder through the inner door and the old familiar round began with a bath, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

The prisoners were anything but overjoyed at my arrival, for my coming blasted their high hopes of immediate release, which had been predicted in the papers. They had their bags packed ready to go home. I was glad to accept Griffith's invitation to join the mess which he and Joe McGuinness shared. A.G., as we called him, was the prisoners' spokesman and he was easily the most cheerful man amongst the dozen internees.

"It was lucky for you you were arrested," he said, "you must have been overdoing it, for you look all in."

He insisted on my remaining in bed for the first few days and he and McGuinness brought me my meals. They were all thirsty for election news and I told them we were going to win seventy-three seats. They thought it a joke, for we held at the time only five seats, whereas the Parliamentary Party held seventy-four seats, and the Unionists twenty-six. I actually gave them a list of the seats we would win and a forecast of the voting figures. A few weeks later, when the

election was over and the returns came in, they found that my figure of seventy-three seats was correct, but I had made two mistakes, which cancelled each other. Pembroke in County Dublin, which I had marked for a loss, was won, and Waterford City, which I had marked to win, was lost. Moreover, the poll figures which I had given them were in most cases amazingly accurate.

Well, we won the election and on the day following it, the Irish Parliamentary Party ceased to exist. Many of the newly elected members were in jail; in our own little group in Gloucester jail we had seven M.P's. - Griffith for East Cavan; McEntee, South Monaghan; McGuinness, South Longford; Fitzgerald, Pembroke; Hunter, mid-Cork; Pierce McCann mid-Tipperary and Clancy, North Sligo. Needless to say, we had great rejoicings and many speeches. We had applied to the Governor to be allowed home to cast our votes on the day of the election and A.E. had solemnly warned the Governor that if our application was refused, we could claim that the election was void. The British Government, of course, ignored our application and this led to my perpetration of one the atrocious conundrums which were in vogue at the time : - "Why is this place unlike a beehive in the springtime?" Several answers were given - "Because being Republicans we can't have a Queen", - "Because there are more cells than we can fill",

and son. The correct answer was : "Because we were not allowed out for the pollin'". They were going to kill me for it.

One day Griffith told me that from the top floor of the prison one could glimpse the outline of Gloucester Cathedral and we climbed the three flights to the higher reaches. From the end window we saw the outline of the Cathedral in the evening light. A.G. talked of its beauty and its history, which he seemed to know very well. I gathered he had visited it some time or other. I expressed surprise at his enthusiasm for something so decidedly English as the Gloucester Cathedral. He reminded me that I did not exactly despise Shakespeare and Shelley, alluding to a spirited debate we had had the night before.

There was no opera which I had ~~heard~~ seen, up to that time, which was strange to A.G. Now and again he used to sing snatches from the Barber of Seville, or Faust, but never for an audience. He had a rather poor baritone voice, but he whistled very well. He was a typical Dubliner in his fondness for Wallace and Balfe and, as for drama, he knew his Congreve, Sheridan and Goldsmith very well. He had a keen appreciation of Shakespeare and of Beaumont and Fletcher. He knew and loved every melodrama that had been produced at the Queen's Theatre, Dublin, for a generation. Synge, he really hated. "Imagine", he would say, "the mentality of a man who suffers no

shame in confessing that he listened through the chinks in his bedroom floor to the women talking in the kitchen of a Wicklow farmhouse".

A.G. told us a curious and interesting thing in connection with Yeats' play "Cathleen ni Houlihan". The poet read the M.S. of the play for A.G. and said he felt that the end was not rounded out as it should be, or sufficiently dramatic. As it stood then, the ending was bald. Michael, abandoning his bride-to-be, had gone out of the house to follow the Old Woman and Brigid had taken into her arms the weeping Delia, the forsaken bride. Yeats said he knew there should be a last line, but he could not get it. Griffith said: "Why not have the father ask the young boy something like this: 'Did you see an old woman going down the road?' and have the boy reply: 'I did not, but I saw a young girl and she had the walk of a queen.'" Yeats at once accepted the suggestion, only putting in the word 'path' instead of 'road.

"And why did he use the word path instead of road?" I asked.

"I don't know," said A.G. "He said the line over several times before he made the change. Perhaps the poets can explain it."

I have related this story to several poet friends of

mine and they all doubted it, but I knew Griffith very well. He was the most unassuming and modest of men and he would never ~~of~~ have dreamed of making a claim of such a nature if it was unfounded.

In some respects he was the narrowest of puritans. One day someone who had given him a novel of Compton McKenzie's, asked him what he thought of it. He turned on his questioner savagely. "Filth," he said, "it has everything that appeals to the lowest English taste; adultery, a suggestion of sodomy, and tears for the poor prostitute." I was surprised, for I had also read the book and thought it rather harmless. Griffith's modern admirers who prate so much about the absence of freedom in literature under de Valera, either forget or are ignorant of this facet of Griffith's character. I am sure that if A.G. had had time to set up a censorship, it would have been far more stringent than anything we have experienced.

A.G. was not always happy in his choice of friends and Darrel Figgis is a case in point. When Figgis first appeared on the Irish scene, he knew so little of Ireland that he thought a terrible brogue and the frequent use of 'sure', 'begorra' and 'bedad' represented the last word in Gaelicism. He was quick to learn, however, and he was one of the most acquisitive men I have ever met. He went in for politics in

a big way shortly after his arrival but, despite untiring efforts to turn on charm, he made enemies more easily than any man I knew. His assertive manner and his unbounded egotism had a lot to do with this, but he had, in addition, a trait which, in Ireland, would damn a much greater man. His meanness in money matters was so pronounced and so obvious that it became almost proverbial. I knew an otherwise admirable public representative who failed to retain his seat, merely because at the end of a long day's campaigning, he gave his driver sixpence for a tip. In spite of everything, Griffith stuck to Figgis. I asked him point blank why he did so, and he told me the following story:

One day in Wakefield, or some other English prison in which he found himself after the 1916 Rising, Griffith and his comrades were being transferred to another jail, as were also some other Irish prisoners who had just arrived. A prison officer at a door examined the belongings of each prisoner as he passed, to make sure none of the prison property was being removed. Just in front of Griffith was a prisoner with a red, pointed beard, green eyes and a commanding manner. It was Darrell Figgis. He was carrying a bag, which he had opened for the officer's inspection. The latter took from the bag a plate, on which there was plainly stamped the broad arrow and the name of the prison.

"This belongs to the firm," said the officer, putting the plate on one side.

"I beg your pardon," said Figgis.

"I say this belongs to the firm," repeated the officer.

Figgis took up the plate and held it aloft.

"Do I understand you to say I have stolen this plate?" he asked.

"No, not exactly," said the officer, "I merely said it belonged to the firm."

"If," said Figgis, "what you say is true and it belongs to what you call the firm, and if you find it in my bag, the only possible inference is that I have stolen it. Is that what you say?"

"I say it belongs to the firm."

"Are you accusing me of stealing?"

"No, but you are making a mistake in taking it."

"I'm making no mistake. I say the plate is mine and I am taking it with me. If you insist on retaining it, it is tantamount to a charge of stealing against me."

The officer made no reply.

"I will not," said Figgis, putting the plate back in the bag, "ask you for an apology. There can be an apology only from an equal. I bid you good day."

The astonished officer allowed him to close the bag and

go out.

"I allowed," said Griffith, "that the man who was capable of dealing with English officialdom like that, was worth having."

I gave Griffith a copy of "The Economic Case for Irish Independence by Darrel Figgis", which had been put on sale at one shilling a copy, a week or so before I was arrested. I asked Griffith to go through it and tell me what he thought of it. I did not tell him I was furious when I read it, because three-fourths of the book consisted of Griffith's own articles, lifted without acknowledgment, from his paper and the remainder of the material I had written and published at Sinn Fein Headquarters, again without acknowledgment. A couple of days later, A.G. gave me back the book.

"What did you think of it?"

"Not bad," he said.

I turned to Joe McGuinness. "Listen, Joe," I said, Figgis has lifted the contents of that book from work which A.G. has slaved at and which I have slaved at. Not merely does he not ask permission to use it, but he does not even acknowledge the sources, and he sells it for Mr. Figgis' benefit at a shilling a copy, and A.G. says it's not bad!"

"Well," said A.G. "don't you think it's good to see someone getting the public to pay for it."

It was not merely his partiality for Figgis that was exhibited in this attitude. He was ~~the~~ most unselfish and ~~the most unambitious of men.~~ and he never cared who got the credit if the work was done. He actually shunned personal publicity. If anyone attempted to curry favour with him by flattery, his suspicions were at once aroused, but his vanity showed itself otherwise. One could not say, "I think you are a great man", but one could say "Sinn Fein is the greatest political plan yet devised to achieve the independence of Ireland", and get away with it. In his standards of conduct for other people, he was very lenient to his friends and merciless to his enemies. Once, within five minutes, I heard him referring to two men, both of whom indulged in liquor rather too freely. The first, a friend, he described as "taking a drop now and again", the other, a foe, he called "a drunken scoundrel".

CHAPTER XXI

Following the election, the forty-seven Sinn Fein deputies who were still at large (thirty-six being held in English prisons) met openly in Dublin and set up the Parliament and Government of the Irish Republic~~Convention~~ known as Dail Eireann.

Those who only saw Griffith in his moments of relaxation in the Bailey or Mooney's, might easily form the opinion that he was an easy-going man of middle class tastes, who liked a good glass of whiskey and a good yarn. He never talked politics, or shop, on those occasions and, indeed, he preferred to let the others do the talking. During all his adult years, except the last few, he slaved for four days of the week at his paper which, for a long time, he not merely wrote, but set up as well. His associates could tell the day of the week by his mood. Monday serious and earnest; Tuesday morose and aloof; Wednesday cranky and ill-tempered; Wednesday night unbearable; Thursday smiling and brisk once more. He put the paper to bed on Wednesday night and then, after a shave and brush-up, he sought his cronies in some pub and relaxed. It was almost painful to see him writing his leading articles, those magnificent editorials which were sowing the seeds of nationality in little groups of young

people throughout the country. He would seize a wad of copy paper and start writing, his stub of pencil gripped tenaciously, digging into the paper, and his foot stamping the floor now and again. Half way down the page he would change his mind and, without tearing up the page he had written, he would turn the whole wad of loose sheets right over, and start again. Often he did this half a dozen times before he would get his subject properly under way. When he ended, his eyes showed the intense mental strain to which he had been subjecting himself. His pockets were a joke in the office. They were all filled with letters, notes, memoranda and clippings, and when he wanted to find something, he would empty one pocket after another, dumping the contents on the table higgledy piggledy, and then try to stuff them all back in one pocket. He never knew in which pocket his money was and, very often, he did not know whether he had any money or not.

For some strange reason, since we were not allowed any spirits in the prison, we had been discussing the relative merits of the various brands of Irish whiskey, and A.G. told us that whiskey that was made in the pot still was whiskey and anything that wasn't, was not whiskey. The Dublin distillers, catering for the expert taste of Dublin drinkers, had a craft which had gained something in every generation

during two centuries or so. For instance, the Jameson people maturing their whiskey in sherry casks found that up to the twentieth, or twenty-first year it gained in flavour, and after that period it began to deteriorate. By a careful series of trial and error, they had decided the final date on which the whiskey was the last word in perfection and they kept a supply of this liquor for family use and for a few connoisseurs who could appreciate the product. Once he had performed some service for Andrew Jameson and had been rewarded by the present of a half dozen bottles of this liquer whiskey. It happened that on the same evening he had a visit from an old friend, John Quinn - ~~the brother of Mary Quinn of the Irish National Theatre, wife of Dudley Digges, the actor.~~ A.G. produced the whiskey and he and John drank "a bottle or so". Some time after midnight, John decided to go home and A.G. saw him as far as the corner. John had to travel from Clontarf into the city and right across to the south side, a distance of about four miles, and there being no public conveyance at that hour, he had to walk. Griffith returned to his home and, shortly afterwards, he became aware that the wind was rising. It continued to rise and developed into a storm. As a matter of fact, it was the worst storm that had been experienced in Ireland for a generation, the storm of 1903. It blew down about half

the trees in the Phoenix Park and on the sea-front at Clontarf, it wrought such havoc that the fronts of many of the houses were blown away and, in the morning, one could see from the street the bedrooms from the first floor up. Griffith could not get his mind off his friend, John Quinn. No mortal who was out in that storm could survive it. The worst of it was there was nothing Griffith could do about it. Next morning, as he made his way with difficulty into the city, he realised that the storm had been even worse than he had thought it. He intended going out to Rathmines to see if John had got safely home, but something prevented him. About lunch time, he walked down Grafton Street and who did he see but John himself. Griffith ran to him and all but embraced him.

"My God, John, I thought you were dead."

"Why?" asked John.

"On account of the storm. I wondered how you could get through it."

"To tell you the truth," said John, "I never noticed any storm. I do remember going over the canal bridge at Portobello on my hands and knees but, beyond that, I saw no signs of any storm."

"What I mean to say," concluded Griffith, "is that the makers of Dublin whiskey have learned something during the

two centuries they have been making it."

Griffith could never concede that the Rising of 1916 was the turning point in Irish History. To all of us who had been through the period, there was no question but that the Rising was responsible for changing a people whose sense of national honour had all but vanished into a disciplined and determined nation whose sons were willing and ready to march as one man into any danger in defence of a sacred right. A.G. could not and would not see that. The change was inevitable, he said. It was bound to come sooner or later. The Rising had hastened it a little. That was all. He had a personal grievance about the Rising. He told me that soon after the outbreak of the Great War he had attended a secret conference at which there were represented Sinn Fein, the Gaelic League, Labour, the Irish Volunteers and the I.R.B., and there it had been agreed that Ireland should rise if (a) England attempted to enforce conscription, and (b) there should be a German landing. It had been further agreed that if neither of these contingencies arose and the war was coming to an end, there should be a further conference to decide whether any action should be taken. The second conference had never been held and Griffith considered that all parties to the first one had been badly treated. In the week preceding the Rising, he was in constant touch with McDermot, who worked in his office, and though he had seen that Sean

was unusually active and that he was receiving many visitors, he had had no inkling that an immediate Rising was contemplated. He was very sore at the fact that Bean had not trusted him. If he had been consulted, he would have been against the Rising, but when it started, he was strongly of the opinion it should have been made general.

On Easter Monday he decided to try and persuade MacNeill to call out all the Volunteers throughout Ireland. He got on his bicycle with the idea of finding MacNeill, but he discovered he could not get across the city on account of the fighting. On Tuesday, he determined to get to MacNeill at all costs and he cycled out on the north bank of the Liffey, intending to cross some of the bridges to the west of the city. He crossed the river at Lucan and made his way back on the south side and found MacNeill. The agony he experienced on his way out from the city, he described to me. He feared he might be taken and that it would be represented he was running away from the fight. On his way back to the city, he was almost happy and he had made up his mind that the Rising should be made a National one at all costs. MacNeill agreed to issue a call to the nation but, later on, other counsels prevailed. The city was already all but encircled and it was felt that the spreading of the fighting to the country would lead only to a greater holocaust and a

national calamity.

All his adult life, Griffith had set himself absolutely against physical force. He visualised a disciplined, well directed nation marching forward to its goal on passive-resistance lines. He held that this was a safe and more certain way of beating England.

On a day in January, 1919, the news of Soloheadbeg made the front pages of the English newspapers. Seumas Robinson, Dan Breen and three companions held up two armed constabularymen who were conveying a load of gelignite to a quarry. The R.I.C. men had resisted and had been shot dead. Robinson and Breen and their companions captured their carbines and the gelignite. It was the first bloody encounter since the Rising. I made no secret of my admiration of Seumas and his companions, but A.G. was scathing in his comments. He was sure that this action did not have the sanction of Dail Eireann, which had been set up a day or two before and, consequently, it was nothing short of outlaw action. But even that was not so important as the consideration that England could always beat us if we chose her own weapons.

"If this sort of thing goes on," he said, "we will end up by shooting one another."

He told us the story of Joe Poole, to illustrate the evils of physical force. Poole belonged to one of two rival

factions into which the I.R.B., had split some thirty years before. A member of the opposing group, who was a stone-mason, had been seen going into Dublin Castle. The fact was that he had legitimate business there, but the other group concluded he had become a spy. He was secretly tried, in his absence, and sentenced to death. Poole heard of the decision and, believing as he did that the man was innocent, he set out to warn him that the firing party was laying in wait for him. Joe took the wrong road at Seville Place and missed his man who walked into the ambush and was killed. Poole was arrested and tried for the murder of the man whose life he had endeavoured to save. He kept silent and was found guilty and hanged. Griffith gave us the impression that he was somehow connected with Poole's activities on that fateful night, though he must have been very young at the time. At any rate, he knew Poole well and the affair made a deep impression on him. I heard him refer to it many times.

In view of his convictions on the question of physical force, one can get a clearer glimpse of his splendid loyalty during the succeeding years. The fight between the Volunteers and the British forces grew more and more bloody and Griffith did not budge. The struggle between his loyalty to his fellows and his detestation of the deeds done by the Volunteers in their gallant and unequal fight against

the constabulary and Black and Tans seared his soul. Very few guessed at his feelings and none heard him complain. Only on one occasion did I get a glimpse of the burden he was bearing and that time he was near breaking point. I shall tell of it when I come to it.

The argument about physical force became very hot one night and Pierce McCann, who was all but a pacifist, and Ginger O'Connell, who was anything but one, nearly came to blows. Griffith decided to change the subject and asked me how I had found Fred Murphy the last time I was in Wexford. I replied I had found Fred quite well, as usual, and Griffith asked me to tell the others what I knew of him.

When I was a young man, it struck me one day that Fred never changed. He was a tailor, very sprucely dressed, very polite and he knew everybody and everybody knew him. Now and again he helped to organise local concerts and amateur theatricals and whenever a professional company came to town, Fred always knew some member of it. He seemed to be about forty-five. One day I said to Thady Hayes, who was then a man of about sixty:

"Do you know, Fred Murphy never changes. When I was a little boy, going to school, Fred was exactly the same as he is today."

"That's nothing," said Thady, "when I was a little boy,

going to school, Fred Murphy was the same as he is today and, what's more, my father, God be good to him, told me that when he was a youngster, Fred was the same then, and my father would be ninety-three if he was alive now."

"That's nonsense," I said.

"Is it nonsense?" he said. "Well, if you don't believe me, just you go down and ask Ben Hughes about it."

Now Ben Hughes was over ninety at this time. A man highly respected, he had been Mayor of the town several times and he was editor of the Wexford Independent, a small conservative sheet. He had once told me he had never agreed with Daniel O'Connell and that he had taken sides with the young Irelanders against the Liberator. So the next time Ben came to the office where I worked in the County Council building - he was the contractor for the printing - I took occasion, as adroitly as I could, to bring up the question of Fred Murphy.

"It's funny," I said, "but Fred never seems to grow a day older."

"I've always wondered about that," said Ben. I remember when I was a youngster going to school, Fred was exactly the same as he is today."

"Why," I cried, "that can't be the case."

"It can't," said Ben, "but it is. Not only that, but my father who remembered the Wexford men coming back from the

battle of the Three Rocks in 1798, told me many times that when he was a youngster Fred Murphy looked exactly the same."

"But that would make him a hundred and fifty," I said. "It's impossible."

Ben shook his wise old head. "So I thought," he said.

"But, has no one ever made any enquiries?"

"Sure we made enquiries," said Ben. "We made enquiries many times but they never got us anywhere. You go and ask Fred himself and see how far you'll get."

"I can't believe it," I said.

"Would you have time to come over with me to my office and I'll show you something?"

"Certainly," I said.

We had only to cross the lane at the rear of the Courthouse to Ben's office. He searched about amongst the newspaper files for some time and finally lifted out one.

"There is a file of the Constitution - the paper which preceded the Independent for the year 1819," he said. "Have a look at it."

I turned the pages of the old, dog-eared, dirty volume. It was, indeed, the file for 1819, its curious type and unemotional headings making a strange contrast with the flaring headlines in the newspapers of today.

"What is this leading to?" I asked.

"Did you ever see Fred playing the part of Dick the Dandy in a play called 'The would-be Gentleman'."

"I did not," I said, "but I heard him mention it."

"Well, I saw him play it," said Ben, "and he did it pretty well. The play is a very poor adaptation of one of Moliere's masterpieces."

He was searching through the file.

"Here's what I'm wanting," he said and pointed to a notice in the advertising columns. "Read that."

I read the notice. It was to the effect that Signor Luigi Fernandi, Professor of the Renowned Menapia School of Terpsichore, Elocution and the Dramatic Arts wished to acquaint the nobility and gentry of Wexford and surrounding districts that yielding to the requests received from many distinguished patrons the performance of 'The would-be Gentleman' given by the Menapia Dramatic Class would be repeated in the Wexford Assembly Rooms on the 19th day of February 1819 under the distinguished patronage of the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Highest Station in the County, etc.

"What I want to show you," said Ben, "is that the name of the gentleman who played Dick the Dandy in that play was Fred Murphy."

"Well, after all," I said, "there are more Fred Murphy's

than one."

"We are talking about only one Fred," said Ben, returning the file to its place.

"But this is so extraordinary," I said, "that someone should try to get to the bottom of it."

"Life is too short," said Ben.

After this conversation, I decided to try and draw Fred out about the past. We had many conversations, but I could never corner him. He spoke freely about the past but only as anyone else would, except that his knowledge of detail was wonderful. One period of Irish history that seemed to interest him most was that of the Norman invasion. He was particularly bitter about Strongbow. There was nothing too bad to be said about him. One day I discovered the reason, or thought I did. There had been a local performance of one of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas and a local girl, named Eva Cousins, had had a great success in it. Next day, I met Fred in the street and we talked of the opera.

"Wasn't Eva wonderful?" I asked.

A strange change came over Fred. He seemed to be transfigured, as casting up his eyes, he said:

"Ah, Eva! She was divine. No woman has ever lived who -"

He caught himself up and seemed confused.

"I'm speaking of Eva Cousins," I said.

"Oh, yes," said Fred, absently, "I thought for a moment -".

He broke off and with some commonplace remark, left me, but I had pierced his secret. He was the original Fergus MacMurchadha, or Fred Murphy, Eva's kinsman and lover, the man to whom she had been betrothed before her faithless father forced her to marry Strongbow, the invader, in Selskar Abbey, in the year 1172.

"And you mean to say he's still alive," said Pierce McCann.

"Sure he is," I said. "If you go to Wexford anyone will point him out to you."

"I can vouch for that," said Griffith, "my brother-in-law, who is a Franciscan priest, was recently in Wexford and he saw Fred Murphy and talked to him and he's as hale and hearty today as ever he was."

He went on to instance similar cases in history, such as the deathless St. Germain who wandered about Europe for centuries, who was an intimate of Charlemagne in the tenth century, and a friend of Louis XV in the eighteenth, of the mysterious Major Fraser, who did much the same thing; of the Ancient Roman who could not die, and of the wandering Jew.

Pierce McCann was looking at A.G. open-mouthed.

"You don't mean to say you believe all that?"

Griffith looked at him blandly. "Why not?" he asked.

Pierce could think of no reply.

In spite of the fact that they hardly ever agreed on anything, Griffith was genuinely fond of Cathal Brugha. The two men had many similar characteristics. They were both unmistakenly native Dubliners - a very distinctive type - both small men with extraordinary physical strength, both good and enthusiastic swimmers and both impossibly headstrong at times. In the days succeeding the Rising and before the historic Ard Fheis of 1917, they came near the breaking point several times. Griffith was striving very hard to keep Sinn Fein to its original purpose and policy, with its immediate aim the restoration of the Constitution of 1782, its means, passive resistance. Brugha, willing to adopt the name Sinn Fein - which had been forced by press and public on the Volunteers - would have nothing to do with the Constitution of 1782 and scorned passive resistance. Griffith was not unlike a game little terrier who finds his offspring surprisingly developing into a very large and angry lion. The quarrel was very bitter at times and once Brugha faced Griffith across the table and said if he wished to stick to his programme he could go to the country and he (Brugha) would take the platform against him with the Volunteers and sweep him out of political existence. De Valera, of course,

saved the day with his formula "The aim is the Republic but after independence is achieved, the people can decide by vote what form of government they wanted," which enabled us all to work together.

In spite, as I say, of their differences, A.G. had always a warm corner in his heart for Brugha and more than once I heard him defend him in his absence, paying tribute to his single-mindedness and whole-hearted sincerity. A few times I heard him refer to Brugha's heroic fight in 1916 when, wounded almost to death, he kept on firing and directing his men. I was not near Griffith in his last days but I am sure that the amazing heroism of Brugha in his last lone stand against the armed forces Griffith had sent against him, must have made the latter's heart bleed.

A.G. always hotly denied his final aim was the Constitution of 1782. One night in Gloucester there was an argument bearing on the significance of the word SAORSTAT, which had appeared in some statement issued in Dublin. A.G. said instead of the word 'Poblacht', which was being used for Republic, they should substitute the word Saorstat, which to us would mean "republic" and to the English "Free State". It was the first time I had heard the latter expression. We need not, said A.G., care what the English called the country if we were satisfied we had got what we

wanted. Tom Hunter, who was no diplomat, said bluntly:

"What about your King, Lords and Commons, A.G.?"

"That's right," said Pierce McCann, "you were always in favour of the restoration of the dual monarchy."

"Begob," said Tom Dillon in my ear, "they are a pair of idiots. Now we are going to have it."

A.G. turned on Pierce. "When did I say that?" he asked, and there was thunder in the air.

"Why, you've always said it," said Pierce, "in every issue of Sinn Fein and Nationality and in 'The Resurrection of Hungary'."

"I told you before," said A.G., truculently, "that you have not yet learned to read. I never said anything of that kind. What I said was that the Irish people should refuse to treat with England till she had conformed to the Act in which the English Government renounced their claim to legislate for Ireland and declared inalienable the right of the King, Lord and Commons of Ireland so to legislate."

"Ain't that the same thing?" asked Pierce, innocently.

"It's nothing of the kind. When you say you refuse to treat with England until they restore a certain kind of regime, it does not mean that that regime is your final aim."

"So under your plan we could go on to a republic?"

"Under my plan, as you call it, your hands would not be tied. You could go on to anything the Irish people wanted."

CHAPTER XXII

In February 1919, a great Irish Race Convention in Philadelphia demanded that President Wilson should voice Ireland's right to self-determination at the Peace Conference. The U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 261 to 41 advocated the application of the same principle in respect of Ireland.

Many times since he died I have seen references, Sean O'Faolain, one of those downright scribes who seem to know everything, referred in a recent article to Griffith's "well-known antagonism to the labour movement", thus exhibiting his too ready acceptance of a current superficial view. Griffith was not antagonistic to the labour movement. He deplored, it is true, the Irish trade unionists headlong tendency to rush into a strike on the slightest provocation and he certainly was bitterly hostile to the Larkin type of labour leader, whose aim was not true trade unionism at all but a sort of proletarian dictatorship through the instrumentality of one big union dominated and directed by one man.

Griffith was himself a staunch trade unionist. All the time he was a working printer in Dublin, he was a loyal and trusted member of the Dublin Typographical and Printers Society (? Provident), one of the most rigid trade unions existing in Ireland - so rigid, indeed, that when we were starting the

Irish Press, the D.T.P.S., refused to allow us to bring in printers from the provinces until every man on their books, no matter what his age, qualifications and physical condition, had already been employed. One of the conditions imposed was that the men brought in, even from Bray, only a few miles outside the City, had to take out temporary membership cards in the D.T.P.S., and had to surrender these if they lost their positions in the Irish Press, a natural insurance against allowing Dublin to be overcrowded with idle members of their trade. This union was so well run and was so far from being an employers' union, that during the period I had to negotiate with it, its members were receiving an average of £1 per week in wages more than the Belfast printers. I have frequently heard Griffith praise the D.T.P.S., and advocate that all sections of Irish labour should be organised on similar lines.

However, in the face of the Larkin threat - for so he regarded it - to the realisation of Ireland's national aspirations, he was adamant. I am, of course, referring to the Larkin of the 1913 strike and of the stormy Saturday night torchlight meetings and not to the later Larkin of the Trinity College Debating Society. Larkin, he held, was a disruptive influence. By splitting up the potential forces

of the Irish nation into warring factions on class lines, he was postponing any chance of Ireland regaining her freedom, quite apart from the fact that the only logical outcome of the success of his movement would be to set up a dictatorship of the worst kind. Later, he said to me of the Russian Soviet system, then in process of formation, "A dictatorship is bad enough but a proletarian dictatorship is infinitely worse. If there is to be a dictatorship, let it be one by the cultured classes". "The propertied classes?" I said. "No," he replied, "not the propertied classes - the cultured classes." Many years earlier, in Enniscorthy, we were discussing a speech made the day before by Michael Davitt - one of his last. "Davitt", he said, "visualises a socialist movement in which the Irish proletariat will march arm in arm with the English proletariat. What is to become of our distinctive nationality? Already the so-called upper classes of the two countries are marching arm in arm. If Davitt's ideas were to prevail, there would be the end of the Irish nation. The union would be complete."

This attitude of Griffith's towards Larkin was well known and one day we got some fun out of it in Gloucester Jail. I had started out somewhat earlier than usual one morning after breakfast for the exercise ground. On the ground floor of the prison, I found some warders supervising the cleaning

out of some cells not previously occupied. I asked a few questions but got no information and, having found there were fifteen cells being prepared, I ran back upstairs to the cell where Joe McGuinness and Griffith were still at breakfast. I told them what I had seen and said that I was going to start the story that Larkin had returned from America and had landed in Dublin the night before, that he had attempted to hold a meeting and there had been a riot in the course of which Larkin and fourteen of his comrades from Liberty Hall had been arrested and that they were on their way to Gloucester. Griffith gleefully agreed he would be furious when he heard the news.

I strolled around the corridor and looked into Tom Hunter's cell. Tom was putting on his boots.

"Aon sgeul?" he asked.

"No," I said, taking one of his cigarettes.

"What's up with you?" asked Tom, noticing my heavy preoccupation.

"Nothing."

"You've heard something?"

I was silent.

"What is it?"

Only those who have been imprisoned under such conditions can realise the thirst there is for news of any sort.

"Aw, maybe there's nothing in it," I said, looking more and more depressed.

"Where did you get it?" he asked. "Was it from Thompson?"

Thompson was the warder who had at times given me some news. I nodded.

"What is it?"

I closed Tom's door and swore him to secrecy.

"Jim Larkin," I said, "arrived unexpectedly in Dublin last night. There was a riot and Larkin and fourteen of his men were arrested and put on a boat for deportation to England."

Tom began to laugh.

"That's a pretty tall one," he said.

He searched for and found a hand ball.

"Are you coming out?" he asked, hopping the ball.

"No," I said, "I've a letter I haven't read."

I went back to my cell and in a few moments Tom passed my cell door and ran down the iron stairs. I heard him going toward the yard and then stop. He paced the hall and a minute later he came stumbling up the steps and burst into my cell.

"They're cleaning out the empty cells below," he said.

"What?" I asked, absent-mindedly, without taking my eyes from the letter I was reading.

"They're cleaning out the cells downstairs."

"Try another one, Tom," I said, without getting up.

"Honest," he said, "come and see for yourself."

"It's early in the morning,Tom," I said.

He nearly dragged me from the cell and down the stairs. We counted the cells, open-mouthed. There were fifteen we agreed. Without a word, I turned and walked back up the stairs to my cell, Tom following.

"It looks like it," he said.

"I'm afraid so."

"Well, what is there to be down in the mouth about?"

"It's Griffith I'm thinking of," I said, "you know how he feels about Larkin."

"Damn it. I never thought of that," said Tom.

He was itching to leave the cell to share the news with someone else. He went to the door.

"Look, Tom," I pleaded, "don't give me away."

"Oh Lord, not at all," he said.

"You know it's on account of Thompson."

"Sure," said Tom as he went off.

In a few moments I heard excited whispers here and there in the corridor and, after a little while, Sean McEntee came in.

"Did you hear anything?" he asked.

I had not, I said. He told me the story about Larkin, the riots and the preparation of the cells. I was very sceptical. He assured me it was true. Where had he heard it? I asked. He was not in a position to tell me, but I could take his word for it that it was absolutely true. Manahan came along just then and he had the story also, but with some additional details. Tommy Dillon who came on the scene wanted to know, in voluble Irish, why they couldn't send Larkin somewhere else. I asked meaningly if Griffith had been told and, without a word, they all made for Joe McGuinness's cell. I followed them. Griffith, with an absolutely wooden face, was listening to Jim Dolan telling the story.

"And they're sending him here?" he asked, pulling at his moustache.

"That's what we're told," said Dolan helplessly.

Griffith turned his back on us and picking up a book, he idly flicked over the leaves. Each of the others looked as if he alone were responsible for the catastrophe. I ventured the opinion that it was all a yarn and brought down on my head a violent and unanimous denunciation. It was clear that in my attitude of doubt, I was in a minority of one. I found myself beginning to believe the story myself. Ginger O'Connell rushed in with the story afresh. He had the added detail that Larkin would arrive in the small hours

following
of the/morning. There was an atmosphere of gloom.

"I don't see," said McEntee, "why we should take it like this. After all, we are all Irishmen and victims of the same foreign tyranny."

Griffith turned on him.

"Larkin is not an Irishman," he said.

"Even if he is not," said Joe McGuinness, "surely we could arrange to carry on without an open break."

Griffith was muttering under his breath words like "communist", "syndicalist", etc.

"Look here," said Dolan, "in spite of everything, and I've no love for Larkin, we should not show a disunited front in face of the enemy."

"That's right," I agreed, "and moreover, whatever A.G. thinks of him, Larkin has done a lot for the working man."

Griffith interrupted me savagely and accused me of being a Larkinite. He said I had taken Larkin's side on the Wexford strike. I retorted warmly that I had taken the side of the workers because they were badly treated, but that did not mean I was a Larkinite.

"Of course," said Griffith loftily, looking at me, "if anyone wants to hobnob with him, that's his own affair, but I will not willingly associate with a man I regard as a destructive force in Irish nationalism."

All day long the discussion went on, even in the exercise ground. After supper the argument grew so hot that a couple of the lads nearly came to blows. Just before lock-up, Griffith came to my cell, chucking with glee.

"Do you think we ought to tell them?" he asked.

"Good lord," I answered, "we'd be murdered."

In the morning we learned that the new prisoners for whom the cells were being prepared were old friends of ours from Usk prison, and we all breathed freely once more.

Many of the prisoners took advantage of their incarceration to study, but Griffith insisted on regarding his internment as a holiday, having never taken a vacation outside. Life in the world was sometimes grim, occasionally terrible for him, but in jail he refused to take life seriously. I helped him to think up jokes which were often considered a dreadful nuisance by the other prisoners. A number of them had started to play bridge - a slow game at any time, but doubly so for beginners. Griffith and I pointed out to the players that the game was a sad waste of time, that for a card game it had not even the rapid fire delivery of nap or solo or even forty-five to redeem it, that it had all the baneful effects of a drug and was therefore demoralising. The players patiently stroked their budding moustaches - they were all growing them - and tried to reach even deeper

depths of concentration on the cards they held. They ignored us as long as they could but finally they abandoned the effort to continue the game in the hall and they retired to one of the cells. Even then, we could not leave them in peace. We walked noisily up and down the corridor outside the cell, talking loudly of the iniquity of card playing in general and of bridge in particular. We deplored the fact that this insidious vice had found its way into our little world and predicted the dire consequences that would ensue if it were not rooted out. As this had no effect, we decided on trying conundrums which had then been raging in the prison for some time. Someone would propound a ready-made conundrum and challenge the house for an answer. Generally, the more inane the answer, the better the chance of its being right. So we appeared at the door of the card-players' cell.

"Ah, here's a good one," cried Griffith, pointing dramatically at the card table. "How is that pack of cards like a basket of oranges?"

I tried several silly answers, the most brilliant being that there were several deuces (juices) in it. At each attempt, Griffith would cry out that it was wrong and exhort me to try again. At last I gave it up.

"It's because there are so many pips in it," he cried and we both laughed so uproariously that the players rose en masse and charged at us. We took refuge in the other cells and, when I emerged from my hiding place, I found Griffith again outside the card players' cell, the door of which had been closed. He had taken off his shoes so as to deaden his footfalls and was carrying out the stools from the adjoining cells. These were piled high against the door and when all was ready we started yelling. As we expected, the door was wrenched open and the stools all fell into the cell, creating an unholy clatter.

All very childish, of course, but all helping to offset the tedium of confinement.

His chess games, however, Griffith took seriously. He was extremely good though he played very rapidly. We played nearly every night and I remember beating him only once.

There was plenty of time to think up and carry out schemes designed to harass one's comrades. Someone gave me one day a copy of the Dundalk Democrat, one of the provincial newspapers which was hostile to Sinn Fein. There was a great deal of post-election news, amongst the items being a letter from Sean McEntee thanking the electors of Monaghan for having chosen him as M.P. One of the passages in the letter was a quotation from a speech of President Wilson's,

prefaced by the words "As another spokesman has said in another place, etc". I brought the paper to my cell and with a pin I worked at it for half an hour until I had changed the word spokesman into statesman. It was good enough to deceive the naked eye. Then I brought the paper out and showed it to Denny McCullagh. He was so tickled that he started reading the letter aloud to all and sundry. McEntee came rushing out of his cell, indignantly denying he had written the "statesman" paragraph. He read the paper for himself and declared his words had been altered by the editor of the Democrat to hold him up to ridicule. He retired to his cell, vowing he would write a flaming letter to the editor. I confessed to Griffith and McGuinness what I had done and asked them to try and get Sean to refrain from writing the letter. They merely took it all as a joke, but when Tommy Dillon came in and gave us details of what McEntee was writing, they realised it would have to be stopped. I was deputed to try and reason with Sean. I put the case to him as strongly as I could and said that, as an old newspaper man, if I were the editor of the Democrat and received from a political opponent such a letter as he was writing, I would make a hare of him with a headline "McEntee says he is not a statesman like Wilson". It was all no use. Sean was adamant. , Of course, I did

not know, at the time, that it was I who was being made a hare of because Tommy Dillon had given me away by telling McEntee the whole story. All day long the comedy went on and, finally, it was agreed that when Sean handed the letter into the Governor's office, I should try and get an opportunity to retrieve it. At length, shortly before six o'clock, watching from my cell, I saw McEntee going to the Governor's office with the letter in his hand. Returning, he stopped to chat with a couple of the lads just opposite my cell, while I was in a fever for fear the Governor would turn up and enter the office before I could get the letter. Eventually, Sean went to his cell and I ran across to the Governor's office. There was the letter on the table, addressed to the Dundalk Democrat. I picked it up just as I was aware someone had come to the office door. It was the Governor.

"Good evening," he said, looking, as I thought, suspiciously at the letter in my hand. I was so confused that I could not think of a word to say.

"Did you want anything," he said.

"Why, yes," I answered, "there was a parcel sent to me from Dublin and it should have arrived two days ago."

"Well?"

I wondered if the parcel had come.

"No," he said, "you know very well that all parcels are delivered the day they are received."

"I was going to post this letter," I said, "but I have changed my mind," and I pushed past him out of the office.

All the fellows were in the corridor as I made my way back and McEntee asked me loudly how I had got on. I knew then, of course, there was something wrong. I went straight to Sean and preferred him the letter.

"I took this back," I said as a preliminary to making a clean breast of the whole thing.

"Open it," said Sean. I did so and found inside only a blank sheet of paper. This time the laugh was on me.

I have often wondered how the monks in a monastery can go on day after day, and year after year, seeing the same people and hearing the same things and retain their mental balance. Of course, their voluntary renunciation of the world in the spirit of self sacrifice has a great deal to do with it. Certainly in Gloucester Jail, and the same was true of all other internment jails, few of the prisoners kept an absolutely level mental balance and Griffith was one of the few. Only in his dealings with the Governor did he show signs of an irritation which the others of us felt and often expressed towards one another.

One day during a handball game, the ball struck a cell

window and broke it. Almost immediately, Desmond Fitzgerald came running out, his face pale with fury.

"Who broke my cell window?" he cried.

"I did," said Denny McCullagh, adding, quite truthfully, "it was an accident."

Fitzgerald ran back into the prison and when McCullagh returned to his cell he found it drenched with water. It appeared that Fitzgerald had filled a bucket with water, lugged it along the corridor and dashed it into Denny's cell.

"It's a pity," said Ginger O'Connell to Fitzgerald, "that you do not learn to cultivate a little more of the detachment of the poet and philosopher."

Sean McEntee had the quickest temper of any man in the bunch but at the same time, he was quick to forgive and his generosity never failed. I remember how humiliated I felt when only a few days after I had had a fierce row with him over a kettle of boiling water and a frying pan - a row in which all the right was on his side - I came down with a feverish cold and Sean came to my cell at least once every hour to minister to my needs. Every parcel he got was shared with everybody. Some of the fellows were inclined to dismiss him lightly as they considered his style of oratory rather florid. I recalled de Valera's statement to me in Lewes jail.

"They're wrong in thinking McEntee is a lightweight.

The British found his activities in 1916 such that they concluded he must be one of the outstanding leaders of the Rising. They had evidence showing he had led the movement in Dundalk, as well as somewhere else in Monaghan, and he was taken in action in Dublin all in one week".

CHAPTER XXIII

Sean T. O'Kelly went to Paris as the Envoy of Dail Eireann. For many months he tried to secure a hearing for the Irish delegates at the Peace Conference but he found that British influence was too strong.

The cells were unlocked at six o'clock but most of us lay on in bed for an hour or so longer. Sean McEntee was always up early to get the half dozen English newspapers we subscribed to. One morning I could not sleep and I was waiting to come out when the door was opened. I found the papers at the entrance to our wing and my first glance at them showed me that the news was sensational. I hastily picked up all the papers and brought them to my cell. The news featured in ribbon headlines on the front pages was to the effect that De Valera had escaped from Lincoln Jail. I read the account in the Daily Mail. After a while, McEntee came out, filled his kettle and put it on the gas ring to boil. Then he went down for the newspapers and returned empty-handed to his cell. I went on with my reading until I had absorbed the whole story and then I concealed all the newspapers under my mattress. I strolled out into the hall and found Manahan assisting Sean who was frying bacon and eggs. Sean told me

the papers had not yet arrived. He was going to make another complaint about the late delivery. I went on to Griffith's cell.

"Are you awake?"

"Yes."

"Listen," I said, "Dev escaped from Lincoln jail yesterday morning. IT's front page news in all the papers."

He jumped out of bed.

"Where are the papers?"

"They're all concealed in my cell."

"Are you serious?"

"Absolutely. I'm not going to give out the papers till I first tell the story and see the reaction. So don't give me away."

Some of the lads were moving about and the warders were coming on duty when I left Griffith. I went to McEntee's cell. Manahan and he were at breakfast.

"Say, Sean, did you get any explanation about the newspapers?"

"No."

"I know the reason they're late. There's news in them."

"Well, think of that," said Sean.
"Dev has escaped from Lincoln jail" I said
Manahan began to laugh.

"That's a good one," he said.

"I suppose," said Sean, "you got it from one of the warders."

"That's right."

Sean stood up and looked out in the corridor.

"Listen, boys," he said to all and sundry. "Dev has escaped from Lincoln jail. Who says so? Brennan says so. Haw, haw, haw!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" they all chorussed.

I started to prepare breakfast and they all crowded around kidding me. The more I tried to convince them the story was true, the more they laughed.

"You'll have to think up something better than that," said McCullagh. "It's not up to your usual standard."

I brought the breakfast along to Joe McGuinness' cell. Griffith had told him the news.

"I don't believe it," said Joe. "You shouldn't play a trick like that on us."

To convince him, I went back to my own quarters and brought back one of the papers, concealed under my coat. They looked at the headlines.

"Aw, this is too good," said Joe, "let them have the papers."

"No," I said, "I want to teach them that they will have to believe me some time."