

W S 1,284

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILE'TA 1913-21
I.C. W.S. 1,284

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21
SECOND STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,284

Witness

Colonel Eamon Broy,
13 Oaklands Drive,
Highfield Road,
Rathgar,
Dublin.

Identity.

I.R.A. Intelligence Agent,
Dublin Castle, 1917-1921.

Subject.

Secret Police reports 1865,
and 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT BY COLONEL EAMON BROY,

13, Oaklands Drive, Rathgar, Dublin.

As I have already stated, I furnished Volunteer Headquarters with all secret and confidential G. Division reports from 1917 to 1921. From 1917 to 1919 these reports passed mainly through the O'Hanrahan shop, and where they were taken eventually I never ascertained. The main purpose was to have the reports in the Volunteer hands as soon as possible, and how these reports were eventually dealt with was a matter for the Volunteers. Subsequent to my first meeting with Michael Collins in January, 1919, all such reports went to him from me through his officers or I gave them directly to him myself.

It would be interesting to read some of these documents now, but I have no idea where they are or whether they were all destroyed years ago. However, I have in my possession copies of exactly similar police reports of the Fenian period. G. Division secret reports for the period 1840-1900 were all copied in handwriting into foolscap size books and all these books were stored in the G. Division political office in 1919. I told Michael Collins about these and gave him the books referring to the 1848 and Fenian periods. As was typical of him, he studied these reports minutely, comparing this aspect of the epochs with what was known from the Irish Nationalist standpoint. He was, of course, at the same time arming himself with an even greater grasp of the Castle police psychology, which was the same in 1848, 1865 and 1919.

While the books were with Collins, Supt. Brien remarked one day that the number of books on the shelves seemed to be smaller than it should be, saying that he must check up on them some day as it would never do to lose them. I told Collins and he decided that it would be safer to return the books after he had copies made of the more interesting of the reports. "After all", he said, "it is less important to know who was the informer sixty years afterwards than twenty-four hours in advance in 1919". Should the books have been missed, it might have had serious repercussions on our activities of the moment. Accordingly, the volumes were returned and remained amongst the G. Division archives until 1922, when they, in common with all later reports, were burned in Dublin Castle before the Provisional Government took over. However, I managed to have some of the reports of the Fenian period saved from the fire in 1922 through a couple of friends I still had in the G. Division.

The following are some of these reports dealing with, inter alia, the arrest and rescue of James Stephens: -

- (1) Arrest of James Stephens
- (2) G. officers shot at Exchange Court
- (3) Particulars re Stephens
- (4) Rescue of Stephens.

On the 15th September, 1865, the office of the "Irish People" was seized and scores of Fenians were arrested. Stephens was at the house of another Fenian and was warned of the raid on the "Irish People" and got away only a couple of minutes before the police raiders arrived. The police did not then know that Stephens was residing, under the name of Herbert, at Fairfield House.

The Fenians never ascertained how the police came to know that Stephens was residing at Fairfield House. Stephen's own opinion was that he had been betrayed. Some thought that Mrs. Stephens had been shadowed to the place by detectives. The arrest under such circumstances and at such a critical time must have had a demoralising effect on the Fenians, which was only relieved by the dramatic escape of the prisoner some days later. That escape, on the other hand, caused alarm and dismay to all the loyal element.

The escape was effected mainly by Warders Byrne (referred to in the police report as discovering the tables placed against a wall) and Breslin. Breslin's brother, Michael, a member of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, carried all the correspondence between Stephens in prison and the Fenians outside and brought in all the keys made to fit the seven doors mentioned in the police report. Colonel Kelly and John Devoy had a party outside the prison wall to receive Stephens after he had been conducted there from his cell by Warders Breslin and Byrne. The rescue was effected between 1 and 2 a.m.

Stephens had to climb to the top of the 17 feet prison wall by means of a knotted rope thrown over by his friends outside. Then he slid down outside with his back to the wall, being caught by Devoy and others to break the fall. Stephens was shivering when Devoy caught him near the ground, and Devoy ever afterwards had a poor opinion of Stephens's courage on account of that shivering. In this I think he was quite wrong. I have seen trained D.M.P. tug of war men lying down shivering after a heavy pull on the rope. This is an involuntary muscular reaction

Stephens had put on weight during his confinement, first at Fairfield House and then for nearly a fortnight in a prison cell. He had to pull his own weight to the top of a 17 feet wall by means of a rope, and the muscles of an athlete in the fittest possible physical condition would shiver after such a performance.

The two Detective Inspectors were fired on by a Fenian named Tom Frith, a Wexford man. Devoy and others tried to dissuade Frith, as the current orders were to avoid violence and shooting detectives as a reprisal for the arrest of Stephens. Frith had a cheap revolver loaded with inferior powder and newspaper wads several days previously. He fired from behind the raised railings of the City Hall, but the inferior powder had no penetrating force.

"FENIANISM.

Arrest of James Stephens - Head Centre.

12th November, 1865.

I beg to report that about 9 o'clock on the evening of Thursday the 9th instant a man called to the Detective Office and stated to Acting Inspector Hughes that a gentleman, who gave his name as Mr. Herbert, and his wife were living in Fairfield House, Newbridge Avenue, Sandymount, since about the beginning of July last. He used to come to town every day until the 'Irish People' newspaper was seized, and since that time neither himself nor his wife were seen out of doors except on rare occasions at night, and the most recent occasion on the

"night of Friday 3rd instant. He saw a man who used to visit the place standing at the door of the 'Irish People' office on one occasion, and he thinks this might be Stephens who resides in Fairfield House but he could give nothing more definite; he merely suspected that it might be, and he would not wish his name to be mentioned. He was asked to describe Mr. Herbert and the wife, and after he had done so thanks were returned him for his information and he was allowed to go his way.

It struck me that the description given corresponded with that of Stephens and the wife, and, as the landlord of the house was a particular friend of mine, I learned from him that in July last a Mr. Herbert took the house from him and when he asked him for a reference he mentioned Mr. Deniffe of South Anne St. (the very man that we have in custody for high treason). He said Mr. Deniffe led him to believe he was of the Herberts of Muckross, Killarney. He paid the rent in advance and seemed very flush in money. I asked this man, too, to describe him, and when he did so my suspicions became still stronger and I desired him not to mention my conversation to anyone. To sift the matter more fully, I directed a shrewd constable of this Division to dress in uniform, to put the letter "E" on his collar, as it is in the "E" Division that the house is situate, and to saunter about as if he were on duty there in the ordinary way and thus quietly reconnoitre the place. He got into conversation, by way of a gossip, with the gardener who was employed there, and from this conversation, combined with what I have already stated, I believed Stephens was there and so set about making preparations to satisfy myself on the point.

"Accordingly, on Saturday morning the men of this Division, in uniform, ten men from B. Division and myself, under the command of Colonel Lake, arrived at the place between 6 and 7 o'clock. We scaled the high wall which surrounds the pleasure ground and took up positions around the house. Acting Inspector Hughes knocked and very soon a voice from within enquired was that Corrigan, meaning the gardener I suppose. Hughes replied "No. It is the police and we ask you to open the door". The same voice, but with a great falter, said, "I cannot open the door, I am undressed", whereupon Hughes said: "If the door is not opened we will be put to the necessity of forcing it", and after a short pause it was opened and the first who presented himself was Stephens, who was undressed and said his name was Mr. Herbert. He returned to his bedroom, where he was identified by Acting Inspector Dawson, and he then admitted he was the man and said he would not offer any resistance, but had he anticipated our visit he would know whether we were men and if he got out he was d...d. but they would have it hard to catch him. He told the wife she might not hope to see him again, but she said she would apply for permission to see him. Whereupon he said with harsh emphasis: "Is it to that scoundrel Peel in the Castle you would apply for a favour? Ah, no. Die first and so will I".

Hugh F. Brophy, a Head Centre in Dublin, Joseph C. Kickham, a Head Centre for Mullinahone, Co. Tipperary, and Edward Duffy, a Head Centre for Castlereagh, were found sleeping in a room adjoining the one in which Stephens and the wife slept, and they also were taken into custody.

"The house, which is superbly furnished throughout, was searched and no documents were found, but some that are regarded as of much importance in the case were found in a pocket book in Stephen's coat-pocket.

The prisoners were conveyed in cabs direct to the Commissioner's office, where Mr. Stronge, Chief Magistrate, attended later in the day and sent them on remand to Richmond, Bridewell, until Tuesday next the 14th instant.

(Signed) DANIEL RYAN
Supt.

Comms. of Police

&c. &c."

"FENIANISE

Doyle and Hughes fired at.

13th November, 1865.

I beg to report that at 7.55 p.m. o'clock (sic) on yesterday, as Acting Inspectors Edward Hughes and William Doyle were turning into Exchange Court from Dame St. two pistol bullets were fired at them from the opposite side of the street, they suppose from about the corner of Crane Lane. The first bullet hit Doyle on the back but it did not pierce his clothes, although it left a mark on his coat which was nearly cut through, and also a red mark on his skin on the left side of the spine about the kidneys. The second struck Hughes in about one or two

"seconds after Doyle was hit. His clothes were not pierced either but there is a large red or purple mark on his skin also, immediately under the right shoulder.

The shop of Mr. George Hopper, who is at present in custody for high treason, is situate at the corner of Crane Lane about the place from where they believe the shots were fired and it is possible the shots were fired from that house. Hopper has two brothers and his father who are still at large, and it appears their principal source of maintenance was Stephens and they may have been exasperated at his arrest. No suspicious looking persons were observed in the street at the time.

Since I have commenced my inquiry I have invariably heard it said that in the event of Stephen's arrest someone would lose his life, and last night's occurrence proves the truth of that allegation. The person who fired these shots must have taken deliberate aim and is evidently not a bad marksman, as if the shots had taken effect both would have been fatal. The balls must have been fired from too long a range and, consequently, were spent when they reached the officers.

Danl. Ryan

Superintendent.

Comms. of Police
&c. &c.

Kickham is the person named in Stephen's own letter found with Luby in which the names Luby, O'Leary and Kickham as the executive government of the Irish Republic. He was a writer for the 'Irish People' newspaper. In a window of a closet or bedroom adjoining the one in which Stephens slept there were found two six barrelled revolvers

"loaded and capped, and in the room in which the other prisoners slept two more also loaded and capped were found on a dressing table.

D.R."

"Escape of James Stephens from Richmond Bridewell.

24th November, 1865.

I beg to state that at 5.20 o'clock this morning a constable of E. Division stated at G. Division office that Mr. Marquess, Governor of the Richmond Bridewell, directed him to call and say that James Stephens, who was confined there on a charge of high treason, had made his escape. Immediately the men of G. Division were called up and told off in parties to watch the railway stations, sailings of steamers, etc. and some proceeded to Fairfield House, the late residence of Stephens, and one proceeded to Richmond Bridewell to learn particulars of the escape. On arrival at the prison he met Mr. Marquess, the Governor, who stated that at $4\frac{1}{2}$ o'clock Denis Byrne, the night watchman, reported that he had discovered two tables, one upon top of another, close against the inside of the boundary wall at the west side, and then, upon examination, it was found that the door of the cell in which Stephens was confined was open and that he had gone.

Seven doors, including the cell door, intervened between Stephens's cell and the place where the tables referred to were placed. The cell door was secured by a strong stock lock and also on the outside by a very large

"padlock, all the others by stock locks only, and all were opened and two false keys found. The police constables on duty in the prison had not access to the cell in which Stephens had been confined or to the corridor in which it is situated. A prisoner named McLeod, who was confined in the cell adjoining Stephen's cell, stated to my officer that about 10 minutes after he heard the prison clock stroke one, he heard the footfall of some person coming along the corridor to Stephens's cell, that immediately he heard the cell door being unlocked and opened, then the footfalls of two persons going along the corridor.

Byrne, the night watchman, stated to the Governor that when he was going his rounds at 3 o'clock Stephens's cell was all right and that he discovered the tables about $4\frac{1}{2}$ o'clock. The tables were removed from the lunatic department of the Bridewell and are so heavy that it would require more than one man to place them in the position in which they were found. The boundary wall at the point where the tables were found is about 17 feet high; the tables one upon top of another extended to about 5 feet high, so that from the top of the uppermost table to the top of the wall was about 12 feet.

Mrs. Stephens and her father (Mr. Hopper, Senior) and her mother were found in Fairfield and are engaged removing the furniture etc. as if they were going to reside elsewhere. Mr. Hopper seemed by the way not to give credit to the escape of Stephens, and said if he were gone there would be some trouble in laying hold of him again, Layng 196 as he would be off to France, and not by an ordinary route either.

Daniel Ryan

Commissioner of Police

Superintendent.

&c. &c."

"FENIANISM

Antecedents of James Stephens.

22nd November, 1865.

I beg to state that I have been informed that James Stephens, the Fenian leader, was born about the year 1823 (he is now about 42 years of age) in the City of Kilkenny, where his father carried on the business of a builder on a small scale. He then received an education such as was accessible to a youth of his class and social position, and after he had quitted school he was employed by his father to assist him in carrying on his business and he acted as his clerk and occasionally made drafts of buildings that he might propose to erect.

He was always regarded as an extremely quiet youth and the last who would be suspected of participating in a political outbreak, but immediately before the rising at Ballingarry in 1848 it seems he heard of the contemplated rising and he took with him a rifle that was in his father's house and, contrary to the will of his father, went and joined the peasantry and was in the affray at Ballingarry and got slightly wounded. After this he succeeded in making his escape through the mountains of Waterford, and from Waterford he reached France and joined the army, where he served for some time and then left and got employment as teacher in an English academy and eventually emigrated to America. During his residence in France he learned to speak the French language and made himself acquainted with the continental system of secret political organisation, and immediately on his arrival in America he commenced to organise his countrymen

"there and formed the Phoenix Society.

About 1857 he came to this country and set about establishing the Phoenix Society here, and in 1858 when some persons in the south, including O'Donovan Rossa, were prosecuted for being members of that society, Stephens, accompanied by Denis Downing Mulcahy (a prisoner in Richmond Bridewell on a charge of high treason) and a man named Shaughnessy, went to France and thence to America, when it was decided that thenceforward the Phoenix Society should be known as the Fenian Brotherhood. As he made no unnecessary delay on that occasion, Stephens should have returned to Ireland in the latter end of 1858 or the beginning of 1859 and recommenced the organisation, and since that time he has not resided out of the country except during periodical visits he made to America for Fenian purposes. As a matter of course he had no particular place of residence and was known as James Stephens, alias Power, Pillar, Shook, Kelly, Herbert or Daly. This latter, I believe, is his American name. Stephens's parents were Roman Catholics, but since his connection with Fenianism he has lived in that state of socialism which characterises the other members of the Fenian society, but if asked what religion he was I presume he would say Roman Catholic.

Stephens is about 5 feet 7 inches high, very stout, neat build, has fair hair and is bald

on top of head, wears all his beard and has
 remarkably small neat hands and feet.

Daniel Ryan,

Superintendent.

Comms. of Police,

&C. &C."

Signed: *Eamon Broy*
 (Eamon Broy)

Date: 11th Novbr. 1955

11th November 1955.

Witness: *M. F. Ryan Comdt* (M.F. Ryan) Comd't.
 (Investigator)

