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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STAIRÉ IMLÉSTA 1913-21-

No. W.S. 783

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 783

Witness

Lieut.-Colonel Thomas Ryan,
Glenavon,
46 Ballymun Road,
Glasnevin,
Dublin.

Identity.

Vice-Comd't. and Acting O/C. 5th/6th Battalion
3rd Tipperary Brigade;

Member of No. 2 Flying Column, 3rd. Tipperary
Brigade.

Subject.

National and military activities
Cos. Tipperary-Kilkenny, 1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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W 8 783

Statement of Lieut-Colonel Thomas Ryan,
"Glenavon", 46 Ballymun Road, Glasnevin,
Dublin.

I was born on the 13th September, 1897, at Tubrid, Ballylooby, Cahir, Co. Tipperary, my family being middle-class farmers. The name of Ryan had been connected with our farm for the past eight generations, which fact may be confirmed by an inspection of the headstone inscription in the graveyard at Newcastle, Co. Tipperary. I learned as a boy that members of our family had figured in every Irish national movement of their time and that, in consequence, the pick of them were forced to emigrate. There was one outstanding athlete in the family two generations ago, Thomas Ryan, who is still remembered and spoken of among the people of the Galtee and Knockmealdown mountains.

I began my education as an infant in the local national schools, but my schooling finished there at the age of twelve because of the fact that my father died then, his death bringing about a domestic financial crisis which demanded my constant labour on the farm. We were a family of seven, four boys and three girls, of which I was the third eldest, a brother being the eldest and a sister next to him. My eldest brother had contracted rheumatic fever at the age of fifteen which left him unfit for work on the farm, so that, following my father's death, my mother had to rely upon me to carry on the work of the farm.

My memory of my schooldays centres about the pals I made there. The schoolmistress was a deeply religious woman and was outstanding as a religious instructor, but beyond that nothing else mattered to her. Nationality was never referred to, but instead we were taught in a fashion in keeping with the slave mentality of the period. We were frequently lectured on the deference due to what was then termed the local gentry to whom we were ordered to raise our hats in salute whenever they passed. I was caned several times following reports to the effect that I had failed to tip my cap to the local landlord.

The responsibility of running the farm had fallen directly upon my mother's shoulders after my father's death and I was aware that the place was in debt at this time. She was a saintly, God-fearing woman and I made up my mind that she would not be alone in the struggle to make provision for the family. So in the space of a few years we had cleared off the debt, and a few years later, when I was forced to go on the run, we had £3,000 in a deposit account. This success was due partly to the fact that I had acquired a good knowledge of the cattle and sheep trade, and the farmers in the locality who appreciated my knowledge of the business began to look upon me as a lunatic when it became known that I was one of the principal officers in the local Volunteer organisation.

Looking back now upon my work, I feel that my efforts justified me to some extent. Each of my sisters received a thousand pounds by way of a fortune or dowry, an essential asset for a farmer's daughter in those days. To the present day they have each

remembered, time and again, that their success was due to my early efforts.

As a boy growing up, even though I had but little time for relaxation, I was head and neck in every devilment and diversion which took place in the neighbourhood. I followed the wren at Christmas, organised dances and was enthusiastic about hurling and football. I was still only a boy when I was asked to shave an old man who had died nearby, and I made such a good job of it that I was requested by a number of old men in the locality to give them their last shave.

I had reached the age of fifteen when an Irish teacher, named Carroll, formed a voluntary night class for the teaching of the Irish language, and I became a member of this class which continued for two years. Several of those attending the classes acquired a working knowledge of the Irish language, but our teacher also awakened our interest in Irish history and, through him, I got a history of Ireland which I read with interest and learned of the wrongs that had been inflicted on our country through the centuries. My interest quickened and I read the lives of Sarsfield and Michael Dwyer, and learned from old men in the locality of the wrongs inflicted by the landlords, and of the executions of Father Sheehy and Dr. Geoffrey Keating who were connected with my native countryside. Organised entertainment in the days of my youth was practically non-existent. The only big event outside a local wedding or an odd football match was an annual dance at Christmas. Neighbours met nightly at the crossroads to exchange gossip, and threshing operations

were looked forward to as a social event where a panel of about twenty local farmers accompanied the threshing mill to each other's farms and the end of each threshing was celebrated by singing and dancing. It was an understood obligation upon the farmer whose corn had been threshed to provide scope for the celebration afterwards, and the local girls attended for the dancing. At such functions I heard, learned and sang the songs of Irish nationhood as well as Irish love songs, but it was the Irish national songs that made a deep impression on my mind.

My first effort at organisation was an occasion when I organised a crossroads dance in my own area. I collected some money from the neighbours with which I bought some timber and with this constructed a dancing platform which provided amusement for many a year afterwards.

When the organisation of the Volunteers began, there was a Company formed in our parish some time about the beginning of the 1914-1918 war, of which I was elected Company Captain. This Company never became a very prominent unit, and the Redmondite split coming soon after its inception, it faded completely away. I have a distinct recollection of the conditions existing in our locality at the start of the 1914-1918 war. The people of the garrison towns and the villages in my area were 100% pro-British and some 85% of the country people had similar leanings. My best pal at the time, who was also my 2nd in charge of the Volunteer Company, a lad named O'Brien, fell for the British propaganda of the period and decided

to join the British Army. He was the son of a labouring man in the locality and a fine upstanding fellow of over six feet. He and I had many arguments on the rights and wrongs of the war and where our duty lay, and it finished with each of us going our own way. He was killed at the battle of Mons and I often regretted his passing when later we were fighting the British, knowing that he would have been foremost in the fight for Ireland on the hills of Tipperary. False propaganda had brought him to his doom.

The 1916 Rising in Dublin came to me as a bolt from the blue. Not being a Volunteer at the time, I had no reason to expect anything of the kind, and the news raised my mind to a fever of excitement, giving me the feeling that I wanted to do something to help the cause. I learned of the fighting from the local manager of the Post Office and kept in constant touch with him throughout the week to learn more of the progress of events. I knew Seán Treacy at this time, as his aunt was married to a cousin of mine, named Walsh, and on Easter Monday I received a dispatch from him for delivery on the following day to Christy Ryan of Mitchelstown. On Easter Monday night I met my godfather, a local publican, named James Hanrahan, and having discussed the fighting in Dublin, we decided to show our sympathy with the national cause by hoisting a tricolour flag on the topmost pinnacle of the highest steeple in the local Protestant church. Hanrahan supplied the flag and I undertook the hoisting of it, which was successfully accomplished though at the risk of my life. The top floor within the steeple

collapsed under my weight when I was getting down, precipitating me some sixteen feet to the next floor, but I fortunately sustained no serious injury. It took the British garrison from Cahir a week to shoot down this flag, as none of them seemed capable or cared to undertake the dangerous task of climbing up to remove it.

I delivered my dispatch to Mitchelstown on the following day, Tuesday of Easter Week, and passing through Ballyporeen on my return trip I was arrested by the R.I.C. and detained for questioning. Fortunately for me, however, there was an R.I.C. man named Vaughan there who knew me, as he was paying attentions to the sister of James Hanrahan, my godfather. This man interceded for me and assured the others of my innocence, so that I was released after a short delay.

Immediately following the Rising the general local opinion as expressed in daily conversations was one of condemnation of the national leaders and the cause for which they had died. They considered that the general rank and file of the rebels were innocent, ignorant, misguided young men and that the leaders had instigated the enterprise not to free Ireland but to help Germany. There was, however, a small percentage of the youth of the rural areas who thought differently. They felt a strong admiration for and belief in the leaders of the Rising, and felt the urge to follow in their footsteps. There was no organisation and no arms in our area, but rebel songs were sung at every crossroads and we cherished the hope that the glory that was theirs would also be ours at some later stage.

My younger brother who was at school in Melleray had become keen on football. He came home one Christmas, bringing five or six other students with him to organise a local team in our district. There had never been a football team there before, but they got a lot of other young fellows in with them to form a team. They played a match against a local team from Ardfinnan and, to the great surprise of everyone concerned, this scratch team played a draw against the Ardfinnan team. There was a re-play of this match before the students returned to school. This was I think in the year 1917. A dispute arose when it was found that the Ardfinnan team was putting in some of their senior players to ensure victory in the re-play. I objected to this and challenged this procedure to the Ardfinnan team. They replied by telling me that I was as big as any of their players and why wouldn't I and any other big fellows we could muster go in against their players. I had never played football in my life before and had only a pair of strong hob-nailed shoes on. In this way I went in to play my first football game. By the time the game was finished, I had succeeded in flattening out every player of the Ardfinnan team. I had the ball at the goal mouth but was unable to score - I knew so little about football. Nevertheless this gave me an interest in the game which I followed up, and one year later - in 1918 - I was selected to play on the county team and played in the All Ireland Final that year against Wexford.

Some time about April, 1917, Seán Treacy made

a few trips to the locality and suggested the organising of a Volunteer unit there. On his second visit to us, he gave us an outline of the organisation and generally encouraged us, pointing out what should be done and how to do it. Treacy came to Ned McGrath of Cahir who afterwards became Battalion Commander of the 6th Battalion, and he spent two days between McGrath's place and mine trying to organise that Battalion.

As a result of Treacy's visit, the Battalion was formed with Ned McGrath as the Battalion Commandant. I was Vice Commandant; Mick Ladrigan was Battalion Adjutant; Bill Dempsey of Ballylooby was Battalion Quartermaster. That was the Battalion Staff. This was really the beginning of my career in the Volunteer movement.

Following Treacy's instructions, we set to work from then on to organise Companies in the surrounding parishes, to appoint officers for these and to direct their training. We had very little in the way of arms at this time but we collected from well-wishers and sympathisers anything we could lay hands on in the way of shotguns and miscellaneous revolvers, but our armament was very poor.

The organising of Companies in this locality was difficult because the European war was not yet over and the general sympathies of the people around were still tending towards the British. In villages where, in the Redmondite Volunteer days, they were able to raise Companies of 100-150, we were only able to get together

5 or 6, or 10 at the outside. The advent of the conscription crisis, however, brought about a bit of a change in this respect, as recruits then flocked in, so that, where we had 8 or 10 men previously, we now had 60 or 80. When the threat of conscription had passed, most of these fell away again, leaving very few of those who came in during the conscription threat to become serious Volunteers. I would say that, after the conscription crisis had passed, the strength of the various Companies in the Battalion averaged 12 to 20, and I think the strength of the whole Battalion did not exceed about 100. The Battalion area extended from Newcastle, Co. Tipperary, to the borders of Mitchelstown, along by the Galtees into Cahir. That was the 6th Battalion area of the South Tipperary Brigade.

In the political sphere, the people around were generally supporters of the Irish Party. There was, therefore, no one to undertake political propaganda for the electioneering work except the Volunteers. The responsibility for this Branch of activity became a primary duty of the Battalion Staff. Consequently, a large part of our activities during the latter end of 1918 was devoted to the work in connection with the 1918 elections. We had to arrange for various meetings, people to make speeches at them, transport to take people around and Volunteer units to protect the speakers from interference. Besides some training and organisation, this constituted our chief activity at this time.

Ned McGrath, the Battalion Commandant, was arrested about this time. I can't remember precisely

when it was that he was arrested, but he was imprisoned in Wormwood Scrubbs and was involved in the hunger-strike there. The result was that the command and administration of the Battalion fell upon me as Vice Commandant during his absence.

We were very green and inexperienced in political methods and, in the carrying out of the work of the elections, we had to use our own imagination to do the best we could. I remember on one occasion I was passing through Ardfinnan when the Irish Parliamentary Party were holding a meeting, which was being addressed by the local Irish Party representative, the M.P. for the constituency. Feeling that it was my duty to do something about this, I got up on the platform and told this man to get off, that we would not tolerate this British propaganda. He got off and that finished the meeting. So perhaps our methods were crude and direct, but at least they were effective. P.J. Moloney was the Sinn Féin candidate in that area and his candidature was successful in the election.

During the election days, the Volunteers mounted guards on the polling booths to prevent any attempt at hooliganism by any other elements. Volunteer guards accompanied the ballot boxes and mounted guard on them during the count, so that, as in other places, the Volunteers appeared to be in complete control of the election.

On the 21st. January, 1919, the same day as the assembly of the 1st Dáil, the attack on Soloheadbeg by the Tipperary Volunteers took place. I was in

close touch with the Brigade Staff at this time and knew Dan Breen, Seán Treacy and the others very well. I did not actually know anything about the projected attack at Soloheadbeg but, on the day it occurred, I got a message from Treacy informing me that it had taken place and that they, the attacking party, intended to stay at my place that night.

As it happened, there was a threshing machine coming to our place on the same evening to begin threshing operations the following day, which, of course, brought a lot of people around the place. There was also a strong rumour current that I was about to be arrested as a result of my appearing in command and drilling Volunteers openly at Clogheen a short time before that. I left my own house that evening to meet Treacy, Breen and Robinson at Tincurry but, when I arrived there, I was told that they had changed their plans. I then returned home.

On the following morning my home was raided by six R.I.C. men and I was arrested. I was tried in Clogheen Court that day and sentenced to three months imprisonment.

Discussing this afterwards with Breen and Treacy, they remarked that it would have been a bad job for the R.I.C. if they had carried out their original intention to stay with me on that night, as they would have attacked the raiding party the moment they appeared.

Up to a short time previous to my arrest, I had no arms, but a short time before I was arrested I succeeded

in gaining possession of a Webley revolver in a peculiar manner. There was a British Army officer named La Terriere who was stationed in Cahir Barracks and who was married to a lady in the locality named Grubb. This officer was a pretty wealthy man and knocked about the country, driving a pony and trap usually and spending money freely in hotel bars and suchlike. He was known to go about armed with a revolver. At this time I was making some dummy rifles - wooden guns - for the purpose of drilling the Volunteers and I took great delight in making these as realistic looking as possible. I had just completed the making of about six of these one day, when I saw La Terriere coming along the road. On the spur of the moment, I decided to hold him up. I went to a point about 200 yards from my home where I hid myself behind a gate pier until he came along. Producing my wooden gun, I held him up. He dropped his revolver and proceeded on his way. In this manner I gained possession of my first revolver, a long Webley .45. I am not sure whether La Terriere was then a serving officer or not, but he continually frequented Cahir Barracks and was on this occasion on his way from Cahir Barracks to his father-in-law's place. He had been left a lot of money from time to time and lived a riotous kind of life in the locality. He may have been an intelligence officer, but I don't know for sure.

I therefore had possession of this revolver at the time of my arrest, but it was not in the house with me. I had it planked in a calf-shed, about a field away from the house, where it was carefully hidden.

Consequently, even if it had occurred to me to resist arrest, I had no arms by me at the time. The question of violent resistance to arrest had not arisen at that time, so that I don't know whether, if I had the gun at hand, I would have used it to avoid arrest or not. I think that things had not progressed sufficiently far at that time to take such action, and I doubt whether I would have done so.

When I was arrested on the day following the Soloheadbeg ambush - January 22nd, 1919 - I received a sentence of three months imprisonment, which I served in Waterford Jail. On the day of my release, which would be some time in April, 1919, the Governor of the Jail sent for me to inform me that I was being released and proceeded to give me a lecture on my future conduct. Realising, however, that I was not listening to him, he got very annoyed and called me a young pup, saying, "Do you think a lot of pups like you can defeat the British Government?" - and dismissed me contemptuously from his presence.

Leaving Waterford, I went to Dungarvan where the Tipperary football team was then in training. The Tipperary players had to go into Waterford to carry out their training as there was martial law in Tipperary at the time and no assemblies were allowed by the military authorities. As I was one of the Tipperary All-Ireland footballers at this time, there was a reception arranged for me on my arrival there. I went into training with the rest of the team and nothing much happened there for a fortnight. The team were staying at the Eagle Hotel in Dungarvan. We

learned in the course of our stay there that the barmaid in the hotel was being courted by one of the local R.I.C. constables. We got to know where they met and when. So one night another member of the team, Bill Grant, and myself went for a walk in that direction when it was dark and we saw the two of these sitting on a seat in the park. Turning up our coat collars and pulling our caps down on our eyes, we came up behind. Seeing his revolver lying handy, I grabbed it and we left them. Having hidden this revolver away, I had it when the Column started. When I grabbed the revolver, we held him up and he did not seem to know whether we were joking or in earnest but, as I had the revolver before he could do anything, he was helpless. The joke of the matter was that there was not a word about this incident afterwards. No one was arrested nor was there any mention of the loss of this revolver. I don't know how the constable managed to get away with it, or whether he reported its loss or concealed the fact. Neither the policeman nor the girl appeared to have recognised us although we were both staying in the hotel.

I was Officer Commanding the 6th Battalion from about May, 1920, until November, 1920. I also acted as Battalion O/C for a period in 1919. This was in the absence of Ned McGrath, who was Battalion Commander and who was imprisoned during these periods.

Mick Ladrigan was Adjutant of the Battalion. He being a man who had nothing much to do otherwise, I thought he would be a better man to look after the organisation of the Battalion, as I had my work on the

farm to attend to and could not devote sufficient time to the Battalion. I brought this matter up at a Battalion Council meeting and convinced the other officers there that it would be in the best interests of the Battalion to appoint Ladrigan as Acting Officer Commanding. He therefore acted in that capacity for some months.

I am not very clear on the dates of my appointment as Acting Battalion Commander. I took up this job when Ned McGrath was arrested on two occasions and I don't remember just when that was. I know that during McGrath's imprisonment, he was on the hunger strike which took place in Wormwood Scrubbs Prison in London. This might perhaps fix the approximate date of his arrest.

It was during this first period of McGrath's imprisonment that I first took over as Acting Battalion Commander, which position I held for a few months until, as I have said, I handed over to Mick Ladrigan. Ladrigan then carried on as Battalion Commander until he also was arrested, and it was then I took over for the second time. I think this second taking-over of the Battalion would have been about April, 1920. I am not clear as to the circumstances surrounding Ned McGrath's position because I think he was released, or came back, and resumed his appointment for a short time, but was again arrested and interned from then until some time after the Truce.

During the period I acted as Officer Commanding the Battalion, I had occasion to preside at the trial of

three spies or, at any rate, people who were suspected of spying for the enemy. This was in the early part of the war when the manner of dealing with spies had not been very formally established. In the case of these three, the evidence against them was not very conclusive. They were people of the itinerant class and the way we dealt with them was to take them by car about twenty miles out of the area where they were left, with the warning that, if they appeared again in the area, they would be shot at sight.

Another thing I would like to refer to, which occurred about that time also, concerned a man named Chris Conway, who was a member of our Column afterwards. It was reported to us from a Company Commander of the Galtee Battalion that there was an ex-British soldier, named Conway, in his area whom he was convinced was a spy. I summoned a Battalion Council meeting to inquire into this matter. Evidence regarding this man's movements was sought. The Company Commander concerned, while he could produce no concrete proofs of the man's guilt, was adamant in his conviction that the man was a spy. In this predicament I put it to the Company Commander, in view of his rooted conviction as to whether he would accept responsibility for taking the life of Conway, but he would not accept this, although he still adhered to his belief that Conway was a spy. The matter was left standing for the moment but I was not too happy about my decision in the matter, and so I arranged to meet Conway and investigate the matter further. I found out from him that he had deserted from a number of regiments in the British Army during the war, not because he was afraid to fight but

because he felt unwilling to fight for England, though he had been driven by economic pressure to join the British Army in the first place. He claimed a pride in being an Irishman and stated that it was his ambition to fight for Ireland. I kept him under observation from that time until the Column was formed.

Some time after that, I invited Conway to take part in an attack on the R.I.C. Barracks at Ballyporeen. He was posted in the most dangerous position during the attack where we kept him under observation, with a view to shooting him at once if he showed any sign of treachery in his behaviour. Instead, to our surprise, he showed himself fearless and determined in the course of the attack and demonstrated to those of us who watched him how a man should behave under fire. From that night onwards, he became the white-haired boy and was taken into the Column without having taken the Volunteer oath. He remained with the Column through all its activities until the Truce and was our principal instructor in drill and musketry, being an expert on these subjects through his British Army training.

Conway was fearless and a natural born fighter. I often thought in the subsequent years that, had the circumstances afforded him the opportunity, he might have become a famous leader like Tom Barry, for instance. During the Spanish Civil War, he was killed while fighting with the Irish Brigade there. He had had a very varied career, having been in the National Army for a time from 1922. When he went to Spain with the Irish Brigade, he assumed the name, Tommy Ryan, that is, my

name, and when he became a casualty it was under this name.

An incident which occurred during one of the periods when I was acting as Battalion Commander, about 1919 or early 1920, deserves mention. I am not sure of the date, but the particular incident is mentioned in Ernie O'Malley's book which may give the date of it. It was while O'Malley was in Tipperary as organiser. A Battalion Council meeting was held at Mrs. Tobin's of Tincurry, at which Seán Treacy and Ernie O'Malley were present. After the meeting, Treacy and O'Malley detained me to go into some question on training details. We had just about finished our discussion when we got word to the effect that the local Company had been rounded up and were all under arrest. We did not know at the time what had happened, but Treacy said, "Come on! We will see what this is all about!", and we headed for the main Mitchelstown-Cahir road.

When we reached the main road, we saw on the Mitchelstown side of us, about 400 yards away, a troop of cavalry coming towards us. There were about 30 or so of these horsemen. The prisoners, amounting to about 40, were being marched along between the files of soldiers, handcuffed in pairs. We learned afterwards that the Company had been surprised at drill and the soldiers apparently had been informed where to find them because they came prepared with handcuffs to take them in. When the troops were within about 300 yards of us, the three of us opened fire on them with our pistols and revolvers. A couple of horses fell and there was a general stampede, the soldiers jumping from their

horses and flying for cover. In the middle of the excitement, the prisoners cleared off, handcuffed as they were. All the Volunteers made good their escape, though some of them remained in their handcuffs for hours before they were able to get rid of them.

This incident was one that demonstrated the character of Seán Treacy. He was full of enterprise and initiative. It was he who first suggested that we should go and see what had happened and it was he, when we saw the soldiers coming towards us with their prisoners, decided that we should attack them. He was armed with his parabellum pistol, O'Malley had a Peter-the-Painter and I had a .45 Webley revolver. It was characteristic of Seán that he would take the offensive whatever the odds, and he probably realised that the surprise of our fire would be effective in concealing the weakness of our force.

Another incident that occurred about that time shows how the gradual arming of the Tipperary Volunteers was carried on. Cahir town, by reason of the fact that it was a garrison town and that most of the population were the loyalist type, was considered a good place for the people in Dublin to send consignments of arms for Tipperary Volunteers. Some time in 1919, or it may have been early 1920, such a consignment was sent, packed in egg boxes. It was consigned to the hardware shop of Irwin's of Cahir. Irwin's had no connection with the Volunteers and were looked upon, if anything, as antagonistic. There were only three Volunteers in the town of Cahir. Two of these had been arrested and were in jail at this time, and the

third was a man who worked in Irwin's but at this time was on holidays.

Irwin's shop was next-door to the R.I.C. Barracks. When this particular consignment of arms arrived and the Volunteer assistant being away on holidays, the boxes were opened by Mr. Irwin himself. The consignment consisted of some 5 or 6 rifles and bayonets, ammunition and hand-grenades. When Irwin saw this, he became alarmed but, though a loyalist, he said nothing about it except to one of his assistants, whom he asked to get in touch with somebody to have this stuff removed from his premises.

This young assistant came out to my place one evening, there being no Volunteer living anywhere between my place and Cahir. I therefore had no one to fall back on to get the stuff away and so I had to do something about it myself. I decided that if I went into Cahir, all dressed up, I would be sure to be arrested. On the other hand, I had often been seen in the town in my ordinary working clothes, where I went often on a Monday to pig fairs and markets, and I decided to take a chance on this. I took a horse and cart and drove into the town as I was. I drove into the market yard and waited there until an opportune moment arrived to pull down to Irwin's and, when the coast was clear, threw the cases up on the cart. I drove off for Brigade Headquarters at Rosegreen where I delivered the stuff and returned home without incident.

During the time I was Officer Commanding the (5th) 6th Battalion Seán Treacy instructed me, following a

Battalion Council meeting, to make arrangements for the capture of Ardfinnan R.I.C. Barracks. The situation of it was such that it could not be taken other than through a ruse. I decided to request a publican's daughter, a cousin of mine, to do a line with one of the local R.I.C. for the purpose of securing vital information re their movements. I ascertained in due course that all the R.I.C. went to 8 o'clock Mass on Sunday morning, with the exception of one left in barracks. I conveyed the information to Treacy. Treacy came to my home on a Saturday evening and made plans for rushing the barracks next morning. I consulted with Pa Maher, one of the few Volunteers in the village, to scout the village early on Sunday morning and report to Mochra cross-roads at 8 o'clock. He reported and, to our surprise, he stated that there was a party of military in the village. The attack was abandoned and we were at a loss to know what happened. I got the impression that my cousin had fallen for the R.I.C. man. Such, however, was not the case. The following may explain somewhat. When I was Officer Commanding the garrison in Clonmel in 1922, an R.I.C. man from Ardfinnan presented himself for an interview with the O/C. My curiosity was aroused and I accorded him the interview. His statement to me was that they, the R.I.C. of Ardfinnan, had an understanding with the local O/C of the Volunteers to the effect that the O/C and the Volunteers in his area could feel safe from molestation or arrest provided the R.I.C. Barracks was not attacked. Also, this particular R.I.C. man had an assurance that if the Volunteers were successful and that if it should

came about that a new police force would be established, he would be accepted without question. This was his story to me, and his principal purpose in calling was to state his case for application to the Gárda Síochána. Needless to say I didn't recommend him.

It was apparent to me in November, 1920, that the might of the British Empire had been massed and prepared for one great blow to wipe out the Irish Republican Army. I had visions that this fight might last for ten years, and my desire, therefore, was that I should become a first class soldier, hoping to fight under the leadership of Seán Treacy. I had great confidence in Treacy, and felt that with him in command we would bring honour to our native county, Tipperary, in the fight ahead for our national freedom. Treacy's death in October of that year came as a considerable shock to me. I was a farmer's son working sixteen hours a day, and though it was my burning desire to study military tactics I did not have an opportunity to do so. I realised that to be a leader it was essential to be fully conversant with military tactics and strategy in order to counter the enemy moves and beat its forces in the field. I was particularly convinced that one of the ^{essential} qualities of ~~a leader~~ ^{leadership} was his ability to safeguard the lives of the men he led and not to sacrifice these carelessly. I believed that I would be fighting in my own area, and that as few are prophets in their own country I could lay no claim to leadership. In brief, I had no desire to be an officer of any rank but considered that I would be sufficiently honoured if I

could prove myself a good soldier in the field. I appreciated the heavy responsibility that rested upon the General Staff of the I.R.A., and that any let down to G.H.Q. would be a let down to our cause. Hence none but the best fitted to command would be good enough to put the G.H.Q. plans into action. I felt that, if blundering ineptitude were revealed on the part of any I.R.A. leader in any action that we might face, it would be a betrayal of the spade work of the national cause done in 1916. I gave many anxious thoughts to the situation confronting us at this time. I knew from Treacy that Columns were about to be formed, and that these would consist of picked men, men not afraid to die, and who, if by any chance captured, would reveal no secret, regardless of threats or painful sufferings.

The area I commanded, that is, the 6th Battalion area, covered the valley which lies between the Galtee and the Knockmealdown Mountains. Up to then I had not been connected with any actual fighting or, in fact, in any action where firearms were used. I had undergone a term of imprisonment and I had carried out my duties as Acting Battalion Commander which, up to that time, entailed little beyond a few raids for arms and a raid on the mails, besides training and organisation. I was on one raid on the mails which was at Gormanstown, near Ardfinnan. Three of us held up the local mail car, which was driven by a Post Office official, and having taken the mails from it, we censored the official correspondence included in it or, in fact, all letters addressed to the local R.I.C. or other officials in the area. This was

for the purpose of gaining information of their activities and of ascertaining whether or not there were any spies in the area.

So I felt that someone else with an established reputation as a soldier who had seen some action should command the Battalion. At that time I did not feel sure how I would react to military action. I did not know whether or not I might become so frightened as to be unable to give as good an account of myself as I might wish. While I looked forward to the coming fight and hoped to prove myself a good soldier when it came, I felt that it would be unfair of me to go into my first fight in a responsible position of command, and so I cast about for someone else who could fill the position more adequately.

All these things had occupied my mind before Treacy's death but, following his death, I felt I had to make a serious decision about all these things. After a lot of anxious consideration of the problems involved, I solemnly made up my mind that, if I went into the fight which I intended to do, I would in all probability become a casualty. I thought to myself that, if I must die, I would die bravely as Treacy had done but that I did not want to involve anyone else in my decision. That was why I wanted to be an ordinary soldier and not the officer commanding the Column. The strange effect of coming to this serious decision was that any fears I had hitherto had evaporated and that, for the first time, I felt really

happy and contented. It wasn't that I wanted to die or anything like that, but I considered it in this way: here we were ready to face a trained, disciplined and well-armed army while we were only very ill-trained, ill-armed and with a casual sort of discipline; number for number, we therefore could not stand a moment against the enemy except we had something else, or some other quality that they had not got, and I thought that the quality that would throw the balance in our favour would be courage; if one had absolute courage and were not afraid, we might well snap our fingers at those well-trained, well-armed forces who had little to sustain them in the face of death, except their expectation of wordly reward, which would be of little use to them if they were killed. It was this line of reasoning that brought me to the decision that I would die, that I would offer my life in the cause for freedom in such a way that my death might be an example to my fellows.

We Volunteers in the rural areas from 1917 onwards were very enthusiastic and impatient. We had great expectations during that time of getting supplied with arms. At times we got encouraging messages from General Headquarters and at other times very confusing messages; but, particularly in the 1918 period, we were part-soldiers part politicians, and we became very confused regarding the role we were to play.

Up to the date of Treacy's death, we pinned our faith in him as the leader in whom we had the utmost confidence. I knew him well and I knew his worth.

He was a man who knew precisely what he was doing and why he was doing it, and he radiated that confidence which we all felt in him. It was men like that who were selected for leadership and who carried the confidence of others, particularly so where, as in my case, I felt that I had not sufficient knowledge. Losing Treacy was like losing the captain of a football or a hurling team. We were thrown on our own resources. Knowing the critical situation that we faced and feeling as I did that almost any day now we would be in a condition of open war, brought my thoughts towards the critical decision, as I have already stated, where I had made up my mind to die in the fight and to die bravely in the best attempt I could make to carry on that fight.

From my knowledge of the psychological make-up of the Volunteers I was associated with, I knew that, while there were many other serious-minded men like myself, yet, however, there were few prepared to die. The vast majority were inclined to treat matters lightly and casually, not giving serious thought to the possible developments of the future.

Perhaps I was rather more serious-minded in this way than most of the others with whom I was associated. Maybe my early training, having the responsibility of a farm and providing for my family thrust upon me at an early age, had tended to influence me in this way but, when I said here that we expected the coming fight pretty soon and were, in fact, impatient for its event, I considered this fight as a

matter of open war where we would have to fight every day against the overwhelming numbers of the enemy. I felt the inadequacy of my own training and preparedness for this and realised that few others were much better than I was, but I nevertheless was determined to go on and to sustain the fight in the best way we could for as long as such a fight might last, or until we had all become casualties. This was why I felt forced to make the serious and solemn decision that I would die; I said to myself, and to myself only, "For God and Ireland!" and, as I have stated already, when I had registered this solemn vow to myself, I felt extremely happy about it. I felt confident now for the first time that I would be a good soldier and would not flinch, but I still felt that, until I had gained experience, I was not capable of command where I must take responsibility for the lives of others as well.

The fact that I would not consent to become Flying Column Commander was a disappointment to the Company Commanders who gave me their enthusiastic support. The Brigade Commander, Seamus Robinson, also expressed his disappointment that I would not accept command of the Column. I had suggested Séán Hogan for this appointment because Hogan had indicated to me that he was willing and even anxious to be appointed as Column Commander.

I was invited by the Brigade Commander to attend at Brigade Headquarters which was at Rosegreen. It was there that I discussed this matter of the appointment of a Column Commander with Seamus Robinson.

Seán O'Meara was present with Robinson when I went to Brigade Headquarters. Robinson asked me what was the idea of inviting Hogan to take command of the Battalion and the Column. I told him that I felt that Hogan was more capable than I of carrying out the duties of such an appointment. As I said already, up to then I had had no real active service whereas Seán Hogan, though he was only a boy at the time, had gained a certain fame through his connection with the Soloheadbeg raid and his rescue by Treacy and the others at Knocklong. In fact, his name had become a household word in Tipperary by that time, where songs commemorating the Knocklong rescue were sung. He lived at the opposite side of the Galtee mountains but, as his name was so well known, I felt he would be acceptable to the Battalion as its commanding officer. I put this argument before Seamus Robinson.

I had known Hogan before this, as I had looked after him when he had stayed at my place for some time following the Knocklong rescue. At this period he held no appointment, but was merely a Staff Officer going around and having no other work to do. He visited my Battalion area pretty often because he was at that time paying attentions to a girl in that area, whom he afterwards married. He knew that my time was very largely occupied in attending fairs and markets. He had put it up to me to nominate him for the Battalion and Column appointment as, he suggested, he had more time and was better able to look after these things than I was.

Robinson, however, knew Hogan rather better than I did, and his remarks to me on this occasion showed his wisdom. He said, "If you insist in handing over the Battalion to Hogan, you will regret it". I could not see any reason why I should ever regret such a thing at the time, and so Hogan was appointed to the command of the 6th Battalion. Fighting as an individual for Ireland meant everything to me, rank and command meant nothing.

I have mentioned here indiscriminately the command of the Battalion and of the Column. The explanation is that, even before Seán Treacy's death, he had forecast the start of the Columns. In fact, he had told me that he would be starting a Column "next month", that is, some time shortly before his death. In our minds, therefore, the command of the Battalion meant nothing other than administration, training and protecting the Columns. The Column, as we looked upon it at this time would be the picked fighting men of the Brigade area and commanded by the officer with the best record to date of fighting leadership.

The question of starting the Column was, in fact, referred to by Hogan to me when he asked me to nominate him for the appointment. He pointed out what would be involved by this, the kind of special training that would be required for the Column members and the business of going around the Companies selecting suitable men and all that. He pointed out to me that I had not got the time to devote to it, while

he knew what was wanted and had ample time at his disposal. He pointed out that, not only would he be able to give his full-time to this work but that he proposed to bring Jack Nagle of Knockgrafton over to our Battalion area to assist him in the work.

Hogan's arguments in favour of his own appointment agreed, in fact, with my own views at the time and I, therefore, was very anxious to have him appointed to the position. The chief argument Robinson made against Hogan's appointment was that he considered him too young for the job. At any rate, he was appointed.

Hogan took up duties in the Battalion right away and he brought Jack Nagle of Knockgrafton along with him to assist him.

The details of my experiences of Bloody Sunday, which may be of interest, are given here. I was a member of the Tipperary All-Ireland football team which travelled to Dublin to play a match at Croke Park on the Sunday, which became known afterwards as Bloody Sunday. We travelled to Dublin on the previous day, Saturday. The Tipperary team was selected from all over the county in a similar way to which it is to-day and, as we travelled to Dublin by train, it was not until we reached Ballybrophy that we had our full complement of players on the train. Here we were joined by the Kilkenny train which carried four of our players, Mick Hogan, Jerry Shelly, Dick Lanigan and Seán Brett.

An incident which happened shortly after the train left Ballybrophy station may have given rise to a statement which appeared in the press on the following Monday that "a band of assassins had come up from Tipperary to carry out the shootings in Dublin on the Sunday". One of the players, Jacky Brett, who was killed later in the fighting, was with a Father Delahunty from Kilkenny in one of the carriages. A crowd of soldiers of the Lincolnshire Regiment, who boarded the train, came into their carriage and made some unseemly remarks to Brett and the priest. Brett, resenting these remarks, went for them but he was knocked down and Fr. Delahunty called to us for assistance. We at this time were engaged in a penny twenty-five card game and had not noticed the disturbance. We rushed to the carriage and, when we saw what had happened, we saw red and Jim Ryan and I enjoyed ourselves immensely by playing handball with half-a-dozen of these soldiers. When we finally had them all down for the count, we took two of them up and pitched them out through the carriage window. By this time the whole train was wildly excited but things calmed down as we travelled along. Considering matters in a calmer light, we fully expected to be met by military and police and placed under arrest when we reached Kingsbridge. There was no indication of any reception party at Kingsbridge when we arrived there, but we decided nevertheless to scatter. The team was booked to stay at Barry's Hotel in Gardiner Place but, instead of that, we divided ourselves up amongst several other hotels.

Hogan and I were, in fact, the only two Volunteer officers on the team and we went to Phil Shanahan's. There we learned of the plans to execute the British Intelligence officers on the following day. It would be about nine o'clock on the Saturday night before Bloody Sunday that we were in Phil Shanahan's. We were not told any details of what was being done. We just heard that there was a big job coming off in the morning.

While we were at Phil Shanahan's, D.P. Walsh came along. Seemingly D.P. had information about the plans for the morning and he was on a mission to collect arms and ammunition. He asked me to accompany him down to Phil Shanahan's cellar where there were some revolvers and .45 ammunition contained in porter bottles. D.P. then asked me to accompany him and to carry some of this stuff for him up to Fleming's Hotel in Gardiner Place. The plan we adopted was to walk one on either side of the street on our route up to Gardiner Place with the understanding that, should one of us be intercepted or fired at by any enemy agent, the other would be in a position to assist by firing on the attacker. Sudden raids and hold-ups on the street were common in Dublin at this time and this was my first experience of the war conditions in the city.

Having deposited the material at Fleming's Hotel, arriving there without incident, we returned again to Phil Shanahan's that night and I volunteered to take part in the job, whatever it was to be, on the next morning. In between times, we had gone

to confession and felt then that we were fully prepared to meet anything that might turn up.

Seemingly somebody in Phil Shanahan's that night had got worried about the fact that we had learned that there was a job coming off the next morning and so there was an atmosphere of hush-hush. We were told that the whole thing had been called off or postponed or something. So we returned to our lodgings and went to bed.

The first intimation of the shooting I had was when Phil Shanahan called on us the next morning to tell us about it. Going for a walk across the town, we went around Mount Street and these places where the shootings had taken place but, of course, there was nothing to be seen there then.

About eleven o'clock that morning, I got a message from Dan Breen, who was staying somewhere in Phibsboro, to say that he was returning to Tipperary soon and would be glad to have me accompany him. He also said that he thought it would be very inadvisable for me to appear at Croke Park that day. Notwithstanding this appeal, I went to Croke Park to take my place with the Tipperary team on the field.

The general story of the attack by Auxiliaries upon the assembled crowd at Croke Park has been written up on a number of occasions, and so I only give here my own impressions of what occurred to me at the time.

The match was in progress for about ten minutes when an aeroplane flew overhead and fired a Verey light signal. Tipperary was playing Dublin on this occasion and the play was concentrating about the Dublin goal. A penalty had been awarded against the Dublin team and I was about to take the free kick when a burst of machine-gun and rifle fire occurred. The crowd of spectators immediately stampeded. The players also fled from the field in among the sideline spectators, except six of us who threw ourselves down on the ground where we were.

The six of us who remained - Hogan and I and four of the Dublin team - were I think all Volunteers. I suppose it was our Volunteer training that prompted us to protect ourselves by lying down rather than by rushing around. From where we lay, we could see sparks flying off the railway embankment wall where the bullets struck the wall, and we saw people rolling down the embankment who presumably were hit. There was general pandemonium at this stage between the firing, people rushing and a general panic amongst the crowd.

Two of the players who were lying on the field at this stage got up and made a rush for the paling surrounding the pitch on the Hill Sixty side, which was nearest to them. One by one we followed their example, and it was while Hogan was running from the field to the paling that he got hit by a bullet. I think Josie Sinnott and myself were the last to leave the field. Going across to Hogan, I tried to lift him but the blood was spurting from a wound in his back and I knew he was very badly injured.

He made the exclamation when I lifted him, "Jesus, Mary and Joseph! I am done!", and died on the spot. My hands and my jersey were covered with his blood.

Making a quick survey of the situation, I ran for a spot in the paling. The Auxiliaries had not come in on the playing-pitch but were all around the grounds marshalling the people into groups, making them keep their hands up and searching them, while here and there some of them kept firing off shots in all directions. As I reached the paling, I saw one Auxie loading a round into the breech of his rifle and who appeared to be looking in my direction. I dropped to the ground, and a youngster near me fell, which I took to be from the shot that was intended for me. So jumping over the paling, I got into the crowd.

At this stage, the firing began to die down and I began to think. Realising that I was a wanted man - the police had been looking for me at my home a few days before I left - and that, therefore, I would probably be arrested at least, I cast about for some means of escape. I was the only member of the Tipperary team who wore the national tricolour in my stockings and knickers and I realised that this fact alone made me conspicuous. I made a dash across Hill Sixty and got out of Croke Park over the wall.

I made my way into a house in Clonliffe Road, where I thought I was safe. I was only a short time

in the house, however, when it was surrounded by the Black and Tans or Auxiliaries. They forced in the door of the house. An old man who made some remark to them in the hall was knocked down with a blow from the butt of a revolver. One of them, seeing me, said, "There is one of the Tipperary assassins! Take him out and shoot him!" Two of them had bayonets drawn and I was knocked down and the stockings and knickers ripped off me with the bayonets, leaving me naked.

Just then an officer came on the scene and instructed the Auxiliaries to bring me back into Croke Park where I would be shot with the rest of the team. I believe they would have shot me there and then, were it not for the intervention of the officer who, I think, acted not from motives of mercy but just that he wanted to be tidy and, instead of having odd shootings here and there, to have them all done together in Croke Park.

I was marched along the road, quite naked, and in the course of my move back to Croke Park, I could see people still rushing about. They were jumping from the wall out of Croke Park and one man had become impaled on the spikes of an iron railing. A spike of the railing had penetrated his thigh and, while he was in this predicament, others were using his body to step over the railing on him. A man who was standing with his girl friend, with his hands up, taking pity of my nakedness, threw me a coat, but his thanks for this was a blow from

the butt end of a rifle from one of the Auxiliaries. As I entered the grounds, I saw a priest ministering to the wounded and dying, and a drunken Tan coming up behind him and knocking him flat with the butt of a revolver. The priest was holding aloft the Blessed Sacrament at the time. The people in the grounds had been holding their hands up for about twenty minutes at this time and numbers were collapsing from the strain.

I found myself eventually back at the railway wall inside Croke Park where I was placed in company with the remainder of the team. I was still in my nakedness as the Auxiliaries had refused to allow me to take the coat I was offered. The newspapers the following day made reference to a naked player. I was the one they referred to.

I and the remainder of the team were lined up against the railway embankment wall and a firing party stood in front of us. There we remained until all the people in the grounds had been searched. We fully expected to be shot, as the Auxiliaries had promised us, but later a military officer informed us that, if any shooting or resistance took place during the searching of the crowd, he had orders to shoot two of us for every such incident.

Our clothes, which had been left in the dressing-room, were searched for documents or arms. Not finding anything like that, they relieved us of every penny they found in our pockets. That night,

as we were penniless, an ex-British army officer, who was in sympathy with us and Ireland's cause, divided £50 amongst the team to enable us to subsist and get home to Tipperary. His name was Jack Kavanagh of Seville Place.

When our clothes had been searched by the Auxiliaries and they had found nothing incriminating, we were released and then we scattered. The Dublin players were very good to us and took us to their homes, which were mostly around about Seville Place and O'Toole's parish. That is how we met Jack Kavanagh.

I stayed that night at Stephen Sinnott's house, which was somewhere off Seville Place. There was a raid in the locality that night and someone about three doors away was taken out and shot by the military or auxiliary raiding party. We heard the sounds of the raid and the shots and, thinking it was for us they were coming, Tommy O'Connor, myself and Sinnott went out into the yard. Running into the middle of a heap of manure, we covered ourselves in this and waited until the excitement had died away. Actually, none of the raiding party came to Sinnott's house.

I remained in Dublin over the Monday, returning to Tipperary for Hogan's funeral about Wednesday. I did not go home, however, as the police and military had raided my home looking for me that night, and they raided the place in search

of me once and sometimes twice a week from then onwards until the Truce. From then on, I became a full time Volunteer.

The appointment of Hogan to the command of the Battalion took place in or around the time of Seán Treacy's death - a little before that date I think, because I remember Treacy visiting us around that time and in the course of conversation he had indicated that a Column would be started in our Battalion area in the immediate future. Outside of that, nothing happened in our area until after Bloody Sunday, 20th November, 1920.

Dealing with the start of the Column in our Battalion area, as I have already stated, Treacy had spoken about this on his last visit to us shortly before his death. There was then a Column in existence in East Limerick, which I believe was the first of the Flying Columns, and that Column consisted of a number of East Limerick men and also some men from South Tipperary. There was, therefore, some time in which we were able to think about the formation of the Column and consider the necessities in connection with the details of its organisation, the selection of suitable men, the arms available, the preliminary training of these men, and things like billeting arrangements and so on. I placed myself at Hogan's disposal in rendering any assistance he might need but he, not being otherwise employed, was able to give his full time to visiting the Companies and preparing them for the launching of the Column. No. 1. Column, that is,

Dinny Lacey's Column had, I think, been formed a little while before Bloody Sunday, but our Column was not formed until some time after that.

Actually, it was soon after that - probably by the end of the month - that Hogan set up his headquarters at Helen Prendergast's, Croughatour, outside Ballylooby, where he was joined by Jack Nagle, to whom I have already referred. He was not forced to, but he did go on the run with Hogan. Mossie McGrath from Burncourt - he was forced to go on the run and joined them there. Also Jack Butler of Millgrove - he was not forced to go on the run either, but he joined them. This was the nucleus of the Column which was added to shortly afterwards. Following Bloody Sunday I was being sought for at home by the police, and I threw in my lot with the Column, being the seventh member to join. A couple of others had joined the first four just ahead of me. The sixth man was Dinny (Sniper) Lonergan from Burncourt.

When I joined the Column, I had three rifles, four revolvers and a couple of hundred rounds of assorted ammunition which I took with me and handed over to the Column Commander. These arms had been in my custody for some time and were hidden in my home. They served to equip the two or three unarmed members of the Column, so that the seven of us were fully armed. I retained a Webley revolver for my own use and I swapped a .44 Winchester Repeater for a Lee Enfield. There were only 20

rounds of ammunition available for the Winchester. I saw little hope of replenishing this supply and I thought there was a better chance of getting fresh supplies of ammunition for the Lee Enfield. Hogan afterwards exchanged this Winchester for a revolver or a pistol, and I believe it found its way into Ernie O'Malley's hands eventually when the Division was formed.

Our first activity when I joined the Column was a course of training which Seán Hogan undertook, to teach us something of scouting and protective duties. There was a certain amount of care and cleaning of arms, though we did not do any live practice as we had not the ammunition to spare for this. Hogan seemed to have been acting on instructions from Brigade Headquarters and he worked from text books in conducting the course. At any rate, he seemed to have some knowledge of these matters and we had little or none at the time.

Nothing happened then until Dan Breen came into the area and got in touch with our Column. I am not sure when this was but, as Breen was badly wounded in the Fernside raid which was on the 12th October, 1920, it could not have been sooner than some time about December, 1920. We knew, or rather we felt that Breen's arrival meant that something was about to happen, that we were about to take some action, Breen's attitude being, "It's time something happened around here!" We felt that his presence in the area meant that there was going to

be action and we were all delighted at the prospect and to have Breen with us.

On the evening of his first visit, Breen came to the house of a family named Fitzgerald, about half a mile from my home. Hogan appointed me as chief scout, as I knew the area well. We set off on our first march from Prendergast's to Fitzgerald's. Breen had joined us at Prendergast's and marched with us to Fitzgerald's, but this was our first march openly as an armed body. We were welcomed at Fitzgerald's who got supper ready for us. Breen told me to post a scout outside the house for, at this point, we were midway between the garrisons of Cahir and Clogheen on a by-road. I posted Mossie McGrath, the Battalion Adjutant, to act as a scout in a field at the back of the house where he commanded the cross-roads leading to Fitzgerald's from the main road and where he would have a view of any military move along the main road, which was about 300 or 400 yards away.

We had scarcely sat down to supper when McGrath rushed in to warn us that the military were coming across the fields in our direction. Breen jumped to his feet, quenched all the lights in the house and called on me to lead him, as I would know the country better than any of the rest. I led the Column then through a gorse-field at the back of the house, in the opposite direction to that which we had learned that the troops were coming, over to a by-road and then down a boreen across the Tonogue river. Having reached this point, I felt that I

had them quite safe. I was more concerned about Breen than anyone else at this time, knowing that his capture would be looked upon as a major achievement by the enemy, but we felt safe at this point where we were about three-quarters of a mile from Fitzgerald's house. After crossing the river, we halted for the first time and Breen inquired where McGrath was. It was only then we discovered that he was not with us. Breen instructed me to go back and search for McGrath.

I moved cautiously back the way we had come, with my rifle loaded at the ready, halting to listen every 50 yards or so, but saw or heard nothing until I had reached the crossroads leading to the main road where the military were said to have been. Just as I approached the crossroads, I halted as I saw what appeared to be a head or a cap bobbing up from behind a stone wall across the road. It was the first time I had ever issued a challenge and I shouted to the figure to halt. There was no response and I repeated my challenge. The third time, the head bobbed up and I opened fire at it in the dark. That was my first shot fired on active service. I fired twice again rapidly but there was still no response from the other side. I took to my heels then and rejoined the rest of our party as quickly as possible, telling them what had happened and that I had failed to locate McGrath.

Our immediate problem then was to find

somewhere to stay for the night and it was up to me to find somewhere in the locality. We were close to a house at this time which belonged to people who had very little national sympathies. They were uppish kind of people, particularly the woman of the house who rather resented the appearance of Volunteers or any national elements in the locality. We had very little choice and, reflecting on the matter, I decided that these people with their lack of national feeling would be well known to the enemy and that, therefore, it probably would be the safest place to stay. With every expectation of active opposition, particularly from the woman of the house, which I decided we would disregard and commandeer the accommodation for the night, I knocked at the halldoor and, finding the family in bed, we informed them that we wanted beds for our men for the night. The family had to leave their beds to make room for us. To my surprise, they received us very hospitably. We spent a comfortable night there.

On the following night we proceeded to Ballybacon from where we sent an inquiry regarding the fate of Mossie McGrath. Within twenty-four hours we had a message back to the effect that McGrath was safe but was badly torn after his experience of the previous night. It transpired that the man I had fired at was Mossie McGrath. When this incident occurred, I had been quite sure that it was one of the enemy party I had fired at,

as I did not think McGrath would be on the road where the military were supposed to have been. Though I knew he might be somewhere around, I thought he would be carefully under cover. So when I challenged and got no answer, I had no idea that it was McGrath I was firing at in the pitch dark. When I fired the first shot at him, he in turn thought that it was the military were firing at him and he took to his heels. He fell into a quarry where he was torn and so injured that it was a fortnight before he was able to rejoin the Column.

From Ballybacon we proceeded to the Grange Company, which was in the 5th Battalion area, and received a cordial welcome from Jack Lonergan, the Company Commander there. Lonergan subsequently became the Battalion Commander of that Battalion area.

Having refreshed ourselves at Grange, we went on to Brett's of Knocklofty where we met Seán Cooney of Clonmel and a lad named Patterson, who became a member of the Column afterwards. Dan Breen and Seán Hogan had an appointment there with Cooney for the purpose of selecting a few reliable recruits from the Clonmel area. The Seán Cooney I refer to here was known as "Wiggy". This name came from the fact that he was rather bald and usually wore a wig. This was not the same Seán Cooney who afterwards became an officer in the National Army and who was also from Clonmel.

Our mission at this time was the selection of suitable men from each of the Company and Battalion areas. As arms were scarce, however, and a very large Column

would be unwieldy, many enthusiastic Volunteers for admission to the ranks of the Column had to be disappointed and these had to be content with Company work in their own localities.

Luck favoured us on our move from Brett's as we had just passed a signpost outside Clonmel where we turned off the Knocklofty road, when a Company of marching troops - about 100 strong - passed along the road and turned for Knocklofty. They were out on patrol, on the look-out for parties felling trees and blocking the roads. If they had come a little sooner or we had been delayed a little in reaching the crossroads, we would have clashed with them. The military in Clonmel were on the alert, as Dinny Lacey's Column had been operating around there for some months up to that time.

Having completed arrangements for Column recruits from the 5th Battalion area, we returned to Grange and to Ballybacon and later visited other Company areas, all the time during these moves, doing our military training and being subjected to a rule of discipline. This generated a feeling of security amongst us, even though we were moving through country infested with enemy garrisons and knew that their patrols continually moved around the countryside.

About a fortnight later we returned to Brett's of Knocklofty where we were joined by 13 men from Clonmel. We were hospitably received by the Brett family, and the additional numbers to the Column gave us a pride and confidence in our ability now to

undertake offensive action. Hitherto we had been concerned only with defensive tactics and the eluding of enemy patrols. Now, however, we felt strong enough to take some action on our own accord. All this time we had been marching along the roads openly and fully armed and our presence in the various localities was well known. This fact of our open appearance was heartening to the local Volunteers who either saw us moving along or heard we were in the locality.

While we were at Brett's, we had a great sense of possession for we had ample accommodation there, but in the place we stopped at when we left Brett's there was a vacant thatched house adjoining the residence which we used, and there were only four bedrooms which we all used in turn. This was owing to the fact that we had not notified our arrival in the locality and no arrangements for accommodation were made by the local Battalion Commander, Condon, who did his best for us under the circumstances.

On the second night the Column moved on to Glenpatrick which became the Column headquarters for the next few weeks. At Glenpatrick we went into occupation of a large vacant house, known as Glenpatrick House. Here the proper organisation of the Column was undertaken. Officers, such as, Adjutant and Section Commanders, were appointed and each member of the Column received a number. The total strength of the Column at this time was about 20 men. The rationing of the Column was the responsibility of the

local Volunteer Company Commander. It fell to my lot to undertake the duties of butcher and cook. Every other morning I went out on the mountain and shot a couple of Lord Waterford's mountain sheep, which we brought down and skinned, dressed and cooked. This fresh meat, with little else was our food for a fortnight.

We were sleeping in hay at the time and, between the total meat diet and the conditions we had to live under, at the end of that fortnight practically all of us had become verminous. We had no method of dealing with this and we became so bad that all we could do was take off our underclothes every time we could get the chance and brush the lice off them. We believed at the time that the absence of variety in our diet was largely, if not wholly responsible for our verminous condition. I remember that Dan Breen, for one, claimed that, if we could get an adequate supply of home-made wheaten-meal bread, it would help this condition. As there were 20 of us to be fed and there were only about a dozen houses near us on whom we could draw for bread supplies, we decided to go a bit further afield in our search for bread.

When we went to one house which was quite a bit away from us on the hills, the woman of the house refused to give us bread and generally indicated her dislike for us. This was the first occasion that we decided to commandeer whatever supplies we could lay hands on. There was, however, one man of the Column in our party who spoke Irish and he made some comment

or other in Irish when the woman had said something about refusing to give us supplies. The woman apparently was also an Irish speaker and, when she heard the Irish comment, she changed colour and seemingly altered her views. She said she had the kettle down and she brought out the teapot and proceeded to get tea for us. Before this, she had said that she had put strychnine in the teapot, as if intending to poison us, but she realised who we were and explanations followed. She said she knew there were Volunteers at Glenpatrick and she thought we were some of the enemy forces trying to capture them. Her original hostility was, therefore, based on this misunderstanding but, now that she knew who we were, having fed us, she gave us two cakes of bread to take away with us, proceeded to bake four more and, for the remainder of the time we spent in Glenpatrick, she sent us two or three cakes of bread daily.

In Glenpatrick we were made to realise that worldly comforts were not for soldiers of Ireland. Apart from the food scarcity and lack of variety, we had no beds and nothing but one blanket to cover us. Our daily training routine was rigorous, the Column Commander's aim being to subject us to a searching test of stamina and endurance, so that later when these qualities would be needed in fighting, we would not be soft. We were continually being called out of our sleep during the night to stand-to when an alarm was given. This meant that we had to be at our posts, ready for action, with full equipment in three minutes. We never knew from day to day whether these alarms

might be genuine attacks by the enemy or part of the routine training. The use of lights or making of noise while moving from place to place were strictly forbidden, so that we were kept on the alert all the time. A night march often followed one of these night alarms during which the eyes, ears and wits of the men of the Column were sharpened. After a fortnight of this, we felt like trained soldiers and eager to put our training to the test in a clash with the common foe.

I am not sure of the precise date of the setting up of the Glenpatrick Camp. It was soon after the Column was started and it remained established for about three or four weeks. Some of the Clonmel fellows who joined us returned home after about a fortnight, having found the life we led there too strenuous. Some indication of the date of this Camp may be found from any record that may exist of the death of young O'Keefe of Kilsheelan, who was killed by the Black and Tans a couple of nights before we broke up camp there. O'Keefe was killed in the village of Kilsheelan, where there is a cross erected to his memory. He was a local Volunteer and was not a member of our Column. On this occasion I believe he was engaged in blocking roads, or something like that, when a patrol came on him and shot him. We heard about this at the time and I remember that it was immediately following this shooting that we broke camp at Glenpatrick.

When we left Glenpatrick, we returned again to the 5th Battalion area. I am referring here to the

Cahir Battalion. This Battalion, which was originally the 6th, had now become the 5th. This was due to the fact that some time before that a despatch rider of ours had been captured with some despatches coming to or from the 6th Battalion and it was decided, in order to confuse the enemy, to thereupon change the description of the 6th Battalion by making it the 5th Battalion, the 5th assuming the designation of the 6th. There was nothing involved in this except the swapping of the numbers between the 5th and 6th Battalions. I am not sure when this took place but I believe it was in or about the time when the Column started.

The day following our departure from Glenpatrick, a party of military - over 100 strong - surrounded the place and made a detailed search of the surrounding woods.

At this point we were reinforced by George Plunkett, Seán O'Meara of the Brigade Staff, Seán Fitzpatrick and Con Moloney who stayed three or four days with us.

When we were leaving Glenpatrick, we marched in military formation across the Comeragh mountains and, after travelling about six miles, we were at a point overlooking Clonmel which commanded a wide view of the town and its surroundings. We rested there as we watched the movements of the military lorries coming and going on the Waterford-Clonmel road, the Cahir-Clonmel road and the Cahir-Ardfinnan road. Perhaps it was because of our height above them at this point, but whatever the reason, we had a great sense of superiority

and confidence and I, for one, felt very happy at this time, believing that our organising and training had now fitted us to take the initiative against the enemy. As far as I can remember, this was winter time, about the end of 1920.

From our halt on the Commeraghs we marched on to Grange in the 5th Battalion area, a distance of about twenty miles. We stayed in the Grange Company area that night and proceeded to Ballybacon on the following evening.

At this stage, Dan Breen returned to Dublin, leaving the Column in the complete command of Seán Hogan.

Following this, we went from Company area to Company area within the 5th Battalion with a view to infusing courage and enthusiasm amongst them. The latter, realising that an active and trained protective force was now amongst them, looked upon us as saviours and gave their full co-operation and assistance. We realised early on that the activities of the No. 2 Column were going to be considerably hampered by the fact that our area, that is, the 5th (Cahir) Battalion area, was the centre of a military stronghold. The enemy forces moving in the area invariably travelled in strong forces of ten, twenty and sometimes forty lorries which it would be impossible for our small force to attack. Also horse cavalry from the local Cahir Barracks, which was the headquarters of the South Irish Horse, continuously patrolled the area.

About this time the Column Commander, Seán Hogan, received information from Brigade Headquarters of a

projected I.R.A. attack on a troop train travelling from Dublin to Cork, the place of attack having been fixed at Duno Hill, about eight miles from Tipperary town. Our Column proceeded to the rendezvous, being reinforced en route at Knockgrafton where there was an A.S.U. Ned Reilly and Paddy Ryan (the master) were two of those who joined us there. No. 1 Column - Dinny Lacey's Column - was also concentrated with us at Duno Hill for this attack. On arrival there we were billeted in the vicinity and all necessary arrangements for the attack were made. We only awaited a signal for the arrival of the train at that point.

It was our first meeting in the field, with Lacey's Column, and that evening, in the various farmyards where we were billeted, we exchanged confidences and had quite a singsong, expecting that the coming attack on the train would bring victory and glory for the combined efforts of the two Columns. We had mines laid on the railway and it was expected that the train would carry at least a couple of hundred troops. As our arrangements were reasonably perfect, we expected that the slaughter of the enemy would be very heavy.

Having waited at Duno Hill for two days, there was no sign of the arrival of the train that was expected. Dan Breen, who had returned from Dublin, joined us there and he, in consultation with the other leaders at this stage, decided to abandon the project as we were in the immediate vicinity of about two thousand troops located in Tipperary town and the length of our stay at Duno Hill left us increasingly

liable to be surrounded.

The Columns thereupon separated and returned to their own Battalion areas. We marched back over the Galtee mountains to the 5th Battalion area, covering in all a distance of about 45 miles. Nothing exciting occurred on our journey until the point of our arrival in the Battalion area when we were crossing the Mitchelstown-Cahir road and going into a wood at Rehill. We heard a lorry coming along the road in the distance and had only time to scramble over the fence and into the wood when it appeared. To our dismay, we observed that, instead of one lorry, there were about 200 lorries filled with troops, while we lay there helpless just inside the road fence, not knowing whether they had observed us or not.

Apparently this body of troops moving by road represented a change in plan by the British authorities. These were the same troops that we had expected by train and that we had laid in ambush for at Duno Hill. They were being sent as reinforcements to Cork. As each lorry reached the wood, the occupants opened fire indiscriminately into the wood, which must have sounded to the natives around that a heavy ambush was in progress. Protected by the road fence and bank, we lay quiet and did not return the fire. The people around thought that the whole Column had been wiped out in this episode until we appeared before them again. It seemed afterwards that they actually did not know we were there but that it had been customary for them passing this particular wood to blaze off shots into it,

in case I suppose that it might harbour some of the Column. Actually if they had any inkling of our presence and if one lorry had pulled up, we would have been caught like rats in a trap, there behind the fence.

Back in the 5th Battalion area, Hogan had plans for attacking and destroying the remaining police barracks in the area, notably Ballyporeen, Ardfinnan and Kilmanaghan. Owing to the scarcity of our ammunition at this period, we were constantly on the alert for police patrols from those places, in the hope of replenishing or adding to our supply by their capture, but they scarcely ever left the precincts of their barracks. We repeatedly sniped the barracks, however, to keep them in a state of jitters and in the hope of forcing them to evacuate. In this way, we caused them to waste hundreds of rounds of ammunition, grenades and Verey lights.

We took up positions for ambushes almost daily where our Intelligence could inform us that a patrol, or small body of the enemy were in the habit of passing a particular road or point, but almost invariably we were disappointed as the enemy seemed to be possessed of supernatural intuitive powers. In some cases where they had travelled the same road, day in and day out, for weeks, they failed to appear on the day we waited for them.

During this time we destroyed all the main bridges in the 5th Battalion area so as to render the movement of enemy troops more difficult. We barely allowed sufficient room on the destroyed bridges for

horse traffic. We were assisted in this work by the Volunteers in the local Company areas who did most of the spade work. Our object in destroying the bridges on the main roads was to compel the enemy to use the by-roads where we could more easily ambush them, but they frustrated our intention by sending armoured cars carrying trench-crossing planks ahead of their convoys, thus enabling their lorries to cross the broken bridges and trenches. However, we dug fresh trenches every day to impede their progress. The British then began to commandeer local labour to fill in these trenches, in the fear that we had mined them as had occurred in other areas.

Having dealt in this way with our own Battalion area, we proceeded to the 6th (Clonmel) Battalion area where we carried out the same programme. From that we went to the 8th (Carrick) Battalion area where we carried out a similar programme.

Our Intelligence reported that a convoy of four lorries passed weekly between Cahir and Clogheen. This information had been obtained by Brigade Headquarters which converged Nos. 1 and 2 Columns to attack this convoy. We looked upon this as a great opportunity because, as I said before, otherwise the enemy only moved in large bodies of ten, twenty and more lorries. Dan Breen and Con Moloney came from Brigade Headquarters to assist us in this operation. The place for attack was fixed at Hyland's Cross - not to my mind a suitable place for an ambush - $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Clogheen on the Cahir road.

The Columns took up position on either side of the road, No. 1 on the Knockmealdown side and No. 2 on the Galtee side, it being estimated that the mountains afforded a safe retreat if anything went wrong. We remained in position there until the late afternoon. As the convoy had failed to show up by that time, it was considered desirable to evacuate the position. We were in a rather dangerous situation located there between strong military garrisons at Cahir and Clogheen and, fearing that the enemy might have received intelligence of our presence there, we withdrew.

Dan Breen and Con Moloney, very disappointed at the failure of the convoy to appear, left Hyland's Cross to return to Brigade Headquarters. No. 2 Column having got out of their positions and moved off, we had not gone more than three or four hundred yards when we heard firing. We realised that the convoy had unexpectedly made a belated appearance and had been attacked by No. 1 Column which had been a bit slower in evacuating the ambush positions. We got back as best we could into our original positions and the fight was short, sharp and successful from our point of view. One soldier was killed and two were wounded, one of whom died later of his wounds. The remainder surrendered and were disarmed. The lorries were then destroyed by burning and the prisoners released.

Realising that the shooting could easily have been heard in both Clogheen and Cahir and that we might expect immediate enemy reinforcements on the scene, the Columns parted and each made its own line of retreat. No. 1 retired towards Newcastle in the direction of the

Knockmealdown mountains. No. 2 retired in the direction of the Galtees.

It was at this point that No. 1 Column accidentally encountered District Inspector Potter and made him prisoner. I, of course, was not present when this took place as our Column had left for the Galtees, but we heard all about it at the time. It seems that what happened was that No. 1 Column had left Hyland's Crossroads and had gone about a mile, but that two of their men - one was Seán Downey and I forget the name of the other - had delayed at Hyland's Crossroads for some reason or other. It appeared that Downey was in the course of filling his pipe when Potter came along in his car, in civilian clothes, and had he passed on, no one would have known who he was nor would he have been molested, but, seeing the remains of the burning lorries and probably some of the soldiers around, he pulled up. Downey, who then found he had no matches to light his pipe, stepped out and asked Potter for a match. As he stepped up to the car to ask for the match, he noticed a revolver lying on the seat of the car and he guessed that Potter was an enemy officer of some kind. So he placed him under arrest and took his revolver. He sent the other Volunteer on to Lacey to tell him that he had taken an officer prisoner, and he brought him along to hand him over to the custody of the Column. Potter, it will be remembered, was subsequently executed in reprisal for the execution of an I.R.A. man who was hanged in Mountjoy Jail (Traynor). The date of Potter's arrest in the records will set the

date for this Clogheen ambush. Lacey's Column was pursued by the enemy and was attacked three or four times on their march from Hyland's Cross to Rathcormack, Co. Waterford, which is in the Nire Valley. They were attacked late that evening and on two or three occasions during the following day or two, but made their way eventually to their destination.

When the Brigade reported the capture of Potter to G.H.Q., negotiations were entered into with the Castle authorities by offering to exchange this prisoner, Potter, for Volunteer Traynor, then under sentence of death. As these negotiations proved abortive and the execution of Traynor was proceeded with, Brigade Headquarters instructed that Potter would be executed in reprisal and this order was carried out by the Commander of No. 1 Column (Dinny Lacey).

No. 2 Column, having made a safe retirement to the Galtees, billeted at a place called the Black Road, up in the Galtees, for the night. A large party of military were seen scouring the country for us along the main road by Skeheenarinka, but we were safely up on the heights of the Galtees. As we felt so safe up there, we decided to remain there for a few days.

We had at this time an order from Brigade Headquarters to procure some motor cars and motorcycles which were required for our own use and that of Brigade Headquarters. We appointed a select party of five men, who could drive, to go into Clonmel and commandeer the cars. These men went into Clonmel and selected six or seven suitable cars in a big garage in Clonmel. These

were taken over within the next couple of days.

In the meantime, the remainder of the Column was somewhat unfortunate. Due to the fact that the housing accommodation was very scattered, we were billeted over a wide area in twos and threes and fours. One evening we were surprised by a large body of cavalry, evidently searching for us. But for the timely warning of a local member of the Column, it is probably that we should all have been captured. Because of the fact that we were resting, our discipline had relaxed somewhat. At one house, which formed the headquarters or centre of the Column, we assembled twice a day for a bit of arms drill, but otherwise the members strayed around rather loosely and they usually left their arms at this centre.

On this particular day, I happened to be at the centre when the alarm was raised and there was no one else with me at the time. I saw a party of about twelve cavalry approaching slowly up the boreen leading to this house where I was. Having no help, I did my best to run with the twelve or fourteen rifles and other equipment that was lying around, bringing them in relays to a place of concealment up the hill. This was rather difficult with the military so close upon me, but I managed, however, to get them all away and I remained as a solitary guard over the arms until the military had gone away. One of our Column was captured by this party, a man named Pyne.

The enemy retreated after about two hours with their prisoner, and apparently this indicated to them

that the Column was in the vicinity. So strong forces invested the area and, for the following two days, an intensive comb-out of dwellings and likely places of concealment was made. When Pyne was captured, he had no arms with him and the O/C of the Column, Seán Hogan, being absent at the time, there was no plan or attempt made to rescue Pyne.

Anticipating the further raid, we had decided that evening to cross over the Galtees into the Glen of Aherlow, but the enemy had anticipated this move and had sent forces into the Glen to intercept us. Our reconnaissance element, however, made contact with the advance guard of the enemy moving down the Glen. As the Column came up, we exchanged shots with the enemy advance guard and, crossing their encircling line, we crossed the Suir by a ford near the moat of Knockgrafton without any further encounter with the enemy. We were joined at Rosegreen by the five members of the Column who had gone to Clonmel to commandeer the cars.

The Column Commander decided to billet in this area for a few days, and plans were made for an attack on a patrol from Ballinure Police Barracks, in retaliation for the capture of Pyne. We took up a position on the road for two or three days awaiting this patrol but they never turned up. We did not consider attacking the Barracks as it was a strong position, difficult to attack, and our ammunition supply was limited.

The next serious engagement was the Ballygiblin round-up, which nearly eventuated in the annihilation of the entire Column. Ballygiblin is on the Tipperary-Cork border between Mitchelstown and Ballyporeen. On three different occasions before this, we had made sniping attacks on Ballyporeen R.I.C. Barracks. On this occasion, however, we were determined to ambush the police patrol which our Intelligence reports informed us came out daily on one or other of the three or four roads leading from Ballyporeen. So we lay in ambush positions and remained in the vicinity of the town for four days, but the police never moved from their barracks during that time. We had remained in each of these ambush positions for eight or nine hours at a stretch, keeping ourselves warm during that time by a certain amount of horseplay and jumping around, but expecting at any minute a signal that the patrol was approaching, but they never came.

We were getting rather uneasy at this stage because it began to appear that there was some leakage of information to the enemy and that they were aware of our presence. It was proved later that this suspicion was, in fact, well founded. An inquiry, held into the matter by direction of Brigade Headquarters later, resulted in the dismissal of the local Company Commander and, in fact, the question of whether or not he should be executed for betraying our plans to the enemy was for some time undecided. It was established that the leakage took place because this Company Commander was keeping company with a daughter of a local publican who was very friendly with the local

parish priest; the local parish priest in turn was very friendly with the local R.I.C. Sergeant. Seemingly, the Company Commander had conveyed our plans to this girl who had spoken of them to the parish priest, and the latter, who had no political leanings of any kind and was anxious to avoid any bloodshed in his parish, warned the local R.I.C. Sergeant. Due to this warning given to the R.I.C., we were surrounded by strong military detachments. The parish priest, it was reported to us, had spent the whole day praying in the church without ceasing, and it was said there afterwards that our escape was due to his prayers.

After being four days in this locality, it became evident to us - and particularly to myself, as this was part of my old Battalion area - that we had remained too long in the district and that we were bound to be surrounded there. I had some discussion about this matter with the Column Commander and, in fact, we had a considerable disagreement on the occasion. He had decided that we would snipe the barracks that evening and, as usually happened when a barracks was sniped, they would send for reinforcements, or reinforcements would be sent out - in this case from Clogheen and Cahir - but it might be four or five hours before the reinforcements would arrive. In this case, we were to lie in wait for the reinforcing party and ambush it as it arrived. This ambush would, therefore, be carried out probably in the hours of darkness.

However, the Column Commander then decided to organise a dance and sent word to the local Volunteers and the local girls that we were going to run a dance

that night. It was about this that I had a bit of a falling-out with him. I said I would not think of going to the dance, that this place was much too dangerous and that we should be getting out of it and making for the Galtees, as I thought there was a strong probability that we would be surrounded there before morning.

Having carried out the sniping of the barracks, the dance proceeded while awaiting the arrival of the enemy reinforcements.

A centre was appointed for a stand-to in case of alarm. It became obvious by midnight that no military party was coming to the rescue of the R.I.C. The Column Commander decided that there was nothing likely to happen and that anyone that wanted to go to bed could do so. The Column was billeted in an area of about a mile radius outside the town in farmhouses. Three of us were billeted in one house.

The first intimation I had of the presence of the enemy was when the woman of the house rushed in to me at 5.30 next morning to say that there were Lancers approaching up the boreen. We had scarcely time to seize our arms and, as the front door was in plain view of the approaching enemy, we threw ourselves out of a back window and hid in a cabbage garden while they searched the house. The officer in charge of the search party said to the woman when he was searching, "You had them here! Where are they?", but getting no information, they eventually withdrew. We made our

way as fast as we could towards the mobilisation centre where, meeting other members of the Column who had arrived there, we found that they had had a similar experience to ourselves.

We had only just assembled at the centre when we were observed by the military who began to advance on us and opened fire. We did not return the fire but began to run as fast as we could, in the hope that we could cover the intervening four miles or so to the Galtees where we would feel safe, but fortunately, as events showed, we were unsuccessful in this attempt.

The military kept up their pursuit, riding along a couple of fields at a time on their horses and then getting down to fire at us. They kept up this fire all the time but without hitting anybody. As we got on to a breen leading on to the main road, a woman who was washing clothes, as we approached the main road, held up her hands in a sign to us that there were military on the main road which we were about to run into. At this point, the whole Column was together and we had just realised that we were completely surrounded, that nothing but a miracle could save us now.

We did not know it at the time and, although we saw various detachments of troops here, there and everywhere, it was only afterwards we learned that troops had been drawn from Mitchelstown, Fermoy, Cahir, Clonmel and all the surrounding barracks and posts and that there were at least 5,000 troops

engaged in this operation to surround us and round us up; and two or three hundred horse cavalry were in close touch with us at this moment. Apparently the enemy had decided on one great sweep to rid the country of not alone our Column but also the North East Cork Column and the East Limerick Column which had been harassing them severely. I believe that the launching of this attack at that particular time was due to the fact that we had delayed so long in Ballyporeen and they had received information of our presence there. They decided to begin by rounding up our Column.

On the night the round-up began, the Column was billeted at Kiltankin near the Tipperary-Cork border, the intention being to return to Graigue the next day. We learned afterwards that from dawn soldiers, arriving from all the military centres mentioned already, had formed posts on all the roads and all the points of vantage in the area to ensure that we could not move out of it - all working on a pre-arranged general plan. Ballygiblin was their centre of operations.

The alarm had been given in some cases by country people who were early risers, such as, the people driving milk carts to creameries and who, seeing troops moving, warned anybody they saw. Great praise is due to the people of the neighbourhood who, as well as passing on the necessary warning to us, delayed the advance of the troops by offering them tea, of which they gladly partook but which impeded their rate of progress and gave us time to mobilise.

Up to the time we reached the main road where we were warned by the woman of the presence of troops there, we had not realised the extensiveness of the round-up and the state of jeopardy in which the Column found itself.

Hogan had spoken encouragingly to us and suggested a retreat towards Mitchelstown, as we had a member of the Column from that area with us who knew the way. He was appointed to act as our guide. The line of retreat was across the Furrough Bog, a very low-lying piece of ground, about 20 or 30 acres in extent, until the Ballygiblin-Kilbenny road was reached.

We were crossing the bog when we were perceived by Miss O'Hanlon, a national teacher from Ballygiblin, who had cycled hurriedly half a mile to a point where we intended crossing the road to warn us that troops were about there in all directions. The extraordinary thing about all this is that, although the military had observation points at Ballygiblin and all around about, they failed to observe us. Dave Moher led the way and crossed the road in the direct view of a party of Black and Tans who were holding up creamery carts.

The Lancers had been behind and pursuing us all this time, but their continuous fire on us had not caused any casualties. We were exhausted from running, however, yet we had to cross this bog to shake off the pursuit by the Lancers. We went through it, though sinking up to our middles in parts of it. Our rifles and everything were a complete mass of mud and, therefore,

useless until we could get time to clean them. We were covered in mud from head to toe and completely exhausted when we got to the other side of the bog, but we had shaken off the pursuing Lancers, some of whom had tried to cross after us but their horses sank and they were held up trying to get them out. Some of them kept up the fire on us while we were crossing the bog, and some others tried to surround the bog so as to intercept us on the other side.

A most extraordinary thing happened when we got to the other side of the bog and which is something I, to this day, cannot find an adequate explanation for. When we reached the ditch on the far side of the bog, we found we had run right into a party of about 200 soldiers who were on the road outside the ditch. Some of them were lying on the ditch and others around the road. They were in extended order with about five or six pace intervals between them, all with their rifles at the ready. We also were running along in file with a similar interval between us, and I am sure, from the firing of the pursuing Lancers, they must have seen our approach across the bog. Yet, when we reached the ditch and turned to run down along it - there was only the fence separating us from the soldiers on the road - they did not fire on us and did nothing to intercept us. I can offer no explanation for this. Our arms were useless, caked and choked with the bog mud as they were, and so we just ran on past the soldiers on the other side of the ditch, practically within arms' reach of them. Continuing in this direction, we dared not to cross the by-road but, after going about five

or six hundred yards, we reached a farmyard of a man, named Nolan, which was about four fields from the road.

Nolan was the man who saved the lives of the Column, for he directed us to a spot which afforded shelter and concealment from the various military observation posts. This spot was a large dike at the end of a field behind his house. The fence along this dike was very high - 7 or 8 feet - and the top of the fence was covered by a thick growth of furze. In front of the dike there was a large growth of thick sallies screening us from the boreen.

We were glad to get this respite to enable us to get some rest and, though our position was somewhat cramped, we were thankful for the comparative ease after our strenuous retreat. Our rifles were so badly plugged with mud that we could not attempt to do anything with them then, so we concentrated our attention on cleaning our pistols and revolvers, so that we would have some arms capable of use if necessary. Our position was such that only a limited amount of movement was possible and it was undesirable in any case to make any noise for fear of attracting enemy searching parties.

From where we lay, we could see the party of about 20 horse cavalry that had been following us and that had tried to cross the bog after us. Some of their horses had sunk in the bog and we watched them for about two hours trying to extricate these horses. If they had been able to keep on after us, they might have tracked us down to our hiding place.

While these cavalry were engaged trying to rescue their horses, lorry loads of infantry came along, dropping parties here and there as they went, to complete the encirclement of the Ballygiblin area and these parties had now taken up the search. One of them came to Nolan's house and took up position on a high wall in Nolan's yard directly facing us, with rifles levelled in our direction. These troops remained there until all the troops were recalled that evening, so that, even had we wished to do so, we could not have moved from where we then were. Some of the cavalry proceeded a couple of hundred yards further up the boreen and, entering the fields, cantered around in rere of our position, coming quite close to us in their search but failing to locate us. The enemy knew we had got to a point somewhere about here but could not understand where we had disappeared to from that. This fact was related to us afterwards by a member of the R.I.C. who had himself been engaged in the round-up at that time.

Enemy activity now became intense. Lorries, moving along the road continuously, dropped fresh parties of troops. Observation posts were established on top of hay-barns and in tall trees, while the troops scoured the fields and houses in the locality and officers swept the country with powerful field-glasses in the effort to pick up our trail.

Suddenly we noticed a party entering the field, in which we were, through the small gate leading to it from the boreen. This was an oldish Colonel

carrying a pair of field-glasses, and another officer with him. He levelled his glasses on every point of the field and the ditches surrounding it while we remained perfectly still. Apparently he saw nothing to excite his suspicion. He remained, however, on top of the small hill in this field, with his glasses now and then focussed on various points, for about an hour while we remained motionless. Possibly the fact of his presence there had the effect of directing the attentions of the search parties in the vicinity further afield as, seeing him standing there, they would probably consider there was unlikely to be any of us in the immediate vicinity.

It was then late in the afternoon, and we suddenly heard three rifle shots in rapid succession. We did not know what this might mean, nor was there anything we could do. While we speculated to ourselves about this, firing started from apparently over the whole area. We concluded at this stage that this was a signal for attack and that they had located our position. We had moved closer together and we held a hurried, whispered conversation as to what should be done.

The Column Commander, addressing us at this stage, said something to the effect that it was all up now, that there was no further hope of bringing the Column safely through and that, therefore, it would be best to break up and scatter in pairs, leaving each pair to look out for themselves. We did not agree with this view. We realised, of course, that the

crisis had come, but we felt it would be more fitting to face death together, as a unit, selling our lives as dearly as possible when the attack came. We felt, in any case, that there was no hope whatever of any of us escaping either individually or otherwise. In view of this unanimous decision of the members of the Column, the Column Commander agreed to accept it. There were 24 of us there on that occasion, and we all made a solemn agreement that no individual would try to break away on his own and that we would all fight and die together when the time came, which we expected would be within the next 15 minutes or an hour at the most.

During this military operation, every male of military age, from 17 to 70, in the area between Ballygiblin and Burncourt had been arrested and brought into the different villages in the locality for identification before being released, so that, when the troops were withdrawn, there were practically no men left in the area.

As time went on and while we awaited the expected attack, it became gradually apparent that no attack was coming and that seemingly the purpose of the shots had been a signal for the withdrawal of the various military posts, because we began to observe lorries moving along and troops moving on to the road and being picked up. So it was clear after a while that the investment of the area had concluded.

We remained where we were, however, until a general silence around proclaimed the fact that the

enemy had definitely withdrawn. We had been lying on the damp or wet in the bottom of the ditch from about 10 o'clock that morning until this time late in the evening - nearly 6 o'clock - and naturally we were stiff and cramped, both from the cold and enforced inactivity. Consequently when we began to get up from the ditch, some of us were unable to walk or even to stand, but feeling a great sense of relief at our miraculous escape.

After a little exercise and massaging of limbs, we decided to call to Nolan's house to thank him for his patriotic and humane act that morning in saving us from certain death. We then found that Nolan himself had been arrested by one of the raiding parties and taken into Clogheen and he had not yet been released.

The local Cumann na mBan in the area, who apparently had been watching the progress of events, got in touch with us as soon as they saw that the military forces had withdrawn and brought us tea and sandwiches, which was one of the most welcome meals I remember having. We had had nothing to eat all day, having been interrupted before breakfast by the raiders, and so, in fact, this meal at about 6 o'clock in the evening was the first bit of food we had tasted from about half-past one before going to bed the previous night.

Following this meal, we continued our retreat to the Galtees where we could recuperate in the safety of the mountains.

Looking back on this episode, I have mixed feelings about it. In the first place, I realise it should never have happened. I blamed the Column Commander at the time for bad handling of the situation in maintaining the Column in its position around Ballyporeen much too long, and I said so to him at the time. Then this dance went further to advertise our presence and I had a bit of a falling-out with him about it, pointing out that I would not be surprised at all if we were surrounded before morning, which we were. From the moment the military round-up began, we had no initiative or no freedom of action left to us. We were driven helter-skelter in our retreat and it was only a set of lucky coincidences or an act of God that brought us safely through. On the other hand, the members of the Column behaved with admirable courage and fortitude and the spirit that animated us all when, at the back of Nolan's field, we resolved to die fighting to a man is something to be remembered with pride and pleasure.

At this time, a number of us were very dissatisfied with Hogan's leadership. There were about 12 or 14 of the Column who wanted me to take over the leadership because they felt that Hogan was lacking in commonsense and we were tired of being continuously hunted. Being surrounded every now and again and getting out of these difficulties more by good luck than good generalship had a demoralising effect on the Column, and we wanted to take the initiative in action of our own making. Hogan's attitude appeared to be that, so long as the Column continued to exist and did not lose any men or arms, it continued to be a thorn

in the side of the enemy and so served its purpose. But a number of us had different views and wanted to ~~take~~ more positive action. Nevertheless we were loyal to each other, and this particular episode had shown each man that all his comrades could be relied upon in any emergency.

I have here with me a copy of a report, from which I would like to quote, regarding the activities of the South Tipperary No. 2 Column in Kilkenny. The record was made and kept by Maurice McGrath, who was Adjutant of the Column, and I got this copy from him about fifteen years ago. From my knowledge of the events, I know this to be an accurate representation of the facts and so I propose to quote from it, merely making some comment at the end.

The concentration of troops in Tipperary and the fact that they moved about in large bodies made it impossible for the Column to take any offensive action against them. Also the fact that military posts had been established and linked up with each other at so many points in Tipperary made it extremely difficult for the Column to even rest or lie up. So it was decided at this stage to move into Co. Kilkenny, which was then a quiet area, and to see what could be done there towards initiating Volunteer activity in Co. Kilkenny, thereby drawing off some of the attention then concentrated on Cork and Tipperary.

The following is quoted from Maurice McGrath's report:

"Operations of Column in Kilkenny

The enemy had concentrated all their retaliation operations on St. Tipperary, so Column leaders decided it would be a strategic move if the Columns moved into strange territories and made things lively there, and relieve the tension in home areas. Kilkenny being the nearest and at this particular time, several districts were comparatively quiet and free from enemy attacks; consequently our Column moved Kilkenny-ward.

Long route-marches from Company to Company followed and consultations were held with local officers with the intention of obtaining assistance from Active Service Units in the carrying out of operations at different points. We found their Coys. fairly well organised and ready to co-operate, but lacking very much in arms and ammunitions.

Local Intelligence informed us that two to three military lorries passed daily from Callan to Kells through the village of Kilmanahan. Our O/C decided to attack those lorries and, accordingly, at about 9.30 a.m. took up positions in the village of Kilmanahan and awaited enemy approach. Nine men of the ^x L.A.S.U. joined Column here and the local Coy. Volunteers assisted in scout arrangement, etc. No civilians were allowed to leave the village and those entering were held, this being a precaution lest enemy should be informed of our positions and plans. Notwithstanding our vigilant precautions word reached enemy. Later Intelligence reported that

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two British ex soldiers managed to get through our cordon and warned the enemy two miles from village. They were dealt with at a later date.

After several hours waiting, we realised that the enemy were aware of our plans and were by this time preparing an attack. Column wisely vacated village before darkness and moved some miles in Tullaroan direction, and were guided by local scouts until we considered that darkness afforded obstruction to our further progress. Consequently we billeted in locality under great disadvantages.

Expecting an attack from the enemy but being totally unprepared for such an extensive round-up, we realised that the enemy were gradually closing in and centring definitely upon our area. They were aware that we were not county-men and we could not have proceeded far before darkness: they quickly mustered reinforcements from Callan, Thurles, Kilkenny and other military centres and rushed them to the spot.

Our Column having travelled for several days needless to say required a much needed rest, so accordingly they were roused from their sleep after about an hour's rest and ordered to stand to. Scouts acting under orders from W. Cleary and Column Adjutant aroused the men and succeeded after a long time in getting men together as the houses were a considerable distance apart.

E. Elward, O/C Kilkenny Batt., who arrived during the night to consult Seán re Batt. affairs, decided to organise local A.S.U's and wage an extensive campaign, such as, road-trenching and tree-felling, etc., and impede enemy's progress during our Kilkenny sojourn.

The enemy lorries were gradually drawing nearer and we could plainly hear the general hum. Troops were dropped at various points and advanced quietly to take up positions and await the morning's light for the attack.

Our position was such that, owing to darkness, without knowledge of the country we had to go through and only a few local scouts available, we were badly handicapped. Consequently we feared to advance one direction or another lest an ambush awaited us. Our only hope was to reach the Tipperary border - and to return on a future occasion when more systematic and co-operative organisation would afford better opportunities.

The Column was fortunate enough to choose a point of advance through the enemy lines which was yet open and, after hours of forced marching, fatigue amongst men, there was no alternative but to chance taking some rest and refreshments. For twelve hours we had fasted and the men were so physically exhausted that they actually fell asleep where they sat. Owing to the fewness of houses, Column again divided.

Eight of the Column were billeted at a distance from the main body - the O/C, Tommy Ryan, Tim Mullaney, J. Nagle, J. Butler, S. Morrissey and three Kilkenny A.S.U. men. They had barely taken refreshments and were dozing when the man of the house rushed in and told them the boy on scout duty was waving a handkerchief from a few fields away. This was the signal that the enemy was in view. He had no sooner signalled then he was captured, and a party of Black and Tans, about one hundred strong, were rushed in extended order towards the house. The men had barely time to get out and take shelter when they were attacked.

Rapid exchange of fire took place and the O/C now endeavoured to out-flank the enemy and rejoin the main body, who were some distance away. The enemy's cordon prevented this move, as a fresh force of military now appeared in that direction. No alternative remained but to engage the enemy and retreat in order. This he succeeded in doing for about four hundred yards. The Black and Tans kept up a rapid fire from the front but did not advance as yet, the reason being that they realised that the I.R.A. were retreating into a death-trap; as a large force of military were advancing from their rear and perhaps they wished to avoid the range of fire from the military.

The military had taken up position in their rear and, though hidden, awaited their approach with levelled rifles. As they retreated, the Column members faced the Tans and consequently,

their backs being turned to the military, they proved easy targets but evidently the officer in charge wanted to capture them alive. Fortunately, as they were quite close, one Column member - Seán Morrissey - casually glancing behind, noticed the military in position and sounded the warning - "tin hats, tin-hats at the other side of the ditch".

Whereupon the military officer rushed through a gap and shouted, 'Surrender', no doubt believing that he had nine prisoners: but he made a mistake. He had not nine children to contend with. Those were picked men and fearless, and death had no terrors for them. No sooner had he uttered the words of surrender than the I.R.A. responded with a rapid volley of revolver shots and the officer and several men fell. The remainder dropped for shelter.

The O/C of Column, realising that a moment's hesitation in his position between both fires, meant the annihilation of his small force and seizing the advantage of the enemy's surprise, rushed his men over a low fence on his right flank. The Tans meanwhile had moved several yards closer and now concentrated their fire upon the very gap the I.R.A. were passing through, the result being that two of Kilkenny A.S.U. men were shot in the act of getting over. Tommy Ryan and Seán, being the last two to pass through, covered the retreat of their comrades, replying and maintaining a rapid fire.

A strategic move on the part of the O/C again saved this gallant little band from direct

contact with a party of horse, who were hurrying to the scene of the fight. He doubled and circled back again to the rear of the party of Tans unobserved by the enemy. This move altogether puzzled the enemy as they had not anticipated under the circumstances such military strategem. The horsemen therefore galloped off in the direction they thought the I.R.A. had taken and circled around area for hours.

The O/C, realising that every attempt to rejoin main body of Column was futile owing to military cordon between them, which had been strengthened by the addition of further reinforcements, decided to attract the attention of enemy further down the line and withdraw their forces from the vicinity of the main body of Column which he hoped to rejoin in the later darkness under local guidance. This he succeeded in doing by attacking a small body of enemy a half a mile further down from Tubrid, the scene of the first encounter. The men were thoroughly aroused and desirous of avenging the death of their comrades. Each man in the O/C's opinion being worth ten of the enemy, he had no hesitation in putting in plan of attack into operation. This had the desired effect as enemy forces withdrew in direction of this new attack. A running fight was kept up for some time and the I.R.A. eventually succeeding in again eluding them until darkness and local assistance made it possible for them to leave altogether that Batt. area and later rejoin main body on Kilkenny Tipp. border.

Fortunately our losses, though serious,

were small and could under the circumstances have been immense. The enemy lost several soldiers and an officer. Several were killed and wounded.

In the meantime, the main body had mobilised and advanced to the scene of the attack but, being a considerable distance off from the O/C and smaller party had to move very cautiously to prevent being surprised. When the lull in the firing occurred, they concluded that perchance the enemy were but 'pot-shotting' at anything in particular as they passed through, which was a frequent occurrence with them. Now they decided to wait and get in touch with O/C and his party before making a move. A member of the house in which we were was sent to where O/C was billeted, but did not return, being picked up by an outpost near the scene of the attack and taken to Callan barracks. Having waited a considerable time for his return, uneasiness set in amongst us as we realised that something had gone wrong. We feared perhaps that O/C and party had really been attacked. We sent the owner of the house, who gladly volunteered, to reconnoitre. He soon returned with the news that an attack had been made upon our comrades but stated that our party had so far escaped. He also reported that the enemy now had withdrawn entirely from the scene and had gone in the direction of Callan. He also informed us that they were in large numbers and were combing the entire locality and suggested maintaining our positions until later in the evening when we could retreat in safety.

We realised now that we could be of no assistance to the smaller party as we were ignorant of their present whereabouts and that they were capable of taking care of themselves. We adopted his suggestion and stayed till darkness. Luckily for us, under cover of night, we got through towards Kilkenny-Tipp. border before the military again concentrated on that district.

Later Intelligence reported to us that they raided and searched this area and arrested several locals.

Intelligence quickly reached us from the O/C of his whereabouts, requesting us to join him immediately at Ballingarry. Without further mishap we continued and soon our little band was re-united. We were proud of their great achievements, which were very modestly told and in those men we recognised heroes of sterling qualities and indomitable courage, who faced the greatest dangers on this and previous occasions and earned the respect and admiration of their fellow-comrades. After a little further sojourning, we crossed down through home territories intending to again return in a few weeks and resume with greater vigour our aggressive tactics and hostilities".

McGrath's report is generally correct from my knowledge except for some minor details which I will deal with here. He was with the main part of the Column and was, therefore, not present in the operation in which I was concerned with eight others.

When he says, "the man of the house rushed in to warn us", this is not strictly correct because the man and woman of the house had left the house when we entered it on the previous night. I was up early that morning, about 5.30, having arranged to cook breakfast for the others, as I had noticed some freshly cured bacon there, and was in the act of doing this when a workman who worked in the place brought in the alarm that the Tans were approaching; and it was he was captured by the Tans immediately afterwards.

Seán Hayes, who in later years became a T.D., was a native of Ballingarry - Tipperary-Kilkenny border. He was an A.S.U. man of the 7th Battalion Tipperary Brigade. He was one of the eight mentioned who took part in this engagement which included the O/C - Hogan. When all seemed hopeless he led the way out.

To make the beginning of this report a bit more clear, let me state that the original ambush position was laid in the village of Kilmanahan and it was late in the evening when we decided to abandon this, fearing that we had already stayed too long in it. As we moved off in the direction of Tullaroan, we already could hear the military lorries moving around the neighbourhood. We knew by the general indications that the lorries we could hear were not the lorries we had expected to ambush and that this was a much bigger force. We had only just withdrawn from the village when we could hear the lorries moving and we travelled about seven or eight miles through a bad type of country from the military point of view and with poor scouts. We knew at this point that some kind of a round-up was going on, but

whether we had reached a point where we were outside any possible cordon, we were not sure. We knew that the search for us would begin afresh in the morning but we were afraid of running into an ambush in the dark, and it was in these conditions that we billeted for the night. At first, we were waiting for information from the local Volunteers as to whether we should move further and in what direction, but their organisation seemed to be so poor that they were unable to tell us very much and, when Aylward with his few Active Service Unit men came to us at that point, they were unable to enlighten us much on the situation.

I might mention that at this time we were encumbered by some of the cars that we had commandeered in Clonmel and which carried our spare gear, hand grenades and so on, and these cars had eventually to be abandoned in that action.

Regarding the two Kilkenny A.S.U. men who were shot, one of them was named Walsh and I forget the other man's name. The latter was a Mayo man with whom I was very friendly at the time. They had come to me that night and I had endeavoured to persuade both of them to go home as there did not seem to be anything they could do to help us. This man - the Mayo man, whose name I forget for the moment - was very interested in football and stayed there pretty late talking to me about football. So they were with us the next morning when we were surrounded by the enemy. Neither of them had ever been under fire before, so this was a new experience for them. Up to the time I left them where they were lying on the ground, they were uninjured.

I had urged them to run with the others while Seán Hayes and I covered their retreat, but they seemed rooted to the ground and I could not persuade them to move. As there was no time to lose, we left them there. Seemingly, they were killed when the Tans advanced to our position after our retreat. Whether the Tans shot them where they lay or after their capture, I cannot say. One of our fellows, Tom Mullaney, had got a bullet through the arm and was in a state of collapse. I was concerned to get him clear, so I carried him on my back over the ditch and for about a hundred yards or so.

Another point in McGrath's report that requires correction is at the point when, following our escape from the outflanking military force, we found ourselves running into a party of cavalry. McGrath states that Seán Hogan initiated a move by us to outflank the party of Tans and rejoin the main body of the Column. Actually it is Seán Hayes that should be mentioned here instead of Hogan. We ran on for about half a mile (having in the meantime linked up with the remainder of the Column) and, not knowing the country, it was pure accident that we headed in the direction where there was a gap in the cordon. The country round about is covered by small hillocks, from any one of which a reasonable view of the country around is obtainable, and so we could see military parties moving in various directions. We therefore headed in the direction of what appeared to be a blank spot which was, in fact, a gap in the cordon and, about a mile further

on, we got on a hillside from which we could see the general dispositions of the military cordon. We realised that, if we had been ten minutes later, we could not have got through at that point as this gap had then been closed. As we stood there on the hillside, we could see the military in the distance and I suppose they could see us, but we were then out of their reach. A burst of firing began in or about the original position we had been in, and this, I took it, represented the advance of the force of Tans and the shooting of the two Kilkenny A.S.U. men. It was only that night when Hogan produced a map and we began to examine the situation that we realised how lucky we had been in making our way through the cordon as we did.

An indication of the difference in conditions between County Kilkenny and County Tipperary at this period is shown by the following incident which occurred while we were in South Kilkenny during that Spring of 1921. In Tipperary from the time of the Soloheadbeg attack the county was more or less continuously under martial law. Where R.I.C. barracks were still occupied, the R.I.C. kept strictly within the walls of their barracks and dared not wander indiscriminately abroad. There was no such thing as small groups of military moving around as these, fearing attack, always moved in large defensive bodies. Consequently, the ordinary processes of law enforcement did not operate in the later period in Tipperary, the police being unable to move freely about. It was a surprise to us, therefore, to find conditions very different when we reached Co. Kilkenny as the following

incident illustrates.

A day or two previous to the Kilmanahan affair, I was billeted with a couple of my comrades in a farmhouse in South Kilkenny. We were awaiting lunch on this day, everything being peaceful and calm about, and I had occasion to leave the house and go into one of the out-buildings. I was in the cowhouse of the farmyard when I observed a lorry carrying police pulling up at the farmhouse. Concluding that this was a raid to capture us, I pulled my gun and covered the door of the house from a porthole in the wall of the cowhouse, being then in a position to take effective action when it would become clear what the police intentions were. A girl of the house came to the door and remained in conversation with them for a few minutes and a document was passed between them, while all this time, as I watched with my gun levelled on them, my comrades sat within the house in the parlour. After a few minutes, they bade the girl good-bye, turned on their heels and walked off. This appeared a very mysterious proceeding to me at the time and I did not move until it was clear that all was peaceful and calm once more. Going into the house, I was amazed to learn that the purpose of the police visit was to deliver a summons to the owner of the house for the non-payment of dog licences. This would have been about May, 1921, and it seemed a rather extraordinary state of affairs that the local police could then be concerning themselves about such trivial matters and indicates what an undisturbed state of affairs existed in that locality up to that time.

There is nothing much further to relate regarding our Kilkenny expedition except that, on our march there, we had laid ambushes in several places in the Battalion area as we passed through, all of which proved abortive. One of these ambush positions was laid around a slate quarry near Carrick-on-Suir with the co-operation of the local Battalion who went into ambush position there one morning and stayed in position until six o'clock that evening, but the enemy failed to turn up. Local Volunteer Intelligence had advised us that two or three enemy lorries passed that way every day. The reason I mention this incident in particular is that it was an ideal ambush position. It was so strong that we could have dealt with twenty enemy lorries had they come along, without any danger of being outflanked.

A couple of other incidents concerning the activities of the Column are accurately reported by Maurice McGrath and there is little I can add to it. As I agree that the report gives an accurate account of these incidents, I can do no better than quote the report. The first incident deals with an expected landing of arms on the south coast and, as far as I remember, took place some time about April, 1921:

" South Tipperary Columns Nos. 1 and 2 were ordered to proceed to the Nire Valley for the purpose of digging dumps to receive a cargo of arms that was expected to be landed on the Dungarvan coast. The Nire Valley Company is situated within

a range of encircling hills between Clonmel and Dungarvan, and it was on those hills that we were to dig the dumps for the temporary storage of the expected cargo of munitions. The Nire Valley Company, being part of the Waterford Brigade, had been instructed to co-operate with us in preparing these dumps. No. 1 Column failed to turn up at the rendezvous owing to enemy activity in their area north of the Galtees, but No. 2 Column carried out the operation successfully. The usual programme of scouts and billeting were carried out, and the O/C of the local Company, J. Power, co-operated and did his work well regarding safeguarding the Column from any surprise attack. It was strenuous work for about a fortnight, using picks and shovels, and about a dozen dumps were made and lined with heather".

We worked in two parties constructing two dumps at a time. These dumps were constructed according to a set plan in concealed positions in the hills and consisted of holes dug about ten feet square and ten feet deep, the bottom and sides being lined with heather and the top covered over with timber carrying sods and heather.

"These dumps were never used for the purpose for which they were intended as, owing to the vigilance of the coastguards, the cargo could not be landed near Dungarvan but was, I understand, landed further down the coast by arrangement with the Brigade Commander, Pax Whelan, at a point remote from the Nire Valley".

I knew little or nothing at this time about the details of this cargo of arms that was expected but, in a very private and confidential conversation between the O/C of the Column, Seán Hogan, and myself, with one or two others, we learned from Hogan that the arms expected consisted of Thompson guns, which were then a novelty to us, and that these guns were coming from America. This was all we knew about it at the time and when, in fact, the cargo did not land there, we heard no more about it at the time. The Column Commander in this matter was, I presume, acting on the Brigade Commander's instructions and whether either of these officers knew much more about the proposed landing, I do not know, but I did not even know about this reported landing of the arms further down the coast at the time; in fact, I did not know about it until I read it in McGrath's report.

The only other thing I have to say about this particular episode is that, though we were working very hard for a fortnight in the digging of these dumps, we felt very happy and contented there in the Comeragh mountains and quite free from interference by the enemy. In fact, the lack of enemy attention drove us continually to ring up the military garrisons at Dungarvan and Clonmel to inform them that we were there in the Nire Valley. Feeling so secure amid the impregnable cliffs and heights, we felt confident of being able to deal with any enemy at the rate of fifty to one but the enemy ignored these messages and made no attempt to disturb us there. We were not afraid of giving away the dumps by inviting the enemy out there

because where we were billeted was at least four miles away from where we were constructing the dumps, and the Nire Valley itself is such a wide area that we felt confident of being able to elude any attempt to encircle us there. Even if the enemy came out to search there, they would have concentrated their search upon the houses in the Valley and would not have gone up on the bare hillsides where the dumps were.

Following this we returned to Tipperary and we were in our own Battalion area sometime, about six weeks, before the Truce. Here I again quote from McGrath's report:

"Frequently two to three lorries of Black and Tans travelled on the Cahir-Clonmel road, our Intelligence reported, and their time of passing varied between twelve noon and three in the afternoon. So both Nos. 1 and 2 Columns concentrated at Derrygrath to make arrangements for an attack on these lorries. No. 2 Column, being in Tikencor outside Clonmel, made a detour and crossed near the Golf Links above Clonmel on through the Grange Company area into Nicholastown, about three miles from Cahir. We awaited there the arrival of No. 1 Column which had travelled south via Clerihan.

The Columns having arrived at Derrygrath, Hogan and Lacey made the necessary arrangements and the Columns moved into position at Barn. Positions were taken up in such a way that, should a stronger enemy force than was expected arrive, the Columns could retire in order, keeping in touch with each

other for a considerable distance. A section of No. 1 Column under Seán Kennedy, the machine-gunner, took up position behind the estate wall with a hotchkiss gun, commanding a view of the road for about 100 yards as far as Hayden's publichouse. The road to Clerihan runs directly opposite the forge.

The plan of action was that the first lorry entering the ambush position would be allowed to pass the publichouse until it reached a point within about 50 yards of the demesne wall when it would be fired on by the machine-gun. Simultaneously with this, two specially selected men would push donkey-carts to plug both roads at the forge. These men were selected - one from each Column, Seán Downey from No. 1 and Tommy Ryan from No. 2. Both men were of great physique and proved courage and, on blocking the roads, they were to take up position in the forge and prevent any survivors of the enemy party from taking cover there. It was expected that, should the first lorry escape the machine-gun volley, the cart obstruction on the road would upset it and this would also cause the others to crash, as the lorries usually travelled very fast with small intervals between them. We expected that the obstruction would overturn the first lorry and that the lorry following would have very little time to avoid crashing into the first. The remainder of the Column was disposed on both sides of the road, some men being close to the road, behind the road fences, to deal with those who might jump from the lorries and try to gain cover on the roadside, while

others were in sniping positions further back from the road where they could readily close around the rere of the lorries when they had got into the ambush position, should the distance between them be greater than usual.

All passing traffic was held up quietly and quickly and the passers-by were sent away down two by-roads where they were out of view of anyone coming into the ambush position and also out of danger. Guards were placed over them to ensure that they remained.

The Columns maintained their positions for about $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours but again we were doomed to disappointment. Fortunately for the enemy, as we learned afterwards, they had left Cahir in the lorries as usual and had travelled a few miles out when the steering of one of their lorries went wrong, and it ran into the ditch and was disabled. The whole party was, therefore, delayed pending the retrieving and repairs to the lorry, and the Column was so deprived of a great victory. The enemy party had consisted of about 40 Tans who would have been utterly wiped out if they had reached the ambush position, where we had that day some 62 men who were tried and true and our dispositions were such that none of the enemy could have escaped us.

About 4 p.m. our leaders realised the futility of further delay and nothing remained but to move on to further activities. They also

realised that the enemy would by then have been informed of our position at Barnagh and would muster in strong numbers there in an effort to round us up. Consequently, the country carts - a couple of hundred of them - that had been detained during the day were released and, when they were released, they evoked so much enthusiasm in their departure as to give rise to a lot of amusement. The clatter of their thundering hooves as they sped away could be heard for a long distance. Disappointed, cold and hungry, the Columns moved off in the Clerihan direction, No. 1 proceeding to Rosegreen and No. 2 to Powerstown.

Darkness had fallen by the time No. 2 Column reached Powerstown and were billeted as conveniently as possible to the Anner river, being quartered at John Dillon's.

The following day, when the hue and cry had died down, a photograph of the members of the Column was taken by a man named Sharkey. This photograph subsequently appeared in Dan Breen's book. Some members of the Column, however, were missing from the picture. Tommy Ryan had left the previous night on a mission of great importance and danger and thus missed being in the photograph.

On arrival at Powerstown, the Column did not disband but set up its headquarters at Dillon's where they enjoyed the hospitality of that family. Scouts and outposts were set up to avoid surprise by the enemy, and the Column was ordered to stand-to ready for any emergency. The Column Commander

believed that information of our activities in Barnagh would have reached Clonmel and Cahir and that the enemy would likely try by a large-scale round-up to capture the Column. Apparently strong military contingents had been rushed to Barnagh after we had left it and at about ten o'clock that night military lorries could be heard passing along the Clerihan and nearer roads. They came so close to our position on one occasion that our scouts reported the enemy advancing upon us, and later warned us of military cycling parties in our vicinity. Later still we learned that a large body of horse cavalry were co-operating with them, but likely the direction of their search took them in the Clerihan direction away from us, where apparently they had received some Intelligence of the movements of No. 1 Column. Throughout the night and the following day, which was Sunday, they continued their search without coming in contact with either Column. Our Column remained standing to during the night until two o'clock on Sunday morning. They were then allowed to go to their beds and to report to headquarters again at eight o'clock in the morning. On Sunday morning Seán Cooney (Wiggy) of Clonmel came to us and reported all clear.

The Column left Powerstown following this episode and proceeded towards Newcastle. An ambush was laid for a police patrol at Kilmanahan, as we had learned that the police in that station were again venturing out on patrol. We intended to

capture this patrol and destroy the barracks, but again we were disappointed as, after waiting two days in the locality, no patrol appeared. So we sniped the barracks as a warning to them of our presence before we left it. We had no ammunition to waste on a protracted attack on the barracks".

Concerning the mission of importance that I was engaged on, mentioned in McGrath's report, the details are as follows: - Mick Sheehan, who had been appointed Brigade Quartermaster at this time, had decided to make a survey of all the arms in the Brigade area and, for this purpose, was visiting Battalion and Company Commanders and going around with them to inspect all the arms in their respective areas. Sheehan had no knowledge of the four Battalions in the southern area and so I was detailed to accompany him for his protection and also to show him around the various places and introduce him to the people around. Being considerably older than I was, he was cautious - I would say ultra-careful. Of course, he was in what was to him a strange area whereas I, being in my own area, saw no danger of being captured by the enemy.

One evening while we were inspecting the Tincurry Company, I heard to my great surprise rifle fire from the Galtee military rifle range. This range had previously been destroyed by the local Volunteers and we did not expect to see it in use again by the military during the period of hostilities, but I now realised that the military in Cahir had ventured out again to carry out live practices on this range. A

few hours later when the soldiers had started to move away from the range - we were then within twelve hundred yards of them - on impulse I fired off three rifle shots at them. Sheehan was close by at the time and, knowing what happened, he retreated hurriedly in the direction of Ballylooby where I rejoined him later. He informed me that he would have me courtmartialled for the action I had taken on this occasion, presumably on the charge that my action in firing on the military was undisciplined and interfered with his plans. I was very annoyed by his attitude and I went away from him that evening on to the main road, away from the farmhouse where he was billeted.

While I was on the road, Jack Keating, who was a driver of one of Brown's lorries of Clogheen, came along with the lorry. Keating was going in the direction of Cahir. I had in mind returning to the Column and leaving Sheehan to his own devices, so I asked Keating for a lift. When I got into the lorry, he told me that he was calling to Harty's, opposite the military barracks in Cahir, but that I would be quite safe in the lorry as he would not be stopped long there. The night was dark. As I was seated in the lorry opposite the barracks in Cahir, I saw groups of people going into the barracks and concluded that there was some kind of a concert about to begin in the barracks. On impulse, I left the lorry and joined one of these groups, being admitted to the barracks without question.

The first thing that confronted me was a soldier who was on beat as a sentry. He was standing at ease. Moving close to him, I snatched his rifle from him and ran at a hundred-yards sprint pace towards a lean-to shed (gun sheds) at the back of the barracks. I knew the lay-out of the barracks very well as I had delivered hay and straw there some years previously. I scaled the gun-sheds and got from the roof on to the wall surrounding the barracks without being detected by the sentries at either corners of the barracks. Outside the wall there was a barbed-wire entanglement surrounding the barracks and I was unaware of the distance this was from the wall as I could not see it in the darkness, though I knew it was there. I jumped from the top of the wall but landed in the middle of the barbed wire.

Before I jumped, the alarm had gone in the barracks and the military had rushed for the front gate, apparently to cut off my exit in that direction but, as I had anticipated this move by going to the back wall and none of them had come in that direction, my mode of escape was unnoticed. However, the search went on and the orderly officer with a party of troops, with fixed bayonets, moved outside the barracks and began to search around the walls. I was caught fast in the wire and could not move without making a lot of noise, so I lay as quiet as possible while this search went on. The orderly officer had a flashlight which he shone upon the wall as he moved around, and the beam of this as they passed me was just too high to pick me up, passing about two feet over my head, which was very fortunate for me.

I remained still for about two hours before I ventured to pick myself out of the wire which I did eventually, though I left the legs of my trousers behind in it, and also my revolver which I lost when I jumped and could not locate it in the dark. I was badly cut by the wire and bled quite a lot, but I held on to the rifle. Having got clear of the wire, I made for the demesne wall of Colonel Charteris place, a few hundred yards from the barracks. I knew then I was safe and made my way from there to Quinlan's of Ballylaffan, about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles away. I remained in bed there for three days, recovering from my wounds. This incident took place about a month prior to the Truce.

A short time following this, the Columns were disbanded and were replaced by active service groups in each Battalion area. I took very little part in any further activity until the Truce came about on the 11th July, 1921, whereby a new situation was created.

In the relation of this story I have confined myself to what appeared to be the incidents of greater importance. There were, naturally, hundreds of minor things occurring from day to day, abortive ambushes and so forth, which I have omitted, such things being common to the daily life of the Columns.

Before the break-up of our Column, all its members were suffering badly from scabies, so much so that a few of us - myself included - had the reputation of being mentally affected by the terrible itch. We were naturally concerned all the time about this infection which impaired the efficiency of the men,

but we were ignorant of the true nature of the complaint and did not know whether anything could be done about it towards curing it. Later we learned, of course, that the only way to deal with it was by hot baths and sulphur applications, but there was no possible way of carrying out such a treatment under the conditions in which we were living, where there was scarcely a bath to be found in the area outside of the large residences which we dared not go to for such purposes. There was a doctor - Dr. Stokes - who was available to us on call to deal with our wounded but no one ever thought of consulting him on the matter of scabies. We accepted it as an inevitable condition.

One of the last incidents that occurred before the formation of the active service groups was the burning of some mansions in the locality, for instance, Captain Perry's of Newcastle. Perry was one of those whose houses were so destroyed. He was the landlord of all that area around, and his forefathers before him had been tyrannical landlords in the country.

I omitted to mention earlier that, following the Clerihan ambush, the military had burned a number of houses in the area as a reprisal, including the houses of people who had no connection whatever with the Volunteers. It was, therefore, as a counter reprisal for these burnings that it was decided to burn down a number of big houses of the gentry who were British supporters in the area; and Perry's was one of these. This mission was given to the local Company who were mobilised for the purpose, but the No. 2 Column went

there to co-operate with the local Company in case anything out of the ordinary turned up.

The local Company had the necessary petrol and straw in readiness for the burning and, having surrounded the house, I was one of a party of six men detailed to go to the halldoor and demand admittance. Perry had the name of being a bit of a gunman. So, having knocked at the door, we waited with the guns at the ready until he himself opened the door when we poured into the hall. Perry was in his pyjamas and became ghastly white when he realised who we were. He concluded apparently that we had come to shoot him and appeared vastly relieved when we informed him that we had merely come to burn down the house, at which he smiled all over and requested us to give him permission to take a glass of spirits. We accompanied him to the diningroom where he helped himself to a glass of whiskey and offered us a drink at the same time, which we refused as none of us took drink then. While he drank his whiskey, he told us that he had a very valuable library of books and requested permission to save these from the flames. We sent a runner to the Column Commander with this request, and permission to save the books having been given, about ten men were detailed to remove the books from the library and from the house, following which straw was spread around the rooms and other men came along to sprinkle this with petrol. Before setting alight to it, however, a roll of the local Company and the Column was called to ensure that everyone was clear of the house. The inmates of the

house went to a nearby house on the estate where they remained for the night. Though the house was burned to the ground, there were in it cellars containing wines and spirits with which the local people made free within the next couple of days, with the result that in the subsequent round-up a number of the locals were captured by the enemy, in a half-tipsy condition.

Another place that was burned some days later was the house of the Protestant Minister in Tubrid. This was after the formation of the Active Service groups and was one of the first - if not the first - acts of the active service group in that locality. The rumour had got around that the enemy intended to establish a blockhouse system where strong points in sight of each other would be established to dominate the whole country. This Protestant Minister, named Disney, had a house which was situated on a hill overlooking the surrounding country and it was thought that this would constitute a temporary blockhouse and would be so used by the enemy. Therefore, it was decided to destroy it. I was back in my own Battalion area then and, except for this, there was no activity worth mentioning until the Truce occurred.

This concludes the story of my activities up to the date of the Truce, except for a few incidents which come to my mind just now as having been skipped in the chronology of events.

One of these incidents concerns the shooting down of an aeroplane. This occurred some time about April, I think, of 1921. At that time the Column were at the house of people named McGrath of Crohane, Newcastle. We were in a field at the back of the house cleaning our rifles one morning, when a military aeroplane came flying low over us. We concluded that the occupants were searching for the Column and had some information of our location. The Column Commander hurriedly ordered us to assemble our arms and open fire on the aeroplane. All six of us who were present at the time took very careful aim and fired several shots as it passed, at what seemed to be 50-100 feet over our heads. Our fire was not returned. It was so close to us when we fired that we could hardly miss it. After our firing, the 'plane set up a crackling noise and it wobbled for some time, so that we expected to see it crashing at any moment. Then, seeming to recover, it gained height and changed its course. Instead of flying, as it had been, over the Knockmealdown mountains, it now turned and flew out of sight over the Galtees. Our last remembrance of it was that it was still clattering as it disappeared from our sight over the Galtees.

The daily press next day gave an account of an aeroplane that had been shot down by the I.R.A. in East Limerick. I can't say, of course, if the 'plane that was shot down by the East Limerick men was the same 'plane that we fired at, but this incident

occurred about the same time and, from the circumstances of our firing on it, we could hardly have missed it though whether our shots had any serious effect on the machine, I, of course, cannot say.

The following is another incident which I would like to record. Tom Looby, now Lieut-Colonel Looby of the National Army, joined the Column in May, 1921. He brought information to the Column Commander that a party of enemy cyclists moved out from Clonmel each day two or three miles out the road and might easily be attacked and captured. I was one of ten picked out to carry out this mission and we proceeded, with Looby acting as a scout, to ambush this patrol. We had planned to surprise them but, in fact, they came on us unexpectedly so that we were surprised instead. After a short, sharp exchange of fire, we withdrew but Looby was captured by the enemy. The engagement took place within a mile of the military barracks in Clonmel on the Kilshelan road.

Another engagement that happened in 1921 with the Column in Slievenamon deserves recording. We were in the mountains above Slievenamon, having come along a main road, and from the heights we observed a party of Tans who were travelling on the road from Kilkenny to Clonmel. We were a considerable distance away but we opened fire on them at this long range, and this started a fight which lasted all night - and we were not in it at all! After we had fired on the Tans we withdrew and went off to our beds.

We were greatly surprised to read in the papers next day of a heavy engagement that had taken place in Slievenamon. Seemingly, at the time that we opened fire on the Tans, there was a party of military coming from the direction of Cork and they, hearing the firing, went into action in the direction from which it came. As we had withdrawn and it was then getting dark, the only firing they could then discern was that of the Tans, while the Tans in turn concluded that the military fire was from us, so the battle between them went on all night and we were not in it at all. I can't give the date of this incident but I believe it would be somewhere about May, 1921, or possibly June.

As it will be found mentioned, or seen in photographs, that Volunteer uniforms were worn during 1920 and 1921 by the officers of our Column, it may be of interest to show the origin of these particular uniforms. When the Column was first formed, I happened to have in my possession three Volunteer officers' uniforms. I had bought one of these in Fermoy and the other two from a tailor in Clogheen about 1917 and I had these in my possession all that time. When I joined the Column, I gave one of these uniforms to Hogan, another to Dan Breen and the third I wore myself. I think it was Breen gave his uniform to Jack Nagle when he left the Column, and the three of us wore these uniforms all the time we were on the Column. Strangely enough, however, I had not my uniform on the night I went into Canir Barracks and I think that must have been the only time I was out of uniform during that period. To be caught in uniform,

of course, meant certain death. Perhaps there was a certain amount of bravado in wearing uniform during this period, but we felt it was necessary to assert our right as soldiers and as lawful belligerents in this war, so that in all the exploits I have narrated here where the Column was engaged, the three of us always wore uniform.

Spy incident in my own native townland:

Being an athlete and foremost in furthering any project that would mean improving life or sport for the people in my native parish, I didn't in my wildest dreams suspect a spy in my native townland. Contrary, however, to my impression, it was obvious there was somebody having a close watch on my home. As stated previously, my home was raided once a week while I was serving in the Column. On occasions when the Column came near my home I made it a point to visit my mother and family. A visit of this nature brought about a raid on the house a couple of hours later. The Black and Tan officer, or military officer, as frequently happened, remarked to my mother, "your son was here to-night". The local Company O/C was aware of the facts. He suspected nothing, neither did any Volunteers in the locality. One such visit nearly spelt disaster for me. Fortunately I had grown to be a hardened soldier, had wonderful ears and good eyes, and these facilities saved me. The visit was one of pleasure and I overstayed the time a matter of a few hours. The field adjoining the house

was newly sown with wheat. A path led from it into a grass field which was my route to join the Column. Proceeding along this path I observed what appeared to be a shadow at the gate leading into the grass field - a distance of 150X away. I put my ear to the fence and listened. In a matter of five seconds I distinctly heard a cough. This signal was sufficient to realise what was awaiting for me. I thought quickly and concluded my hope was to roll into the corn field. I kept rolling until I got to a hollow in the centre of the field. Every roll followed after a look in the direction of the gate. I made another decision in the course of rolling. In the event of being observed I would run for it and fight it out. I hated the thought of being captured alive and tortured. I had no sooner arrived, as I thought safe and sound, in the hollow of the field when I heard the Lancers on the road. I saw them surrounding and searching the house and I expected every moment to see them galloping into the field. I lay on the ground from eleven o'clock at night until five in the morning before I was convinced the coast was clear.

The Sequel:

I was Officer Commanding the 19th Battalion, as also Officer Commanding Kilkenny Military Barracks in the year 1924. On one Saturday morning inspection of the Barracks I remarked that the men's canteen was perfect from a cleanliness point of view, and I was favourably impressed it was so highly organised.

I sent for the Manager and congratulated him. He seemed very pleased and thanked me. At the same time he remarked, "May I see you alone sometime for a minute?" I was curious to know what purpose he had to see me. I called upon him an hour later, and he up and told me that he knew me by repute well, that he was Manager of the canteen in Cahir when the Column were fighting the Tans, that from what he knew he foresaw my capture. He often heard it remarked, "we are going out for Ryan and we will have him dead or alive to-night". I asked how it was they were so sure of capturing me. He made the pronouncement that I had a special spy on my home, a native named Dan Moloney. He is now gone to his reward. He was a peculiar type, and the last person I would suspect to be fitted for the work.

Incident following the Truce:

I paid a visit to Cahir on the 14th July 1921. I mentioned previously that Cahir was a Loyalist town. Five members was its total contribution of Volunteers towards the fight for freedom 1916 to 1921. The people were curious at this stage to see individuals, such as myself, who had been on the run, and I was accorded a good outward show of welcome. A publican named Annie Bradshaw, who hunted with the hare and followed the hound, prevailed upon me to accept an invitation to her place that evening to meet two Black and Tans who were good friends of hers. I accepted the invitation, met the Tans referred to and the best bottle in the house was put up. They were gentlemanly fellows, and after a few references

to the fight we decided to forget about it and celebrate.

The best bottle led to several and to a sing-song. The evening was most enjoyable until approaching midnight, when a lorry of Tans sought admission for a drink. They insisted on joining us in the sitting-room. The driver, a notorious ruffian, when he saw and learned who I was, stated, "I think too much of the oath I took to drink with a rebel". Whereupon he approached me. There were two Volunteers in the room at the time, the local Company Commander and myself. The Company Commander was armed; I was not. I saw red as the driver approached me. I caught his face with the palm of my left hand and his body with my right. I lifted him to the ceiling and flung him over the banister into the hallway below. Two others came to his assistance but they were roughly treated by the two Tans who were with me at the beginning of the celebration. Skin and hairs flew in all directions for ten minutes. One of the lorry Tans drew a gun at this stage. He was disarmed by one of my Tans. A second drew a gun and the Company Commander handed me his gun. Just at the climax, the District Inspector appeared and ordered the Tans to barracks. Five seconds more and it would have been a sorry sight. The culprit who was responsible for this episode was shot dead the following evening while driving through Tipperary town.

As I have referred in the course of this story to the Vice Brigadier, Seán Treacy, as one to whom we looked as the leader, perhaps I should make some reference also to Seamus Robinson who was the Brigade Commander from the formation of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade until the Truce in 1921.

Robinson had come to Tipperary after his release from prison in 1917 to become the G.H.Q. Organiser of the Volunteers in the county. His 1916 service and the fact that he was the G.H.Q. representative on the spot gave him a certain standing, and so I suppose it followed naturally that, when the Brigade was formed, he was given the appointment of Brigade Commander. I have no direct personal knowledge of the circumstances of Robinson's appointment to Brigade rank but, from what I know of Treacy, I imagine that it was probably he that supported, if he did not propose Robinson for the appointment.

While Treacy lived, he was looked upon by all the officers and men of the Brigade as the actual power, even though he did not choose to hold the appointment of Brigade Commander. At Brigade Council meetings which I attended, though Robinson might preside, it was Treacy who dominated and directed matters, and it was, therefore, to Treacy we looked for leadership in action.

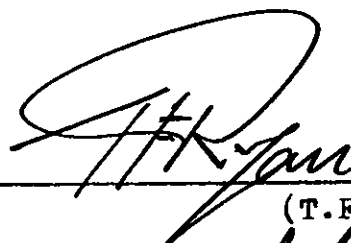
Almost immediately following Treacy's death, the Columns were formed and the whole energies of the best fighting men were concentrated on the operations and activities of these special units. The activities of the Brigade Staff from then on became almost purely administrative, giving support to the Columns by intelligence and communication services.

From the time the Columns began operations, Robinson remained in and about the Brigade Headquarters at Rosegreen, taking no active part in the work of the Columns, and so was not regarded by the men of the Columns as having any effective control of them. In fact, the Column Commanders at this time seemed to be supreme in their respective commands, the Brigade

Headquarters merely acting as a centre for intelligence reports and other communications.

From this, it may be seen that we looked upon Robinson's position as Brigade Commander as purely nominal, though, with the wisdom of later years, I realise that, had he been possessed of a more forceful character and spent most of his time with the Columns where he might have influenced or directed their activities on the spot, we might have had less to lament in the way of lost opportunities.

SIGNED:



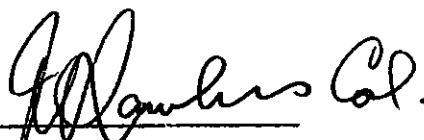
(T.F. Ryan)

DATE:



20/1/53

WITNESS:


(J.V. Lawless) Col.

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