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STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Sean MacEntee, T.D.,
9 Lesson Park,
Dublin.

Identity.

Lieut., later (1919) member of Volunteer Executive.

Minister for Finance in the Fianna Fail Government.

Subject.

operations Counties Louth & Dublin and O'Connell Street, Dublin, Easter Week, 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.510

Form B.S.M. 2

STATEMENT OF MR. SEÁN McENTEE
9 Leeson Park, Dublin.

STATEMENT, NO. 1.

CHAPTER ONE

Preparations for the Rising.

I went to Dundalk in January, 1914, or December, 1913. The Volunteers were organised in Dundalk shortly after - probably around Easter. If you have a file of the 'Irish Volunteer', there is an article on the subject, signed "Laurence Kearan", which was written by me.

I became very friendly with Paddy Hughes of Dundalk and a man called James Brennan, who was an accountant in the Electricity Works. A sister of the latter, a teacher, was quite active later in Cumann na mBan.

We got moving with some others - a few belonging to the Irish Party, one of whom was Peter Toner, a member of the Urban District Council. There was a meeting held at the Town Hall to organise a company of the Irish Volunteers. I was a member of the original committee. Councillor O'Rourke, I think, and others were members. You will probably find the other names in the 'Dundalk Democrat' and the 'Dundalk Examiner'. I can't remember them after this lapse of time.

That committee was set up, I think, before John Redmond made his demand to get control of the organisation. During that period, we tried to keep that Committee and

the Volunteers together, and we succeeded.

After the outbreak of the war and Redmond's recruiting speech, the whole thing broke up because Dundalk became a great recruiting town, as the Hibernians became a very strong force there.

Some time early in 1915, I met Paddy Hughes in Dundalk Square and he told me that they were thinking of reorganising the Volunteers under the Pearse Committee, and would I help. I agreed, and they made me Adjutant. Many others, such as, the McGuill's, Paddy McHugh, Peter Toal, Peadar Carr, Tuite, Martin, James Sally, Hamill, Paddy Duffy of the 'Dundalk Examiner', and Darcy of the 'Dundalk Democrat', became active members. There were in all about a hundred. The Secretary of the Committee was Ward, an I.R.B. and G.A.A. man, an accountant in a firm of builders' providers. He did not come out in 1916. There was a man called Eugene Hughes, who will be mentioned later. There was also a Vincent Hughes - as far as I know, no relative of Eugene or Paddy. He was an electrician who had worked in Manchester or Liverpool. He was one of a group I selected on Easter Sunday to stay behind in Dundalk to seize the Redmondite rifles. He later returned to England and was active over there during the Black and Tan period.

We drilled in the Irish-American Hibernian Hall in Clanbrassil Street. We only had small arms as, at the Split, the rifles were retained by the Redmondites. We used to have small arms practice in the G.A.A. grounds. A couple of ex British Army men instructed us.

I cannot now say whether it was about February,

1916, or before, that I knew that something was definitely planned and, as a cover, with Paddy Hughes and Jimmy Brennan, we decided to organise a lecture for Easter Week at which James Connolly, I think, was to be the speaker. I know that some of his letters were found, after the Rising, by the police who raided my office and my digs. The Town Hall was booked for the meeting which, of course, was never held.

It was on Holy Thursday afternoon that Paddy Hughes came into my office at the Electricity Works, Dundalk.

"Mac", said he, "the word has come!" His eyes glittered with excitement, though his voice was quite cool and steady. "We are to march with full equipment and to make Tara on Sunday night."

"You're not making fun, Paddy?", said I, my heart pumping wildly.

"No", he answered, "The messenger has just come; but I must hurry. Will I see you to-night at the Hall?"

"Certainly! At seven."

"All right", he replied, and hurried away.

The drill hall was well filled when I got down that night, a little later than usual. Exhilaration and excitement pervaded the room. Everyone was busy. On the floor a squad or two was drilling. At a bench in the corner James Toal - (he is dead since) - and some others were busy at armourers' work. Dan Hannigan, whom Pearse had sent us from Dublin, was deep in consultation with Phil MacMahon, Seán Butterly and some

other men from various districts of the county, arranging for the general mobilisation on Sunday.

Paddy Hughes, of course, was there too, busier than any, his great big round face beaming as he moved from group to group, helping and cheering all. One moment he was detailing some person to see after two or three "good men" - Paddy's own phrase - who lived in some little place away from the beaten track and who had mustered with the rest of us. A second later, he was listening to another who was in want of an overcoat, or perhaps a stout pair of boots for the march. "Come up with me to-night", Paddy would say, "Maybe I'll be able to give you one of mine - or an oul' one of Peter's." That was his way. Great, big noble, generous-hearted soul, he had but one ideal and he strove for it, lived for it, wrought for it, as never another man I knew. Occasionally, he got into hot water at home for it. For not content with devoting all his own earnings, and his own property, and his own time to the cause, he had no scruple about spending or using anything of his brother's or his sisters' in the same way. Not unreasonably, I think, they were sometimes angry with him. Paddy used to feel their displeasure sorely. "But", he would say to me, "it's for Ireland, Mac, it's for Ireland. And sure it must be done." To-night, however, Paddy was in his glory. For years he had dreamed of such a night as this, while men had scoffed at him and mocked at him and called him mad. But he held on, and his dream had come true. On Sunday he would march to fight for the cause for which, all his life, he had laboured. Was it any wonder his heart was light?

That night I went to Belfast to bid good-bye to my family and to buy surgical bandages and First-Aid satchels, some Ordnance maps, a pair of binoculars, a prismatic compass and such other items of an officer's paraphernalia as I could afford. On Saturday afternoon I returned to Dundalk. Of what occurred in the interval I am not competent to speak, but some defections had taken place and these necessitated a recasting of our plans. Accordingly, under the rearrangement, I, with some picked men, had to remain in Dundalk until Sunday evening.

Easter Sunday morning broke cold and squally with passing showers of rain. About nine it began to clear and the sun was peeping through the high-riding clouds as the hour for the march-off drew near. At the drill hall, all was bustle and business. Kits were overhauled, ammunition checked, bicycles tuned up. The "fall in" was given. The two ranks quickly formed. "Company, 'tion!", cried ~~Donnchadha~~ Donnchadh Ó h-Annagain; and every man, his heels coming together like the click of a rifle, sprang to attention. In a minute the company was proved. "Form fours! Right!", came next and, sharp to the hour appointed, the detachment of over sixty men marched off to a rendezvous outside the town.

I was not in the detachment, but I followed it at some little distance through the town. As I passed through the streets, the rhythmic tramp of the marching men giving warning of its approach, the people rushed to their doors to watch it, some with a smile, some with a scowl, one or two with a blessing. Of all, however, none displayed such interest in the march as did a dozen

or so of tall, heavy looking, serge-coated men, strangers who had been lounging around the street from the early morning. They were "G-men" who had been drafted into the town in anticipation of a meeting which, it was announced, Patrick Pearse would address that day in the Town Hall.

At the rendezvous another detachment of about fifty men, under the command of Paddy Hughes, awaited them. While the detachments joined up, there was a short halt, during which two Dundalk policemen arrived upon the scene. Mounted upon bicycles, they had evidently ridden hard to overtake us; for they were panting and perspiring - an indication that the police had been unaware of our arrangements until they saw us march out. Beyond this, their presence was unheeded and, in due course, the company struck out for Ardee.

As had been arranged, a certain party of us did not march with the main body but returned to Dundalk. We had been detailed to seize there some forty Lee-Metford magazine rifles which had originally belonged to the local Volunteers. They had been purchased by public subscription and, for a month or two, were the pride of the town and the delight of the corps. Then came the "split" in the Volunteer Executive. Like their leaders, the Dundalk Volunteers were divided into two sections. The party, at first a mere handful which had followed Pearse and his comrades, grew stronger as the spirit of the nation revived, while the other party had dwindled away and died. The local executive committee did not ostensibly commit itself to either body, but had contented itself with impounding

the rifles, so that neither could use them.

Those rifles had long been a source of secret heart-burning to us. Every time a man handled his old single-shot, short-range shotgun, he thought of those beautiful Lee-Metfords, firing their five shots and sighted up to two thousand yards. Many times we had discussed the advisability of seizing them and, had we not been certain that when they were wanted in earnest they could be easily got, we would have taken them many months before. But the project was always deferred to a more propitious moment. The time was come now when it could be deferred no longer: this Easter Sunday, have them we must.

No attempt to get the rifles could be made until after seven o'clock that evening, for a strict order had been issued from General Headquarters that no overt action in connection with the coming campaign was to be taken until after that hour. We spent the interval, therefore, in perfecting and rehearsing our plan. All of us were familiar with the premises where the weapons were stored; the men were well drilled; motor cars would be available at seven o'clock, and everything seemed in train for a successful coup. Quite unexpectedly, a breathless messenger brought me a despatch. It was signed by Eoin MacNeill and read:-

"Volunteers completely deceived.
All orders for Sunday cancelled."

Almost immediately afterwards, another messenger arrived bearing an exactly similar message. I verified MacNeill's signature and, unaware that he had

broken with Pearse and those who had planned the Rising, decided to act on his orders.

My first thought was how to get in touch with Hannigan, for it seemed essential that the order should reach him and Hughes as soon as possible. At six o'clock, Volunteers were to be outside Slane. At seven o'clock, they were to occupy the village, seize the bridge there, across the Boyne, hold it until my detachment, with the rifles and some other companies of Louth and Meath men, arrived and then destroy it. But Slane was a strong police centre, and our men could hardly carry out their programme without coming into conflict with the enemy. If our leaders' plans had changed, such a premature conflict might precipitate a national disaster. At any cost, the Volunteers must be turned back.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when MacNeill's order arrived. Fifteen minutes later, I was searching the town for a motor car. But a motor car, just then, was not to be had. Four of our men, however, had bicycles, so I sent them off in pairs, by different routes, to intercept the Volunteers. They were to tell Hannigan that I had received a most important despatch from Headquarters, and to warn him not to enter Slane nor take action until the despatch should reach him. About half an hour after these messengers had left, Joe Berrill secured a car and the promise of another within twenty minutes.

As Berrill was one of the senior officers who would naturally be consulted as to our future course of action, I despatched him with one of the copies of the

countermanding order in the first car. A little later, about half past four in the afternoon, I walked out of Dundalk, was picked up by the second car, to speed off through Ardee to Slane.

CHAPTER TWO

I lay back in the car while it sped along the route which I had hoped to traverse that evening with a purpose far different, and found it hard to realise the true import of my journey. I remembered that, in the morning as I watched the men wheel around the corner of the Dundalk street and out into the road which led to the open country, a thought had flashed through my mind: if anything even now were to upset things? But, as I saw our brave fellows stepping out with swinging strides, their heads erect, their guns on their shoulders, the plain-clothes men only casually scanning them and apparently quite unaware of the purpose of the march, I banished the suggestion as too ridiculous. Such a thing could not happen now, I reassured myself. Yet now, irony of ironies, it had happened. The new development was difficult to apprehend, hard to grasp and to realise as a fact. The suddenness of it, the unexpectedness of it, without hint or forewarning of its coming, increased our confusion. It seemed that up to a certain point - for we in Dundalk knew nothing of the misadventures in Kerry - everything had gone like clockwork, and then, suddenly, the clock stopped. What had evoked the strange order? Had the English become aware of our plans? If so, the police were strangely inactive. No attempt had been made in the morning to interfere with the Volunteers, armed though they were, nor with myself even now in the afternoon. It was inconceivable that the English should know anything of

our plans, and yet do nothing. Yet, what but some action on their part, either on their own independent initiative or precipitated by some untimely disclosure of our intention, could have brought forth MacNeill's cancellation.

I was on the very horns of this dilemma when the car entered Ardee - might I not get some hint of its solution here? But Ardee was as peaceful and unruffled as any other little Irish town on a Sunday. The same quiet placidity pervaded its streets, the same cool, grey sunlight of the late afternoon, the same few and unhurrying townspeople, the same couple of policemen lazing at the barrack door. Everything was the same. The police blinked sleepily at the car. That was all. We passed them and sped through the town out on the road to Collon.

Collon hove in sight. A long village, built upon one straight street that runs down the slope of one steep hill to climb another even steeper, it is about eighteen Irish miles from Dundalk and four from Slane. As the car came into it, we would see, over against us, climbing the slope opposite and half-way up it, two men, their heads and backs bent down along their bicycles, pedalling manfully and determinedly up the hill. A short distance from the brow, they were forced to dismount; and we passed them with a shout of recognition. They were two of the despatch riders who had left Dundalk less than an hour and a half before, and who had cycled twenty-three English miles in that time...

About three miles past Collon, we encountered

two more cyclists, but of a stamp far different, two policemen, one of whom was Sergeant Wymes of Dundalk. Wymes was afterwards promoted Head Constable, as the official Constabulary announcement had it, for "distinguished services during the late rebellion". Those "distinguished services" were purely verbal. He could not possibly have seen me upon more than two occasions that day up to that hour, once, at about ten o'clock in the morning in Dundalk and, a second time, as I passed him then in the motor car at about a quarter past five in the evening, a mile from Slane. Yet, in order to bolster up the case for the prosecution at my courtmartial after the Rising, he swore that he saw me in Ardee at 1 p.m.; and he stated at the preceding Summary of Evidence that I was in command there. Both statements were false but, at that time, there was certain promotion for those who were willing to render "distinguished services".

We passed the policemen, and a little distance further on, at about half-past-five in the afternoon, overtook the Volunteers. They had halted about half a mile from Slane, and Hannigan, Hughes and Toal were in consultation when I arrived. Berrill had caught them half an hour previously and had been sent on to Dublin to verify the despatch. After a brief discussion, it was decided to remain in the vicinity of Slane and to await his return before taking any further action.

We made our camp by the roadside and sent scouts along the roads and into the village of Slane to ascertain whether there was any activity there. They returned, reporting that there were no indications of the other Volunteer corps which were to have mustered

at Slane and which ought to have been converging upon the rendezvous at that time. Then the despatch riders from Dundalk began to arrive, the boys we had passed in Collon coming first. All were greatly spent, having ridden hard. They were without kit or equipment of any kind, for they had shed every superfluous article, even their vests, in order to ride light. They were obviously exhausted and unfit to endure any stress of weather; the evening seemed as if it were going to break to rain; the continuance of our enterprise, in view of MacNeill's order - the authoritativeness of which we had no reason to question - was doubtful; so it was decided that the four should be sent back to Dundalk by the motor in which I had come. It was with the greatest difficulty that I could get the men themselves to consent to this. With tears in their eyes, they begged for permission to remain. It was only, indeed, when we pointed out to them that we were more likely than not to return ourselves and that they could rejoin us if we should not return, that they consented to go. It was well they did so, for afterwards one of them, Eugene Hughes, was able to render us a signal service. He was telegraphist in the Dundalk Post Office and, as great good luck had it, he was on duty there on Easter Monday afternoon. When the cypher messages came through, warning the County Inspector of the outbreak in Dublin and instructing him to take action accordingly, Eugene put them in his pocket. The messages were never delivered; and the Dundalk policemen were among the last in Ireland to know of the Insurrection. I wish I were able to give to Eugene and his family - for he was not alone in his attachment to

the cause; his brothers also gave proof of their patriotism - the tribute they merit. Deeper then any made by others are the impressions of sincerity and devotion that this man and his brothers made on me. There were three brothers of them, one, little more than a boy, each of whom vied with the others in the intensity of his patriotism. Absolute reliance could be placed upon any one of them. There is nothing I would not have asked them to do, no sacrifice I would not have asked them to make, were it needful, and I would have done so with the absolute certitude that they would do anything, no matter how dangerous, in the cause of Ireland.

With growing impatience, we awaited the word from Dublin. But no word came. Three hours passed. It was almost eight o'clock and it was growing dark. The sky became overcast and the rain, which had threatened all day, began to fall. The word to break camp was given. We fell in, marched into Slane and took possession of the village.

In Slane we made our dispositions for the night. The main body of our men was stationed at the village square; pickets were placed on all outlying roads; and a strong force was posted at the approaches to the bridge over the Boyne. Through all this, the police, of which there was a large force in the village under the command of a District Inspector, remained inactive. Beyond manifesting a close interest in what they must have considered extraordinary proceedings, they did not interfere.

At half-past nine, Berrill had not returned and we began to surmise that English forces had held him up, either going in to, or coming out of Dublin. But when we referred this conjecture to the strange inactivity of the police, we found it unsustainable. As the hours passed and he did not return, our anxiety and uncertainty increased. We could think of no satisfactory explanation of his absence - for, strangely enough, the most reasonable one and the real one, a motor break-down, escaped us. We could only imagine he had been taken prisoner. Yet, if prisoners were being taken, why were the police in Slane so remiss? Was it because they hoped to catch us in a trap - were we being surrounded? We could not believe this, for our scouts, who were out for miles along the roads, were continually reporting, "All's well". The land was asleep, "not a mouse stirring".

On the other hand, we knew also that the first movements were to be made in Dublin at six o'clock that evening, certainly not later than seven. It was now after ten, yet there were no movements of men in the surrounding country, and the police were, to all appearances, acquiescent in our occupation of Slane. The last seemed the most inexplicable circumstance of all. If the insurrection had broken out in Dublin, it was unlikely that news of it would not have reached them by that time; and, if it had, it was inconceivable that, being in such strong force, they would not make some effort to challenge our occupation of so important a point as Slane. All this seemed to prove the despatch genuine. But still we hesitated to act upon it until we had the absolute assurance that, in doing so,

we would not fail in our obligations to our comrades elsewhere.

The rain added to our difficulties and to the discomfort of the men. Since our arrival in Slane, it had been falling intermittently. Now it developed to a steady downpour. The night was pitch dark and had turned cold, with a strong gusty wind blowing, a night appropriate to adventurous enterprise. And there was an air of romance and military adventure about the whole affair. There were the movements in the dark, from picket to picket, up and down the streets of the village, the houses on either hand closely shuttered, most of the villagers inside their homes, just here and there a door ajar for a second, letting out a flash or two of the cheery light within to break into half-glowing patches the gloom without. Then, looming up out of the darkness as one approached the square, the huge, black forms of the policemen, somewhat bewildered and at a loss to account for it all; the clank, as he passed and repassed, of their officer's sword; the subdued voices of our men as they sat in groups under whatever shelter was to be had; and now and then the challenge of a sentry to a passer-by. Truly, all this smacked of the camp and the bivouac, all this appealed to the imagination, and did all that sound and scene could do to make one feel a soldier.

In those moments too, one felt a free man. A strange feeling of independence and exhilaration possessed one. No more taking cognisance of English authority, prepared to resist its assertion if need there were, doing what we did regardless of it, we

were soldiers of the free Irish nation. A yoke seemed lifted from our shoulders; our heads were held higher; our hearts beat faster. It was a revelation of what freedom brings.

But, though we felt like soldiers, it seemed also, at first, that we were to be treated like soldiers in the country of an enemy. It became necessary to get food for the men and, if possible, more weather-proof shelter than that afforded them by the footings of bare walls. We sought the food at a public house, which posed as an hotel, and then at one or two other of the larger houses in the village, but were refused in all. One or two inhabitants of a row of small cottages at the foot of one of the streets were more charitable and less cowed and churlish than their more substantial neighbours and, so far as food was concerned, endeavoured to meet our wants. But the succour they could give was very slight and we should have fared ill, had not Paddy Hughes been foraging. He found for us both food and shelter. In the local baker he had found an old friend who placed a shed at our disposal and offered to provide tea and bread for the men. The timely offer was gladly availed of, and soon the main body of the men, the pickets still being maintained along the roads, were snug and warm in shelter, while our host and the hospitable ladies of his household were providing for their regalement.

We had the shelter of the shed, and our men sat there and ate in comfort until in the house there was no more to be eaten, while we waited for the messenger. Midnight passed. He did not come; and Hughes,

Hannigan, Phil MacMahon (of Ardee) and I held a consultation. Some of us, myself among the number, arguing from the continued inactivity of the police that Dublin had not risen, were inclined to accept the countermand as authoritative and to act upon it. But one man was immovable and inflexible. He would not recognise the order as valid. He would not act upon it until the messenger returned with confirmation of it from Dublin. If the messenger did not return, he would stay where he was until morning and push on then to Dublin with whatever men would follow. That man, Paddy Hughes, prevailed. We determined to remain in Slane and to occupy the shed there until morning.

But the police disposed otherwise. They remonstrated with the owner of the shed for giving us shelter. They threatened him with legal proceedings if he permitted us to remain, till at last he was forced to turn us out into the inclement night.

Our predicament was now truly unenviable. The rain was torrential, pattering down in those wild spates which accompany thunder-showers. It was dark. It was cold. The men were tired and leg-weary. We knew not what to do, nor where to march. But one gleam of humour the situation had: our attendants, the Ardee and Dundalk police, were in as evil a plight as we. They even looked more miserable and uncomfortable than we did; they had no thought of a purpose to sustain them - spying is an uninspiring occupation. Water poured off their cycling capes, and the rain drops trickled off their noses. The Sergeant had a fair moustache which he was accustomed to wax to two fine points and to given an aggressive curl upwards at the

ends, like a sabre. But now the gallant moustache no longer curled. All the aggressiveness had gone out of it and it draggled down around the one-time dapper fellow's mouth, making him look like a walrus as he floundered around uneasily after us. He followed us as a weasel might stalk a rabbit, moving when we moved, stopping when we stopped, looking cold and uncomfortable all the while.

But while the predicament of the police was amusing, our own was not. It was half-past two in the morning and the men were beginning to murmur a little at our inactivity, for they knew that somewhere there was a hitch. The wind was rising to a gale; the rain was heavy and drenching; the police becoming aggressive and inquisitive; our position in the village anomalous and impossible; and all the time our hands were tied by that confounded order. Again, we held a consultation; and, this time, I volunteered to ride to Drogheda, about twelve Irish miles away, to catch the mail, which left there at a quarter to four, and to proceed to Dublin to secure definite instructions. Meanwhile, the men under Hannigan and Hughes were to march slowly back towards Dundalk.

I chose Tom Hamill, who was familiar with the road to Drogheda, to accompany me, and, exactly at twenty-five minutes to three on Monday morning, we started on our ride.

CHAPTER THREE.

Liberty Hall

As Tom Hamill and I began our ride to Drogheda, the Volunteers began their march back towards Dundalk, with the police still in their wake. We went with them a little way, before pushing ahead, working quietly and unostentatiously to the head to the column, for we wished to get away without attracting the attention of the police. Then, at the first by-road, we turned to the right and shaped our course for Drogheda.

Before we set out, I had given Tom instructions to disassociate himself as much as possible from me at Drogheda and Dublin, so that there might be less chance of both of us being apprehended, should the railway or the city be held by hostile forces. Now, acting prematurely upon the order, he shot by me like a flash and vanished into the gloom. His disappearance was certainly awkward, for I was ignorant of the road we had to travel and was entirely dependent upon him for guidance. There was nothing for it, however, but to trust to fortune, and I bent my head and pedalled after him as hard as I could. Luck favoured me too, for, after resisting the invitations to turn astray which one or two forks in the road plausibly offered, I caught him again some miles further on. Thence we went ahead together, but at a steadier pace.

I think neither of us will forget that ride. There was a strong head wind blowing, and it beat the heavy rain into faces and eyes. Our raincoats were

soaked, so that streams of water poured off them and upon our legs and ankles. The mud, thin and liquid, was inches deep on the road and, as our wheels plashed through it, they cast up a lavish spray that no mudguard could completely intercept. It was dark too, almost impenetrably dark; I could not see Tom twenty yards ahead of me. And it was lonely.

At first, there was nothing to be seen, nor anything to be heard, except the splutter and splash of our wheels on the roadway. Then, as we rode, the dark masses to our right hand began to assume a misty definition, shadows began to creep together and the long, slow curving outline of the low hills, fringed here and there with a line of bush, or broken by a lonely tree, became apparent against the fore-glow of the coming dawn. The rain was slackening and, in patches overhead, the dark sky began to show a soft grey radiance as the clouds grew lighter and the moon struggled to get through. She succeeded, just as we struck the course of the Boyne, and sent one shaft of soft mellow light through the darkness. The gloom lightened; the trees, the hedges, the tall grass by the river showed up in the moonlight, green, glistening and encrusted with a myriad sparkling drops of rain; the smooth, placid bosom of the river, shining with the lustre of old silver, wound like a ribbon beside us; and here and there in the sedges glimmered innumerable pools. Then, through the distance, came the sound of a belfry chime; time was running and we were still three or four miles from Drogheda. We bent our heads over our machines and pushed on.

In a little while, we entered Drogheda in the

leaden grey light of the early morning. It wanted but a minute to a quarter to four - could we catch the train? I told Tom, who rode faster than I, to ride ahead and leave me to follow him as quickly as I could. Off he went, dropping me a little behind. When I reached the foot of the steep hill which leads to the station, I could see him manfully climbing to the brow. That hill was still before me, and the station clock showed three forty-five. The slope was a climb to break one's heart, but climbed it was, at last, and, carrying my bicycle on my shoulder, I rushed through the station entrance and down some stairs to the platform. As I ran, I could hear Tom's voice, shouting, "Wait! Wait! Here's some other poor devil like myself". And then, in a tone of the most genuine commiseration, "God help him!" The guard had blown his whistle, but the driver gave me an extra second; I flung my bicycle on the platform and scrambled into the train.

For a little while, I lay on the carriage seat, panting and blowing hard; then, in case, I should be searched, I went through my pockets and destroyed any papers that might give rise to suspicion. That done, I lay down again and went to sleep, and slept until, at Clontarf, the guard came to collect my fare. A minute or two later, I was in Dublin.

It was six o'clock when I reached Dublin; the rain had ceased and the streets, under the rays of a strong sun, showed few traces of the night's downpour. There were few people about - a policeman or two, and some early risers going to early Mass. Going straight to an address in Upper Dorset Street which Dan Hannigan

had given me, in a few minutes I had knocked up the occupants and was introducing myself. The head of the household, Mr. Ward, was a cousin of Dan's and as enthusiastic as Dan himself for the cause, and his own son was a Volunteer. When I told him from whom I had come and whom I wanted to see, he made me heartily welcome and bade me come in while he procured someone who could put me in touch with Pearse. I had just sat down, when a knock at the street door announced Tom Hamill's arrival. Young Ward went off to make enquiries at Liberty Hall while Tom and I had something to eat. Tom Hamill had only a little time to stay, however; there was a train leaving Dublin at six-thirty and we arranged that he should return by it to Ardee. He would arrive there about eight o'clock, some hours earlier than the Volunteers, footsore and weary as they were sure to be, could hope to make it. It was arranged, therefore, that he should ride to meet them and tell Hannigan that we had arrived safely in Dublin, that all was quiet in the city, that I was proceeding to Headquarters and would return via Ardee to meet the Volunteers there and to deliver whatever orders Pearse might give me.

Tom Hamill left to catch his train. I had a wash and dried my clothes, and about half an hour later Dan Ward's son returned with a comrade to bring me to Headquarters. It was still early morning but there was now quite a bustle in the streets, for it was a Bank Holiday and there were the usual races at Fairyhouse. Numbers of police were to be seen, but no military, though the latter, I was told, had been on duty all the previous day outside the Volunteer office

in Dawson Street. The police took no notice of us, however, and, but for the fact that my two companions carried revolvers, there was nothing noteworthy as we walked down O'Connell Street and along Eden Quay to Liberty Hall.

Alertness and animation marked the entrance to the famous Labour Headquarters. People were continually passing in and out. All who went in, however, and all who came out were challenged by the sentries at the doorways. My comrades gave the password and we passed through. Though it was then only about half-past seven, the building was thronged. Groups of Citizen Army men stood in the passages and on the landings. Others of them, orderlies apparently, passed from room to toom. Now and then, a Volunteer officer would emerge, to disappear again into another apartment, or to go hurrying upon some mission outside the building. Occasionally, a woman or girl, as busy and as hurried as the rest, would be seen. My conductors whispered for a moment with the man in charge of the guard. He went off down one of the corridors, asking us to remain where we were until his return. After a little, he came back, accompanied by an orderly, who requested me to go with him.

Up a few steps to the right we went, turned to the left and proceeded along a corridor to a room which apparently had been the editorial office of the 'Workers' Republic'. Bundles of that journal were arranged on the floor around the walls. On the walls themselves were copies of its posters and, side by side with these, were displayed caricatures of Jim Larkin and of Larkin's opponents, advertisements for the

Transport Workers' Union and a copy of an Agreement between the Union and local ship owners.

I had been standing for a moment, looking at the caricatures, when James Connolly came in. He was just as I had known him some years previously in Belfast. At that time, he was acting there as organiser, first of all, for the Socialist Party of Ireland and, afterwards, for the Irish Transport Workers' Union which had been founded by Jim Larkin a short time before. Those had been hard times with Connolly, though not harder than often before he had endured for the same cause, with the same patience and the same selflessness. At the invitation of the Socialist Party of Ireland which was then struggling to revive itself, he had returned from America to act as National Organiser at a salary, I think, of thirty shillings a week. The struggling party, however, could not provide even this trifling amount regularly and, for most weeks, the Organiser's salary was not only nominal but non-existent.

Connolly, however, laboured on with unabated zeal and came to Belfast to inaugurate a campaign to convert the North. It was shortly after the general elections of 1910, and Ulster democracy was making some feeble effort to express itself. Connolly founded a branch of the Socialist Party of Ireland and gathered about thirty or forty of us, of whom the majority were not Catholics, around him. At first, we were very active and held meetings on the Falls Road, at Donegal Pass, at Ballymacarret and even at the Custom House steps, where we were chased for our pains. At most of our meetings, Connolly spoke.

Fluent, rapid, explosive, his voice a little hoarse, his utterance a little thick, his accent unmistakeably Irish, his speeches made manifest a heart and a mind that were unmistakeably Irish too. His social theories had Irish roots and in Irish history he sought their justification. The national struggle was to him a struggle to realise the great social ideal of the common people of Ireland, and he strove in all his speeches to advance his national as well as his economic principles, believing that national freedom and economic freedom were complementary conditions and that one could not be truly achieved independently of the other. Connolly's oratory, however, and all our enthusiasm availed little, and the Socialist Party of Ireland made poor headway. For the Catholic workers had been nobbled by the Hibernian lodges; and whatever else there was of democracy in Belfast went chasing after Tom Sloan, the Independent Orange Order and an "escaped nun". So that, in a little time, by a combination of indignant Catholics and indignant publicans - the latter body having been antagonised by Sloan's vote on the Licensing Bill - Protestant Democracy was smashed in Belfast.

With few converts and few subscribers, our funds were speedily exhausted and, for a time, Connolly was stranded in Belfast. Then Larkin, who had long been wanting him as an organiser, got him to undertake the reorganisation of the dockers and transport workers there. Jim threw himself into the work with his characteristic force and energy, and soon had the main body of the dockers, Catholic and Protestant, enrolled in the new union. Then came the Sailors' and Firemen's dispute, involving the Transport Workers in

a sympathetic strike. The struggle was prolonged, the Union funds were very low and the men suffered terribly. Connolly suffered too, and there were many days when he and his family had no dinner, for his salary had gone into the strike fund. But, by this, he held his men staunchly together, Catholic and Protestant of them - a thing almost imcomprehensibly difficult - so that the employers could not divide them, even by reviving the old religious bogeys. "Connolly was a 'Papish'", the employers said. The Protestant workers knew that as well as any, but he was a 'Papish' who gave his dinner to feed them, and at that time the solid fact counted for more than the old prejudice. And this influence over the men continued after the strike. For, in about six months' time, as a municipal candidate in a ward where the Nationalists were in a minority of four to one, Connolly, with the support of his Union, came within a hundred votes of beating the official nominee of the Unionist Association. That election might well have been the beginning of great things for Ireland, had Connolly been permitted to remain in Belfast. But Larkin brought him back to Dublin to be his Chief Lieutenant there, and, in bringing him, took from Belfast the one man, with the exception of Larkin himself, who had ever been able to unite the Catholic and Protestant workers in common cause.

It was the same James Connolly I met now this Easter Monday morning in Liberty Hall, the same low-set, sturdy man - perhaps a shade stouter - with the same heavy black moustache, the same deep-set twinkling eyes, the same thick utterance. He recognised me

immediately, and I began at once to tell him my errand. He listened in silence to the end, thought for a moment before replying and then, telling me to rest myself, asked me to wait in the building until Mr. Pearse came in.

I left the room and went back to the main landing; and there, on the stairway to the left, sat down and fell asleep. I must have slept until about nine o'clock, when I was awakened by the clatter of feet. There was a great stir now in the building, with a regular line of despatch-bearers and orderlies passing up and down the main staircase. About half-past nine, Tom MacDonagh came in, ran lightly up the stairs and disappeared along the corridor. Shortly afterwards, I was sent for again.

Connolly had MacDonagh with him this time, and I began again to tell to both of them my errand. We were talking just for a second or so, when our conversation was interrupted by MacDonagh being called away to a group in a corner of the room. A minute later, it was resumed, however, when Eamonn Ceannt came in and joined Connolly and myself. Once again we were interrupted, this time by some new-comers - among whom was Piaras Beasley, wearing a long, dark grey waterproof and a bowler hat - and I moved away from the group.

By this time, there were about nine or ten people present, grouped about the room in little changing circles of threes or fours. Connolly had gone out, and MacDonagh, Beasley and Ceannt were the only others there that I knew, even by appearance. There was much talk and much gaiety. At a table was a lady, typing very busily. The members of one very

animated groups, of which the centres were MacDonagh and Ceannt, seemed to be teasing and chaffing each other. Now and then, MacDonagh's merry laugh would ring out. I could catch an odd word or two of the conversation. Some person asked him how he felt that morning. "Never better. I feel grand", replied MacDonagh, with a light-hearted smile and with quick nervous fingers caressing the frog of his Sam Browne belt. A moment later, the door opened and Padraic Pearse entered the room.

Tall, broad-shouldered and commanding, the presence of the newcomer filled the apartment. Dressed in the grey-green uniform of the Volunteers, there was an air of dignity and power about him as he stood for a moment exchanging greetings with those around; he seemed to be pre-conscious of his historic destiny and to rise to its grandeur. Never before was I so impressed by the bigness of any man. Standing as I did, apart from the groups, I could clearly see how his personality dominated all the others there. His somewhat slow, deliberate movements, his physical bulk overshadowing the slighter and smaller figures of his companions, the high seriousness of his face, the carriage of his leonine head, the air of mastery and command and control, which he bore as easily and as naturally as a garment, demarcated him forcefully and insistently from the others - had a stranger entered the room, he would have assumed naturally that Pearse was the chief personage there. He stood for a second, looking around him, until Connolly spoke a few words to him, and the two together went into a small room which opened off that in which we were.

After a couple of minutes, Connolly came out and spoke to the lady who was typing. She took her typewriter and went with him, back to the little room. Ten minutes later, he again came out, this time to bring me in.

Pearse was standing beside a table when I entered. He had doffed his hat and sword. I stood to attention, saluted and began my story. He heard me out silently to the end, except for a remark or two to Connolly, which the latter received in his dry, taciturn way, with an occasional "humph" that I had often heard him use before, and which might signify assent or dissent - I never could tell which. Pearse then asked me a few questions regarding the strength of our detachment, whether I had observed any activity in other parts of the country and where I expected to pick up my men again. Regarding the last point, I replied that it was my intention to proceed by train to Ardee, from there to go to meet them if they had not already passed through the town, or to follow and catch them if they had. This seemed to satisfy him and he dismissed me, asking me to wait in the outer room.

Outside in the other room while I was waiting, Tom MacDonagh came over to me and began to chat. He asked me if I had seen Mr. Pearse yet. I told him I had. "I suppose you know", he went on, "there's to be a secret session (of the English Parliament, he meant) next Tuesday. They'll declare for peace then. And the country will be lost without a blow." "Will it be that - or conscription?", I asked. "No", he replied, "peace - -". Just then Pearse sent for me again, and

I had to leave the conversation unfinished.

Pearse was still standing at the table. As I entered, he advanced a little to meet me. "You will return to Hannigan", he said, "and tell him to carry out the original instructions. We strike at noon." I repeated the message to him, and he continued, "Two other despatch riders are also carrying despatches to the same effect. They are going off now". I had no revolver, so I asked him could I have one before I left - and a change of clothes. I wished to disguise myself, in case the Ardee police, hearing of the insurrection before I got there, might try to arrest me before I had delivered my despatch.

Producing a revolver from a drawer of the table, Pearse loaded it and handed it to me, asking me, at the same time, by what train I was going back to Ardee. I told him the ten fifty-five was the earliest and that, travelling by it, I should arrive in Ardee about half-past twelve. "Very well, then", he replied, "we'll get you some clothes." Connolly came in just then, and Pearse told him what I wanted. "Come along with me, MacEntee", said Jim, turning to me, "and I'll fix you up all right."

Leaving the room, we went down the corridor to what appeared to be the caretaker's apartments. And there Connolly produced for me an overcoat, a coat and a cap - a cap with a broken peak,- all very worn and very shabby. "How will these suit?", he asked. "Fine", I responded, and proceeded to divest myself of my clothes and to put on the strange garments. In a couple of minutes, with the addition of a frayed,

unstarched collar and an old necktie, the metamorphosis was complete, and I went back to the staff office, where Connolly was to procure me one or two road maps.

As I entered the office, the people there looked askance at the disreputable looking new-comer. Seán MacDermott had arrived in the interval and was now working at one of the tables. We had met several times in the preceding few months; so, as a test of my disguise, I went over and stood in front of his table. He looked up at me, puckering his brows in doubtful and questioning contemplation, but without a sign of recognition. Before he had time to ask my business, I spoke to him, asking him did he not know me. He hesitated, looking very puzzled for a little before replying, and then asked, very dubiously, "Is it Seán MacEntee?". I pleaded guilty, and we both began laughing at my masquerade.

We remained chatting for a few minutes and, while we were speaking, Tom MacDonagh passed through the room in the direction of the door. At the door, some person spoke to him, asking him a question to which, as he moved off, I heard MacDonagh reply, "Oh, quite all right, but the boys are turning up very slowly".

It was now approaching train time, and I had yet to see about my ticket. Spies and G-men, in swarms, infested the street about Liberty Hall, and I was very chary of going directly from the building to the booking office, lest one of them might, by tracking me and ascertaining my destination, warn the Ardee police to look out for my arrival. I decided to ask one of the men who were about the Hall to procure my ticket and to

bring it back to me, while I remained in the building until just before the starting time of the train. As the sequel will show, my over-precaution defeated itself.

As I planned, I sent a man off for my ticket. It was then showing twenty minutes past ten by the clock over the main stairway at Liberty Hall, and I set my watch to that hour. My friend was some time longer than I had anticipated, but eventually he returned with the ticket. I waited for about five minutes more, and set off for Amiens Street terminus.

I walked over to the station rather leisurely, thinking I had ample time to spare. But, when I got there and saw the clock above the entrance, I rushed up the steps as quickly as I could - only to see the train I had intended to catch, clearing the end of the platform.

The clock at Liberty Hall was five minutes slow.

CHAPTER FOUR

Deeply despondent, I retraced my steps to Liberty Hall and, in great confusion, reported my failure. Pearse heard me quietly and silently; Connolly shook his head vehemently, saying, "Tchu, Tchu", but Seán MacDermott was very angry and very much annoyed.

"What shall I do, Seán?", I asked.

"I don't know", he snapped, bitterly and sharply.

"It's not quite all my fault", I pleaded. "The clock - -"

"The clock, man", angrily interjected Connolly, who was standing near us. "Why did you go by that one? That's not the one - there's another one here. Everybody knew that one was slow."

"I didn't", I said mournfully; then, as an idea came to me, "Have you a man who can drive a car? We'll get a taxi and, in case the driver won't come, we'll try to take him, taxi and all".

"Do what you like", Seán snapped, "only get out of here before twelve o'clock." And then, mollified a little as he began to think that I might get away after all, "Have you any money?", producing treasury notes.

"Plenty", I replied.

"Very well, I'll get you a driver." And he did.

Ten minutes afterwards, I had changed back into my own clothes and was leaving Liberty Hall with the

boy Seán MacDermott had procured for me to hunt for a taxi.

The quest was not so easy as I had thought. It was Easter Monday and it was the day of Fairyhouse races; so, with wedding parties and racing parties, every available taxi in the city was engaged. We tried every garage without success. Then, as a forlorn hope, my companion went off to try if a certain chaffeur, whom he knew well, could be suborned to break an engagement for our sake.

It was then half-past eleven. During the little time I had been in it, Marlborough Street had grown increasingly busier, until now it had quite a brisk air of subdued agitation. Many of the people passing walked quickly, with that quick, nervous, springy, self-conscious step which betokens suppressed excitement, and now and then a boy, or even a grown man would go running past, obviously upon some errand of importance. At about twenty minutes to twelve, two men of the labouring class, sturdy, squarely built men, went down towards Liberty Hall. They were half running, half walking, two women in their wake, of whom one was silent, the other voluble. The two couples were chaffing each other, the men laughing and evasive, the women laughing also but, I thought, a little anxious too. A street opened off the other side of Marlborough Street, just opposite to where I stood; and one of the men paused there, detaining the other until the women came up.

"Where are ye off to now?", I heard one of the women say, as they approached the men.

"Oh, just a bit of drill", replied one of the men, laughing.

"Will ye be back this evening, or will I bring ye yer supper down to the Hall?"

"Maybe I'll be back" - turning and running after his companion who had moved on towards Earl Street.

"Maybe -", re-echoed the woman quizzingly and just a trifle wistfully - "Well, God bless ye anyway." And she and the other woman stood a second, looking after the departing men, and then turned up the side street.

Meanwhile, I was impatient and a little uncomfortable. It was almost noon, I had no taxi and there seemed little likelihood of securing one. I looked at my watch. It was showing seventeen minutes to twelve. What could I do? I dare not go back to Liberty Hall and confess a second failure. It was obvious, too, that events were moving, that Fate was afoot. A car or two passed, laden with men and driving very quickly. Then came another, and on it were Seán MacDermott and three others; they also were driving fast. As the cars passed the corners, I saw men step out from the pavement and give and accept signals from the riders - as Seán passed, they gave a subdued cheer. It was then thirteen minutes to twelve. Five minutes later, my comrade came running up to tell me that he could not get a car immediately, but that there was a prospect of one being disengaged in twenty minutes, or half an hour, if I could wait for that.

While we were talking, we walked down towards

the Pro-Cathedral;; a taxi was approaching from Earl Street and was pulling up at the church porch. As we came near, the driver got out and went over to the railings.

"Crank up the engine of the taxi", I whispered to my companion and, leaving him, ran over to the car and jumped into the driver's seat. My companion looked at me, amazed; so did the driver. But the latter recovered the more quickly and ran over to the car, while my friend stood gazing blankly from the footpath.

"Crank the engine! Crank the engine!", I shouted again to my chum as I adjusted the petrol and the ignition levers.

"He'll crank no blooming engine", said the chauffeur, by now at my elbow, "and you'll get to h--l out of that."

A crowd began to gather, attracted by the strange scene. My position was untenable; it was becoming ridiculous.

"Here", I said to the chauffeur, "I'll give you any fare you like if you'll take me out --"

"Are you Mr. Kelly?", he queried, before I could finish the sentence.

"No, I'm not Mr. Kelly", I asnwered.

"Well", retorted he, "I have been engaged by Mr. Kelly and I'm not going to take anyone else."

"Come, I'll give you anything you ask", I coaxed,

just as a man came running down the church steps and I, looking up, saw three other persons, two of them ladies, dressed in light blue costumes and wearing large white hats.

The chauffeur went over to the newcomer. "Yessir", I could hear him say in response to an interrogation, "Yessir, Mr. Kelly, Sir, yessir, just get in, sir." In a second, the ladies were stepping into the car behind me. There was nothing for it but to evacuate the position, and this I did with as much dignity and coolness as I could muster, although, as I stepped off the car, I could hear the chauffeur saying to the wedding party, "Wanted to kidnap me, by jingo!" At this sally, the ladies laughed. "When he offered me any money I wished, to get him out of town", he continued, "I thought he might be Mr. Kelly and that he'd lost his nerve", whereupon they laughed more uproariously.

My face was burning as I walked abjectly away from the car and up the street. I had two humiliations that day, that first, when I missed the train, and the second, just now. "Truly", I said to myself, "the position is desperate." "Toot, toot", derisively hooted a motor horn; I looked up, in time to catch the driver grinning at me as he and his damned car shot past.

"Come on", I said to my companion, "we'll get out of this, even if we have to walk. We'll go along the road to Fairyhouse and perhaps we'll pick up a taxi coming back from the course."

By this time, we had arrived at the top of the street. And there, just at the corner, an old horse in a jaunting car which appeared to be affording more support to the horse than the horse gave to it, came limping down the road.

"Hewst!", I whistled to the driver. "Are you disengaged?"

"I am", said he. "Jump up." We jumped.

"The Finglas road, and out towards Fairyhouse as fast as you can pelt", I told him, and off we went.

Off we went; but I have walked faster at many a Belfast funeral.

In this fashion we proceeded at a snail's pace out towards Phibsboro' (the driver flaking his nag lavishly the while). We crossed the bridge there, going out towards the Finglas road, at about ten minutes past twelve. At a quarter-to-one, we passed through Finglas where I made a further vain effort to hire a motor car and where, at the top of the hill in the village, as we passed the police barracks, a policeman endeavoured to read the number of the car - probably as a preliminary to prosecuting the driver for cruelty to the horse. If he had arrested us there and then on such a charge, we could hardly have questioned his action. In this manner, we went on for another mile, but the old horse's speed by this time had dropped to less than a smart walking pace, and we could endure the tediousness no longer. Dismissing the car and telling the driver to go very, very slowly back to the city, we started again on foot.

We stepped out smartly, hoping to meet a disengaged taxi coming back from the race-course. Plenty of them and plenty of private cars passed us, but all were filled with passengers and all were facing with us towards Fairyhouse. Not a single empty car, nor one coming from the course, was to be seen. We were a little anxious, too, for the action of the policeman at Finglas was disquieting. It was just possible he had heard of the outbreak in Dublin and had been told to look out for suspicious looking persons leaving the city. If he had, I presume that our appearance and association with so jaded an animal as we had been driving could not but arouse curiosity. The thought had largely influenced me to dismiss the hackney, for, if we were suspected, with such a horse we would be easily identified. Even temporary association with it was dangerous and it would be certain to excite the attention of a close observer, and, if such a one should happen to be a policeman, would give him that mnemonical reference whereby he could mentally docket and afterwards recall and trace one.

Meanwhile, we trudged on. It was a beautiful day, just at that period when Spring is passing through later adolescence. The long road stretched in front of us, white and dry. Now and then, a motor sped past us, filled with pleasure-seekers on their way to the races; and twice we passed farm carts loaded with manure - the countryman was too busy to play. The sun rode high in the heavens and the breeze was hot and sultry, though, out in the west, clouds were gathering which seemed to threaten rain later. It was wearisome work, walking, and I had begun to think it would be futile. A couple of boys passed on bicycles and, for

a moment, I contemplated seizing their machines. But we let them pass, and plodded on, turning now and then at the sound of wheels to see if, by any fortunate chance, it might be the wished for car.

It was now past two o'clock and there was still no prospect of a conveyance of any sort. A countryman in a cart overtook us and, telling him we were going to Fairyhouse, we asked him for a lift. He told us to get in, and we rode a mile or more with him, passing a cross-roads where stood a finger-post, one of the arms of which read, "Ashbourne 8 miles". A short distance past the fingerpost was a small wayside public house. And there, just as we were approaching, a beautiful Overland car was drawing up. Like hawks, we watched it slow down and stop. Slowly and leisurely, like a man listless with the heat, the chauffeur got out, worked for a moment at a tap or two on the car and went into the house. We followed him.

CHAPTER FIVE

I warned my companion to be ready to run outside and start the car when I gave him the signal, and then with him followed the chauffeur into the public house. The bartender was setting up the drink the chauffeur had ordered as we entered. I called the order for my companion and myself and, turning, struck up a conversation with the chauffeur: "Coming from Fairyhouse?", I asked him.

"Yes", replied he.

"Big crowd there?"

"Very big, indeed. I'm just after leaving one party out and now I'm going back for another."

"I was trying to get out there myself", said I. "Have another drink?"

"Rather", replied he.

"What will it be then?", I asked.

"I - don't know - I think I'll just try another bottle of beer", replied he. "And oh!", he exclaimed to the bartender who was just stooping to lift the bottle, "do you know what one of the taxi drivers out there at the race is after telling me?"

"No, what?", asked the barman.

"He's just after coming out from Dublin" - I set down my glass - "and all the Volunteers are round the Post Office. They have rushed in and broken all the windows, and are throwing all the books and papers into the street."

"Now!", whispered I to my chum and, stepping to the door, drew my revolver.

The barman was decanting the bottle of beer I had ordered for the chauffeur's delectation. Holding the bottle up high in one hand, with the air of a butler, he was looking critically and admiringly at the bright golden fluid as it poured, frothing and foaming, into the glass. The chauffeur was watching him, and an old man at the left-hand corner of the counter was drinking from a porter glass. The man in the corner saw the revolver, put down his glass and stared at me, open-eyed. The others noticed nothing.

"If any man", I said, striving to speak coolly, "tries to leave, I'll shoot him. If you remain quiet, no one will be harmed."

With a start, the man behind the bar planted bottle and glass down sharply on the counter and gaped. The old man continued to stare, thunderstruck, while the chauffeur came, with hesitation indeed, but also with menace, towards me.

"Stand where you are!", I commanded him - and my voice must have been stern, for he stopped. "Stand where you are. If you move a foot, I'll shoot. I want your car." Outside, I could hear the engine 'thug-thugging'. "I must have it. There's more than your life or mine dependent on my getting it to-day."

"But", he answered me, deprecatingly, "what will I do? There's a party waiting for me to bring them to the races. I must go back for them."

"You won't get back for them to-day. In fact, I don't think they'll be able to leave Dublin now. But, in any case, I must take your car. Tell me the name of its owner, and I will try to have it returned to him or to secure compensation for it, should we succeed."

"What! Do you mean to take the car for good?", he cried out, astonished. "Oh, what will I do?" He was in pitiable distress. "I can never go back without it, and I have a wife and family to keep."

"I am sorry", I said, "I must take it. And they can't blame you for its loss. These men will prove that it was taken by force and that I threatened you with a revolver. Here is some money - it will help to tide you over until you get a chance of working again."

"What can I do at all?", he begged piteously.

"Nothing", I answered. "I must have the car."

By this time, the car had been turned in the direction of Dundalk and was waiting, throbbing and panting, at the door. "Goodbye", said I to the men in the shop.

"Good-bye", said they - and I thought I heard one say, "Good luck".

I backed outside the door, turned and got into the car, and almost instantly we were off.

The drive to Slane was uneventful, except for the fact that on the crest of the high land between

Slane and Dublin, in the bleakest and loneliest part of the way, we came upon an automobile which had broken down. Apparently, it belonged to an officer in the English army, for, as we approached, one stepped out into the roadway and signalled to us that he required assistance. In our circumstances, we could only disregard his plea; so we rushed past him and on to Slane. Half an hour later, that officer might have had his revenge, for at Slane we found ourselves in a similar plight.

The road from Dublin to Slane crosses the Boyne just outside the village, not two hundred yards, indeed, from the village square. Approaching from Dublin, one drives down a steep and tortuous hill to the bridge and then, just at the abutment of the bridge where the road makes a sharp turn, swerves to the right to cross the river. Across the bridge and just at the egress from it, the road makes a further sharp turn and bifurcates at the very apex of the angle thus made. Of the two branches thus formed, one, with its fall beginning right from the crown of the main roadway, slopes down steeply to the main gate of the Marquis of Conyngham's estate; the other faces directly up a steep hill and runs straight to the village square.

From the very beginning, my companion and myself had had trouble with the gears of the car, for neither of us were experienced drivers. And now, just as we were leaving the bridge and facing up the hill to the village, the change-levers of the gear box jammed in a neutral position. The gears were not in mesh, but the momentum of the car, however, carried us a few yards up

the hill, and then we paused a moment, hung as it were in the balance and began to back down towards the river, my comrade vainly pulling at the gear lever the while. Just at the beginning of an incline, so steep that the brakes would not have held us and from which we and the car and all would have been precipitated into the Boyne, he succeeded in pulling up. Then began an anxious time as we ripped up the floor board and stripped the gear-box, in an endeavour to right the trouble. Every moment we expected the police to be upon us, for we thought by this time the chauffeur would have reported the loss of the car and that all police barracks en route would be looking for us. Fortune favoured us, however, and, without sight or sound of a policeman, in about twenty minutes we had the car put right and were spinning through Slane and on to Collon.

Near Collon and towards Dundalk, the road forks, the main road leading on through Ardee to Dundalk, the bye-road leading to . But, before the traveller from Collon to Dundalk meets this fork, he is confronted with another, one limb of which leads to Dundalk via Dunleer. This road is the bye-road but it more nearly resembles a main road than does the highway itself. Coming out of Collon in a blinding shower of rain, we met this first fork and, taking the road to the right, ran along it for half an hour before we discovered our mistake. It seemed better then to go on than to turn back; so we continued our way towards Dunleer.

At Dunleer we halted to make enquiries if the

Volunteers had passed through there that day. They had not, nor could any information be got regarding them. I decided then to run through Dunleer to the Castlebellingham road and, turning off that, to make Ardee. Pursuing this plan, we spun along towards Castlebellingham until we came to a cross road, known locally as Sarsfield's Cross. The place was so named, not from any historic association with the Earl of Lucan, but because a certain Patrick Sarsfield keeps, or rather kept - for, passing that way some time ago, I saw the house had changed ownership - a public house there. Here we halted, to assure ourselves that the road to the left led to Ardee. Being assured that it did, we were resuming our seats and were about to get the car under way again, when a policeman rode up on a bicycle from the direction of Castlebellingham. He slowed up when he saw the car, dismounted and scanned its register number intently. "Is that car yours?", he asked. "It is," I replied. Whereupon he looked closely and carefully at myself and my companion, taking in every detail of our appearance, jumped on his bicycle and went pedalling smartly towards Dunleer. As he went, he looked back once or twice to assure himself that we were really taking the road towards Ardee.

And here I may point out a rather curious chain of infinitesimal circumstances which, so far as I and many others were concerned, had important consequences. By just a hair's breadth of time - if one may write so - I caught the train at Drogheda; by almost as imperceptible an interval, I missed the one from Dublin; by the merest inadvertance, we chose the

wrong road at Collon; and, by the luckiest coincidence, we met the policeman at Sarsfield's Cross. Had I not caught the train at Drogheda - where it was over ten minutes behind its scheduled time in departing - I should not have seen Pearse in time; had I not missed the train from Dublin, I should not have had to commandeer the motor car; had I not commandeered the car, taken the wrong turning and met the policeman, I would not have gone to Dunleer; and had I not gone to Dunleer, I probably would not have come in contact with the Louth Volunteers until too late. Failing any one of these circumstances, I should not have been able to get back to Dublin, should not have been in the Post Office, should not have been sentenced to death, nor been in penal servitude; MacGee, the policeman, would not have been killed, nor Paddy Hughes and the others have had to go on their keeping. To others, this catenation of circumstances may not seem remarkable. But to me it will ever seem strange and extraordinary how Chance, with a gossamer thread, on this day bound imprisonment, exile and death together. In Dundalk, a priest who was very bitterly opposed to us, addressing his congregation on the Sunday following that Easter, referred to me as "a messenger of the devil". As to that, most people would hardly agree with him, but I certainly appear to have been a messenger of Destiny.

The policeman's conduct seemed to indicate that news of the chauffeur's mishap had been passed along to the Louth police stations and that the police had been instructed to look out for our car, seize it and arrest its passengers. I determined to change my

plans. It seemed probable that, by this time, the Volunteers would have passed through Ardee and be marching on Dundalk. I purposed, therefore, instead of proceeding to Ardee, to continue on the Dunleer-Dundalk road until close to Dundalk and, skirting the town, to strike the Ardee-Dundalk road somewhere near it. Then, travelling towards Ardee, I hoped to intercept the Volunteers on the route. To lay a false scent for the policeman, I first ran down the narrow bye-road towards Ardee until I was certain he had lost sight of us. Then, in a spot where the ground seemed firm and hard, and unlikely to retain any wheel-tracks, we turned our car and made our way back to the main road. Once on it again, we sent the car spinning along for a mile or so until, just in front of us as we turned a slight bend in the road, at a place called Lurgan Green, we saw a small black band of marching men. They were the Volunteers.

CHAPTER SIX

It was about four o'clock on Monday afternoon when I fell in with the Volunteers. The rain had ceased but the roads were thick with mud, and the men marched slowly. They seemed footsore and weary, and were bedraggled with rain. The little band had dwindled until it mustered only eighty men; but that there should have been any at all spoke volumes for their devotion and for Dan Hannigan's leadership. They had had a trying time. Turned out at Slane into the storm, they had been marching and counter-marching all night through the wind and rain. They had had no sleep, no rest, and very little food. And now they were marching towards home and were scarcely four miles from it; yet, as I drove past them, telling them that Dublin was ours, they raised a stirring cheer.

Hannigan was at their head, trudging along in front, alone. He seemed dejected and was very weary. Just as I pulled up beside him, Paddy Hughes came running up, crying out, "What's the word?"

"The Volunteers seized Dublin at noon. The orders are to carry out the original instructions."

"Did you see Pearse?" asked Hannigan.

"I did," I replied. "His words were: 'Carry out the original instructions; we strike at noon!'."

The Volunteers had come to a halt. I suggested to Hannigan that he should give me three or four men, so that I might rush with them to Dundalk and endeavour to seize the rifles there. But he demurred, saying, what was possibly true, that we would not have time and that the English forces there were likely to be on the alert by now. Meanwhile, the police, who had followed the Volunteers all the way, were put under arrest and disarmed. This was done without any personal violence whatsoever, though it was necessary to be rather explicit and verbally forcible, to convince them that resistance would be summarily dealt with. Pickets were posted and orders given that all traffic was to be held up and all vehicles seized.

This, unfortunately, was not done without some excitement and a great deal of confusion, so that one or two regrettable incidents occurred, for one of which I was myself to blame. Leaving Slane for Drogheda, I had given my automatic pistol to Paddy Hughes to keep for me. When I met him again, he had returned it to me and, in the bustle, I put it in my pocket without examining it. A little later, the pickets, in holding up the traffic, encountered one very obstinate and determined man. He was driving a pony and cart, and refused to dismount when ordered. An angry altercation between him and some of our men attracted my attention, and I went over to the group. When I came up, the man was endeavouring to drive on past the guard. Rather sharply, I asked him once or twice to get out. He refused and, in order to intimidate him, I drew my automatic. With that, he raised his whip and aimed a blow at my head. I drew back to avoid the blow.

Inadvertently, my finger pressed the pistol trigger and the pistol went off, wounding the man in the fleshy part of the arm. The safety catch of the pistol had been put to the firing position, and I had not known it - a fact which I offer as an explanation and not as an excuse. My negligence, in failing to ascertain whether the catch was at the firing position or not, and, perhaps, the hastiness with which I presented the weapon were certainly blameworthy.

Shortly afterwards, in a similar way, I had a narrow escape myself. A man, who previously had little experience of fire-arms, was given a rifle to hold. Somehow or other, he managed to discharge it, and the bullet from it whistled past my head and the heads of two or three others in the vicinity. Fortunately, no one was hit.

In the midst of all this confusion, one of the pickets came running in, to report that there was a body of men marching towards us from Dundalk. At once, all eyes were turned upon the new-comers. In the distance, they looked like a body of police or blue-jackets, and at once we disposed ourselves to receive them in a fitting manner. As the strangers came nearer, however, they halted for a moment, apparently in indecision, and then, turning, retraced their steps along the way they had come. Later, we learned that the cause of our excitement was a party of fishermen who were walking to Annagassan and whose prudence, when they heard of the strange doings along the road, proved stronger than their curiosity.

Scarcely had the fishermen turned back when Hannigan, who had gone to reconnoitre the road to

Castlebellingham on a motor cycle, returned with the information that a number of motor cars were returning from Fairyhouse. Here was the chance to get quick and easy transport for our men to Tara.

In a moment, we had made our arrangements to seize the cars. Along each side of the road our men were drawn up, and every car as it came was stopped. The occupants, with the exception of the driver, were then asked to dismount, and their places were taken by our men.

Considerable inconvenience, no doubt, was caused by this procedure to the owners of the cars.* In the circumstances, it was unavoidable. At the same time, we endeavoured to mitigate it by securing seats for the dispossessed in the cars for which we had no need. For some, however, this provision could not be made, and for these we obtained seats in a horse-brake which conveyed them to Dundalk. In this way, having secured accommodation for all men and having made what provision we could for the people whose cars we had commandeered, we set off for Tara.

Two miles from Lurgan Green lies the village of Castlebellingham. It is a small place, inhabited principally by workers in the local brewery and by dependents of Sir Henry Bellingham whose seat is here. The main street is built along the Dublin road

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*NOTE: Two of the occupants of the cars were Mr. T.E. Alexander and Mr. J. Magowan, both members of the Belfast Corporation, who afterwards at my courtmartial, at great inconvenience to themselves, gave evidence on my behalf.

which passes through the hamlet. Along it lie all the village shops and, in its centre, is a little grass plot, railed off on either side from the roadway. About fifty yards from this little park is the imposing gate lodge, the rest extending in a line down the street. The main body was lined up alongside the railing, but the last car, that in which I was, drew up on the opposite side of the roadway, close to the houses and the footpath.

As the cars halted, a detachment of our men under Paddy Hughes jumped out, entered the shops and commandeered whatever provisions were to be had, "for war purposes". Then the village police arrived on the scene and, like their confreres at Lurgan Green, were placed under arrest and searched, very superficially to be sure, for firearms. All this was very quietly done, for the police offered no resistance and were not molested in any way. I had just placed a guard over them when another constable, called McGee, rode into the village. He was a tall, fine looking fellow, of rather a tougher spirit than his comrades, and he refused to obey when I ordered him to dismount, and it was only under pressure from the other police that he complied. Eventually, he got off his bicycle, and I placed him under arrest, searching him and putting him alongside the other prisoners. By this time, we had procured all the supplies we required, the men had resumed their places in the cars and all was ready for starting. I was just returning to my place in the last car, when a new comer arrived on the scene.

A fresh motor car had driven into the village

and, of course, was stopped by our picket. The occupant, from his gold-braided uniform, an officer in the Guards, was exceedingly angry at being held up and refused to get out of his car. Naturally, there was a somewhat noisy altercation between him and our men which attracted my attention. At length, he got out, and he and his chauffeur were placed with the other prisoners. Before there was time to search him for arms, Hannigan signalled to get ready for starting.

To ensure, as far as possible, that no mishap would occur, I now took charge of the prisoners myself and ordered the men previously on guard back to their cars. Keeping the prisoners covered the while, I then backed towards my own car which, as I have stated, was the last of the fifteen. I had just turned to enter it, had mounted the foot-board and was stepping inside the car, when a shot rang out. I jumped out at once and looked towards the prisoners. The lieutenant was standing quite steady and upright, two policemen were running across the road, while of the other policeman and of the chauffeur there was no sign. I thought that, like the others, they too had run away. At the sound of the shot, the cars had stopped. I ran to the leading car and told Hannigan that some person had fired on the prisoners.

"Have any of them been hit?", he asked.

"No," I replied, "I think not. I saw the police running across the road, but the officer is standing there still and apparently is uninjured."

"Very well", he said, "if there is no person hit, get back to your car. We must hurry to Tara." -

blowing two blasts on his whistle and thereby giving the signal to start.

The cars were moving off as I walked back, and mine was just starting as I reached it. I got into it, as it moved, and turned then to look back at the officer. He had been standing very bravely and steadily up to this but, as I looked at him now, I saw him tremble and sway and sink to the ground. I realised then, for the first time, that he had been wounded. But already most of our cars had left the village and were spinning along towards Dunleer. I could not stop them nor turn back to ascertain whether or not the lieutenant had been seriously wounded; every moment, we thought, was precious to us and we dared not risk the consequences of delay. Besides, so far as the wounded man was concerned, there was a doctor in the village who would be of much greater service to him than we could be, and to whom we could offer no help. I followed the other cars; and it was not until nearly five weeks later, when I was brought back from Stafford to stand my court martial in Dublin, that I learned that the same shot that wounded the lieutenant killed Constable Magee as well.

CHAPTER SEVEN

It was growing dusk when we left Castlebellingham. It was dark and raining as we passed through Dunleer. Henceforward our way led through the night. In the whole party, there were about fourteen or fifteen cars; Dan Hannigan was in the foremost, Paddy Hughes in the middle car, I in the last. In charge of each of the others, a man was placed who had orders to see that the driver followed the tail lamp of the preceding car. Thus spread out in Indian file, we all took our direction from Hannigan's car, driven by one of our own men who was familiar with the road. As we drove, I discovered that my chauffeur, like myself, was a Belfast man, and we speedily became intimate enough to talk without allowing the exigencies of our respective situations to embarrass us. He was a hard-headed, steady Northern - the epithets are conventional but they are truly descriptive of him - who nevertheless seemed to have predilections for fight and adventure - isolated traits of his lawless ancestry - buried somewhere beneath his stolid exterior. Indeed, when he told me to whom the car belonged, I began to suspect that this was not his first lawless nocturnal excursion. For his master was a noted sympathiser with the Ulster Volunteers; and it was common rumour that the very car in which we rode had been on many a gun-running expedition for the U.V.F. - had, in fact, been used to distribute the cargo of the "Mountjoy".* In a little

* One of the two vessels, the "Fanny" and "Mountjoy", that served in Carson's famous gun-running expedition, by which, with the connivance of the British officials, 50,000 rifles were landed to equip the Ulster Volunteer Forces in 1913.

while, however, we had become great friends, and very soon he was telling me all about his home and about his two little boys, of whom he was very proud.

"I'm sure," I said to him, "the boys will wonder what has happened to you to-night."

"Maun, they will that", he replied, and then added, "Of course, Mr. Mac, I'm not your way of thinkin'. But, if it's no harm to ax ye, what do you mean by all this business?"

I proceeded, as well as I was able, to explain our purpose to him. He listened very attentively to me, breaking in now and then with, "Maun dear! Do you tell me so?", or maybe interrupting me with some such remark as, "Maun! To think o' the likes o' me bein' mixt up wi' a thing lak this. A wunder what yon wee fella o' mine 'ull say when he hears it".

"Well, do you know, Mr. Mac", he said when I had finished, "now that I am mixed up in it, I'd nearly lak to see it through - just for the fun, lak. But A suppose ye'll be sendin' me away when ye're done with me?"

I told him yes; that, as soon as we got to our destination, we should allow him and the others to go.

"Ah well, A'll tell ye no lie", he responded, "A'm very glad for that. But, do you know, A would just like to have somethin' to remember ye by when we're going - a wee souvenir, lak, of the thing. Ye know, a thing lak this doesn't happen a maun ivry day." I had nothing very much to give him except a cartridge from my automatic. So I gave him that, and we sat

together and talked in the darkness. Thus we became almost comrades in adventure; and, before that night was out and at my court martial, my friend, the chauffeur proved a very good friend indeed.

And it was little wonder that even my companion's imagination was stirred, for there was an air of romance and grand adventure about that drive in the darkness. The enveloping blackness, the long line of speeding cars, the wind and the rain, the race through the night, the silence, the tensity of purpose and the determination that inspired our men, had a kindling and ennobling effect. One gazed into the murk at the little red light gleaming in front, and resolved to follow that little light anywhere at any cost. The very car, catching the spirit of the thing, seemed to live under one; it strained, and jumped and bounded on the chase like a sentient being.

The dark night, too, was pregnant with inspiration. When the road lay blackest before one, an imaginary ambush lurked; if, for a moment, an evanescent radiance lit the sky and showed the land silent and asleep, one thought of the battle-eve and prayed that, on the morrow, it would be alive with marching men; or, as the rain swept into one's face, stinging it and making the cheeks tingle, one thought of a hosting of succouring ships bringing aid and relief to the Gael. Out of the night they came - all the dreams of one's boyhood - the ships like wolf-dogs breasting the waters, the marching men, the romance and gallantry of emancipating war.

Now and again, for a few minutes' space, the

wind would fall and the rain cease, so that a great silence lay upon all the land. Then, indeed, it seemed that there, behind the veil of darkness, a great purpose was being brought to birth; and the night became filled with solemnity, and the darkness draped it like the curtains of a temple, and the very hum of the speeding cars had the tones of ritual music, in this moment when a new spirit was being born into Éire.

Through Collon we rushed, and the long line of little houses on either side of the road shot fitful gleams of light through the shuttered windows, as if the village were blinking in surprise at the unwonted intruders. Then up the hill-crest we climbed into Slane. Through Slane we sped, across the square, down the hill, over the bridge and across the Boyne. To get to Tara without going through Navan, was Hannigan's aim, and he chose now a devious and tortuous route through a most complex and perplexing network of bye roads. In these obscure and tangled laneways, we were often at fault, so that progress was slow, long tedious halts alternating with bursts of hurried driving.

There was danger in these rushes that some of the rear cars might get out of touch with their leaders and go astray. I pointed this out to Hannigan, advising him to proceed more cautiously and, for a little time, he acted upon my suggestion. At last, though after a longer halt than usual, he set off at such a tremendous pace that those behind were hard pushed to follow. In this manner, for about fifteen minutes, we travelled, when suddenly the car in front of ours pulled up dead. I jumped out to ascertain why, and found that the fifth car from the end of the

file had lost the track of the car before it and, turning down a narrow laneway that scarcely afforded passage for it, had run off the road, down into a gulley or ditch, thus completely blocking the way in front. We tried every expedient we could think of to raise the car, but without success. It was a large Daimler limousine, too heavy to move; nor was it feasible, in the pitch darkness, for the rest of the cars to attempt to back out along the twisting and narrow causeway upon which we found ourselves and which carried the thoroughfare between two deep ditches on either hand. We could only bide where we were until dawn. I set pickets and outposts and - to put it so - went into camp for the night.

When the first greyness of the morning began to diffuse through the darkness, we broke camp. Abandoning the deranged car, we backed the others down the lane to the high road and set ourselves to find the tracks of our comrades. Here and there, at a cross-roads or a turn off the road, other tracks would intersect, or deviate, or single themselves out from the main rut; so that one was often at a loss as to which track to rely on. But my Belfast friend, the chaffeur, was our salvation; his observant and experienced eye had noticed that one car was fitted with a singular make of tyre which left a peculiar impress, and, from the confusion of road marks, he was able, though sometimes with difficulty, to single out the track of that particular car.

This track we followed. Making a wide circuit, it led us twice round the Hill of Tara. On the

second circuit, we carefully scanned the ground to pick up the tracks which would show us where our comrades had ascended the hill, while, at the same time, we sought on Tara for signs of the insurgent encampment - for the men of the counties around were to have mustered there. At last, we found a track leading to the hill-top, and followed it to the summit. The place was deserted. A cluster of peaceful and shuttered cottages, a public house and the ruins were all there was to be seen in the quietness of the morning - not a single man but ourselves, nor any sign that they had been there. Royal Meath had not risen. Tara of the Kings was silent still in its solitude.

I went back to the cars, a little despondent but hoping still that Hannigan, in the night, had anticipated the rendezvous and, instead of camping at Tara, had pressed on with the Meath contingents to Dunshaughlin and Dunboyne. With this hope, we set out after him again.

A short time later, we passed through Dunshaughlin and there the petrol, which had been running short, gave out. There was no chance of securing a fresh supply, so I decided to abandon the cars and proceed on foot. The drivers, we left behind, giving them what money I thought would procure their breakfast and pay their fares home - that is, if they were lucky enough to get trains running. The boy, who had come with me from Dublin, went ahead to try to make his way through to Pearse, with a message that the Louth men, under Hannigan, were between Dunboyne and Dunshaughlin. This done, we pushed

ahead again in search of our comrades, but with lagging and weary steps, for we were completely exhausted.

It was then, I judged, about half past four in the morning and the country had begun to show some signs of life. A jaunting car came along from the direction of Dublin. The driver seemed unnecessarily shy. We hailed him, however, and asked him if he had seen another party of men like ourselves.

"No", he replied, "but I have seen soldiers."

"Where?", I questioned.

"In Dunboyne."

"Many?", I asked again.

"A good many - five or six thousand."

"What sort?"

"Horse soldiers and artillery," he replied, edging away from us and shouting back the answer as his horse began to trot.

When, a minute later, the carman's information was confirmed by a couple of carters who said they had been going with hay to the market and had been turned back by the military, our position began to look serious enough. We mustered fourteen men, all told, all weary, footsore and disheartened. Yet, if our information was correct, we were almost in contact with overwhelming English forces. Some of the men were utterly broken. They had begun to throw their ammunition and equipment away and to discuss among

themselves the advisability of retreating, even of surrendering, should we encounter hostile forces. Some of the others, like Paddy MacHugh, were quite steadfast and wished to go on. Just then, Tom Hearty's side-car, driven by Tom himself, came up. An old Fenian, seventy years of age, Tom had set out with us on Easter Sunday morning with his horse and car which had acted as a sort of combination baggage waggon and ambulance for our men. When we commandeered the motors at Lurgan Green and rushed off to Tara, Tom and his horse and car had natrually dropped behind. But the dauntless old Fenian followed us and arrived now, just in the nick of time, when younger hearts were faltering. His coming helped us a little, for we were able to put the two or three rifles of those who wished to go back, and a couple of the more exhausted of the men upon the car. I sent Tom on in the wake of Hannigan, whose wheel tracks were to be seen on the roadway, to pick him up as soon as possible and to tell him that we were following on, so that he might watch out for us.

In accordance with this arrangement, the car went on, most of us following it, in the hope of falling in with Hannigan, or of getting through to Dublin. We were just starting off again, when a country cart passed us, going in that direction, and I asked the driver to give a couple of our men a lift. To this, he readily agreed. But the first two or three men, to whom I offered the seat, refused it - afterwards, they said they had been afraid to trust the driver - and it was only after some persuasion that ultimately a couple of them did get up on the

car. They succeeded in reaching Hannigan. The rest of us broke into three small parties and trudged on, on foot.

Meanwhile, I myself was exhausted. For months before, I had been working very hard, overdoing it, in fact, and had been ordered a complete rest. I had no sleep since Sunday morning, nor scarcely any since the preceding Thursday, so that now I became quite faint. Alongside the road, a little stream was running and I thought, if I were to bathe my hands and face, it would revive me. Asking the two men who, with myself, made up the last of the parties to wait a minute for me, I sat down by the water. There, I must either have fainted or fallen asleep, for I awoke to find myself sitting on the edge of the stream, one boot off, my sock rolled down on my ankle and the road deserted. I bathed my feet and hands, got up and resumed the journey towards Dunboyne.

I pushed on for about a mile more, walking very slowly and very painfully. I was very hungry, having eaten practically nothing since the preceding morning. A couple of men came towards me, apparently going to work somewhere near Dunshaughlin, and I asked them if they had passed any men on the road. They said not. Were there any soldiers at Dunboyne? They didn't know, they replied, very hesitatingly; they had heard there were soldiers there the night before. With that, they walked on, and a little further I had to sit down again.

I got up, after a little, still faint and craving for food. There was no sign of a house near

at hand. But some distance away, across the fields to my right, rose the roof of what appeared to be a very substantial farmhouse. Towards it now I made my way, striding, at first, across the fields, but presently, coming to a laneway which apparently led to it. The surface of the laneway was badly cut up, as though by a heavy traffic of horses, the soft and mirey ground holding fresh impressions of their hoofs, inches deep. I remembered what our friend, the car-driver, had told us in the morning about the cavalry; it was possible a cavalry patrol had called at the house, might even then be there. I proceeded much more cautiously, making my way now in the cover of hedges, and gradually drew near.

As I approached the house, I was struck by the marked silence and quietness of the surroundings. There were none of the sounds of life that one usually associates with a farmyard, no cackle of hens, no low of cattle, nor champ of horses, nor rattle of carts and cans, not even the bark of a dog. All was very, very still and, I thought, very, very strange. If there were people there - even if there were only soldiers there - there ought to have been some noise. It was mysterious. At last, I came near enough to discover the explanation; the house was deserted, had been deserted apparently for years. Fungus grew on the roofs, and grass on the window ledges; the windows were boarded; the doors were locked; and only weeds and rank vegetation flourished around. There was no food to be had here, but at least, I thought, I should find a place to sleep in for an hour or two.

Round the house I went, seeking for an entrance.

There was none. Every window was shuttered and barred, every door was as secure as if the place had been a bank instead of a deserted ruin. I was just about to shoot off one of the locks, when I thought of those horse-tracks in the lane, and decided not to risk a shot. Instead, I started to examine the house again, and this time, going round, I noticed at the back of the house a strong, gnarled creeper growing up the wall. It was a vine, growing green, luxuriant and wild, and round about it were discernible the footings of a demolished glass-house. Somehow, that vine seemed to accentuate the desolation of the place. Everything else, the mortar crumbling between the stones, the swarms of insects hovering over the morassed and weed-grown ground, the fungus on the roof, the rat-eaten doors, were signs of decay or the products of corruption; but this plant, this exotic, was still alive and hale, and putting forth new little green tendrils, curly and succulent, to bear testimony of its vigour. The thing that was of its nature perishable survived; that which the builders had hoped would be permanent decayed. I turned and left the house, and, making my way back into the fields, found a sloping bank, sheltered a little by a hedge. Here I lay down. It was cold and uncomfortable, but I slept.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I did not sleep long, scarcely more than an hour, I think, and, when I awoke, I was stiff and sore. I made my way again towards the road, this time using the lane which the horses had traversed, and came out upon it just opposite a little gate lodge, about a mile nearer Dunboyne than the point where I had entered the fields. The house was closed, but smoke was coming from the chimney, and I knocked at the door. The first response was the raucous barking of a dog. Then, almost immediately afterwards, the door was opened by a man who stared at me in surprise when I asked if I could have something to eat. For a moment, he hesitated, doubt and suspicion battling with his native sense of hospitality, before he answered. "Certainly", he said, "Come in."

I stepped inside the house. Within were the man himself, his wife and, I think, two children. At once, a place was arranged for me at the table, where the man of the house was just after breakfasting; and, with all the zest of hunger, I fell to upon a meal of home-baked bread, washed down with tea. When I had eaten, I rose to go and, thanking the good people for their hospitality, asked them if there had been any bodies of men moving on the road since the previous day. They had not seen any, they said, but they had heard that a great many English soldiers were in Dunboyne. I bade them good-bye and struck out on the road once more.

Feeling that, at any moment now, I might fall in with the English, I proceeded with much greater caution and, after I had travelled a mile or so, met yet another man. He was standing at the gate of his own house. I asked him if he had seen a number of men in civilian clothes anywhere in the vicinity. He told me he had not. Had he seen any soldiers? "Yes", he said, "Dunboyne was full of them - and they were also along the line there", pointing with his hand across the fields to where, about a quarter of a mile away, the railway embankment stood up against the sky. Had he heard of any fighting? Yes, there had been fighting in Dublin last night. Did he know how it was going? He thought the Sinn Féiners were still holding out. "Was it far from the Finglas road? Could I get to it without touching the railway line?" - looking up meaningly into his face. With a quick appreciation of the position, he nodded significantly and proceeded to tell me the route. First of all, I should go across the fields directly opposite, bearing away from the railway until I struck a road. Striking it, I was to turn to the left and follow it for about half a mile; then I was to turn off it to the right again, and to continue bearing in that direction, not too pronouncedly, until I ultimately emerged upon the Finglas road, near Clonmeen.

Thanking my informant, I struck across the fields, as he directed. I was determined now to make for Finglas, thinking that there I should have the best chance of picking up the Volunteers again, for, if the city had to be evacuated, it was along the Finglas road that they would retire. It was not so easy to follow my informant's direction, nor was the

distance to Finglas so short as I had expected. Only after much wandering and devious turning did I arrive in the vicinity of Clonmeen, a little before three o'clock in the afternoon. Very quiet and very still, I remember well, the day was, with that dull, brooding calm which prevails when nature lies quiescent and listless under the premonition of a coming storm. The sky, which even from the morning had seemed to threaten showers, grew darker; and masses of grey and lighter toned spongy cloud, that were suggestive of condensing steam, began to bank up here and there across the horizon. Suddenly, out of the distance to my left hand, came a dull, dead sound, as though a giant drum had been struck by a giant drummer. Boom! Boom! Boom! Three times the sound was repeated, while the sky overhead grew darker until, with the third and last clap, the clouds burst in a torrential downpour of rain. Just at that moment, as I heard afterwards, the first bombardment of Liberty Hall began.

Close at hand was a corrugated iron shed, and I took shelter under it while the rain lasted. About five o'clock, it ceased and I set out again for Dublin. Trudging along, I endeavoured to pick up on the way any information I could regarding the situation in Dublin. A general question or two to an occasional passer-by was all I could venture, and most of those whom I asked knew as little as myself; so that what intelligence I gleaned was scanty and indefinite. Luckily, however, I fell in with a gentleman, named Dwyer, a friend of Eoin McNeill and a farmer in this neighbourhood, who volunteered to ride into Dublin for me in a motor car and find out what the real position was. He was gone

on this business rather longer than I expected, and it was almost three hours later when he returned. He told me that martial law had been proclaimed, and that he had learned from an English officer that Dublin was completely surrounded, that no German landings had taken place - the whole country round was alive with rumours of such landing - and that the bombardment of the Post Office would begin on the morrow. It was then considerably after seven o'clock and, therefore, impossible for me to make Dublin before dusk. I bade my friend good-bye and went back to the hay shed to spend the night there.

Next morning, I was up with the dawn, feeling very hungry but greatly refreshed, for, wrapped snugly in the hay, I had slept well, and started for Dublin. Back to Clonmeen I went, the problem of breakfast becoming increasingly urgent as I walked, until I came to the cross-roads about the centre of the village. A fingerpost stood there and, more from curiosity than with any definite purpose, I read the directions on it. "To Clonsilla Station - 1 mile", ran one of them. Railway stations and automatic machines - who has not, since childhood, associated them together? I felt in my pockets to see if I had any loose pennies. Furtunately, I had; so, if the machine had any chocolate, I would be kept going until better fare came along.

Off to Clonsilla Station then I went, turning over many an imaginary bar of chocolate on my way. The station platform was deserted; but the chocolate machine was there, safe and sound, and in a trice I was pushing in pennies and pulling out chocolate as fast as

my hands could move. I had just put in my last penny and was about to move off when, looking up towards the signal cabin, I saw some of the occupants there, apparently taking a great interest in my movements. The discovery presented, or seemed to present me with a new problem. Should I, or should I not, take any notice of their presence? If the party in the cabin were inclined to be friendly, I might get some assistance from them; on the other hand, if they were, as they might possibly be, members of an English picket posted to guard the railway, the position would become very delicate indeed. Taking the bull by the horns, I decided to go down to the cabin and, if need be, brazen the matter out. My fears were speedily set at rest. The occupants were all friendly. With the exception of the signal man, they were members of a break-down gang that had been working at Blanchardstown, repairing the line which had been blown up there on Monday night. They were making tea and asked me to sit down and share it, which I very gladly did. After the tea and a brief chat, I started off again, having been advised by them not to go through Blanchardstown but to skirt it, as it was likely to be held by the English.

On the road once more, I kept up a fairly rapid pace until I was almost at Blanchardstown; then my feet became painful and began to blister. Turning off the main road now, I commenced working my way round the town, as I had been advised by the railway men to do, so as to strike Finglas village without going through it. I was now very foot-sore and was compelled to halt very frequently. During one of these halts, as I lay for a

little while in a field, looking up at the blue cloudless sky - the rain had altogether gone during the night and it was a glorious sunny morning - I heard again the thunder of the big guns against Dublin town. A little while afterwards, the cannonade ceased with a suddenness that seemed ominous, and I began to wonder if the Tricolour still floated in the city. The battle, I thought, seemed too short to have been decided in our favour.

After a very short rest, I started again and, a little later, reached Finglas, coming into the village by a road that led me straight to the door of the Police Barracks. I had not seen the barracks until I was almost upon it, for the road bent sharply just before reaching it and hid it from the view of a person approaching. Now, as I came up to it, there was a policeman, a big burly fellow, lounging in the doorway, a pipe in his mouth, his tunic open, his hands in his pockets. He was taking the air after the royal and leisurely manner of all policemen. Suppose he should choose to be inquisitive - he was looking rather scrutinisingly towards me and might want to gratify his curiosity further. In that case, what should I do?

To the left was a large notice-board on which, in normal times, he had, no doubt, pasted many a notice that dog licences were to be renewed before the first day of March, and many a Departmental admonition to farmers to spray their potatoes. The board served a sterner purpose now. One large white poster was displayed upon it and, standing out against the white ground of the poster in great, black forbidding type, were the words, "MARTIAL LAW". I turned to the board

and read the proclamation through. Then, having determined to forestall awkward questions by asking a few to himself, I turned to the policeman.

"Was the fighting very fierce in Dublin? Would it be safe to go there?", I asked him, with every appearance I could muster of an innocent abroad.

"It might be", came the reply, in that dilatory, over cautious manner in which police answer questions. Was the fighting all over the city? I was very anxious to reach my hotel there, where my money and luggage were. Did he think it would be safe for me to go?

"Whereabouts is the hotel?"

"In Gardiner's Place", I told him.

"Oh, begobs, that's down be the Post Office - why, man, that's where all the fighting is; if you're wise, you'll keep away from that."

"But I must get to Dublin", I rejoined. "I must find some friends there; otherwise, I couldn't get back to Belfast; I have no money. Was there any fighting at Amiens Street? Would it be very dangerous to go there? If I could get there, I could get in touch with my friends" (as indeed I hoped I could). He didn't know; he didn't think there was any fighting at Amiens Street; but he wouldn't advise one to go near it all the same; it was very risky. I thanked him, and walked on down through the village and out on the main road to Dublin.

As I made my way towards the city on that Wednesday morning, I met every conceivable description

of vehicle - with the exception of a tramcar - coming out of it. Motor cars, cabs, brakes, jaunting cars, carts, hand carts, bicycles, perambulators - I cannot depose positively as to wheelbarrows - all packed with refugees, or their belongings, were hastening outwards to the country. Beyond this exodus, however, and an increasing number of people on the road as one neared the city, there was no indication that anything very unusual was happening. At Glasnevin I turned, for a moment, into the church in the Cemetery there, where I found a priest hearing confessions, and then went on to the Cross Guns Bridge.

The bridge was already held by the English. Pickets were posted upon it, and all passage across it was being refused. Crowds of people thronged the street, all of them in a state of subdued excitement and most of them, I thought, in sympathy with the Volunteers.

I stood watching the scene for a time, scanning the groups of people in the hope that I might fall in with someone who would put me in touch with the Volunteers. At length, I struck up a conversation with a couple of young men who were not long in discovering their sentiments to me. We became mutually confiding, and I told them I was particularly anxious to get to the Post Office. They thought that was not possible, as all the bridges were held by the English troops who would not allow anyone across. We remained chatting together for some time, and then I observed that a few people were moving along the bank of the canal towards Drumcondra Bridge. Thinking that perhaps one could get across there, I followed them.

Just as at the Cross Guns Bridge, Drumcondra Road and Lower Dorset Street were filled with people. Up to this time, they had evidently been able to move freely up and down the street, and even to go in the direction of the centre of the city. Now, however, they were being pressed back by a military cordon which, just then, was drawing across the street. The people were being rushed backward as I arrived, and it was scarcely possible to make headway against them. For a moment, I stood, uncertain what to do, and then a barber's sign caught my eye. I looked at myself. I was muddy and travel-stained. I had a beard of four days' growth, and my general unkempt appearance might easily excite an unwelcome interest in my movements. A wash was desirable, not only for its own sake but because it would help to allay suspicion, while a clean collar, if I could procure one, would be a godsend - for, in certain circumstances, a clean collar is as much above suspicion as Caesar's wife.

The shop was almost full when I entered, and an animated discussion was going on regarding the Volunteers, their merits and demerits, and their prospects. The barber himself was leading the attack. He seemed a character in his way - one of these men who make a pretension to greater culture than the commonalty of their class, and know all about the fashionable world and every somebody and every nobody of reputed consequence in it. The walls of his shop furnished a true index to his mind. All around were little square framed portraits, most symmetrically arranged, of notabilities of every grade and every distinction. There did not seem to be any common

idea or sentiment underlying the whole collection. It was like a patchwork quilt; the portraits appeared to be there just to swell the collection and for nothing else. On that account, it presented many inconsistencies. For, if the walls were honoured by portraits of Parnell and Davitt and some of the notabilities of the Fenian movement, there, too, were portraits of French and Jellicoe and George the Fifth. And the barber's mind, like his walls, seemed to be able to find a place for them all. His devotion to Redmond and to Parnell, and to Ireland, apparently, was reconcileable with an attachment to England and the Empire, and a horror and detestation of the Volunteers. The Volunteers and Larkin - those were the enemies of the country. But, please God, one of them would be speedily dealt with before nightfall. The British Navy would have finished off the rebels in the Post Office, and Sir Edward Carson's little game to kill Home Rule and to undo Mr. Redmond's handiwork would be frustrated. Poor man, I suppose he believed it all, just as so many more thousands of his countrymen did at that time.

The "cause", however, was not without its defenders and, if the barber was against the Volunteers, the majority of his customers were against him. They gave him tit for tat and a good deal over and above that equal measure. For myself, for the minute or two that I had to wait, I listened keenly but discreetly to the debate and said nothing. When my turn came, I had as complete a wash up as possible, polished my boots, brushed my clothes, turned my collar and stepped into the street again, more presentable, I

thought, than when I went in. Then, with an assurance that a good grooming gives, I crossed the road to the corner of Street, walked, as unconcernedly as I could appear, past the pickets there, and made my way with no great difficulty after that to Mountjoy Square.

Looking down from Mountjoy Square upon Parnell Street, I stood for a minute or so, watching the throngs of excited people hurrying up and down. Then I got into conversation with a little, much under-sized man, with a pale, shrunken face, who, as soon as he discovered I was from Belfast, began to unburden his soul to me. He was bitter and vicious against the Volunteers. They were scoundrels, rascals, every one of them! They were in league with the Germans. Ah, if the Germans were here, he wondered, would those scoundrels be so fond of them when they did in Dublin what they did in Belgium? And look at the destruction they were causing - rascals, every one of them - he hoped they'd be taught a lesson - hanging was too good for them!

I allowed him to maunder on in this strain for a while , and then I suggested that, since I was in Dublin when all these strange things were happening, I would like, if I could, to witness some of the actual fighting, so that I might tell my friends about it when I returned home. Did he think that could be managed? He thought it might. We were not far from Parnell Street. From that corner, we could see the Post Office. It was a trifle risky, but he would show me the way if I liked. After a little more discussion, designed on my part to get a better idea

of the lie of the land, we agreed to go. So, down Gardiner Street we went and along Parnell Street until we came to the corner of it; and there I had my first sight of the battle flag of the Republic.

The whole of O'Connell Street was filled with sunshine and empty of people, as it might be in the early morning of a Sunday in summer. Down the street rose the massed bulk of the Post Office, the citadel of the Irish Republic, its dark grey stone taking to itself something of the lustre and tint of polished metal in the morning sunlight, its walls rising strong like adamant, defying England and commanding the honour and respect of the world. High up on its roof floated two flags: the further one, a green flag with white letters, the flag of the Workers' Republic; the other, a tricolour of green, white and orange, fronting the bullets that swept around it from Findlater's Church. Never have I beheld so brave a flag, such rich, bright green, such deep, living orange! Up and down the street, the bullets swept, whistling high above our heads for the most part, but impinging now and then with a sharp crack upon Parnell's monument. At our feet, the pavement was wet with a pool of blood, where some poor unfortunate had been struck down that morning.

We stood thus for a little, alone at the corner, fascinated by the scene, until the crack of a bullet on the wall above our heads, and flying splinters of masonry, pointed the warning of the blood-pool and compelled us to retreat.

We went back a little way up the street, and then

I asked my companion - for I was grievously ignorant of the geography of Dublin and, for guidance, was entirely in his hands - if we could not get an even closer view of the Post Office. He thought that possibly we might, from Cathedral Street. So, down through Marlborough Street we went, going at first as far as Earl Street, where we could see, stretched on the pavement in the street on the further side, the body of a woman. "She was shot this morning", said my companion, as we turned back from the corner and into Cathedral Street.

Lawrence's once stood at the corner of Cathedral Street. But, on the night before, Lawrence's had been set ablaze and its ruins were still smouldering. In and out from the gutted building, urchins of every shade of diminutiveness were making their way, laughing and romping, crying, screeching and chattering, admonishing and disputing with each other, all of them intent on making the most of the treasure the fire had laid open to their grasp. There were rubber collars of all shapes and sizes to be had for a penny each; there were rubber balls and dolls and pop-guns; there were post-cards and umbrellas and tin whistles; there were Ingersoll watches and imitation gold chains; and there was a busy, chaffering trade going on in these miscellaneous commodities all the time.

"Hi, Tommy, I'll swop ten collars for that mouth organ", cried one youngster to another.

"No, ye won't", rejoined the other. "I don't want yer oul' collars. What would I do with them anyway?"

"I'll give you twelve, then." The other shook his head, running the organ along his lips the while. "Fifteen, then", advanced the buyer.

"I tell ye, I don't want them at all."

"I'll give ye ten, then, and this tie-pin and this injey-rubber ball."

"Le me see the ball. That's not much use. It'll hardly bounce at all. No, I won't swop."

"I'll give ye this gun and the ball for it", cried the other in desperation, producing a toy pistol from his pocket.

"Have ye anny caps for it?", asked the other, examining the new offer. The other shook his head. "Well, give me a couple of them oul' collars - and the ball - and this - and ye can have the French fiddle." And so the bargain was made.

In the midst of all this, there was a sudden strange commotion in the street, as five or six men, some dressed in green uniform, filed into it. They were Volunteers who had been ordered to evacuate their position in one of the establishments of the Dublin Bread Company and to fall back on the Post Office, and who, in compliance with these orders, intended to dash across O'Connell Street, under fire, to the Post Office. They were lining up at the corner, ready for the dash, when, bidding my astounded companion good-bye and giving my overcoat to one of the urchins near - for I thought I should never need it again - I fell in with them.

Just as we were about to make the rush, a woman came out of one of the houses to tell us that there were Volunteers in the buildings in Earl Street, and that it would be easier for us to reach them first and then to make a shorter rush across the street to the Post Office from the Imperial Hotel. We decided to take her advice, and she led us back through a public house and a billiard room into a tobacconist's shop, which opened on to Earl Street. After a little there, we succeeded in attracting the attention of the Volunteers in the buildings opposite. They lowered a ladder from one of the windows, and we, crossing the street, one by one, and receiving on the way some little attention from the English at Amiens Street, joined our comrades holding the post on the other side.

CHAPTER NINE

We entered our new quarters about half-past one on Wednesday afternoon, and found ourselves in that block of buildings which formerly stood fronting O'Connell Street, and between Earl Street and Middle Abbey Street. Of this block, the Imperial Hotel and the large general emporium of Messrs. Clery & Company formed by far the greater portion, while the wing in which we immediately were, that fronting Earl Street, was occupied by, amongst others, Noblett's confectionery store and the Continental Café. As we entered the building by the window on the first floor, we were met by Gerard Crofts who brought us to report to Brennan Whitmore, who was in command of this section. That officer, having satisfied himself that we were genuine Volunteers, handed us over to Crofts again. He bade us follow him to the mess-room, into which the kitchen of the café had been converted, and there sat us down to a good dinner of cold viands, to which I, for one, did full justice, for it was the first square meal I had had for days.

When we had eaten, we were drafted to various duties. Some of us were set to loop-hole walls, some to break down stairs, so as to isolate each floor from the others except at one particular place; some were put to barricade doorways and windows with the loose bricks which still another gang was removing from the party-walls between the houses, as a passage way was made through the whole block. In this way, the afternoon passed uneventfully enough, save for the

occasional bursts of rifle fire which swept the streets, and, now and then, a stray bullet which, flying through the window, flattened itself harmlessly against the wall inside. The main fight was being carried on between our men on the Post Office roof and the English troops at Findlater's Church and Amiens Street, so that, on this day, we saw very little of the battle.

When nightfall came, we were taken off our various tasks and divided into two parties, one of which kept guard while the other slept. I was on the first guard and was stationed at one of the windows in Earl Street. The night was bitterly cold and comparatively quiet. The only break in a monotonous watch was furnished by a tipsy night-brawler. This worthy, though the public houses were closed, had evidently been able to procure more than a sufficiency of liquor, an abundance of it, and, as he now came along, he bore very unsteadily indeed the full burden of his potations. Staggering to and fro across the pavement, he made his way down O'Connell Street from the direction of O'Connell Bridge. Every now and then, as he came along, he would stop to apostrophise some imaginary companions, or to burst into a snatch of disjointed song. "Two lovely black eyes", he was singing, "Oh-h-h wha-at a shurr--. Hi! Murphy!" - he broke off - "Give us yer hand a minute an' I'll show ye how it's done. Now then, ladysh and schents, if yez watch me closhly, yez'll see --" - a long pause - "two lovely black eyes. Hurro! Three cheers for John Redmond!" He stopped for a little under the very windows of the Post Office, and someone within

said something which aroused his ire. "Come out, come out, will yez, an' I'll show ye! I won't go home. What right have ye, or the likes of ye, to be interferin' with a dacent man? What! I'll be shot? Who'll shoot me? Faix, you wouldn't anyway! Come out an' I'll bate the lot of ye! Oh, yez needn't laugh - I'd make yez laugh if I had a hoult of ye! What do I care for the English! To hell with the English! I cud bate you and thim together! So cud Dan O'Connell. There's a man for ye! The boul' Dan - he wouldn't be afraid of ye - nor the English nayther. Here, I'll sing ye a song. Here, will ye have manners an' lissen like Christians?" And he broke into:

"God save Ireland ses the hayroes,
God save Irelan' ses they all --",

and went on maudling through it until he turned Henry Street corner and passed out of sight and, ultimately, out of ear-shot. He was the last disturber of the night. A little later, my watch was over and I lay down to sleep.

Thursday morning opened very quietly. Up to nine or ten o'clock, indeed, up to the afternoon, there was no great activity on either side. An occasional discharge from a big gun, now and then a burst of machine-gun fire, and almost continual sniping - these were the only manifestations of battle, although once or twice we were called to the loop-holes and windows in preparation against an attack which did not materialise.

As the afternoon wore on, however, matters became livelier, the sniping became faster and the

bombardments more frequent. The English guns seemed to have got the range more accurately, and the fire of their machine-guns became more continuous and heavier. About three o'clock, they scored their first notable hit, when shrapnel fire carried away the flag-staff from which the Republican flag floated over the Henry Street corner of the Post Office. A little later, a shell struck the corner of the Metropole Hotel and, a minute after that, another struck the balustrade of the Post Office roof, and carried portion of it away. After this, there were a few more shots but no more hits, and the cannonade for a time died down.

But, if the big guns were silent, the machine-guns were not. They kept up a continuous crackle, and O'Connell Street and Earl Street were swept by a continuous heavy fire, the bullets flying past and pattering on the pavement and upon the walls like hail-stones.

About four o'clock, we saw, reflected in the ground-floor windows of the Metropole Hotel, the glare of fierce flames. The word went around that "The Ship" had been set ablaze by an incendiary bomb. A little while after, we saw five men, some units apparently of the garrison of "The Ship", dash across the street to the Post Office. They went across in single file, running under fire all the way. The first four of them crossed safely, but the last of them tripped and fell over a length of broken trolley-wire which lay curled across the street. For quite half a minute he lay, while the enemy's fire swept

fiercely around him, and we began to think he had been badly hit. Then, suddenly springing to his feet, he ran, limping a little into the safety of the Post Office.

Meanwhile, we could see the conflagration wax fiercer and spread with great rapidity. Desperate efforts were made to cope with it, but without avail. It was my spell on duty at one of the windows fronting O'Connell Street, so that, most of the afternoon, I could see its continued and relentless progress. It was falling dusk when I was relieved, and the whole street was filled with the lurid splendour of the flames which were reflected on the hundreds of windows, on every piece of metal, of glass and of polished stone-work and on all faces. It was a truly magnificent spectacle and, for a while, I continued to watch and admire it, fascinated by its awfulness. Then, overcome with weariness even as I watched it, I fell asleep.

It was about nine o'clock when I was awakened by a tap upon the shoulder and told we were about to evacuate the position. The whole block of buildings, including the Imperial Hotel, which was next to us, was now well alight, and there was nothing else for us to do. The garrison, which up to now had held this position, had gradually been forced by the flames to concentrate upon the buildings at Earl Street corner. We mustered, all told, I think, about eighty souls, and marched out in single file into Earl Street. Crossing the street without molestation from the enemy, we entered a tobacconist's shop opposite and,

following the route by which my companion and I had come on the preceding day, we passed through the shop and through the billiard-room into Cathedral Street.

Our leader had determined to make for the country, if possible. Under his direction, we proceeded in single file, keeping close to the wall, and made first a turn to the right down one street and then a turn to the left down another. All went well with us until we had made the second turn, and until our little column had marched down this street in fancied security. Then suddenly machine-gun fire swept the street from end to end. It was pitch dark and we could not see the position of the gunners, but the bullets were whistling all through the air around, bounding off the surrounding walls and crackling on the pavement at our feet. Taken completely by surprise, we retreated very hurriedly.

Back, about one hundred yards, we went and reformed. In the surprise, our party had been divided, so that we now mustered scarcely half our former strength. We had lost our senior officers, too, which was a grave misfortune, for most of our men were from England or, like myself, from the country and, therefore, of very little service in a situation such as ours. Luckily, though, we had Paudeen O'Keeffe with us; and he, having a good knowledge of the locality, now took command. Under his direction, we scaled a wall and found ourselves in what, I think, must have been a garden attached to the Pro-Cathedral buildings. Here we reformed and, with Paudeen at our head, set out again, and passed down a long, glass-roofed passage way out into a narrow street, called

Cathedral Lane. Filing down this street, we made two turns to the left which brought us into Marlborough Street. Then, once more, the enemy opened fire on us out of the darkness. About the twentieth man from the head of the file, I had just passed the railings around Marlborough Street Pro-Cathedral when the fusillade commenced. Flat on the pavement I dropped, to wait until the fire should cease. About four yards away stood a red pillar box and there the man in front of me had taken cover. He, when he saw me lying on the pavement, thought I had been hit and at once he stepped out from the shelter of the pillar box to come to my assistance; but, just as he did so, there came another fierce burst of fire and he had to take cover again. A lull in the firing came a minute or two later, and we had a chance then to decide what, in the circumstances, was best for us to do. There was no sign of the men in front of us. It was obvious that the English were very much alert and that we could not hope to pass up the street under their fire. We decided that nothing remained for us to do but to retreat, picking up our comrades on the way, and to try to make the Post Office.

Back we accordingly went to the covered passage way where we found twenty or twenty-five others of our comrades, with whom we held a short discussion as to what our plan should be. Ultimately, it was decided that my friend of Marlborough Street, J.J. MacElligot, who was afterwards Secretary of the Department of Finance, should make a preliminary dash for the Post Office. If he arrived there, he was to arrange that one of the doors would be opened, and then at a given

signal, we were to follow him.

MacElligot set off on his venture, while we sat waiting very anxiously for the signal that was to tell us of his safe arrival. Two shots rang out, one after another, two shots clear and distinctive in a lull of firing. By two such shots, we were to know that it had been arranged to admit us to the Post Office by the door in Henry Street. Therefore, those who were to cross arranged to make for that door. Four of us made ready to go.

We filed down to Lawrence's corner and waited a moment there in the shadow, until the firing slackened sufficiently to enable us to cross. Fire ceased for a moment. The first to chance it made his dash, and got over in perfect quietness. A second or so later, I followed him. All was quiet until I was half way across, just passing Nelson Pillar; then the enemy spotted me and opened a fusillade. The bullets crackled and hopped around in a most disturbing fashion. Round the Pillar, however, I dodged, and then, setting my teeth, burst across the street into the comparative safety of Henry Street.

When I reached Henry Street, the enemy's fire was increasing in volume, rising to a "crescendo" of intensity, until the bullets whistled through O'Connell Street like the blast of a hurricane. I turned to look back at the two men who were yet to come. They came on together, starting in the very crisis of the tempestuous fire. Out from the shadow of the devastated buildings, where we had taken cover a moment ago, into the lurid brilliance of O'Connell

Street they rushed. Down the street, to their left as they ran, on the one side Clery's and the adjoining buildings were fiercely ablaze; on the other side stood the flaming mass of the Metropole Hotel. Outlined against this fiery curtain, they made their dash - plain targets for the enemy's fire. And what a fire there was! Machine guns and rifles spat in one bitter, vengeful unison. On the brave fellows came, their heads bent down, sprinting along a zig-zag course to mar the enemy's aim. Into the cover of Nelson Pillar they ran, and out of it again, upon the second half of their journey. One of them seemed to stumble - my heart leapt to my throat - he recovered himself and came on as gallantly as ever. Half a second later, they were both safe in Henry Street.

Comparatively safe only, for the situation, in which we now found ourselves, was not without danger. Some mistake had been made regarding the signals; either we, or the advance runner, had misunderstood them; for we now found the Henry Street entrance closed to us. In the street we were in danger, as we thought, both of fire from the enemy and, should they misapprehend our purpose, of fire from our friends. Cautiously, we knocked two or three times at the gate in Henry Street. No friendly response came. We tried at one or two of the windows, but with as little avail. We determined to try the front entrance. By this time, however, our friends in front, who had seen us rush across, began to deduce from our non-appearance at the O'Connell Street doorway that there had been some misunderstanding. And apparently they had come round to look for us, for, just as we were creeping

round into O'Connell Street, we heard a hail from one of the Henry Street windows. A moment's interrogation satisfied those inside regarding our identity. We were told to climb in through that particular window, and, a minute later, we stood inside the Post Office.

Here we were taken charge of by Captain Breen who provided us with some food and procured blankets for us. When we had eaten, we wrapped ourselves in the blankets and, lying down on the floor in the quarters allotted to us, we were soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER TEN

Next morning in the Post Office, we were early astir. About five o'clock or so, we were told to tumble out and to present ourselves for breakfast in the men's mess. The prospect of breakfast was an incentive to hasten; and, two minutes after the order was given, we might have been seen, a very shaggy and mixed crew, climbing the stairs to the upper floor where the mess was laid. We found ourselves in what, I presume, was one of the dining rooms designed for the use of the postal staff. I am sure it was equal to its original purpose, and it now served the commisariat of the Irish Republican Army equally well. The room was filled with tables which, in turn, were equally well filled with Volunteers, plenishing themselves after the heroic manner of soldiers. We took our places and, after a short delay, were served with tea in mugs of most liberal dimensions, and as much white bread and margarine as we desired. We tackled our task with a will, though in a sufficiently leisurely manner to give us an opportunity of noticing that the attendants, who served in this somewhat unusual buffet, were to most of us an unusual type of waiter. They, and the kitchen hands as well, were almost all soldiers dressed in khaki. Irishmen for the most part, who had been taken during the operations, they had volunteered for the kitchen. They now served out the food with that fine indiscrimination and enthusiasm for their task which is the common characteristic of

all soldiers in work of the kind.

After breakfast, my first concern was to report at the Staff office. This I did, and was told to report again later, when the Commandant-General, James Connolly, would be available. Meanwhile, I had a little leisure in which to take stock of my historic surroundings.

Those who were familiar with the Dublin Post Office in the days before the insurrection will remember how the buildings were built around a quadrangular space, portion of which was roofed over with glass, so as to form a large and almost square shaped hall, where, I suppose, most of the sorting and similar work was done. This hall now had other uses. The greater portion of it had been screened off to form a hospital. A kit-store had been opened in another portion, and here boots, handkerchiefs, trousers, shirts, overcoats, combs and boot-laces were to be obtained, while the sorting-tables were in general use as sleeping bunks for the Volunteers. In a secluded corner, a priest sat hearing confessions. Through this central hall, parties of busy Volunteers in charge of various officers passed to and fro. Now and then, one of the Cumann na mBan nurses would come out of the hospital and go upstairs to the kitchen, to return a minute later with food for some of the patients.

Arranged around the hall were the main blocks of buildings, with windows looking on the streets. Every window was manned by a rifle-man, and, beside them, squads of men were working feverishly, preparing new defences or consolidating old ones. The most

active of these was a party under the command of Dermot Lynch who was, I think, the officer responsible for the defence of the ground floor. They were working so hard that I became ashamed of my inactivity and joined in to help them. The task was arduous, for it consisted of filling the largest mail sacks we could find with rubbish of all kinds. The fillings had to be done in the yard, and the sacks then were carried into the front of the building where they were built into breastworks.

Filling the sacks, time passed quickly by until I heard a heightened commotion in the hall. Pausing in the work for a moment to ascertain the cause of the stir, I saw a man lying upon a bed borne by four or five men, with a nurse and a couple of officers in attendance. It was Commandant-General Connolly making his rounds. Twice wounded seriously on the previous day, he still insisted on taking as active a part as possible in the fight - remaining to the end, as Pearse described him, "the guiding brain of our resistance". As he came by, I stood to attention and, recognising me, he ordered those bearing him to stop. He then asked me if I had succeeded in reaching the Louth men, and with what result. Briefly, I told him I had got in touch with them but had become separated from them again, and that I thought Hannigan would try to get in touch with the men in North County Dublin. After a few more questions regarding the conditions in the country and the indications of Volunteer activity in Meath - the failure to muster at Tara seemed to disappoint him greatly - he told me to report to Mr. Tom Clarke. I went upstairs to find Tom Clarke, and,

in the course of our conversation, he (Tom Clarke) asked me whether I would be able to fix up the electricity which had failed throughout the building. I replied that I would do my best.

Just then, someone - I cannot remember now who it was - started to read Commandant-General Connolly's Order of the Day:-

"Army of the Irish Republic,
(Dublin Command),
Headquarters.
April 28th, 1916.

This is the fifth day of the establishment of the Irish Republic, and the flag of the country still floats from the most important buildings in Dublin, and is gallantly protected by the officers and the Irish soldiers in arms throughout the country. Not a day passes without seeing fresh postings of Irish soldiers eager to do battle for the old cause. Despite the utmost vigilance of the enemy, we have been able to get information telling us how the manhood of Ireland, inspired by our splendid action, are gathering to offer up their lives, if necessary, in the same holy cause. We are hemmed in; because the enemy feels that in this building is to be found the heart and inspiration of our great movement.

Let me remind you of what we have done. For the first time in seven hundred years, the flag of a free Ireland floats in triumph over

Dublin City. The British Army, whose exploits we are forever having dinned in our ears, which boasts of having stormed the Dardanelles and the German lines on the Marne, behind their artillery and machine guns, are afraid to advance, attack or storm any position held by our forces. The slaughter they have suffered in the first few days has totally unnerved them, and they dare not attempt again an infantry attack on our positions.

Our Commandants around us are holding their own. Commandant Daly's splendid exploit in capturing Linen Hall Barracks we all know. You must know also that the whole population, both clergy and laity, of this district are united in his praises. Commandant MacDonagh is established in an impregnable position, reaching from the walls of Dublin Castle to Redmond's Hill and from Bishop Street to Stephen's Green. Commandant Madam Markievicz holds the College of Surgeons, one side of the square, a portion of the other side, and dominates the whole Green and all its entrances and exits.

Commandant de Valera stretches in a position from the Gas Works to Westland Row, holding Boland's Bakery, Boland's Mill, Dublin South Eastern Railway Works, and dominating Merrion Square.

Commandant Kent holds the South Dublin Union and Guinness's Buildings to Marrowbone Lane, and controls James's Street and district. On two occasions, the enemy effected a lodgement but were driven out with great loss.

The men of North County Dublin are in the field, have occupied all the police barracks in the district, destroyed all the telegraph system on the Great Northern Railway up to Dundalk, and are operating against the trains of the Midland Great Western. Dundalk has sent .... men to march upon Dublin, and in other parts of the North our forces are active and growing. In Galway Captain Mellowes, fresh from his escape from an English prison, is in the field with his men. Wexford and Wicklow are strong, and Cork and Kerry are equally acquitting themselves creditably. We have every confidence that our allies in Germany and kinsmen in America are straining every nerve to hasten matters on our behalf.

As you know, I was wounded twice yesterday, and am unable to move about, but have got my bed into the firing line and, with the assistance of our officers, will be just as useful to you as ever.

Courage, boys, we are winning, and in the hour of our victory let us not forget the

splendid women who have everywhere stood by us and cheered us on. Never had man or woman a grander cause; never was a cause more grandly served.

(Signed) James Connolly

Commandant-General, Dublin Division."

When the reading of this, the last "Order of the Day" which Connolly addressed to his men, was over, Tom Clarke brought me downstairs again to the Staff office and presented me to Joseph Plunkett, telling him that he thought I would be able to get the light going for the night. The Staff office was situated in the wing of the building which fronted on O'Connell Street. In the space almost immediately opposite the main entrance hall and midway in this wing, an office had been arranged; and in the offices, while I was talking to Joseph Plunkett, the first President of the Irish Republic could be seen busily writing. Except for his brother, Willie Pearse, who stood a little way from him, he was quite alone. His head was bent over the desk, and I could see his hand move rapidly across the page as he wrote with the fluency and swiftness of one who writes under intense inspiration. Plunkett and I stood chatting a little while longer; and when I left him, to seek out Jack Plunkett who himself was already engaged on the problem of lighting the building, Mr. Pearse was still writing.

I found Jack Plunkett in the telegraphic battery room and told him my business. After a short discussion, we settled upon a plan by which we hoped

to be able to light the building after a fashion that night. First of all, however, it was necessary to procure a motor bicycle, so we set off to look for one. Our search led us upstairs and into the main building again. Here we found a group of Volunteers congregated around Mr. Pearse. He had a document in his hand and was just about to read it. We stood with the rest to listen. In a clear, strong voice, the President began:-

"Headquarters: Army of the Irish Republic,
General Post Office,
Dublin, 28th April, 1916.

"The forces of the Irish Republic, which was proclaimed in Dublin on Easter Monday, 24th April, have been in possession of the central part of the Capital since twelve noon on that day. Up to yesterday Headquarters was in touch with all the main outlying positions, and these positions were still then being held, and the Commandants in charge were confident of their ability to hold them for a long time.

During the course of yesterday afternoon and evening, the enemy succeeded in cutting our communications with our other positions in the city, and Headquarters is to-day isolated.

The enemy have burnt down whole blocks of houses, apparently with the object of giving themselves a clear field for the play of artillery and machine guns against us. We

have been bombarded during the evening and night by shrapnel and machine gun fire, but without material damage to our position, which is of great strength.

We are busy completing arrangements for the final defence of Headquarters, and are determined to hold it while the buildings last.

I desire now, lest I may not have the opportunity later, to pay homage to the gallantry of the Soldiers of Irish Freedom, who have during the past four days been writing with fire and steel the most glorious chapter in the later history of Ireland. Justice can never be done to their heroism, to their discipline, to their gay and unconquerable spirit, in the midst of peril and death.

Let me, who have led them into this, speak, in my own and in my fellow-commanders' names, and in the name of Ireland present and to come, their praise, and ask those who come after them to remember them.

For four days they have fought and toiled, almost without cessation, almost without sleep, and in the intervals of the fighting they have sung songs of the freedom of Ireland. No man has complained. No man has asked, "Why?" Each individual has spent himself, happy to put out his strength for Ireland and for freedom. If they do not win this fight, they

will at least have deserved to win it. But win it they will, although they may win it in death. Already they have won a great thing. They have redeemed Dublin from many shames, and made her name splendid among the names of cities.

If I were to mention names of individuals, my list would be a long one. I will name only that of Commandant-General James Connolly, commanding the Dublin Division. He lies wounded, but is still the guiding brain of our resistance.

If we accomplish no more than we have accomplished, I am satisfied. I am satisfied that we have saved Ireland's honour. I am satisfied that we should have accomplished more, that we should have accomplished the task of enthroning, as well as proclaiming, the Irish Republic as a Sovereign State, had our arrangements for a simultaneous rising of the whole country, with a combined plan as sound as the Dublin plan has been proved to be, been allowed to go through on Easter Sunday. Of the fatal countermanding order which prevented those plans from being carried out, I shall not speak further. (Both Eoin MacNeill and we have acted in the best interests of Ireland.)

For my part, as to anything I have done in this, I am not afraid to face either the

judgment of God or the judgment of posterity.

(Signed) P.H. Pearse,
Commandant-General

Commanding-in-Chief, the Army of the Irish Republic and President of the Provisional Government."

He finished, and not one of us raised a cheer, not because we were despondent or discouraged - any of us would have died for him then - but because we felt the occasion was too solemn for any demonstration. Nor had Mr. Pearse any doubt of us. For a moment, he stood fronting us, serene and confident, his countenance untroubled by any shade, the certitude of right and the consciousness of greatness ennobling his brow. He looked down to us and we looked back up to him - and each of us prayed in his heart. Then, with grave deliberation and dignity, he folded up his papers and walked away.

The silence still lay upon us. We knew now the reason for the comparative inaction and quietness of the English guns. We were in the midst of comparative calm, a dead, brooding, ominous calm: soon the storm would break upon us. Each of us vowed that not he should break before it.

For the moment after his departure, we stood in silence - in that silence which is born when awe and mystery move a crowd, so that the spirit of God stirs in their hearts. Then, in one instant, there came whispers from many voices, a babble of words and

a laugh; and we broke off to our posts and our duties with a new zest, laughter on all our lips, and a prayer for courage and steadfastness in all our hearts.

Like the others, I went to my business. It took me upstairs to the telegraphic instrument room, and when I came down, I had occasion to pass through the main hall, close to where the hospital was. There I saw Mr. Pearse again. This time, Seán MacDermott was with him; and they were both surrounded by the nurses of the Cumann na mBan, whom the President was addressing. He seemed to be exhorting them to something they were unwilling to do. I could see some of the women in an attitude of earnest entreaty, but I was unable to hear what was said. It was only some time after I learned from Desmond Fitzgerald that Mr. Pearse gave orders that the whole female nursing staff were to leave the Post Office and, under cover of the White Flag, to proceed to one of the city hospitals. The brave women were reluctant to go. They, too, wished to remain in the Post Office to the last, and tearfully they implored Mr. Pearse not to insist upon their going. He could not be other than insistent, despite the persuasiveness of Seán MacDermott, whom the nurses had enlisted as their advocate. At last, bearing a white flag and under escort of a priest, they had to leave the building.

Jack Plunkett and I passed on through the hall to our work, with which we occupied ourselves until about two o'clock. Knocking off for dinner then, I was just finishing my meal when, with one or two

shots, the English re-opened their bombardment. A few minutes later, there was some commotion on the stairway outside the dining room door, and immediately afterwards an orderly came in, who reported that the English had set the roof on fire and that Joe Plunkett had been overcome by the fumes. I finished my dinner and went downstairs. As I went down, they were uncoiling the fire-hoses and laying them along to the roof. The final attack on the Post Office had begun.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The attack on the Post Office had begun. Not a direct frontal attack, not an attack where men advanced in the open and met their foe face to face - this attack was more subtle and more formidable. There was nothing heroic about it, nor epical. Here was no clash of champions, no drama of personal combat, where hero met hero and where he who fell might hold the respect of his conqueror, even as he disdained his mercy. No exploit this, for the bards of the victor to sing about. Behind his curtain of flame, he assailed us with gun fire. I know not where the English gunners were posted. Somewhere in security they were; and, from there, within the harbourage of Dublin's streets, from out of the shadow of the ruin they had wrought, caring not if offenceless age or womanhood or tender years perished by their fury, they who had made such great ado about the plight of the undefended towns of Belgium dropped bomb after bomb indiscriminately.

In a little while, the Post Office roof was a raging flame which a squad of our men fought, inch by inch, without avail. Underneath, on the ground floor, everyone was calm and busy. It was little use to trouble any more about the lighting of Headquarters; one could find a fitter job now. A few of the men were manning the windows; most of the others were engaged, under Seán MacDermott, in clearing away the rubbish and combustible material that had accumulated, even since morning, and in making the place shipshape

against the expected assault. I asked him was there anything I could no. He told me to join his squad, and I worked under him until the work was finished. Then I was given a shot-gun and posted with some other men at the windows.

The window, at which I was, looked out on O'Connell Street. A little to the left stood Nelson's Pillar. Across the street, I could see the building at Earl Street corner where I had been on Wednesday and Thursday. It was now a black and smouldering ruin. Directly opposite was the Imperial Hotel, or rather what had been the Imperial Hotel, for only the facade of the building remained. The rest, windows, floors, roofs and walls, had become the prey of the flames, so that now, with its shallow and unsubstantial background, with its gaping window-sockets, and the flames that leapt through them or crept around them, the facade itself seemed like a huge stage scene, set for the spectacular act of some ambitious melodrama. There was no sign of the enemy.

We stood thus on duty for almost two hours, looking out across the street, empty but for one disabled tram-car which stood derelict at Earl Street corner, and for the body of a dead horse which lay putrifying where he had fallen - a reminder of Monday's cavalry charge. Up and down behind us, all the while, walked Mr. Pearse. He seldom spoke except when a spark or a fall of burning matter from the roof set some of our defences ablaze. Then he would direct his men in extinguishing the fire. He was very cool and calm. Now and then, an orderly would

report to him on the progress of the fire, although indeed the progress was only too apparent. From my position at the window, I could see the advance of the flames. I was fascinated by the long snakes of fire that went curling and writhing across the glass canopy of the central hall. I watched them with the rapture of a young boy at a great fireworks display. Death had been so close for the last few days that, now when it came still nearer, I almost laughed in its face. Over the glass roof, the water from the hoses, a bluish, transluscent liquid, came pouring from above in a fiery stream. The end of the stream, impinging on the tough glass, would shape itself for a moment to a star before it burst and sent flying from its blazing rays a hundred fiery particles. Often a spurt of water from the hoses would sweep across the glass, carrying the fire before it, and then, when the mass of water was large, it would go billowing back and forward from end to end of the transparent ceiling, so that the flame, like fire-fairies in play, went glissading to and fro on the crystal above us.

The fire grew fiercer and spread until it seemed as though we stood underneath a lake of flame. With the decline of daylight, the shadows had lengthened about the walls and corners of the hall, filling the adjacent space with a heavy gloom. On this sombre curtain was thrown the reflection of the flames, flooding the centre space of the hall with a lurid radiance. Strange demoniac rays of orange and red swept all around us, playing changefully and vividly upon our faces and hands and gun-barrels, until we ourselves stood against the dusky background

with something demoniacal about us too. The heat was intense. We could hear the glass plates crack above our heads and see the hungry flames leap through the broken spaces.

We concentrated now in the main hall of the building, the fire following us with amazing rapidity. For a moment, an obstruction in one of the hoses led to some confusion. In the withdrawal from the front hall, it had been so twisted around that the flow of water through it stopped. Mr. Pearse, however, with his own hands, set it right and soon it was playing again upon the flames, but with no success; for, down the elevator and air shafts, through the doorways and every aperture they came, hurrying for their prey - down even to the basement. Here the magazine was situated and here was stored a large quantity of gelignite and hand grenades, so that a new danger now arose. If a spark were to reach the magazine, the Post Office and all in it were doomed. A call was given for volunteers to help to remove the explosives. It was readily answered, and about twenty men were chosen who, under the command of Dermot Lynch, began their task.

The elevator shaft to the basement was already in flames as we descended the stairs. Close by, was the main ammunition store where hundreds of hand grenades were stored. These had now to be removed, and carried around three wings of the building to a cellar in the yard outside. In the basement, it was almost pitch dark, while the floor was littered with rubbish and lumber, over which a man might trip and,

if laden with bombs, falling, set his load alight which would spell disaster for all. But the man in command was methodical. At every dark place and at every corner, men were stationed with lights to act as guiding points, so that the men, hurrying with their loads, might go from point to point without undue caution and consequent delay.

When the stores were cleared and we returned once more to the main hall, we found the rest of the garrison drawn up in two lines, between which orderlies were passing, distributing a ration of biscuit to each man. We fell in at the end of the line and took our ration with the rest. When the distribution had been completed, Patrick Pearse came along the line and told off the last twenty-five files of us from the others. Forming us up then, a little from the main body, he spoke a few words to us, saying that it had been decided to evacuate the Post Office and that we, under the command of The O'Rahilly, were to act as an advance guard. Our task was to secure possession of the factory belonging to Messrs. Williams and Woods and to hold that position until the main body came up.

It was about seven o'clock when we left the Post Office and filed out into Henry Street, The O'Rahilly at our head. Without commotion and without incident, we lined up and halted for a moment in the street outside. Beside me in the line, though I did not know him at the time, was Gearóid O'Sullivan. The O'Rahilly, his voice as steady as on parade, gave us the command, "Left turn. Quick march", and we started off at a marching pace. A little way from

the Post Office doorway, a barricade had been erected and, a very little way beyond this, was Moore Street. Up Moore Street we turned and proceeded along each side of the street in single file, keeping close to the walls of the houses all the while. As the leading files and the main length of the column turned the corner and passed up the street, there was not a sound. All was quiet until the last files, among which I was, stepped into Moore Street. Then, suddenly, from down the street and from the houses on each side, at almost point blank range, came a burst of heavy fire.

Up the street we rushed, men quickly falling as we went, and the further we went, the more quickly they fell, melting away like straw in a flame. Halfway up the street, I paused. There was no one in front of me and I did not know where the factory was situated. As I stood for a moment to get my bearings again, I saw some of our boys standing in a sort of little covered entry on the other side of the street. Almost at the same moment, the flash of a rifle, aimed apparently at them, came from a window right at my side. I paused to discharge my shot-gun into the window, from which the shot had come, and then rushed across the street to join the men waiting in the entry. Two things stand out now in my mind in connection with this episode. One is that I think I saw The O'Rahilly fall - for, coming up with files of the column, I have a misty recollection of seeing a man with a brown moustache drop on one knee as I rushed past him. The other is the face which I saw as, crossing the street to the entry, I looked up

to the windows of the houses opposite - the pale, horrified face of a frightened woman.

In the entry I found twelve of our men, all unwounded and all anxious to do something, but uncertain what that something should be. I asked if it were possible to reach Williams and Woods by another road. Some one of the men said, "Yes. This lane opens on a street which leads to the rere of the factory". Thus assured, I formed the men up in single file and set off down the lane, intending to make the factory from the rere.

Just as before, we had turned the corner and were out into the street before the enemy gave any indication of his presence. Then came a terrific burst of concentrated fire, much heavier even than that we had already experienced in Moore Street. It was impossible to advance against it, and we had no option but to retreat again into the laneway. Here, an examination of our condition made it obvious that we could not make Williams and Woods that night - even if it were possible for us to make it at all. The main approaches to it were held by the enemy, apparently in force. Night was falling; it was dusk now; it would soon be dark. Five of us were wounded - one, very slightly, four others, much more seriously. Our immediate objective, therefore, was to secure quarters for the night, where the wounded could be tended and where they could rest.

At the corner of the lane was a new brick

building, a stable. In a trice, we had the lock off the door and were in possession. Loop-holes were quickly knocked in the walls. Hay was found in abundance and beds were soon made for the wounded. These last were in a sore plight. One poor boy had his foot laid open by a bullet, so that, from toe to heel, it was a gaping wound; two others had broken arms; the fourth was wounded in the forearm and in the breast. We had no doctor but, luckily, we had a first-aid dresser with us. He bandaged the wounded and made the poor fellows as comfortable as he could. When this had been done, a sergeant's roll was drawn up and a stock taken of provisions. A few biscuits, some chocolate and a few jelly squares, which we found in the stable, comprised our stores. Then a guard was told off, and we all turned in, by turns, to get what sleep we could until morning.

In the morning, our first anxiety was to procure water for the wounded. They had been craving for it all the night and had finished what little we had. The ambulance dresser, who knew the neighbourhood, volunteered to go out in search of some, and he and another of the men set off on this quest. While they were gone, we started boring through the party walls of the houses, working from the corner in two directions at right angles to each other, so as to strike Moore Street in the one and to work up to Williams and Woods in the other. About noon, the dresser came back, having succeeded in getting water in a yard attached to one of the houses, and reported that he had not seen any sign either of the enemy or of our friends. It had grown very

quiet now, and the sniping, which had continued most of the night, had ceased altogether. The lull, we thought, forebode a storm, so we pushed ahead eagerly, so as to make our position as defensible as possible and to link up, if we could, with the main body. We were thus engaged when, at about two o'clock in the afternoon, we heard voices from the street, crying, "Any Volunteers here?"

Wondering who could cry out so boldly in that area, I opened the gate of the stable and saw, standing at the top of the street, two Volunteers. One of them carried a white flag. He was the Captain Breen who had received myself and my comrades in the Post Office on the preceding Thursday night. The other was Willie Pearse.

Leaving the gate, I ran up to the two men. "What!", I cried, speaking to Pearse and breaking down with emotion, "Has it come to this?"

"It has", Pearse replied sorrowfully, "but we have got terms - the best possible terms. We are all to march out with arms in our hands, and no one will be detained but the leaders."

"What, then, are we to do?"

"Bring along all the men and all the arms you have, and fall in behind Mr. Breen here."

"We have some badly wounded. What shall we do with them?"

"Let some person stay with those who are not able to walk, but let the others fall in here. And

please hurry. We have to round up all we can before night."

In a minute or two, we had arranged ourselves as Willie Pearse had desired, and were marching down Sackville Lane behind the stalwart figure of Captain Breen. As we passed down, we saw the body of a man lying on the pavement, his uniform riddled and in tatters upon his breast, his arms and his legs spread out, his face turned upwards, with long, wavy, brown hair lying back from his white forehead. The face itself was stricken with a ghastly pallor, which was accentuated by the faded crimson stains that were to be seen dotted here and there upon it. It was The O'Rahilly. He had fallen in Moore Street, and had crept into Sackville Lane where he died.

As we went along, our little band increased, as fresh batches of Volunteers joined us, so that, when we reached O'Connell Street, we numbered, I suppose, forty or fifty men. In O'Connell Street, we were taken in charge by an English officer who seemed not too certain of his instructions regarding us. First, we were marched down to the base of the O'Connell monument and ordered to halt there. This order was then countermanded by an English staff officer who was standing by, and we were wheeled about and marched off down the street again, this time to the base of the Parnell monument. Here, we were halted upon the centre of the roadway, ordered to ground all arms - strong emphasis was laid on "all" - and, when this was done, to retire backwards four paces. This done, we stood at attention, while a number of British

officers passed up and down the lines, scanning us curiously. Others of their colleagues paid a like courtesy to our weapons, and even did us the honour to make to themselves surreptitious presents of some of them - much to our resentment. In this way, I saw a young English officer come along and appropriate my automatic pistol. Very furtively, he picked it up and made off with it round Dawson's corner. It was a significant circumstance. But, by no means, were all of his comrades of his kidney. One of them, an elderly major, was very sympathetic and considerate towards us, but neither was he absolutely representative of his bunch.

For a while, we were the only batch upon the street. Except for the English officers, their orderlies and guards, and a small group of people who stood at the doorway of the Gresham Hotel, we were altogether alone there. In the growing dusk, the place was grey and chill as an evening in November. It was very quiet, so that the voices of the English officers as they gave orders to their men or spoke to each other, had the echo and quality of voices that break the stillness of a lonely countryside. In the ranks of the surrendered, we spoke to each other in subdued whispers. Not that we were cowed or afraid, but that we were loath to disturb too rudely the stillness of this street, which was the scene now of our humiliation and of our glory. To our right, down towards O'Connell's statue, the fires of the Post Office and the Imperial Hotel still blazed fiercely, filling the thoroughfare there with light and splendid radiance, but, where we stood, there was neither

light nor splendour, nothing but the drab greyness of that cold, dead evening.

It was almost dark and we could hardly see across the street, when the next batch of prisoners arrived. They were lined up opposite us, close to the other pavement, and many guesses were made as to their identity. Some said that they were Madam de Markievicz's command, others that they were Ned Daly's. The first, I think, were wide of the mark; the latter may have been right. Other squads joined us, until we mustered in the street from four hundred to six hundred men. When the muster was complete, we were marched to a small plot of ground in front of the Rotunda, and there, in the open, in a space where there was scarcely room for us to stand, we were compelled to spend the night in bitter cold.

Of that night, I will not speak, nor of the indignities which Tom Clarke and Ned Daly were compelled to undergo before the eyes of the ladies who had the ill-hap to share our lot there. It passed in discomfort, made the bitterer by the insults and jeers of those who were our captors. An officer and a gentlemen, is a tag of common speech. That night, we had plenty of officers but - . One fellow, in particular, a tall, dark-haired fellow, with a vulture's beak, stands out in the minds of all who were there, not for his chivalry but for his coarseness. The insults he heaped upon us were unspeakable by any, but his own foul tongue. In particular was he offensive, needlessly and grossly offensive, to Ned Daly and Tom Clarke. Since that

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night, he stood in the minds of most of us as a type and symbol of all that England stands for in Ireland. The night passed, and with the morning we were marched through the streets to Richmond Barracks.

The city was quiet and almost deserted as we trudged along. Here and there, at some few windows, were a few onlookers, most of them, so far as one could judge, sympathetic. In the churches, the early morning congregations were gathered to Sunday Mass and, as we passed by, many turned their eyes towards the doorways, in the hope that they might catch a glimpse of someone whom they knew, friend or relative, praying for their safety.

At last, we arrived at Richmond Barracks, and here our reception was in keeping with the treatment on the night preceding. As we entered the gates and were marched towards the gymnasium there, we were compelled to run the gauntlet of curses, abuse and kicks from a crowd of soldiers gathered along our path. At the gymnasium door, we were searched and everything in our pockets taken out, valuables and money. It is true that the officer in charge of the searching said that nothing was to be taken from us except weapons of any kind but, in most cases, all was kept, so that the greater number of us lost whatever property of worth we carried. In the gymnasium itself, we all squatted down on the floor. After some parley with the guard, a couple of cans of water and mugs were brought and we were allowed to drink. This was the first refreshment of any kind most of us had from the preceding Saturday afternoon.

When we had been a little while in the room, some twenty or thirty men, dressed in civilian clothes, entered. Unmistakeably, they were policemen of the "G" division, come for their prey. They went among us, scrutinising our faces and appearances, tapping, here and there, a man on the shoulder and telling him to go to the other side of the room. In this way, Willie Pearse was taken from beside us. Poor Willie! He had a premonition of his fate. We had been beside each other on the march up and were beside each other in the hall, so that naturally we began to discuss with each other what the outcome of our position would be. He had little fear that the rank and file of the Volunteers would be harmed, but he thought the officers would be severely punished. He was taken to the far side of the room with the others - to whom were added, a little later, Seán MacDermott and Joe Plunkett - and that was the last I saw of him.

When the "G" men had completed their selection, the remainder of us were taken from the hall. At the door as we went through, a couple of detectives, seated at a table, took our names and addresses. "What's your name?" asked one of me.

"MacEntee," I replied.

"Your full name?"

"John Francis MacEntee."

"Where do you come from? You're not a Dublin man."

"Belfast."

"Belfast? How did you get mixed up with this then - did they drag you into it?"

"Do I look like that kind of a fool?" I answered and, without any further comment, passed on to join the others.

Dividing up into small batches outside the Gymnasium, we were taken along to the main block of the barrack buildings and were placed, thirty or forty of us together, in a number of small rooms. Here we were left, to a great extent, to our own devices except for the occasional visit of a "G" man, intent upon further pickings, or the entrance of a sergeant or corporal who, of course, had come to search the prisoners. The searchings were frequent. To search the prisoners seemed the purpose in life of every soldier there. Sergeants, corporals and privates - all were devoted to the sport and to the perquisites it brought. In a little while, however, we were searched bare, and were left in comparative peace, broken only by the entrance of a staff officer or an intelligence office, until about four o'clock in the afternoon. Then a sergeant and two orderlies came around, distributing two biscuits and half a small tin of bully beef to every man. The biscuits were very hard and very dry, ordinary ship biscuit, and few of us would have chosen bully beef for a meal, but we fell upon them like famished men, for most of us had had no food since the preceding afternoon.

Before we had finished with our first meal in Richmond Barracks, the sergeant and orderlies were around again, distributing a second ration, telling us this time to conserve it as it would be our allowance for the morrow. Hardly had they concluded

their meal, when another sergeant and a squad of "tommies" turned us out of the room and ordered us to take all our belongings, and marched us down between armed guards to the barrack square. Here two lines of soldiers, a distance of two paces between each line, were drawn up. Between the two lines, we were marched ourselves in two lines and halted. An officer then went down the front and rere rank of the detachment, tallying off each of his men with one of ours, so that each soldier had a prisoner to mark. A little later, we were called to attention. Next, an order was given to the soldiers to load, and, with the usual double rattle, the bolts of every rifle was drawn back and a cartridge placed in the breech. Then came the orders, "Left turn - quick march", and we set off for an unknown destination. By the clock over the barrack, it was then five o'clock.

Outside the barrack gate as we came out, a mob was gathered, composed almost entirely of women, soldiers' wives and dependents, with an occasional man or two. These hooted and jeered and cursed us with an insensate rage, trying to strike at us through the files of the guards in their fury. We passed through them, however, turned by Kilmainham Jail and entered the grounds of the Royal Hospital. Through these we went and came out on the quays, along which, passing the Four Courts and Liberty Hall - demolished, or almost so, by the English shells - we marched down to the North Wall quay. Here, an old tub, a cattle-boat, was lying. We were put aboard her, packed down in the holds so that we had not room to lie. An hour

or two later, we felt the ship quiver and leap as the screw beat the water, and heard the splash as the moorings were cast off. Prisoners, we left Ireland; and thus ended our Easter Week.

Thus ended our "Easter Week", and, with that last episode, ends my book, a plain record of the happenings as I saw them - and purposing to be no more. It is not for me, obscure participator in one great event, to praise or appraise the achievement of that Eastertide. Let that be left to History and the matured judgement of the Future. It is not in my competency nor, I deem it, in any man's of this time ripely to judge and justly to measure the wisdom of those who had the vision and the courage to plan the Insurrection. Yet, O Pearse and Connolly, and ye others, heroic companions of theirs in life and death, we will not believe you died in vain! Your death throes were but the birth pangs of a new generation, that, animated by your spirit, shall tread your way to consummate your work. When, in the happy homes of the future Ireland, happy because free, and happy because you died to make them free, your names are held in reverence and in love, there will be your monument and your sanction!

(SIGNED) Sean MacEntee

(Sean MacEntee)

(DATE) 18. XII. 54

18.12.54

WITNESS: S. Ni Chiosain

(S. Ni Chiosain)
INVESTIGATOR