

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,155

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,155

Witness

Michael O'Kelly,  
76 Upper George's St.,  
Dun Laoghaire,  
Co. Dublin.

Identity.

Volunteer Organiser;  
President, Sinn Fein, Co. Kildare.

Subject.

National activities, Co. Kildare,  
1913-1922

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2459.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

W.S. 1,155

STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL O'KELLY

76 Upper George's Street, Dunlaoghaire,  
Co. Dublin.

Organising for the I.R.B.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-2  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1,155

The preparation of these pages relating to Revolutionary years in Kildare from 1913 to 1922, was undertaken as the result of conversations on the subject with others who participated in the Sinn Fein and Republican movements of that period. When the project was first mooted, it was objected to by some on the grounds that it would lay them open to a charge of parading the part they played in the struggle of that time, and so seeking an egotistical publicity. It was resolved, however, even at the risk of captious criticism to place on record authentic facts, which it was hoped might help to perpetuate the nationalism of the county in trying times, and perhaps, stimulate the latent patriotism of the youth of the county. The fact that my occupation in life was that of a Journalist, coupled with the circumstance that I was more or less conversant with the earlier movements leading up to the formation of the Irish Volunteers were among the reasons that I was asked to lend whatever aid I could in having a record of this kind compiled. I accordingly agreed and undertook to write the following brief outline of events in the country as I saw and remember them from the time I first got into touch with local nationalist sentiment in 1913 until the close of the civil war in 1922-23. It will therefore be understood by the reader that this outline is intended as an introduction to the reminiscences of others that follow, and also of those which it is hoped to obtain for inclusion later on, in case the necessary support and encouragement is forthcoming to have them published in book form.

Before arriving in Co. Kildare, I had already become a member of the I.R.B. and my earliest connections with political activities occurred in 1898, in Loughrea, Co. Galway, where in conjunction with some kindred spirits including my brother the late Seumis O'Kelly, we formed a 98 Centenary Commemoration Committee and a large popular demonstration was organised and successfully brought off celebrating the centenary of the Irish Rebellion of 1798. In the organising of this demonstration we had the aid of veteran nationalists like the late Peter Sweeney, Loughrea, and P.J. Kelly of Killnadeema who was for several years Chairman of the All Ireland Gaelic Athletic Association when that body still adhered to the principles of its Fenian origin.

Some years later I went to Limerick as a reporter for the Limerick Leader, and was there introduced to members of a group in that city who supported the propaganda still carried on by the veteran Fenian, the late John Daly, who was at that time Mayor of the city. It was about this time I met the late Sean O'Connor, a County Limerick man who afterwards became well known in Gaelic League circles in the County Kildare. Sean was for some time engaged in teaching in Killaloe and my work as a journalist sometimes took me there, so that I became intimate with him, and in our intercourse we exchanged political confidences. Years passed and when next we met it was in the town of Naas, when Sean informed me that he was now residing in Celbridge, and that he had been appointed Gaelic League organiser for the county, and also that he was quietly engaged in organising for the Irish Republican Brotherhood, I expressed surprise at hearing this, and told him that from all I had seen and heard of the conditions then prevailing in Kildare, he might as well attempt such organising work in Yorkshire or

any other English county. This was about the year 1913. Sean, however, assured me that things national in the county were not as hopeless as they appeared to be on the surface. He added that the tide of militant nationalism then rising in other counties was finding an inlet to some of the rural areas and towns of Kildare, and that in fact he had got into touch already with some adherents of the I.R.B. I asked him about the town of Naas, and whether he had made any headway there. He replied that so far he had not, but that he was not without hope, and that between the two of us we ought to be able to make some impression when he had sifted local feeling a little more.

It was about this time or perhaps a little later that Thomas Patterson, having completed his business apprenticeship in Dublin returned to Naas and engaged in business at home. Owing to some allusions I had made in the course of articles published in the "Leinster Leader", I was accosted by Mr. Patterson one day as I was passing his shop on my way home from work. He referred to the articles in question, discussed the matter that gave rise to them and we each exchanged some opinions on these. Later on we met and talked several times, and eventually I learned that during the time he had been in Dublin he was in close association with the more progressive national organisations that were then active in furthering the cause of Irish Independence. I, therefore, at once realised that I had discovered in my new acquaintance just the very helper required by Sean O'Connor to aid in his work for the I.R.B. Sean and T. Patterson became acquainted. Thereafter the latter's premises were often the rendezvous for discussions on plans and propaganda between us. Among Mr. Patterson's customers were a few men who had served in The Royal Dublin Fusiliers,

and we found that these accepted, to some extent, the political propositions we ventured to give expression to in their presence with a view to sounding them. In this way we hoped to make closer contact with men actually serving in the army, so as to secure the co-operation of as many as possible of those who still retained national sympathies. We did, in fact, later succeed in making contact with several men of the Dublin Fusiliers, and found that a great proportion of the men then stationed in the Naas barracks were sympathetically disposed towards the National Volunteer movement, which owed its inception in great measure to the aggressive attitude of the Carsonites in the North who were arming to defeat the so-called Home Rule Act promoted as a sop to Irish national sentiment. On one occasion I attended a sing-song entertainment in the Sergeants' Mess, to which I had been invited with some other civilians from the town. I had a little earlier made the acquaintance of a few of the men including Sergeant Ceannt, brother of Eamon, who was subsequently executed for his participation in the Rebellion of Easter Week 1916. The Sergeant himself was fated to fall at the front in France while serving with his regiment during the First Great War. He was a fine, tall, hearty specimen of Irish manhood, and, during the entertainment at the Sergeants' Mess, he was the life and soul of the evening's amusement. Nothing could exceed the hospitality of the mess and the ability of its members to provide an enjoyable time for their civilian guests. To the surprise of the latter, Carsonism was denounced with an outspoken freedom and vigour that could not be excelled by the most advanced Home Ruler. Two or three of these Sergeants, with whom we had conversations later, assured us that they were ready to place their services at the disposal of the Volunteers, and one of them

who was an expert machine gunner offered to act as instructor as such whenever the opportunity came. Naturally this was all very gratifying to us, but with the outbreak of the Great War, and the other developments affecting the Volunteer organisation our efforts in that direction came to an end.

To revert to the sequence of events as I recollect them, there was at that period no organisation with a national outlook in the town or neighbourhood with the exception of a branch of the Gaelic League which was not in a flourishing condition. The Ancient Order of Hibernians was making some headway in neighbouring counties and it occurred to me that if a branch could be formed in Naas it might be utilised to further our own aims in this way. It would bring together different social elements that might include some of those with whom we wished to get into close contact, and could be won over to our way of thinking. I believe also that the A.O.H. was the only type of organisation likely to secure a measure of support in the town, and which might serve our purpose in the way described. I therefore spoke to some acquaintances on the subject, and some time later a public meeting was held and the establishment of a branch of the A.O.H. decided upon. An organiser from Dublin arrived and a good number of people applied for admission to membership. I became a member as did also T. Patterson, and as we failed to make any headway with our propaganda among the others, I at length withdrew, but T. Patterson remained on for the purpose of watching possible developments that might be of importance or interest to us. Then the wave of enthusiasm that came with the advent of the National Volunteers following the raising of the Ulster Volunteers

to resist the emaciated Home Rule Bill at the time before the British House of Commons at length overflowed into the country and furnished us with the conditions most favourable to our purpose. The A.O.H. dwindled away and was replaced by a purely social club.

#### Formation of National Volunteers.

At this time, Francis Fahy, a young Tipperary man was employed as a reporter in the "Leinster Leader" office where I occupied the position of editor. Following a private conference circulars were issued announcing a meeting to discuss the formation of a corps of National Volunteers in the town. The use of the premises of the County Agricultural Committee in Basin Street were obtained for the purpose of the meeting. On the evening it was to be held I happened to be in the company of some others, a few of whom had been prominent in the A.O.H. branch and a discussion took place with reference to the forthcoming meeting, to which they had been invited. None of them favoured the volunteers project, and, in fact, were so opposed to it that they decided to attend the meeting for the purpose of opposing and disrupting the meeting. The most outspoken declared that they would nip the growth of this militant spirit in the bud, as far as Naas was concerned. Francis Fahy acted secretary to the meeting, but I cannot recall who presided. When the proposal to establish a volunteer corps was put forward, the opposition at once objected, protesting that there was no reason or necessity for the encouragement of such a dangerous organisation, and that the country was quite safe in the hands of Mr. John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party, who would see to it that fair play

would be obtained for the country, and the enactment of Home Rule, etc. Some of these objectors saw nothing dangerous in the organised recruiting that a little later sent 50,000 men to the shambles of the Great War to fight, not for their own country but for a power with six centuries of unparalleled brutality and bloodshed to its credit in the efforts to exterminate their race, and eradicate their religion. Despite all opposition a motion was carried in favour of a public meeting to decide the question.

A public meeting announced by poster was accordingly held in the Assembly Room of the Town Hall, which was insufficient to accommodate the large numbers of people gathered there. Speeches were delivered strongly advocating the formation of the Volunteer Corps and considerable enthusiasm was aroused, and at the conclusion of the meeting it was decided to make an immediate start. The crowd adjourned to the Town Hall yard, where they were formed into companies, drill instructors selected and arrangements made for future drill exercises, etc. As time went on, more and more applications for membership of the Volunteers were received, and these included young and old, and even some of those who opposed the movement at its inception. Soon the Town Hall yard was utterly inadequate to accommodate the numbers attending to drill, and activities were transferred to the old disused Jail premises. The police authorities ever watchful of any movement of an organised military character amongst the people looked on helplessly at these proceedings, powerless to interfere owing to the number of people involved and, who, moreover, had the precedent of the Ulster Volunteer movement which was permitted to go on



without hindrance by those responsible for law and order in the country, to assert the right to drill. Volunteer caps and some other equipment were acquired and then as the Volunteers became more proficient in elementary drill movements, the place of rifles was supplied by wooden dummy guns for rifle drill exercises. The movement had by this time spread to other centres in the county, and on June 7th the first big muster of Volunteers took place at Gibbet Rath, a significant placename not unfamiliar in the county. Athy, Newbridge, Kildare and other centres had by this time organised bodies of Volunteers, and upwards of one thousand took part in the parade. Delegates also attended from Kildare, Nurney, Kilcullen, Kildangan, Newbridge, Allen, Naas, Blessington, Ballymore-Eustace, Boola, and Brownstown. The Pipers' Band in Gaelic costume, from the latter place, was a feature of the gathering. Among the speakers and prominent persons present at the close of the parade were Messrs. John Shiel O'Grady, who presided, John O'Connor and Denis Kilbride the two Members of Parliament for the county, Charles Bergin, J.P., Kildare, Thomas O'Rourke, Chairman, Newbridge Town Commissioner. The O'Rahilly, who afterwards in the 1916 Rebellion was killed in Moore Street, Dublin, Dr. L.F. Rowan, Kildare and Professor M.C. O'Connor, St. Thomas College, Newbridge. Resolutions were adopted to form Volunteer Corps in every town and district in the county, and calling for a repeal of the Arms Act, to enable the people to arm for the defence of their country. With reference to the latter resolution it may not be amiss to recall that the manifesto which called the Volunteer organisation into existence was issued on the 29th November, 1913, and that its aim was to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland.

On the evening of the same date (June 7th, 1914) a Volunteer rally was held at Celbridge and the assembly was addressed by Messrs. James O'Connor, County Council, who presided, W. Gogarty who acted as Secretary, L.J. Kelly, P.H. Pearse, who was one of the leaders executed in Easter Week, Art O'Connor, Elm Hall, subsequently T.Ds. for the county, and prominent all through the struggle to the close of the Civil War, Hubert O'Connor, B.L., etc. At Athy on the 11th of the same month, there was a big parade of the Volunteers of South Kildare in the spacious enclosure of the Agricultural Society. Captain G. Bergin, J. Doyle and F. O'Brien were in command of the parade. The Athy Battalion had by this time four full companies numbering in all nearly 1,000 men, while it had also the distinction of possessing what was then the only mounted troop in Ireland.

Meanwhile in Naas we pursued our original propaganda amongst the more likely of those Volunteers who had been attending the drill exercises in the old disused jail premises, but so far without definite success. There were about half a dozen who were inclined to fall in with us, but they were not oath bound. After some months we had a welcome addition to our small circle in the person of Tommy Traynor, who threw himself whole-heartedly into the movement. He was at the time Manager of Mr. T. McDermott's hardware department in North Main Street.

The rapid growth of the Volunteer organisation throughout the country had by now alarmed the Irish Parliamentary Party who regarded it as a menace to their existence as a political force, especially as a number of the Provisional Committee that controlled the Volunteers were men holding to the old Fenian faith, as the only true one by which our national redemption could be achieved.

They began to feel their power and influence in the country, particularly in the larger centres of population, slipping from them. They therefore set out to oust the Provisional Committee and obtain control of the organisation themselves. Each county was invited to nominate a representative to serve on the Provisional Committee. Mr. John Redmond demanded that 25 of his nominees from different parts of the country be added to the Committee. This was the beginning of a trial of strength for the mastery of the organisation between the Irish Party and the younger and more virile nationalism that challenged its futility as a spent political force, and that must be swept aside in order to allow a forward movement to the goal of National Independence. Mr. Redmond and the Party failed to carry their purpose but the organisation was split, one section giving allegiance to the Irish Party and the other adhering to the new Committee set up to maintain the original policy. The bulk of the Volunteers at first declared in favour of the Irish Party, but a proportion of these later transferred their loyalty to the Provisional Committee whose followers afterwards became known as the Irish Volunteers in contradistinction to the National Volunteers. The effects of the cleavage were, of course, felt by all the companies in Co. Kildare as elsewhere. This was particularly noticeable at a review of Volunteers held on the football grounds at Naas. The reviewing officer was Colonel Maurice Moore and the Volunteers were commanded by Mr. George Wolfe of Foreunghts, Naas, who had been unanimously chosen as Colonel of the Volunteers of the area. The turn out was undoubtedly a big one, and the absence of the small number that adhered to the Irish Volunteers organisation was scarcely noticeable, but that a split had occurred nevertheless and that it would make itself felt in the

development of political events was made evident in the course of the day's proceedings. The review and march past had concluded and the men on parade and the general public who were spectators were addressed by the reviewing officer, Colonel Wolfe, and Mr. John O'Connor, M.P. While the latter was speaking he proceeded to make the customary political capital for his party out of the parade which he pointed to as showing the impregnable position the Irish Parliamentary Party occupied in the popular estimation of the people of Co. Kildare, and the chagrin and mortification this display brought to their opponents. Dr. Grogan, Medical Officer, Maynooth, and now County Medical Officer of Offaly, interrupted the speaker and challenged the accuracy of some assertions. The doctor, however, was oratorically no match for a doughty champion with the record and experience of Mr. O'Connor in the debating arena at Westminster and the latter proceeded at once to administer an eloquent castigation to the doctor for daring to beard him in the midst of his constituents on such an occasion. It was the first time such an experience befell Mr. O'Connor in Kildare and the occurrence was discussed far and wide, but not to the advantage of Mr. O'Connor or his Party. It was but the first of a series of rebuffs he was to experience later, and it might be said to mark the beginning of the decline of Mr. O'Connor's political prestige in Kildare, which at length entirely vanished in the rout and ultimate destruction of the Irish Party at the General Election of 1918.

In August, 1914, the Great War broke out, and some weeks later England and the Empire became involved. The Irish Party, whose members had never in the past lost an opportunity of invoking the ideals of Tone, Emmet and the other grand galaxy of apostles of Irish freedom at once revealed the hypocrisy of all this. The dictum that

England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity, for them, was reversed and the National Volunteers were urged to fight not for the emancipation of their own land, but for its centuries old enslaver. I have particular reason for remembering Mr. Redmond's pronouncement at a meeting at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow, in which he embodied the purpose and policy of himself and his Party in regard to the Great War. In an editorial published in the "Leinster Leader", I rather strongly criticised the speech and the attitude of the Irish Party, and although this article met with general approval and, I believe, enhanced the reputation and influence of "The Leader", it was later utilized by the owners as a justification for my dismissal from the post I occupied as editor on account of my anti-British sentiments.

#### The Rebellion of 1916.

Events at home and abroad now began to move more rapidly. It had become clear that the Irish Party did not want a Volunteer organisation at home, and as they had now identified themselves with the British recruiting authorities, the ranks of the national volunteers became rapidly depleted, and soon vanished altogether. In County Kildare only a skeleton organisation remained. It consisted of men who did their best to promote its purpose. In 1915 Doctor Ted Kelly, formerly of Maynooth, came to the County as organiser. In the Autumn of that year he arrived in Naas and Newbridge and by the end of the year had made substantial progress in these districts and in Maynooth, Kilcock, the Curragh and Kildare. About the end of the year a mobilisation of Volunteers was announced for manoeuvres between Naas and Newbridge, when Dr. Kelly, myself, and a few others were conversing at the Canal Bridge on the Newbridge Road some

distance beyond the Kennels, a Sergeant of the Royal Irish Constabulary, who had been paying some attention to our movements for some time at length approached Dr. Kelly and asked him for his name and address, occupation, etc. The doctor answered the questions with dignity giving his name and describing himself as a Volunteer Officer, and added some unasked for opinions about the R.I.C. and the British Government in the country. The Sergeant having written in his notebook all the particulars he required, or could get from the doctor, was about to return it to his tunic pocket when the leaves somehow became detached and were blown about the road by a sudden gust of wind, some of them finding their way into the canal. This and the Sergeant's efforts to retrieve his precious notes excited the laughter and ridicule and derision of those present, amid which the Sergeant beat a hurried retreat. Some weeks later an article appeared in a local paper in which the persons and movements of the Volunteers were held up to ridicule. It was, in addition, an example of the felon setting tactics then beginning to manifest themselves here and there. Anyhow if the purpose of this form of publicity was to kill the Volunteers' spirit in the country it failed in its purpose, for organisation instead of relaxing became more intensive.

, As the year 1915 closed, the possibility of a rising in the near future was rumoured. N.P. Byrne, N.T., who had been appointed principal of the National School at the Green, Naas, was at this time included in our small organising circle, and was a speaker at several Sinn Fein public meetings held in later years, and which are dealt with in subsequent chapters of these records. At this period a few of us had purchased automatic pistols and I had

accumulated a fairly large amount of ammunition which I kept in a safe place in my house. On one occasion matters became a little complicated in this way by the arrival of a quantity of arms and ammunition from Dublin, which, in view of unexpected raids by Crown Forces had been sent to Naas for safe keeping. These had been entrusted to my brother Seumus, who was then engaged in journalism in addition to his other library work in Dublin. In the opening months of 1916, conferences were also held, now and then in my home and at one of these I made the acquaintance of Tommy Harris, Prosperous, who was then but a youth, Donal Buckley, T.D., P. Colgan, Maynooth, Senator Michael Smyth, Athgarvan, and others. Mr. Pat Dunne of Kill was a prominent figure at that time in the movement. Then my brother Seumus was obliged through ill-health to relinquish work in Dublin and return to Naas. Dr. Kelly kept in touch with those of us who were in the movement in Naas, and on Ash Wednesday he came and intimated to me that the rising was arranged to take place simultaneously in Dublin and throughout the country at 6 p.m. on Easter Sunday. He asked me to notify any others of our comrades whom he might not be able to see, and also any sympathisers I might be able to count on. I saw Thomas Patterson and Thomas Traynor and conveyed the intelligence about the rising communicated to me by Dr. Kelly. They were both delighted that things were at length coming to a head with regard to the rebellion. I should have mentioned that some time before this Sean O'Connor had ceased acting as Gaelic League organiser in Kildare and was at work in Dublin. On Saturday I had a further call from Dr. Kelly who was accompanied by Thomas Harris, and the former intimated that all was going well in Dublin with the preparations but later on intelligence arrived that the Rising was called off for Sunday evening. On Easter Sunday

Dr. Kelly and T. Harris called on me again and we had a conversation about the delay, or postponement, of the Rising. The doctor explained that our part in the opening operations would be to assist in having the railway bridge across the canal outside Sallins Station blown up, so as to prevent transport of troops from the Curragh to Dublin by rail. He added that the explosives for the purpose were in readiness and that the operation would be carried out under the direction of Tom Byrne. The latter was formerly in the employment of the Dublin Corporation and was a member of the Irish Brigade with Major John McBride which fought on the side of the Boers when the Boer Republics were attacked by the British sixteen or seventeen years before. He is at present Captain of the Guard at Leinster House where the Free State Parliament meets. We left the house walked towards Dublin Road, and stood talking near Mr. Sheridan's house. After some time Tom Byrne joined us, coming from the direction of Dublin. Then a few minutes later a motor cyclist came along, who turned out to be a despatch rider named Stokes from the city. He handed Dr. Kelly a despatch which stated that the rising was definitely fixed for the following day, Easter Monday, at 12 noon. The despatch further informed us that it was expected that some hundreds of men belonging to a regiment stationed in Dublin would turn out on the signal for revolt and hold the line of quays in the city. The doctor and T. Harris came back to me to my house, and having secured their automatic revolvers and a good supply of ammunition took out their bicycles and road away to notify Volunteer companies to be ready. Before leaving, the doctor stated that the rendezvous for the Volunteers the following day would be Bodenstown Churchyard, where Theobald Wolfe Tone is buried. He also enjoined on me the desirability of bringing as many as I could with me. I told him that as far as Naas



was concerned that I could not answer for any following outside our own small group. I saw T. Patterson and T. Traynor the following morning and handed each his automatic, telling them to be at Bodenstown at noon. They were both engaged at business at the time, and I said I would precede them to the meeting place. About an hour later I set out towards Sallins on the way to Bodenstown, arriving at the cross roads there at about a quarter to 12. There was no sign of anybody about, and having walked in the direction of the historic old churchyard, I returned to the cross roads. Having waited there for some time, I concluded that something went amiss with the arrangements. Returning to Sallins I met T. Patterson and T. Traynor and they were both very much disappointed when I informed them that I failed to see anybody at the meeting place. They were loth to return to Naas again, but after lingering about Sallins for a considerable time, they at length agreed to do so. On our return to Naas we heard of the failure of the train service, but it was not until the evening was well advanced that it became generally known that a revolutionary outbreak had occurred in Dublin, and that this was the cause of the non-arrival of the railway trains as usual. Next day I saw T. Patterson again, and he was still very much upset and expressed his determination to try and reach Dublin. I tried to persuade him from this purpose pointing out that it was desirable that some local assistance should be available for guiding and supplying information to the Republican forces should the fighting spread to Naas. In this connection I recall that he had made a sketch, or plan, showing the main approaches to the town, and also places in the town itself where implements useful for barricading, erecting defence works, etc., could be procured. I prevailed with him at length but as more news of the fighting in Dublin arrived, he again became anxious and desirous to

make an attempt to reach Dublin. As the day wore on the activities of the R.I.C. increased, and each of us was in turn questioned as to our movements on Monday. The following day a few men from neighbouring districts, who had also been notified about the meeting at Bodenstown on Monday, and missed it, called in to Naas to make enquiries. We then learned that a party did assemble in a field at the back of the churchyard and that the project of blowing up the railway bridge outside Sallins station had been abandoned, and that they had proceeded to Maynooth instead. On Thursday, I learned that T. Patterson and T. Traynor had left Naas, presumably for Dublin. The next thing that happened was a sudden descent on my house by a party of R.I.C. under the charge of the late County Inspector Supple, and District Inspector McDonald. Myself and my nephew, Alphie Sweeney, then only 15 years of age, were placed under arrest and taken to the police barrack, where we were searched and then placed in a cell. When placed under arrest I discovered that I had a few rounds of ammunition in one of my pockets which I had overlooked, but on the way to the barrack when crossing the street near the residence of the late Dr. Murphy, in Poplar Square, I managed, unobserved by my escort, to drop the bullets on the roadway. On the arrival at the police barrack I found that other arrests had also been made in the town. The names of those arrested in addition to myself and my nephew were:- Paddy Grehan, South Main St., Christy Byrne, Tower View, Naas, Dick Furlong, Killashee, P. Mooney, chaffeur and T.J. Williams, reporter in "Leinster Leader" office. The latter was released the following day. In the evening we were all handcuffed and removed to the guard room at the military barracks, under a strong armed escort of military and police. The procession through South Main Street and New Row attracted much attention, but we could sense from the glances that greeted us that we had not the

sympathy of the populace. The personnel of the garrison at the military barracks had long before this been changed, since the time I had made the acquaintance of some of the men serving there. I was now to make the acquaintance of others under quite different circumstances.

When last I had been inside the barrack gates, I was there as an invited guest. Now I was there under duress as a prisoner, and forced to accept such hospitality as a prisoner is deemed entitled to. It is but bare justice to say that our custodians did what they could to make our detention as little irksome as they could during the few days we were in their hands. On the Monday following the Rising we were again handcuffed in pairs, and removed in motor cars to the Military Prison at Harepark, the Curragh Camp.

On arrival at Harepark we were taken from the motor cars and left standing for some time outside the prison. An ex-R.I.C. man then serving the Government in another capacity approached and addressed some remarks to us denouncing the rebellion, and declaring that the progress of the country had been stopped, and conditions put back to what they were one hundred years ago by the rebels. He wound up his denunciations by the wish that he had the opportunity of putting those connected with it against a wall and shooting them. Dick Furlong bridled up at this onslaught on the men who had unselfishly placed their lives and everything else they held dear at the service of their country, and told the ex-R.I.C. man that his only regret was that he was not in Dublin to take his place in the ranks of the rebels to fight for the freedom and independence of his country. Moreover he added "I know how to handle a rifle". Our military escort were listeners to this interchange and I confess that what I regarded as Dick's indiscretion in being so outspoken

to the ex-policeman made me uneasy as to the effects it might have on our captors, and consequently on the treatment to which we might be subjected later. I conveyed my uneasiness to Dick, but his blood was up, and the only effect of my remonstrance was to increase the wrath roused in him by the ex-R.I.C. man's taunts. Later on when we had an opportunity of talking without being overheard by our guards, Dick bitterly complained that he had not been notified in time to enable him to elude arrest and take a hand in the fighting.

We were each placed in a separate cell in the prison, which subsequently became known as "The Glass House". The particular military unit of the British Army in whose charge we were placed was the Veterinary Corps, the Commanding Officer of which was Captain Purdy. That evening other prisoners were brought in and during the next few days we had Eamon and Louis Moran, Ballysax, The Curragh, J. Fitzgerald, E. Cosgrove and "Dixie" Wallace, Newbridge, Christy, Paddy, Jack and Joseph Kenny and Tom Behan, Rathdangan, John O'Brien, Donore, Nicholas P. Byrne, N.T., Naas, Dr. L.J. Rowan, Kildare, F. Ledwidge, T. Wafer and some others from Maynooth, whose names I am unable to remember. We were rather closely confined at first and as all belongings found on our persons were taken from us when searched after arrest, we felt keenly the need of tobacco. After a few days we were allowed time to exercise, and then we were permitted to smoke while at exercise. This concession was due to the goodness of Captain Purdy who, in addition had pipes, tobacco and cigarettes provided for his prisoners. This act on the Captain's part was warmly appreciated by us all, and no attempt was made to abuse the privilege, the only condition on which it was

granted, namely that the pipes, tobacco, cigarettes, etc., be handed up to our guards at the conclusion of the exercise hour. About three years after this time I happened to be waiting for a train at the Kingsbridge railway terminus, Dublin, when I was accosted by a British Officer in uniform whom I at once recognised as Captain Purdy. He spoke about the unpleasant duty that fell to his lot in having charge of the prisoners at Harepark, and I took the opportunity of assuring him that we all appreciated very highly the considerate treatment that we received at his hands and the humane efforts he had made to alleviate the misery inseparable from loss of personal liberty no matter how well meaning the prison authorities might be.

We were kept in Harepark for about a week which was without further incident, except that one day at exercise J. Fitzgerald became ill and so weak that a chair had to be provided for him to rest on. He remained unwell for a day or two and then recovered. Then one evening we were notified that we were to be removed to some other place of detention the following morning. Accordingly we were taken out the following morning, and found a strong armed escort awaiting us. We were placed in the middle of the escort and marched across the Curragh towards Kildare town. As we left the camp a large number of soldiers off duty assembled and groaned and booed at us, at the same time shouting epithets. Their attitude was particularly menacing towards J. Fitzgerald. As we neared Kildare the route taken led to the railway station and on the arrival there we were placed on a train bound for Dublin. On arrival at the Kingsbridge terminus, Dublin, we were marched to Richmond Barracks, and on reaching there we were halted at the rear of a block of buildings. Looking up

we saw that the windows were crowded with the faces of other prisoners many of them were boys who gazed down curiously at us. After some time we were marched into a large gymnasium where there were a number of other prisoners. Here we were forced to move about and mingle with each other while a line of soldiers with fixed bayonets guarded the entrance. We had nothing to eat since early morning and were feeling the pinch of hunger. After some time we were supplied with a tin of hard biscuits which required sound teeth to masticate. Meanwhile, a system of segregating the prisoners went on, and my nephew was taken away with others. Later on the remainder of our party was taken to a room in the top-most storey of one of the barrack buildings. This was numbered Room 6, in "E" Block. In the room opposite on the same landing were a number of other prisoners, and later on, as the doors of both rooms were opened to admit a guard to inspect us, we recognised among the prisoners in the other room, the late Arthur Griffith, founder of the Sinn Fein organisation.

The rooms occupied by the prisoners were devoid absolutely of furniture of any kind, no seats to rest on, no beds or bedding so that when we wanted to sit down, we were obliged to squat on the bare floor. At night we lay down around the walls, dressed as we were and obtaining whatever warmth we could from our overcoats. Late in the evening we were supplied with a "dixie" of tea and more of the hard biscuits. As we were without drinking vessels we made the best use we could of some empty bully beef tins. The following day we were supplied with a ration of one tin of bully beef between every two prisoners, but we were able to supplement the hard biscuits with some loaves of bread purchased for us by soldiers with money given them by J.J. Fitzgerald, and which he was fortunate enough to be able to retain when he was arrested. The soldiers were, of course, handsomely recompensed for their good offices. The

need of sanitary accommodation was greatly felt by all the prisoners. Early each morning batches of eight or ten would be taken out by an armed escort and marched across the wide barrack square to a lavatory, but this procedure occupied most of the day, and each roomful of prisoners had to wait for their turn. Still as two or three batches would be often together in the lavatory at the same time, they had an opportunity of talking and exchanging news while they washed. At this time, the second week in May, the courts martial were in full swing and the firing parties were busy carrying out executions at dawn. Then the deportations to England commenced. The first batch we saw marshalled on the barrack square for deportation we cheered from our windows, and immediately the sentries below brought their rifles to the present and shouted at us to get back from the windows. Thenceforward we were not allowed to show our faces at the windows. No visits from outside were then permitted to the prisoners, although later on they were, and barbed wire cages were erected on the barrack square for the purpose. In the evenings we were taken out for exercise to a vacant place at the rear of the block of buildings we occupied for about three quarters of an hour. At intervals, while a number of the "Tommies" looked on and jeered at us, some of the officers, young Englishmen of the "bounder" type, were inclined to be very aggressive towards us. Life continued in this fashion in Richmond Barracks until the Friday following our arrival. Dr. Rowan and E. Cosgrove were released during the week. On Friday a guard entered our room and ordered us to get ready for deportation to England. Some time later in the day we were taken out on the barrack square and lined up with a large number of other prisoners. Some distance from us was a second body of prisoners, also lined up, amongst whom

I recognised a couple of men from my native town, Loughrea, Co. Galway. These were the late Joseph O'Flaherty, Draper, and the late Peter Sweeney, Junior, Athenry Road. The recognition was mutual and we signalled greetings to each other. We were left standing on the Barrack Square for a couple of hours, and as a drizzling rain set in we felt anything but comfortable. We were, however, supplied with some hot tea or cocoa, drunk from the new customary bully beef tins. At length with a line of military guards on each side of our ranks, the order to march was given and as we stepped forward a loud and defiant cheer went up. A halt was immediately called and officers flourishing revolvers ran down by the ranks threatening the prisoners and warning them against a repetition of the cheering. Once more the order to march rang out and we again stepped out, this time silent. As we neared the Barrack gates, however, the prisoners could no longer be restrained and up went another mighty cheer. The military guards glared and muttered threats and imprecations but no halt was called this time, as the head of the column was issuing out on the highway from the barrack premises. As we progressed towards the Kingsbridge the procession of prisoners was attracting more and more public attention and by the time we had advanced some distance up the North quays the side walks became lined with spectators. As we passed by, they mostly regarded us with silent curiosity. Some amongst them, however, recognised friends and acquaintances here and there in our ranks and shouted greetings. In a few instances packets of cigarettes were thrown to those so recognised but the cigarettes were immediately confiscated by the guards. In front of the newsagents' shops our attention was also attracted to placards announcing latest execution of leaders in the Rising and also results of recent



court martial trials. Here and there were battered and blackened walls of wrecked houses, while as we crossed O'Connell Bridge, we could see that the whole length of O'Connell Street presented a smouldering vista of ruined buildings. Smoke was still rising in clouds from Messrs. Hopkins & Hopkins. Messrs. Mooney's establishments near the corner at the bridge, Liberty Hall further down the quay also showed the effects of the British bombardment to which it had been subjected. Arrived at the North Wall we were put aboard a cattle boat, being "accommodated" in the hold of the vessel the hatches of which were left open so that the sentries on deck could have us more easily under observation and control. We noticed also some sheep on the deck above us. After some time the hatches were partially covered in and a little later found that we were under way. When we guessed from the motion of the boat that we were approaching the open sea, one of the prisoners started reciting the Rosary, and all knelt and joined in the responses. We then sat down on planks and patriotic songs were sung. The possibility of the boat striking one of the floating mines, with which the Germans were supposed to have strewn was alluded to seriously by some, by others jocosely. We made the passage safely, however, and about 2 o'clock in the morning reached Holyhead. Having disembarked we were lined up on one of the railway platforms. While we were waiting for the train that was to take us to our destination a party of ladies came along with hot drinks for the troops. We then boarded a train with out custodians. As the train started the window blinds were drawn closely down in order to prevent lights showing as little as possible, so as not to attract the unwanted attentions of any "Zepplins" that might be engaged in one of their air raids. We therefore saw nothing of the air raids, nor the country through which we were speeding, but when we were well on our way we

learned from one of the military guards that our destination was Wakefield Military Detention Prison. At about 9 a.m. we arrived at Wakefield and we were led to the prison. There we were kept standing on the ground floor of one of the corridors of a wing of the prison, while the slow process of a roll call and identification of each prisoner was carried out and each conducted to separate cells. For the first few days we were closely confined, and then an hour's exercise morning and evening was allowed. After a week or two we were also given books from the prison library, beginning with works on religious subjects. Prison discipline was later further relaxed, so that we were allowed to have more time outside our cells, sweeping floors, cleaning and polishing the hand rails that ran along the corridors, etc. On one occasion I was put to cleaning some brass bells that hung in one of the corridors. At the same work was another prisoner, who still wore the tattered volunteer uniform in which he had been taken prisoner. We had opportunities of conversing now and then while at this work, which, of course we dallied over as long as we could. My new acquaintance turned out to be Leo Henderson, who in later years was a prominent figure in the events leading up to the Civil War. We became close friends, and as we worked at the burnishing of the bells he gave me a graphic description of the scenes in Messrs. Hopkins & Hopkins' Jewellers premises in O'Connell Street during the week's fighting in Dublin. There were but two other incidents during the time I spent in Wakefield that I regard as of particular interest in this record of the happening of that time with which I was concerned. The first relates to an occurrence, in the prison chapel on the first Sunday we were permitted to assist at Mass. The chaplain was an English priest and when we had concluded the usual prayers at the

end of the Mass, one of the prisoners, a dark-haired young Corkman rose in his place, and addressing his fellow prisoners said:- "Let us join now in saying an Our Father and three Hail Marys for the repose of the souls of our executed leaders and fallen comrades." He started reciting the first part of the Our Father and the rest of us were responding when the prison warders, who were seemingly taken by surprise by this addition to the devotions, at once ordered us out of the chapel. As we filed out the remainder of the prayers were completed. I did not know at the time who the young Corkman was who improvised this addition to the prayers after Mass, nor was I to learn his identity until six more eventful years had passed, and then from himself. This was in the year 1922, while in the Newbridge Internment Camp, where I made the acquaintance of that faithful Irishman, the late Denis Barry. In the course of conversation one day we were talking of past events and found that we had both been in Wakefield Prison at the same time. I referred to the above-related incident in the prison chapel and asked him if he knew who the dark haired young fellow was who was responsible for it. He smiled in his quiet good-humoured way, as he told me that the dark haired young man was no other than himself. Alas! poor Denis Barry's hair was no longer dark. It had grown white prematurely in the service of the land he loved. He had sacrificed much and endured many hardships in that service, and now he was fated never to leave Newbridge alive, owing to his fidelity to the cause he exposed. For, in the hunger strike that took place in Newbridge Barracks in October, 1923, he persisted to the end in exhibiting the same unconquerable spirit as his martyred co-patriot Terence McSweeney, and so added the sacrifice of his life to the many he had already made so that the ideal of Republican Independence might be at length realised.

The other incident which I think it well to relate here has reference to a visit paid to the prison by the late John O'Connor, M.P. for North Kildare. It was about eight o'clock in the evening soon after we had been locked into our cells for the night, when a prison warder entered my cell and ordered me out. On descending a spiral stairs at the centre of the prison, to the ground floor, I found a number of my fellow prisoners from the Co. Kildare, standing in a line. Mr. John O'Connor, with a number of prison officials stood in front of them. Mr. O'Connor went down the line questioning each prisoner as to the circumstances of his arrest, etc. I was standing next to J.J. Fitzgerald and after he had put some question to us he informed us that he was making representations to the British authorities with a view to our release. I thanked him for the trouble he was taking on our behalf and added that as far as I was concerned I was indifferent to his good offices or their result:

The reason I refer to this incident is that, subsequently, Mr. O'Connor made an attempt to discredit the Sinn Fein organisation in the County Kildare by giving publicity to some correspondence that had passed between himself and J.J. Fitzgerald in connection with favours that he alleged had been sought from him by the latter. This led to a controversy in the local press which attracted a good deal of attention at the time. At that period a General Election was looming on the political horizon and when it took place in 1918, the contention was renewed at the hustings.

After a couple of months has passed, there were a number of releases from Wakefield Prison, amongst them being

those of men from Naas and other parts of Kildare. Before leaving the prison each of us was given a travelling voucher, some sandwiches and one shilling. On arrival home we found that a strong local feeling of resentment against the Rising, and all associated with it, prevailed. This feeling manifested itself strongly in the language of those who were known as the separation allowance people, the wives and families of men on active service with the British Army in France and elsewhere. It was further reflected in the tirades published in the press, while the public bodies were equally vehement in their denunciations. The resolutions of the public bodies were subsequently rescinded or expunged from minute books and, in some instances, burned when the seats on them were captured by Sinn Fein nominees at the next Local Government elections. In fact the public bodies that passed them had outlived their representative character and no longer reflected responsible public opinion in dealing with political questions. A section of the press continued its sails to the fresh political breeze. It will, however, be understood from all this that for some time past after the Rebellion of 1916, it was not regarded a flattering epithet in Naas to be called a Sinn Feiner.

To preserve as much as possible the chronological order of these reminiscences, I should have earlier mentioned that my nephew was released with a number of other boys, on account of their youth, after a few days' detention in Richmond Barracks, also that my place as editor of the "Leinster Leader" had been filled during my absence by my brother Seamus.

A detachment of the Sherwood Foresters whose regiment suffered severely during the Rising in Dublin was for some time afterwards stationed in Naas. They had

the solicitous attentions of those ladies who were doing their bit for the Empire during the war by ministering to the needs and other comforts of British troops. Part of the Town Hall was placed at their disposal as a tea and recreation room and the Sherwoods enjoyed the hospitality with becoming appreciation. Now, Naas is lacking a little in its resources for social intercourse and outside the Town Hall there was no place of resort for the young people to cultivate the social amenities. I commented on this fact in a paragraph dealing with local life, published in the "Leinster Leader" and added that the Town Hall had barely sufficient accommodation for local needs in this respect. This paragraph was construed as an attack on the Urban Council for permitting occupation of the Town Hall by the military and a reflection on the latter; as a consequence I was dismissed from the Editorship of the "Leader" in order to placate the anger of the Imperialists. I was also, as a further justification of my dismissal, confronted with the article I had written, a year or two before, protesting against the policy of the "Irish Parliamentary Party with regard to Ireland's part in the Great War. However, as a result of a strong local feeling, a deputation of the Urban Council accompanied by the Very Rev. Fr. Norris, P.P. of Naas, waited on the directors of the "Leader" and induced them to reinstate me in my position.

Although the Rising ended in the only possible way it could as a trial of strength between a handful of imperfectly trained and ill-armed citizens who were soldiers and the huge highly organised and disciplined forces of the Empire, still its purpose was achieved in the preservation

of the spirit of the nation and its undying resistance to British rule and domination. That spirit, which in the past had refused to surrender its old traditions and had saved our ancient civilisation from being submerged and engulfed by the excessive waves of anglicisation directed against it, had well-nigh died out. Invasions, plantations, immigration, famine, preservation of religious faith, national language and customs, distortion of national education, coercion acts and lastly the latter day recrudescence of the Irish Parliamentary Party had at different periods left their impressions, and it is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the national spirit was in danger of succumbing to their corroding influence. But now invigorated once more by the blood of martyrs of Easter Week, the drooping spirit showed signs of revival before the first anniversary of the Rising had come round. The most hopeful manifestation of all was that noticeable amongst the younger people, and therefore gave all the more promise of that virility which was to bloom out in the resumption of the struggle that ended with the Truce in ~~July~~, 1921, and vindicated the men of 1916.

In the spring of 1917 I was approached by a number of boys in Naas, including Sean Rafferty, James Whyte and my nephew, to assist them in forming a branch of the Sinn Fein organisation in Naas. I put them off by saying that I would do so later on when they understood a little better what they were asking for, and when they had got a sufficient number to join. They had already formed a troop of national boy scouts of which James Whyte was Chief. Later

on they renewed their appeal for aid to get the Sinn Fein branch formed, stating that they had got the names of a sufficient number to join, and at last I consented to help them. We obtained the use of an upper storey room in the premises occupied by Mr. Joseph McDonald, in the main <sup>STREET</sup> for club purposes, and there held our inaugural meeting. The majority of those present were schoolboys. Confessedly we were not, at the outset, a very influential body. We formed a Committee with myself as President. The branch grew in numbers and, in the developments that followed in the political life of the country, it became the hub of the organisation in the county. We hung some pictures on the walls, mostly photographs of scenes during the Rising and also of the leaders who were executed or in the fighting.

After about a year we were obliged to surrender occupation of the club room owing to structural alterations about to be carried out in the premises. Mr. Stephen Garry, who had business premises in Poplar Square, on the site now occupied by Mr. R.P. Lowe's Spirit and Grocery Shop, had a vacant room there which he placed at our disposal for club purposes. There was very little accommodation and it was not at all suited to our purpose, so that we again decided to shift our quarters and apply to the Urban Council to rent us part of the Town Hall on the ground floor adjoining a room used as an office by the Town Surveyor. Our application was acceded to by the Urban Council but, when we sought possession, difficulties arose in connection with the key and after having been sent from one official to another without result or success in obtaining it, we resolved to gain admission otherwise than by the front door. Rightly or wrongly we believed that our presence in the Town Hall was resented by others and that obstacles were being placed in our way. Accordingly, having determined to take forcible



possession we proceeded one night in a body to the rear of the Town Hall where we succeeded in opening a small window, to which Sean Rafferty, then one of our smallest boy members, was lifted up and, having wriggled through, he was able to open a door leading to the market yard and we all then entered. The Urban Council members at their next meeting resented this proceeding on our part but our possession of the place was not further disputed. In connection with our tenancy of this room, I should like to correct an unfair allegation made in recent times at a meeting of the Urban Council that the Sinn Fein Club never paid any rent for the use of these premises. I have by me as I pen these pages, duplicate of agreement between the Urban Council and the Sinn Fein, under which the latter agreed to pay the yearly rent of £10. This agreement is signed on behalf of tenants by Michael O'Kelly, Stephen Garry and John O'Neill, who had been appointed Club Trustees. On behalf of the Council it is signed by D.J. Purcell, Chairman and J. Boyle, Clerk. The witnesses' signatures are those of Thomas Patterson and Thomas Perkins. I also hold official stamped receipt for £5 being half year's rent paid in advance by Stephen Garry who was, at the time Treasurer of the Club and signed by J. Boyle, Clerk. Possibly there are other receipts also, but at all events the receipt I hold is a refutation of the allegation that no rent was ever paid. The allegation may be due to a misapprehension of the facts but I think it right that the aspersion it cast on the club should be removed by the inclusion herein of the foregoing facts.

The Irish Transport and General Workers Union had not at this time extended its organisation to County Kildare,

and as it was growing to be a virile force in social life, with a national outlook, the question arose at a club meeting of encouraging the formation of a branch of the organisation in the town and thus getting it going in the county. It was considered that it might prove a useful auxiliary in promoting the objects Sinn Fein had in view. A meeting of working men was called at which I presided and a proposal that a branch of the Union should be established was agreed to after some discussion.

A Committee for organising purposes was formed and, following communications with Headquarters at Liberty Hall, Dublin, the latter agreed to send a delegation for the purpose of explaining the objects of the Union and formally establishing a branch. The meeting, announced by posters, was duly held in the Assembly Room of the Town Hall which was crowded by a large attendance. The speakers from Liberty Hall were Messrs. William O'Brien, Seamus Hughes, J. McGrath and J. Farran. There and then, the first branch of the Union was established in Naas and the organisation soon spread to Newbridge, Athy and other parts of the county. Stephen Garry was appointed Chairman and N.P. Byrne, N.T., Hon. Secretary. The room in Poplar Square, formerly occupied by the Sinn Fein Club, was secured for Committee purposes, etc. Although a proportion of the Sinn Fein Club members also joined the Union, the latter remained a purely labour organisation throughout its existence.

Soon after the Sinn Fein Club had started, trouble arose over some dissatisfaction of the Boy Scout Troop with the Committee and which led to a "mutiny" of the latter, who raided the Club room and carried off the pictures. A "Scene" followed when the next meeting of the club was

held but after an exhibition of some heat on both sides, a settlement of the difficulty was arrived at and peace and the pictures were restored. Thenceforward complete harmony reigned in the running of the club. The organisation had now spread to other centres in the county and a little later Eamon Moran, Ballysax, called on me in the "Leinster Leader" office when we discussed the question of calling a convention of delegates from the clubs then in existence for the purpose of forming a County Executive and so pushing forward the work of organisation. I got out circulars for this purpose and Newbridge was selected as the most convenient venue for the convention. Most of those who had been circularised attended, but when we reached Newbridge we found that permission for the use of the Town Hall, which we had been given to understand would be available for the convention, had not been applied for and the group of delegates having conferred on the street in front of the hall it was decided to postpone the fixture to a future date. Eventually the fixture was held in the Town Hall, the greater part of the county being well represented.

Eamon Fleming, whose acquaintance I had made some time before this, next arrived in Naas as organiser for the county and by his energy and whole-hearted earnestness did effective work in perfecting the organisation. In this work he had the active assistance of J.J. Fitzgerald, in addressing public meetings Sunday after Sunday. On Sunday, the 5th August, 1917, the first big Sinn Fein demonstration in the county organised by the local club was held in Naas. The meeting was announced by poster to be held in the Main Street, but on Saturday a Government Proclamation under the Defence of the Realm Act, signed by General Sir Bryan Mahon,

as the competent military authority, was issued forbidding the holding of the meeting in the town, and warning that all marching bodies of men and processions attempting to enter the town would be dispersed by force. The meeting-place was thereupon changed from the Main Street to the football grounds outside the town, and messengers were sent out early on Sunday morning to meet incoming contingents and direct them to the football grounds. From different districts the contingents came with Republican flags flying and headed by bands. The Sinn Fein club premises were also lavishly decorated with the Republican colours. The huge gathering at the football grounds was addressed by Rev. Fr. O'Brien, C.C., Kill, who presided, Arthur Griffith, J. McGrath, Miss Alice Milligan the distinguished Irish writer and poetess, Professor V. Collins, J. Connolly, father of Sean Connolly killed on the roof of the City Hall, Dublin, during the attack on Dublin Castle in Easter Week, 1916, and G. Lyons, Dublin. With regard to Mr. J. Connolly, it was fifty years since he had been last in Naas and he expressed gratification that the heroism and sacrifice of his son in giving his life for his country were perpetuated by the Naas Sinn Fein Club in adopting his name. Sean's father, grand-father and great-grandfather were born in Straffan and the family burial place there at that period was marked by a tricolour flag at the top of a tree nearby. The family originally belonged to Monasterevan. Five brothers and a sister of his family took part in the Rebellion of 1916.

Resolutions were adopted at the meeting demanding that the remains of Republican soldiers, executed after the Rising in defiance of all civilised warfare, be returned to relatives for Christian burial, pledging

themselves to nullify the proposed denationalisation of Irish history teaching in the Elementary Schools and calling on the men and women of Kildare to immediately join branches of the Sinn Fein organisation and with the rest of the county present a united front to claim sovereign independence for Ireland at the Peace Conference. Subsequently a conference was held in the Town Hall, at which M. Smyth, Rathgarvan, acted as Secretary and submitted a report showing that the following clubs had affiliated: Athgarvan, Kilgowan, Ardclough, Naas, Clane and Rathcoffey, Maynooth, Celbridge, Carbury, Tinahoe, Athy, Newbridge, Broadford and Prosperous. Several new branches, the report added, were in course of formation. An address was there delivered to a crowded audience.

On the 16th September following, an Aeridheacht Mór, promoted also by the local Sinn Fein rally club, was held in the same venue and was the occasion of another big Sinn Fein rally. At the opening of the Aeridheacht, addresses were delivered by speakers from headquarters, including Mr. W.T. Cosgrove, now head of the State Government, the late J. O'Leary Curtis, and Sean Lennon. A varied programme of songs, dances, recitations and instrumental music was contributed to by the following among others:- The Harmonic Orchestra, Dublin, Mr. Denis Cox, Mr. Charles Bevan, Mr. Sean Connolly, Maire Nic Shullaigh, Sean O'Hegarty, Rita Devereux, Sean McGlynn, all of whom were well-known Dublin performers. The Ballyknockan Brass Band and Dunlavin Prize Fife and Drum Band were also present.

About the same period the Ardclough National School came into much prominence by reason of the principal lady teacher, Miss Nora Murray, being accused by the British

Board of "National" Education of seditious teaching in the school. Miss Murray, in addition to her profession as a teacher, also engaged in literary work and attained some distinction as a writer in prose and verse. She taught such subjects as Irish History and language, which were outside the curriculum of Elementary "National" Education approved by the Board, and private information sent to that body that she had gone even further in inculcating a spirit of sturdy patriotism in the pupils attending her school formed the basis of a Sworn Inquiry into the manner in which she discharged her duties. The inquiry, possibly owing to the effect it produced on public opinion at the time, was not followed by any drastic action. Miss Murray subsequently taught in the Brownstown National School.

On the 27th January, Mr. J. Boyle, Clerk to the Naas Urban Council, reported to that body that a flag which had been presented to the local National Volunteers a couple of years before had disappeared from the Council Chamber where it had been kept. It was a beautifully embroidered green flag and was the work of Mrs. Shiel, then residing at Victoria Terrace, Naas. According to reports of the occurrence published in the local press, it was supposed that an entry had been obtained through a window to which a ladder had been raised and the flag removed by some persons unknown. Investigations by the police failed to trace the whereabouts of the flag which has never since been recovered.

#### Conscription - Prosecutions.

In the month of April, 1918, the proposal to extend the Conscription Act to Ireland became more menacing. The British House of Commons, by a majority of 200 passed the

first stage of a Bill with this purpose in view. Following this, public meetings were organised all over the country, at which the proposal was denounced and resolutions passed to resist its enforcement. The Irish Volunteers went on quietly but steadily reorganising their forces and were not at all disturbed by the Conscription scare. In fact it was welcomed by them as likely to be an aid to their determination to make good the effort and the sacrifices made in 1916, in as much as it would put some fight into those who had held aloof from their ranks and secure allies or sympathisers among those who would be moved by a feeling of self-preservation if not by the righteousness of the cause exposed by the Volunteers. It was considered that the anti-conscription committees set up could also be utilised to turn to advantage the Conscription threat by acting as recruiting agencies for the Volunteers. All parties were, for the time being, united in the common purpose of defeating conscription. On the 15th April of that year, Mr. D.J. Purcell, Chairman of the Naas Urban Council, presided at a large public protest meeting outside the Naas Town Hall, at which the different elements of Society were represented. The other speakers were Mr. John O'Connor, M.P., Very Rev. Fr. Norris, P.P., Naas, Mr. M. Fitzsimons, U.D.C. and the late Mr. John Healy, Co. C., Firmount. At a further demonstration on the 23rd April, the assembly registered a pledge to defeat conscription, in token of which all present held up the right hand while the pledge was being read from the platform. An Anti-Conscription Committee was then formed of which N.P. Byrne and Seamus O'Kelly were appointed Joint Honorary Secretaries. The last named had some time before this returned to Naas having been obliged owing to ill health to relinquish work in Dublin as Editor of "The Sunday Freeman" as well as his other literary activities.

In the end the British Government thought better of its Irish conscription proposals and devoted itself instead to dragooning the country in the vain effort to suppress the resurgent spirit of militant Irish Nationalism.

In the same month of April the Naas Sinn Fein Club hit upon the rather novel idea of opening a store in the town for the sale of potatoes. Philanthropy had, at that time, given place to profiteering in different directions and complaints were made that this latter was carried on to an inordinate extent amongst the traders in Naas. The Club succeeded in concluding a bargain with a farmer for the purchase of a ton of potatoes of the "Shamrock" variety at a price that would enable them to be retailed at 8d. per stone. Across the street from where the Club rooms were situated were vacant licensed premises. We rented the front part of the shop and installed scales, weights, scoop, etc., for weighing. The Store could not be opened until the evening when our ordinary work for the day was finished. A few members were appointed to take charge of the weighing of the potatoes for purchasers. The system adopted was - the purchaser called at the Club Rooms where the quantity of potatoes required was paid for and a slip of paper showing the weight and price duly signed given in return. This slip was then presented at the "shop" and the potatoes supplied. When the poorer classes of the people heard that the best quality potatoes were to be had at 8d. per stone (a price that was considerably lower than that obtaining in any of the ordinary shops in the town) we at once had a steady stream of customers who included even our "friends" the separation allowance families. The first ton of potatoes was quickly sold out and further supplies ordered. The paper slips handed to purchasers were written and



initialled by me. I was engaged in this way a few days after the opening of the shop when a police sergeant and constable of the R.I.C. came into the room. The Sergeant asked me whether I had an official permit to sell the potatoes. I replied that I had. He asked me to produce it. I explained that I had not got it with me just then. He then asked me from whom I had got the permit and I replied that I had got it from the Food Controller. Still dissatisfied the Sergeant pursued his inquiries and demanded from me the name signed to my permit. I gave it as Diarmuid Lynch. The Sergeant, so to speak, was now satisfied that he had caught me out and, with evident satisfaction, said that that was not the name of the Food Controller. I told him that Diarmuid Lynch was the official Food Controller of Dáil Éireann and the only one we relied on or recognised. A similar visit was paid by the police to the "Shop" men. The upshot of it all was that a summons was served on all concerned to appear at the following Court of Petty Sessions to answer a charge of selling potatoes without a licence or permit from the British Food Controller.

It may be well to explain for the benefit of any of the younger generation of people who may scan these reminiscences that during the Great War an official Food Controller was appointed by the British Government, from whom a licence to sell certain commodities not ordinarily requiring a licence had to be obtained. This requirement included potatoes. Those summoned for this misdemeanour were myself, S. Garry, T.J. Williams, James Whyte and Alphie Sweeney. The magistrates on the bench were Mayor Thackeray, Resident Magistrate, Lord Mayo, Colonel St. Leger Moore and Dr. Smyth, all of whom have since gone to

the Final Judgment Seat before which all must appear sooner or later. The Sergeant detailed circumstantially what he had seen in the Sinn Féin Club Rooms, his questions and my replies with regard to the sale of the potatoes and the licence. When we were asked if we had anything to say in our defence we each in turn refused to recognise the authority of the Court to try us for that or for any other offence with which we might be charged. Major Thackeray delivered a homily in the course of which he rated us for seeking a cheap advertisement for our Sinn Féin activities by engaging in a spurious form of philanthropy. We were ordered to pay a fine of ten shillings and costs each, which we refused to comply with, and taking the Major at his word, decided to make all the capital we could out of the case against us by electing to accept the alternative of one week's imprisonment in Mountjoy Jail.

At the conclusion of the Court Mr. McDonald, District Inspector of the R.I.C., came to us and expressed his sympathy with us in what he regarded as our meritorious action in seeking to counteract the profiteering then going on. He added that he was sorry that we should decline to seek the necessary official permit to enable us to continue doing so. The Sinn Féin Potato "Shop" was thereupon closed down, to the disappointment of the many people who had availed of its advantages, but its brief existence obtained for the Club a little more toleration from some of those who had been most hostile to it.

Some weeks later a further summons was issued by the police against Christy Byrne, a member of the Club and one of the "Leinster Leader" composing staff. He was charged with being concerned in the illegal sale of what had come to be known as the "Sinn Féin" potatoes without a permit

from the Food Controller. This time the penalty was increased by the Court to £2. A further batch of summonses were later withdrawn as the "Shop" had ceased to exist. All these proceedings inspired one of our members to endeavour to reflect the local feeling they aroused in a parody of "The Wearin' of the Green". I forget the entire production but the following opening lines will give an idea of the general treatment of the subject in the ballad:-

Oh! there Biddy dear and did you hear  
The news that's goin' round  
The Sinn Fein spuds by law forbid  
No longer can be found  
Upon these licensed premises  
At eight pence be retail  
For there's a cruel law which makes  
Illegal such a sale.

Oh! they met the food controller, and  
He took them quick in hand  
And said a licence for to sell  
These spuds I now demand  
Or else in Mountjoy Prison, etc.

The attention of the police to Club activities did not, however, end there. When the late Mr. Laurence Ginnell came to Naas on the invitation of the Club to deliver an address a few months afterwards, the occasion was availed of by the R.I.C. to again invoke the majesty of the law and make Club members amenable to its dictates or else suffer the consequences of conflict therewith. Admissions to the Town Hall to hear Mr. Ginnell were carefully supervised so that no hostile or disorderly elements might gain an entrance. For this purpose T. Patterson and J. White took up a position at the entrance door. A party of police sergeants and constables approached and their entrance was barred. They demanded the right of entry which was refused, despite warnings as to the consequences of being obstructed in the discharge

of their duties. A Sergeant subsequently succeeded in entering and he took notes of Mr. Ginnell's address. Mr. Ginnell was prosecuted for seditious statements in this address and inciting to a breach of the peace. T. Patterson and J. Whyte were called upon to answer a charge of obstructing the police on the same occasion. They all refused to recognise the authority of the Court to try them, and Mr. Ginnell was sentenced to six months', T. Patterson, three months and J. Whyte two months' imprisonment.

The patriot priest, Rev. Father Burbage, was one of the speakers at the meeting in the Town Hall on the occasion of Mr. Ginnell's visit.

#### Exciting Events in Naas.

Towards the close of the Summer of the same year an exciting incident occurred in connection with a public meeting near the Market Weight House, Naas, called to demand the release of the Irish political prisoners then confined in English Jails. Mr. Art O'Connor, Elm Hall, Celbridge, was, at the same period, a much-wanted man by the R.I.C. and he had been "on the run" for some time. This came about in the following way:- About the month of May, 1917, my nephew became possessed of information that Mr. O'Connor's residence was to be raided by a military force for the purpose of placing Mr. O'Connor under arrest. My nephew immediately got out his bicycle and rode from Naas to Celbridge to warn Mr. O'Connor. It was about 5.30 p.m. when he arrived there, and Mr. O'Connor immediately left home on receiving the warning from my nephew. An

hour later the military raiders arrived at Elm Hall, but failed to find their quarry. My nephew did not see Mr. O'Connor again until the night before the public meeting arranged to be held in Naas. Returning home late after having attended to the delivery of some despatches, he found Mr. O'Connor alone in the sittingroom which was unlighted. Mr. O'Connor explained that he had been staying for some time at Broadford but as the police scent was getting too warm there he had to leave. The Rev. Father James, P.P., had driven with him in a pony and trap to the outskirts of Naas and he found the rest of the way alone to my home. After partaking of some light refreshments Mr. O'Connor retired to bed and it was not till morning that I was aware of Mr. O'Connor's presence in the house. This was on Sunday and after late Mass several of those connected with the organisation of the public meeting called to my house and the arrangements and general political situation were discussed. Mr. O'Connor, who for some months previous had had a very trying time in evading arrest, was looking very weak and exhausted and the question whether he ought to surrender himself to the government authorities arose. He placed himself unreservedly in the hands of those present as to what course he ought to take. The matter was discussed for some time but there was a consensus of opinion against surrender as it was considered that imprisonment in the weakened condition he then was in would be too much of a strain on his constitution. A safe retreat was then arranged for him where everything would be done to make him comfortable. When this had been settled, my nephew propounded a plan by which Mr. O'Connor might be able to attend and address the public meeting despite the police. The boldness and novelty of this proposal appealed to all present and it was agreed that if it could be successfully carried out it would supply

a sensational and dramatic coup that would be likely to enhance the prestige of Sinn Fein and expose the impotence to which it had reduced established authority. Mr. O'Connor also favoured the idea. The plan formulated was then examined in detail and approved. Briefly it was this. The meeting place was to be at the market weigh house, convenient to what is known as Grey's Lane, which leads from the Main Street to the road returning from the Fair Green, through Mill Brook and out on the Friary Road near the railway bridge. Mr. O'Connor was to proceed to the meeting place accompanied by a couple of Volunteers and wait near the corner of the laneway for a pre-arranged signal to come forward and mount the platform. Immediately he did so the platform was to be surrounded unobtrusively by a body of Volunteers from Naas, Newbridge and Kill who were to resist any intention on the part of the police to arrest Mr. O'Connor. When he had finished speaking, the Volunteers were to form in a double line from the platform to the laneway so as to provide a clear passage for his retreat. The Newbridge Volunteer section at this stage were to create an uproar near the Town Hall to make it appear that Mr. O'Connor was getting away in that direction.

This plan worked out as arranged. When Mr. O'Connor appeared on the platform he was enthusiastically cheered and then all eyes turned towards the police present in charge of a Head Constable. They made no attempt to interfere until Mr. O'Connor had ceased speaking and stepped down from the platform. The Volunteers joined hands to form a kind of living chain but their line broke in the confusion as the police advanced towards Mr. O'Connor. The latter succeeded in reaching the laneway and the Volunteers formed a cordon across the entrance when Mr.

O'Connor had passed. The police came on with a rush and the number of Volunteers at this point was not sufficient to form a double line completely across the entrance to the laneway. In this dilemma a long flag staff was seized and held by the Volunteers to bar the passage of the police. A rush by the latter failed to break through and a scuffle ensued in which the police used sticks but despite this the Volunteers declined to give way. Meanwhile a short run up an incline in the lane brought Mr. O'Connor and his escort to where a bicycle belonging to Seamus O'Kelly was waiting for him. Two other cyclists, John and Peadar Traynor of Woolpack, escorted Mr. O'Connor along the laneway, through Millbrook and on to the Tipper Road and soon the town and the excitement were left behind. Arrived at Mrs. Hill's residence at Arthurstown, a hospitable welcome awaited Mr. O'Connor and his escort and for several days the former was able to rest in peace and security. He was later able to make his way to Newcastle where he had relatives. From there he went to the west of Ireland but eventually he was arrested at Spiddal, Co. Galway.

With reference to Mrs. Hill, it may be said that this was by no means the only occasion on which her house had harboured hard-pressed men on the run. At all stages of the struggle for freedom her residence was open for the reception of Republicans who experienced unbounded hospitality and kindness at her hands. She furthermore unstintedly subscribed to every fund having for its object the support of Republican activities and I doubt very much if there is any other sympathiser with the Republican cause in the county who has made more sacrifices in this way than Mrs. Hill of Arthurstown. In the services she rendered to republicans seeking refuge at Arthurstown she had the

whole-hearted assistance and co-operation of Mr. Phil Traynor.

In the month of November, 1918, about the time that the armistice was concluded between the belligerents in the Great War, an attack was made by a mob of British soldiers and women on 6, Harcourt Street, Dublin, where the Sinn Fein Headquarters were located. These premises were also the offices of the newly-formed Land Bank, a Sinn Fein enterprise, and also for editorial purposes in the publication of "Nationality", the official organ of Sinn Fein. "Nationality" was the successor of the "United Irishmen", "Sinn Fein", "Scissors and Paste" and the other series of publications edited by Arthur Griffith, the letters of which had to be altered from time to time as they came under the ban of Dublin Castle and were suppressed. To the brilliant journalism of Arthur Griffith in these publications is largely due the rousing of the dormant national consciousness that was destined eventually to assert itself in those cultural and political revolutions that punctuated the period between 1900 and 1921. With Griffith now removed as a prisoner under the bogus German Plot fabricated by the British Government to justify the arrest of leaders, his loss in the editorial control of "Nationality" was rightfully regarded as a serious blow to the maintenance of the national spirit he had engendered through the medium of its columns. In a message he had contrived to have sent to Harcourt Street after his arrest, Griffith expressed the desire that the choice of editor of "Nationality" during his absence should fall on Seamus O'Kelly if the latter's



health allowed him to accept the post. Seamus was then living with me in Naas. On the morning that the newspapers announced the "Discovery" of the alleged German Plot and the arrest of Griffith and others on the charge of being implicated in it, Seamus quietly announced that he was going to the city to offer his services in taking Griffith's place as editor of "Nationality". He took the mid-day train to Dublin, went to Harcourt Street and was soon carrying on where Griffith had left off. He stayed at Seapoint and went to Harcourt Street every morning. He continued discharging the editorial duties until the attack on the premises alluded to occurred. When the military mob burst in, some shots were fired and the lamps were smashed. The effect of all this on a man in the state of health that Seamus then was can be imagined by the reader. He went as usual the following morning to Harcourt Street, Dublin, and on his arrival his weakness was noticeable to all the others present. He was in "De Valera's Room" when suddenly he was taken very ill and collapsed. Sean McMahon, Q.M.G. of the Irish Republican Army and later of the Free State Army, had a priest and doctor in attendance upon him without delay, while Charlie Murphy, T.D., watched by the patient's side. He was removed to Jervis Street Hospital where he died about 5 a.m. without regaining consciousness. Among the many early messages received deploring his death under such tragic circumstances was one from Arthur Griffith.

In the "Sunday Independent" of the 27th July, 1930, under the heading "Sinn Fein" and its newspaper armoury" a correspondent signing himself T.S.C. wrote as follows:-

"The memory of another outstanding personality associated with these events should reverently be recalled.

Many patrons of the Abbey Theatre will remember the fragrance of Seamus O'Kelly's plays.

Coincident with the tragedy attendant on the careers of many of his companions, Seamus O'Kelly's end was sad. He had been a member of a friendly little group, banded together in the background of the Round Room of the Mansion House on November 11th, 1918. The occasion was the inauguration of the Dublin electoral campaign under the Chairmanship of Alderman "Tom" Kelly. Moved by the enthusiasm of the proceedings, Seamus penned an editorial entitled "The Swan Song" which appeared in the issue of "Nationality" for the ensuing Saturday. It was emphasised that:- Ireland is to-day once more being put to the acid test of faith in herself and her resurrection will be in proportion to her faith. Meanwhile, before his article appeared, Seamus had passed to his reward on the night of the previous Wednesday. Arthur Griffith, who with others of his comrades was enduring imprisonment for complicity in the "German Plot", wrote from Gloucester Jail on the 26th of the same November.

"I have just heard of Seamus O'Kelly's death. It is a tragic loss to Ireland at the moment, and to me it is the loss of one of my dearest friends. He has given his life for the cause, for two years ago he was warned by the doctor that to expose himself to any excitement would lead to fatal results, but I knew well that Seamus would not let "Nationality" lack for an editor after my arrest. I hoped he would survive the strain. I cannot write more to-day, Mise, le meas, etc."

On the Sunday following his death a public funeral was accorded his remains from St. Teresa's Church,

Clarendon Street, to Glasnevin Cemetery. A body of Volunteers acted as pall bearers, while others marched in the funeral procession in which many of the City Bands playing funeral marches and other organisations participated.

Although the tribute paid to his memory in this way was a recognition of the faithful services he had rendered to the cause of his country's freedom, it is his work as a story writer, dramatist and poet that is likely to have a wider and more enduring place in popular estimation. Many glowing appreciations of his personal qualities and patriotism have been published in both prose and verse since his death, but those dealing with the magnetism of his literary genius by which alone he was known to many of the writers of these would, if published, require a separate volume of bulky properties to contain them. These appreciations came from many countries, even as far off as Japan.

Besides the literary works in prose and verse published during his life, he left several others, which have since passed through publisher's hands. Amongst these is "The Parnellite" a play in three acts published in 1919, to which I wrote a preface giving a brief outline of his parentage, birth and career and from this I quote here the following extract with some minor alterations:- "Born at Loughrea, County Galway, the early life of Seamus O'Kelly was passed in an environment that was strongly reflected in all his work. His forebears on the paternal side were for many generations identified with the milling and corn-buying trade which in the past flourished between Galway and Limerick. "Kelly's Mills" as they were formerly known still exist in the townland of Leitrim near Loughrea.

Family changes and inter-marriages led to alteration in the ownerships of these mills and to the migration of some of the family to Loughrea where they continued the corn-buying and carrying trade. The father of Seamus O'Kelly for many years carried on a prosperous business in Loughrea. Seamus's mother was Catherine Fitzgerald of Foxhall in the same neighbourhood, a family name now extinct there. Much delicacy marked his childhood but with the passage of years he grew stronger although he never became really robust.

He early evinced an aptitude for telling fairy stories, revealing even then remarkable imaginative powers and a no less extraordinary gift of impressing his imaginative pictures on the minds of his listeners. These flights of fancy frequently took the form of trips to fairy-land, mounted on a grey steed, so that often a request for a story was put in the form of an inquiry as to whether he had been out on the grey steed the night before. Other tales had for their subject matter visions of "The White Lady" who was wont to haunt the lakeside at night and at times created magic paths of flowery grandeur over the waters to the islets on the lake, where she reigned as fairy queen in splendour during the world's sleeping hours, vanishing at cockcrow in the morning. "Lanty-Cant" was another fairy he greatly favoured. How this name suggested itself to him I cannot remember but some time after he had introduced "Lanty-Cant" this identical appellation formed the title of a story in a Dublin publication of the period then much read in the provinces. This may have been an example of that subtle telepathy which, it is claimed, is more common than sceptics will admit. By the family of Seamus it was regarded as a remarkable coincidence occasioning much merriment. As an acolyte attached to the Carmelite Monastery, he formed a profound affection for the

Community and a deep and abiding reverence for everything connected with it. Memories of the Abbey remained with him through life as is evidenced by his story "The Sick Call", included in the volume of stories and sketches published under the title of "Waysiders", and also by his poem "In Memoriam". These verses were commemorative of Brother Joseph O'Shea, a saintly and gifted lay brother, well known in the past to devotees of the Abbey.

Seamus was educated at St. Brendan's College, Loughrea, then conducted under the Presidency of the Rev. Fr. M.J. Leahy, now Parish Priest of Eyrecourt, County Galway. It cannot be said that he showed either brilliance or application to his studies, but that he was observant and impressionable even then is shown by the readiness which in maturer years he could recall and imbue with renewed life scenes, incidents and personalities that he encountered in those days. It may be added that many of his literary creations had their prototypes in real life. The humorous side of what he saw and experienced ever appealed to him, although pathos and tragedy came within the scope of his literary and dramatic work. As a boy, he loved to listen to the language of his fathers spoken by the older folk and thus learned much of it directly. As he grew older he became a voracious reader, dividing his time between his books, birds and flowers for he loved nature in all its forms. Having developed a taste for journalism, an opportunity for satisfying it came with the advent of a local paper published in an adjoining county.

At this period he made the acquaintance of Mr. J.W. O'Beirne, a gentleman well known in journalistic and nationalist circles in Dublin, and the friendship that sprang up between them was lifelong. As a journalist his powers

were immediately exhibited in the quickness, ready resourcefulness and originality he brought to his work. The awakening that came with the Irish renaissance, and which has since revolutionised almost every phase of Irish life, had just begun and he threw himself into the movement with enthusiasm. It might be said that he was a pioneer in seeking the reform of Irish provincial journalism and raising it out of the rut of pettifogging parish politics and the "Rameis" with which it was about to regale its readers. His abilities were quickly recognised and rewarded with the editorship of a Southern provincial paper. This gave him distinction as the youngest editor of an Irish newspaper. When the "Cork Weekly Sun" shone over the journalistic horizon, he was offered the editorship, but some obstacle arising, the offer lapsed and soon after the "Sun" set and did not rise again." A little later "The Irish Packet", a bright weekly journal was launched in Dublin, piloted by Mr. Matthew Bodkin, K.C., County Court Judge of Clare for many years, as editor. In some contributions to this weekly publication, the latent literary genius of Seamus O'Kelly was first discovered, although some notable contributions from him had already been accepted and published in other journals. Encouraged by favourable notice and appreciations from literary critics, he applied himself with renewed zeal to his work, and the result was a series of short stories published in the "Packet". About this time Seamus was appointed editor of the "Leinster Leader", Naas. The proximity of Naas to Dublin brought him into touch with literary circles and one of his earliest friends was Mr. Arthur Griffith, then Editor of "The United Irishman". About the same time he became acquainted with Mr. Seamus O'Sullivan, whose charming verse is so widely appreciated,

and between them close and intimate relations existed. The sorrow felt by Mr. O'Sullivan was beautifully expressed in a press appreciation from his pen, published on the occasion of his friend's death. Apart from journalism, the publication "By the Stream of Kiluieen", was his first venture into the domain of publicity. This contained a collection of short stories and sketches of Western Irish life. The reception of the book was flattering and he soon applied himself to more ambitious work; "The Matchmakers" comedy followed. It was first played by the Theatre of Ireland Society, the forerunner of the Abbey Theatre, and proved a pronounced success. This comedy as well as "Meadow Sweet" and other dramatic works from his pen have since been played to appreciative audiences all over the country, as well as in England, Scotland and other countries. "The Shuiler's Child" also produced by the Theatre of Ireland Society, confirmed the reputation he had already made as a playwright. His time was now divided between journalism and his other literary activities and he continued contributing short stories and sketches to different publications notably "The Manchester Guardian" and "The Weekly Independent". How he contrived to do so seemed a marvel to his friends and especially to his family who were not unmindful of his frailty since boyhood. He was a tremendous worker and possibly overtaxed his physical powers. At all events a long and tedious illness - rheumatic fever - interrupted his work. It left effects which eventually proved fatal and this at a time when his friends had hoped that he would, by sheer force of will-power and natural optimism, for such was his temperament, overcome them. No sooner had he become convalescent than he again set to work and, eventually editing the "Dublin Saturday Post", he found it possible to be in closer touch with the

the congenial literary atmosphere of the metropolis. Continued ill-health, however, obliged him to relinquish work for a time. After he had spent some time in the country recuperating he was offered and accepted the Editorship of "The Sunday Freeman" but he soon had to retire from this, also for similar reasons. He was all this time in deadly combat with the malady which ultimately proved fatal heart affection, but it was characteristic of his unconquerable spirit of cheerfulness that he availed of every moment of freedom from illness to work away persistently. The production of "Driftwood" in London and Manchester, and in Dublin, "The Stranger", "The Homecoming", "The Bribe", "The Parnellite", as well as the publication of a novel "The Lady of Deerpark", "Waysiders" and "Hillsiders" (Stories and Sketches), "Wet Clay" and "The Weaver's Grave" have all been the work of a comparatively brief period. These together with "Raps and Ballads" and other poems were written under conditions of health that would have been impossible to a writer endowed with a less cheerful disposition or optimistic spirit. Most of it was done while he resided at Abbey View House, Naas. It only remains to be added that when he returned to Dublin in May, 1918, to continue the work of editing "Nationality" in the absence of Arthur Griffith, then deported, he knew that he was risking his life in doing so. Yet he entered into the work with the same enthusiasm and spirit that he would settle down to some favourite literary theme-calin, oblivious to the consequences to himself but determined to be steadfast and loyal at all costs to his friends and their ideals. His death at his post, the public funeral accorded to his remains, the many beautiful and pathetic appreciations in prose and verse, which appeared in the Press of the country at the time, combine fittingly to close a career.



He passed away in the prime of life, and had he lived a little longer or been blessed with a more vigorous constitution, he might have aspired to and attained a still greater degree of eminence in the literary world. But these are vain regrets and I prefer leaving to others such conjectures and speculations and to the general reader the appraisal of his efforts.

#### General Election, 1918.

When the General Election of 1918 took place, the Naas Sinn Fein Club was in a strong position from the point of numbers and the growth of enthusiasm manifested in other districts in the county. The main political issue had also become more clearly defined, namely Imperialism versus Nationalism, so that in the coming contest the electors were constrained to choose between either one or the other. The action of the Irish Parliamentary Party during the Great War in identifying <sup>ITSELF</sup> ~~ourselves~~ with the Anti-Irish elements in support of England's war policy and in seeking to commit the country to approval of the course they had taken had lost them a good deal of their former influence. When the conscription threat came they sought to retrieve their political influence by voicing the country's determination to resist it. But their recruiting activities for the British Army, ostensibly for the sake of the Home Rule Act, and the preservation of small nations, were remembered and their floundering inconsistency availed them nothing when the crucial test of the ballot came. The old-time followers, who still adhered to the political leadership of Mr. Redmond and their old-time enemies the Unionists, now found common cause in support of the Parliamentary Party

against Sinn Fein. This combination had, however, to reckon with a re-awakened nationalism nurtured on Fenian principles and which won to its side the youthful enthusiasm of a new generation.

The Sinn Fein standard bearers in the country in this election were:- Donal Buckley, Maynooth, for North Kildare, and Art O'Connor, Elm Hall, Celbridge, in South Kildare. The former won a proud place in the esteem and confidence of the supporters of the Sinn Fein organisation by the part he had played in the Rebellion of 1916 when he marched with a band of 18 Kildare men from Maynooth to Dublin on Easter Monday and formed one of the glorious garrison that held the G.P.O., Dublin, for a week against the forces of the British Empire.

Mr. Art O'Connor had won his way to the foremost ranks of the Sinn Fein orators of the day and, later, was prominent in the Republican fighting line. The Irish Party nominees were the sitting members of both constituencies namely John O'Connor in North Kildare and Denis Kilbride in South Kildare. The election agent for the Sinn Fein nominees was G.N. Reddin, brother of the present District Justice. Associated with him as legal agent was Donal O'Connor, brother of Art, then a law student and now practising as a solicitor in the county. The members of the Naas Sinn Fein Club threw themselves into the work of the organisation with vigour, and soon an election committee with sub-committees all over the county were actively at work. The Parliamentary Party candidates concentrated on the material benefits they had won through the operation of British legislation in rural

housing schemes, drainage of land and land purchase, and denounced their opponents as "rainbow chasers" grasping at the shadow for the substance of material progress. The broad main issue of Imperialism versus Nationalism was insistently kept before the electorate by the speakers on the Sinn Fein side and the policy of abstention from the British Parliament was justified as the only consistent and ultimately effective one for the attainment of freedom and independence.

Some time prior to the polling day or about the 2nd December, the Reverend Father Michael O'Flanagan arrived in the county and addressed a series of meetings in support of the Sinn Fein candidates. On reaching Naas a very large meeting assembled to receive him at the Market Weigh House, for the fame of the patriotic priest's eloquence had preceded him to the county. His reception was worthy of the place he held in the hearts of the people, nor were the people disappointed in the delivery of an address by Fr. O'Flanagan that was calculated to fan even the smallest spark of patriotism into a blaze. The alternating humour and pathos by which his speech was interspersed also kept the assembly moving from one mood to another. Thus, for upwards of an hour, he held the gathering in the thrall of his eloquence.

As he concluded his speech a mob of British soldiers and women who had congregated at the outskirts of the crowd began to indulge in cries of "Up the red, white and blue", "Up England", varied with other language. Then they became more aggressive, rushing in and hustling members of the crowd. This conduct was at length resented and some blows with fists were exchanged, whereupon the mob of interrupters retired to the sidewalk in front of the Post Office. Here a "Union Jack" flag was hoisted to the top of a lamp post,

around which the soldiers and their women friends gathered cheering and gesticulating. Matters were again becoming menacing and the police and some peacemakers got between the opposing elements to prevent a clash. In the height of the renewed excitement the Union Jack was torn down from the lamp post. Then the Irish Republican tricolour appeared where the Union Jack had flown and a soldier endeavoured to clamber up the lamp post to tear it from its place but he was seized by some civilians and dragged down before he could achieve his purpose. More scuffles followed as the crowd surged round and more blows were struck. Cheers and counter cheers were then indulged in and, after some time, excitement simmered down. The crowd returned to the platform and the meeting was brought to a close. Later in the evening a motor with some speakers at the meeting drove to the Royal Hotel in South Main Street. A group of women approached and seized a tricolour on the car. The occupants of the car jumped out and recovered the emblem while the women fled to an adjoining laneway. Thereafter all excitement subsided and the town resumed its normal peacefulness.

At the conclusion of the polling on the day of the election, the ballot boxes were conveyed to the County Courthouse, Naas, escorted by a guard of Volunteers at the Naas Town Hall, which was one of the polling stations. The ballot boxes were taken possession of by the Presiding Officers who were ex-R.I.C. men and these were escorted by a party of the local Volunteers, under the charge of Alphonse Sweeney, to the Courthouse where they posted a guard outside the room in which the ballot boxes were deposited. This guard was relieved at intervals during the night until the

boxes were taken possession of the following morning by the Returning Officer when the counting of the votes commenced.

The result of the count was received with great jubilation when the figures were announced as follows:-

North Kildare - Buckley 5,070  
O'Connor 2,772

Majority:- 3,298

South Kildare - O'Connor 7,104  
Kilbride 1,545  
Majority 5,559

This double victory of Sinn Fein in the County Kildare was part of the general rout of the Irish Party all over the country.

One other local happening that marked the close of the year 1918 was a raid on the Gas Works on the occasion of a County Hunt Ball in the Naas Town Hall, when the gas connection was cut off and the ball had to be carried on with the aid of candles.

#### Repression and Retaliation.

In 1919 the repressive policy of the British Government was in full swing against Sinn Fein and raids, arrests and courts martial were taking place all over the country. In retaliation for the association of the ascendancy class with this repressive policy, the stoppage of hunt meets was decided upon in several parts of the country. The Naas Sinn Fein Club adopted this policy in order to make

a demonstration that might have a salutary effort in bringing home to this class in the county that they could not indulge their hostility to Irish ideals in this way with impunity. It was, therefore, decided that a number of the members should proceed to Betaghstown, Clane, on the occasion of a Hunt Meet there and, with the aid of others from adjoining districts prevent, as far as possible, the hunt from taking place there. A number volunteered for this purpose and, on the 8th February, they proceeded to the scene of action. Mr. Tommy Harris, with the local men, met those from Naas and a cordon was formed across one of the cross roads by which the Hunt would have to pass on the way to the covert. Those forming the cordon were armed with sticks torn from trees. Individual members of the Hunt on seeing these preparations to make trouble came and expostulated with the obstructors declaring that the hunt or its members had nothing to do with political affairs. The spokesmen of the obstructors replied that Irishmen had been arrested and sent to English jails for political reasons and that until these were released all hunting would be prevented. They added that certain followers of the Hunt were notoriously hostile to Irish freedom and, on the County Grand Juries, had identified themselves with resolutions passed by them urging the Government to suppress national organisations. Mr. Kerry Supple, County Inspector R.I.C., who was present with some policemen, warned the obstructors of the consequences that might attend interference with the Hunt. The obstructors refused to abandon their position and the followers of the Hunt, seeing that they were determined to persist in their opposition, a conference was held with the Master of the Hunt and as a result the ruse was adopted of taking the

obstructors by surprise in changing the draw to another covert to which a different road to that held by the obstructors led. The huntsmen in charge of the hounds, followed by the rest of the Hunt, suddenly made a dash for the road that led to Mount Armstrong and galloped off before further opposition could be offered. The obstructing party had, therefore, to be content with the demonstration such as it was but it had its effect amongst members of the Hunt and at the same time encouraged active opposition of a like kind in other centres.

Soon after the Betaghstown demonstration a large public meeting of farmers was held in the Courtroom of the County Courthouse, Naas, at which Mr. Joseph O'Connor, Mylerstown (now Senator Joseph O'Connor) presided. In explaining the purpose of the meeting viz., to protest against organised opposition to Hunt Meets, the Chairman pointed out the gravity, from the farmers' point of view, of interference with Fox Hunting, stating that on the existence of this sport depended to a large extent the prosperity of the farming community. Large quantities of oats and forage were purchased from the farmers every year by those who followed the hounds. An elderly gentleman, Mr. Sam Ray of Clane, who said he was there speaking on behalf of the labouring classes, denounced the interference with Hunt Meets that had taken place and launched out into denunciation also of the burning of police barracks, which was now becoming more frequent, and which marked the first offensive tactics adopted by the Irish Republican forces. Mr. Pat Dunne at once challenged Mr. Ray's claim to speak for the labouring or any other classes and denied that he had any authority or mandate whatever to do so. He (Mr. Dunne) continuing declared his full sympathy with the policy of Sinn Fein in this opposition to Hunt Meets, which he said was the

only means they had of bringing the coercionists and anti-Irish elements to book for their hostile displays.

Further on in the proceedings, Mr. John Halverstown also declared himself in favour of the stoppage of hunting until all the prisoners arrested in connection with the alleged German Plot were released by the British Government. The meeting ultimately came to an end without coming to any definite agreement.

I should have mentioned that by this time a flourishing branch of Cumann na mBan existed in the town and its members met regularly for instruction in First Aid and devoting themselves to the other activities of the organisation. Their work and co-operation gave much encouragement to all connected with the Republican movement. Later when more serious work was demanded by the exigencies of the times, they were equally alert, ready and active in the discharge of the duties assigned them. When the jails and internment camps became filled with Republican prisoners their solicitude for these and in having them supplied with any comforts that it was possible to send them never slackened. This encouragement and unflagging co-operation continued all through the struggle down to its latest phases.

When the Cumann na mBan branch was first formed the services of the late Dr. W.J. Murphy, Naas, were obtained for the delivery of a series of lectures on First Aid, etc., and later these lectures were continued by Dr. O'Donel Brown, Naas.



The I.R.A. v. Black and Tan Terror.

I made the acquaintance of Seán Kavanagh, then Gaelic League Organiser for North Kildare, in 1919, and as time went on we became more intimate. When, in 1919, arrests, raids, courts martials and imprisonments became the order of the day I found that he was eager to make use of the position he held in order to assist in the organisation of firm resistance to the form British rule was then taking. As the year 1920 approached, the Sinn Féin policy of passive resistance gave place to more militant tactics and the clubs became so many Units of the I.R.A. Even before this development took place, the members of the Naas Sinn Féin Club engaged in drill exercises and occasional manoeuvres at night. Lines of communication had been established between Dublin and other parts of the country, North, South and West for the conveyance of despatches to and fro, and the duty devolved on the Club to receive those passing to and from the south and have them conveyed to the next receiving centre. Notwithstanding that the country was occupied by British forces estimated to number 150,000 and that it was constantly patrolled by both Police and Military, the drilling and arming of the citizen soldiers went on unabated. The R.I.C. had now been gingered up to commit those wanton and brutal acts, the consequences of which were later to recoil so heavily on them, and no longer hesitated to shoot whenever a pretext for this presented itself. Within a month in the early summer of 1919, the police carbines had accounted for a dozen civilian victims, one of them being a sick and helpless prisoner. Verdicts of wilful murder against men of the Force had been found by Coroners' Juries, but none of them had been put on trial. Then began the general attacks and burning of Police Barracks until outlying and isolated stations had to

be vacated and eventually the R.I.C. were compelled to mobilise in larger bodies in the centres of population. The resignations of members of the Force, some of them from motives of repugnance to the work expected of them, next set in, and to fill the gaps in the ranks and convert the Force into a marauding murder organisation more in keeping with British traditions of waging war against the Irish, the jails, workhouses and slums of England were raked for recruits to serve in the R.I.C. So came the Black and Tans to take the offensive against the I.R.A., supported by the huge regular army of occupation.

The murders, burnings, tortures and robberies of 1920-21 followed, and yet the I.R.A. stood up to it all. Hitherto on the defensive, the citizen <sup>SOLDIERS</sup> attacked and ambushed enemy forces; barracks were raided for arms, Government Offices entered, trains held up and official correspondence abstracted from the mails to discover British military plans and intercept intelligence reports.

The railway stations in Naas and Sallins were repeatedly raided in this way as well as the Post Offices. The house occupied as an R.I.C. Barracks in Sallins and which was one of those abandoned, was burned completely after two or three attempts. An ambush of a police patrol occurred near Kill, a Sergeant was killed, others of the party wounded and the remainder taken prisoners. Raids for seditious literature and arms were repeatedly made in Naas and district by the Tans, among the houses visited in this way being T. Patterson's, Mrs. Grehan's and Mrs. Whyte's, South Main Street, Seán Rafferty's, Basin Street, Charlie Byrne's and Christy Byrne's, The Green, Dick Furlong's, Two-Mile-House, and my own. On a few occasions I received

warning beforehand that these raids were about to take place, from friendly sources. On one occasion a rifle was lost by a party of soldiers who had been carousing in the town. Suspicion fell on T. Patterson that he knew where the rifle was. He was questioned and threatened by the County Inspector R.I.C., who declared that if the rifle was not returned Mr. Patterson's premises would "go up". So much was the whole family terrorised by the police that they were obliged to leave their home and seek shelter elsewhere. For over a week they dared not sleep at home. Mrs. Whyte, South Main Street, and her family were also repeatedly intimidated, while policemen with blackened faces on several occasions broke into Michael and Christy Byrne's homes for the avowed purpose of taking them out and shooting them. They were also obliged to seek shelter at night away from their homes while the terror lasted.

The most terrifying ordeal to which the town generally was subjected was on the night that Mr. Boushell's premises adjoining the R.I.C. Barracks were burned by the Tans and the town "shot up". Arriving in lorries the Tans ran through the streets shouting and yelling like fiends and firing in every direction, while the lurid blaze from the burning house lit up the streets, and the roar of the flames added to the pandemonium prevailing. Several of the houses the following day showed the effects of the firing in bullet marked walls.

In New Row several people had narrow escapes from death by bullets fired into the houses by the Tans as they sped past in their motor lorries.

This terrorism was not confined by any means to Naas. Other parts of the county were visited by the Tans, and shops

and private houses were entered and looted while the residents were threatened. Among those who suffered severely in this way was Tom Doran, Mile Mill, Kilcullen, whose premises were several times raided. He was Officer in Command of the Kilcullen Volunteer Company and regularly represented it at all Battalion meetings usually held at Prosperous at that time. While the terror lasted he also had to go on the run.

Other young Kilcullen men with creditable records in the Republican Organisation are Paddy Brennan and Jim Collins. The latter was an internee at Newbridge while the former put in a period in Mountjoy Prison, was interned at Tintown, the Curragh from which he escaped, and was a participant in other more sensational episodes.

In Celbridge Paddy McNally, N.T. excelled in leadership, while the parts played by John Cotter, Tom Cardwell, Jack O'Connor and other members of the Column commanded by the first named are familiar to the people of the district.

Youthful but active adherents of the Republican Organisation in the Ballymore district were Frank Driver and Tom and Jimmy Smyth, Grangebeag, Dunlavin. Frank Driver and Jimmy Smyth were interned in 1922 and were two of the youngest internees at the Curragh and Newbridge. Elsewhere I have referred to courtmartial and sentence of Art Doran who while in Harepark in 1921 had with him as one of his fellow-prisoners Tom Smyth.

Kill had worthy representatives of Republicanism in Pat Dunne, his son Jimmy, Peadar and John Traynor, Woolpack, Joe Kearney and others. The brothers Traynor were interned in 1921 in the Rath Camp and Pat Dunne also underwent a term of imprisonment.

Other names that occur to me in this connection are those of Mick Sheehan, T. Dunne, Newbridge, L. Toole, Bill Tynan, Tom Kavanagh, Ballitore, Tommy Lynam, Clongorey, Bertie Graham, Val Grady and the brothers Breslin, Kildare, P. Ryan, Brackna, Rathangan.

In the southern part of the county Eamon Malone, Barrowhouse, Athy, was an early recruit to the Republican ranks and was among the prisoners in Belfast Jail who participated in the memorable hunger-strike under the leadership of the late Austin Stack. P.P. Doyle was one of those who attended the first meeting at Newbridge to form a Sinn Fein County Executive in 1917. At a later period Seán Hayden, P. Butler, Seán Gibbons, M. Rourke and J. Rourke were active in the Republican cause in the Athy district. Seán Hayden was interned in the Rath Camp and again at Newbridge.

Kit Tracey was prominent in Monasterevan, while James Behan, Co. C. ever threw the weight of his influence on the side of the independence struggle in that district.

In the early part of 1920, Seán Kavanagh succeeded Alphie Sweeney, who had gone to Dublin, in carrying on confidential consultations with Sergeant Maher, R.I.C., at that time clerk in the County Inspector's Office. Sergeant Maher was also in close association with Sergeant Casey, clerk in the District Inspector's Office.

Seán Kavanagh was then acting under the direction of Michael Collins, to whom Sergeant Maher was introduced. He commended the Sergeant highly for the assistance he was rendering the Republican Organisation.

A little earlier than this, Peadar McMahon, subsequently Chief of Staff of the Free State Army, arrived in Naas and called on me in company with Seán Kavanagh, at the "Leinster

Leader" Office and intimated that he was about to engage in an inspection of local units of the I.R.A. and the organisation of new companies. He remained for some time and his work was attended with satisfactory results.

About the month of May, 1920, plans for some operations were under discussion at Battalion Council Meetings of the I.R.A. in Kildare. The first of these related to the contemplated arrest of Mr. Kerry L. Supple, Co. Inspector, R.I.C. and his removal to a place of safety pending the carrying out of other projects. On a certain date in the month mentioned, it was learned that Mr. Supple was due at Castledermot to inspect the local R.I.C. As a result of a communication from the Carlow Brigade, T. Harris, Prosperous, visited Carlow and had an interview with some of its leaders including Messrs. Farrell and Coghlan and it was arranged that groups of the I.R.A. from Carlow and Kildare co-operate in the capture of Mr. Supple on his arrival at Castledermot, where an attack on the police barrack was to be carried out later. Five or six men from Maynooth and as many more from Prosperous under the command of T. Harris and a section of the Carlow Brigade under Coghlan converged on the village and these were disposed at points of vantage to await the coming of Mr. Supple. Several hours passed but the look-outs posted for the purpose could discover no sign of the approach of Mr. Supple. It was remarked also that the local R.I.C. were conspicuous by their absence from their customary beats. After an all-day vigil the conclusion was arrived at that the local police had become suspicious of the presence of so many strange young men in the neighbourhood and had sent a wire to the County Inspector, warning him that something unusual was on foot in the neighbourhood. Anyhow it

subsequently transpired that Mr. Supple changed his intentions at the last moment and selected a different part of the County for his inspection duties that day and so saved himself from detention in the hands of the I.R.A.

In connection with police intelligence activities I had one experience that may bear relating here. I received a verbal message one day from a member of the Cumann na mBán that a British soldier, "demobbed" from the Army, wished to speak to me privately with regard to an important matter. I asked what the nature of the important matter was and the young lady informed me that she thought it related to the I.R.A. and added that although the man appeared to her to be straightforward and honourable, still it was better to be cautious and on my guard. She arranged for my introduction to the ex-soldier at Miss Kenny's dairy shop in South Main Street where Mrs. Higgins now carries on another business.

I went there at the time appointed and was introduced to the "demobbed" soldier. He was a tall well-dressed young man with an easy and ingratiating manner and very little of the barrack room atmosphere in either his presence or demeanour. After some general conversation he broached the purpose for which he asked me to meet him. Briefly it was as follows:-

He had been summoned to Dublin Castle and offered an appointment as Secret Service Agent, on attractive terms, to spy on the I.R.A. Hundreds of "demobbed" soldiers had been engaged for the same work and sent all over the country. His sympathy, however, was with the I.R.A. he went on and he wished to turn his appointment by Dublin Castle as Secret Service Agent to the advantage of the I.R.A. and work for it

instead. To do this, it would be necessary to win the complete confidence of Mr. Supple, Co. Inspector R.I.C., to whom he had already reported, and who was the only police officer permitted to know of his identity. To win this confidence and furnish Mr. Supple with proof of his zeal, he suggested that a few old arms might be dumped at some convenient place so that he could make their discovery and report to Mr. Supple. He was anxious also to get into immediate touch with prominent leaders and talk matters over them. I listened to all this attentively and was non-committal but promised to think over his suggestions and consult with some others. The following day I happened to be in Dublin and, meeting Arthur Griffith on his way to his usual lunching place at the Country Produce Restaurant in Henry Street, I walked with him there and told him of my interview with the demobbed soldier the previous day. He advised me to keep playing the man for the present, and as I was in a hurry at the time to get a train back to Naas, Mr. Griffith promised to have the matter attended to and write to me later on. Whether I was "shadowed" to Dublin or not that day, I do not know, but anyhow when I returned to Naas the "demobbed" soldier had disappeared and I have neither heard from, nor seen, him since. Sergeant Maher on hearing of the affair had sent me word advising me to have nothing to do with the man, whom he regarded as a fraud.

The Sinn Féin Club premises in Naas had by this time become untenable owing to the attention of the Tans who on one occasion fired into them as they passed by on a motor lorry. Fortunately there was nobody inside and no serious damage was done. The Club as it was hitherto carried on ceased to exist. It had long before this shed its purely political character as part of the passive resistance



organisation against British rule. But before bringing to a conclusion its history, I desire to have put on record the names of a number of its adherents who, in days when it was not regarded as fashionable to be associated with Sinn Féin or the Republican cause, gave both their steady and loyal support. These included Christy Hart, Newlands, Jim Byrne, Dowdinstown, Brian King, Swordlestown, M. Stapleton and Matt Russell, Mullacash, Tom McCormack, Caragh, the late Mark Carroll, Sallins Road, P. Callaghan, Main Street, Charles Byrne, The Green, Charles Kavanagh, The Knocks, Tommy Whelan, The Harbour, Bill Doyle and J. Martin, New Row, W. McGlynn and P. Whelan, Naas.

Seán Grehan was also prominent in both Dublin and Naas Republican circles all through those strenuous years. John, Tom and Peter F. Lalor, Halverstown, were among those in the neighbourhood of Naas who were supporters of Sinn Féin. Tom Lalor, for some time in 1921, acted as a leader of the I.R.A. but had to go on the run.

The roads in every direction were now being trenched and obstructed with trees fallen across them at suitable points to hamper the passage of lorries carrying British patrol parties and for favourable ambush opportunities. The police and military had resorted to the practice of seizing or commandeering parties of civilians and compelling them to fill in the trenches and remove felled trees. In the Spring of 1921 the roads in the neighbourhood of Naas had been trenched and obstructed in this way one night.

This brings my part of the task to supply an outline of the happenings in the County Kildare with which I was concerned during the revolutionary period that began with the inauguration of the Volunteer Movement in 1913 and ended with the Truce on the 11th July, 1921, to a conclusion.

I may not have succeeded in preserving the sequence of events that came under my notice in strict order as with the lapse of time these have not come as clearly to my memory as I would wish. I have had also, in the course of this narrative, to mention certain names. There are many others in Co. Kildare whose part in the struggle deserves to be specially mentioned but with whom I have not been closely or personally associated during the years mentioned. It will, I hope, be understood, therefore, that I am animated by no desire to be invidious in singling out for special mention the names of particular individuals. If an injustice has been done in this way it is neither deliberate nor intentional.

For any other blemishes that may disfigure this memoir I crave the kind indulgence of the future historian whose interest in the matters dealt with may induce him to scan those pages.

In recording my recollections of the first twenty-two years of this Twentieth Century I cannot refrain, even at the risk of repetition, from expressing the hope that it will serve the purpose that inspired it, of perpetuating the same spirit among the youth of Kildare that actuated the school boys of Naas who got the Sinn Féin movement going in the town and county and that subsequently strengthened them in their objective when they took their places in the ranks of the I.R.A. to fight for an Independent Irish Republic.

Signed Michael O'Kelly  
Date 9<sup>th</sup> May 1955.  
(Michael O'Kelly)

Witness M. F. Ryan Comdt. 9th May 1955.  
(M.F. Ryan) Comd't.

