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STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Nicholas Whittle,
St. Patrick's Terrace,
Tramore,
Co. Waterford.

Identity.

Director of Local Elections

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STATEMENT OF MR. NICHOLAS WHITTLE,

St. Patrick's Terrace, Tramore, Co. Waterford.

My family, according to a well-founded family tradition, came to Waterford County nearly seven hundred years ago. The tradition, as given me, is as follows:-

Two brothers of the name of Whittle, one of whom was John Whittle, were sent from their home in Lancashire, England, to a school at Annestown, Co. Waterford, in the parish of Dunhill. Some of them afterwards settled down in the district. It was when the Wars of the Roses broke out that some of the Whittles of Dunhill, Co. Waterford, decided to return to Lancashire, the family having espoused the King's side in the cause of the Red Rose.

It is a well handed down tradition that, on their arrival at the King's camp in their native Lancashire, they discovered that all their family had been wiped out in the fighting. The side of the Red Rose went down in that war, and two ancestors, knowing only the districts of Dunhill and Annestown, Co. Waterford, decided to return there. They came back to Dunhill and settled down there. One of them, John, afterwards married one of the de Poer's of Dunhill Castle. Later, it is told, that a Whittle, with a detachment of men from Dunhill, was present on O'Neill's side at the battle of Kinsale.

The family were evicted from Dunhill around 1820, in common with all the tenants of the lands owned by the Pallisser family, and then purchased a farm at Lacken in the parish of Tramore.

Six years later, the famous Beresford-Stuart election took place in Co. Waterford. The tenants received orders from the landlord, Lane-Fox, through his agent, that they were to vote for Beresford. All the tenants on the estate voted for Beresford except two, who voted for Stuart. The two latter were a man named Walshe from Couse and my great-great-grandfather, David Whittle. It was open voting at the time, and, soon afterwards, my ancestor and his family of nine were evicted. They subsequently moved into Waterford city, in which city I was born in the year 1895. I might add that I have in my possession a portion of a ballad written in 1826, which tells of the part my ancestor played in that election.

My first remembrance of nationality was when I was about seven years of age. I can recall clearly my grandfather, Patrick Whittle, frequently telling me that John Redmond was a rogue and a schemer. My grandparent was a fervent admirer of Michael Davitt whom Redmond had defeated in the election which first won for him the parliamentary seat in Waterford. This early bias was frequently with me as a young lad of ten or eleven years.

I can recall, when about eleven years old, learning that John Redmond was coming over from London to address a public meeting in the Theatre Royal, Waterford. A number of bands, together with a torchlight procession, went to meet him and accompany him to the meeting place. "I am so small (I argued with myself) that, if I go over and come back with the procession, the bigger people will elbow me out of the way when I am trying to get in to the Theatre Royal." I decided, therefore, to go and stand outside the theatre and await the opening of the door,

when I would get in without being jostled by the crowd.

When the doors finally opened, I went in and sat down. There was no one there only myself and the door attendant. After a while, a man came in and sat beside me. He asked me my name and why I had come there. I told him I wanted to hear John Redmond. He replied, "Aren't you the great little politician - for your age!" Actually, at the time, while my mind appeared to be dominated by all the talk amongst my elders about John Redmond and Home Rule for Ireland, I was still cognisant of the warning given me by my grandfather.

I can recall watching John Redmond that night, forty-eight years ago, while the 'house rose to its feet' in a sustained burst of applause and saying to myself, "I wonder is he a rogue".

My first active line-up with the national life was when I joined the National Volunteers in 1912. I was not long a member when I began to discern that this volunteer army was somewhat of a circus army. There were many things in it and many types of men whom I met that did not please me. However, I argued to myself, "I am being trained in the use of a gun and I can close my eyes to a lot".

Following the outbreak of the 1914-1918 war, I was, at that time, engaged at work in the bakery premises owned by my father, the late Patrick Whittle. At the period and for three or four years, I was working in the bakehouse from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. This latter mode of life meant that I was unable to be present at any of the Volunteer company parades which were held at night during the week. The only drill parade I could attend was the

one on Sunday, which frequently took the form of a 'dress parade'.

There were special arrangements made for myself and a few other night-workers to carry out weekly target practice one morning each week. I mention this matter, as, at the time of the split in the Volunteers in 1915, following a speech by John Redmond at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow, I had only a very limited opportunity of meeting my comrades in the National Volunteers. I refer, particularly, to the Sinn Féin group who afterwards led the breakaway, which resulted in the formation of the new body called the Irish Volunteers.

I remained performing my Sunday drill and carrying out my one day a week target practice after the 'split'. I was not happy. I disliked greatly the enlisting of the National Volunteers in the British army, but I was young at the time and was more or less 'ploughing a lone furrow' for myself in national affairs.

I can well recall reading in 1915 a leading article written in the Waterford 'Evening News' by the editor, Edmond Downey, in which he cast serious aspersions on the conduct of the Irish Parliamentary Party whose leader was John Redmond. The reading of that article acted like a thunderbolt on me. I was as one who was waiting to say the things which were lurking in the back of my own mind.

When I heard the new of the Rising in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916, my mind automatically made itself up. I knew now, for the first time in my life, the open clear road I was to walk.

The National Volunteers had broken up sometime previously. I was a unit adrift, attached to nobody,

when, on the Tuesday of Easter Week, 1916, I decided to go to Paddy Brazil, who was one of the leading men in the Irish Volunteers in Waterford, and tell him where I thought the rifles (about two hundred in number), belonging to the National Volunteers, were hidden.

In the meantime, a man named Foley (deceased) came to me and said, "There is a rumour that the National Volunteers are to be called out for service if there is trouble in Waterford". He added, "If they are, will you agree to take your gun and ammunition and go over to the Irish Volunteers with me?" I told him I would do so. There was, however, no subsequent development in that respect.

I joined the Gaelic League in Waterford in 1916 and look on that period as my first real contact with Irish nationalists.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in Waterford city at the end of the year 1916. My recollection is that we were merely drilling two nights a week. At the time, there were only about thirty men in the Waterford City Battalion, with Seán Matthews, Battalion O/C, and Willie Walsh, O/C of "B" Company.

The rallying front around about this time was a weekly céilidhe held in the Volunteer Hall, Thomas Street, Waterford, on every Sunday night. I had then come to look on the officers and men of the Irish Volunteers as, so to speak, giants in the national sense, and I looked on myself as a small boy in that sense. Occasionally, I found myself questioning how much of the talk of some of these leading men was bluster and how much was real. For a long period I was unhappy and dissatisfied on this

point. I joined the Sinn Féin organisation in 1917 and was appointed secretary to an election committee (although there was no election in the offing at the time). The members of the Sinn Féin Executive in Waterford were: Chairman, Alderman Richard Power; Secretary, John J. Wyley; Treasurer, Patrick W. Kenny, T.C.; members - John D. Walsh, Dr. V. White, Thomas Wyley, Patrick Brazil, Seán Matthews, John Gallagher, William O'Connor, T.C., John K. Walsh, Robert Phelan.

Early in this year (1917) Sinn Fein Headquarters in Dublin sent a direction to the Sinn Féin Executive in Waterford City to have a courier service of cyclists formed. This service would be linked up with the whole country and would be utilised to keep lines of communication open, should conscription be passed. I assume that the order was sent, following an agreement between the Volunteers and the Sinn Féin Executive, in Dublin. Professor Wheeler was appointed in charge of the couriers in Waterford, with myself as assistant. (At this period the young Republican movement had a penchant for calling school teachers, other than National Teachers, by the name of "Professor". It, probably, helped to give a borrowed sense of dignity to the new young movement.)

The main work of organising the team fell on me, as Professor Wheeler was immersed in a number of national activities at the time. My recollection is that we had a team of about ten couriers (male and female).

The main idea behind the courier service was as follows:- On the main roads leading to all towns from Waterford, we were given the names of a courier on each such road. The approximate distance of the contact

couriers from Waterford was seven miles. Thus, if a message was to be sent to Cork, the despatch would be carried by a Waterford city courier who would proceed to hand it on to another courier further on the road to Cork. Each courier on the line was provided only with the name of the next courier en route.

On our courier system being set up, I tested the line from Waterford to Wicklow with a despatch concerning reports about the health of John Redmond, M.P. for Waterford city, whose home was in Co. Wicklow at the time. I did this for a dual purpose. First, to test one of the lines with a view to finding out if the system was smoothly working. Secondly, I was anxious to find out the exact state of Mr. Redmond's health, as, in the event of his death, it would precipitate an important bye-election in Waterford. As a matter of fact, Mr. Redmond died during this illness a few months afterwards.

The despatch which the courier from Waterford city hsnded over to the contact courier at Glenmore, Co. Kilkenny, was carried right through by road cyclists to Wicklow, and the reply to my despatch came back, carried again by a succession of couriers.

It was also during 1917 that I was sent on a mission by the Waterford Sinn Féin Executive to Kilmacthomas, Co. Waterford, a village situated at the foot of the Comeragh mountains. My mission there was to contact people friendly disposed towards our movement and ascertain from them a rough idea of the number of mountain sheep and wild goats that were in the district at the time. It was felt that, if conscription for Ireland was passed in the British House of Parliament,

the Comeragh mountains would be the obvious place to fall back upon and my mission was to ascertain the amount of foodstuffs in the form of sheep or goats which were on the hills there. Also, that day, I made arrangements for the storing of some barrels of oatmeal which were purchased by the Waterford Executive of Sinn Féin, as a first contribution towards the building up of a food supply in the hills.

On Sinn Féin General Headquarters requesting that a Director of Elections be appointed in each constituency, I was appointed Director of Elections for the Waterford city constituency. A short time later, in 1917, John Redmond died and I found myself at ~~the age of~~ twenty-three years of age, presiding over the greatest human dogfight I have ever experienced.

The campaign on our side was opened by Seán Milroy, General Director of Elections, on The Mall, Waterford. That meeting was subject to every form of hooliganism to prevent the speeches being heard and, were it not for the Irish Volunteers, reinforced by temporary recruits, who surrounded the platform, the speakers would have been driven from the streets. It was on that night I realised the hard nut we had to crack in Waterford.

During the subsequent election campaign money was being spent copiously in free drink in several public houses, priming the mobs who sought to hinder the young republican movement. On the members of the Sinn Féin General Executive coming to Waterford, it was decided by them, owing to the frequent assaults on the persons of the people supporting Sinn Féin, to bring in from other centres in Ireland detachments of Volunteers to protect

our supporters. The prime reason for this was because the R.I.C. turned the other way while our people were being beaten up. As the election campaign of February, 1918, developed, there were roughly seven hundred Volunteers in Waterford, drawn mainly from the counties Cork, Tipperary, Limerick, Clare, Kilkenny and Dublin city, as well as some men from the Midlands.

I should add here that all the members of the Sinn Féin Executive, including Arthur Griffith, Eamonn de Valera, Alice Milligan, Seán Milroy, James O'Meara, Darrel Figgis, Seán O'Mahony and Laurence Ginnell, participated in the election work in Waterford city and canvassed the city daily. Arthur Griffith had stated in an issue of 'Nationality' at the time that the issue in the Waterford bye-election was all important - Captain William Redmond, son of John Redmond, versus Dr. Vincent White, Sinn Féin candidate - "If", Griffith wrote, "the Irish Party wins this election, then the English Government will carry through their Irish Conscription Act."

The Republican movement in Ireland threw everything it had into this bye-election. Seán Milroy, as General Director of Elections, wrote, daily, letters to prominent Republicans throughout the whole country to come to Waterford and lend a hand. The result was that, besides the presence of seven hundred Volunteers in the city, a very strong representation of the leading figures in the republican movement was in Waterford during the election. Count Plunkett and George Plunkett were down here also.

As the campaign developed, it became plain that the orders to the R.I.C. were to give the Redmondite mobs

full reign in seeking to smash up our public meetings and break down our canvassing arrangements. One incident in particular stands out in my mind. It was the morning that I was notified that Eamonn de Valera was to start canvassing for votes in the city.

I arranged for a local man to accompany him and selected the Broad Street-Michael Street area, which is a business one, for his canvas. Dr. O'Kelly of Dublin, who had been assigned to Waterford by the Executive of the Volunteers to take charge of all Volunteers in the city, was present in the room at the time Mr. de Valera left the room with the local man - Dan Grant. Dr. O'Kelly turned to me and said, "Is the district where 'Dev' is going, a hostile one?" I replied, "There are laneways at the end of Michael Street which are hostile". "Then", Dr. O'Kelly said, "I had better send a bodyguard with him." He then detailed four Volunteers, one armed with a revolver and three carrying sticks, to walk a few yards behind Mr. de Valera. A few minutes afterwards, Dev. returned and was very angry. "Did you", he said to Dr. O'Kelly, "send this bodyguard with me?" "I did," replied Dr. O'Kelly, "I have been informed that the district where you are going to work is hostile." Dev., standing up to his full height, replied, "I have no need of a bodyguard in any part of this county, and please do not let this happen again". He then left the room with the canvasser, Dan Grant.

A few moments afterwards, Dr. O'Kelly called the four Volunteers into the room again. "Go out again", he said, "after Mr. de Valera and keep behind him at a sufficient distance so that he won't know you are there. If he gets into trouble, you can double up and come to

his aid." It would be about twenty minutes afterwards when we heard a great din in the street outside. On looking out the window, we saw Mr. de Valera, his hat crushed and dirty, walking in a square formed by the four Volunteers. Behind him was a yelling mob of about one hundred men and women. The officer in charge of the bodyguard, on his arrival in our election rooms, handed to Dr. O'Kelly a triangular piece of timber, about two pounds weight, which had been flung at Mr. de Valera in Michael Street. It was this incident which caused his bodyguard to promptly intervene. I felt myself that, following the incident, Mr. de Valera changed his opinions as regards his safety in walking through the streets of Waterford alone.

Another occurrence which sticks in my mind is this. It was polling night in that bye-election of February, 1918. The mobs, composed mainly of the ex British soldier fraternity and their womenfolk, regularly reinforced with drink, had been creating trouble at the polling booths all day. Dr. O'Kelly had stationed, outside each booth, about twenty Volunteers, all armed with sticks. A gun or two was also amongst each group. I should have said earlier that Seán Milroy had stressed repeatedly that G.H.Q. had strictly ordered that guns should not be drawn by our men during the election. Quite a number of the prominent men in the campaign, myself included, carried a gun, for the reason that, in a final showdown, it might be necessary to defend one's life.

I recall leaving the election rooms one morning at 1 a.m. accompanied by Dan McCarthy, Dermot O'Leary, Joe

McGrath, Seán Milroy and P.C. O'Mahony. I left them at the corner of Patrick Street where I lived. I had only got to my bedroom when I heard shouting outside. I then heard a revolver shot and, after a pause, a further shot. I immediately asked myself should I take my gun and go down to see what was amiss. On second thoughts, I realised that I might walk into a posse of R.I.C., be searched and arrested for carrying arms, and, as I held, as Director of Elections, the threads of the whole local organisation in my hands, the idea would be futile. I knew that some of the party whom I was accompanying carried guns and that they would be well able to take care of themselves.

I learned afterwards that the group had been approached by a mob, armed with sticks, in Broad Street. Dan McCarthy had drawn his revolver and fired a shot over the heads of the Redmondite mob. The mob continued to advance, so Dan lowered his hand and fired again. This time a man fell with a bullet in his hip. There was an outcry amongst the mob of, "Oh, the murderers! They are after shooting a man". The republican party then proceeded unmolested to the Metropole Hotel where they were staying. Police raided the hotel about an hour later and several men were questioned. There was one arrest early that morning, viz., Owen Puzzau, who was the only local man in the group. He was later sentenced to six months in gaol.

The result of this incident, which impressed me very much, was that, for the succeeding two or three nights, our supporters could go where they wished unmolested. This conveyed a message to me, which suggested that our methods were 'out of bounds' in their

sense of tolerance. In other words, 'the best way to pull a nettle is to grip it tight'. Possibly, the viewpoint that our prime duty was to win these people over to our side was, in great part, the cause of this tolerance.

As Director of Elections both in the bye-election of March, 1918, and the General Election of December in the same year, I formed the opinion that, outside of the ex British soldier fraternity and the Ballybricken pig dealers, the bulk of the people who were supporting Redmond did so in a feeling of loyalty to a cause. The following is an example of what I mean to convey.

A canvasser of ours, who was interviewing voters in the Holy Ghost hospital, Waterford, a charitable institution for the aged, brought back to me his marked register of voters. He pointed out, in particular, the name of one old man on the register. "That man", the canvasser said, "I never saw before. He was about eighty years old and had a fine face. I remarked to him, when he told me he was voting for Captain Redmond, 'Do you know, judging by your appearance, I would say you were a member of the Fenians. You must often have heard in your boyhood days that the Fenians were drilling some place near you'." "As I spoke", remarked the canvasser, "the old man took a handkerchief from his pocket and commenced to weep. Through his tears, he murmured to me, 'I always stood by John Redmond, boy, and I must stand by his son'." This turn of mind illustrates well the point of view I hold regarding that fatalistic loyalty to a cause amongst Waterford people.

A further proof of this common outlook in

Waterford was revealed in Captain Joseph Kavanagh of Passage East, Co. Waterford.

Captain Kavanagh was the man who steered the ship, 'Erin's Hope', from the U.S.A. to Ireland with arms and men at the time of the Fenian Rising in 1867. He was so trusted at the time that he was the keeper of the sealed orders for the voyage. This man, however, also espoused the cause of the Redmondite party in 1918.

During this bye-election of March, 1918, the six or seven of us on the election staff were busy one night at routine election work in the election offices at Colbeck Street, Waterford. All Republican supporters were out attending a monster public meeting at the Market House on the Quay, where de Valera was the principal speaker. The only others in the building with us were two armed Volunteers who were kept on duty day and night from the time the position started to become acute. About 10.30 p.m. on this night, a procession accompanied by bands from a Redmondite public meeting, came along the street outside. Our first knowledge that they were not our party became evident when a brick crashed the window and landed on the office table. Dan McCarthy of Dublin immediately ordered all present to stand with backs to the wall between the windows. We did so and witnessed, amidst the noise of crashing glass, a shower of bricks and stones flying into the room, causing a bad mess to be made of all the clerical work which lay on the table.

The barrage lasted for some minutes. Suddenly our two armed guards came downstairs and stood at the door. One of them called out to Seán Milroy, telling him that the mob were lifting a man up on their shoulders with a

lighted torch in his hand and that an attempt was being made to set fire to the National Flag hanging from the upper window. "Will we fire over their heads, Seán?", asked the armed Volunteer. (Both men had drawn their revolvers at the time.) Seán Milroy replied, "Don't fire! The orders from G.H.Q. are absolute that no arms be used". I was the only Waterford born man in the group that night and I shall always remember the sense of shame I felt as the bands outside continued playing while the flag, so closely linked with Waterford born Thomas Francis Meagher, was being publicly burned.

On polling night, following hours of street fighting by the Volunteers at the booths, who had been repeatedly stoned by the mob, the climax arrived when a drunken crowd of about four hundred strong arrived at Thomas Street and proceeded to smash the windows of the Volunteer Hall with stones. There were seventy or eighty men in the Hall drawn from all parts of the country. At the time I was making a tour of the polling booths with Commandant O'Kelly, who was giving final directions to the squads of Volunteers outside them. The Redmondite mob in front and surrounding a number of the booths was so threatening that we had, several times, to show our guns to ward them off. It was towards the conclusion of our tour that a woman came over to us and told Commandant O'Kelly to go up quick to Thomas Street where a number of our men were lying unconscious on the road. O'Kelly was inclined to regard the matter as a rumour, because there had been rumours in plenty all the afternoon. However, on my pointing out to him that the woman was weeping and that her story must have some substance, we turned the car,

in which we were travelling, in the direction of Thomas Street.

On reaching the street, the place was in complete darkness; all the gas lamps had been extinguished by stone-throwing. We went into the Volunteer Hall. About twenty Volunteers were lying on straw there, some of them bleeding from strokes of sticks and stones and two or three wounded by gunfire. Some of the ex British soldier element amongst the mob had revolvers, and a rifle was used from the window of a house on the opposite side to the Volunteer Hall.

Commandant O'Kelly immediately ordered out on to street every Volunteer capable of fighting - the mobs at this time had disappeared back into the side-streets and alleys, probably for a fresh supply of stones. Commandant O'Kelly placed all Volunteers carrying revolvers in the front rank, the men carrying sticks being placed behind them. His orders were that, when the mob returned, every man was to hold his fire until he (the Commandant) gave the order to fire.

It was at this juncture that over one hundred armed R.I.C. men, carrying rifles and fixed bayonets, sealed off the four streets leading to Thomas Street. Our position then was that we were virtual prisoners of the R.I.C. with a howling mob behind them at each street entrance.

The situation remained like this until about 11.30 p.m. when Mr. de Valera and Dr. McNabb of Belfast, with some others whose names I cannot recall, came to the police line in O'Connell Street and asked to be allowed to go up to the Volunteer Hall in Thomas Street.

I should add that Dr. McNabb of the party refused to accompany de Valera beyond the police cordon as he (Dr. McNabb) was against seeking the permission of the police to do so.

On de Valera arriving outside the hall, he spoke to Commandant O'Kelly and ordered him to have all Volunteers returned back into the hall. On 'Dev.' ascending the stairs leading to the hall, his first remark to all present was, "At times of excitement, the thing is to be calm". He then had a look at the wounded men and took a general summary of the position there. He turned to me and asked me to come out on the road and walk up and down. It was a moonlight night and there were only two of us in the street. I expressed my opinion of the situation to him in a couple of words. He did not reply, but walked, in silence, by my side. I spoke to him again. Again he made no reply. "Well," I said to myself, "if you be Dev. fifty times over, there is such a thing as courtesy", and I maintained a silence.

He walked up and down, the mobs behind the police hurling filthy epithets at Dev. Finally, he broke the silence. "Are there any friendly houses in the street?", he enquired of me. I replied, "There is one". "I ask you that", he said, "because I have a feeling that the Volunteers in the Hall here are going to be pinned down all night by the police cordons. The police are, probably, waiting for further reinforcements to come to the city. My idea is that they will close in on the hall in the morning, and, as several of our men there are carrying arms, a number of them will fight before they allow themselves to be disarmed." I asked him what he

had in mind. He said he wanted to get as many of our armed men as possible into the safe house and over the back wall. I pointed out that the house in question was immediately in front of the Volunteer Hall and our men would be plainly discernible crossing the street in the moonlight. Dev. asked me to see the owner of the house and ask how far he was prepared to help us.

I went to the house occupied by a man named Farrell (Thomas Street). He told me that he was working at Henry Denny & Sons, the bacon people, and said that, if it was found that he did anything as I suggested, he would lose his job in the morning. After further discussion, he agreed to allow in one man and get him over the back wall to safety.

I went back to Dev., who was out on the street, and told him that had happened. He asked me who was the most wanted man in the Volunteer hall. I told him "a man from Co. Meath". I should add that amongst the Volunteers were a number of men on the run from the police. These men had reported for duty with us in Waterford. This Meath man, whose name I cannot recall, got away over the back wall of Farrell's house.

De Valera and I continued to walk up and down Thomas Street, when suddenly he decided to go see the County Inspector of the R.I.C. and asked me to go with him.

We went down to the police cordon where Dev. asked one of the R.I.C. to convey word to the County Inspector that he (Dev.) wished to speak to him. As we stood there, our presence gave a further impetus to the mob to howl threats at us. In a few moments the Inspector came

to the cordon. "Goodnight, Inspector", said de Valera. "Goodnight, Mr. de Valera", replied the Inspector. "I take it", said Dev., "that you are here tonight in the interests of peace". "That", replied the Inspector, "is precisely why I am here, Mr. de Valera." "Well", said Dev., "I sent for you now because I am anxious to preserve peace in this city and, as far as I can gauge, the presence of a lot of Irish Volunteers from different parts of the country is a cause of friction. Here is my suggestion towards effecting peace. You, on your side, withdraw all the cordons of police around the area, and I, on my side, will give an undertaking that all Volunteers from outside areas will leave the city by the first trains in the morning. The result of this, if you agree, will be that the citizens of Waterford will get up in the morning, and, finding that not a Volunteer from another County is here, it will mean that the ordinary everyday life of the city will commence to go on as before ever this election took place."

The police Inspector paused for a few moments. Then he asked de Valera, "Will you give me your absolute word that you will get all your men out of the city by the first trains in the morning?" "I give my word", replied de Valera. "Then", rejoined the Inspector, "I will take away the police cordons.

As de Valera and myself walked back towards the Volunteer hall, he turned to me and said, "Everything I have told that gentleman is not the truth". I was a bit puzzled myself and was physically tired with working late in to the night for a long period, and I made no reply.

On entering the Volunteer hall, de Valera asked

Commandant O'Kelly to come out of the hall for a few minutes. The three of us then went into an adjoining small building used by the Fianna boys and known as the Fianna Hall (Thomas Street). On entering, de Valera took a pencil and drew a circle on the back of the door. He placed a point in the centre of the circle and wrote "Waterford" at that point. He then asked Commandant O'Kelly to give him the names of the different Counties from which all the outside Volunteers were drawn. Commandant O'Kelly called out, "Clare, Cork, Dublin", et cetera. As he spoke, Dev. placed a point on the circumference of the circle and marked the name of that County. He then drew lines from the centre to each point on the circumference. "Now", he said, turning to me, "give me the name of the first railway station outside Waterford City on each of the railway lines to these Counties". I gave him the information asked for, and these railway stations, varying from four miles to seven miles from the city, were then marked on the different lines in the circle, the name of the particular railway station being set down. Thus, on the Dublin line, Kilmacow Station, three miles distant, on the Cork line, Kilmeaden, seven miles distant, and so on.

Turning to Commandant O'Kelly, de Valera repeated what he had mentioned to me about the police intending to hold our men for a comb out when reinforcements would arrive. "The police may now", he added, "transfer their comb out to the different trains leaving Waterford in the morning, carrying the Volunteers out of the city." "My instructions are", he said, "that the Cork men here leave the city at 4 a.m., walk to Kilmeadon and join the Cork

train there. The Dublin men will march to Kilmacow, the Limerick men to Grange, and so on. The main object is that all our men must be left the city by four o'clock this morning."

Commandant O'Kelly immediately became angry and protested. "This", he said to Dev. looks more like cowardice, running away under cover of darkness." "I am not interested", replied de Valera, "in what people think. I am only interested in the safety of the men."

The nett result was that Commandant O'Kelly immediately sent couriers through the city (when the police cordons were withdrawn) to all centres where the Volunteers were housed. My recollection at the time was that there were over a hundred Volunteers in the Metropole Hotel, Bridge Street, and three or four hundred in Pierce Durant's coach factory in Parnell Street. It should be added that all these Volunteers had gone on duty at six o'clock on the morning of polling day. They had been engaged at times during the day in brushes with the mobs and, with the hooliganism in the city, many of them had been but an hour or two asleep when they were awakened and ordered to march four, six or seven miles as the case may be.

Following the arrangements for the withdrawal of the Volunteers being completed, I walked with de Valera, accompanied by bodyguards of three or four, and left him at the Granville Hotel, The Quay, Waterford, where he was staying. It was then 2 a.m. and, even at that hour, de Valera gave instructions to the bodyguard of the best vantage points they should take up, in case of an attack. The bodyguard then accompanied me to the Metropole Hotel

where I was lucky to get a sofa on which the lie down. I should add that, when walking up the stairs of the hotel, men were seated asleep on all the steps. I was awakened by a courier at 3.30 a.m. who was getting out all Volunteers to start on their journeys.

At 5 a.m. somebody - I think it was a member of the election staff - woke me up saying that the hotel was surrounded by military and that a special train of British troops had just arrived in the city from Clonmel. I went to the window. There was seen a line of British troops in full war kit on the pathway facing the hotel. At the corner immediately opposite the door of the hotel, a machine gun had been mounted. The troops made no attempt to enter the hotel, merely taking up positions all around it. I was very tired and I lay down on my sofa again, thinking of what would have happened had de Valera not manoeuvred the Volunteers out of the city an hour or so before.

On the night of the declaration of the poll, I was sitting in the vestibule of the Metropole Hotel. Arthur Griffith was sitting at a table near me, hurriedly writing notes for that week's 'Nationality'. As we sat there, we could hear the noise of the smashing of the windows of houses of our supporters, which was being carried on by the Redmondite mob in jubiliation at their victory. It was at this point that Arthur Griffith ceased writing for a moment and, turning to me, said, "Do you know, this has been the roughest election in Irish history, not excepting the famous Galway election".

During the bye-election of March, 1918, I concentrated on remodelling the election organisation

in preparation for the General Election. I knew that we would be without the help of very many people from Dublin and the country generally who came in to lend a hand in Waterford during the bye-election.

It would be about two or three weeks prior to the General Election of December, 1918, that a man from Sinn Féin Headquarters called to my residence. He told me that his mission to Waterford would be known only to myself, as there was no need for him to acquaint any other member of the local executive of his visit. He then explained to me that he had been sent by Headquarters to me to give specific directions regarding the conducting of the coming election in the city. "I want you to remember", he said, "that, from the moment the election campaign opens, you are in charge here and are subject to nobody but to General Headquarters, Dublin. Headquarters want you to conduct this election in the way you think fit, and, in anything you purpose doing in the conduct of the election, no member of the city executive here has any right to interfere with you in your mode of work. If it should happen that the executive here think there is any fault in you as Director of Elections, they can apprise General Headquarters of it and it will be open to the latter to do what they consider best. As far as Headquarters is concerned, there is one man here running the elections for Sinn Féin and we are determined to have him allowed to do the job as he deems fit."

I was more or less relieved following the interview, because on the city executive were a number of men older than I, who had been in the republican movement prior to 1916. Some of these men felt they had

an inherent right to dictate to any man who came into the national movement at a later period. I was then only twenty-three years old and my difficulties about directing men, much older than myself and longer in the national movement than I was, will be obvious. Needless to say, I kept the matter of this interview a close secret.

The first little clash (and there were many such later) which occurred between myself and the group mentioned took place a week afterwards. The Waterford Sinn Féin Executive had a message from the District Inspector of the R.I.C., stating that he would like to have a conference with them with a view to making suitable arrangements towards avoiding scenes of rowdyism and fisticuffs in the streets as happened in the bye-election earlier in that year (1918). The Executive were unanimous in agreeing to meet the Inspector with two dissentients, the late John Gallagher and myself.

My mind, at the time, on this matter was that the police on several occasions urged on the mobs to attack our people during the bye-election and thus I could see no point now in a round-table conference. I decided, therefore, to absent myself from the conference which was fixed for 11 a.m. in the Sinn Féin Club in Colbeck Street. On reconsidering the position later, however, I decided to attend, in order that I might be aware of what transpired between the Executive and the police inspector, particularly as to what commitments would be entered into. I waited the following morning until the conference was a few minutes in session when I arrived.

The police inspector was very nice and suave to everybody present. He explained that he merely wanted

an arrangement come to whereby he would send an R.I.C. man to our people each day of a public meeting and we would acquaint the police of the processional route to the meeting that night. The police, on their part, would arrange that any meeting of the Redmondite party on the same route would be advised by the police beforehand to take a different route to ours. This, in practice, would mean that the main crowds of our people and the Redmondites would not clash. Everybody seemed very happy with this proposal and everything in the garden looked grand. As vocal bouquets were being passed across the table between the inspector and a number of members present, I intervened and spoke for the first time.

"Is it your intention", I asked the inspector, "to urge on the mobs to attack our people in this election as was done in the bye-election?" The inspector simply replied, "Who are you?" Apparently he knew by sight a number of the old and better known men in the republican movement and so he was unaware of my identity. "My name", I replied, "is Nicholas Whittle, and I am Sinn Féin Director of Elections for the election which you are now discussing." I could see at once the quick reaction of many of the older men who, literally, glared at me, as a young, irresponsible who had burst in upon a discussion amongst a group of very sensible men, including the police inspector. I proceeded then to describe the attitude of the R.I.C. men in the bye-election when they stood by and guffawed, while a drunken mob threw stones into the midst of our supporters attending our public meetings.

The police inspector flatly denied that these things ever occurred. I gave him further evidence, and

both myself and the inspector grew somewhat heated. Some of the older men present, who remembered having been struck and had stones thrown at them, backed me against the inspector. Finally, towards the close of the conference, I agreed, as Director of Elections, to acquaint the R.I.C. man who would call to me what route our public processions would take on any particular night. I did this because I had been long enough in the movement to realise that it was necessary at times to 'play around' with the police without giving away on any fundamental issue.

When the inspector left the conference that day, I could see I had suddenly become an unpopular person with a number of my older confreres, and I decided that my job as Director of Elections (apart from the violent opposition of the Redmondite people) was not going to be an easy one. However, I remembered the direction I had got from the confidential messenger from General Headquarters and I felt satisfied with the prospect, once I realised that G.H.Q. would be behind me.

The incident which I am now about to relate strikes me as being of sufficient importance to have it placed on record.

During the year, 1918, (I am not sure of the month, but I remember that the First World War was on at the time) an American gunboat anchored at Waterford quay one day for the purpose of obtaining stores or some such reason. A number of the American bluejackets, who were drinking in a public house in Waterford that night, happened to meet a group from the local Sinn Féin Club and an impromptu concert took place. One of the American

sailors stood up on a barrel and recited, in his best Americanese, Emmett's "Speech from the Dock" from beginning to end. When the applause subsided, he announced from his rostrum on the barrel that he had never seen the shores of Erin until a few weeks previously. He was born in Chicago and learned Emmett's speech from his Irish father there. Before the party broke up, some of our crowd invited the sailors to come along to the Sinn Féin Club the following night, when they would be given literature dealing with Ireland's case for independence. On the following night, the bluejackets arrived at the Club in Colbeck Street. I happened to be working there at the time and the visitors w were brought into my room. They told me they wanted any literature dealing with the republican movement and said they would pass it on to other American warships in their flotilla. I gave them a good supply of leaflets and posters which we had been utilising throughout the city and county; amongst the latter were two or three large double-crowned posters setting out Ireland's claim to independence. The following day, I learned that a copy of that particular poster had been pasted on to one of the funnels of the American gunboat on the quay. I further learned that, on the same evening, quite a crowd of spectators had gathered on the wharf looking at the Irish Republican poster which was on exhibition. A phrase heard several times amongst the crowd was, "Look at the Sinn Féin poster on the American battleship". It should be remembered that America was fighting side by side with England at this time in World War I, hence the amazement of the Waterford opponents of the Irish Republican movement.

The climax to this extraordinary incident came, I learned, later that same evening. An R.I.C. man named Sullivan (he was the political member of the police force in Waterford inasmuch as he was on whole time duty keeping an eye on Irish Republicans; he was known to us as "83", that being his number; he was a fluent speaker of Irish and spent all his time shadowing particular people.) boarded the gunboat and asked to see the Commander. The Commander was brought to him, and the R.I.C. man said that he had been sent by the police authorities in Waterford to have the poster affixed to the ship's funnel removed at once. He quoted the particular section in the Defence of the Realm Act which governed offences of this nature. The Commander took out his watch and, looking at it, informed the R.I.C. man that he would give him five seconds to leave the ship, or he would have him (the R.I.C. man) thrown overboard, at the same time reminding him that he (Sullivan) was standing on American territory. The policeman promptly left the ship and the poster remained affixed prominently to the funnel.

On the opening of the General Election campaign in December, 1918, I was faced with certain difficulties regarding the provision of a whole time election staff. In the bye-election earlier that year, all the staff were composed of men from G.H.Q. In fact, all major decisions regarding the conduct of the bye-election campaign were made by the group from G.H.Q. As Director of Elections, I was consulted and, while many of my suggestions were accepted, I had at no time the last word in a major decision. In fact, G.H.Q. was so strongly represented in Waterford at that bye-election

that I can recall a meeting being hastily called of all the members of the Central Executive of Sinn Féin who were in Waterford at that time. I do not know whether the subject discussed at that meeting was associated with the Waterford bye-election or with a matter of wide national policy. My reason for mentioning the incident is to stress the fact that the main body of the Dublin Executive was in Waterford in February, 1918.

In the General Election of December, 1918, which I now speak of, my main difficulty in securing a full-time election staff was due to the fact that men who could absent themselves daily from business over a period - I refer now to men who were proprietors of business houses - were very few, on our side. Of the few supporters we had amongst this class, the high tension of political feeling at the time in Waterford was the cause of a number of them supporting us in a quiet, rather than in an active manner.

The main body of our supporters came from the working classes. The result of all this was that, on the day the campaign opened, I found myself alone in the election rooms with a couple of girl helpers. The election staff, which had earlier been appointed, would not be available until about seven-thirty each evening when their day's work was done and they had partaken of a meal. Realising that an election could not be run by a staff commencing duty at 7.30 p.m. each night, I made a quick decision. I appointed a new election staff as follows: Daniel McGrath (clerical student, home on holiday), Director of Literature; James Rafter, Director of Canvassing; from Limerick there came Robert

de Courcey, C.E., - de Lacy, David McNamara and Michael Hartnett who were engaged on election duty whole-time from 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. the following morning. The posts were filled with the best material available during the day-time. For instance, the Director of Literature, whom I appointed, was an ecclesiastical student home on holidays from college. This decision of mine, I found, caused friction amongst some of the men who felt they had been deposed, but my job was to direct the election in the best interest of the candidate (Doctor Vincent White).

On reaching nomination day, I learned in the newspapers that night that Republican candidates had been returned unopposed in several constituencies. On ascertaining this, I immediately sent telegrams to all these constituencies, asking them to send on speakers and election workers to Waterford. I should add again that, owing to ninety-five per cent. of the personnel of our supporters being drawn from the working classes, I was anxious to bring into Waterford, as speakers, canvassers and election workers generally, as many of the professional classes as possible. We had become to be looked on largely, in Waterford, as the 'poor man's movement' and I was anxious to cut across this stupid viewpoint.

The result of my telegrams was, firstly, a complete election staff came on to us from Limerick city and were a tower of strength in the ensuing campaign; secondly, every other district that got our telegram, immediately assumed that squads of volunteers were required again in Waterford to deal with the Redmondite mobs because, by every train coming in to the city, squads of men, twelve

to twenty strong, arrived. Each man carried a heavy stick, while some carried firearms. Apparently, the fame or ill-fame of the scenes in Waterford during the bye-election of February, 1918, had ~~reached~~ REECHORD throughout the country, and Waterford had come to be looked upon as one of the principal battle fronts for the Volunteers in the country.

I was in a peculiar position now, as I had set out, in the first instance, to look for good platform speakers and able canvassers as we had in the earlier bye-election. Instead of that, the great bulk of the assistamce offered us was in the shape of Irish Volunteers for police duty. To be candid, I quietly winked my eye at the whole thing. I had seen the men from G.H.Q. in the bye-election bring in Volunteers from all over the country to ensure that our supporters could vote as they wished and I came to the conclusion that our only chance of impressing the bullying element, which dominated the Redmondite party in Waterford, was to show them as full a muster of strength as possible. In this view, I was opposed by many of what I should term the old brigade in the movement in Waterford - I refer to the pre 1916 men. They came to me repeatedly and asked me why I was bringing Volunteers in from all parts of the country. I tactfully dodged the questions by replying that I had wired about twenty constituencies where there was no contest, asking for canvassers, speakers and election workers; all of them, practically, sent on volunteers. I was sheltering myself behind this excuse until a real showdown would come in the city and I felt that the policy of having a strong detachment of volunteers at our back would speak for itself.

Among the Limerick city group who arrived was Bob de Courcy, Professor William de Lacey, David MacNamara and Michael Hartnett. On the day following their arrival, I appointed the group immediately on the election staff, as they were specialists at the job. In the course of conversation with them, Professor de Lacey, who was on the run at the time and who was passing under the name of "Hennessey", said to me that it appeared to him the Sinn Féin movement in Waterford seemed to have been partially blocked by a number of bullies on the Redmondite side. He asked me who was the leading bully in the Redmondite crowd and I told him that Bryan Cunningham, locally known as "Curly Bryan", a Ballybricken pig-buyer, was the man. He then said to me, "We must act quickly". "I suggest", he said, "that I be empowered to get a car from Clare and, with three or four volunteers, visit this man's house after dark; we will carry him off in the car after first giving him a darned good hiding; we will imprison him in a quiet spot in Co. Clare and he will not be heard of again until the election is over when we will liberate him. The effect will be that the news will be flashed around Waterford that 'Curly Bryan' was taken from his home by armed and masked men and brought away to an unknown destination. Some people will declare that he has been executed and buried. There will be all sorts of rumours, but the more of them the better, and we will be guaranteed a peaceful election."

I welcomed the proposal heartily and discussed it with one of the local Volunteer officers. My impression, now, of the reception which my proposal got was this. The governing officers in Waterford would prefer that the

job would not be carried out but, in view of the very strong volunteer representation from Limerick, they were more or less forced to toe the line in the matter.

Two days after the suggestion being made, a telegram, in code, was sent from Limerick to Professor de Lacy (passing under the name of "Hennessy") informing him that the police were aware that he was in Waterford and advising him to pack up and get out at once. He was, apparently, looked on as a key man in the Volunteer movement in Limerick at the time and it was necessary to keep him out of gaol. De Lacey left Waterford that day a short time after the receipt of the telegram. His departure meant to me the absence of the one strong man behind me who could put the job through, and so, Cunningham, the pig buyer, was allowed to retain his freedom. Perhaps I should qualify what I have stated by saying that the governing mind amongst the Irish Volunteers in Waterford amounted briefly to this: they would strike back if they were struck at, but the question of they themselves taking the initiative to crush once and for all a group who were a menace to national progress was beyond them.

I might add, a propos of the freedom of Bryan Cunningham, that, on my making an early tour of the booths in Waterford city at 8.30 a.m. on polling morning, Mr. Cunningham, with a heavy stick, cut the tricolour and staff from off the front of the car as I turned a corner into Ballybricken. This is only a minor incident, but it reveals the type of "gentleman" who was allowed to remain at large.

At the outset of this general election, I made up

my mind that it could be won for Sinn Féin in Waterford and I believed that firmly. The presence of Volunteers from other places would, I felt, enable me to control the numerous rowdy elements on the other side and I felt that, with these under control, our party would register a majority. I should add that I had the assurance of Headquarters not to brook on the question of expenses in the election, as Headquarters were fully aware of our peculiarly difficult position as regards the opposition. I formed the impression that Headquarters felt that the winning of Waterford by Sinn Féin would be a high light in the general election. Regarding the assurance concerning expenses, I mentioned this to nobody in Waterford and kept the card up my sleeve throughout the whole campaign.

On several occasions prominent men in the Irish Volunteers in Waterford asked me how it was proposed to meet the expense of keeping and feeding the many volunteers from outside counties who were here for the election. These Waterford Volunteer officers were, in the main, opposed to bringing in outside volunteers, as they held that the presence of what would be termed "strangers" only helped the aggravate the Redmondite mobs. I held an absolutely different view. As local Director of Elections in the bye-election earlier this year, I had worked six weeks whole-time during the campaign and I was convinced that our only hope of success lay in meeting blackguardism with force and breaking it.

To the men who remonstrated with me about expenses, I used innocently reply that in my telegrams

to other constituencies I asked for canvassers and election workers; if these places sent volunteers, I did not ask for them to be sent here. I played this card, as I felt that the presence of these volunteers would be amply justified by subsequent events. I might add here that the rail fares, into Waterford, of volunteers from other counties, were paid by the organisation in their particular counties.

So far as I can recall, the volunteers were quartered at the following places: the Volunteer Hall and the Fianna Hall in Thomas Street, also in a very large factory premises used for coachbuilding and handed over gratis to us by Mr. Pierce Durand, the proprietor. This place alone would house about three hundred men. They had their own commissariat, cooked all their own meals and slept on hay in the factory. A further group was located in the Metropole Hotel, Bridge Street. There were other minor locations which I cannot now recall.

I had a very able Director of Finance on the election staff and I kept him at it every day, seeking to raise every possible pound. I must say he was very successful. In this connection, we literally flooded the constituency with propagandist literature, including a number of pictorial leaflets and posters which were designed locally. One of these in particular stands out in my mind. It represented a prison cell with Kathleen Ní Houlihan seated on a bench, her hands and feet manacled. Beside her stood the ghost of a uniformed Irish soldier who had been killed while fighting as a member of an Irish regiment with the British army in France. Underneath the picture

appeared the following caption: "They told me I was fighting for you, Mother Éirinn; they lied; they tell you that a vote for Redmond is a vote for Ireland; ah, mother, they lie again!"

While on this question of literature, I might here mention a printing job I got done privately during the campaign. The job was done three of four days before polling day.

Feeling that many of our followers looked on it as an almost impossible task to defeat the Redmondite party in their greatest stronghold, I decided on a ruse to help to cut across this view. I went to the "Waterford News" and arranged with the manager of that paper to have printed a quantity of small leaflets, giving a summary of the alleged position of the Redmondite party and ours, on polling day. Briefly the leaflets read as follows:- "Polling Day, December 12th. Position of parties at 12.30 p.m." Then followed details: "Ferrybank Booth, Whyte 280, Redmond 170", and so on. I took the precaution of giving Redmond a majority in a number of booths where I knew his support would predominate. The manager of the "News" arranged that, in the printing of these leaflets, the ink would be blurred at several points to testify to a hasty printing job. These leaflets were printed late at night (when the staff had gone home) by a confidential printer and were kept in "cold storage" in the "News" office until 2 p.m. on polling day.

I should add here that I was trying, in common with many of my comrades placed in a similar position, to introduce a new election technique, different from the old hum-drum methods. I would stress the point

here that the Dublin newspapers frequently commented on the completely new ideas which the Republican party were evolving throughout the country in election technique.

To illustrate my point, I would refer to the fact that, for almost a century, it had been the practice to hold public meetings in Waterford at two points, (1) Ballybricken Hill and (2) The Mall. I had induced Dan McCarthy, the General Director of Elections for Sinn Féin, to alter this scheme by the holding of public meetings at every point in the city where there was sufficient road space for a crowd. My idea in doing this was: I said to myself that many people will vote against us because they do not know our policy and they will not come to our meetings. By holding public meetings in the streets outside their doors, they will be forced to listen to us and in this way we will 'spread the light' and break down ignorant prejudices.

As regards meetings during this election of December, 1918, one addressed by Rev. Father Michael O'Flanagan on the Mall was the high-light of the campaign. It was our largest meeting, and, in using the word, "largest", I include the Redmondite meetings. It was estimated that there were twenty thousand people present at the meeting that night. It was conducted amidst a medley of fisticuffs. We had squads of Volunteers at different points amongst the crowd as well as a mobile squad stationed outside on the fringe of the meeting, who would intervene at any particular point amongst the crowd where scenes of rowdyism were most rife. In connection with this meeting, it is interesting to record the following incident as giving

a sidelight on what Republicans throughout the country expected from Waterford.

I went down to the Metropole Hotel, Bridge Street, at 6 p.m. on the evening of the meeting, to contact Rev. Father O'Flanagan in order to discuss with him the arrangements for the meeting. After a few preliminary remarks, he asked me what arrangements were being made to prevent rowdyism. I gave him details of the arrangements. Father O'Flanagan, however, was not satisfied. He took out a sheet of paper and I had to draw for him a map of the meeting-place and mark the various points at which we were placing squads of Volunteers. I must say he impressed me on that occasion by his suggestions to switch squads of our men to what he considered the most vital places.

When the meeting began that night, I was present, although invariably I never attended public meetings as my absence would mean a hold-up in the staff work in the election rooms. On this occasion, I attended for the purpose of carrying out a particular job. I kept the meeting under observation from different vantage points in order to locate where opposition pressure was most rife. I then contacted one of the Volunteer officers who would switch a party of men to deal with the particular unruly spot.

In the estimation of pressmen on the platform, there were twenty thousand people at the meeting. The principal speaker, who spoke for one and a quarter hours, had his speech frequently punctuated by organised interruptions. One thing which impressed me that night, apart from the huge dimensions of the meeting, was the

machine-like regularity with which the Volunteers dealt with organised vocal opposition. Indeed, as I looked at that meeting, policed by Volunteers, I felt grateful that we had a few hundred Volunteers from counties outside Waterford.

After the meeting, I made up my mind that the election was as good as won by Sinn Féin and I have always had the feeling since that, psychologically speaking, the back of Redmondism was broken in Waterford at that meeting in December, 1918. I state this because the organised mobs, placed at strategic points amongst the crowd for the purpose of interrupting our speakers, were in each instance handled so promptly and firmly that, for the first time, they had come to realise that even in this department they were now forced to take second place.

As an instance of the thoroughness of the link-up between the various squads of Volunteers doing police duty through the crowd. I happened, towards the end of the meeting, to step in close to a hostile group. Immediately a fairly powerful looking man stepped out in front of me with an oath, his fists sparred for fight. I was physically very weary at the time. However, there was no need for me to do anything, as the fist of a Volunteer suddenly shot out between myself and the other gentleman, which promptly laid him flat on his back on the road.

The general impression amongst our party after that meeting was that the Sinn Féin Party in Waterford were going to win the parliamentary seat for the Republican Party. I shall pass over a number of

incidents of rowdyism which continued during the campaign that can be easier understood than described. I might state, however, that,for business purposes, myself and three other local men on the election staff, who were working full-time with me, slept and had our meals in a house next door to the election rooms in Colbeck Street. I made this arrangement, as the usual procedure previously used to be that the election staff would finish the day's work about 1 a.m. This meant having a guard of Volunteers (who slept in the election rooms) accompany each man to his home. My decision to stay at the scene of work cut out all this, including a possible repetition of what occurred in the bye-election of that same year, when one of the Sinn Féin election staff had to open fire with his revolver, in order to get to his hotel.

On the eve of polling day, as all final arrangements were being smoothed out for the morning when we firmly believed that Waterford would elect its first Republican T.D., I had a visit from an R.I.C. Sergeant named Farrell. I should point out that, during the campaign, an R.I.C. constable always called to me on the eve of a meeting to enquire the route our procession would take. Actually, although this looked a helpful gesture by the police, it was merely nominal and without meaning. On several occasions, squads of police drawn up on the outskirts of our meetings, laughed and joked as stones and bricks were being hurled at our supporters. Sergeant Farrell, on this occasion, said that he had come from the District Inspector of the R.I.C. to enquire from me the number of Volunteers from outside districts who were then in Waterford city. I replied naively that, as I was the

Director of Elections here, my job was concerned solely with voters, polling booths and meetings. I added that I knew my own job from A. to Z., but, about the Volunteers, I knew nothing. The Sergeant then asked if I could guess the number of outside Volunteers. I told him I could not do so and that he would probably make a better guess himself. I added that I had nothing to do with that matter whatsoever. He then became angry and said to me, "Whether you do know, or do not know, I want you to know this, that if the Volunteers come on the streets tomorrow and if they are the cause of friction, we will sweep them off the streets by force". I then asked the Sergeant what he meant when he used the words, "are the cause of friction". "I mean", he said, "that if they prevent the voters from going into the booths as they did in the last election." "Now", I said, "I was local Director here for the last election and your statement that the Volunteers interfered with voters is absolutely untrue. And as regards tomorrow, I can tell you this: although I have no jurisdiction over the Volunteers, I am certain that, under no circumstances will they attempt to interfere with any voter." The Sergeant replied, "Remember, again, what I have said. If the Volunteers are a cause of friction tomorrow, we will sweep them off the streets by force." - and, with these words, the interview between us terminated.

Looking back at that election of December, 1918, now, I realise that the trump card was played against us by the R.I.C. Sergeant. Given the right to police the polling booths to ensure that none of our supporters were interfered with, I felt we had the requisite

number of voters on our side to give us a majority. The majority would not be a large one but it would definitely be a majority. The threat from the R.I.C. simply meant that the one weapon we possessed to hold the city in peace during the polling hours was now threatened to be taken from us. Immediately after the departure of the R.I.C. Sergeant, I left everything else aside, personating agents, papers and all the other important last-minute work to be done on the eve of an election, and went over to the Volunteer Hall in Thomas Street.

In the hall I saw the local Volunteer Commandant - I think it was Peadar Woods - and I described in detail the R.I.C. interview with me. The Commandant listened to me with the air of a very wise man who was listening to a schoolboy speaking. I dwelt on the emphasis with which the emissary from the District Inspector had delivered his message to me. Alas, at this time I knew I was being dubbed as the man responsible for bringing to Waterford what were termed the "outside Volunteers" and my ideas concerning Volunteer work could not, thus, be taken too seriously.

I went back to the election rooms that night disheartened. I felt that the R.I.C. had taken over the initiative on behalf of the Redmondite mobs and officially we appeared now to be oblivious of this very important fact.

The following morning I was called at 6 a.m. and, after a quick breakfast, went to the election rooms. A most exhilarating sight confronted me as I saw, drawn up, the different squads of Volunteers (all wearing

bandoliers) who were preparing to march to the booths allotted to them. I have a very clear recollection of my feelings that morning. I felt that Ireland's greatest day had come and that Waterford was going to be on Ireland's side. (A night's sleep had probably helped to dwarf the significance of the R.I.C. Sergeant's message to me.)

I should state here that the allocation of the Volunteers was as follows: about thirty men, standing two deep, took up a position near each polling booth, their strict instructions being to remain there all day and to promptly intervene if any of our supporters were interfered with, or assaulted. It should be understood, of course, that our local men on the spot would inform the Volunteers of any interference with our supporters. However, there is perhaps no necessity for the last sentence as the shouts of the Redmondite mob at our supporters would portray, in no uncertain fashion, on what side the sympathy of the voters lay.

I set out at 8 a.m. on a first run over, for inspection purposes, of all the booths and found everything working smoothly. The only untoward incident, with the exception of jeers as I went by (I was in a car), was the loss of my tricolour flag which, as I mentioned before, was knocked down by a stroke of a stick by Curly Bryan Cunningham.

I was in the election offices at 11 a.m. when I learned, for the first tiem, that mobs of Redmondite supporters had congregated about the polling booths and were making their presence felt. I should point out here that tactics of this nature would have a very

definite effect in retarding a certain type of our supporters in casting their votes. I refer to women, particularly the aged. From that on to mid-day, there poured into the election rooms reports of growing tension and increased rowdyism by the Redmondite mobs. By 3 p.m. that day, with all the reports of this rowdyism continually reaching me, I began for the first time to feel that the reins, which I had held, were gradually slipping from my grip. I had unleashed the bogus election report about 1.30 p.m. and this probably may not have had the effect I had hoped for. It was wearisome sitting in the election rooms, learning of different cars - chartered by us for the day to carry voters to the poll - being wrecked by the opposition mobs. At 4 p.m. I learned that five or six of our cars had been put out of action. Then came a report that the Sinn Féin candidate, Dr. Vincent White, and his election agent, Patrick M. Kenny, had both been severely beaten with sticks while about to enter the booths in Mount Sion Schools. I should add that six polling booths were situated in Mount Sion Schools and, as these booths represented both hostile and friendly districts, this particular spot became tougher as every hour went by.

That whole day is somewhat of a blur to me now. I had been campaigning until the early hours of the morning for six weeks with other members of the election staff. I had stepped into a polling day with everything arranged in almost alphabetical order when, under the pressure of the Redmondite mobs, aided by the R.I.C., our whole election machine seemed to be falling to pieces.

I have forgotten to remark that about 1 p.m. I went by car to the Volunteer Hall, Thomas Street. While in the hall, some stupid official in our movement, seeing the car with the tricolour on it, took it away to convey voters to a booth. While I was in the hall, about thirty R.I.C. men arrived, with rifles and fixed bayonets, and took up a position with their backs to the wall of the hall. I then learned that they had intimated that no Volunteers would be allowed to leave the hall. Immediately the statement of the R.I.C. Sergeant of the night before came to my mind. The Volunteers were to be bottled up and the constituency handed over to the tender mercies of the Redmondite mobs.

I waited some time for the car to return, and, as it was urgent that I should go ahead with my work, I decided to do so on foot. I was carrying a loaded revolver at the time and the question arose as to whether I should park the revolver in the Volunteer hall before leaving, owing to the R.I.C. having surrounded the building. I analysed the position thus. As Director of Elections, the public cannot prevent me from leaving the hall. If I leave minus my revolver, I may walk into a mob who would beat me up, and my part in the election is finished. I must, at all costs, remain on my feet until the booths are closed, as I hold all the threads in my hand. Having reasoned with myself thus, I walked out on to the street and asked to see the police officer in charge. He came up and I said to him, "I am the Director of Elections for an accredited candidate in the election. By law, I am free to move at will through every part of this constituency under the terms of the Ballot Act until the polling booths

are closed, and you, or none of your men, have any legal right to hold me up". He swallowed the whole thing, although my legal right strictly amounted to nothing, as the Ballot Act covered, in this instance, only Patrick Kenny, the election agent for Doctor White. The Inspector then called out to the police, "This gentleman is alright. Let none of you interfere with him". I passed through the line of police with my revolver safely in my pocket.

On reaching the election rooms, I met Doctor White, who had a large sticking-plaster on his forehead, and the election agent, Patrick M. Kenny, similarly bandaged. I learned that the bottling up process of the Volunteers had also taken place at the other points where reserves of men were being held.

The remainder of that polling day was literally pandemonium. I can recall the last motor pulling up at the election rooms about 6.30 p.m.; the windscreen was smashed and the young driver, about twenty-two years of age, behind the wheel, with the engine running, and a wide bandage around his forehead. The sight impressed on me the indestructible fighting spirit of our side.

It was about this time in the evening that a party of R.I.C., armed with rifles, marched up to the Mount Sion polling booths. A group of Clare Volunteers, augmented by five or six Waterford Volunteers, had been holding the fort all day here. On the R.I.C. approaching the Volunteers, the police officer ordered the Volunteers to leave. They refused to do so. The police officer then said, "If you don't leave, we are going to put you out of it". With that, he ordered

his men to fix bayonets. The details which I now relate were given to me by the late Michael O'Neill of Michael Street, Waterford, a man of first-rate integrity.

As the R.I.C. advanced with fixed bayonets, some of the Volunteers began to move back. Immediately Miles Fanning of Waterford, with an ash-plant in his hand, advanced in front of them, shouting loudly, "Every man stand fast!" As the armed police came on at the double, the melee ended in the dispersal of the Volunteers. A group of Claremen ran through Green Street on to Ballybricken, having in mind the idea of reaching the Volunteer Hall in Thomas Street which adjoins Ballybricken. They were chased by a mob and, as they ran across Ballybricken, the one splendid incident in the election occurred. John Morgan, a horse dealer and one of the front-line men in the Redmondite group, had a large show yard for his horses, close to his residence here. As the Volunteers approached this spot, the first of the mob were getting close to them, whereupon the Volunteers dashed in through the open gate of the show yard. John Morgan was standing outside his door at the time and, as the last Volunteer raced through his gate, Morgan proceeded quickly to shut the gate. The mob clamoured to him to allow them in, but he told them that, no matter who had come in to his yard, none of them were getting in. He was a very resolute man and a type who would be feared by the mob attached to his political party.

About 11.30 p.m. that night a man called to the Volunteer Hall and asked to see Michael O'Neill (referred to already). This man told Michael O'Neill that John Morgan had sent him to say that there was a

number of Clare Volunteers in his home and he requested that they be brought down to the Hall. I should add that Michael O'Neill was on the clerical staff of the Great Southern Railway at the time, and John Morgan knew him through frequently booking horse waggons from him. Michael O'Neill, who told me of the incident, immediately went up to Morgan's house where he found twelve to fourteen Clare Volunteers seated around a table, enjoying a very plentiful supper. In all the events in this election - and I certainly was close up to them, - this was the one and only outstanding incident depicting a "white man" amongst the supporters of the Redmondite party.

My recollections of the closing stages of the election are somewhat hazy. I can, however, clearly recall having a throbbing headache as I sought to direct the final turn of events amidst much pandemonium. I can remember sitting in the election rooms about 6 p.m. on polling day. Patrick W. Kenny, the election agent, was sitting near me, a large sticking-plaster on his forehead. Dr. Vincent White, the Sinn Féin candidate sat next to him, similarly bandaged. Some of my last recollections of the day were of my chartering the one and only car left to us, to make a final tour of the polling booths about 7 p.m.

There were two Volunteers with me in the car besides the driver, and all of us were armed with revolvers. As a matter of fact, we were in such a state of exasperation following the events of the day that our mood was one which would almost welcome an opportunity to empty our guns into the mob. The main purpose of the tour was to direct whatever small bands

were still outside the booths to accompany the ballot boxes to the courthouse. I felt that no stone would be left unturned by the opposition, and I feared an attack on certain ballot boxes which the Redmondite party knew would contain votes favourable to us.

I can recall that, in every instance in which we left the car to interview the O/C, Volunteers, we carried our revolvers in our hands. This was the only "admission card" which would allow us to make our way through the mob outside each booth. I shall always remember the howling and screaming of the mob at us on our visit to each booth. In fact, it was very difficult to realise that one was dealing with Catholic Irishmen and women.

The last act in the election drama was when I went to the courthouse with the election agent, to have the doors of the room where the ballot boxes were deposited sealed. On the latter job being complete, I could see through the windows a large crowd, many of them drunk and all armed with sticks. As they waved their sticks in the air, they chorused to us outside what was going to happen to us when we came out. I should add that the main threats were directed at Patrick W. Kenny, who was a prominent member of the Waterford Corporation at the time.

In explanation of the fact that I came through two prolonged election campaigns in that year myself, without being assaulted seriously, I would like here to give a reason.

The Whittle family, to which I belong, were, numerically, a big family in Waterford. A number of

them were owners of business houses and ninety per cent. of the family were on the Redmondite side. This fact, which I regret to record, frequently sheltered me when it might otherwise have been different. In justice to them, I should state that they were not a party to the extraordinary rowdyism prevalent in this election. In common with a certain type of Redmondite, however, they winked at the blackguardism and in this I must, of course, dissociate myself from them.

On the following day the count of votes took place and the result was as follows: Redmond
Dr. White . It was a hard blow to us, as I was convinced that we had the requisite number of votes to give us a slender majority, but the combined efforts of the R.I.C. and the organised mobs cut across the accomplishment of victory for Sinn Féin.

There is an aspect or two of the election which I consider historically important enough to dwell upon here. I first refer to the extraordinary combination of forces which beset the path of Irish Republicanism in Waterford. I shall enumerate the groups seriatim.

Firstly, there was the spearhead, viz., the Ballybricken pig buyers. I once asked the famous historian, the late Canon Patrick Power, D.Litt., if there was any historical background to the Ballybricken pig buyer, as they appeared different generally to the ordinary run of Waterford citizens. He told me that somebody else had asked him precisely the same question. "My reply to you", he said, "is going to be the same as I gave then."

"There was", Canon Power said, "no historical

background to the peculiar characteristics of the Waterford big buyers. In common with men who make their living by dealing with livestock, they acquired a love of things garish. They resembled the gypsy by the love of show, of shined brasses in the homes and their ignorant outward show generally." My personal recollection of all the Waterford big buyers was that they were an absolutely illiterate class, without a knowledge or respect for learning. They came out of a period when the pig buyer and the cattle dealer literally bludgeoned the small farmer when the latter came to offer his stock for sale at a fair. An organised system of what I should term "blackmail" existed amongst them in the method of buying. Behind the front line of buyers was a second line, known as tanglers, the latter making the running for the farmer. Through the two groups, a technique was evolved whereby each buyer would select freely his own victim at a fair and none of his competing buyers would interfere. In fact, farmers who set out to break this discreditable technique were frequently beaten up at fairs. These same pig buyers were the moulders of the blackguardly election methods which were typical of the Redmondite party in the Waterford elections.

I have one very clear recollection of the type of mind which dominated these men. It was in September or October, 1916, when John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party made, what I think was, his first public statement since the Rising. The occasion was a convention of the United Irish League in Waterford which was held in the large room in the City Hall. Actually, owing to the fact that there had not been an election, or a need for an election, for about

twenty years in Waterford (as John Redmond was always automatically returned unopposed for that constituency), there was in reality no built-up organisation, with the exception of the top group of his followers. At the period in 1916, an engineered convention of the United Irish League was ordered to be held by John Redmond in Waterford. My late father, Patrick Whittle, who, to my knowledge, was never a member of the U.I.L., was handed a delegate's card. The card, I clearly remember, indicated that he represented Division 52 of the U.I.L. in Waterford. My father, at the time, was a supporter of John Redmond's policy in common with most of the men of his generation. I asked him if he proposed to go to the convention and he informed me that he did not. I then told him I was anxious to go and hear what Redmond had to say, so he gave me his delegate's card.

The large room in the City Hall was packed when I produced my father's card and was admitted. As I sat there, I heard a din behind me and saw the late J.D. Walsh whom I did not know at the time, his face streaming with blood, being ejected from the hall. This man was well known to have strong republican sympathies. All this happened before the meeting opened. I saw three or four other men being struck with sticks and ejected. As I sat there, I realised fully that, owing to my family being known supporters of Redmond, I, of course, would be coloured with the same brush.

On John Redmond stepping on to the platform, all present stood up on the seats and cheered loudly. I remained seated, and I assume I was judged a very quiet, odd sort of person for doing so. In the course of his speech, Redmond referred to the new Sinn Féin party as

the "effervescent scum of the body politic", and predicted that they would "soon run back like rats into their holes". Dealing with World War I., which was raging at the time, he stated that he had "pledged" the Irish regiments in the cause of the freedom of small nations. He stressed the fact that a large number of casualties were occurring in these Irish regiments fighting with the British army in France, and added, in a loud voice, "These gaps must be filled". Immediately the audience, to a man, leapt up and cheered vociferously. As they stood cheering, Redmond called out a second time, "These gaps must be filled". Again, I remained sitting, a solitary figure on my bench. I was expecting a punch from some of those nearest me, but seemingly my being seated was misinterpreted. I recall clearly my contempt for the men cheering, many of whom were known personally to me. I had a contempt for them, for I knew that not one of them would ever join the British army, not through patriotic motives but through less worthy motives. At the time, the laneways and alleyways of Waterford were being drained daily of recruits for the British army. These young fellows, most of whom lived close to poverty, were the sons and grandsons of men who had worn the British uniform.

The cheering by the mass meeting that day was about the lowest piece of hypocrisy I have ever experienced. In point of fact, one solitary Ballybricken pig buyer joined the British army. He did so, following a prolonged bout of drinking, and I am convinced that, were it not for this, Ballybricken would have been without its one solitary representative in the British army during World War I. While listening to the cheering at that meeting, I felt that the whole thing

was merely bluff. I knew that, when they spoke of filling gaps in the Irish regiments, the fodder would be provided by the unemployed or the semi-unemployed from the lanes and alleys of the city.

The second group comprised what I shall term the "shock troops" in the raids carried out by organised mobs in the city. I refer to the numerous element in Waterford which always was strongly represented in the Irish regiments in the British army. This type were the relatives of men who served in the British army and they were organised as mobs by the Ballybricken pig buyers who directed the elections. The relatives of soldiers on active service also included "gentlemen" known as ex soldiers, who were too old to serve. These latter were most difficult to deal with, as they all had experience of actual warfare in the British forces in Africa, India, et cetera. They were copiously supplied with drink during the two election campaigns and, while it used be said that the Ballybricken pig buyers were spending money in prodigal fashion, it was my belief that the finance was coming from across Channel.

The third group in the Redmondite political set-up in Waterford was the convinced Redmondite who believed firmly that Redmond was the saviour of Ireland and we, of Sinn Féin, were closely allied to the Bolshevists in Russia.

The last line of Redmondite organism in Waterford was the Unionist party. Too cute, for business reasons, to show their hands, they backed Redmond's party as the nearest approach to their own particular creed of Unionism.

I would like to set down here the fact that our mainstay in breaking finally the mobdom and rowdyism of the Redmondite party came largely from one class. I refer to the children and grandchildren of evicted farmers who lost their homes during the Land League agitation and prior to it. A large number of these came into Waterford city to work. Some of them worked in the cellars of local bacon factories, some in the breweries; others had humble jobs, such as, cart drivers, et cetera. Also in this group were sons and grandsons of men who had been evicted from their farms in South Kilkenny. Following careful consideration, I came to the conclusion many years ago that the groups referred to made up the core of resistance which finally broke the back of Redmondite rowdyism in Waterford.

On the conclusion of the general election of December, 1918, a scapegoat for the defeat of the Sinn Féin candidate in Waterford had to be found. There was no difficulty in finding him. He was none other than your humble servant who directed the election. The fact that I had put in, over the heads of the existing staff, a whole-time election staff who had offered their services from Limerick, plus the fact that I had quietly "winked at" all the Volunteers from outside counties coming in here, made my nomination as scapegoat a very simple one. The main theme amongst my critics at the time was that I had allowed in, what were termed, "strange Volunteers", who allegedly irritated the sensitivies of the thugs and blackguards on the opposition side, thereby causing much rowdyism which could be avoided. Finally, I was alleged to have spent money lavishly on the election work. Those three reasons were advanced to me at a special

meeting of the Waterford city Sinn Feín Executive.

I can recall clearly the scene at that meeting. When all my accusers had finished speaking, I stood up and defended my actions in the election. Referring to the question of finance, I stated that I had been given a guarantee, privately, by General Headquarter that they would stand by me implicitly in the matter of financial assistance, as they were fully aware of the powerful opposition with which we had to deal. The amount of election expenses which exceeded our revenue was, I think, about £1,800. I made the offer to the Committee that I would go to Dublin, make a statement to the General Director of Elections there, and I knew that there would be no hesitancy in G.H.Q. standing by their word to me.

Some of those present scoffed at this assertion. One man at the meeting - the late John Gallagher - a man I had always found possessed of guts, stood up and defended me in my every action in the election. Another man, the late J.K. Walsh, also spoke in my favour. As for the others, there was nothing but active or silent opposition. Eventually, Patrick W. Kenny, the election agent, was commissioned to accompany me to Dublin on the following day. I can clearly remember one gentleman declaring he pitied both Kenny and myself on the futile mission we were undertaking. On the following day, I went to Dublin accompanied by Patrick W. Kenny.

Arriving in Dublin, we proceeded to the Sinn Féin Headquarters in 6 Harcourt Street, the personnel of which I knew far more intimately than my confrere. Within twenty minutes of our arrival, the General Treasurer of Sinn Féin, the late Mrs. Wyse Power, had

agreed to pay every penny of the amount due. I left Mr. Kenny at No. 6 Harçourt Street and went and had some tea. My mind that night on the patriots with whom I was working in Waterford was fully made up. I felt that they were simply a bunch of politicians, and constitutionalism, as I had know it, began to recede very far away from me.

Following my Dublin visit and the payment in full of all election debts by G.H.Q., I absented myself from Sinn Féin circles for some months. In fact, some of my former associates were kind enough to say of me that I had gone over to the Redmondite camp. My only further connection with Sinn Féin, so far as I can recall, was during the municipal elections in Waterford in 1919 when I attended at the election rooms and worked as a member of the staff. In this election, the Sinn Féin party won a majority of the seats in the Waterford Corporation, resulting in Doctor Vincent White, the defeated candidate in the parliamentary election, being now elected Mayor of the city. I realised very fully at the time that this comparatively easily won victory was, naturally, made possible by our efforts in the two election campaigns a year earlier when the back of Redmondism was broken in Waterford.

Following the municipal election, my national activities were confined to my weekly or bi-weekly (I'm not sure which) drill with my Company of the Irish Volunteers. As far as I can recall, I was attached to "C" Company, the Captain of which was Liam Walsh. I was an ordinary member of the Company and, while there was a certain form of pleasure in drilling beneath the moonlight while thinking of the Fenians and the '48 men,

I began to find myself becoming bored at the never-changing pattern of these nightly drills.

We formed fours, deployed, doubled, marched in column, file, etc.; then we sat on the grass and read copies of 'An tOglach' (the official organ of the Volunteers) which was distributed to us. I can distinctly recall commenting to myself on the quickening of military activities in other districts in Ireland, while we continued to form fours. This condition of things obtained without change. I remember quite well going one day to see our Commandant, Peadar Woods, to enquire when our Company would be trained at target practice. The reply from the Commandant was a magnificent one. He said that "when the men get the guns to go in and fight, you may be sure they will know how to use them". During the period of my acting as Director of Elections, I had learned to become a thorough-going realist and I now realised that, in this reply, there was something radically wrong.

Peadar Woods was, personally, a very straight-forward type of fellow. He was a coach builder by trade, and certainly possessed a fine personality. He was looked on as "one of the strong men" by the old I.R.B. group in the city. I was not at ease in the Volunteers at that time. I was an ordinary member, with no rank, and I had no authority to make any changes the set-up of the Company.

Some time in 1920, I think, under a reorganisation scheme, I was transferred to "B" Company, Fourth Battalion, East Waterford Brigade. I looked for a transfer to "D" Company. I had great confidence in the Captain of "D" Company, Jimmy McGrath, and in a number of men of that

Company. In passing, I might add that, during my period of election work, I came to know the worth of every individual man in the Republican movement in Waterford; hence my anxiety to get into "D" Company where I knew from past experience there were a bunch of men who would look for fight against the British forces.

There are two incidents which I recall while serving in Captain Cullen's Company, which I omitted mentioning heretofore. The first was on the occasion of a drill parade one night out in Ballinaneisha, about two miles west of Waterford. James Hetherington, who, I think, was Vice Commandant of the Battalion, arrived at the close of the drill and selected a number of men from the Company to blow up some police barrack which had been evacuated. I can recall feeling rather hurt at being passed over. At the time, my more or less quiet disposition, coupled with the fact that I had been so deeply concerned in the Sinn Féin movement, probably labelled me before a certain type as "not being a fighting man".

It was about this period - early 1920 - a rumour reached me that I.R.A. General Headquarters had been probing the position in Waterford and, as a result of this probing, a number of the I.R.A. leaders in Waterford, who had been long in position, were summarily deposed. My recollection of the rumour is that Cathal Brugha had either ordered, or presided over, a military court of inquiry and that it was proved that the men in charge in Waterford were marking time over too long a period. I recall also hearing at the time (I cannot vouch for the absolute truth of this) that orders coming from G.H.Q. regarding increased activity by the I.R.A. in Waterford

were suppressed by the local men in charge.

In connection with what I have stated, I should say that, for about a year previously, there had been distinct grumblings amongst the rank and file against the inactivity in Waterford compared with other counties. I remember clearly being at a drill parade in the Volunteer Hall, Thomas Street, when we were addressed by Sean Matthews who I knew was in charge in Waterford. At the conclusion of Sean Matthews' address, Tommy Brennan of "D" Company inquired rather abruptly when the Waterford Battalion were going into action. Sean Matthews became very angry and retorted, "If any bunch of men want to go into action, we will supply them with the arms." This was rather an extraordinary statement for the commanding officer to make.

About this period - early 1920 - I remember beginning to think for myself of some method to put the battalion on a basis that would prepare them to fight. I had absolutely no authority to do anything like this, as I was only an ordinary Volunteer. However, a couple of years' work as a Director of Elections had given me a certain sense of initiative, and so I started on my solitary campaign. I called on two men who had worked with me in the election and in whom I had absolute confidence. I put it to them (they were not members of the I.R.A.) that the time had now come for a showdown with the British forces and that it was their duty to join the I.R.A. The men's names were Harry Munns and Eugene Dowling. Both men acceded to my request and did much useful work afterwards.

My main problem, however, as an unappointed and

unofficial organiser was to get hold of some fellow who had a practical experience of warfare. I had spent some years drilling under men who knew as much about warfare as they did about the Chinese language. I realised that, with the toppling of the old chieftains, it was time to get down to brass tacks.

After much thought, I decided to approach a second cousin of mine, whose family I knew had voted for us in the two elections, and this man had seen service in the 1914-1918 war; his name was Patrick Paul. I spent six weeks bringing him out for occasional country walks, talking to him about Pearse and his dreams, and seeking to stick as much republicanism into him as I could. Towards the close of the novitiate, I put it to him that he should join the I.R.A. and that his military training would prove an asset to us. He agreed to join. Immediately I went to Liam Walsh who, I think, was Commandant at the time and guaranteed that I knew Paul inside out and that I felt he would make a good I.R.A. man. I should add that Liam Walsh was one of a group who held as taboo all men who had worn a British uniform; hence my mission to him to pave the way for the entry of Paddy Paul into the ranks of the I.R.A. Liam had known me for a number of years, he accepted my recommendation and told me to bring along the recruit at the next parade night.

My recollection now is that, within a short time of Paddy Paul's joining, he was appointed a Company Instructor. Sometime a little later, he called to tell me he had been appointed Battalion Instructor. I rather enjoyed this situation, as I realised that, although only an ordinary Volunteer, I had succeeded

in causing this switch over to practical military training.

I next decided to organise an Irish dancing class in the city. This may appear to have been a strange activity at the time, but I felt that ceilidhe, which were invariable held in a small hall in the Gaelic League premises, should be brought to the forefront to rival the County Hunt Ball and other social functions sponsored by the shoneen element in the city.

I formed a Committee of seven or eight men, with Eamonn Matthews of the Gaelic League as Chairman and myself as Secretary. At first, we held weekly practice ceilidhe in a large hall in the city, and then we held a céilidh mór in the large room in the City Hall. The rules of our dancing class set out that members were forbidden to attend foreign dances. It was a surprise and a hurt to me at the time to find a rival dance class come into the field, at the dances of which each alternate dance was Irish and foreign. I have said this hurt because the new class was sponsored by "A" Company, Fourth Battalion, East Waterford Brigade, I.R.A.

I would like to point out here that this "A" Company comprised men, the majority of whom were not from Waterford. The Company was mainly composed of drapers' and grocers' assistants who had come in from outside counties to work in shops in Waterford. The setting up of this counter dance class struck me at the time as somewhat ominous; to my mind, Irish Republicanism and Gaelicism were one and the same thing.

I recall running a Céilí Mór about September or October, 1920, the proceeds of which were for the arms

fund of the Waterford Brigade. I mention this fact to show that we were not using the céili room for pleasure only. At that ceili we had over four hundred present, and so our main objective in bringing ceili dancing on a par in every way with the best organised foreign dances had been achieved.

Another incident in connection with this céili mór comes to mind. It is the interview I had with the late Patrick Brazil, Town Clerk, seeking the necessary document to permit us to use the room in the City Hall. Before doing so, I would like to record the background of this man.

Patrick Brazil could best be described as a former fire-eating I.R.B. man.

On my asking for the document empowering me to use the large room in the City Hall, Mr. Brazil said to me, "Nickey, I'm going to say one thing to you now. This is no time for dancing while there is so much trouble in the country". I replied to him, "Yes, there is trouble in the country, Paddy, and there's going to be trouble in Waterford too, and you'll find the men who are going to make the trouble at the céili". At the time, Paddy Brazil was anxious to keep the eyes of the British military in Waterford off the City Hall; hence his worries about the trouble in Ireland.

On St. Stephen's night, 1920, a group of us held a small céili in Bishop's Hall in Broad Street. Paddy Paul, who had now risen to be Brigade O/C, attended. At the conclusion of the céili, he came to my home and slept there. A raid for arms had been planned for 10 a.m. the following morning. About six men took

part in the raid, with Paul in charge. The house raided was that of a Mr. de Bromhead, near Upper Newtown, Waterford. We had been advised by a friendly servant where the arms in the house were kept, but, unfortunately, on our arrival, we drew a blank, the arms having been shifted some days previously.

A céili mór was in progress on January 6th, 1921, when, about 1 a.m., Jimmy McGrath, my Company Captain, approached me and told me to put by a supply of sandwiches, left over after the supper, as they would be required the following night. He instructed me to "fall in", in the field below the Mental Hospital, Ballytruckle, Waterford, at 7.30 p.m., and asked me to try and have rations for (I think) thirty men. He added, "Bring your gun with you as we will be going into action".

I should mention here that, during 1920, I had got a single-barrelled shotgun, and, on getting it, I went to Jimmy McGrath, my Company Captain, and asked him to give me a guarantee that he would call on me on the first occasion the Battalion went into action. He gave me his word to call on me, and he duly kept his word on the night of the céili. The following afternoon I went to a Presbytery, to a priest friendly disposed, and made my Confession. That date was January 7th, 1921.

I fell in with the squad of men at the time appointed, in the field adjacent to the Waterford Mental Hospital. There were sixteen men, in all, so far as I can remember. My impression now is that all had shotguns with the exception of two or three who had

revolvers. The Commandant of the Fourth Battalion stood out in front of us; his name was [redacted] and so he was popularly called "[redacted]. He had drink taken and proceeded to address us. He was a native of Ferrybank. I should point out that there had always been a traditional rivalry between Ferrybank and Waterford city. Ferrybank is in Co. Kilkenny and in the Diocese of Ossory. A English king, John, handed over Ferrybank for incorporation in Waterford city, and this, I assume, is the cause of the traditional want of good feeling between this district and the city proper.

In the course of his remarks to us that night, [redacted] said, "We are going into action tonight and we will see how the Waterford cowards will behave when they come under fire". [redacted]. There was a tense silence amongst the men as he spoke. When he had delivered himself of his short address, Willie Keane, who was standing at the top of the line of men, stepped out. I admired Keane that night as he proceeded to put the situated right. Standing next to [redacted], he addressed us, saying, "I am Vice Brigade Commandant and, acting under the authority of Brigadier Paddy Paul, I now take over command here. All men immediately fall in to rank and stand to attention". [redacted] at once walked over and stood at the end of the line of men. Willie Keane's handling of the situation gave me a new confidence, and a few minutes later a man arrived with a canvas bag full of cartirdges which Willie Keane distributed. I think I had about a dozen or so. Others had somewhat less, as they were further down the line.

The ammunition having been issued, Willie Keane announced that we were going across country to our destination. He did not disclose the name of the latter. He told us that Tommy Brennan, who would act as guide, would go ahead about a field in front of us and we would follow his signal which was the call of a curlew. I should like to mention here that Tommy Brennan's imitation of the curlew's call was positively perfect. The time was now roughly about 7.30 p.m. on 7th January, 1921. It was a dark cloudy night at that time.

We made our journey on foot across country and it was only when we had gone about six miles that I learned that our destination was Tramore. I consider the latter statement an important one, owing to the many rumours I have since heard over the years regarding all the people who knew beforehand that the Tramore ambush was taking place. I was acting as Company Intelligence officer at this period and my closest friend was the Battalion Intelligence officer; neither of us had any prior knowledge of the ambush.

The only incident worth recording en route was, after we had climbed out over a ditch on to the Old Tramore road, near Castletown, about two and a half miles east of Tramore; orders had been given for all guns to be loaded in case of a surprise meeting with enemy forces. I can recall speaking with Michael McGrath of "D" Company who was killed later that night. He told me that, having inserted cartridges in his shotgun, he discovered that one of them had jammed and could not be ejected. I went with him into a house where he borrowed some implement and forced the cartridge out.

The cartridges with which we were served that night had, I understand, been made at Headquarters in Dublin. They contained heavy buckshot. I have an impression that they were so packed as to make their ejection difficult from the gun after firing. I had a single-barrelled gun myself that night, but, as it was somewhat of a crock, I could not altogether attribute the fact that the fired cartridge had to be prised out afterwards by me, was due to the cartridges being overpacked.

On reaching the roadway, we advanced at the double so as to reach our destination in time. We were finally halted by the O/C, Willie Keane, on the Ballynattin Road. This road extends from the junction of the Dunmore East-Tramore-Waterford roads and sweeps by the shrine erected since the ambush. The position is about a mile east of Tramore town. We sat around on the ditches here, resting. The time was about 10 p.m.

In the course of conversation which I overheard amongst some of our officers, I learned that we were waiting there for the arrival of the West Waterford flying column and would not go into action until they came. We had been there about twenty minutes or so when word was conveyed to Paddy Paul, Brigade O/C, (who had joined us) by some members of the Tramore Company of the I.R.A. that a police patrol had gone back into Tramore barracks. I learned that it was intended to shoot this patrol which action would, in turn, bring the military out from Waterford and they were to be ambushed by us at the Metal Bridge. The latter is a railway bridge, situated about three-quarters of a mile from Tramore on the east side and crosses the main

Tramore-Waterford road. On learning that the police patrol had entered their barracks, Paddy Paul decided that the barracks should be attacked, to draw the military out from Waterford.

There was a period of suspense for about half an hour as we awaited the arrival of the West Waterford column and it would be about 10.30 p.m. when Paddy Paul rushed up the Ballynattin road and warned us not to fire on a party of men approaching the road, as they were men of the West Waterford column. The column marched up, two deep, and, having halted, Pax Whelan, their O/C, had all our contingent lined up for an arms inspection. Each man's gun was inspected separately and it was during this inspection that the gun of a man behind me suddenly went off. I understand that he had some drink taken and was one of the three men from the Ferrybank unit who who were under the influence of drink. Paddy Paul immediately disarmed this man as he did the other two Ferrybank men. I say this latter because, before we went into action later, I heard Paul say he had thrown these men a couple of revolvers in order that they might defend themselves.

Following on the inspection of arms, we broke up while a hurried conference went on between the officers from East and West Waterford. After the conference, Paddy Paul told us that it was intended to make a feint attack on the police barracks and he asked for five volunteers for the job. I was amongst the five who volunteered. The others included, so far as I can recall, the late Sean Brett of Waterford city and Willie Gallagher, an attendant in Waterford Mental Hospital.

During the time I lived in Waterford city in which I was born, I knew comparatively little about the geography of Tramore, outside, of course, the sea-front. A guide, whose name I cannot now remember, led our group of five under the Metal Bridge where we saw, as we passed, the first preparations going on for the laying of the ambush barricade. Our guide brought us through Tramore via the Upper Branch Road and we halted at the top of Train Hill from whence we were led by Mickey Bishop to the back of the police barracks.

Our instructions from Paddy Paul were that, on hearing the first shot from the front of the barracks, we were to blaze away at the rear. We took up a position behind a stone wall, about four feet high..

After a few moments, the attack opened in front and we immediately commenced firing. Each of the five of us was armed with a shotgun, and each emptied his gun in quick succession, thus giving the impression to the police of continuous firing from the rear. The police returned the fire and sent up Verey lights. The firing from the barracks grew in intensity. One of our men had just lifted his gun off the wall when a rifle grenade struck the point. It was just at this juncture that we heard the prearranged cease fire signal from the front of the barracks, viz., two prolonged whistle blasts. Immediately we pulled out under rapid fire from the police. On our way back towards the Metal Bridge, I met one man from West Waterford who was at the front of the barracks;as we trotted along the road, he mentioned a significant event to me. He told me that it was announced by the British that martial law in Co. Waterford was to come into force at midnight that night. "And

here we are", says he, "giving a fine reception to it."

On reaching the Metal Bridge, I saw the barricade erected on the road, about six yards from the bridge on the Tramore side.

When I returned to my original position on the Ballynattin Road, I was there only a matter of minutes when I heard Willie Keane shout, "There they go, lads". I looked and saw the Verey lights in the sky coming from the R.I.C. barracks. A very short while after, I again heard Willie Keane saying, "They're coming, lads. They're coming". And with that, I could see lights from cars in the distance approaching from Waterford on the main Tramore-Waterford road.

The instructions which had been given to me that night were as follows. The shotgun party, to which I was attached, were to leave the first British lorry pass and to hold fire until the second lorry was immediately in front of us on the main road. This would mean that, by the time the second lorry would have reached us, the first lorry would have rounded the corner under the Metal Bridge, struck the barricade and would be dealt with by our men at that side. A further instruction was that, if things got too hot and our position on the Ballynattin Road became untenable, we were to fall back under cover of the riflemen who were stationed further up above us on the main road. The final instruction given me was that, if an order to fall back was given, it would be passed along the line from man to man.

I have one pleasant recollection of that night. It was just after I had seen the first glimpse of the lights of the first British lorry. Jimmy McGrath, my

Company Captain, came over to me on his way down the road to take up his allotted position. He said, "You are now going into action, lads. Remember you belong to "D" Company".

The first British lorry came along down the main Tramore-Waterford road and, when almost in front of our position, shooting began to take place. The shots were not from our side of the road, but came from the neighbourhood of the lorry. In the meantime, this lorry ran on for about ten yards and pulled up with lights full on. We were dumbfounded as the firing became more intense. There was shouting going on amongst our lads on the road at the untoward turn of events. Finally, some of our boys opened fire on the standing lorry and I myself did likewise.

My recollection then is of increasing gunfire coming in our direction. It increased again after a few minutes, and finally the top of the ditch where we were holding on was being swept by rifle and machine-gun fire. A number of our men below me were retreating hurriedly up the Ballynattin Road, but, as I had got no order along the line as promised, I hung on. The man immediately below me told me that the men lower down from us had fallen back, but I replied that I was ordered to stay here until word came to retreat and that I had got no such word to retreat. The result of all this was that, after a while, I could see nobody except my friend on my right. After a time, I said to him that there seemed to be nobody down here but the two of us and that we had better fall back. I can recall crouching close to the ditch almost opposite where the present shrine now stands. Willie Keane was there, also Michael Wyley and others,

whose names I cannot remember. Suddenly I heard the accent of English soldiers at the other side of the ditch against which I crouched. I involuntarily pulled away and then felt a sharp prod of pain in the back of my neck. I can only remember a sensation as if sailing through the air and of noticing a pungent smell of gunpowder. I dropped unconscious on the road but must have been only momentarily stunned because, when I came to, the action was still proceeding.

I was lying on my back, with shooting going on all around me. My first idea was to crawl away to where I could get some cover. I tried to move but was the same as if I was pinned to the ground. I made up my mind then that I was going to die, as I can recall the sensation of my hands and feet being very cold. I felt perfectly conscious in mind, tried to pray but could not do so. I had been at Confession the previous afternoon and felt satisfied to die. So clear was my state of consciousness that I began to take an interest in the outcome of the action. It was the first major action in our Brigade area and I had long looked forward to it.

As I lay on the road, I can recall the British officer shouting, "Come on, lads! Get out and get into them". The British appeared to line the inside ditch on the Tramore side of the Ballynattin Road. The group of our lads, who had been on that road, were in a position behind the ditch at the other side of the road.

As the British officer urged on his men, they shouted, "Bayonet the b-------s! Bayonet the b----s!", and then fired their rifles. It was after this shouting had occurred three or four times that I heard

the sound of an Irish voice, in good thick brogue, coming from the other side of the road. The voice shouted, "Up the rebels! Give it to the suckers!", followed up by a blast of gunfire. At this, a silence fell on the English soldiers on their side of the ditch.

I would like to state here, before continuing my story further, that the incident I have mentioned was, I believe, the turning point in the night's events because the soldiers appeared to have moved on up through the fields, in line with the Ballynattin Road, in an easterly direction, and to have come out on to the road a fair distance up. On hearing the shout from the I.R.A. men, followed by the blast of fire, they probably assumed that a fresh group of I.R.A. were going into action and this, to my mind, accounts for the British deploying through the fields and entering on to the road further up.

I was lying on the road for probably a further five minutes, or maybe more, following an easing down in the firing, when I heard a solitary footstep coming down the road. Actually, it was a British soldier who was coming down in advance of a party who were following behind. He stood when he came near me, and the next thing I knew was I heard a shot, and a rifle bullet passed through my ribs. I will digress here to describe exactly the thought which came into my mind as I received that bullet whilst lying wounded on the ground. I recalled in a flash the sufferings of the Wexford insurgents at the hands of the Yeos in the '98 Rising, about which I had read in Father Kavanagh's history, and the thought was very soothing to me. I mention this expressly to illustrate to the young what a valuable asset a knowledge of Irish history can be.

Owing to the numbness of my body, when I received the bullet in the ribs, I experienced no feeling of pain; it was merely the same sensation as if someone had touched me with a finger. I should have mentioned earlier, by the way, that as I received the first bullet in the neck, I also received another one in the small of the back, close to the spine. I did not feel the pain of this or the third bullet; I merely felt the pain of the first one.

Owing to my not having moaned on receiving the last bullet, the soldier must have concluded that I was dead. Had I moaned, I should certainly have received yet another bullet.

On firing into me, the British soldier walked a few paces down the road and would be about in line with my feet when I heard the sounds of someone running up the road. The soldier shouted, "Halt, hands up". Two shots rang out almost simultaneously at close range, and the next thing I knew was that the soldier was lying on the road beside me. My face was to the ground but I was very much aware of his presence, owing to his cursing and blaspheming, in the most vile terms, the Sinn Féiners and the --- I.R.A. He seemed to be in great pain as he moaned loudly between his outbursts of cursing. At this time, having received the third bullet, I made up my mind I was dying and that it would be only a matter of moments until I passed out.

We were lying side by side for a few minutes when I heard distinctly the tramp of marching feet down the road. They proved to be the British, and I assume they were the party of soldiers who had retreated through the

fields at the juncture I mentioned earlier and had now come out on the Ballynattin road, a good distance up from where the actual fighting had been taking place. I judged it to be a good distance, owing to the period of time that elapsed from the moment one of our men shouted, "Up the rebels", etc., to the time that the soldiers marched down the road and reached the spot where I lay.

On seeing both of us, the British officer asked the soldier on the ground who was it that shot him. (I knew he was an officer because the soldier addressed him as "Sir".) I take it that the officer assumed that it was I who shot the soldier. The wounded man replied that "two b----s who had gone up the road did it". The officer asked him where he was hit, and the soldier replied, "In the groin, sir". Immediately, the officer ordered that the soldier be carried down to a lorry. As this was being done, I heard the soldiers group around where I was lying. One of them asked, "Is this bloke finished?" I could distinguish the officer's voice replying, "Yes, that fellow is out alright". One of the soldiers then said, "Maybe he is only shamming. Turn him over." I felt myself being caught and thrown over on my back. I should here say that, at no time in my life had I anything like a cool, calm nerve, and anything I did now, I do not attribute to myself but to my Maker. As they flung me over on my back, I remembered to keep my eyes closed and to lie still on the ground. I could again distinguish the officer's voice amidst all the babel of shouting when he said, "Yes, that fellow is finished".

They did not make any attempt to feel my pulse or my heart, and I was conscious enough at the time to

think of this. One of the soldiers then kicked me in the ribs, but again there was no sense of pain. It was then that one of them placed the butt end of his rifle on my forehead. I thought to myself, "He is going to crush in my skull; it will only be a moment's pain and then all will be over". However, after a few moments, he lifted the butt of his rifle from off my forehead and I now assume that the man was merely leaning on his rifle and probably felt he might as well lean on a dead man as lean on the ground.

It was just at this point that I heard soldiers running across the road away from me. I did not know what was wrong for a split second until I heard them shout, "You b - d, you b - d, bayonet the b - d!" The officer, who appeared by the sound of his voice to be standing close to me, called out, "Don't shoot him! Take him prisoner!" The whole party then seemed to rush away from me, and I can remember well the shouts of the soldiers as they appeared to beat this man with their rifle butts. I should have said that, on their rushing away from me at first, I heard, in vivid contrast to all the English accents, a few words spoken in a County Waterford accent. What the man said, I do not know, but I can clearly recall that no moan came from this man who was apparently being murdered. I assume that, on receiving the first stroke of a rifle butt on, perhaps, the head, he was rendered unconscious and this would explain the absence of any moan or further words from him.

All this time I kept my eyes rigidly closed. I can recall the officer's voice directly his men to take

the man they had attacked down to a lorry, presumably. The man wasn't dead then but had likely been beaten into unconsciousness. I can clearly recollect the grating of the man's boots on the road as he was being dragged along, possibly by the head and arms.

It was at this point that I began to think that the British officer seemed to be a fairly decent man who was trying to hold his men in check. I came to this conclusion, firstly, by his assuring the soldiers that I was dead when they wanted to turn me over; again, his orders to them not to shoot the man at the other side of the road, but, instead, to take him prisoner. I began to consider the officer to be at least human, and I said to myself, "The best thing I can do now" - as the party moved away with their prisoner - "is to shout to the English officer that I was alive and to take me prisoner". My reason for this was that I had tried to move my body prior to receiving the third bullet but could not do so. I argued with myself, "These men will come back for me again and, finding me alive, will brutally murder me". I omitted to state earlier that, just prior to the English soldiers discovering the other I.R.A. man on the road a few yards away from me, the officer said (referring to me), "Take away his gun. We will come back for the body later".

As they dragged Tom O'Brien away (afterwards I discovered it was Tom O'Brien of the Dunhill Company they had taken prisoner), I made up my mind to surrender to the officer, in the wild hope of saving myself from being murdered outright, when somebody over my head seemed to whisper to me to leave things alone and - this I did.

As the footsteps of the soldiers walking down the road died down, I had begun to entertain the hope that I was to be spared. I tried again to move. To my amazement, I found I was able to roll my body slowly across the road. I reached the ditch to my right, about opposite to where the present memorial shrine now stands. (I am able to fix on this point because I understand there was a large pool of blood found on the road the following morning where the shrine now stands, and this I assume was where poor Tom O'Brien received his battering). On reaching the ditch, I commenced clawing at the grass and I can remember dragging myself, animal-like, up towards the top. The fence in question would be about two feet or more in height. I managed to drag myself on to the top of it where I lay on my stomach in a see-saw position. I clawed the grass further and the weight of my body somersaulted me into the field below. The drop into the field would be about four feet, and the field itself was on a steep decline. I continued crawling through the grass, and I had now definitely made up my mind that God was going to spare me.

By this time, I could see the lights of a lorry below me on the main Waterford-Tramore road. There was spasmodic firing going on a little distance away from me and steady firing was still continuing in the direction of Tramore. I omitted mentioning earlier that the police in Tramore barracks continued firing after the barracks attack, and this firing was repeated right through to the time the ambush of the military began, until the time of which I now speak - a period of an hour or more. Quite possibly the garrison were jittery and this probably accounted for the sustained fire they kept up.

As I crawled slowly through the grass, my main object was to get as far as possible out of the area where the British military were. My first idea was to crawl down towards a pool of water at the bottom of the field and try to cross over it; my intention was to try and get to one of the cottages on the outskirts of Tramore where I could seek to have my wounds attended to. As far as I can recall, I had this in mind when I decided to remove a heavy overcoat I was wearing, as I felt that, in my weakened state, it was impeding my progress. I undid my bandolier and my belt whilst lying on the ground. I also opened the buttons of my overcoat. I remained lying down as I dared not assume even a crouching position in case of being seen by the British. These two lights from the lorry on the road served as a warning to me every moment of this time. Having removed my coat, I found I could move with a little more ease. I had no sensation of pain whatsoever, merely a feeling of great weakness. A burst of firing suddenly broke out within what appeared to be a few yards of me. I immediately rolled myself into a cutting in the field and found then that I was lying in water, but I was lower than the surface of the field and would not be easily observed.

I have a feeling that this latter incident may have helped me greatly in another way. All my wounds, being in the back of the body from the neck downwards, were probably staunched somewhat by lying in the water for a period. It was days afterwards when the latter viewpoint struck me.

As the latest burst of firing died down, I crawled

towards the pool at the end of the slope, but, on looking at it, I decided that, in my weak state, it would be a risky thing to attempt to cross it, even though there might be only a few inches of water in it, so I gave up the idea. On leaving the pool, I decided to try and get into the adjoining field which would put a further distance between myself and the enemy. I crawled over towards the fence which would mean that I was now moving parallel with the Ballynattin Road and eastwards in the direction of Dunmore East. The night was dark and, as I reached the fence, I found it was a thick hedge planted on a fence about two feet high. I tried at three or four points for an opening to drag myself through, but I failed on each occasion. I can remember quite clearly then crawling some yards down by the side of the fence, stopping and saying fervently the following prayer: "Lord, if You wish me to die tonight, I am perfectly satisfied; if You wish that I shall live tonight, I will be perfectly satisfied also". Having said this prayer, I moved again towards the fence and I can truthfully say that I pushed my head and wounded body through that fence, the same almost as if somebody was pulling me through. I learned afterwards that my face and hands were covered with blood through being torn by the briars in the hedge, but, in my excitement at getting through, I simply felt no pain.

On tumbling into the next field, I was now firmly convinced that the Lord was going to spare me my life. I crawled again through the next field and decided I would try and get out on the road. My reason for this decision was the fear of collapsing in the field where I would just linger on a bit, and die.

If, I argued, I got out on the road, I could perhaps make my way to some house and ask assistance.

I would like at this stage, from the point of view of the future reader of this history, to set down my thoughts at this particular time.

Firstly, in my efforts to move, I used think of the dear ones of my own family and, if any of them happened to be near me now, how they would gladly have helped me to safety. Again, as I staggered along, I used think on Our Divine Lord staggering along under the weight of His Cross up the hill of Calvary. Another thought which frequently occurred to me was this. About a month previously I had read in the 'Irish Independent' of a raid on the home of a wanted I.R.A. man in some part of Ireland. In the course of the raid, the wanted man escaped out through the back of his house which was situated in a country district. The English raiding party fired at him several times as he made his escape, but he successfully got away. The following morning the dead body of that I.R.A. man was found a few fields from his own home, with his folded coat underneath his head as a pillow. Seemingly, he had been hit by bullets as he rushed away and he kept moving until he collapsed and could go no further, whereupon he divested himself of his coat, placed it on the ground as a pillow, laid his head on it, and died. Several times during that night I used ask myself, "Will I too have to do the same as the I.R.A. man who made a pillow of his coat?"

I have digressed in setting out those thoughts of mine for one purpose alone. Historical novels

dealing with this period will be written in the future, and the setting down of one's thoughts under the shadow of death will help to provide truthful data to any future Irish historical novelist.

As I neared the roadside, I saw a small cottage. I had been crawling all the time up to this, and thought now that, if I tried, perhaps I could stand and then make faster progress. I made the effort and, to my amazement, found I could stand, but I had to remain in a crouching position standing, as I was unable to straighten my back. I was delighted at this discovery and slowly made my way out on the roadside. All this time, the shooting was going on intermittently down around the ambush point and also from the police barracks at Tramore. I assume that the British continued firing at random into clumps of bushes, as possible places where some of our men might be lurking.

On approaching the cottage which I have referred to, I knocked at the door and got no reply. There were no lights in the windows. I was feeling very weak and tired, and went over to what looked like a henhouse, with the idea of lying in there. Again, something beyond me prompted me not to do so, but to move on further, which I did. Actually, this house was the one on the road nearest to the scene of the ambush, and it was searched and ransacked by the English forces a short while afterwards.

I then decided to make my way into an adjoining field, as the noise of firing seemed very close to me. I did this, got through to another field, and then, to my great joy, saw a labourer's cottage with lights in

the windows. Some day, with God's help, I hope to see Heaven. I should say that my feelings on that day will be akin to the feelings I had when I saw the lights in that cottage.

I dragged myself on to the road and made my way up the path to the door of the cottage. A man was standing at the door. I spoke to him, telling him I had been wounded in the ambush and asked for help from the people inside to bandage my wounds. I should here add that I had a Red Cross bag with my equipment but, when I removed my overcoat, I had thrown the bag away with my bandolier. The man mumbled something and walked in front of me into a kitchen. I followed him. There were two women there, one of whom burst into tears when she saw me (I suppose there was a fair share of blood on me). I asked them to get some cloth and bandage me. One woman said she was mistress of the house but that she would be frightened to look at the wounds. The woman who was crying said she didn't live there at all; she belonged to a cottage down the road. I then asked the man for a drink of water which he gave me. I can remember asking them if they would let me lie on a bed to rest. I should point out here that, with the shock and loss of blood, one could not think very coherently, as certainly it was very foolish of me to ask these people to allow me to lie in bed in the house, so close to the ambush.

When I made the request about the bed, I was met with silence whereupon I decided to make my way further. The long drink of water had refreshed me. As I went towards the door, I heard a burst of rifle fire which seemed fairly near. I said to the man at the door

that I was going to try and make my way to another house, that I was very weak and afraid I would collapse on the way. I asked him to walk a bit along the road with me and allow me to link his arm. He answered me, saying he could not leave the women, to which I replied angrily, "You are fine types of people for men to be fighting for!" He made no reply.

I made my way out on the road again. I was walking, but with my head bowed down in front like an old woman. It was the only posture that I could hold my body in. I have a recollection of seeing another cottage with no light in it. I KNOCKED. A man's voice enquired, "Who is there?" I told him I was an I.R.A. man and gave my name. I did this because there was a second cousin of mine living about three miles further on, and, following my reception at the first house, I thought that my relationship with a neighbour might encourage this man to help me. When I mentioned that I had been wounded and wanted to get in, the man commenced shouting something like, "Oh, God help me! I'm going to be murdered! Go away! Go away!", and repeated this several times. The voice appeared to be that of an old man who, possibly, was in bed. I got worried in case the shouting would be overheard by any of the British military whose presence could be near me or otherwise - I could not tell. I, therefore, made my way on to the road again.

I can recall coming to a place called the Horse-shoe Bend, where I saw a man lying on the side of the road. I went over and looked at him. He appeared to be a tramp asleep. I take it, it must have been a drunken sleep, for otherwise the noise of the firing

which was even then going on would have awakened him. For a moment, I toyed with the idea of awaking him and asking him to give me a hand along the road but, on second thoughts, I decided not to disturb him in case he might be the type who would hand me over to the British in return for a reward, so I continued on my way.

At this time I was at the hairpin bend on the Ballynattin road and about one and a quarter miles from the scene of the ambush. As I approached the bend, I could hear the sound of a lorry. I looked ahead and could see faintly its lights coming towards me. Immediately I commenced clawing at the ditch for fair life until I had dragged myself across it and then fell into the field on the other side. I waited for the lorry to pass, but I heard no sound. After a few moments, I peeped over the ditch up the road. There was no sign of a lorry. I made my way a little through the field parallel with the road. There was still no sign of any lorry. It began to dawn on me then that maybe I was just imagining there was a lorry, this being due to my loss of blood. However, I crept back on to the road some distance up, and discovered there was no lorry there at all.

I remember now getting frightened, as I felt myself growing weaker and very, very tired. The remembrance of the I.R.A. man who died with his head resting on his coat was now with me very much, and, as I passed a couple of bohereens leading to farmhouses, I decided not to walk up, in case I collapsed on the way. This may seem peculiar reasoning now, but it should be remembered that I was very weak and, naturally, my powers

of reasoning were very limited. I decided to move on until I met a house on the side of the road where I could seek assistance.

My recollection of events is a bit hazy at this point. I have an idea I may have tried to get into a house and failed. My most clear recollection out of this blur was of coming to a farmyard gate, which I entered, and made my way towards the door of the house. I knocked a few times, and a voice called out who was there. I replied that I was an I.R.A. man wounded in a fight with the British near Tramore, and that my wounds needed bandaging. I remember also saying I was very weak and asked for some place to lie down. He answered me, saying, "How do I know who you are? You might be some prime boy who just wants a chance to get in here?" I tried to ease his fears and asked him did he not hear the firing which was still going on in the direction of Ballynattin. He said something to the effect that, if he let me in and the soldiers found me there, they would burn the house over his head. Again I appealed to him, and this time he undid the bolt inside and opened the door. He seemed a middle-aged man and was standing with only his shirt on him. I think he had a candle in his hand. As he looked at me, he seemed at once to take pity on my appearance, for he said, "I'll let you in, even if they burn the place on me". I was overjoyed and went into the kitchen.

In my feeling of gratitude to him, I told him my name was Whittle, a cousin of Paddy Whittle who lived about two miles further up the road. I probably told him this to try and cement my welcome. The moment he heard me say this, I could see his attitude

change. I had asked him earlier for a drink of water. He said to me, "I won't give you water. I'll give you a drop of whiskey". He went into a room and I have a faint recollection of hearing a woman's voice as well as his in that room. He came out with a bottle, half-full of whiskey, and told me to take a swig. I asked him to put some water in it as it might be too strong for me to take it raw. He did so, and, handing me the bottle, told me to take a drink, and added, "You can have the bottle. It will help you on the road. You won't take long now in making your way up to the house of your cousin, Paddy Whittle".

I was disappointed but I drank some of the whiskey and made my way out on to the road again. It may have been the result of the whiskey, but the firing seemed to be only a few yards away. I returned to the house again and, telling the man that the firing was very near, asked him to help me along the road to my cousin's house. He replied, "You want too much now". So I again went back on to the road.

I don't know how far I had walked. I can remember holding the bottle of whiskey tightly. I felt it was the only friend I had outside, of course, God, and, by taking an occasional sip, I could battle my way on. As I have said, I don't know how far I walked when, suddenly, I saw a gate to a house and entered. I approached the house and could see the door and windows plainly. I knocked at the door with my fist but touched something soft. I put my hand forward again, and what I felt was hay. Then it dawned on me that I was standing in front of a hayrick and there was no house there at all. I made up my

mind then that I could go no further, so, pulling out some hay with my hand, I made a rough sop in the ground and lay down in the field.

I appeared to have collapsed because, the moment I lay on the ground, I remember no more. When I came to, it was raining a thick mist and the dawn was just beginning to break. I tried to get up and, for the first time since I received that sharp prod of pain from the first bullet, I experienced great pains around my back when I tried to move. After a series of efforts, I got to my feet, and I can remember my head hanging very low as I tried to walk. I then remembered the whiskey bottle and went to take a sip; alas it was empty. I must have knocked it over as I went to lie down.

I made my way along by the hayrick and I saw, a few yards from me, a small house with a light in the window and a man standing at the door. The first signs of daylight were now appearing.

I went over to this man, told him I was wounded and that I was making for the house of Paddy Whittle, my cousin. He merely replied to me that Paddy Whittle's house was about a quarter of a mile further up the road. I did not ask this man for assistance and he proffered none. I was now suffering from acute pain as well as extreme fatigue.

I have no recollection of anything from this onwards. My next remembrance of things was seeing the gate of my cousin's farmyard which was open. I can clearly remember hearing the sounds of firing from Tramore which was four miles away. There was light

in the kitchen window and the door was open. I staggered inside. A boy of about thirteen years of age was sitting turning the fan at the fire. On seeing me, he jumped up and said, "Ah, poor Paddy, you're all covered with blood! What happened to you?" I made my way over to the settle seat by the fire. The boy had been making tea. I asked him for a cup which he gave me, and I'm sure I must have drank that tea in one draught. I asked for a cigarette. The boy gave me one from a package of Woodbines. Actually, the lad was a milk boy, employed there by my cousin. He was from Waterford city and recognised me.

Immediately on pouring out the cup of tea, he rushed into the bedroom of Paddy Whittle, my cousin, and his wife and told them of my arrival. Poor little chap, he was the first kind person I had met since I was wounded. I can recall clearly seeing him watching me drinking the tea and repeating, "Poor Paddy, poor Paddy" which latter he thought was my name.

My cousin's wife then came out to the kitchen. I asked her to bandage my wounds. She said, as far as I can remember, that she couldn't bear to look at them. The poor woman, I could plainly see, was only concerned with getting me out as quickly as possible, being concerned apparently more with her own safety than with mine. She said to me that Willie (the milk boy) would be going in to Waterford soon with the milk and that I could lie down in the cart and he would leave me in to the Infirmary. Blurred and all as my mind was at the time, God gave me savvy enough to turn down the suggestion.

I was told afterwards by Doctor Philip Purcell of Parnell Street, Waterford, that what happened exactly in my cousin, Paddy Whittle's kitchen that morning, January 8th, 1921, was as follows: I asked Mrs. Whittle for a pen and paper, and wrote a brief note to Dr. Phil Purcell, who was our family doctor at the time, telling him I had been wounded. I understand that I also suggested that, if a horse and cart were sent out for me, I could be removed to some destination, the location of which I have forgotten. All this latter points to my reasoning power being at a very low ebb at the time. The one thing that God appeared to have left to me at this juncture was my will. I gave this note to the milk-boy, telling him to put it inside his stocking and, although I do not now remember saying this, I most probably warned him not to mention my whereabouts to anybody.

In the meantime, my cousin, Paddy Whittle, had come out from his bedroom (he and his wife have since died), and I could see the battle of wits going on between husband and wife. My relative struck me as wavering under his wife's pressure to get me out of the house, but he was, in the main, backing my remaining there. At length, his better self seemed to assert itself because, after a while, he clearly gave me to understand I was welcome.

I was taken to a bedroom and lay in my clothes on the bed. I should have said that, on my arrival in the house, I was wet to the skin, and my clothes, I understand, were smeared with blood and mud. I lay in the bed, fully dressed, for some short time when the terrible pain, caused by lying, urged me to call my

cousin and ask him to lead me back again to the seat by the fire where, by sitting in a sort of half-reclining position, with my body held rigid, I could obtain more ease.

The day dragged on like this. I can remember little about it except two things. One was the efforts of my cousin to be kind to me; the other was the utter silence of the woman of the house all day long.

It was, I believe, about 3 p.m. that evening when Doctor Purcell arrived in his car. He undressed me by cutting my clothes with a scissors. He then drew, with a forceps, a revolver bullet from the small of my back, close to the spine, bandaged all my wounds and lifted me into bed.

I can remember Doctor Purcell emptying his cigarette case on the bedside table and whispering to me, under no circumstances to leave the house, no matter what was said to me. He told me that some of the lads with Paddy Paul would come later that night and shift me and Mickey Wyley (who was also wounded and in a house in the neighbourhood) to the Mental Hospital, Waterford. He said it was the safest place in the county to get to, and he warned me, on no account to mention to anyone in the house where I was going. He had scarcely left the house when I fell off into a deep sleep.

About 7 p.m. I awoke, with the noise of footsteps in the room. Brigade O/C, Paddy Paul, Tom Brennan of "D" Company, Waterford City Battalion, and a man, named Whittle, were there. I learned that Mickey Wiley, also wounded, was outside the house in a pony and trap at the time. As Doctor Purcell had burned my clothes that day, to remove every trace of my being there, I was bundled

into a suit given me by my cousin, Paddy Whittle, and, with Paddy Paul's overcoat around me (it was very cold), I was put into the trap with Wyley, and we set out on the road to Waterford, Tom Brennan riding on a bicycle, about a hundred yards ahead, to give warning (by lighting a cigarette) if he thought a military lorry was approaching.

We drove to Waterford by various bye-roads, and I can clearly remember seeing a line of lights from lorries of British troops down on the main Waterford-Tramore road as we drove along on the upper road. We arrived without incident at the gate of the Mental Hospital. Jack Edwards, who was afterwards killed in the Civil War, was on duty inside the gate. I recognised his voice as he shouted to us on our way in. A few moments later, I was lifted out of the trap and placed on a stretcher. I have no further recollection of what happened that night except a faint recollection of being placed on a bed.

We were ten days, in all, in the Mental Hospital. We were placed in a medical wing attached to the Hospital, so that the frequent attendance of doctors on us would attract no undue notice.

The first three or four days were more or less a blank to me. I can, however, recall the severe pain, particularly at night, and experiencing a scaldingly hot feeling all over my body. There are two incidents which I can remember during this period. I recall an attendant standing on the ledge of the window overlooking the Ballytruckle road and describing to me the funeral of my comrade, Michael McGrath of "D"

Company, who was killed in the Tramore ambush on the night of January 7th, 1921. I also remember Willie Gallagher, an attendant in the hospital and a member of "D" Company, warning me to be careful what I said in the presence of the night watchman, whose job it was to supervise two medical wards during the night and who was a Redmondite. In fairness to the latter, I would like to put on record that, despite the fact that it was this man's duty to flash a lamp over the bed of every patient in the two wards once every half-hour, he remained by my bedside faithfully during my most trying hours. I should add that, if my own mother were there, she could not have been kinder to me. I learned a lesson during these three or four days that I shall always remember.

About a week elapsed when, one morning, an attendant, who was also an I.R.A. man, rushed into our ward and informed us that the British had raided the County Infirmary (in the same street) the previous night and, an hour ago, had raided St. Patrick's Hospital on the opposite side of the road. It was, thereupon, decided to move Mickey Wyley and myself to the refractory ward. This was deemed the safest place in the building in the event of a raid by the British. After a few hours we were removed to another ward where, I remember, we were warned to behave as madmen, as some of the inmates were very cute and might speak out, should the English soldiers come to raid. We feigned insanity as best we could.

The next day, Doctor Fitzgerald, the Resident Medical Superintendent, told us we were being removed from the Institution that evening. I should add here

that I learned afterwards that, prior to our arrival in the Mental Hospital on January 8th, 1921, two faked certificates had been made out on our behalf by, I think, Dr. Vincent White of Waterford. In my certificate it was stated I was James Power of some address in Dunhill, Co. Waterford, and certified as insane. Both of the certificates were held by the R.M.S. in case of awkward questions being asked about us.

Before continuing my narrative, I would like to record the following incident which occurred during my stay in the Mental Hospital, Waterford. I was about a week there when the Vice Brigadier of the East Waterford Brigade, named Willia Keane, came to me and told me that the Brigade staff had issued an order to the effect that all the houses, whose occupants refused me help or entry on the night I was wounded, should be burned out. He asked me to give him all the particulars I could concerning each such house. I lay back in the bed in silence. I was bandaged from my neck to my wrist, and I argued within myself that, as God had been so terribly good to spare my life in such a miraculous fashion as He had done, it would be poor gratitude on my part if I were now to be the cause of wreaking evil on others. Having summed up the position in my own mind thus, I told Vice Brigadier Keane that, as God had been so good in sparing me through that terrible night, I would consider it wrong to be hard now on others. He asked me again to give the names, but I was adamant and refused. It was months afterwards that I learned from Joe MacDonagh, a brother of the executed 1916 leader, that I.R.A. General Headquarters had issued an order for the burning of these houses but that my want of co-operation in giving the exact location "cut across"

the order.

Referring back to my removal from the Mental Hospital after about ten days' there, I was taken (with Mick Wyley) by night in a motor car, driven by Pierce Durand of Waterford, an I.R.A. man, accompanied by Vice Brigadier Willie Keane and Tom Brennan. We were taken to the farmhouse of Mrs. Nano Power of Callaghane, about four and a half miles east of Waterford city, on a side road, a little distance away from the main Dunmore East road. It was as we drove out through the hospital gates that Willie Keane informed me that the Brigade staff had decided the previous week to announce me, officially, as dead. The reason he gave for this decision was this. As a result of my giving my name in some of the houses to which I called for help on the night I was wounded, it became known generally, but particularly to the police and military, that I had been wounded and they were searching intensively for me. It was with a view to having the search called off that the decision to announce me as being dead was made. Willie Keane added that my father, mother, sisters and brother knew I was alive, but, on the directions of the Brigade, they closed their shop for a day, pulled down the window blinds and went into mourning.

On arriving at Mrs. Power's house, we were warmly received. She was a fine, noble type of Irish countrywoman, and we were particularly blessed in the fact that her man-servant (she was a widow) was Paddy Kennedy, the trustworthy Intelligence officer of the 3rd Battalion, East Waterford Brigade. The day following our coming to Mrs. Power's house, we learned from the local I.R.A. Commandant, Bobby Nugent, that

eleven hours after we had left the Mental Hospital, the place was thoroughly searched by the British, who even took the precaution of turning down the bed-clothes from every youthful-looking patient and examining his body for wounds.

Following the raid on the Mental Hospital, Brigadier Paddy Paul placed Mrs. Power's house out-of-bounds to everybody except the three of four staff officers who knew our whereabouts, with the result that, in a few days, we were in a bad way for want of medical attention as our wounds were again becoming very sore for lack of dressing. I do not blame anybody for this, as our staff officers in Waterford were trying to save us by keeping our whereabouts an absolute secret and probably overlooked the question of the daily bandaging of the wounds.

It was about mid-week of the first week in Mrs. Power's that Paddy Kennedy decided to walk across country to Dunmore East, about seven miles from Callaghane, to bring along Doctor Brennan of Dunmore to visit us. Doctor Brennan was a native of Co. Clare and a first cousin to Austin Brennan, the well-known Clare I.R.A. leader. In the very early hours of the morning, Dr. Brennan arrived with Paddy Kennedy; both had come on foot from Dunmore East. Dr. Brennan cut off the old bandages and did a complete job of work on our wounds.

I would like to state here that, during our stay at Callaghane which was roughly a fortnight, Paddy Kennedy appeared to remain up all night on guard, and yet he carried on his duties about the house during

the daytime. The poor fellow (since dead) was a hunchback and had a short leg. He was a man of great courage and a fine Intelligence officer. He used to say to Mick Wyley and me, as we went to bed at nights, "If the British come to-night, I will open fire on them and, when ye hear the shots, try and get out through the back window. I will guarantee to hold them off until I think ye are well away". We used say, "What about yourself, Paddy?" And poor Paddy would smile and reply, "Ah, don't mind me!" I can recall him pushing in our bedroom door at different hours during the night and enquiring, "Are ye alright, lads?" He was a great soldier.

We had been about a fortnight at Callaghane when Paddy Kennedy got word that the British had searched an empty house about a mile further out on the road from us. He sensed immediately that the British had some inkling that we were in the area. He kept moving in and out all that afternoon, and about 7 p.m. dashed in to tell us that the British had again raided the same empty house as they had done about midday the same day. It was decided to move out of Callaghane at once, in view of the urgency of the situation. There was no time to contact the Brigade staff in Waterford before doing so. At about 10 p.m. that night, a pony and trap, driven by Bobby Nugent, the local I.R.A. Commandant, took Mick Wyley and myself, accompanied by Paddy Kennedy and Tom Brennan, through various bye-roads to the village of Dunmore East. I have just mentioned Tom Brennan's name and I certainly should have made particular reference to this man earlier because, during all our time in Mrs. Power's of Callaghane, he remained

with us. He was armed and this, with the knowledge that Paddy Kennedy was also armed, gave us some feeling of security as we fought our way back to health again. Tom Brennan was a member of "D" Company, Waterford City Battalion, and is the postmaster at present in Tramore.

We arrived late at night at the house of Jack Butler, Dunmore East. The following morning, Tom Brennan, seeing the maid who was preparing breakfast, enquired of Jack Butler was the woman "safe". Jack nonchalantly replied that she was alright, that she worked a half-day in the Dunmore R.I.C. barracks and a half-day in his house. Tom Brennan immediately warned the woman of the dire consequences should she speak in the barracks about any strange men staying in Butler's, and she promised not to do so. Tom Brennan then sent word to the Brigade O/C, Paddy Paul, telling him of the position of affairs, and, with the assistance of some I.R.A. men, we moved out that evening to the house of Mrs. Ivory, Ballyglan, Woodstown, Co. Waterford. She gave us a hearty welcome and we were very comfortable that night and the following day. On the evening of the day after our arrival, Brigade O/C Paul came in his motor car to Mrs. Ivory's and told us that arrangements had been completed for Wyley and myself to be transferred that night across the river Suir to Co. Kilkenny. Actually, we had been discussing the question of a change over to Co. Kilkenny amongst ourselves, as Mickey Wyley, although living in Waterford, worked as a clerk in Carrigeen Co-operative Creamery, Mooncoin, and had plenty of I.R.A. contacts there as well as some very good friends. I believe that the decision now taken to move us to South Kilkenny probably was the saving of us,

as the British had been prodding and probing here and there, and there was, therefore, little chance of us getting that rest and quiet so necessary to enable us to regain our health.

Paddy Paul, with Tom Brennan, drove Wyley and myself in a motor car that night from Mrs. Ivory's house at Woodstown to a place called Whelan's Bridge, outside Kilmeadon, Co. Waterford, and within a stone's throwmof the river Suir. Here we went into a field, bringing with us a basket containing bandages and medical supplies. It was our only luggage. We were near the river bank and were awaiting a boat to come for us from the opposite (Kilkenny) side of the river. I remember at this stage Paddy Paul pulling out his watch and saying it was after half-past seven. He told us he must be going at once as there was a new curfew order in Waterford that week which forbade any car to be out after 8 p.m. without permission of the British military authorities. Paddy Paul then gave me his overcoat as he left, and a few moments later I heard a low whistle, to which Tom Brennan replied. I knew then that our boat had arrived.

The boat was a flat fishing cot propelled by a paddle, in Indian fashion. Hay was scattered on the bottom of the boat, and both Mickey Wyley and myself were taken across the river in two separate trips, each lying on his back in the boat. I remember the date was February 1st, 1921. "Jim Pax", as Jim Fitzpatrick was known, paddled the boat. On the three of us reaching the Kilkenny side, we were brought to a horse and trap, in a field close by, where Jack Walsh of Portnascully Mills, Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny, drove us

to the house of his mother, Mrs. Mary Walsh, where we remained for a period of six weeks. One of Mrs. Walsh's daughters, Lena, a nurse in the South Infirmary, Cork, was home on sick leave. A friendly doctor had this leave extended, thus affording her the opportunity of giving us the medical attention we needed.

Before I continue my narrative further, there is one matter to which I would like to refer again, and that is with reference to my reported death.

Since those days, several fairy-tales have been recounted about my supposed death. I have met quite a number of people who tell me, in all seriousness, that they had walked behind the hearse at a mock funeral of mine which they alleged was carried out. In actual fact, there was never a pretence at holding any such funeral. As I said before, I was officially pronounced dead by the Brigade Staff who informed my parents, by letter, that I had died of wounds received in action and expressed the sympathy of the Brigade. My parents knew, of course, that I was alive, but closed up their business premises as a mark of respect, on instructions from the Brigade Staff. On the morning our shop was shuttered, several good-natured republican friends handed my name in to be prayed for. The result was that, on the following Sunday, my name was read amongst the list of dead in the churches in the city and some parts of the County.

On the day our shop closed, my people were visited by two R.I.C. men who inquired what details of my death had been received. My mother, as per instructions, told them that a man, unknown to her, arrived on a

motor bike and handed her a letter, and that was all she knew. Popular imagination had decided on, at least, four or five different graveyards in which my body was interred. In one instance, a lorry of troops of the Devonshire Regiment drove out to the old graveyard at Reisk, near Dunhill, about ten miles east of Waterford, to search for my grave. En route, they picked up an I.R.A. man, named Jimmy Murray, of Boat Strand, who was attached to the 5th Battalion. Arriving at the graveyard, the soldiers proceeded, with picks and shovels, to dig up what looked like a newly-made grave and found nothing. Infuriated at drawing a blank, they, thereupon, gave Murray a good hiding, made him take off his boots and socks and told him to run for it. As he did so, they fired volleys of shots over his head. Finally, Murray arrived in Tramore, five miles distant, barefooted, and to this day remembers the grave in Reisk in which my body was supposed to be deposited.

During our stay at the house of Mrs. Walsh, Portnascully Mills, Mooncoin, Ted Moore of Rathcarbery, Kilmacow, an I.R.A. officer, mounted guard every night with one of the Walsh family, the pair being relieved by Tom Brennan and a local I.R.A. man whose name I have forgotten. They were armed with rifles to cover our escape, in case of a raid by the British. I will always remember the great kindness and self-sacrifice of the Walsh family during my six weeks' stay in their house, and I must pay tribute also to the men who did guard duty and, in particular, to Tom Brennan who remained with us faithfully during the whole period.

We would have been about three weeks at Walsh's when the Brigade O/C, Paddy Paul, arrived and told me that arrangements were being made to send me across to England. He told me that this was a decision of the Brigade Staff because it was felt that my presence would prove only a hindrance if I was kept in the country, as provision would always have to be made to ensure that I wouldn't be picked up by the military. He added, "You know what would be waiting for you if they should get you".

I bowed to the decision and asked about the arrangements. Paddy Paul told me that efforts were being made to get me across to England as a stowaway on a tramp steamer and that, before I sailed, I would be given an address in England to which I was to go, on my arrival there.

Following on this, there were a few attempts made to get me away by boat, but all failed. I remember Paddy Paul telling me that, in one case, the captain of the ship backed down at the last minute. In another instance, a captain agreed to take me and then offered to take a further twelve I.R.A. men as stowaways. This latter offer aroused the suspicions of our Brigade Staff who refused to have any further dealings with this captain. Finally, on March 15th, 1921, Brigade O/C Paul came out to Walsh's and told me to be ready to leave for Dublin by train the following morning from Kilmacow station en route to England. He gave me a sum of money and the address of the presbytery of a priest in an English city, the name of which I do not wish to mention, for obvious reasons. He also told me that an I.R.A. man from Waterford would travel to Kilmacow

on the same train and that this man would accompany me to Dublin, look after me generally and see me off on the boat from Dún Laoghaire the following night. The next morning, in a pony and trap driven by Jack Walsh and accompanied by Tom Brennan, I set out for Kilmacow station.

My appearance was somewhat altered by a black moustache which I had grown, and by the absence of spectacles which I always previously wore. At Kilmacow station Jack Walsh purchased a single first-class ticket to Dublin for me. The train arrived and I was quickly bundled in. During the short time the train was in the station, we discovered my I.R.A. travelling companion was not on the train. This man afterwards stated he had not wakened in time to catch the train.

It was the first time that I was outside the doors of a house on my own since January 7th, 1921, and I felt very jittery. The only exercise Mickey Wyley and I used have at Portnascully was about a half an hour's walking around a field each night after dark.

On reaching Dublin, my first thought was the possibility of detectives being on the platform at Kingsbridge. However, I continued on, trying to avoid the gaze of passers-by, and eventually made my way into the city. Arriving there, I remember reading on the newspaper placards a notice to the effect that three I.R.A. men were hanged in Mountjoy Gaol that day. That news made me very thoughtful. I have only a dim recollection of my further movements in Dublin that day. Being kept indoors for so long and then meeting

the impact of trying to stand on my own feet was a very trying ordeal indeed..

After a dismal day in Dublin, I hailed a jarvey car and drove to Dún Laoghaire where I purchased a first-class ticket for Holyhead, and boarded the ship without incident. The ship's steward brought me to my cabin. I placed my bag underneath the bunk and went up on deck, as I felt that the best thing for me was to move about openly, to disarm any suspicion. When I got on deck, a priest was standing there with whom I started a general conversation about the weather and suchlike. He suddenly asked me if I thought they (the British) were "going to search the boat tonight". I replied, as calmly as I could, that I hoped they would begin right away as I was going to turn in to my bunk shortly and didn't want to be disturbed. The priest told me his name was Father Kieran or Kiernan and that he was returning to Australia after being home in Ireland for a holiday. As I noted the small bag in his hand (for a person travelling to Australia) and in view of his earlier question, I asked myself whether this man might not be a detective in disguise. I excused myself and went down to my cabin. When I entered the cabin, I noticed on the bunk, underneath which I had placed my bag, a brand new Colt revolver. When I saw it, I suspected a trap of some sort and was at a loss as to what I should do. My first impulse was to report the facts to the captain of the ship. Then I thought to myself that, if I did so, the police would be brought on the scene, and this was something I had to avoid at all costs, as it might mean the finish for me.

With sheer worry of mind, I developed a severe pain in my head, so I decided to go on deck again to get a little air. The priest was still there, carrying his little bag. I approached him, looking, I am sure, very agitated. I told him I was very worried and said I had received a telegram earlier that morning, telling me that my sister, my only living relative, was dying and asking me to cross over to England to see her. I asked the priest for prayers on behalf of my non-existent dying sister. He promised to do so. Having said this much, I again excused myself and returned to my cabin. The revolver was still lying on the counterpane. I remained there about two minutes or so, and returned on deck, spoke to the priest who told me he had said a Rosary for my sister. On hearing him state he had said a Rosary in the space of two or three minutes, I was convinced he was a detective. However, as I stood there with him, I gave him plenty of emotional chatter about my dying sister when, suddenly, the ship's siren blew and we slowly pulled out from the wharf.

A new hope began to mount in me as I looked across at the disappearing lights of Dublin and, after a few moments, I went down again to my cabin. When I got there, I found that there was no revolver on my bunk; instead, there lay a man and, hanging on the end of the bunk, was part of his uniform. He was a British officer Needless to say, I did not ask him why he had taken my bunk, but I now realised the explanation for the presence of the revolver. He was a young officer stationed in Ireland and had, I assumed, thrown his revolver on the bunk to stake his claim to it.

Certainly I did not dispute possession with him. With difficulty, I climbed into the bunk over his and, after a few pleasant words with him, fell into a half-doze.

I got out of the cabin early in the morning, collected my "priest" friend and, with the officer, brought them to the ship's bar and stood them a glass of whiskey each. I made friendly conversation with the officer who told me he was crossing to play a rugby match at the college where he had been educated. When I remarked that I was sure he was glad to get away from all the bother in Ireland. I remember him saying, "You bet I do".

On arriving at Holyhead, as I got into the waiting train, I made sure to take the same carriage as my "priest" friend. He travelled with me to Crewe where I changed trains and, as I shook hands with him, he said he hoped I would find my sister alive when I arrived at my destination. I believe that the man was a detective. I believe also that he did not know my identity and that he swallowed completely the story of my dying sister.

That night I slept in the presbytery of the priest whose address I had been given, and the following day - St. Patrick's Day - he sent a telegram (as I learned afterwards had been previously arranged) to another priest in Waterford. The telegram read, "Shamrock arrived in good condition".

In the newspaper, 'The Cork Examiner', of that week, which I procured in England, I read that, as the steamer was about to proceed from Dún Laoghaire to

Holyhead on the night of March 17th, 1921, she was boarded by a party of Auxiliaries from Dublin Castle. The press report stated that every passenger was scrutinised, after which the Auxiliaries returned to the Castle. That steamer was raided on the night after I had crossed. In fact, the Brigade Staff in Waterford, seeing the report the following morning, were very alarmed in case I had decided to remain overnight in Dublin on March 16th and was amongst the passengers aboard on the night of the 17th March. However, the arrival of the telegram to the priest in Waterford, as already mentioned, completely eased the situation.

After remaining three days in the house of my priest friend, I was given the address of an Irishman in another English city and was told that this man had all preparations made to receive me. I travelled to this man's home and was greeted as a member of the family. I had, in fact, never met any member of the family before.

It would be about the middle of April, 1921, when a messenger arrived with a letter from my brother, a [illegible] priest in Wells, Somerset. I had not seen him since the previous summer. The letter from my brother gave me interesting news. He had crossed over to Waterford a couple of weeks earlier to visit our family. He told me that, towards the end of March, 1921, there had been a raid on our home in Patrick Street, Waterford. English troops took up positions surrounding the house and sealed off all the approaches, nobody being allowed to pass through the cordon. The raid began about

11 p.m. and lasted until about 3.30 a.m. Every document in the house was examined, particular attention being directed to all photographs. A photo of one of my sisters was taken away, it being thought she bore a resemblance to me. The purpose of my brother's letter was to warn me to lie low, as the raid seemed to point to the fact that the British did not believe the report of my death.

I should add here that, when leaving Waterford, Brigade O/C Paul gave me strict instructions that, no matter what happened when I was in England, I was, on no account, to put pen to paper to anybody, that I was to live under an assumed name, as "Nicholas Whittle was dead and buried", and I was not to attempt to return to Ireland until ordered to do so by the Brigade Staff.

Some time after receiving the letter from my brother, sensing as suspicious some question being asked about me by residents in the locality, I decided it was time to quit. In that particular city I carried on under the name of John Connow, a surname invented by myself.

I moved on to another city and assumed the name of John Hunt. I posed as an out-of-work labourer here and managed to get in touch with three Kerrymen, two of them labourers and one a carpenter. A trustworthy source had requested them to keep an eye on me as I was a wanted man. That was all the information given to them, and they asked for none further from me.

It was after the Truce in July, 1921, that I travelled to Wells to see my brother. I had not got

my orders to return home, but, as the Truce had been on now for quite a long period, I decided to cross over to Ireland and go as far as Walsh's house at Portnascully, Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny, about six miles from my home town, Waterford. I started my return journey, and the memory of it will always remain with me as one of the most pleasant journeys of my lifetime.

On arrival at Mrs. Walsh's house, contact was made with Waterford and Brigade O/C Paul came out to see me. The following night, Jack Walsh of Portnascully drove me in to Waterford and to my home.

The day afterwards, there was somewhat of a sensation in the city, when it was announced that the man who had been deemed dead was, in fact, alive and home again. The excitement for me for the next few days was tense, in the full sense of the word. When I went walking, people stood and stared at me, thinking I was somebody from another world.

Being anxious to join up with my old comrades, I asked one of the local I.R.A. officers to whom would I now report, as a number of my former comrades were either in gaol or away in the country. I was given the name of the officer who, I discovered, was a follower of Captain William Redmond in the two elections which I directed for Sinn Féin. He appeared to have joined the Volunteers shortly before the Truce of 1921 and had been appointed a Battalion officer. This experience prompted me to ask no further questions, and I went home in a thoughtful frame of mind, being determined to have nothing to do with the new set-up in the I.R.A. organisation.

A further experience earlier in that year, 1921, also burned itself into my mind. I should first relate how I used frequently see, in England, charabancs of holiday-makers returning from the seaside, singing a popular song of that time, "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles", and, with the contempt I had for the English, I used say to myself as I watched them go by, "We gave you bubbles and we will give you bubbles again". The remembrance of all this was very vivid in my mind on the night of November 11th, 1921, when I stood in a doorway in John Street, Waterford, and watched a procession, led by the Waterford Barrack Street band. Behind the band marched, in ranks, a large contingent of the No. 1 Devon English regiment, the men who murdered my comrades, Tom O'Brien and Michael McGrath, and one of whom had tried to murder myself. I watched these pass, led by a Waterford city band, maintained by public subscriptions, and followed by a large crowd of Irish processionists. I got a shock on that occasion which I shall always remember.

I am hesitant to set down anything in an unfavourable light, considering the joy of my homecoming after several months without knowing, from day to day, whether I might not yet end on the gallows. I have set down these two unfavourable impressions because I am a student of history, and I am desirous that future students of history will be able to examine the weak links in the national chain at the glorious period when they should have been strongest.

Having recorded these unfavourable impressions, I will finish on a more optimistic note. I refer to

the occasion about two weeks after my return home to Waterford when a national concert, organised by the local Sinn Féin Executive, was held in the Theatre Royal, Waterford. On that occasion I was asked to appear as an artist at that function. I might point out here that I had, frequently, sung on concert platforms before being wounded. There was no mention of my name on the concert programme, but I understand that my being a contributor became known to quite a few beforehand. It was midway through the concert when the compére announced to a packed house that the next person "who is going to sing is the man who was - and is". I was then pushed on to the platform while the audience stood cheering wildly for minutes. It was an ordeal for me, but I took it as a tribute coming from the very heart of my native city to myself and the men with whom I had fought.

For my first number, I sang that fine marching-song composed by the late Countess Markievicz, "The Battle Hymn". The words of the song, together with the peculiar circumstances associated with the singer, set the audience wild with excitement. I followed this up with Willie Rooney's beautiful ballad, "The Bearna Baoghal", and then "O'Donnell Abú". As I made my exit from the stage, the huge crowd cheered and gesticulated wildly. My recollection of that night may be summed up thus: these people's thoughts and prayers had been with me and men like me through our most trying period, and any achievement or sense of triumph which I now had was assuredly also theirs.

A final word about the engagement which has since become known as "the Tramore ambush".

Looking back at it now, I realise that the corner-stone of the I.R.A. hopes (when the gradual dismemberment amongst our forces took place) rested on the handful of Waterford city and East County Waterford men who lined the ditch close to where the memorial shrine now stands. They were completely outnumbered by the British forces. The Dunhill men on the railway line had fallen back, as directed, after firing a few volleys from their shotguns. The West Waterford column, on the Glen Road, were also retreating, and the whole brunt of the British counter attack was borne by the small group of men who held the ditch on the Ballynattin Road, a few yards from where I lay wounded on the road. I know that the men's reserve of ammunition was reduced to two or three cartridges in the case of the shotgun men, and similarly few rounds remained to the riflemen. It was just at the vital moment when the British troops on the other side of the Ballynattin Road felt that they had the situation in hand that this group of I.R.A. men stood firm and gave of their best. Had they not succeeded in forcing the British troops to deploy through the fields a goodly distance before coming out on to the road, I am convinced that the British would have worked havoc amongst those of our men who were retreating towards Waterford up the face of a hill. I could not speak too highly of this group of men.

I would also like to refer particularly to Tom Brennan who was just a casual friend of mine before the ambush. I would like to place on record here now my sense of gratitude to him from the night he acted as advance escort in front of the pony and trap, which

brought Mickey Wyley and myself to the Mental Hospital, to the day when he stood beside me and bade me farewell on Kilmacow railway station when I was making my bid to get to Dublin en route to my destination in England.

I consider the Tramore ambush a most important engagement in the Anglo-Irish war and I make this statement for the following reasons. For a short time immediately before Christmas, 1920, there was a lull in activities. It was an ominous lull. The whole atmosphere over the festive season of 1920 was marked by a thoughtful apprehension as to what the new year would bring for Ireland. It was during this lull, and in the first week of the new year, that the country was startled by the news that a major engagement between I.R.A. forces and British military had taken place at a point in Ireland where it was least expected.

Men from most of the thirty-two counties had witnessed scenes in Waterford two years earlier that stamped on their minds the impression that the fires of nationality burned much lower in Waterford than in any other part of Ireland. The success of the Tramore ambush lay, therefore, in the fact that the lull in the Anglo-Irish war was broken by a major engagement in a district where it was least expected. This shot in the dark which came from Tramore (known generally as an easy-going holiday resort), in my opinion, did much to brace up the I.R.A. throughout the country, as, on the other hand, it must have caused deep apprehension amongst the higher British authorities in Dublin.

I shall now qualify this statement I have made by adverting to the fact that, late in the year 1917, Eamonn Waldron, a school teacher in Galway, was

arrested by the British and charged with sedition. Having been jailed, he was further sentenced to deportation from Co. Clare. He was given the option of residing in either of two places in Ireland, Belfast or Waterford. He elected to come to Waterford. The safest place, deemed safest by the higher British authorities in Ireland a year after the 1916 Rising, had suddenly, out of the blue as it were, switched over and taken its proper place with the nation in its struggle for freedom. In this latter fact lay the great importance and success of the Tramore ambush.

SIGNED: Nicholas Whittle
(Nicholas Whittle)

DATE: February 25th 1956

WITNESS: T. O'Gorman
(T. O'Gorman)