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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1595.

Witness

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Carrick-on-Suir,
Co. Tipperary.

Identity.

Brigade Engineer, 3rd Tipperary Bde.

Subject.

Activities of Carrick-on-Suir Battn.,
Tipperary 111 Brigade, I.R.A., 1916-22,
& Brigade Flying Column 1920-21.

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Nil.

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DUPLICATE

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STATEMENT BY MR. SEAMUS BABINGTON,

95 Main Street, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary.

In my primary school days in the early part of the century, I think we admired power and strength like most youngsters. The talk then was the sorrow and regret for the defeat of the Boers by the British, and nearly everyone we listened to was singing the praises of the famous Boer generals, de Wet, etc., etc.

I don't think any of my school pals in the hills of Kerry, Kilsarcon national school, Farranfore, had any great love for John Bull, though some admired his strength. Still, all the songs and music played were rebel songs. Fair days and market days were our glory, listening to the ballad singers and buying their sheet songs - all the fire of Fenian nature.

Sinn Féin used hold annual collections, and we admired the collectors. Otherwise, on the surface, the national spirit was low. The first world war broke out when I left school. There were divided thoughts about the all-powerful propaganda of the British - poor Belgium and small nations attacked. Up to then, any man who joined the British army could never appear in uniform; he either remained away or his people sent clothes to his station, the danger being that his uniform would be stripped from him and burned; even his parents, brothers and sisters would do it before neighbours, so much was the British uniform hated, giving a true insight into the spirit of the people.

I left my native parish and county in May 1915, and came as apprentice to the drapery trade in a shop owned by my uncle, James Coffey, Carrick-on-Suir. From a rural farming area to a town is a big difference. The spirit of the people was not very different, except that about

eight hundred men in Carrick-on-Suir had joined the British army, many of them members of what they called the National Volunteers - Redmond's army. Most of them joined from sheer necessity, no industry, no employment, the very young - seventeen, eighteen and nineteen years - for adventure, like all youth, very few for the sake of helping England. The national spirit seemed dead or dormant. Frequent British army recruiting meetings were held, yet there was some heckling from behind big men. I gloried in this activity.

The year 1915 dragged on - more recruiting posters and many young men joining the British army. I spent much time buying, sorting, packing wool from local farmers. Early in the New Year, 1916, just after the Christmas holidays, I was stricken down with typhoid or typhus fever. Later my doctor discovered that I had picked up the fever from wool brought from a fever infested area at the time - Aheny or Slate Quarries. I remained in my uncle's home for six weeks when I was removed to the fever hospital at Ballylynch for three months. The 1916 rebellion broke out while I was in hospital, and not a soul knew who were the leaders, or had any knowledge at all that such a glorious movement was in existence. As a matter of fact, I never heard in the previous ten months of any movement in touch with Dublin, with that purpose in view.

After some few days all patients were notified that, due to shortage of yeast - no transport - bread was unobtainable and our people would have to bring us out. The Rebellion was over in a week and food supplies came in again. I was released from hospital at end of May and had to learn to walk again. Sympathy was with the executed men but the wealthy people were all against them. Still youngsters, on reaching the age of sixteen and seventeen, were joining the British army, and the large amount of

separation and family allowances coming into the town began a new type of national demoralisation. After an extensive summer and autumn holiday, I regained most of my natural health and, when the New Year of 1917 dawned, I had made pals with some young Carrick men who had strong national views - birds of a feather come together. One, John O'Keeffe of Castle Street or Greystone Street, pawnbroker's son, and a Paddy Power, a draper's assistant at Comerford & Baldwins, later joined in with John Loughman and Tom Hickey who, with Kevin O'Higgins, student in the National University, Dublin, tore down recruiting posters in Dublin, paid £10 fine, apologised, as appeared in the papers then, and returned to Carrick. He was admired for this act.

So, chatting along in February and March, we decided to honour the 1916 men by having a High Mass, with all the priests, on the anniversary of the Rebellion, 21st April, 1917. J. O'Keeffe and I called on all who we thought had national feelings and took what subscriptions we got. It did not reach £20 after a week's trying but it was enough. We approached the parish priest, Canon Sheehy, who certainly was not a Republican. Week after week he dodged the date - this, that and the other excuse.

The anniversary date had passed and we decided to force the matter with the parish priest. Tom Hickey and I were appointed to interview him personally. Hickey, who was bold and hot-tempered almost got into blows with His Reverence. The latter said he beat big blackguards in Leeds when he was there and was not afraid of us. I pointed out that the money was subscriptions from his parishioners for the first anniversary Mass for the 1916 leaders and that we intended to send it to Mount Melleray. This quietened him and he fixed a date. We put out one hundred posters in town and local villages and parishes. The day before the Mass he notified us that it would have to be held an hour earlier. We had, as best we could,

to re-notify all areas, for during the previous week Hickey and I called on the two convents and Christian Brothers schools. We got a great reception from the Reverend Mother (Hurley) of Carrick at the Mercy Convent, and she promised with a heart and a half to send all day boarders to the Mass. The Presentation Convent were non-committal and evasive, and they raised Hickey's temper, for the Reverend Mother, to waive the request, asked him how was his mother. "Don't bother about her! We came to see that the school children are let go to the Mass", and warned her to see that they were. The Christian Brothers, who are always very friendly, talkative and courteous, were like the Presentation nuns - perhaps the Inspector might call, etc., etc., but again Hickey said he wanted none of that talk. Yet I always thought that the Christian Brother at that time were as anxious as we were to honour the noble dead, but, of course, did not want it to be known.

The great day came at last. St. Nicholas' spacious church was packed like sardines, and an overflow outside. All shops and offices, etc., were closed. When Mass was over, the majority of the crowd remained outside, and youths holding Republicnn flags - first time flown or seen in town - were surrounded by a team of R.I.C. who made an effort to capture the flags but the large crowd closed in and they luckily withdrew.

This Mass was like a national tonic - what the 1916 rebellion did for the nation, the High Mass did for the people of Carrick and districts. Right away, it was full time national work. Immediately we, who organised the Mass set out at once to start a branch of Sinn Féin. James Coffey, who was a good pen writer, was asked to write our appeal, and I got a bottle of red ink for it. The appeal, of which I possess a copy, was a simple worded few lines: "We the undersigned wish to join a branch of Sinn Féin".

John James O'Keefe and I called in the evenings to people whom we knew or thought were likely to join. Some whom we called on had spoken openly in favour of the Rebellion and Sinn Féin policy, yet a number would not put their names on the paper, but told us they were one hundred per cent. with us. However, we got a doz. or so old men. We thought they were very old then, yet some were only thirty years. Looking over the past records of that time, I notice the following names: Maurice Hickey, Clerk of the Union, (Tom's father), Dr. Philip Murphy, Medical Hall, Thomas Lynch, Printer, Seán O'Flynn, Journalist, James O'Keefe, Pawnbroker, John Meagher, Gardener, Thomas McGrath, Grocer, and Brendan Dowley, Merchant. A few others were in and out, like in all organisations, and, as ever, youth and age seldom agree.

We, from the start, could not find any outlet for our youthful energy. So off again right away in the formation of the first branch in Carrick-on-Suir of what was termed the Sinn Féin Volunteers, with nothing very logical in view but the idea of doing something. Having a reputation for organisation and writing, I was again assigned to the writing of the notices, inviting those whom we thought were the right sort and would be likely to join. We made out a list of about thirty. Twelve turned up, so we decided to have another go. We dropped some of the first, and added others. Twenty-two turned up that week. Tom Hickey was appointed Captain, Small Jack O'Keefe, Adjutant, I, Assistant Adjutant, P. Power, Treasurer or Quartermaster, and John Loughman, 1st Lieutenant. This was only a local and independent body. It had no status and no association with others, for, at the time, there was no organisation to affiliate with. We held some Sunday evening marches out on the rural roads and were followed by the R.I.C. We went to the Patron at the Holy Well of Mothel on the second Sunday in July, with

flags flying.

But not yet satisfied, on top of this, we formed Na Fianna Éireann for schoolboys, and appointed the eldest officers. Bernard Thompson was appointed Captain, and the officers of the Sinn Féin Volunteers became external officers, John Loughman X-Captain, Jack O'Keeffe, X-Adjutant, I, Quartermaster, and my shocking job was to raise money to buy uniforms, etc., etc. My boss agreed to finance the purchase of the material (green) from O'Flynn Woollen Mills, Six-Mile-Bridge, and I to recover the money, and this led to numerous devices and, in the long run, succeeded. There were many marches, one every Sunday, and numerous evenings. This attracted all youngsters, even as young as ten years - the fire of childhood. Later on, most of them, when they reached seventeen or eighteen, joined the I.R.A. in 1920-21.

With so many national and semi-military societies, it meant a non-stop activity. This activity led to increasing numbers joining both the Sinn Féin Volunteers and Fianna. Some M.P. died in Kilkenny, and W.T. Cosgrave, one of the 1916 leaders, was put up by Sinn Féin. At a big meeting there one night on his behalf, about forty of our members cycled over on a Thursday, the half-day in Carrick-on-Suir. This was our first dive into political elections. Our idea was to swell the crowd only. The same applied in all parishes for fifty miles from Kilkenny. Well known 1916 people spoke at the meeting. Mr. Cosgrave won. Looking back, our spin to Kilkenny, twenty-six miles, was most enjoyable and interesting. We got home to Carrick a short time before shop opening next morning. Then Tom Ashe died on hunger strike after forcible feeding. His death raised the spirit of the people in revolt, and the recognised leaders availed of this to propagate the Republican cause, for the day he was buried a big meeting was held in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny, addressed by the recently successful candidate, Mr. Cosgrave, Arthur,

Griffith and Dr. Ed. Barrett. It was a very fine Sunday, and after eight o'clock Mass, with John Loughman (a brother of Frank Loughman, afterwards T.D. and later Senator), I cycled to Thomastown. We fell in with the South Kilkenny Volunteers, Piltown, Hugginstown and Templeorum, and marched in a mile into Thomastown. The day was marred by a black depression on account of the death of Tom Ashe. The crowd was large, and the meeting was held in conjunction with a Feis held in a large field, packed to the gates.

All over Ireland the storm got stronger after his death, and everywhere money was raised to build a hall in his memory in Dublin, so we decided to run a concert and lecture in the Town Hall in Carrick-on-Suir in November, 1917. President O'Kelly was Honorary Secretary, and again I got the job of organisation and correspondence. We invited Countess Markievicz, that noble, patriotic Irish-woman who commanded a group in the 1916 Rebellion. I possess the correspondence from S.T. O'Kelly and the Countess in preparation for this meeting.

I got in touch with all the local parishes, and invited the Mullinahone band to play through the town in a parade of strength before the proceedings started in the Town Hall. We had this made known by posters. The pro-British "separation" women and their children assembled at John Street and attacked the band when they got off their side-cars - no motors then. A good number were injured from stones, including a well known Mullinahone man, Phil Mansfield, a brother of E. Mansfield, later President of the I.N.T.O. They all got a bad mauling. Later on in the night, this drunken group of rowdies reassembled in large numbers in front and rear of the Town Hall and fired stones, bottles, bricks at the doors and windows, under the protection of the R.I.C., and whenever the Volunteers counted attacked, they were held up by a large section of the R.I.C. However, we were too strong and, after several assaults, the rowdy group were glad to get home before too

much flesh flew about. The concert was a distinct success, over-packed hall, and, after expenses of about £50 in all, £30 profit was made and sent to S.T. O'Kelly for the Ashe Hall.

Tom Hickey had got married the previous week - he married another Hickey from Deerpark - and they insisted on inviting the Countess to their home in Carrickbeg after the concert and lecture. (She had lectured on her Easter Week experiences and the importance of a strong, virile local Fianna.) This accepted invitation to Carrickbeg entailed much trouble and worry, for, after a long and stormy night, we had again to mobilise a strong section of Volunteers to escort her across the river and protect her from assault. However, they all had left the streets and, after an hour's chat and tea at the home of Maurice O'Hickey, we conveyed her to the home of her host, Dr. Murphy, Medical Hall, Main Street, where she was a welcome guest for the night. After another two hours' chat and more tea, listening to her great story of experiences, we returned home at 3.30 a.m. Early next morning we got word, which afterwards proved reliable, that a massed attack would be made on us and her when she would return to Dublin in the 11.30 train, and that it was largely organised. So early next day, we decided to have a horse drawn covered car - no motors then - and drove her to Fiddown, four miles in the opposite way from Kilsheelan, for the owner feared attack on the Clonmel road. Hundreds of separation women, old men and youngsters had assembled at the Park side and on all roads leading to the station, with bottles, stones, sticks, etc., a few minutes before the arrival of the train, but no notice was taken of her and numerous friends who had got to hear of the arrangement and who passed in to the train. The mob closed, but the train had moved out before they fully realised what was happening, and the last carriages got the worst of their spite.

This active hostility will give readers some idea

of the demoralisation caused by the free spreading of large sums of British money dished out to wives, sons, daughters, parents, etc., whose relatives were in the British forces. Even to this year 1955 and since the late second world war, families began to lose national interest when their sons deserted the Irish army and others got over the Border and joined the British forces. Large sums of money again flowed into Ireland once more, and many strong-willed Irish Republicans began to get neutral, others became hostile, and others lost all interest in Irish affairs, clearly pointing out the weakness of human nature. What money can buy! A price can be put on most people! But worth recording is the story of an old traveller for Lyons & Co., Ltd., Cork, who gave £5,000 for an extensive practice for his son, a doctor (medical) in London, and who was blown to pieces, never heard of, with hundreds of others, in air raids during the war. The father said he did not mind, so long as England was beaten. At that time, England was almost wiped out, with raids, and it looked as if it was the last of powerful England, but the old man died with shock, years later, when the Germans were almost beaten. A moral - keep youth from joining enemy forces.

Against all this horrible, filthy and hired hostility we were gaining strength. Most decent people, with even five per cent. love for Ireland, had a horrible hatred for this blackguardism, and many schoolboys joined Fianna, others joined the Volunteers, and some joined Sinn Féin. Readers must understand the feelings of people then. Shoneenism - most of the Tom's, Dick's and Harry's bowed to the well-to-do, and tuppence looked down on a penny, fourpence on threepence, and sixpence on fourpence, and all tried to ape the landlord or extensive landowner. It was a sort of hallmark of respectability to be pro-British and anti-Irish, and it even prevails to-day. So on we went, organising route marches, lectures, weekly drills and meetings.

Early in February, I got a letter from John Carroll who, up to a short time previously, had been an apprentice at Bourke's & Co., Ltd., Drapers, Carrick-on-Suir - he was a native of Hugginstown, Co. Kilkenny - and was now a junior assistant hand at a draper's shop in the town of Tipperary. He knew Carrick well, after spending four years (free) learning the trade. His letter asked me if I could find out, privately and confidentially, the amount and descriptions of guns (shot), ammunition, explosives, etc., in the various shops and stores in the town. After carefully thinking, I decided to contact the most loyal members of our Sinn Féin Volunteers in each shop and store, and after two weeks, I got a list from each store. I found it was necessary to almost swear silence on the assistants. I posted this information to Carroll. He replied that I should get the same assistant in each shop to guarantee to have all boxed and carefully packed in a special part of the store. To their lasting credit, all promised to do this, but, of course, it was necessary to decide definitely, without fear of changing, on a particular night. So the night of the 16th March, 1918, was decided.

In the meantime, I had the boys in each store fully acquainted with the position, and arranged about the keys to open the stores and where to get them. The smaller quantities had been brought into the two biggest centres. One of the latter centres was situated at the Quay where about fifteen hundredweight of ammunition and gelignite was assembled, and our difficulty there was a pack of hounds (hunting), as no one could enter unless he followed the hunt. The hounds were all loose in the yard. We immediately thought of Tom Reidy, who was not a member of the Volunteers, but it was easy to get him to join, and, after a week, we revealed to him the job. It was just to his heart's delight - something big, something

dangerous - and he volunteered right away. Mixing so much with everyone in business, the danger was that someone might talk. The boys who had helped were all lodging in, and were advised to be in at 11 p.m. that night, to avoid suspicion. Carroll was to bring others from Tipperary town with him, but had only one, a man named Hourigan, a real tough, typical Tipperary man, fearing nothing.

With small Jack O'Keeffe, John Loughman, Paddy Eade, Tom Reidy and I, Carroll and Hourigan, we arrived at my place at 10 p.m., had supper, and revealed the plans. At 11.30 p.m. we moved into action, deciding that all should meet singly on the New Bridge. It was an exceptionally fine night, bright moon shining. O'Keeffe was five minutes late and, to avoid suspicion, we left the bridge; and O'Keeffe waited for thirty minutes and then proceeded along the Waterford road; he was out for four hours and was gravely disappointed over the loss of contact with us.

Peidy mounted a down-pipe and climbed to the top of the wall. The pack of hounds barked, and here lay the danger, but, after five minutes of hound palavering, he said he thought he was safe and descended inside, like the lions in imperial Rome. We thought he'd be torn asunder. He must have had some food for the hounds, for, when he opened the big gates, he took out a hunter horse and put the pack of hounds into the stable, locked the door, opened the big gates, and in we were, but there was about a ton of stuff there, and how could we lift it? Reidy handled the hunter and put him under a new trap. He reared up sky-high and rarely came to ground for ten minutes. We tied him to a door, and decided to push the stuff into the grand new black trap. We tested our pulling and pushing strength in the big yard, and realised we were up against it. The lesser quantities were left over, and P. Eade volunteered to get three or four pals to fetch them into an old graveyard of the famine days, near the Union field. So, with the Sign of the Cross, we pushed out our load

to the quays. Reidy closed the big gate inside, let out the hounds into the yard, and stabled the horse - a necessary precaution to avoid early suspicion. Out on to the quay we went, across Strand Lane, turned left at Bridge Street, and west towards Clonmel on the Gas House Quay. The night was as bright as a dark day.

We had, of course, decided beforehand where we'd store our precious stock - above the cottage borseen, in a large old quarry, fully and closely covered with overgrowth of furze, briars, etc. We reached there about 2.30 a.m., in a stew of sweat, and returned to town, only over half a mile, with the expensive new trap. We intended to get it into the yard where we had taken it, but as we approached the old bridge on the Quay, about a dozen fishermen were on the old bridge, resting and wondering what was up. Of course, the only stranger was Hourigan, but we had on the necessary disguises. After waiting for twenty minutes, Hourigan wanted to push the trap into the river - it was high tide at the time - but it was all right for an outsider; we respected our neighbour's property, no matter how hostile. We left the car on the Quay, near the Old Bridge, though it would have been wiser to move through the fisher folk, disguised, and leave the trap into the yard, than what we did. Carroll and Hourigan stayed in some farmer's house outside the town, in case of early raids in the morning by the R.I.C. All of us agreed to take every precaution, in case of early interviews and raids by the police - all shoes to be dried and polished before retiring, ends of trousers cleaned, etc., and up for late Mass on St. Patrick's Day.

There was no need to worry because it was late that evening before the car was identified, and very late, almost night, before the police were notified, and it was next day before the police were aware of the loss of property, because only about half the quantity of gun cartridges were taken that night with the explosives

The assistants who helped in this job were Tom Phelan and David Power at Carroll's, three Flynn's, two Mullins, two Power's at Cleary's, and Tom Walsh at Hearn's.

This valuable capture was removed later in the week. The exchange we were promised from Tipperary area - revolvers and revolver ammunition - never turned up, and caused a sourness that was never forgotten. It caused a feeling afterwards - "never give anything away".

Like a fighting dog tasting blood, it had the same result with me and my comrades. It was my first worthwhile successful military operation. The careful planning and month's preparation and extra precautions taken to avoid suspicion and arrest stood a good friend for years later, because it always increased similar precautions.

From that date, it was a weekly movement of super activity. The Germans were sweeping all before them, and this was giving such hopes in Ireland that courage was rising in every phase of national and military activity. England, with its back to the wall, was short of troops, and the British government decided to extend conscription to Ireland. The next six months were exclusively devoted to all national organisations, and many that were not too national united to defeat the attempt to conscript young Irishmen. All joined in, and every parish had its own organisation, and huge sums of money, close on one million pounds, were collected to fight it if it was attempted. Meetings and speeches everywhere. It was my first time to speak at public meetings on behalf of Sinn Féin and National Volunteers. A bad and wretched speaker I was, too shy, too nervous and not enough ability. However, as bad as I was, other speakers were as bad, and some worse. Yet we were acclaimed heroes everywhere.

Believe it or not, before it ended - at least, before conscription ceased, or the attempt was

dropped - I was a million per cent. in favour of conscription, and even up to the present year, 1955, or thirty-seven years afterwards, I regret that conscription was not attempted to be enforced. I even wrote to the newspaper a year or two later on that point, and my reason was that thousands of young men, who were a hundred per cent. pro-British and a hundred per cent. anti-Republican, or anti-1916, and who despised our movement, subscribed large sums of money to save their carcasses. When the war was over, the money was refunded to subscribers, less one per cent. expenses. I was one of three, representing Sinn Féin and the Volunteers, who remained at a table in the Town Hall after an appeal, on behalf of our organisations, had been made for subscriptions to be handed in to us - after we had saved them from conscription - and one out of sixty subscribed. Anyone, with a bad temper and with a gun, would nearly have used it on them.

It was a tragedy, even to the present day, that conscription was not enforced, because it would have been a form of purification. It might have brought out some Irish feeling. It might have made men out of mice and, even if they submitted to conscription, it might have put spirit into spineless men.

To stand there all day and see the wealthy anti-Irish Irishmen take their £20, £30 and £50 and sneer at the people who saved their skin, created in me a sourness which I found hard enough to shake off. It was a very fine, warm, sunshiny year - a rare thing in Ireland. Our friends, the Germans, fell, and it made it a hundred times worse because we spent three years of such high hopes of English defeat. The weight of the almighty American-Jewish dollar went

against her, like in the second world war. Our hearts dropped so low it was hard to surface again. The pro-British and anti-Irish sections went mad with drunken parades and street marches, and would probably drive the pro-Republicans out of the country but for the fact that the 'flu broke out.

The late summer and early autumn of 1918, following the intensive anti-conscription campaign, found the ranks of the Volunteers considerably increased. Men who would not think for a moment to be in any type of Irish military or semi-military organisation or who would not fight a hen, flocked into the movement for no purpose but to save themselves from use by the British Army as fodder for German guns. When conscription failed and the danger passed a big number dropped out again. Still we had left a good number of young men who remained, and the period of conscription, organisation and training opened up national feelings and the necessity everywhere of a military force in each parish. Looking back 20-25 years later, I often thought that perhaps we'd never have so many young men in the I.R.A. later in the Black and Tan war but for this anti-conscription threat. Given an early idea of the usefulness of organised military bodies, we attempted to put it on a more army footing and called an important meeting for the election of new officers.

Tom Hickey, on account of his early marriage to a farmer's daughter living in Deerpark, over a mile from the town, lived there, and lost direct interest in events of that period. So John O'Keefe, New St., (no relation of John O'Keefe, Pawnbroker) was appointed

Captain. His schoolpals voted him into that position, and later events proved their wisdom. Wm. O'Meara, Mill St., his schoolpal, was appointed Vice Captain; Jn. O'Keefe, or Small Jack, Adjutant; I, Asst. Adjutant; Paddy Power, a native of Clonea, a shop assistant at Comerford & Baldwin's drapery, Quartermaster.

With the anti-conscription period of training this stood a great test very soon, for no sooner than two months later - in November 1918 - the 1st World War ended. British triumphed again, and this required all the organisation we had to hold our feet. For the 'separation women', their children, old parents etc., lost all sense of calmness with joy, and with rivers of drink flowing about from mountains of money dished out, any pre-1916 man, family or house stood danger of immediate attack, perhaps serious damage. Destruction and loss of life would take place all over but for that terrible European scourge following on the heels of the end of the war - the Black 'Flu.

Though millions were lost in the 4½ years war, in two months twice as many died from this 'flu supposed to originate in Europe. Thousands of unburied bodies lying on ground and trenches! This killed in England and her allied countries the joy and recklessness that naturally followed a successful 4½ years war. Most families were stricken down and many lost three or four.

I escaped for six weeks, though I called to see the late Jack O'Keefe every night (Adjutant Jack) then living with his father in Cooke St. He was down for half a year. Eventually I got it bad and was in bed for a ~~month~~

and the blackest man in Africa was not blacker.

Most amazing, before this death scourge disappeared a general election was declared in England and this, of course, applied to Ireland as well. Even before I was out of bed I drafted a poster and circulars. We had to get them printed outside the town, for two months earlier I had got a poster printed by Tom Lynch against men joining the English Army and its wording was too strong. The R.I.C. confiscated his printing machinery and the first day I was struck with the 'flu I had called some of his old friends together for a meeting in the Town Hall to see how we could make up a sum of money for him to maintain his wife and family. Six or seven turned up - officers of the Sinn Féin movement, including Maurice Hickey, James O'Keefe, Seán O'Flynn, Dr. Murphy, and I believe I could not open my mouth. Dr. Murphy ordered me out of the room and inquired if I had any close friend in a public-house who would be so kind as to give me a bottle of whiskey, for, due to its severe scarcity, £20 would not obtain it in a shop then. I got one on my way up home from Dan Gregg, Manager Skehan Bros., but could scarcely take off my clothes with sickness. I put the bottle to my mouth as advised and finished the whole bottle in an hour. It was the only cure then - it killed the poison - but not being available it could not be had. He brought another bottle next day, and both bottles killed the poison before it killed me. The reason Lloyd George declared an election was to use their great victory, and he (Prime Minister) naturally thought the people would support the leaders, but strange the kink of human nature: Lloyd George was beaten!

However, I struggled out of bed the day of the election in 1919 and was given the job of meeting all voters in the Presentation Convent. Pierce McCann, a gentleman and large farmer at Dulla, outside Cashel, was the Sinn Féin candidate. He was a prisoner in England. Tom Condon, Clonmel, an ex-Redmondite National member, was a decent, popular man, but on account of his standing against a Sinn Féin candidate the wrong or anti-national element supported him. Porter was dished out on the streets from barrels from his supporters (local leaders). Martin Walsh, High Road, who was a member of our Company (and still hale and hearty in 1955), and I were on duty inside the gate across the road from Fairfield at noon. Large squads of 'separation women', their children, brothers, parents, etc., mobilised in groups and paraded the streets carrying all sorts of missiles, sticks, stones, bricks, bottles etc. Inflamed with six barrels of porter dished out by a very honourable but one hundred per cent pro-Redmondite Manager of Ml. Power's Bottling Stores, they attacked in Kickham St. a bicycle shop of Michael McGrath (Rath), a member of a famous national family, whose brother Maurice will figure prominently in this write-up. They broke his windows and some bicycles left with him for repair. They smashed the third or fourth only motor car in town, at that time owned by Dr. Murphy and driven by Jimmy Hurley, Main St., a delicat man, made pieces of the windscreen and continued attacking all shops and supporters of Sinn Féin who displayed Sinn Féin colours. After much damage and injury they returned by New St. to the Greenside, and opposite the present Swan Club they encircled a motor car with eight voters from Grangemoekler, eight

miles away, who had to come into town to vote. The car was driven ^{by} the owner, Tom Reidy, already mentioned in the St. Patrick's Day store ammunition and explosive raid. True to his reputation he had a gun (revolver) on him and he fired a shot in the air for protection. I was on the actual spot at the time and so were members of the R.I.C., including a very popular 5' 7" Head Constable Cronin. Reidy was placed under arrest. Later he got 12 months in Cork Prison for this offence. His valuable revolver was taken by the R.I.C. He was released after six months in poor health.

The mob then broke into the convent yard, where a number of booths were held and with only Martin Walsh and I on duty at the time, with bottles and stones fired freely. We got inside a large tree and the wall. The tree bore the signs of attack until cut down. After 15 minutes of this attack and still both of us on our feet, an elderly leading member of the anti Sinn Féin gang faced his gang in front of us and said to me: "I see you at G.A.A. matches". We had met on the road to Clonmel. Walsh had put up a great fight. "You two get out of here; I will see no stones or bottles are fired until you are clear" he said. We took his tip and got out with our lives. We reached the Town Hall, where Sinn Féin H.Q. was, and reported. John O'Keefe, the newly appointed Captain, was there. He mobilised as many of the Volunteers as were available and sent a note to Ballyneale, Faugheen and the immediate parishes to come in in strong forces. After an hour or two ^{we had} ~~60~~ ^{Volunteers} marching through the streets and had the streets to ourselves. The 200 mob of pro-British people had very wisely cleared into their homes. Voters displaying Sinn Féin colours or sympathies were attacked in

Greystone St., a strong area of the pro-British. It was known as the "Cockpit". Let the readers understand that such pro-British feelings were due to poverty and propaganda.

That night we in a gang of twenty surrounded the houses of the stone and bottle firers in Long Lane. They all barricaded their houses with tables, chairs and beds, but some of our countrymen had no mercy and broke in through windows and even pulled some of them out through windows. All that could be found got a great hiding. The town was taken over and £1,000 could be offered to see one of them, how scared they were. When polling closed we again paraded the streets, through the spots in the lanes and out the Ballyrichan road, another hot quarter, where we retired at 1.30 a.m. after a long, strenuous and dangerous day.

This hard hitting hiding they got stood good. For a long time they remained as meek as mice. The Sinn Féin candidate, Pierce McCann, the jail bird as he was then called, won fairly well. In most areas the National Party or Redmondites did not contest the election at all, leaving a free field to Sinn Féin, on account of the great victory over the attempted conscription threat, but it's debatable indeed if the contests were held that Sinn Féin would not have the signal victory they had.

The year ended with the British victory, Germany's defeat and the terrible death roll of the 'flu. National and social spirit sank low and very low in 1919.

The early death of our victor, Pierce McCann, in

an English prison brought great grief in South East Tipperary. His funeral from Dublin was a manifestation of national grief. A bunch of the local boys decided to cycle all the way to Cashel though it was a wet morning; no motors at that time. Six of us who went got drenched. After having some food in Cashel we decided to cycle on to his home at Ballyowen, Dulla. We were deeply impressed by his fine home - Ballyowen House - and all the extensive up-to-date outhouses, cattle, horses and expensive lay-out. A man of rather extensive property, he embraced the national cause, suffered and died for it! What more can a man give? It was nearly dark when he was laid to rest in his native clay. Thousands attended. Dark had set in when we resumed our return to Carrick-on-Suir, 30 miles away. The night was stark dark, with rain and storm. We could not see a yard in front of us. The roads were like river beds, with loose stones and rut holes. I got many falls and was drenched through and through. We got home at 3 in the morning. His early death knocked the spirit of the people still lower.

The foregoing sad events, perhaps, had much to do with a decay in the Republican spirit, and the remainder of 1919 or nearly all of it was something like a quagmire of depression and looked like as if we'd sink again into the same lowness as had followed the '67 Rebellion or attempt. Suddenly it rose again at the end of the year or early in the New Year (1920) following the Soloheadbeg road ambush. Had the British used this as propaganda instead of the man-hunt and the wholesale raiding and opening up the floodgates of fury

it's possible the spirit would not re-kindle like it did. But with their intensive hostile action, their ruthless treatment of the civil population and their unbridled hatred of any suspects of genuine Republicanism and nationalism, this open tyranny at the time was a God-send, for it engendered an amazing spirit in a section of lively young men of spirit. Yet, of course, it had no effect on the spineless young men of the wealthy section, of the section who ape the wealthy in the hope that they be regarded as equals, and the very poor whose spirit is dead.

Entering into 1920, the first year of real genuine attack on the enemy since the glorious Easter Week of 1916, a year of unceasing intensive activity in the training of a proper military organisation of the I.R.A. Up to then in this area (8th Battalion or Carrick-on-Suir) it was in the military standard only a national organisation of an accepted semi military organisation. This year it fully developed into a full blooded army standard. Practically every night from 8 p.m. to any hour of mid morning it was a case of training, drilling, organisation, parades, revolver practice, oath swearing, etc. etc. Raiding for arms continued, and the only arms of any worth-while prestige were farmers' shotguns. About this period it was a case of any old gun, good, or bad, without even a single cartridge, because since 1916 and the raiding over a year previously it was impossible for farmers to obtain from the merchants the single cartridges. In most cases the old farmers had notified that they had guns and did not want them to fall into the hands of the enemy. At the time they were collecting shotguns, in a number

of cases they were taken against the owners' wishes - some who would prefer them to fall into the hands of the enemy. In a few cases owners who professed that they were one hundred per cent with us strongly objected to our taking their guns, saying that they wanted them etc. Numerous comedy stories could be related of incidents and circumstances of their collection. Yet the organisation had a number of collections without any order from the local headquarters. Local strong supporters, or at that time more or less external members, had called on their neighbours and collected guns.

Visiting or raiding houses by night, disguised or remaining outside the door while members of outside areas who could swear the people about to be raided were unknown to them, some interesting conversations took place. If I attempt to relate or open up this form of activity in writing, my write-up would take so much space it would be far beyond the patience of a publisher to put in print, so I intend to confine my experience to one hundred per cent military activity.

In the full or honest-to-goodness sense of the word 1920 was the first year of the real open warfare against Black and Tans and English forces in Ireland. After the blood hunt all over Munster following Soloheadbeg ambush, the English Army of occupation and their torture and shooting-up activity must be given full credit for the development and super advance full blooded I.R.A. organisation and operational military activity. At the start of the year we put the Carrick-on-Suir or "A" Company into real military

status. Early in January a special important meeting of the Company was held in the Town Hall and was addressed by Eamon O'Dwyer, a large extensive farmer from Cashel. His home was subsequently burned down by the Black and Tans and his invalid mother taken out on the lawn in a stretcher to view the flames of her fine home. He spoke for $\frac{5}{4}$ of an hour on training, organisation and patriotism. He was one of the pioneers of the Sinn Féin and Volunteer movement, but he strongly spoke against shooting any man, but especially a policeman or soldier, simply because he had on or wore a uniform. He deprecated such action - that no excuse would justify shooting a policeman from behind a ditch unless some grave charge was proved against him.

His address on this point on youngsters had a decided slant. He repeated this form of address in every area he visited, and eventually this advice lead to differences with headquarters and subsequently led to either his dismissal or retiral.

After the meeting the Company re-elected its officers. I was appointed for the first time Company Engineer, a position unheard of at that time. Many of the members were rather surprised I was not given a higher rank, after 2 or 3 years of actual leadership or at least responsible for the existence of the movement. Of course, I had cold sense enough to know that I was not wearing a local school tie and that, while human nature is what it is, it's natural that the school tie get first preference. Secondly, it's quite possible that locals may think this stranger only $4\frac{1}{2}$ years in town should be cheeky as to attempt to show them the way, or perhaps jealousy. Yet it

had no ill-feeling on me. Fortunately I was one hundred per cent free from it at the time and the intense interest and love for the work covered and blocked out any thought like that. While I am writing 35 years later I'd hardly accept it now, because if you or anyone create an organisation you'd like to be on the high officership. Yet, though not fitting in higher rank, I was always in the inner circle of worth-while operations.

Intensified night training was the order of the 'night', not the day, because all had to do their ordinary work during the daytime to exist. This was far better as we were able to get out of town unnoticed by the police or people and able to get to parish or company areas for organising and training the rural companies. It's surprising what youth can do. It's unbelievable at our present age, 35 years later, that after working 10 hours in a shop - because the most of us were shopboys, the backbone of the I.R.A. then - that after having our tea we at once got into action six nights every week and, of course, every Sunday was a 16 hour day in I.R.A. work.

The R.I.C.. evacuated the barracks at Carrickbeg, Clonea, Fiddown and Slatequarries, and we immediately blew them up or rather down - not any great job for bravery recognition because we had only old ruins of buildings to demolish.

Often among ourselves later in life in discussing this we said that if only 1 or 2 police remained there armed they would never be taken. Perhaps the joke was true, because another local barrack five

miles from the town, at Glenbower on the Dublin road, the four police in it, though like lions in a cage, stuck it to the end, though during the year before the Truce it was attempted to be taken many times and was under heavy fire, yet was never closely approached in a realistic or military way to overcome this small force. I will refer later to this garrison, which was a source of help to the I.R.A. in providing arms and ammunition from inside.

The empty barrack at Carrickbeg was an old mud wall one, and the day after evacuation, or night rather, we knocked it. The wall was so soft that the charge did not make as much noise as the breaking of a goose egg. Next day I had a call from a local curate, Fr. O'Shea, C.C., St. Nicholas's, a close friend of the movement, but the poor man is now long dead, R.I.P. He was very odd. Though I could bet 1,000 to 1 he did not know a single word about the plan of destruction but heard of it next day, he said "I knew this was to be done. I held awake until after midnight and was disappointed with the want of noise from the explosion. Even I heard the cock crow. If it was a strong stone wall building the noise it would cause would wake and throw out of bed all the shoneens in the town". His way of thought and expression!

The R.I.C. in Carrick-on-Suir then were strengthened by the forces in the aforementioned barracks thus doubling their strength, and this gave them strength for a while. They became very active. They made numerous house raids and questioned many people. That spring and summer the movement was put on a solid

military basis, with all the companies organised and all the men fairly well trained. Headquarters formed divisions and they later formed battalions - an absolute necessity for communications, reports and organisation. Our Carrick-on-Suir area, on account of its extreme east position, was the 8th Battalion of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade which consisted of eight battalions. The 8th Battalion consisted of nine companies, being the largest battalion in the brigade, but when we added the 10th Company from over the border but near the town in Co. Kilkenny, Kilcash was given to Clonmel or the 5th Battalion.

Every day in 1920 brought news of war activity - ambushes, deaths, shootings, executions, torture, great deeds of recorded and unrecorded actions by the I.R.A. and by the people, whose loyalty, patriotism, extraordinary bravery, courage, kindness and goodwill to the I.R.A. were chiefly responsible for their success.

The first worthwhile operation in early 1920 in which I participated was the destruction of the local income tax collector's books and documents at Turkstown, Fiddown, Co. Kilkenny. It was decided by G.H.Q. that income tax books and documents throughout the Thirty-two counties should be destroyed on this particular night. I am not in a position to say whether the operation was fully carried out in the north-eastern part of the country (now known as the Six Counties), but, in a total of 340 or 350 areas, income tax documents were burned that night. We mobilised after closing the shops at 9 p.m. - a

Saturday night - and waited until it got dark. Six of us took part in this operation: John O'Keeffe, Battalion O/C, W. O'Hara, O/C, Ed. Power, I.O., A. Company, Tom Phelan, later Company Engineer and, later still, Battalion Engineer, and myself, Battalion Engineer; and again we fetched Tom Reidy, whom I mentioned earlier as being in the capture of the large explosives arsenal. Reidy was again brought in, for his daring. All went separately on bicycles - the only transport then available, - travelling towards Waterford, about six and a half miles from Carrick-on-Suir, though we joined with one of the bunch on the road. We had masks and loaded Webleys, and all met at the gate outside the residence of the collector at a given time. Only one or two knew who exactly the others were. All of us entered the house about 10.30 p.m. The collector and his wife - Mr. and Mrs. Drohan - were on their knees, saying the Rosary, and, as far as I can recollect, we were asked by Mrs. Drohan to join in at the finish of it. Mrs. Drohan was a huge-sized woman who was universally known and popular in Carrick. She was a close personal friend of Reidy, so he was warned to keep his mouth shut. We said we had come a very long journey and told them our business. As far as I know, they were strong supporters of our cause, though he, being a Civil Servant, had to hide it, but she didn't. Of course, the probable loss of his highly paid job need not have caused them much worry, as she owned a very substantial and rich farm of land adjacent. It is worth recalling her good nature and their love and respect for the cause. She invited us to supper but we declined, with

thanks, and said we were in a hurry. She still persisted and said that there was no fear of the enemy coming. Yet, of course, any delay on our part was dangerous, for if the enemy had an inkling of what was happening in only one of the three hundred and fifty areas, all such offices could be surrounded that night and one of the biggest enemy victories would be gained. Again, ample proof of the loyalty, bravery and trustworthiness of the Volunteers concerned! Reidy, being such a friend of the family and knowing the woman so well, could not keep his mouth shut, but changed his accent. He had to be touched on the back to make him finish the conversation. Then, without a word or growl, all the books were handed over.

Bidding our two distinguished hosts, "Good night, God bless you, and apologies!", we went towards the river Suir, a field from the house. On the main Carrick-Waterford road, we sprinkled a bottle or two of paraffin oil over the books, papers, etc., etc., and set them on fire. Looking back now, what a foolish place to select for the job! We were in full view from the road and, if the enemy happened to be passing at that time, we would be under fire, but, of course, there was very little motor transport then. As a matter of fact, we did not meet a soul over the twelve miles journey, going and coming.

Most of the participants in this operation did not know what was to be done, or who or how many were to take part. Each had a special job - sentry, guard, direction. We returned to Carrick by two

roads, but all arrived in town before 11.30 p.m. Everyone had a bicycle that night, and no one took the least notice, just like people in motor cars now.

Action is the best form of training, and this job, well done, gave courage, trustworthiness and reliance to the men who took part and later were called on to help in similar big operations.

Next day, the only paper in circulation then, the Dublin daily "Independent", a hundred per cent. anti Irish, anti Republican rag, had a sorrowful tale to give to the people. A sad story for its owner - but, little and all as it was, it gave the Republican army and the people great courage, and proved to the enemy and the world the widespread strength of the I.R.A., its perfection, its obedience to orders and its ability to carry military operations into any corner of the country.

This was a great blow to the enemy, for it rendered almost impossible the collection of income tax from their own rich friends. Only the people who were rich were their friends. Prices for beef cattle were higher than they are even to-day (1955) when farmers are receiving sky-high prices. The prices then averaged £80 for a bullock, 6/- a pound for butter, eggs, 6/- a dozen, and milk, 2/- a gallon. The bigger the farmer, the closer the friend of England he was. It was generally understood that many of them sent their cheques direct to headquarters the following week - some who would not be too willing to pay under the ordinary channel.

So the English army of occupation began a whirlwind of house-raiding and questioning, but they were badly handicapped in every area as the R.I.C. had almost disappeared into barracks and apparently were getting no information of any kind. Otherwise, it would have been impossible to do the things we did without their knowledge of it. All our success was due to the secrecy and trustworthiness of the members of the I.R.A.

When Brigade Headquarters was set up at Rosegreen, midway between Clerihan and Cashel, the organisation became a full-time military one, though everyone associated with it were Volunteers. Orders from Headquarters in Dublin were received there and transmitted to the Battalion Headquarters, the latter passing them on to the Company officers. The work entailed by numerous despatches, orders and reports gave full-time night occupation to Battalion officers, and it must be borne in mind that working for a living then meant a sixteen or eighteen-hour day.

Practically all the A. Company officers became Battalion officers:-

| | | |
|--------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Company Captain | - | Battalion O/C. |
| Vice Coy. Capt. | - | Battalion Vice O/C. |
| Coy. Adjutant | - | Battalion Adjutant. |
| Coy. Engineer | - | Battalion Engineer. |
| Coy. I.O. | - | Battalion I.O. |
| Coy. Quartermaster | - | Battalion Quartermaster. |
| Coy. Despatch | - | Battalion Despatch. |

This, of course, necessitated great difficulty in filling all above vacancies with new officers from one small Company, and for a number of months the Battalion officers had to hold Battalion and Company ranks combined.

It was too much to expect a man to work at his ordinary work for ten hours a day, as well as doing the immense duty then imposed on officers in looking after a large Battalion and an active Company, unless he was working in a shop or an office for his father - or with an uncle, like I was, who had been a Fenian or the Castleisland Moonlighters' agent thirty-five or forty years previously, and who was very hostile to English rule, bred into his blood from evictions during his schooldays. So, fortunately, I was able to spend all my spare time as a shop assistant. In a small town like ours, there was plenty of spare time for a shopkeeper or shop assistant. Two full days' work in a week, if put together, would be the most we would have to do, but unless the shop remained open for the whole week, the business would suffer. Most of my time was devoted even then, the spring of 1920, to I.R.A. activity with nine large Companies, embracing three counties - a very wide area. As the shop was situated in the centre of the town and there was only my uncle with me, all the Company officers and the members of the nine Companies, when in town either on I.R.A. duty or business, would call in to see me, in case I might have a job for them, or for a chat. As time went on, this practice became very dangerous and it was discontinued altogether, for precautionary measures, in case the enemy might start putting two and two together.

At the end of the spring of 1920, we had a visit from Seán Treacy, the famous Tipperary leader. This visit to the extreme end of Tipperary was hailed by the officers of the Battalion as a great honour.

Only the officers were aware of his identity. Although secrecy was absolutely essential for security reasons, this was detrimental to the morale of the rank and file. What was good enough for the officers, by way of this high official compliment and encouragement, should be good also for the rank and file. After all, it was a Volunteer army. We all met this outstanding Irish soldier at Rath, the farm of the famous McGrath family - one of them, Maurice, who later became O/C, 8th Battalion, and about whom I shall have more details to give later on in this statement.

We all felt highly honoured. All the leading Battalion officers, Company Captains and senior company officers were present. Treacy briefly lectured us on the high-lights of military organisation, capturing of arms in the area, training, etc., etc.

It was close on midnight when we left McGrath's farm in Rath, and I, with three other Battalion officers, was appointed to accompany Treacy to Carrick, as guide and bodyguard. It was a fine night. Avoiding the main roads, we went along the hillside over the town, through old Mass paths or short-cuts. Leaving Crehana Cross, we took a rather perilous, narrow footpath, then used by the town children from Carrickbeg, facing Crehana boys' school. One would have to be agile and smart to venture on this path. It was then a very bright moonlight night, and suddenly behold, out of the blue like a ghost, a man appeared with a bicycle. Sefn Treacy, with the typical alertness of a soldier's training, snapped

to attention and, putting his hand on his revolver, was about to challenge, "Who goes there? Put up your hands!", when we, recognising the man, said it was safe to let him pass. He was the very notable, highly learned and distinguished principal of the nearby Crehana national school, Laurence Kiely, who, like many others of the professorial class, worn out from the torture of trying to instil education into children, under ten years of age, used go into town for a drink of "lemonade" to ease the nerves, and, though rarely seen on the bike, was seldom seen without its company - like a walking stick. Whether he preferred not to be on the public road, or forgot he was off it, I cannot say, but he pushed his way up the steep incline where it was difficult even to pick one's footsteps, not to speak of pushing a bike too. He muttered some sort of salutation to us. Believe it or not, Seán Treacy could never forget this incident. He thought it the strangest performance imaginable - the professor negotiating a pathway only used by himble children.

About this period, another development set in which benefitted the morale of the I.R.A. considerably - the rescue of Seán Hogan at the railway station in Knocklong. It had the same effect of invigorating appeal and encouragement as would be felt after the defeat of a large division or capture in a world war. Training started in earnest, and our officers availed of this opportunity. The 8th Battalion area was extensive and, in order to spend one full night a week in each Company, we had to be on duty on Sundays as well. With nine companies, we had to take on two or

three companies on a Sunday, or two extra Companies on some nights. It was fairly easy to do this in the winter because we were able to get out of town after 6 p.m. without anyone seeing us, quite different in the long evenings.

All our military knowledge and efficiency was acquired from books. We had no one to teach us at the start because we had to maintain secrecy to avoid information falling into the enemy's hands.

To train five or six hundred raw recruits in nine parishes at night and to work for a living next day meant that from this time to the Truce in July of the following year, I and my Battalion officers scarcely spent three hours in bed unless we slept late into the morning, and only those who were their own bosses could stick this. I was fortunate to be working for my uncle - James Coffey - who was a violently anti-English man because he had suffered so much in his schooldays from rack-renting, evictions, seizure of cattle, arrests and moonlighting, forty years previously. As he had no other shop assistant except myself, he suffered much through my absences from work, due to my getting into bed at five or six o'clock in the morning and staying there until ten o'clock. Shops were opened at 8 a.m. then. It was as a self-preservation that I developed a silence, unbelievable in me - , as I am now quite a talker - and rarely ever spoke even to my comrades about what we did, intended to do, whom we met, or the thousand and one things to speak about.

In order to avoid meeting people on the roads who might put two and two together, we found other routes for getting to the different parishes than the main roads. This entailed much more labour on ourselves because, in most cases, we had to travel on foot through pathways, fields, woods and over ditches. Ballyneale was three to five miles from Carrick, Kilcash, eight miles, Grangemockler, nine miles, Faughan, four miles, Clonea, eight miles, Rathgarrick, seven miles, Mothel, four miles, and Windygap, three miles. To make the journeys seem twice as long, the company meetings were usually held in the most out-of-the-way places, to avoid detection. It was amazing to see how these Volunteers from the rural areas viewed, with surprise and respect, our coming to train them. They thought we were experts, whereas we were no better, and perhaps worse than themselves. Yet, coming from a town, we were supposed to be "wonders". In fact, we were quite the reverse, and had great cheek and pluck ~~to~~^{to} attempt the training of these men in the same manner as the military did then, or would now.

All our Battalion meetings were held at about nine or ten o'clock on week nights which meant that we would leave town about 8 p.m. after a ten-hour working day, walking or cycling. These meetings were nearly always held in different company areas. We were fortunate that the people living in these areas were mostly sympathetic to us. Seventy-five per cent. of them were wholly in favour of the movement, about ten per cent were indifferent, and fifteen per cent. were

solidly pro British. But, thank God for that, because even if only one person from any of the company or parish areas reported our presence to the R.I.C., we would have little chance of escaping. It was impossible for us not to be observed when travelling to and from the different company areas, by night and by day - the mere fact that we went across fields made it a thousand times more suspicious - and also when one hundred to three hundred men were being drilled and carrying out revolver and gun practices, by night and on Sunday evenings. The fact that no one slipped into the local barracks to give the word about our presence in the locality, or even sent a letter, should be on record, to show the high standard of patriotism. Compare this to their attitude during the Civil War period when rarely was an I.R.A. man seen in the area but it was reported at the local Free State barracks an hour later.

By this time, all the Companies were pretty well organised in the numerous military services. The big and dangerous job - and the one that most men dreaded - was the daily delivery of despatches from the battalions to Brigade Headquarters at Rosegreen. Two men left Carrick, at the extreme end of the promontory which constituted Co. Tipperary, every day at about 10 a.m., for Rosegreen, near Cashel, thirty miles away, via Clonmel or Fethard. The main roads were avoided as far as possible, except at certain points. Sometimes the main roads, on account of them being used by ordinary business people, were safer for the Volunteers and

caused less suspicion, provided that the Volunteers showed no sign of nervousness when meeting a military or police party, and made no attempt to by-pass them. The enemy began avoiding the main roads as they were afraid of ambushes, and this proved to be a danger to the Volunteers who might be inclined to get careless and fail to maintain the calmness necessary to throw off suspicions. Every day - wet, dry, snow or storm - the men had to go, whether they had any material or not.

After a short time, these men never left the 8th Battalion without something for Brigade Headquarters. Each Company Adjutant had to send a report daily of action, and the Battalion had to report daily too. As well as that, any guns captured and any material of military value were sent to Brigade Headquarters. Very often, the latter would return the compliment and send along a revolver for special jobs, such as, raids, protection duty and training. It would be sent to each Company for a week or so, to enable the officers to handle it, to learn how to use it and to have a full knowledge of its mechanism. The very fact of having such a weapon for a few days raised the morale of the men considerably. Even a greenhorn officer showed every sign of improvement after having this weapon in his possession for a few days. This shows up the shocking state of affairs that existed due to the absence of war equipment. To have five hundred men in every Battalion without even one good revolver, not to say a rifle, in a Company area was

enough to cause the men to lose heart of ever getting supplies from Headquarters. The fact that the enemy had disappeared from practically every rural area was due to the passive resistance of the people rather than to any military operation.

Every Sunday, the senior battalion officers proceeded to Brigade Headquarters for training, instructions, lectures and discussions on plans for operational work for the following week. S. Robinson presided at practically every Brigade meeting. These meetings were held in different townlands in the homes of our loyal supporters - all farmers - and they used give us free dinners. As a result of these weekly meetings, all the officers of the 8th Battalion in the 3rd Tipperary Brigade became very well acquainted, and a high-grade, full-blooded friendship sprang up amongst them. No words of mine could describe the intensity of this friendship. It was extraordinary indeed when one remembers the intense hatred that developed among them during the tragic Civil War. I often think of the truth of that old saying, "When friends fall out, they are the worst enemies".

I suppose another reason for this friendship among the I.R.A. men was the continual risk of immediate death. Frequently, we would not return to our Battalion areas on Sunday, and would take a day off on Monday, because some of our friends in the area between Carrick and Cashel would bring us to their homes in the early hours of the morning, or to participate in a military operation or raid, if the opportunity arose. This form of acquaintanceship

served its own purpose as, later on, the Volunteers were able to move about the county in column formation and to call at the homes of local Company officers or men. It enabled an active Brigade or Battalion officer to personally know about three thousand comrades in the area.

Coming on towards the end of the year 1920, the effects of constant raiding, ambushes, murder, torture burning, and curfew changed the people's pattern of living. Practically all forms of business or other means of livelihood were suspended by the active members and officers of the Volunteers, and parents or bosses, who depended on their services, suffered their own share. No man can serve two masters, and so, for the vast majority of Brigade, Battalion and Company officers, it was a case of "no other law". It was fortunate that we were all young men, as otherwise, we could not have stood the strain of working for a living in the day time and spending five nights a week on I.R.A. duty. Yet that was the pattern of our life then.

About this time, one of the greatest blows struck the 3rd Tipperary Brigade - the death of our beloved Vice Brigade O/C, Sean Treacy, in Talbot Street, Dublin, after a glorious fight. Hero of a hundred battles! A man whom every Volunteer in the Brigade adored! The man who inspired us, gave us courage and to whom we looked for a lead! But, look at how ended his great life! He had spent the previous night in company with his old soldier friend, Dan Breen, on the roofs of houses in Dublin, defending

their lives and firing pot shots down at the enemy, one after another, as they appeared. The odds against the two men were a hundred to one, yet both escaped. Wasn't it a dreadful tragedy that this Irish de Wet exposed himself in one of Dublin's central streets and that it was possible that he was shadowed by an Irish spy! Who could believe for a moment that the enemy were capable of thinking of having an Irish spy to track Breen and Treacy, and if it were possible to have one in Talbot Street at that time, it is only logical that every other important street in the city was manned by a similar wretch, unless, of course, enemy intelligence was better than it was reputed to be and they knew that I.R.A. headquarters, or its equivalent, was in Talbot Street! If the enemy were aware of this, it opens up another chapter of unwritten history for the future historian. If only one spy was employed to shadow Breen and Treacy, why was he in Talbot Street? After thirty-five years, no explanation was issued by Headquarters on this important matter. If Dublin had thousands of famous fighting men - and who will deny that? - why the necessity of bringing such famous men from Tipperary to carry out the big jobs? Was it on account of their experience? When it was found necessary to have them in Dublin, who was responsible for ensuring that no one could shadow them? Even with a hundred spies, how could they know that the two Tipperarymen would be in Dublin, or of the necessity for having them there? I have never yet heard that General Headquarters held an inquiry to ascertain if the British spy was helped by some spy

from the Dublin I.R.A. ranks. Anyone with average intelligence and thinking powers must feel that one spy could not, at that moment, have been outside premises so much used by Dublin Headquarters men. A mystery never cleared up! Let us hope that my giving this statement to the Bureau will be the means of influencing the surviving members of General Headquarters to make a report on this matter.

Seán Treacy's early death cast a shadow of gloom all over Ireland, but in his native County, especially in the 3rd Tipperary Brigade area where he was universally adored and respected, a black cloud of gloom settled. At his funeral in Kilfeackle churchyard where thousands were assembled, the place was surrounded by a large force of Black and Tans and three hundred men's bicycles were taken away. A large number of these bicycles were never claimed, which was a wise course because all the young men who called to claim their bicycles had to furnish their names and addresses, which provided the enemy with a very useful way of knowing who was who. However, to make up for his loss, I.R.A. activity was resumed with a hundred per cent. frequency, boldness, daring, in an all-out effort to show that all was not lost by the death of one great leader.

During the following month we in Carrick-on-Suir carried out an important military operation every night. Trains transporting large consignments for various military stations between Waterford and Clonmel were raided and their contents captured and

destroyed. In most cases, these goods were food, clothes, boots, delph, etc., etc. Post offices and postmen were deprived of letters, parcels, etc., addressed to the enemy or to residents under suspicion. As usual, in all our operations, our well prepared plans to avoid detection by outsiders or by the enemy were always carried out to perfection. Selected men were notified, half an hour before the scheduled time, to be in a named place, but never the actual vicinity of the place, post, station or building where the job was to be executed, and to be armed as best they could. Then, at a certain time, we would proceed to the exact place. Of course, it must be understood that in most cases it was made rather easy for us. In seventy-five per cent. of the operations, we had everything cut and dried for us by some friendly persons in the places we were raiding. These were postal officials, postmen, railway workers, etc., and if they happened to be on the premises when we arrived, doors and windows were opened for us, boxes placed in position for us to take away and in most cases we were able to leave the building, station or the area in the shortest possible time and get safely away. Of course, for these operations we had the advantage of the long winter nights.

However, we had carried out similar operations in the previous June and July, and we continued these operations in the following May and June. We always took better precautions in the summer months. For instance, I once brought along a white flannel waistcoat, which used be worn by old men along the

Comeraghs - bawneen - and a wide Jerry hat, and when I put them on outside the post office, my comrades had to ask me my name, so good was the guise. Passers-by remarked, "There's an old shepherd from the mountain!" Twenty-five yards further along the road, I wrapped them up in a parcel and appeared in my ordinary clothes again.

Our campaign of intensive action was so successful - we carried out about a hundred operations in the town and Battalion area in a month - that the enemy got moving to counteract all this. Our first loss was the capture of our Vice Commandant, William O'Meara - a good, sound, sensible officer, a glutton for work, a great loss to the Battalion Staff, a popular, good-humoured man. A few nights later, we held a Battalion meeting and elected a farmer's son from Rath, Co. Waterford - Maurice McGrath - as Vice Commandant in place of O'Meara. The McGrath farm was a substantial one, but, as there were two other brothers at home, Maurice was able to devote most of his time to I.R.A. work.

Operations were continued in the Battalion area. We had hardly settled down when, to add to our losses, the Commandant, John O'Keefe, was arrested while trying to escape into the Convent, where he and his family were well known. His, or rather his parents', residence and business premises adjoined the Convent. Had he been three minutes earlier, he would not have been seen by the enemy and would have got safely into the Convent. This was a big loss to our new Battalion as he was one of our most active officers

and showed great ability, energy, daring and courage. He had all the qualifications necessary for building up the Battalion - very young, always available for operations which required immediate action on receipt of information which might suddenly crop up, and capable of adapting himself to military knowledge and training. We had now to elect a new Commandant.

Once again it was desirable that he should be living in the town, as we received an order from Headquarters that the appointment should be a whole-time job.

Maurice McGrath had been an easy selection for Vice Commandant as he could move from company to company even in the daytime, and it was now considered that he would be suitable for the post of Commandant.

After three hours' deliberation, the gay, laughing and carefree Maurice McGrath was promoted Commandant of the 8th Battalion, in place of the imprisoned John O'Keeffe, and, in order to continue the policy of appointing officers who could give whole-time service to the Battalion, we appointed another County Waterford man as Vice Commandant, one Thomas Fahy of Ballindesert, who, like McGrath, was not tied to any job. He was a real sportsman, loved greyhounds, gun dogs, etc., and had made the training of dogs his occupation, not like the training nowadays as there were no dog tracks then. A local solicitor, Michael Quirke - another dog fancier - had a grádh for Fahy.

Readers must bear in mind that it was not so easy to carry out an increasing number of operations in the Battalion area without a hitch. With two townsmen in prison and with two senior Battalion officers more or less stranded, a couple of miles

apart, in the rural area, who was to be in charge in the town where all executive decisions had to be made? Of course, the work of organisation had been perfected and the Battalion was now running smoothly, such as Adjutant duties, engineering, Quartermaster duties, despatches, intelligence, etc., but even so there was an immense amount of overlapping as far as the officers were concerned, because they were working for bosses during the day and had not the time to direct the services. I was the only townsman who could, without fear of losing my job, give all my attention to keeping the wheels of the services going.

Christmas closed in with an alarming orgy of excessive drinking, perhaps to find solace or some escape from the trying times prevailing. For the past three months life in Carrick-on-Suir, as well as in every other town, was almost unbearable. Curfew was at nightfall, and no matter how important the reason for going out of doors, one was always confronted with enemy patrols, "hands up" and a gun shoved into one's mouth. Even a strong percentage of the pro-British section were in the jitters.

Christmas eve saw a big section of the people becoming beasts through drink, the military, Black and Tans, British ex soldiers and their wives, and a big section of I.R.A. supporters sprawling about. Some of the ex soldiers repeated their vengeance of 1918-1919 by stoning the shop windows of prominent Sinn Féin supporters and shouting, "Up John Bull!" in the streets. Mrs. Dowley's premises - she was a prominent Sinn Féin and I.R.A. supporter - at West

Gate, public house and grocery, were smashed and much damage done, and a large quantity of drink consumed in the premises. This added fuel to the fire, and the position became so bad that the military had to be called out to deal with their local loyal section. Some of the big ruffians were brought to the barrack and held there until late on Christmas day. Hundreds of pounds worth of damage was done all over the town.

Quietness prevailed on the holiest day of the year and on the following St. Stephen's day, but when business resumed two days later, large-scale enemy activity opened up. Houses were raided. I had just returned to business when I observed some R.I.C. men and Black and Tans pulling up outside. They were about to enter when their attention was diverted by a man who had refused to halt, and they followed him instead. He was a Mr. Spicer, clog maker, a native of Navan, who was married to a local Protestant lady, Miss Cashman - his own religion. He was still in the gigs after Christmas, as usual. He would have been shot and torn asunder but for the intervention of the loyal pro-British people living near ^{by} Gorbys, who owned a soup shop where the Black and Tans usually spent their spare time. But Spicer, to his eternal credit, refused to be searched.

Immediately, a horse-drawn common car with a load passed by. The horse was galloping and the iron wheels made such a noise that the driver did not hear the order to halt and had gone into another street. Shots were fired over his head.

Having taken shelter in my private dug-out for

ten minutes, I was informed that the coast was clear. I went to the hall door, saw our Battalion Quartermaster across the street at the door of Baldwin's drapery shop where he was employed, and went across to talk matters over with him. I was only a few minutes there when the enemy appeared on the double. They took up position in front of my place and half a dozen of them rushed in. P. Butler, the Quartermaster, and I separated. I went into Skehan's large grocery store, which was packed with customers as this was the first day of opening after being closed for four days' Christmas holidays, and for ten minutes I kept watching the enemy going in and out of the shop where I worked. Suddenly, the enemy withdrew and, crossing the street, came into Skehan's shop. Someone certainly had given them information that I was in Skehan's. I was pointed out to them by an R.I.C. man. They used their new method of pulling my clothes up over my head, and guns hot as fire were shoved into my head and body. A woman fainted near us, and this distracted the enemy as a number of them went to revive and take her off the floor. It was a lucky faint for me. I would probably have been brought out, a corpse, if they had continued the rough handling and pegging at me in their fury. It took ten minutes before the woman came to life. By that time, the Manager, Dan Gregg, got shaky also and some of the party had to attend to him. At the time I had an enormous head of thick curly hair, and the officer in charge had also a fine mop. He was a tall, young and extremely handsome man, but was in a thorough state of nerves, due to drink. He was shaking and shivering, with a bad smell of whiskey. Like many extra good-looking men, he was vain, for he had powder

on his face which he had found when raiding the house of an I.R.A. leader in a townland outside the town - two or three young girls were living there, who presumably owned the powder and scent. This young officer said to me, "Don't you frequently visit there, your outside headquarters!" He wanted to know did I use the face powder and scent in my hair. He spent five minutes searching my extra large mop of curly hair, which action reminded me of my childhood days when my Mother was searching my hair for vermin. Although he was in an advanced state of collapse from drink, he was nevertheless extremely mild and courteous. He certainly was not satisfying the soldiers under him because they were most anxious to give me a mauling. After about fifteen minutes, he ordered me to put on my clothes. I had, of course, to give an explanation as to why I was not in my place of business and why I was there.

There were a number of women in the shop and, in accordance with enemy policy, they were not allowed to leave, in case information would be given to the I.R.A. as to their whereabouts. These women got frightened and began to get hysterical. I think the officer and his men were anxious to get away from them and eventually they withdrew, leaving me high and dry after a tough shaking up.

When I returned to my business, my uncle, James Coffey, was in a state of rage. The shop and all the rooms were tossed about like after an earthquake. First he asked me why did I run away and where did I go. He had been nearly shot to compel him to say where I was. They must have had an idea that I had

a special hiding place. After they had hit him with their guns and boxed him about, he got excited and defied them to shoot him. Being a highly strung man and quick of temper, he was on the verge of collapse in his tangled up shop.

Later in the week we heard that the enemy had stopped further raiding. The reason for this was that an R.I.C. man had been fired on that morning while going from his home to the barracks - over his head - and as big as he was, he fell prostrate, got up, staggered on to the barracks and made his report. The man who fired the shot ~~was~~^{was} an ex British soldier named Halloran from Long Lane, the same man that had raided Dowley's public house on Christman Eve and had been kept in the barracks for twelve hours, and this was a form of revenge on his own friends. Where did this man get a revolver, unless when they were demobbed the year previously they had got one each for supposed protection! A raid was made on his house and the gun taken.

From inside information received, we heard later that I was the man who was supposed to have fired the shot over the head of the R.I.C. man, that I had got out through the back of the shop at 95 Main Street, across the graveyard and on to the level crossing. When the enemy discovered their mistake, it appears that they ceased street patrolling for a week.

Our I.R.A. work went on. We held two special meetings discussing all the facts we knew about the arrest of O'Keefe, the Battalion Commandant. Someone must have given information to the Barracks. For two months previously, O'Keefe was not sleeping at home by

night, in accordance with an order from Headquarters that leading officers were not to sleep at night in their own homes. Across the street from his residence, there lived an ex R.I.C. man, named O'Connor, and his family, and one of the girls there, who was pally with some young boys, stated that she knew O'Keefe was to be arrested, informed him very late at night, but he said he would take a chance that night and would get away early in the morning. We could never put our finger on the person who informed.

For nine months previously we had, on strong advice, held Irish dancing classes in the Town Hall. The teacher was a leading Tipperary I.R.A. officer, McCormack, who later distinguished himself in action. These classes proved a boon because we were able to assemble there to discuss special military objects without the least suspicion, and from such meetings we often made important decisions. If we were held up coming from or going to the hall, we always gave the explanation that we had been at the dance or were going to it. Perhaps too much repeating of this explanation led the military to raid the hall and it got such raiding from time to time that it had to be abandoned. One night much more than dancing shoes were with the men - revolvers, ammunition, and bombs - and when the whole place was surrounded by the enemy, the young girls present took some of them and the special hiding place saved the remainder.

A week later, we were there again and, after a special meeting, decided on a big raid. I was directed to go to my own place for the necessary equipment. Up to then, the streets were entirely

free from the enemy - a desert. When making my way back to the hall with my promiscuous bundle, I was amazed to find that the enemy had carried out a surprise move and that the hall was surrounded. I was about to turn into New Street when some of our friends shouted, "Go away! The soldiers and police have taken one and all in the hall". I escaped, by ten yards, and proceeded as fast as the wind to a well planned safe place where I dumped my "stock" .

Early next morning I made enquiries of the first acquaintance I met when I came to Carrick to find out full particulars, and got the worst news yet. My comrade, Patrick Power, the Battalion Quartermaster, had been picked up in the hall raid and some papers of I.R.A. importance found on him. It was to him I had been bringing the material for our intended raid. He was one of the pioneers with me in the formation of the Sinn Féin, Fianna and I.R.A. in Carrick. No words could describe my feelings of regret. Here was I, the only remaining promotor, with small Jack O'Keefe, Adjutant, arrested in June at a Brigade meeting near Rosegreen when surrounded by a platoon of military, with Vice Commandant William O'Meara arrested in November, with John O'Keefe (Long) arrested before Christmas, and now with the Quartermaster arrested. Patrick Power was a real honest, sincere worker, a loyal, faithful and genuine pal. With four Battalion officers - all in the town - picked up, it was a case of all-round promotions. All the responsibility fell on my shoulders as no one had a close, intimate knowledge of the ability of the other town Volunteers but myself. Here was I once again almost in charge

of the movement in that area. This enormous responsibility in the midst of a death struggle with the enemy was far too much for one man, so, at a specially convened meeting of Battalion officers I had to recommend those whom I thought to be best qualified.

An adjutant's job at that time, with nine Companies to look after, was like running a big army now or a huge business. So I picked the new A. Company Adjutant, Frank Barrett, for the post of Battalion Adjutant. He was an assistant at Skehan Bros., a big grocery and provision shop, and had good experience in handling correspondence, etc., etc. He proved a real success.

On my advice, Robert Walsh was selected to be Battalion Quartermaster. He was manager of Miss Dowley's grocery and public house at West Gate, another big business. He was capable but had a strange manner, and certainly was not popular with the majority of the men. However, a quartermaster can't please everyone.

About this time, it was decided that most of the operational work of destruction would be under the engineering department, and this gave me full scope. For the next six months up to the Truce on July 11th, 1921, I was virtually in charge of the whole Battalion area, for, as already explained, the Battalion O/C and Vice O/C were residing in the rural area and never had an opportunity of giving daily orders. As both these officers had been my selection, my orders received their blessing. For the next six months, it was a case of one sensation following another hourly, a

matter of life and death for the people, but the I.R.A. struck hard. Our duty was to almost isolate the enemy. I drew up a plan of campaign early in January and, having full authority, put all the Companies in the Battalion area, with the exception of one Company, on nightly activities.

One of the most important of these activities was keeping the enemy from moving about easily, by the destruction of roads. The reputation of the 8th Battalion in that respect was famous. The main road between Carrick and Clonmel (Carrick side of Kilsheelan) in the 8th Battalion area was practically full time under destruction by making large, deep pot-holes and lifting gulleys. Every night, a small group of A. Company (town) men, assisted by men from Ballyneale and Windgap (Co. Waterford) across the river, with picks used visit this five-mile stretch of road. I accompanied the men on most nights. I had a great liking for this spade, or rather pick work. At this time, we were without gelignite which could do the same damage in five minutes as a dozen men would do in three hours, but we had to make the most of it.

First, of course, a large tree would be felled across the road on the side of the area intended for destruction. Then men, fully armed, would take up guard on both sides, sometimes a difficult job. If an enemy lorry, or two, approached the position and the occupants decided to attack, the few men on guard, armed with only colt revolvers, could not offer much resistance and could easily lose their own lives while courageously protecting the men at work. We soon overcame this great risk by adopting the best of all

systems - that of the old moonlighting days in Kerry when the owners of cattle about to be seized by landlords were aware of their arrival, half-an-hour or even an hour beforehand, by the method of extended scouts giving the alarm by sounding whistles or horns. If this system had been used more extensively by the Volunteers, it would have proved very successful. Suppose, for example, that a job of destruction is taking place and that one or two lorries, or an enemy patrol, move out from the town; two minutes later, the first scout sounds the alarm, by whistle or horn; a hundred yards away, the second scout, on hearing the alarm, repeats it, and so on, until it reaches the men on the job, who leave the area and return to safety.

One night I had arranged to do such a big job of destruction that it would be almost impossible to repair the road. Having purchased a dozen new picks in a local hardware shop, I had taken them the previous night a mile outside the town - Lacey's, Deerpark - and laid them in a drain, fully covered with briars, near the spot marked for destruction. All available men in Carrick Companies were asked to help, and, to their credit, they were a wonderful crowd, most willing to do hard work, and saw no danger. The full Ballyneale Company, whose area was marked for destruction, were ordered to be present, and the Windgap Company, from across the river, were to be brought over in fishing cots. After waiting an hour at the appointed spot, there was no sign of Ballyneale Company. Over an hour late, the Windgap Company gave a signal that they had arrived, about a

dozen of them, with picks, shovels and some guns for protection. I had arranged previously with a local cot fisherman to fetch them across the river - only two at a time, as they were small light cots. After taking eight men across, the cot took water and sank immediately in a fairly deep wide part of the river. The two Volunteers who were in the cot - Paddy Crotty of Coolmuck and Paddy Fleming of Windgap - were big, strong men and able to wade to the bank out of danger, but they were both shivering from the effects of the cold, wintry, frosty river water. We had to fetch a second cot to bring them across again, so that they could go home immediately, remove their wet clothes and get into bed. Thank God for saving of both! We lost two fine, new and expensive picks which went to the bottom of the river. I heard that they were recovered in a short time by some of the men who knew their location. When the men had crossed the river and found that the Ballyneale men were absent, they kicked up a row and refused to do the work at first. I pointed out that this disobedience was serious and, if reported, would lead to trouble and punishment. I appealed to their Captain, Eddie Byrne, who was a first-class officer. Some of the men were hostile and, only for the intervention of their Captain who was deeply interested in doing his duty, the men would have withdrawn. Even so, when pointing out the places for destruction and covering, two of the men threatened me with their guns. Had I reported them and demanded punishment, there was the fear that other men in other companies might adopt similar action.

The chief grievance of the men from Windgap

Company was that they should be brought across the river Suir from another County to do this work that should have been done by the Ballyneale Company. It was the duty of the Battalion officers to see that all the Companies did their share of road blocking. Carrick and Ballyneale Companies were almost every night on duty, especially the town Company. Because of its situation, the area covered by the Windgap Company did not necessitate any road or bridge destruction as it was never used by the enemy at that time.

However, we called off the men at 3 a.m. I was thoroughly dissatisfied with the progress of the operation. As I was not sleeping at home then, I decided to sleep in a hayshed belonging to Taaffe's of Ballinderrin. The Battalion Adjutant, Frank Barrett, was with me. The cold and hay lice were so bad in the shed that we got no sleep and had to clear out into the open which was far pleasanter. We decided to get into town before dawn and, if we ran into an enemy patrol, to explain that we were at a wake. An old man was being waked in the area. To make matters worse, I could not find any of the new picks on the following night.

Early in the morning, a despatch was sent to the Captain of Ballyneale Company for a written explanation of their failure to report for duty on the previous night. The reply was that the full Company had assembled at Ballindine instead of Ballinderrin, and, after waiting two hours for us to contact them, they withdrew. The Battalion meeting did not accept this explanation, as it was known that some of the

Ballindine Company officers were well aware of the positions of the road for destruction.

To make up for this, the Company had a further two weeks of similar destruction on the Clonmel-Carrick road and on the Carrick-Glenbower road. Activity everywhere, night and day, was the keynote of the organisation.

We decided that it was important that the men in each Company should be fully acquainted with the topography of their areas, and I got someone in every one of the nine Companies to sketch, in pencil, a fair outline of their company area - in most cases, parishes. It is surprising how someone in every Company was capable of doing this in a reasonable, intelligent form. These sketches enabled the Battalion officers to move freely, by day and night, over the whole Battalion area without using the main roads. This was most essential to avoid meeting the enemy, or, worse still, the danger of talk and gossip.

On top of all this, every man was frequently sworn and warned against even talking or telling of any personal activities to the people at home. This became such a hundred per cent. rigid practice that rarely was it necessary to even mention or recall an instance where a leakage had to be reported.

From the town, I could reach every part of the Company areas of Ballyneale, Grangemockler, Faughan, Kildorrery, Mothel, Clonea, Rathgormack and Windgap without using a road, except passing.

Battalion meetings were held weekly from now

on, the sittings lasting from three to five hours. We usually held them in parishes near the hills, where the newly formed Brigade Column used visit and billet. The Column officers always attended these Battalion meetings which were in our own lands.

Up to now, our men as well as the Column men travelling from Tipperary to Waterford and vice versa used cross the river Suir with the aid of the fishermen and their cots. This was rather risky because the men might not be fishing and our men would be standing around, waiting, for long spells, and if the enemy got to know, they would be in great danger. On most occasions, of course, the local Company would be requested to have the fishermen and their boats ready. Throughout the whole period, these fishermen acted willingly and loyally and considered it their duty. Practically a hundred per cent. of the men were like that. Most of the young fishermen were members of the I.R.A.

However, we decided that it was necessary to have other and easier means of transport across the river. Even at the most urgent of times, only two men could be taken across in the fishermen's cots. So we raided the railway for the umpteenth time and carried away a sufficient number of light-weight porter barrels, using farmers' carts for transport. They were placed in an old unused house near the river, at a point frequently used for crossing, to be made into a temporary bridge with the aid of ropes, which we had also procured. I suppose it would take at least twenty or thirty minutes to assemble the bridge. If the armed enemy were in pursuit, I - and

most of the men as well - would prefer to take a plunge into the river and swim across, but then we would require an I.R.A. hospital. Taking this plunge in the ice and snow of winter would leave many vacant spaces in the Companies.

It is surprising what a man can do when he is young. It was a case of day and night duty from now until the Truce, eating supper after closing the shop at 7 p.m., cycling seven, eight or nine miles to Company areas and remaining there until midnight with the assembled Company. Sleeping in the areas was the safest, but getting into town in the morning was the trouble, especially if we had carried out operational work and had been noticed by anyone who might inform the enemy. February dawned and I remember that it rained every night nearly. Mostly all survived the drenchings we got when cycling in the rain and having to wear wet clothes - probably due to the high spirits we were always in.

Headquarters decided that a pretty substantial levy should be collected all over the country on a valuation basis. Brigade Headquarters held a special meeting to make arrangements. It was a long drawn out meeting, and some of those present were not so much in favour of it. This national fund was supposed to finance General Headquarters in procuring military equipment abroad, and for this reason the collection was a distinct success. Subsequent history shows, however, that not one copper of this huge amount of money was used by General Headquarters to purchase the military equipment that was so badly needed. The country mugs again used

falsely. It was revealed in subsequent writings that a large number of the Dublin men were paid weekly. Perhaps it was absolutely necessary when so many were whole-time, and, of course, Brigade Headquarters at this time had also a large number of officers whole-time. Without money, they could not exist, but the express purpose for this huge collection was solely to purchase needed guns and ammunition.

Practically from January to July, one or other of the three Columns of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade and one of the Waterford Brigade used be billeted in the 8th Battalion area, due to the protection afforded by the high ranges of the Comeragh mountains in Waterford and Slievenamon in Tipperary. This area was remote and isolated from main roads. This involved enormous labour and strain on the comparatively small number of Volunteers in the mountainy ranges. There were only twenty men in the Rathgormack area and about thirty in Grangemockler. Of the total, only three-quarters were available for duty at this time. The protection of the Columns by night, the provision of sleeping accommodation, and the placing of sentries at all the approaches, spreading over a number of parishes, became a serious problem. The officers of the Companies had to appoint special billeting officers who were self-employed or living with parents or relatives - mostly the working classes because the grown-up sons of well-to-do farmers were at school. However, boys as young as twelve years could take on this duty. When I used visit the areas weekly, I always met with serious complaints and problems of this nature. Naturally,

to avoid this dangerous and risky work, most of the Volunteers were trying to join the Columns, and the local officers had almost to threaten to shoot them to ensure that they would remain in their areas.

It was pathetic to see these young men, mostly unarmed, or at the most there would be an odd shotgun or revolver, generally obsolete or defective, and a few rounds of ammunition between them. Many of them were on the brink of collapse, working hard during the day and on duty for hours at night, and I got many personal complaints. One group of them wanted me to make a rule that three or four Volunteers should be on sentry together, fully armed, and that the Column should lend them rifles. This suggestion could not be entertained for if there should be an enemy advance, it would be terrible to find that the Column had not arms. This matter always came up for discussion at battalion meetings. After some weeks it was difficult to find enough young men to do this work, and the Column members had to replace them.

Needless to remark, Volunteers, their parents and even younger brothers and sisters used give up their beds to the Column men. The generous spirit of these people cannot be described in words. Living near the mountain, they were naturally very poor, and could not afford to provide good nourishing meals. They gave up their own beds four out of seven nights in the week, as well as feeding them and washing for them. The meals consisted of tea, bread, butter and eggs, practically all the time. There were frequent cases of illness among the column men, due to being unable to have changes of underclothes and to the irregular meals. Eventually, there was a serious

outbreak of the itch which nearly killed many of them, and naturally their hosts were infected too. Doctors and nurses attended them.

In order to avoid the necessity of having company Volunteers on full-time operations, I prepared a programme of road destruction over the whole battalion area. It was a difficult position because the men who were available could not get picks, although our information was that there was a pick in every house. People were willing enough to lend their picks, but they had trouble in getting them back again, and naturally enough they did not wish to lend them a second time. I had bought as many as we could get in the local stores, but they too were lost. This brought operations to a standstill on many occasions. However, I kept up the pressure. The work in some areas was good, but in other areas, not so good. I concentrated on the gulleys because this work was comparatively easy once the first flag was lifted at the side of the road, inside or outside the fence. A crowbar or pole would easily lift the flags. The enemy gradually ceased to use these roads, as they were always expecting ambushes. Of course, all such places were mapped out for ambushes where suitable.

The gradual disappearance of the enemy from the roads meant that we could relax our vigilance at the nightly road blocking. The Volunteers on road work were exempt from the daily despatch carrying to and from brigade headquarters - and rightly so. We concentrated on company areas where the column did not stay, except to pass through. It was recorded by brigade headquarters, and by the enemy in later reports, that

road destruction in our battalion was the most extensive in the thirty-two counties, and the enemy reports pointed clearly to the concentration of large I.R.A. columns in the area.

At this time, I was instructed by the Battalion O/C to prepare a list and make final arrangements for the I.R.A. collection, covering the whole battalion area. It was an enormous job for one man - something like a council rate collector's large area, and estimates. However, I asked each company officer to write down and submit to me the names and valuations of all in his area, indicating the supposed financial position of each person. This they did without any great delay. Fortunately, at this time - two years after end of the 1st world war - all the people were very prosperous. Farmers' stock and production were far higher than now, 1955, when everyone thinks that prices are sky-high.

After a month's bookkeeping, I had all the battalion area written up, and submitted it to a special battalion meeting, which was held in an old, disused farmhouse near Johnstown Cross, on a Sunday. The meeting lasted five hours, and was presided over by the O/C, the late Maurice McGrath. Also present were O/C, T. Fahy, Quartermaster R. Walsh, Adjutant F. Barrett, I/O David Power, Despatch Officer J. Foley. We went through every name, including all business and professional people in the town of Carrick. We struck £100 each on Lord Waterford and Colonel Quin of Castletown (which sums were readily paid), £60 on Hayden's estate, £60 on Cregg's, and £50 on M owner. John Power refused to pay, on

the grounds that he was a loyalist and against the I.R.A. actively. He was perfectly candid about it. The same attitude was adopted by Mr. Saunders, manager of the National Bank. Both said they were not refusing to give the levy but their consciences would not allow it, as they bore loyalty to the enemy, and both offered that they would not object to the seizure of stock or furniture at any time, to cover the levy, which was accomplished during the end of the Truce period. Later, they recovered twice as much as the valuation of the seizure, by way of compensation in the courts. This form of seizure led to many tragedies during the Civil War.

The collection of the levy took nearly three months to complete. Each company officer got his book of estimates, like a rate collector, and the collection was 90% thorough. Only one thing was against it - the levy was too high - and I was blamed for it. It was explained by a number of factors. Property was at high level at the time - no unemployment, cattle prices and all agricultural products flowing on the waves. The majority of the people had no representatives in the I.R.A., and the majority were only too willing to subscribe. Of course, every company had snags. Many appealed against the demands, and others complained of their inability to pay. In most of the latter cases, however, it was hostility.

To make life a real burden to the battalion officers, we had to go to the defaulters, which had to be done by night and before bedtime at 10.30. In most of the areas, I was accompanied by Frank Barnett, the battalion adjutant, and the local company O/C or other officer. It was like fair day bargaining, and in most

cases we made settlements. In a number, we had to make substantial reductions. The people nearly killed us with kindness in many houses - food and entertainment - and when it reached a late hour, we had to accept their offers of beds. The time lag was becoming unbearable to me, having to work in the shop during the day. My ever willing boss, who was getting on in years, would have to close down if he had no help, as he could not have his dinner, or go to the warerooms or store rooms.

In many cases where people were reported as being hostile, I was not supposed to talk at all, in case I might give myself away, with my Kerry accent. One of my earlier deformities! On the roads, or raids, by night, with his mid Tipperary accent, Barrett was always the talker, and his stock argument was that he had to come from "Thurolus" area to collect the levy.

When it was finally completed at the end of May, £3,407 was in the kitty, an enormous sum of money. It was sent to brigade headquarters for transmission to G.H.Q. Later, when the amounts subscribed by other battalions were disclosed, I realised, from the comparative figures, my shocking mistake and that our contribution to the levy was over fifty per cent. too high. We were to get a substantial number of rifles and revolvers, with a large amount of ammunition and military equipment. We got damn all! Not even one solitary gun! Poor compensation for the three months of night slavery by battalion and company officers!

On top of all this work, I willingly accepted the most dangerous of all jobs - as receiver of military equipment consigned from London, Manchester, and Birmingham, to James Coffey, draper, Carrick-on-Suir. At that time, practically ninety to ninety-five per

cent. of the goods sold in the shops were made and consigned in England, and every week big boxes were arriving from English exporters. Train and ship loads reached the Irish ports daily. Coffey used get, on an average, one large box weekly; So the danger of detection was not so great. Yet, from later information, few people would accept this dangerous work. I did not acquaint Coffey, although he was one of the extreme type of Irishman, born and reared in Fenianism, fearing that he would not accept the risk. My job was to distinguish the box containing the precious goods from the others, which I did successfully except once, when he opened a box while I was otherwise engaged. The man nearly blew up. When I explained the position, he shouted, "We will be blown to pieces, burned out and burned in! A right blaze!". The senders made use of specially printed labels, bearing the names and addresses of the big exporters, and the names which I had submitted of Coffey's suppliers. However, I got possession of the stuff - this time, revolvers - and, when Coffey had calmed down, I pointed out to him that the danger of detection was not great. He was highly satisfied then, and said it was alright if a scoundrel like me were not in his shop. That night, I passed on the revolvers to brigade headquarters for column use.

Fairly safe work, all done by hand! But when it was a very big box, an animal and car had to be procured, and then there was great danger, as well as having to get a Volunteer to take the risk. Only once did I experience a narrow escape.

I and a farmer (an I.R.A. man) called to Coffey's for a fairly big box, with his horse and cart. He had

gone only fifty yards from Coffey's when he ran into a Black and Tan patrol search party. It was about 11 a.m. He did not know what was in the box, of course, but he certainly showed a realisation by his nervy appearance and anxiety to get away from the door as soon as possible. This was fortunate for him, for had he delayed and kept talking to me, the patrol would have met him at the door, with poor prospect of escape. He was held up in the middle of Kickham Street and was about to have the contents of his belongings probed, when another horse and cart came along the street from the opposite direction, at a galloping pace. Whether it was due to the animal being frightened, or the owner wanted to get out of reach in case of a shoot-up, I do not know. The patrol halted the second man, but, due to the noise, he did not hear them. They followed him on the double, pulled the driver from the car and almost tore the clothes off him. Fortunately for the first man, when the patrol returned after five minutes, he was outside the town. Perhaps they did not think of him at all, for if they did, they might possibly have tried to pull him in. If they had broken open the box - and this is what they were about to do - he, as well as they, would have been blown to pieces. There was too the great danger that my name would have been given. Readers can realise what it would mean.

However, with later deliveries, more care was taken. The boxes were opened and the contents made into small parcels for hand delivery, or, if it was necessary to use a horse and car, this would be done about 5 or 5.30 p.m. when the military and police had returned to barracks for tea.

In Carrick-on-Suir curfew was first fixed at 10 p.m., shortly afterwards being changed to 9 p.m., later to 8 p.m., and still later to 6 p.m. No one could venture out for a week, but I never had to remain inside on account of this restriction. At the back of the shop is a graveyard. Like all old towns, the church was in the centre, with the graveyard attached, and I was able to get out by this way on to the town wall, into the Fair Green, without the slightest detection or ~~supposition~~ ^{suspicion}. However, to counteract enemy activity, I ordered all companies to render the roads in their areas impassable. Company captains and engineers were more than pleased with this order, because the more dangerous the work men had to do, the better they became and the more work they wanted, for there is nothing worse to destroy morale than inactivity. Imagine, about a mile of the main trunk road between Carrick and Clonmel, lifted in parts and fired into marshes over the ditches. It was the same with the Carrick-Glenbower road, the Grangemockler-Callan road, the Carrick-Dungarvan road, the Carrick-Rath road, the Carrick-Piltown road and the Carrick-Portlaoise road.

After a week's operation of this work, the enemy dreaded venturing out either by day or by night. This all-round extensive operation caused the enemy to enforce the curfew strictly. Anyone found out of doors was closely screened, and they extended curfew to the rural areas, but to no avail, for it only helped to bring out the best in our men and they redoubled their efforts. Of course, this caused grave inconvenience to our people too, as they could not use the main roads.

Hence new work opened up for farmers who were requested to break fences, open gaps, etc., etc. As a matter of fact, most people began to make use of fields inside the roads. Necessity is the "father" of ^{invention} adventure!

This widespread road destruction obviously irritated the enemy, so they struck back with surprise raids in villages and rural areas. They swooped down on young men working in the fields and road workers, and, having rounded up goodly numbers of them, made them, ^{or} by force, cut the felled trees and fill in the trenches. They made sure it was local men - the latter would be careful not to be too anxious to repeat the good work. This work, of course, filled a treble objective of the enemy. On all occasions, they took perfect photos of the men when using shovels, hacks, etc., and, as well, finger prints on all implements. They were always guided by the R.I.C. Amazing, at this particular time, with the nation bleeding to death in its struggles with the forces of the biggest empire and army in the world, that Irishmen, for the sake of an average wage of £6 a week, could be found to remain in the services of the arch murder, pirate nation of the world. More amazing still, for ninety per cent. of the R.I.C. were sons of small farmers, good Catholics and mostly really good Irishmen. They came from homes and from parents whose ancestry for centuries had kept alive the spirit of nationalism. So far, during the past thirty-five years since then, no writer, committee or organisation has made any efforts to find an explanation for this - unless that "there is a price on every man".

If there happened to be a pub in the immediate neighbourhood of the work, the leading R.I.C. man and

Black and Tan officer would bring all the forced labour men in for drinks, and the rural pubs were emptied of drink by these free treats. In most cases, they were very poor people. It was easy to be generous at other people's expense.

Again, the enemy would make a swoop on the town and raid shops for shop assistants - the men mainly responsible for keeping the organisation alive. They were pulled out of the shops, taken away in military lorries and forced to remove road obstructions and fill in trenches and pot-holes. Several times, attempts were made to round me up for this work but I always escaped through my private get-away, and this practice I maintained, with one exception.

One morning, an R.I.C. man passed by the shop door and, from his deliberate look in through the door, he evidently meant business. I was about to be especially on the alert, when a Mooncoin company officer called on me to make a report that twelve valuable cows had been driven from a farm by the farmer's brother or brother-in-law - some form of family jealousy - that they had been traced to Grangemockler area, Co. Tipperary, where a near relative of the farmer lived, and that, as the cows were only after calving, they would be lost unless immediately milked. I wrote down the particulars of his information in my notebook. As he was about to leave, the shop was surrounded, front, back and sides, and they moved into the shop, wareroom, storeroom, etc., etc., etc. I made a super human effort to reach my escape system when they were on top of me. Fortunately, for five seconds later I had been about to escape and the secret place would have been discovered. I was pulled into a lorry and, with about a dozen other townsmen, brought to the Clonmel road where I had spent five hours the previous

night destroying it, with the aid of local Volunteers. We were as long again filling in the trenches, pot-holes, and removing felled trees - five hours hard work as on the night before - under the supervision of Black and Tan officers and R.I.C. men. It was experience. We carefully watched for any effort being made by the enemy to put in explosives or mines. This experience gave me new food for thought. Up to then, we always re-opened the previously filled in trenches, and if the enemy were bad enough, or had that knowledge, they might have - long before that - placed explosives in the filled in trenches, so that our men, when re-opening them, were in danger of being blown to smithereens. I don't recollect ever hearing or reading of such a happening in any part of the country. Yet, to our eternal disgrace, this was practised largely by the Irish Green and Tans during the tragic civil war. Read Dorothy McArdle's book, "Tragedies of Kerry"!

That night again, at nine o'clock, everyone of us assembled outside the town, and proceeded to Ballindine where we undid all we had done during the day, and doubled the area of destruction.

Immediately afterwards, I issued quite different instructions for road destruction. Except for removing the surface of the trenches, we left the remainder untouched and, with rain and the little traffic then on the roads, it made them almost unusable for military lorries. I could not take the risk of some of our Volunteers being blown to pieces.

But where there's a will, there's a way! And the area of our battalion was such that we could destroy fifty to one hundred yards of any road twice weekly without ever touching any filled in stretch.

About this time, I got instructions from brigade headquarters to prepare a sketch, showing lines of all roads suitable for successful ambushes. From twenty to thirty aspects of topographical qualifications had to be registered before a final decision was taken on a suitable site.

- 1st - Frequent usage of road by the enemy.
- 2nd - Non-observable by any passers-by of the area where the men would take up position.
- 3rd - Sufficient length of stretch of road to enable men to spread out and cover an area where a large convoy of enemy could be encircled.
- 4th - Suitability of escape route, in case of unsuccessful attempt.
- 5th - Suitability of road obstruction in as short a time as possible before report or expectation of enemy approach.
- 6th - Supply of food to I.R.A. group.
- 7th - Removal of locals for fear of revenge.
- 8th - Avoidance of area selected near enemy barracks.
- 9th - Sleeping billets for men.
- 10th - Relief by local Volunteers.

I will leave it to the intelligence of the readers themselves to fill in the other factors considered necessary at that period to deal with the situation.

I immediately prepared my plans carefully. Having already such a close, intimate knowledge of the whole area, and having noted many times when covering the area positions of one hundred per cent. suitability, I requested all company officers to closely examine the

positions named in my recommendations, and to further examine them, in the light of the necessary qualifications, and report on any other suitable positions in their areas. I gave them two weeks to do this. It was indeed surprising the number of excellent sketches submitted to me from all the company areas. The town area was a different problem. It involved getting men into position without being recognised and holding them there for any length of time. Then, instead of lorry loads of men, it meant dealing with patrols in extended formation. However, I drew up such a lengthy plan of attack in the town - approach, escape, etc., etc. - that it must have fully satisfied Brigade headquarters and column officers of its capabilities, because I was asked to give this matter further careful examination, and report in a week's time.

At that time, every night about twenty enemy military, accompanied by a number of R.I.C., used patrol the streets for an hour - not every night, to be correct - between eight and ten o'clock, in very extended formation, ten on one side and ten on the other, either north and south, or south and west, according to the lay-out of the streets. Lacey, the column O/C, having fully examined the sketches and reports from the company officers, decided to disarm the patrol on a Sunday night at about 8 p.m. The most minute details were carefully examined, submitted, approved or rejected. The Main Street was considered to be the best position, two hundred yards in length, east and west, with sufficient lanes on both sides for the I.R.A. men to take up positions, or to make their escape. The local company members were fully

instructed as to their duties - two to lead two men of the column into the best positions in the lanes, or in shop doorways whose owners were friendly.

The plan was so extensive and elaborate that it was almost error-proof. After two full weeks of careful planning and preparation by the column, it was decided to take action on a Sunday night, as the crowds coming from Sunday evening devotions in the three town churches would allow the I.R.A. men to take their positions without being noticed.

On Sunday night, Volunteers and even Cumann na mBan girls were stationed at the best positions to meet all church-comers and request them to proceed, without a moment's delay, to their homes, which request was obeyed to perfection. It was a bright night, and the enemy patrol appeared, in the best Hollywood cinema style, for disarmament. They walked, twenty to twenty-five yards apart, along the street channels, at a dead slow pace, looking at the ground, never for a moment realising that they were surrounded by fifty column members and I.R.A. men, with fully loaded rifles/revolvers at the ready. It took the enemy fully fifteen minutes to cover the Main Street, with their rifles handled in the most careless fashion, like old men using umbrellas on a fine day, and to get out of Main Street into Ken Street.

To the utter amazement of everyone, no whistle was sounded, and no signal to take action was given to the waiting men; and the months' careful planning and preparations went up like a squib. Many of the local company Volunteers were so disappointed that they refused to convey the men out of their positions;

others were going to disarm the column. It had a very bad effect on the morale of all concerned, so much so that, for fully two weeks afterwards, all operations were suspended. Men failed to turn up to parades, and refused to take any participation in further operations. Naturally, it had a more demoralising effect on the column members. Many would have left the column and returned to their homes, but feared they were known to the enemy and might be arrested.

One of the most astonishing features was that not even one shot need to have been fired in order to capture the twenty rifles and ammunition, so badly needed then. Six able-bodied men could have fully covered each member of the patrol. As already explained, the plan of campaign was that six men - one or two with revolvers, and the others with bludgeons - were to jump on one member of the patrol simultaneously. The two armed men were from the Column, accompanied by four local Volunteers. They were to fell the R.I.C. man or soldier, snatch his rifle and ammunition, and off immediately, withdrawing according to plan. The enemy appeared to fit in so well, unwittingly, as if they too had been consulted beforehand and had so arranged themselves in order not to disappoint. No shot need be fired - this was agreed upon and known long before the time to take action. Between 7.45 p.m. and 8.15 p.m. was the time fixed for action, and everything fitted in so well, according to plan, that if it was intended to try again a hundred times, it could not have been so accommodating. Yet not one damn thing was done.

After a week, a report was made, attempting to

explain the matter, that, due to the number of people who had remained on the streets longer than anticipated, action could not be taken, fearing bad results. Whereas this had been the main factor for a successful action - the six men to fell one member of the enemy patrol, and each man to move among the walkers in the town without any notice or suspicion. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for four or six men to appear out of a laneway or doorway without attracting the enemy's attention. But such an explanation could not be accepted by anyone with a grain of intelligence or sense. It was perfectly evident that the men of the column were not to make an attempt to obtain the rifles or disarm the enemy patrol, because, if they had not been fully instructed beforehand to take no action, how could the sixteen or twenty officers in charge of each position have made no move? It is as clear as daylight that they were strictly forbidden to make any move and must have been even threatened not to do so, because, knowing the men as I did then, it must have been indeed heartbreaking for them to be there in such a glorious position, looking at the enemy carelessly snail-pacing along, each with a valuable rifle, fully loaded, hanging carelessly on his arm. More amazing still that some one of them did not break the order and take action independently.

Not for one moment since have I ever been convinced that it was not a stunt and a fake - later, to issue statements that such activity was necessary to make soldiers, to give the local company men something to do, to realise what could be done. Had the column given us a dozen revolvers, the company would have captured the twenty rifles that night.

To the present day, everyone associated with the job that night never could offer an explanation for the inaction. Most surprising still, for the leader and officers of the column - Dinny Lacey's - were the bravest men in Ireland. Lacey knew no fear, and his officers were all men of undisputed courage.

Examining the matter from other angles - Dinny Lacey was one of the most religious men in Ireland. He spent much time every night at prayer, saying the Rosary, etc., all during his long, distinguished I.R.A. campaign. It is probable that, though convinced by facts, preparations and details that there was every possibility of capturing and disarming all the military patrol without spilling one drop of blood, he must have realised that the operation could not have been carried out without a big fight. The fact that he was able to get his other officers to agree was indeed evidence of his control over his men.

Another view held at the time was that the quantity of ammunition held by any of the three columns operating in III Tipperary brigade area was so small that it had to be reserved for protection purposes, in case of an enemy attack or surprise surrounding. This, of course, was a reasonable explanation, and it was evident that this was why any worth-while major operations never took place in III Tipperary brigade area. Subsequently, this was referred to in Ernie O'Halley's book, "On Another Man's Wound".

A third explanation which sailed around the area at the time was that the 8th Battalion area, on account of its topographical lay-out, was reserved for the three columns, for special protection and

billeting. This could not be sustained, for practically the same story could be applied to all the other seven battalions.

Though no major or semi major operation, in the line of a conflict with the enemy, took place, some great deeds were done, but were accomplished by national military leaders, unaccompanied by column sections. There must have been a general headquarters order in most areas. For the very fact that some all-out head-on conflicts took place in a few counties, they were strongly condemned by headquarters, as revealed in books written by famous leaders, twenty-five to thirty years later.

But if columns never fired a shot, the fact that they were moving about in groups was well known to the enemy and had the same desired result. It kept the enemy confined to barracks almost constantly, and it broke their nerve and morale.

Most amazing was the fact that many company officers and men were prepared to carry out military engagements, if they could get the loan of the necessary equipment from the columns, but it was as easy to expect heaven as to get the loan of such. As a matter of fact, no matter how many arms were captured in raids and by other means, they had to be handed over to brigade headquarters.

It took a full month before the men of the battalion area began to observe routine orders again, and perhaps it would have been much longer but for the all-out fight to death struggle taking place in other parts of the country. Murder, burnings, executions. Blood got hot again, and officers of all companies

began to lead their men in operational activity.

Like every organisation or society, all-time activity is the key to success, and our next big move - and what I still hold to be the best, because men had to work like slaves to operate it - was the erection of dug-outs. I planned every one of them in the nine company areas, and two in each of the larger company areas. We picked the best possible positions for the dug-outs, where our men and columns could store military equipment and safeguard national documents, in areas that the general public would never use or even see. I examined every company area, and, of course, with four or five years' close personal acquaintance with the areas then, it was rather an easy job to decide the best positions. Many factors had to be decided before final selection. All the necessary implements were available in farm-houses - picks, spades, shovels, crowbars, mine props, etc. If I made a mistake, it might have been in the elaborate and spacious designs. In fact, in most cases, they were not finally completed until the Truce came, and work was suspended, but the companies that had made the biggest advance - it was the nearest thing to a first-class underground residence. It was indeed a job of labour and sweat - sore hands and tired bodies. Readers must remember that six men, every night at 8 p.m., after a hard day's work on their farms, or roads, forests, or other labouring work, would proceed, after supper, to give two, and even three hours, raising clay and stones from the earth, or drawing this material away, with horse or ass and carts to holes and quarries to avoid suspicion.

In practically all areas, the selected site for a dug-out was in a grove of trees, or hidden by a growth of bushes. This was essential, to avoid public glance. In many areas, after going down three feet, on removing subsoil, work had to be suspended as they had met rock, but in one area in Rathgormack they continued by blasting the rock. It nearly killed all the men. If it was torture or slavery, the effect was a most amazing build-up of morale. Men who were indifferent or sceptical up to then, embraced the movement in a thousand times better spirits. Even young men of the well-to-do farmer class, who had held themselves aloft, volunteered to assist by giving horses and carts, subsequently proffered help and joined the companies, later becoming real good soldiers.

In some areas, the dug-outs were finished like any nice homes, lined with timber, sealed overhead with fine wood, timber floors and fine fire-places. Chairs and even beds were set up. As raids took place nightly in other counties and men feared that, if found at home, they would be kept as hostages and subsequently murdered, so they intended to use the dug-outs instead. One thing is certain - if the Truce had not taken place in July, 1921, the columns left would have had to make use of them. Of course, that was the original idea.

The making of dug-outs was not confined to rural areas, for Carrick company had to erect four - two across the river in County Waterford, one in County Tipperary, and one across the Lenaun in County Kilkenny. The townsmen were wonderful workers. I often gave a hand with them, as I was a glutton for that labour, having been reared in a farm, and, only for the

thousand different types of work that I was engaged on, at the time, I would have given anything to be free from all, and confined to the pick instead. This job took six months to complete, and indeed I doubt if it could have been done in six months.

Thirty-five years later as I am writing this account for the Bureau of Military History, I suggest that some organisation should get in touch with each company area all over Ireland, and get the Government to erect a sign over each one of the completed dug-outs, like the old forts which were made by the Danes.

The extensive and immense pile of documents and correspondence that was kept in the business office for two years was a record, I am sure.

Like the old saying, one word borrowed another, this work opened up bigger and wider and more far-reaching fields of futuristic operational activity: with what, I always, even to this day, feel, over-fertile imagination took flight into other and more dangerous fields.

After every brigade meeting, new orders were the order of the day, and the battalions issued same to the companies. About this time, *February* of 1921, all shopkeepers were notified not to supply the enemy forces, but it proved to be a very difficult order as far as the R.I.C. were concerned. Most of them were stationed in towns for a couple of decades, some, even longer. Many of them came into the town as young men, and, after marrying, their children attended the local schools, and palled with local children in their age groups. Shopkeepers' sons and daughters grouped

together with the children of R.I.C. men, and, like all children, mixed from infancy. Strong friendship grew out of this, and, day and night, boys and girls under fourteen years of age - primary school age - visited each other's homes, and it was only as expected that their parents knew one another. As well as that, the R.I.C. men, their wives and children bought all their necessities in the town - food, clothes, boots, meat, bread, drink, etc., etc., etc.

Readers can visualise the shopkeepers' reactions to the order served on them to refuse the supply of any of the above mentioned necessities. In the order issued to the Carrick-on-Suir traders, they were reminded that, if they continued, they would be black-listed. Most of the patriotic shopkeepers were delighted with the opportunity, and refused point blank from the start. A few of the R.I.C. men bought all their clothes from my uncle, James Coffey. As he had travelled much in his young days and thought this was the best way to know Ireland and its people, there was scarcely a town in the Four Provinces that he had not worked in as a draper's assistant. Some of the R.I.C. men stationed in Carrick-on-Suir came from one or other of these towns, or their wives did, and in this way, he was well known. Now and again, they would do some business with him as well, as he was a heavy punter. He was always backing horses - many times, bad ones - though he had the name of being a great judge, and most of the police used try to make a few bob extra, but, instead of making a few bob, most times they would lose it. They used call on him for a tip.

The first day or two after the issue of the boycott, an old customer of his called for a boy's

suit. He was Constable Cook of New Street. I happened to be there, and refused point-blank. He nearly dropped dead, because all the family clothes and household goods for his wife and family were bought at Coffey's. Later in the week, Constable Connolly - a young man from Galway whom I knew very well, and one who used do much to make a closer friendship - asked me for a shirt, and I refused. He showed much anger and resentment. He went next door into Carroll's for sole leather, and the assistant there - an I.R.A. man named Phelan - refused him.

This boycott of the R.I.C. was the biggest blow they got up to then, but it was never a real success for there were always some shopkeepers most anxious to get their trade. To overcome the difficulty, they would send all they wanted without having them to call at the shops, in order that the workers in the shops would not be aware of what was happening. Yet, it had the desired effect in the loss of morale. Traders were again warned and we had information that some were supplying goods secretly. This caused more hardship and wrong to the English forces.

In Carrick-on-Suir, a modern, powerful fortress, the police barrack, was occupied by a platoon of military and of Black and Tans, as companions. This detached building, impregnable to approach, with many rows of barbed wire entanglements, was more like a concentration camp at the Curragh or Ballykinlar. I decided on making an effort to remove it. First, I examined the large store and yard of Grubb Dowley's, and the adjacent yard of McGrath's hotel, both adjoining the Presentation convent grounds. This, of course, had

too many objections: 1st - the seventy yards distance; 2nd - the extensive wall road. A square, about forty-five yards, the centre very low: it would be necessary to go to a very low depth. Its advantages - that the broken ends could be used for storing earth from the tunnel, without detection. After consultation and examination, the proposal for a tunnel was dropped as impossible and unworkable.

In its favour was the ever prevailing fact that I thought we could carry on the work as part of a building scheme, and leave the enemy and the man in the street none the wiser.

Something had to be done. We could not carry on with such a vast organisation with as much organisational activity as would nearly satisfy an empire army during war. So, at once, I swung over to the People's Park, and decided we would get the urban council to arrange a sort of sewerage scheme. Unfortunately, at that time we had no outside housing scheme, and few houses were about the area, but the park, as well as the Fair Green, is in about the lowest area in the town. It would be difficult to get a successful sewerage scheme working - sketches, maps, equipment, etc. - and the ever necessary arrangements in case the enemy became suspicious. Like most corporate bodies at the time, the majority of the council officials were not connected with the I.R.A. They were mostly old men, and naturally they wanted quietness at the end of their lives - and certainly they were not getting that. As well as that, of course, a lot of them had the idea that if you are anybody, you must be shoneen and ape the elite. It was pathetic

to watch the very poorly circumstanced people trying to rub shoulders with the swells. It was the age. So, any attempt to get the council to agree to us carrying out a scheme of work, with the object of destroying the barrack, was out of the question. Then how could it be done otherwise?

The other scheme was to take the bull by the horns - open the road outside the barrack and work into the park, with a view to getting better position, and, once the work was in any fair scale, it would not be difficult to work the tunnel from the inside of the park across the road to the barrack. The area was only a third of what was contemplated in our first idea. I was between the devil and the deep sea. If we commenced the work without acquainting the town clerk or the county council, we would be reported at once for destroying the road. If I could only get some member of the U.D.C. or the county council to ask for road improvement - but all was in the hands of the town council at the time. After many nights and days of examination, to decide the best course, we were still speculating as to whether it was possible to convince a U.D.C. member of the necessity for such a scheme, but the engineer would report that there was no necessity for it, or whether we should move independently when we would be reported as property destroyers and the R.I.C. would be informed. All this speculating brought us into "new" time - all day and no night, - so we decided to postpone it until late in the following autumn.

As all intended actions had to be reported to brigade headquarters for examination, authority and

assistance, I made out a detailed report, which was given to one of the daily despatch carriers to deliver to headquarters. When this man was passing through Fethard, he observed a platoon of British military approaching. Fearing they would hold him up and search him, he cutely dropped his despatches behind his back before getting off the bike. He said he was minutely searched, and that, later, when he looked for the dropped envelope, could not find it.

A month later, it was stated that someone had handed in the missing envelope to the enemy headquarters at Cashel, and that it was reported by the enemy as found in the street in Cashel. After examination and investigation, we came to the conclusion that, instead of going to Rosegreen, I.R.A. headquarters, he purposely went to Cashel first, to meet friends, and did not want to go to headquarters, fearing detection, and that he dropped the envelope in Cashel when he saw military moving about.

It was evident that the enemy had got the despatch, because new orders were issued by them that no one could assemble or do any constructional work within five hundred yards of a barrack without giving full particulars to the police.

Be it remembered, in the months that followed, when the battalion discovered the failure of getting this despatch through, the job of deciding who had failed to do his duty and placing the blame on the right shoulders was indeed a big job, with different men going everyday from the nine company areas. Battalion Despatch O/C, James Foley, Main Street, had no record, but the company despatch officers in most

areas kept some form of daily records. A lot of credit ^{is} ~~to~~ due to the hundreds of men who did this thankless and very dangerous work every day - wet or dry, storm sleet, snow - and the Nation owes them thanks. Some had to cycle nine and ten miles into town, with or without despatches from their company officers, and, of course, each of the nine companies had to send daily some report into battalion headquarters, whether good, bad or indiffent. The battalion then would have to examine these, to see if any were important enough to be sent to brigade headquarters. The battalion itself would have to prepare its own special reports. The whole affair mounted and increased weekly, for work creates work.

After some weeks of investigation, it was narrowed down to the right company, and eventually the man. ~~This~~ ^{this} report or explanation did not correspond with later events. Therefore, the man must have told lies. But later events were not known during the investigation. Otherwise, he might have left himself open to punishment. This led to a tightening up of the rules for recording everyday activities, and names and addresses of personnel, which, of course, necessitated an additional spate of work on the already over-worked officers.

On top of all this was the provisioning of three columns in the area, which meant ~~nearly seven~~ ^{two} at the same time in the County Waterford section of the battalion, the other in Tipperary. This was a worry and created a problem - procuring sleeping accommodation, food and, more important, the protection. People used get out of their own beds, but naturally, they could not be continually doing this, working hard all day.

The work of the company officers was increased by getting the good-natured people to provide spare beds, which they did willingly. Then all the men who did scouting and protection work had to work hard for a mere living. They might be able to spend one night in the week without sleep, but they could not stick two or three nights.

To overcome the problem, lengthy brigade and battalion meetings were held. Every Sunday brigade meetings, lasting four and five hours, were held - reviewing the work accomplished, organisation and the thousand and one problems of that time, covering every phase of the vast organisation. Sunday was my hardest day, for I had also to visit two or three company areas, travelling with Maurice McGrath, O/C, and Tom Fahy, Vice O/C. The company officers were daily pressing for visits and inspections.

We had fixed on a particular Sunday for a visit to Ballyneale company. I remember that it was a very fine day. The appointed place was near Kilmurray graveyard, which was well sheltered as it was surrounded by a grove of large trees. After some time of drilling, formation, etc., one of the scouts rushed up, in wild excitement, asking us to come to a specified place at once as a spy had been captured and was about to be shot on the spot. As we were approaching the spot, another scout met us and informed us that the spy was the R.I.C. sergeant - Enright - of Glenbower R.I.C. barracks. When we reached the spot, I recognised him as Enright all right. Some of the company members had already got ready for his death. Here was I, the only one in the whole battalion who was fully aware that this very man was, I am sure, one of the very

few R.I.C. officers who had been, for the past three months, helping, though perhaps in a small way, by increasing - or, rather, releasing valuable revolver ammunition to the column, through a man in the area, a liaison man, but not a member of the company at all. My position was made a thousand times more difficult by the fact that, even though the Battalion O/C and Vice O/C were present, they had no direct knowledge. After a hurried private conversation with both, I was able to convince them of the fact without a shadow of doubt, and immediately the man, who was in civilian clothes, was allowed to go. The three of us were now in a stew as to what explanation we should give to satisfy the men. What would they think? The correct explanation could not be given, so a lie had to be framed, and a lie is never satisfactory. It was explained that this man had saved the lives of some of our men at one time. Enright had a narrow escape, a man who had given much needed material - and even continued to do so after that. Fortunately, he had not seen the group, only scouts on protection duty. His explanation was that he was having a quiet cycle spin on a fine day to ease his nerves on a quiet by-road.

Here would be shot a man who, at the same time, was helping us. It happened in other places. Some of our best intelligence officers in the cities were in the greatest danger from our men, because only one or two, at the most, had knowledge of their great work. In Cork city, the greatest intelligence officer, the man who picked up important inside enemy information, was marked as a political spy by our intelligence organisation. Even in Limerick, one of the senior

brigade officers was shot as a spy when he was trying to do the greatest intelligence work. Personally, to be candid, I hate the idea of anyone doing double-handed work. To make myself clear, not for a million countries would I join or remain in enemy police or military force and, at the same time, help the noble cause of Ireland. After all, the guns, slipped out, may be used against the comrades inside; the ammunition given may be put into the bodies of pals. Therefore, no form of reasoning in the world would convince me that men capable of doing that, are capable of doing anything. If a man hated his R.I.C. police duties, his first duty was to fire off his uniform and go home to his relatives. Most surprising, most of the men doing double handed work at the time could never be trusted, and repeated it in years later. It is a horrible and difficult task to handle at all, because the giver does not want the taker to know that he is giving, in case his comrades in the barrack should get to know it when he would be shot on the spot - and who would blame them? The taker is and was in the same plight. He did not want the giver to know he was taking, for, if the giver doubled back again to his paid loyalty, the taker might be murdered there and then. It was like between the devil and deep sea. My task was equally dangerous as a transmitter from the taker, but I did not take from him. I only made arrangements.

I was already doing the most dangerous job in the country - allowing my uncle's shop premises to be used as a receiving depot for military equipment coming into the country - and, to make my life more miserable, this other miserable job, miserable and rotten in

every way, altogether against my grain, hating treachery. Yet, I had to help on it.

To add to my woe, spending two and even three days a week away from the shop, and, when engaged in the shop, spending ninety per cent. on I.R.A. work, were bound to gravely injure the business. My uncle, James Coffey could only serve one customer at a time, and any night or whenever he met me face to face, complained that every day customers had to go away without getting served, that he could not be in the shop on the ground floor and in the wareroom upstairs where the heavy readymades were kept. As well as that, he had to eat his dinner, and let all the customers go away. As this was seriously injuring the business, he was constantly threatening to close for good, that he could not carry on. I was daily advising him to advertise for a trained assistant, that I was worn out too, doing night and day work. He used say that I had so much destroyed his business that he would not be able to afford a full outdoor living wage. To make his life more miserable, information leaked out, or perhaps the tip was given that four shops were to be burned in town - Dr. Murphy's medical hall and residence, Thomas McGrath's, Main Street, known as "Stand Back", Mrs. Dowley's, West Gate, and James Coffey's, Main Street - and qualified the threat by giving the reason that personally the enemy had nothing against old Coffey, but for his allowing me to be with him. The information given was that these four shops might be burned in a moment. If such occurred, Coffey would not have the price of his food for a month. After consultation and advice, my uncle insured the place. Only Lloyds of London were taking war risk insurance then, and

they would only take for three months. Their best terms - they had no opposition - were £50 per £1,000 for three months. Almost death terms - but the poor old man did not want to be stranded without a copper, and could not bear to go to relatives or charity. He parted with £450, to cover the loss of his stock, shop and house. It was the best he could do, and this only for three months. Taking this big sum out of his very slender means nearly destroyed him, and ruined him for the remainder of his life. It was too much to take out of the business, same as if a match was put to it. With business already seriously injured, with my absence, the loss of £450 was like the proverbial last straw on the camel's back.

At that time, there was no thought of counter compensation, for, at the time, not one person dreamed of getting the enemy out of the country. When the three months were up, my uncle was unable to renew the policy, not having the money to pay. The other three people concerned did not take out any policy. Dr. Murphy was reasonably comfortable, as far as financial means were concerned - and Dowley's, better still. McGrath, like Coffey, could not afford, so he did nothing. The information, given in the best interest, turned out the reverse. Even fourteen weeks later if the place went up in smoke, Coffey would not have a penny to get. This was the sacrifice many people had to make in the fight for freedom.

It is only people of property who can lose when they assist a cause, for men of no property cannot be poorer. Hundreds, of course, down through the centuries, who assisted in the fight to restore Irish

freedom, lost all they had - farms, business, industry and possessions. The only reward my uncle got was the possession of a receipt for his £450.

At this period, I had little sleep, being out every night and getting a shake-down here and there at 2 a.m., and trying to work during the day. I could, of course, months earlier, have followed some one of the three columns, like the wise fellows did, but the enormous responsibility of keeping the battalion active and, more important still, the shop as a depot were of greater importance. Had I given up this dangerous job and followed a column, it would be said that I was getting cold feet and shirking the danger of being consignee for the precious goods, but, damn it all, where or who was benefitting by their possession. At least, no visible sign of military organisation in the whole area. Headquarters, Dublin, who were supposed to be the leaders, had failed miserably to arm the thousands of secretly trained Volunteers, and, after six months, it was difficult for an officer to attempt further drilling and explain it all to fully grown wide-awake people. The old saying could be applied - you can't fool all the people all the time. The only thing that kept up the spirit then was the hope of revenge when in other parts of the country murder was the principal and only fate every day.

The neighbouring counties were in a worse still position. To the east, a vast area of South Kilkenny and into Wexford was without practically any organisation at all. So bad was it that manly spirited young men were, in a large number of parishes, trying to join the III Tipperary brigade; and, later, when the 2nd Southern Division was formed, this area

was included.

Every effort and pressure were put on me to be O/C of the 5th Kilkenny brigade, in the hope of trying to bring it up to the organisation standard of the 8th battalion. It was undoubtedly a tribute, but no pressure could get me to withdraw my allegiance from the area where I had spent four years helping, with loyal comrades, to bring it up to pitch. When I refused O/C-ship of South Kilkenny brigade, I was offered, and advised to accept, the rank of Brigade Engineer in our own brigades - III Tipperary - and, for the present, to remain in residence in the 8th battalion area, in the hope of increasing consignments of military war material.

At this time, I was beginning to feel the strain of overwork, and, with little sleep, was even losing the ability to sleep at all. My health was breaking up - I was badly run down. I got a double dose of hernia but, to avoid going into hospital for an operation, as I did not want to avoid participation in the struggle, Dr. Murphy got a double truss for me for protection, and said it would hold me together until I reached a sudden immediate burial, for at that time everyone like me was fully prepared at any moment to be shot on the spot, if captured with arms or important documents, or if anyone of our comrades turned his coat and became an enemy spy - to their everlasting credit, not one did.

For the first month, I found the wearing of this truss was torture. I found it difficult to walk, and, worse still, was not able to cycle. I had no other means of covering the extensive battalion area

except on a bike; this reason made me get used to the truss months sooner than in normal times.

Every member of the I.R.A. was a potential intelligence officer. When he saw anything worth reporting to his company officers and they thought it should be investigated, I always had to visit the company. At that time, both the O/C and Vice O/C were constantly on the move, and it was with difficulty that I could locate them for emergency operations. Any persons seen entering or coming out of the R.I.C. barracks were noted, especially tramps, because anyone could disguise himself as a tramp and be the perfect spy. All company officers were notified to be on their guard in this particular phase of activity.

Anyhow, I got an important notice from Faugheen company that they were certain that they had made an important capture of a spy. They had decided to execute him, but wanted official sanction. A tall order for me! At once, I cycled via Ballynacad road to Newtown, near the school, to a cottage at present occupied by a man named Kennedy. Here were about a dozen of the leading officers and men of Faugheen company. I was received as if I was the Chief of Staff of the 2nd Southern Division, or rather I was. I was led into the cottage in ceremonial fashion, to give sanction for the immediate shooting of this alleged spy. Low and behold, I at once recognised him as an old tramp to whom I used give a copper a few times a year when he would call into Carrick over the previous five years! They produced a pension book which, I am sure, had much to do with his arrest and subsequent condemnation. A British army pensioner, he had served in the English army during the Boer war.

He was seen coming out of the R.I.C. and Black and Tan barrack, and, to the credit of the Volunteers who saw him and next day met him at ~~Mainstown~~^{Yungheer}, it was decided that the correct thing to do was to pick him up for interrogation. The man was pretty old - over seventy years - and was, more or less defective in mental powers, and his utter failure to give any intelligent explanation left his captors no option but to excuse him for his object in visiting the headquarters of the local enemy. After asking him a few questions and with my knowledge of him as above, I had no hesitation in ordering his release - to the consternation and disappointment of a number of his captors. Later, I was informed that they had actually preparations made for a grave in which to bury him.

Having arranged for some operational work with members of Carrick Company that night, I returned via Ballyrichard. As I was leaving Mainstown, a young girl who, I am certain, did not know me shouted to me to stop. She was only nine or ten years of age. She told me not to go any further, that the army were raiding Ballyrichard road. I reversed and went through Tyvrassay breen. I stayed at Dunphy's, Fylagh that night. Next day, I discovered the cause of the raid. Late that night, on the outskirts of the town - but, before going on further, it is well to note the alertness of this young girl of ten, taking a chance to advise me, because I am certain she perhaps never saw me before, only, like most people at the time, took it for granted that every man was a friend, and everyone anxious to save everyone else.

For months previously, the public were warned against any form of association with the enemy.

Allowance was duly made where the enemy could compel by

force the supplying of necessities, as, of course, they could easily commandeer. But everyone who was reported for speaking to, visiting, or showing any outward signs of social friendship, received a special notice to discontinue, and, if repeated, action was taken.

At that time, a rather wild sort of young woman, a native of Kilsheelan parish, was employed in Turner's chemist shop and, like many other girls, had a grádh for men in uniform. She ignores warnings and, most dangerous at that time, used visit the barrack after the shops closed and then proceed home. This had to be stopped, so two Volunteers from the Kilsheelan end of the town were ordered to be on the Kilsheelan road anytime about 7 p.m., remain there until she arrived, fully search her and warn her that her clothes would be taken off her if she went into the barrack again. The two Volunteers, Thomas Torpey and Paddy Colleton (latter, long since dead, I.I.P.), swore that she did not know either of them. They went as far as Brunswick's, and were instructed to go to the river bank or railway and remain there until she approached. Thomas Torpey was fishing and got a younger brother, Frank, to act as substitute. However, they failed to adhere to instructions and, after some time, came out on to the road, over a mile from the town, where they were seen by a young woman living nearby and recognised. If they had exercised full intelligence, they should have done nothing that night, after being seen. However, they carried out the order and, without over-description, gave the lady a thorough searching from head to foot without missing any of her inside garments. It was so thorough and

minute that she did not dare call on the barrack again, but lost no time in reporting.

Next day, there was much activity about the area on the part of the enemy. Unfortunately, the woman, who had seen and recognised the two men waiting on the previous night, was a thorough pro-Britisher and anti-Sinn Féin, and, to her disgrace, gave their names to the enemy. Thomas Torpey and Paddy Colleton were arrested, but she was not exactly sure of one, and gave the name of a man from Ballyrichard road who she thought resembled one as well as the other. This was the cause of the raid that night in that area. The man from there, who was picked up and brought to the barrack, was not in the I.R.A., and was otherwise engaged. He was able to give a perfect alibi. So was Thomas Torpey who was arrested. He was able to give convincing proof that he was out fishing at the time, and, when the other members of his crew were interrogated, they confirmed it. Of course, his younger brother was somewhat like him, and perhaps the woman thought the younger Torpey was Tom. Poor Colleton, a rather delicate man, got twelve months in prison, but was released after nine months at the general amnesty. Later, during the Civil War, he was again imprisoned for one and a half years. When he died some years later, there was not enough to take in his coffin into the church. Worse still, next day we had to wait and call someone passing to give a hand in bringing his coffin and remains from the church to the hearse. He was a member of a very old, honest and respectable Carrick family - the Colleton's of Greystone Street. Typical of the reward paid to many patriots, for centuries.

We had a special battalion meeting on the following night, and had no difficulty in putting our finger on the identity of the informer. We decided to take action that night. I ordered six men, under their Captain, Ed. Byrne, from Windygap company, each of whom was able to swear that the woman had never seen them before and was deadly sure that she could never recognise him, to carry out the operation. We decided to take all the furniture out of the house, plank it on the main road outside the house, and burn it. I had two of our town boatmen Volunteers there, with their cot, and they brought the six men across the river. Of course, the two river men remained at the boat, fearing she might know them. I remained on the railway overlooking the house, but out of view. They lost no time in having all that was in the house ^{put} out on the road, every article, but her mother, who was an old woman, cried, roared, prayed and begged - that she never knew her daughter was so bad, that all her people were Sinn Féiners - and so they were - and that her daughter was a frequent inmate of local hospitals and was not fully responsible. Strange, the father was pro-English, but he was not at home. The worst part of it was that they were poor, and it is very hard to deal justly with poor people. Before the paraffin was sprinkled, the Captain of Windygap company, E. Byrne, had a special consultation with me, and we were of the one opinion that what was done was sufficient to ensure that never again would she or anyone in the household spy. The little furniture in the house and its poorness saved it from fire. Even the hardest men performing the job without disguise thought it was sufficient punishment. Certainly, they got such a fright and, I suppose, feared the worst, that they did not report it to the barracks. The house was near the railway bridge and, next day,

passengers thought it was some train accident and that the furniture got tumbled over the bridge on to the road.

About this time, we lost one of our great column men, Dinny Sadlier, shot accidentally in the area, and buried temporarily at Ahenry. During the Truce, he was ^{dis}-interred and ^{re-}buried in his own family grave in Drangan, with a five-mile funeral cortege from Grangemockler church.

The enemy made a surprise drive into the rural villages, expecting to meet people assembled, and, of course, anyone able to move at all tried to get away, fearing a bad beating, or being plugged, or being carried as hostages. At Clonea, one of our men trying to get away was shot through the arm. He was Tom Sheehan, a brother of the Mothel Company Captain, Bob Sheehan, who was in one of the columns (Dinny Lacey's).

We retaliated the following night by one of the most extensive road constructions. Practically a hundred miles of road were put out of use: Carrick to Kilsheelan, Carrick to Nine-Mile-House, Carrick to Slate-quarries, Carrick to Piltown, Carrick to Fiddown, Carrick to Kilsheelan, Co. Waterford side, Carrick to Coolmachorna, Carrick to Mothel and Clonea, Carrick to Rathcormick. Over three hundred men took part, and three and a half hours, nine companies participating. I spent five hours that night on the main road from Carrick to Kilsheelan. The destruction was extensive, so thorough that no military lorry attempted to get through for two weeks, but the weather was nice, and the farmers had to get through, inside fences and through fields. The military began to avail of these substitute passage ways until they had some of the main roads repaired. They started again to round up any persons wearing a trousers,

from a twelve year old to an eighty - any man they saw in a field, even in charge of a pair of horses, was fetched along to repair the roads and remove obstructions, but to no avail - the following night it would be repeated.

This proved that the enemy knew well the I.R.A. were engaged on this work by night, but they never ventured out to surprise the I.R.A. Undoubtedly, they were afraid, and must have been under the impression that all Volunteers were fully armed whereas only one on each side of operation and two or three officers had arms - and with only a few rounds of ammunition.

Around this month, officers were complaining of many absentees at parades and, worse still, failing to turn up or report for important operational work. This was most dangerous, for, if not properly manned and scout protection afforded, it was impossible to execute orders proficiently. The days were now getting pretty long and the protection afforded by darkness had passed. Men were visible when going to specified places, and this ~~may~~^{may} have been the cause of absenteeism. Drastic action was decided on to ensure that this slackness would cease. Ropes were procured to tie slackers over the old bridge and dip them down into the tide, in the presence of people moving over the area. This was rather drastic as well as dangerous, for if such took place, there was every likelihood that the enemy would hear about it. Company rural officers were to tie men to the gates before Mass on Sundays. The very threat of this had the desired effect without resorting to the extreme course. One evening, quite bright, I had, with two others, a strong new rope in my possession on the old

bridge, expecting a well known slacker to come along. We were to tie him and hang him over the parapet into the tide. Fortunately, he never came along, and I was later glad of it, for he was one of my earliest town acquaintances, and over the long number of years we remained great friends. It was always difficult to get him to be up to the mark as regards attendance and punctuality. The long period of organisational practice and preparation without warlike activity was bound to lessen the efficiency in the I.R.A. - all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy!

Between the columns, I was spending two days a week, and out by night, often without getting to bed and change of clothes; and staying in so many different places, I was losing the gift of sleep.

I was fortunate that our housekeeper, Mrs. Connolly - ~~was a widow of a man~~ - had a house of her own, and though an old woman gladly took a risk by agreeing to give me a bed in her house when I wanted it, and I had a key to enter there any hour of the morning. She was a gift to me, for it was difficult to rouse up rural people at all hours, and staying in haysheds was next thing to death, with hay lice and cold. It was easy to get there, without touching the principal streets, but I used have to get out before eight in order that I would not be seen by people, and succeeded. One morning, I was noticed by a well known merchant across the street. He was Patrick Kirby, Chairman of the U.D.C. and a J.P. He was a very staunch pro-Britisher - the fashion for some people then. He was a fowl merchant, and used be up early, going away to markets. He called that evening to James Coffey and told him he had seen me for some time but that I had seen him that morning for the first time.

He told him that I was quite safe as far as he was concerned. This sustained my confidence.

I had a special appointment with the Dinny Lacey column one day at 4 p.m. somewhere near Curraheen mountains, Rathgormack. All appointments then were at a certain house, or place, but never near the exact position where the meetings were actually held or where the column was, for fear of the despatch being lost or the carrier being captured by the enemy. My order was to call at Power's at a certain time, as above, and as usual get final instructions for proceeding to the exact place. It was a very warm evening when I reached and entered the farmyard. Not a soul in the house or in any of the out-houses. I went out from the yard into the hay haggart, looked about the hayshed and saw no one. I returned to the farmyard, closed the gate, and began to shout out the names of the Power brothers. When a man, dressed as a regular tramp, entered the farmyard from the haggart as I returned. He was about in the centre of the yard when he saw me. I thought he was going into the house, begging and I did not even bother to look at him. I was about to tell him no one was there, though the front door was open, when suddenly he took a right-about turn, in the most lively, fully styled military pace and was retracing his steps. I felt that this was rather surprising and strange antics. I asked him to wait. I called on him to stop, but he took no notice of me. Then I shouted, "Halt!" Yet, he was increasing pace. I shouted that I would fire if he did not stop. He had gone three-quarters of the hayshed field by this time. He hesitated and then pulled up. I ordered him to come forward to me, and told him to proceed in front, which he did. He was in the usual rags and had the beggar's sack on his back.

I got him into the yard and, at that time, Paddy Power appeared. He was a member of the Rathgormack company. I asked him to hold the tramp until I would get help, but Power nearly collapsed with the fright, and could not understand what was up at all. I said I had a suspicion about this beggar. I said, "If you are afraid to hold him, I will do so until you get some local Volunteers or neighbours" - but neighbours were few and scarce here. Power asked where could he get them, that the Volunteers were far away, working. I mentioned three or four that could be notified and here in half an hour. He reluctantly went off, shaking, and, right enough, three or four locals were into the place in less than half an hour.

I told Power my business and asked where could I meet the column. He said they had left very early, leaving him instructions to tell me, when I called, that they got some information to get out of the place and had gone on towards Clonmel, through the mountain ranges, but that they would leave a message for me at Hogan's, Glen Patrick.

I had, of course, a big job on hands now, to make sure that this man was safely held until the Brigade officers were acquainted. I had to remain there all that evening, and saw that the full company were properly instructed and would have him properly secured. The company officers did all that they could. They secured an outhouse at Halpin's at Currowhoon, and four or five armed men saw that the prisoner did not escape. I notified Brigade headquarters next day. In the meantime, the prisoner divested himself of his outer rags, and here he was a fine, well built, well dressed, tall man, with a very pronounced Englishman's bearing. He

had a most educated address and accent, and certainly appeared to be the full English officer. When and while I was with him the first day, he never spoke, probably to hide his identity, due to his English accent. His only explanation was that ^{he} was a genuine beggar. After three days' captivity, he realised that it was no further use trying to prove he was a beggar. He was very well treated, the best of food and other attention.

Seamus Robinson, the Brigade O/C, sent a despatch to me at Currowhoon the following Sunday, that he would be there. I was there thirty minutes before the appointed time, and nearly the full company were there also. The man seemed in good spirits, and did not seem to mind in the least about his position. Robinson, after getting a brief outline about the capture and a few other convincing particulars, ordered the man to be brought away from there that night. He eventually reached Brigade headquarters near Rosegreen.

At that particular time, over thirty well-known British officers were spread over the country as an intelligence squad, as beggars, and were trailing the I.R.A. columns, but if British intelligence was as stupid as that personified by this man, it is surprising that they ever made the grade in the world, militarily. Evidently he had no tactics at all. Surely he could have cultivated an Irish accent. His nearest attempt to be smart was when he refused to talk at all, and if he had persisted, perhaps he might have been let off as a dummy, because, after a minute search, nothing was found on him to arouse suspicion, except his good clothes inside the rags, and a reasonable amount of money. He had, of course, an expensive pipe, tobacco, cigarettes, etc.

Most surprising, it was never properly investigated as to how did he get the information that the I.R.A. columns were in that area. He must have had an idea of the right time to be there because, only for the column having to leave earlier than intended, he'd have been right on their heels. Who was giving the information? Or was he only dumped from headquarters in Dublin to go to the mountains and track the I.R.A. men there, for, naturally, of course, enemy headquarters knew the fighting men were on the hills, because many of their published reports at the time - that the "gang" did this and took to the hills? But surely they got some training. Otherwise, how could he fail at the critical moment? Had he gone into the house, I would not have taken the least notice of him. His disguise was perfect, and he even displayed the beggar's stoop. Or would he have gone into the house at all? That is the point perhaps, and, of course, it was the only likely explanation at the time that he thought I was a member of the column and that he was just after falling into their hands. There is no other reason why he lost his head as he did and withdrew so quickly. Had he withdrawn even at a slow tramp's pace, I might not have minded him. Later information proved that he was a high ranking officer, highly educated and of a wealthy family, but even in the wilds of Africa would the most stupid and untrained do what he did, or act as he did? It is indeed undisputed proof that headquarters of the British military in Dublin were at the time suffering badly from nerves. Otherwise, how could it be possible that they would release, much like pigeons but with less intelligence, a large number of their supposed intelligence staff showing the stupidity and cowardice of this officer? Had he even received

ten per cent. of the necessary training required to reach the necessary standard of action, of courage, of approach, etc., to justify his services and dangerous duty, surely he would not have acted as he did? Again, supposing I was not there at that time, how would he fare? Would he get up to the column? Would he be able to advance along, without knowledge of the difficult area? Mind you, this area would require the locals to cover it properly. Its very topography was unique - its mountains, hills, glens, woods, drains, rivers, furze, heather and bogs; and only the people living there were capable of covering it properly. Even with my long experience of the area, I often found it almost impossible to get through when trying to avoid the roads. Where was he dumped when sent out of Dublin? Did he come from the direction of the high Comeragh mountains overlooking Curraheen? Or had he already followed the column? That is the question.

Brigade headquarters may be able to answer this - they can write it up. But unless he completely changed his mind, he never gave away a word while in custody in the 8th battalion area. The obvious conclusion is that, if anyone wants successful espionage work accomplished, the best thing is to get or employ a local, or have the assistance of a local. But to the eternal credit of the Irish people of that historic period, scarcely half a dozen in the whole thirty-two counties acted the spy or betrayed their neighbours, and be it remembered, the organisation was so open and at the mercy of everyone that even much gossip would be equally dangerous, and it must have been a gift from Providence that people who knew everything then had, by force of imminent danger, got into the habit of never talking at all during the

whole period.

Once again returning to the obvious necessity of doing anything with a grain of success, one must thoroughly know the people and topography of the area. Look at what happened in Omagh thirty-three years later, 1954, when a number of youngsters from Cork and Dublin, styling themselves the I.R.A., decided to raid a barrack occupied by foreign troops, staying there by force when they got into the enemy barrack. Plans did not go according to arrangements, and the enemy fired on the youths who successfully got out of the barrack, but their lorry driver from the south got cold feet when he heard the shooting and, to save his own skin, betrayed his comrades by leaving them stranded on the road. They got into the nearby fields, and, not knowing where they were, were captured the following day. This showed wretchedly bad planning by their leaders who should have employed the local republicans, or at least have a number of locals to guide them to their homes and could work next day as locals.

The same thing applies to Arborfield Road in London. It had all the ingredients and elements of perfection of organisation, bravery, courage, intelligence, etc., etc., but they should have had more London-Irishmen on the job who would have known how to get to a place of safety through the back lanes. Also it showed that someone of the participants betrayed his comrades in the capture next of the residence where the captured arms were planked - in this year 1955.

About this time, the enemy must have been planning very much because new features and events were the story everywhere. Many young men, senior schoolboys, some whose

people were listed as unfriendly; others were suspects; some made great efforts to proclaim their loyalty to the I.R.A.; and others who tried to join but, at the time, it was as hard to get out of hell as to get into the I.R.A. This kept out many who would have been a great help, for at the time the ever willing Volunteers of all companies were far overworked, practically out every night at some job and working again next day. Most of them were trying to be left into the columns to avoid day and night work, and the columns had to threaten the would-be applicants to desist. Very many of the well-to-do young men - large farmers' sons, business and professional people - remained outside the ranks, and after a year of campaigning, the hard workers were getting jealous, and here there was much danger. Company officers had a spate of trouble here and there, and, of course, the way out was to notify me to visit the areas and mend the breaks. This always meant four or five hours' night work, and often the rank and file made serious charges against the slackness of officers, so that, instead of the officers putting their men on the bench, sometimes it was the other way about. A vast job it was to try and keep the spirit and discipline perfect over such a large wide battalion area. I often drew the attention of brigade headquarters to the size of our battalion. Eventually, Kilcash company, which I personally organised and every member of which was a close personal friend of mine through business transactions, was transferred to the 5th or Clonmel Battalion.

Previous to this transfer and for a month afterwards, a young man from Kilcash area by the name of Dillon, son of a retired R.I.C. man who occupied the caretaker's house caring the old castle of Kilcash, and

a senior pupil of Carrick Christian Brothers College, every Saturday for a month or six weeks when the school used close at noon, used remain outside my shop, talking to school pals, and everyone he knew from Kilcash area. Naturally, if anyone were seen there, the same person, in that position for three or four hours on even one day, it would arouse suspicion and cause for thinking; but when he would be there for three or four Saturdays, it would give ten times more reason. After the first day, I was keeping him under observation, but he was nearly always talking to someone I knew well and, as it had to be, always, they were all supporters - friends of the cause. I knew his parents, for in my boyhood days I used pal with John O'Shea, a shop boy at Skehan Brothers; he used visit his relations, the O'Neill's of Kilcash; they used bring us to visit the castle and call into Dillon's to get the key. Dillon was long retired from the R.I.C. As far as I can recollect, he tried to get me to get him into the Kilcash company. He became an object of suspicion and was reported for many queer stunts. Later, it was reported to me that he called into Kiely's, the teacher, at Crehana, and told the teacher that I had sent him out to meet Lacey's column at Barrs Wood (local name). Kiely, quick enough, told him knew nothing about what he was talking about. Most surprising stunt, unless he was made a fool of by someone, because no columns ever ventured to that wood - too near the town. This report naturally came forward and raised my suspicions. It would probably have caused his arrest but for the name he had of being a thoroughly irresponsible person. I will soon refer again to this youth and his family which fully justified our suspicion of him.

It was all blossoms and sunshine this spring,

hardly any rain and cloudless skies, one big event following the other. All this time, but in a small way, the military equipment from England was coming through as drapery consignments. When any revolver or rifle ammunition came, I used open up large rolls of flannel - blue, black, red or white - and put the ammunition in, and roll them back again, thirty or forty yards. The shop and house were constantly raided, and often the rolls of flannel were pulled around and fixed flat, but no attempt was made to pull them open. One day, three grand Webley's arrived. The column were notified. Dinny Lacey, Column Leader, and Paddy McDonagh, Column Quartermaster, arrived and put up at Thomas McGrath's (known as "Stand Back") at 32-33 Main Street. Word was sent to me to bring the three revolvers to that address. I made sure that the street was free from enemy, and got them safely there. It was like dew from heaven. All were examined, oiled, polished and kissed. McGrath's son, Paddy, was there - a University medical student. He was fiddling with one of the revolvers, like all amateurs, and off went a shot, the bullet piercing some furniture. This caused a sensation, for it could be heard loudly on the street outside. Lacey was all excitement, but McDonagh was his usual jolly and calm self. Let it be remembered that Paddy McDonagh was the son of a retired, discreet R.I.C. man. As fine a young man as one would wish to meet, of magnificent physique, always in the best of humour, his nature as big as his body, he met his death with his leader, Lacey, during the tragic civil war in the Glen of Aherlow. McGrath would probably have been beaten, only he and his parents were good hosts. When other members of the family had examined the street outside and reported to us inside that no number of people were congregated

on the street, the distinguished visitor and leader calmed down. They departed later when it got dark, with their precious consignment.

It was a relief to me that guns, rifles and ammunition were taken as soon as possible after arrival, on account of the numerous enemy raids. The shop and rooms used be strewn about after these raids, and only for the fact that the large rolls of flannel were capable of holding and hiding the equipment months before the period, the dangerous business would have been finished.

Visiting companies by night, with the battalion O/C, vice O/C and other officers, the rank and file, as well as the company officers used have some practice with the officers' guns. This was necessary, to maintain any form of military bearing and training, but always there was great danger of accidents with inexperienced men and with men who only handled guns whenever an officer visited the area. A few serious accidents and numerous narrow escapes occurred.

One night, in preparation for some job, I, in company with the Assistant Battalion Engineer, Tom Phelan, was with Maurice McGrath, Battalion O/C, and, when we got out of the fields at Crehana Cross and about to depart in our own directions, Phelan was examining the O/C's revolver. We were all around in a circle, whispering and discussing affairs when suddenly a shot went off, right down through the road with the bullet which shot gravel and sand into our faces and through our legs. The bang was so loud, it should have been heard in a town a mile away. Some strong language and prayers by the O/C, with some names, swearing that never again would he part for a second with his gun. Accidents like this

often caused postponement of intended operations.

The I.R.A. levy was still being collected, but to cover the whole battalion area, company by company, during the night time when the day's work was over, took a long time. In many cases, the locals were not on too good terms with one another, or the locals had a decided objection to giving money in big sums. That was understandable - money collections are always open to suspicion. This, of course, threw heavy work on to me, for I had to get town residents to call on the people who had not been called on, as well as some who refused and some who objected to the amount. Except in the case of I.R.A. supporters or people I knew well, we always got someone, who was not known, to call on the others. I would remain outside. It was always done in the night time. It was a deadly, hard-working job. Be it remembered that the distance from Nine-Mile-House in Co. Tipperary, to Coolmahon in Co. Waterford, is eighteen to twenty miles - the length of the 8th Battalion. Going through fields for short cuts was our usual procedure.

At our battalion meetings, long discussions used take place, for hours, discussing the pro's and con's of something - some big move for major operations. In preparation for military movements, extensive and elaborate ambush positions used be minutely examined and discussed. Yet the arms held by battalion and company officers were so few, obsolete and defective that, unless the column assisted or gave a loan of their arms, it would be sheer madness to attempt a fight against an enemy patrol. It would be an impertinence and cast reflection on the capability of the column, if the rank and file had to get the loan of their arms. Something

had to be done this time, but passive resistance could not be carried on forever, and the only thing keeping it going now was the stark tragedy and murder - glorious battles in a few other parts of Ireland, namely, Cork and Dublin. Yet the people there were tortured and burned out, while we had in III. Tipperary some notable leaders, three columns and eight fairly large battalions. Divisions were now formed, with a view to better understanding and assistance from one another, to act independently of headquarters, or at least divisions to represent headquarters. This arrangement did play havoc at the beginning, taking officers out of their posts in promotion, because if any worthwhile success was to eventuate, the men who knew their men, their area and their armament should be able to do better than new men less knowledgeable.

Everyone was now nearly sick of organisation. What was wanted was action, and the latter could be had in every area if the rank and file were armed. Where was the use of further organisation if headquarters could not import plenty of equipment from America or Germany. America had thousands of tons of ammunition dumped and decaying - millions of rifles and revolvers.

With hundreds of small ports along the Irish coast, the possibility of getting arms in was encouraging. Yet none came, and here were thousands of semi-trained and well organised young men in the thirty-two counties, all ready for the fray to drive the ancient enemy from our shores. With millions of our kith and kin and their descendants in America, and with idle ships in all American ports, it is one of the unexplained mysteries that

nothing was done to get in arms.

At this time, many counties and areas that had initiated combat with the enemy were burned to the ground, like Cork city, large parts of Clare, Kerry, and many men, young and old, murdered. What possibility there was of filling history books with glory if every battalion and every company in the thirty-two counties - if all Volunteers were reasonably armed and a few days' supply of rifle and revolver ammunition. Even against what was known then as the biggest empire in the world! Her prospects would be black because even with token armament and struggle, it was revealed in the British House of Commons that it would be necessary to have 300,000 English soldiers in Ireland if they were to put down the I.R.A.

Even the few armed I.R.A. men could not use what they had, for in most fights all they had was lost in ghost fights - unable to bring them to a successful end and capture the enemy if defeated.

Numerous parades of columns stationed in the 8th battalion area at this time pointed to some immediate action. I was summoned to an important parade at 9 a.m., after breakfast one morning, at Garry Moore's, Grangemockler - Lacey's or No. 1 column. This meeting was quite different to all the others, as every man was tested, examined, checked, all equipment closely examined, quantity and quality of rifles, guns, revolvers, and the health, outfits, clothes of the men noted. An hour's meeting followed. Most of the men were still on "stand at ease" order, and every moment expected the order into real warfare. Nearly all at the meeting were also under a similar impression.

However, nothing was decided upon, to warrant the summoning of this important review of troops and the meeting so early in the morning. It is possible that the totting up of military equipment revealed such a small store - even half of the men were practically unarmed, in the military sense of the word - that it would have been madness to attempt any worthwhile combat with the military.

Within one mile of where this meeting was held lay a small number of R.I.C. men in Glenbower barracks, inside in a deep glen, in a small two-storey residence, and though fired on a few times from the high hilly country, no close effort was ever made to capture it. The reader may wonder how such a small enemy outpost as Glenbower barracks could remain in this isolated, mountainy, rural area, in the midst of such an extensive and thoroughly, or over-thoroughly organised battalion of nine or ten company areas. You will recollect that I referred previously to the R.I.C. sergeant, in a rural area, who was releasing ammunition. This was Sergeant Enright who was in charge of Glenbower barracks, but then, at most, only four in the whole battalion were aware of this.

Shortly after this parade which had, of course, a preliminary bearing on future events, one of the most important meetings was held and decisions taken at Ballypatrick on another very fine, warm day. Every battalion officer and every company captain was strongly warned to be present - "for the most important meeting". The usual procedure was adopted. All were notified to report at a certain house for directions as to where the meeting would be held. The house was Thomas O'Neill's, Kilcash. One of the local company Volunteers was

stationed there, and directed all who called to the actual location of the meeting, which was held in an open field, due to the large number present and the fine, warm day. At the rear of a block of hay in a shed owned by Martin Tobin, near Ballypatrick and Kilcash, over a hundred were present, presided over by Dinny Lacey, O/C, No. 1 Column. The meeting lasted three and a half hours, and the whole position, from a military point, was reviewed in detail by many officers. Finally, the decision was taken to disband the brigade columns as constituted at the time, and the few men in each column, who were from the different battalions of the brigade, were to form small battalion columns instead, and to carry out military operations in the battalion areas, while remaining in their own areas. This was the biggest bombshell yet, causing grave disappointment and consternation to the men of the columns as well as the battalion and company officers who, for the past few months, had devoted all their time, means and ability to maintain, provide, support, feed, protect and cater for the protection and welfare of the columns.

At that time of hopeful wishing for foreign equipment, the outlook and ambition of every Volunteer and supporter were for larger columns and more columns for open conflict with the roving enemy. It looked as if all was lost, the white flag thrown in. Here were great leaders and the bravest of men, with six months' experience of moving about South Tipperary, knowing every townland, with courage built up from long soldiering together - to get an order to disband must have been heartbreaking to them. Worse still, the protection a column provided when the men were together ensured their escape if they suddenly encountered the enemy. This was all lost now - and what could a few

men, with practically no equipment, do in a battalion that they were not able to do collectively in a brigade.

There are two sides to every story, and, when examined, you will readily understand the necessity for and wisdom in disbanding the brigade columns - even though very much misunderstood by the Volunteers and the people, strong supporters, and the families who, for the previous few months had accommodated and care for the flying columns. Many strong reasons were given - and some not given - as to the real cause for this sensational development at that time when the existence of columns was most particularly needed, to counteract the daily increasing enemy activity, spreading death, foul murder and destruction in other parts. Keeping forty to fifty men of the flying columns was one of the most difficult tasks, and only people intimately acquainted would have any knowledge of the enormity of maintenance. Few families had more accommodation than their own requirements. They were mostly two-bedroom houses, with one, two, three or four beds. In nearly all houses, the beds were fully utilised at that time. In all cases, it was necessary for members of the family to give up their own beds to accommodate the column men. Then there was the difficulty of clean bed clothes, and proper and sufficient food, for it was only late at night that a column arrived - earlier would be dangerous - and this gave no time for the householders to have in stock extra food for the men. Many times, there would be only barely sufficient food for themselves - for perhaps the next day would be the day for the market, to get family provisions. The company billeting officers, or company officers would have to proceed late at night to a dozen or more houses in the area, to have all column men put up. Houses are so far apart and scarce in mountain districts

that a few townlands would have to be covered before all could be put up, and this widely scattered accommodation entailed the gravest risks should the enemy make a surprise visit to the area during the night, or even during the day before the column reassembled. Even after reassembling, they had again to scatter out over a wide area for dinner, and again for tea. Should the enemy enter a particular townland long before the column or a part of it fell in, a number would be in combat killed or captured. Worst of all was the inadequacy of the armament. This was the major trouble and worry. Unless every man in a small flying column of forty or fifty men was fully armed with a modern rifle - hours of fighting with rifle ammunition in case of standing fights with the enemy, the potential was disheartening to officers.

What was not made known generally, but only to very few, and the latter would have to use their own intelligence, for this knowledge was in every column - a few of the leading officers were fully prepared and could on many occasions carry out comparatively worthwhile actions, but for very special and important reasons. All over the country, when a small barracks was captured, or a small convoy of enemy fired on, the people, both near and far, suffered heavily within twenty-four hours. Dozens of houses, practically all owned by the parents of Volunteers or strong supporters, were razed to the ground. Any young men who unfortunately were at home or on the farm were murdered there and then. Whole families were left homeless. All they owned burned or blown up. In many places where the enemy lost only four or five, twenty of our people were either killed or captured, which was a thousand times more, for they were

brought about as hostages in lorries, and if ambushed by the I.R.A., the first killed were the hostages by our men, as they were exposed to fire; and if they escaped, were tortured to death later on. In most cases, the reason for Volunteers being captured and murdered was for refusing to give information, after their finger nails and pieces of their flesh were torn off. A thousand times better for men to be killed outright, when trying to escape after being captured by the enemy at that time, than fall into their hands. For their policy at the time was to kill six to ten Irishmen, old, young or middle-aged, for the loss of one of their members, and to destroy and burn to the ground dozens of houses. This more than any other reason was the loss of thousands of attacks on the enemy throughout the country.

I could recall many dozens of deaths and acts of destruction throughout the country, where only one noted leader murder garr officer was shot. But when the first shot was fired by one side or the other, the scent of blood followed. When the enemy wrought such death and destruction in any area, it there and then raised the spirit of revenge in the I.R.A., and they struck with great success - requiring two to make a war.

That evening at Ballypatrick, the decision brought gloom and sadness to men who, for four or five months previously, had lived a life of glorious anticipation, and if this parting was filmed at the time, it would make a nice picture. Some of the boys with a few bob treated their pals to a few bottles of "lemonade" in Gibb's pub.

This meeting brought more sadness and tragedy than the parting of friends. All the men of the

battalion in the column, all the battalion and company officers moved out of the Ballypatrick area to their own areas except about half a dozen of the leading column officers who were well known to the enemy and had to go on the run to avoid capture. They remained in the area that night, together, on the slopes of historic Slievenamon, but in higher ground over Kilcash. That night after midnight, three thousand enemy troops assembled in Clonmel and moved out. Two hours later, the extensive hill range, from Ballypatrick in the south, Killusty and Drangan in the west, Ballythohill and Nine-mile-House in the north, and Grangemockler and Glenbower in the east, was ringed round with enemy troops, and had ringed round the whole mountain range. They gradually closed in, hand joining hand almost, like children playing ring-a-roses, combed practically every sod, entered every house, outhouse, wood, scrub, bush, etc., and, after spending the whole of that day until nightfall, did not capture a solitary I.R.A. soldier. They were as much disappointed as our men had been, the previous day, at the disbandment of No. 1 column.

It was not all roses for the column leaders and officers who were aroused from their sleep - they had a most miraculous and amazing escape - and who got through this ring of enemy soldiers in the most thrilling and sensational manner, due to local guides and the intimate knowledge of the area by the men themselves. Their description later would fill a book of wonderment. I hope that one ~~of~~^{or} two of the men still alive have fully described this to the Bureau of Military History. The Bureau will be enriched by having this episode written.

It was late when I left Ballypatrick that night. Having a few bob in my pocket like some others, we held a farewell social in Gibb's. With the southern battalion delegates to the meeting, we proceeded southwards and, as we moved along, we assisted in getting some of them a night's shelter in friends' houses.

Next evening, we got the startling news. Of course, it was immediately obvious that there was a spy in the team, or in the area. It did not take long, after the shortest special investigation, to lay a finger on the identity of the spy, for in every post office in Ireland, or in at least ninety per cent. of them, the I.R.A. had a perfect organisation set up to detect any and every form of treachery or spying. We had friends in the Post Office at Ballypatrick, as well as at Clonmel, the receiving depot. Young ^{Dillon} Dillon, whom I have already mentioned, and who mixed freely and socially the night before with the column, billeted with families in Kilcash area, 'phoned from Ballypatrick post office to his brother, who was a postal clerk in Clonmel post office, informing him of the I.R.A. invasion in the area that day, and he at once 'phoned the British military in Clonmel. Ears were always on the alert, and word was at once sent from Clonmel to Kilcash and Ballypatrick shortly before the military arrived, and by the narrowest escape imaginable, the I.R.A. men had just got outside the ring. Otherwise, it would have been a fight to death because men long on the run and hardened by military movement, and fairly well armed, would not allow the enemy to handle them, for if they did, they knew the fate that awaited them at the hands of the military - the order was anyone found with arms on him was to be executed.

Action was taken right away to deal with this shocking and barefaced treachery. Lacey and the few officer comrades who remained with him returned to the 8th battalion area a few days later, and Ballyneale company got an order to have the ^{Dillon} Dillon house surrounded and kept under observation early that night. Though it was in the Kilcash company area, it was the usual practice to get outside men, and not locals who would be known, for this work. After two hours on duty, waiting, the men over-stepped their instructions and orders. Knowing at that time that the family was held responsible for the spying, they closed in on the house, situated above Kilcash Castle, and eventually were trying to get in, but the doors were firmly blocked. Words were exchanged between the I.R.A. and the occupants. One of the latter, understood to be the young girl, threw a pot of dirty water out of the window which fell on some of the men. One, without the slightest thought, cocked his shotgun and fired in through the second storey window where the water was fired from. Unfortunately, the young girl of the Dillon's, without a shadow of sense, was looking out through the window at the time, and got the full contents of the shot in the face and body. She was killed instantly. This tragedy, of course, caused a sensation and consternation in the area. The one-sided report that came from enemy headquarters and appeared in the press at the time - that a body of armed men fired into the house of a family in Kilcash and brutally murdered a young schoolgirl.

When Lacey and his comrades arrived, they found this sudden tragedy after taking place. They withdrew from the area without taking the intended action, to open up a big investigation.

The area was immediately surrounded by police and military, and no civilian appeared. After a verdict of "brutal murder" at the inquest, the burial took place at recently opened new graveyard at *Carrickbeg*. Why it was ^{not} Carrick-on-Suir could not be understood, but, of course, there were reasons.

The aftermath was that Lacey held a short inquiry as to why the men exceeded the orders, when they had no authority or order to close in on the Dillion house, and no authority to fire on the house at all. As a matter of fact, he was so upset and so annoyed that he favoured punishment on the company and the man who so foolishly fired on the house. It was understood at the time that it was to be their sad punishment for the treachery of her brothers, but she was a very young girl - a sad ending to an innocent girl, for the treachery of her brothers.

Gillar
I have already mentioned that the young Dillon who sent the news to his brother in the post office, Clonmel, was not fully normal, as, of course, a fully sensible man, or even youth, if he was anxious to spy, would not use the 'phone; he would cycle to Clonmel, or even get his sister to do it. The Clonmel brother knew at once that he was "on the spot", and, after the funeral, took the boat to England. This man, who was a postal official, though perhaps he got the job as an R.I.C. man's son, must have realised fully, when he got the message, that he was doing the lowest and basest act any man could do, by knowingly and treacherously giving the enemy every opportunity to wipe out his own flesh and blood, young Irishmen, fighting on the hills of his country against the murder machine of the old and only enemy, England. Davis, the son of an

English soldier, born in a British barracks, wrote:

"Breathes there a man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
'This is my own, my native Land!'"

Dillon There was not a shadow of doubt but young Dillon was the informer, for, all during the day, the enemy closely searched every house, nook, glen, wood and drain in the Kilcash area. They gave the names of the men who stayed the night before in many houses, and told them the songs sung, dances, music, etc., in the houses where Dillon was a guest with the I.R.A. men. Only the houses that Dillon was in during the night did they give this inside information. The break up of the column next day was the reason for the locals and the hosts giving a sort of American wake to the boys that night.

Most surprising indeed was the fact that the Kilcash people were so innocent or the company so thoughtless that Dillon was never one to be watched - not because he was an ex R.I.C.man's son, for one of the finest and greatest men in Lacey's column, P. McDonagh, Quartermaster, was the same. Similarly, we had two men in Carrick company, Finlay and Hodnett, who were the hardest workers. The former became Assistant Brigade Engineer later; he was a University engineering student. But the seemingly utter irresponsibility of Dillon favoured him. Later it was revealed that it was due to love's jealousy. Like the wild creature he was, he fell in love in a rage of fury with a Limerick girl, by the name of Williams, who was teaching in Kilcash school. Of course, she completely ignored him, but a local farmer's son - and only son at that - by the name of O'Neill, was able to be in her company

frequently, and this enraged ^{Dillon} Dillxon. O'Neill was an officer of the Kilcash company, and, to revenge himself on O'Neill, it is said he thought of becoming an informer, because during the night's social with the I.R.A., the lady was in the company of O'Neill. Perhaps he thought this was the best way to separate them, for, like the old saying, "There's no fury like a woman's love broken", and it must have been the same with Dillxon.

To conclude this sad episode, months later, during the Truce period, another sensation followed in the arrest in Blackrock, Dublin, of one John O'Shea, grocer's assistant, a native of Raheen, Piltown, Co. Kilkenny, but who had, for a number of years previously, worked in Carrick as a grocer's apprentice at Dowley's, West Gate, and later as an assistant at Skehan's, Bros., 14 Main Street. He was then married to an R.I.C. man's daughter by the name of Hanley. He was arrested and charged with the murder of the Dillxon girl. Most extraordinary, he did not know she was dead at all. Most surprising, I was expected to be arrested the following day, for it was a case of mistaken identity by Dillxon or Dillxon's people. The day the column disbanded at Ballypatrick, I moved up and passed by Dillxon's house, to get to Tom O'Neill's of Kilcash, and, as far as I can recollect now, thirty-four years later, I was recognised and saluted by one of them. Twenty minutes later, the Windgap company captain, Ed. Burne, called at Dillxon's for direction to O'Neill's house. He was the same height and size as O'Shea, had the same red hair, and was about the same age. In my statement I have already mentioned that, on a couple of occasions, I accompanied O'Shea when visiting the Castle with the O'Neill cousins of O'Shea, and that the

Dillon's, having the key, accompanied us, which proves that Dillon was still trying to revenge himself on O'Neill and said that the latter must have got O'Shea, his cousin, to do the shooting, whereas it was Byrne who passed there that day. Most amazing that I was not charged also, for, if he thought that I preceded Byrne, therefore, I was with O'Shea who was, in reality, Byrne.

Anyhow, O'Shea only barely escaped that gallows. He would have been convicted, were it not for the fact that many R.I.C. men, who had heard in the meantime, from general gossip, of how the girl's death occurred, volunteered to give evidence and, with dozens of others who were able to give undisputed alibis for O'Shea and proof of his innocence.

Perhaps young Dillon had no reason to suspect O'Shea, and only wanted to have revenge on O'Neill over the teacher woman. He was picked up later by a column, and they kept him so long that he completely went mad and added a further chapter of tragedy and death to his own deed, whether it sprung solely from baseless national treachery or love's jealousy. I always thought it was imprudent of the Kilcash people, who knew him best, to have him in such a position at all, or in the company, that he could spy, and, worse still, his brother, who was supposed to be quite normal, to debase himself and to act on the information of his brother who he knew was not normal, and the failure of the I.R.A. section to carry out the order they got, to surround the house only.

I had an appointment, on one occasion, with the column in Grangemockler parish, to call at Walsh's at

mid-day (now Lanigan's) of Templemichael. I had two very important dispatches with me, and took every precaution that, if held up, they would not be discovered on me. No envelopes were used, to avoid bulkiness, and they were written on thin paper. I deflated the bicycle tyre and put in the pieces of paper, flat, full length, to avoid thickness. Never before had I taken such care. I proceeded up Ballyrickard road, to get out by Rath~~David~~ hill, to avoid main roads. I was only after passing Mountrichard farmyard when I heard, as I thought, the sound of heavy lorries, and could, at the time, have got over a fence into a field; but the noise stopped for a few minutes. At the mill boreen, I heard the noise again, and knew or sensed danger. I jumped off the bike, and placed it against the wall. I began to light a cigarette. The first and second lorries, containing Black and Tans, approached, and their occupants appeared not to take any notice of me. The third or fourth lorry contained some R.I.C. men who must have given a signal to stop. The other three lorries then stopped, and half their numbers got out and ran back, with rifles at the ready. I was surrounded by about thirty Black and Tans and a few R.I.C. men. I was quite prepared for immediate death and plugging. I was practically stripped naked, clothes pulled off, all pockets closely searched inside, shirt closely examined. I was questioned at length. I said - I always had an answer ready, in case I would be held up - that I was calling on people, soliciting orders for business, and calling on farmers who had wool for sale. There was no use in my saying I was collecting debts, as I could show no bills on me, if they checked up and found the people I named did not owe any money. Coffey's used buy wool from the three

counties' area; I was a sorter, weighed it, etc., and sometimes owners with large quantities would invite me to their farms for inspection. When they failed to find anything incriminating, they closely felt the tyres on the bike. Had they torn it with their bayonets, quite probably they would have found the despatches. The reason why they did not take more drastic action - women were coming into town for shopping in horse, pony and ass traps, and they used - a few of them - hold them up and search their cars and luggage.

Often I thought that one of the R.I.C. who recognised me and who was in the last lorry, and who gave the signal to the preceding lorries to stop, knew me well. He was the youngest in the barracks, a Galway man by the name of Connolly, married and had a house in Rice Road. His sister had remained with him and his wife. A pal of mine by the name of McGuinness, a chemist in Murphy's medical hall, a native of County Monaghan, was doing a line with Connolly's sister, or friends with them. Though I had, a year or nine months earlier, refused him goods that he called for - it was an order at the time - and though McGuinness, who was friendly with his sister, had got an order from the company to discontinue visiting there and had obeyed the order, I am certain that, but for this earlier acquaintance, I would have been plugged that day. The Black and Tans were not drunk - it was early in the day - and looked as if they were under orders. They did not talk much at all, but proceeded with the searching. Yet I imagine that the many people coming from and going to town freely, on business, had something to do with their calmness. Blessed are the

meek, for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven! When I got through - I was nearly in Grangemockler before I felt I was out of danger, for I still expected them to follow me, as they had done in a number of places throughout the country, and to follow one expecting a meeting!

I arrived at Templemichael, and was told that, when I did not arrive at the time specified, they had left. I explained the reason for my delay. I was told to go to Wallace's of Heathbrad, a mile south on the main road to Carrick, to meet them there. When I got to Wallace's, I was told that, for some very special reason, they had not called there, but was told to get further in towards the mountain. I was all in a fog, but said to myself that I would have to find them. I went up Glenacurra road. A man, with a barrel of water on a cart, whom I did not know or who, I think, did not know me, shouted, "You'd better be careful! A British column of soldiers are up there further!" I began to examine myself; who am I? Am I dead, asleep, dreaming, or in doubt like the poet? But he assured me they were there. Nearly everybody in Grangemockler were close, personal friends of mine, but I thought, if I called anywhere, I might be held up. The best thing I could do was to get away from the area, as it was now pretty late. I decided to go to Phelan's of Ballygine, Nine-Wile-House. Try as I might, it was impossible to contact or find even one Volunteer of the local company anywhere - like everyone grounded. Word had got around the parish earlier that a British flying column was in the area. It was getting late in the evening and I had not got a morsel of food since early breakfast; my two sides were meeting. When I got to Blockogue, the house was closed. I again thought I

was dreaming, and felt like Robinson Crusoe on the island. I tried the fields, and found Michael Phelan farming, so, to forget my worries and get my mind off my roving life, I took off my coat and gave a hand. Open-air farmwork was something I had a great love for. He said the brother and sister had gone to Glenseskeogh to visit their sister, Mrs. Bolger. I drove in the cows and helped to milk, and had just finished when his sister, Maggie, and his brother, Jim, who had spent twenty-five years at the drapery trade at Comerford & Baldwin's, 17 Main Street, Carrick, arrived, all excitement and talk - they were held up twice since they left Glenseskeogh for Nine-mile-House and the trap and themselves personally searched by the English soldiers. This fully confirmed the warning I got earlier in the day from the wide-awake man with horse and load of water at Glenacurra, South Lodge. They were told by some of the people whom they met that the I.R.A. column were on the run from the English column, and had barely got through.

It was then nearly dark, and, after a long, hearty and welcome feed, Jim Phelan suggested going for a drink at Nine-Mile-House. I refused point-blank, because I did not want anyone to know or see me in the area during the night, but he persisted and said that we could get in through the back and into a room where no one would see us. It was only one hundred and fifty yards from Blockogue to the public house at Nine-Mile-House, and as we reached the important road junction (crossroads leading to Callan, Kilkenny and Dublin on the east, Carrick and Clonmel to the south, and Mullinahone, to the north) - it was very fine but dark for summer time - a shout was heard, to halt at once and put up our hands. We ignored it at first, but the

shout was repeated. We asked who was it, and the shout came again, "Military! Keep your hands up!" One soldier, with rifle at the ready, advanced into the road, in company with two others, three yards apart, fully armed - real English accents - and we realised at once that it was the English column. With rifles against our backs, we were forced into a field on the west side of the junction underneath Carrignaclear Rocks, where a dozen other soldiers joined us and, still holding up our hands, we were forced through a very small opening in a fence, covered with wire and hawthorn - some gap used for rabbit hunting - and into the hill proper, right under the huge, high pile of rockhills, Carrignaclear.

Here were about forty soldiers and two young officers, apparently intending to camp there for the night, with ground-sheets, blankets, etc. There already were Michael Phelan, who also took a walk to Nine-mile-House, before going to bed, for a chat with the locals, a nephew by the name of Tim Bolger, and three or four others. We were thoroughly searched, and our names and addresses taken. I always had another name on the tip of my tongue for similar occasions and, of course, had plenty of time when crossing the field to think. I gave the name of James Dunne, The Bog, Poulacappal, a nearby place. No one was allowed to smoke, and could only talk in whispers, covered by two, three and four soldiers with guns - two groups of two hours each. Old Phelan, Michael, was at the start pleading to be let down to the end of the field, to tell his delicate and invalid sister why he could not be there with her - and the other brother, Jim, and

Bolger. They refused, of course - perfect instructions. Then Phelan asked them to send down one of the soldiers, but, with courtesy, they refused. The language of the men, chatting among themselves, was the usual soldier type, every second word a foul expression. Two years later, Paddy Power, 1st Battalion Quartermaster, previously mentioned, who spent two long terms as a military hostage, first with the Black and Tans, and second with the Free State Army, told me that the foul language was the same in the three armies, no difference in the world - the Irish Republican Army, the Free State Army and the British.- and he had years' experience of the three.

About 4 a.m., when dawn appeared, all assembled, including their scouts at the outposts, woke up the officers and men, carefully and tidily packed up their sleeping outfits with typical military cleanliness and tidiness, and gave the order to fall in. Both officers very courteously and generously apologised for any inconvenience caused to us, and told us we were free to go home. I counted fifty men, with two officers, all under thirty years of age and exceptionally good-looking. We prisoners numbered seven, including three out of one house and two. All accompanied the army to Blockogue, two hundred yards from the hillside, and all cheered us good-morning when turning off the road. They went on towards Mullinahone, and when they reached near there about six o'clock, it was full daylight, and the farmers were about to drive in the cows for milking. I got information that evening that they were not seen at all. They must have walked into some grove of trees.

After a good, welcome breakfast, I had a long sleep next morning. About mid-day, I departed to

contact the officers of Grangemockler company, or any of the men. It was all sensational, wild reports - shootings, ambushes, etc., etc., - but the local column had got their heels clear and were reported to have gone south, over the Suir, into County Waterford. Readers will realise the life of a Volunteer at that time. I made it my business to find out as much information as possible regarding the actions and activity of the enemy column that day. They raided no houses, but remained for long periods at road junctions between Grangemockler village and Slievenamon mountain. After an hour or two, they would move off to another part of the road. Everyone who passed by was searched.

They were under perfect discipline and order by the two officers, and no horse-play was attempted. I had a great opportunity of observing their type of duty during the night, and, of course, had very little time to observe much in the morning. They did not appear to love the job - most of them seemed unhappy. Of course, sleeping out in fields is not a pleasant job, yet during the first world war millions of men spent months and years in water and mud in trenches in France. I could not trust any of the information I got from the people they held up in the area, because it was only old men, women and young children that moved along the roads during the day. Young men of military age, even accompanied by horse and cart or cattle, on business, would be in danger of capture.

It was a well thought-out plan. They remained two miles away from where they would spend the night, and did not proceed to that area until darkness had set in, crossing over fields, like the I.R.A. The very fact of a small group of enemy soldiers being able to

move around unmolested, while the I.R.A. column was actually on the spot, should have led to some action, but our column were so poorly equipped that they could not even attempt a make it unpleasant for the enemy, which is clear evidence of the weakness of our fighting men. They were men of dauntless courage and bravery, but, of course, it would have been madness to attempt a conflict, because after ten minutes the stock of ammunition would have been used up. Yet, it is clearly obvious that the columns must have been one of the greatest worries to the British. The very fact of them passing from Clonmel to Kilcash, Grangemockler, Nine-Mile-House, Mullinahone, Ballingarry, Fethard and on to Thurles at this time without a shot being fired on them, must have given a different impression to the enemy. Other solid reasons for this immunity from any attempt at open ambush or open conflict would mean condemning to death twenty to thirty neighbours, old friends and one's own people in that area, and all their property, which would mean many thousands of pounds. The enemy knew that well. The more they killed, old or young - anyone up to ninety years, babies in their mothers' arms. That had occurred all over the country. If I.R.A. leaders or column leaders had any semblance of conscience left, they felt that, in that way, with reprisals following reprisals, it was senseless.

Out for the week, I made it a job to visit and check up on local activities. I had to get back to the old shop for market day, Saturday, and all was chaos there as well - consignments of goods unopened, and letters, and large numbers of farmers' wool unweighed and left aside for owners to call. However, it was not business. The martyr was on the gibbet; people

staring down the rifles of the enemy before death.

Next day, a battalion meeting was called early in the day, out near the mountain, at Curraheen in Rathcormack. The O/C, Commandant Maurice McGrath presided at the meeting which was attended by every battalion officer, vice O/C, adjutant, engineer, quartermaster, intelligence officer and their assistants, as well as every company captain available. The weather was exceptionally fine, like all the days in 1921. The meeting began early and lasted four and a half hours. Correspondence from G.H.Q. was read, and stress was laid upon the necessity of some form of major operation to be carried out in every battalion area, in order to withdraw the pressure of troops from the counties that had, month after month, carried out continuous attacks on the enemy and were now suffering heavily from reprisals. Every battalion was ordered carry out shooting operations - to shoot at the enemy. This was surprising, coming from headquarters, for, up to then, they had condemned any attempt at shooting operations. In areas where sniping or major operations had taken place, condemnation, verbal as well as by correspondence, followed from headquarters.

After deliberating the pros and cons, it was decided by a majority at the meeting to do away with an enemy intelligence officer. When one of the battalion officers stated that this man was responsible for the arrest of prominent battalion officers, other members present questioned it. It was stated by another member that this man had nothing to do with his arrest, that it was a sister of the I.R.A. officer who went to the school pal of an R.I.C. man that he should be arrested,

to save him from the danger of shooting, and that this ex R.I.C. man's daughter, instead of going to the barrack, went to the man or his people, and told him to get away or he'd be arrested.

These, of course, were serious charges, and the meeting went on for hours. Another I.R.A. officer stated that this R.I.C. man gave some very important and worthwhile information in town. This was fully investigated, and it was found that the information did not benefit the campaign in any form, and that it must have been given to ascertain the repercussions. A further member explained that this man had two brothers in Ballykinlar where thousands of I.R.A. men were imprisoned in the six-county area. This was accepted as a fact but would not in any way exonerate his culpability.

Another member stood up, and strongly urged that, if anyone was to be shot, it should be the mad R.I.C. constable who had beaten up and gravely injured anyone arrested in town, and who had injured many youngsters when held up in the streets. This man was named as the man for punishment. This member also pointed out that the first man named to be shot had never beaten a man, held up or arrested. He had a dour, cold looking appearance, and that did not make him likeable.

All these arguments were fully discussed, but did not alter the proposal to do something and remove from the area the R.I.C. man named. The meeting lasted late into the evening.

The decision or order was executed on the following Wednesday night when R.I.C. Constable O'Leary was fired on, in the centre of the New Bridge, at about

8.45 p.m., in broad daylight, while a small number of people were passing in both directions at the time, as few people ventured out then. The two I.R.A. men were not disguised, and were recognised by the few people they met. Both carried their Peter-the-Painters openly in their hands while retreating to the Carrickbeg hills.

In a few minutes, the news spread rapidly around that area, and immediately the place was deserted. It was not until an hour later that the R.I.C. and Black and Tans were aware of what had happened, and the body was removed to the barrack at the Greenside. People were out walking, cycling, playing and practising on the river for rowing competition. Word flew all over the town and area in ten minutes, and people scampered home in all directions. It was obvious that the identity of the two men was known in the barracks in a short time, because unlike other occasions, youngsters were not beaten up. Of course, they made sure they were not on the streets or roads. Many young and elderly women and elderly men were returning from their evening constitutional around the hill or New Line, and met the two men walking away over Carrickbeg hill. Both were well known to most people. An old sergeant of the R.I.C., in mufti, with his wife, was with or near these people. It is certain that he knew them. They, or he, had a narrow escape because, coming down by Boreen Malogue near the New Cemetery, they were in the midst of a goodly number and, when they passed them, the two I.R.A. men recognised him and they feared he had recognised them. It was understood that the names of the two men were household words that night and subsequently.

That was Wednesday night, and the town was shut up for the remainder of the week. The shot policeman

was brought to the barrack, and waked there. A day or two later, he was brought to St. Molleran's church, Carrickbeg, and removed by train for burial in his native place.

The townspeople's reactions to his death were not favourable, as they thought that the wrong man had been shot, and that the men thought he was one of the two who were marked for a long time. He never figured in any outside action that would make him hated. He had a surly appearance, and lived in a pub in the Main Street most of his time. Later information was that he was on bad terms with a next-door neighbour, and that it was information from this source which caused suspicion.

This week's closing up, following on the previous week, enabled me, with other battalion officers who were also out of town, to make up arrears in the collection of the I.R.A. levy. There were various reasons for the many people who did not pay. Some, out of vanity or to stress their loyalty, would only subscribe to well known I.R.A. personalities, some would not subscribe to locals, some would not give if one of the collectors was not a favourite, some objected to the amount charged, some did not want to part with money under any circumstances, and some were perhaps hostile. So this period was availed of to call on many people, resulting in considerable sums - all sent to brigade headquarters for supposed transmission to G.H.Q.

We were now into the month of June, and only a month before the Truce. This collecting of the money was one of the most hated jobs to me, though, to the credit of ninety per cent. of the people called on, they considered it to be one of the most glorious things in

their lives to subscribe money to the cause, though, of course there were exceptions in all areas. I must congratulate the violent opponents, the people who were pro-British to the bone and who were hostile to the I.R.A., for they were honourable enough to refuse me point blank. They were so British and so much against the I.R.A., yet so honourable as never to give my name, or those of my comrades, whom they knew well, to the enemy in the local barracks, because, if they did, I would have been arrested or plugged to death on the spot. From some years of business transactions with my uncle (James Coffey), I got closely acquainted with them. Though they were wealthy, pro English and anti I.R.A., they were honourable. The test was that they never gave my name - I'd have been shot on the spot. The landlords, the wealthy people, were ninety per cent. pro British and anti I.R.A. so that readers can understand their feeling. Yet, to their credit, they never gave my name to their friends, for if even one of them mentioned my name, it was the end. What was most surprising was the fact that this pro-British type used call to Coffey's for Irish manufactured goods, the only house that was so foolish as to stock nothing but Irish manufacture, if it was to be had at that time. I would not order or stock goods of any other manufacture except Irish. The spirit was so high at the time. What was most amazing and most significant that the only people who came into the shop (Coffey's) to buy it were the pro English people, the landlords and that clique. To their credit, they would buy nothing but Irish manufacture in order to give home employment. The most violent gun-running and shooting I.R.A. man, or his family, did not give a continental damn about Irish manufacture or employment of Irish labour, or any of

the workers - and it is the same to-day, thirty-four years later, 1921-1955.

This collection work was by far the most dangerous and the most horrid. It wasn't the danger, but I always hated taking money unless dished out with open hands. We were under such compliment that, if even one word or name was sent to the enemy, it meant instant death. The pro British and anti I.R.A. people knew that well, but they realised our position and what would be our fate if they gave information, and they resisted.

The 5th battalion (Clonmel) organised one of the most unusual and indeed the most amazing functions held during the previous few years, a form of outing or picnic, so popular that time. The brains behind it was Frank Loughman, Clonmel, a Carrick-on-Suir man, a chemist in Gladstone Street, Clonmel. With his fertile brain, he thought that something should be done to bring some social life into the I.R.A. - some form of relaxation at the time, for during the previous two years, it had been a life and death struggle - no smile on anyone's face, just expecting death around the next corner. If only one comrade or Volunteer had a little talk around, it percolated to the man on the street, and so it was obvious that it would reach the R.I.C. and, if the latter had their heart in their rotten and horrible work, it meant instant death to the Volunteer concerned. Most significant, from post Truce information, they were aware of far more than we guessed at the time. Probably, to avoid local activity, they kept their tongues in their cheeks. Frank Loughman, a man of brains, had advanced vision, and thought it was necessary to hold some form of social function to maintain normality among the I.R.A. troops, keeping in mind the old proverb - all work and

no play makes Jack a dull boy.

Of course, this served a dual purpose. As a matter of fact, it was ninety per cent. an I.R.A. meeting, and only ten per cent. social, though supposed to be one hundred per cent. the latter. It was held at the shooting lodge at Ballyknockane, Ballypatrick, the summer residence of Lord Ossory, Kilkenny, then the most popular open-air place for picnic or rendezvous in the south of Ireland. Remember, readers, few people went far outside their own areas then, for such socials. So few cars were on the roads - as a matter of fact, hardly any motors at all. So, no Sunday passed but hundreds, and often thousands, assembled at the shooting lodge, Ballyknockane, for picnics - all on cycles, or sidecars, traps, etc. Really, the 5th and 8th battalion meeting that Sunday in June 1921 was no other than a joint meeting of the officers and prominent active men of the I.R.A. from both battalion areas, and the object was to try and plan a joint form of major action in both areas. Let it be understood that the social side was not ignored. Loughman was the Irish chief of staff of organisation of any form of activity, but his flare for social and pleasant activity was another of his great accomplishments.

The shooting lodge at Ballyknockane was then more popular than Tramore, and hundreds used come there every Sunday. No motors then except for a few rich people, and people had to go on cycles, traps or on foot. Many old friendships renewed, many handshakes. It was the first of these pleasant few hours after three or four years, and it was God's gift to the nerves for the most of us, who had been without any proper sleep for six months in our own beds, no decent change of clothes,

or any change at all only weekly. Of course, the final as well as the chief purpose of this social I.R.A. gathering was to try and hammer out some co-operative plan between the 5th and 8th battalions for worthwhile operations. The 8th had a big reputation for unceasing activity and, to be truthful and without boasting, it never stopped trying to do something. The 5th, due to some valid and sound reasons perhaps, from a military point of view, had not big roll of activity. It had nothing to do with want of willingness or able men, because, from its valiant O/C to the rank and file, it numbered many with distinguished I.R.A. service. Yet at this gathering at Ballyknockane, as well as from many remarks by brigade headquarters, the activity in that area did not give satisfaction.

At this particular meeting I was nominated or named to be the new brigade engineer, on the grounds of a year's solid, hard work and operational activity in my department. Perhaps this was mainly due to the fact that, though the others were O/C's - and O/C's chiefly on my recommendation - they were both living in rural, sequestered areas, and had no means of close association with the town company who had to administer the major part of I.R.A. activity. Though I was supposed to be in charge of the engineering department which was responsible, for the past six months, for all worthwhile operations, I was really and truly, in the operational sense, in charge of the battalion. At least, I had dared preach authority without a question from the O/C. Perhaps this was due to my close personal friendship with O/C Maurice McGrath and ^{then} O/C Thomas Fahy. The more I did - bad or good, reckless, absurd, sound, sensible or foolish (latter supposed to

be non-existent then) - the more they liked it. Both were very hard, tough men, sportsmen to the finger-tips, reckless, gay and brave. So the more I got done, the more they liked it, and when one starts on jobs of this type with full, undisputed power and authority like I had, without even one to question them, then it is like the wind - the storm gets stronger, the longer distance, all joining in speed and power. So it was with me - never to stop - and for this reason only was I picked out of the large Tipperary III. Brigade area, with its numerous distinguished soldiers, officers and men, with years of fighting records, and appointed to the highly dangerous and responsible position of Captain of Engineers of III. Tipperary Brigade.

Late that evening, the gathering broke up. As we were about to break away in many directions - I, with all the 8th battalion officers and all the company officers and active Volunteers, about to return east for 8th battalion area - a special despatch arrived from the Carrick company to say that a Black and Tan soldier was shot dead on the New Bridge, two hours previously, in their own military lorry, that dozens of men were rounded up and shot dead or beaten to death by the enemy, that the whole town was to be blown up that night, and that all roads were scouted by the company Volunteers who were warning all friends not to enter the town as the enemy, fully armed, were in charge and arresting all men coming into the town. The message also said that the Suir river was now red with spilled Irish blood.

This was confirmed by rural people who had left the town, and women and old men in traps who, after minute searching and explanations, were allowed to pass through from the town to their homes, but was later proved to be grossly exaggerated.

The officers and Volunteers from the Co. Waterford companies of Windgap, Clonea, Mothel and Rathgormack, got across the river about midnight, with the aid of fishermen's cots at Ballindine. The Carrick members broke up, and went to friends' houses far outside the town. I foolishly went too near the town for shelter, but it was an old man's home where no young men were living - Quinlan's of Ballinderfry, now Murray's. It was situated well in from the main road and sheltered by a wood.

This was the third week of continuous absence from my uncle's shop - and the height of the wool purchasing season. I was then prepared not to return to business. Word came to me from one who was in the shop that the boss, James Coffey, had to refuse to accept wool, as I was not there to sort and weigh it, and that he had to instruct and advise owners who had left their wool to take it away, as I had not been in the shop to help for for almost the whole time since Christmas.

In the meantime, I made use of the opportunity, as in the previous week, to try and contact all battalion companies, in order to check, inspect and improve their military efficiency and knowledge.

After a week, word came from the town that the enemy had never been so quiet and had actually disappeared from the streets, that they had now fully investigated the death of the Black and Tan in their own lorry on the New Bridge and that it was not caused by the I.R.A. The Black and Tan had been holding a bomb in his hand, with the pin withdrawn, ready for an I.R.A. attack, and, when the lorry left the R.I.C. barracks, it travelled at great speed and turned the right-angle bend at the top

of New Street into Main Street. Still at great speed, it suddenly took a left turn at the New Bridge. The speed was so great, and the distance from the top of New Street to the left turn at the New Bridge was so short, that the lorry turned right and struck the protecting wall (now east of the Munster & Leinster Bank). The shock of the impact caused the finger of the Black and Tan to be eased on the pin, and the bomb exploded in his hand, resulting in his death. Most surprising that all in the lorry were not blown to pieces.

Father O'Shea, C.C., St. Nicholas Church, who was one hundred per cent. an out-and-out I.R.A. supporter and was well known as such, even to the enemy, went to the New Bridge when he heard the man (Smith) was killed - the only Catholic Black and Tan in the barrack. Father O'Shea was going to be shot on the spot, but they removed his broken body to the R.I.C. barrack. This did not deter Father O'Shea, and he followed them to the barracks where he insisted on giving the last spiritual rites to the dead man. I understand, after a short time, instead of shooting the priest, they realised that he was a brave man, determined to carry out his sacred duty to administer to his humble flock, and that, after a short reminder by one of the Catholic R.I.C. men, they admitted the priest into the barrack where he anointed and ministered to the dead soldier.

From information later received from the R.I.C. men who were Irish Catholics, the bravery, courage and spiritual devotion, against the blazing revolvers of the non-Catholic Black and Tans had a very salutary effect - even more so afterwards when they knew the Black and Tan was blown to smithereens by the bomb he held in his own hand. But a large number of youths, who were rounded

up that evening and who were shockingly beaten up, were the sufferers. Close on thirty were brought into the barracks, about twenty of whom were badly beaten, fifteen severely. They were the real sufferers. Fortunately, they were all very young, and some very old, for no man of military age, even an anti I.R.A. man, would leave himself open for arrest, and they made it their business to be out of the way. Some young lads were so badly injured that they were nervous wrecks for the remainder of their lives. This butchery with its mistaken objective had a quietening effect on the Black and Tans and R.I.C. for a long time afterwards.

The battalion officers called a special meeting that week-end, to ascertain the cause for the beating of townspeople, and to make arrangements for retaliations. The meeting lasted three and a half hours. Indirect apologies, by word, from the R.I.C. had reached some of the people, etc. The position was that no one was killed on the Irish side, though many Carrick people suffered undue injury. And none of them made claims for the beatings they got, when subsequently claims were the order of the day - perhaps they were thankful to be alive.

It is impossible to believe that his comrades in the lorry did not immediately realise that the explosion was caused by the bomb in his own hand where it was held to cause the death of some Irishman. It is evident that they knew it right away, because otherwise they would have carried out same pattern of reprisal in Carrick as elsewhere - shoot at sight, men, women and children, and burn to the ground shops and streets - especially as they had a prepared list of shops for destruction in the barracks. The rounding up of three dozen people that

were on the streets and subsequent beatings were for show, to hide their own blunder, and the death of their pal, though due to his own inefficiency, was solely due to the Irish people for having them there at the time.

This episode brought us into July, 1921, and, a week or less later, news began to peter through that we were about to have a truce. No one could believe it, for, at the time, no one saw or expected anything but death and burning - looking down the rifles of the enemy for a year, and expecting to get its contents every moment are only imaginable to the people who went through it. But, far and beyond our wildest hopes and dreams, like children's imagination, or the peaks of Walt Disney imagination, the Truce was declared to take place at twelve noon on July 11th.

Bravery appeared to be immediately awakened in the heart and soul of every I.R.A. man, and dozens of them who had been noted for their absence from normal duty were on the warpath for a major attack all day, July 10th, and well up to noon, the Truce hour, seeking the enemy anywhere and everywhere, to top off his head. One group got into the closed graveyard at Carrickbeg to take a pot shot at an old R.I.C. man named Prout who lived nearby. He escaped by inches. He too intended to celebrate the end and had gone, an hour earlier than usual, from his house to a pub, and the long day waiting for his removal ended up in a pub by this group. A good job - he was a Protestant and it would have been said that that was why he was shot.

For me, after a few years of the life as described, the ending of hostilities brought the hope of trying^{to} rebuild, in some way, my business, almost

destroyed by neglect and absence, with no one to meet, attend and serve customers over such a long period. All the glory of the Truce - the fact that the strongest nation on earth had to bend their knees to the I.R.A. and seek a truce, and that the shadow of death was over - was neutralised by the cold, staring fact that the profitable business, built up by the attention and hard work of my uncle and myself over the years, had been almost destroyed by me in one year. All the glory, cheering, shaking of hands and flag waving would or could not make up for the loss. Right away, I swore that I would work day and night to build it up again, but, cruel and hard as the pre Truce life was, this orgy of mad celebrations was even worse.

Like Our Lord's Resurrection, men now too appeared that had not been seen for years. The few hundred in the ranks of the I.R.A. in the 8th battalion multiplied fourfold - we had now thousands. Everyone was an I.R.A. man or a prospective one. All July was devoted, day and night, to celebrations, drinking and dancing. Dances were got up in every village, every townland, and in nearly every home. Drink, drink, drink - food, smoking, dancing - the people went mad. This was quite understandable for one month, but it dragged on for three months. To the credit of the maturity of the officers - men of cold, hard commonsense, disciplined by hardship and responsibility - this wild life did not appeal to them, but unfortunately some of the officers went to the "dogs", and there is no more pathetic and sad scene than a high ranking officer blind drunk, in front of a few hundred people. This, of course, was bound to lower the respect required to maintain a reputation.

My doctor, Dr. Murphy, got after me right away to go to hospital immediately for operation - for the double rupture that I had postponed for a year. He kept after me, but I put him off, saying that after two months the excitement would have died down, and that, when the shop would be in shape, with some wool weighed and owners acquainted, I would be able to go.

G.H.Q., from reports, realised the danger of the Truce and that the high living would have to stop - a proof of their wisdom and patriotism. Right away, I got a circular from G.H.Q. that they were making preparation for a week's lectures in Dublin for divisional and brigade engineers, and to be prepared and ready to come to Dublin and attend this course. No excuse. Here again, I was faced with having to leave the shop. It had to be done. I spent a week in Dublin in a hall in Parnell Square under the chief command of General Rory O'Connor, Chief Engineer, G.H.Q. Every divisional and brigade engineer from the thirty-two counties attended. It was all work and no play, from ten in the morning until ten at night, one hour for dinner and for tea. We received as much instruction in five days as would normally cover six months.

It was an opportunity for meeting officers from every county in Ireland, going to and coming from the hall, and after ten o'clock at night in the hotels, etc. We did our best to make friends and exchanged views, and mostly they were engineers from Northern Ireland, now the Six Counties. I found it difficult to understand their accents - the Tyrone people in particular.

When we returned to Carrick, we were advised to study carefully and fully, nightly, what we had learned in Dublin, that we would have, right away, to attend a

Divisional engineering course, something similar to the one in Dublin. We were honoured by the visit of some of the leading fighting men. Our instructors and lecturers were famous University engineers.

After another week's slavery in the shop, I proceeded to Knocklong for the Divisional engineering course. I had to give every battalion engineer in the III Tipperary instructions for equipment, clothes, etc. This was held in the big Cleeve's creamery there. All billeting was fixed for us in farmers' houses around the area by the local Knocklong company. Every brigade and battalion engineer in the 2nd Southern Division was present, under Divisional Engineer de Courcey, Limerick. I was with Tom Phelan, 8th battalion engineer, and we were billeted at Moloney's at the back of the old castle, Knocklong. Moloney was a well known, well-to-do young farmer, with his young wife and two children, one a baby. We were treated as lords, and we got a half-day off, if we would like to attend an agricultural cattle show at Charleville, eight miles west of Knocklong. Mr. Moloney, with his wife, drove us in horse and trap to the show. We were introduced to hundreds of friends, cousins and neighbours of Moloney's, and, with local company officers present, were again introduced to a few more hundreds, including some very nice young Limerick girls - a deep, strong and valid reason for not returning at all. We were invited that night to at least fifty dances, and to a hundred dances for the remainder of the week. We had to decline all. Under the supervision of de Courcey, we blew up some farmers' cement passage bridges over streams on their land. They first gave us welcome permission, the spirit was so high then.

Home again after a week, but no time was lost, for I had to prepare and make all necessary arrangements for holding another week's lectures and instructions on engineering specially for III Tipperary Brigade. This was for every battalion and every company engineer in III Tipperary. I notified every battalion engineer to notify every company engineer in their battalions that I had arranged to hold a brigade engineering course to last the whole of the month - four weeks of November, 1921.

It was held in Grantstown Hall, home of Lord Massey, four miles from Tipperary town. This was the longest course yet. Instructions, equipment making, engines, mines, bombs, electricity, explosives, motor cars, motor cycles. It was like a combination of Ford's and the Electricity Supply Board. I managed to pick up, here, there and everywhere, a sufficiency of essential equipment to maintain the full course of training for a month. In all, about fifty were there. It lasted three and a half weeks. A big job was the providing of food, cigarettes, milk, bread, tea, sugar, delph, cutlery, cooking and washing utensils. Everything had to be prepared beforehand. I got every help from the officers and men of the 4th battalion (Tipperary town) as well as from the officers of the battalion.

All the knowledge that we had gained at G.H.Q. and Divisional H.Q. engineering courses had to be imparted. I brought two local University students in engineering with me - William Finlay and Paddy Dalton. The latter had to leave after three days for Cork University. I drove him to the train at Bansha and paid his way to Carrick. He did not want to go, but

his parents insisted. Shortly before Christmas, he got some water on the brain and died there in Cork about Christmas time. Finlay remained on, stating that his father had no money to finance him. He was full of brains, and, many years later, after getting out of prison in 1924, he returned to Dairy Science in Cork University. He became the leading science man there. Then he was appointed Assistant Manager of Landsdowne factory in Limerick. His new scheme for converting milk into a more profitable channel than butter, designed by himself, had much to do with the prosperity of the farming community of the present day. He met a sudden death, by falling down from the top storey of the factory through an opening, his body striking a supporting upright beam, injuring his spine - a big national loss.

Naturally, men, after four weeks in a camp, made many close friendships that lasted for years and to the end. Practically everyone there returned to his company area, with a reasonably good knowledge of his duties.

This looks as if it would be near the end. It was now obvious that it was far worse on me than during the Black and Tan time, for then I was able to pay, every week or by night, some attention to the business, but now it was full-time.

During the battalion engineering camp in Grantstown Hall, we had daily visits from many high ranking I.R.A. officers from G.H.Q., Divisional H.Q. and many O/C's of Columns from all over Ireland. After the first week, it looked as if we were a demonstration engineering camp. During the month, I was introduced to over four hundred officers, and the time lost by me from the direct training of my brigade engineers was

definitely serious. Of course, I was fortunate in having numerous competent men, expert in training. Let it be understood that, a week before the camp opened, I had to make sure that I had engaged fully competent instructors in all phases and courses of military operations - 1st, Infantry; 2nd, Engineering; 3rd, Explosives; 4th, Bombs; 5th, Motoring; 6th, Rifles; 7th, Machine Guns; 8th, Bayonets; 9th, Military Explosives; 10th, Repair of Rifles; 11th, Repair of Shotguns; 12th, Revolvers; 13th, Physical Training; 14th, Discipline; 15th, Secular Education; 16th, Religion. This applied to the battalion engineering training camps in the New Year, 1922. I was aided by G.H.Q., Divisional H.Q., and Brigade H.Q. in procuring men competent in all subjects - mostly ex British officers and soldiers who were disbanded or had retired before then. When approached, they thought they were in Heaven - the honour to train the I.R.A. Up to then, they were under suspicion - at least, they thought so, as ex English soldiers. They were all locals. They certainly were competent, willing, capable, and hardworking. Some of our men were equally as capable, having over a number of years studied closely and worked hard to acquire efficiency in all phases.

When we wound up at the end of November, all the boys had a tanned colour from the outdoor field operations by day, as the weather had been quite summer-like. By night, it was still schooldays, or rather night schools, hours spent at lectures, demonstrations, etc. It was a case of all work and study. To me and other officers, it was a full sixteen hour day, as we had to make sure of supplies of all the thousand-and-one items that were required in a camp catering for sixty, as well as all the numerous distinguished officers who

called.

Simultaneously, a camp for rifle and general infantry training, on a far larger scale, for III Tipperary brigade was held at Ballinard Castle, near Fethard, kindly given by that great Irish soldier-statesman, Senator William Quirk ^e recently deceased (1955). At the same time, all over Ireland, every brigade carried on the very same training as III Tipperary.

All this intensive training and preparation were to fight the enemy should they renew the war, in abeyance since the Truce, 11th July. Most amazing of all, taking into account the nation-wide preparation, was the failure of G.H.Q. and the Republican government to import arms, for there was not a shadow of a sign of any improvement in equipping five thousand soldiers, not to mention the hundred thousand new recruits who had blown in since the Truce.

News, gleaned from the horse's mouth and from press reports that the ^{negotiations} ~~negotiations~~ were breaking down and new plenipotentiaries were appointed, were not cheerful and gave the incentive for an arduous form of training and preparation. Christmas closed in, and a cloud of darkness, in the form of sorrow, grief, and disappointment, fell on the people when the news appeared that the Irish delegation had come to terms with the enemy and had let down the Republic, and that all the sacrifice - death, plunder, ~~murder~~, burnings, destruction, loss of life, loss of business - was all in vain by the acceptance of the treaty of surrender. The confidence, smiles, handshaking, the hail-fellow-well-met, the orgy of pleasure ceased, and the faces, jaws and countenances of the I.R.A. soldiers lengthened two inches. It caused a dampness and coldness over the Christmas holidays that

should otherwise have reached the zenith of joy, pleasure and festivity.

I went to my father's home in County Kerry, and strolled into Castleisland on St. Stephen's Day. There I met General Humphrey Murphy, O/C, Kerry No. 1 Brigade, in company with that other great and tragic leader, General Charlie Daly, who had been sent by H.Q. from Kerry in charge of the hottest spot in the North against the Black and Tans. (The latter met his death about a year later with three others, O'Sullivan, Enright and a Derryman called Larkin, after having spent five months as prisoners of the Free State Army in Dromboe Castle - a reprisal for some ambush by the I.R.A.). The three of us spent hours together that day, but coming events had already cast their shadows. The whole trend of our conversation was that all was lost.

I was back again in Carrick after four or five days. Gone were the carefree recklessness and enjoyment.

Then, the long-drawn out debate on the Treaty in the Mansion House by the Republican deputies. This dragged on for a month - one speaker for, and the next against. Speeches lasted for hours. The late Mary MacSwiney, sister of the illustrious Terence, spoke for three and three-quarters of an hour. When the final vote came after five weeks' of talk, the pro-Treaties won, on a vote 63 to 57.

This actually put the nail on the coffin of the Republic. The "four glorious years" (1918-1921) and the glory of 1916 were wiped away by this vote. Here, for the first time in Irish history, a majority of elected representatives forsook freedom. Be it

remembered, the act of Union was accomplished by bribery, corruption and attainment of the highest paid job of state, but the majority were not Irish, but English and Scotch people living in Ireland.

Here, were men who had sworn allegiance to maintain unto death the Irish Republic. Here, was a delegation of the most distinguished Irishmen, selected for their high qualifications to maintain and assert, to the very end, the Republic, and compelled, in case of failure of attainment by negotiations, to return to the Dáil, deliberately signing away the Republic. A delegation headed by that great patriot-writer, a man who had devoted all his life to the Irish cause, Arthur Griffith - the man who was looked up on as never giving away an inch. Yet, that very man was solely responsible for the others to follow him.

Next in command was the famous and great Irish soldier-officer, Michael Collins, the *de Wet* of Irish fighting men, the man who was reputed to be solely responsible for maintaining the fight for freedom in Dublin, the man with a thousand escapes, the hero of all that was brave.

Here were the two leaders - the last two men in Ireland that any one person in the thirty-two counties would have dreamt or thought would ever betray the cause. The others, of course, were only associates. They had no authoritative power. The wily Lloyd George, English Prime Minister, separated Griffith from Collins, and the two from the remainder. Like what is now being done behind the Iron Curtain in Russia - the same system must have been used to get Griffith and Collins - confessions of guilt by distinguished Cardinals and Bishops in

Russia and Yugoslavia to-day. No other explanation can be accepted.

The long debates did not help, for gradually they developed into personalities and bitterness. When the non soldier deputies - and they held seven-five per cent. membership - spoke in favour of or against the Treaty, they were reminded right away by the soldier deputies that they had no right to talk. And where much sacrifice applied to deputies, it was challenged, and, at the end, the situation was a million times worse than before it commenced. The hatred let loose spread all over the country, and the for and against argument of the Dáil found itself into the talk at every street corner and in every pub.

The first delegation carried out their pledge that they would not sign anything unless they submitted it to the Dáil. They would not agree to surrender or lowering the Irish flag, and returned as they went. The second delegation were appointed. They were fully acquainted with what they had to meet and were prepared beforehand as to the nature of their action and defence. And this adds considerably to their failure in maintaining Irish instructions to return like the first delegation when they failed to obtain justice for Ireland.

Needless to add, during all this negotiation and debates, the morale of the I.R.A. in all places was not improving. From every town, village and townland, complaints were drifting into battalion and company headquarters of terrible trouble. Soldiers in uniform with their Sam Brown belts and Peter-the-Painters hanging out were the order of the day. So, to get down to terra firma, G.H.Q., Divisional H.Q. and Brigade H.Q.

decided right away on another spate of training. The brigades had now to sponsor training camps for their battalions.

This was a big job for me, to organise and supervise eight battalions in III Tipperary and, worse still, as I was living in the extreme south-east of the area. From Carrick to Emly there were over forty-five companies, and, further on, fifty and up to sixty in some places. I had to deal with about sixty companies, and the overloaded programme of full-scale military training. If confined exclusively to an engineering course, it would have indeed been loaded enough, but a soldier's training cannot be confined to one special course. To be a soldier, he must be trained particularly in infantry. He must be highly competent in rifle, revolver and gunnery, all forms of modern military drill, and, if an engineer, driving a motor car, lorry and van, destroying bridges, roads, railway, blowing up buildings, diverting rivers, destroying buildings, telephones and rebuilding all destructions. He must be able to make rifles, revolvers, machine guns, build bridges, roads and houses, use and make telephones, repair cars, lorries and vans, and he must be proficient at signals and signalling codes. In a word, for any sort of competency, the engineering classes would take three to five years of a full University course. At this time, I put it up to Brigade and Divisional H.Q. to considerably lessen the number of items for training, for it was utterly senseless to expect a fraction of competency in the hundred and one courses in our programme.

It was worse still for me to attempt to write and keep up correspondence with the eight battalion O/C's of the brigade on this enormous programme, and to try and

read and check the cart-load of reports which I used get every day. In all, I handled three hundredweight of write-up.

When the Bureau of Military History was first formed, I thought it right to hand over a huge bundle of this material, so that it would give the Bureau some idea of the enormous activity of the I.R.A. at that time. Most of this was done during the Truce period. Naturally there was no opportunity for anything like this during the Black and Tan period. Anyone who might have attempted to do so was foolish for, if it had fallen into the enemy's hands, the contents would reveal our operations. I would also impress on the officers of the Bureau that this write-up is fully comparable to the time and activity in the pre-Truce period.

However, I engaged the services of some girls, senior commercial pupils, sisters of leading I.R.A. men, and they used to come in some evenings every week, and take their turns at copying and typing fifty to hundred large copies of orders, reports, checks, etc. These I used despatch to the eight battalion engineers.

In all areas we selected unoccupied farm buildings, with large yards where the men used assemble, and the unused buildings housed the men during the demonstrations, lectures, etc. Unlike the Divisional and Brigade camps, we had the men moving about in an area up to two miles from the centre, where they were given free food and beds by night. Even the most supposedly snobbish, well-to-do families entertained the men lavishly.

The course took a month to be wound up, over the brigade area. In some companies, one week, and in others two weeks. We decided that the engineer

officer or trainer from an outside battalion would be in charge, and also he could bring any good trainer with him. We found that this was the best course, as men looked up to strangers and were not able to challenge their ability. It is like the saying: One's reputation is known or rather made by what is not known about one.

During all this period of intensive training and preparation, the political side of the Republican movement was anything but healthy.

Before I proceed further on this, I might point out that several other camps were under intensive training in different areas in the battalion simultaneously. The biggest was the infantry. I selected a number of men from both who used have to visit, participate and demonstrate their knowledge. The Engineers' most competent men used go to the infantry camp to give a demonstration of active engineering capabilities, and vice versa. In a sense, the majority of males between seventeen and forty-five years were under military training then. Perhaps if no training was every attempted, we would have had no civil war.

With all this vast military activity, the political wing was rapidly deteriorating. No one was big enough to withdraw every army man from the Parliament. It might be difficult, for the army men were the backbone of the former. Numerous incidents and activities in Dublin, Limerick and in a few other places had opened up the first stages of disunity among the I.R.A., and right away all the knowledge gained from the six months military training seemed to be lost in doubts. Who was it going to be used against? All were for the old and

only enemy, England, should they resume the Black and Tans. At the time, we looked on the parliamentary members as being old men, in comparison to ourselves, and naturally every youth or young man looks to age for guidance and advice. The child looks to a boy; the boy, to a youth; the youth, to a young man; the young man, to his elders; the elder, to his father; the father, to his elder, and the latter, to his grandfathers. But we had no one to look to - perhaps too many blooming officers, each a supposed General, and they overriding all old men of sense, because the latter did not seem to be alive at the time. The enemy played on the weakness of the Irish character, and left the game playing for such a long time that eventually the Irish military side would grow jealous of one another. And the Parliamentarians, who favoured the wretched Treaty, became a form of official government. And here came the start of tragedy.

At that particular time, the Irish people had not made a decision by election vote as to whether they would accept the articles of the Treaty, and, therefore, no group had authority to use Irish money to finance their supporters. They provided their officers who favoured the Treaty with enormous salaries, most expensive uniforms and ^{part} best transport - motors, lorries, etc. - at their disposal. The enemy occupying Government, England, facilitated by the provision of Irish taxation money for this purpose - a point never fully covered by historians during the past thirty-five years.

Let it be remembered - if the officers and men who favoured and later fought to destroy the Republic were not paid, not fifty men in Ireland would have joined their ranks. Patriotism was so low and the people so disappointed and depressed at the time that no one

person or group was big enough to launch out against using Irish money to finance a group of men to shoot down an unpaid group of men. I would venture to say that not a dozen men in Ireland would be in the Free State army if they had no wages. Hitherto unheard of men jumped overnight as Field Marshals, with £1,000 a year, and the lowest spalpeen had £1 a day, with full board, fine clothing, etc. If they were left without a copper or a uniform, without boots or fags, without food, and if they still fought to uphold the articles of the Treaty, then no honest person could ever raise a finger of scorn against them. Even with all this tinsel, over ninety-five per cent. of the officers in Munster, ninety per cent. in Connaught and the same in Ulster remained true to their oath - to the everlasting credit of Irishmen at the time. Let us hope that future writers and historians will record this for the generations to come.

Readers should understand that many of the leaders and men who accepted the tragic Treaty were above suspicion of doing so for money or glory. Arthur Griffith, the man solely responsible for putting the Treaty through, a noted writer and journalist, lived all his life in poverty to devote his talents in advocating the Irish cause whereas if he had any worldly feelings, he could have been earning a big salary as a first-class journalist on any of the large daily papers. The same applied to Michael Collins, one of the bravest and most courageous soldiers who had, most miraculously, been able to live for two years in Dublin with many escapes, and still could be about there, day and night, active. The man that lived that life, with death staring him every minute of the day

or night could not, for a second, think of money or salary at all. Other leaders on the Treaty side would also be above money attraction.

But let it be remembered, with the exception of Rory O'Connor and Cathal Brugha, all G.H.Q. officers favoured and fought for the Treaty, and against the Republic. Let it be remembered, I have mentioned in the early part of this statement the thorough failure of G.H.Q. to make any effort to import arms and military equipment, and their hostility to some of the most famous battles against the enemy in the south. For analogy, if twelve chosen men spend two long years building a church, monument, hall, home or any noble edifice without one copper of reward, and at the same time provide out of their own private means their food, clothes, boots, smokes, refreshment, doing it for patriotism, honour, etc., and, when completed, two of the twelve engage outsiders, scoffers and even opponents or servants of their enemies and pay them £1,000 a year to leaders and £1 a day to their labourers, with food, clothes, transport, etc., to blow up, pull down and destroy the same building, what would any normal sensible person think of it?

Let it be remembered, some of my closest and best friends fought for and supported the Treaty - men who had slept with me in friends' beds, in my own bed, and who partook of my humble fare on a humble table in my kitchen.

April 1922 dawned and, instead of devoting all attention to meeting the enemy, should he resume hostilities, all attention and activity were now concentrated on avoiding a clash and war among brothers. Great efforts were made by leading officers to find some

platform where differences could be ironed out, and an army council of sixteen senior divisional, brigade and G.H.Q. staff was set up to hammer out a formula to avoid killing one another.

They were all distinguished officers, with years of hardship and sacrifice. The majority of them were friends of mine. They deliberated for a long time, and readers should ask for production of the photographs which appeared in the daily papers during the course of this grave and important conference. You will see at once, from the grave countenances of everyone of them, the seriousness of their deliberations. A year earlier, these faces would have been full of smiles.

The final result was not satisfactory, but they found a basis for stopping immediately the madness of shooting one another down.

The result was that the parliamentarians or the political side, which unfortunately contained too many military men, had to summon special Dáil meetings, to come to some understanding and avoid fighting over the tragic treaty. It was really a command given by this conference and by public opinion that it was imperative for the Dáil to find a solution to avoid brothers killing brothers, and, to their credit, they did find a solution. The solution was the Pact, the most important agreement and the most important solution ever arrived at, in the whole history of Ireland or any other country in the world - an agreement to avoid civil war, to avoid brothers shooting brothers, to avoid companions and friends killing companions and friends.

The Pact was ~~to~~^{to} hold a general election, and the

pro and anti Treaty parties were to put up sufficient numbers of candidates, in the ratio of 63-57 - the vote on the Treaty, viz., 63 for, 57 against - and no other party or independent was to contest.

To the credit of all parties and independents, they put up no candidates, realising the danger and to avoid the worst of all tragedies, civil war. Every man of note and patriotism appealed to the people for calmness and to abide by the national decision, but the wretched political labour party, this infamous gang, realising thoroughly and well acquainted with the gravity of the national situation, deliberately put forward candidates in a large number of constituencies, causing a split in the voting for or against the Republic.

A most amazing action for labour, because some of the labour groups had performed trojan work during the fighting. But without any leadership, the workers would have acted on their own.

So important and far-reaching was the Pact that every person of responsibility and influence all over the country proclaimed at every opportunity and on every occasion the importance of keeping the Pact. Yet with all this, the official political labour party, realising the great danger, deliberately nominated candidates, and were largely responsible for the breaking of the Pact and precipitating the tragic civil war.

It was evident that the people would not support the Republican cause, for, let it be remembered, the majority of them were never out-and-out Republicans, and even to the present day, if a plebiscite was taken, the independent Irish Republic versus back-to-the-Empire, I am certain it would be a neck and neck struggle in the

twenty-six counties.

Be it remembered that, up to this election in 1922, no real test was recorded, for the 1918-1919 general election was a walk-over in ninety per cent. of the constituencies. . . The Home Rule Irish party put forward no candidate, closely following the attempt to force conscription on the Irish people. The Sinn Féin movement, which was the leading force against conscription, gained remarkable respect, honour and prestige.

The old enemy, whose diplomacy is the dread of the world, disbanded 25,000 Irishmen who had joined the enemy army during the first world war, with the direct object of them joining the new Irish Free State Army, knowing well that the majority of this vast army had no alternative. They were members of poor, unemployed families, with no other means of existence. Before the war and at that time there were no industries in southern Ireland - nothing doing except farm labouring at 1/- a day.

Fifteen thousand of these fully trained men acted on the advice of their superiors, out-and-out anti Republicans, and stepped out of the enemy khaki uniform into the Irish green, or the subsidiary army of the British. This influx of thousands of highly trained men swelled the heads of the Treaty leaders, and undoubtedly had much to do, in later weeks, with the launching of the civil war. To their credit, ten thousand of the men who were sent home, they downed tools, as it were, and returned to their homes of poverty, hunger and all that they had to face.

Turning away from the rights and wrongs of both sides, let any independent unprejudiced person think

it over. Here are 15,000 men who were released from imperial service abroad on behalf of John Bull, and who helped the old and only enemy, turned over at £1 a day, with best uniform, boots, shirts, underclothing, food, transport, latest British military equipment, etc., to shoot down and destroy the few hundred haunted and hunted men of the I.R.A. army who had struggled for the previous two years at a million to one odds against the biggest and strongest army in the world.

Hope, smiles, joy and confidence were rapidly disappearing from the Irish scene, as, day after day, clashes, incidents, shootings were happening here and there.

Liam Lynch, O/C, 1st Southern Division, whose brigade area had carried out more successful operations against the enemy than in the whole of the thirty-two counties, made another all-out effort to save the situation, by agreeing with the leaders and headquarters of the Treatites that the men of his Division would don the Free State army uniform, join up with the Free State army and march on the North for an open battle, to avoid civil war. He must certainly have got some clear promise, understanding and assurance from his men before they agreed to this course, but the Treatites failed to carry out this agreement. The wearing of the uniform and moving about in strong Republican areas caused much danger, hold-ups and even conflicts, because it would indeed have been necessary to carry placards on your breast and rear, to explain the reason. Shortly after all hopes of a united move northwards were lost, the men of Liam Lynch's Division dropped wearing the Free State army uniform. Michael Collins held some

special private meetings with his one-time royal pals and soldiers, in the hope of using the last straw to save the situation. Some great understanding between him and the Republican side was reached, for, next day, he made a national pronouncement that it was far better for the Irish people and the Irish nation to keep the Pact than the Treaty.

This famous and most important statement brought joy to every Irish heart. Hope, confidence and courage revived, and the people came to life once again. It was like the resurrection from the dead. All the enemies of Ireland got into a rage. The filthy anti-Irish press - the Dublin daily "Independent", the pro-Unionist "Irish Times" and the southern upholder of the British empire, "The Cork Examiner" - all wrote in fury. Their idol since December, 1921, one of the framers of the Treaty, was now nothing short of the bad boy. The arch enemy of world's freedom, Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, took it up in cold and hot words, that this language of one of the leading Irish signatories of the Treaty could not be tolerated, and that the I.R.A. should be evicted from their headquarters in the Four Courts right away. It was done two days later, and opened up the saddest page of Irish history. All the glorious sacrifices of the previous six years went up in smoke, or, rather, pools of brothers' blood.

To foreigners, studying closely and intelligently - if it is possible for outsiders to do so - it would be difficult to explain the honesty, straightforwardness and loyalty of our character. To swear for a number of years, with hands uplifted to God, our Creator, as witness, our loyalty to the Republican cause, even to the cost of one's life, and never to be a renegade reconcile

this with the destruction of Republican ideals, 1922-1923.

I have omitted dozens of major incidents and activities from March, 1922, to the outbreak of the Civil War, because in reality how else could they be described but civil war, and relating would cause as much extensive writing as already covered by me.

To finish before I bring my history (personal) to a close, I would advise no man or group of men at any time, in any way by word or act, to encourage civil or religious war. Hell let loose would not, or could not be worse than war among brothers, for it takes almost from half to a whole century to fully eradicate its consequential evilness.

In closing, I would like to pay a tribute to all my I.R.A. friends in the 8th Battalion and III Brigade areas - thousands of close, honourable friends I made. It is no wonder that Tipperary is known as the premier county - or Tipperary leads, Ireland follows - for the loyalty, good humour, cheerfulness, bravery, honesty and, most striking of all, modesty and humility of all the Tipperary men I met, both officers and rank and file. The same applied to the men in County Waterford in the Company areas of Mothel, Clonea, Rathgormack and Windgap. The three latter areas, due to their geographical topography, bore the brunt of the catering for men on the run. To the men of South Kilkenny with whom I was frequently in touch in the parish Company areas of Piltown, Owing, Windgap, Tullylough, Templequinn and Mooncoin, though not intimately acquainted, or, as much in touch - yet the best of Irishmen. To the pioneers, or first political and military acquaintances - Jack O'Keefe, The Lawn, Paddy Power, Tom Hickey, John Loughman, and later John O'Keefe, New Street, William

O'Mara, Tom Phelan, James Foley, Frank Roche, P. Eade of a thousand activities, John Foley, Sam and J. Doherty, W. Thompson, the Murphy's, P. Rourke, J. Mullins, F. Reidy, D.J. O'Driscoll, R. Sheehan, Laurice McGrath, T. Fahy, all the Fahy's of Windgap, the Butler's of Grangemockler - the two families had twelve men in the I.R.A. - the Tobin's, Laurence Glendon, Grangemockler, Arrigan's, Hickey's, Carbury of Ballyneale, Power's and Rickham's of Mothel, Byrne and Walsh's of Windgap, the Hassett's, Flynn's of Clonea, the Daly's, Haghney's, Power of Ballyocull, others prominent in the Battalion - Crotty's, Walsh's, Morrissey, O'Reilly, Clerkin, McCormack, Tommy Walsh, Peter McGrath, Maher, Phelan, Killeconnery, Walsh, Lanigan, Power of Faugheen, Walsh, Moloney, Moran, Harbour, Bob Walsh, Torpey's, David Power, Wm. Moore, Baldwin's, Murray - only a few from memory - the Coughlan's, McGrath's.

To my Brigade officers, everyone of them - Seán Treacy, Seumas Robinson, Sean Fitzpatrick, Michael Sheehan, etc., etc. I had the happiest association and remained in closest friendship with them.

To the many active Column leaders, I had the closest association with and retained full and mutual confidence of Dinny Lacey, Paddy McDonough, Jim Kilmartain, Mick Sheehan, Sean Hogan, Bill Allen, Peter Tobin, Ned Glendon, P. Butler, Bob Sheehan, Thomas Coughlan.

The bravery and courage of all were never questioned, and had they been reasonably armed and equipped, they would have harassed the enemy, so that England would have required a quarter of a million army to beat it.

People will ask how did a practically unarmed

organisation put up such a fight as to force the strongest nation in the world to seek a truce. It was due to the people's loyalty. If even one person in every area, or every ten parishes, who had intimate knowledge of the weakness of the I.R.A., relatively small unarmed groups of men, moving about, had given information to the enemy by word or letter - and a country man or woman could drop a letter into a town post office when shopping - the whole weakness of our armed forces would have been known to the enemy who would immediately have surrounded the area and either have captured or driven out of existence our mystic forces. The freedom from informers, and the loyalty of the people carried the day. Informers were the curse of many previous generations. It is one of the greatest and noblest tributes to the Irish people of that period to have raised themselves above the horridness of spying and informing for the enemy.

I will leave it to other writers to analyse this great nobility and how it materialised in only three or four instances that an informer worked. One case was the major tragedy at Clonmult where a small column of men were surrounded, on receipt of information from a postman, British ex soldier, with the aid of another ex British army man - supposed rabbit hunting - but the officers could be all blamed for this tragedy through their utter stupidity in keeping a group of men for a month in one house. One day was regarded in the III Tipperary as a safe time to stay in one place. See what an informer did in Kilcash in the early stages of this statement. You may recall it.

Years later, I discovered that many R.I.C. men - a number in all areas - had a fair knowledge, but if they

had, it must have been lopsided, as otherwise, with the hatred then prevailing, it is difficult to be convinced that they would not make some use of it.

When the British government had handed over the barracks to the Pro-Treatites, the R.I.C. were withdrawing from their barracks in Carrick-on-Suir, one of their tough, drunken members got out of the lorry outside the shop and brought in some articles which had been taken during one of their numerous raids on the shop and house. I questioned him about some books they had once taken from the shop. Using the usual tough language, "Babington", said he, "don't mind your damn books. You must be the luckiest man in Ireland to be alive to-day!" "What do you mean?", I asked. He said, "You may think that we didn't know, but we knew everything - no matter how little, and so-and-so. You should not be here to-day!" He - Cummins - was mad with drink and nerves, and rushed out the door to the waiting British army lorry, cursing me as he went. These remarks made me think that our plan of action was not watertight, but again their families were about, and, of course, played with groups of all ages up to fifteen and sixteen years of age at school.

To James Coffey, though now deceased, I owe an apology for the miserable life I gave him over the long number of years, for the seventy or eighty raids on his shop and residence, for the good business, built up by his honesty, ability and experience and now ruined by my association with the independent movement. A man of comparative prosperity, he was brought to the fringe of poverty, due to hatred, boycott, jealousy, intimidation, etc.

The unity and success of this great movement were primarily due to the sacrifice of the participants, and the chief cause for this was that there was no payment. No man aspired to officer rank - in all cases, it was cast on him. There was no jealousy, because no hour approached but one expected to meet instant death or torture, should one fall into the enemy's hands. Every man had to provide, out of his own means, clothes, boots, overcoats, shirts, underclothes, tobacco, cigarettes, food, books, guns, etc., etc. It was all a free army. With all these expenses, one had to contribute from 1/- to 2/6d. a week for general expenses. One word of advice I would give to youth groups or young volunteer organisations: always try to remain in the rank and file, for the worry, trouble, time, expense and responsibility were so much that no one, except one having little to do, could be a leader. For "glory is bought at the cost of happiness, pleasure - loss of health and favour - cost of independence. Better one glorious hour of fame than a whole life without a name. The worst fate is to die the death of inaction. For a man really worth his salt has little time for finding fault.

The moving finger writes and, having writ, moves on! Nor all thy piety nor wit shall hire it back to cancel half a line - nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

To finish as I began - Breathe's there a man with soul so dead who never to himself hath said, this is my own, my native land.

With love to every true born Irishman, let me

end, with approximately thirty thousand words,

Seamus Babington,

Captain, Engineers, III. Tipperary Brigade.

P.S. Other great personal brigade officer friends were Dan Breen, Bill Quirk, Martin Breen, A. & M. Barlow, Jerry Kiely, J.K. Lonergan, Sean Prendergast, Sean Downoy, Tadhg Dwyer, S. & H. Burke, Sean Walsh, Jerome Davin, Mick Fitzpatrick, Dick Dalton and a hundred others whom I may mention later.

SIGNED: _____

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