ORIGINAL

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1716.

Witness

General Seán MacEoin,
"Cloncoose",
Stillorgan Road,
Donnybrook,
Dublin.

Identity.

Brigade Director of Operations;
O/C North Longford A.S.U.;
Member of Dáil Éireann;
Cabinet Minister.

Subject.

I.R.A. activities, Longford, 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 557.

Form B.S.M. 2

General MacEoin, who was held office at various periods as Minister for Justice and Minister for Defence, deposited with the Bureau, when holding the latter office in 1955, a collection of documents and narratives as the material for a draft statement. This material was assembled, co-related and edited as a chronological narrative by Colonel J.M. MacCarthy of this office, and submitted to the witness early in 1956, together with a questionnaire and notes as to episodes requiring further data.

On this basis, in a series of interviews extending over 1½ years, the witness dictated to me and a stenographer a further sequence of recollections to fill the gaps in the draft narrative, answer points in the questionnaire and to make various amendments. These further instalments were then co-ordinated with the original draft and the whole submitted to the witness and accepted by him as his testimony. The witness went to great pains to put on record what in his view was an accurate picture of the events of the period and of his association therewith.

He appears to possess a good memory and was in a position to consult original documents on many points where there was a doubt in his mind.

General MacEoin appeared to be most careful to avoid inclusion in his statement any reference to political and other controversies which arose in later years.

J. Conway COLONEL.
(J.J. Conway)

Date: 13th December 1957

STATEMENT OF LIEUT.-GENERAL SEÁN MacEOIN.

CERTIFICATE BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU.

This statement by Lieut.-General Seán MacEoin consists of 213 pages, signed on the last page by him, and 10 appendices.

Owing to its bulk, it has not been possible for the Bureau, with the appliances at its disposal, to bind it in one piece, and it has, therefore, for convenience in stitching, been separated into two sections, the first, consisting of pages 1-213, and the other, containing 10 appendices, "A" to "J", inclusive. The separation into two sections has no other significance.

A certificate in these terms, signed by me as Director of the Bureau, is bound into each of the two parts.

DIRECTOR.

(M. McDunphy)

6th December, 1957.

C O N T E N T S

Pages

Chapter V.

Preliminary Military Operations and Activities

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Chapter VII

My Arrest.

Chapter VIII

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Chapter IX

My Trial.

List of Contemporary Documents deposited with Bureau of Military History.

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SEÁN MacEOIN, T.D.,

Cloncoose, Stillorgan Road, Donnybrook, Dublin.

Chapter 1.

EARLY DAYS.

I was born in my grandfather's house, John Treacy's, Ballinlough, Ballinalee, County Longford, on the 30th day of September, 1893. My father, Andrew MacEoin, was the fourth eldest of a family of seven, five sons and two daughters. He was born in Molly, Aughnacliffe, County Longford, in the parish of Columbkille, and my mother, Katherine, was the youngest daughter of John Treacy's second marriage.

The MacEoin family had been blacksmiths for generations, having, at the same time, three little farms on the hill of Molly. The Treacys have had fairly large farms in the parish of Granard for several generations. I have never traced the ancestry on either side, but it suffices to say that the Treacys of the parish of Granard are a numerous clan to-day, while the MacEoins in Columbkille are just as numerous.

At the age of 18 years, my father left his home and went to work at his trade in Dublin. This was for the purpose of gaining experience in his calling. After six or seven years he came back to his native place, building a forge in the village of Bunlahy, three miles from Granard. After five years working there, he married my mother in June, 1892. She returned to her father's house, where she remained until I was born in 1893.

My father had no house, only the forge, in Bunlahy; he was about to build a house when a house and forge became vacant near Ballinalee. This my father took, moving there on 1st November, 1893, when I was barely one month old. There my father did a good business, and there all my brothers and sisters were born, four brothers and three sisters.

While a youngster of about four years, I became a great favourite with three peculiar old men and, strange to say, with the three at the same time. These were Edward Killane (R.I.P.), a Dominican layman, a large farmer and mill-owner, a very pious, clever, industrious old man; Joe Dowling (R.I.P.), an ex-British Sergeant-Major of the Royal Irish Rifles and Indian Army, who had a grocer's store and hardware shop and, of course, sweets. He was a very clever business man and I remember he used one phrase to his customers regularly, "Small profits and quick returns". The third man was Thomas Kenny, an old workman of Killane's, who was a Fenian local leader, a stern old nationalist and a great reader of the Old and New Testaments and could recite at will any chapter or verse of either.

In the morning, Killane would walk from one of his mills to the other and I would accompany him on this walk. His ambition was to teach me all my prayers, etc. on this walk. I would then come home and Dowling would call for me. He went for a regular walk every day at eleven o'clock and he would tell me of his fights, as he would call them, in India and tell me all about a soldier's life. His ambition was to educate me and have me, when I went to school, knowing more than any boy of my age, and to save my pennies to be thrifty and buy a nice alarm clock, which he

had for sale, instead of sweets, so all pennies which came my way went into my saving box in Dowling's shop.

Kenny went for a walk at two o'clock, he now being unable to work, and I would go with him and back to his house, where he would tell me of the Fenians, Ribbon-men, Molly McGuires, and all the things that happened in the parish of Clonbroney in these times, of their fights and activities to get Ireland free. He described the Battle of Granard to me, and told me of Farrell and Deniston, local leaders, and of Farrell's jump on his black mare at the white gates near Granard, stirring up my young blood to boiling point that there could be such bad people in the world as the British.

Then I would repeat some of Tommy's story to Joe Dowling, and he would give me another version of the story, so I would have to come home to get the matter decided, and would tell my mother or father. They would smile, and a story would be told to me of some part either a Treacy or a MacEoin had taken in some of these struggles. One story in particular comes back vividly to me as I write, told me by my mother - that when the French landed at Killala and came on to Ballinamuck, some of the Treacy boys went to meet them and every day they were expected to pass victoriously through Bunlahy. A brother waiting at home so expecting every day, saw a body of horsemen riding into the village and ran out with his pike to meet them and welcome them, but, alas, they were English, and he was put to death at the big tree of Bunlahy. I have never questioned the accuracy of this story, and I don't know what truth there was in it, but it left me thinking that Tommy Kenny was the hero, and he continued to tell me what I now know to be fantastic stories of all the struggles in which he took part against the British.

All this made an indelible impression on my young mind, and I longed for the day to come when I would be a man and be able to do something against these terrible people, the English.

At five years old, I was a sturdy young lad going to Ballinalee school, having all my fights with other boys, and not very particular about my education. I continued school up to fourteen years of age, but, unfortunately, the last two years were very short school years indeed, having spent only 57 days and 36 days respectively in these two years. In the last year, I went for my examination, after having been absent for several weeks. My schoolmaster decided to send me home, for he said, "You will disgrace the school, and all your comrades are far before you, having full days at school". To this I replied that I would have a try anyway. I sat for the examination, and imagine the teacher's surprise when I headed my class, beating every other boy by many marks. My teacher was so pleased, he told me if I would go to school that he would make a scholar of me, but asking, at the same time, how I managed to do so well. I told him I had been studying at the anvil at home, and this was the result. Unfortunately for me at this time, my father had trouble with his workmen and they left. He then said he would employ no more men but that I must help him. Thus, at the early age of fifteen years, I began to serve my time as a blacksmith with him.

I worked in the forge from morning until night - at night studying geography, reading and writing, arithmetic and shorthand (Pitman's) for four nights of the week, and Irish and Irish dancing on two other nights. This continued until I was about eighteen years of age, when I came to the conclusion that a blacksmith did not require so much education after all.

About this time I joined the United Irish League, being appointed on the parish committee and a delegate to the North Longford Executive.

At the same time, a fife and drum band was started in the parish, and great agitation had sprung up for the division of the ranches and for purchase to be carried out.

At this time I had read a bit of Irish history and commemoration meetings were being held in Finea for Miles O'Reilly the Slasher. I attended one of these meetings and heard an oration delivered by Very Rev. Canon Langan, the P.P. of Abbeylara and now P.P. of Moate, and the Archdeacon of the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise; speeches delivered by Alderman Cole, Bulmer Hobson, William Ganley, Alderman Tom Kelly, Dublin. There was a bit of fighting strain in the speeches of all the latter and I began to think seriously of the position of Ireland then, but a great misfortune happened to me at the time. Two neighbours, one a tenant and the other a farmer whose house this tenant occupied (both small), had a dispute and the farmer proceeded to evict the tenant. The United Irish League declared a boycott on the farmer. At the meeting where this resolution was passed, I voted against the motion but got no support. The eviction came off, and I happened to be going to Ballinalee and went in to see the place just as the eviction had taken place. I remained there some time longer than I should, and while there the house was knocked down. On the following Sunday, the United Irish League passed a resolution condemning my father for sending me to be present at the eviction and declaring him boycotted, expelling both him and me from membership of the United Irish League.

There was no truth in the charge, and when he was called for an explanation he refused to attend and the resolution was confirmed during the week. I had also been expelled from the band.

The boycott was put on my father very heavily, and after some time three business men were called before the League to give an explanation of their conduct in doing business with my father. There were scores of farmers doing business with him at the time, but the League could do nothing to them. They could manage the business people. One of these business men came to my father and said he should go into the League and finish the matter. This he did on the Sunday morning on which the three business men were to turn up, he telling these men to stay at home, which they did. He went into the meeting and, as a result, the boycott was taken off and matters settled down, but my father's heart was broken to say that the popular national organisation would declare him an offender of its rules. I again withdrew to my rooms after my day's work and set to study-going.

I went to a shorthand teacher, Miss Conefrey, who held a night school for shorthand and typewriting in Peter Keady's of Ballinalee. This class was attended by a number of boys of my own age, including James Fealy of Cloncoose, Patrick McGrath of Ballinalee, and William Wixted. This was in 1912, and I continued at this for almost a year, when my father became seriously ill. This terminated my shorthand and typewriting classes, and I had to take up full-time duty in the forge. My father died in February of 1913, when the full responsibility for the management and working of the forge - with my brother, Michael - was placed on my shoulders.

Chapter 11.

Political and Cultural Influences.

At the end of 1913, the Home Rule movement was the red-hot topic of the day. When the Ulster Covenant was drawn up by the Orangemen of the North, led by Sir Edward Carson, a Provisional Government for Ulster being formed and an armed force of the Ulster Volunteers initiated, all this was the subject of heated discussion every day and night. The fact that we were working hard did not stop the discussion. I may mention that, from my father's death in February, 1913, until 1917, both my brother and myself worked as long as fifteen hours per day for a six-day week, with sometimes an odd job on outlying farms on a Sunday thrown in. During that time, we purchased a farm for £400 in Kilshruley, and another one in 1915 from Brady of Kilshruley for £300; and all that money was made and saved in the period, 1913-1915. So, even though there were very hot discussions upon all questions, including, as I say, the political question, the work of the forge was not interrupted.

The Irish National Volunteers were formed throughout the country, and similarly in the parish of Clonbroney of which Ballinalee was the local village. On its formation, we were placed under a committee. The local Catholic Curate, Fr. Patrick Higgins (later Parish Priest of Shannonbridge) was appointed Chairman. A local committee was formed to direct our activities. Brian Brady, Tullybawn, an ex-British army reservist, was appointed instructor. The number on the roll then was about ninety-six - just under the hundred.

After three months, an examination was held for officer appointments, and John Keane, Drumeel, and myself qualified, and were promoted as Section Commanders. After a further three months, we were appointed to 2nd Lieutenant. There were no further appointments.

The company was still under training, and we were under instruction for promotion to a higher rank when the 1914-1918 War burst upon the world. Some time prior to the outbreak of the war, a parade was held in Granard, at which the Inspection Officer was Major Dease of Coole, Co. Westmeath. There was a competition amongst all the companies from North Longford and portion of Cavan. The competition was in drill, infantry and rifle. Clonbroney Company took first place, winning a .22 rifle.

After the outbreak of the war, the Irish Parliamentary Party, through their leader, John Redmond, offered the Volunteers, to fight in an Irish brigade. This was rejected by the British Government, but it was sufficient to split the Volunteers from top to bottom, and our company dwindled to nine.

At the end of 1914, I was sworn in a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood by John Cawley of Granard. Meetings were held in Granard, but there was, as yet, no Circle established in Clonbroney. I was attached to the Granard Circle only, and I did not attend meetings very regularly. John Cawley died in 1957.

I was not mobilised for 1916. It appears that, when the messenger called to the house, I was away at my uncle's place in Molly. On Easter Tuesday night, James Fealy and myself cut all the telephone wires from Ballinalee to Longford, and from Longford to Edgeworthstown,

and threw two small gun-powder bombs into the R.I.C. barracks. It was our only weapon of offence except for the .22 rifle. I was aware that an attempt at an insurrection was to be made, but I did not know when.

In 1917, a Circle of the I.R.B. was formed in Clonbroney, and consisted of Seán Connolly, Seán Duffy, Joe Keenan, Ned Tynan, Jimmy Tynan, Joe Tynan, John Treacy, Sonny Greer, James J. Killeen, and myself. The first official inspection of that Circle was by Tomás Ashe.

In 1917, the I.R.B. was organised in every parish in the County of Longford, and in 1918, the first County Circle was formed, presided over by Martin Conlon. That meeting was held in McGuinness's boot-shop (upstairs) in Longford. I was elected County Centre, a position I held until my arrest in 1921. In the meantime, I was elected to the Provincial Circle, but, as this story concerns the Longford Brigade, I will not deal with that any further.

From early 1907, the Gaelic League and Gaelic Athletic Association flourished in the County, interspersed with the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the United Irish League. The independence, or separatist movement was a very tiny plant, and found it difficult to succeed during these years. The separatist movement in the County was initiated from and developed by Granard and Longford towns. To Seán Cawley of Granard, Frank McGuinness, Longford, and William Ganley of Creevy, Granard, much credit can be given for the growth and development of the separatist movement in the County.

My colleague, Seán Connolly, was prominent in G.A.A. circles and in the reorganisation of the Volunteers in 1917. He was then captain of the local football team,

and Johnny Smith was captain of the hurling team.

In 1917, the McGuinness by-election in South Longford did much to assist the growth and development of the separatist movement in the county, especially the success of the Sinn Féin candidate in the South Longford election. This, with the West Cavan by-election in 1918, had a very great effect upon Longford.

The success of Captain Redmond in the Waterford by-election brought things to a head in Ballinalee. The Irish Parliamentary Party's supporters decided to organise a victory celebration. Acting under the authority vested in me as Centre of the I.R.B., I proclaimed the celebrations and enforced the decision with the aid of the Volunteers. This was our first serious clash with the Irish Party supporters, and our last one. I want to pay this tribute to them - the Irish Party supporters. When the Black and Tans were our principal enemy, many of the Irish Party supporters gave us great help and assistance in every way.

The political organisation of Sinn Féin was carried out in the parish in 1917, but, while I took a part, as directed by the organisation, I did not become a member except for the period of organisation and one Convention in 1918 in Dublin, one Árd Fheis. Rev. Fr. Markey was President of the Sinn Féin Club, and James J. Killeen was Secretary.

After Joe McGuinness was elected and later released from jail, a great Sinn Féin rally was held in Longford, which our small party from Clonbroney attended. We decided to invite some of the speakers to address a meeting at Ballinalee at a later date. The late Tomás Ashe

and the late Michael Collins came. We had a very successful meeting, and the speeches delivered by Collins, Ashe, James J. Killane, and James O'Neill, Lismeen, were very useful and added to the development of the organisation. Tomás Ashe, in his speech, was forceful, and it had far reaching consequences for him and resulted in his death later.

The battalion was mobilised for the Longford meeting. Drumlish and Killoe Companies joined us at Kiernan's Crossroads, and we then marched to Longford. We marched all the way.

I may here mention that, in regard to Tomás Ashe's speech, unknown to us, a person took a shorthand note of what he was alleged to have said, and reported direct to Dublin Castle. There was no member of the R.I.C. present at the meeting. The sergeant at the time was on leave, and a Constable Boyers was in charge. The latter decided that the safest place for him to be on duty was at Heraty's of Ballinalee, a publichouse, about two hundred yards from the meeting place. The first intimation that he had that there was anything wrong was when Dublin Castle, or his headquarters, sent him an extract from the report made, and he and Constable Quigley, who were supposed to have been on duty, were asked to state if Ashe had used these words. As Boyers himself said later, he replied in the affirmative, but said that he did not regard them as having any significance.

Ashe was charged with having uttered the words, confirmed by Boyers, and Boyers and Quigley confirmed, in evidence at the trial, that Ashe used these words, although they were not present, and never heard them.

Ashe was convicted under the Defence of the Realm Act. His hunger-strike and death followed as a consequence of his speech in Ballinalee, the garbled report of a would-be British agent, and the false testimony of the two police officers.

The trial of Ashe, and his hunger-strike and death, are already well recorded, but his funeral was made the occasion of a great rallying of Volunteers and Volunteer officers from all over Ireland.

After the Ballinalee meeting, which was addressed by Michael Collins and Tomás Ashe, Collins addressed a meeting in Dromard, at Legga Church. The R.I.C. were present at this meeting, and a report was made by them. This led to a most extraordinary development.

Collins was arrested, and brought to the courthouse in Longford. He was charged under the Defence of the Realm Act. There was a preliminary hearing before Jephson, the Resident Magistrate, and it was decided to take depositions. Jephson decided that, during the taking of the depositions, Collins would be allowed bail, which was quickly forthcoming, Michael Doyle and Michael Cox going security for him. Of course, that was the last the British ever saw of Collins until they met him in the Council Chamber during the Treaty negotiations, although as much as £10,000 was offered at a later stage as a reward for his capture.

The organised effort by the people to resist British rule in Ireland and to break that power was made up of many sections of our people that were organised in different ways. As I have already stated, we had the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. and its various circles and

centres as the organising body, the Volunteers or army which grew up attached to this organisation and which later became the army of the elected Government.

We had the political side, Sinn Féin, which, like to-day, was just a political party, seeking to secure the votes of the people to support them in their political view. This organisation was originally formed to secure "the re-establishment of the Independence of Ireland, composed of King, Lords and Commons", or, in other words, the repeal of the Union. This was in keeping with the various Leagues in the early century, including the Irish League, of which Justin McCarthy, a member for North Longford, was the Secretary.

I think I should mention that this constitution of Sinn Féin remained in force until the Sinn Féin Convention of December, 1917, when the objects of Sinn Féin were changed from the establishment of an Independent Monarchy to the establishment of an Independent Republic. This change was carried by a resolution at the Sinn Féin Árd Fheis in 1917.

In the constitution of Sinn Féin enacted at that Árd Fheis of 1917, it was further agreed that, on the establishment of our independence, a plebiscite of the people would be taken to decide whether we would be a monarchy or a republic, that, in the first instance, it was easier for the world to understand what our aims were for declaring a republic. No actual plebiscite has since been held upon that issue.

Working alongside Sinn Féin, we had an active Labour movement, working in harmony with Sinn Féin to achieve our objects. Then, in a more vigorous form, we had Fianna Éireann and Cumann na mBan.

Of course, it is true to say that each section believed that they were the key or principal part of the organisation. The truth is that it was the united efforts of all that brought about what success we had.

The change from the monarchy to the republic was the first compromise between the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. and the political party, Sinn Féin. The decision to have a plebiscite was the concession made to the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. by the political party, Sinn Féin, for the change from the monarchy to the republic.

At this time, the sole Government of the Republic was the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., and the President of the Supreme Council was the President of the Republic. This continued until after the general election of 1918, when the first meeting of the Dáil, elected in the 1918 election, was held in January of 1919.

Our branch of Sinn Féin was represented at the first Árd Fheis after 1916 by James J. Killeen of Curragrane and Very Rev. Canon Markey, P.P. A Convention of the Volunteers was held in Dublin on the same date as the Árd Fheis, and Killeen attended this Convention, representing the Volunteers of Ballinalee and district. At this Árd Fheis, Mr. Griffith and Count Plunkett withdrew their nomination for election as President of Sinn Féin in favour of Eamon de Valera, who was elected President of the political organisation, Sinn Féin, at that Árd Fheis. This election led to some confusion afterwards, as some people thought that his election as President of Sinn Féin meant that he was also President of the Government, but Sinn Féin, being only a political organisation in support

of the Government, could not elect a President of the Republic, no more than the President of the Labour Party could be described as President, or Countess Markievicz, as President of Cumann na mBan, might be so described.

In the 1918 Convention which was held prior to the general election of 1918, there were delegates from every parish in the Co. Longford and, it could be said with truth, from almost every parish in Ireland. Again, Clonbroney and Ballinalee were represented at that Sinn Féin Convention. I was a delegate to that Convention along with Father Markey and others. Plans were made for the selection of candidates to fight the 1918 elections, which the Supreme Council decided should be fought, although there was much misgiving as to the wisdom of this course, as it was a recognition by us of an Act of Parliament of the British Parliament. It was suggested that an election should be held on somewhat the same lines as the Referendum which had been taken and subscribed to by the overwhelming majority of the Irish people to have Ireland's case submitted to the Peace Conference, but it was felt that it would be better to work the machinery made available to us by the British Government, to achieve our objective.

Chapter 111.

Military Developments.

The Volunteers were reformed in 1917, but still remained a very small unit - not more than nine or ten members. There was no appointment of officers, other than that of myself as Centre of the I.R.B.

This situation continued until the passing of Conscription in Ireland by the British Government, and, when a committee was formed to resist Conscription, the Volunteers sprang to full strength. There were over two hundred members on parade in the week in which Conscription was passed. It was then decided to hold an election of officers. There were four nominations for the rank of Captain, and five nominations for that of Lieutenant. A parade was held in Foster's Field in Cloncoose, at which I was elected Company Captain, Seán Connolly, 1st Lieutenant, and as the company was so strong, there were two 2nd Lieuts. appointed - Michael Kenny and Seán Duffy. Seamus O'Connor, N.T., and Michael Kane, Drumeel, a shop assistant in Reynold's, Ballinalee, and a brother of John Kane, previously mentioned, were in the nominations mentioned above.

Organisation proceeded apace, and Longford was brigaded by order from Headquarters. There were two battalions - 1st (Longford) and 2nd (Granard).

The 2nd (Granard) Battalion comprised seven or eight companies, including Clonbroney Company, and the officers were as follows: -

O/C, 2nd (Granard) Battalion - John Cawley.
Vice O/C, do. - Seán MacEoin.
Adjutant, do. - Paul Dawson Cusack.
Quartermaster, do. - Michael Drum.

This organisation lasted only a few weeks.

In 1919, the Brigade was organised into four battalions, with headquarters at Longford, the O/Cs being: -

O/C, Ballinalee - Seán MacEoin.
O/C, Longford - Jim Keenan.
O/C, Ardagh - Leo Baxter.
O/C, Lanesboro - M.J. Ryan.

To summarise the various changes in the organisation of the Volunteers in County Longford, the brigading sequence is here set down as follows: -

In 1917, there was one battalion for the whole county, under the Athlone Brigade, the officers being -

O/C - Hubert Wilson, Longford.
Vice O/C - John Cawley, Granard.
- Paul Dawson Cusack, Granard.
- Frank Clarke, Lanesboro.
- M.P. Connolly, Longford.

In February, 1918, Longford was organised into two battalions, the officers being -

<u>1st (Longford) Battalion</u>

O/C - Hubert Wilson.
Vice O/C - M.P. Connolly.
Adjt. - Thomas Redington.
Q/M - Frank Clarke, Lanesboro.

I should mention here that, prior to this organisation, all Longford was one battalion, brigaded under Athlone. Seamus O'Meara was Brigade O/C.

On the formation of the Longford Brigade, the officers were as follows: -

O/C, 1st (Longford) Brigade - Thomas Redington.
Vice O/C, do. - M.P. Connolly.
Adjutant, do. - Frank Clarke, Lanesboro.
Quartermaster, do. - Ned Cooney.

In 1919, a complete reorganisation of the brigade took place, the officers being as follows: -

O/C - Thomas Redington.
Vice O/C - Seán Connolly.
Adjutant - James Flood.
Quartermaster - Ned Cooney.

2nd (Granard) Battalion.

O/C - John Cawley.
Vice O/C - Leo Reilly, Ardagh.
Adjutant - Jim Flood.
Quartermaster - Michael Drum.

In that same year, about May or June, 1918, Longford was reorganised, and a brigade was formed, the Brigade Staff being -

O/C - Thomas Redington.
Vice O/C - M.P. Connolly.
Adjutant - Frank Clarke.
Quartermaster - Ned Cooney.

In 1919, the Longford Brigade was re-formed, the officers being -

O/C - Tom Redington.
Vice O/C - Seán Connolly.
Adjutant - Jim Flood.
Quartermaster- Ned Cooney -

with four battalions.

1st (Ballinalee) Battalion.

O/C - Seán MacEoin (myself).
Vice O/C - John Murphy.
Adjutant - Seán Connolly, Ballinalee.
Quartermaster - Frank Whitney.

2nd (Granard) Battalion.

O/C - Seán Cawley.
Vice O/C - Seán Murphy.
Adjutant - Jim Flood.
Quartermaster - Paul Dawson Cusack.

This organisation continued until early September, 1920, when Seán Connolly was transferred to G.H.Q. and detailed for duty in Roscommon, Jim Flood was arrested, and the brigade was re-formed, the Brigade Staff being -

O/C - Tom Redington.
Vice O/C - Seán MacEoin (myself).
Adjutant - Michael Heslin.
Quartermaster - Ned Cooney.

This organisation of the Brigade Staff continued to March, 1921, when I was arrested, and Patrick Callaghan was appointed Vice O/C to replace me. The Brigade Staff then was -

O/C - Tom Redington.

Vice O/C - Patrick Callaghan.

Adjutant - Michael Heslin.

Quartermaster - Ned Cooney.

I attach, as Appendix "A", details of the Brigade and Battalion Staffs as supplied to me by General Collins after the Truce.

From the organisation in 1919, all special services were attached to the Brigade Staff, engineering, etc.

I may here mention that, during the organisation and re-organisation of the Longford Brigade from time to time, Pat. Garrett, a G.H.Q. officer, supervised and directed the organisation of the Volunteers from early 1919 until the Truce, and when the Truce was arranged, he was sent from G.H.Q. as special courier, announcing the decision that the Truce would take effect 11th July, 1921. He later was attached to the Adjutant General's Staff in 1922, and died in 1954. He held and supervised several N.C.O's and officers' classes in North and South Longford during that period, and many officers qualified under his instruction, including Tommy Earley, Harry Flaherty, and Seamus Conway, from the Ballinalee district.

In 1918, much of our activities were taken up with the manufacture of ammunition, attempting to perfect home-made mines and explosives of various types, including the manufacture of gun-cotton. This was not very successful, but, looking back on it, we were very fortunate that we avoided blowing up ourselves.

The late Seán Connolly made a very special effort to manufacture shotgun cartridges from old empty cartridges. He secured moulds, presses and various tools for this type of work from Henry Greer of Roose, and Smith's of Loughill. Connolly and the Mullervy brothers set up a small factory for this type of work. The refilling of the cartridges was a success, but we used very, very few of them.

From 1918 to 1919, there was the enforcement of law under the guidance and instructions of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., which developed later into the Republican Police under the Ministry of Home Affairs, of which Austin Stack was Minister. In 1919 there was very little delay, in the Longford Brigade area, in establishing the Republican Police, thus enabling the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Local Government to function freely.

In the local elections in 1918, candidates were selected, pledged to support the new Dáil and Government, to contest the County Council election, and were elected by an overwhelming majority. I did not go forward as a candidate, but was co-opted to the Longford County Council, along with James Killeen. At that time, the Council had power to co-opt two members. This was my first experience of public life.

Chapter 1V.

BACKGROUND OF THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN: ITS CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS.

Few people realise to-day what was the constitutional basis on which the national struggle was waged in the period 1919 to the Truce. When the Government of the Republic of Ireland issued its Proclamation in 1916, the signatories gave just their names, without stating the offices or Ministries which they held in the Government of the Republic. Each signatory held a particular office and appointment. Amongst the signatories to the Proclamation was the President of the Republic, Ministers of the various Offices of State, and a Commander-in-Chief of the army. Though they described themselves as a "Provisional Government", there is no doubt whatever that each man held an appointment or office similar to those held to-day by the Head of the State and by the various Ministers.

When in December, 1918, the Irish people got an opportunity to elect an independent parliament, they did so by an overwhelming majority in practically all Ireland, and though, when it assembled on January 21st, 1919, some of the elected Members of Parliament refused to take their seats in the First Dáil, as that parliament was officially named, their absence did not lessen its validity. When the First Dáil met, it carried out the same procedure which is followed to-day. The election of a Ceann Comhairle was proceeded with, and Cathal Brugha became the first holder of that office. Father O'Flanagan opened the session with a prayer, invoking the Divine blessing upon that first elected parliament of the Irish people

The roll was then called. All elected representatives, from Antrim to Cork and from Dublin to Galway, had already been summoned to attend and their names were called. The Constitution for the Dáil was submitted and approved. The Declaration of Independence proclaimed in 1916 was confirmed and was published in a new form, in Irish, French and English. Delegates representing the Irish nation were appointed to the Peace Conference in Paris, and a message of peace and goodwill was sent to all the free nations in the world. A democratic programme was enacted and in the report of that programme is the first official recognition of a President of the Republic. It is given on page twenty-two of the official report of that first session which contains the phrase: "We declare, in the words of the Irish Republican Proclamation, the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be indefeasible, and, in the language of our first President, Pádraig Mac Piarais, we declare that the nation's sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the nation, but to all its material possessions, the nation's soil and all its resources". In this quotation it is clearly established that we had a symbolic and executive Head of the State in its first President.

The second session of the Dáil was held on January 22nd, when Standing Orders were approved and a Government or Ministry was appointed. Cathal Brugha was elected President of the Ministry pro tempore, as reported on page twenty-six of the official report. The following Ministers were appointed: - Finance, Eoin MacNeill; Home Affairs, Michael Collins; Foreign Affairs, Count Plunkett; National Defence, Richard Mulcahy. On the same date,

Seán T. O'Kelly, our present President of Ireland, was appointed Ceann Comhairle in succession to Cathal Brugha.

The next meeting of the Dáil was held in private in the Mansion House, Dublin, on April 1st, 1919. Seán T. O'Kelly was confirmed as Ceann Comhairle. The Priomh-Aire, or Prime Minister, was then nominated, and Eamon de Valera, Member of East Clare, was elected. On the following day, as stated on page thirty-six of the official report, the Prime Minister submitted the names of his Ministers for the approval of the Dáil. Each Minister was proposed and seconded by a deputy of the House, as follows: -

Secretary for Home Affairs, Art Ó Griobhtha. Proposed by Liam de Róiste (Cork City). Seconded by P. Ó Máille (Connemara). Approved.

Secretary for Defence, Cathal Brugha. Proposed by J. MacGuinness (Longford). Seconded by Piaras Beaslai (East Kerry). Approved.

Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Count N.G. Plunkett. Proposed by A. Griffith (East Cavan). Seconded by P. Ó Máille (Connemara). Approved.

Secretary for Labour, Countess Markievicz. Proposed by Liam de Róiste (Cork City). Seconded by S. Etchingham (East Wicklow). Approved.

Secretary for Industries, Eoin MacNeill. Proposed by Cathal Brugha (Waterford Co.). Seconded by Seán MacEntee (S. Monaghan). Approved.

Secretary for Finance, Mícheál Ó Coileáin. Proposed by A. McCabe (South Sligo). Seconded by H. Boland (South Roscommon). Approved.

Secretary for Local Government, Liam MacCosgair. Proposed by John Mahony (S. Fermanagh). Seconded by R.C. Barton (W. Wicklow). Approved.

Heads of Departments: Propaganda, L. Ginnell; Agriculture, R.C. Barton. On April 4th it was decided to publish the names of the Ministers or Secretaries of State.

There is in the foregoing a clear picture of a properly elected and democratic government established by the votes of the people to guard the interests and rights of the Irish nation and its citizens, and to speak both internally and externally on their behalf. It is difficult to realise to-day that the situation was not fully appreciated at the time by a great number of people, including some who had taken a very prominent part in bringing it about. It was not realised by all that there was a symbolic head, or President, of the Republic at that time, just as definitely as there had been one who signed the Proclamation of 1916. The fact that the head of that Government was described as a Priomh-Aire, or Prime Minister, should have been a clear indication to all reasonable and intelligent people that he was Prime Minister to a President.

I do not propose to give that person's name in this context, but I wish to stress the fact that it was by his orders that I was directed, at the meeting of An Dáil in August, 1921, to propose that Eamon de Valera be elected President of the Republic. This motion was seconded by Richard Mulcahy. From the date of the Proclamation of the Republic in 1916 until the assembly of the First Dáil in January, 1919, the Government of the Republic was in the hands of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., to whose President all members had sworn obedience and allegiance as the Titular

Head of the Republic. Owing to the fact that the country was under enemy occupation at the time, the democratic election of a Republican government was an impossibility and the I.R.B. Government was, in fact, a predecessor of the many patriot underground governments which functioned and received recognition during the recent war. During this period, the armed forces of the Republic consisted of the Volunteers, under the control of their own elected Executive, and the Circles of the I.R.B., under their Centres.

An entirely new situation arose with the assembly of the First Dáil and its re-affirmation of the Declaration of the Republic and its acceptance of the social principles embodied therein. There was then in existence an established government appointed by the legally elected representatives of the people, and to that Government the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. at once voluntarily ceded all its powers except one. The President of the I.R.B. continued to be regarded by the Brotherhood as the President of the Republic until 1921, when, as I have already stated, Eamon de Valera was nominated and elected to succeed him.

This prompt and voluntary cession of its powers, in the moment of triumph, by a secret revolutionary body, has few parallels in history, and nothing could demonstrate more clearly the high patriotic motives that inspired the Supreme Council. This voluntary abdication in favour of the new Government has never been fully understood by the public.

Having voluntarily divested itself of its executive powers at the commencement of 1919, the Supreme Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, however,

did not itself dissolve until five years later. As long as the struggle continued, there was danger that the elected Government and Dáil might, at any moment, find themselves extinguished by enemy action, and, should this happen, the Supreme Council held itself in readiness to carry on the fight as a "caretaker" government.

The British declared war upon the Irish people and their Government by proclaiming the Dáil, forbidding it to meet or function, and by proceeding to arrest, intern and destroy, in so far as it lay in their power to do so, every prominent member of the Dáil or of the armed forces established under the Ministry of Defence. The I.R.B. and the Irish Volunteers were already in being and constituted a ready-made army determined to support and defend the Irish people and their Government against all enemies, whomsoever.

At various meetings of the Dáil, as reported in the first, second and third volumes of the Dáil Debates, each Minister made written reports on the administration of his Department, with the exception of the Minister for Defence, who made oral reports. In one of those verbal reports he informed the Dáil that the enemy was attempting to draw the Irish Army into a defensive action suitable to the British, but added that his Department intended to use "their own methods".

It is true that it was not until the private session of August, 1919, that the Oath of Allegiance to the Republic was decided upon, but it was agreed that it must be taken by: - (a) all Dáil deputies; (b) the Volunteers; (c) the officials and clerks of the Dáil; (d) any other body or individual who, in the opinion of the Dáil, should

take the same oath. These decisions are reported on pages 151 of the Dáil Debates for August 20th, 1919.

The Oath of Allegiance was taken by the deputies and officials in October, 1919, and thereby was concluded the building of a parliamentary and governmental institution. At that meeting the British proclamation banning the Dáil was announced, and authority was given to the Minister for Defence to undertake the task of defending the nation from this aggression. The Volunteer Army, which then became known as the Irish Republican Army, was organised throughout the thirty-two counties and had been formed into brigades, battalions, and companies. Accordingly, not alone had we a properly constituted government, but we also had a properly constituted national army, all members of which had taken the Oath of Allegiance prescribed by the Government and Parliament of the people.

I have in my possession a roll kept by the Director of Organisation from January, 1919, onwards. This roll, dating from January, 1919, is in the handwriting of Eamon Price and of Diarmuid O'Hegarty. Its contents have been published in my article, "The Constitutional Basis of the National Struggle", which appears in the book "With the I.R.A. in the Fight for Freedom" published by The Kerryman Ltd., Tralee. I am depositing this roll on permanent loan in the Bureau of Military History, together with the other documents listed as contemporary documents in the list appended at end of this statement.

This roll gives the personnel of the Headquarters, Brigade and Battalion Staffs. It is, in my opinion, the only written record of its date, and the authorship is a guarantee of its accuracy; but it must be remembered that promotions, removals, additions and other alterations

were very numerous between early 1919 and the Truce in 1921.

Many vacancies in the Government and Parliament, and in the Irish Republican Army, were caused by enemy action which included murder, arrest and deportation. Elements of our forces in enemy hands were continuing to fight by every means at their disposal, and the Irish Republican Army was attacking the enemy at many points throughout the country.

A judicial system of arbitration, Parish and District Courts, and a police system had been built up under the auspices of the Sinn Féin Party. The majority of Local Government bodies, such as County Councils, District Councils and Corporations, had declared their allegiance to the elected government of the nation. British administration, the courts included, had broken down in a great part of the country, and even the British military, Black and Tans and R.I.C. were unable to maintain the authority of the Imperial civil arm. Under the British system each county had a civil head in the person of His Majesty's Lieutenant of the county, and Deputy Lieutenants; but they were unable to give effect to, or to carry out civil administration. In some areas, like my own in Ballinalee, County Longford, there were units of the Ulster Volunteers in existence. In a great number of cases, the men who belonged to them were very decent Irishmen, but they felt bound to give their loyalty to the King of Great Britain and to their brothers in the North, who were opposed to self-government for Ireland.

The gallant prison struggle of Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, who died in Brixton Jail, having

endured the long agony of a hunger-strike that had lasted for seventy-four days, drew admiration from most parts of the world, and, I am sure, even from some of our enemies. Following his death on October 25th, 1920, and his funeral, a general order was issued by the Minister for Defence and by the Headquarters Staff, for an intensification of our defensive measures. It is arising from that order that I can tell the story of what has become known as The Battle of Ballinalee. My purpose is to show the extent to which the people had united against British aggression. It was the Sinn Féin Party which had been given the mandate at the General Election of 1918, to set up an independent Irish Parliament. In that election, Sinn Féin had wiped out the Irish Parliamentary Party which would have continued to send M.P.s to the British Parliament at Westminster. Yet, once the British had declared war on the independent Irish Parliament, which had become known as the First Dáil, every nationalist element in the country rallied to its support. Side by side with Sinn Féin stood Labour, the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. In a word, priests and people stood shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy, united in their defence of Dáil Éireann.

Chapter V.

PRELIMINARY MILITARY OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES.

In April, 1918, the European War was in full swing. Great threats were being made by the British House of Commons of conscripting the youth of Ireland, that they were not taking their full share of the war, although more Irishmen joined voluntarily, at the behest of the former Nationalist leader, John Redmond, than any other portion of the British Empire in proportion to population.

The Volunteers were in fair strength all over Ireland, having been reorganised after the suppression of the attempt in 1916 to shake off British rule. The Irish Parliamentary or Nationalist Party were then in the British House of Commons and they maintained that the only way to resist conscription was by constitutional action on the floor of the House.

Notwithstanding all their protests and votes, the British Commons passed the Bill into law for the Conscription of Ireland, and then the Party had to adopt the policy which Griffith had advocated for years, namely to withdraw from the British House of Commons, as every day the Party who were there simply gave England the apparent right to legislate for Ireland.

The older generation in Ireland was in complete despair when the Conscription Bill became an Act.
The only organisation in Ireland that looked on with a smile was the Volunteers. Although their arms were ridiculously poor, they were determined to resist to the death. The real leaders of Ireland, the Catholic Bishops, met in

council and they, who are the steadiest body of men in the world, declared that the proposed blood tax, as Conscription was called, was iniquitous and unmoral, that no country had the right to conscript the Irish save an Irish Parliament elected by the people, and that it was an enactment that should be resisted by every lawful means at the disposal of the Irish people.

This opened up a new era and new work for the Volunteers. The political parties took various steps to make the act inoperative, and the Volunteers went on drilling, training and preparing to resist. Arms were purchased where possible. Explosives were purchased, begged, borrowed or taken from merchants. County Councils, traders or merchants who traded under licence for the British were interviewed. Some of them were quite willing to hand over their stores, which were little, without any fuss, while others had to be raided and the stores taken and a receipt given. Farmers, sportsmen and ex-British Army officers who had rifles, shotguns, etc., were called upon, if possible, before the British authorities, and their arms taken.

I may mention that we were often going away from a place when the British would be arriving to take up the arms also. Some people charged us with stealing or robbing these people of the arms, etc., but in the case where the British took them, it was only collecting them for safety. Several thousands of arms thus taken are at present rotting in the custody of the Irish Government to-day and owners cannot be identified.

Each company of Volunteers had to secure arms for themselves. The Ballinalee Company was no exception to the

rule and its arms at this time consisted of two double-barrel shotguns, one Winchester Repeater rifle, and a .38 revolver which the Company O/C held and carried. For the shotguns we had twelve cartridges, and for the rifle, a few rounds, and for the revolver, ten rounds.

A raid at Kilnaleck:

It would be about this time that we staged a raid for arms in Kilnaleck. This happened to be the second incident of my "fighting career" and, although in the light of after events it was a very minor and trifling one, to me at that time it was a very thrilling affair indeed and one that I shall always remember.

It was during the Conscription period of 1918, and the total arms in our battalion area was one rifle and one .38 revolver, and, as we were determined to resist Conscription, we were searching far and wide for arms and ammunition of any description. Now, I was told that a Miss Sheridan in Kilnaleck, Co. Cavan, over seventeen miles away, had some sporting rifles, gunpowder, etc. In Longford, at this time, everything had been taken by the British, but in Cavan, so far, nothing had been seized.

Well, we were going to get that suff, by hook or by crook, and hit on a plan. The late Seán Connolly (my Battalion Adjutant), Seán Treacy, Seamus Conway and myself got on our bicycles one summer evening and rode to Kilnaleck, arriving there about 9 o'clock, armed with the .38 revolver. We had separated a short distance from the town, two going in at one end and two at the other. Conway and myself were shabbily dressed, but Connolly and Treacy were "disguised as gentlemen"!

Now, the plan that these two well-dressed gents were to operate was to go in to see Miss Sheridan, engage her in conversation and see how the land lay. If she was agreeable to sell the stuff, well and good; if not, they were to find out what she had, and when they were about half an hour in the house, we two rough-looking fellows were to walk in (armed with the .38) and seize the stuff by force - and we thought ourselves as valiant as Napoleon!

Well, when they had been inside for about half an hour, we walked in, as arranged, and just as we entered we heard her explain that she was in the very difficult position of having been notified to have the stuff ready to surrender to the Government in the course of a day or so, and we saw on the table a rifle and various small arms. "Your difficulty is solved, Ma'am", I said, "we're taking it"! The lady swung round, very startled, then, recovering herself, said laughingly, "Oh, take it, and good luck to the two of ye"! Then to the other pair, "But I don't like ye're method of matchmaking"!

The bicycles were outside the door and we brought our two in, tying on them the parcels containing a Lee Enfield, some other small arms, a revolver or two, etc. and some ammunition. But, lo and behold, when we opened the door to go out with our booty, there were eight policemen standing on the footpath. Of course, we immediately came to the conclusion that we were "sold", but I, being armed with my .38, decided that I could easily shoot the whole lot, and bravely pushed my bicycle with the parcels

out through them (closely followed by Conway), at the same time calling back to those in the house, "Good night, we'll be back shortly". The police made way for us, and we got on the bicycles and rode off like 'billeo'!

The police had evidently seen us go in, became a little suspicious and had come up to investigate, but were reassured by our apparent friendliness with Miss Sheridan.

Now, we had previously arranged that we should meet at a house of an uncle of mine, about eight miles from Kilnaleck. We arrived at the uncle's house, near Finea, about 10 or 11 o'clock, waited for an hour, but there was no sign of the other two boys, and we came to the conclusion that if we had escaped, they had not.

We took off the parcels, left them with the uncle, and rode back to Kilnaleck. All the way I was in an agony of apprehension: - those two boys had been arrested and nothing would clear me. I was the Battalion Commander and had brought them into a hole, and left them there, etc. etc.

We arrived at Kilnaleck, and found the town very quiet. I went to the house of an aged band master whom I knew, and asked if he heard whether anybody was arrested in the town that night. To our great relief, he said "No"! He had not heard of any arrests. A little reassured, we then proceeded to Miss Sheridan's and found that the boys had left there an hour or so ago. They had gone astray!

That little episode will always remain in my mind, and as I have mentioned it as the second incident of my operational career, I may as well give an account of the first such incident. This was a raid on Heraty's, Ballinalee.

At this time we decided to get some ammunition from a merchant in Ballinalee which he had in store. Arrangements were being made to get it when information reached us that it was to be moved to Longford, that its return had been asked for by the local Sergeant of the R.I.C. Accordingly, the late Seán Connolly and I held a consultation as to how it could be secured. The merchant (Mr. P.J. Heraty, R.I.P., who will come in for mention several times later) could not give us the stuff. His foreman, Volunteer Frank O'Keeffe, told us of the whereabouts of the stuff, and also declared that he could not give the ammunition, that, if it was taken, he would have to report the loss. So it was decided to raid for the stuff at 10 p.m. when the shop was about to be closed.

At 8 p.m. on a night in July, 1918, Seán Connolly, Paddy Callaghan (R.I.P.), Ned Tynan and one or two others were in the forge, as ordered. Connolly and another man, whose name I forget, were to watch the police barracks; Callaghan and another were to take up position at Hannigan's Bridge; Tynan and I were to raid the shop. The other four Volunteers went to the village, in pairs, and took up positions as directed. Tommy Earley was to patrol the town, and let us know if all was clear, by walking down the old lane at the end of Heraty's at 9.45 p.m. Tynan and I proceeded across fields to Ballinalee, armed with one small .38 revolver,

being the little one I have mentioned before, and the only revolver in the place save one old Bulldog pattern revolver which Seán Connolly had. It might fire, and it might not.

Ned Tynan and I walked quietly across the fields and, when we got to the old lane, we met Earley as arranged. His information was that four policemen were in Heraty's, apparently having no business but quietly leaning on the counter, that they were armed with revolvers, and that Constable Boyers and Sergeant Smith were in the party. These two men were Protestants, and were particularly bitter against us. Boyers it was who swore against Tomás Ashe. Earley further informed us that Connolly had withdrawn and had told Earley to tell me that I should withdraw also, that he suspected treachery. I asked Ned was he game to stick it and run the chance of raiding for the stuff. He chuckled a little, and replied, in real style, "Sure"! We dismissed Earley, and went up to the end of the house. Just as we walked up, out walked the police, and went in the direction of the barracks.

We rushed into the shop, held up the assistants, and, to prevent them saying they knew us, we wore two old school satchels, with two slits for the eyes on each, over our heads. The assistants offered no resistance, but put up their hands and faced the wall in proper style. Ned remained at the halldoor, with his revolver in his hand. A brother of Mr. Heraty, not knowing what our errand was, and thinking the day's cash was in danger, dashed out the light and made for the door, but he was held up by Ned. I dashed for the ammunition, which I got, and made for the door also. To prevent Mr. Heraty

from calling out or raising an alarm, O'Keeffe, I believe, told him what was on, and he remained quiet. We moved off, ordering the assistants, O'Keeffe and Heraty not to stir for fifteen minutes.

O'Keeffe came to the conclusion that too many persons would be interrogated if he ran to the barracks at the end of fifteen minutes, and accordingly told all hands to keep their mouths shut, that he would manage the affair. He arranged that Mr. Heraty would go away at six o'clock in the morning, and that he should try to let some policeman see him going. This, Mr. Heraty succeeded in doing. At 8.30 a.m. on the next morning, O'Keeffe was down in the shop to open it, having arranged that the girls and boys would not be downstairs for half an hour after him. When he opened the shop door, there was no one on the street. He took down a shutter, let it fall with a bang, and shouted, "Mercy, boys! Don't shoot!" Everyone in the establishment was upstairs, and, by the time they came down, O'Keeffe was in a fainting condition in the shop, and informed the staff that four men had come in and held him up as he was taking down the shutters, and that two of them had rushed into the shop and taken the ammunition which he had bundled up for the police. The shop showed a dishevelled appearance, candles, sugar, tea, etc., scattered all over the place. He declared that he must go to the barracks at once to report the loss. He ran up to the police barracks, told his story and, in a few moments, the police were flying around the place. The other members of the staff were questioned. They knew nothing, save that they had heard confused voices, and O'Keeffe shouting, "Don't shoot, boys!" They were upstairs at the time. O'Keeffe brazened it out to the

police - this tall story of his of a raid adjourned by him for nearly ten hours - certainly giving the perpetrators a good start. Wires were sent to Longford, and, in an hour, police and military and the County Inspector and District Inspector were on the scene. O'Keeffe was closely questioned. He described the raiders minutely. The only difference he made in the actual appearance of the two men was that the fair one was six feet tall, and the small, black fellow, about five feet, seven inches, thus giving my description for Tynan, and Tynan's for mine. He described the sort of masks worn. These had been safely burned in the forge at this time.

The police were at sea. The raiders had disappeared completely - vanished into thin air. How they could have done so, in so short a time, was the mystery. Little did they know how the time of the raid had got such a change. All passed over without any further trouble. I may mention here that O'Keeffe served faithfully and well in the troubled years to follow, and later when civil strife reigned in the land. You will find O'Keeffe again successfully defending his master's property, this time against five armed robbers, but this is another story, so I must leave it to its proper place.

I have dealt elsewhere with the establishment of the Dáil, and have given the names of the first elected Government in Ireland since the Act of Union. The constitutional growth, as outlined in that chapter, is accurate.

In 1919, a meeting of the Provincial Council of the I.R.B. was called for Aughnacliffe, and the place

decided was the shores of Lough Gowna in the townland of Aughakine. A Feis was organised, on a fairly elaborate scale, including a public meeting to be addressed by members of the Dáil and other prominent persons connected with the movement. A Brigade Council meeting was also summoned for that night, and a concert and dance were being held in Aughnacliffe Hall. There was a large force of armed R.I.C. mobilised for the occasion from Counties Longford and Cavan. Many Volunteers were on guard and other duties in connection with the meeting and the Feis.

The meeting passed off successfully, and the Feis was brought to a close without incident. Success had attended our efforts so far. The brigade meeting was now to be held, and was to synchronise with the dance. Just when the dancers were assembling and some brigade and battalion officers had already assembled, shots rang out, a short distance from the hall, which could be heard for many miles around.

On a road, running from Aughnacliffe to Edenmore, towards Drumlish, two junior Volunteer officers - a 1st and 2nd Lieutenant, respectively - decided to disarm two of the armed R.I.C. There was a severe tussle between the four men, but the R.I.C. succeeded in retaining their arms and wounding both officers, Brady and McNally.

This came as a surprise to both Brigade and Battalion Staffs, as no instructions had been issued for it, and, at the time, it was taken that the R.I.C. had attacked us, but, on immediate investigation, the facts were ascertained.

McNally was only slightly wounded. Matt Brady was severely wounded in three places. Two bullets shattered his leg, having entered on the inside, and blowing half the femur away on the outside, shattering the whole leg from nearly the knee to the hip. He was shot through the arm in two places, and, what appeared to be the most serious of all, one bullet entered half an inch below his left nipple, with an exit wound directly opposite, in his back. Priest and doctors were hurriedly mobilised. The doctors declared that he had a short time to live, that he was shot through the pericardium.

Brady was still alive an hour afterwards, although the doctors had declared that he had only a short time to live. His mother and sister had arrived from Gelsha, about three miles distant. All believed that he was dying, but still there was no blood coming from his mouth or nose, and he was shouting very vigorously with pain.

I came to the conclusion that there was a chance of saving his life, and I enquired from those around if they knew of any doctor who had experience of gunshot wounds in the British army, or who had been through the 1914-1918 war. I was informed that there was a Major Douglas in Killeshandra, who was a doctor and surgeon, and that he was home on leave at the time. I sent two Volunteers, whose names I cannot now recall, with a driver, to call on Dr. Douglas in Killeshandra. They were to tell him that Lord Farnham had had a serious motor accident some distance out on the road, and that he was to come at once and bring his medical and surgical outfit with him, as the patient was in a serious condition. Major Douglas hustled. He brought out his

bag, got into the car, and they set off for the scene of Lord Farnham's accident, which was non-existent. After some time, he began to get uneasy, and challenged his escort as to where the accident had happened. He was told to calm down. Eventually, he arrived safely at Smith's of Rathmore where Matt Brady lay, wounded and still alive.

I met Dr. Douglas - he was highly indignant at our conduct - and I explained to him why he had been brought, that he was regarded as the only one with experience of bullet wounds, that this Volunteer officer had been seriously wounded, and that I now asked him, in the interest of suffering hamanity, to do what he could for him.

Dr. Douglas made a careful examination of the wounded man, and then declared that the wounds in his hip were serious ones and likely to be the cause of his death, that the breast wound was of no importance, as he was fortunate enough to have what was known as a pigeon chest and the bullet had entered at a point where it was deflected around his rib and around directly at the back, causing only a slight flesh wound, but that the leg was really serious and should have been attended to hours ago, and that an immediate operation was necessary.

It was then decided to send for Dr. Mayne, the surgeon in Longford, and to get an ambulance sent out for him. I decided that Longford Hospital was the only place where I could have Brady treated, in view of the necessity for urgent treatment. Dr. Douglas was kind enough to say that he would remain until Dr. Mayne arrived, which he did. When Dr. Mayne arrived, they had a consultation, and I overheard

Douglas advising Mayne as to the nature of the operation. They put on temporary splints and dressed the wounds. Then a British army ambulance arrived, accompanied by a British army doctor and four Red Cross orderlies.

When the army doctor dismounted from the covered lorry with a red cross on the sides and ends, he put his hands up, and declared that he was there in the interests of suffering hamanity, and that his uniform was not to be regarded as hostile. Dr. Mayne then explained that, as he had no ambulance, he had rung up the O/C, Longford, for the loan of the ambulance and some orderlies. I took this as a reasonable explanation. Anyway, no other ambulance was available. When Brady was moved on to a stretcher and carried to the ambulance by the Red Cross orderlies, there was considerable hostility to this move. So I decided that I would insist on travelling on the ambulance with Brady to the hospital. The officer at first objected, but I insisted, and explained that, if Brady should die on the road or anything happened, he would find it extremely difficult to prove that he had not been killed by them. At this, he consented.

I accompanied Brady on the ambulance to Longford County Hospital, and saw Brady safely in bed, in the care of nurses and Dr. Mayne. I am not sure whether Dr. Douglas came to Longford to assist at the operation, or not, but I have a half-notion that he did. I asked Dr. Mayne to let me know if there was any attempt to arrest Brady. This, he refused to do, but said that he knew that T.W. Delaney, the Crown Solicitor, was a friend of mine, that he would tell him, and that Delaney might do as he pleased.

After some months, when the British authorities decided to arrest Brady, T.W. Delaney sent out word that he was to be arrested. We succeeded in having Brady transferred from Longford to the Richmond Hospital in Dublin, where Dr. Michael Burke and Sir Thomas Myles took care of him till the Truce, many times locking him into presses and other places of concealment when the place was being searched by Black and Tans and other British forces.

The shooting of Brady took place on Sunday, 29th April, 1919, at about six or seven o'clock in the evening, and he was not moved to hospital until the following Monday evening at about four o'clock. It was on a Monday morning that Dr. Douglas came. On Monday, while we were waiting, a large force of R.I.C., under the command of District Inspector Dan O'Keeffe and Head Constable Carroll, arrived at Smith's. Leaving the R.I.C. about four hundred yards down the road, the two police officers walked up to Smith's. They said they were enquiring into the shooting, and wanted to interview Brady who, they were informed, was wounded in Smith's. I told them that they could not see him, and they asked me for my authority to refuse them permission to see him. I told them that, under doctor's orders, he was not to be disturbed, and the authority of the Government of the Republic, to which the Head Constable replied that he would act on the doctor's orders, and would not take any cognizance of the other reason, and they withdrew.

One of the outstanding administrative acts by the first Dáil was the flotation of the first Dáil Loan by Collins, as Minister for Finance. The Volunteers

and Volunteer officers in a great many counties were instructed to assist in its collection. The late Senator Frank McGuinness was the chief officer for the collection in Longford. Jack O'Sheehan (of Hospitals Trust, Ltd.) was sent by Collins to Longford as special agent, with the late Joe McGuinness, T.D., Longford-Westmeath, to collect in the brigade area.

I travelled a considerable portion of North Longford with Joe McGuinness and Jack O'Sheehan. They had reasonable success, some subscriptions being as high as £100 which, at that time, was regarded as a very great sum.

We called upon one person near Ballinalee. When the loan was explained to him, he felt it was an opportunity to make some profit. He declared that he was a member of the Masonic Order, and that it was quite obvious that we would require arms and ammunition. He was prepared to carry out a gun-running expedition of arms and ammunition for a sum of £30,000, for ten thousand rifles and one hundred rounds per rifle. This was a new development, as far as McGuinness and Sheehan were concerned, and they did not know what to make of the proposal. They came to the conclusion that the best thing they could do was to get away from him and his proposal, although I believed, and still believe, that he was in a position to deliver the goods. This person did subsequently act as intelligence agent for us and, during the defence of Ballinalee, his house was made headquarters on several occasions. His motor car was also used. To record the story of this man's activities would require a long chapter, if not ten chapters. He died quite recently, reconciled to the Church.

In pursuance of the Dáil Loan collection, posters were sent out, to be put up on church gates, for the information of the congregations attending the churches. I put them up at Ballinalee Church for first Mass, but, between the Masses - a Sergeant Reidy and a Constable Quigley, before mentioned, with Boyers, took them down. Perhaps I was careless not to have stayed with the posters. I decided that I would put them up myself again for second Mass, and to stay with them. While the people were inside the church at Mass, I put up the poster. Sergeant Reidy and Constable Quigley left the church where they were at Mass, came out, and ordered me to take it down. I told them that I would not take it down, and that they would not take it down. Reidy made a move to go towards the tree on which it was posted. I was not armed, but I pretended that I was, and told him that, if he took another step forward, he would pay the penalty. Quigley interved with him. Reidy then demanded my name, which I refused to give. He then informed me that he knew me, and that I would hear about it again.

At this time, we were under strict orders not to sleep at home. A month passed, and the late Seán Connolly and I attended a Battalion Council meeting at McGrath's of Clonbroney. The meeting lasted until three o'clock in the morning. As it was then very late, Connolly and I decided that we would not trouble anyone that night, but would go to our respective homes. On my way home, it was freezing. This was the 1st or 2nd November.

When I got home, I handed my papers and revolver to my mother, and got into bed. I was only a short

time in bed when a knock came to the window, and I heard someone calling me by name. As it was freezing when I was going to bed, the thought struck me that the road had become slippery, and that probably it was someone who wanted a horse sharpened to enable him to travel to a fair that day in Edgeworthstown. I was sure that the voice of my caller was that of a man named William Reilly. I asked him what he wanted, and he said, "Open the door!". Practically in my sleep, I answered, "You can break it in!" - still believing that it was Willie Reilly. I had no intention of jumping up to attend him that quickly, or my brother, Michael, either. To my surprise, the next thing I heard was an axle of a car being pulled around the end of the house. I then realised that, whoever it was, was going to break open the door, and, of course, that it was enemy forces. At that moment, my mother came down and told me that she had looked out the back window and that the house was surrounded by military and police. I told her to go back to bed, and I went to the door and opened it. I was there met by Sergeant Reidy and Head Constable Carroll.

Head Constable Carroll pushed Reidy back from the door, and said to me, "It is alright! Dress yourself. Sergeant Reidy is here, and he has a warrant for your arrest". I said, "Alright - provided you do not go into the house, or disturb anyone in it!" He said he would not allow anyone in, or disturb anybody. In the circumstances, I was only too glad to avail of the opportunity of preserving the documents which were in my mother's custody, and which, if they fell into the hands of the authorities, would have had far-reaching consequences. I had all the papers - Connolly's and my

own. I hastily dressed, stepped outside the door, and Sergeant Reidy then read the warrant, by the aid of a flash-lamp, in which I was charged with putting up the poster. I was conveyed in an open lorry, on that very cold morning, to the barracks in Longford town.

At eleven o'clock that same day, I was brought before the Resident Magistrate, Jephson, and charged, under the Defence of the Realm Act, with having put up the poster, with advocating the Dáil Loan, and with impeding the R.I.C. Sergeant, Reidy, in the discharge of his duty. I refused to recognise the court. During the proceedings, my breakfast was carried into the courtroom, on a tray, by the McGuinness sisters. There was a scramble over the breakfast. I was told that I would not be allowed to take it. I insisted that I must get it, that I could not do without it any longer, as I had been a long time without food. The proceedings were reported in the "Roscommon Herald" and in the "Longford Leader", at the same time. I did not get my breakfast. A cup of tea was spilt on the table. The Resident Magistrate regarded the whole thing as very unseemly conduct.

Sergeant Reidy proved his case, which was corroborated by Constable Quigley, but there was no mention of a threat. The Resident Magistrate then asked if any of the police officers knew anything about me. District Inspector Daniel O'Keeffe, and District Inspector Preston both came forward. District Inspector O'Keeffe declared that I was a blacksmith of good quality and regarded as an excellent worker, that there was nothing against me, and that, if I was bound

to the peace, he was sure it would meet the case. District Inspector Preston concurred with this, and spoke very highly of my conduct at all times.

The Resident Magistrate then declared that he was binding me to the peace on my own security of £10, or, in default thereof, two months' imprisonment in Sligo Jail, and asked me to show cause why I would not do so, to which I replied that, if any citizen felt that he was in danger or afraid of me, or that I would injure him in any way, I would gladly give an undertaking to keep the peace, but that, if, on the other hand, he, the Resident Magistrate, was binding me not to wage war against the King and the British forces in Ireland, I would not do so. Things were becoming a bit involved at this stage, and the Resident Magistrate ordered me to be taken away.

I was conveyed to Sligo Prison. This had far-reaching consequences for me subsequently. A member of my escort was a Sergeant Ryan of Longford who, at a later date, accompanied District Inspector McGrath in the raid upon Martin's cottage, which was followed by the shooting of District Inspector McGrath and the battle with Sergeant Ryan. During my courtmartial, Sergeant Ryan identified me, and his explanation for being so sure of me, was that he had been a member of my escort to Sligo Jail at the end of 1919, and that he knew me well.

On my arrival in Sligo Jail, I found as companions, Alec McCabe, Jim Dolan, Jim Hunt, Thornton, Castlebar, Seamus O'Mullane, Tom O'Donnell, and several others.

While I was in Sligo Jail, a demand was made for political treatment. The Governor was very favourable, and went a long way towards meeting our demands, but there were still some prisoners not satisfied. The question of a hunger-strike was proposed. I happened to be the senior officer present, both in the Volunteers and in the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and I countermanded the decision to hunger-strike, pointing out that the sooner we could get out, the better it would be, but that, if necessary, we could do two things, all escape, or burn the prison and escape, including the capture of the guardroom.

I was able to make a plan for this undertaking. When one of the prisoners, Thornton, got seriously ill during the night and had to be removed to the hospital within the prison, I travelled with him, and had considerable freedom within the prison. I succeeded in making a plan of the prison and the whereabouts of the guardroom, and, with the help of Warder Stephen Clement, the prison carpenter, two plans were drawn up, firstly, for the escape of prisoners or any one prisoner, and, secondly, the capture of the guardroom and the prison .

This plan was sent out of the prison to Billy Pilkington, the Brigade O/C, and it was eventually utilised, at a much later date, for the rescue of Carty and other prisoners. On my release, I discussed this with Pilkington. A very active and reliable member of the Cumann na mBan took a very prominent part in Sligo at the time. She was a Miss Máire McHugh,

sister of Alfred McHugh who was an officer of the Sligo Brigade. Mother Cecelia in the Ursuline Convent was also an energetic enthusiast. All played a very prominent part relating to the prison.

I succeeded in being released on the 28th December, having spent Christmas Day in Sligo Jail. It was one of the most enjoyable Christmas Days I ever spent. All doors were open during the Christmas season.

Chapter VI.

MILITARY OPERATIONS.

On my return, there was a mobilisation of the brigade to meet me. At a meeting held that night, the attack on Drumlish Barracks was decided upon. Authority had come to capture Drumlish Barracks, we of the Battalion Staff having submitted plans before my arrest. The plans were approved of, and we got the work to do, Drumlish being in our battalion area.

The following were present at the meeting of the Staff Officers of the 1st Battalion, Longford Brigade, which was held on December 28th, 1919:- Myself (Battalion Commandant), John Duffy (Adjutant), Frank Whitney (Vice O/C), Pat Kiernan (Quartermaster) and Seán Connolly (Vice O/C, Brigade Staff). The plans were reconsidered, and found satisfactory. They were as follows:

The barrack was to be surrounded, silently and on all sides, by twenty men, at a distance of two hundred yards. Four men were to approach the southern gable, and insert in the ground, under the foundations, ten pounds of gelignite, in two charges, with two electric detonators in the two charges (one each). Before they started to mine the gable, one man was to walk up to the door, light an ordinary fuse (with a match) in a bomb, weighing fourteen pounds, and throw it through the fanlight. Should this blow open the door, five men were to rush the door, and perhaps capture the place at the point of the bayonet, the reason for five men being that we had only five rifles with bayonets. Should the bomb

not make an opening sufficiently large, the mine was to be put in the gable, as arranged, and it was expected that this would make a hole sufficiently large to allow the place to be rushed.

Our information was that there were in the barracks twelve R.I.C., one Sergeant, one N.C.O. and eight soldiers - twenty-two men, all told. The barracks was fortified with sandbags and steel plates on the windows, the door being secured by a chain, and could not be rushed at night. It might be rushed in daylight, but the difficulty in disarming twenty-two men was considered impossible unless we had short arms. Our stock of revolvers was very small - only four. The night plan was, therefore, decided upon.

We decided on testing the loyalty of the whole Brigade with this operation, by sending out instructions to all Battalion O/C's to block several roads leading to and from Longford, Granard, Arva and Mohill to Drumlish, this order to be sent out one day in advance of the date named for the attack.

We fixed the night of January 5th, with myself in charge of the operation, Tom Reddington, Brigade O/C, and Seán Connolly, Deputy Brigade O/C, as onlookers and to assist me by advice as the attempt to capture the barracks developed.

We picked our men for the attack by taking a few from each company, about eight, and the Battalion Staff, making a total of thirty-six, all ranks. Amongst those selected were ex Commandant B. Masterson, P. Cooke, Granard Company; Pat Finnegan, Columbkille Company; Patrick Kiernan (Red), Drumlish; M.F. Reynolds, Terence Doherty, - Clarke, - Keogh, M. Gormley,

Paddy Cooney, Killoe Company; P. Callaghan, J.J. Killane, Clonbroney Company; John Sullivan, Ballinamuck Company. These are the names that come to my mind now, but there was at least one other from Killoe, whose name I will not mention, but who gave me the laugh of the night after we left Drumlish, and many a laugh since.

The arms of the party were made up of five service rifles (one Mauser rifle), five revolvers, the remainder being armed with shotguns, two hand grenades which had been purchased from soldiers, and the three charges of gelignite made into three huge bombs, one detonated with ordinary fuse and the other two, as already mentioned, with electric detonators. The gelignite had been purchased in Dublin in November, 1918, and was kept very carefully in Henry Tynan's of Leitrim, Ballinalee, at one time, in the barn, and at another time, in the drain at the end of Moorehead's, a Protestant's place, about fifty yards from Tynan's.

Mobilisation was for 9 p.m. at Edward Cooney's of Dooroc. Every man and officer were to get there as best they could. The order was sent out, that morning, that all roads were to be blocked, as outlined, at 11 p.m., which was the hour decided upon for the attack.

There was no absentee at 9 p.m. in Dooroc - all answered the roll. We nearly had a mutiny over the distribution of the arms, as every man wanted a rifle, and we had but six, all told. No one wanted the shotguns. The revolvers were for the officers. Michael Gormley had one of the rifles home with him from the British army; he must get his own; it was given to him. Terry Doherty was an officer in the British army; it was felt he should have one; he got it. No one

disputed the right of these two, because no one could say that he could make better use of them. Distribution was finally effected, after much grumbling. The order to fall in was given. Small advance and rear guards were thrown out, and a start was made for Drumlish. Frank Whitney, who lived opposite the barracks, was excused participation. He only had to watch the movements of the R.I.C. and soldiers, see if all were in the barracks, report to us outside the town, and then return to his house and go to bed. He reported that all were in the barracks, and we gave him fifteen or twenty minutes to get inside and get to bed before we moved.

We were in position at about 11.30 p.m., and, by this time, we could hear trees falling upon the roads in all directions. A crux arose over the difficulty of lighting the fuse of the bomb which was to be thrown in on the fanlight. For fear of any accident, the late Seán Connolly, who was supposed to take no part, took the bomb and walked up to the door. He coolly lit a match, ignited the fuse, and smashed it in on the fanlight. A policeman ran to the door, but ran back when he saw the fuse spitting and burning. We awaited the explosion which came in a few seconds - but what appeared to us to be hours. It came, not with the crash we expected, but just as a sharp crack. The detonator only exploded, and the gelignite remained as it was. We came to the conclusion that the bomb was broken in pieces by the fall, and that, in some way, the gelignite separated from the detonator, and that that was the reason why there was no explosion.

Fire was opened from the barracks in all directions. Fire was opened by us on the front and rear of the premises. Our men started mining the end which

had no window, and, after half an hour, the mines were firmly planted underneath the gable. The cable was attached to the detonators, and the stand-clear was given. The cable was then attached to the battery, contact was made, and the two detonators exploded, but nothing more. The gelignite was useless - we might as well have had the bombs charged with soap. We did not know the difference between gelignite in good condition and in bad.

We then tried to smash the windows in, by having a grenade burst on one of them. B. Masterson, a bomb thrower in the Great War, did his best, but to no avail. I decided to take out the bombs from underneath the gable. In the meantime, desultory firing was kept up on the front and rear of the barracks, the occupants of which were using so much ammunition that we had hopes that, if we stayed long enough, we might be able to force a window and effect an entrance.

The occupants were called upon to surrender at various intervals, but they knew that, if our explosives were like what we had thrown in, they had nothing to fear from our threat to blow up the barracks. No one was supposed to say anything to the beleaguered garrison but myself. Imagine my surprise to hear, from the rear of the barracks, a call, in very emphatic language, to the garrison to surrender, or they would be blown to perdition. This happened three or four times. I went round to investigate, and I found the party in the rear alright. I asked them who was shouting. They said it was someone over on their left, and to their rear. I went around, and found T. Q., a Volunteer from Killoe, with his back towards the barracks, and he firing

straight up in the air, and every shot he fired, he called on the garrison to surrender. I tapped him on the shoulder with my revolver, and he gave a shout, saying, "I surrender!" He prayed and blessed and blowed when he found out that it was his commanding officer and not one of the R.I.C. He then coolly informed me that he was wounded, and that he felt the blood running down his leg. He was not wounded.

The bombs were, by this time, removed from under the foundations and the earth replaced. We decided on one final effort to blow out the door. We had one Mills bomb left. A young Volunteer went up, under fire, and threw the grenade through the fanlight again. It did not explode. I never knew the reason why.

We decided to call off the attack at about 5 a.m., and returned to Dooroc, very sad men, having failed in our objective, but thanking God that we had the gelignite safe, and deploring the ammunition lost or wasted in the affair.

We got to our homes or lodgings at 6 a.m. or 7 a.m., very tired. We all were in good form for a concert, which was given in Ballinalee on that night at Heraty's. We learned that night that our gelignite was frozen. We were told all about gelignite by an old quarryman, and how we could restore it to its strength. How we restored the gelignite and blew Ballinamuck barracks to perdition is another story.

The only satisfaction we had out of this, our first large operation, or what we considered then as large was: firstly, there was no traitor; secondly, all the boys showed willingness and courage and obedience; finally, that the barracks in Drumlish was evacuated very soon afterwards.

When the general order for the burning of all vacated barracks was issued, we decided to do a first-class job on Ballinalee Barracks, which had been vacated by the R.I.C. some time previously, but which was now occupied by the Sergeant's wife, Mrs. Hamilton, with her family.

Seán Connolly and I decided that we would carry out the burning of this barracks ourselves, with the help of some Volunteers. We called on Mrs. Hamilton, and took her, her children and her personal furniture over to Peter Keady's house, mentioned before, which had been vacated. We assured her that she was quite safe, and she told us that she knew she was, especially as she knew us both - and declared, with willingness, that she did not know us, subsequently.

We brought some hay and shavings into the barracks, and spread them on all the floors. We then sprinkled the place well with petrol. I do not know, to this day, what happened. Someone struck a match, and suddenly, the whole place was in flames around us. We were upstairs, finishing the sprinkling - instead of starting above and coming down - when the door slammed on the two of us. With a great effort, we burst it through, and got out, with our clothes on fire, and the hair on our heads and eyebrows all burnt up. It was a close call.

At this time, early in 1920, the Cumann na mBan was fully organised in the Brigade area, a unit having been established everywhere there was a company of Volunteers. Mrs. McKeown (née Miss McLoughlin) of Main Street, Longford, was appointed in charge.

The following were the principal members who

took part in the organisation of the various units of Cumann na mBan, and formed the Headquarters Staff of the Brigade:-

Miss May Maguire;
The three Misses McGuinness.
Alice Cooney, sister of Ned Cooney.
Mrs. Margaret Doyle.
Miss Kathleen Cooney.
Miss Madden, sister of Commandant Pat Madden, Roscommon.
(She worked in the Post Office.)
Miss Baxter, Ardagh.
Miss Annie Duffy, Ballinalee.
Mrs. Killeen, Ballinalee.
Miss Helena MacEoin.
Miss Annie Hennigan.
Miss Maggie Cooney.
Miss Julia Keenan, Soran.
Mrs. Kate Brady, Cartronmarkey.
Miss Aileen Flood, Granard.
Miss Ledwith (now Mrs. Kilbride).
Miss McGowan (now Mrs. Richard Tuite).

Mrs. McKeown, being O/C, has already given a full record of the Cumann na mBan organisation to the Pensions Board, and I will not elaborate on it now.

Brigade and Battalion Medical Officers were appointed as follows:-

Dr. Robinson - Brigade Medical Officer.
Dr. Keenan - Ballinalee Battalion M.O.
Dr. Reynolds - Gowna
Dr. Kenny - Ballymahon
Dr. Yorke - Edgeworthstown.

These medical officers gave lectures in first-aid and general stretcher work to the members of the Cumann na mBan. First-aid kits were packed, but they were rather bulky.

The members of Cumann na mBan were mobilised for every engagement, and played an important part in our activities which included despatch carrying, mapping,

and cooking for the Column at a later stage. They were also responsible for procuring clothing for the Volunteers, and running social and other events to raise money. There were some who rendered very valiant service:-

May Maguire.
Annie Duffy.
Nellie Kenny (Mrs. Evers), deceased.
Julia Ballasty.
Mary Ellen Baxter.
Brigid Clarke.
Julia Keenan.
Helena MacEoin.
Marie Sorahan.
Elizabeth Conway.
The three Misses McGuinness (Peg was arrested and interned).
Maggie McHugh - one of the most vigorous members.

I will leave it to these ladies to tell of their own activities.

After Drumlish Barrack attack, a lot of our time was spent in the manufacture and preparation of ammunition, large and small bombs, and grenades. Seán Connolly and the two Mullervey's were busily engaged in attempting the manufacture of gun-cotton while, at the same time, filling and loading old cartridges.

A Brigade Council meeting was being held at the forge in Cloncoose when word was conveyed to us that two lorries of police and military would be travelling from Granard to Longford. It was decided, there and then, to attack them on the borders of the townlands of Ballinascraw and Listrahee. This was the first time that the whole Brigade Staff and Battalion Officers had got an opportunity to plan together an attack upon a mobile unit of the enemy.

Every available weapon was mobilised. Positions

were taken up at a point near the branch road leading from Ballinalee to Granard and Clonbroney, and near the houses of Cathcart's, Gilliard's and Doyle's. The road was cut to a substantial depth, covered with twigs and branches, and, as the weather was very dry, dusted over again. A bush was then pulled along the road for a considerable distance in the direction of the oncoming enemy lorries, and left on the side of the road as if somebody had dragged it that far. This levelled off the trench in the road, and was intended to mislead the enemy.

All preparations were completed in a short time. Just then, the enemy were signalled as coming. They were approaching Howden's crossroads, about half a mile from the ambush position, on the Granard side. For some reason unknown, the two lorries went straight on, instead of turning at Howden's crossroads - or, in other words, they went astray. We regretted their error very much. It meant that all our work was in vain, and we had to refill the trench, and the Brigade and Battalion Staffs did not go into action.

Subsequent to this, we lay in wait for the enemy on several occasions, but none came.

On Thursday, 27th May, 1920, an engagement took place between Ballinagh and Crossdoney, between members of the Cavan Brigade and R.I.C., and tha Company Captain, Thomas Sheridan, was seriously wounded in the abdomen. He was conveyed to Connareen, Aughnacliffe, Tom Reilly's place, which was our headquarters jail, and word was brought to me of his arrival. I was then at Cartronmarkey where I had temporary headquarters. I had the Battalion Medical Officer, John Francis Keenan,

conveyed to Reilly's. When he had examined the wounded man, he declared that an immediate operation was necessary as the only chance of saving his life, and that, in his opinion, it could not be carried out in Longford, and, therefore, recommended that he be transferred to Dublin at once.

There was some delay in getting a car. It was now approaching nightfall, and curfew was in force in Dublin. Stephen McGeeney of Longford volunteered for the task, provided that I accompanied him. Sheridan was made as comfortable as we could make him in the car, and we ran the gauntlet of curfew to the Mater Hospital in Dublin. I rang the accident ward bell, and two attendants came out. I said that it was a gunshot wound, requiring immediate medical attention. He was carried into the accident ward. I gave his name, Sheridan, but gave his address as Ballylongford, a combination of Ballinagh and Longford. We then "cut our stick" back home.

When we returned, a second brother, Patrick Sheridan, had arrived in Columcille, suffering from a bullet wound in the knee. McGeeney turned his car, and we went back to Dublin with Patrick, delivering him to Jervis Street Hospital, as I did not want to have the two brothers in the one hospital.

It was now Friday. I called to the Mater Hospital to inquire the condition of Tom, and, when I inquired, I was immediately made a prisoner and told that the Reverend Mother wanted to see me. She came, highly indignant at the manner in which I had been treated, and informed me that Tom had been operated on, but that peritonitis had set in, and that he was certain

to die in a very short time. She said that, under the military regulations enforced by the British authorities, she was required to notify them when an injured person, suffering from a bullet wound, was brought in, that she had not done so, but that, as his death was imminent, it would place her in a very difficult position. I then gave his correct name and address, and, in the circumstances authorised her to report that he had been brought into the hospital and put into the accident ward without report, and that it was only now she had secured his name and address. Tom died the next day, Saturday.

On Friday night or Saturday, the British raided Sheridan's home and, after abusing the parents, set the house on fire. I think they were able to prevent its total destruction, but it was severely damaged.

Patrick Sheridan recovered, and, on my release, he was one of the first to welcome me home at Kilshruley where he had been staying in the neighbourhood for several months previously. He got well in Jervis Street Hospital, and succeeded in returning to Treacy's of Aughagreagh where he remained until after the Truce.

At this time, it was decided to attack and capture Edgeworthstown R.I.C. Barracks. It was decided to attack the barracks from the adjoining house, Mullally's, the same line of attack as was carried out at Ballymahon subsequently.

Seán Connolly and I went into Edgeworthstown, to make a survey of the barracks. We went into Mullally's house and inspected the diningroom, which adjoined the R.I.C. barracks. We then decided on our plan of attack - to break or blow up the fireplace in Mullally's

diningroom, which was in the wall between the two houses, and leading into the dayroom of the barracks. Positions were to be taken front and rere of the barracks, and outposts placed on the Longford, Granard and Dublin roads.

Mobilisation of all units, including a detachment from Granard under Vice Commandant Murphy, was at Lisnageera, about a mile from Edgeworthstown. The Ballinalee unit cycled from the forge to Lisnageera via Clonbroney church. Murphy and his unit from Granard came by Lisryan and Ardaguillion, swinging into Lisnageera lane, off the Granard-Edgeworthstown road. The Longford unit was to man and block the Black Bridge (railway bridge) at Edgeworthstown. Ned Cooney was in charge of this unit. A further unit from Ardagh was to block the main road leading from Ardagh to the Edgeworthstown-Goshen road. Some members of the Clonbroney unit were to assist the Ardagh unit in this blocking.

Everybody moved into position, as planned, and just as the Longford unit was about to block the railway bridge, known as the Black Bridge, Longford, a company of the 18th Lancers, who were stationed in the Upper Military Barracks, came out on horseback and moved towards Ardagh. The Longford unit did not attempt to attack them, or block the road, but sent word by special messenger to the mobilisation point, informing us of this diversion. After a long and heated argument, it was decided to call off the attack, and instructions were issued, countermanding all activities for the night. It was suspected that some leakage had taken place, which was not correct. The Lancers had moved out to give their horses an airing, as they had not done so for some time previously.

To give some idea of enemy activity on that day, a unit from Athlone Military Barracks moved to Ballymahon, and from Ballymahon to Carrickedmond, and, in the course of their travels, they visited Curraghboola House. Commandant Paddy Ryan of Ardagh came to Seán Connolly and myself with a special report concerning this matter, and that he had information that Curraghboola House was about to be occupied. We thereupon authorised him to return immediately, remove the furniture from Curraghboola House, and to burn it. I regret to say that the order was not obeyed as given. The house and furniture were burned. This led to a Court of Inquiry into the whole matter of Curraghboola House, which has a local story. I may mention that a certificate for the order to burn was given by us to Gilliland, the owner, which enabled him to secure compensation under the Wood-Renton Commission.

On returning from the attack on Edgeworthstown Barracks, the decision to attack Ballinamuck Barracks was taken. On the next evening, Seán Connolly, Seamus Conway and myself cycled to Ballinamuck for a reconnaissance of the district. The plan for the attack was made.

After the failure to capture Edgeworthstown Barracks, we had to get new gelignite from Dublin, but there was none available, and our only explosive consisted of this famous gelignite which was equal to soap, as an explosive. We proceeded to restore it, as advised by the old quarryman. His instructions were to dry it slowly in some heated place, such as, an oats kiln, or by putting it into a cooking oven in a kitchen. The latter method we considered too dangerous, and we got an oats kiln belonging to Cornelius Treacy. We placed the gelignite

on bags on the tiles. When the bags and gelignite were placed on the tiles, we lit the kiln and allowed it to burn itself out. We continued at this work for several days, and finally we tested it. We took one stick of gelignite and a detonator and fuse, ignited the fuse, and threw the stick into a limekiln. With only the one stick, it nearly tore down the whole kiln. We then found all our gelignite was in good condition, but the difficulty was to keep it good. We stored it in a nice, dry place this time, and turned it regularly. We made up four 14-lb. bombs, with thirty sticks of gelignite in each, as well as an ordinary fuse and detonator, and, before loading, we tested two sticks and they were perfect. I often considered since the danger we were in, from that gelignite, and the risks we took in its restoration.

On Sunday, the 6th of June, 1920, Seán Connolly, Seamus Conway and I arranged with Captain Seán O'Sullivan and J.J. Brady to meet at Gaigue crossroads, to have a look at Ballinamuck Barracks and arrange a plan for its destruction and possible capture.

Ballinamuck Barracks was built as a fortress, with four round turrets, one at each corner. Each turret was loopholed in such a way as to command the approach from any side for four hundred yards. Some years previously, the R.I.C. had built a ball alley at one end of the barracks, and this wall proved their undoing, as will be shown. Having surveyed the barracks from every possible angle, we felt that, if we were to approach it under fire, we could never succeed. We went towards the ball alley wall, and found that, when we were within a hundred yards of the barracks, the wall blinded one

of the turrets completely, and almost obscured half of another. We learned that, from ten o'clock, two policemen took up positions in the second floor of the turrets, one on the front and the other on the rear.

We decided to attack on the following Wednesday night and to keep the operation a secret from every officer in the place, including J.J. O'Neill, for reasons which we felt were good and sufficient. O'Neill was drinking a good deal, frequented a public house in Ballinamuck, and, when in his cups, could talk too freely. The only officers from the area in the operation were Sullivan, Brady, Davis and Harte. We had some Volunteers.

We picked our men from the companies as before, with some alterations. Since Drumlish, the R.I.C. and Military had been experimenting with rockets and Verey pistols, to call for help in case of attack. This was a matter that had to be taken into account whenever a barracks was to be attacked.

The plan in this case was that eight men would creep up, in the darkness, to the ball alley wall, taking with them a short ladder, the four heavy bombs and two baskets of bottles filled with petrol, ignite the fuse of one bomb with a match, run up the ladder and throw the bomb into the flat roof of the turret which was on the south-west corner, or the west point of the barrack. This was the turret which the wall only partially blinded. When the bomb had exploded, five or six bottles of petrol would be thrown into the turret, and then another bomb would be thrown in. This was expected to set the place on fire.

The road was barricaded on the Ballinamuck side

of the small plantation on the Gaigue road to Drumlish. In the event of reinforcements coming, their advance was to be held up there, and further advance resisted.

Seán Connolly took charge of the attack on the barracks, and I took charge of the party on the Gaigue road. He took six riflemen with him, leaving me with forty shotguns, single and double barrelled, on this road.

Seán Connolly took his eight men up to the ball alley wall as arranged, and succeeded in throwing the bomb on the roof of the turret, as planned. He then threw in six bottles of petrol, and the second bomb. Immediately, the whole place was in flames. The police withdrew to the back yard from where they continued their defence. When Connolly saw the place sufficiently on fire as to be impossible to extinguish, he withdrew. The arms and ammunition were not captured, nor was the barracks.

Sergeant Ruddy, in charge of the barracks, sent a man to Longford on the following day to report the destruction of his barracks, which had been considered impregnable, but was able to boast that he had beaten us off, and that he had succeeded in saving his arms. Two hours after we had left, he opened fire, and shot all over the place. When the Inspector came with reinforcements next day, he was able to show the terrible resistance he had put up, and that he had nearly wasted all his ammunition before he succeeded in beating us off.

We still had two bombs safe after Ballinamuck. They were handed over to me, and I was told that the next attempt must be made by me, and that this must be Ballymahon. The preparation for the attack and capture

of Ballymahon is another story.

The destruction of Ballinamuck Barracks was regarded by everyone as an event of the utmost importance, and was performed with great difficulty. Any noise or error on the part of Commandant Connolly or any of his party in the advance on the place would have had fatal results, as approach would have been impossible. He explained to me afterwards that he never found anything as difficult as the approach for the last two hundred yards. Some of the thoughts that struck him were: Would the R.I.C. guard see him? If so, and if he fired and chanced to hit one of the huge bombs carried by his men, the result would be serious! That he would be quite satisfied if he succeeded in destroying what was regarded as one of the greatest strongholds in the county! I certainly agreed that this was so. We came home, delighted with ourselves and our night's work, but, greater than all, the soap cum gelignite worked, and worked with a vengeance.

After Ballinamuck Barracks being destroyed, our supply of explosives was almost exhausted and our supply of ammunition was practically nil. We had to set about securing more. A soldier was seen very often out the roads alone, and then going to a public house near the railway station in Longford, named Lee's.

We decided to get in touch with him. Commandant Redington saw him in Lee's, Earl Street, Longford, and spoke to him, and told him that there was money to be had for the sale of arms and ammunition, that he, Redington, would put him in touch with the right people if he was prepared to sell. The soldier agreed to meet the man with the money, and gave his proper name. We called

him "Jordy". This was not his proper name, but one which we gave him. Commandant Redington wrote to me to come into a shed near Longford, alongside the road, at a certain time on a June evening. Jordy informed me that he was prepared to push one or two rifles per evening out through a loop-hole in the barrack wall, and carry out two hundred rounds of ammunition twice a week, at the price of £4.10.0. per rifle and bayonet, and £1.0.0. per hundred rounds of ammunition. I agreed to these terms, and told him that, if he had two rifles out next night and two hundred rounds the following night, I would have a letter left for him in Lee's, containing the cash.

Tom Bannon collected the rifles and ammunition. He picked up the rifles outside the barrack wall, and carried them under his coat up the street of Longford. He is a very tall man. The ammunition was collected by him also, next evening. Jordy got his money in Lee's, as arranged. He brought out one rifle more, or two separate single rifles, and a hundred rounds each alternative turn, but not daily, as Jordy stated that all rifles were locked up from the time the first two were taken, and that he had great difficulty in procuring the ammunition. He was coming out one evening, and, fortunately, had no stuff on him, it being dumped through the loop-hole. But the ammunition was missing, and he was the last person seen near the place from where it was missing. Jordy was arrested and returned for court martial. He was tried in Mullingar and acquitted, and he returned to Longford. He declared he could get no more rifles, but that he could get ammunition, and that he would have four hundred out with him on a certain night. He lined his tunic with the ammunition, and was

coming out the gate when a C.Q.M.S. struck him across the back with his cane. The cane flew into splinters, and the C.Q.M.S. immediately arrested Jordy, with the goods on him. When he did not turn up, we were satisfied that something had happened to him. We made inquiries, and found out that he was in a small prison on the northern side of the barracks. We also learned that there was a lavatory along the wall which he could get out to, just at dusk. We got a message conveyed to him to get into the lavatory, and that we would be outside and take him away. Jordy reached the lavatory, as arranged, and got his jailer to return to the cell for something for him. Immediately the jailer turned his back, Jordy happed over the wall to us, so we hurried him away out to my own place. We got him employment with Mr. W. Reilly, Aughkilmore, Bunlahy, where he remained for some time. But he was useless as a farm labourer. So I took him into the forge, and discussed more fully with him the routine of both barracks, the upper and lower. I learned all the details of the upper barracks, and carefully noted all this.

The plan for the capture of Ballymahon R.I.C. barracks was completed; but to put it into effect, we would require at least twenty rifles, as Ballymahon is situated midway between Athlone and Longford - then two important military centres. Tests had been made by the enemy of their communications by rocket and Verey pistol, and we felt that, in ten minutes after the attack opened, both Longford and Athlone would be aware of the fact, allowing twenty minutes for turning out the reinforcements which should be en route in half and hour.

Our plan for the capture of Ballymahon was

estimated at two and a half hours to effect. It being a main road from Athlone to Longford, blocking could not be commenced for at least half an hour after scheduled time for attack. I had to get from Ballinalee to the mobilisation point and, in case of any accident, the attack was timed for twelve midnight. We required, as I say, at least twenty rifles for the attack - seven on road, Ballymahon-Longford; to hold up reinforcements from Longford; seven on Ballymahon-Athlone road, to hold up reinforcements from Athlone. We had but ten rifles. Ten more were required, and that would leave six for attack on barracks - three on the front, and three on the rear. Ten rifles must be got. The responsibility for the capture of Ballymahon was placed upon me.

We called two Brigade Council meetings to sit upon the knotty problem, and each of them sat all night, and the solemn decision finally arrived at by the assembled wisdom was that ten rifles and a hundred rounds of ammunition were not just enough to bag the barracks, with its twenty/thirty fighters and big store of fighting material, while, at the same time, holding off possibly three large parties sweeping down on us from behind. Notwithstanding that decision, however, we never, for a moment, considered shirking the task that was put before us by Headquarters. It never entered our minds to leave Ballymahon Barracks uncaptured.

We saw that something radical must be done in order to alter the too-great inequality of forces, and after discussing the many possible ways of doing this, we finally decided that it must be done by getting more arms, and that the inequality could be more rapidly altered by taking the arms, not from some neutral

source - if there had been any possible neutral source, which there was not - but by transferring them from the enemy's hands into our own, and it was furthermore decided that we should try to take them from the Lancers who occupied the Upper Military Barracks In Longford.

Although we had, between us, only ten rifles and a hundred rounds of ammunition, we would have gone at the job light-heartedly and confidently enough, if we had only that garrison alone to tackle. But the Police Barracks had just been supplied with Verey lights, rockets, etc., had tested and found them effective, and Ballymahon Police Barracks had the comfortable knowledge that they could instantly call to their aid and have on the ground, in half or three-quarters of an hour, three military garrisons by which they were surrounded - those at Longford, Athlone and Mullingar. In Longford there was a battalion of the East Yorks and a company of the 18th Lancers; Athlone, with not less than two battalions of soldiers and a brigade of Royal Engineers, etc., and Mullingar, with a battalion. It may be mentioned that each battalion numbered about eight hundred men. In addition to the soldiers, of course, there were the police garrisons of these towns, ready for help, if wanted.

So, it may well be supposed that the capture of Ballymahon Barracks was far from being as easy, under these circumstances, as it might seem at first blush.

<u>The Longford Surprise</u>:

The surprise of the Longford Military Barracks in July, 1920, was then thought by my boys and myself the most exciting experience ever. I suppose it was because it was among the first of our exciting

experiences.

A few months before that, we had considered military barracks impregnable. We were all country boys of no training, who had never seen the inside of a barracks. A barracks was all awe, mystery, and the last word in defiant strength. But when we had got a couple of lectures on how to hold up and how to surprise, we were so cock-sure of ourselves, of our wonderful strategical abilities, that the dearest wish of our hearts was the opportunity of taking Gibraltar! However, the taking of a military barracks proved to be enough for us - and a little too much!

We at once set to work to find out all we could about the plans, habits and ways of this barracks and its occupants. Fortune favoured us by putting in our way a Corporal of the East Yorks, stationed in the other barracks, eight hundred yards distant from "our" barracks - as I may call the Upper Military Barracks. This Corporal had been inside "our" barracks, and had a rough, general idea of the layout and the ways of the occupants. We had got in touch with him by the fact that he was not averse to the making of an honest penny by selling one of our men a rifle for £6.0.0. After that, in the course of seemingly idle gossip, our man drew out of him, in the most casual fashion, all that he was able to tell him of the Lancers' Barracks, and, from the several talks with the Corporal, he was able to draft a rough plan of the interior.

The barracks that we meant to surprise were on the Newtownforbes road, running parallel to the road and surrounded by a very high wall. There was a short avenue of about fifty paces, running from the main road, just mentioned, up to the great barracks gate,

which was in the middle of that long front wall. In the upper storey of that high front wall, extending from the gateway to the left, and broken by several windows, the men's quarters were situated. The upper storey of it, extending from the front gate to the right, consisted of quarters for the N.C.Os, Officers, etc. We understood from the information obtained that the guardroom was a little to the left, inside the gate, that it was sandbagged and occupied by an armed guard of eight or twelve men. We knew too that there might be ten or twenty or thirty Lancers out of barracks during the evening, and returning at any time, or times, up to midnight, that the gate was guarded on the inside by an armed sentry and a military policeman, that the sentry had a little peep-hole, or sliding panel, to inspect all who wanted to enter. The outside gate was sandbagged, and there was also a sandbagged defence over the gate. They thought they were well enough prepared to enable them to laugh at Bonaparte.

As I was then Director of Operations for the County of Longford, I investigated the whole situation myself, as far as possible. None of the men had ever been inside these barracks.

I got in touch with the loose-tongued Corporal, and heard all over again all he could tell. I saw that entrance could only be made to the barracks by the main gateway, that it was so strongly guarded that it could be attacked hopefully, only by an overwhelming force, and that the immediate neighbourhood of the other military barracks, with its battalion of men, only eight hundred yards away, and the police headquarters for the county, with its thirty/forty men, another eight hundred yards away, made the idea of attack entirely too foolish for

a moment's entertainment. So, what was to be done, must be done by strategy. Then I made up my mind at least to capture the guard and their equipment, which would be so much to the good, and I even had the temerity to think that, with Providence especially favouring us, there was just a chance of going further and capturing the whole barracks.

I casually got out of the Corporal two more important bits of information - one, that parcels were sometimes brought up by foot messenger from shops in the town for delivery to the Quartermaster, whose name was Upton, and another, that the soldiers returning from town after dark were not challenged coming up the little avenue from the road when they whistled a certain air which, at this time, was "Parley voo".

Consequently, I was going to enter those barracks as a messenger, carrying a parcel for Quartermaster-Sergeant Upton, on a night very soon. Both in the interest of the men's safety and of my own safety, I would have to work with the fewest men possible. My headquarters then were at Ballinalee, ten miles from Longford by direct road, entering the town by the end, opposite that at which "our" barracks were situated, the latter being the Newtownforbes road. I set about choosing five good reliable men who were readily willing to take their lives in their hands.

The names of the men whom I selected were Harry Flaherty, John Duffy, - Clarke (Killoe), James Brady and Ned Tynan. I asked them to come to my forge at seven o'clock in the evening. At the appointed time, they had gathered at the forge. I was working on a job, doing some work for a customer, as the boys dropped in.

I had it finished at my usual quitting time, seven o'clock. Then I had to wash up and get my tea before starting. I may say that, even at that hour on that night, I had not yet completed my plans, and it was only between then and our going off that the plans took final shape. We decided that we should take over the first automobile that came along the road, and as it had got duskish - for, let readers remember that 'old time' only was known then - we should drive slowly for Longford, not on the direct road for that town, but in the other direction, detouring round via Drumlish and striking into the Newtownforbes road, on the opposite end of the town, at a junction of about six hundred yards on the Newtownforbes side of the barracks, and that we would make our little sally to the barracks when darkness would be apporaching.

When I was finished, I came out and started down the road with the boys. We did not have long to wait until we heard, and then saw a Ford rattling towards us from the direction of Granard. We stopped them; found three men from Ballinamore, County Leitrim, who had been up in our country, at Wilson-Slater's, Whitehill, buying a bull. Naturally, they were amazed, and terribly indignant, and a little bit obstreperous when we said we wanted the loan of that car for a couple of hours, and ordered them to get out. It needed the production of a pistol or two, to convince them that it was healthier out on the road. We turned them into the forge and locked them there. Then we entered the car, and drove off - Jim Brady at the wheel. My boys went away, laughing at the perplexity of the Leitrim men.

On our road, we called at the country shop of Thomas Brady, Soran, Ballinalee, and got from him one

of those paste-board boxes, out of which a pair of shoes had come. I filled the box with some rubbish, wrapped it up neatly, and corded it. Thomas Brady, the shopkeeper, watched us with a good deal of wonder, and put to us a lot of questions. We left him in still more wonder when we told him that we were just bringing the empty box along, to sell it. "Faith an", he said, "if that's so, there must be in Longford some bigger fools than yourselves!" I answered him, "Thomas, it is just in the hope of finding bigger fools than ourselves that we are going!" "Troth, an' I doubt if ye'll succeed!", he hurled after us.

We arrived at the crossroads outside Longford, on the road to Newtownforbes, about six hundred yards from the Cavalry Barracks, just at the time and under the conditions we had planned. Then, bringing the car out on the main road, we turned its head in the direction of Newtownforbes. We left Jim in charge, with exact detailed instructions for his guidance. I should have said that each of the six of us came, armed with a pistol - no other arms or ammunition. I took Jordy, who was to walk up to the barrack gates with me, to seek entrance, and I told John Duffy, Harry Flaherty and young Clarke (Killoe) to crawl into the avenue on their stomachs, at our heels, and come crawling up to the gate after us. I instructed Ned Tynan to hold, and line up at the end of the road, any soldiers or civilians who came along while we were on our mission. Jim Brady's instructions were that he was to watch out for the lining up of the first man, and, at that moment, take his car down the road to the avenue entrance.

Very well, up the avenue went Jordy and myself,

boldly and smartly, myself carrying in my left hand the Quartermaster's parcel, our right hands in our overcoat pockets, there grasping our Webleys, and, as I approached the gate, I careless struck up, "Parley Voo". There must have been something the matter with my style of whistling that started the suspicions of the sentry inside, for, through the peep-hole, he called, "Halt!", while we were still five yards from the gate. We halted. "Who goes there?" I replied, "I have a parcel here for Quartermaster Upton". "Advance!"

Just at the moment between giving us the order to advance and his opening of the wicket gate, I had a queer feeling of something far greater than wonder come over me, as I looked at the big black gate, and, in the space of a flash, realised that, while in front of it, it was plain to me that everything behind was a great mystery, and the happenings of the next few moments - whatever they were - an unreadable mystery within a mystery. All that happened in a flash, but it was a flash that left a very deep impression with me.

The opening of the wicket gate ended the flight of my rambling imagination. I stepped over the ledge, through the wicket, so closely followed by Jordy that he kept touching me. My first surprise was to find the sentry having his bayonet fixed and presented at me, so that he might lose no time in running it through. The military policeman was by his left shoulder. The eyes of both were on me. My right hand was still grasping my pistol in my pocket, and I was reaching forward the parcel in my left. "Have you got a pass?" "Yes", I replied, "I have got a pass", fumbling my right hand in my pocket and, at the same time, while I spoke and

fumbled, moving past the point of his bayonet.

From my outstretched left hand, I gave the parcel a quick push downwards to the ground, and, on the same sweeping motion of the left hand, gripped the rifle by its middle band, saying at the same time, "Here's my pass", while, with the right hand, reached the pistol into his face. I said, "If you make a move or speak a word, you are a dead man!", my active left hand at the same time wrenching the rifle from his hand. He opened his mouth, evidently to shout in alarm, but quickly closed it again without uttering a sound.

In the few minutes within which this transpired, Jordy, acting on instructions, had moved round in touch of my left shoulder, passed behind the guard, and was feeling the dumbfounded military policeman for a pistol, and satisfying himself he had none. In the next instant, he had the two fellows by the necks of their tunics, and rushed them out through the wicket, the guard's rifle after them, into the hands of John Duffy and Harry Flaherty who had now come up. One of them took them, and did not give them a half from their unwelcome race until he left them at the mouth of the avenue with Ned, who lined them up - his first prisoners - against the road wall. (Though, as I afterwards discovered, Ned being a chap who was nothing if not efficient, stripped them of their equipment and their tunics, which were loaded, the first instalment of booty, into the Ford car.) In another half minute Jim Brady had rushed up in reverse to the mouth of the avenue, and then quickly backed up to the main wicket.

I met with my first surprise now - a curious one to me. Turning to make to the guardroom which, in my

mental plan, should have been some paces down, I found it was right beside me - that I was almost touching the sandbagged entrance. Now, to the reader it will seem ludicrous that this should make any difference to me, but I am completely unable to explain the psychology of the matter. That seemingly most trivial and unimportant upset upon my mental plans gave me a powerful upset that shook me for the fraction of an instant. Just because of the curiosity and mystery of the thing, I think it worth setting down. I recovered from my bewilderment, or non-plussedness, or whatever you like to call it, in another fraction of an instant, and, putting my hand on the sandbagged wall, which was 3½-4 feet high, bounded over, and along with me, or at my heels, Jordy, and, just behind us, the two crawlers, now returned from their sally. Here, another little incident worth noting; although we had rubber soles and heels to our shoes, and that we really must have made only a little noise, we heard our own noise resounding, so that, for the moment, we were certain that it roused the whole barracks. We did not take into account that the men, both in the guardroom and the rooms above, were off their guard and occupied or enjoying themselves, each in his own way, and, in the security of the two guards upon the gate, perfectly indifferent to rattling, or scrambling or ordinary noises without. The guardroom door was open. Jordy and I bounded in, to find eight men sitting round a table card-playing - their rifles lying against the wall behind them, in a room about twelve feet square, a ladder leading to a room overhead. "Hands up"!, my command giving every man of them an instant shock.

Up flew their hands, while a look of the wildest amazement sprang into their upturning faces, gazing at the

two pistols levelled at them. Seeing the instant and seemingly perfect success of our coup, Jordy, to lose no moment, pocketed his pistol to begin gathering the booty, while my pistol held the room, and in that instant we made one grave, almost fatal, mistake. The Corporal in charge of the guard, who sat at the table immediately beside me, had not got his hands up, and, making a lunge at Jordy, he gripped him by the throat. I had to take the fearful chance of turning the pistol off the seven up-handed men and on to the Corporal, and faced the second fearful risk of firing, and bringing down on top of us all the men who were moving about overhead. Just on the point of firing, the Lord - it must have been - moved me to take a third risk, which saved us. By taking the aim of my pistol off the other seven men, I reversed it and hit the Corporal a blow between the eyes, that laid open his skull and tumbled him "dead" for the time being. So much were the other seven men terrified or bewildered by the sudden invasion and then the struggle and braining of the Corporal, that no single man of them for a moment thought of taking down his hands during the few instants in which they might well have done so, and now my pistol was on them again.

John and Clarke at this point appeared, and, with Jordy, they grabbed up armfuls of rifles, the equipment off the walls, ammunition belts, Mills bombs, etc., and disappeared with them to the car - which was now waiting immediately at the outside of the gate. For the men overhead had not heard, or had not heeded, the car reversing up the avenue.

As there were in the room a dozen rifles, with much ammunition and equipment, they were able to take little

more than half of it with them, and must come back. I still held the men covered while they were gone. There wasn't a move from them - nor a cheep. No single word was uttered. In fact, that very silence nearly proved our undoing again. I think it must have been that prolonged silence - it seemed prolonged to me - which awakened the suspicion of someone overhead, for, just an instant before my three men reappeared for another load of booty, I was startled, to put it mildly, to hear a voice calling down from a trap door in the far corner of the ceiling - which I had failed to notice before - "What's the matter down there?". Then a face looked down at me from the trap door. It was a trying position, but I, impudently and ludicrously, replied "Hands up! You are all our prisoners". The head was jerked back. My men re-entered for their second load at that instant. "Hurry up, boys", I said, "we are discovered". Just as I said this, the bugle alarm rang out overhead. I will say that my three boys were very cool in collecting everything else they could lay their hands on, and in getting out of it as the din above became, in my ears, terrific. I held the men covered for a few seconds longer - to make sure that the boys had got through the gates - and then myself packed up, bounded over the sandbagged barrier and went for the outlet.

Here I fell under the same mental upset as I did before. There still held me the mental picture I had formed of the inside, with the guardroom some distance from the gate, with the result that before I knew it I had gone past the gate, and was ten paces down the yard to the left of the gates and opposite the Commanding Officer's quarters before the truth of the matter dawned on me. Then I wheeled again, back to the gate, and out.

Those above, believing that they were surrounded by a big force, had now manned the windows, and were firing from them fast and furiously.

For some reason that I don't know, those over the gate did not fire, but a man at a window over my right shoulder fired down on me point blank. (I was yet too close to the building to be in the range of fire from the other windows). This man missed me. I returned his fire and, as it proved afterwards, hit him. There was no more fire from that window. I was in the car in a jiffy, and we went down the avenue to what seemed a regular cavalcade.

We got into the car, and away out the Drumlish road, making a detour to get back to Ballinalee. We got eleven rifles and 550 rounds of ammunition, three grenades, bayonets, slings etc.

The British troops fired indiscriminately for about twenty minutes before they sallied out of the barrack. Instead of making an effort to pursue us on some of the roads, they went down the fields in front of the barracks, and raked the place with rifle fire.

We left Ballinalee at about 9.30 p.m. to carry out the raid, and had the arms secured before midnight. Jordy was taken away in the car, for a distance of three or four miles, before he was fixed up for the night. As a result, he had no knowledge of the location of the rifles.

I have already mentioned that this Corporal, Jordy or Clements, had agreed to sell us rifles and ammunition from the Lower Barracks in Longford. The price agreed

upon was £4.10.0 per rifle, and £1.0.0. per hundred rounds of ammunition (.303). Each night, he pushed a rifle and a hundred rounds of ammunition through one of the loopholes in the wall. The rifle was collected by Tom Bannon, national school teacher, wearing a long overcoat. I have already told this story, but the point I want to mention here is that, at Jordy's arrest and escape, the guard who helped him also came across the wall, at a later stage, and secured an old man, named Clancy, in Dublin Street, to drive them out to Listrahee, near Ballinalee. The two soldiers were in full uniform and equipment. They were kept for some time, and then two of them were put in transit to Belfast, through Charlie Fitzpatrick of Ballinagh who passed them on from unit to unit. Another British soldier, Johnny White, who also deserted, remained in Ballinalee, got married there, and died recently in Granard.

After the capture of the guardroom at the Upper Military Barracks at Longford and Ballymahon Barracks, it was agreed to pay Jordy a substantial sum. As he was determined that he could return to England and be perfectly safe, L.D. Kiernan of Granard was engaged to transport him by car to Dublin, and to pay him his money, agreed upon, when he would be about to sail for England. Kiernan carried this out, and returned that evening, informing us that Jordy had taken the boat, but, to my surprise, Jordy turned up at the forge on the following evening, at about six o'clock, having all his money spent, which he said was lifted off him in Dublin.

Jordy was suspect, and made several attempts to return to Longford. We believed that it was his intention to return to his unit. He had then considerable

information and knowledge of the organisation and personnel in the 1st Battalion area. He was placed under strict supervision, but one day he escaped, and was captured at Longford workhouse, within a mile of the barracks. He was then courtmartialled with attempting to convey information to the enemy, and was sentenced to death. The sentence was reduced to permanent internment. He was transferred to a prison in the parish of Dromard where he remained until the Truce when he was released, but, in the meantime, he succeeded in getting married.

He was known by the name of Clements as well as Jordy. I believe he got married under the latter name. I lost trace of him until Christmas of 1923, when two hams and two turkeys were stolen from the Officers' Mess in Custume Barracks, Athlone. A search was made, and Jordy was captured, in possession of all four. He was then Sergeant-Major "Cunningham" of the Defence forces, and was a resident of Athlone, his previous history being unknown, and deliberately kept so by him. He resided for years in Athlone, and perhaps may be alive still, but it was an interesting situation, to find him as handy at lifting a bird or a ham as he was at lifting a gun or ammunition from the barracks.

We sat down and completed the plans for the capture of Ballymahon Barracks the following night, Thursday.

On Thursday, the 19th August, 1920, I got up early and sent for Commandant Frank Davis. I told him that Ballymahon was being attacked that night. Seán Connolly went off, and warned all the Battalion O/Cs as to the roads that were to be blocked, etc., giving definite instructions as to times, etc. He also picked, from the

South Longford portion of the area, the men for the attack and for holding the roads, as already outlined.

The plan was - mobilisation at 11 p.m., at a small house near Miss Mulvihill's on the Castlecor road from Ballymahon. Seán Connolly was to have all the men gathered there. I was to get there at 11 p.m. Connolly had marked where the roads were to be held. I was to bring rifles, the two remaining bombs and revolvers. The men were to proceed from there to a point where barricades were to be erected. This was done by felling two trees, one after another, the men taking up position at the tree nearest Ballymahon, an advance party of two men at the first tree, who, if the military advanced, were to fire and fall back to the second tree. It was to be the same on the Athlone road. One officer and three riflemen would be in position in front of the barracks, at the church, and the same number in the rear, each section to be accompanied by two bomb throwers. We were to have a party of eight men to seize Donohoe's, the saddler's, and work from there into the house next to the barracks. When they reached the house next to the barracks, they were to break out the roof. Then they were to break in the roof of the barracks, call on the enemy to surrender, and, if they refused, put one of the heavy bombs into the hole made by us. When it had exploded, they were to call on them to surrender again, and, if they refused, put in a gas bomb, which was composed of sulphur, brimstone, red pepper, and exploded by ordinary fuse and blasting powder, the whole weighing about three pounds.

Everything went all right with Connolly, but not with me. I commandeered a Ford van belonging to McGuire of

Soran. Davis commandeered and drove the van to the dump. We picked up Paddy Callaghan, Peter McGrath, Seamus Conway and Mick Kenny, and started for Ballymahon at 9 p.m., giving ourselves two hours to get there. We had to use by-roads, and went astray. After great difficulty, we got to Doorey Hall where we met the first guide, who took us to mobilisation point. We arrived there at 11.30 p.m. It took us two and a half hours to travel a distance of about sixteen miles.

I ordered the men to fall in, and handed out the arms which had been in our possession prior to the previous night's capture. Before I distributed the arms captured the night before, I addressed the men. I told them that I had eleven or twelve rifles here which last night were the property of the King, but that, because a number of men had obeyed my orders implicitly, they were now our property and, therefore, the property of Ireland, and that, if they, the men present, obeyed my orders implicitly, the rifles and equipment at present in Ballymahon Barracks would, in three or four hours' time, at the most, be ours also - and without the loss of a single life on our side. They then declared, in one voice, that they would obey if I would only give the orders. I then solemnly handed out the twelve new rifles and bayonets to the remainder of the men who were to be armed. When I produced the first rifle from the bag in which it as, there was a subdued cheer by everyone present.

The officers then took over, and marched off their units to the road outside, one section taking the Longford road, the party for the front of the barracks going with them, led by a guide. The party for the Athlone road came with us, but they had to branch off from the rear

of the barracks. The officers present that night, and in charge of small parties were as follows: -

Longford road	-	M.F. Reynolds.
Front barracks	-	P. Ryan.
Rear and storming party	-	Seán MacEoin (self), Seán Connolly, Leo Baxter, Frank Davis.
Athlone road	-	Michael Ballesty.

The attacking party under Seán Connolly and myself moved off towards Ballymahon, towards the rear of the barracks from Moy. We passed through Moy House grounds. Bernard Garrahan (later Commandant Garrahan of the Ballymahon Battalion) served as scout and guide. We reached the barracks at approximately twelve midnight.

Connolly moved into Donoghue's, the saddler's, which adjoined the barracks. Seamus Conway and others were with me at the rear. Conway fired one of his grenades, which was of the percussion type, but it failed to explode. At the same time, fire was opened on front and rear of the barracks, once Connolly had succeeded in getting into Donoghue's.

Here, an episode, which was fortunate for us in our campaign, took place. Notwithstanding our so-called good intelligence system, we were not aware that one sergeant and a body of men left the barracks every night at 11 o'clock, took up position in out-offices, some distance away from the rear of the barracks, and played a very hectic game of cards there until midnight. Sergeant Hamilton assured me, years afterwards, that, when the first shot was fired on the night of the attack, he had his finger on the latch of the back door, marching out with

his men. They were thus kept in the barracks by the fact that we opened fire on arrival. It is difficult to visualise what would have happened had the R.I.C. occupied the out-offices before our arrival.

In the meantime, Seán Connolly had made the breach from Donoghue's into Lloyd's. He sent out word to me to join him. Leaving Conway in charge, I proceeded to Donoghue's, and from there to Lloyd's. The house was empty downstairs. We had flashlamps. We decided to rush the stairs, which we did, one or two men entering each room simultaneously. All the rooms were empty except one, which contained all the members of the Lloyd family and the wives of two R.I.C. men. There was a young Lloyd lying seriously ill in a bed. They were all in various stages of dress and undress. We carried the young Lloyd boy who was ill out of the house, through the hole in Donoghue's wall, and put him, with his parents and the other members of the family, into a house some distance down from the barracks, in the laneway at the end of Donoghue's.

Seán Connolly proceeded with the making of an opening through the roof of Lloyd's house. He ordered Leo Baxter, who was six foot, three inches, in height, to cut down the ceiling of the roof with an axe, but the roof was high, and, to enable him to use his full strength at it, a table had to be pulled over. Leo cut a hole through the roof very quickly. Then, as arranged, Connolly called on the garrison to surrender, but they refused to do so.

Connolly then broke an opening in the roof over the barracks, and told the garrison he was inserting a

bomb. He was told that they would still not surrender. He then lit the fuse, and threw a 7 lb. grenade, of the cartbox type, into the barracks between the roof and the ceiling. It exploded there, blowing a large hole in the roof, and practically tearing away the whole ceiling and floor of the room above and below.

In the meantime, the garrison had moved to the other half of the house. The warning had given them an opportunity to save their lives. They were called on to surrender, and again they refused. They were told that "Black Bess" was going in, that is, the bomb made of sulphur, brimstone, red pepper, etc. It fell through the roof and ceiling, and down to the bottom floor before exploding. The explosion sent the fumes of gas all over the barracks.

The garrison then surrendered and marched out, falling in on the footpath at the Protestant church. One of the garrison, an elderly man, was bare-footed, and I ordered him to go back into the barracks and get his boots, but this he refused to do, stating that it was impossible to go into the barracks. I took him over, just to see what it was like, and, even then, it was almost impossible to breathe in the barracks. We got the old man's boots. I asked him where he lived, and he told me it was up at Hugh Garrahan's gate. I told him to go home and stay there until I sent for him. I sent somebody with him. I will mention this old man again.

Brady's car and Maguire's van were brought along to the barracks, and the captured arms were put into them and taken away. These included, shotguns, revolvers, Verey pistols, boxes of egg-bombs, and the telephone, which we removed. It was a complete capture. No one

was injured on either side.

There was a second incident of importance which was fortunate for us. A defence plan had been arranged for Ballymahon Barracks, which, as I have stated, was only fifteen miles from Longford, Mullingar and Athlone, three large military stations. Constable Greaney was to fire so many Verey lights in the air if an attack was about to take place, and so many Verey lights if an attack was on. If there were fighting, he was to fire intermittent shots in the air, to keep the British military and R.I.C. informed. On our opening fire on the barracks, in the first instance, Greaney was about to fire his Verey pistol up the chimney in the fireplace when a bullet entered through one of the loopholes of the steel-plated windows, hitting the Verey pistol and knocking it out of his hand. As the place was in darkness, the lights having been extinguished, he could not find it, and was, therefore, not able to fire any warning shot, or appeal for help. Constable Greaney later joined the Civic Guards, and finished with commissioned rank.

At this time too, an order had been issued to all R.I.C. and military posts that, in the event of an attack, they were to defend their posts until the last round had been fired, or, in other words, until they had used all their ammunition. This was a very positive order which could only be disobeyed at the risk of disciplinary action. After we had withdrawn from Ballymahon and the roads blocked, the two sergeants, as they afterwards informed me, proceeded to prepare their report. We had not burned the barracks, and, to do so, would mean burning all the houses on that side of the town, and, therefore, it was easy to see what damage had been done

to the barracks, what defence had been put up, and the nature of the attack. The two sergeants and the remainder of the R.I.C. made an elaborate report upon their defence, concluding with the positive assertion that they had wasted their last round of ammunition, and that, in accordance with the recent order, they had then broken the stock of every rifle.

Next day, the Officer Commanding, Athlone, the Divisional Commissioner from Kildare, the Officers Commanding, Longford and Mullingar, together with the two County and District Inspectors of Longford and Westmeath arrived, with a large force. They inspected the barracks, and the two sergeants, Martin and Hamilton, presented their report. They were assembled on the street outside when the old policeman from Garrahan's gate toddled down the road. The District Inspector immediately challenged him as to where he was, and he replied that he was up in his own house where the decent man, who had attacked the barracks, put him. He was then asked what he knew, or what he had to say about the attack, and he replied that there was not much he could say except that they must all be grateful to Sergeant Martin for surrendering when he did, and that it was a great blessing he did not break the rifles, or they would all have been killed. So, instead of Sergeants Martin and Hamilton getting medals, they had to stand a court of inquiry into their conduct.

A guard was put near Ballymahon for some time after the attack, but there were no enemy reprisals. The captured arms and ammunition were removed to William Reilly's of Aughakilmore, where a dump was kept. I believe that some of the leather equipment and other items

captured in the barracks may still be found in Aughakilmore, being utilised as leather to repair harness, etc.

The Kelleter "Ambush".

Some of our experiences were more amusing than grim, as, for instance, that little affair at Kelleter.

It was in the latter end of August, 1920, when the Sinn Féin Courts and Dáil had been proclaimed. The R.I.C. in Granard reported that a Sinn Féin Court was to be held in Granard on a certain day, and asked for a body of troops to be sent to the town, to reinforce them to suppress the Court. I heard this, and, having previously received orders that we were bound to protect these Courts at all costs, we decided to meet these troops going out to Granard, and ambush them. For this purpose we went to a place called Kelleter, which is midway between Longford and Ballinalee, and, with about 15 rifles, took up position overlooking the bog in that townland, and anybody going towards Longford was taken prisoner. But we made one mistake - on our way coming up into position we met one person but, believing that he had not seen that we were armed, we allowed him to pass. Now, as we afterwards learned, this man met the troops at Carriglass, and warned them. The soldiers then came on to Carriglass Crossroads and, instead of coming direct to Ballinalee, they went up a by-road until they met a road running parallel with the one we were on, which faces Ennybegs Church, and which was about 1,500 yards from our road. When they came on a line level with us, they halted their lorries, stood up in them, put their caps on top of their rifles, cheered at us, and told us to go to .....Jericho! They then drove off. The ambush did not take place.

Our success at the Upper Military Barracks and the capture of the R.I.C. barracks at Ballymahon left us with a substantial supply of arms, ammunition, egg bombs, shotguns and various rifles, which had been stored by the R.I.C. or surrendered to them in Ballymahon by some people, and encouraged us to undertake more extensive operations.

After consultation with G.H.Q., Connolly and myself visited Mohill and Ballinamore. We met the Brigade Staff in Mohill - Seán Mitchell, Seamus Rynn, and Byrne, the Adjutant. We surveyed Mohill Barracks from both back and front, and decided that it was easy to capture. The Leitrim Brigade Staff had procured a motor car and a driver, known as "Flanders", who held a permit from the British authorities. We proceeded to Ballinamore. On the way, a most amazing occurrence took place.

As we were approaching Gorvagh, the driver said, "I will have to produce my permit here!" We were all armed with revolvers. And the driver drove merrily on. I did not advert to his statement that he would have to produce his permit at Gorvagh. Just as we were turning at Gorvagh crossroads, to our holy horror, we found that a house on a hill over the cross was occupied by British military, and that a sergeant and four men held the road at a sandbagged point. This certainly was a surprise that neither Connolly nor myself had the slightest inkling of. The driver said, "It is alright! They will not search the car, and we can get through when I produce my permit!".

There was nothing for it but chance that the driver's confidence would be realised. We were halted.

The sergeant walked forward, and asked the driver for his permit. At the same time, a soldier walked up along the side of the car, with a rifle and fixed bayonet. He rested the stock of the rifle on the ground, and looked into the open Ford car in which we were travelling. Rather than have him asking us any questions, I asked him if that knife - pointing to the bayonet - was sharp, to which he replied, "You b..... idiot! That's a bayonet! That's no knife!". With that, the sergeant signalled that everything was right. We drove on and got safely through.

It was the most embarrassing situation that it was ever my lot to run into. Not to say, the conduct of the Brigade Staff and the driver in running us - two Brigade Staffs almost - into such danger was unwarranted and careless.

We proceeded to Ballinamore, and we examined Ballinamore Barracks, securing entry into O'Rourke's yard, and being shown over the place by Mr. O'Rourke. He was rather nervous when he saw us examining the barracks, but we told him not to worry and to keep a discreet silence. He solemnly undertook to do so, and did so. We then examined the barracks from another angle - the upstairs loft of a carpenter's shop - which was also close to the barracks.

It was decided to put down a telephone system from Mohill to Ballinamore, by-passing the post at Gorvagh, and utilising existing telephone wires and, where available, the services of James McGoldrick, Director of Communications, an Irishman returned from America, who had been an employee of the New York Telegraphic and Telephonic Company, and who

had brought home with him several sets of head-phones and connections. I may mention that these were also used on later occasions.

It was now decided to attack four barracks on the one night - Granard, at home; Arva in Co. Cavan; and Mohill and Ballinamore in Leitrim.

Seán Connolly and I proceeded to Granard, and we planned an attack on Granard R.I.C. barracks. The plan included the idea of pumping petrol on to the roof, and then setting it on fire. For this purpose, it was decided that we would require a force-pump. I will tell of this later.

We then proceeded to Arva, and made a plan for the attack on Arva Barracks.

It was decided that we would establish a headquarters, to carry out the four attacks. There was much work to be done, preparing explosives and cartbox bombs, and dividing the arms and ammunition equally amongst all the attacking parties.

It was then decided that I would take charge of the attack on Mohill, Seán Connolly, the attack on Ballinamore, Paddy Finnegan, the attack on Arva, and Seán Duffy and Seán Murphy, the attack on Granard.

Everything went according to plan, except the securing of the force-pump. After inquiries had been made, it was found that the only force-pump that would meet our requirements was at Wilson's of Streete. James J. Killeen and Jack Moore were called in, and given instructions to seize the force-pump at Wilson's. That night, they proceeded to Wilson's and secured an

entry. Captain Moore was outside, supervising the operation, when, to his holy horror, he saw an armed man walking down the corridor towards him. Moore called on him to halt, but he did not do so, and Moore fired. Unfortunately, it was one of his own men who had gone around to the rere, had come in, and was walking along, examining the house for what he could see. This incident delayed the operation of securing the force-pump for another night. The man was only injured. He was not killed. His name was Mullaniff. But it was a serious upset. The force-pump was secured the following night, and everything was now ready.

Seán Connolly and I had made final arrangements, and were about to prepare to move off for Ballinamore and Mohill, when Seamus Rynne and another Volunteer, whose name I disremember - I think it was Joseph O'Beirne, the Brigade Adjutant - arrived. Rynne was Vice Brigadier in Leitrim. They reported that, on that day, a large force of British military had come into and occupied Mohill, that there was a substantial force also in Ballinamore, and that Gorvagh - the British outpost where we had been halted with the car - was also strengthened.

This looked like a complete give away of information. Rynne was quite positive that no leakage was possible, that nobody knew of our plans or intentions except a very small and trusted number. A hurried consultation took place between us, and we decided to cancel Mohill, Ballinamore and Granard, but that we would test Granard and Arva, to see if any additional reinforcements had been sent to the barracks there.

There was some activity in Granard, but not sufficient to cause alarm. Nevertheless, we decided that our main effort would now be directed against Arva alone, and that a widespread barricading of roads leading to and from Arva, in all directions, north, south, east and west, would take place. We got in touch with the Ballinagh Battalion, and with some of the adjoining companies of the Leitrim Brigade, on the Arva, Longford and Leitrim borders. It was then decided that Connolly and I would take joint charge of the attack, Connolly commanding from the Main Street, and I entering Corcoran's, an adjoining house, and attacking the roof of the barracks from Corcoran's.

The Staff met at the forge. We had not yet told Finnegan of the altered plans. His mobilisation was to proceed. We decided to wait until the last minute, to see if any information would arrive concerning British troop movements. No information arrived, and we decided to seize the first motor car that would come along the road. In a short time, a car came from the direction of Edgeworthstown, with two men in it. The car was stopped and brought to the forge. The two men were put, under guard, into the forge. The car was loaded, and driven by Frank Davis to Rossduff.

When we arrived there, Finnegan had all his troops in readiness to move into position. Finnegan was then sent to a position at the rear of the barracks.

Seamus Rynne and the Volunteer who was with him - O'Beirne, I think - when they reported that day, had appealed for an opportunity to take part in an engagement, when they heard that we were proceeding with the attack on Arva, and, although we were seriously perturbed about the whole Leitrim situation, we decided to admit them as part of the attacking forces. Rynne accompanied me on the

night of the attack.

I approached Corcoran's house from the north, or Cavan side, having come by the Fair Green. I knocked at the door, and Mrs. Corcoran opened it. When she saw me, she gave a slight gasp of surprise, and said, "The barracks! I knew that this day would come! But what about my family?". She and her husband had a family of five or six boys. It was now eleven o'clock at night, and the children were all in bed. I told her not to worry, that I would change the children to a safe place in the house, and I proceeded to do so. Having got some bed-clothes warmed quickly, we carried all the boys down to a small room where they would be safe from bomb explosions. Only one of the boys woke up during the transfer. As I was carrying him down the stairs, he woke up, and said, "Who are you?" I said, "I am your Uncle Seán, and I have to change your bed!" "I never saw you before!", he said, and snuggled into the clothes when I put him down, and fell fast asleep. Mrs. Corcoran told me that not one of the children woke up during the whole engagement.

By this time, fire had been opened from front and rear. The barracks was occupied by two sergeants and twelve or fourteen men. We broke through the roof of Corcoran's house. The plan was that five sticks of gelignite, tied to the end of a pole, with a lighted fuse, would be put across an archway between Corcoran's house and the barracks, and the slates on the barracks broken when the gelignite would explode, and then bottles of petrol would be thrown under the roof, into the hole which we expected would be made by the explosion.

I decided that, when we had the hole made in Corcoran's roof, before I would go to the trouble of lighting the fuse and putting out the gelignite which had yet to be packed, I would throw one grenade into the archway, and that I would try a ruse, to see what effect it would have. I ordered a cease fire, which was obeyed, and I called on the R.I.C. to surrender, stating that I had the gable mined, that it was the gable next Corcoran's, and that, if they did not surrender, I proposed to blow up the barracks.

One man in the barracks shouted that he was Sergeant Curran and that he was surrendering, but the other sergeant, Sergeant Wilson, said, "No" - that they would not surrender. With that, the first sergeant, Sergeant Curran, burst open the door, and Connolly took his surrender on the street. I then threw the grenade, and its being in the confined archway, it was a terrific explosion. In the meantime, of course, Connolly and Finnegan had reopened fire on the barracks. The moment the explosion took place, however, the second sergeant decided to surrender, and he and all the members of his forces, consisting solely of R.I.C., marched out, with their hands up.

I came out from Corcoran's house to assist Connolly in taking the surrender. Sergeant Wilson enquired of me if the whole gable was gone. Apparently, they did not wait to see what effect the explosion had on the gable, which, of course, was practically nil.

We lined up the two sergeants and their men in Elliott's, adjoining Merchants' House, where there was a very fine dining-room. We did not let them see the barracks, or what damage had been done to it. I addressed

them, and warned them of the consequences if any of them attempted to identify any one of us. They gave very solemn assurances that they would not identify any man whom they had seen that night.

Just then, a constable, who had had some dispute with Frank Davis some time previously in Ballinamuck, spoke to Frank. Frank was very disturbed about this, so I went back and re-addressed them. Again, each man solemnly swore that he recognised no persons who took part in the attack, and that he would not recognise them if he saw them again. I then gave them some refreshments.

We set fire to the barracks, after removing all the arms, ammunition, grenades, shotguns, Verey pistols and Verey-light cartridges. It was not as large a capture as Ballymahon, but we got as many short Lee Enfield rifles as at Ballymahon, as there were some of the R.I.C. away on leave.

One incident struck me very forcibly after the R.I.C. had surrendered at Arva. We gave permission to the ordinary members to remove their private boxes from the barracks to Elliott's, but we took possession of the two boxes belonging to the two sergeants, as they contained the code and other instructions. As there were two or three R.I.C. men's boxes left in the dayroom, I asked where the owners were, and I was told that they were on leave. I said, "Will some of you fellows not remove these?". Two of them were removed, leaving one box, solitary and alone, which nobody appeared to be prepared to remove. Looking down at the box, I was amused to find that the name on the box was J.J. McKeown. I asked what was wrong with this fellow, that nobody was prepared to save his box, and I was informed that he was

no good. I said that I thought he should be the best in the barracks, and I ordered them to take the box down to Elliott's which they did.

The barracks was now set on fire - and what a blaze! We had to stand by until it was completely destroyed, and it took all our efforts to prevent the fire spreading to Elliott's and some of the other houses, but we succeeded in confining it to the barracks, so that no one would know what damage was done by our bomb explosion.

An order for the defence of towns that were likely to be attacked by the British forces, as a reprisal, had been in force for some time, and, therefore, the obligation rested upon us to prepare for the defence of Arva. Three units were put into position, with Finnegan and Seamus Conway in charge of the whole defence. They remained there for several days and nights, but nothing happened.

A letter, which I enclose herewith as Appendix "B", from Sergeant Curran may explain why no reprisals were taken at Arva.

Shooting of D.I. Kelleher, Constable Cooney, Granard.

D.I. Kelleher was sent to Granard vice D.I. Dan O'Keeffe, a native of Dungarvan, County Waterford. The latter was friendly disposed and he, no doubt, was torn 'twixt patriotism and duty. The former won and he was compulsorily retired in July, 1920. Sometime in September, D.I. Kelleher, in charge of a party of R.I.C., raided Brady's of Ballinamuck. The ordinary members of the raiding party were savage in the raid, but Kelleher was worse than any of them. He declared that he was sent to Longford to spill blood and that blood would be spilled.

He tore up the floors in Brady's house and insulted and abused Mrs. Brady and her daughters. He talked very loudly in Granard. His conduct was discussed and the Brigade Council condemned him to death. The proceedings were forwarded for ratification to G.H.Q. Ratification came in due course but with a stay. Effect was not to be given to the sentence of death unless Terence MacSwiney died. In that event, the execution was to be carried out on the night of MacSwiney's funeral.

MacSwiney died some weeks after the receipt of the ratification. In the meantime, Kelleher was staying on and off in the Greville Arms Hotel, Granard. The owners of his hotel (Kiernan's) were friendly and we did not want to execute Kelleher in their house. We went to L. Kiernan and asked him to inform the D.I. that there was a boycott on the police and that he, Kiernan, would get into trouble for having him there and to ask him to leave. Kiernan refused to do this and said that anyway the hotel was not his, and that he would not order Kelleher out. That was the effect of our request.

We came away, leaving Kiernan to keep Kelleher. Kiernan paid dearly for this afterwards, as will be seen. We found that the D.I. visited the barracks every night about 11.20 o'clock, leaving Kiernan's about 11 p.m. The execution was fixed for Sunday, 31st October, 1920, at 11 p.m., just as he would step out of the hotel, and if any policeman was with him, he was to go too.

Two men were detailed for the work, armed with Colt automatics and one Webley. A party of ten were higher up the street, and if the R.I.C. rushed from the barracks fire was to be opened on them - just one volley and then

withdrawal. (This latter action was taken as a result of the conduct that week of some of the R.I.C. (or Black and Tans, as that force was mostly composed of then). The two parties took up position at 10.40 p.m. The two men were fully aware that Kelleher was in the hotel. They waited until 11.30 and Kelleher made no appearance. A piano was being played upstairs and the watchers came to the conclusion that there was a party of some description being given.

One of the watchers (the senior) said they would wait no longer - that when he did not come out, that they must go in to him. They both stepped into the hall and, at that moment, the D.I. and a lady came downstairs and went into the bar. The watchers waited a few minutes and proceeded into the bar. There they found the Secretary, the Treasurer and the Vice-President of the Sinn Féin Executive for North Longford and a prominent Sinn Féin member of U.D.C., Granard - all drinking with the D.I.

The two Volunteers opened fire on the D.I., both firing two shots. They then turned and walked out. The D.I. died in a few minutes.

All his companions were in consternation, as he (the D.I.) being in their company was bound to implacate them, and no expression of horror or loyalty to the Crown would clear them of at least knowledge and conspiring to murder Kelleher. Priest and doctor attended the fallen man, the priest being first. The doctor was late. When he arrived, Kelleher was dead. The priest and doctor were in the hotel when someone ran to the barracks and informed the police. That person returned to the hotel. The police dashed out in a single file. Fire was opened on

them, as arranged. They took nearly an hour to come up the street. By that time our men were withdrawn to new positions.

All the persons in the bar, including L. Kiernan, were arrested, also the Misses Kiernan, and brought next day to Longford as prisoners, charged with the murder, or, alternatively, with having conspired to murder D.I. Kelleher. It is very significant that some of the party arrested were released in a day or two, and that the police had an accurate description of our two men. When we got the description of the men that the police had, it was perfectly accurate and we had a look through our battalion to see the number of men the description would fit. We found five of one description and six of another. It is stated here definitely that none of the persons in the hotel that night had any previous knowledge of the shooting plan, nor were they in any way responsible for having Kelleher there, except in contravention to an army decision and in contravention of their own resolution to boycott all members of the R.I.C. Had any senior officer of the Brigade Staff been with these two men who carried out the shooting, at least three people present would have been shot, not killed, perhaps, but at least wounded.

On this day, I was holding a court in Finea, where the Volunteer police had a number of publicans summoned for breaches of the Licensing Act. The cases were all called, and instead of bearing any evidence on the various cases, I warned the publicans against any breach of the law, that even if the R.I.C. were not available to enforce it, that we would do so, and that I was letting them off with a caution. This was hailed with cheers, and I then asked all who were not Volunteers

to withdraw. I inspected the company, and by the time it was finished it was nearly 11 p.m.

I returned to Granard, after having some supper at William McNally's, Carrickbane, Finea, and then found that Kelleher was shot and that the town was in an uproar. I went out to where the Volunteers were and dismissed them until Tuesday night, but instructed their O/C, John Murphy, Vice O/C Battalion, to keep scouts in the town and, should any reinforcements come, to let me know. I had come to the conclusion that there would be no reprisals for a day or two. On Monday, I mobilised the North Longford Column on a definitely wholetime basis, mobilising approximately 30 men, all armed with rifles.

The Battle of Ballinalee. (i)

In September, 1920, I was appointed Vice Brigadier and Director of Operations for Longford and portion of Leitrim and Cavan. The fact that I was then County Centre of the I.R.B. may have led to these appointments. Later on I was elected Provincial Centre. The Longford Brigade, both Volunteers and Cumann na mBan, was fully organised for active service by November 1st, on which date my column was divided into three parts, with my headquarters at Ballinalee, a section at Granard, and another at Longford town. An engagement had taken place between the Granard Section and the R.I.C., and the Black and Tans had arrived in Longford and Granard, both of which places were strongly held by the enemy. In Longford town, the upper military barracks was occupied by a company of the 18th Lancers, and a battalion of the East Yorks held the lower barracks. The R.I.C. headquarters for the county was also there, and there were posted to it a County Inspector and his staff, and a force that comprised a

(i) The attached diagram of Ballinalee and district shows positions referred to by number in this narrative.

Names of premises and positions

numbered 1 to 24 on attached sketch.

No. 1 - Rose Cottage: private residence of L.H. Reynolds, farmer and business owner.

No. 2 - Protestant Church.

No. 3 - Doherty's Crossroads; telephone operated to this position.

No. 4 - Harte's residence.

No. 5 - Three small houses - Early's, Hannigan's, and Fox's; burned by British forces in December.

No. 6 - National School: occupied by R.I.C. and Black and Tans after they were forced to evacuate Patrick Farrell's premises, (No. 7 on sketch.) The school was occupied until the British forces were evacuated from the country.

No. 7 - Patrick Farrell's premises: occupied by British forces on 11th December, 1920. Attacked by I.R.A. on 13th December, 1920. Evacuated on the following day.

No. 8 - Business premises, property of L.H. Reynolds, occupied by Auxiliary police, where a strong garrison was maintained until end of 1921.

No. 9 - Courthouse.

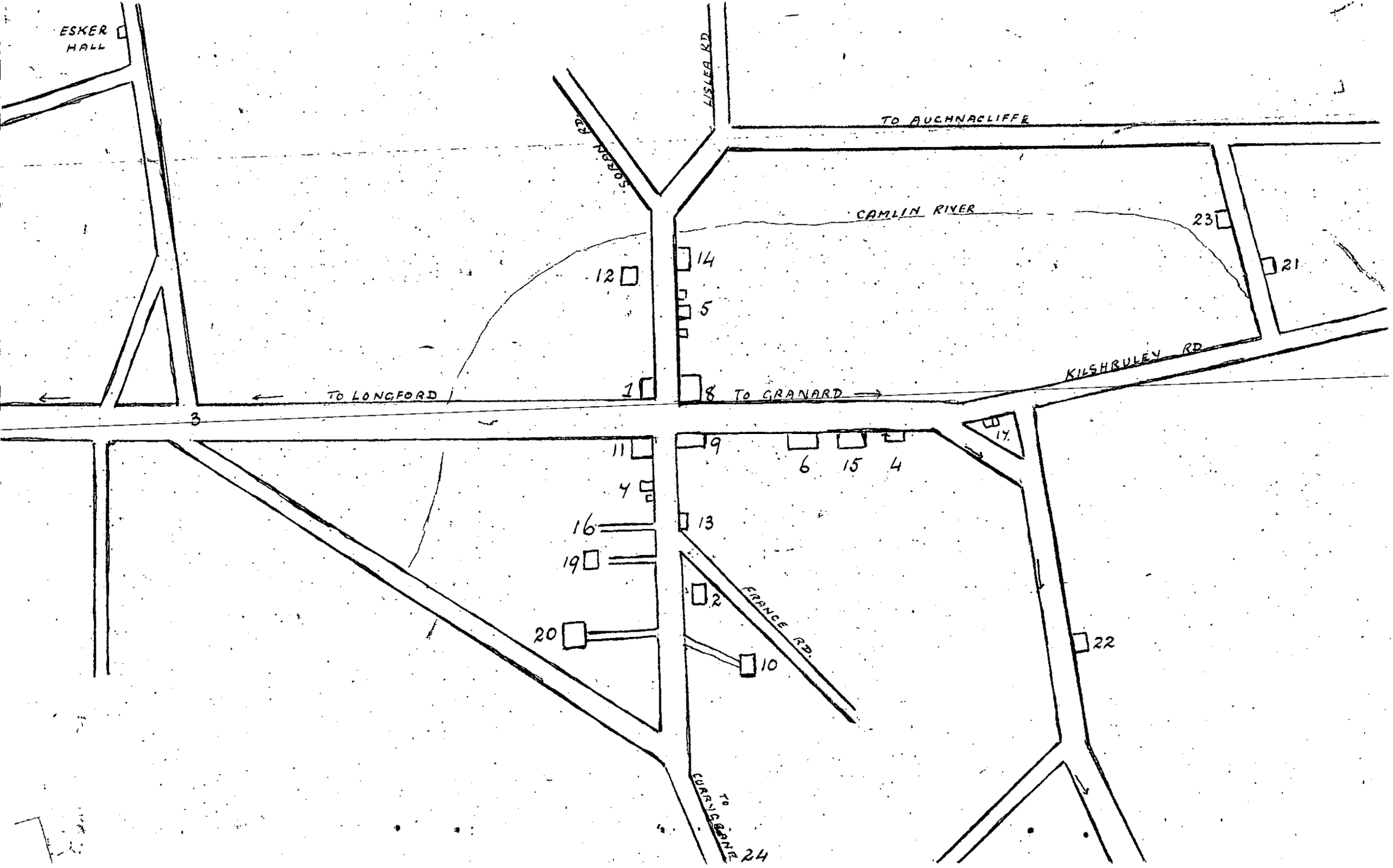
No. 10- Gurteen House: residence of Joseph O'Farrell. This man was a member of the Masonic Order but often placed his car at the disposal of I.R.A. officers. The A.S.U. was billeted in his house for some days during the defence of Ballinalee in November, 1920. He also did intelligence work for the A.S.U. during that period and got some useful information.

No. 11- R.I.C. barrack: evacuated in JANUARY 1920 and burned by I.R.A., Easter 1920.

No. 12- Roman Catholic Church.

No. 13- Patrick McGrath's: business premises and private dwelling.

No. 14- Business premises and dwelling house, the property of P.J. Heraty. The business comprised drapery, hardware, grain stores, grocery, wine and spirits. It was destroyed by fire by British forces in December, 1920.


ESKER HALL
SORGAN RD.
LISLEA RD.
TO AUGHNACLIFFE
CAMLIN RIVER
23
21
14
12
5
1
8
TO LONGFORD
TO GRANARD
KILSHRULEY RD.
3
17
11
9
6
15
4
7
16
13
19
2
FRANCE RD.
20
10
22
TO CURRYGLONE
24

District Inspector, two Head Constables and about fifty constables. Granard was occupied by a District Inspector of the R.I.C., a Head Constable and about thirty constables. The R.I.C. was grouped under the command of a Divisional Commissioner stationed at Kildare.

My headquarters in Ballinalee were connected by telephone to a point outside Longford town. The only method of communication I had with Granard was by runner or dispatch rider, and I was kept informed of events there through the reports of Seán Murphy, Commander of the local section. All three sections were organised for the defence of Longford, Ballinalee and Granard, which the enemy was hourly expected to attack, on November 1st and 2nd. The British had given towns and villages to the flames in several brigade areas, and we had orders to defend our towns and villages at all costs.

It was difficult to get information about the enemy's plans. On November 1st, I was informed that his forces in Longford had been increased and that large reinforcements had also been sent to Granard. I decided to send a reliable officer named Frank Davis into Granard for the purpose of getting first-hand information of the enemy's strength and dispositions. No sooner had I taken that decision than a report came in which stated that a constable in mufti had been to Ballinalee and was on his way back to Granard. Orders to follow him were immediately issued to Davis, who succeeded in overtaking him about a few hundred yards from the parish priest's house on the Granard side of Clonbroney Parish Church. Fire was opened and the constable was fatally wounded. The shooting was heard by the parish priest, Father Markey. He hurried to the scene and administered the Last Sacraments to the constable, who

died a few minutes afterwards. Davis returned to my headquarters, accompanied by Father Markey. He made his report and handed over to me the notebook and diary of the constable. The parish priest then put to me the question: "What am I to do?" In reply, I suggested that he should return to the scene of the shooting, have the body removed to a farmhouse and then send his servant boy to Granard, with word that the constable was dead on the road. To that the parish priest replied, "No, I will not do that. I am not prepared to tell a lie for you, or for anyone else, and I can't tell the truth, for I know that it would mean trouble for Davis. I am satisfied that the man is in Heaven. If I send a messenger in, I am bound to be interrogated, and that would mean an impossible situation for me". In consequence of Father Markey's attitude, I had to send in word myself to Granard that the constable was dead. The British refused to act on the information, believing it to be a ruse to draw them into difficult country. They would not come out. I next sent word to some people in Ballinalee, who went to the scene of the shooting and took the body into Longford. It had lain on the road over twenty-four hours.

Two lorries of police, which included the District Inspector and Black and Tans, went to Father Markey's house on November 2nd and arrested him outside his hall door. They interrogated him, and, as we generally called the process, they gave him the "once over" in violent manner. He refused to make a statement concerning the shooting of the constable near his house, and, in fact, refused to answer any questions beyond replying in the affirmative that his name was Patrick

Markey, P.P. His attitude enraged the police, who insisted that he knew all about the shooting of the constable, whose name was Cooney. When he made no response to the charge, they sentenced him to death. The District Inspector gave him permission to retire into the house. When Father Markey had re-enetered it, he made for the kitchen and escaped by the kitchen door that gave on to a hidden laneway. Despite his sixty-one years, he lost no time in covering the approximate four miles that lay between his house and my headquarters on France road. He sought protection, and the only means that I had of taking care of him was to attach him to the column and place him under orders. He accepted that situation and remained a while at my headquarters, which were about four hundred yards from Father Montford's house. As we were likely to come under fire, I decided to move Father Markey to Hargadon's, a very quiet place, about four miles away, and to put a small guard over him. He remained there for some days and I kept in almost continuous contact with him. As the various battles took place, however, we had to move him about a great deal and he suffered considerable hardship, for the weather was severe, with frost and snow.

Prior to the events described, the police had been very active in Granard. A District Inspector named Daniel O'Keeffe, who was a native of Dungarvan, had issued car permits to some I.R.A. officers, including one to J.J. Brady of the 5th Battalion. It had been observed by the enemy that Brady's car was used by the I.R.A. during attacks upon the upper military barracks in Longford and on the police barracks at Ballymahon and Arva. O'Keeffe was dismissed from the force as a result, and

was replaced by a young ex-army officer, who was given orders to take action against the I.R.A. and clean up the area. The new District Inspector was, as just described, fatally wounded in the Greville Arms Hotel in Longford on the night of October 31st, 1920. The I.R.A., under Vice Commandant Seán Murphy, occupied positions in the street the same night, and an engagement took place during which the police were forced to retreat to their barrack. On November 2nd, we received information that Granard was likely to be burned. Some slight enemy reinforcements, which consisted of Black and Tans and old R.I.C., had already arrived there. I proceeded to Granard, taking a section of the column with me and leaving behind adequate protection for Ballinalee. With Vice Commandant Murphy's force, we took up positions at the Catholic Church end of Granard and on both flanks. It was then about nine o'clock. Contact was made with the local scouts and they reported that everything was quiet and that there were no enemy patrols on the street. About eleven o'clock, a force sallied forth from the R.I.C. barrack and made straight for the old home of Father Markey. It was a big business premises, owned by his brother, James, and situated at the corner of the main street and the Edgeworthstown road. It was unoccupied that night, as, like many other buildings in the town of Granard, it had been vacated by staff and family. We awaited events. The police called for the house to be opened up, and when there was no response they broke in the door, and, having sprinkled the inside of the shop with paraffin, they proceeded to set it alight. Some of them were still in the shop and others were outside on the street when I gave the order to fire. Thirty-five rifles barked at 150 yards' range. Several of the enemy were wounded, and those who

had escaped being hit immediately rushed back towards the barrack, dragging their wounded with them. Following their precipitate retreat, we put out the fire they had started in Markey's. We remained in Granard until the following morning, and no further action was taken by the enemy. Well satisfied with our work, we then drew up a new plan for the defence of Granard, in conjunction with our previously arranged defence of Ballinalee.

The first report of action by the British in Longford town was received on November 3rd. I learned that they were about the town in substantial numbers, drinking heavily, but apart from having arrested a prominent citizen named Francis McGuinness, and having paraded him through the streets with the Union Jack, no other incident occurred until the evening. Then a large convoy of eleven lorries pulled into the town from the Mullingar direction. They searched and damaged St. Joseph's Temperance Hall, and were loud in their boasting that Ballinalee was about to suffer.

Ballinalee is built on crossroads and extends from north to south, with the main Granard-Longford road forming an intersection in the centre of the village. At its southern end stands the Protestant Church, and the Catholic Church is at the northern end, near a bridge which spans the River Camlin. To the east lies Granard, nine statute miles away, with Longford a similar distance to the west. Outside the village, on the Granard road, stands the national school and the curate's house, marked 6 and 15 respectively on the sketch appended. As we could not find out what movement of troops was likely to attack us, my Ballinalee forces were divided into five parts.

One was stationed to the west of Doherty's crossroads, one to the east at the school and overlooking the Granard road, one at the Protestant Church, (2) on sketch, one on the east side of the village, covering the church and the bridge, and my own headquarters at Rose Cottage on the crossroads. The object was to let the enemy come into the village. Should he divide himself north and south, our forces were to open fire from each end, at the signal of a whistle blast and the explosion of two grenades, and those from the east and west were to close in, so that we would hold all exits from the village. About five o'clock in the evening, information was received that the enemy was very turbulent in Longford, and about an hour later news came in that eleven lorries of R.I.C. and Black and Tans had left Longford in the direction of Dublin.

A Novena was being made in the Catholic Church at the time, conducted by the local curate, Father Montford, and he had received information that Ballinalee stood in grave danger. He was highly-strung, though possessed of great courage, and he advised the people who had assembled in the church to disperse and to clear away from their homes as quickly as possible. I had to countermand his instruction and direct that the people would return to their homes. The Novena was completed, but it was impossible to persuade the people to remain in the village of Ballinalee, with the exception of three families - P.J. Heraty and his family, the sub-postmistress and her family, and Patrick Murtagh and his family. All the others evacuated the town, notwithstanding my efforts to prevent them. The curate even decided he would go with them. I insisted that he should remain, for we

were likely to go into action at any time, and, as we were by no means saints, his services would be needed in the event of any of us being seriously wounded. He thereupon ordered me to mobilise my total force, which I did, falling the men into two lines, with each man carrying his arms and equipment. Addressing them, Father Montford told them that he wished to prepare them spiritually in anticipation of their going into action, but that, as the time was short, he would ask them if they all had the intention of going to Confession. Having replied in the affirmative, they were told to say a confiteor and then make an act of contrition aloud. When the prayers had been said, Father Montford gave the men general absolution, and then asked me if he could leave. In reply, I told him that he must either join the parish priest at Hargadon's, or remain in his own house. He refused to do either. I then ordered him to go to the house of James Hosey, about a statute mile from the village, and to remain there until I would relieve him. This he agreed to do.

My officers were then instructed to take up their posts, and the time was about 9 p.m. Food had been distributed and the defence of Ballinalee was ready. I made contact with Longford and found that everything was quiet. Vice Commandant Murphy was holding Granard, in accordance with the defence plans decided upon on the night of November 2nd. No report had come in from him and there was no indication that anything was wrong in Granard.

About 11 p.m. a car was signalled approaching from Longford. It had been permitted to pass through by the section at Doherty's Crossroads, but on arrival in

Ballinalee it was signalled to stop. The only occupant of the car was Rev. Father Clancy, now P.P. of Cloone, in County Leitrim, who had been a British Army Chaplain. He had been decorated some time previously for bravery during the 1914-1918 war, and had been given an honorary rank. We did not know what his national feelings might be. Just then one of the officers of the column reported that he had been absent from the parade when general absolution was given, and he sought permission to go out to Hosey's to Father Montford. I inquired of Father Clancy whether he had faculties, and, as he replied that he had, I informed him that a young man wished to go to Confession. "Very well", he said, and drove his car to the foot of the hill near Farrell's shop, where the officer awaited him. He put his stole round his neck and heard the Confession. When he had finished and was about to move off, the officer greeted him with a friendly "Good-night, uncle". It turned out that Father Clancy had heard the Confession of a nephew of his own, and seeing that the young man carried a revolver and a kitbag, his interest rose immediately. "What's all this about"? he asked urgently, and, without giving the young man time to reply, he went on to provide the anser to the question himself by observing, "So you're in this, too"! I then decided to inform Father Clancy that we were expecting an enemy force to attack the village and to attempt to burn it. He greatly doubted the likelihood that this would happen and said that he thought it was not possible. I then directed him to proceed to a certain house and to remain there. He thought it inconvenient and suggested Denis Kerrigan's place as an alternative. I agreed, and he went there immediately. Kerrigan was Sub-Sheriff of Longford, and it was he who had revealed the enemy's

intentions to Father Montford. The young officer whom Father Clancy had just shrived was attached to my own staff and returned to his post jubilantly. Every man of the column was then prepared, and, if needs be, ready and willing to lay down his life.

Just as we had settled down at our positions, a report was received from Hart's, (4) on sketch, that there was a red glow visible in the sky over Granard. A dispatch rider was about to be sent to Granard to ascertain the reason for it when information came in that a large number of lorries was approaching Ballinalee from the Granard side of the village, their heavy headlamps lighting up a long stretch of the road. Within a few minutes, we learned further that my home and forge, about six hundred yards from Hart's, had been surrounded. The forge, (17) on sketch, is in a diamond on the right-hand side of the main Granard-Longford road through Ballinalee, and three good roads were available to the British for the purpose of surrounding it. Needless to relate, they found no one at home, and, for some strange reason, they did no damage beyond forcing the door of the house. Almost immediately afterwards, they restarted their lorries and drove straight to the village of Ballinalee. All of our posts were alerted and told to prepare for action. Ten lorries swung to the right, down the main street towards the Catholic Church, (12) on sketch, and the leading lorry drew up near the bridge. Another lorry had stopped on the crossroads at the end of the Courthouse, (9) on sketch. The British were given an order to dismount approximately midway down the street. We waited patiently, for I had ordered that action was not to begin until the signal was given.

The enemy Commander blew a single blast of a whistle, and the eleventh lorry turned and fell into line with the other ten. That was grand, as the entire enemy force was then in one compact body in front of my post. I ordered my section on to the road and to lie over on the roadway at the rear of the lorries. At the same time, Seamus Conway, Father Clancy's nephew, moved rapidly down to about centreways in the line of lorries, and from his haversack he extracted two Mills No. 4 grenades. Whilst he was doing so, the enemy Commander ordered some of his force to move to the crossroads where we were in position. When they were within fifty yards of us, I called on them to halt and to surrender, and at the same time I gave three blasts on the whistle. Conway promptly delivered his grenades one after the other into the centre of the halted lorries, and we opened fire on the advancing party. Hell then broke loose. The enemy cut out his lights and opened up with a Maxim machine-gun. A Lewis gun joined in, firing wildly and even causing casualties amongst enemy troops. When this had gone on for five minutes, I again blew my whistle, this time for a cease fire, and I called upon the enemy to surrender. There was also a cease fire by the British and they asked for our terms. I demanded an unconditional surrender, which they refused to give. "What then", they asked, and I replied, "A fight to the finish". By that time, Conway had rejoined us following his bomb throwing.

As we had but sixty rounds of ammunition per man, it was essential that the other units of the column should join us, and, as they had not appeared, I sent Thomas Early to the church to bring down Captain Hugh Hourican's party. We had to conserve our fire, while the enemy fired in all directions and continued to do so for at least two hours;

people who were listening to the sound of the firing thought that it went on for about four hours. No reinforcements reached me. A cease fire was ordered, for we had noted that there was a great deal of activity by the enemy under cover of darkness. We were unable to determine what he was up to, until, about five a.m., a lorry engine was started down near the bridge. It was immediately followed by another, and one by one the enemy lorries moved off in the darkness. Over the bridge they went and up the Soran road, a very bad by-road which eventually reaches Longford following various turns and twists. They did not arrive back in Longford until 2.30 p.m. on the following day.

Meanwhile, we were in the awful position of having been reduced to five rounds per man, and we could neither waste those precious rounds nor withdraw. So we held our positions and the coming of daylight revealed a remarkable scene. About the area in which the lorries had been drawn up were pools of blood, and strewn all over it were items of military equipment, revolvers and thousands of rounds of .303 ammunition. There were also boxes of chocolates, boxes of boot polish and every conceivable commodity, all of which apparently had been looted from the shops in Granard. Thus it happened that my men, who had commenced the engagement with sixty rounds apiece, ended up with five hundred or more rounds each.

About 9 p.m., Johnny Collumb arrived from Granard with the information that many houses had been burned in the village, and that practically every house had been looted and robbed; that Vice Commandant Murphy, having noted the extent of the enemy forces, and having come to

the conclusion that his own force was inadequate for the defence of the town, had withdrawn about five miles in the direction of the Cavan border. He failed to report to me at Ballinalee or bring his force in that direction. A charge was subsequently made against him, but he was acquitted on the grounds that his force was inadequate and that the orders were not written or sufficiently detailed to enable him to carry them out.

Father Clancy had barely arrived at Kerrigan's when he saw the advance of the enemy forces. He counted the lorries, as I did, and we later agreed about the number of them. The military commander in Longford, in his report of the operation, stated that a number of R.I.C. led by a senior officer, the Divisional Commissioner from Kildare, had asked him for a military escort, and he gave them one lorry which carried an officer and twenty men. On his return to Longford on the afternoon of November 4th, the officer, who had been in charge of the military escort, reported that they had been ambushed at Ballinalee by a huge force which numbered several hundreds. According to him, numbers of the enemy were seen to fall in the course of an engagement which lasted for several hours. He said that they succeeded in beating off the ambushers eventually, and returned to barracks with one killed and some others slightly wounded.

At Hosey's, Father Montford, listening to the explosions, the rifle and machine-gun fire in the distance, came to the conclusion that we were all killed, and said so. With two others for an escort, he left Hosey's and, having crossed the River Camlin, sought refuge in St. Mary's Seminary in Moyne. The pastor, Father Markey, remained at Hargadon's, quite jubilant and confident that none of our forces had been killed.

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon of November 4th, all the various units of the column reported for duty. A new defence of Ballinalee was prepared, for I was of opinion that the enemy would not leave us undisturbed. I moved my headquarters south of the Protestant Church to a position on the France road to Cavan through Gurteen. I commandeered the Rectory, which was occupied by the Rector, the Rev. H.J. Johnston, and I also took over O'Farrell's, Gurteen; Gilsenan's, and James Archibald's house and forge on the France road. My colleague, Seán Connolly, who had been sent to Roscommon by G.H.Q., sent word that, if required, he was prepared to bring a force from Roscommon to help me with the defence of Ballinalee. I replied, asking him to come at once.

On the night of November 1st, I had started writing my report for the Chief of Staff and the Director of Intelligence. I had it finished by the morning of November 3rd, and it included, for the information of the Chief of Staff, my new plans for the defence of Ballinalee, which had been hurriedly drawn up. In accordance with the plan, the Granard and Longford units were brought into Ballinalee, so that a full mobilisation of all our arms, ammunition and equipment was made for the defence of the village. Seán Connolly arrived on the morning of November 5th, and was accompanied by Commandant Bill O'Doherty, Strokestown, of the Roscommon Brigade, and by a number of riflemen from the same brigade. Having outlined to Seán Connolly my proposed defence of the village, and having explained our responsibility and duty to protect Father Markey, I then told him that I was going to bed, to get my first sleep in seventy-two hours. Connolly checked the defence posts and decided to alter

one of them from Croppy's Hill, (16) on sketch, back to Rose Cottage, (1) on sketch. He placed Lieut. M. Kenny in charge of that post. I had been about two hours in bed when a dispatch was brought to Gilsenan's where I was sleeping. There was considerable commotion amongst the guards, but the dispatch bearer insisted upon seeing me. The dispatch was from Lieutenant Kenny who commanded the Rose Cottage post, and it simply amounted to mutiny. He claimed that the original position in which he had been placed was the proper one, and that Rose Cottage would be untenable. I upheld the authority of Seán Connolly and, having ordered Lieutenant Kenny to maintain the post at Rose Cottage, I issued a stern order that any attempt at disobedience or neglect of duty would be drastically dealt with in the future. I then went back to bed and slept for two hours. Seán Connolly had returned to Gilsenan's at the end of that period, and together we discussed the question of the Rose Cottage post. It was decided to evacuate it and to re-occupy the original position at Croppy's Hill. Seán Connolly issued the necessary order himself. We were determined to hold Ballinalee, and to defend it at all costs. The enemy's set-back on the night of November 3rd and morning of November 4th had been his first defeat in an attempt to burn a village.

The people of Ballinalee, including Father Montford, did not return before November 7th. In the meantime, the curate's house had remained unoccupied. Word was sent to us that a small enemy force would come to Ballinalee, to remove the widow and family of the constable who had been shot near Father Markey's house, together with their furniture and effects, and that it had no other duty to

perform. It was decided that no action would be taken against the enemy unit. An officer of the column named Barney Kilbride, who had been finding difficulty in sleeping on the hard ground round by the Protestant Church, decided that Father Montford's bed was much better suited for the purpose. On his next break from duty, he gaily retired to rest in the priest's house and was there when the enemy force arrived in Ballinalee for the purpose of removing the dead constable's family and effects. Two lorries drew up at Father Montford's house. It was open, and the military went in and upstairs, where they found our friend in bed. The British officer inquired if he was the priest. Kilbride replied that he was not. He said that he was the priest's boy and told the officer to get to hell out of that. He was fully dressed in bed, but had the clothes pulled over himself and had his revolver by his side underneath the clothes. The British officer apologised and withdrew. Barney Kilbride, feeling that in certain circumstances the hard ground by the Protestant Church might have more to commend it as a resting place than the curate's bed, promptly rejoined his unit.

The family of Constable Cooney having been removed to Longford, together with their effects, tension grew in Ballinalee. The night of November 5th was one made forever memorable as the result of a weird experience. All along our defence line one half of the column had been resting in the fields and in the graveyard whilst the other half remained on duty and on the alert. About midnight, a series of lights started up on our right front, about two miles distant in the direction of Granard. Individual points of light were visible over a three-mile

stretch which extended almost to Doherty's Crossroads, from which point we had telephonic contact with Longford. We contacted scouts who had been placed on all the outlying roads in the Granard direction, but none of them had anything to report. Nevertheless, it appeared that a large encircling force was approaching the village of Ballinalee. We calculated that there must be more than two thousand men participating in the operation, but we wondered why they were making their advance so obvious by displaying so many lights. The only explanation of the lights that we could think of was that the nature of the country was making it difficult for the different enemy groups to maintain contact with one another in the darkness. We also came to the conclusion that our position had been given away to the enemy. It was a distinct possibility. For one thing, we had allowed enemy elements to enter Ballinalee to remove Constable Cooney's family and possessions. There was also the question of an intelligence agent whom I had employed and who was a prominent Freemason. He had been sent to Longford to get first-hand information of the enemy's plans and had returned with his report. As far as he could find out, it had been determined to give Ballinalee a wide berth for a few days until reinforcements had been secured. He also brought back details of the losses suffered by the enemy in the battle of Ballinalee, and the advice that no movement was contemplated by the British other than the removal of the dead constable's family and effects. I had absolute confidence in this intelligence officer, notwithstanding his association with the enemy and the Masonic Brotherhood, and I was certain that I could trust him. Still, Seán Connolly and other senior officers were uneasy. They were of the opinion that there was a very

large enemy force advancing against us, that if we remained in our positions we would be encircled and that daylight would find us in serious difficulty. Longford was checked again and they assured us that there had been no enemy movement from that point. The scouts on the approaches were checked again and they, too, reported no enemy movement. It was puzzling, and, following long argument and conference, I decided to withdraw the column to positions that would be outside an encircling ring. When we had travelled about three miles in the darkness, and had reached Earley's which overlooked MacEoin's forge, I ordered a halt. There we found that what we had thought was an encircling army was nothing other than "will-o-the-wisp" over that three-mile stretch of moor and bogland. It was my first experience of this extraordinary phenomenon, and, having regard to the circumstances, it was both disconcerting and terrifying. We returned to the France road wiser men, dejected because we had made such fools of ourselves. Mr. and Mrs. John Mullen set out to compensate us by preparing a breakfast of bacon and eggs for the entire force. We were very grateful to them, though they had no cause to be thankful to us for, when the column had finished breakfast, little remained of a very fine pig which had been hanging as bacon from the kitchen ceiling. After breakfast we returned to our posts. Father Markey said Mass for us, and, following a long discussion with me, he returned to Hargadon's where he remained for some days.

We continued to hold Ballinalee. It is not my intention to give details of our day-to-day activities in this statement, but mention should be made of some things of note which occurred during our first week in occupation of the village. One morning a signal was received that a

lorry and a car were approaching Ballinalee. They were allowed in, for, as the village was firmly held, they could not get out again unless permitted by us.

The vehicles were drawn up at Rose Cottage, and I sent down Captain Seán Duffy to question the occupants. It transpired that they were pressmen, and he gave them a short account of the engagement of the night of November 2nd. They then interviewed Mr. and Mrs. Heraty, who had remained in their house throughout the whole of the fighting in the village and who had observed much of the battle and the retreat of the lorries - without lights and in disorder. The pressmen then left Ballinalee. About midhight, the approach of a lone car was signalled. It stopped near Father Markey's house, and the occupant, who inquired for me, said he had an urgent message from the "Big Fellow", as Michael Collins was known to all of us. No chances were taken with the midnight motorist. He was driven round in circles before being brought to my headquarters on France road. There he handed me a calling card belonging to the "Big Fellow", and written on it in ink were the well-known initials, "M.O.C." He informed me that he was Patrick Quinn of the 'Irish Independent' and that he had accompanied the pressmen to Ballinalee earlier in the day. Whilst on the way back to Dublin, he had discovered that one of the party was in reality a prominent Scotland Yard detective. He reported this to Collins immediately that he arrived in Dublin, and Collins had ordered him to return to Ballinalee at once, find me and inform me of his discovery. I then gave him a message for the "Big Fellow", to the effect that I was satisfied that it did not matter if there had been twenty or a hundred Scotland Yard detectives with the pressmen; that it would have made no difference to my defence measures

and that we were ready for any emergency. I gave Quinn a second report for Collins concerning the latest situation in Ballinalee. We were then full of confidence, and, perhaps, flushed with our success in the previous engagement, we felt that we could take on any army, notwithstanding the fact that a short time previously we had been shaken to our finger tips by the will-o-the-wisp!

Father Montford had returned to his house, and I slept there some nights, adopting the idea of Barney Kilbride. One morning, Father Markey came down to Father Montford's and they both went into conference in the dining-room while I lay in a small room overhead. There was a knock at the hall door. Maggie McDowell, the curate's housekeeper, who was a member of Cumann na mBan, opened it to admit the Most Reverend Dr. Hoare, Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. He was admitted to the dining-room where pastor and curate had been in conference, and he immediately challenged Father Markey with being absent from his house while no one could tell where he was to be found. To this, Father Markey made no reply, and he was then challenged to state why he had left the body of a Catholic lying on the road for twenty-four hours. His Lordship demanded to know the history of the case, and in a loud voice he condemned Father Markey's action. As the parish priest made no reply to all this, His Lordship inquired whether he was dumb, and then informed him that he was suspending him. Father Markey interjected: "My Lord, you are not aware of the facts". "Then what are the facts"? the Bishop demanded again; but the parish priest made no reply. Turning to Father Montford, the Bishop asked: "What did you do in all this"? "Nothing, my Lord", he replied, "it was in the upper part of the parish". His Lordship then told Father Markey that all who had taken

part in the incident would be condemned from the altar on the following Sunday. Father Markey said that he could not, and would not, do that, and repeated that His Lordship was not aware of the facts. The Bishop then left and slammed the hall door as he went. When he had gone, I appeared on the scene and inquired of Father Markey why he had not given him the facts. Father Markey replied that it would only be an embarrassment to him, and that what he did not know would not trouble him. I then referred to the suspension, and he said, "That's all right".

On the following Sunday, His Lordship having spoken sternly from the pulpit and condemned us, I decided to go myself to Longford to give him the facts of the situation. He received me at the Bishop's Palace, and I explained to him that I was a properly appointed officer, serving a lawful Government through its Minister for Defence and his Headquarters Staff; that the Government had been voted into office by the elected Parliament of the Irish people; that I was fighting a defensive battle against the enemy; that this was a mother country and that the Irish Bishops had declared that it was entitled to its freedom. I showed him that every operation of ours was carried out in accordance with the usages of war, and that we took life only in self-defence and in defence of the nation and its Parliament. His Lordship then said: "As a loyal son of the Church, do you not think that you should have informed me of all this before now? How did you expect that we were to know of the organisation of the armed forces? There has been no declaration by the Government or Parliament to the effect that you are acting under their control, but now that I see that you are a properly constituted force my words of condemnation do not

apply to you. You are not privateers, but the armed forces of the State. I wish you success". He then gave me his blessing and I took my leave, having for the future a real friend in the Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. His attitude following my explanation of the facts did not surprise me, for as a young priest he had served three months in jail for his support of the Irish tenant farmers during the Land War.

We remained in undisputed possession of Ballinalee and district. Breastworks had been thrown up, trenches cut and communication lines established. Still the enemy did not interfere with us, though every day a large number of his lorries left Longford and passed through Edgeworthstown which is on the way to Granard. They followed the same road from Longford to Granard that they had used on the night of November 2nd.

After the battle of Ballinalee, which took place on the night of 2nd and morning of 3rd November, I sent a full report, or what I considered a full report, of the operations carried out, up to and including the 6th or 7th November. As already stated, I wrote a report at three different stages on the night of the Ballinalee engagement. General Mulcahy informs me that he has that report safe. It was written in ink, pencil and indelible pencil.

As pointed out already, District Inspector Kelleher was shot in Kiernan's, the Greville Arms Hotel, Granard, and the Kiernan family were getting a very rough deal from the British. Their very extensive and up-to-date grocery, hardware and publichouse at the corner was burned to the ground. Laurence Kiernan was in jail, and was likely to be charged with the killing of District Inspector Kelleher.

I received an acknowledgement of my report, and Collins ordered me to report to him in Dublin at the earliest possible moment. It was not possible to do so for some time, but I arranged to travel to Dublin at the end of November.

I decided to go to Dublin by car, and secured Commandant J.J. Brady's car. He still had a permit from District Inspector Dan O'Keeffe. I was accompanied by J.J. Brady, Seamus Conway, Tom Reilly and Frank Reilly. We proceeded to Dublin, avoiding all towns, skirting Oldcastle in the County Meath, by-passing Trim, and arrived safely without hindrance.

I reported to Collins, and I got a very severe cross-examination and interrogation as to the reasons for the shooting in the Granard hotel, and the necessity for it. He complained bitterly of the inadequacy of my reports, to which I replied that, if I undertook to fight, I did not undertake to write. He there and then decided to appoint a certain person as a sort of publicity manager or liaison officer. (All that I will say about this man's appointment was that, when he reported for duty, we fed him on bacon and eggs for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and that he succeeded in lasting only three days in the country. The billet in Charlie Treacy's, Aughagreagh, was too much for him).

We had run short of detonators, ordinary and electric, and we had, as yet, only a small number of short arms. After much work, I secured a number of detonators, ammunition, some gelignite and revolvers from the dump near Christchurch Place.

When I was ready to leave Dublin, we found that the car had been seized by British forces at whatever place Frank Reilly had left it, and we had to return by train. Brady and Frank Reilly remained in Dublin to try and recover the car, and Conway and Reilly accompanied me on the train.

It had been our intention to travel via Mullingar but, as there was a good deal of stuff being sent by Collins on that train, he directed that we should travel by Oldcastle via Virginia Road station. We proceeded to the station, carrying the explosives in two or three handbags. They were very heavy. We changed at Drogheda, without incident, and proceeded, with safety, to Virginia Road. A number of men - cattle dealers and others - had been in and out of our carriage.

When we reached Virginia Road station, the three of us were alone with one companion who was travelling to Oldcastle, which is the railway terminus and our destination, as far as the railroad was concerned. I inquired from him how things were in Oldcastle. He told us that things were very quiet, and that no incident of any importance had taken place until that morning when he observed, as he was leaving Oldcastle on the train, that the R.I.C. had taken up position at the station. On receiving this information, I opened the bags and handed out the revolvers to Conway and Reilly. Our travelling companion got very excited when he saw four revolvers being taken out, and declared, with emphasis, that he had never used a gun in his life. He inquired what was the worry. We said, "Isn't it easy to see to see the worry!" He announced that his name was Bob Doughty, that he was a Protestant and a Loyalist, and that, if we took his

instructions, he would get us through safely. I told him to produce his plan at once. It was quite simple. He would take two of us out on one side of the train, opposite to where the police were stationed, and bring us down a field to a shed of his, and that he would run back to the train, take the third man, and bring him out through the R.I.C. cordon, introducing him as his nephew. I disremember what name. He gave the name. I decided to accept the plan.

We acted speedily. True to his word, Doughty brought myself and Reilly out on one side of the platform, and down to the shed. He rushed back to the train, contacted Conway, and brought him out through the police cordon, introducing Conway as his nephew. The police sergeant simply put the question, "Is he a friend of yours?", to which Doughty replied, "Yes".

Doughty and Conway proceeded down through the town of Oldcastle, where Doughty succeeded in hiring a car, but a new regulation was coming into force that night at midnight, under which every car must be in its garage by twelve midnight, and thereafter a new permit had to be secured which confined it to a radius of twenty-five miles from its garage.

Reilly and I remained in the shed for some time. Then we saw the lights of the car approaching, and Doughty and Conway met us at the roadside. The driver explained that he must be back and have his car in the garage before midnight, and, therefore, he could only drive us a short distance. I informed the driver and Doughty that I was a nephew of Fitzgerald of Finea, and that, if we got to Fitzgerald's, I was all right. The driver agreed to drive us there. We landed safely at Finea around 11 p.m.,

leaving the driver an hour to get back and have his car in the garage.

We proceeded on foot from Finea to McNally's of Carrickbane, near Ballywilliam station, where we got some refreshments, and proceeded on foot to Reilly's of Clooneen, where one of the Reilly boys gave us a pony and trap. We landed safely at our base in Columcille.

When the enemy did not come to us, I decided that we should take the initiative and go to him. Accordingly, I withdrew my forces from Ballinalee and proceeded to Ardagullin which is on the main road from Edgeworthstown to Granard. There we mined the roads and took up positions. Snow had fallen and there was hard frost. When we had held the positions for two nights and a day, we received the astonishing information that the enemy had entered Ballinalee in force. He had ejected from their houses Pat Farrell and his family (7) and Father Montford, and had occupied both places and the schoolhouse. Soberly we took up our mines and carried them to a new headquarters which I set up at James Kiernan's of Drumeel, on the France road. James was a prominent supporter of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Nellie Kenny, a member of the Cumann na mBan, was sent to Ballinalee to scout the position there and to find out the defence posts put up by the enemy. She reported back with a map which showed the defences at Farrell's, and with the information that both Father Montford's house and the schoolhouse had been vacated. I then prepared plans for an immediate attack on Farrell's. In accordance with these, the column moved from Drumeel to Ballinalee, on November 8th, and we took up positions on all roads leading to the village. An attack was launched in force against the front and rear of

Farrell's. Before it began, Seán Duffy and I had succeeded in placing a mine on the end window of the building. We crawled on our stomachs in the frost, pushing the 56 lb. mine in front of us and carrying with us the detonator and cable. We cut through the strands of barbed wire at the gable end of Farrell's and placed the mine on a window sill. We attached the cable to our electric detonator and withdrew with the cable to Kiernan's out-offices, facing the end of Farrell's, and then attached our exploder. All was then ready for the attack, and we called upon the enemy to surrender. He refused to do so. We then exploded the mine, and it blew the ceiling, shutters and the end of the house high in the air. Of the police whose posts had been at that end of the house, three were killed and several wounded. The engagement continued from midnight until 7 a.m., when we withdrew to Drumeel on the France road. We had no casualties, but the whole force was greatly fatigued following the Ardagullion episode and the night-long attack. About mid-day, when we had barely rested, an enemy force, several hundred strong, re-entered the village and re-occupied the schoolhouse and Father Montford's house. When the British had settled in, they burned Duffy's of Cavan and the forge. Moving out to the France road, they also sent up in flames the house of Commandant Seán Connolly, who had by that time returned to Roscommon. Back in the village again, they burned Hannigan's, Bracken's, Heraty's, Fox's, Earley's, and my own forge and house. We went immediately to Connolly's, but it was beyond aid when we got there, so we proceeded without delay to McGrath's Corner (13). It was still broad daylight and there was snow on the ground. Farrell's had been evacuated by the enemy and that end of the village was completely clear of

his forces. We pushed down the village and had got as far as Farrell's (7) when a howling mob of Black and Tans, R.I.C. and military appeared at the top of the hill, at Rose Cottage. We promptly opened fire upon them and gave them ten rounds rapid. They broke immediately and fled to the schoolhouse and to Father Montford's house. Rockets and flares were sent up by them, calling for reinforcements, and they remained within the relative safety of their new posts, all the approaches to which had been blocked by extensive barbed-wire entanglements.

James Mackey Wilson, H.M. Deputy Lieutenant, brother of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, lived in Currygranne House, about a mile and a quarter from Rose Cottage. I approached Currygranne with the intention of burning the place as a reprisal, as I had been authorised to do by G.H.Q. Whilst on the way to the house I thought the matter over. There were not in the brigade area more than a dozen houses that could be burned as reprisals for British outrages, and there was only one Wilson connected with the Chief of the Imperial Staff of Great Britain. On that account, I came to the conclusion that it would be wiser to adopt different tactics. I called upon Wilson, brought him out and showed him Duffy's and Connolly's on fire. I reminded him that the destruction had been carried out by forces acting under his brother's orders, and I insisted that he should write to Sir Henry and inform him that, if the British burned another house in County Longford, Currygranne would follow it up in flames, and, not only that, but he, James Wilson, would very probably die with it. He said that the Field Marshal would pay no heed to such a request. "Well", I replied, "in that case it will be too bad for Currygranne and for you".

I added that, should he attempt to leave Currygranne, I would have him executed before he had reached Edgeworthstown or Longford. Before I left him, I said that if the battle was left to the military forces of both sides to fight it out, I would, in the name of the Government of the Republic, guarantee protection of life and property to him and all others of his sort in the county, on condition that they remained strictly neutral.

Next to receive a formal call from me was the Reverend H.J. Johnston, the Rector of Ballinalee, whose house I had previously occupied. I informed him that I was aware that he was an honorary Colonel of the Ulster Volunteers, a member of the Orange Order and Chaplain to the British forces then in occupation of the village. I pointed out his close association with the enemy forces, whom he knew to have burned and destroyed the houses of innocent people, and said that his connection with the enemy was of a much more intimate kind that Father Markey's association with us. I explained to Mr. Johnston that Father Markey had been sentenced to death by the British, and told him to inform them that Father Markey would be at home on the following day and every day afterwards, and that should they impose any hardship, indignity, injury or penalty upon the parish priest, I would be reluctantly compelled to deal likewise with himself. Mr. Johnston replied that such would be an outrage. I agreed, but added that it would also be an outrage if Father Markey were murdered; that by taking this step I was preventing two outrages. Mr. Johnston went to the troops in Ballinalee. What he told them I do not know. I ordered Father Markey to be returned to his house and, at 11 a.m. on the following day, a lorry load of R.I.C. and Black and Tans, and a lorry load of military

drew up in front of it. We closely watched developments as the enemy officers left the lorries and proceeded to Father Markey's hall door. Later we learned the details of what passed between them and the parish priest. The officer in charge first inquired whether he was Father Markey, and having received a reply in the affirmative, he asked further whether he required any protection. Father Markey said, "Protection from whom? You are the only people I require to be protected against". The officer then blandly informed him that he was in no danger whatever from His Majesty's forces, and assured him that he would remain unmolested for the future.

I am glad to say that, with one exception, no house was burned in County Longford after that evening of November 9th, 1920. The exception referred to, took place after the Clonfin ambush on February 2nd, 1921, when Commandant Finnegan, having expended all the ammunition for his short carbine, threw the rifle away and picked up a new one from a wounded Auxiliary, together with its ammunition. He failed, however, to remember that he had, with great care, engraved his name, rank and address on the discarded rifle. The following day, his home was raided and the enemy found a large number of old shotguns, partially constructed grenades etc., in the house which they promptly set on fire. They defended this action on the ground that the house was not private property, but an enemy post. Smith's house at Rathmore suffered a like fate for a similar stated reason.

Father Markey returned from the column to his parochial duties, and lived in Ballinalee until the Truce. I like to remember that, until their deaths, which occurred in the same year, he and the Reverend H.J. Johnston

regularly signed my nomination papers for Dáil Éireann.

At Christmas of 1920, Seán Connolly and Bill Doherty of Roscommon (Commandant of the Elphin Battalion) reported to me at our headquarters at Aughagreagh - Charlie Treacy's. A survey of the situation relating to Longford, Leitrim and Roscommon, as we saw it, was made. Seán Connolly felt that there should be more co-ordination between Longford, Leitrim and Roscommon, even though the river Shannon divided them, and communications were not easy except by boat, crossing the Shannon at various places.

We decided to get in touch with Collins and ask him if he would see the three of us around Christmas time. This was approved, and the three of us proceeded to Dublin where we found Collins and the G.H.Q. Staff in excellent spirits and very confident. It was an inspiration to us.

The question of transport for getting us to Dublin had been solved by commandeering a new Ford car from a Mr. Taylor, Corboy, Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford. He was very decent about it. Captain James Sheeran, who was in charge of communications, knew Mr. Taylor very well. On condition that we would give him a requisition note and a receipt for the car, Mr. Taylor undertook to remain silent about the affair, if we had the car back within three days. We readily gave him the assurance, and I signed a commandeering order for the car. He had no petrol except what was in the tank - about two gallons. We decided that we would call upon a reserve of petrol held by Dr. Ryan of Finea, whom we regarded as a very great opponent. The party, consisting of Seán Connolly, Bill Doherty, Strokestown, the driver, who, I think, was

James Brady or Frank Reilly, and myself travelled to Finea. We picked up John Arkins and James McNally, Volunteers from the Finea section, who told us that everything was quiet in Finea. We left the car at O'Connor's in Finea, and then picked up young Fitzgerald who also informed us that everything was quiet in Finea.

Connolly, Doherty and myself went to the door of Dr. Ryan's house. We were carrying revolvers in our Sam Browne belts. Dr. Ryan opened the door. I told him that I wanted four tins of petrol, and, before I had time to explain what I wanted it for, he hit me, with his fist, between the two eyes. I saw every star that was ever seen in the heavens. He declared, "You will get no petrol!" Connolly and Doherty immediately drew their guns, but I threw out my two arms across their arms, and said to them to "hold". I then addressed the doctor, and told him that he was an aged man and that, if I were to hit him, I would kill him, that he had done a very dangerous thing, but that, when he would be dead, I would still get the petrol. He was still in a fighting attitude, but had not struck a second blow. "By gad, sir", he said, "You are a gentleman! You will get the petrol!" He turned on his heel, walked upstairs, and brought down the four tins of petrol which he handed over to us.

I may mention that Dr. Ryan was then married, for the second time, to a lady from Castlepollard. She was a school teacher there, and, at Christmas of 1919, she had played "God Save The King"! as a hymn or carol, in the Catholic Church there. This had created a rather serious situation for her, but it had left her in very high standing with the Crown forces. At the time of the altercation with the doctor at the door, there were three Auxiliary officers in the drawing-room with Mrs. Ryan.

I leave it to the reader to picture the element of surprise that would have been in the incident for us, had shots been fired at the doorway and the three Auxiliary officers come on the scene.

When in Dublin, the old complaint by G.H.Q. was made again, that we were not writing enough, that our reports were too scanty, and we decided that we would make them more elaborate in future. In Dublin, Connolly got some equipment for Roscommon. We returned to Kenny's of Glanagh where we spent the Christmas.

While in Dublin, Collins told me that he would probably be in a position to send me information relating to a transfer of arms from Boyle Barracks to the Curragh, by train, and that he expected us to make a good job of it. I will refer to this later on in this statement.

On the night of the 6th January, 1921, we decided to move into Ballinalee, and to inspect Fr. Montford's house, which had been occupied by a section of the East Yorks, stationed in Longford. The East Yorks had vacated Fr. Montford's. Seamus Conway and I proceeded towards the schoolhouse, but we did not realise we were so close to it until we could see the white wall of the gable of the barracks. We moved to the France road, and here I may mention something very extraordinary. The field at the end of the barracks, through which we had passed, was laid with trap mines, and the Almighty, Who is careful of fools and children, guided our steps safely through the mine-field. A cow that rambled into the field, the next night, was blown into smithereens. We entered the village at McGrath's, and proceeded to the

Old Barracks where we took up a position, with the expectation of getting in some sort of an attack on the enemy patrols, but no patrol came.

We then withdrew to a hay loft at Bully's Acre, at the rear of Rose Cottage. This building was the former Masonic Hall of the village of Ballinalee. The loft was fully covered with chaff and other straw refuse, and we decided to rest there for some time. We were very comfortable, but there was a large collection, or a monster meeting being held that night in the loft, of small black insects, known as fleas. After a very short time, they started to operate upon us, and I regret to say that we had to retreat hastily, leaving them in possession, but it was now almost morning.

Conway and some members of the column moved to Aughagreagh. Jim Sheerin and Michael Gormley accompanied me to Martin's Cottage, (marked 21 on sketch), where I had promised to look after some accounts relating to the forge, and to write some letters that required attention. I put out scouts, sending my sister, Lena, into Ballinalee, to watch enemy movements. We had a meal in Martin's cottage, and then I commenced writing at the table. After a short time, my brother, Peter, and my sister, Kathleen, drew my attention to the fact that there was a large crowd of enemy forces coming down the road. They were then within three hundred yards of the cottage. I hastily barricaded the back windows, and put my mother and the two old Miss Martins, Nanny and Mrs. Mary Devine, into that room. I put Sheerin on one window in front, and Gormley at the other, in front. By this time, they were surrounding the house, the District Inspector and Sergeant Bryan being already through the gate, which was

only twenty paces from the door. I stepped out at the door, and opened fire upon them. I then threw a Mills No. 4 bomb amongst the other members of the forces. I dashed back into the house, and allowed the bomb to explode. I now refer you to the courtmartial proceedings for the rest of the story.

I rejoined the column in Aughagreagh. Seamus Conway and Seamus McKeown had, in the meantime, gone down to Martin's cottage. I refer you to them for their story of that.

We then moved to a higher position at Gelsha Hill, but still in the townland of Aughagreagh, occupying a line from one road to another, that is, the main Ballinalee-Aughnacliffe road and the main Ballinalee-Bunlahy road, with headquarters at John McNally's, who, by the way was a very inquisitive type of man, inquisitive only as to the type and make of shotguns, rifles and revolvers. We were only a short time in McNally's when Frank Davis left his revolver on the table and proceeded to do something. Before he knew what was happening, McNally had lifted the Colt .45 to examine it, declaring it to be a great weapon and that it was a pity it had only one barrel, and, at the same time, pointing it towards the dresser in the kitchen. He pulled the trigger, and the automatic pumped out its seven or eight rounds into the dresser, because McNally was unable to release the trigger, and every plate got smashed. Mrs. McNally blandly informed him that he was an old fool.

I wish here to draw special attention to Dr. Keenan's evidence at my trial by British courtmartial arising from D.I. McGrath's death. Dr. Keenan was our Battalion

Medical Officer. At the trial, he was asked the question, "You, being a doctor, looked at the body (that is, of D.I. McGrath), I suppose, to ascertain what was the cause of death?". To which Dr. Keenan answered, "No, I was not concerned with the cause of death. I was concerned to see if anything could be done for the man I was called to see". Later, when he was being pressed to say what he considered to be the cause of death, he answered, "My only concern was to see whether the man was within medical aid. When I found he was dead, I did not pay any more attention to him because I assumed that there would be a post mortem on him". There never was a post mortem.

I may also mention that, when the summary of evidence (a copy of which is attached at Appendix "C") was being taken in Mountjoy prison, I was warned that I should not cross-examine any of the witnesses, but, when Sergeant Ryan said that he was less than three feet from me when he fired at me at Martin's cottage, I thought it was important to establish at an early stage that the District Inspector was between Sergeant Ryan and myself, and that there was some evidence that District Inspector McGrath might have been killed by the indiscriminate firing of Sergeant Ryan and the other R.I.C. men and Black and Tans. I therefore cross-examined Sergeant Ryan, and, in the cross-examination in the summary of evidence, copy of which I here submit, it will be seen that Sergeant Ryan admitted that District Inspector McGrath was to his immediate front, and between myself and the British forces. I asked Sergeant Ryan if the point of his rifle would not be in my side when he fired, if his evidence was true, that he was that close to me; to which he replied that it

would, if I had to stand where I was, but that I had jumped into the porch.

Around Christmas, 1920:

I decided that the mines which we had made and stored were too large for speedy transport, and I moved my headquarters to Joe Lynch's of Cloghurnal. There, at Boylan's forge, we made two light mines - light only to an extent. They were not half the weight of the mines made previously and were used at Ardagullion and Patrick Farrell's, Ballinalee, but they still weighed over 56 lb. each.

Information was received that a convoy moved regularly from Longford to Athlone, and that sometimes the Divisional Commissioner from Kildare travelled that road. The column was got ready, and we moved from Redihan's of Coolarty to Lisglassick House, stopping on the way at Breany, midway between Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon, where we rested for one night, moving next morning to Lisglassick, a route march of about ten miles. We took up positions in Lisglassick, and the column went to bed. The local company under Captain James Hussey had already been mobilised, and they did guard duty while the column rested. E.J. Cooney and the two Garrahan's, Seán and Tom, met me by appointment.

We inspected the road from Ballymahon to beyond Kenagh on the Longford side, and finally decided on a long stretch of road at Tierlicken, with very few houses but with a lot of cover, as the best place. The columns turned out, and the two mines were put in the road, a few hundred yards apart, one of the exploders being kept in a

cottage under the command of Seamus Conway, and the other, up near McCann's where there were some old houses, in charge of Paddy Callaghan. On my right flank, Ned Cooney was placed in charge of one party. Conway and myself were at the centre, with the first exploder, and Callaghan at the other end. The mines were well concealed in the road.

After some time - about eleven o'clock - a small car, carrying a Red Cross, came along the road, and we decided to let it through, as it was said to be Dr. Armstrong's car from Kenagh, the local medical officer. This was a grave error.

In a short time, two lorries drove into the ambush position. The connection for the exploders to the mines was so defective that, when the order was given to explode the mines, the current returned into Conway's hands instead of passing through the charge in the mine. I then tried it, and it was nearly sufficient to cause paralysis. I then gave the order to open fire, and the battle was on, without any mines exploding. Worse still, the small car returned, and joined the two lorries. It contained the Divisional Commissioner of the R.I.C. from Kildare.

Conway disconnected his exploder, and pulled the cable sufficiently hard to disconnect it from the charge in the road. We got safely away with his exploder and cable, but Callaghan lost his, and had to fight very hard to secure his retreat in safety when I ordered the retreat to be sounded. The engagement lasted about half an hour.

We all fell back to Lisglassick House, to lick our wounds which were mental but not physical. There was one bright spot. Miss Hussey and the members of Cumann na mBan from Kenagh had one powerful feed of pancakes ready when we returned to Lisglassick. I then reconnected the detonators to the cable we had brought, and the exploder, and tested them at Lisglassick House, although the enemy were still moving around in great strength. The two detonators which I tested exploded perfectly. Of course, we were unable to say what was the condition of the mines when the British took them up from the road. Our mines had been successful in the attack on the R.I.C. barracks, formerly Farrell's house, in Ballinalee, but after Tierlicken, the value point of mines was rather low. I still had great belief in them, which was to be proved afterwards at Clonfin.

I appointed a small column at Kenagh under the command of the Company Captain there, Jim Hussey, for guard and protective purposes, and in case there might be reprisals, but apparently the Wilson episode was holding good, as no reprisals took place.

We started our route march from Lisglassick on our return journey, through Edgeworthstown, to Browne's of Casino, a distance of about twenty miles. We got refreshments at Carrickboy. I may mention that, in paying for the goods received, I lost the only £100 note I ever had in my life at that time. I was two miles further on the road when I missed it. I returned to Carrickboy and found my £100 note, high and dry, in the centre of the road. I overtook the column at Edgeworthstown, to find the "Bun" McDowell, Conway and others deciding to sprint a hundred yards, to see who could

do it the quickest. I don't know who won, but they did run it, to show how fresh they were, but it was evidence of their ability that they were capable of marching well to Casino, which is near Coolarty.

At this time, our courts were functioning properly. Parish and District Justices were appointed for both North and South Longford. James Victory of Edgeworthstown was Chairman of the District Court. They held many courts, or what might be better described as arbitration courts.

A dispute arose between two brothers, William and Robert Charters of Garvagh, Ballinalee. It appears that, under a will, a farm was to be divided equally between them, but that, for some reason, at that time, Robert had a survey made of his portion, and found that he was some acres short of the half measure to which he was entitled under the will. His brother-in-law, John Lloyd of Cavan, was a very prominent supporter of ours, and he encouraged Robert to take Billy into the Sinn Féin courts, as they were called. The case was heard, both parties having signed the arbitration agreement to abide by the decision. The court found in favour of Robert, that he was entitled to one and a half or two acres more of land, which could only be secured by the division of a field. The Chairman of the court, Mr. Victory, decided that he would divide it, and, of all people, he called upon the Brigade Engineer, Barney Kilbride, to assist him in making the survey and to put down the marks. They arrived at Charters', met both families, and everything appeared to be all right, but, unfortunately for them, a son, Willie, went off and informed the British. He brought the enemy forces down, and Victory and Kilbride were both arrested. This was regarded as treachery of the worst type.

At the same time, the enemy were moving around the district, searching and raiding houses. On many of their tours, they were accompanied by a young man named William Elliott, who was a 2nd Lieutenant in the Ulster Volunteers. He was acting as scout and guide for the raiding parties.

Charters and Elliott were both arrested and executed. Elliott claimed that he was entitled to render the service to the crown that he was rendering, that he was a member of the Ulster Volunteers, and that he was doing nothing he was not entitled to do.

These executions created a grave feeling of unrest amongst many of our Protestant neighbours, who were unaware of what had happened, and I felt that it was necessary that the position should be clarified and explained. I went to Aughnacliffe creamery where there was a duplicating machine, and I prepared a proclamation over my own name, guaranteeing protection of both life and property to all citizens, both Catholic and Protestant, who remained neutral in the struggle, and stating that they were not to regard what had happened as an attack upon them. This, I am glad to say, had the desired effect, and many families who had their bags packed, unpacked them.

Needless to say, there was very great British activity over the area, searching for the bodies of the two executed men. We had to have the information conveyed to the British authorities as to where they would find them.

At this time, the column had headquarters at Cartronmarkey. There was much activity, preparing mines, grenades, etc. Information was received that the East

Yorks had evacuated Fr. Montford's house, a post which was approximately four hundred yards from the national school which was held by the R.I.C. and Black and Tans. It was decided to destroy Fr. Montford's place.

The column moved from Cartronmarkey to Ballinalee, positions being taken up to the right and left of Fr. Montford's house. We moved into the house and sprinkled it with paraffin. Suddenly, a searchlight was turned upon Fr. Montford's house and machine-gun fire opened on it from the school. At this time, I was carrying a sapper's Lee Enfield rifle which had on it a telescopic sight. I fired down the beam of light, while the others fired at the same time. With the firing, the searchlight was smashed. A bomb was then thrown by us into Fr. Montford's house, and the place wrecked and set on fire, but apparently the fire did not take a very effective grip, although the premises were badly burned. We had withdrawn a short distance when a new weapon was utilised. A Verey light was fired which remained hanging, high in the air, suspended by a balloon or parachute contraption, which held it about five hundred feet up, and it threw a very bright light all over the district. By remaining stationary while this light was up, we succeeded in extricating ourselves without loss of life.

Towards the end of January, 1921, I discovered that a patrol of two lorries, containing eighteen or twenty R.I.C. and Black and Tans left Granard regularly at 11 a.m. and proceeded to Longford via Ballinalee. I decided to attack this patrol, and selected an ambush position, about mid-way between Granard and Ballinalee, at a place called Clonfin. My decision was to place a mine in the road to blow up the

first lorry, and, at the same time, to concentrate all the fire power of one of my sections on the occupants of the second lorry.

We occupied the positions at 5 a.m. on the morning of February 1st, 1921. Captain M.F. Reynolds was in charge of No. 1 section, so as to guard my right, or Granard flank. Captain Seán Duffy was in charge of No. 2 section, positioned in a fort overlooking the road, and about one hundred and fifty yards distant. The fort was also my command post, from where I was in close touch with the other two sections. Captain Hugh Hourican was in command of No. 3 section, which included the mining party under Paddy (Bug) Callaghan, on the opposite side of the road and about seventy-five to one hundred yards distant. The sections on either side of the road were positioned, so that there was no danger of coming in the line of each other's fire.

Callaghan worked very hard constructing the mine and placing it in position in a hole sunk in the road. A small trench was then cut to conceal the electric wires running from the mine to the exploder. Fearing that passing transport would damage the cables, Callaghan cut off the barrel of an old Queen Anne shotgun, even though he was very fond of this weapon. The steel barrel completely insulated the cables when they were run through it.

All was now ready, and we settled down to await the approach of our enemy. Coming to noon and no sign of the patrol gave me an uneasy feeling that they had got some information about our position. I sent for Miss Kate Anne Mulligan (now Mrs. Christy Browne, Clonfin),

a member of Cumann na mBan and a sister of Captain Mulligan, a member of my column. I instructed Miss Mulligan to cycle to Granard and get any information possible about the movements of the enemy forces there that day. She returned in a short time to inform me that no British forces had moved out from Granard that day. We got some food from Thomas Duffy, Mrs. Katie Brady and Jimmy Conroy, who lived close by, and we settled down for another wait.

About 3 p.m., the section on the Granard flank signalled the enemy approach of two lorries. I signalled Hourican and Callaghan, and all was ready for the fight. Numbers on both sides were about equal, only that one section of mine was on outpost duty, with orders to hold up reinforcements from Granard, so that the main position was held by twelve men.

At exactly 3 p.m., the first lorry crossed the line of sight over the mine. Callaghan pressed the exploder switch, timing his action beautifully. The mine exploded under the engine of the lorry, shattering it and the driver's seat. The lorry swung across the road, in about twenty yards. The driver was wounded, but the officer sitting beside him escaped injury. This lorry carried a Lewis gun, with crew, armed with Long Webley revolvers, and six men armed with rifles and Long Webley revolvers. In addition, six of the party carried .38 Webleys, concealed inside their tunics.

The second lorry was travelling about one hundred yards in rear of the first, and was pulled up in the centre of the road before reaching the hole made by the mine explosion. This lorry carried nine men, armed with

rifles and revolvers, and fire was opened on them by No. 2 section in the fort.

I now realised that I was dealing with an Auxiliary force, recently recruited into the R.I.C., and not the expected Black and Tans and R.I.C. patrol. I called on the enemy to surrender, and I believe they did not hear me.

The party in the first lorry was thrown clear on to the roadside. The Auxiliary, who had charge of the Lewis gun, had a good grip of it, and took it with him. In a matter of seconds, he had it in operation against our position in the fort. This man was shot dead, after firing the first burst. No. 2 gunner took his place. He was wounded and rolled to cover. No. 3 then got to the gun, and fired the remainder of the ammunition in the drum before he was shot. The extra drums of ammunition were in the lorry, and it meant certain death for any man who attempted to collect them, so the gun was discarded.

I had expected an immediate surrender, due to the position in which the enemy was placed. In this, I was mistaken, as some of them found cover from fire in folds in the ground and in the river, under the bridge.

They fought doggedly for about a half hour, and then one man put up his hands, signifying the intention to surrender. I ordered a cease fire, and went down to accept the surrender. When I got there, the man who had put up his hand, was dead. I called on the remainder to surrender, which they did. While lining them up, some of my men informed me that one of the Auxiliaries was attempting to escape. I noticed this man running uphill, at a distance of five hundred yards. I ordered two of my

men to open fire on him. Although wounded, he succeeded in reaching cover and made good his escape. He made his way to a house in Ballinacraw, about one mile distant, where he got assistance.

On a check-up after the surrender, I found that five of the enemy were dead, and others wounded. Only two had come through unscathed. I told all the men who were able to stand up, to do so, and put down their arms, which they did. I then called in two of my sections, and ordered them to attend to the wounded, collect arms, ammunition, etc. I then ordered Captain Seán Duffy to search the men who were standing up. Inside their tunics, he found each man had a .38 Webley revolver concealed. This was a distinct breach of the surrender, and necessitated a search of the remainder of the wounded and the dead. They tried to explain that they had forgotten these arms, but we had a distinct recollection of this lack of memory, with fatal results, at Ballinagh, Co. Cavan, and Kilmichael, Co. Cork.

At this point, one of the Auxiliaries came up, and asked for the officer in charge of our men, stating that his commanding officer wished to speak to him. I asked where he was, and instructed the Auxiliary to take me to him. On the roadside, I found this officer, a man of good physique, bleeding profusely from several wounds. I attempted to staunch some of them, without success. He told me not to trouble as he felt he was gone past medical aid. He then asked me was I the O/C of his attackers, to which I replied, "Yes". He then said, "I am not worried about myself, but I am anxious about my boys, and want to know what you are going to do with them". I then explained quickly about the concealed arms, and asked

him, if our positions were reversed, what would be the result. He replied, "Is it as bad as that?". I told him, "No, it is not! You have surrendered and are now disarmed. I will treat you as best I can, by attending to your wounded and giving one lorry to take them to hospital. The unwounded men, I will decide about later. He then asked me if he sent the Auxiliary, who was listening to the whole conversation, away, might he ask my name. I replied that there was no necessity to send him away, that my name was Commandant MacEoin, that I was an alleged murderer, according to the findings of a recent court of inquiry held by them. I told him that I would be glad to know his name. He informed me that he was Commander Worthington Craven of the Royal Navy. He stated that I was a murderer; otherwise, I would not have shot them down. To this, I replied that, had they remained in the Navy or in England, I would not have had any occasion to shot them down, that this was our country, that we were the Army of the Irish people, acting under proper authority, and that our mission was purely to fight our nation's battle for the independence which was our right. I further stated that, so long as they, an alien force, remained in the country, we would continue to shoot them down, that we were fighting for freedom to govern ourselves only, that the killing by them of any of our people was murder, as they had no right here. To this, he replied, "I believe you are right! I wish you success! Be kind to my fellows, and remember your promise!" These were his last words. He died, a few seconds later. (The Auxiliary, who was listening to this conversation, repeated it, on oath, at a later date).

I next proceeded to get things in order, and had the wounded attended to. I gave final instructions as to the destruction of the damaged lorry, the collection of arms and ammunition, and the occupation of new positions. My attention was called to the condition of an Auxiliary, lying further up the road. I went to him, and found a partially stopped flow of blood from his arm. I proceeded to put on a tourniquet, and was almost finished when he told me that he could hear the rumble of lorries in the distance, and that it would be their reinforcements arriving. He told me to leave him, and look out for myself. I replied that I would finish dressing his wound, and did so. He then told me that his name was District Inspector Taylor. This man died later.

By this time, the first lorry, carrying reinforcements, had come round the corner at Murphy's, into full view of our position, coming from the Ballinalee-Longford direction. Seán Duffy came running to me. He was very excited. He said that we were now surrounded and that I must issue orders immediately to meet a new attack. I ordered four of my men to open fire on the approaching lorry. The remainder of my column was ordered to fall back, and take up positions on a hill, slightly north of our original ambush positions. I stayed with the four riflemen, and kept up a steady fire on the party in the lorry, forcing them to dismount. More lorries arrived, and the occupants made an effort to come up on my right flank. I got back to the main body, in time to check this manoeuvre.

I then ordered the Lewis gun into action, but, to my great surprise, I discovered that it had been left behind in the bog, and was now in the immediate line of

fire between my party and the enemy, which, by now, numbered about eighty men. I decided to hold my position at all costs, and kept up continuous rifle fire on the enemy. The daylight was now failing, and they were forced to withdraw. One of my men, Tom Brady, got a slight wound over the hip in this action. This caused some excitement, as he was our first man wounded, up to this time. After having the wound dressed, he was fit to travel again. During this action Captain Patrick Finnegan, who was carrying two captured rifles, in addition to his own, put down two rifles when taking up a firing position, and, later, when collecting them, he left one behind, which happened to be his own, on the butt of which he had foolishly carved his name, some days earlier. At the time, Finnegan was not a "wanted" man by the police, but they found his rifle on the following day, with the grave consequences for him which I have related earlier.

After the enemy withdrawal, we took up a position in Murray's wood, a little further north of our last position, and took stock of the situation. I called the roll, and found that three men, who were on outpost duty at Bunlahy, a good distance back, had joined the column during the second fight. They were Grier Pettit, Peter Connolly and John Coyle. I next asked for volunteers to return with me to the enemy lines to search for the Lewis gun. Seamus Farrelly and James Sheeran volunteered to return with me. We found the gun, ammunition and spare parts. Marching through Willsbrook and Ballinlough, we rejoined the column at Pettit's house. Finally, I instructed my men to break up into parties of three's and four's, and find billets in houses named. These houses I

selected, from a strategic point of view. Having in mind the possibility of any of the houses being surrounded by the enemy, the men in the other houses would be in a position to come to their aid. So ended another day, and another brush with our enemy, and I felt quite satisfied with the results.

The following day, North Longford was invaded by British forces in great strength. They visited the scene of the ambush, took photographs and studied the position, I would say, from a tactical point. While they were there, an aged man, named Michael Farrelly, was walking across the fields towards his home. He was called upon to halt by the British forces. Farrelly, who was over seventy years of age and deaf, did not hear the order. Fire was opened on him immediately, and he was shot dead. I have referred, in an earlier part of this statement, to the burning of the home of Commandant Patrick Finnegan and Smith's house at Rathmore on the same date.

In 1955, when I was Minister for Defence, I was visited by Captain Wilford, who was a member of the Auxiliary party ambushed that day at Clonfin, and was fortunate to escape unscathed. He told me that he had married a girl who was a native of that district, and that he intended visiting the scene of the engagement while he was in the locality.

He called on me, on his return journey, and gave me a number of photographs of the place. Some were taken on the day following the engagement. One shows the crater in the road where the mine was located. Others were taken on the occasion of his last visit.

I asked him to write an account, giving his version of the engagement. This he did, and I now hand in a copy of that statement to the Bureau, together with photographs for copying. These are attached as Appendix "D".

Early in February, 1921, Collins sent a despatch that the pilot train and two specials (which I have stated earlier as being mentioned to me by him) would leave Boyle at a certain time on the morning following date despatch arrived, with arms and equipment, including machine-guns and some heavy and light artillery. The instruction was that we were to let the pilot train pass, as it would only consist of an engine, and that we were to deal with the second two. Although that despatch arrived early in the morning in Longford, it did not reach the column headquarters at Redihan's of Coolarty until almost midnight. The pilot train would be almost ready to leave Boyle at the time that we received the despatch. The only place that we felt was suitable for an attack was the railway line at Clonwhelan, outside Edgeworthstown, so that there was a distance of eight miles between our unit and the striking place. However, we moved mines, exploders and all to Clonwhelan. It was a great rush to get to the railway line. When we got there, I regret to say that the last train was passing by. This was our first big failure, due solely to faulty communications.

In February, 1921, our line of communication with Dublin was very unsatisfactory, and information, which the late General Collins wished me to receive urgently, was delayed to such an extent that it was no longer effective when I received it.

At the same time, I had perfected a mine that could easily be transported with perfect safety, and exploded instantaneously, with very satisfactory results, and had already been used by myself in Ballinalee and at Clonfin. In the last days of February, 1921, a despatch arrived from Dublin from General Collins, asking me to send up the plan of this mine, and also asking me for an alternate line of communication, and complaining very bitterly of the defective line which we already had. The same despatch contained a sealed envelope from the Minister for Defence, and it was stamped on the outside with General Collins' office stamp, but was enclosed in General Collins' outer envelope. When I opened the Minister's despatch, it was an order to proceed to Dublin at the earliest possible moment, but not later than Monday. (This was received the previous Saturday). (Cathal Brugha was Minister for Defence). This communication also instructed me to put some officer in charge of the column - one who would be capable of carrying out my duties while absent - and to invest him with all the authority which had already been invested in me.

I was perfectly satisfied that Headquarters Staff was aware of what was in the internal letter when it was enclosed. Normally, the Minister for Defence did not communicate direct, but communicated through the Chief of Staff, or through some of the Headquarters' Staff Officers.

I realised at this time that it was very dangerous for me to go to Dublin, because a hunt for me was then on, and it was almost impossible to get into the city without running through a raid or hold-up, but, at the same time, once the Minister ordered me to go, it was the same as if

the Lord called, and I handed the column over to Paddy Callaghan (Bug Callaghan) of Ballinalee.

I took with me Commandant J.J. Brady (the driver at the Longford attack), and we proceeded to Streete Railway Station, on the line between Longford and Mullingar. The station-master at Streete, being an officer in the Volunteers, had already instructions to have tickets ready for us two. He was also to mark a carriage for us to travel in that did not contain police or military. He marked a carriage for us, in which there were two young women and one aged woman, and it happened that the two young women were sisters of a Volunteer belonging to the Ballinalee Company. In this carriage we proceeded to Mullingar. The Spring assizes were being held there, and the railway station was filled with R.I.C. from many points. Now, in the last year or two, my appearance had somewhat changed - among other ways, by the growth of a longer moustache. Seeing on the platform some policemen who had known me a few years previously, I made up my mind boldly to discover whether the change in appearance was enough to disguise Seán MacEoin. My boldness was well bolstered by the fact that I held a revolver in my pocketed hand. So I strolled carelessly up and down the platform, passed these fellows a few times, and was delighted to find that none of them took any notice of me - didn't know me. So I rode in easy confidence for the remainder of the way to Dublin.

My instructions were to go to a certain number in Bachelor's Walk, and ask for "Mr. O'Brien". "Mr. O'Brien" was Cathal Brugha, and the house was his business establishment, an establishment for the manufacture and sale of candles. Enquiring there for "Mr. O'Brien", I

was led into his office, and saw Cathal (whom I had met before, but with whom I was only slightly acquainted) sitting at his desk. I introduced myself, and was welcomed by him in a business-like way. He asked me to sit down, and then, in the very forcible and very efficient manner of one who knew his ground well, and was intimate with his subject, he questioned and cross-questioned me upon my conduct of the campaign in my area, particularly over the last twelve or eighteen months. As I had brought with me a diary, with jottings that no one could understand but myself, I was able to answer every question with a promptness and thoroughness that, I was soon glad to note, seemed to be pleasing and satisfying him. He again questioned me about the man whom I had left in charge, his ability and reliability, courage, boldness and so forth. His questions impressed me as a man who was nothing if not capable and thorough.

When, at length, he was satisfied regarding my substitute, he told me that his reason for asking me so many searching questions was a big one, that he wanted to take me away from the Longford work, and give me a far more difficult job - in London. How would I like that? I told him there was, with me, no question of liking or disliking my superiors' orders. Whatsoever they ordered, I should do, so far as it lay within my power. That was very well, he said, and went on to state that he was going to give me charge of a party to go over to London on one of the most serious missions yet undertaken in this war of Ireland against England.

Then, instead of directly telling me what my mission was, he puzzled me for a little while by beginning what I thought was a sort of preachment at me -

a kind of thing that I knew our Executive Members were not given to - and this is, roughly, the gist of that discourse which at first puzzled me, until he came to the point that he was driving for:

"You know the horrible murders that the Black and Tans are every day doing - often upon non-combatants, even young boys and girls - in every corner of our country! You know they are bleeding our country to death, that Ireland is suffering as no Western country suffered in the late ages, and that the fearful things they have done have begun to revolt even decent Englishmen! You know that the parties responsible for the savage outrages and murders are the Members of the British Government, that, even if they did not order the campaign to be a murder campaign - as I am sure they did not - they now accept it; and they approve of it in the meanest, and most criminal, cowardly way, by denying it and lying about it in Parliament and the press, in order to prevent its being ended by outraged public opinion! You know that they know - for the facts have been brought home to them again and again - that the foulest murders are being done, and that they think, if they can save the campaign to continue for another little while, Ireland will be broken! And they are satisfied the murdering can then stop.

Now, you, MacEoin, like many another Volunteer in the city and in the country, are fighting to save Ireland, and, for that, you are not only willing, but anxious to wipe out every Black and Tan in Ireland! Aren't you?"

I said, of course, I was.

"And, there, you are wrong!", he thundered.

I looked at Cathal, whose eyes were blazing, and I said, "Am I?".

"If you wiped out every Black and Tan in Ireland to-morrow, you'd have shiploads of them pouring in again, the day after! And if you wiped every soul of <u>them</u> out, double as many shiploads would come in, the day after that! Isn't that so?"

I said, "Maybe!".

"You are wrong!", he snapped back. "To save Ireland, you have got to wipe out the guilty ones who sent the Black and Tans here! We have got to wipe out every Member of the British Cabinet! I brought you here to-day to order you to lead to London, and in London, a party that will do it. To each one of you will be named the Member of the Cabinet he is to execute. Will you undertake it?" He closed his mouth with a snap, and looked me hard in the eye.

After a minute in silent thought, I answered him, "If you order me, of course,I will obey; but -"

"What's the but?"

I think myself he expected that I would question his decision that the Cabinet Members were really the murderers, not only of scores of our boys who fought for their own country's freedom, but also of scores of non-combatants. I'm no theologian, and wouldn't presume to give an opinion for anyone, but my poor ignorant self. There are many thousands in the world who consider that the killing of the enemy in a stand-up fight in the field of battle is murder. These people may be wrong. They may be right. But, whether they be right or wrong, I, in my own poor unlearned, country-boy way of reasoning, then thought - and always thought - that, if it was right to kill the soldier in the field for the sake of saving your

country, and saving the lives of your countrymen, it would be, at least, as right to kill the man who put the soldier there, for the purpose of enslaving your country and taking the lives of your country people. Or, if you want it another way, that it was as criminal to kill the soldier who was violating your country and murdering its people - that it was just every bit as wrong to kill him as to kill the man who sent him there to do that work. In short, I took the very same view of the matter as Cathal. I'm not formulating an opinion for you, reader - for anybody but my own ignorant self. And I'm not asking you to accept my opinion, or Cathal's. I'm only setting down the bare statement of facts.

Now, the mission was to be the execution of every Member of the British Cabinet. Each man in my detachment going to London would be assigned the execution of a given Member of the Cabinet. The ways, means and details would be left to me, to work out when I got to the ground and looked it over. The chance of escape for ourselves after the shooting, it was agreed, was very slim indeed, but each man was to plan and be planned for, so that the most might be made of that slim chance. If, and when, one of our men was caught, the orders were that he should tell the enemy one thing only, namely, that he was a soldier of the Irish Army, who had done his duty and carried out his orders, and, from that forward, to keep his mouth shut.

To hark back to Cathal's question, "What's the "but"?

My "but" meant something else than he anticipated -

"But", I said, "I am only a country chap who has never been farther than Dublin", and explained that I thought I was not the man to lead such a party, though I might do fairly well in the ranks. Did he realise that I was only a plain, simple country lad, inexperienced and untravelled, who had never been beyond Dublin, and, even in Dublin, would be a poor leader of a mission.

Cathal, instantly and forcibly, pooh-poohed my excuse, and said very complimentary things about myself - out of all the available men, he had picked me for the job because, he said, he knew I was the man to carry it to a success. He said, "Your order now is to proceed to London with your party, without delay. This is Monday. I want you to start on Wednesday".

This gave me a little bit of a jolt. I said, "I need a few days at home to fix up things that ought to be fixed up, before going on what might be my last journey in this world".

"Nonsense!", he said, "No going home!"

I went on to show him that, in the interests of my people, in the first place, in the interests of our Longford Column, and in my own interests, it was absolutely necessary that I should have some days there.

"Very well", he said, "What is the very earliest that you can go?"

I said I could start on Friday.

"All right!" Friday, let it be!", and we there and then shook hands on it, in Cathal Brugha's office, on the afternoon of 1st March, 1921.

When Brugha and I had sealed the London mission with a hand-shake, I went off, to report at the office of the Chief of Staff (Richard Mulcahy), to submit my plan for the altering of the line of communication, and to show him my mine plans. He just barely asked me how I was, said he was in a hurry and would meet me later, and then sent me to Collins. I then started off, escorted by Joe Reilly (Colonel Joe Reilly - shadow of Collins - known as "One-and-Only Joe", A.D.C. to Collins, and, in more recent years, to President Cosgrave).

To Collins, I first put up the plans which he agreed to, and then a report of my activities in Longford. I was mighty well pleased with myself while detailing the great things, as it seemed to me, that I had done, and was feeling sure that Collins was getting better pleased, and prouder of me every minute. So you may imagine my shock when, as I concluded the relating of my great doings, Collins hurled at me, "And what the hell has you up here now? You ought to be at home attending to your business!" An unexpected electric shock could not have jolted me more, and the toy balloon of my pride went bang and collapsed. "What, I say, what the hell took you to Dublin?"

I pulled together the tatters of my pride, and I answered him, just as abruptly, "You!"

"What do you mean?"

"What about your despatch of last Saturday?", I fired back at him.

"What about it?", he answered. He said, "I

asked you for a suggestion as to a new line of communication, and I asked you for a plan of the mine. Surely, it was not necessary to come to Dublin with it!"

"But", I said, getting a bit flabbergasted, "the communication from the Defence Minister which you included!"

"What about that communication?"

"Don't you know - that it called for me to come to Dublin at once?"

"It did, did it? That's news to me!"

"I surely thought you knew what was in it!"

"No, I do not! What did the Minister for Defence want with you?"

I felt a good bit confounded, for I had certainly believed that the Ministers hadn't any secrets from one another. "Do you demand me to tell you?"

"I do!"

Then I laid before Collins the few details I had of the plan of the London mission.

When I had finished, he said, "You are mad! Do you think that England has only the makings of one Cabinet?"

As his question invited argument, I tried to point out to him that, though she had the makings of Cabinets without end, the success of our scheme did not lie in just the removal of so many prominent men,

but in the effect it would have upon those who succeeded them, upon England in general, and upon the world.

He said that the effect would be just the direct opposite of what we had calculated, and that it would be Ireland that would be the loser, not England.

He said, "You ought to be old enough to know that you had no right to come up here without an order from your immediate military superiors. You have enough to do in your own patch in Longford - if you'd only do it - without thinking you are some vest-pocket Bonaparte going over to conquer England. Let me tell you that your mad plan was put before the Defence Council, and the Cabinet, and was scouted out! But that doesn't concern you. My orders to you are to return to your brigade area, and I will explain to the Minister for Defence that I have countermanded his instructions".

I explained to him that I had promised to undertake the work, and I felt that I should go back to him, that, after all, he was the Minister for Defence, and that even his (Collins') verbal order would not be sufficient; that his (Collins') countermanding order, unless in writing, was not of any use to me.

He said, "I will give you a written order, and, if necessary, after I have seen him, I will arrange another interview.

That ended our interview for the time being.

The next day, he sent me, in charge of O'Reilly, to the munitions factory in Parnell Street, to make

the mine, which could be of metal, concrete, of plaster of Paris.

I found the munitions factory in the basement of a small bicycle shop. It was a small room, sixteen feet by twelve feet. In the right-hand corner, as you entered, was a furnace; in the centre of the floor, moulds for grenades, and the heads or necks of the grenades, which were of brass; directly in front of the moulds was a lathe for doing machine work. In the right-hand corner opposite, there was a man taking out gunpowder from Morris tube cartridges, the powder from it scattering over the floor. The empty cartridge cases were handed to a man in the left-hand corner, who put the empty case on the end of two inches of fuse. A man on his right put a detonator on the other end of the fuse, and left it down, opposite him; and a man in the left-hand corner (back) loaded gelignite, and packed the fuse, the gelignite lying in bars.

In all, there were eight or nine people working in a little room, in which there were a furnace, lathe, gelignite, scattered gunpowder, a revolver for each man, very close to his hand, one specially large grenade resting on the bench to which the lathe was attached, and a box of gelignite lying in the middle of the floor, in front of the lathe. The bomb on the bench was about ten inches long by seven inches thick, egg-shaped, and weighed about ten pounds. Clouds of steam mounted, filling the room, and pushing its way through the skylight on to the footpath outside. The temperature of the room was oven-heat.

When I stepped into this room and saw the appearance of the place, and knowing what gelignite could do, and the careless manner in which everything was being handled, for the first time in my life, I really knew what terror was.

I proceeded to ask questions as to the defence of the place. I could see no outlet, except the entrance I had come in, which was a very narrow stairs, and, for the few moments I had been there, no less than five or six lorries of Black and Tans, Auxiliaries and military passed up and down the street.

I was told that, in the event of a raid, the extra-large bomb on the lathe was to be pushed out through the skylight on to the foot-path outside, and that, when this bomb exploded outside, everybody was to rush up the stairs, and fight his way out.

I did not say anything, but I realised that, when that grenade would explode outside, so would the gelignite inside.

I set to work to complete my job as rapidly as possible. After two and a half hours' work, I had not finished, and went out to lunch. When I got outside, I saw the smoke hovering and wreathing round - enough to awaken the suspicions not only of the whole neighbourhood but of passers by.

I asked the officer in charge and O'Reilly how long they had been working in that foundry, and he said four months. I asked him if he thought the detectives and British forces in Dublin were smart men. He said, he did. I did not!

I came back, with my heart still in my mouth, and finished the mine. I was never more glad to get out of any place in my life. I reported to Collins on the successful making of the bomb, and he handed me a letter from the Minister for Defence, cancelling his former order to me on the London mission.

Chapter VII.

MY ARREST.

On the morning of the following day (Wednesday), James Brady (who, it will be remembered, travelled with me to Dublin) and myself started for home.

Brady had gone to the Adjutant General's office with reports for that Department. He had also gone to the Quartermaster General, and had secured one thousand rounds of ammunition - 303 rifle ammunition and ammunition for revolvers.

We considered ourselves fortunate in getting an empty carriage, upon the rack of which we placed the parcel of ammunition, and settled down to the leisurely enjoyment of the run home.

But, lo and behold, a few minutes before the train was due to start, a company of fifteen soldiers, under the command of an officer, marched on to the platform and entered our carriage, nearly filling it. I looked at these soldiers for a moment, and a bright thought inspired me. On leaving home, I had requested 'Bug' Callaghan to have the Column (about forty men) at Edgeworthstown station to meet me on my return - to give me the opportunity of delivering to them messages that I would probably bring back from Dublin. Now, looking at the soldiers, I said to myself, "Wouldn't it be a dandy thing to make you our guests for a week in Longford!" On the spur of the thought, I jumped from my seat, ran out of the train and into the refreshment room where I bought two five-naggin

bottles of whiskey, and with them returned to my seat again. And, when the train started, I first invited the officer to have a drink, which he refused with sincere thanks for my courtesy, saying he did not drink. Then Brady and myself passed the whiskey round to the men, none of whom, I assure you, wanted to follow their officer's example.

Then, not only were we the white-haired boys with them, so entirely different from the "Shinners" with whom they knew Ireland to be infested, but with their officer, who knew us to be the right kind of Irishmen - the kind who loved their gracious King and admired the King's fighting men. The soldiers heartily drank our health. The officer, very cordially, took his place between Brady and myself, and we helped him to damn all the "Shinners" who were bringing disgrace on our country. And I found that they were travelling to Athlone. I took sharp note of everything. The men's rifles were stood up, here and there, around the carriage, while they themselves became jovial, gay and careless, their spirits rising higher and higher as those in the bottles went lower and lower - and the officer too, a good kind, who enjoyed the enjoyment of his men, grew almost as carefree as they.

I was very pleased with the development of my scheme, and, despite the constant stream of conversation with the officer, I had planned in detail the surprise and taking of the party, with their valuable rifles, ammunition and equipment. The thing put me in great spirits, and I even saw myself congratulated by the "big fella", who had called me a madman the day before,

but I would soon alter his opinion!

As we approached Mullingar, I made up my mind to go to the refreshment room again and get another couple of bottles of the grand mollifier. Somewhat to my surprise, however, the train, instead of drawing in at its usual platform, which would be close to the desired refreshment room, drew, most unexpectedly and puzzlingly, into a siding. When I looked out, there were two large forces drawn up on the siding platform, a force of soldiers and one of police.

An announcement was instantly cried into the carriage - "All civilians out on the platform!" Myself and Brady, now two rather confounded men, held ourselves back in our seats beside the officer, hoping that, by some miracle, they would overlook us. Helping us out, to our joy, our friend, the officer, put his head out of the carriage window and informed the guardians on the platform, "All right in here!", for he knew that we were two loyal men who did not need to be inspected. But the policeman, touring the carriages, put his head in, and, seeing us, insisted that all civilians must come out. So, as you may well suppose, with hearts full of trepidation, we went out, and took our places at points in the civilian line. If anything could console us, it was the fact that we had, by Collins' order, given up our revolvers in Dublin - not to take the risk of running the gauntlet with them, getting out of the city. I was also a little bit comforted by the remembrance that the fellows at Mullingar, on my way up, had failed to recognise me.

There was a long row of civilians, lined up along the platform, and several picked policemen were

passing up and down the line, narrowly inspecting each man. One, two, three policemen came down in succession, looked at me, as they did at the others, and continued their search. As the fourth man approached, I set my teeth. He was one of those whom I had known a few years ago. He looked at me, and was about to pass on to the next, when he halted, gave me a much more searching glance than the first, and then passed. As quietly as I could, I drew a breath of relief.

But not for long was I relieved, for, to my horror, I now saw coming down the line Head Constable Kidd, who had been a member of the escort that had taken me to Sligo jail in 1919. As it came to my turn to stand his scrutinising, I stiffened myself and tried to assume the most unconscious look I could, gazing into the far distance. The next moment, he was standing in front of me, sizing me up. I never moved a muscle, nor batted an eye. He was about to pass on, after giving me the usual scrutiny, when, like the policeman before, he halted to inspect me again - this time, a good, sharp inspection. Finally, he rapped out, "What's your name?" "J.J. Smith." "You lie! You are MacEoin!" I looked surprised, and terribly offended. "My name is J.J. Smith, and I am from Aughnacliffe." "You lie! You are MacEoin of Ballinalee!" He signalled to his superior officer, whom I afterwards knew to be District Inspector Harrington - a man who had proved himself useful to us, and who had regularly supplied information to Michael Collins. In fact, as I learned afterwards, he had, that very day when he got orders to take me off the train at Mullingar, sent word to our

Mullingar Brigade Commander to stop the train before it reached Mullingar, and take MacEoin off it - a tip that the Mullingar Brigade, never any good, had failed to act upon.

"This", said Kidd, pointing to me, "is MacEoin of Ballinalee!" "Are you MacEoin?" In reply, I stormed, and showed how deeply I was offended at doubting my word. I said, "Superintendent, this officer of yours is drunk, and insists on making me out to be MacEoin. I am J.J. Smith of Aughnacliffe!" Harrington said, "He doesn't look like the man we want". "Send for Dunne!", Kidd snapped out. I knew at once that the Dunne mentioned was a policeman whom I had known, and who had known me well some time ago when he was stationed at Ballinalee, and I felt my fate was now sealed. Dunne was found, and brought up. "Tell us who is this man", says Kidd. Though Dunne knew me as well as his left hand, either for reasons of friendliness or fear, after he had looked me over well, he said, "I never saw him before!" "I thought so", said Harrington, turning on his heel.

"Superintendent Harrington," Kidd called, "I must agin tell you that this man is MacEoin of Ballinalee." Then Kidd seized me by the left hand, pushing up my sleeve well, revealing the many white burnt spots that are to be found on every blacksmith's arm, as the result of the hot sparks falling when he is beating the red hot iron, or when he holds the iron in the fire. "If that isn't a blacksmith's arm", said Kidd, "I am a liar! I declare him to be MacEoin, and if you do not arrest him, I will report you in the morning!"

Harrington, a good deal piqued by the tone and attitude of his inferior officer, hesitated a little, and then said, "All right, arrest him!"

Again I stormed. I said, "This is an outrage. I am, as I told you, J.J. Smith of Aughnacliffe. I know this man, MacEoin, that you are talking about, and don't even look like him. If you delay me here, it would be a disaster, for I have highly urgent business in Edgeworthstown that must be attended to tonight. If you give in to this drunken officer and hold me here, you will have done me great damage".

Because I knew my Column was waiting at Edgeworthstown, and that they would soon free me if I got that far, I said, "If you bring me on to Edgeworthstown or Longford, there are several police in both places who will identify me." "And", I added, "the Sergeant at Aughnacliffe, who was then stationed at Longford, would identify me." Anything, to bring me to Edgeworthstown station - even to pass through it going to Longford!

Harrington replied that he could not send me to Longford, but that he would 'phone up Longford immediately, and ask them to send over some men, and that, if my statement was correct, I could be carried by them back to Edgeworthstown, and only delayed an hour or two. I said I was perfectly satisfied. As I had to be!

Now, to go back to my comrade, Brady - he gave his name as Richard Bower and was not recognised. But an unfortunate poor lad, whose name was Edward Brady and who, of course, gave his name as such when asked, was seized as MacEoin's right-hand man and travelling companion, and we were confronted with each other.

Kidd said, "Here is your pal, Brady!" To this I replied, "It is a pity to have you with so junior a rank! I will recommend you for immediate promotion!"

Meanwhile, James Brady returned to the carriages with the remainder of the passengers, and continued his journey. I may here add that, at Edgeworthstown, he found that the Column had been at hand, had waited some time and, giving up hope of our coming, had gone off. Therefore, my plan, of which Brady was aware, to take the military party off at Edgeworthstown, fell through.

Now, when they had got what they were looking for, the officer commanding the soldiers asked District Inspector Harrington whether their services were needed any more. Harrington said, "No, and the soldiers were marched off. The forty, or so, police were now formed in twos, to take us to the barracks. I - handcuffed, of course - was placed between the police pairs, in about the seventh or eighth row from the front. Edward Brady was placed in the same way near the front. It was so arranged that we had plenty of guards in front of us, between us, behind us, and on either side. They were taking no chances. It was now, of course, dark.

The order was given to march to the police barracks. For this, we had to proceed first from the railway station into the Main Street, turning at a right angle down the Main Street, for a distance of perhaps seventy yards, and then again, at a point where the street mounted a bridge over the railway, we had to turn sharp to the left for the barracks.

From the moment we started, I had my mind going like a steam-engine, searching for a plan of escape.

With all those men and their rifles immediately in front, all the men with the rifles behind me, and the men who held a hand on my shoulder at each side of me, the finding of even the slimmest chance baffled me. But now, when we reached that high point in the main street where, as I said, the street passed over the railway bridge and our road turned sharply to the left, and when the seven or eight ranks immediately in front of me had swung round, I had then, for half a second, a clear way ahead; and, though I knew the chance of saving my life was the slimmest, I resolved to die in an attempted escape, rather than die in their hands.

As quick as lightning, I shot my manacled arms to the left, with a powerful thrust, digging my left elbow into the stomach of my guard there, doubling him up and bringing him to the ground. And, quick as lightning, and with just as powerful a thrust, my arms then shot to the right, digging my right guard in the stomach with my right elbow, doubling him up and bringing him, with a groan, to the ground. And, still in the same instant, shouting at the top of my voice, "Down on them, lads! MacEoin is here!", and as there was a lot of action crushed into a flash of time, I bolted down the bridge top, down the dark street ahead.

Now, the rank immediately behind me had sprung forward, just as fast as I had sprung, but their two fallen comrades in front tripped them up, and brought them down on top. The agonised groans that my elbows had forced from the first fallen ones, my own wild shout and the wild shout of the two policemen who sprang after, and, on top of that, the struggling heap

lying on the ground, instantly alarmed the whole body of police that they were surrounded and attacked, causing all of them, in an instant, to flop on the street, on their stomachs, and begin pouring bullets in all directions.

Manacled and overcoated though I was, I tore down the street at a terrific pace, with the bullets singing around my head - fortunately, above it - for the police, firing from the hump of the bridge, sent their volleys too high, and struck the street, far ahead of me, only where it sloped upwards again beyond the depth down which I was running.

In the dimness, I saw two high archways on my left that offered escape. (See photograph at Appendix "E".) They were the entrances to MacDonald's bakery. Dashing into them, one after the other, I found, a few feet inside, big, wooden doors filling the archways, closed and bolted. I turned quickly from the second of these, and dashed across the main street to a little side street opposite, just by the corner of Brophil's Hotel. Here, I made my fatal mistake. If I had continued down the main street, I would almost certainly have found means of getting away. The side street was fatal to my chances, in two ways. In the first place, it proved to be a cul-de-sac against the railway embankment. In the second place, I had not dashed far along it when I saw, coming towards me, two people who were evidently taking a shortcut back from the railway to the main street - and these were two policemen! They were running at the alarm of the fusilade, and, as they saw the fugitive practically rushing into their arms, they drew pistols, calling on

me to halt.

I determined to break through, instead of halting, and increased my pace, if that were possible. They fired - one of them missing me, and a bullet from the other hitting me on the right chest and, as was afterwards discovered, breaking two ribs, passing through the lung, and almost making its way out again under my right shoulder, while several splinters, some of which have not yet been extracted, scattered around the general inside of me. But the bullet was not going to halt me. I broke through them, and ran for about ten paces, when the smothering of blood in my throat brought me down on my face. The fall relieved me of the smothering, and I was up as quickly as I was down, and on again. I now saw the street end barring my way, but that mattered little, for, after a few paces, I was down again with the smothering, and not able to rise until I should be lifted. In a short time, I was the centre of a mob of howling savages - a crowd of maddened policemen - cursing and shouting abuse and belabouring me with the butts of their rifles which left me bruised and blackened over every square inch of my body.

It was only the arrival of Harrington on the scene that saved my life at that moment. He ordered them to stop their attack, and commanded two Sergeants to lift me up, and link me to the police barracks. This they did, and sent immediately for priest and doctor.

Because I was always keenly aware of my need of preparation for sudden death, I often made such preparation, and, on the evening previous to this, I

had been to Confession in Whitefriars Street Church in Dublin, and had received Holy Communion that morning at Dominick Street Church. So - presumptuously or not - I did not avail myself of this priest's spiritual services, but, thinking that he would desire to be helpful to a countryman under these circumstances, and as, of course, we were for the moment alone, I asked him if he would convey for me a message to the officer in charge of the Column that I was wounded, a prisoner in Mullingar R.I.C. Barracks, that he should have the Column brought near, keep a watch upon my movements, and avail of the first opportunity of trying to effect my rescue. He said, "I will not do that!"

I then asked if he would have a message sent to my mother that I was wounded in the Police Barracks in Mullingar. He would not do that either. I bade him "Good night!".

Then Doctor Keelan came in, stripped off my clothes, except the pants, inspected my wound, and told me he was sorry to say I could not live more than a couple of hours, so it was no use torturing me by probing for the bullet. He gave the wound a dab of iodine, stuck a bit of lint on it, and went away.

As I afterwards learned, the bullet - which the Mullingar doctor had supposed to have cut the main artery, thus ensuring my fairly quick death - had just missed the main artery by a shade, and, consequently, the main danger now lay only in the chance of the wound turning septic.

The moment the doctor went, a crowd of savage Black and Tans burst into the day-room. I was now

half-standing, half-lying against the wall of the day-room, still stripped, as the doctor had left me, for, because of the choking of blood, I could not lie down. They began again, unmercifully, cursing, abusing and jeering at me. At length, one very sallow individual of them struck me a painful blow in the face with the butt of his revolver, which cowardly action so incensed me that the strength that had seemed to wane out of me returned. I broke from the two men holding me, drew back, and gave the fellow such a smashing blow on the chin that I sent him reeling back across the day-room until he fell at the other wall. The fellow got up, and came rushing at me again with his revolver, but this time he did not hold it by the barrel, as before, but in the regular business-like manner. Whether he would have killed me there and then, I do not know, but it was Harrington's coming once more that seemed to save me. He ordered the man back from me, and ordered me to be removed at once to the Military Barracks.

Harrington afterwards told me that he did this, as he believed he "could not otherwise save my life any longer, but it was, to a great extent, my own fault, that, if they were abusing me, I was not giving anything away - I was calling back".

I was carried out, neck and heels, and pitched into the lorry, still, of course, naked but for the pants.

The lorry started off, with its heavy guard, and two Black and Tans seated on my chest.

For a naked man, it was cold enough and inclined to be sleety, this March night, but that would not have mattered much to me, only that the follow, sitting on

my right chest, caused me sharp agony. For now the bullet, which was just beneath the skin at the back of the shoulder, was being pressed back through the scapular bone as his weight kept pressing my shoulder into the hard bed of the lorry.

I was taken to the hospital ward in the Military Barracks. There, the wound was examined again, and another dab of iodine and another bit of cotton wool thrown on it. I was then taken from the hospital ward down to the guard room and thrown on a plank, with a dirty blanket underneath me, and two dirtier ones, if that were possible, over me, where I lay all night until eleven o'clock next morning, with no other refreshment, since my morning breakfast in Dublin, than an occasional sip of water.

At eleven o'clock the next morning, I was taken again to the hospital ward, and got the same radical treatment for my wound. I was then put upon a clean stretcher, with clean blankets. The military doctor then pronounced me fit for the journey, and withdrew. There now came in a Red Cross orderly, a military officer, armed with a pistol, and two policemen with rifles. Under the direction of the officer, the police laid down their rifles, and then coiled a rope upwards over my body and stretcher until it reached my neck, where it was finally bound to one of the stretcher handles. When they had me secured, I was carried out and put in a Red Cross ambulance for my journey - whithersoever it was to be.

Chapter VIII.

IMPRISONMENT IN MOUNTJOY.

Rescue Attempts:

I may here anticipate a little by telling that, as I afterwards learned, Michael Collins, aware of what had happened in Mullingar and aware that the wounded MacEoin was to be in Dublin as soon as possible, had planned to attempt my rescue - dead or alive - and that he sent out no less than three rescue parties, to find and intercept the convoy, and every road from Dublin into Mullingar was held. The British suspected something of this, because the ambulance drove towards Longford, up into Trim, and came into Dublin by the Trim-Belfast road, and I arrived, without incident, at the King George V. Hospital - now known as St. Bricin's.

There were in the ambulance a Red Cross orderly, an officer and two R.I.C. men, carrying their rifles, the officer sitting on my side of the ambulance, on my left, at my head. He said, "We are now proceeding to Dublin, and I want to give you warning. If there is any attempt made to rescue you, or if you make any attempt to escape, I am putting two rounds through your head. And, to show you that I am in earnest and what my orders are, the muzzle of my revolver will remain in your ear, from this to Dublin!"

I said that that was very consoling, and that it was certainly in keeping with British tactics, but was hardly in keeping with the spirit of the Red Cross;

that I was wounded; that I was entitled to a chance; but that, if he removed the ropes, I would be perfectly satisfied with his conditions; and he said, "We know you too well to take any risks".

The next morning, at about eleven o'clock, the Chaplain arrived, saw me, asked my name, was very gruff, and left. He was Rev. Fr. Flanagan, then a curate in Arran Quay and Chaplain to George V. Hospital, later P.P. Sandymount.

I was informed that I would be operated on at twelve o'clock. That morning, two lorry loads of Black and Tans fired upon five boys outside the city, wounding three rather seriously. They were taken into King Georve V. Hospital, and, as they had to be operated on immediately, my turn was delayed for some time. When the first boy was coming from under the effects of the ether, he commenced to talk, and an Intelligence Officer sat down on the edge of the bed, and started noting down what he was saying, and plying him with questions. This also happened with the second fellow, and, when the third was brought in, I was carried out.

Sir William Taylor was the surgeon in the operating theatre. He was assisted by another doctor whose name I do not remember. When I saw them preparing to give me the anaesthetic, to remove the bullet, I told them that I could not take it, that I could not allow myself to be placed in the predicament of the boys outside - telling them what I knew had happened.

They said that that was impossible, that I was one of these madmen who was prepared to tell anything that would blacken the British forces. I told them that, if they went out to the ward, they would find it being done now. With great indignation and just to

confound me, they went out into that ward. Just as I had stated to them, they found the officer by the boy's bedside, getting information from his ravings. And I tell it to their credit, they forthwith kicked the fellow out of the ward. They apologised to me when they returned, and told me that I had now no reason to fear, and that they themselves would remain with me until I came out from the effects of the ether. I told them that I did not doubt their word, but that, while I was prepared to endanger myself, I was not prepared to say anything that would endanger others, and could not allow myself to be put in the position of saying something I would not say when fully conscious. So, very much against their will, they operated with a local anaesthetic, the operation being very painful. This was at 12.30 p.m. on Friday.

On that evening, the unwelcome Chaplain, who had that morning proved himself so gruff, came back again and, when he found he had a good audience of nurses, orderlies and soldiers, began a highly abusive lecture to me which, naturally, put me in a mad state, not merely because of his lecturing a man in my condition, but for his making it the opportunity of currying favour with the British authorities. I listened, and kept my mouth shut, hard. Maybe it was as well. After he seemed to have got everything off his chest that would establish himself and prove his true loyal character with the authorities, he stopped, and I had just muttered to myself a relieved "Thank God!", when I heard, in a very low whisper, "I come from the big fellow!" That whisper gave me a jolt. It held me silent for a couple of moments. Then, as proving that my silence was that of a conscience-

stricken man, I spoke out loud, to make sure that every nurse and soldier would hear, answering his lecture with the words, "Well, Father, maybe you are right, and that I am the wicked ruffian you believe me to be! In that case, it might be good for my soul to have a private talk with you".

"Good, my child!", he replied. Immediately, he had a screen placed round us, to give the penitent a chance for redemption. He told me, in few words, that he had been sent in that morning by the 'big fellow', meaning Collins, to see if I was in the hospital; that, if I was, I was to take immediate stock of my surroundings; that he was going to outline the portion of the building that I was in; that, if I thought I was able to walk a short distance, to say so; that an apparent British military officer and six soldiers would arrive at eleven o'clock on Saturday night, to move me; that that military officer would be Paddy Daly or Emmett Dalton; and that they might have some difficulty in forcing their way up, but that, in that event, I was to force my way to them, and he gave me a plan of the hospital.

I need not say that this was joyful intelligence to me. I slept very little that night, but did not care, and every hour of the next day was long in passing until night should come - and the fateful eleven o'clock. But my fate was settled two hours earlier, for, on the stroke of nine o'clock, I was astonished to see a military officer walk into me - attended by his satellites. But, alas, and alas! They proved to be real Britishers, Red Cross men. "We have orders to remove you!" The balloon of my hopes

was once again burst with a bang! I was bundled up, put into an ambulance, and taken away - to Mountjoy, as I afterwards discovered.

From a warder, next day, it was that I learned Mountjoy had now the honour of holding me.

I was suffering the keenest disappointment over the recent blasting of my hopes of freedom when, on Monday morning, I had planted a new seed of hope again. A visitor to me that day, after asking me how I was, pointedly asked me if I was able to do anything, to which I answered that I felt strong enough, but that the doctor insisted on my lying on my back, for fear of my wound going septic.

The same messenger returned to me, as a visitor, on the next Monday, slipped me a plan of Mountjoy prison, showing the hospital, and showing the window of my cell, and gave me a message from Collins, telling me to be ready, on the following Wednesday, to receive a visitor who would bring pants, overcoat, a hack-saw, watch, cap, scarf and a pair of shoes.

I waited Wednesday with high hopes, and, sure enough, it gladdened my heart when they announced visitors. I said, "Show them in!" There entered two girls from my own country, one whom I knew well, and the other, very slightly. I made them welcome. I thought Collins had done well in choosing my own country girls. I had told the warder that one of these was my best girl, and he, very kindly taking the hint, had gone back to the door. After a few minutes' chat, I asked, "What about the message?", and the girl whom I knew well answered, in a kindly

but yet casual enough way that flabbergasted me, no special message, but, as they were coming up to Dublin, her brother, Ned, told her to call and see me, and find out how I was.

I should explain to the many who do not know it that only one visit per day was permitted to a prisoner. These girls had arrived early, were admitted, and now the visitor that I longed for would be turned away!

If I was a candid man, I am afraid I would have to admit that I got mad inside of myself - and maybe showed a little bit of it outside too. I am afraid I then spoke pretty gruffly to those two kind-hearted girls who had given up part of their valuable short time in the city for the purpose of showing me the only, and the best, kindness they could show me. And, to make matters worse for me, I may as well confess that one of these girls, she whom I only knew slightly, was destined, a few years later, to occupy the biggest place in my life! And I am afraid the poor, kind girls left Mountjoy prison that day, a good deal more down-hearted than when they came in. A clean confession is good for the soul! The girls were members of Cumann na mBan from Longford and Ballinalee Alice Cooney and Ellen Hannigan.

On the next day, Thursday, came the expected messenger/visitor, an overcoated girl, who, after she had sat and chatted with me for a while, and when the warder's attention was not centred on us, casually took off the overcoat and threw it on the bed, while she sat down and resumed her chat. After a little while, one of the blankets was carelessly thrown back, closing the overcoat out of sight and out of memory. The overcoat contained most of the things. The hack-saw - a

collapsable one - was in her handbag, and a bottle of 3-in-1 oil. She also gave me a plan from Collins.

She told me that the plan had been arranged, on the supposition that I would get it on Wednesday night, and on that and Thursday night I should manage to saw two bars out of my cell window; and that, on Friday night at seven o'clock, I should dress, slip out of the window, and follow the detailed instructions given, until, if successful, I reached and knocked upon a certain wicket gate, located in the wall between the male and female prisons, when the gate would be opened to me by Paddy Daly and three or four boys of the Dublin Column. She now said that, as she had not reached me on Wednesday, and that it was now Thursday, she supposed the plan for Friday night was upset. I took a little thought and said, "No!" - I would do it in one night (tonight) the sawing that they had calculated would take fully two nights, and, if Providence favoured me, I would get out of the window at seven o'clock on Friday night, and try to get to the wicket gate.

Now, the plans and details supplied by Collins showed that the hospital, in which I lay, was a separate building, away behind the main Mountjoy prison and near to the wall that separated the male and female prisons, and that my room was on the ground floor, at the hospital's extreme right-hand corner, as looked at from the men's prison, and on the side facing the prison.

My room had a fairly large window, faced towards the main prison, a window crossed by maybe half-a-dozen

iron bars, five or six inches apart. Looking from this window in the general direction of the prison, which lay in front but somewhat to the right, could be seen a gravel walk, which came round the corner from the left-hand side of my room, which was also the left-hand side of the hospital, passed in front of my window, and then several other windows of the front rooms in line with mine, on down to the hospital's right-hand front corner; and then the walk continued right onward, leaving the hospital behind, passing an avenue that led from it to the left up to the prison, still onward, passing a little workshop on the left, just beyond that, the prison avenue; and then the gravel walk continued onward, with a curve to the right, till it came to the wicket gate, referred to, in the separation wall between the male and female prisons.

Every ten minutes, a sentry came from round the left-hand wall of the prison, turned down the gravel walk, passed my window and all the other windows of the prison, until he reached the end of his beat, and then returned on the same beat again, passing my window once more, and disappearing round the corner. This beat was done every ten minutes, day and night. In addition to this, a warder passed up and down the passage on to which my room door opened, and looked in at each room every half-hour, day and night.

On the floor immediately over me was a Company of Auxiliaries, who were the prison garrison.

So, my task was, in spite of the half-hour warder behind, and the ten-minute sentry in front, and the perpetual Company above, first, to saw my way through the bars, and, at the assigned hour, to dress, get

through the window, and then make my way to the left along the sentry's gravel walk to the wicket gate that would open to me the door of hope. The sentry might halt me. I was to tell him I was a temporary warder, going for a drink. If I watched him going round the corner, by walking fairly rapidly, I might get to the wicket gate before he came round again.

I had a big night's work before me on that Thursday night.

On Thursday night, at nine-thirty o'clock, I began cutting the bars. I always heard the sentry's footsteps coming round the corner, passing my window, getting lost away to my right, soon returning again, passing once more round my corner, and there remaining for about seven minutes before he started once more. In this seven-minute period, I was busily at work with the saw. Although I was still weak, I had, once every ten minutes during the whole night, to grasp a bar on the window which was fairly high up, and draw myself on to the inside window sill, where I had just room to rest my knees while I worked, and, six or seven minutes later, let myself down again, for a three or four minute interval. At the same time, I had to keep watching the half-hour periods, for the warder coming up behind, although it happened, by good luck, that the warder on that particular night was a friendly one who would not be inclined to take notice of any noises unless they were, in some way, forced upon him. However, it was well for me to stop work for the half-hour that he approached my room, and I did so.

I worked hard, getting up and getting down, and

sawing all night, from 9.30 p.m. until 6 a.m., when, thank the Lord, I had the bars sawed through, to the least little piece that would just barely hold them in place. Then, weak, sick and fearfully tired and sleepy, I tumbled into the blankets, with a heartfelt and joyful "Thank God!" If all went well, my next following sleep would be in a free man's bed, and, on that joyful thought, I slept - and slept sound. So sound that it was eleven o'clock when I awoke, and I was only awakened then by the coming in of the doctor. (He was Doctor Hackett.) It had been usual to him to take my temperature, pulse, etc. He now took both, as usual, looked surprised, and said I was not doing well. "Warder", he said, "this man has a temperature of 102! Did not I order you to have him taken out of this ground floor room, and to a good room on the third floor, where he would have plenty of fresh air? Now, see that my orders are carried out at once!"

The doctor spoke sharply - sharply enough, in fact, to cut to my heart.

"Oh, Doctor", I pleaded, "I have sort of got to like this room! I would sooner be here than anywhere else!" "I am your doctor. I know what's best for you!" "Don't fail to carry out my orders at once!" - to the warder. "But, Doctor, my mother is coming up from Longford tomorrow to see me. She's an old woman. She is not able to climb stairs. Let them take me up Monday, but leave me here till she comes!" "If your mother is able to come up from Longford to see you, surely she'll not mind climbing some stairs! If she wants it, we'll get warders enough to help her up. Good morning!"

And another bright hope of Seán MacEoin was nipped in the bud.

My anxiety now was to get a message through to Collins, and I succeeded, through the warder, in letting him have a message before five o'clock, just that I was moved.

In May, 1921, I received a despatch from Michael Collins, informing me that a new attempt would be made to rescue me from Mountjoy prison. The despatch instructed me to contact Warder Breslin. Later that evening, I received information and instructions from Collins, also in despatch. These were to the effect that an armoured car, manned by Volunteers would enter Mountjoy prison at any time between ten and twelve o'clock on the following morning, and that I must take such steps as were necessary to be in the Governor's office, and remain there for that time.

When I came in from exercise that same evening, I made contact with Breslin who informed me that everything was ready for action the next morning. On return to my cell, I immediately sent for the Deputy Governor, Mr. Meehan, and made a violent attack upon the conduct of (a) the warders, (b) the Auxiliaries, and (c) the Black and Tans, who were in charge of C (I) Wing and were our gaolers. In accordance with the Rules, I demanded an immediate interview with the Governor, and succeeded in arranging the interview for the following morning. Everything was working according to plan, and I arrived in the Governor's office, escorted by an Auxiliary officer and a warder.

I succeeded in remaining in the office with the

Governor, Charlie Munroe, until about 11.30, when I informed Munroe that I had further complaints on behalf of many of the prisoners, and that I would return to my cell and prepare notes for use next morning. This was simply a makeshift, as I did not know what had happened.

Going out to exercise after lunch, Breslin contacted me again, and informed me that the car had not been taken that day, but that the attempt would be made on the following day, and that the same plan must work.

I then sent a despatch to Collins, informing him that I could be in the Governor's office on the following morning, and that I would be accompanied by an Auxiliary officer with a revolver, but that, when our men would arrive, I thought I could handle him. As arranged on Thursday morning, I was once more in the Governor's office, and remained there for about the same time, with the same result; and, on going out to exercise, I received a repetition of the same message from Breslin. On the third morning, the interview was again arranged with the Governor for 10 a.m., but, in the meantime, something had occurred which we had not foreseen.

The members of the Auxiliary and Black and Tan guard, who were in charge of the Wing, were being relieved, and a new body of Auxiliaries and Tans were taking over the duty.The officer commanding the new party insisted that every prisoner in C (I) Wing should be locked in his cell. This was done. Then the new party, accompanied by the officer commanding the old party, came and saw each prisoner. This was for the purpose of identification. Each prisoner was carefully

scrutinised, and notes taken of him by each member of the guard, so that each one would know and recognise each one of the prisoners who was being handed over, for the first time, into their custody. It was then believed by the authorities that the warders could not be trusted, and that prisoners might be enabled to exchange cells, so that they would have wrong names and wrong cells.

While this was going on, I protested and claimed my interview with the Governor, which I had arranged. Mr. Meehan, the Deputy Governor, was present, and explained to the Commander that I had an interview arranged with the Governor.

The Auxiliary officer replied that my interview with the Governor would be time enough, that his orders took precedence. While this inspection was taking place, the armoured car arrived into Mountjoy, and the first indication I had of its presence was the firing of shots. The Auxiliaries manned the inner gate of C (I) Wing, and, in a short time afterwards, they returned, and opened my cell. They were very excited, and proceeded to search every corner of the cell and my person. While this was proceeding, Breslin came into the cell, and said to the Auxiliaries, "We are all safe!", at the same time, giving me the "glad-eye". From that wink, I realised that the car had come in and gone out, and that those with it were all safe. I bluffed the Auxiliaries a bit, by saying, "When you meet the armoured car down-town, you will have a very hot time, if I get much more abuse!" I wished them luck in their efforts, feeling satisfied that they could not have secured any information upon the line of

communication, which was a very simple and very old method. That is another story.

When the excitement had died down, I was blandly informed that the Governor was now ready to receive me, not in his usual office but in a cell at the end of C (I) Wing, and all interviews with the Governor thereafter, while I was a prisoner in Mountjoy, were in this cell.

The capture of the armoured car and the attempt at rescue were a first-class effort, and, had they succeeded in capturing it on either of the two first days on which it was planned, I would have been in the Governor's room, and would have had no trouble in being able to accompany the two Volunteer officers who were dressed up in the uniform of the enemy force.

Chapter IX.

MY TRIAL.

One month, almost to the hour, after the jail break attempt, I stood, handcuffed, in the dock at Dublin Castle on a charge of murder. It was a general court martial ordered by Major-General G.F. Boyd, commanding Dublin District, and it was held in a big room overlooking the street. A copy of the Proceedings is attached, as Appendix "F". I stood between two armed soldiers, and listened to the charge - that I did at Kilshruley murder District-Inspector Thomas McGrath. I answered, "As a soldier of the Irish Republican Army, I have committed no offence, either of national or international law. I admit no offence, and I plead not guilty".

My counsel, Mr. Charles Bewley, had a difficult case to defend. He could call no evidence for the defence. The men who could support me, in describing relevant details of my escape from Martin's cottage and of the death of the District Inspector, were fighting in Longford, and dared not show themselves unless with guns in their hands.

It was a queer, one-sided trial - queer, even from the viewpoint of British military law. For example, the District Inspector had died at Martin's cottage, but there was no medical evidence to show the cause of death. Dr. G.F. Keenan had been called to see McGrath after the battle, but he had been called,

not to examine him, but to see what could be done for him. When he saw that he was dead, he had no further business there. "My knowledge of the case is extremely meagre", he told the court martial. "I only looked at the body, with the aid of a bicycle lamp. I was only concerned to see if anything could be done for him. I could not say how he was wounded. I simply looked at the body, and saw he was dead. Anything that could puncture the skin could have caused the wounds I saw - two small wounds in the neck."

There was no other evidence which would satisfy the legal mind of a judge to-day on the question of whether the District Inspector died from the shot I had fired, or from shots fired by the police, or from natural causes. There had been no inquest and no post-mortem examination.

When the R.I.C. men gave their version of the fight at Martin's cottage, Mr. Bewley's cross examination revealed discrepancies in the evidence. One man, for example, said he was three feet from me and pointed his rifle at me - an extraordinary feat, since the rifle was four feet long.

But it was talk, talk, talk, talk, and with one obvious result. Long before the case for the Crown opened, much less closed, I knew the result - conviction - death sentence - death sentence ratified - execution at 8 a.m. in Mountjoy.

The case for the prosecution ended. Counsel for the Crown sat down. There was a shuffling of papers, and officers of the court martial whispered a

few words together. Charles Bewley said, "I understand that the prisoner would like to address the court. He has written out some notes which he would like to read. I, therefore, ask that his handcuffs be removed while he is reading his notes". The President said, "Very well, remove the handcuffs!" The handcuffs were removed, and I rubbed my forearms. They were stiff, but I limbered up in a few seconds. The President was looking at papers on the bench. The little soldier beside me was standing at a respectful attention.

The moment had come when I had to make a fateful choice. That choice would be decided for me according to which of two pieces of a cigarette packet I drew from my pocket. On each of these slips of cardboard, I had written a different sentence. If the piece drawn from my pocket contained the sentence, "Trust in God, go ahead and do your best!", I had planned to wrap my arms around the soldier at my side, seize his revolver, open fire, dash for the window, holding the soldier as a shield against any return fire. On reaching the window, I planned to dive through it, on to the barbed wire entanglement spread over the City Hall entrance steps, some thirty feet below. There I hoped to get some help from Volunteers whom Collins would have in waiting, with a car, ready for a quick dash away.

I had smuggled the plan out to Collins. The Chief of Staff had approved. I had little faith in its success, but death in the courtroom or on the stones outside the City Hall had more to commend it than the hangman's noose.

When I put my hand in my trousers pocket, the

card I took was not, "Trust in God, go ahead and do your best!", but, "Trust in God, have patience and wait!" That is why I got out my notes and began to deliver my speech from the dock. Outside, men of Collins' Active Service Unit were in the Exchange Hotel, waiting and watching the window. The British forces had spread canvas over the barbed wire to prevent a view from the interior of the City Hall. I began my speech.

"You try me not as an officer but as a murderer ... because I took arms in defence of my native land. The principle which is proper for the Jugo-Slavs, the Czecho-Slovaks, the Belgians, the Serbians, is equally a proper principle for the Irish.

"That stand has been fully approved by the Irish people.

I am glad that, in carrying out my duty to my country, I have always acted in proper accord with the usages of war."

I dealt with the treatment I got when captured, and described the battle in which the District Inspector was shot. I ended with these words:-

"I crave no favour. I am an officer of the Irish Army, and I merely claim the right, at your hands, that you would receive at mine, had the fortunes of war reversed the positions.

"If you don't give me that right, but execute me instead, then my last request is

"that you give my dead body to my relatives, so that my remains may be laid to rest among my own people. Long live the Republic!"

Charles Bewley opened the impossible defence. He had only three witnesses to call: Cadets Maddocks, Smith and T.J. Wilford, of the Auxiliaries, who had surrendered to me as their commander, Worthington Craven, was dying at Clonfin. They testified how I had protected them, how I had attended to the wounded, and treated all with courtesy and kindness.

The court closed, to consider its finding, at 3.55 p.m., re-opened at 4.10 p.m. to announce conviction, and closed again at 4.12 p.m., to consider sentence. I was taken to a cell in Dublin Castle. Notification of sentence of death was served on me in that cell. (The original notice is attached as Appendix "G".) At midnight, I was transferred to the condemned cells in Mountjoy.

On the following day, Arthur Griffith, Michael Staines and Eamonn Duggan, who were then prisoners in Mountjoy, were taking exercise in the ring, which was near my cell. On reaching my window, the glass and fittings of which I had already removed, they stopped to enquire what was the result of my trial, an account of which had been published in the daily press of that date. I folded up the notification of sentence of death, placed it in an empty match box, and threw it out the window to them. They could not give it back to me then; hence, Staines retained it in his possession. His mother than got possession of it, retaining it for many years, and positively refusing

to part with it, during her lifetime. It was only after her death that I succeeded in regaining possession of the document.

Whether it was a genuine effort to save my life or a trick to stop the Longford fights, the British Army authorities sent word to the Longford Brigade to hand in their guns - and I would not be hanged. I sent out a countermanding order, and was relieved when told that the Brigade would go on fighting.

When Brighid Lyons came to see me, I slipped her my final message to my Flying Column, congratulating them on their decision, and calling on them to carry on the fight. (A photostat copy is attached as Appendix "H".) Later, I wrote to Brighid Lyons:-

> "My dear friend: This may be the last opportunity I will get of writing to you. I want you to say good-bye to all my boys - Mick Heslin, Tom Reddington, Ned Cooney, M.F. Reynolds of Killoe, M. Mulligan, Paddy O'Callaghan, Sean Tracey, P.J. Finnigan, Jim Conway - I may quit; I cannot name them all ..."

I referred to a photo which I had sent to "Minnie", code name for Michael Collins, with the request that copies be sent to all who had asked for them.

The day of my execution was drawing near, and hope was dwindling. My mother, brother, sisters and all who could dare show themselves, came to take their last farewell.

But, outside the prison, strange things were happening. Men from Dublin Castle, searching by accident in a house in Blackrock, captured de Valera; King George V. made a goodwill speech; Collins had hardly recovered from the stunning blow of the "long fellow's" arrest when de Valera was turned free again.

Awaiting my execution, I did not know the import of these happenings until a ray of hope came with a message from Collins, telling me that the war was ending.

An appeal was made on my behalf by a number of people from Longford, including members of the Masonic Order, the Venerable Archdeacon Johnstone and the Deputy Lieutenant for Longford, Duff of Woodville, who was a partner in the firm of Chamberlain, Duff & Co., the Chamberlain being later a Prime Minister of England. There was a special letter written by one of them, whose name I am not at liberty to give, direct to General Macready, pleading that I should not be executed. To this personal letter, Macready replied, and I hand in herewith (Appendix "I") the original letter, of which a photostatic copy has been retained by me. In his letter, Macready was adamant in his decision to carry out the execution, and decided, when he wrote that letter, that my execution would take place the following week.

When General Macready wrote the letter, he had decided that my execution would take place in the following week. He and all the senior officials, including the Lord Lieutenant, evacuated Dublin, and went to London.

Frank Hemming, private emissary of Mr. Lloyd George, also an assistant secretary in the Chief Secretary's Office, had been sent to Ireland by the British Prime Minister, to bring to justice the murderer of Canon Magner, and to be his chief officer in conveying information and making confidential reports on the trend of affairs in Ireland to him, Lloyd George.

Here is the story, as told by Mr. Frank Hemming, in the first instance, to Mr. John Dulanty in 1938. Mr. Dulanty reported the gist of the conversation to Mr. de Valera, then President of the Executive Council, who, in turn, conveyed it to me, and arranged that I would meet Hemming at the Irish Embassy in London. The interview was arranged, and I met Mr. Hemming, who was then Secretary to the Non-Intervention Committee for Spain, in that year.

Mr. Hemming told me that, on his arrival in Dublin, he proceeded with his investigations into the murder of Canon Magner by Auxiliaries, that, from that moment, his, Hemming's, life was in danger, and that every effort made by him to secure information and evidence that might lead to a conviction was stimied, at top, middle and lower levels: that his rank was Assistant Secretary.

He said that, during my trial, he had taken a keen interest in the whole matter, that when, on Saturday, the 25th June, 1921, he found that I was to be executed on the following Monday and that every official with executive authority had left Dublin for London, he immediately packed his bag and went to London, arriving in London on the Sunday, the 26th June, 1921, and that he went direct to No. 10 Downing Street,

where he had a free entry at all times. On asking for the Prime Minister, he said that the officials there refused to announce him, on the grounds that Mr. Lloyd George had been very busy during the previous day and night, preparing for a conference in Paris, and that he was now dressed and resting in the garden with a grandchild of his.

Mr. Hemming said that he decided to go out to the garden, unannounced, that, on meeting the Prime Minister, he was challenged with the words, "Can I not have a few minutes to myself?", and that he informed him that it was a matter of great urgency, relating to the proposed truce in Ireland, that MacEoin was to be executed on the following day, Monday, that that, in his, Hemming's, opinion, the execution at that time would wreck the truce negotiations.

Mr. Hemming told me that he was explaining in detail what he considered would be the reactions to my execution, when at this point the grandchild caught the Prime Minister's hand and said, "Grandaddy! Come on, and play!", to which he replied, "I cannot play now. I have to decide whether a man will live or die", and that the child replied, "Let him live, Grandaddy! And come on, and play!"; that Lloyd George turned to him, Hemming, and said, "There is your answer! Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings comes the decision!"

Mr. Hemming said he got that decision in writing from the Prime Minister, and that he returned to Dublin in time to cancel the order for my execution on that day.

Mr. Hemming told me in that interview, which

must be regarded as confidential during his life-time or while in the service, that he proposed to write about this and other incidents during his term of office in Dublin, and I believe that he informed the Bureau of Military History, in reply to a query from them, that he would do so. I am informed that the relevant correspondence will be found in Bureau of Military History file, numbered S.1816.

Collins, though working a twenty-four-hour day in this period of doubt and fear and hope, did not forget me. He was planning to risk his life by going into the lion's den in Mountjoy himself, to see me for the last time. He secured a permit in a friend's name, and fixed the hour to visit me.

He visited me under the name of James Gill, Bride Street. In the course of the conversation, he told me that he had been down to Ballinalee to see my mother, and had told her that, when he would next come to visit her, I would be with him. So that, even at this late stage, he had not lost hope of effecting a rescue. He mentioned that negotiations were proceeding, and that he was satisfied that something had happened when I had not been executed before that date. I do not think that either he or any member of his Staff was aware of the incident, to which I have already referred, of the intervention of Mr. Frank Hemming, Mr. Lloyd George's emissary, but, of course, this was not told to me until 1938.

Collins was distressed that his efforts on my behalf, so far, had failed, but I told him of Canon Markey's visit to me, that he was a very positive,

saintly, old man who, at all times, had insisted that nothing would happen to me, and that when, in reply to his assertion, "You will be all right!", I had said that I never knew of a fellow dropping six-foot-six through a hole in the floor, with a rope round his neck, had ever been the better of it, he, Canon Markey, had nearly beaten me, saying that I was a "Doubting Thomas", and repeating that I would be all right.

I think I should refer at this point to a situation that was unknown to many of our people, that the split in the Cabinet had already reached serious dimensions, and that there was considerable hostility by certain members of the Cabinet to Collins, because of his unique position. When the Truce was declared and the British Government decided not to release me, as a Deputy, they based this decision on the grounds contained in their announcement of August 6th, 1921, which is as follows:-

> "In keeping with the public undertaking given by the Prime Minister that His Majesty's Government would facilitate in every practicable way the steps now being taken to promote peace in Ireland, it has been decided to release forthwith, and without conditions, all members of Dáil Éireann who are at present interned, or who are undergoing sentences of penal servitude or imprisonment, to enable them to attend a meeting of Dáil Éireann which has been summoned for August 16.
>
> His Majesty's Government have decided

"that one member, John Joseph McKeon, cannot be released."

On the evening of the 6th August, 1921, the Cabinet met in the Gresham Hotel, and this decision of the British Government was considered. Whatever the decision of the Cabinet, Collins and Eamonn Duggan called at the "Irish Times" office at midnight, and handed in the following statement:-

"It was officially stated that there can be and will be no meeting Dáil Eireann until Commandant Sean MacEoin is released."

That statement was published in the "Irish Times" of Monday, and on Monday morning, Mr. Erskine Childers declared that the statement of Collins and Duggan was wholly unauthorised.

I have in my possession the notes written by the late Mr. Curran to whom the statement was given by Collins and Duggan, and the conversations that ensued between himself, Mr. Curran, and Messrs. Barton and Childers. I attach a copy at Appendix "J".

The decision to release me came in a day or two, as a result of the determination of Collins to secure my release.

Arthur Griffith, Micheál Staines and Eamonn Duggan were released some time previously, and Duggan returned to Mountjoy prison for me, as he was then liaison officer between the Irish and British forces. I travelled with him and Mrs. Duggan to Vaughan's Hotel, where I was received by Michael Collins, Dick Mulcahy and other members of the Headquarters Staff

and of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B.

I returned to Longford some days afterwards, and was given a civic welcome in the Market Square and in the Temperance Hall, and a banquet in St. Mel's Diocesan College, at which representatives of every shade and opinion were present. There are reports of these incidents available in the local press.

I may here mention that a meeting of the Supreme Council was held early in August, before the Dáil met, and I got a direction to propose the election of Mr. de Valera as President. It was not declared that he was taking the place of the existing President. He was then, like now, Prime Minister or Head of the Government. The President wrote out, in Irish, the speech that I was to make, proposing it. I have no further comment to make on this matter at the present time.

Perhaps I should have adverted earlier to the fact that I was nominated as a candidate for the 1921 Dáil Éireann election which was described as the 2nd Dáil. People who supported my candidature were Very Rev. Father Markey, P.P., Clonbroney, Eugene Hetherton, contractor, Carrickadorish. There were many nomination papers filled in support of my candidature all over County Longford, but the election was for the constituency of Longford-Westmeath, and my colleagues were Laurence Ginnell, Joe McGuinness and Lorcan Robbins.

Laurence Ginnell was a member of the 1st Dáil and was a Parliamentary Secretary in the first Government. He was also appointed first Minister

Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to the Argentine. I may here mention that the Argentine Government was the only government, bar the British, to recognise our Government. Joseph McGuinness represented Longford in the 1st Dáil after the 1918 election. He had been second-in-command of the Four Courts garrison in 1916, and won the South Longford by-election in 1917 by a very narrow majority - thirty-five votes - after three counts.

I would like to point out that the electorate at this time was very restricted. In that by-election and in all by-elections between 1912 and the general election of 1918, only a rated occupier, male, was entitled to vote in either Parliamentary or Local Government elections, so that you had an extraordinary situation of the owner or occupier being ill, mentally or physically, and, therefore, unable to vote, even though there might be, and were, in many instances, as many as nine adults in the household, including sons and daughters. They were completely disfranchised under the then existing legislation. After the first European War (1914-1918), adult suffrage was provided by British legislation.

My election as a deputy for Longford-Westmeath and the election of several other officers of the Irish Army throughout the country was of great benefit and support to our fighting forces, and enabled me, in the dock, to say, with conviction and truth, that the Irish people had supported us and were the source of our authority

for our actions in the field.

The official notification of my election was sent to me by Fetherstonhaugh, the returning officer for Longford-Westmeath, and it was received by me in my cell in Mountjoy prison. I was then an untried prisoner, and, therefore, free to receive all documents and letters sent to me. My election on the 13th May, 1921, speeded up my trial which took place subsequently on the 14th June, 1921.

The Governor of Mountjoy prison, Captain Charles Munroe, made a small ceremony to present me with the official notification of my election as a Member of Parliament. Some other prisoners, including Frank Carty, Sligo, in our wing, were elected Members of Parliament at the same time.

I may here point out a rather significant fact. The election held in May of 1921 was an election under the 1920 Partition Act, and those who were nominated, sought election and were elected to a Parliament for the Twenty-Six Counties and the Six Counties, respectively. It is not at all clear if the Members of the 1st Dáil Éireann still remained members, under British law, of the Imperial Parliament at Westminster, but the new election of May, 1921, was, as I stated, to the Twenty-Six and the Six County Governments, respectively. The Six County Parliament was opened by King George V. in Belfast, and only four members of the deputies elected for

the Twenty-Six County Parliament attended the opening of the Twenty-Six County Parliament in Dublin, namely, the four deputies elected for Trinity College. They solemnly met and adjourned sine die.

SIGNED: Liam Mac Eoin

DATE: 12th December 1957

WITNESS James Hannay

STATEMENT OF LIEUT.-GENERAL SEÁN MacEOIN.

CERTIFICATE BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU.

This statement by Lieut.-General Seán MacEoin consists of 213 pages, signed on the last page by him, and 10 appendices.

Owing to its bulk, it has not been possible for the Bureau, with the appliances at its disposal, to bind it in one piece, and it has, therefore, for convenience in stitching, been separated into two sections, the first, consisting of pages 1-213, and the other, containing 10 appendices, "A" to "J", inclusive. The separation into two sections has no other significance.

A certificate in these terms, signed by me as Director of the Bureau, is bound into each of the two parts.

M. McDunphy DIRECTOR.

(M. McDunphy)

6th December, 1957.