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STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Daniel F. O'Shaughnessy,
Kilfinane,
Co. Limerick.

Identity.

Subject.

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STATEMENT of Daniel F. O'Shaughnessy,

Kilfinane, Co. Limerick.

I was born on 19th May 1902 at Kilfinane, Co. Limerick, being the second son of a family of seven. My father kept the principal draper's shop in the town and concerned himself with the national politics of the time, being an adherent of the Irish Parliamentary Party under John Redmond. One of the first things I remember is an episode that became memorable in the local history. This was a conflict which took place between the local landlord, Colonel F.C.Trench Gascoigne and his town tenants, who sought a reduction in their rents. The landlord refused to acceed to the demands and, backed by all the forces of the law, began a series of evictions, which were fiercely resisted by the tenants. The struggle came to a head on the 28th January 1909 in a clash between the young men of the town who carried hurleys, and a force of R.I.C., about 60 strong, some of whom menaced the crowd with carbines in their hands, while others attacked the crowd with their batons. The fight lasted from 8 p.m. until midnight, and many heads were broken, necessitating the continuous services of Dr. Meade, the local medical practitioner.

Though this may not seem to have anything to do with the revolution which was to follow in subsequent years, it actually had some direct bearing on it, because when Seán McDermott came to Kilfinane at the end of March, 1909 - that was the year I think - he was asked, "What brought you here?", and he answered, "I admire their fighting spirit!" The first evening he came, he was accompanied by John Augustus Smyth - Rathany, and Jack Carroll, The Lodge, Hospital. They were introduced by Thomas Doherty, who was then living in the hotel with his uncle, to my

father Michael C. O'Shaughnessy, the leading draper, who was a fine public speaker and made fiery speeches. MacDermott was anxious to secure services of a prominent person in town and it was then Doherty suggested my father. Both of them came down to father's shop where MacDermott and Papa had a discussion on political matters for some time, when he agreed to preside at the meeting. They then went to St. Peter's Hall to make arrangements and, while there, MacDermott had a wordy debate with the caretaker who asked Seán how were they going to achieve Independence? By fighting, said MacDermott. Is it with a haggard of cabbage stumps, retorted the Caretaker. So they left the Hall, having been promised it for a particular night. St. Peter's was a young men's club, non-political and non-sectarian that was its charter run under the aegis of the confraternity.

A private executive meeting was held in the hall on the following night and Father Mangan, C.C., presided, but nothing that was said at this meeting was known to the other members of the Hall. In the meantime, posters were sent out and posted, advertising MacDermott's meeting for a certain night. When Seán called to my father, they went to St. Peter's, accompanied by Tom Doherty and Harry McCarthy, but the door was closed against them. They then approached John Doherty, Hotel proprietor, if he would give them the Ballroom, which was actually a hay loft, but he also refused. As a last resort, they interviewed the Clerk of the Petty Sessions, John Bennett, a Protestant, and to his memory let it stand on record he handed them the key of the Courthouse without question when they told him that it was their only hope of carrying on the meeting. Candles were procured to meet the emergency and the Courthouse, though small, was full to capacity. Father presided and after a brief speech

introduced the only other speaker, Seán MacDermott. He got an attentive hearing and spoke of Independence and freedom and Grattan's Volunteers. He also introduced into his speech Griffith's Sinn Féin theory of self-government and developed the theme of Ireland and Hungary. On this part of his address he was interrupted, but in a friendly spirit, by Séamas O'Keeffe, a pork butcher by trade from the Cross of the Leacht. Mick Tobin from the Cross of the Leacht had made the acquaintance of MacDermott and the most up-to-date literature on freedom was posted to his home every week. Séamas wanted to let MacDermott see that some of them at least knew and understood Griffith's Sinn Féin policy, but the majority heard it for the first time. They then formed a Committee but I don't think it could be described as a Sinn Féin one.
MacDermott stayed at Doherty's Hotel until the following Sunday, 31st March, which was only a day or two off the anniversary of the death of O'Neill Crowley. A meeting was billed for Kilclooney at the Memorial Cross to his memory for that date. MacDermott pressed father hard to go but Sunday being one of the busiest days of the week in business at that time, he had to decline the offer.
Tom Doherty and Harry McCarthy, two fine fellows, went with him and Paddy Fetton, the shoemaker. MacDermott spoke again at length but not more than two or three dozen people were there to listen. He spoke from a long car on the side of the road. His reception at Kilfinane was definitely on the cool side, but they listened attentively at what he had to say. There were a few enthusiasts but the vast majority were Parliamentarians or All for Ireland League. The first Committee composed of Michael C. O'Shaughnessy, Chairman, Henry McCarthy, Thomas Doherty, Ed. O'Keeffe, Cross of the Leacht. Uncles of the first two names were closely

associated with '67, while Doherty's father died after leaving jail in '82.

Members of St. Peter's Hall who refused admittance Fr. Mangan C.C., Joe Cagney, owner of The Golden Vein Dairy Creameries, John O'Keeffe, Harnessmaker, Pat Brennan, boycotted by people during 1909 for keeping police during the riots. Literature was now coming from Dublin and about a month later a public meeting was called. A small number collected and John Doherty again refused the hay loft but Charles C. O'Shaughnessy, my uncle, opened the gate of his private yard and in an old disused forge they held their first Sinn Féin meeting, but this new organisation melted away after a few months.

MacDermott met Fetton on the Sunday they went to Kilclooney and congratulated him on the fight they made against the landlord and the police. Tom Doherty received four or five letters from Seán MacDermott, enquiring how the organization was progressing, and in one of these he stated that he would be either shot or hanged. That that would ultimately be his end, but he didn't care as long as it was for Ireland. These letters are unfortunately lost. Before the meeting in Kilclooney, Doherty put up a poster in St. Peter's Hall but Brennan, after reading it, pulled it down, which caused a heated altercation between them. Brennan was manager of the Darragh branch of the Golden Vein Dairy, of which Kilfinane was the centre. MacDermott was told about the poster incident and in his speech at Kilclooney he referred to this matter of the poster which was deeply resented by the suppliers to the Darragh Creamery and Brennan stood in a very poor light in the eyes of the people.

Immediately after poor MacDermott was shot

father wrote to Dublin for picture postcards of the dead patriots. He put them out on the window and wrote underneath them - "We oft might lose the good we'd win by fearing to attempt". This drew forth a scathing remark of mockery from an uncouth local magistrate, M.F.Burke, B.A., a local teacher. Father resented Burke's remark, because at that time Papa's brother, Leo, was fighting in France for the freedom of small nations.

As father is now dead these 20 years I am writing from memory and information supplied by my Uncle Charles, Thomas O'Doherty and Ed. O'Keeffe, who still live.

At Easter, 1916, I was 14 years of age and had reached the higher standard and Edmond Hayes was my teacher. His room was composed of three sons of District Inspector Reid and many other Protestants and policemen's sons, including two sons of Head Constable Creedon. Then, one day early in the week, he evidently could not contain himself any longer. He burst forth into a speech and a tirade of abuse against the British Government and all it stood for until he had us almost frightened out of our wits. At the end of his short but virile speech, he said - Irishmen's blood was flowing out there - pointing to the field outside - and the whole class involuntarily looked out the window to see the battle that was raging. He was brother of Dr. Richard Hayes who was in the fight outside Dublin. We were really disappointed when we couldn't see the invisible battle.

On Thursday evening of that week we were home from school and Head Constable Creedon walked across the street from the post office with a telegram in his hand and read it for father. The situation is serious. Thats bad, he replied. Then, on Friday, Head Constable Creedon brought another telegram from the Post Office and read -

The situation is well in hand. Thats good, thats good, replied papa. Creedon showed the telegrams to nobody else but I wonder did he realise that he was showing them to a revolutionary who had sent and received two revolvers from Birmingham to shoot Clifford Lloyd, but his plans miscarried. Another day was a market day and no buyers attended and a farmer shouted at the top of his voice when he saw a Volunteer passing, "How can we do business while these ruffians are at large!"

I watched on Easter Sunday the Volunteers collect at the Convent Cross at 10 a.m. before they marched to Ballylanders. They were few in numbers, not more than fifteen or twenty, and they had no arms except about two carried revolvers. Everything seemed very quiet and there was no excitement. They were in charge of Jack McCarthy, Sycamore Lodge, and the only other person watching them with me was Sergeant Maguire, who was shot afterwards. Jack McCarthy must have known there was trouble coming, because he ordered all the men to Confession the day before and a barrel of gun powder was despatched in an ass and cart with Tony Barrett sitting on top of it on Saturday to Ballylanders. They were locked up in the Hall all day in Ballylanders and they cursed the freedom of Ireland on their way home in the afternoon because they were starved with the hunger. Pierce McCann was at the Convent Cross before they left for Ballylanders - he was from Tipperary and an important leader.

At 1 p.m. on Wednesday morning they were all called out of their beds and told to mobilise secretly in Thomastown Wood. This they did, but a despatch rider from Ballylanders arrived about 2 a.m. and told them to disperse as plans had miscarried. The despatch rider was Ned Tobin, Ballinlacken, and he carried his bicycle on his back all the way from Ballylanders [illegible]

the wood a mile long to the other end where he met the Kilfinane Company. This was a feat of strength as the wood was thick with scrub and underbrush. It also gives an idea of the secrecy required and the excitement prevailing at that particular hour.

A month before the Rising, Ernest Blythe stayed at Doherty's Hotel and in the evening attended a meeting of officers at Tom Lipsett's, opposite the Grotto. This was a secret meeting and he was taken by a circuitous round to the back. When Blythe was told that Sergeant Maguire was watching him he replied, "I don't give a damn about him".

After MacNeill's call to arms in 1913 a strong company was formed in Kilfinane. It was about 60 strong and was formed of the young men of the parish. They naturally turned to British reservists to train them in the use of arms but they had no arms so they made timber replicas of the British rifle. The making of these kept the local carpenters busy for a long time and cost 2/- each. The Company was divided into sections. The first was the Main St. section and were known as the "collar and tie" squad, and were drilled by Con Barrett. The second was the Low Road section and drilled by John Riordan, who incidentally received a special medal from Queen Victoria for his famous march of 800 miles across the African veldt during the Boer War, on which a thousand started and only four finished up. This section embraced the western end of the parish. The last was the Cross of the Leacht, which included the eastern end of the parish. They were drilled by Pad Carthy, the son of a metal runner and were called Carthy the tinkers. He was the perfect drill-master, handsome appearance and fine physique, with a powerful voice. When he was drilling his section, he'd never say "Attention", but shortened it to "She-hen", so

that section were called the she-hens, as Riordan's section in the Low Road were called the "awkward squad".

It was painful to watch some of these men being drilled. It took them a month to learn to number off and a month to form two-deep and another month to form fours. On the march they couldn't keep step. But the ultimate efficiency of these men from the raw is due solely to the patience and perseverance of the drill masters. There was a friendly rivalry between the different sections and for efficiency, Carthys was the best. The reveille was sounded at 7 every evening by Con Keeffe in the centre of the town, calling the Volunteers to drill, which now gave the drilling a barrack square touch. This hugle call could be heard all over the parish which reminded them of their duty. The collar and tie squad had a fine piccolo player when on the march through the town. At this time Ballyroe Lane was full of militia men and reservists and old soldiers. They were standing at the corner one night watching the Volunteers pass, and laughing at some of the fellows out of step. Fall in, the Munsters, shouted Ned Kelly, an old soldier. They jumped to it into line and to watch their efficiency was a revelation. No wonder they won an Empire. What a dangerous fighting machine these Munsters must have been in action.

As the summer of 1914 approached, night skirmishes were carried out with the Glenroe Company led by Meehan on the hills around Ballinacourty. Other companies were also formed in Ardpatrick, Martinstown and Cush, and the drill-master of the former was Hannigan, a former Sergeant Major in the British Army.

Then the war broke out in August and all these reservists were called to the colours, so the Companies decided to give them a send-off. They all met in the

Fair Green and, led by the Kilfinane Brass and Fife bands, they marched through the town to Kilmallock Station, 300 strong. All along the side walks there was waving of hands and handkerchiefs and weeping of women and young girls, for this was the end of their cherished hopes. I saw Con Barrett kiss his sweetheart a passionate goodbye on the Laurencetown road as she wept bitterly. The stationmaster ordered the gates to be closed against them, but the weight of numbers forced them open and the Companies marched on to the platform with the bands playing full blast. There they stood four deep in silence. Then Meehan stepped to the edge of the platform and sang with intense feeling - "Goodbye, Mother, you may never press me to your heart again". It was a most impressive moment and tears came into my eyes. Had he some strange premonition he was the first man killed in Flanders? Then Redmond offered the young men of Ireland for Empire, but there were men in Dublin with other ideas.

When the split came in the Irish Volunteers in October 1914, the local Company marched to the Fair Green and there they were addressed by Dr. Lee, Fr. Lee and Papa, and told that all those not in sympathy with Redmond's policy should step forward. About 15 or 20 left the ranks and formed their own company, and Pat O'Dea was elected their first captain. He was afterwards superseded by Jack McCarthy, Sycamore Lodge, at a Company meeting held at Tom Lipsett's. Lipsett's mother was a milliner who married a policeman and their only son, Tom, a University student, never got the slightest pittance as a reward in after years for his Volunteer activities when he badly needed it, as his enthusiasm for the cause upset the even tenor of his life.

As the Companies began to march and drill, the Redmonites in and out of the Volunteers held the remnants of the Irish Volunteers in complete contempt. They stood in splendid isolation and held their little broken ranks together. After a few months Redmond's Volunteer force was broken up as they had taken the advice of their leader and at least a hundred young men from this town with a population of one thousand served sincerely their King and country. Their betrayal on England's part is a lesson for all time to Irishmen. All through 1915 things were at a dead end and there was about as much notice taken of MacNeill's Volunteers by the general public as an elephant would take of a fly on his back. The only stimulus that seemed to keep them alive was when they went by train to Limerick where Patrick Pearse spoke in July - I think - 1915. There they had a clash with the "separation allowance" women with stones and bottles on their way home to the station, which kept them talking for the rest of that year.

Michael O'Leary, the first Irish V.C., was at the Junction station and they smashed his carriage windows. A few months before Uncle Leo, 19 years, joined up and is by now in France. By the autumn of this year Monteith is playing an active part in reorganising the Irish Volunteers in the Galtee Battalion area. He is staying in either Ballylanders or Galbally.

The local Company do some target shooting back in Ballyeagogue quarry with a revolver. Someone has bought one but they haven't enough ammunition to shoot a dozen rabbits.

They now carry out some inter-company exercises with Ballylanders. There was no Company in Cush then and Davy Clancy was one of the strongest opponents of the new

Irish views.

British propaganda is now working to a tremendous crescendo and the magistrates of the court lend a willing hand. Three young men from Ballyroe Lane are brought before the Petty Sessions for fighting among themselves. Under ordinary circumstances, they would be bound to the peace, but Willie Gubbins, J.P., gave them the option of joining the Army or six months' hard labour. One joined the Army but he came home minus a leg.

It was in the early part of 1915 that Pad Carty ("She-hen") came home with a wound in the leg. The brass band met him at the outskirts and played him through the town. By the end of the year English money is pouring in to the lanes and old faction fights are renewed. The Wards, Costellos, Sullivans and Mannins and Frahers of Captain's Lane meet in combat the Cartys, Ryans, Hicks and Lynchs of Ballyroe Lane.

Shinawagh Fraher is home on leave in a sailor suit. With his two brothers they stand at the entrance to Ballyroe Lane waving ashplants of defiance. The Cartys rush from their den in a concerted attack and Shinawagh the sailor is laid low from an iron bar on the head. Ellen Dido, mother of the Cartys, appeared on the scene and, lifting her skirt, hit her naked bottom three resounding strokes with the palm of her hand and said, let Kate the Hatter kiss that! We did what Cú Chulainn did under similar circumstances: we bent our heads with shame.

In the autumn of this year MacNeill came from Dublin to review the Volunteers of the Galtee Battalion at Loughgur, but it was a poor show. Not more than sixty Volunteers paraded. Recruiting for the British Army is

and Captain Moloney, Croom, father of the famous jockeys, supported by W. Gubbins and Dr. Lee. Captain Moloney went on to praise the patriotism of the Frahers, five of whom had joined up and when he continued to speak in more glowing terms of the Costellos, their mother Nano spoke up and said, They're gone to be slaughtered. That took the wind out of his sails.

From the recruiting point of view, ex-Sergeant John O'Brien, who had a public house in Kilmallock, was the most subtle and dangerous. He was an ex-R.I.C. man and was permanent recruiting agent for the Government in Kilmallock. At first you took a shilling and you were joined up after being primed with drink. But the boys got wise to this, so he worked out a new scheme. Boys went into the bar, pretending to join up, but they had no intention of taking the shilling, which evidently sealed the contract. So he now decided that the value in porter or six pints was as good as the bob and, with the phone at his elbow, he had them whisked off to the nearest military station. I know three men from this area caught in this fashion.

In 1914, most of the towns and villages of Ireland echoed the tramp of the Redmondite Volunteers. They were mostly unarmed, but carried dummy rifles which were used for drill purposes. The Volunteers had come into being following the founding of the Ulster Volunteers who were pledged to resist the imposition of Home Rule, and the National Volunteers were the counter to this, to uphold the Home Rule Bill, then before the British House of Commons. The Irish people as a whole trusted at the time in the British promises to give effect to the Home Rule Bill, but the declaration of war between England and Germany on August 4th intervened, and caused the Home Rule Bill to be shelved until the end of the War, which many thought would

be of short duration. Accepting this gesture of friendship on the part of the British Liberal Government, when the call came of "Your King and Country needs you", thousands of young half-trained Irishmen, believing that the freedom of small nations was at hand, rushed to offer their services to the British Forces and, with them, all the old Reservists who had given their services free in the training of the Volunteers left to join the colours and were escorted with bands and banners to the railway stations.

In the excitement of the Great War, the Irish people seemed completely oblivious of the small but important developments that were taking place at home. A split in the ranks of the Volunteers that had taken place when Redmond declared in favour of Britain in the War had left a small and apparently insignificant organisation under Eóin MacNeill, which was known as the Irish Volunteers, as distinct from the previous designation of "Irish National Volunteers", which existed before the split. The war in Europe, therefore, overshadowed the interest that might otherwise have been taken in the activities of the Irish Volunteers, until the Rebellion which broke out in Dublin in Easter 1916 came as a bolt from the blue and, not understanding it, many rose at once to cry "Shame" on those who would thus attempt to stab England in the back. Gentlemanly bodies such as County Councils and District Councils hastened to pass resolutions condemning the Rising, and confirming their loyalty to England but, following the execution of the rebel leaders in Dublin, a reaction set in, and the clouds of misunderstanding and false propaganda began to clear away. When the truth was revealed in this way, the same public bodies, though over-quick to prejudge the actions of the Volunteer leaders, were now as quick to assent in an almost unanimous voice that the ideals of

these patriots, the freedom of Ireland, must and could only come within the shores of Ireland and by Irish sacrifice. Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick was one of those who pointed out the truth of the matter when, in a public statement, he indelibly branded Sir John Maxwell as "a judicial assassin". In the course of a letter to His Lordship, Maxwell said....."Therefore, it should not be difficult for Your Lordship, under such disciplinary power as you possess, to prevent, at any rate the priests, from mixing up and inciting their flock to join an organisation such as the Irish Volunteers have proved themselves to be". On the same day, James Connolly and Seán MacDermott were shot and Bishop O'Dwyer's reply from Kilmallock is unique. Nothing like it ever emanated from an Irish Bishop before in defence of Irish patriots, and it silenced forever their slanderers. This is his reply to Maxwell's letter:-

> "You appeal to me to help you in the furtherance of your work as military dictator of Ireland. Even if action of that kind was not outside my province, the events of the past few weeks would make it impossible for me to have any part in proceedings which I regard as wantonly cruel and oppressive. You remember the Jamieson Raid, when a number of buccaneers invaded a friendly state and fought the forces of a lawful government? If ever men deserved the supreme punishment, it was they but, officially and unofficially, the influence of the British Government was used to save them, and it succeeded. You took care that no plea for mercy should interfere on behalf of the poor young fellows who surrendered to you in Dublin. The first information we got of their fate was an announcement that they had been shot in cold blood. Personally, I regard your action with horror and I believe that it has outraged the

conscience of the country. Then, the deporting of hundreds and even thousands of poor fellows without a trial of any kind seems to me an abuse of power as fatuous as it is arbitrary, and altogether your régime has been one of the worst and blackest chapters in the history of British rule in this country".

Sir John Maxwell did not reply to the Bishop's letter, but His Lordship received many letters of congratulation and, in acknowledging a resolution passed by a public body on the matter, Dr. O'Dwyer wrote thanking the members for their "approval of my attitude towards that brute Maxwell who, in my opinion, is only one degree less objectionable than the Government that screens itself behind him. But Ireland is not dead yet. When her young men are not afraid to die for her in open fight or, when defeated, stand proudly with their backs to the wall as targets for English bullets, we need never despair of the old cause. Your resolution will be a comfort to those who reverence the memory of Ireland's latest martyrs and will assure them that our countrymen, in spite of all the corruption that is at work, distinguish between genuine patriotism and the spurious stuff that has been disgusting us of late."

Acknowledging another resolution, he wrote:-

" It would be a sorry day for the Church in Ireland if her Bishops took their orders from the agents of the British Government. As to the men who have given their lives for Ireland, no one will venture to question the purity and nobility of their motives or the splendour of their courage".

On the 14th September 1916 Bishop O'Dwyer was made a Freeman of the City of Limerick and in the course of his speech, replied:- "Clever and plausible English

Ministers may do a good deal by way of corruption. They may buy the national members; they may mislead the Members of Parliament; they may demoralise individuals and even large classes by an insidious system of bribery but, in my humble judgement, there is, deep down in the heart of Ireland, the sacred fire of nationality which such influence can never reach, much less extinguish and which will yet burn on the altar of freedom. They may think that prosperity will win our people from the old cause; that education will turn their thoughts into other channels. This is the flattering unction which tyrants are always laying to their souls, but the history of the world is against them. Ireland will never be content as a province. God has made her a nation and, while grass grows and water runs, there will be men in Ireland to dare and die for her. It is that national spirit that will yet vindicate our glorious country and not the petty intrigues of Parliamentary chicanes".

Ere long, a new Ireland had arisen. These men, by sacrificing their lives, had already achieved their purpose for, before 2½ years had passed, Sinn Féin had won a signal victory at the June elections of 1918, in which the Redmondite party, a few of whom continued to attend at Westminster, was practically wiped out. The Sinn Féin representatives of the people, following the Election, met in Dublin in January 1919 as the only true representative body of the Irish people which had met together for centuries. These representatives were alreadycommitted by their election promises to a policy of a free Ireland, and when they met as the first Dáil Éireann, they publicly and solemnly endorsed and ratified the Proclamation of Easter Week of the Republic of Ireland. During this time the Irish Volunteers, thereafter called the Irish Republican Army, were strengthening their position

and organisation. Thousands of young men were flocking to its ranks as upholders of the Irish Republic.

Throughout the country at that time monster meetings were being held at historic centres and the policy of Sinn Féin advocated and explained by prominent leaders. The unity and enthusiasm of the crowds, flushed by their first victory over England in her failure to enforce conscription, must have surpassed anything like it in Irish history before. Massed bands playing martial airs to the tramp of marching men and girls bringing up the rear with flags proudly fluttering in the breeze, and everybody wearing buttonhole emblems of unity, symbolising a nation one and indivisible, showed a solid block of public opinion behind the new national movement. The British authorities in Ireland did not, of course, acquiesce in this situation. Hundreds of young men were being arrested and imprisoned for seditious speeches and for marching and drilling, but their arrest and release was always made the occasion of national political propaganda which was now being pushed forward at home and abroad with all the speed that a highly developed political machine would permit.

The end of the European war towards the end of 1918 and the subsequent talk about peace conferences, in view of the professions regarding the rights of small nations used freely during the War, raised hopes in some that the Irish cause might be heard, but it was a vain hope. Those who sat down to deal with defeated Germany had no thought then for the rights of small nations or the justice of their demands, and so Ireland's claim was not heard. Suddenly, the ambush of a police party at Solaheadbeg in Tipperary, in which two policemen were killed, gained the headlines of the press. The leading

papers denounced the shooting and some prominent members of the constitutional Sinn Féin party did likewise, but the Republican Army Headquarters were silent on the matter, for these must ultimately be the methods of the I.R.A.

Though these early shootings were individualistic in character, and the outcome of personal impulses, they had not, as yet, the sanction of general headquarters. The action at Solaheadbeg was prompted by the feelings of young men who were determined to bring about a climax to the struggle. After the Solaheadbeg shooting, a citizen of a town in East Limerick who had acted as first Chairman of Sinn Féin in its early days, and who remained a staunch supporter of Sinn Féin to the end, wrote to Headquarters and requested of them a public unqualified condemnation of the shooting at Solaheadbeg. This is the reply he received:-

"

Sinn Féin,
6, Harcourt Street, Dublin.

27th January, 1919.

To M.C.O'Shaughnessy, Esq.,

A Chara,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 24th instant. Sinn Féin cannot undertake to prejudice the case of the two armed policemen doing garrison duty for the British Government in Co. Tipperary, who have lost their lives. I think it is an extra-ordinary thing for any responsible person to invite this Organisation to issue a condemnation when we have no idea as to who should be condemned. So far as we can judge at the moment, the position of the country is menaced and the lives of the people in it are menaced by, and only by, the forces of the English garrison. At all events, the moral responsibility for the loss of life to members of the hostile enemy forces does not lie with the people who seek to defend their own population against them. I presume the two armed English policemen did not carry loaded arms for the sake of preserving life.

Mise,

(Sd.) P. Ó Síothcháin,
Rúnaí."

It may be seen by this reply that, while still being pacifist and constitutional to all intents and purposes, the letter is couched in a phraseology showing the predominating

influence of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The I.R.B. was the secret organisation which had existed from the Fenian times of 1867 and exerted its influence in the pursuit of its ideals of national freedom through all the other open national organisations and so, while Sinn Féin represented the purely constitutional organisation, and the Irish Volunteers, now the I.R.A., the physical force movement, both were controlled in this way by the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

The various departments and activities of local government were taken over by the I.R.A. and British attempts to run and control such functions largely ignored by the people. Sinn Féin courts were established in nearly every town and village in which civil actions were dealt with, as well as criminal cases. Strangely enough, the litigants and people concerned in these cases were generally satisfied to abide by the decision of the Sinn Féin court, rather than seek redress from the British courts, because they felt that in such case, the weight of public opinion would be set against them. Even the Co. Councils no longer recognised the British central authorities, and sums of money collected by way of rates were handed over to Sinn Féin, with the result that the whole machinery of the State, as far as the British Government was concerned, had failed.

Up to midsummer of the year 1919, the numbers of policemen shot had greatly increased and before the end of that year daring surprise raids for arms were made upon R.I.C. barracks, with a measure of success, because many of that force were sympathetic towards the national movement and made little resistance. There were, of course, many exceptions to the general rule of these men who, by aggression or otherwise, endeavoured to uphold the King's

made the supreme sacrifice. Before the end of the year the I.R.A. had taken a forward and more aggressive step and, I must state again, methodically, without orders from G.H.Q., at least in East Limerick. Other writers persist in stating that every enterprise of importance had the authority of Headquarters, but that is not the case in East Limerick, as far as I am aware and I have made careful enquiries.

Soon, raids for arms were no longer very successful as the R.I.C. had locked themselves in before dark and entry could only be achieved by a good password. A general defensive aspect, according to official orders, was given to the exterior of the building and, with these obstacles in the way as living monuments to England's authority in Ireland, the I.R.A. decided that they must be destroyed. Consequently, where previously evacuated, they were burned in one night and, where R.I.C. centres were strengthened by withdrawals from isolated places, attacks by armed men were made upon them. These attacks continued up to June 1920 and every success was hailed as a triumph for the I.R.A. by the vast majority of the people.

Up to this time England had been preoccupied by her domestic and Continental affairs but, at this stage, seemed to give her full attention to Ireland. A change of policy, therefore, took place and the British forces began to adopt a line of positive aggression, without respect for international law, as applied in war. 80,000 troops and Black and Tans with all the paraphernalia of modern warfare were landed in Ireland and in their wake terror stalked the land. Murder and arson were British methods and a daily occurrence.

The foregoing gives a general outline of the main national events which form the background upon which I

shall endeavour to give a history of the Galtee Battalion or East Limerick Brigade area up to the Treaty of December 1921. The information was obtained by me from members of the East Limerick Active Service Unit and others and is, in many ways, conflicting and disjointed, so that a proper sequence and correlation of events is extremely difficult. I make no claim, therefore, for absolute accuracy which is historically essential, as my information is based on verbal accounts, and a personal knowledge of the period, sometimes clouded by the passage of time and the innumerable conflicts of opinions.

Liam Manahan of Ballylanders, who was then Manager of Ardpatrick Creamery, was elected Commandant of the Galtee Battalion in 1915. He held that appointment until his arrest by the British authorities some time following the Rebellion of 1916. During his absence Denny Hannigan of Anglesboro' was temporarily appointed to the the command of the Battalion by a majority of the Companies that formed it but, on making this appointment, they did not calculate on the very serious consequences which nearly caused the complete collapse of the Volunteer movement in East Limerick. Owing to the many unjust insinuations on the one hand, and the powerful influence of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, exerted through most of the officers of the Battalion who were members of this secret revolutionary organisation on the other, the difficulties of the situation arose on the release of Manahan from prison at the end of 1916. With the exception of one or two Captains of Companies, the officers and non-commissioned officers of the Battalion again recognised Manahan as their legitimate Commander, but some of the senior officers, with the authority of General Headquarters, wished to retain Hannigan as the

Battalion Commander, Hannigan being a member of the I.R.B. and, accordingly, one who would take his orders from the proper quarters and avoid a repetition of the Disaster of Easter Week. Manahan, in their eyes, had committed an unpardonable offence by taking his orders from Eóin MacNeill during Easter Week. They looked upon him as too prone to platform oratory and as one who courted public esteem, and as lacking in the essential attributes of a revolutionary leader. They estimated that Hannigan had the necessary qualities and, no doubt, correctly so, for he afterwards proved a resourceful and fearless leader. The rivalry for power continued between the two leaders up to about April 1918, when a court of inquiry was ordered by G.H.Q. to investigate the whole business.

In the meantime, every effort was made by Manahan's antagonists to bolster up a case against him which, if it succeeded, would discredit him as a national leader in the area. In the heat of the controversy, the I.R.B. officers, animated no doubt by national considerations, underestimated the finer qualities of Manahan. By drawing into the dispute his family associations, which were in fact honourable, the I.R.B. outstepped the bonds of comradeship and decency which ought to limit the course of a dispute amongst men whose integrity and honesty of purpose in the national objective cannot be questioned.

Matters got worse as time went on, officers and men of the various companies taking sides for and against Manahan or Hannigan as their sympathies led them. In Ballylanders and Anglesboro', the companies split without hope of reconciliation and while Galbally, Ardpatrick, Kilmallock, Elton, Knockkong and Kilbehenny were for Manahan, Glenroe stood by Hannigan and, while the officers of Kilfinane and Cush stood firmly for Hannigan, the N.C.O's

and men of both these companies were against his retaining the position. The result was that there was a dual leadership and the two factions of the Battalion fiercely antagonistic towards each other. The situation was so bad that on one occasion at Anglesboro' there was to be a parade and inspection of the local Company. Manahan arrived first on the scene and was engaged for a few minutes in a review of the assembled Volunteers, when Hannigan arrived. Hannigan ordered Manahan to leave and when the latter refused, he drew, or threatened to draw, his revolver. The Company thereupon divided, according to their adherence, and each officer carried out an inspection of his own supporters.

On the 31st March, 1918, which was the anniversary of O'Neill Crowley's death, a big parade of Volunteers was to take place at Kilclooney. Many of the men, when they arrived at the spot, refused to fall in on parade under Hannigan whom they did not recognise as their leader, and a few of them were consequently placed under arrest for insubordination. Shortly afterwards, a meeting was held in the Sinn Féin Hall at Kilfinane and Hannigan was asked many questions, one of them being "Why have we not Manahan now?" His replies were regarded as very unsatisfactory. The questioners did not know or suspect the influence of the I.R.B. in their midst, and of course Hannigan, who was the senior I.R.B. officer there, could not inform them. Matters were brought to a head eventually by the decision of G.H.Q. in Dublin to hold a court of inquiry.

The court was held at the end of April at Mr. D. Moloney's of Knocklong and was presided over by Commandant M.W.O'Reilly, specially sent down for the purpose from G.H.Q. Nearly all the officers of the

Battalion, as well as a few other essential witnesses, attended the inquiry which lasted from 8.30 p.m. until the early hours of the following morning. Manahan's rejection by some, and his upholding by others, was the central point of the discussion, on which witnesses on both sides were called to give evidence. Certain charges of personal indiscretions and lack of military discipline were made against him and magnified to the extent of impugning his reputation as a desirable leader. There were many heated exchanges and personal recriminations which sometimes led to a condition of affairs where the excited rivals appeared ready to decide the matter by force of arms, and only the cool and stern hand of the presiding officer prevented the collapse of the inquiry. After hearing the evidence on both sides, Commandant O'Reilly decided that a re-election should take place for leadership within a certain time. The meeting broke up with little hope of unity and Commandant O'Reilly returned to Dublin to make his report.

About two weeks later, the meeting for the election of the leader was held at Paddy O'Donnell's of Cush. All the officers entitled to vote attended, except Jack McCarthy, Captain of the Kilfinane Company who had a cold, but he gave instructions to the effect that if Manahan were elected, he would not go forward as Vice-Commandant. On a vote being taken, Manahan was again elected by a big majority as O/C Galtee Battalion, with the result that Tadhg Crowley, Dan McCarthy and a number of other officers, who were members of the I.R.B., resigned their commissions. This situation threw the I.R.B. into a state of bewilderment and the only action they could take then to retrieve the situation was through G.H.Q. Notification of Manahan's election having been sent to

G.H.Q., a reply was received within a few days, expressly stating that G.H.Q. refused to sanction his appointment. On that evening at O'Donnell's of Cush there was a revision of the election, in view of the previous resignations, and Seán O'Riordan of Kilmallock, who was then Vice-Commandant, automatically became leader. But O'Riordan was nothing more than a figurehead.

The next Battalion meeting was arranged for Tommie Carroll's of Ballinlina, about a week later, for the purpose of electing a Vice-Commandant. The local I.R.B. members, pleased with the news from G.H.Q. of Manahan's dismissal, used their influence through unknown channels to have Jack McCarthy elected by a small majority as Vice-Commandant. From that day forward, the members of the I.R.B. in East Limerick were in the ascendancy, though the officers who had resigned their commissions did not regain them. Even Hannigan was now a private Volunteer and held no rank until the autumn of 1920(?), when there was a complete reorganisation. The election of Jack McCarthy as Vice-Commandant created a curious situation in that all his brother I.R.B. officers were gone, and he was the only I.R.B. officer who also held a senior Volunteer rank. All the supporters of Manahan were illegal in the eyes of G.H.Q., although they were not aware of the fact that it was kept a close secret after his dismissal. In this precarious manner, the Companies of the Battalion continued up to the end of 1920(?). An example of this peculiar situation was Ballylanders Company which had been under the leadership of Tadhg Crowley. Crowley, who had now no commission, commanded the officially recognised Company, while the other section under Sampson was unofficial and was not recognised by G.H.Q., although from the point of view of the majority Sampson's position was quite legitimate.

G.H.Q. worked through two channels - issuing its orders through the I.R.A. organisation, and its secret orders through the I.R.B. The I.R.B. men in the area were specially selected men, mostly confined to the higher officers of the Companies. The same situation existed in Kilfinane, but with this difference, that, here, the Company did not split on the question but continued under their former captain, unaware of their constitutional illegality. The Galbally officers and men were the strongest supporters of Manahan, and remained so to the end. Consequently, they were not recognised by G.H.Q. When Garry Scanlon, now Dr. Scanlon, was in Belfast Gaol he met Ernest Blythe, to whom he explained the whole situation, and asked Blythe if he could do anything about it. Blythe's reply was that nothing could be done except to write to G.H.Q. and say that if men were ever wanted, they would be found in Galbally.

When the rescue of Seán Hogan at Knocklong Station was planned, Dan Breen tells us in his book that assistance was requested from some Tipperary officers and was refused, probably on the grounds that the rescue proposal had not official sanction, and that they then sent to Galbally to the unofficial Company and got daring men to assist them in the enterprise which created a sensation at the time. Even when the barrack attacks, inspired by Tomás Malone, alias Seán Ford, began in the spring of 1920 his most active cooperators were the members of the I.R.B. and other Volunteer officers who were and had been antagonistic through the election of Manahan. These were the men who, placing the national objective before all other considerations, promoted the war and forced the issue to its ultimate conclusion. Most of these were active participants but a few others who were active in their support and direction of affairs up till then, later

conscienciously objected when military action was taken, even though they themselves were directly responsible by their encouragement up to the point of actually taking part.

On the night of the attack on Ballylanders Police Barracks in April 1920 many of the rank and file of the Kilfinane Volunteers got but a few hours' notice of the attack and knew little or nothing about it. As they entered one of the houses in Ballylanders to take up their positions, they were greatly surprised to find a young woman seriously ill in bed, who had to be removed and for which they were severely scolded by her aged mother because she did not get more timely warning, even though her son was one of the most active Volunteers in the movement and proved his worth. Others of his way of thinking (supporters of Manahan) were allotted insignificant positions that night inferior to their military status, such as outpost duty, which nearly resulted in a fracas before the attack commenced. After the taking of Ballylanders Barracks the rather small minority (the supporters of Hannigan and the I.R.B.) became all powerful and the voice of the opposition was silenced once for all. The supporters of Manahan no longer had any voice in the councils of war and, instead of giving orders, took and accepted them willingly in the new order that had been established. On examining these matters carefully at this stage, we find that individual members of both sides of the East Limerick dispute were equally anxious to fight in the national cause, but their aims were distracted by the local matters in dispute and the personalities involved. The action of the Galtee men in the Knocklong rescue is one example where a non-recognised unit sprang into action on call without questioning the authority of orders, and I have learned of an incident which occurred previous to the first ambush in July 1920 when a few Volunteers

decided amongst themselves on an ambush on the well road leading to Kilfinane Mills, where an R.I.C. patrol in charge of a Major Nicholson passed. Nicholson had made himself obnoxious by habitually beating people up and the Volunteers in question asked an officer of the Company, S. Cagney, if he would participate in this attack but the officer, though personally willing, would not act without orders. Instead, he conveyed the information to Tom Lipsett's where the officers frequently met, and whose house was always a centre of activity and hospitality. When the Volunteer entered Lipsett's shop, he was questioned by a high executive officer, Jack McCarthy, as to what he meant by his intended action without consulting them. His reply was that Headquarters left it to individuals and Companies to do as best suited them when opportunities presented themselves. The executive officer mentioned denied that these orders existed, saying that if such a condition of affairs were to obtain, he would resign his appointment. This shows, I think, that the men on both sides of the dispute were anxious to fight. The minority of officers and men, backed by the I.R.B., had usurped the control of the Volunteers in East Limerick, hitherto exercised by a democratic election of officers. But their control was eventually justified by their extra-ordinary success in the field of operations against the enemy. They had created the war atmosphere by beginning the attacks on barracks, and the nucleus of the first officially recognised flying column in Ireland was formed from the ranks of the I.R.B. members of the I.R.A. in East Limerick.

Whatever tendency individual members of the Irish Volunteers may have had towards revolutionary methods, these ideas were not embodied in the constitution of the organisation whose first principle was defence and not offence, as laid down by Eóin MacNeill when the organisation

was initiated in 1913.

It was only at the Árd Fheis of 1917 that Arthur Griffith after much persuasion by Cathal Brugha consented to insert in the Constitution of Sinn Féin the two all important words "Independent Republic", without which Sinn Féin as a progressive national instrument was practically useless, but if such a policy of passivity were to prevail either before 1916 or 1920 without the active cooperation of the secret revolutionary policy of the I.R.B., it is quite probably that the young men of the country would still be marching to overtake the measure of freedom we now enjoy.

In East Limerick the factions of the Hannigan/Manahan dispute fought along side by side up to August 1920, when the leaders of both these factions had to go on the run because of British military activity, but in August the British military began the occupation of numbers of towns and villages in East Limerick, and Hannigan, who had reappeared as the Commander of the East Limerick Flying Column, could not yet get the Galbally men to serve under him. Instead, they joined the South Tipperary unit, the town of Galbally being on the border between Limerick and Tipperary. Two months later, there was a complete reorganisation of the Galtee Battalion which now became known as the East Limerick Brigade, and this was followed by an order from G.H.Q. that the Galbally men would return to their own Brigade area. All were now willing to bury the hatchet in face of the greater and more intensive national struggle against the common enemy. The Galbally Volunteers returned and fought in the East Limerick A.S.U. under the leadership of Donnchadh Hannigan, with Seán Wall as the Brigade Commander and Jack McCarthy as the Brigade Adjutant. Long before this, Manahan had withdrawn from the scene, having accepted a post of employment which

was offered to him away from Limerick, but in changing quietly out of the scene he showed, I think, that no personal motives had animated him in the dispute and, unable to have himself cleared from the allegations and innuendo built up against him in the dispute, he preferred to leave the neighbourhood rather than allow this dispute to further cloud the national issue.

I would like, however, to add that neither can ulterior motives be ascribed to Donnchadh Hannigan and the officers who supported him as they, by their energy, zeal and self-sacrifice to the cause of Ireland, have left their names written in the honoured pages of history as the champions of freedom when sons of Ireland were most needed.

In the foregoing I have not stated one of the principal reasons why the I.R.B. were trying to get rid of Manahan and perhaps I should give this here. His sister was a good-looking, intelligent, educated young girl and she was keeping company with a British officer at that time. He was Dr. Ogilvie of the British Army Medical Service. This aroused the suspicions of the I.R.B. that their secrets would be betrayed by a woman in love. But these suspicions were never justified as she was a woman of very highest honour and integrity and, afterwards, married Dr. Ogilvie, who now resides at Kilmallock. They had been seen dining together in a public restaurant in Dublin, which was quite a natural thing but, being viewed with suspicion by someone who saw them, the fact was used by the Dublin I.R.B. to get rid of Manahan, and the I.R.B. officers within the Galtee Battalion were used for that purpose. At a meeting of officers at Ned Tobin's of Ballinlacken on the Manahan question, there was considerable excitement and heated discussion because the insinuation was made

that Manahan was a spy. This allegation almost drove the Galtee men crazy and they demanded the evidence. They said, If he can be proved to be a spy, we'll shoot him. That retort frightened the I.R.B., for the insinuation was a pure invention, unscrupulous and mean.

During these years of dissension between the I.R.A. leaders, the Volunteers were building up the social and cultural arm of the Irish Ireland movement. Dances, Feis Ceóil, hurling matches, the language revival and Gaelic League concerts were arranged in every parish in town and the proceeds of these handed over to Sinn Féin and ultimately used for Volunteer purposes, i.e. the purchase of arms and ammunition. Though hurling and football matches were held in conjunction with the Feis which was used to encourage the people to speak their own language and dance their native dances, these platforms were nearly always used as platforms for fiery national speeches by prominent leaders, which caused them to be proclaimed by the British Government in 1919. Monster meetings of this kind were held at Kilmallock, Hospital, Ardpatrick and Kilfinane, the principal speakers being de Valera, Arthur Griffith, the Countess Markievicz and Dr. Hayes.

I remember the early summer of 1917 when I was but a young lad, a meeting was billed for Kilfinane immediately after the results of the Clare by-election became known and which caused a good deal of excitement. In this election de Valera had had a sweeping victory over the Redmondite Parliamentary Party. It was rumoured that important speakers were coming to the meeting and on the evening of the results of the by-election tar barrels were blazing and torch bearers were waiting on the outskirts of the town, while the large gathering

grew impatient owing to the lateness of the hour, which was 9.30 p.m., and long after the time fixed for the meeting. At long last the speakers arrived and, headed by the local brass and reed band, they all marched amidst great cheering to the historic moat, from the slopes of which the meeting was addressed. It was then almost dark. Thomas Ashe, the principal speaker, was apologising for the lateness of the hour when one of the crowd shouted enthusiastically, "We'd wait for you till morning". The man who shouted was a well-known character who, some time previously, had been caught stealing milk from a farmer and, recognising the man who shouted, a farmer shouted, by way of repartee, "You would, if you had our cows to milk!" , which remark produced a great deal of laughter. I merely quote this incident to show that Sinn Féin had at this time attained the unanimous support of the people. It was not until after the General Election of 1918 that the opposition were completely silenced and defiance at meetings became almost unknown. At this period Eamonn de Valera was serving a life sentence in Lewes Prison with many others, but towards the close of June 1917 they were all released unconditionally because the British Government, which was anxious to bring America into the war against Germany, got a hint from President Wilson that the Irish element in his country should be appeased before success could be made of their enterprise. The result was Lloyd George's olive branch to the rebels of 1916.

It was in the spring of that year that the movement, after almost 12 months of despair, began to show itself, and before autumn had arrived, the spirit of patriotism was gripping the imagination of Irish youth at an extraordinary speed and Sinn Féin as a living political force had to be seriously considered.

The release of the prisoners in the middle of 1917, while regarded as a triumph, was hardly understood as a friendly gesture but more in the nature of a pacification of Irish feelings in view of the threatened passage of a Conscription Bill for Ireland. After the release of the prisoners, Mr. de Valera, then regarded as a leading figure, was given a rousing reception at his uncle's home in Bruree where he had been reared from childhood. Contingents of Volunteers and admirers, which had arrived in the afternoon from all over the area and formed in processional order, headed by the Kilfinane brass band, marched through the town amid the applause of the people. He was then, comparatively speaking, a young man of about 35 years of age and to the majority of the people of East Limerick an unknown quantity, except for the heroic part he played in the Rising. To the vast majority I would say he was nothing more than a curiosity - a sort of hot-headed firebrand, characteristic of the race. When the procession stopped he mounted the platform with a light and self-assured step. The deep furrows and lines of his face betokened a man of strong will, determination and sincerity of purpose. His speech was passionate and determined as, with blazing eyes, he sent home every argument with telling effect, accompanied by the tremendous applause of the crowd. At the finish of his speech he said, referring to the executed leaders, "the sacrifice of these men must not be in vain". Looking at him the people thought, "So this is the man who is to act as the leader of the new Ireland in trying to achieve the apparently impossible Irish Republic" but then, of course, the progress of the war in France looked bad for the Allies and we lived in hope, without calculating upon the great strength of our own people when united. We felt that as long as men such as he were prepared to lay

down their lives for their country, there was no need for us to worry about how our freedom could be achieved. We listened to all the grandfatherly advice of the older people but youth was prepared to take the plunge and abide by the consequences. In passing, I would mention that I consider that there is a very marked change from the viery de Valera of the revolution to the calm and imperturbable man of today. Time has a soothing effect upon youthful enthusiasm.

The year 1917 passed with little incident, except that Sinn Féin was gaining strength with the passing of time and the new year blossomed with brighter prospects for the future. On the following St. Patrick's Day (1918), another big rally was arranged for the Hill of Ardpatrick and the principal speakers were Arthur Griffith, Eoin MacNeill, Countess Markiecivz and Dr. Richard Hayes. This was the time of the Conscription crisis and, for this demonstration, the Volunteers left no stone unturned. The whole Galtee area was organised, so that the weight of numbers should have a telling effect upon the British authorities in this protest. Such displays throughout the country at this time gave an indication of the unanimous voice of the Irish people against conscription and the Volunteers, in their display of military strength, showed that such resistance to conscription would be more than passive. It was about a month later when Douglas Haig, referring to the position of the British troops in France, announced "our backs are to the wall". Yet, the British Government hesitated to precipitate war in Ireland in face of the unanimous opposition. This meeting at Ardpatrick left a number of impressions on my mind - of people crowding into pubs which were doing a roaring trade and into one of which I ventured to get myself a bottle of lemonade; of seeing my schoolmaster

and being anxious that he should not see me going into the public-house; of listening to all the talk among the crowds in and out of the pubs; of coarse remarks intermingled with finer intellectual discussion on the national ideals, and of a beggar singing "The Bold Fenian Men". Through the crowd were to be seen Volunteer officers in uniform passing nonchalantly backwards and forwards, with all the assurance of official sanction for their uniforms and appointments while, nearby, 6 members of the R.I.C. watched the performance and probably took mental notes for their reports to be made later. The pipers' band came into view around the bend at Sunville, followed by a body of Volunteers. They had marched all the way from Bansha, the band being dressed in the Celtic style common to such bands. Walking out the road to meet them, I met my father who was interested in the tune the band was playing and when they stopped at the cross, he asked one of the pipers the name of the tune. The piper told him the name was "Won't you come with me?" My father told me afterwards that he had not heard the tune since his father hummed it years before. Nearly everyone was wearing miniature flags of green, white and orange, which colours were still new to us and Cumann na mBan girls carried collection boxes bearing the words "Help the Irish Volunteers". The crowd then moved up the hill towards the ruins of a round tower which made an admirable platform and as the speakers mounted this, we recognised each of them in turn - Griffith, the Countess, MacNeill - from their public photographs. One man I did not recognise and I asked a pal who was with me. He informed me that this was Dr. Hayes - a brother of our Headmaster. Griffith stood erect with his hands firmly set in the pockets of a closely fitting black overcoat with a velvet collar, calmly surveying the animated scene around him. He wore pincenez and a soft hat, somewhat the worse for wear. There were no traces of a crease in

his navy pants, but his deep penetrating eyes and strong, square jaw showed a strong will and deep sincerity of purpose. He stood a while in this posture, while we gazed in admiration at the father of Sinn Féin, until some local celebrity in charge plucked up sufficient courage to step forward and shake his hand in welcome. Eóin MacNeill looked rather frail and gave the impression of a widely read and cultured man. He was dressed in a brown tweed suit and wore a soft hat and glasses. He seemed to possess anything but the attributes of a soldier and in him, as Commander-in-Chief of the Volunteers, I was disappointed.

Countess Markievicz and Dr. Hayes followed; the former appeared tall, thin and athletic looking and was poorly dressed in a badly fitting Irish tweed costume and close fitting felt hat. Her face seemed drawn and worn but her eyes sparkled and when she spoke to MacNeill while they waited, the intonation of her voice gave a pleasant impression of culture and refinement which immediately overcame any prejudices which might be created by her appearance otherwise. For her we had a great and abiding admiration because of her heroism and self-sacrifice for the cause. Dr. Hayes appeared correctly professional like, showing every attention to dress and personal appearance, while the broad forehead, piercing eyes and sharply drawn contour of face indicated an intellectual mind. That was the first and last time I saw them and through the years which have since rolled by I can remember the impression they made upon me. As a small boy, I was curious about everything that went on and, sticking my head in here and there to catch what the old folk were saying, I could glean from the general trend of the many conversations going on around me that this was a truly great day for Ireland, and I felt elated.

When the preliminaries were over, Griffith was the first to speak. He spoke with a slow deliberate voice, as one conscious of the weight of his words, little caring for the loud cheers that now and then punctuated his address. Griffith was followed by the Countess and Dr. Hayes and all in turn were given a rousing reception and cheered when they finished. MacNeill was the last to speak. As he moved forward to begin his address, there seemed to be a decided cooling in the enthusiasm of the crowd, but I took little notice of it at the time. During the course of his speech I caught the remark of a person near me who said to some one beside him, "He made a mess of it". I wondered what he meant. He could not be referring to MacNeill's speech, which evidently was one of the finest speeches of the day and as MacNeill's speech went on, this man's remark recurred to me, with the thought that he must be a queer kind of fool not to appreciate the words of MacNeill. When he had finished speaking, the crowd seemed to have thawed out, and applauded. It was long afterwards when I remembered the over-heard remark that I realised the comment was meant to refer to MacNeill's action in connection with the Rising, and not to his speech then.

Going down the hill after the meeting, the crowd fell in behind the band which struck up the air of "A Soldier's Song", and as we marched along I could see in this procession the natural succession of all the Irish forces that had marched along the same route throughout our history.

Signature Daniel F. O'Shaughnessy

Date Mar 1st 1954

Witness [signature] Col