Part I

DUPLICATE

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Michael V. O'Donoghue,
Lismore,
Co. Waterford.

Identity.

Engineer Officer, 2nd Battalion, Cork No.

Subject.

I.R.A. activities, Counties Waterford, Cork and Donegal.

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Nil.

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DUPLICATE

STATEMENT BY MICHEAL U. Ó DONNCHADHA

(Michael Vincent O'Donoghue)

An Meall Theas, Lios Mór Mothuda, Co. Portláirge.

I was born in Portumna, Co. Galway, on May 18th, 1900 and baptised Michael Vincent O'Donoghue by Monsignor Joyce, Catholic Dean of Portumna in the local church. My father, James O'Donoghue, was an R.I.C. sergeant of 20 years service at the time. He had served as R.I.C. constable in Mid-Tipp. (Thurles, Holycross and Littleton) between 1881 and 1896, and had been transferred (after marriage to a Moycarkey girl) across the Shannon to South Galway.

My mother, Johanna O'Donnghue, née Mackey, was the daughter of Michael Mackey, a small but thrifty farmer of Curraheen, Thurles. Her mother, Mary McCormack, came from the Cashel district and claimed to be a second cousin of the McCormack brothers hung on faked evidence for an agrarian murder, whose innocence was publicly established years after their judicial murder, and whose mortal remains now rest in Lough more graveyard outside Thurles. My grandmother, Mary Mackey, née McCormack, remembered the famine and '48 and Smith O'Brien and the Fenians, and told me many a tale of them before she died at a ripe old age of 90 or so in 1921.

My grandfather, James O'Donoghue of Glencairn (then Castlerichard), Lismore, had been evicted from a 60-acre farm in 1879 during the last phase of the great land clearances. During the same week, fifteen farming households had been levelled and dispersed in the townland of Ahaneboy adjoining Glencairn. Most of the evicted families made for the emigrant ship at Cove (Queenstown) and sailed to America at 30/- a head. But my grandfather was married with a large

young family of twelve at the time - seven boys and five girls. His wife (my grandmother, Mary Brigid Boyle of Dungarvan) was a member of one of the oldest and most national families in Mid-Waterford - the Boyles of Dungarvan. James O'Donoghue clung fast to his old home and holding at Glencairn Cross where generations of O'Donoghues had lived before him. Shortly after his eviction from the 60-acre Ahaneboy holding, his old home at Glencairn was burnt accidentally, but he promptly built a new one at the Cross of Castlerichard (Glencairn), got a publican's licence for it and carried on there the mixed trading of a country shop.

My father (also James) was the second eldest boy and joined the R.I.C. in his 18th year. Incidentally he was the only one of the seven sons in the family to stay at home in Ireland. His brothers all went to U.S.A. one by one according as they reached man's estate, and died or disappeared there, swallowed up in the vast human melting pot which is the U.S.A.

My father, emerging from the R.I.C. depot though not yet 19, was sent to Thurles (his first station). He was mighty proud of his educational prowess - he was a first-class writer speller and statement composer in the turgid stilted polysyllabic English of those days; he had spent a few years going to the newly-opened C.B.S. in Lismore in the mid-seventies, and considered himself highly educated accordingly. He was a tall, powerful man, very athletic in the sprints, and especially with the weights, and a tough footballer of the old rough-and-tumble school. He participated with distinction in all these activities (though an R.I.C. man) in the Thurles area, and became very popular. During all his time in Mid-Tipp. he was 'one of the boys', welcome at every crossroads and farmhouse.

Two incidents during his sojourn in Thurles he spoke of to me many years afterwards and he invested both with an air of mystery which I could never fathom. The first was the arrival of the mortal remains of Charles Joseph Kickham at Thurles rail station, and the refusal of Dean Cantwell (between whose family and Kickham's there existed a life-long feud) to allow the patriot's corpse into Thurles Cathedral. My father boasted to me that, in plain clothes, he attended Kickham's wake in Kerwick's publichouse in the company of some of his sporting and athletic friends among the young men of Mid-Tipp.

The other incident was an obscure sequel to the Phoenix Park killings and the activities of the "Invincibles". There must have been a unit of this secret society in Thurles. Order came from R.I.C. Hqrs. in Dublin, a few days after the Phoenix Park tragedy, to Thurles R.I.C., to arrest some young men in Thurles. My father was detailed for this duty with one R.I.C. party. On the list for whom warrants were out was one Dwyer, a Thurles friend of his. O'Donoghue tipped off somehow his "wanted" friend, and when the R.I.C. searched, their man was missing. Dwyer fled the country, after warning his immediate associates of their danger, and reached haven in Australia, never to return. The R.I.C. seized three or four 'suspect' Invincibles but they were only very minor fry and, as far as I know, were never charged. My father, normally a talkative man, was very secretive and mysterious on this affair. He seemed to fear always that his R.I.C. masters would come to hear of his association with Dwyer.

After some years in Thurles, O'Donoghue was transferred out to Holycross. There, his bosom friend was Jim Cahill, the father of Phil Cahill, the famous Tipperary hurler of 1920/1935 or so, who died young some years ago. Cahill, as well as hurling and athletics, was interested in greyhounds; so was my father. Cahill also made a 'book'. The two were inseparable and frequented every sports meeting and coursing in Tipperary

and East Limerick. Many a modest coup they brought off with hound and man. Those were the days of the infant G.A.A. and the R.I.C. as a body were anything but popular in the Irish countryside. My father continued his athletic activities, though on many occasions under assumed names. On transfer to Littleton, Co. Tipperary, he came in contact with the O'Keeffes of the Horse and Jockey (Tom, Dick, Jim and Jack), one of the most famous hurling families in Tipperary - All-Ireland hurlers all, and members of the famous Tubberadora team of the late nineties. He and Dick O'Keeffe became fast life-long friends and when each, in time, married, the other 'stood up' with him as his best man. Here at the 'Jockey' my father met his wife-to-be (through the kind offices of Dick O'Keeffe) - Johanna Mackey of Curraheen, and they were married in Moycarkey Parish Church by Dr. Fennelly, afterwards Archbishop of Cashel. With his newly-wed bride, O'Donoghue was sent on transfer to Portumna, Co. Galway, on the fringe of the Clanrickard Estate, at that time a great storm centre of agrarian activity in Ireland.

After our birth in May 1900, my elder twin brother (by a few hours) was sent to Curraheen, Thurles, to be reared by his aunt, Ellen Mackey. I, the younger and weaker twin, was reared by my mother. Being somewhat delicate as a child, I contracted a variety of infant diseases including scarlet fever and, somewhat unexpectedly in most cases, survived them all. I am afraid that this resulted in my growing up something of a pet. In 1903, my father was sent on promotion as sergeant in charge of the R.I.C. Barracks in Peterswell. There we lived in the barracks and I and my twin brother - James Ernest - went to our first school, the national school in the village. There, too, I remember hearing Irish spoken for the first time, in the village shop of Mrs. Hayes. Vividly I can still recall the evening in the field outside the barracks with the R.I.C. men

practising weight-throwing (favourite pastime for men in those days). I and my twin brother - about four years old then - were hurling close by when the ball was struck by me across the weight-throwers. My brother ran to retrieve the ball, all oblivious of his danger; so, too, were the R.I.C. men. A shout! a sickening thud! and James E. O'Donoghue, my brother, lay stretched on the ground - still - with his forehead crushed in. My father was away in Gort; my mother distracted. Dr. Foley was brought over poste-haste from Ardrahan by horse and trap, no motors in those days. The injury was almost mortal, but not quite - a wide jagged fracture of the centre forehead and deep concussion. By a miracle of surgery and medicine (15 stitches were put in his forehead) my brother was restored to health and strength in six months, thanks to the genius and tender care of Dr. Foley. He carried throughout his short life, however, a huge seven-pointed red star on his forehead as the mark of his amazing escape from death.

Shortly afterwards, Sergeant James O'Donoghue was moved to Loosecaun near Woodford, Co. Galway, not on promotion this time, but rather as an expression of disapproval by his R.I.C. superiors for his scarcely-concealed sympathy with the local farmers in their struggle with Clanrickard, and for his lack of zeal in upholding law and order within the meaning of the various Coercion Acts then in force; but the days of O'Donoghue's service in the R.I.C. were drawing to a close.

In 1905, after the minimum 25 years service for pension purposes, he retired with station-sergeant's rank and went to live near his old home at Glencairn, Co. Waterford. He was then only 43 years of age, still a strong athlete and a comparatively young man. He returned to his home district with a view to buying back at a public auction part of the

farm from which his father had been evicted 26 years earlier. Much of the evicted lands in this area had been planted with hardwood forest trees after the tenants had been banished. My father's bid to purchase the former O'Donoghue land failed and the holding was knocked down to a local grabber, a blacksmith named Cashin. Foiled in his bid to purchase land, my father rented some grazing land in Glencairn on the newly-instituted 11 months system, got the tenancy of a one-storey thatched house at the "Level" near Glencairn schoolhouse and settled down as a retired R.I.C. pensioner in August 1905 with his wife and three young sons.

At the tender age of four I was fascinated by the martial atmosphere of R.I.C. Barracks and I remember that I was allowed to accompany my father and the 'men' when they went ball-firing. That was target and shooting practice with their carbines at a 'natural' range (usually a large sandpit. I can recollect, too, how I was allowed to lie down, hold the carbine and actually fire a shot from it. This indeed was a rare privilege for a four-year-old and made a profound impression on me. My father indulged my childish craze for firearms by giving me a present of an air rifle (then a very modern weapon) on his return from a trip home to Glencairn prior to his quitting the R.I.C. I can still recall the pride I felt at possessing a real air rifle of my very own on the occasion of my fifth birthday.

Four years we lived in the thatched cabin on the 'Level'. Then, in 1909, we moved to Dungarvan. My father had got a job as a supervisor (Gaffer) in the Brewery and Jam factory of his second cousin, Thomas Power, the Industrialist and first Chairman of the Waterford Co. Council. We lived in Dungarvan until 1913. I attended the Christian Brothers School where I had as school companions 'Pax' Whelan, George

Lennon and others who were later to figure prominently in the national resurgence. I was rated a good scholar, though out of school I was as tough as the toughest of the fish-hawking ("fish-jowlters" as we called them) youngsters from Boithrin-na-Trá, or the 'Buttery', the two toughest slum areas of Dungarvan, now cleared for ever. I hurled and played Gaelic football in the 'Marsh' behind Power's jam factory and was also useful at handball - at that time there was a fine ball-alley at Dungarvan C.B.S. There were many juvenile street and district teams, both hurling and football. Rivalry between them was intense and competition was fierce and bitter. The teams were more like juvenile gangs and many inter-district matches ended in faction fights with hurleys, stones, bottles and what-have-you. There was no adult direction or patronage in these savage juvenile fueds. I rose to be a much-admired 'hero' in this juvenile underworld. Two deeds of daring led to this. In one, I 'fecked' (to use the slang term of the time) a couple of men's hockey sticks from the temporary dressing quarters beside a fence during a match between the Dungarvan mixed hockey team and a visiting team (from Lismore, I think). I cut the handles of the sticks down short and sold them to two students of St. Augustine's College - one of whom, a namesake of my own, afterwards became an ecclesiastic of international fame in the Augustinian Order. My other achievement was to get 'captured' while raiding an orchard for gooseberries while my two companions escaped. I was hauled before the R.M. and admitted the 'crime', but refused to divulge the names of my chums. I was fined 12s.6d., a pretty hefty sum at the time. But for my father being an ex-sergeant of R.I.C., the magistrate, a pompous bloated English Protestant named Orr, would have sent me to a reformatory. I can still recall his comment when it was pleaded in my favour that I was a clever boy at school and usually at the head of the class.

'Yes', said he, 'clever in school and lawless outside where property is concerned, and all the more likely to become a dangerous citizen'.

At the height of my fame(?) after my conviction, I was sent by my mother to her old home at Curraheen, Thurles, for my summer holidays in 1913. Really, it was a form of banishment to get me away from Dungarvan for a while and from my fellow delinquents. As it happened, I was never again to return to my home in Dungarvan.

At Curraheen I helped my uncle at the farm work and in the bog. I became an expert turf-catcher, root-thinner and pike-man (with a hay pike). I haunted Dick O'Keeffe's ball-alley at the Jockey every Sunday all day and every evening from 6 to 8.30 p.m. I had to be indoors by nine to say the family Rosary, always given out by my grandmother, then well in her seventies and getting Lloyd George's Old Age pension of 5/- a week. She regarded me as a grown man and told me many stories and confided in me secrets and scandals, too, of Moycarkey and district in the years gone by. I was regaled with poor Parnell's amatory affairs with Kitty O'Shea in vast detail. But I was only 13 and in no way precocious in sex affairs or the facts of life. Consequently, Parnell's 'carryings-on' aroused in me little interest or enthusiasm or even curiosity. I wanted to hear about the Fenians and the Moonlighters and the men of '48 above in Ballingarry at the collieries, and Smith O'Brien's arrest in Thurles, and the famine times. Her most enthralling story to me was her vivid account of that unforgettable morning in March 1867. Having raked out and rebuilt the turf fire after rising as usual at 6 a.m. to prepare breakfast for her husband and young family (her eldest was then 8 years, she said), she opened the one door going out to the yard and saw a blanket of deep

snow all around. Out on the road, she looked down towards the 'Jockey'. There, a quarter of a mile away, she saw a squadron of soldiers on horseback. Frightened, she turned to run back in. Inside the gate she heard the shrill call of a bugle in the distance and then nearer the muffled thud of many galloping hooves. The Lancers, for such they were, pulled up on the roadside outside, and a gorgeous officer dismounted and entered the yard. "Any men in the house?" said he. "What, sir", she asked - she did not understand his fine speech. He repeated the question: "Only my husband and the children", says she. He looked closely round the house on the outside and, then satisfied from his examination of the untrodden snow around, he moved up the yard and searched stables and outhouses. Finding nothing suspicious, he returned to the door where my grandmother had remained all the time as if rooted, bade her "good morning", mounted and rode off up the road towards Ballinure with the rest of the troop.

Meanwhile, my father had been left a legacy of a shop and dwelling-house in Cappoquin by an old friend of his childhood who had been fostered in the O'Donoghue home in Castlerichard. Mary Hennessy as a comely girl of twenty had been courted by Peter O'Neill Crowley of Ballymacoda, the Fenian leader who died fighting in Kilclooney Wood. After Crowley's death she went to America, returned after 20 years or so, married another old Irish-American and settled down in Cappoquin and built a house and shop there. She was a wonderful lace-maker, and her fine lace exhibits won first prizes at the Dublin and Cork Exhibitions in the early days of this century. In her old age she was something of a recluse, but my father often called to see her. In July 1913 she died leaving her property to my father. He, at first, tried to sell the house. Then, quitting his job and his home in Dungarvan, he moved to Cappoquin in August 1913. So, on my return from

my Tipperary banishment, I found myself in entirely new surroundings in our new home. But things happened fast in 1913.

My twin brother and myself went to Cappoquin N.S. where I stayed three weeks before changing to C.B.S. Lismore to do the 'Intermediate'. My brother stayed in Cappoquin N.S. And then the National Volunteers were founded. Cappoquin boasted about 80 men enrolled in local branch all full of fighting for Home Rule and proud of their wooden dummy guns. We youngsters gaped in admiration as they formed and reformed at close order drill at the local G.A.A. playing field. The instructors were hefty ex-members of England's army and militia, reservists all. The most striking of the National Volunteers here was a small, thin, hardy, wizened man of uncertain age wearing a bowler hat, black swallow tail coat, knee breeches and black leggings. He was the only warrior carrying a real gun, a long single-barreled fowling piece which he, a veteran poacher on land and water, named "The Ould Coople" (real name Crowley), was reputed to bring to bed with him. A big review of the National Volunteers was held in Cappoquin G.A.A. field in the early summer of 1914 and many very important persons including Colonel Moore, O/C. Volunteers, were present. I was present at the parade with about 20 other juveniles, gaily attired with green sashes, and each shouldering an imitation croppy pike - wooden handle and blade of tin. We were the Boy Scouts, the new child warriors of Erin.

But Sarajevo flashed across a startled Europein June and with it the Great War in August 1914. Bewildering changes at home in rapid confusing succession. Reservists called up by British War Office: gone to the Colours are the National Volunteers instructors: Irish Parliamentary Party pledge every support to British War effort. Leader John Redmond offers

National Volunteers as cannon fodder to Britain and tells the Volunteers themselves - at a great demonstration in Ballybricken, Waterford - that their duty is to fight for King and Country against Germany. National Volunteers break up completely; thousands join Britain's khaki ranks, duped by Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party and their recruiting propaganda. Minor remnants here and there reorganise as Irish Volunteers pledged to Ireland only. No Volunteers or Volunteer units survived as such in Cappoquin or in the Barony of Coshmore and Coshbride. The recruiting campaign carried on by the Irish Party politicians swept the young men into the British army in thousands and even youths in their early teens flocked into the recruiting offices which were opened in all the towns to attest the brave and loyal Irish subjects of His Majesty into the new Kitchener's army. The craze to be in khaki swept like a plague through Ireland in 1914 and 1915.

From the first day of the war, I was a rabid pro-German. At home, I engaged in heated arguments usually developing into violent quarrels with my father on the merits of the Germans and the foul treachery of the British. In school, where the Brothers were discreetly neutral or quietly anti-British, I assembled a number of kindred spirits into a sort of Irish-German friendship group. We gloated over the initial German victories on land and sea, and gleefully prophesied the day when our heroes, the Germans, would invade Ireland.

Many a night at home, two old friends dropped in to discuss with my father local and Irish and world affairs. Both were evicted tenants, victims of the Land War, and that was their common bond with my father. One, Matt Coffey, sworn in a Fenian at 18, had to fly to U.S.A. after the "Erin's Hope" fiasco in '67; returned to Ireland late in life, married,

and was now, in 1914, still in the I.R.B., the only one of such secret body in the Cappoquin area, as far as I know.

From August until Christmas 1914, many were the rumours of impending German invasion of Ireland. Armed R.I.C. sentries were posted on guard night and day on the Cappoquin railway bridge, an important communication link on the Mallow-Rosslare line serving the two great military centres of Fermoy and Buttevant. The British authorities were nervous, as they imagined German spies everywhere. The arrest of a few actual spies, their removal to London, and their execution in the Tower, added to official nervousness. Then, one morning early, the story reached Cappoquin and spread like wildfire that the Germand had landed at Waterford. The local R.I.C. chief Head Constable, Patrick Cahill, actually went around notifying licensed traders to close up and be ready to evacuate. There was panic in the town until the arrival of the morning train from Waterford - with no German troops - and the rumour was scotched.

In the autumn of 1914, there was much propaganda in Co. Waterford about the "appalling atrocities" of the Germans in "poor little" Belgium. Local Unionists wept with compassion and the mere natives were duly impressed - 40 or 50 Belgian "refugees" found a haven of refuge in Cappoquin, brought there by the local landlord, Sir John Keane, and housed in a row of hovels in the town. These victims of German brutality spoke no English, only their native Flemish and some French. There was a rush to brush up a few words of French by the local champions of little Belgium, including the R.I.C. One R.I.C. Sergeant - O'Neill - a zealous middle-aged Protestant, rejoicing in the nicknames of "Other Lips", and "Dogs' Enemy", the latter for his zeal in pursuit of unlicensed canines, and the former by reason of the negroid lavishness of his lips, the upper

one of which carried a neatly trimmed array of light brown bristles, went so far as to acquire a vest pocket size English-French dictionary, and sought through the medium of my father to enlist my services as tutor. At the time I was doing Junior Grade at Lismore C.B.S., walking to and from my home in Cappoquin each day a total journey of 8 miles. As it happened, I was studying French and, while I could read a novel or a newspaper in that language readily enough, speaking it and that to natives was a different proposition. However, Sergeant "Lips" met me often on my way back from school in Lismore and walked beside me pushing a bicycle and his little French book open. These running lessons dragged on for some weeks until the poor sergeant gave up in despair at his failure to get beyond the "parlez-vous" stage. Nor was he entirely prepccupied with French. He used to try to pump me, crudely enough I thought, about my fellow schoolboys and their views on the war, and the Christian Brothers and their attitudes and teachings. I was amused as I parried his obvious "feelers". Sometimes I felt a bit of a hypocrite as I piled it on about the admiration both I and each and all of the Brothers felt for British martial deeds and British rule. He swallowed it all, but could not manage to absorb any French. Then, one day, my own exalted status as a French scholar was threatened badly. I called up to my father, at that time weigh-master for Sir J. Keane at the Market-house, and there with him were three or four of the Belgian refugees. My father proudly enlisted me promptly as interpreter. But, alas! After a few "oui","Oui", "merci, and "Je ne sais pas", the interchange ceased and there was silence. My father looked at me sadly, the Belgians curiously, then I had a brain wave. "Any French paper or letter?" I asked. "Oui", "Oui". One produced part of an old French daily paper and handed it to me. I read loudly and assuredly, then reverted to English

for my father's benefit. My! what a change! I felt like a French Academician! Early in 1915, our Belgians disappeared quietly; gone to munition work in England, it was said.

Old Matt Coffey, the Fenian, was almost nightly in my home during 1915 and 1916. He was a man of many parts. When in good form, his favourite method of celebrating was to dance a horn-pipe, humming his own accompaniment. He had known many Germans, Russians and Italians during his long years in U.S.A. The latter he despised, while he regarded the Russians as barbarians. The news of Hindenburg's great victory at Tannenberg filled him with joy and he danced his hornpipe that night with the gusto of twenty. He had a great tongue of Irish, rich and voluble, which I much envied. My Irish at that time was book-Irish, Junior Grade category, which he professed not to understand. But I could read and write a little Gaelic, while he could do neither. He used to produce now and then copies of strange new papers and pamphlets: the "United Irishman", "The Spark","Scissors and Paste" and others. He gave them to me as a great favour to read and return. I was puzzled at first. The literature served up to me by The Intermediate Commissioners of Education bore such seductive titles as "Clive in India", "With Buller in South Africa", "The Road to Cabul", etc., etc. As 1916 dawned, my pro-German views were more emphatic than ever. But now, I began to realise that there was a deeper meaning to Old Coffey's robust nationality and to his repeated slogan: "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity". It dawned on me that pro-German support was not enough as partiotic endeavour from your true Irishman. That something more positive and more effective was demanded than mere wishful thinking.

Within a mile of Cappoquin lived the Fitzstuart family,

– a brother of Villiers Stuart of Dromana – The Stuarts of Decies – whose head Gerald Villiers Stuart was at this time a colonel of the British army in France. His son, "Fitz" Stuart we called him, a youth of my own age, spent his summer holidays from an English College at home in Cappoquin. He was 'mad' on guns of all sorts and he amassed a varied collection. Manys the shooting 'expedition' we planned during vacations in 1914 and 1915, he, I and an older youth from Cappoquin, Jim O'Brien. The latter, seduced by the intense recruiting propaganda and the glories of military life, ran away from his widower father to join the Leinster Regiment in Dublin. After a few weeks soldiering he was bought out by his father as he was a few years under age, and returned somewhat crestfallen and shame-faced to Cappoquin. When "Fitz" returned to England in the New Year of 1916 he left some of his firearms to O'Brien. Occasionally, O'Brien and I had a little secret target practice with the weapons.

Then came Easter 1916. First intimation was non-arrival of the Dublin and English papers on Easter Tuesday. All during the war, 1914-18, the "Irish Independent", "The Freeman's Journal", the "Irish Times", the "Daily Mail, and the "Daily Sketch" arrived daily in Cappoquin in the early afternoon Then the "Cork Examiner" of Tuesday carried the momentous headlines of a "Sinn Fein Rebellion" in Dublin, as well as confused accounts of the arrest of a German spy in Kerry (Casement) and his transfer to London, and the sinking by scuttling of a strange German vessel near Cove, and the capture of her German crew (The Aud and Karl Spindler). Then the rumours flew thick and wild – "Cork and Kerry" were out"; "Dublin was in rebel hands"; "Fierce fighting in Belfast and the North"; "Everywhere the rebels were winning and Connaught and Leinster were entirely theirs".

Every day during that sunny week brought stranger and stranger news. At first we believed that the rebels in Dublin were in complete control of that city; that the English garrisons there were smashed, and that the Irish forces were sure to win. Then the absence of any military activity locally made us doubt and we felt at times that the whole wonderful story of Irish insurrection was only a dream. But suddenly the stark reality of war in Ireland was brought home to us in quiet Cappoquin.

On Easter Thursday a long troop train from Fermoy en route to Wexford was halted a mile or so from Cappoquin west of the big railway viaduct over the Blackwater. All through that evening the train with its hundreds of Khaki warriors armed to the teeth remained stationary. All the local young fry gathered to gawk at the troops, amongst them O'Brien and and myself. Then the thought struck us that these same troops were on their way to attack the insurgents fighting for Irish Freedom in Enniscorthy. Why not strike a blow ourselves? We did. Back to O'Brien's house to get "Fitz Stuart's" Winchester repeater and another rifle of small bore for which we had stuff. We stole quietly across the Glenshalane River to the Blackwater which we crossed in Jacky Foley's flat-bottomed punt to reach the "Rock" at Drumrue. Up across the fields there to swing round north to Kilbree where the troop train stood. As we approached the last fence near the railway we heard the puff-puff-puff of a locomotive starting. From the fence we saw our troop train moving slowly towards the viaduct about 300 yards away. "We'll have a shot at them anyway" said O'Brien. We fired a few rounds at the disappearing troop-train with what result we never knew. At that range and with our weapons it was no more than a token act of defiance, a sort of

flag-waving heroism; but we both felt highly elated at having done a deed which we regarded as a great blow for Ireland.

But, alas! The weekend brought the bitter news of the surrender in Dublin and, later, in Enniscorthy. The Easter Rising was over. Then the stories and the details of the fighting. We devoured every scrap of printed reference and description. The attempt to seize Dublin Castle gate where the D.M.P. Guard, Big John McGrath from Modeligo, Cappoquin, though receiving four or five bullets in the body, yet managed to keep the gate shut, and so saved the Castle from surprise. McGrath, recovered from his wounds, was invalided home from the D.M.P. and became later a rabid Sinn Féiner. During the War of Independence he sheltered and supported the men on the run and always expressed admiration for the daring courage of the men who shot him. The Mount Street Bridge battle and the Sherwood Foresters. The mass-murders of Dublin people in their homes in North King Street by British khaki troops. A photo of some of the victims in a Dublin paper startled me. I recognised the faces of father and son butchered by English soldiers in their King St. home - William Hickey and his only son, Tommy.

William Hickey had managed a meat store in Cappoquin in 1913 and 1914 for a Cork firm of butchers which traded largely in Australian frozen meat. My father let part of his premises to this firm as the "City Meat Market". His son Tommy cycled with me daily to the C.B.S. in Lismore where we were both in Junior Grade. Then came the Great War and the supply of Australian frozen meat retailed at from 4d to 6d per lb. dried up. The Meat Store closed and the Hickey family returned to their native Dublin. A few letters from Tommy later (we were great friends), but the correspondence faded out as juvenile letters will. And then the stark tragedy of the massacre of

the two Hickeys in their own Dublin home, the mother alone surviving to mourn her awful loss. This brutal atrocity filled me with a sort of personal loss and aroused in me a fierce hate for English soldiery.

In general, the people at first denounced the rebels in round terms - stabbing England in the back; aiding the "Horrible Hun" (the descriptive epithet applied to Germany by all British and Irish journals of the time). "Why did they do such treachery?". "Weren't they getting Home Rule when the war ended?". "Why did they not wait and then strike if England again defaulted. My father was louder than most in his condemnation. But the cold-blooded executions of the rebel leaders by Sir John Maxwell in daily batches of three and four horrified the people. Disgusted with the ghoulish blood-lust of G.O.C. Maxwell, and numb with shock at first, they maintained a discreet silence. Then Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick spoke: The first public expression of approval for the insurrection of Easter Week. His words re-echoed through Ireland, rousing fierce emotions of long-latent patriotism and admiration for the executed leaders in many an Irish heart. Already the Rising had succeeded ideologically. A new unquenchable spirit swept Ireland. Even my father forgot his antipathy to the rebels to such an extent that he now lauded their actions. This, I think, was more by way of revulsion to British atrocities in Dublin than to positive national convictions. He really did not believe that British soldiers could be such savages, but the Hickey murders and the wholesale executions shocked and shamed him. His Anglophile war outlook altered considerably, as I was soon to find out.

In school during the summer and autumn of 1916, things changed rapidly . Most of the boys in my class (Middle Grade) were pro-rebel and pro-German. How we envied two of the senior

boys who had been to Dublin at Easter for a G.S. & W.R. exam. and had been caught up spectators with a close-up view during all that Easter Week in a Dublin lodging house. How raptly we listened to the accounts of their experiences! They, too, were able to give us odd lines and verses of the new rebel songs. These we copied carefully and surreptitiously under the desks and exchanged from hand to hand or swopped as juveniles do nowadays with 'Comics'. By July we knew every word of "Easter Week", the "Foggy Dew" and "The Felons of Our Land". We whistled and sang them on our way to and from school. During the late autumn nights, we youngsters of 15 and 16 marched out in fives and sixes, parading the country roads around Cappoquin singing our rebel songs lustily sometimes to the accompaniment of a mouth organ.

Then, round Christmas 1916, word was whispered that drilling was going on in the mountain glens of Knockmealdown. R.I.C. country patrols were reinforced, especially on Sundays. Around New Year's Day, a party of young men drilling were surprised near Mount Melleray by an R.I.C. patrol and barely escaped by scattering and disappearing in all directions. I learnt that the leader of the reorganised Volunteers here was Jack O'Brien, an older brother of Jim's, my comrade in the Easter Week exploit of the troop train. Meeting O'Brien, I asked to join the Volunteers, but he said I was too young. He consoled me by the assurance that if four or five other youngsters were to be had locally, then he would arrange to organise an unit of the Boy Scouts (Fianna Éireann) to be attached to the Volunteers. By this time, a Sinn Féin Club had been formed in Cappoquin by a travelling organiser named "T.F. Walsh", a mysterious individual who liked liquor and 'big talk' of the sunburstry type. Walsh stayed hereabouts for a month or so, lodged in a licensed hotel in Cappoquin and

addressed some public meetings in the locality. The R.I.C. took no notice of him, though he seemed to challenge police notice and then he disappeared as quietly and mysteriously as he came and we never heard of him after. My father was convinced that he was an "Agent Provocateur" and warned me against him. I was suspicious of him and believed him to be a 'chancer'. However, the newly-founded Sinn Féin Club rented a club room in a big unoccupied house opposite the C.I.Church. The Sinn Féin Club officers were Miss Molly Johnson, a spinster shopkeeper almost next door to the club, Matt Coffey - my olf Fenian friend - and John Flanagan a G.S.R. porter in Cappoquin station.

At 8 p.m. on a February night in 1917, I was notified to attend a meeting in Sinn Féin Club. Jack O'Brien, M.J. Walsh ('Jody') and Willie Kennedy were the men present as well as six youths of about 16 years or so. O'Brien lined up us youths and told us briefly that a boy scout arm of the Volunteers was being formed. He explained its aims and objects and possible duties and then ordered us to elect a leader who was to be captain to take over drill and train the scouts. In the election I was the unanimous choice - my 'college' training and previous activities (since 1913) influenced my youthful comrades. There and then my election was ratified by the Volunteer officer (Captain J. O'Brien) and I was invested as captain of the boy scouts in Cappoquin district.

Now began a course of training and secret drilling - quietly on week nights in the seclusion of the large basement room in the Sinn Fein club, and on Sundays in the woods and hills of the Mount Melleray area. We trained with the Volunteers on Sundays, acting as scouts and s entries and lookouts. Then, about Easter 1917, we paraded in public for the first time. I well remember the occasion. We mobilised

at the 'Big Tree', a mile east of Cappoquin, formed up in two columns. The scouts, seven in number, under my command, leading the march, and the Volunteer company, 17 strong, under Captain Jack O'Brien, with Lieut. Walsh (Jody) and Lieut. (2nd) Cosgrave. No arms or equipment was carried except haversacks of many varieties containing food rations (a little bit of lunch). We marched east by a byroad for four miles, then turned south and reached the main Cappoquin-Dungarvan road at Rockfield. Here we halted, rested and lunched on the roadside. We then formed up on the roadside, did quite a programme of close-order drill watched by the curious eyes of a large country crowd which had collected. The older people and the women onlookers appeared to sneer at us as in pitying fashion as if saying "God give the poor simple knock-kneed goms a bit of sense". "What are they up to anyway"

As we moved off on the return march we were accompanied by a young man in khaki uniform named Jacky McGrath, a local ex-National Volunteer who had joined Kitchener's army and was now convalescing at home from wounds received in the trenches in France. McGrath, playing Irish airs on a melodeon which he carried (he used to play at country dances and threshings) brought up the rear until Cappoquin was almost reached - he then turned off a byroad to his own home at Affane. His music helped greatly to ease the hardship of the route march though it mystified the gaping casual onlookers we met, more then ever. "What new Force is this?", they thought, as they viewed the martial ranks in 'civies' being kept in form step by a khaki-clad soldier of England playing rousing Irish marches on a melodeon.

We marched to the square in Cappoquin where, before the astonished eyes of Head-Constable Cahill, Sergeant 'Lips' O'Neill and a few other R.I.C. we performed various military

evolutions in close order. I gave the orders, inreal sergeant-major fashion, to my seven scouts and they, to my great joy, executed them smartly. I was intoxicated with importance and flattered myself that the scouts were better drilled and better officered than were the adult Volunteers.under Captain O'Brien. A big crowd of sightseers had now gathered which gazed inquiringly now at the Volunteers and scouts drilling, now at the apparently indifferent R.I.C., wondering what it was all about and what was going to happen next. Nothing happened. We dismissed and returned to our homes unmolested. I went to Lismore C.B.S. as usual next day.

Later that week, my father called me a side and spoke to me agitatedly but without anger: "Head" Cahill had come along to him, told him of my prominent association with illegal drilling and training, even in public, and advised him to persuade me to quit those activities. I would only get myself into great trouble and endanger my father's R.I.C. pension. My father was worried about this latter veiled threat naturally. He told Cahill, though, that he could not be expected to control my opinions or activities or politics - that I was a youngster of almost seventeen and had a mind and an outlook of my own and that he, my father, could not be held responsible for any activities of mine of which he knew nothing. I was torn between two emotions - vanity at the prominence and the importance I had achieved, and anxiety that my deeds would reflect in injurious fashion on my father. I told my father that, without in any way reducing my national activities, I would take care in future to avoid exciting the attention of the R.I.C. Afterwards, the only occasions when we paraded openly in Cappoquin were on the nights of the Sinn Féin Election Victory celebrations. The first of these was the success of Count Plunkett in North Roscommon in the March

snows of 1917. He was the first Sinn Fein M.P. to be elected to the Imperial Parliament of Westminster. The celebrations took the form of a Victory March through the streets. At the head of the procession a Flag Party carrying the tricolour, then a motley array of musicians playing rousing marches, then the Volunteers followed by Boy Scouts and Sinn Fein Club members with the general public in fair to middling array bringing up the rear. These victory celebrations, with one exception, passed off without incident, as the R.I.C. usually kept in their barracks.

On the night of W.T. Cosgrave's election to Kilkenny, a procession larger and louder and more exultant, paraded Cappoquin. As the marching Volunteers passed the R.I.C. barrack door, a loud thud and the crack of splintering wood was heard. A huge stone had been hurled at the barrack entrance door. For a moment there was alarm; then the sharp command: "Cover off and keep step" steadied the wavering ranks and the march continued. The stone-thrower had been a youngster named Boylan, a Dubliner employed as a junior gardener at Sir John Keane's house "Bellemont" - a particularly daring practical joker, but a good reliable Volunteer. The R.I.C. reacted as if the barrack was empty and ignored the provocative assault on the door. A subsequent Volunteer inquiry failed to expose Boylan as the culprit - he was as smart and slick as an expert card-sharper and was a genius at assuming a poker face.

By Christmas 1917, the Volunteer strength had declined to 14, while the scouts had increased to 9. We continued to drill at country rendezvous. The only excitement during autumn 1917 occurred when Sinn Fein flags were flown from vario points (usually high and somewhat inaccessible) in and around

the town. The R.I.C. took a serious view of this activity. They gathered in force, fully armed, and removed the rebel flags where possible. Where they could not reach the offending flags, they burnt them by means of flaming oil-soaked cloth on long poles. The crowds who gathered to watch the proceedings cheered derisively the efforts of the police, but the latter kept their heads and their tempers despite the taunts and the jeers.

Then, as 1918 dawned, the great conscription crisis loomed up.

The Allied armies of France and England were cracking up in France under German onslaughts; U.S.A. aid in troops had not yet come. Lloyd George, Premier of England, saw no solution to the problem of replenishing England's shrinking armies except the conscription of Irishmen. A Bill to press Irishmen between 18 and 45 into England's khaki was read in the House of Commons. Ireland's reaction was instantaneous. Redmondites, O'Brienites, all the constitutional parties and elements, as well as the extremists - Sinn Fein, Labour and the Volunteers - united in one solid phalanx against this new and frighful English threat. The Irish Hierarchy met and with one voice proclaimed their deliberate opposition to conscription. Passive resistance was organised among the people generally, while the Volunteers, whose ranks were now vastly swollen by thousands of men alarmed at the prospect of being drafted into the English army, prepared for active resistance. The access of numerical strength to the Volunteers made many companies unwieldy and also lowered the morale and general military standard of the Volunteers. The new Volunteers were poor quality, mostly actuated by selfish motives of saving their skins, and did little if anything to make the Volunteers an <u>effective military</u> force.

In July 1917, I had sat for University scholarship examinations at University College, Cork. I did not get a scholarship as I failed to attend for the examination in history through a blunder of my own and so lost my chance. During my week's sojourn in Cork I witnessed a baton charge by the R.I.C. on the Grand Parade. A recruiting meeting was in progress with the usual accompaniments - a platform occupied by some British army Brass-hats, a few elderly civilian loyalists, an Irish khaki-clad soldier or two back from the trenches to say his little piece urging his fellow countrymen to join up before being forced into khaki, an army band beside the platform around which were gathered some women (Separation Allowances) and children and a few older men - around this motley assembly was a strong cordon of police outside of whom congregated the general public. The speakers were continuously heckled and interrupted by the outer audience who jeered and yelled without cease. When the din became worse, missiles of many types, rotten fruit and vegetables and even aging bones from the nearby market, were showered on the platform. Pandemonium broke loose when the R.I.C. drew their batons and charged the jeering mob, flailing savagely to right and left. From a safe distance on the pavement at Old George's St. corner (now Oliver Plunkett St.) I saw the whole riotous scene. I fled up George's St. with the rest when the police charged.

During the autumn and late winter of 1917, the local Volunteer Company in the Cappoquin area did a little bit of searching for weapons. A few big houses in the locality were quietly ransacked at night and some guns and ammunition got. A few others, owned by the 'gentry' were raided by masked Volunteers and more stuff was got. These operations were carried out by the officers of the company with the aid

of a few men with intimate local knowledge and the inside co-operation of a servant on occasion. Though upwards of a dozen big houses were raided, only one was reported to the R.I.C. and they did no more than make a few cursory inquiries. It looked as if the people raided and were sympathetic or, at least, wished not to be involved in any way. They kept silent.

During the Christmas holidays of 1917, my father, who had returned from Liverpool where he was doing duty as a Special on the docks - that was how he served His Majesty for a while in 1916 and 1917 - enlisted my aid to do a bit of stocktaking in the Foundry Store and premises of Sir John Keane where he was employed as storekeeper and weighmaster. I did not miss the chance of doing a thorough search of the huge store. In the course of my stocktaking activities I discovered quite a store of gelignite as well as shotgun cartridges, but no guns or arms of any description. I checked over this stuff with my father and duly entered amounts in stock book. Thrilled at my discovery, I duly reported to Captain Jack O'Brien and company quartermaster Willie Kennedy. We laid our plans to secure this stuff, but decided to delay action until I had been back at school for a fortnight Meantime, I made a careful map of store interior, indicating clearly where gelignite and cartridges were kept and marked clearly the nearest point of entrance - a large skylight in the store roof about eight feet from floor.

On a Saturday night the job was to be done. Earlier that evening I had called to see my father at the foundry and found an excuse to send him out for a few moments to see P. Walsh, a local merchant, about the weighing of some corn. Left alone inside the foundry, I opened back the catch bolt securing the skylight on the inside, leaving the window itself

closed down. I was sitting inside innocently reading a newspaper by the fire in his office on my father's return and I waited to accompany him home from his work. That night, I made certain to stay in at home and to go to bed before my father. I slept little as I could not keep my mind off the little drama that was taking place that night under my remote control.

Next morning, 20 minutes before first Mass time (I was never so early before) I was waiting on the stairs of the organ gallery. Along comes Kennedy and 'Jody' Walsh. Kennedy stayed beside me, Walsh moving on to sing in the choir. I knew by the look on Kennedy's face that he was bursting with news. Yes, 120 sticks of gelignite and 200 cartridges approx. - a fine haul. Everything carried out with only one hitch. They climbed on the roof, entered by the skylight, using a rope ladder to drop down and re-ascend. Retreating after the job down by the railway station, a black figure showed up suddenly in their path. Captain O'Brien, whose sight was none too good - he was known as "Boogie-Bog" among the men - was startled and raised his gun, calling out a challenge. There was no reply, but a laugh from Joe Kelleher by his side, who recognised the shadow as a mule, reassured him. For long after, mention of a mule on duty was enough to rile the poor short-sighted captain.

Among those who took part in that operation were Jack and Jim O'Brien, Walsh, Kennedy and Kelliher. Strangely enough, the loss of the gelignite and ammunition was not discovered for a long time afterwards until the next stocktaking, I believe. This was a tribute to the slickness with which the job was carried out.

By March 1918, the Cappoquin Company numbered 120. Its

officers now were: Jack O'Brien, captain; M.J. Walsh, 1st Lieutenant; Jim O'Brien, 2nd Lieutenant, and William Kennedy, quartermaster. I had transferred from Boy Scouts to Volunteers in January, being now 17½ years of age and old enough for soldiering (within the meaning of the Conscription Act). I brought along with me an assorted armoury - a Winchester sporting rifle, an old pin-fire revolver, bullets of many calibres of heavy lead type and a sword bayonet. The latter was presented to me when I was Boy Scout captain, by one of my Boy Scouts - Declan Fitzgerald, a young brother of Jim Fitzgerald, the reservist who trained the National Volunteers pre 1914. The latter brought it home from France as a souvenit. Declan stole it from him and bestowed it on me. Later in 1918, this same Declan deserted from the Scouts and joined the English army as a drummer boy. I suppose he could not help the bugle in the blood of the militia breed. Incidentally, four or five of our "conscript" Volunteers, including two brothers named McGrath, also deserted about this time and joined the English army. It was August 1918 when the German armies were weakening and the Yanks were coming and an Allied Victory was in sight. Significantly enough, those who leaped on the band-wagon like this were <u>all</u> employees in some form or another of the local 'gentry'.

Early in 1918, too, a branch of Cumann na mBan was formed in Cappoquin. It was almost as strong as the Volunteer Company. Its officers were:- Mary Kerfoot, Fanny Lincoln (R.I.P.), Bridie Pigott. They, too, had a room in the Sinn Fein Hall where they trained, learned first aid, made and repaired outfits and equipment for themselves and the Volunteers. Social activities were not neglected either. Irish dancing was practised in the Sinn Fein Hall a few times weekly by the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan and an odd scout. Concerts and

sing-songs were of almost nightly occurrence after drill and training. There were several large rooms in the Hall and each body had its own quarters - Sinn Fein Club, Volunteers, Scouts and Cumann na mBan. Gaelic League classes were held in the convent school and were largely attended, the travelling teacher at this time being Tomás de Bhial (R.I.P.)

There was a hurling team of sorts. I had introduced the game into Cappoquin in 1913, but no progress was made here until 1917 when we formed a club, affiliated and rented a small scrubby 'inch' beside Glenshalane River about 1½ miles from town as a playing pitch from Sir John Keane. All the hurlers were Volunteers and the tricolour flew over the pitch entrance whenever a game was played there. In neighbouring Mount Melleray, a strong hurling team had grown up, all Volunteers too. A match was arranged between Melleray and Lismore in support of the National Aid Association (the Fund assisting the dependants and families of the imprisoned rebels). The match was played in Matt Coffey's land at Carrigeen and was the first hurling match ever played in Cappoquin. Witnessed by a large crowd, it was exciting and a bloody affair, Pulling was wild and reckless but honest, and casualties were numerous, especially in the Lismore team owing to the unsuitable pitch (the grass was thick and high) and the awkwardness of the players. Lismore was captained by Jim Madden, who was also the O/C. of the Volunteer company there. A Nenagh man, he had come from University College, Dublin, in 1917, to become a lay Secondary Teacher at the C.B.S. where he tutored me in Latin, English and Irish. He was a zealous Volunteer officer and kind for him as a Tipperary man a fine hurling full-back. He was the first Volunteer officer whom I saw wearing uniform.

In May 1918, there was a big mobilisation of the West

Waterford Battalion Volunteers. Cappoquin Company marched out from Cappoquin on Saturday night early, moving east to Modeligo where they halted. An R.I.C. patrol of three followed them later on bicycles. I had delayed in Cappoquin after the main body. Noting R.I.C. move, I got my bike, rode rapidly by roundabout way, reached Volunteer Company and warned the officers that the R.I.C. were on their tracks. Shortly after, police came up, rested awhile, chatting to the Volunteers near them. It was a bizarre situation. Finally, the captain fell-in the company, four abreast, officers in the lead and marched off southwards, I cycling behind accompanied by the three R.I.C., pushing their bicycles. After crossing the main Dungarvan road, we headed for the Drom Hills at Ballintaylor. It was now about 1 a.m. A Volunteer (J. Olden, R.I.P.) came back to me, saying that the captain had instructed him to get my bike and return to Cappoquin. Off he cycled and then the R.I.C. jumped on their bikes and off after him - for what reason God alone knows. I took Olden's place in the ranks and continued on the long, long, weary march. Reaching Ballintaylor Wood (after a 14-mile march) we rested under the trees. All the others had brought large rations; I had none. However, Jim Brien and Joe Kelliher shared with me hard-boiled eggs cold, with bread and butter and bully beef. While others dozed and slept, we lit a small wood fire and stretched around it yarning and singing. We were very young.

Dawn about 5 a.m. brought cold and weariness. Sentries had been posted round the camp and the sight of the short Lee Enfield rifles which they carried thrilled me to the core. This was the real thing, military exercises under war conditions. At 6 a.m. a bugle sounded and then we fell-in company by company - Lismore under Captain Jim Madden,

Appendix 6

National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8

Form to be completed and inserted in the original record

in place of each part abstracted

(i) **Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed:** WS 1741/13.

(ii) **How many documents have been abstracted:** 2pp

(iii) **The date of each such document:** 19 August 1958

(iv) **The description of each document:**

WS 1741 Michael V O'Dwyer

named individual p 31 at p 32

(Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents).

(v) **Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:**

(c) Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.

(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)

J Moloney

Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

Tallow under Hourigan, Cappoquin under O'Brien, Dungarvan, Clashmore and Ardmore and Ballinameela - almost 1000 men, all told. We practised extended order drill with attack and defence tactics on the great bare moor, nearby known as Toor. Later we marched off to early Mass. I well remember the way we crowded the little gallery of the country church at Toor and the wide-open wonder of the local people as they gazed on the rifles and equipment. Some of the officers wore uniform and carried revolvers in holsters and some of the riflemen noisily brought their guns with them into the little church. The priest, a tall heavy old man, looked on with obvious disapproval on this strange military congregation of his, but said nothing. There was no sermon and the Mass, I remember, was surprisingly short. Possibly the priest, as well as ourselves, felt it was dangerous to tarry in such circumstances.

After Mass, back again to manoeuvres and battle drill on the moor until about 1 p.m. when we dismissed for another meal (our second in camp). After dinner, such as it was, each company formed up and headed off in various directions each to its own home. The Tallow, Lismore and Cappoquin companies were together as far as Geosh Bridge. Here an incident occurred that gave a rude shock to my sense of discipline. We halted for a brief rest here. Some Volunteers sought admission to 'Kate Kenna's', the pub at the Bridge. There was no response. of Tallow Company thereupon drew his revolver, kicked the door and threatened to shoot up the place if he was not admitted. His bullying display disgusted me. The intervention of some Volunteer officers from Lismore and Cappoquin prevented from disgracing himself and the Volunteers. We resumed our march and the last I saw of the Tallow Company off over the hills north west to the River Blackwater. Shortly after, was arrested and charged with attempt-

ing to shoot an invalided Tallow ex-soldier named Pender in a drunken brawl in a pub yard, and got a term in gaol. A year later, he was expelled from the Volunteers for thefts and robberies which he carried out under the guise of raids for arms in the Strancally and Ballinatray districts on the west bank of the Blackwater. Banished from West Waterford, he took refuge with relatives near Skibbereen. Arrested there by British troops for having some military uniform or something stolen, he was tried at the Cork Assizes. He recognised the Court, publicly recanted his Sinn Fein associations and pledged himself to be henceforth a loyal British subject. Even the stern British Judge commented on the abject figure he cut in the dock as he sentenced him to twelve months in gaol. Years later, turned up as a dangerous criminal and he got 20 years penal servitude under Free State regime for armed robbery. He reappeared in the Tallow district during World War II Emergency. Incredible though it may seem, he served in the L.S.F. and L.D.F. during that period and tried to wipe out his criminal past, living alone in a lonely cottage in . Here he died of T.B. sometime after the war and was buried by the charity of the Local Defence Force.

In this autumn of 1918, I was myself tried before a Volunteer courtmartial for an offence against good order and discipline. The Boy Scouts had put in a stock of good things in preparation for a party in their quarters in Sinn Fein Hall. With the scouts were associated some of the Cumann na mBan. Being somewhat peeved at not being asked to the scouts soiree a few of us - Jim O'Brien, Joe Kelliher and I - broke into the scouts' locked quarters late the night before the party and looted their stuff. Not content with that destruction, we got a large blackboard from Cumann na mBan quarters (used for instruction purposes), erected it in centre of scouts' quarters and piled their property around it in a confused heap. On the board we traced uncomplimentary likenesses of a boy

scout and a Cumann na mBan member, and beneath some lascivious limericks reflecting on both bodies. It was a bit of vandalism all right and a disgraceful display of blackguardism by young Volunteers. Next evening, the discovery of the ransacked Scout Hall caused a sensation and the bawdy writings on the board roused fierce anger. At first, there was a suspicion that pro-British riff-raff from the lanes locally had broken it and caused the mess. But Tom Lincoln (afterwards company intelligence officer) whose sister, Fanny, was a Cumann na mBan officer, never let up in his investigations until he discovered the men responsible. Reporting his findings to the company captain, we were duly notified to attend important mobilisation of whole company. We had no idea that we were for it. The company paraded in the basement of Sinn Fein Hall at 9 p.m., about 60 strong, standing to attention in double ranks facing each other across a large room. The captain and 1st Lieut., very regimental, occupied the middle of the floor. The O/C. then announced that the company had been mobilised to hear a serious charge of indiscipline and misconduct against three Volunteers - James O'Brien (Lieut.), Joseph Kelliher and Vincent O'Donoghue. I felt cold and weak; my head swam, and I am sure my legs shook. The captain ordered the three of us out of the ranks. We stood in an agony of suspense before him. He said that from evidence supplied him, he charged us with blackguardly conduct unbefitting Volunteers and with grossly insulting the Cumann ma mBan. He then set out our delinquencies and called on Vol. Thomas Lincoln to stand forth as Prosecutor. It was a peculiar courtmartial. The air was charged with tension and drama. Then the O/C., turning to his culprit brother (Jim O'Brien), asked him had he anything to say. He shook his head. Kelliher did likewise. Then the O/C. directed the question to me. "I have" said I.

"The charge is true, I did it". There was a gasp from my two comrades and a low murmur through the ranks. "You admit it", said the captain. "I do", said I. Then Jim Brien spoke up: "I made him do it, I was the leader". Another murmur from the ranks at this confession of their 2nd Lieutenant. "I was in it, too" admitted Kelliher. "That ends the case, I suppose", says the O/C., "except to sentence the guilty". "It does not", interrupted Lincoln. "Who wrote the dirty lines about the Cumann na mBan?" Lincoln was very bitter and wanted the most drastic action. "I wrote them", said I. "But I dictated them and made him do it" said Jim Brien. Lincoln looked at me in pained surprise and angry disgust - "so I was the low ruffian that insulted his sister". It was obvious that he had not expected that. "They should not be kept in the Volunteers any longer" said Lincoln. A murmur of disapproval here and there in the ranks gave me the first gleam of hope. "Well, men, what do you say?" asked the O/C. A tall young Volunteer, M.J. Sargent, spoke up: "Give them a chance", said he, "they did not intend any harm" "and though they did a nasty bit of blackguarding, they have admitted it honestly. Besides, too, the three of them are men who have given great service as active Volunteers already and ye know that well too" says Sargent, addressing the officers. His words were received with general approval, as Sargent was held in great esteem as an older Volunteer and athlete and, moreover, it was known that he and Fanny Lincoln were "great" with each other. After the three of us (culprits) had expressed abject sorrow for our misconduct, we were sharply reprimanded by the O/C. in the presence of the whole company. The judgment was that each of us be reduced to the lowest rank (J.O'Brien was a 2nd Lieutenant, and Kelliher and I N.C.Os.) and we were forbidden to enter the Scouts and

Cumann na mBan quarters at any time. I felt in disgrace for a while, but shortly after that, my active association with the Cappoquin Volunteer Company came to an end.

In July 1918, I again sat for scholarship examinations in University College, Cork. This time I was awarded a Waterford Co. Council University scholarship, having got first place in the examination. I was elated beyond measure. I moved to Cork in October and signed on at University College, Cork, for engineering. All along, I had intended studying medicine and had even made up Latin specially for that purpose. But, meeting an old Dungarvan school chum now doing Engineering at U.C.C., I was encouraged by him to switch to engineering. As well, he introduced me to the O/C. of the U.C.C. Volunteer company and guaranteed my bona fides as a Volunteer of almost two years service in West Waterford. From the Cappoquin company I brought along an assorted array of rifles and revolver ammunition, nearly 150 rounds in all, which I gave to Jerry Wall, Quartermaster of 'A' (U.C.C.) Company, for the company armoury. I was much surprised when Wall offered to pay me for the munitions. I refused, of course, and then it seemed Wall's turn to be surprised. I kept, for my own private ends, a revolver and some .38 ammunition for it. The Winchester rifle with ammunition I left to the Cappoquin Volunteer company.

I had barely joined my new Volunteer unit when I was struck down with the "Great Flu". It was late in October 1918 and I was among the first victims in Cork. Despite touching death's door for a week or two (tem. 105° F. for 3 days) copious quinine saved me and I was out and around again for the historic Armistice night of 1918. It was a rowdy night in Cork, especially in the King St. (now McCurtain St.)

area. Intoxicated Tommies from Victoria Barracks whooped it up in style with beshawled dames whose husbands, brothers and sons were 'doing their bit' overseas. It was woe betide young men in 'civvies' who ventured through King St. or its environs as the 'swaddies' used belts and 'trench' tools of various kinds to belabour all men not in khaki - who were, in their vernacular, either 'shinners', 'shirkers' or pro-Germans. The Palace Theatre was almost exclusively patronised by the 'swaddies' (khaki-clad soldiers) and on that account was usually given a wide berth by us, not alone because we disliked the smelly variety programme (pale imitation of smutty London music halls), but also for reasons of discretion, A visit to the Palace often meant a brush with the soldiers and their lady auxiliaries.

In the latter half of 1918, Cork Harbour was the head-quarters of the U.S.A. war fleet. Thousands of American naval men flooded Cork city. Many of these were of Irish blood or extraction. I had a good opportunity of studying them as they frequented my 'digs', a restaurant and fruit shop in Old Georges St. opposite the G.P.O. U.S.A. non-coms. and ratings came in daily to regale themselves with strawberries and cream and other delicacies. Their pay and allowances were then huge, by British standards, and they spent money like water on all kinds of luxuries throughout the city and thereby incurred the fierce envy and hate of the poor scraggy English Tommy with his 'bob' a day. Dames follow the dollars and the arrival of the Yankee sailors caused a massed swing-over by Cork belles from their 'Tommy' sweethearts to the dollar-flush Yanks. The Tommies reacted as soldier men will. They waged bloody and brutal gang war on the U.S. sailors. So fierce grew the feud between them that the U.S. Naval Command had to put Cork city out of bounds for its sailors. But to solace the pangs of

frustration of the U.S.A. navy, special trains were daily run in late evening to Cove to accommodate the swarms of love-sick or dollar-sick ladies from the city who yearned for their Yankee sailor boys. Such were things in Cork in late 1918. I often discussed Irish claims to international recognition with these same Yankee sailors. Many were strong in support of Ireland as a small nation, but all expressed a bitter and (to me) insane hate of Germany, and I had to be mighty careful to avoid rousing their hostility by showing any pro-German sentiments.

Of all the U.S.A. forces, I found the Filipinos to be, as a body, the most friendly to the Irish case. These small, hardy, chocolate-coloured U.S. sailors were intensely religious (R.Cs. all and generously provided with beads, medals, emblems, etc.), spoke Spanish mostly among themselves and seemed, surprisingly so to me, to be a very intelligent and highly civilised people. They were very interested in Ireland and eager to learn the true history of our bloody protest against British rule in the thick of the Great War in 1916. They never seemed to mix with the white Yankee sailor - evidently Uncle Sam's colour bar extended to this virile lovable/Catholic Oriental race who seemed to owe so much to their centuries of Spanish over-lordship.

The occasional British subaltern who dropped in now and then to Fitzgerald's for a high tea was aloof and formal. Attempts to get him to open up on war or on Irish topics seemed to scare him into uneasy silence as if he was in mortal dread of D.O.R.A. (The Defence of the Realm Act). I can only recall one deep discussion with a Scotch captain who used to come fairly regularly and always alone for an evening meal. He showed considerable understanding of the Irish question

and admired Ireland's tenacity and devotion to freedom. Moreover, he was sympathetic to her national claims and hoped that she would secure representation at the Peace Conference after the war - at this time the war was drawing to an end and victory for the Allies (France, U.S.A. and Britain) was assured.

In March 1918, John E. Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, died, and there was a by-election in his constituency of Waterford city. Sinn Fein nominated Dr. White, local M.D., as its candidate, and the Constitutionalist Irish Party chose William Redmond, son of the dead leader, as their champion. At the time he was serving in France as an Infantry captain, but returned to fight the election personally. It was the last kick of the dying "Home Rule upon the Statute Book" Irish Parliamentary Party. The election was fiercely fought and was marked with much rioting, intimidation and factionism. The Redmond Brigade in Waterford had its great support then and always in the Ballybricken pig-buyers and their ilk, and the soldiers in khaki and their friends and relations. Waterford had ever been a strong English bastion in Ireland. It was to prove so now, Redmond's meetings all featured the Union Jack and loyalty to Britain, and to hell with all Irish rebels and pro-Germans. These meetings were well protected with R.I.C. cordons and military squads to see that law and order were maintained (sic!) Meetings in support of Dr. White were at first attacked by mobs of yelling males in uniform and in 'civvies' and hordes of shrieking women. Sinn Fein acted promptly. Volunteers from Waterford County, Cork City, Clare and Tipperary, all under the command of Mick Brennan (Meelick, Co. Clare), were drafted into Waterford City. The Cappoquin Company sent a dozen Volunteers down by train to protect

Sinn Fein in the Urbs Intacta. Headquarters were set up in the Sinn Fein Hall in Thomas Street. Hundreds of Volunteers, almost exclusively armed with cudgels, bivouacked in Waterford and environs, marched and counter-marched to the Sinn Fein meetings, guarding them from interference and attack. The militant Redmondite faction fiercely resented the invasion of the 'Urbs Intacta' and assailed the 'invaders' savagely with all kinds of arms and missiles. Some of the Volunteer officers carried revolvers which they used in emergency. The R.I.C. tried to disarm them and to protect and aid the Redmondite cohorts. Result was a confused series of riots, skirmishes, arrests and bloody and brutal street-fighting. When after a week or so of this tumultuous electioneering, the smoke of battle cleared, Captain William Redmond had won a historic contest by a few hundred votes. The 'Daily Sketch' described it as a 'Great British Victory in Ireland'. And such it was, though it proved to be a pyrrhic victory indeed. At the time, none could blame Poor Old Britannia for its jubilation.

Redmond's Waterford victory was the only consoling bright spot for the British Empire in an era of dark despondency when General Gough and the Fifth Army were fleeing in Flanders before the last great desperate German onslaught, and War Premier Lloyd George was wailing across the Atlantic: "Our backs are to the wall! O, Uncle Sam, save us or we perish!" It was the time, too, of the conscription threat.

Dr. White's defeat in Waterford was Sinn Fein's first setback - in the previous year it had swept from election victory to election victory - North Roscommon, South Longford East Clare and Kilkenny City. Coming, as it did, it encouraged the British to persist with their conscription plans. Shortly afterwards, in a grand sweep to leave militant

resistance in Ireland leaderless. De Valera and numbers of prominent Sinn Feiners were seized on a charge of complicity in a German Plot, transported to England and there imprisoned. They were never brought to trial as the plot was 'bogus' - a big "frame-up". Our dozen true men returned to Cappoquin from the election wars in Waterford, sad, tired, hungry and discomfited. Few were at the train to meet us as we arrived and dispersed to our homes to nurse our bruises and wounds and disappointments. That we left our wooden weapons behind us in Waterford shows how disconsolate we felt about the whole sorry expedition.

Abour the same time in the spring of 1918, I was involved in an incident which reflected little credit on those of the Volunteers concerned. A Cappoquin merchant and auctioneer, an aged Protestant Imperialist and Orangeman - one C.A. Stanley, whose son C.O. Stanley is today (1955) one of Ireland's leading industrialists, maraging director of Pye, Ltd., and director of several other radio and textile firms - used to travel occasionally to Cork by the Rosslare Boat Express which, at that time, stopped only at Lismore. Old Stanley had driven by pony trap to catch the morning train at Lismore. A few of us, aware of his movements, planned to ambush him on his return trip in the evening along the Kilbree road home. After darkness, three of us set out (James O'Brien, Joe Kelliher and I) and lay waiting along the rail embankment which skirts the road.

At the expected time, a pony-trap, driven rapidly, approached. As we handled the already-prepared sods of earth we noted that the driver was alone. As he passed our spot, he was greeted with a fusilade of heavy earthen sods. The pony was struck, the car was struck, the driver was hit more than once. Then the trap pulled up, a small black figure stood up

and shouted: "You ruffians! Would you stone a priest? I hope you'll all be conscripted! I am a priest, you blackguards! Ye'll pay for this, ye cowards!" We were rooted to the ground with fear and remorse. Our legs felt too weak to run as we were as if petrified. I recognised the voice. It was Rev. John O'Shea, P.P. of Ballinameela, and a great Sinn Fein stalwart, who had already attracted the hostile attentions of the RIC. and English authorities by his open encouragement of the Volunteers - he had actually marched at their head at parades in his own parish, like Fr. Murphy of Wexford fame. Moreover, he was a well-loved and much-admired priest who, some years before, had actually been decorated by King Edward VII for his great gallantry in manning a boat with some others in a howling gale to go to the rescue of a wrecked ship in Ardmore Bay. And this was the man whom we had so cowardly assaulted! My greatest fear was that he recognised us. As we made our way fearfully and secretly back by the railway line, we upbraided each other for having done such a monstrous deed as to assault and batter a Catholic priest. We quarreled bitterly. O'Brien was very silent - he was not a good practising Catholic and often missed Mass. He was very touchy, too, on this matter, and once he struck me viciously and we fought when I told him that 'he would not believe a priest". As I slipped in quietly by the back door of my home that night O'Brien whispered mockingly to me: "Don't go to sleep or you'll wake up in cinders in the morning". I was not amused. I was so scared and full of remorse that I could not sleep. My conscience was torturing me for what I had done. The only way to absolve my guilt was to see Rev. Fr. O'Shea and to tell him all. But I never got the courage to face that great little priest with the facts of the 'ambush'. He went to his grave, I'm sure, never knowing that it was three Irish

Volunteers who attacked him so treacherously in the dark of night.

At home convalescent from the 'Flu, and on holidays (Christmas) in Cappoquin during the historic general election of December 1918, I found the Sinn Fein Club a hive of activity. Meetings were frequent in the district, the Sinn Fein members providing the speakers and organisers while the Volunteers provided a guard and protective force. In the Hall 'twas amusing to see the way in which some of the individual Volunteers embellished the cudgel with which he provided himself as a weapon of defence (and offence) - he carved designs on its thick business end and the more blood-thirsty ones decorated it with flat round-headed nails like the sole of a hob-nailed boot; others still bored a narrow tunnel in the thick end and loaded it with lead to make it more lethal. What weapons to achieve the freedom of Ireland! The spirit of factionism was still strong in Irish politics even in 1918. Many thousands of young Irishmen really believed that they were fighting for Ireland's liberty when they were bludgeoning the diehard old followers of the Irish Parliamentary Party and their election allies and protectors, the R.I.C. with their batons.

Sinn Fein workers canvassed in person every local voter in support of Cathal Brugha. The Volunteers added to the persuasiveness of the political workers and even the Cumann na mBan, especially among their own families and relatives, helped to drive home the Sinn Fein arguments. In this way, every available vote from the man with any kind of a virile national outlook was secured for Sinn Fein. Cathal Brugha, a Dublin rebel, despite all the disadvantages of being a stranger and unknown to 99.99% of the people of West Waterford, was returned triumphantly by double figures over the wellknown local

standard-bearer of the Irish Party, J.J. O'Shea, Solicitor, Carrick-on-Suir, who, for more than 20 years, had represented this constituency in the British House of Commons. All Ireland did likewise and Sinn Fein swept to an amazing and complete victory. In West Waterford we, the Volunteers, were especially proud of having such a heroic figure as Cathal Brugha, senior Volunteer officer and miraculous survivor of Easter Week, to represent the historic Decies in the First Parliament of the Irish Republic - Dáil Éireann.

A victory celebration was held in Cappoquin on 6th January 1919. Cathal Brugha himself appeared and addressed the joyous crowd who gave him a vociferous welcome. Drawn up before the platform on the Square were the Volunteer companies of Cappoquin and Lismore under their officers, some of whom were in uniform. I well remember Brugha's few sharp and plain words - he had been detained that very morning at Thurles railway station on his trip from Dublin by the R.I.C. but released after a few hours' detention. He said that the people had now by their votes endorsed the Rising of Easter Week, that the work they had then begun would now continue, that the R.I.C. had better understand that they were the armed persecutors of the Irish people and would henceforth be treated as enemy garrison troops. They, Sinn Fein, had now the authority of the Irish people to govern them and that they would do without delay. Brugha's words were significant and prophetic. Dáil Éireann was convened and the Government of the Irish Republic formally set up on 21st January 1919, just two weeks later, and Brugha himself read the Proclamation of our independence.to the world in the Gaelic tongue.

Meantime, I had returned to University College, Cork, and resumed Volunteer service with A/Company, 2nd Battalion,

Cork I Brigade. The company captain was Raymond Kennedy, M.Sc., 1st Lieutenant T. O'Donovan, M.A., O/C. of 2nd Battalion - Sean O'Sullivan; Brigade O/C. Sean Hegarty. At this time, a company numbered about 60, as many of the enthusiastic warriors of the conscription days had retired. The company was organised into sections of 12 or so, each section under a N.C.O. (section commander). Each section was divided into 2 squads each under a squad commander. Each Volunteer had a Volunteer membership card on which was entered amount of weekly subscription (3d). This was usually collected by a section commander preliminary to parades and was to be used for the acquisition of equipment and arms and ammunition. Later on, when the struggle became intense, possession of this card would have been damning, so they were withdrawn from use.

Early in 1919, Cork Prison was full of Sinn Féiners arrested for drilling, wearing uniform, breaking D.O.R.A. regulations, etc. Many were untried. These were allowed to wear their own clothes, receive visitors, letters and parcels and send letters. They depended mostly on parcels of food from outside as prison fare was scanty and bad. The supply of parcels to the Sinn Fein prisoners was arranged by Cork Cumann na mBan. Fitzgerald's restaurant of 104 Old Georges St., where I lodged, collected and made up the parcels and sent them in to the jail. It was the clearing-house outside the jail for the prisoners' supplies. On the staff at Fitzgerald's were Peg Duggan from Blackpool, a prominent officer of Cumann na mBan, and also a McCarthy girl, another member, as well as Kitty Fitzgerald, daughter of the house, who, too, was a zealous worker in Cumann na mBan. According as the prisoners were released, they reported to Fitzgerald's and

many the Volunteer I met there after getting out of gaol. Amongst them I recollect Art O'Donnell, a West Clare man from Carrigaholt, still wearing Volunteer uniform when I met him after serving a term for carrying the "Clareman's Badge" (a revolver); also Seam Moylan, who spent some time in Cork gaol for a drilling offence. Sean in those days was reputed a wild, impulsive madcap who seemed to deliberately court trouble, but he seemed sober and thoughtful enough, belying his reputation, when I met him with others in 104 Old George's Street. In Cork gaol, too, were two Lismore Volunteer officers, Captain J.J. Madden and Lieut. J. Keyes, both of whom had worn uniform the day they paraded their company in Cappoquin to receive Cathal Brugha, T.D. (6.1.1919) They served three months sentences in prison for their vainglorious indiscretion.

Round this time I got news from home that disturbed me somewhat, not that I was entirely unprepared for it. My twin brother, James Ernest, had joined the R.I.C. He had always been a big strong fellow, but, not being over keen on the books, he had never gone to a secondary school, and left National School at 15. He had worked continuously since then on the farm at Sir John Keane's Estate; later at the bacon factory, and during 1918 in the Corn Stores of Paddy Walsh, where his great frame and enormous strength were a big asset. During conscription crisis of 1918, my father had encouraged him to join the R.I.C. rather than have him forced into the British army, but he would not be accepted then, being too young. My father had persisted, arguing that an R.I.C. man's life would be better for him than handling huge sacks of corn. At any rate, now with the Great War over, he was up in the Depot (at 18½, like his father before him) doing his training. A letter from my

mother told me that he had ventured out to Dublin City on an afternoon with another recruit from the Depot. They had been accosted, stopped and searched by a band of men in the North Circular Road who warned them to quit the R.I.C. or they would get no other chance if caught a second time. My brother was so scared, it seems, that he never left the R.I.C. Depot on recreation out to the city again. His training completed, he was posted to Aughnacloy, Co. Tyrone, where he served until the R.I.C. were disbanded in 1922.

I wrote back to mother and told her to warn her R.I.C. son never to write to me or never to mention that he had a brother in Cork at U.C.C. Furthermore, I wanted to hear no mention of him whatsoever in any of her letters, and I never referred to him at all. I was a bit alarmed about my own extraordinary position. Here was I now in Cork, an active member of the Irish Volunteers (now the I.R.A.), while my twin brother was in the R.I.C. Force in Ulster, and my father, an ex-sergeant, R.I.C., living on his pension at home in Cappoquin. There were two other boys in the family, but both were very young (one 8, the other 13), so they were unaware of the divided loyalties and mixed worries of the O'Donoghue household.

The very day that Dáil Éireann met and formally ratified the Declaration of the Irish Republic by the men of Easter Week, the Solohead ambush in Tipperary occurred. The next day the gruesome details of the shooting of the two R.I.C. men was splashed on the Cork Examiner. The public were shocked. Even those of us in the Volunteers army were stunned with the ruthlessness of the affair. I well remember that night in Fitzgerald's - the man of the house, Jack Fitzgerald, middle-aged and a fanatical A.O.H. leader, in a fury denouncing the

"murderers"; his wife, equally as fanatical for the Irish Republic, vehemently denying that the 'boys' would or could do such a terrible thing, and I arguing, but without conviction, that the attackers had no alternative under the circumstances and, anyhow, that I doubted very much if they were Irish Volunteers at all. But Solohead had a profound effect on Ireland in general and on the Volunteer force in particular. It was borne in on us that the days of parading and pageantry were over and that stern work now would be the portion of the active Volunteer.

The spectacular rescue of Denis McNelis, a Donegal man working in the Cork Shell Factory, a Volunteer who resisted arrest to the point of shooting two R.I.C. officers, and who lay in a cell in Cork Prison almost assuredly awaiting the hangman - from the threatening gallows and the manner of its doing, amazed the country by its efficiency. It gave a tremendous boost, too, to our Volunteer morale. Now we could do things which seemed impossible. The status of the Volunteers as a military body grew enormously in Irish eyes. Solohead and the McNelis rescue convinced the nation that the Volunteers were in deadly earnest and that the proclamation of a democratic Irish Republican Government on 21st January 1919, was no mere display of histrionics.

The British army in Cork, the Great War being now over, began to collect and dispose of its surplus war material. A quantity of mechanical transport stuff, mostly push bikes and some motor bikes, were stored in Marsh's auction yards behind Union Quay R.I.C. Barracks, to be disposed of by public auction to dealers. The I.R.A. learnt of this and, so as to give the Volunteers a little training and practice at something more serious than the usual drill, arranged for the seizure of the vehicles. It would, moreover, provide many Volunteers

with 'free' bikes, and 'blood' them for more dangerous operations later on. The Volunteers were to converge on the army store in twos and threes quietly and inconspicuously, they would find the entrance gates thrown open at 7.30 p.m. exactly, by a special party detailed for that special purpose. Things panned out as planned; gates opened, and for 15 minutes or so, parties of cyclists emerged and coolly dispersed in all directions. The fact that some of the machines were in poor shape and none carried lamps was somewhat embarrassing. An amusing sequel was the stopping by R.I.C. of two boys using unlighted bikes who were arrested and later charged with the larceny; they were not Volunteers and had apparently got the machines after they had been abandoned as unroadworthy by some of our lads. I think they were both fined a few pound: At that rate, this 'exploit' of ours lost much of its value in our eyes when we saw our big 'raid' treated as petty larceny by the police authorities. We kind of felt ourselves and our operation treated with disdain. It is doubtful if the R.I.C. ascribed this 'job' to the Volunteers at all.

The University students club, in Maylor St., Cork, was a hive of activity all this time. Here, ostensibly, students spent their hours of recreation at billiards, cards, boxing, gymnasium, amateur theatricals, Irish classes and cultural activities and other innocent pastimes. It was for male University students only. Actually, the whole club programme was a cover for Volunteer activities and training. On two week nights regularly, A/Company mobilised there and practised close order drill, rifle drill (with wooden dummies) and bayonet practice. These drills were held in the large central hall at the rear normally used for dancing and boxing practice. On those nights the club was entirely in Volunteer hands and a double guard checked entrance at main door and

also at second entrance to rear main hall. None were admitted except they were identified and passed by guard at main outer door. The full company now numbered about 60 and gradual defections occurred as the martial and national ardour of an occasional University Volunteer cooled. Rarely was the whole company mobilised in toto for these indoor activities.

Once only, to my recollection, was the full company assembled in Maylor St. Club. That was on the occasion of the taking of the oath. It was a very formal and very solemn business. The company was paraded in Main Hall and all exits were then locked. The Battalion O/C., Sean O'Sullivan, appeared with Battalion Adjutant and addressed the Volunteers who were standing rigidly to attention. He said that Dáil Éireann had set up the Government of the Irish Republic and that the Volunteers were now and henceforth the army of the Republic and, as such, it was now incumbent on each Volunteer who wished to remain in the Volunteer army to take an oath of allegiance to the Republic. The form of oath he pronounced as follows:-

> "I swear by the Almighty God that I will give true faith and allegiance to the Irish Republic and to Dáil Éireann which is the government of the Irish Republic and to defend the Irish Republic from all enemies both foreign amd domestic and I take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion - So Help me God".

The O/C. sat in uniform behind a table on which lay before him a Lee-Enfield Service rifle. The Volunteers approached the table, four at a time, each laid his hand on the rifle which Commandant O'Sullivan, standing, held stretched horizontally across his breast. Then, slowly and solemnly, they repeated the words of the Oath after the O/C. At length, the ceremony was completed and the Volunteers, now the Irish Republican

Army, A/Company, 2nd Battalion, Cork I Brigade, were dismissed. All were sworn and no one declined. The touch of the rifle and the solemn individuality of the swearing-in impressed me, and I believe the others too, profoundly. Henceforth, we felt, as it were, strong and perfect soldiers of the Irish Republic.

For long, the club in Maylor St. had been used for the making of explosives and crude bombs. These were of the small canister or jam-jar type containing sulphuric acid (in phial) and explosive chemicals - chemical nitrate and chlorate and ammonium chlorate. Ray Kennedy, Company O/C. was a M.Sc. and a demonstrator in chemistry at U.C.C. and he personally directed and supervised this work. I do not know if these chemical weapons were ever tested for efficiency, but I think the passing of the conscription threat ended 'research' in this direction.

One night, however, the company was suddenly mobilised. All the chemical armament in Maylor St. had to be shifted at once, as information had come from R.I.C. sources that the place was to be raided. For two hours or more, we smuggled jam-jar bombs and other lethal contrivances of mysterious construction beneath our overcoats out of Maylor St. and down to the Thomas Ashe Hall on Father Mathew Quay where they were received by battalion officers. What happened them after that I never knew, but I think they were dumped in some dark region and forgotten ever after, as they never came into use in activities against enemy forces.

In 1919, every Volunteer in A/Company was either a hurler or a Gaelic footballer, and most of them played games in U.C.C. teams. At this time, no member of a rugby club or no non-G.A.A. man was to be found in A/Company. Later, in the winter of 1920, two rugby players joined, one of whom - David Reynolds - subsequently became Major-General Reynolds of the Free State Army 1923.

In May 1919, the Fitzgibbon Cup Competition was played in Dublin. The Cork team, on which I was a substitute, returned by train on the evening of 19th May. At Knocklong station we were startled out of our loafing and dozing by the deafening noise of shooting in a carriage further down the stationary train. In a second, all was confusion and near panic. The shooting continued, more intense and more widespread all around. Looking out of the window I saw three men move rapidly across platform to entrance gate, two swinging revolvers. One turned and fired past the window towards end of train. The doors on off-side of train were pulled open and passengers jumped wildly down on track and scattered to right and left behind walls, houses and fences. An R.I.C. man crouched beside the signal cabin and kept on firing his carbine in the direction of the exit gate through which the three men had gone. After several minutes the shooting died down and, little by little, the frightened passengers ventured back to the train, we - the U.C.C. - among the rest. Chaos was general and no one knew what had happened. An hour or so later when the last of the passengers had drifted back, the train resumed its journey. When it stopped in Kilmallock we heard the rumour that several policemen had been killed. On the way to Cork we talked in hushed voices of all the shooting, but we never knew until we read the "Cork Examiner" next day that we had witnessed the rescue of Sean Hogan from his R.I.C. escort bringing him to Cork Prison. I think we felt rather abashed at our panicky behaviour in scuttling from the train blindly. We certainly showed little of our Volunteer training and I was ashamed of my weakness at being so easily stampeded. It just showed that panic is contagious. It taught us a salutary lesson Several of those young Cork athletes who fled so sheepishly that night afterwards won high distinction, some of them as flying column officers in the War of Independence which was just beginning.

The Knocklong exploit brought the rigours of Martial Law to South Tipperary. As usual, I cycled to my grandmother's home at Curraheen, Thurles, to spend some of my summer holidays from the College. I travelled over the Knockmealdown mountains via Melleray, Newcastle, Clonmel, Fethard and Ballinure. Near Newcastle, I hid in a wall some seditious stuff which I carried including Volunteer membership card and a few copies of An tOglach which I wanted to give to my uncle. I was glad I did, especially as I recovered them all on the return journey. At Curraheen, I soon fitted into the familiar summer routine of work on the farm or on the bog with my uncle by day. Every evening after 6 p.m. I met the other Tipperary youngsters at the ball alley near Horse and Jockey. Several evenings around dusk, my young comrades, with whom I hurled and played handball, moved off leaving me alone. Then, one night, I came across about 80 men amongst them my friends, lined up in formation in the ball alley, and being drilled by Jimmy "Jerry", later Colonel "Jerry" Ryan, T.D., Mid-Tipperary. No notice was taken of my intrusion. Afterwards, I confided to Dinny Heany, a Tipperary scholar in U.C.D. and later I.R.A. Engineer in Mid-Tipperary, a friend and fellow undergraduate, that I too was in the I.R.A. in Cork. Thereafter, when the boys assembled at the Jockey Cross at night, yarning, whistling and singing rebel songs, I found a ready welcome. Already within two months, the ballad "The Rescue of Sean Hogan from the Station of Knocklong" was first favourite at every crossroads gathering in Tipperary and I felt thrilled as I listened to those country lads lustily singing it and I tried to learn the words and the air which, truth to tell, was very difficult for me, having no ear for music.

Returning home to Cappoquin from Curraheen, I left in the early morning intending to make a detour from Ballinure

to visit Dualla graveyard to see the grave of Pierce McCann, T.D., who had died from prison hardships early in 1919. At the graveyard entrance I ran into a big squad of armed British soldiers on bicycles who were engaged in enforcing martial law in South Tipperary. The officer, a Lieutenant, halted and questioned me. His curiosity aroused on learning that I was cycling to a place, my home, as far away as 50 miles over the mountains in West Waterford, he ordered an N.C.O. to search me, my bike and my 'portmanteau' on the bike. This was done most carefully, but nothing incriminating was found. It was my first experience of being searched by English military and my main feeling was one of relief at having been so lucky as to have discarded my seditious documents away beyond Newcastle coming to Tipperary. After being detained for 20 minutes or so, I was allowed to proceed on my way which I did via Cashel. The soldiers moved away in the opposite direction towards Ballinure.

Some years afterwards, when I met the famous Sean Hogan himself at the Clarence Hotel in Dublin in May 1922, it dawned on me why the officer was so keen in his searching scrutiny that day in Dualla. I bore a marked physical resemblance to Hogan in face and figure and colouring. We were of the same age approximately, and both of us sported a heavy crop of light brown (auburn or 'foxy) hair, and both had very fresh feeckled oval faces. But Hogan was taller by at least two inches.

Back in Cork again, October 1919, the drilling and training of A/Company went on apace. Now we practised more field movements in the open country, learning laboriously the tactics of attack and defence in various types of terrain - wooded, hilly, level etc. Every Sunday was devoted to a full day's military exercises. After early Mass in St.

Augustine's (the favourite church with University Volunteers) we packed a heavy packet of bread, butter and cold meat for lunch and set out for the Viaduct on the Bandon road. From there, scouts directed us to the rendezvous, usually three or more miles away in the rolling hills to the south. After a few hours drill and manoeuvres we fell out for lunch. After grub and a short rest and smoke, we resumed our programme of military training. It was 100% realistic. Every order had to be obeyed promptly and completely. We were practising war and lacked only firearms and the presence of a real enemy. Woe betide the I.R.A. man who shirked throwing himself into a boggy drain when he was ordered to take cover, or to roll over a rough fence on the attack, and the thoughless 'rooky' who threw himself heels-facing-enemy when on retreat never again made such a fool of himself. This wearisome monotonous field routine was occasionally brightened by some target practice with both rifle and small arms. Only small calibre stuff (.22) was used in practising rifle shooting, and I.R.A. men carrying revolvers, pistols or automatic weapons were not encouraged to expend precious ammunition in target shooting. Every round was valuable, as replacement was difficult and improbable if not actually impossible with some of the weapons of rare type and vintage.

In my new digs at 31 Grand Parade, there were five active I.R.A. college students of A/Company. Hence it was convenient that the practice rifles should be temporarily kept at this address. I recollect one Saturday night when Jack Daly and myself went across city to Sunday's Well on the north side, where Simon Moynihan, at that time company quartermaster, lodged. I carried back two rifles beneath my overcoat through the streets of Cork to our digs at

31 Grand Parade, while Jacky Daly, with loaded revolver ready to deal with any hold-up, escorted me every step of the way. The following Sunday morning, two of us, Jerome Twohill and I, escorted by four armed A/Company men, brought the rifles in like fashion to our rendezvous near Ballinhassig. In the late evening, after training in rifle drill and target shooting the arms were brought back to 31 in similar manner and, later in the week, returned to the quartermaster. Different Volunteers were used from time to time in transferring arms like this through the city. It was a very valuable training tactic, teaching coolness and resource in moving through a city swarming with uniformed enemy forces always on the alert. It bred confidence and steadiness in the Volunteer, raised his morale and hardened his fighting value in the bloodier work which lay ahead.

Strolling through Winthrop St., Cork, in June 1919, I recognised a tall dark young man hurrying by, it was Jim Madden, my late teacher at C.B.S., Lismore. Over a drink in Wren's, he told me he was returning from Dublin Sinn Fein Headquarters. He carried a parcel of I.R.A. Official Organ 'An tOglach' and was heading for the Bandon railway on his way to Kinsale. He was now Volunteer organiser in West Cork having been moved from West Waterford a little earlier. We discussed I.R.A. affairs generally in West Waterford, Cork City and West Cork. That very morning a man's body riddled with bullets had been found in a marsh near Douglas on Cork city boundary. Madden told me this man was a spy who had travelled from Dublin a few days ago and had been trapped by Cork city I.R.A. intelligence who executed him forthwith. It was the first spy shooting by the I.R.A. and Quinlisk's bloody fate caused a sensation. I accompanied Madden later to the rail station at Albert Quay where we met Tadhg Lynch,

a veteran Sinn Feiner who carried on a drapery business in Kinsale, and who was a valued Republican worker in that hostile town. A number of British soldiers in full war kit eee occupied some of the carriages on the train. Madden was a trifle taken aback, but Lynch entered an unoccupied single compartment while Madden and I paced up and down the fairly crowded platform until the train whistled. Then Madden joined Lynch and I returned to 31 Grand Parade. I was to meet both again much later in the wars.

On Saturday afternoon in late 1919, as Tom Walsh, Shanagarry, Jerome Twohill, Kanturk, Jack Daly, Youghal, and myself - all university students and I.R.A. men - were playing a game of handball in the Old Market Place, Cork, we were startled by the sudden entry of four R.I.C., a sergeant and three constables. We were togged off and my first reaction was that we were hopelessly trapped; but such was not the case. The policemen's mission was most unusual. They accosted each of us in turn and first quietly and then more menacingly asked us to come along to serve on a jury at an inquest on a man in a nearby morgue. He had been found shot dead that day - apparently another spy execution. All of us refused and then continued our game. The R.I.C. withdrew through the tavern which provided the only entrance to the Old Market Place ball alley.

Early in the New Year (1920), Tom Walsh, who, as well as being in A/Company, 2nd Battalion, was also a lieutenant in his home company at Shanagarry, called to me one weekend at 31 Grand Parade, seeking my aid to ferret out what loose military equipment (bandoliers, haversacks, belts and pouches etc.) could be bought or 'swiped' in Cork. Walsh had heard of my contribution to the warlike stores of A/Company and he flattered me by enlisting my help. He confided in me that they (the local Volunteers) were preparing to attack Cloyne

R.I.C. Barracks and that he would come to Cork City again the following Saturday to meet me, which he did. He was disappointed with the small material I had got together; nevertheless he invited me to return with him that night to Shanagarry to engage in the barrack attack. I declined, as I felt that I would be a nuisance rather than otherwise being a complete stranger in that district, though the thirst for adventure in me strongly urged me to go. That Sunday night Cloyne barracks was attacked and, though the building was wrecked and R.I.C. killed and wounded, the operation was not a complete success, as no R.I.C. arms or equipment was captured as the attackers had to retreat at daybreak.

In March 1920, our brigade O/C., Tomás MacCurtain, was murdered in his home in Blackpool by R.I.C. from King St. Barracks, led by District Inspector Swanzy. Earlier that night, Constable Murtagh, R.I.C. had been shot dead near St. Patrick's Bridge. Murtagh's two sons had been schoolmates of mine at C.B.S. Lismore, as their mother, nee Hartnett, hailed from Lismore where her brother had taught casually in the C.B.S. pre 1900. MacCurtain's murder, a few hours after Constable Murtagh's killing, seemed at first sight a callous reprisal in hot blood. But a closer study of the circumstances and methods of the murder party prove that it was a calculated deed planned carefully for some time under high direction and could not have been the spontaneous revenge reaction of men driven mad with rage at the death of a comrade.

At the funeral from his Blackpool home to the Cathedral, the two city battalions of the I.R.A. marched company by company in military formation behind the bier. As A/Company (U.C.C.) fell into place, a young Dungarvan medical student, Benny McCarthy, joined the ranks. He was ordered to drop out

as he was not a member of A/Company or, as far as was known, of the I.R.A. He did as ordered, though obviously upset and humiliated. A year later, this same student (having failed his examinations) returned home to Dungarvan and joined the West Waterford flying column. As the hardships of column life were too great for him, Pax Whelan, Brigade O/C., Waterford, appointed him brigade adjutant, putting him in charge at brigade headquarters. He showed great grit in insisting on serving actively in the I.R.A. The funeral next day from Cathedral to the Republican Plot in Wilton (St. Finbarr's Cemetery) was of national proportions. Dáil and Republican Government were fully represented and even Cathal Brugha and Michael Collins with other headquarters officers of I.R.A. marched in the procession. We, A/Company, were the leading company of the Cork City Brigade, our place being right behind the bier on each side of which marched the Guard of Honour in Volunteer uniform. There was no sign of enemy soldiers or police anywhere on the funeral route. Arrived at cemetery gates, A/Company was deployed to guard the entrance and only immediate mourners, Dáil and Government party, Cork Corporation, Volunteer Pipers Band, Brigade Staff and Guard of Honour were admitted to graveyard. There was no oration. The Last Post was sounded and then a firing party of six Volunteers with rifles appeared from nowhere at the order of "Firing Party advance" and three volleys were fired over the mortal remains of Tomás MacCurtain, Lord Mayor of Cork, Brigade Commandant, Cork No. 1 Brigade, the first notable victim of British terror reprisals in Ireland.

All Cork was incensed at MacCurtain's foul and brutal murder, especially his comrades of the I.R.A. At the inquest a verdict of wilful murder was returned by the coroner's jury against the R.I.C. from King St. Barracks, and D.I. Swanzy

was named as the leader of the murder gang. The official British reaction was typical of British methods. MacCurtain had been killed by Sinn Feiners, they contended, masked and disguised Republican conspirators who wiped out MacCurtain because they mistrusted him. This was how the murder was described in the British Press and in the Official Reports of Dublin Castle. With malevolent vileness which knew no bounds or scruples, the British authorities in Ireland, not satisfied with having slaughtered Tom MacCurtain before the horrified eyes of his wife and children, now did their damnedest by their devilish propaganda to brand him as a renegade and a traitor to his comrades and to Ireland. They tried to blacken his character as they did four years earlier with Roger Casement. They wished to confound and confuse and sow the seeds of discord with their foul lies. Their damnable attacks on MacCurtain's memory only increased the cold fury of the Cork I.R.A.

A day or two after MacCurtain's burial, all the college Volunteers having firearms were assembled in a high room of the college tower of U.C.C. This room was used as a store and dump for A/Company's war material. It was like a magazine having only two narrow windows to admit light, but nothing else the only entrance being a low narrow heavy iron-studded door, the key of which was held by a member of the college staff who was also a Volunteer officer. It was a perfectly secure and safe retreat and remained untouched and undiscovered until the Truce of July 1921. As we discussed the Lord Mayor's murder in hushed tones, we could see through the narrow window west an English soldier sentry pacing to and fro on the embattled roof of the Cork Prison, 50 yards or so away - this part of U.C.C. and Cork Prison are adjoining structures. Suddenly, Pete Kearney springs to the window, 'Peter the

Painter' raised and deliberately takes aim at the pacing sentry. "I can get him easily" he said. "Will I shoot?" Ray Kennedy, Jack Daly and a few others of us crowd round Kearney chorusing "Don't! Isn't it mad you are? Have a bit of sense, man!" He lowered his gun reluctantly enough. "Is it not tempting", said he. Earnestly we pointed out to him what a foolish idiotic act it would be and could only result in drawing the vengeful attention of the British - soldiers and R.I.C. - down on U.C.C. and on the I.R.A. there, something to be avoided at all costs. Bringing the suspicion and the hostility of the British authorities down on the College would be both stupid and foolhardy and would have serious consequences for U.C.C. Volunteers most of whom were valuable I.R.A. officers in their home units. A/Company was like an Officers' Training Corps for the I.R.A. and now and later provided many officers and special service men for the active service columns not only in the three Cork brigades, but also for the Kerry and Limerick brigade columns.

After passing my second year engineering examination in Ju June 1920, instead of returning home to Cappoquin for summer holidays and spending the usual five or six weeks in Curraheen Thurles, I stayed on in Cork city. I went into Ford's newly established factory at the Marina to get experience in Engineering matters. I and other students doing this holiday work, were classed as juvenile workers and paid 1/- per hour for a 44 hour week. At first I was attracted to it but very shortly I regretted my bargain. Work began at 8 a.m. break for lunch from 12.30 to 1 p.m. and all work ceased at 4.30 p.m. each day with half-day on Saturday. My first assignment was to salvage department where, in the open exposed to all weathers, we used timber salvaged from boxes and cases of all descriptions to make standard crates as

containers for the export of Ford agricultural tractors then coming off the assembly lines in hundreds daily. My associates on this job were "Packy" Mahoney, ex-pugilist and Irish heavyweight boxing champion still showing the heavy overhanging jaw which Bombardier Billy Wells, the British champion, had broken in a famous encounter a few years before. "Packy" was big and soft, a lovable character full of humour and good nature and, moreover, an active I.R.A. man attached to the Blackrock Company near where he lived in Ballintemple. He was married and the wife carried on a small publichouse business. On the job too with us was Billy Stout, another prominent boxer lightweight, but an ex-British soldier, still in his prime as a fighter, but was not trusted owing to his close Union Jack associations.

I had only been a week or so at Ford's when, early one afternoon, as "Packy", Stout and myself and a few others were hard at it nailing cases, facing the Marino road. A car pulled up outside the gate at Park Road entrance. Three young men entered the works and moved along casually to the Construction Department adjoining the Salvage Department. There they stopped where a small gang of men were on a building job and accosted a dark thick-set middle-aged ex-soldier known as "Mickaroo", whose real name was Michael Walsh. Walsh accompanied the three strangers back to the car which drove off. Walsh's workmates were thunderstruck, as the men had pulled revolvers to persuade "Mickaroo" to come along with them. Next morning, the dead body of a man riddled with lead and bearing the label "Spies and traitors beware"! "I.R.A. execution" was found in a side street near the South Infirmary. It was "Mickaroo". The corpse was taken to the Infirmary Morgue, and that night, Cork street urchins entered and with barbaric ghoulishness tried to disfigure and distort the

features of the dead spy. It just showed the bloody temper of the times and the fierce hatred in which the spy was held. Poor "Mickaroo" was unfortunate in that he was betrayed unwittingly by the greed and the illiteracy of his own wife. One morning after he had gone to work, a letter was addressed to him was handed by the postman to his wife. She opened it, but being unable to read, sought the aid of a neighbour. The latter told her it was an army paying order for Mick. The I.R.A. were also told that it had come from "His Majesty's" Intelligence Service, Victoria Barracks, Cork. Mick's little activities were quietly but thoroughly investigated by I.R.A. Intelligence and so he was seized while working at Ford's Factory. He was tried summarily that night and confessed. Sentence of death was duly carried out after he had been given a brief interval to make his peace with God.

Shortly after the "Mickaroo" incident, I was transferred to the Assembly Department in Ford's and assigned a job on the conveyor belt fitting ball and socket steering arms. It was more technical from an engineering viewpoint than pulling and hammering nails, but I missed the earthy democratic company of "Packy" and his chums in the salvage department.

All the spring and summer of 1920, I.R.A. Intelligence in Cork City had been intense. The active Volunteers of A/Company did quite a lot of scouting and spotting. We usually performed our intelligence chores in pairs. This allayed suspicion, induced mutual confidence and reliance, and sharpened powers of observation and, moreover, helped to develop an eye for detail and conduced to sounder judgment. A regular beat of ours was the Western Road between the Muskerry Station and the Gaol Cross. Two hours was the

maximum 'duty' time, but usually the scouting pair were relieved at more frequent intervals. Our main objectives were to note accurately all enemy movements and activities and details of time, direction, number, type, were to be precise. The following sample report will show the nature of our intelligence work: "At 3.45 p.m. 7.4.1920, a patrol of military, 30 strong, led by two officers, marching in file in extended formation passed Donovan's Bridge going west. They were armed with rifle and bayonet and moved in two files one on each side of street. An advance guard of six and a rear guard of four were about 50 yards or so to front and rear of main body". As a result of this intensive work, the regular movements of all enemy forces along the Western Road in daytime was wellknown to I.R.A. intelligence. Even the off-duty activities of police and soldiers were also quietly noted.

Another 'beat' of A/Company was the Grand Parade and the South Main Street which ran parallel to it. Tuckey Street, a short narrow street, joined these two major streets. At the corner of Tuckey St. and Parade, the R.I.C. had a big strong barracks with a garrison of about 30. It was our job to note as minutely as possible all the activities of these Tuckey Street police, and many the long hour we sauntered along to and fro between Beamish's Brewery and Christ's Church noting every move of the uniformed police. Keeping Tuckey St. garrison under surveillance involved night work as well. This needed a more astute approach, as fewer people moved about and loitering was a sure means of attracting suspicion and arousing enemy attention. I well remember one night as Jack Daly and I, 'on the job', argued animatedly about exams. or something in a doorway at 25 Grand Parade opposite Tuckey Street. Suddenly a sergeant and two constables emerged from

the South Mall, swung in around us in the doorway and promptly searched us for arms. Finding nothing, the sergeant asked our names, addresses and occupations. Still suspicious, he truculently ordered us to clear off. I chipped in to say that we were staying there which was indeed literally true for me, as at the time I lodged in No. 31, a few doors away. The sergeant, whose local knowledge did not seem very much, looked hard at me, then apparently assuming that we were living in that particular house, moved on with the constables and then crossed over to the R.I.C. Barracks we were watching (in Tuckey Street).

Fairly regularly, too, we noted that two 'G' men - R.I.C. plain clothes detectives - crossed often by night to Tuckey St coming apparently from R.I.C. Headquarters Barracks in Union Quay. These two were known to us by sight and by name. Weeks later, they ventured by day away out to Mardyke Rugby grounds on a Saturday afternoon, when a big game was in progress - if I mistake not, an International - Ireland and France. On that Saturday, Jerome Twohill, an I.R.A. medical student, Jack Daly and I were present at the U.C.C. grounds - we had a watching brief for I.R.A. Intelligence. The match over, the crowds moved on to the Western Road citywards. We saw no uniformed police or soldiers at all that evening. As we passed the Courthouse, a fusilade of shots rang out about 30 yards ahead. The crowd scattered pell-mell. I saw a man staggering against a shop door; another shot sounded from right across the street. I looked in that direction, but saw nothing but running men and women. We three kept walking ahead; a few yards from the doorway I saw a few empty bullet cases - automatic, I thought. Inside the doorway as we passed I saw the body of a man, half huddled on the floor, face sideways. With a start, I recognised the face of Detective Maylor, the 'G' man. Keeping abreast, the three of us hurried on to the Grand Parade.

As we crossed the Parade towards the City Meat Market, about two dozen R.I.C. with rifles at the ready came charging wildly down the Parade from the direction of South Mall and Tuckey St. The crowds of people scattered frantically, running blindly into open doorways and every place which seemed to offer escape. We three had reached the pavement opposite Meat Market by this time without increasing our pace. Suddenly, as three or four towering policemen with rifles pointed at us bore down savagely upon us, Daly and Twohill broke from me with shouts of "run, run" and dived headlong into the wide open entrance to the City Meat Market. I kept walking. A huge R.I.C. made for me. I felt the muzzle of the rifle driven in to the small of my back and then I got a ferocious kick on the back of my lower right thigh. I staggered forward and half fell. I got another kick on the calf of my left leg. I fell to the pavement in a gony. Looking up, I saw thw R.I.C. man, his eyes blazing with fury, swinging his rifle over my head. I thought he was about to 'brain' me. "Get up, you bastard!" he yelled. I dragged myself to my feet and moved on in agony. The rifle barrel was stuck in my back as I tried to walk on. Every instant I expected the final shot - the suspense was awful. Then I felt the rifle being withdrawn and I bent forward instinctively I got a terrific blow with the butt of the rifle on the right shoulder; again I fell. After a few seconds' awful expense, I looked around. My savage assailant was gone. Still feeling in mortal danger and suffering intense pain, I crawled round Old Georges St. corner (now Oliver Plunkett St.) and into a chemist's shop. There I was pushed into a small back room and patched up and given stimulants. I was in bad shape. About an hour later, I mustered up enough courage and muscular energy to limp slowly and painfully back round to 31 Grand

Parade. There I found Daly and Twohill, alarmed at my long absence and fearing for my safety. The late editions of the "Evening Echo" carried the story of the shooting of two R.I.C. detectives - Maylor and O'Sullivan - returning from the rugby match. Both were very badly wounded, having got several bullets in the abdomen, though both recovered after a long long spell in hospital. Neither figured henceforth in police activities against the I.R.A. O'Sullivan, I believe, long after his recovery, was again shot down near St. Patrick's Church, but this time with fatal effect.

On a Saturday night in early July 1920, Colonel Smith, one-armed World War I veteran and newly appointed Chief Commissioner of the R.I.C., arrived in Cork from an organising tour of R.I.C. barracks in Kerry. A few days before, his new campaign of "Terrorism Unlimited" had shocked even the tough R.I.C. so much that the Listowel R.I.C. garrison had mutinied and thrown off their policemen's jackets rather than associate themselves with the brutal wholesale slaughter of their fellow Irishmen. Smith had barely finished a meal after arrival and was apparently discussing the new plan of campaign with R.I.C. County Inspector A. in the exclusive County Club on the South Mall, when a trio of young men entered. "Colonel Smith" queried the leader. "Yes" said Smith curiously. "Your orders are to shoot at sight". "Well. so are ours". Shots rang out. Smith fell dead and the County Inspector too sank to the floor badly wounded. The young men, their mission accomplished, pocketed their revolvers and coolly retired to the street and disappeared. An armoured car and military lorries and swarms of police descended on the South Mall within minutes and surrounded the area to carry out an intense but fruitless search before curfew cleared the streets. Next morning brought a military proclamation of more severe

curfew restrictions - all indoors between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. and at weekends henceforth from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

That Sunday afternoon, as Daly, Twohill and I strolled along through the Lee Fields west of the Waterworks, struck with some foreboding of danger, we hurried back to the Tram Terminus at Victoria Cross, but missed the last tram and had to foot it in along the Western Road, two miles or so. We ran and we sweated as we tried to make the Grand Parade before 7 p.m. - curfew zero hour. Others, too, hurried rapidly, all trying to be indoors and an ominous sense of foreboding hung over the whole scene.

7 p.m. struck as we passed the Courthouse and the streets ahead were now almost completely deserted. As the three of us made across the Grand Parade towards Oliver Plunkett St. corner and safety, we saw some stragglers - men and women - crossing from Patrick St. towards Castle St. The next moment, we heard the roar of lorries tearing down Patrick St. and bursts of rifle fire. Looking back, we saw several of the hurrying stragglers drop to the ground. An armoured car enters Parade from Patrick St., machine guns roaring. As we reach the safety of the hallway of 31, our digs, we could hear the whine of bullets along the Grand Parade outside. The armoured car approaches firing continuously, then turns up Oliver Plunkett St. For several minutes bursts of machine-gun fire are heard. Then gradually the shooting dies away in the distance. Stealing to a four-storey window overlooking the Parade, I ventured to look down north and south along the thoroughfare. Five figures still lay huddled on the pavement near Castle St. corner, and two others on the street near Singer's corner. No other sign of life or death in the street. Across the way in Tuckey St. R.I.C. Barracks

all is as quiet as the grave. Not an R.I.C. man to be seen anywhere. Evidently the military have been given a free hand this night and all the police have wisely kept in barracks. Later, an ambulance from Fire Brigade Station drives down Parade and picks up the victims. The morning's paper reveals the extent of the slaughter. Almost a hundred people, men woman and children, have been shot down by the British military in their bloodthirsty lust for revenge at Colonel Smith's death - not by soldiers run amok, mind you, but, as the absolute confining of the R.I.C. to their barracks proved, callously and deliberately acting under the command of their senior officers. It was the first and the bloodiest of the many nights of terror which Cork citizens had to undergo at the hands of the British army of occupation during 1920 and 1921.

This month, too, saw the arrival of thousands of newly-recruited English ex-soldiers to the R.I.C. - these were the infamous Black and Tans. Thousands of British ex-officers, ranking from Captain to Brigadier, were formed into a special Corps d'élite - the Police Division of Auxiliary Cadets - commonly called "The Auxies" - were quartered in special strong-points here and there in the Martial Law area (all Munster) to cope with the I.R.A. columns and active service units. One company of these were in Victoria Barracks, another billeted in the Imperial Hotel beside the G.P.O. These were night and day engaged in searching houses and people, shooting, looting, burning, drinking and marauding without restraint. Some of them were sadistic killers like the mysterious "Sergeant Chance" who regularly paraded Cork's principal streets in a small single-turreted armoured car with its name "The Fiend" printed in large conspicious type on the front of the turret. Chance was usually accompanied inside by a spy or "spotter", often the notorious "Monkey"

McDonald, the barber with the charmed life, who survived half a dozen I.R.A. bullets to harass and betray many a Cork republican and eventually to disappear unscathed. Other "Auxies" were given to bravado and it was no uncommon sight in Cork to see their Crossley tenders moving slowly along the streets, while some of their Glengarry-capped occupants sat jauntily within knitting sweaters or scarves. It was a most incongruous sight: these British warriors armed to the teeth (each carried a rifle and a Webley revolver held by a strong cord in an exposed thigh holster) showing their morale and their contempt for Cork City I.R.A. by "acting the woman" knitting in public.

About August 1920, too, Special Services were organised. and trained in Cork City. Of these, the most important and the most active were the Intelligence Service, the Engineering Service, Signals and Communication. A small special group were also trained in machine gun use and assembling. Jack Daly and I were chosen from A/Company for this latter work, and one night in autumn 1920, we reported to a secret rendezvous - O'Brien's Woollen Mills near Clarke's Bridge, where we were admitted after being identified. Inside in a large kitchen, with eight others, we were instructed in the handling of a Lewis machine gun. The instructor was a Dublin man, one Mitchel, residing in the Mills as caretaker. His wife and a few young children lived there with him. We spent hours dismantling, assembling and manipulating the Lewis gun on the kitchen table. It had been captured from a British lorry in an ambush out beyond the Kerry Pike, six miles or so from Cork earlier in the year. It was now being used to familiarise the I.R.A. in Cork with machine gunnery. As we went through our training course, loaded revolvers lay ready at hand for use in case of surprise raid by enemy. At this time, martial law was in force in Cork City and the penalty

for possession of arms or for harbouring or aiding rebels was death. Yet seldom did anyone refer to the tragic consequences of falling into enemy hands in compromising circumstances.

Being an engineering student at U.C.C. I was, naturally, chosen for the Engineering Special Section. Lectures and training in this were given in the guise of Gaelic League classes at Maylor St. Club and at the Thomas Ashe Hall. In October, we did a course in explosives, land mines, booby traps, road and rail obstruction and destruction, chiefly in the latter Hall. It was used to good effect a few weeks later. The Thomas Ashe Hall itself was mined with 50 lbs of guncotton set to explode automatically on the opening in of the front door. Everything was ready by Friday night, 26th November 1920. An unobtrusive guard was put on the door until curfew time in case any "drunk" might burst in the door. "Cooked" information was fed to the R.I.C. in Union Quay Barracks that I.R.A. gunmen used it as a hideout after curfew. The bait was swallowed. After curfew on Saturday night, November 27th, Jerry Wall, A/Company quartermaster, saw from a window in his lodgings on the quay opposite the Hall a dozen or more police approach from Union Quay and line up outside. A moment's pause, then the sound of splintering wood and a fearsome explosion rocked the area. The whole front wall of the mined building was blown out towards the river. Some of the police were killed on the spot, some blown in to the Lee. Their full casualties were never discovered nor admitted; but four coffins from Union Quay were put aboard a British warship with the sixteen dead Auxiliaries who met their fate on Sunday, November 28th 1920, at Kilmichael, Macroom.

That mass funeral of the Macroom "Auxies" was unique

as well as brutally sombre as it moved through the streets of Cork. Arriving from Macroom at Western Road in the early afternoon, the procession of armoured cars and lorries slowed to a slow march. A previous military proclamation from Major-General Strickland, British G.O.C. in Cork, had ordered all streets along route of funeral to be cleared and free of traffic by 2 p.m. The streets, at least the traffic-ways, were silent and bare. At the head of the procession were two armoured cars, draped in black, followed by two open Crossley tenders carrying Auxiliary Cadets, sitting back to back in two rows facing outwards and with rifles pointed threateningly. After these came eight Crossley tenders at intervals of thirty yards or so, each tender draped in black, bearing two coffins in black with the Union Jack covering almost the whole top of each coffin. Bringing up the rere were more armoured cars and tenders all with their full complement of fiendish-looking armed Auxiliaries. The pedestrians on the pavements, in awe if not in reverence, stopped and uncovered their heads and remained so until the strange biers had passed. Woe betide the male civilian who forgot or was slow to remove his head gear. Near St. Augustine's Church, from the main door of which I watched the extraordinary spectacle, I saw one of the leading lorries halt for a second, its load of Auxies jump to the ground on each side, then proceed in file along the pavement with rifles at the ready. As they reached ahead of the leading bier, Auxiliary officers rapped out harshly to all civilians "Hats off! Keep your heads bare". An old man near Singer's corner, apparently not hearing or understanding or heeding what was happening, was conspicuously alone with his hat on. A big hulking Auxie, cursing luridly, ran at him and jabbed him in the stomach with the muzzle of his Lee-Enfield. The old man staggered back a little but

otherwise took no notice. Then the Auxie grabbed the hat from his head, threw it on the pavement, stamped on it and strode on. The old fellow stood for a few seconds awkwardly gaping, then stooped and picked up his battered hat which he now held to his chest. The funeral moved on. It was an amazing spectacle. Sixteen corpses being paraded by the British forces before the gaze of the citizens of Cork in such pagan and barbaric fashion, with the aim evidently of terrorising the people. The Auxies that day were so mad with hate and revenge that they only wanted the smallest pretext to shoot down all around them. But their taunts and goadings and provocations and brutalities on this lugubre and tragic occasion failed in their object. After wending their way through the silent streets of sparse onlookers, the procession reached Custom House Quay where the sixteen coffins plus the four from Union Quay R.I.C. Barracks were placed on a naval vessel for England.

Terence McSwiney had succeeded Tomás MacCurtain as Brigadier of Cork No. 1 Brigade after the latter's murder in March 1920. "Terry Mac", as he was affectionately known to every Volunteer of us in Cork, was a most efficient military organiser. He was, as well, T.D. for Cork County and Lord Mayor of the City. Moreover, he was beloved of the University student I.R.A., being one of themselves; as well as being a poet, writer and philosopher, he also did some lecturing in U.C.C. Very much 'on the run' and regarded by the British as their most dangerous enemy in Cork, he, yet, had such a high concept of his civic duty and national responsibilities, that he presided personally as Lord Mayor at the regular Cork Corporation meetings. He was closing a Corporation meeting on a July day when the City Hall was surrounded by strong British military forces. Already that day he had been present at a secret senior I.R.A. conference in a private room

of the City Hall and quite a number of important I.R.A. staff officers from Cork City, including Liam Lynch, O/C. Cork II Brigade, were trapped in City Hall when the British struck. All were detained temporarily, but, as the British Intelligence officers (unlike the R.I.C. who, for some reason or other were not associated at all with the raid), knew nothing of the identity or status of their prisoners, they were all released, much to their amazement, when the soldiers withdrew, McSwiney alone being carried off to prison and death. The Lord Mayor immediately went on hunger strike vowing that he would take no food until he was released. He was first taken to Cork Prison where he was joined in the hunger strike by Mick Fitzgerald of Fermoy, Joe Murphy of Cork City, and about a dozen other I.R.A. prisoners held there. The Lord Mayor's removal to Britain and his long agony and lonely death in Brixton Prison, London, are known throughout the world. It was the most heroic individual sacrifice for Ireland in all her glorious history and it had a profound effect on the course of the War of Independence. While the Brixton tragedy was being enacted, the I.R.A. hunger-strikers in Cork Prison kept up the awful struggle and their fierce resolve.

Nightly, thousands assembled after 6 p.m. at the Gaol Cross outside the prison and prayed and sang to strengthen the spirits of the men refusing food within. Remarkably enough, the most generally sung piece was a religious hymn: Father Faber's typically English composition, "Faith of our Fathers". I do not know how it began, but there every night outside Cork Gaol it was sung lustily though proudly and solemnly by the watching thousands. My own view is that it was chosen to banish any conscientious scruples or theological misgivings which the hunger strikers within may have had

about the moral rectitude of their deliberate abstention from food even to the death. At all events, this popular preference for Faber's hymn as a kind of rallying song in this desperate phase of the patriotic struggle resulted in "Faith of our Fathers" coming to be accepted almost as a sort of National Anthem. Nowadays, on many big national occasions and G.A.A. days, it is played and sung publicly before the National Anthem "Amhrán na bhFiann". It is given a status and a sanctity to which it has no great title with the exception of its use as a patriotic cum religious hymn in the great Cork Prison hunger strike of 1920.

For quite a while we were able to communicate directly with the hunger strikers each night. Among the crowds were quite a lot of I.R.A. men including signallers. Messages were sent in semaphore from the windows of the prison hospital where the hunger strikers were and which faced Gaol Cross. Before dusk, white cloth handkerchiefs or pillow covers were used by the signalling prisoner at the window. After dusk, a light was employed to flash brief messages to the waiting crowds below. I.R.A. signallers received the messages and replied in Morse. In this way each night the progress of the struggle inside was relayed in an up-to-the-minute story to the anxious citizens of Cork. The invariable question from the men within was "How is Terry Mac?" Our lads always signalled back the latest news we had from Brixton. It was an extraordinary moving and pathetic scene before the grim gates of Cork Prison each night until curfew, usually at 8 p.m., earlier at weekends. Then a night came when there was no signal from the hospital window. We knew that, either the prisoners had been shifted, or were too weak to rise from their beds. As night followed night and no message came,

we realised that their condition must be desperate. Then Mick Fitzgerald died, followed shortly by poor Joe Murphy. The latter, although a battalion commandant in 1919, had been expelled from the I.R.A. in early 1920, for conduct bringing disrepute on the Republican army. Arrested then by the British, he was falsely convicted of taking part in a bomb attack of which he knew nothing. When the hunger strike started, he was not even a Volunteer, but he insisted on joining in to show his Republican loyalties and to purge his past misdemeanours. He died the happiest of deaths, as a few days before the end, official notice was brought to him (smuggled in to the Prison Hospital) that he was restored to membership of the I.R.A.

And then, Brigade Commandant Terence McSwiney, B.A., Lord Mayor of Cork, died in Brixton, the most glorious martyr of all to defy English tyranny and intolerance. The Irish Republican Government authorities ordered the surviving hunger strikers to abandon the hunger striking weapon. Back almost from the yawning grave they came, after more than sixty days of the cruel torments of hunger.

The dead Lord Mayoy was brought in funeral procession from Brixton Prison to Southwark Cathedral, London, where he lay in state before the High Altar. A group of I.R.A. men from Cork, wearing uniform underneath their overcoats, travelled to London to act as a Guard of Honour in conveying the Lord Mayor to Cork, but they were arrested on board ship by the British, tried in England for wearing I.R.A. uniform and sentenced to two years imprisonment. Amongst them was Tommy Turner of A/Company - medical student in U.C.C. - of Turner's Hotel, whose sister, Sheila Turner, subsequently married J.J. Walsh, T.D., the first Postmaster General of

the Irish Free State. To prevent McSwiney's remains from being carried in state through Dublin, the British ghoulishly seized the body and sent it over to Cork by a British naval destroyer. It was there given to the relatives (Maire, Aine, Peter and Sean McSwiney), these last two had returned to Cork from U.S.A. shortly before. The body was then laid in state in a coffin with a glass lid on a catafalque in the Large Chamber of Cork's City Hall. A guard of honour of six I.R.A. men was placed standing solemnly to attention around the coffin. These were relieved at two-hour intervals during daylight, but during the night, with curfew in force, had perforce to remain overnight in the City Hall. Thousands of people of all ages trouped in from long queues to view with proudly mournful eyes the mortal remains of the man who had defied the British Empire to the death. All during the long hours of day the unceasing stream filed past. I had a good opportunity of viewing the sad scene, for I spent two hours on guard duty. Beneath the glass cover lay the shrunken corpse of Terence McSwiney, clothed in his brigadier's uniform, the face small, pinched, but very serene. The most striking feature of the body was its smallness, like that of a child of twelve. The folds of the uniform piteously accentuated the mummy-like contour of the corpse. From the parchment pallor of face and hands it seemed as if the whole body had not alone been drained of blood, but dehydrated as well. Fascinated, I kept looking until the poor gaunt skeleton body had made such an impression on my mind's eye that I can still clearly recollect that sombre picture of the wake of Terence McSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, in his own City Hall.

Major General Strickland had issued a proclamation prohibiting any demonstration or any procession in formation

at McSwiney's funeral; but the proclamation was ignored. The Cork City Battalions of the I.R.A. were drawn up in column of route, company by company, all along Anglesea St. and the Quay outside the City Hall. Beside the bier on each side marched the Volunteer Guard of Honour. Immediately behind marched the McSwiney brothers, Peter and Sean, with members of Dáil Éireann and the Republican Government, senior officers from General Headquarters, I.R.A., and his colleagues on the Cork Corporation. Heading the Volunteer columns was A/Company, 2nd Battalion - McSwiney's own - from University College, Cork. I was on the extreme right in the first rank. As we wheeled right across Grattan Bridge, a British armoured car stopped facing us at South Mall side of bridge. The car's machine-guns were swung into position and trained on the oncoming Volunteers. I found myself looking into the ugly mouth of a Hotchkiss gun at 20 yards. Five yards from the armoured car, our company O/C., R. O'Kennedy, rapped out the order: "Left wheel". As we wheeled down South Mall, the car reversed slightly and then turned with us, keeping pace with us as we marched ahead. Other armoured cars and lorries loaded with khaki-clad warriors joined at intervals, flanking the marching I.R.A. men all along the funeral route. The Volunteers were in civilian dress and displayed no military equipment or arms; but many, of a certainty, carried small arms ready loaded. The British soldiery were armed to the teeth. Apparently they were there to enforce Strickland's proclamation. Taken aback, evidently, by the confident and stern demeanour of the Volunteer ranks mourning their dead chief, their officers, deeming discretion the better action, hesitated. For a while, the tension was electric. What would happen? Would there be a massacre? Another holocaust! As the vast funeral procession moved out along the Long Western Road, Ireland's Republican

soldiers marching in the centre whilst their deadly and murderous enemies, thirsting for their blood, stalked them on the flank in their armoured cars and lorries with all the paraphernalia of war weapons cocked and ready; it seemed that only a miracle could prevent an appalling blood-bath. But, with all their ruthlessness, the Crown forces hesitated and their indecision showed that they feared to act in this critical situation. As it became clear that the British terror feared to strike, the tension gradually relaxed.

As the Gaol Cross was reached, the salute "Eyes left" was given to McSwiney's heroic fellow-strikers still in the death throes of hunger in the hospital of Cork's grim prison Out along beyond Victoria Cross as far as the Old Ballincollig Road, the British forces accompanied the funeral. At this latter point they halted and came no further. As the head of the procession wheeled left at Wilton, the coffin with the Guard of Honour; Volunteer Pipers' Band (which had played the "Dead March", "Wrap the Green Flag Round Me" and "Flowers of the Forest" all along the route), the mourning relatives, Dáil, I.R.A. H.Q. and Corporation passed through the cemetery gates. "A" Company deployed at the gates and other companies extended round the graveyard cutting off, courteously but firmly, any other approach to the Republican Burial Plot within. A Volunteer bugler sounded the "Last Post" and a firing party of six I.R.A. riflemen appeared from nowhere to line the wreath-strewn grave and pay their last soldierly tribute of three volleys to their beloved Chief. British armour and lorries were still below at the Old Ballincollig Crossroads within sight and sound, but they made no attempt to interfere. As we wended our way citywards after being dismissed, an occasional military lorry or armoured car passed us, speeding rapidly back to its base in Victoria Barracks.

The day that McSwiney died in Brixton was a day of general mourning in Cork. By orders of the Republican authorities, all business was suspended during certain hours and all work ceased in factory and in public. At Ford's, where I was at the time, all stopped work and marched out, most attending Mass to show their sympathy with the Immortal Lord Mayor. Judge of our surprise when we reported back at Ford's, we were called before the Manager (an Englishman), reprimanded for leaving the factory without specific managerial permission and informed that our services would be dispensed with if such unauthorised abstention ever occurred again. The men were furiously resentful, but they suppressed their anger. It may be noted that none of Ford's workmen of any kind were organised in any Trade Union at that time. Henry Ford himself, not recognising any Union, boasting that, as he paid wages way above the general union rate, he could afford to ignore their existence. His management, apparently, was as antagonistic to any expression of patriotic feeling by his Irish workers as Ford himself was to Trade Unionism.

One autumn night, about the time of McSwiney's martyrdom, Jack Daly, Jerome Twohill and I strolled up the northern side of Patrick St. It was about 7.30 p.m., half an hour before curfew. We had passed St. Peter and Paul's Church when, suddenly, we saw a huge flash of flame eight feet high, followed almost instantly by a tremendous report, at Prince's St. corner, about 70 yards away. I felt a sharp sudden sting in my right shin. For a second my leg went numb. Then the sensation passed and I found to my relief that I could walk all right. "What's wrong? asked Daly. "Are you hit?" "I am, I think" says I, "but it is nothing". Crowds were scurrying helter-skelter from the scene. We hurried forward to find out what happened. At Prince's St. corner three or four men in

civilian clothes lay prone on the ground and a few others were bending over them. There was no sign of a uniform anywhere, policeman or soldier. We approached the huddled group. "What happened?" we asked. "A bomb" was the reply in a pronounced Cork City accent. "How"? "Don't know" was the laconic reply. Thinking that an R.I.C. man or a Tan had flung the missile among the knot of men, we looked fearfully all around, up and down the streets, at the windows, on the roofs. Nowhere was there any sign of a uniform or an enemy attacker. "Get a car, lads" said one of the men, "the boys are badly wounded". I looked closely at the speaker's face and recollected that I had seen it a few times before at Volunteer mobilisations. Then we realised that the motionless figures stretched on the street corner were I.R.A. casualties. A few minutes later a couple of jarvey cars requisitioned nearby came along and the injured men were conveyed to the Accident Wards of the North Infirmary. Two alas! were beyond medical aid, and a third died a few days later. They were Volunteers from Blackrock district, prominent officers of our own Second (Cork City) Battalion. One was Vice-Commandant Trihy, another Captain O'Donoghue, and the third was a Lieut. Mehigan. The other wounded - all Volunteers - recovered, though I believe two of them fell victims to British bullets later in the struggle.

What happened that night at Prince's St. corner is still much of a mystery. At first the rumour was circulated that the Tans had thrown a bomb among a group of young "Shinners" and some eye-witnesses actually "saw" a uniformed figure silhouetted on the palisaded roof of the newly-built Pavilion Cinema as he threw the missile - this was the generally accepted story. But I and those with me are positive that no uniformed police or military were in the immediate vicinity

then or even subsequently. Later, I ascertained from their comrades and a fellow officer of the victims that they had had a Battalion Staff Volunteer Conference and afterwards had dispersed. These Blackrock Volunteers had dallied for a final chat before parting on reaching Patrick St. One of them had a percussion bomb in his possession and, through some mischance which will never now be explained, it must have dropped on the pavement causing the frightful tragedy. It was certainly one of the three who were killed but which one will never be known. Needless to say, Volunteer sources kept a strict silence about the whole matter. As far as I could ascertain, no official I.R.A. inquiry was held into the matter.

After the moving of the casualties to hospital, we three loitered on the scene and then on the approach of curfew time moved off to our 'digs' and, during all that time, we never met a Tan or R.I.C. man or a soldier.

Within doors, we were retailing our experiences to our fellow-lodgers at supper when Twohill remarked that I had been 'hit'. I had clean forgotten all about my own wound until then. Hoping that it had not been imagination, I pulled up my trouser leg under the gaze of some curious but sceptical eyes. Sure enough, the top of my sock bore a dark red stain, this part of the sock being stuck to the flesh. I pulled down the sock gently and there was a small laceration about the size of a shilling, more bruise than anything else, beside my shin. I felt mighty relieved and very important. I had been wounded, even though only very slightly, by a bomb splinter. Almost immediately, I became an object of more than usual interest. I got much sympathy and more admiration from a young American lady who was staying in the 'digs' (31 Grand Parade) at that time with her widower Irish father, a pretty young redhead of 19 named Helen Monahan, and as I, too, was red-haired, twenty and susceptible, it was only natural that we were attracted to each other. Alas! her stay was very brief in Ireland.

She had come over with her father, shortly after her mother's death in New York, to visit her maternal relatives in Drimoleague, and as my landlady, Miss Mary O'Brien, was from Drimoleague, Helen and her father had made '31' their H.Q. in Ireland. I 'did the gallant' while she was in Cork even though the courtship only went to the extent of two visits to a cinema and one to the "Republican Plot" in St. Finbarr's, a rather lugubrious venue for a boy-and-girl tete-a-tete. She returned to Staten Island, New York, before Christmas, and for some months or so we kept up a desultory correspondence But after I had gone to West Cork on whole-time republican army work, the romance, if such it had ever been, faded into oblivion.

All during 1920, British spies, touts and agents in Cork City and environs had been ferretted out and 'liquidated'. Most were executed by shooting after trial. A few, whose guilt was trivial or inconclusive, were ordered to leave the country, which they promptly did. Tom Irwin, Secretary of Cork County Board, G.A.A., was a towering figure of a man, great athlete and hurler and a very popular figure as he officiated as Weigh-master in his office-box near to Father Mathew Statue. One summer morning, Cork City awoke to find that jovial Tom Irwin was missing. He was never seen in Cork again. Years later he was reported as having been heard of in South Africa at the time of the Revived Tailteann Games in 1924. Tom's disappearance was another major mystery to all except the few who were instrumental in giving him just 24 hours to go. His secret activities were very compromising and the discovery of his peculiar association with British Intelligence were damning in the extreme. However, his prominence in the G.A.A. and athletic world saved him from the usual fate of the enemy agent. His exposure would have been a shock for the G.A.A. which was also largely (in Cork almost

one hundred per cent.) the I.R.A. and would have provided the British with valuable propaganda to undermine and discredit both the G.A.A. and the I.R.A. As it was, the British were in the dark, and remained so, as did the general public in Cork of the time. Incidentally, Irwin was succeeded as County Board G.A.A. Secretary by Padraig Ó Caoimh, at that time a battalion officer on whole-time service in Cork, and nowadays the General Secretary of the whole Gaelic Athletic Association.

As a result of the wholesale destruction of the spies and agents used by the British to obtain information on I.R.A. activities, the Crown forces reorganised their Intelligence services on a new basis. A secret society known as the "Anti-Sinn Fein Society" was formed. Its principal members were wealthy imperialists in Cork - drawn from industrial, commercial and retired British governmental servants, both civil and military. They were almost exclusively non-Catholic; a fact which later gave a curious religious slant to I.R.A. counter-activities to suppress them. This society collected and sifted information, by discreetly using some of their employees as spotters and touts, which they passed on to the Auxiliaries and military. Warning notices and fearsome threats of murder and reprisals were actually published in Cork City newspapers and in posters in the name of the "Anti-Sinn Fein Society". These notices were invariably handed in by armed Auxiliaries who ordered publication at the point of the gun. At first, the new spying methods were somewhat disconcerting, but I.R.A. Intelligence were not long in unmasking three of the A.S.F.'s principals, two in Cork and one in Youghal. They were promptly executed and this alarmed the rest.

The Cork City active service unit of the I.R.A. had been

operating as a special striking force on a wholetime basis since mid-1920 or earlier and, already, had an imposing number of military successes against the Crown forces. Its area of operation was Cork City in which the British held Victoria Barracks, dominating the city, the H.Q. of an Infantry Division, commanded by Major-General Strickland, the G.O.C. of all British forces in Munster. Companies of the Auxiliary Cadets were quartered in Victoria Barracks and also in the Imperial Hotel. R.I.C. and Tan garrisons occupied strong barrack fortresses in a ring around the city: Lower Road, McCurtain St. (then King St.), Union Quay, Elizabeth Fort in Barrack St., College Road, Tuckey St.Gaol, Bridewell, Courthouse, Rock Abbey, Sunday's Well, Commons Road, Dillons Cross. There were several hundred "Auxies", almost a thousand Tans and R.I.C. and close on 5000 military holding Cork City for the British Crown. A truly formidable garrison indeed!

To augment the offensive potential of the regular A.S.U. City unit, small part time active service units on a company basis were formed about October 1920. Already each of the two city battalions had its own special/active service striking battalion force. A company (the U.C.C. Company) was in a position to form a particularly efficient I.R.A. attacking unit, as it comprised men or youths from all over Munster who had seen various types of active service already in their home areas, and, moreover, who had with them their own small firearms. At least twelve men of A/Company were possessed of their own revolvers. Most of the U.C.C. Volunteers were non-city men and for a while those, myself included, suffered from the countryman's feeling of claustrophobia as we moved, ready for action, through the city streets and suburbs. During October and November, 1920, Cork City centre swarmed with enemy forces by day and night, holding up and searching men, young and old.

Seldom did they venture into the suburban streets outside their ring of barracks. In this outer fringe, the A.S.U. fighters prowled on the alert for any small parties of the Crown forces wh may happen to move too far from their bases. On these patrolling trips, usually in the afternoon or late evening, A/Company active service unit seldom mustered more than ten armed Volunteers. Through the streets we usually moved in pairs quietly, nonchalantly and inconspicuously, the pairs being a little distance behind each other at random or on opposite sides of the street. Our particular theatre of probing activities was the Washington St./Western Road area between the University College and the Grand Parade. The company officer commanding at this time was Simon Moynihan, a Kerryman dismissed from the British Civil Service for republican activities, and now County Manager, Waterford and Kilkenny. He was the aggressive type, proud of his company and his men and anxious to prove their fighting qualities. We had three or four widely-separated rendezvous in this area, reliable houses where our active service unit students lodged, one in Sheares St. near the Courthouse, and another in Mardyke district; main mobilisation point was U.C.C. archway (over which our dump was located); my 'digs' - 31 Grand Parade, known as the 'Shamrock Hotel' - was also used as a 'gathering' place, but, owing to its close proximity to Tuckey St. R.I.C. Station, was classed as 'dangerous'.

One November evening in mid-week 1920, I was ordered to report at 5 p.m. to A/Company's headquarters at U.C.C. Arrived there, I armed myself with a large Colt .45, fully loaded, from the dump. Other active service unit men had already come and, having been served with loaded guns, had already been dispatched to Sullivan's Quay. Our orders were to get to Sullivan's Quay Fire Brigade Station and to hold ourselves in readiness there. Should we happen to meet any

enemy patrols on the way, we were to evade action unless cornered, in which eventuality we were instructed to shoot our way out. My usual comrade-in-arms, Jack Daly, was not mobilised for this 'stunt' as he was a qualified Bachelor of Engineering and working in Ford's; so, with Jerry Dwyer, 2nd Lieutenant A/Company, an ex-clerical student studying engineering, I set off to Sullivan's Quay. We reached there, walked boldly in through main entrance and out at the rear to a large storage shed. I was greatly surprised to find that there were about twenty men already there, all armed. Outside of the half-dozen or so of my own U.C.C. comrades, I recognised only two of the others - one, Paddy O'Keeffe (now General Secretary, G.A.A.), the other a young man by name O'Sullivan, a pal of O'Keeffe's. We lolled and lounged on the bales of compressed hay with which the place was filled (as fodder for th the Fire Brigade horses). There was evidently something big in the air to warrant this big muster of active service unit men. At intervals, individuals - some old, some quite young - came to the entrance and spoke briefly to either O'Sullivan or O'Keeffe, then departed quickly. On these occasions, we steeled ourselves for the action which we expected instantly, with hands gripping guns and hearts pounding and nerves tingling. In the intervals, we cleaned our weapons, ostentatiously loading and unloading them to show our eagerness and our coolness, but really to do something to allay the almost intolerable restlessness which beset us, and to smooth the suspense of waiting, waiting in fretful inaction.

We were mystified as to what military operation against the Crown forces we had been mobilised for in that most unusual and most dangerous assembly point, the Cork Fire Brigade Station, an exposed spot on the quayside facing the Grand Parade with three strong police barracks heavily

garrisoned encircling us at an average radius of 250 yards. Then about 6.15 p.m., a scout, a whispered message, bustle and eager activity as we got ready to move off in small groups to Douglas St. where the presence of a party of raiding Auxiliaries had just been reported. We are only moving out to the station door when we are stopped. We gripped our guns tensely. Back again with us to the hay bales for a further spell of uncertain waiting and chafing inactivity. The later hurried message had brought word that the 'Auxies' had gone away from Douglas St. (200 yards south of us) towards the City Hall. We cursed our missed objective and our intelligence scouts. It was now dark and the feeble flickering gaslamps which illuminated the street junctions were already lit up by the Corporation lamp-lighter - a hardy and courageous body of men, one of whose number had spotted and denounced the R.I.C. murder gang under District Inspector Swanzy - as they returned to King St. R.I.C. Barracks after murdering Lord Mayor Tomás McCurtain in March 1920. At 6.45 p.m., fifteen minutes before Curfew, we dismissed.

Now we made our way home to our 'digs' in twos and threes carrying our guns, keeping them with us until we were instructed to return them to the dump. I went south up Sullivan's Quay alone, crossed over Parliament Bridge and back via Prince's St. and Oliver Plunkett St. to my 'den' in 31 Grand Parade. Paddy O'Keeffe came a few yards behind me with Captain O'Sullivan. O'Keeffe dallied a minute to drop into Peg Duggan's new Flower and Fruit shop just at the Bridge. (Peg was senior officer of Cork Cumann na mBan, and had been working two years earlier in my old 'digs' (Fitzgerald's at 104 Old Georges St.). It was a few minutes to seven. Curfew zero hour. O'Keeffe emerged. Four or five tall men in civvies with levelled revolvers order him to put up his hands. O'Keeffe, resourceful, yet not quite realising the position, delays a little asking:

"What's up, lads?", half-thinking them to be fellow I.R.A. men. A gun rammed into his back with a curse bring home to him the awful truth that they are Auxiliaries and that he is in deadly peril. On searching him, they find a hand grenade. Almost at the same time, he sees O'Sullivan some yards from him at the bridge, being disarmed. Now O'Keeffe realised that the 'Auxies' would likely shoot him on the spot. A flash of desperate inspiration: "Here", he says to the 'Auxies', the District Inspector down at Union Quay knows all about this. Take me there and District Inspector so and so will explain my job to you". The bluff worked. P. O'Keeffe was playing for time - a respite. He felt that if he was brought to Union Quay Barracks, he would be safe at least from being murdered on the spot; that he might get a judicial trial first, or courtmartial, which would take him out of the murderous hands of the bloodthirsty 'Auxies'. Arrived at Union Quay R.I.C. Barracks, O'Keeffe was recognised as a wanted I.R.A. man. The 'Auxies' were enraged and wanted to kill him on the spot in the day-room of the barracks, but the R.I.C. saved him to stand his trial and die on the scaffold, as they thought. He was courtmartialled and charged with possession of a bomb. Sentence: 15 years penal servitude served in Parkhurst and other English prisons. He was lucky to escape the death penalty and so was his comrade, O'Sullivan, who got twenty years penal. O'Keeffe's capture was a salutary lesson to us all and we were very wary ever afterwards when moving around the city armed.

On a Saturday evening shortly after this, Jack Daly and I left 31 Grand Parade to be at Magazine Road rendezvous at 3 p.m. Jack had a big Colt .45 loaded. I had a Spanish .38 of doubtful efficiency and vintage. For precaution, we sent two young U.C.C. Volunteers - both first year engineers from

Co. Waterford - named Jerry Ormond and Willie Harris, ahead of us through Tuckey Lane and South Main St. to St. Finbarr's Protestant Cathedral. Harris was to drop a red handkerchief if they saw any uniformed enemy ahead. We got through Tuckey Lane, a real danger spot, all right, and emerged on South Main St. It was a Flag Day. As we passed Beamish's Brewery, walking the pavement on that side, I, on the inside, we were accosted by a lady 'flag seller. Jack Daly already sported a flag; I had none. I could not reach any money to buy one, so I refused and tried to pass on. The lady persisted, keeping in front of me with the collecting box thrust against my chest. I was in an extraordinarily embarrassing and rather dangerous position. Over my left arm, I carried my overcoat, hanging folded, the evening being sunny. My right hand held the loaded .38 gun in my right trouser pocket which had a large hole in the bottom to facilitate gun-carrying. I could not free either hand to get a copper from my vest pocket. I dare not release the gun as I was fearful it would drop down through the hole in my pocket to the pavement. I was in a fearful sweat. The lady thought I was a mean 'jackeen', too lousy to buy a flag and she meant to break down my sales resistance. Jack Daly was oblivious of this tense drama. "For Christ's sake", I snapped angrily to the girl, "clear off to hell". She looked at me in horror, then walked away. Jack looked at me in surprise. "That young bitch had me in an awful jam", said I, and then I explained my discomfiture. Jack laughed and we passed on over South Gate Bridge and away out to College Road, our two scouts turning into the College. Passing along at rear of Cork Gaol, I felt a large piece of metal slipping down my leg. Out on the road fell the loaded six-chamber piece of my .38, followed by the long loading pin, leaving me gripping the harmless butt and body frame of the revolver. Jack Daly

picked up the pieces.. I put on my overcoat and slipped the separate parts of my weapon into the right-hand outside pocket. I was mad with myself, first, for having exposed myself to such danger in depending on such a weapon, so unreliable, so unserviceable, and, secondly, in being so careless as to overlook checking security and working of gun before leaving 'digs'. Arrived at Magazine Road, I reassembled my Spanish 'skit' and tested it before loading.

We spent hours hovering around expecting to have a crack at a small military party from the prison, who occasionally slipped out when off-duty for an adventurous 'refresher' to a local hostelry. But, again, we drew blank. At 6 p.m. we dispersed and I dumped my erratic .38 gun in the active service unit dump at U.C.C. on the way back to the city.

Early on Saturday, 9th December 1920, when Cork city was burnt up, I was doing some Drawing Office work in U.C.C. Engineering Office, when I was notified to report under arms at a Sheares St. haunt. I picked up a heavy Colt .45 (Jack Daly's) from A.S.U. dump and strolled back about 1 p.m. to my 'digs' at 31 Grand Parade where I had my dinner. About 2.30 p.m. I made my way warily through back streets and lanes to our A.S.U. assembly point in Sheares St. At 3 p.m., about nine or ten armed men of College A.S.U. were there ready waiting. Amongst them were Jerry Dwyer, Humphrey Kelleher, "Béara" Murphy, Dan Barton and Joe Kearney. We were 'standing to' awaiting word to emerge and attack any small enemy patrols on foot in the vicinity. At 4 p.m. or so we received intelligence that a large party of 'Auxies' had thrown a cordon across Washington St. at its junction with Grand Parade and were holding up and searching vehicles and male pedestrians. My heart beat excitedly, half in nervous foreboding, half in eager expectancy. After hurried discussion, we moved into

the street in twos and threes with guns ready. I was much relieved, as I was in mortal dread of being trapped inside in the house which had no rear exit. We carefully scouted along up to the South Main St. but encountered no hostile uniform. A few of us actually ventured to Washington St. - South Main St. junction from which we actually saw the Auxiliary cordon 150 yards or so from us at Singer's Corner. We hoped that some of the 'Auxie' searchers would venture in small numbers from their cordon into the smaller adjoining streets. We kept moving, keyed up for action at a second's notice. The tension was trying on young eager men in their teens and early twenties. But none of the enemy moved from their lines at the Parade. About 5 p.m. at nightfall, we reported back to Sheares St., discomfited and disappointed, and were dismissed with orders to dump our guns at U.C.C. before returning to city.

Having divested myself of my .45 qnd stuff, I picked up a Science Notebook along with an engineering sketch book and strolled back via Western Road, overcoat on left arm and my two books in my hand. I wore a pair of woollen gloves. Passing St. Augustine's Church, I saw the 'Auxies' still searching at Grand Parade. Mustering at my most careless manner, I walked unhesitatingly ahead into their arms. Within three yards I was ordered to put up my hands and halt. I did so promptly. A thickset 'Auxie' with round, ruddy, jovial face and rakish green Glengarry cap, felt me all over with his left hand. Then, satisfied that I had no firearms, he put his revolver into his leg holster and proceeded to search my pockets for any small incriminating stuff. He had completed the job on my coat and trousers and then he thrust his fingers into my waistcoat pocket. "Jesus", he barked, pulling out his fingers, from one of which blood began to drip, "What have you got there?" He pulled his Webley, levelling it at me again

I was horrified, appalled. And then, I remembered in a flash: "A safety razor blade" said I, "I use it for topping pencils". "Look" I said, as I lowered my right hand and gingerly pulled out the offending Gillette from my top waist-pocket. He hesitated a second, looking at me, then at the blade and my note books held aloft: "Face the wall and keep your hands up" he ordered. I did. Then I saw, around Singer's Corner, an armoured car. I thanked God and my lucky stars that we had not managed to get shooting at any 'Auxies' of this group an hour earlier when we were prowling round them eager to pick off any straggling members of their crowd. The armoured car, of whose presence there we were not aware earlier, would have wiped us out. Shortly after, an older man, about 40, joined me facing the wall, he too with his hands up. For an eternity, as I thought, we stood there. I wondered what was going to happen me and I had dreadful visions of a cruel death. At best, I said to myself, now that I am detained, it means gaol or internment, maybe torture. My mind was torn with all these dark and calamitous thoughts as I stood there rigid, myarms aching at the effort of keeping them upstretched. The next thing, two Crossley tenders pulled up at the junction. A senior 'Auxie' officer dismounted, approached the 'Auxies' searching at the Corner, now temporarily out of business owing to scarcity of suspects and held a short consultation. I could hardly believe my ears when I was ordered to "clear off to hell", myself and my elderly companion. Fearful lest it might be the prelude to another "shot while attempting to escape" episode, I walked slowly and anxiously, alert to every stir behind me, along the Parade towards Tuckey St. corner (and the R.I.C. Barracks). I was afraid to cross the Parade for fear of re-arousing 'Auxie' suspicions or inviting further attention from them. As I crossed from Tuckey St. corner to 31 Grand Parade, I saw the two Crossleys loaded with

Auxiliaries turning the corner around into Patrick St. It was about 6.15 p.m.

Arrived in the 'digs', full of thanksgiving for my safe arrival and immensely relieved to have passed through the 'Auxies' hands without a scratch, I had my tea. Still discussing the affairs of the evening, when an elderly fellow lodger, a Dublin man named Pat Kelch, a compositor working at Messrs. Purcell's of Patrick St., came in all excitement and quite out of breath. There had been a terrible ambush up at Dillon's Cross near Victoria Barracks about 6.30 p.m. Two lorries of 'Auxies' returning to Victoria Barracks had been ambushed with bomb and bullet and there had been heavy casualties among the cadets. We were a bit sceptical of Kelch's news, as he often spoke and acted mysteriously, trying to create the impression that he knew inside secrets of I.R.A. activities - a little pretence of his which was highly amusing to those of us who were engaged on I.R.A. work. Shortly after, on curfew time, Dan O'Connell, a middle-aged lodger working at Insurance, and an active Volunteer in the 2nd City Battalion, brought the same story. Later events confirmed its truth.

The 1st Battalion (North City) A.S.U. had been luckier than we were: Under 'Sandow' (Mike Donovan), 1st Battalion O/C., they had trapped the 'Auxies' at Dillon's Cross, within a short distance of their base, and almost annihilated them. The reaction of the Auxiliary Division in Cork was terrifying and savagely vandalistic.

From the moment we heard of the bloody ambush of the 'Auxies' that night, we felt a peculiar sense of impending tragedy, a foreboding that something terrible was going to happen. All lights in the front rooms of the "Shamrock" Hotel, 31 Grand Parade, were put out, the residents keeping to the back rooms at the rear. At 8 p.m. or so, three or four

of us, I.R.A. men all, stole silently into a large room on the second floor whose two large windows looked out on the Grand Parade. Carefully raising the windows, we were able to kneel down behind them and, keeping our heads warily low in the shadows, peer out and observe what was happening from end to end of the Parade. Tuckey St. Barracks was right across from our position and we could see any movements there and in the immediate vicinity, even keeping our heads behind the window. All was quiet, unnaturally quiet. There was no sign of any military curfew patrol anywhere, no sign of R.I.C. or Tans moving and no sound of lorries or motors or guns. We still kept watching, knowing that awful events were on the way. The very quietness all around convinced us that it was just the calm before the storm.

About 9.30 p.m., desultory rifle fire was heard in the direction of Patrick's Bridge. The shooting came nearer, then died off. Then, some minutes later, about 20 or so tall figures in 'civvies' (trench coats and headgear, caps, hats of 'Glengarrys') appeared suddenly from Patrick St. direction. All were heavily armed. They crowded round "Sean Jennings' Furniture Store, at Tuckey-Street - Parade Corner, opposite the R.I.C. Barracks, about 8 yards distant. They pounded on the shutters with their rifle butts. Then a small bar or bayonet was used to wrench the shutters free and make a large gaping entrance in the front window. Bang! a terrific report and the windows at our heads rattle. Instinctively we duck. Bang! Bang! Bang! More explosions. Peeping out cautiously I see the tall figures crouched down on the opposite pavement at Jennings. They are throwing bomb after bomb into the Furniture Display Room. With each explosion comes noise of breaking glass and falling and smashing wood. A pause. The men stand up, crowd round and look in at their handiwork.

Some move over to the corner and R.I.C. barrack door. There is no sound or movement whatsoever from the R.I.C. inside. They must surely know what is going on, but they are too scared to come out, or else, they have been instructed to stay inside. The men resume the bomb throwing into Jennings'. Then, apparently wearying of such senseless savagery, they move across the Parade towards the City Market. Again the crash of glass, but this time no bombing. It is Hilser's the jewellers. Looking down north along the Parade, I see the men jostling with each other at Hilser's window having a lucky dip in the semi-darkness amid the jewel cases, watches and other valuables. They help themselves at their leisure. Into their trench coats go the precious stock of the looted shop. And then, volleys of shots are heard from Patrick St. and shouting. A brightness creeps up in the sky and a low far-off purring queer noise is heard gradually rising to a vibrating roar. The Grand Parade is empty of life - the tall men are gone.

We retire to the rear of the house, talking anxiously and forebodingly of the scenes we have just witnessed and wondering if the barbarous bomb-throwing wreckers and looters will come back. We dread the prospect of their return and the probability of our own retreat, the Shamrock Hotel, being attacked and bombed. There are upwards of eight I.R.A. men sheltering here but none of us, on this critical occasion, have any arms to defend ourselves, or to ward off an attack on the place. I regret not having kept the old .45 'skit' on hand in the digs. It would be better, at any rate, than bare hands against this after-curfew bomb attack - we have no illusions about our fate should the bomb-throwers burst into the 'Shamrock' - we have no doubts about their identity - they are the Auxiliary Cadets run amok and only casually

trying to disguise their picturesque tunics and uniform attire. The fact that Tuckey Street R.I.C. Barracks yonder is sealed up and silent as the tomb kind of reassures us, as there are certainly R.I.C. men in there who know (or guess) little or much about the activities of some of the young men in the 'Shamrock'. They even are afraid to emerge while the 'Auxies' are loose on the streets, not trusting the murderous British Auxiliaries in their maniacal fury. Even though both serve the same Imperial tyranny, there is no love lost between the Irish policeman wearing the uniform of the Royal Irish Constabulary and the swaggering, bullying, cruel English ex-officers of the 'Auxies' who regard themselves as a superior caste and all Irish, whether loyalists or not, as inferior scum. So the I.R.A. profited by the dislike and distrust and lack of co-operation which existed in no small measure between the three main groups of Crown forces arrayed against the I.R.A., namely the British military, the R.I.C. and the 'Tans' and 'Auxiliaries'. Moreover, the pay differentials of the three did little to make for harmony amongst them; the poor Tommy in khaki for his shilling a day, the R.I.C. man his ten bob a day, but the 'Auxie Aristocrat' got thirty shillings a day plus all else found on a 'Savoy' Hotel scale.

We discussed all these things as we sat quietly in back rooms. Then, as the brightness outside grew redder, we mounted to the roof of the four-storey "Shamrock" and looked out through the large skylights on the rear roof to behold a terrifying spectacle. Billows of red flame roared and swelled high into the air about 200 yards north east of us. As far as we could discern, Patrick St. South from Wintrop Street to Princes Street was one huge inferno blazing, roaring and crackling. There was little smoke. The sky was clear

and starry. The air was still and dry as it was freezing. As we watched the devouring flames, awe-struck and fascinated, our backs and bodies generally shivered in the cold frosty air of the roof; but, turning our faces to the red-roaring holocaust, we felt the heat-waves beating against our faces. It was an extraordinary experience. We crawled out on the roof round which there was a low stone parapet about two feet high and lay back against the slates gazing on the inferno Occasionally, the regular vibrating note of the conflagration was broken by the sharp crack of rifle shots. Then I was startled to see the flames, as I thought, leap across Prince's Street and burst up from the roof of Grant's Emporium. As we gaze, horrified, the flames with lightning rapidity, engulf their new victim and approach to within 150 yards of us as we watch on the roof. Between us and the conflagration in Grant's interpose the Meat Market with its numerous stalls and stands and alleyways and the narrow thoroughfare of Old George's Street (now Oliver Plunkett Street). We wonder if the huge blazing inferno will extend further in our direction. As we continue to watch, all four blocks on the south side of Patrick Street continue to burn in one red searing mass of flame, but we note with immense relief that there is no further advance in our direction. Plainly the incendiaries picked the Big Business houses - Cash's, Munster Arcade and Grant's - for their fire-raising fury. Significantly enough, the Victoria Hotel stands more or less unscathed.

Now a great new conflagration, about 1000 yards south east of us attracts our attention. It is the City Hall on the south side of the Lee, less than 200 yards from the great R.I.C. Headquarters in Union Quay. The two huge fires blaze and billow to the heavens as if each was endeavouring to excel the other in ferocity and in spectacular intensity. At 3 a.m.

Sunday morning, 10th December 1920, the fires still blaze into a still starry frosty night, but they seemed to have lost their initial voraciousness, their devouring hunger half satisfied. We move down to the lower rear where we start a game of 'Spoiled Five' to while away the long fear-haunting threatening hours until dawn and curfew's end. At intervals a card-player drops out and goes up to survey the state of the burning city from the roof, where the women of the household, especially Miss Mary O'Brien (the landlady) keep anxious watch with sleep-laden eyes, fearful lest the 'Shamrock', too, is fated to be a victim of British military fury and incendiarism. No one retires to bed, Volunteer or non-Volunteer, man or woman. I.R.A. men are Michael O'Brien, the landlady's brother, a big powerful man, who resigned from the R.I.C. after Easter Week, and now an active Volunteer; Tom O'Brien, his cousin, an electrician; Michael O'Riordan, Denis McCarthy, Jerry Ormond, Willie Harris (both latter U.C.C. students), Mick O'Callaghan, rail clerk at Bandon Railway Terminus in Cork, a Bantry man with I.R.A. service in West Cork as well as the city, and who is now Judge Advocate General of the army in Dublin, and myself.

After breakfast at 8 a.m. or so, I, with Callaghan, went off to Mass in Holy Trinity, after which we called down to 8 Cook Street (over Buckley's) to pick up Jack Daly. The three of us walked around viewing the devastation. The fires were now for the most part burnt out, though many buildings still smouldered and crumbling walls fell now and then on the smoking debris to send mushrooms of ashes, smoke and sparks into the air. Of the scores of houses and shops reduced to ruins along with the great business concerns, one in particular caused me personal pangs of regret; it was my old 'digs'

104 Old George's Street, Mrs. Fitzgerald's Fruit Shop and Restaurant. Only with difficulty did I locate the gaunt shell of it as the houses on both sides, too, shared its fiery fate. As we returned round the G.P.O. and past the Imperial Hotel, we were startled by a loud harsh order in a market English accent "to take your 'ands out of your pockets". Looking back hurriedly, I saw three 'Auxies' at hotel door with drawn revolvers and glaring menacingly in our direction. We obeyed. All unconsciously, I suppose, some of us had our hands in our overcoat pockets. I had not, I remember, as I was wearing woollen gloves and was swinging my hands. I was on tenterhooks with trepidation and alarm lest I'd get a bullet in the back, until we rounded the corner into the South Mall. Safely there, I breathed freely once more and we dispersed, hurrying rapidly to our abodes. Here, at 1 p.m. or so, Dan O'Connell came in from last Mass in St. Peter and Paul's with the most sensational news of all that tragically sensational year. His Lordship, Doctor Daniel Cohalan, Bishop of Cork, had issued a decree solemnly imposing the dire penalty of excommunication on all Irish Republican Army men in Cork Diocese opposing in arms the Crown forces of the British usurpation in Ireland.

Dr. Cohalan, who, at his consecration in 1913 - it was whispered - was frowned upon disapprovingly by the British Government in Ireland, had by his intervention in Easter Week 1916, immobilised Cork City Irish Volunteers. His action then was believed to be motivated by concern for the peace and safety of the citizens. But this new edict of his damning his own fellow-Corkmen for taking up arms against the cruel foreign demons in uniform who had devastated his own city and slaughtered his own parishioners, threw a new and lurid light on his previous actions, especially in 1916.

The reaction in Cork was immediate and emphatic. The whole Catholic population was aghast at the Episcopal Decree and profoundly shocked and angered at its anti-national bias, its flagrant injustice and in the callous brutality of its timing. While Cork still burned, its Bishop, so far from denouncing the British terrorists, the crack officer-corps Auxiliaries who set it ablaze, takes them to his bosom and calls down the direct penalty of ex-communication on the young Irishmen who are trying to fight the terror and defend their country. Little wonder that more than half of the congregation walked out in protest from the Bishop's own cathedral in Cork on that bitterly memorable Sunday. Little wonder that many uncharitable Cork voices complained bitterly that Dr. Cohalan had allied himself with the British Military Governor, General Strickland. The public announcement that the Bishop had interviewed Strickland that very morning infuriated all Cork. Many believed and said so that His Lordship's excommunication proclamation against the I.R.A. resulted from this tete-a-tete and that Strickland was the instigator of it. At all events, the Bishop's fire-and-brimstone broadside had amazing and unexpected results.

Not a single member of the I.R.A. in Cork ceased his Volunteer activities or eased off in his active military opposition to the Crown forces as a result of His Lordship's Act. On the contrary, city Volunteers steeled themselves to pursue the offensive against the British tyrant more vigorously than ever. It raised the morale and increased the determination and the fighting qualities of the I.R.A. in Cork. It made each A.S.U. member a desperate and a resourceful and an implacable fighter more formidable than ever to the British military machine and to the British Government in Ireland. Ecclesiastically, even the unjust Decree proved

inoperative. Only in the secular churches in the diocese was an attempt (and a poor one at that) made to enforce it. An occasional I.R.A. man was refused Absolution by secular confessors, but in the monastic churches, the Volunteer penitent was received and shrived as the sincere Christian he generally was.

All that Sunday afternoon, Cork citizens discussed the Great Fire and the Bishop's Decree. I, with other Volunteers, was mobilised for republican police duty in Patrick Street at the scene of the fire. We were mainly engaged in salvaging goods, damaged and undamaged, removed from the partly-demolished smaller houses. These goods were stored in houses and yards on the north side of Patrick Street. Looters, too, had to be kept in check. They had been very busy and brazen in the morning and had been fired on by a British military mobile patrol and suffered several casualties. That did not altogether deter them and we had to be very much on the alert to foil their depredations. Personally, I thought that these police activities by us Volunteers were unwise and unnecessary. I did not relish them, neither did the other A.S.U. men, as it exposed us to recognition and identification as Republican forces. Perhaps the idea was to make a spectacular gesture for propaganda purposes to show the Volunteer forces of the Irish Republican Government protecting property and maintaining order in vivid contrast to the disorder and vandalism of the British forces who had run amok.

During these activities on this Sunday evening I was content to play a very unobtrusive part keeping my eyes open and exercising a kind of strolling supervisor's authority.

After dark, Patrick Street and the streets in the city centre were quickly deserted. Everybody out of doors hurried

home quite a long time before curfew zero hour. There was in the air a grim fatalistic expectancy of further arson, pillage and slaughter. People generally believed that a further instalment of terrorism was in store for them that night too. The unnatural silence and eerie quietness of the streets as curfew hour approached added to the tension and increased the feeling of further impending tragedy; but the unexpected happened - nothing !

After tea, that Sunday night, we sat down as usual in our rear first-floor sanctuary and talked and argued. The older folk read, as was their wont, to pass some of the long weary hours indoors. The younger element played cards; the more venturesome and more impecunious played halfpenny 'Poker' or tried their hand at 'Nap'; these, of course, included all the students, while the steadier and wage-earning section amused themselves at 'Spoiled Five'. About an hour after curfew, we were all startled by a clear, sharp, authoritative knocking at the front door. For a moment there was consternation: "We are in for it now" was the thought in all our minds. The most frightened and nervous of all was a young West Cork electrician, a Protestant, and son of a Dunmanway minister, whose outlook and sympathies were, naturally, pro-British, who was fond of drink and a multiplicity of women and who once had encountered the 'Tans' on a drinking spree in one of his favourite pubs and was in mortal dread of bumping into them in taverns ever after. He turned ghastly pale and all but fell in a weakness. The knock was repeated more peremptorily. "Don't stir, anybody, now", says I, "carry on, everybody, as we are". Miss O'Brien looked at me. I understood the look. It was a mute inquiry to know if I had any incriminating stuff inside. "You go down, Miss O'Brien, and answer the door". Down goes Mary

O'Brien, her sister Nora with her. Opening the door, she was confronted by a khaki-clad British officer and a score or so of steel-helmeted soldiers armed with rifles. "Have any uniformed men knocked here before, tonight?" the officer asked. "No", answered the mystified landlady. "Well, they may yet" said the officer; but, continued he "Keep your door shut tight and do not open any more tonight for anybody". "There are unauthorised people in uniform about, but do not open for them" It was an extraordinary order; a queer warning surely. Miss O'Brien locked and barred the front door (the one and only entrance or exit from the house, by the way) and reported to us all upstairs - most of us had heard what transpired already from the landing at head of stairs. We were one and all immensely relieved. We had visualised, at best, a military raid and thorough search resulting in arrests, maybe shootings; at worst, the wrecking or burning of the house, with its inmates driven out and ill-treated or even killed, and all their personal belongings consigned to the flames. No wonder we said prayers of thankfulness.

The warning about the menace of uniformed irregular Crown raiders did not disturb us overmuch. We felt that our proximity to Tuckey Street R.I.C. Barracks would act as a deterrent on the 'Auxie' incendiaries. When they did not "bomb us up" or "burn us up" on the previous night when they were wrecking Jennings' Store across the street, it was hardly likely that they would descend on us this night. We continued our card-playing. Until the small hours we remained up, but no sound of shots or bombs disturbed the peace of Cork and nothing untoward happened that sad and silent Sunday night. No policeman walked abroad. All the police in Cork were confined to barracks. No Auxiliary Cadets appeared to continue their mad ferocious incendiarism of the night before. Cork

City this night was entirely in the care of General Strickland's uniformed military who patrolled the streets until daylight. The night before, when Colonel Latimer's Auxiliary Cadets ran amok and razed the city centre to the ground with fire and bomb, not a single khaki-clad British soldier was to be seen in the streets of Cork. The Auxiliaries were given a free hand to indulge their insane fury and to perpetuate the most horrifying atrocity of the year 1920 A.D. in Ireland - the sack of Cork City.

Monday morning, 11th December 1920, dawned with Patrick Street a half-mile stretch of ruin and devastation with thick smoke rising here and there from masses of rubble yet smouldering beneath layers of fallen masonry.

A week before Christmas, University College, Cork, closed for the holidays and I returned home to Cappoquin. I brought with me the big Colt .45 with a dozen rounds packed at the bottom of my travelling bag, an all-leather affair of some capacity into which was pitched at random boots, books, clothes and the usual paraphernalia of a university student on the move from college to home. With me travelled Jerry Ormond and we boarded the night Rosslare Express at Glanmire Station. As this train did not stop at Cappoquin in those days - only at Lismore in deference to His Grace, the Duke of Devonshire, who had built Lismore Railway Station, and who resided on occasion in Lismore Castle, his Irish Headquarters. - I arranged to alight at Lismore and to stay with Jerry for the night. The train stopped on time and out the two of us jumped, Jerry leading carrying his own bag, I following, lugging my own with my right hand, the left holding some newspapers and a magazine. As we reached the entrance of the waiting-room, through which we would have to pass to the exit,

there was loud commotion and a shout of "Put your hands up". In the semi-darkness - it was about 8.30 p.m. - and only two small oil-lamps feebly endeavoured to illuminate the platform and station. I jumped in startled alarm and a cold wave of fear swept over me for an instant as I thought of my deadly but inaccessible weapon in the bag which I carried. There, at the waiting-room entrance, I saw three khaki-clad soldiers (of the 'Buffs', a company of which garrisoned Lismore then), with rifles held at the ready, while an N.C.O. with revolver levelled at the breast of a small thin young fellow of about twenty was busy searching with his left hand the clothes and the person of the lad who kept his hands raised high all the while. For an instant, in my panic, I thought of turning about and reboarding the train which was still stationary. Then, seeing Jerry move ahead and pass by the military into the waiting room, I followed close, brushing between two of the soldiers before reaching the exit. Outside safely, we made rapid tracks for Ormond's. Jerry told me that the man being searched by the soldiers was Bernard O'Brien, an I.R.A. comrade and bosom friend of his, who had actually come to the rail station to meet Jerry and accompany him home. Jerry himself passed through as if he were a traveller stranger and had taken no notice of his friend in jeopardy. It was well he did. Evidently the soldiers took us for young men, commercial travellers or visitors to the Castle or hotel.

We reached Ormond's safely and got a great welcome from the people of the house. I was not at all happy; neither was Jerry. It was anything but a safe house as the R.I.C. and military often raided it by night especially. Jerry's brother, Jim, was a prisoner in Ballykinlar and his father and uncle who stayed there were prominent Sinn Feiners. Moreover, there were five younger members of the family, boys and girls, in

the house. The father, John Ormond, seemed 'windy' too and started nervously whenever a knock came to the door. This was too often for my taste, as Ormond's kept a grocery and milk shop and, at that time, such businesses kept no fixed hours. At length, we retired to bed, I and Jerry together, but little we slept. I was still 'nervy' after the fright at the station and wondered would my luck hold or would we be raided and searched and the Colt discovered. Owing to the big young household, I had decided, at Jerry's request, not to use the gun in defence, but to trust to luck that the weapon would not be discovered, if the house was visited by the Crown forces. However, all was well. Nothing untoward happened. After breakfast in the morning, Joe Mason, Ormond's hackney car driver, motored me over to Cappoquin, accompanied by Jerry and Joe Collins, another Lismore Volunteer.

At home, I found my father indignant about the bloody casualties inflicted on the police by the I.R.A. and my mother worried to death about my health and safety. Torn between two affections, one for her first-born son, now in the R.I.C. in Co. Tyrone, the other for me, the younger twin, so mixed up in the 'terrible' I.R.A. in Cork, my mother was very relieved at seeing me full of vigour at home again, and consoled herself with the comforting thought that her R.I.C. son was stationed in a very quiet area at Aughnacloy on the Ulster Blackwater where there was little if any republican military activity.

Two deadly attacks on the R.I.C. on the streets of Cappoquin some weeks before in early November had embittered my father against the West Waterford I.R.A. warriors. Neither was remarkable for gallantry or courage. In the first attack, on the evening of a coursing meeting in Cappoquin, two R.I.C. men talking to two girls in the doorway of their (the girls')

home, opposite the Protestant Church and within 100 yards of R.C. Church and Police Barracks, were fired on at close range by men from a speeding motor car. One R.I.C. man named Rea was shot dead, the other, as well as one of the girls, badly wounded. The brutally callous nature of this shooting did little to exalt the status or raise the credit or the character of republican military prestige in the district.

The second attack was even lower in the scale of cowardly callousness. On a dark winter's night, as Constable Quirke, R.I.C., unarmed and alone, walked across the street from Walshe's Hotel to enter his own house, a few yards away, he was shot to death by shadowy figures who crept up behind him in the darkness. This was a particularly horrifying act, as Quirke was a good Irishman, a genial strapping Kerryman, with a wife and a young family. During his time in Cappoquin he had been very popular and never did (or said) the slightest thing hostile to the republican movement. On the contrary, he had more than once aided, by timely warning, known I.R.A. amongst his neighbours. He had himself said that but for the wife and family he would have resigned from the R.I.C. as thousands did in 1919 and 1920. Years afterwards, by mere accident, I was idly perusing some Intelligence files of the I.R.A. in West Cork and in Kerry, when I saw the name of Constable Quirke entered in the file as 'friendly' to the republican movement, along with some brief items about his family and background. Incidentally, too, I noted the name of James O'Donovan of Rosscarbery, an R.I.C. constable stationed in Cappoquin at this time and all through until the Treaty, also listed as 'friendly', which he certainly was. O'Donovan's married a local publican's daughter after the Truce and settled down in Cappoquin to a quiet restful life in the place where he had worn the R.I.C. jacket all through

the trouble. I found it particularly difficult and unpleasant to defend or justify these two local killings against the angry arguments and denunciations of my father. These wordy battles between us about I.R.A. versus R.I.C. usually ended in my father getting violently angry and ordering me from the house which I did as often as not with a sour grace and bitterness in my heart. These things led to strained relations and bitter feelings between us which made my mother's lot all the more unhappy and sad. It was a house bitterly divided by the National struggle. I found it hard to bear the outspoken antagonism of my father. Yet, withal, I never remember him asking me to break my association with the I.R.A. 'ruffians' whom he denounced so passionately as cutthroats and cowardly savages. Sometimes it struck me that, especially in his calmer moments, deep down in his heart he was secretly proud that I was an active fighting man in the republican forces.

The first night of my arrival home in Cappoquin, I strolled up to Kenny's publichouse. Mrs. Kenny was a widow and her two sons, Gerald and Michael, both a year or two younger than I, had been in the Fianna with me and were now active in the local I.R.A. company. Gerald, the elder, gave me an outline of the activities of the company since the previous September when I had last been in Cappoquin. They had a new company captain, Jerry Moloney, a solid-bodied, sound but over-cautious man of early middle age, who was not the type to encourage the offensive spirit or aggressive action against the Crown forces. He had refused to co-operate in a plan to shoot the local District Inspector, R.I.C., and so had caused its abandonment. Paddy O'Reilly of Youghal, at that time a very active and much-wanted I.R.A. fighter with Diarmuid Hurley's East Cork Column, Battalion IV, Cork I

Brigade (who was executed in Waterford Gaol by the Free State in 1923) had offered his services to make the attempt alone if Cappoquin local officers provided adequate scouting and intelligence aid. The District Inspector, an Englishman of the ascendancy public school ilk, had rooms in Harrington's Hotel in Cook Street, about 150 yards from R.I.C. Barracks. It was his wont to dine there, aristocracy fashion, each evening after returning on foot from the barracks. Sometimes the District Inspector had an escort which returned at once to barracks after seeing the D.I. safely to the hotel. Hence O'Reilly's tentative plan was to enter the hotel after the D.I. had sat to dinner and the escort was gone. Once there, he had arranged to take the waiter's place and dress and enter the D.I.'s presence in the Dining Room, bearing a tray of food, holding beneath the tray a loaded revolver. O'Reilly came along to Cappoquin district and stayed about for a few nights all set for the operation, but Moloney declined to arrange the necessary co-operation within and without the hotel, and O'Reilly had no choice but to abandon the attempt. O'Reilly himself told me a few months later that he believed neither Moloney nor other Cappoquin I.R.A. officers approved of the attack on the D.I. as they feared the dire consequences by way of reprisals from the British armed forces. The R.I.C. had exacted no revenge by way of burnings or killings for the two previous fatal attacks on them - a restraint on their part rarely in evidence in those days. But now there was a big 'Tan' contingent stationed in Cappoquin and they were only spoiling and eager for any excuse ro shoot up the town and punish its inhabitants. Still, Paddy was sore and disappointed and complained bitterly that they (Cappoquin I.R.A.) had co-operated with and allowed flying gunmen from Dungarvan to come in and kill these Irish

policemen (more or less friendly to the National Cause) and they refused to help him in attacking an English R.I.C. officer, a far more bitter and more dangerous foe, a real traditional arch-enemy to Irish freedom.

Of course, there were other aspects of these activities by mobile I.R.A. units which caused friction and unpleasant non-co-operation. It was never very clear what were the ethics, militarily or morally, governing the activities of the columns or active service units or individual fighters outside their own immediate area. O'Reilly, after all, was a member of an I.R.A. column in another brigade area - Cork No. 1. He was acting on his own initiative in coming to Cappoquin, many miles outside his own theatre of military activities. He was an eager and aggressive Volunteer who exploited to the full his individual attacking prowess in his own town of Youghal. His familiarity with Cappoquin and district showed him some good opportunities of inflicting loss on England's forces there and he was eager to avail of them. On the other hand, the Cappoquin I.R.A. and possibly the West Waterford Brigade would regard and did regard O'Reilly as a tresspassing individual republican fighter in their area, whose presence meant armed attack on enemy forces there with savage enemy reprisals locally as the inevitable aftermath. Within a few weeks, I myself was to experience a little of this peculiar 'dog in the manger' attitude of the Cappoquin I.R.A. towards incursions from outside by armed individuals of the Republican army who were attached to other brigades. Of course, at the time, throughout Ireland, the I.R.A. was organised into brigades, each brigade a self-contained independent military unit exercising military authority only within the limits of its own brigade area. Each brigade was itself directly subject to G.H.Q. in Dublin.

Between adjoining brigades there was occasionally a certain amount of rivalry, even of jealousy at times. Some Brigade O/Cs were like big farmers as regards the "sanctity" of their boundaries. Violation of the territory of a neighbouring brigade was recognised on the plea of military necessity sometimes when a Battalion Column or a Brigade Column was hard-pressed by the enemy, but a prolonged sojourn by an "outside" column within another brigade area was frowned upon by the Brigade Commandant. It must be remembered that Flying Columns, big and small, were quartered entirely on the people in the districts where they sheltered, or retreated, or laid low. The "safe" districts were the most inaccessible and secluded spots in the mountains and glens, but these were also the poorest and most sparsely populated. Often enough, the problem of feeding the billeted column for anything longer than a few days provided an acute problem for the resident "hosts", the Column O/C and the Battalion or Brigade Q/M. No Brigade Commandant could feel other than disapproval or resentment at seeing his own scanty resources of shelter and support being exhausted by fugitive I.R.A. combat forces from places far outside his own command area and jurisdiction. This trespass was understandable when it was official, that is, under the orders of the Column O/C or Brigade O/C, but when individual I.R.A. combatants sought enemy targets outside their own defined area of operations it posed new problems of authority, recognition and co-operation.

When I came home from Cork this Christmas, 1920, bringing with me from Cork City arms and ammunition to harass the Crown Forces in West Waterford, I never thought for a moment of this aspect of the question. I assumed

I was only doing my duty as an I.R.A. man to wage war on the enemy anywhere and everywhere and at any and every opportunity. I asked or sought no superior authority to do what I did. It never struck me to do so. I recollect that afterwards, early in 1921, an action order was issued to each A.S.U. man of us in Cork City that each of us had army authority to act on his own initiative and to use his own discretion when he was operating individually against the enemy, that is, should he happen to encounter an enemy target casually and should he see a favourable opportunity of a sudden successful attack, then he could go right ahead, fortified by the assurance that the I.R.A. would "stand over" his aggression. The propriety and the military wisdom of delegating such operational authority and power to individual soldiers in such indiscriminate fashion is very much open to question, but the I.R.A. in Cork wished to develop an aggressive spirit and initiative in the individual Volunteer and to improve his morale, his battle confidence and his effectiveness as a guerrilla soldier. This they planned to do by throwing each I.R.A. man at times entirely on his own resources and giving him full executive authority in emergency. I believed that the comparative quietness of the Cappoquin district, with its corresponding small and casually unoccupied and unalerted enemy garrisons, would during the general laxity of the Christmas period provide an opportunity for a crack at the enemy, which, if it did nothing else, would jolt his complacency, shake his morale and "put the wind up him".

As we talked that night, Gerald Kenny told me, too, of the arms dump of the Cappoquin Company and promised to show it to me on the morrow. As I was about to leave Kenny's that night, three of us stayed talking in the

doorway. So engrossed were we in discussion that we never noticed four big black figures appear out of the dark, drizzly night until they were around us at the door. Four tall, heavy R.I.C. men without rifles. It was about 9.45 p.m. They looked sharply at us but neither searched nor questioned. "Clear out of this" the Sergeant ordered gruffly. We cleared, I going with Willie Kennedy up Barrack St. and then returning home by a circuitous route via the railway station. The R.I.C. made no attempt to follow us. I did not know them and I was sure that they did not recognise me; that is why I walked off with Kennedy as if I was going home with him.

Next day, sure enough, Kenny showed me the company dump. I was shocked at such ignorance and neglect. In the open air, covered with undergrowth beneath some large trees inside Sir John Keane's Demesne wall alongside the old boreen short-cut to Melleray was the dump. Some shotguns and a couple of sporting rifles and an old carbine, wet and rusty and useless, with no covering (or oiling) on them to protect them from the weather - it was a galling sight for any I.R.A. man who realised the precious value of serviceable firearms in the deadly guerilla struggle then so intense. "The Q/M or Company Officer responsible for that mess deserves to be shot" I said to Kenny. He agreed. Then I saw a small egg-bomb amid the scattered guns. "This may be handy" I said, "take it along home with you and keep it safely". He did. He also told me of the existence of another smaller dump in the cliff beside the Glenshalane river where the company's ammunition and some small arms were kept. I decided to visit this later. During the next few days there was a big influx of new Black and Tans direct from

England - a mongrelly, scrubby, ill-assorted crew. Within a week one of them was caught red-handed robbing a Mrs. William Maher - the wife of a farmer-cum-huckster residing in Main St. and the mother of several young children - of a considerable sum in notes, the proceeds of a cattle sale. The Tan was fired and deported to England by the local D.I. as he had been caught in broad daylight robbing the woman.

On a few days before Christmas, 1920, Kenny and I scouted the Ballygelane Road for a mile or so west of Cappoquin during morning and early afternoon. We were armed and were prospecting for an opportune shot at any Tans who might be venturing along that way in ones or twos or threes. But we encountered no Tan. We did, however, one evening before Christmas happen on Head Constable Patrick Cahill, R.I.C., out strolling briskly all alone and unarmed. We refrained from molesting him for several reasons. He was an ageing man serving out his time in the force. He had a big family and some of his sons had been school companions of mine and Kenny's at Lismore Christian Brothers' School. Moreover, he had shown no open hostility to Sinn Féin or the I.R.A. and had always been friendly with the people and unobtrusive in the discharge of his ordinary police duties. He it was who had warned my father in 1917 to caution me about my then drilling activities and I had no reason to think it was any other than a friendly gesture. All during his period as Head Constable in Cappoquin R.I.C., "Head" Cahill had moved freely round and about the town and country, usually alone and unarmed. He trusted in the people for his safety though he must have known that at times he was exposing himself to great danger. Evidently he believed that no harm would befall him as long as he was alone and

unarmed, even though he always wore R.I.C. uniform. At any rate, the "Head" returned to barracks that evening blissfully unconscious of the danger through which he had passed.

Shortly after, in 1921, he was transferred to Baltinglass, Wicklow, and was replaced by a big domineering Kerry Head Constable named Galvin who had soldiered for England in the Great War. The best thing to be said in Galvin's favour was that the Tans under him, to a man, hated and feared him like the devil, while the R.I.C. worshipped him. Curiously enough, he developed a romantic interest in the local Cumann na mBan Chief - Miss Mary Kerfoot. They kept company and walked out openly, but it was hard to say if Cupid was directing affairs or if it was a case of "who is codding who"? Many believed that the experienced "Head" was courting Mary for police and political purposes, to worm out the secrets of the local I.R.A. and Cumann na mBan. Others, mainly the Sinn Féin element, regarded Mary as "Judith of old in the camp of Holifernes", employing all her charm to pry out information about R.I.C. affairs. Whatever the true explanation, an over zealous Sinn Féin M.C. at a Boat-House Dance in Cappoquin round Easter, 1921, refused to dance with the 'Fair Mary' when he encountered her in a set of Irish Quadrilles. "Girls who went with the Tans were boycotted at dances" the grim, heroic M.C. cried, as he folded his arms and stared at the bewildered Mary. "I won't dance with you no more than I would with any other girl running after the Tans, even though you are a Cumann na mBan officer". It was a comical scene surely at that grim time; dance M.C. Mick Mason, I.R.A. member, publicly scorning, on the dance floor, a Cumann na mBan

lady for her alleged flirting with an R.I.C. officer. It was one of the funny incidents which relieved the dark tenseness and gloom of that tragic period.

After several barren prowlings and layings in wait on the Ballygelane Road, Kenny and I one evening turned our attention to the eastern surroundings of Cappoquin. We had learned that the English District Inspector of the R.I.C. (the fellow who escaped Paddy Reilly's attentions) made an occasional social call to Derriheen House occupied by two or three elderly ladies named Trant, scions of an Ascendancy planter family which had figured in the stormy agrarian history of Holycross-Dovea area of mid Tipperary where the Trants were big evicting landlords occupying Dovea House. The Trants of Dovea were one of the most tyrannical rack-renting Cromwellian planter families in all Tipperary. Derriheen House was situated in a small wooded glen and approached by a dark, tree-lined avenue, about a quarter mile long, in from the main Dungarvan road. On the north it was skirted by a small swampy stream, a tributary of the Glenshalane river which flowed due west into the Blackwater a little further to the north and between Derriheen House and Cappoquin. Due east of the house was a large grove of scattered timber terminating in a long scrubby wooded cliff stretching north eastwards to the Glenshalane river at Balica Bridge - a railway bridge about one mile or so to the east of Cappoquin.

On the first evening we scouted round the place carefully, noting all the approaches and retreat routes and the various spots giving cover from view and from fire. I had the big .45 Colt loaded, with spare bullets loose

in my pockets. Kenny was unarmed. Having loitered for some hours round the house, we wearied of the monotonous waiting and moved away to the east through the grove. About 400 yards or so from Derriheen and out of sight and sound of the Big House, I did a strange unaccountable thing. Whether it was that I wanted to shoot at something or another or wished to impress Kenny with my familiarity with firearms and my prowess as a revolver shot, I cannot tell. At all events, I pinned a paper bulls-eye target to a nearby conifer, stepped back twenty paces or so and cocked the gun. Extending my gun-arm rigidly to its fullest, I brought the gun with a downward motion on the target, sighted simultaneously and fired. I hit the tree about an inch from the circular piece of paper. I moved to twenty-five paces, repeated the motions, fired and hit the paper. I was mighty pleased with my marksmanship. Handing the Colt to Kenny, I told him to have a try. He did, but by the loose, awkward, crooked-arm way in which he aimed the gun I knew he would get a surprise. He fired and the heavy revolver kicked upwards in recoil, the bullet missing the tree altogether and severing a light branch high up in a tree further away. I advised him to keep his arm stretched taut and rigid and to fire on the downward movement to reduce disturbing of aim by recoil. He was about to shoot again when I saw the figure of a woman (one of the Misses Trant) about 60 yards away behind the target and walking in our direction, looking curiously all round. Whether she had heard the shots or seen us I could not say. We did not wait to find out. We beat a hasty and rather panicky retreat along the wooded cliff bottom to the east. Emerging over the cliff top near Balica Bridge, who did we meet but Tom Lincoln, N.T., the local company intelligence

officer. We were almost out of breath. Kenny explained our hurry and told how Miss Trant had interrupted our shooting practice. Lincoln was angry and scared. Turning to me he said, "You are alright, you're not known round here now nor suspected, but we are", he continued, "and I am; and if any shooting occurs here I will suffer and 'tis we who will be burned out". I was a bit nettled at this, all the more so as it was mostly true. I told Lincoln that there was no necessity to be alarmed, that I had the gun with me for use against the British soldiers and Tans and that, given a favourable opportunity, I would so use it, regardless of consequences to myself, to him, or to Cappoquin. I resented what I regarded as his pacifism and I reckoned that he was "windy" at the knowledge that his nextdoor neighbour (my home was next to Lincoln's) carried a loaded revolver during his Christmas sojourn in Cappoquin. However, Kenny and I continued on our way and returned home via the railway. Lincoln changed direction so as to avoid the possibility of running in to Miss Trant and crossed due south to the Dungarvan Road.

A few nights later, on the eve of Christmas, I had just come out of Kenny's about 10 p.m. and was crossing the Square on my way home. It was pitch dark but the oil lamp at the Cornerstone cast a feeble pale flicker around. Suddenly I heard the rush of running feet. A bunch of shadowy figures emerged from the black shadows behind the street lamp, running towards me. I heard the shout "Halt, put your hands up". I obeyed. I was immediately surrounded by seven or eight men in civilian clothes brandishing revolvers. Their attire was swell - velour and felt hats pulled down all round, silk mufflers and scarves of gaudy colours, dark heavy greatcoats, a few with belted

light mackintoshes. Their accents were decidedly English; Tans, disguised as civilians, out for sport on one of their terror expeditions. One of them stuck the muzzle of a Webley against my throat and proceeded to feel me all over carefully, searching for concealed weapons evidently, then, satisfied that I had nothing lethal, he asked me where I was going. "Home" I replied promptly, "just down the street". I wished to stress without delay that I was a local resident and not a stranger or a country man. "You're coming with us", said my English questioner grimly. "We want you". I got a shock. A kind of panic seized me. It was well that it was dark for I shivered and I am sure I turned pale as a ghost. Frightful visions of a savage beating-up or torture or a cruel death flashed across my mind. The dreadful uncertainty of the ominous words "we want you" struck fear through my whole being. Just then another local young man approached. As he reached the circle of light he was halted, searched and hustled like me. He was roughly pushed over beside me. I recognised him as Tom Ahearne, a local Volunteer. "Two will do for the present" shouted my Tan, who was evidently the leader, as the others clustered round Ahearne and me. That shout frightened me all the more as the lot of them showed signs of drink and were in a dangerous, truculent mood. I wondered what was to happen us. I was soon to know. They turned round and marched back down the Main Street towards the church, their two captives in the lead with arms held high. As we neared the church the town lamp-lighter passed by on his rounds with a ladder. He was halted, his ladder taken, and ordered home. We two were compelled to carry the ladder. The whole party stopped at the church and a few of the bunch went off down towards the R.I.C. barrack. We were in agonies of suspense. In a short time

they were back with two or three uniformed R.I.C. The ladder was taken from us and placed against the front of Miss Mary Johnson's shop and home. (She was a prominent Sinn Féiner, chairman of local S.F. Club). A pot of paint and brush was handed to Ahearne (that was what the Tans had gone away to get) and he was ordered to mount the ladder. I was obliged to hold the ladder firmly on the ground. Ahearne was then ordered to paint "God Save the King" over Miss Johnson's shop-front. Revolvers were levelled at him to make sure he did the job. I remained at the bottom of the ladder, nervous, miserable and ashamed and almost sick at my own helplessness. For ten minutes or more this shameful performance went on and then more R.I.C. appeared and one of them looked sharply at me for a moment or two and then called the Tan leader aside and whispered to him. At that moment footsteps sounded approaching on the Main St. pavement. A tall man appeared and was stopped and searched. Jim Curran, another local I.R.A. man returning to his home in Mass Lane. He was put holding the ladder in my place. The Tan chief called me aside and, putting one arm round my shoulder, he walked with me a little back up Main St. Then he stopped,and putting his mouth, which reeked of whiskey, close to my face, he asked: "Is your brother in the R.I.C.?" "He is" I answered. "And your father is an ex R.I.C. man living here"? "Yes". "Sorry, old fellow", he said as if about to kiss me, "very sorry, we did not know", and then with a "good night, old man" and a vigorous handshake he turned about and rejoined his comrades in uniform and civies.

I walked home quickly, seething with conflicting emotions. Humiliation was uppermost. I was furious, too, with myself for my meekness and for my tail-between-the legs

behaviour in the hands of the Black and Tans; then I was glad that I was spared the utter degradation of painting British slogans on a Sinn Féin home. I knew, too, that I had Sergeant Foley of the R.I.C. to thank for my timely release, for it was he who had spoken to the Tan leader. I did not know whether to feel thankful or not. My pride and my self-respect had been sorely wounded. Such were my thoughts and feelings as I tried vainly to sleep that night.

I spent Christmas quietly at home nursing my hurt self-esteem back from the jarring it had received the night I was a play-toy in the hands of the Tans. I paid one visit to Lismore where Jerry Ormond put me in touch with two young men - Bernard O'Brien and Joe Collins - who were prepared, though having no arms, to aid in any attack <u>outside the town</u> on individual Tans or military or small parties (numbering two or three at most). I arranged with Ormond to have these men ready at hand at Monamon any day with six hours' notice. Then with G. Kenny I discussed possible activities. We could but muster four men - Kenny, the two Lismore men and myself - and our weapons consisted of my Colt .45, a small .32 of Kenny's, for which he had a few rounds, a lady's derringer gun which might intimidate but which was far too light for serious deadly work, and the egg-bomb whose effectiveness was doubtful in the extreme. It was clear that the whole brunt of any attack would depend on my big Colt, so we reckoned it would be foolhardy to challenge any more than two armed police. It would depend on circumstances whether we would challenge and shoot or challenge to disarm. In the latter case our two unarmed comrades would come in useful to do the disarming. But all during Christmas season, no armed enemies, in any strength at all, ventured along the Ballygelane Road between Cappoquin

and Lismore, so I never had occasion to mobilise the two Lismore lads.

It was market day in Cappoquin, the last market of 1920. It was a bright, mild, sunny day after Christmas and quite a number of people were moving about the streets despite the dangerous times. As I strolled up the street by the Square in the early afternoon, an extraordinary sight met my eyes. About eight or ten Tans in uniform and fully armed hovered round the Market House - cum - Courthouse. Some of them watched with grim amusement a nervous young man who industriously scrubbed a large paint brush on the main Courthouse wall facing the Main St. He was feverishly busy smearing over some big letter slogans - such as "Peace with England? Never!" and "No peace until Ireland is free" - slogans which Jim Brien, Kelliher, Kennedy and myself had spent a night painting up in the exciting post-armistice election days of 1918. The dark young man was Tommy Lincoln, I.R.A. Company I.O. and my neighbour who had disapproved revolver practice in Derriheen a week or so before. There he was now under the threats of the Tans, obliterating before the gaze of all, in broad daylight in the Square of Cappoquin, Irish national slogans. No wonder the Tans were exultant. No wonder many of the passers-by were puzzled and surprised. I was neither, for I understood. Had I not had a similar experience a few nights before, but at dead of night with no spectators but drunken armed Tans dressed in civies? Having finished obliterating, Lincoln now proceeded to paint "God Save the King", "Rule Britannia" on the same Courthouse wall under the directions of the Tans with their revolvers swinging menacingly. Many passed by but none dallied for fear of attracting the attentions of the Black and Tans. Having finished his forced painting

labour, Lincoln was then released by the Tans without hurt or injury.

The Tans, very proud of their new efforts to restore Empire prestige, rounded up some prominent local men next day, brought them out to Cappoquin Bridge, provided paints and brushes and ordered them to paint up British slogans on the bridge. The first man ordered - Mick Mason, a burly Volunteer, the regular M.C. at local dances, he who later refused to dance with Miss Mary Kerfoot - refused. The Tans were momentarily taken aback at this unexpected defiance. Then one of them rushed at him with raised revolver and smashed it down viciously on Mason's head. He staggered and blood started to stream down his face. Then he was brutally ordered to stand back. Another local man, an athlete, footballer and Volunteer, Mick Gargent, was thrust forward and ordered to take the paint brush. He too refused. He was seized by three or four Tans and hustled to the parapet of the bridge where the Tans tried to lift him and throw him into the flooded wintry Blackwater beneath. Just then the local Catholic Curate, Rev. Fr. Mescall, who had served as British Army Chaplain in France in the Great War but who was now an ardent Sinn Féinér, came on the scene. Apparently he had been apprised of what the Tans were up to and had come along fearing that some of his flock were in grave danger. It was a providential appearance. The Tans desisted in their efforts to throw Sargent in the river and released him, so, too, with the others whom they had rounded up for their brutal sport. But Mason had to have several stitches inserted in the gaping wound on his head by Dr. White, local M.O. It was his heavy tweed cap that saved the plucky Mick Mason from the full murderous force of the Tan's savage revolver. Incidentally, Mason's

eldest brother had been killed in France fighting for England early in the Great War. The spirit shown by Mason and Sargent in refusing to be intimidated or humiliated by Black and Tan guns into performing abject acts of slavery had a salutary and a stiffening effect on local resistance morale. Yet a few days later the Tans forced young Michael Kenny, a lad of 17 years, a brother of Gerald, to paint "God Save the King" on either side of his own hall door at 2 p.m. in the afternoon before the gaze of all. It was a dirty brutal act of terrorism. The youth was pulled out at the revolver's point from his widowed mother's house and compelled to disfigure in horrible fashion the front of his mother's house while the Tans looked on leering in savage glee at their brutal performance. Little wonder that the widow Kenny was so terrified that she sent her two boys (her entire family) away to the Salesian College in Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick, to try and save them from the savage attentions of the Tans.

The Christmas was over, New Year was come and still we had failed to ambush or attack any of the police or soldiers. Loth to return to Cork without being able to boast that I had fired a shot at the enemy in some shape or form, I decided to have a try on my own. It was a mild sunny afternoon in early January, 1921, so I set off to Derriheen Avenue to lay in ambush for the D.I. who was likely to make one of his now infrequent social calls on the Trant ladies on an evening like this. I took up a well-concealed position on the north side of the avenue about midway between Derriheen House and Main Road, from where I could retreat under cover to the well sheltered Glenshalane River eastward. The time dragged by slowly and ever more slowly. One moment, finding myself getting jittery with impatience and monotony, I would decide to give

up my fruitless and nerve-wracking prowling in wait; the next I'd make up my mind to linger on just five minutes more. Then again, I'd move to go off and again I'd postpone abandonment for another few minutes. One inward voice whispered that I had waited long enough, that I had done enough to prove my determination and satisfy the earnestness of my intent. Another voice taunted me with nervousness and indecision and suggested that this individual display of aggressive spirit was really only an act and at heart I was glad and relieved that no enemy was showing up and that my military ardour was not being put to the test. Finally, I was in such a state of unrest, mentally and physically, that I lost confidence in myself completely. I found myself shivering with suppressed emotion and the tension of my situation. Acting on the principle that a good run is better than a bad stand, and finding my courage and nerve beginning to sag, I hurried away, slinking like a scared dog from my lair. Many times I looked fearfully behind and about me, but I reached the river without mishap, crossed on to the railway and returned home. My mind was a prey to warring thoughts, relief, disappointment, self-distrust, self-pity. I upbraided myself for my indecision, I excused myself for my weakness and wavering. Finally, I consoled myself with the comforting thought that all's well that ends well. I had done nothing and accomplished nothing despite all my valiant intentions.

Early in January, 1921, martial law edicts were intensified in Munster. Strickland had issued another proclamation which rivalled the Cromwellian edicts in rigour and severity. For all breaches of martial law code in the south, 'Death' was the penalty. For being in possession

of arms or ammunition or any lethal firearm, for levying war against the British Crown, for harbouring, aiding or consorting with rebels (i.e. The Irish Republican Army), for wearing military uniform, British or otherwise, or being in possession thereof, the penalty was death by shooting before a firing squad. The accused, if he was not shot out of hand on the spot, which, incidentally, was a frequent occurrence, was tried immediately by drumhead courtmartial, found guilty and handed over to the execution squad. Mindful of my lucky escape from search on my pre-Christmas train arrival in Lismore Station, I resolved not to risk a second experience. I was returning to Cork, but if I could not chance again travelling back by train armed, how was I to get my precious Colt and ammunition back to the City? I decided on a daringly simple method. Why not utilise the British Government's own carrying services for the purpose? The more I thought it out, the more it appealed to me as simple, sure, audacious and almost foolproof. I got an ordinary cardboard boot box at home and into it I packed the Colt .45 - empty and wrapped in thick flannel. With it I packed in also about 20 rounds of .45 revolver bullets, each carefully wrapped tightly in cotton wool and tied with cotton thread. When all this stuff was packed tightly in the cardboard box, I fastened it securely and wrapped it in strong brown paper, which I sealed most carefully. On the paper I gummed a plain white label on which was printed neatly in Roman capitals the name and address: "M.V. O'DONOGHUE, ESQ., c/o PORTER'S OFFICE, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, CORK" and the legend "WITH CARE" neatly above.

I must digress for a moment here to explain that a few days before I prepared this parcel, I had visited the Cappoquin

I.R.A. Company's dump in a cliff beside the Glenshalane River. This dump was shown me by Tommy Ahearne - the man who had been forced by the Tans to paint "God Save the King" on Miss Johnson's shop front that night round Christmas - and who was anxious that some warlike use should be made of the local buried armoury. The dump consisted of a varied assortment of ammunition of ancient pedigree, with two small revolvers, a .32 and .38, I think, stored in a large cubical biscuit tin, buried in sand at the foot of the gravelly cliff where a large burrow of almost cave-like proportions had been excavated in the cliff. The approach to this was effectively concealed and protected by thick thorn bushes and briars, and entrance was gained by crawling dog-fashion between bushes and cliff-face for some distance. After checking carefully the ammunition, I took away about 10 rounds or so of the .45 stuff to add to my own supply to be sent back to Cork with the Colt.

Now the problem of posting the parcel presented itself. I dare not do it myself and to post it in Cappoquin would be suicidal, so on the Sunday prior to my leaving by train for Cork I rolled the precious parcel in my overcoat and secured this neatly on the carrier of my bike and set off along the Kilbree Road for Lismore. Keeping to the by-roads skirting Lismore on the south, I reached Ormond's at West St. corner, one hundred yards from the R.I.C. barracks. He said that he would get Bernard O'Brien to post it in Lismore P.O. on the following morning but that I should see O'Brien myself to give him full instructions. At all events, I would most likely contact him in a Chapel St. house where the newly arrived Battalion O/C, Liam Fitzgerald, was staying quietly, having come along from Kilrossanty on

Brigadier Pax Whelan's orders. Ormonde and I walked round by the Fair Field, I leading the bike and ready to race away on any signal of danger, my companion very much on the alert. We met Fitzgerald in Chapel St. but no "Ber" Brien. I remained discussing national and I.R.A. affairs with Fitzgerald while Ormonde went off to locate O'Brien. In a short time he was back with O'Brien, much to my relief. I explained to O'Brien the mission he was to perform. It was a very dangerous one. He was to take my parcel, keep it safely until next morning, then hand it in personally before noon for posting in Lismore Post Office. O'Brien volunteered with alacrity - he was a courageous little fellow and eager for active service in the I.R.A. The risk he was undertaking may be judged from the fact that to reach the post office he had to pass by the strong military post garrisoned by the 'Buffs' at Goulding's corner, from which the post office was a bare 40 yards distant. On the other approach, a sand-bagged enclosure on the Main St. was occupied night and day by armed military sentries who surveyed all passers-by with suspicion, holding-up, searching and shooting according as the whim took them. Already O'Brien was a marked man with these 'Buffs' - had they not man-handled and searched him on the very night of my arrival by train with Jerry Ormonde. He was exposing himself to mortal danger by carrying out this mission for me. Yet he never faltered, never demurred. Such was the measure of his eagerness to serve his country as a soldier of the I.R.A. I bade good-bye and good luck to "Ber" Brien, then parted with Fitzgerald and Ormonde and returned to Cappoquin. I had more than one twinge of conscience that night as my mind kept worrying on the danger to which I had exposed O'Brien.

Next day I travelled back to Cork by train without incident. Next evening, Tuesday, about 5.15 p.m. - when all University activities had ceased for the day - I called at the porter's office in Main Hall, accompanied by Ormonde and Gerald Kenny who had come along to Cork to do a course in some commercial college. I had previously scouted the surroundings for fear of any trap being laid. I asked the porter, William, if there was any parcel for me. My heart missed several beats when he told me that there was. He went behind the office counter, produced my precious parcel and handed it to me. I took it gratefully. William, the porter, although an ex-British soldier, was quite chummy with me, as I flattered him occasionally by listening to his "doings" and tips for exams and an odd tip of a 'tanner' for himself. Now, with my parcel clutched under my oxter, I retired with the other two down to the recesses of the engineering lanoratory in the basement, where, who should I encounter but Denis Kennedy, B.E., Ray's brother, and whom I knew to be an I.R.A. staff officer. He was at the time doing a bit of engineering research in the laboratory. I told him of the contents of the parcel and he brought us into the engineering private office, where I untied the parcel and exposed its contents. Kennedy was amused and astonished. He thought it a grim audacious joke to use His Britannic Majesty's postal service for the safe despatch of guns and ammunition to rebel I.R.A. gunmen. Who would have believed it? What a tribute to the security and the efficiency of the Imperial parcel post in Ireland? I was mighty proud of the complete success of my simple stratagem, relieved that O'Brien had escaped detection and, in general, felt myself a mighty clever and important fellow. That night I left the Colt and its "feed" in the

safety of my private locker in the engineering building of University College, Cork. I did not wish to tempt fate further by bringing it down city to my digs in the Parade. That job could wait for a day or two until I had sized up the position and could avoid unnecessary risks. That night I gave Jack Daly a full account of my Christmas adventures in Cappoquin and he was tickled to death at the dramatically simple way in which I had got the Colt .45 back to Cork.

During January and early February I put in a little hurling practice at the U.C.C. Gaelic grounds in the Mardyke. The Universities' hurling and football championships - the Fitzgibbon and Sigerson Cups - were due for decision. I fancied myself a bit as a hurler and though I played but little in Cork (as my energies were almost entirely devoted to sterner exercises) I had already competed in the Waterford championships in 1919 and 1920. With me used be Jerome Twohill, medical student, ex-radio operator of World War 1 and now I.R.A. member, who also "digged" in the 'Shamrock' and who was feverishly anxious to make the grade for the Sigerson as football was his preference. Mick Crowley, too, of Kilbrittain, afterwards second-in-command of Tom Barry's Flying Column, an ex-Rockwell student, also turned up for the hurling practices with John Joe Joyce of Midleton, a great pal of mine who lodged up in Leitrim St. and with whom I occasionally ventured on romantic excursions with some of the more attractive of Blackpool's gay young "flappers" (the teenagers of 1920). Joyce had an appalling "Coal Quay" accent - though he came from Lisgoold. He was a lovely hurler, with dash and determination, but was handicapped with short-sight and continually wore thick-lensed glasses. Despite the danger and the conditions, there used be big musters for practice and training. University College, Cork,

had at that time great teams competing in the Cork County Senior Championships in hurling and football. In the years 1919-20-21 U.C.C. teams reached the Cork County finals more than once. Several College players figured prominently on Cork inter-county teams of those days, the most famous being Connie Lucey, afterwards Dr. Con Lucey of Barry's Column in West Cork.

Well, when the Fitzgibbon Cup hurling team was picked, Joyce was on the playing fifteen, I was a sub and Crowley was not listed. Neither was Twohill with the footballers. Both were disappointed I think. In the event, Dublin, who at that time had an all-star team led by the famous Seán Hyde, beat Cork, and hurling hopes and ambitions were forgotten as the students reverted to more intensive effort on tougher and sterner fields. Mick Crowley, in February, left College for his Kilbrittain home and Barry's Column, bringing with him Connie Lucey and "Nudge" Callanan, two of our hurling stalwarts, medical students and N.C.O.s in A. Company. Joyce was doing engineering with me and we put the hurling out of our minds to concentrate on our I.R.A. work and do a little bit of work and study, but within a few short weeks poor Joyce was to meet a bloody and brutal death in the massacre of Diarmuid Hurley's Column at Clonmult.

Late in January, Jack Daly and I met Raymond Kennedy, now acting O/C 2nd Battalion, and asked him to arrange to have us both sent to Brigade Flying Column in the country. He told us that the country A.S.U. columns were at full strength and that scores of City Volunteers were offering their services for Flying Column operations in the country. The Brigade O/C and staff did not want any city men for service in the country and had actually from time to time

sent back men from rural columns to the city. We knew that this was true and that Mick Murphy, 2nd Battalion O/C, had just returned to the city from a period of service with Brigade Column in the Macroom area. Kennedy told us that we were far more valuable in Cork City where the two city I.R.A. battalions were holding down very strong enemy forces. Every active, zealous Volunteer was needed in Cork City, he said, to intensify the offensive against the British. Every action in the city, no matter how small, helped to distract the Crown Forces and to lower their morale. By keeping the British "on the jump" in Cork City, the City I.R.A. were keeping thousands of enemy forces occupied and preventing them from being thrown into the campaign against the Flying Columns in the country. Besides, there was no necessity for I.R.A. men to "take to the country" either 'on the run' or for column work, as the British Authorities in Cork City hardly knew a single I.R.A. officer either by name or by description. Shortly afterwards, Commandant Mick Murphy himself was arrested by a curfew patrol in a house in Douglas St., and after serving a prison sentence of some months was actually released by the British. This shows how very little the Crown Forces Intelligence Department knew about the personnel of the I.R.A. fighting forces arrayed against them in Cork City.

Though disappointed at Kennedy's matter of fact dismissal of our proffered services as column fighters, we recognised readily enough the wisdom and common-sense of the official brigade view-point as explained by him and resigned ourselves to the peculiarly restrained and shackled "shadow boxing" activities which were a feature of the I.R.A. campaign against the enemy forces in Cork City. Shortly after, however, Daly was offered a post as junior electrical engineer to Dublin Corporation, which he duly

accepted. At Easter he moved to Dublin. I put through his transfer promptly to the Dublin Brigade, but, alas, he was destined to see but a glimpse of active service with Dublin before he was captured by the Auxiliaries.

I had kept the Colt .45 with ammunition in my digs in the Shamrock Hotel during January and early February, 1921. Many a night Miss Mary O'Brien took the gun over from me and concealed it herself during the long night hours, handing it over to me in the morning, but now the latest Martial Law Ordinance ordained that all heads of households should list the names and occupations of all those residing in their house and should hang this list for military inspection on the inside of the front door. Absentees or fresh arrivals or new residents should be specially noted. The penalty for evasion of this black listing decree was all the rigours of a British military courtmartial. Miss O'Brien had complied, as did every other householder, with this nightly "tag-tagging" of the City population. Nobody in the place objected. After all, what's in a name? It meant nothing to the British. It seemed a silly, cumbersome provision, a real nuisance. It could be of little value, if any, to the British Authorities and it seemed impossible to check. Then one day when I was at College, a British military officer with about ten armed soldiers visited 31, Grand Parade. The officer removed the list of names, questioned Miss O'Brien about the then whereabouts of all the residents who were out and noted the names of the males who were in. He ordered Miss O'Brien to show him to the rooms of these in turn, leaving his armed soldiers below in the hallway and at the door. He queried each man of those in about his name, age, occupation and reason for being in, and checked with

particulars on list. Satisfied, he returned the sheet to Miss O'Brien and withdrew with his troops. When I came in to dinner at 1.30 p.m. she told me all that had happened. I could see she was worried by the intensity of the British officer's investigation, for the very night before she had safely dumped my armament for me as usual and returned it to me that morning. I was disturbed, too, as I had left the 'skit' casually in the wardrobe of my own room, which, incidentally, I shared with two others, one a Volunteer. I knew from Miss O'Brien that, though there were a number of I.R.A. men in the house, including her own brother, I was the only one about whom she worried, for, truth to tell, I was the only I.R.A. man who kept firearms in the place. With the death penalty being enforced for possession of firearms under martial law, I could understand Miss O'Brien's agitation on my behalf. I saw, too, that I was recklessly and inconsiderately exposing herself in particular, and my fellow residents in general, to unnecessary peril. I decided to be more cautious and prudent. That evening I contacted Quartermaster I.R.A. at U.C.C. and he was astounded to learn that I had kept personal possession of the Colt .45 all this time. He said an instruction had been issued to all I.R.A. personnel who had firearms to deposit same with Quartermaster for storing in official dump.

That night I remember I kept the gun loaded in my overcoat pocket hanging in the wordrobe of my room. Sharing the room with me was Mick O'Riordan, an I.R.A. man of "B" Company, 2nd Battalion, who worked as a draper's assistant over in the South Main St. Mick, who came from Kilmichael, Macroom, knew all about me and my activities

and was quite willing to run the risk of being my room-mate even though he realised that I was determined to use the weapon against any night raid by the police or military. The night passed without incident and next morning I brought the gun, loaded and all, with me to the Crawford Technical Institute where I was to do some practical work and study in the electrical laboratory. I was a final year student for B.E. degree (mechanical and electrical) and in those days all the practical work involved was done in the laboratories of the Technical Institute. Our class was a small one, about eight or so, and only three or four were Volunteers. The others were of the cautious, circumspect type, fearful of revealing any national leanings or political views in case it might endanger their professional prospects and ambitions. Though the family background of a few of them was strongly Imperial - one came from Hawlbowline Naval Dockyard, another was the son of a lately retired R.I.C. officer - yet I felt sure that motives of caution and self preservation would keep them from talking loosely or revealing any secrets which they might casually learn.

My two I.R.A. class-mates were Bill O'Connor and Ned Enright, both of whom were destined to figure in leading roles subsequently in the fight for freedom and later in the civil war. During the morning laboratory work I did not feel at all at ease, carrying in my trouser pocket the big Colt .45. It was a double relief, therefore, when we stopped at 12.30 p.m. for the lunch break. I decided on going ahead to the University College to hand up my gun to the quartermaster and then return to the digs. Enright, who was in digs down the Mardyke Walk,

volunteered to accompany me as a scout and look-out. I was mighty glad of his company. Putting on my gaberdine overcoat, I put the Colt, muzzle down, butt protruding, in the inside pocket, which was at the left side. In my left hand and pressing against the bulge in the gaberdine I carried a couple of large science laboratory notebooks. These covered up very effectively the bulging outline of the Colt in my overcoat pocket and kept my left hand engaged. My right hand I swung freely by my side as we walked up Gillabbey St., Enright on my left and I on the inside of the pavement on the right-hand side. We talked animatedly about our electrical engineering studies as we moved up briskly to College Road. We had just reached the street crossing at the beginning of College Road, when, to our dismay, out from the R.I.C. barracks twenty yards away ahead came six policemen, revolvers swinging on their thighs. Three of them crossed to opposite side, then swung around, hands on guns and lounging backs to wall. The instant I saw the Tans emerge, I swore: "Oh, , Ned, we're for it". "Never mind" said Ned, "blaze away". I gripped the gun-butt inside my overcoat with my right hand, which was now stretched across my breast. I shuffled the science books in my left hand, raising them higher so that I almost pushed up the collar, and we advanced coolly to pass through the R.I.C. It had all happened in a flash. We could have stopped and turned back down street again. We could have swung right to the rear of the barracks or we could have turned left up towards Barrack St. But one instant's reflection sufficed to decide me that any of these evasive moves would have been fatal and would have at once drawn fire on us. There was but one escape - to go right ahead into the jaws of the enemy and, should he

challenge, then to shoot it out with him, though the odds were terribly against survival. Enright, though having no gun at all, had clinched my own decision when he gave the almost suicidal incitement to "blaze away". Amazing though it may seem, I felt quite cool and self-possessed as we approached the barrack door. I had my index finger on the trigger with thumb on the hammer ready to fire instantaneously on challenge. The three Tans lounging across the street looked us up and down curiously as we advanced - they kept their hands caressingly on their Webleys in their thigh holsters. I returned their stare in calm, casual fashion as I tried to size up the three others standing at the barrack door. We kept to the pavement, I on the inside. I almost brushed against one of the police, a sergeant, as we reached the door. As we were about to pass through the Tans I turned to Enright, saying, "We'll miss that lecture, 'tis gone quarter-to-one already". We passed. The police neither spoke nor challenged us. How that sergeant or either of his two companions failed to see my right hand clutching the big Colt under their very eyes and just a few inches from their noses, I could never explain. It was a miraculous escape. As we hurried on after passing through the Tans I could hardly draw my breath after the suspense. I kept my ears cocked to hear a challenge, for it was almost incredible that we should have got through. Then, as we quickened our pace eighty yards or so beyond the barracks, we heard a loud "Hi" away back behind us. My heart jumped up in my mouth as I swung round instinctively half-levelling my gun. The Tans were still in the same positions on either side, but hurrying past them was another student, a chum of ours named "Fitzy" (Ned

Fitzgerald from Glounthane) and a bit of a queer character. He it was who shouted after us to wait for him. What an anti-climax! We hurried on and when Fitzy did catch up, I frightened him with the intensity of the curses I poured on his idiotic head for having endangered our escape by his stupid yelling after us. Poor fellow! When he realised how he had nearly ruined our chances by directing so much attention to us with his shouting, he was full of remorse. We reached the College safely and I surrendered possession of the chequered Colt to the Quartermaster for safe keeping in the company dump. That night I never slept a wink with my heart going pit-a-pat and my nerves all a-tingle after the fearful tension of the ordeal through which they had passed. Even yet I cannot think of my providential escape on that momentous day before College Road Police Barracks without feeling a tremor of trepidation go through me. In retrospect, it has given me many a nervous disturbance and many an anxious overwrought nightmare repetition of the experience. Even though I was quite calm and cool-headed all through the actual experience, yet it left indelible after-effects on my nervous system and psychic make-up, so much so that I can never recall it with equanimity.

Next day in the students' club at the College, Jerry Wall quizzed me about my adventure with College Road Tans. He had heard a wrinkle about it, he said, from Fitzy. Sure enough, the latter could not keep quiet about the affair and in a little while I found myself as a kind of curious object of attraction amongst my I.R.A. student comrades. I was regarded as a very cool and resourceful Volunteer, a bit of a hero. Then Ray Kennedy came along to ask me to undertake a new I.R.A. activity - he had learned of my amazing lucky escape and complimented me

on my audacity and resource. He wanted somebody like that, with mechanical ability as well, for a special job. He had got a number of Mills bomb metal casings from City I.R.A. Headquarters to be re-fitted and re-filled with explosive. Would I be able to do the job for him? I accepted. Some nights later I took possession of four bomb casings which Jack Daly brought along to me from Kennedy. They were empty Mills cases which came out defective from the moulds; the heads of a few were cracked and small metallic pieces were missing. They would require pretty neat trimming and fitting in a mechanical engineering workshop to make them suitable for filling and service. I placed them in the fireplace of my room among some coal arranged for display therein, as I reckoned that they would escape any but the sharpest notice there. I would later see how to tackle the job. A few days later, while I was absent at the Technical Institute, three or four Auxiliary Cadets raided the Shamrock Hotel about midday, searched the shop beneath and the living rooms, dining rooms and kitchens on the first floor, but went no higher and refrained from entering the bedrooms. They were quite polite and found nothing incriminating. Strangely enough, they asked few questions and actually apologised to Miss O'Brien on leaving for the disturbance. Miss O'Brien seemed to think that they were acting on some tip from their behaviour and that they had misread their information or had mistaken the house. I was not so sure or easy in mind.

A few days later, on a Friday evening in the third week of February, I parted with my hurling and Volunteer chum, John Joe Joyce. He was going home to Lisgoold for the week-end to see the folks at home and would return to

the College and his Leitrim St. digs on Monday. He never saw Cork City again. On Saturday he met with Diarmuid Hurley's 4th Battalion Flying Column who had just moved into the Clonmult neighbourhood near Joyce's home. Next day, Sunday, he shared the column's quarters and was inside in the Clonmult farmhouse, their main billet, when it was surrounded by a large force of military who had come directly from Cork City about twenty miles away. The column was hopelessly trapped. But the I.R.A. fighters fought with desperate valour all that Sunday evening to break through the British ring of steel and fire. Within the dwelling man after man fell mortally wounded beneath the terrible withering fire of machine-gun and rifle. The house burst into flames. The survivors rushed out to scatter for cover in the yard. They were mown down pitilessly. The rest, now unarmed, surrendered. The Tommies closed in savagely. The wounded still alive were slaughtered mercilessly, so, too, were most of those who yielded. Almost twenty corpses of young Irishmen strew the floor and the ground slumped in their gore. Amongst them was the brutally mutilated body of John Joe Joyce, twenty years old engineering student of U.C.C., Fitzgibbon hurler and bowler and the merriest heart and cheeriest soul in every game and frolic. Joyce's end filled me with pain and woe and sorrow and foreboding.

The Clonmult massacre was a major disaster to the Irish Republican Army in East Cork. A whole Flying Column was wiped out and, more serious still, all their precious armament lost. The Column O/C alone escaped, as he had gone some miles east that fatal Sunday reconnoitring possible ambush positions and to arrange withdrawal of the column to a new billeting base. Returning that night to th

Midleton area, Diarmuid Hurley was aghast at the completeness of the tragedy that had befallen his fighting force. The Brigade O/C, Seán Hegarty, Cork No. 1 Brigade, whom he came to Cork City in person to see and to obtain from him some rifles to arm a new column, dismissed him callously with the scorching remark, "Go and get back the rifles you lost at Clonmult". Poor Hurley, sad and forlorn, returned to the Dungourney district and tried to rearrange and reform the remnants of his armed Volunteers in the battalion area. With Paddy O'Reilly of Youghal - still operating as a lone musketeer - and Tommy Power, another tough individual I.R.A. warrior, a comrade of Reilly's from the Ardmore area of Waterford, he succeeded in preparing a couple of powerful land mines. But alas, he could only muster about six armed men to be the nucleus of a new fighting squad. This striking force would be totally inadequate to attack any mobile enemy parties anywhere in East Cork where the Crown Forces now moved in strength. Under these circumstances, Hurley set off for West Waterford to meet Pax Whelan, Brigade O/C there, and to discuss with him a junction of column forces to ambush a strong Tan convoy which travelled the wooded Moorehill road by the River Bride from Cappoquin to Tallow and back with almost daily regularity. Hurley had picked on a position and would supply the land mines, a small section of expert operators with their own armed guard, adequate scouts, with demolition, blocking and cover parties, and a safe retreat into the East Cork hill country. Whelan was to supply the riflemen, sufficient to deal with three fully-loaded Crossley tenders of Tans. The arms captured were, after replenishments to the Waterford Column men, to be turned over to Hurley for the purpose of equipping his re-organised column. Hurley was happy as he made his

way back to Dungourney. He would now have a chance of wiping out the crushing catastrophe of Clonmult - the memory of which tormented him as he blamed himself and his own neglect for it all. He would now have the means of mounting another and bigger offensive against the English enemy in his battalion area. But Pax Whelan dallied. He hung for weeks with his column inactive in the Sliabh gCua area about sixteen miles north east of Moorehill. Apparently he was too cautious to venture with his fighting force of sixty rifles across the River Blackwater to the south side of the River Bride. Still, the ambush position was in his own brigade area. Moreover, the Tallow-Lismore-Cappoquin Battalion of the Waterford Brigade had its Battalion Headquarters a few miles to the south in the safe, secluded and inaccessible reaches of Glendine. Pax never moved. Then Hurley came along again, with fearful, pressing urgency, to persuade the Waterford O/C to act. The latter was not enthusiastic; excessive caution was his forte. Hurley came back through Glendine to Dungourney with a vague promise that after Easter he could expect the combined assault on the Cappoquin Tan convoy. The very next night after his return from Tallow area Hurley ran into a police patrol near Midleton. He was fired on but got away, returning the fire to stall off pursuit. Next morning his body was found on a pathway almost a mile away from the scene of the encounter. He had been shot dead. A stray rifle bullet had thus ended in this sad, silent and lonely manner the career of one of the greatest fighting Republican patriots in East Cork. In many respects his lone melancholy end by a stray shot at dead of night resembled the doleful death of his famous Fenian

predecessor in East Cork's fighting annals - Peter O'Neill Crowley of Ballymacoda who fell in Kilclooney Wood in 1867.

After Hurley's death, O'Reilly and Power carried on the fight desperately and relentlessly against the Crown Forces in the Imokilly-Youghal area. They had many hair-breadth escapes but their cool audacity always brought them through. Their last and greatest exploit against the British was the exploding of a land mine beneath a marching column of khaki riflemen, two hundred strong, on the back road leading from Youghal military barracks to the rifle range by the sea. To fire the mine, the two valiant boys had to lie exposed on the brow of the slope forty yards from the road and in full view of the British marching columns. Sad to think that within 18 short months of this gallant exploit, Tommy Power, wearing the uniform of a Free State Army Captain, had been killed at Kilmallock in the early days of the civil war, while Paddy Reilly, the lone Republican fighter of Tan days, had been executed by a Free State firing squad in Waterford City for having defended the Irish Republic in arms.

But revenge for Clonmult was on the way before February, 1921, had passed. Meeting "Beara" Murphy on Saturday evening, February 26th, near St. Augustine's Church, he whispered to me "Go to Confession to-night, Mick, and be ready for Monday". "Beara" was always a bit mysterious, but I guessed that something big was in the offing. Some weeks before, an I.R.A. column in ambush at Dripsey Bridge, six miles north west of Cork City, had been surprised in position and themselves

ambushed and scattered. Several I.R.A. men had been killed and wounded and five prisoners captured. The five prisoners, including two or three who had recovered from wounds, were courtmartialled and charged with levying war against His Britannic Majesty, George V. The five were sentenced to death by shooting. With them facing the firing squad would be a young Tipperary man named Seán Allen who had, too, faced a courtmartial on a charge of being in possession of a revolver. Mindful of my own recent personal experiences carrying a revolver, I was deeply interested in the fate of young Allen. The Dripsey I.R.A. prisoners had been "given away" by an elderly Imperialist lady of the Anglo-Irish Landlord Ascendancy class named Mrs. Lindsay who lived near Dripsey. On the day of the ambush, as the I.R.A. column lay in attacking positions at Dripsey Bridge, she passed through in an open horse-carriage driven by her coachman. Her keen hostile eyes must have detected the armed Volunteers in ambush, for, having passed along through Dripsey, she made a detour, driving along hastily to the military barracks in Ballincollig some miles away. She reported the presence and position of the I.R.A. column to the British there, with the result that large parties of soldiers left hurriedly in the Dripsey direction, fanned out and surrounded the trapped I.R.A. ambushers before they realised their peril. Though the I.R.A. lost heavily in killed, wounded and captured, the column was not entirely liquidated. Several broke through the encircling khaki lines and escaped, bringing their arms with them.

A few days after the Dripsey disaster, Seán Hegarty, Brigade O/C, learned of Mrs. Lindsay's significant trip to Ballincollig on the fatal day. He ordered that herself and her coachman be seized and removed captives to an unknown destination. Here, under interrogation, Mrs. Lindsay admitted informing the British military and gloried in the successful fruit of her espionage. She and her coachman were tried as spies and sentenced to death. At the same time, General Strickland, British O/C in Cork, issued a formal notice that six rebels (five Dripsey men and Allen) had been tried by courtmartial and sentenced to death and that the six (names given) would be executed by a firing squad in Victoria Barracks at dawn on Monday morning, February 28th, 1921. Seán Hegarty promptly sent an ultimatum to Strickland saying that he held Mrs. Lindsay and her coachman as hostages for the lives of the six I.R.A. and that if these were executed he would carry out the death penalty on Mrs. Lindsay and her man. In the upshot, Strickland rejected Hegarty's ultimatum and the six rebels were shot at dawn as officially notified. Hegarty carried out his threat and Mrs. Lindsay was executed as a confessed spy. It was grim and gruesome competition in terrorism, but now stark military necessity obsessed the British Army of occupation, while desperate instincts of self-preservation and stark ruthless resistance motivated the merciless retaliation of the Irish Republican Army.

The members of "A" Company, A.S.U., got the mobilisation order on that Monday afternoon, February 28th, 1921. By 6.30 p.m. all had reported at College Tower, U.C.C., and had been issued with small firearms and ammunition from the dump. Their instructions were clear

and simple: (1) To shoot down at sight every enemy soldier and policeman in uniform on the streets of Cork City; (2) The particular area of operations allocated to 'A' Company, A.S.U., was Patrick St. and the adjoining streets between South Mall and Coal Quay. This was the most dangerous section of the City as it was ringed by a chain of police barracks barely 150 yards apart between the two channels of the River Lee. At the western end of Patrick St., the Grand Parade and its northerly continuation Cornmarket St. separated these two channels at this spot barely 500 yards apart. In Cornmarket St. was the Bridewell Police Station and detention cells strongly garrisoned. In the Grand Parade at Tuckey St. corner was another large R.I.C. barracks. These two barracks effectively dominated the approaches to Patrick St. from the west. At its other extremity was the bottleneck of St. Patrick's Bridge. This then was the sector where our University Republican soldiers were to challenge the military might of the Crown Forces and exact bloody revenge for the execution by firing squad of the six Republican prisoners that same morning. Every man of 'A' Company who had a gun was in action that night. We operated in small groups of two or three. Zero hour was 7 p.m. by Shandon Church clock. By 6.45 p.m. we had made our way unobtrusively to Patrick St. and begun to scout along quietly marking down our quarry. My companion was Dan Barton, engineering student and cousin of Robert Barton, T.D., one of the Treaty Plenipotentiaries. We strolled casually up the south side (The Swaddies' side) of Patrick St. Here the British Tommies usually sauntered in their hours of ease chasing and picking up their lady loves from among the rather numerous "skivvy" fraternity

which catered for their romantic needs in Cork. There were few on the streets. An air of grim foreboding seemed to overhang the whole place. No policeman in uniform was anywhere to be seen in the whole section. Civilians, men and women, hurried by, each intent on some essential business. There was little loitering. Here and there were some young girls of the Tommy-hunting type. It was getting dusk, a bit early yet for the soldiers to begin their "clicking" with their girls.

At 6.53 p.m. Dan and I reached Patrick's Bridge, meeting Mick Crowley, Connie Lucey and "Nudge" Callanan, three of our lads who had come in from West Cork, where they were with Tom Barry's Column, to share in the night's desperate work. Crowley winked at me and passed along with the remark"Nothing doing further up". We turned back. It was now 6.57 p.m. and almost dark. We saw a party of three khaki warriors with bandoliers ahead near Prince's St. corner. Six-fifty-eight p.m. and still two minutes to go at least. We wheeled rapidly down to Old George's St. and turned up Prince's St. intending to get our soldier enemies as we emerged on to Patrick St. again. Seven o'clock struck as we swung into Prince's St. Loud and clear and ominous the strokes rang out. A few seconds tense silence and then desultory shots to the north. Then shooting seems to break out all over. Three soldiers came running from Patrick St. straight towards us, all scared by the nearby shooting. Our revolvers are drawn and I have the big Colt cocked. Fire! Within eight yards of us, two of the soldiers crash to the ground, the survivor stops, shrieks in panic, turns and flees back. I race after him. As I pass the two fallen soldiers

one is kicking convulsively. Blindly the fugitive races in through an open shop door, I almost at his heels. It is a fancy shop with a variety of musical goods. The soldier huddles crying in a corner against the counter. Another shot and he slumps down. I turn on my heel quickly towards the door. I don't even search the khaki body or glance at it. Then as I reach the door I hear a loud shriek of terror behind me. I look back and see the face of a terrified woman behind the counter. I do not know if she has witnessed the ghastly business but I am now scared. Outside near the corner Dan awaits me. Two bodies lie motionless on the street. Shooting still continues and seems to come from the streets all round. It is now quite dark and the streets are completely deserted. It is time to get away, to escape outside the enemy ring. Curfew time is approaching and it can only be minutes now until the streets are filled with armoured cars and lorries and machine-guns with maddened soldiers and policemen howling for blood. Cautiously we reach Daunt's Square. As we emerge from Patrick St. to cross to Castle St. a volley of revolver shots ring out and crash goes a plate-glass shop window behind us. We are seen and fired on. Two dark figures, Tans evidently from Tuckey St., are firing on us from Singer's Corner about fifty yards away. Crouching low by the wall of Woodford Bourne's, I fired three rounds at the two Tans to disconcert them. Then together we rush across the street to Castle St. corner. We make it safely and continue on down Castle St. I have but one round left in the Colt now. No time to refill as we reach North Main St. corner. Would we be intercepted there? No. All is clear. I heave a sigh of relief and we slink along down Shearas St. Shooting

still continues at intervals, now more heavily in the Sunday's Well and Blarney St. direction. It is now almost on curfew hour as we reach the Dyke Parade. Here a man looms up out of the tree shadows to ask "Is the shooting bad down by the Mercy Hospital"? Then he sees the gun in my hand and muttering "Oh" scuttles away in the Main St. direction. We continued on warily down by the Mardyke Walk until we reached O'Donovan's Road. I told Dan here that it would be suicide for me to try to make back to my digs in the Grand Parade after curfew. He would have to give me a bit of his bed that night. Dan agreed to smuggle me in to the Honan Hostel where he stayed and to shelter me there for the night. As we reached O'Donovan's Bridge opposite U.C.C. after crossing over the Western Road from the Dyke, I ejected the five spent shells from the Colt and dropped them in the River Lee.

We got in safely to the Honan Hostel and I shared the privacy of Dan's room. Even though most of the hostel student residents were actively sympathetic and many of them Volunteers, yet it behoved us to lie very low as it was a serious breach of the regulations, entailing expulsion, to "keep" a non-resident in your quarters. Should the warden (at that time Dr.D.T. McCarthy, later prominent Dungarvan surgeon and industrialist, now deceased) hear of it, it would be serious for Dan. Moreover, my concealment there that night, if it became known, would expose me to grave danger and would pin-point me as one of the attackers in that night's bloody work. However, all's well that ends well. I was not detected and spent a quiet restful night. Up early next morning, I breakfasted in novel fashion on some assorted eats which Dan managed to smuggle in to me. Then, borrowing some large notebooks from him, we departed together from

the hostel and crossed the quadrangle to the engineer's building of U.C.C. Here I transferred the trusty Colt .45 to the dump, picked up a few large text books and scientific notebooks, secured them neatly under my right arm and sauntered down the College Avenue to the Western Road. I intended to get back in without delay to my digs in the Shamrock Hotel, to allay any uneasiness of Miss O'Brien's about my absence and to show the most innocent of exteriors.

It was 9.30 a.m. or so as I strolled in citywards on the left pavement. Near Presentation College I saw a large military party approaching in extended order, rifles at the trail in two long files. Suddenly three or four soldiers leaped on to the pavement and surrounded threateningly a thick-set middle-aged man with greying hair, about ten yards ahead of us. Then I noticed with horror that the soldiers had bayonets fixed on their rifles. One soldier kicked the man brutally and another lunged forward and thrust the bayonet forward viciously over the victim's shoulder within a few inches of his face. "Why don't you put your hands up, you bastard"? another yelled. As I passed within a few feet, the poor man was being roughly searched, the soldiers actually tearing his coat off him. Not the smallest notice was taken of me as I passed on through them, with my heart pounding within me with trepidation. I feared for the old man's life but I was afraid to look behind to see what was happening to him. Then the dramatic tenseness of the situation struck me - there was I, who, a few hours earlier in the streets of Cork, had shot down their khaki comrades without compunction, now passing the enraged British soldiery,

untouched, unmolested and unquestioned, to all appearances an innocent carefree young student, while an old man was being savagely man-handled by them just because he did not raise his hands promptly enough at their order. What would they not do to me if they suspected for a moment that I was an I.R.A. man? These were the doubts and fears that filled my mind as I wended my way, with nerves on edge, to my digs at 31, Grand Parade.

Miss O'Brien met me at the top of the stairs with her finger pressed to her lips. I started. I thought the soldiers or police were inside. No. It was Madge, the maid-of-all-work. She was in a frightful state of fear, hate and anger. Last night she had been walking, herself and another Fair Hill girl, with two soldiers. Their two khaki beaux had been seized by armed I.R.A. and carried off and the two ladies had been hunted off home. Madge did not know for certain what had happened her swain, but the shooting all round and the morning's Cork Examiner, with its long casualty list, left no doubt or room for hope. She was raving and ranting about the "bloody Shinners" in a fearsome way. Miss O'Brien was afraid that, if she heard that I was out all night from the digs, she would denounce me as one of the killers of her soldier sweethearts. I avoided Madge carefully and had my breakfast (the second one) in Miss O'Brien's own sanctum. I met Dan Twomey, fourth year medical student from Ballymakeera, Macroom, who shared my room, and warned him not to breathe to anybody that I had been out for the night. Later I went along to the Crawford Technical Institute and put in a little laboratory work there for my forthcoming B.E. degree exam in June.

A little earlier there had been changes in the command of 'A' Company. Simon Moynihan, our O/C after Ray Kennedy, had been drafted to Brigade Staff and City Squad of A.S.U. He had been succeeded as Company Captain by Garry Scanlon, final medical student of Kilfinane, Co. Limerick, whose brother, a prominent Limerick I.R.A. officer, had recently been murdered in William St. Barracks, Limerick City, by the Black and Tans. Jerry Dwyer was now 2nd Lieutenant and Tadhg Donovan 1st Lt. Both these officers were older than the rest, being ex-clerical students who had quit their theological studies and were now doing engineering and medicine respectively. Mick Crowley, Con Lucey, "Nudge" Callanan and Jack Buttimer of 'A' Company Staff were now frequently in West Cork with Barry's Third Brigade Column. Simon Moynihan was now sent to Wicklow and attached to the Finance (Dáil Loan) section of Michael Collins's own department. Simon's experience in the Customs and Excise Department of the British Civil Service being now very valuable.

Easter came and I went home to Cappoquin. My main object was to contact the chief members of the Waterford County Council and to ask them to increase my scholarship, which at the time was only £50 per annum. Out of this I had to pay University fees and digs. To carry on I had to squeeze another £50 from my parents at home, who could not afford any such expenditure. I thought it but fair and just that the County Council, who had awarded me the scholarship in 1918, I having won first place in the examination, should increase the amount by £25 at least so as to go near covering the minimum cost of a University course. Arrived home, I arranged to meet in person these

prominent County Councillors, all Sinn Féiners and some very much 'on the run' - Seán Goulding, Mike McGrath, John Butler, "Pax" Whelan. Pax was O/C Waterford Brigade, I.R.A., at that time and was quartered somewhere in the Comeragh Mountains. I met Seán Goulding, told him my story and got his promise of support. I cycled to Butler's home near Dungarvan, but, he being out, I left a brief note for him. In the note I explained my case and, to strengthen my claim, mentioned my I.R.A. active service in Cork.
I returned to Butler's a few days later, met John himself and found him scared somewhat at the danger to which I had exposed him by leaving such an incriminating letter in his house. Butler told me that Pax had been along that way later on the very first evening I called but had since gone back to the mountains. He, himself, promised to support my application. Returning to Cappoquin, I decided to hit off into the mountains next day in search of the elusive Pax. That evening I visited Kenny's, where I met the brothers Gerald and Michael who had returned for Easter holidays from their school in Pallaskenry.
Michael gave me a small .32 revolver which he had dug up from its place of concealment deep down in Kenny's vegetable garden. The little gun was serviceable and easily concealed on the person. I set off next day cycling out to Sliabh gCua where I expected to locate Pax. I had the .32 weapon strapped loosely to my left forearm above the wrist and hidden in the sleeve of my coat.
It was a grand sunny spring day as I moved along steadily on the bike. I left the main Dungarvan road at Rockfield and turned north towards Modeligo. Here I called to Mike McGrath's farmhouse at Parkmore. Mike was a Sinn Féin County Councillor and he promised to support my claim for

a scholarship increase. He also told me that if I got Pax's support for my application it would be as good as granted. Furthermore, he thought that Pax was up in Touraneena at that very moment.

Off I headed for Touraneena, arrived in the village and, leaving my bike outside the local tavern, in I went and called for a "pint". A barmaid, a nice young girl of twenty or so, served me and I opened up a conversation. She was chatty enough but seemed both cautious and curious. I was anxious to learn from her if the I.R.A. column was in the vicinity and the nearest house where I could meet any of the boys. I knew that she could help me but I was uncertain how to broach the matter to her. Eventually, tired of fencing and desultory small talk, I asked her would she give me a word in private. She agreed and invited me into a small room behind the bar, a private sitting-room. Here I promptly rolled back the sleeve of my coat, displaying the revolver, told her I was an I.R.A. man and was anxious to contact Pax Whelan, Column O/C, personally. It was a disastrous move on my part. Her eyes gaped on seeing the gun and I knew by the expression of her face that she took me for an enemy, an R.I.C. prowler in civvies likely. She said that there were no I.R.A. round there, as far as she knew, and she never heard of Pax Whelan. I tried to convince her of my bona fides but no use. She had decided that I was a dangerous inquisitor and she knew nothing at all at all. I had failed. In despair, I bade her good-bye, mounted my bike and cycled off down the steep village hill towards Cappoquin. The next instant, I heard a loud "Hello". Looking round I saw a small man whom I had known well as a baker at Kenny's, beckoning to me. I jumped off and Terry Mernin of Villierstown, for it was he, came up.

"What the hell brings you to these parts"? he asked. "Business, and important business at that" I replied. And then I told him of my quest, for Terry was an active Volunteer in the Cappoquin Company while at Kenny's. When I related my encounter with the young barmaid and my failure to get anywhere, he laughed heartily. "Come and we'll have a drink" says he, and back we go to the tavern. The barmaid's eyes open wider than ever when she sees me return in Terry's company, for Terry was a baker in O'Keeffe's shop across the road from the 'pub'. Mernin explained that I actually was an I.R.A. officer with an urgent message for Pax Whelan. He, Mernin, knew the column were around as he had seen a few of the boys that morning moving about. He did not know where Whelan was or if he was about. She said that Pax was in the vicinity yesterday but that she did not know in what house exactly. However, she would send her brother, a Volunteer, at once to the nearest house in which column men were billeted and he would be back without delay with the news. We waited. Within an hour I learned that Pax had left the district that very morning and that he was going to Dublin and would not be back for a week or more, a story which I afterwards verified. Pax had actually gone to an I.R.A. conference of brigade officers in Dublin at G.H.Q. So I had my trek to Sliabh gCua for nothing.

Returning to Cappoquin that evening, I met tinkers camped at Ballyhane on the main Dungarvan road. I stopped and chatted with them. A youngster of ten or so asked me for money. After learning from him that no police or soldiers were around or had passed along that way during the afternoon, I gave him a shilling. It was an

amazing act of bounty on my part but I had no smaller coin and I felt comparatively affluent at the thought of the £5 note and 10/- note which I had in my purse in my hip pocket. (The £5 was the proceeds of a lucky run at playing "Nap" and Poker in the Shamrock Hotel after curfew hours). That night back in Cappoquin, Gerald Kenny and I dropped down quietly to Conway's Hotel for a game of billiards. I lost and put my hand in my pocket to get my purse to pay the score. There was no purse. Frantically I searched every pocket, but no sign of money or purse. I had to borrow a few bob from Kenny. From that day to this I never knew what happened that purse and its precious contents of £5 -10. I searched high and low, home and away, everywhere I could remember I had been for days previously, but all in vain. What rankled me entirely was that I could never make out for certain if I had the purse in my possession at the time I gave the shilling to the young tinker, and I could never banish from my mind the thought that my purse had vanished as I chatted with those tinkers and that somehow, by magic or conjuring arts, they had stripped me of all my money as I parted with my last shilling in a fit of generosity to the tinker urchin. Tó crown my misfortunes, I was informed shortly after that the Waterford County Council refused to grant any increase in my scholarship allowance of £50 per annum, so all my soliciting and canvassing of the Sinn Féin County Councillors had been in vain. I felt raging mad at the iniquity and injustice and insult of it all. There was I, exposed to deadly danger hourly in Cork, fighting in the A.S.U. of the I.R.A. for Ireland's liberty, being refused a paltry mite of monetary assistance to help me through my university course by the Waterford County Council who had

sent me to the university. True enough, all my energies and my enthusiasm were directed not to my university career but to the service of my country in her hour of mortal need. And the Waterford County Council refused to recognise that service to the nation. Two years later, that self-same Council increased by 60% the university scholarship awarded to a William O'Keeffe of Dungarvan. This student was the son of District Inspector O'Keeffe of the R.I.C., who was stationed in Dungarvan in the year of 1921. I, the Republican student, the I.R.A. fighter, was denied any consideration at Easter, 1921, by the Waterford County Council but the D.I.'s son is granted a big increase in 1923, though having no case at all in justice and in spite of the fact that his father was actively engaged as R.I.C. District Inspector in enforcing British terroristic rule in the Dungarvan area of County Waterford during Ireland's fight for freedom. Is it any wonder that I have always had a poor opinion of Waterford's County Councillors as Irishmen and administrators?

As the end of the Easter holidays approached, I asked Kenny to let me keep the .32 revolver and bring it back with me to Cork. Frankly, what I intended doing with it was selling it to one of the many Volunteer newcomers in 'A' Company who would be only too eager to pay £2 or £3 for it. I was anxious to restore the finances of my private treasury after the mysterious disappearance of my purse of notes. The morning of my departure from Cappoquin, I secured the revolver firmly (too firmly as it happened) by bindings of strong cord round the inside of my right thigh at the groin and went up town to see Kenny to say goodbye. I told him that I

had the gun hidden on my person. He searched me but failed to find it. We both then walked across to Pat Cahill's, the tailor, an elderly Sinn Féiner of some prominence, where we talked national affairs for a while. Then I invited Cahill to search me for firearms. He did readily and thoroughly, but failed also to discover my concealed gun. I was quite sanguine then that I would pass through any ordinary police or military search and hold-up without being detected. I bade goodbye to Cahill and Kenny and returned homewards. As I came within sight of the railway gates, I saw that they were shut for the arrival of the train from Dungarvan. The next second I heard the loud gong signalling the train pulling up at the platform. I had fooled away too much time up town. In consternation at the thought of losing my train, I started to run. My mother was at my home door. I paused for an instant to say goodbye as she shouted at me: "Your father is gone up to the station with your bag; run and you may just catch it". I did. Entering the railway track I raced up the line to the platform where the train was drawn up. As I passed the engine, I felt the strappings on my thigh burst with the intense muscular activity of my flying feet. There on the platform I saw my father and the travelling bag, and there, too, horror of horrors, were armed soldiers all over the place who had jumed out of the train and taken up defensive positions on the platform. As I reached my father, I passed two British Army officers in khaki with drawn revolvers. He opened a carriage door for me, threw in my bag and then pushed in myself as the train whistled its departure. "You bloody nearly lost it" was my father's parting salute.

And then the truth of his words and the horror of my situation swept over me in full flood as I took in my awful predicament. I was a lone civilian Irishman in a carriage with five British soldiers armed to the teeth, one of them a sergeant.

As I sat in the middle of the seat, with a nervy soldier on either side of me with rifle resting at the ready on the window frame, I tried to regain my breath and my composure. I gingerly felt the inside of my thigh to locate my deadly illicit gun. It had slipped down to my knee. As I wore no under-pants I was in an agony of fear that it would drop down altogether. I fumbled at my sock suspenders, adjusting them by the way, but really trying to push my hidden revolver back up my leg. I did not succeed very well, only managing to move it a little above my knee on the inside. What was I to do? If the gun fell out at my feet under the eyes of the soldiers I could only expect one thing, to be shot there and then out of hand or to be brutally and savagely manhandled and later to face a firing squad. My deadly danger shocked me into a frigid coolness and calmness which afterwards amazed me. Crossing my legs beneath the seat, I pulled out a packet of cigarettes. I opened the packed and offered a 'fag' to each of the soldiers, beginning with the N.C.O. They gratefully accepted, thanked me and lit up. So did I. The ice was now broken and I chatted with them in friendly fashion. They were returning from South Wales, where they had been for weeks on protective duty at the coal mines during the great miners' strike of 1921. Now that the strike was over, they were returning to their regimental headquarters at Fermoy. There was a whole

company of them on the train. They were jumpy and nervous. All the reports and stories they had heard about train ambushes and train hold-ups by the "Shinners" had "put the wind up" them and they were really scared of being attacked every moment on their train journey. I avoided the subject of the disturbed state of Ireland and queried them innocently and casually about their time in Wales. I learned but little. The train was now approaching Lismore so I carelessly remarked that I would have to get off the train there to purchase my rail ticket to Cork. The train stopped. Telling my khaki travelling fellow-passengers to hold my seat for me, I jumped out on the platform. The military, with rifles at the ready, had already done so. The platform was crowded with soldiers all set to resist attack. I ran down towards the gents' lavatory. Two officers with drawn revolvers barred my way. As I neared the officers, I felt my tell-tale hidden fire-arm slip down again below my knee - the running had dislodged it again. Still running, I bent down and grabbed my right shin below the knee to prevent my deadly packet from dropping out on the platform. In this fashion, I passed the military officers, who eyed my strange acrobatics curiously, and reached the lavatory entrance. Would anybody be inside before me? There wasn't. What a profound relief to enter the toilet cubicle and bolt the door? I almost collapsed with weakness but there was no time to lose. Pulling down my pants, I tugged the little .32 skit free from its moorings to my thigh. I had to cut the cord binding with a pen-knife to remove the weapon. I looked around. What luck! A large oily rag loosely folded was hanging from a crook behind the door. Wrapping the gun firmly in the greasy cloth,

I stood on the lavatory seat and put the deadly parcel behind the lavatory cistern, where it was effectively hidden on the bracket between the cistern and the wall. I adjusted my pants, pulled the chain as a bona fide user of the lavatory would do, and walked out on the platform. The military were still on guard around. I rushed over to the station-master, who was at the station door, and asked him for a single ticket to Cork. He looked at me, cursed me heartily and told me get aboard the train at once and get the ticket from the checker. Back with me to my soldier buddies in the single compartment. I had two hearts now and felt like singing with joy and relief. And well I may! For it was a miraculously lucky escape from a deadly predicament. For the rest of the journey to Fermoy I maintained a scrappy conversation with the "swaddies", who all the time kept nervous but wary eyes on the passing scenery. Their tension never relaxed.

Fermoy at last! And the soldiers, with their joy and relief so obvious in their laughter and loud bantering talk, alighted with all their equipment and paraphernalia. "Good luck, chum" was their parting word to me. With a fervent prayer of thanks to God for my escape, I relaxed back on the carriage seat. A checker entered and asked for my ticket. I told him I had boarded the train in Cappoquin, without a ticket in my hurry, to travel to Cork. He issued me a ticket and the journey continued uneventfully until Glanmire Station was reached. I alighted, passed the barriers and emerged outside right into the midst of a military patrol searching all male travellers. I was searched all over for weapons by an oldish officer, who was rather

courteous and apologetic in his manner. Then I had to open my bag to display its contents, and when I was passed through I felt unable to walk even the short distance to where I would get a tram, so I mounted a jarvey car near me in the station yard and told the driver to take me to the Grand Parade. That worthy headed out on the Lower Road, where he whispered to me in great confidence: "They are searching mad down round Patrick's Bridge. I'll get around the back way down the Mall, for maybe you would not like to be held up again by them". "Go ahead" said I, relieved to let the jarvey direct operations. Arrived at the "Shamrock" without mishap, I paid my cabby, who thanked me and then with a knowing wink said, "It is not the first time I drove one of the boys". I looked hard at him and then I understood.

Sometime before Easter a military lorry had been bombed in Washington St. near the Courthouse. It was in the forenoon of a spring morning in early March, I think. I had been detailed to stand to for cover and protection duty in the Courthouse vicinity. Already I had, with two others, spent an anxious half hour there a few mornings before, but nothing had cropped up so we dispersed as ordered. This morning we were loitering around behind the Courthouse at 10 a.m. My three companions and myself were armed with revolvers. Our instructions were simple - to cover the retreat of a bombing party who were waiting to attack a military patrolling tender which passed that way fairly regularly in the morning. A narrow side-street led north from Washington St. at each side of the Courthouse. The bombing party of three (as far as I could make out) were in readiness at Courthouse north corner on Washington

St. Two of the covering party hovered in their immediate rear. I and a "B" Company Volunteer held the entrance to the side-street at Courthouse South Corner. I was beginning to feel ill-at-ease and conspicuous as we had been in position for twenty minutes or more. Passers-by were few, which made our loitering all the more embarrassing. Then the roar of a Crossley lorry was heard in the distance. I noted the bomber party separate, one to each corner of the side-street and one in the middle and to the front as if about to cross Washington St. The lorry, loaded with soldiers, some seated, some standing with rifle barrels projecting front, flank and rear, roared past our position. With drawn revolvers we crouch instinctively to avail of the cover of the low courtyard wall as we retreated a few steps. Then the roar and the crash of a bursting bomb and an instant later another loud explosion. Then a ragged burst of rifle fire and I heard the whine of a .303 over my head. The lorry's engine roared as the vehicle sped on. More rifle shots and then quietness. The lorry had raced around Washington St. corner into the Parade. There is no pursuit. We hold on for a few moments to give the bomb throwers a chance to get away. Then we ourselves pocket our "skits" and retreat rapidly back into Sheares St. Looking east towards Broad Lane Church I saw one of our bombers limping along slowly and heavily holding his right side and half supported, half dragged along by a companion. Then, as if from nowhere, a side-car appeared and from it jumped down another of the attacking party. The wounded man is then helped up to a seat on the car, his companion sitting beside him and holding him. The jarvey sat

on the opposite side with the other Volunteer behind him. The driver whips up his horse and off they trot in the direction of the Mercy Hospital. Satisfied that the attacking party were now safely away, I walked rapidly up Hardyke, reached the University, dumped my gun and strolled into the engineering drawing office, where I toyed for an hour or so with some draughtsmanship.

That evening's 'Echo' carried a short account of the bombing of the British Army tender. One bomb struck the side of the lorry high up and exploded almost immediately, wounding a few of the soldiers. The other missed its target and exploded on the opposite pavement, injuring some passers-by, including a woman. The soldiers had fired on their attackers, inflicting casualties on the rebels, and then raced on citywards in the lorry. Police and military combed the ambush area later without finding any trace of the bomb throwers. Such was the 'Echo' version, with a later condemnation of the enormity of thus attacking the Crown Forces in a crowded city street during the daytime and callously exposing innocent citizens to the danger of bullet and bomb. There was a sequel next day when an official proclamation was published in the 'Examiner' announcing that the competent military authority (Major General Strickland) had ordered the destruction of two large resident business premises near the Courthouse because they had been places where "rebels and other evilly-disposed persons had consorted to levy war against His Majesty, King George V". One of the premises was Macari's Café, a great resort of College students, where ice cream, minerals, fish and chips, peas and various other choice delicacies in fruit, fish and flesh

eked out the scanty evening menu provided by the average landlady catering for university students. Macari himself, his wife and teen-age family were Italians who had settled in Cork pre 1914. It was a very popular place for Cork youth, especially students of all types, and I.R.A. men were in and out casually every day and at all times. The British wanted to punish Macari for not "reporting to them the comings and goings" of his rebel clientele. The other house officially condemned to destruction was Murphy's publichouse and provision store round the corner of Messrs. Dwyer's stores near Clarke's Bridge. The Murphys were a prominent Republican family from the Kinsale area of West Cork. At 2.30 p.m. that evening the British military cordoned off Washington St. between the Courthouse and Wood St. Macari's and Murphy's were entered by armed soldiers who ordered all occupants outside. Macari's was blown up first. A demolition squad in khaki entered, set some explosives apparently on top floor, withdrew to the street where they took cover at a safe distance. In about a minute there was a series of explosions and the roof was blown out, sending showers of slates and pieces of wood and masonry flying into the air. When the shower of smoke and dust had subsided, the demolition squad again entered, this time to complete the job by laying explosive charges on the ground floor. Out again with them and back to the safety of the cordon. This time three or four tremendous explosions rocked the interior, completely wrecking everything within. Then the military repeated this programme of destruction in like manner at Murphy's. Not a solitary item of furniture or goods were permitted to be taken from either house and both buildings were utterly and completely wrecked in this brutal "official reprisal".

Jack Daly, who had been working at Ford's Works on Marina since summer, 1920, now accepted an appointment as Junior Electrical Engineer to the Dublin Corporation. He left his big revolver to me on leaving Cork and also arranged that I was to attend to putting through his transfer from Cork 1 Brigade to the Dublin Brigade. Daly's transfer to Dublin I.R.A. was effected after Easter and he was attached to Signals and Engineers' Section of I.R.A. in Pigeon House Fort area, where he worked as switch board attendant. He had been less than a month in Dublin when he reported one Saturday night to Battalion Headquarters in Pearse St. for a special signals' class. Practically all the battalion signallers were present and training was in full swing when in burst a squad of Auxiliary cadets. The rendezvous was entirely surrounded. Obviously the Auxies had got a tip. The whole outfit present were arrested and removed to Dublin Castle. Later they were all interned in Collinstown Internment Camp and the unlucky Daly did not again see the light of freedom until Christmas, 1921, after the treaty was signed. A letter he got smuggled out to me shortly after his incarceration told me of the whole sorry affair. I wrote back to Daly later and told him that I had got a "special engineering appointment down Inchigeela way", which was my way of informing him that I had joined a Flying Column in West Cork. Much later I got another smuggled note from Daly calling me "all the fools at large" for mentioning such a thing in a letter to a prisoner in a British internment camp. Still there was no mistaking the note of envy in poor Daly's letter, and I pitied him in his enforced helplessness and inactivity while I roamed the mountain fastnesses of West Cork organising active service engineering units to harass and resist the English enemy in the field.

By this time, too, mid April, 1921, many of the senior members of 'A" Company (U.C.C.) had been diverted to specialised channels of I.R.A. activity. Mick Crowley, Conny Lucey, "Nudge" Callinan and now Jack Buttimer were gone to Cork 111 Brigade and were operating with Barry's column. Jim O'Mahony was gone to Cork 11 Brigade under Liam Lynch. "Garry" Scanlan, Company O/C, was now operating with East Limerick Brigade, while two of the University Company's later recruits - Davy Reynolds and F. Scanlon - who had got a reputation as tough, determined fighters, were actually dispatched to South Galway. There Reynolds became a Brigade O/C - mainly because of his merciless ambush of some British officers at a tennis tournament for gentry. I was now asked by Ray Kennedy, acting O/C 2nd Battalion (the Battn. Comdt., Mick Murphy, was in Cork Gaol unrecognised and uncharged), to arrange for the manufacture of certain bomb parts - levers and strikers. I agreed to do my best. I was supplied with a full-size patterns of a bomb lever and of the striking mechanism. I was required to obtain the raw materials myself and also to arrange for the complete making and final testing of the parts.

Getting the raw material was easy enough. Through Mick O"Callaghan (clerk at Bandon railway station in Cork) I contacted a Bere Island man from Eyeries, an ex miner and an I.R.A. man who now worked as a smith in the railway workshop at Albert Quay, Cork. This man's name was Teehan and he was a typical blacksmith. He lodged down near the electric power station and only at night could I see him. He poked out the steel strips from workshop stores and made rough casts of the bomb levers to my specifications. I visited Teehan's digs just before curfew, got the rough

specimens from him, secreted them about my person and made my way furtively back through the silent, deserted streets in daylight to my own room at the Shamrock Hotel. Next day I brought the steel levers with me to the Crawford Technical Institute where I intended to drill them to receive the bomb pin and to file and smooth them to have them fit for assembling. But, unfortunately, I had overlooked providing myself with the correct drill, a $\frac{1}{8}$" I believe. However, I was very chummy with old Harry Nolan, the workshop supervisor. Using plámás on Harry, I got him to root out a couple of $\frac{1}{8}$" drills, which he did after much demur. He then insisted on fitting the drill himself in the drilling machine. He was all curiosity to see what was the job which I was so particular about. I produced the lever to be drilled. "What's that for"? says he. "A motor-bike" says I, pat enough. "Why the hole bored through it"?. "Oh, for a fine cable" I answered. He looked at me and I could see that he was only half satisfied. However, he clamped the lever in position and set the drill. Cautiously he pressed the revolving drill on to the lever to be drilled. A grating screech and a shower of sparks. He stopped and poured oil copiously on drill and levers. Again he began to drill. Hissing and tearing and sparking galore but no sign of an incipient hole. Again a pause for more oil treatment. This time he forced the drill more firmly against the surface of the lever. A loud rending noise and the drill shattered in several pieces. Harry, a fat, jovial man, was now in a wicked temper and cursing volubly. He had broken a tool in the workshop before many amused eyes in operating a drilling machine. And Harry was so careful of his machines! How he held forth to the engineering students about the proper way to handle them;

he almost regarded them as sacred. And now he had done what the most uncouth ignoramus of a student was always afraid of doing - he had smashed a machine tool. Removing the shank of the broken drill from its chuck, he examined it grimly. Then, tramping back into his private sanctum, where only the most privileged seniors among his student machinists dare venture, he emerged with the second drill. Another prolonged attempt to bore the tough-surfaced lever failed even to make an entry. And then it dawned on us both that the material of the levers was tough steel, and case hardened at that. Such being the case it was impossible to drill.

I collected my undrillable levers and brought them back to Teehan at the railway workshop and asked him to soften lever surfaces by reheating to red hot point and slow cooling. He did. A few days later I brought along the things again to the technical workshop and Harry Nolan. This time I had two drills of my own which I bought in a machine-cum-tool shop in Patrick St. Again we tried to drill the levers, but all to no use. Teehan's treatment for softening surfaces was a failure, as the levers were as hard skinned as ever and could not be drilled by ordinary methods. Disappointed, I took the stuff back again to Teehan, who told me that the high grade locomotive steel from which he made the articles was probably too hard for any but special machine tool drills. I asked him to look around for some softer iron strips. In two days he had made a new lot of levers for me, which I collected and tested in the tech. These proved to be easily drilled. Delighted at this success, I tackled the job of making and fitting the grenade plungers and strikers. The material in those was more easily workable. In the course of a week or ten

days, I had this assignment completed. I kept these grenade fittings concealed in my digs at the "Shamrock" until I had again contacted Ray Kennedy and told him that I would bring the stuff along to him at U.C.C. on a certain afternoon. At 4 p.m. I set out with the bomb levers hidden in the turn-ups of my long trousers and the heads, plungers, strikers and ring pins concealed carefully about my person. I was a bit nervous about carrying the stuff hidden on my person like that. I had doubts about the wisdom of this method. Perhaps it would have been safer to have carried the stuff innocently and openly in a tool bag like any bona fide mechanic and if I was caught to pretend innocence of the nature of the fittings and use bluff to get out of that tight corner. However, I handed over the stuff safely to Kennedy at the College and returned to 31, Grand Parade feeling mighty proud of myself. I was on this job of making munitions and bomb fittings for a period during May, 1921. Early in June I had the satisfaction of seeing grenades put to grim and effective use in a simultaneous bombing attack in daylight on several R.I.C. barracks in Cork City. I was actually a spectator of the attack on Tuckey St. R.I.C. station. It was a sunny evening after tea as I looked out the dining-room window of the "Shamrock" and watched a couple of children playing at Tuckey St. corner and running in and out among three or four Tans who lounged smoking at the corner a few yards from their barrack door. A motor car drove slowly up the Parade and turned right down Tuckey St. There were four men in it. I saw two hands raised aloft as the car passed the loafing Tans at about four yards range. The car had hardly passed by the R.I.C. barrack door, down Tuckey St., when there were two loud explosions, crashes of breaking glass and a burst of flame and smoke. The next instant the children, unharmed,

were running into the open doorway of their home nearby. The Tans made for the barrack door, two of them staggering as if they were wounded. The car sped on down Tuckey St., swung left through South Main St., over the bridge, turning right and away west through Gilabbey St. Tans and R.I.C. carrying rifles poured out of Tuckey St. barrack, on to the Grand Parade and raced down south towards the river Lee opposite the fire brigade station. Here they halted and faced west up river to South Gale Bridge, firing at random from their rifles in the general direction of the bridge and Gilabbey St. Some of them dropped on one knee. For several minutes the rifle shooting continued and then the R.I.C. retired slowly to their Tuckey St. stronghold. The following morning's Cork Examiner reported two Tans wounded by the bomb throwing at Tuckey St. and a middle-aged lady, a dressmaker living alone, shot dead as she worked at her sewing table near the South Gate Bridge. It was the tragic fruit of the Tans wild and indiscriminate shooting.

As a sequel to my train adventure with the military at Easter and the hasty discarding of my most embarrassing .32 Derringer revolver, Jerry Ormonde told me that the weapon had been recovered and was now in the possession of Bernard O'Brien of Lismore, the young Volunteer who had posted the .45 Colt back to me on my return to Cork in the New Year of 1921. Jerry had written Bernard and tipped him off to search the station house lavatory, which he did. There he found my unlucky gun intact under an oil cloth as I had left it. O'Brien was arrested shortly after this and interned in Bere Island, but again the little gun escaped discovery. Ormonde secured it after the Truce, brought it to Cork and there sold it to a young Volunteer in U.C.C. and that was the last I ever heard of it.

One Friday early afternoon towards the end of May, I was having my lunch in the "Shamrock" when Pat Kelch, the old Dublin compositor, came in all excitement to say that there was a big round-up outside by the military and that the whole Parade - Old George's St. - Princes St. - South Mall was cordoned off. I was afraid of a systematic house to house search, so I collected my bomb parts, including a couple of empty Mills grenade cases, and went downstairs into the small rear room at the back of the adjoining fruit shop. Here, occasionally, customers had a quiet cup of tea or coffee or maybe ice cream and fruit. Luckily there was no one present. I deposited my deadly load in the fire grate, beneath and behind some shrubs and flowers which were covering up the ugliness of the empty grate. Then I went back upstairs, finished my lunch and got some large books which I carried beneath my arm. Down the stairs with me and out on the street. A military cordon stretched diagonally across the junction of Old George's St. and The Parade. An officer and two sergeants were busy searching all males. A queue of men of various ages were resignedly awaiting search. I dawdled for a few minutes awaiting my turn; then, getting impatient, I went up boldly to the nearest N.C.O. and presented myself for scrutiny and search. He looked hard at me, felt my pockets and all over my body with his hands and then asked me where I was going. I told him that I was going back to College preparing for an examination, which was true enough indeed. He told me to pass on. I did with alacrity and relief. In the evening I returned to the "Shamrock". The military were gone. They had not even visited the digs, so my goods in the grate were intact. Later I transferred the lot to the custody of Raymond Kennedy, Battalion Vice O/C.

My final engineering examination in mechanical and electrical engineering was due early in June. I had done little, if any, preparation for it. Nevertheless I was going to take my chance and sit for it anyway. And then Mick Crowley, second in command of Tommy Barry's 3rd Brigade Column, came along to Cork, met me at the College and asked me to come along to Cork lll Brigade and help him to reorganise the engineering services of that I.R.A. brigade. I accepted eagerly but told him that I would not be available to go to West Cork until after my June exam., then about to begin. He agreed. So I began my final exam. After I had answered the first three papers it was clear to me that I had not the remotest chance of a pass. Rather than mess up the rest of the exam., I withdrew and appeared no more that June in the exam. hall. I wrote home to my father and mother explaining how I had missed doing some of the papers and to prepare them for the disappointment which they would suffer at not seeing my name in the pass lists for the B.E. degree. Of course, they knew little of my almost exclusive preoccupation with I.R.A. operations and activities and did not realise at all that my own engineering career and University studies were only a very secondary consideration. I told them, too, that I was going to a temporary engineering job down in West Cork in Kinsale and that I might be back home later in the summer to prepare for the autumn exam. This was how I explained my departure from Cork City to West Cork in June.

Off down west I went after my abortive exam. to take up my new appointment as engineering inspector, 3rd Cork Brigade, I.R.A. At this time, the army in the martial law area had just been reorganised into divisions. Liam Lynch, Bde. O/C, Cork ll, had taken over command of 1st

Southern Division with Liam Deasy, late O/C, Cork 111, as his Div. Adjutant. The new O/C of Cork 111 was Seán Lehane of Durrus, Bantry, a Drumcondra trained national teacher who had gone soldiering with the I.R.A. instead of teaching. With Seán I was destined to spend several years campaigning with the I.R.A. all over Ireland. Round this time Cork 111 Brigade H.Q. was south of the Bandon river in the Ballinadee area. There I reported to Mick Crowley and we got down to planning the re-adjustment of the brigade engineering service. The brigade area was now about one half of its former size, as the region of West Cork from Leap-Drimoleague-Castle Donovan-Gugane to the Kerry border had now been carved off to form a new I.R.A. brigade, Cork V. Cork 111 now comprised the area from Kinsale to Ballinhaseig and Bealnablath west to Kilmichael and Gugane. Within it were the towns of Kinsale, Bandon, Clonakilty, Ballineen, Enniskeane, Dunmanway, Roscarbery, Timoleague and Courtmacsherry, all strongly garrisoned by the English army, Auxiliaries, R.I.C. and Tans. The following were the brigade, battalion and special services officers as far as I can remember: -

Bde. O/C - Seán Lehane
Bde. Vice O/C - Seán Lordan
Bde. Adjt. - Seán McCarthy
Bde. Q/M - Tadhg O'Sullivan (brother of Gearóid O'Sullivan, Adj. Gen.)

Battn. Cmdt.
1st Bn. - Seán Hales
2nd Bn. - James Hurley
3rd Bn. - Peter Kearney
4th Bn. - Tim O'Donoghue
5th Bn. - Tom Kelliher.

Engineering
Bde. Engr. - Mick Crowley
Asst. " " - Jack Buttimer
Bde. Insp. of Engr. - Mick O'Donoghue (mise féin).

My first assignment was the design of a new type of land mine, lighter, more easily transferable and more reliable than the heavy concrete types which up to then had been favoured. Not that the old concrete box affairs were

entirely discarded, not quite. But with the nature of the explosive available in good supply in Cork 111, the new tubular type was far more easily constructed and fitted. Over three thousand lbs. of high explosive tonite - a perfectly dry form of guncotton - were stored in Cork 111. Ten lbs. of tonite or twelve of guncotton or gelignite would make a powerful filling for the standard size tubular land mine. This was fitted for electrical detonation. The tube was usually a cast iron pipe three feet long and 7" to 9" internal diameter. The metal shore pipes for taking water beneath yard entrances on street pavements were ideal material for the job. These now disappeared surreptitiously overnight from many of the streets in Clonakilty and Dunmanway. Later I remember a letter of protest coming to Brigade H.Q. from County Surveyor's Office, Cork County Council, saying that it had been reported to them by their road officials that these road and street fittings had been removed by I.R.A. official orders, and one Mick Donoghue was quoted as the I.R.A. officer who had instructed Volunteers in the local companies to seize the metal pipings. I admitted giving general instructions to that effect but the question of authority or authorisation had never occurred to me. Anyhow, I said, the exigencies of war and ruthless military necessity overrode all other considerations.

Out here in West Cork our range of movement was restricted to the rural areas. But we moved around freely through the country during curfew hours. This was in great contrast to the conditions in Cork City where, owing to the complete clamp down on all movement after curfew hour had descended each night, one felt a feeling of frustration and claustrophobia at the rigid indoor confinement, especially

during summer nights. In the towns of West Cork, British military curfew restrictions were enforced at the point of the bayonet, but outside the towns no military curfew patrols ventured and the I.R.A. moved freely, the people generally giving them full co-operation. I found the change refreshing, invigorating and welcome. I had chafed under the conditions dictated by British occupation in Cork City and was weary of munition work and playing a continuous game of hide and seek with the Crown forces, whom you encountered many times daily. Out in the country you were a rebel, free and defiant, and if you met the British enemy, you or he shot at sight. In the city you could lie low, keep quiet and pass as an innocent and harmless citizen. And even in dire emergency, bluff, coolness and good acting could save you in many a tough situation.

Late June of 1921 was very fine and warm. Already, to conserve their precious arms and munition supplies and to maintain their strength, safety and fighting potential, Barry's column of a hundred men had been demobilised. The column men had returned in small groups to their own battalion areas, where they operated as light guerrillas, sniping enemy posts and mobile detachments and obstructing enemy movement through the district. We in the engineering service found the going more satisfactory for our reorganisation plan. A Battalion Lieutenant of engineering was appointed to take charge of the engineering special service in each of the five battalions. In each company of a battalion, a Section Commander was appointed to command the special section of Volunteers in the company who were to be trained fully and specially for military engineering operations of all descriptions. The engineering services in the brigade gradually began to take shape and then to function in reality.

Now came July, and with the scorching summer heatwave came rumours of peace and negotiations for a cease fire. Then before we had time to realise what was happening, as everything moved so suddenly, the Truce was upon us on July 11th 1921 at midday. Overnight everything was changed. The fugitive rebel army, the I.R.A., was recognised as Ireland's national army by the British Government. There was an uneasy peace. 'Twas hard, even for the I.R.A. themselves, to credit that the fortunes of war had changed to such an extent. We could now move everywhere in town and country. We exulted in our new found authority and importance. Everywhere the people regarded us as heroes and hailed us as conquerors and turned our heads with flattery, adulation and praise. We were youngsters in our teens and early twenties, and who could blame us if we got intoxicated with all the hero worship and rejoicings. Even those people who had maintained a cautious neutrality, standing on the ditch during the War of Independence, now rushed to acclaim us and to entertain us. It was amazing the numbers and varieties of people who crowded on to the Irish Republican band wagon in the late July of 1921.

As for myself, I decided to return home to work for my final exam. and to return to West Cork after the exam. results. I dropped into the "Shamrock" Hotel on my way back through Cork City, where I spent a few gay days and nights before heading for home. On my first post truce night in Cork, I was amazed at the reactions of the populace to the abolition of curfew and other restrictions on their freedom. At 10 p.m. they could be seen sitting on the pavements, in doorways everywhere, on the streets under the open air, as if they were trying to assure themselves that it was really true that British tyranny no longer

operated and that they were now free and no longer under the baleful hostile gun-muzzle of Tan and Tommy. But Republican Police appeared like mushrooms and enforced the licensing laws with strictness and even harshness. The R.I.C. and Tans strolled around aimlessly and at ease and seemed to regard the rather puritanical activities of their successors in law-enforcement with amused benevolence. The citizens played holiday round their streets until well past midnight each night, rejoicing in their new found liberty. The young girls, particularly, fell over themselves in their admiration for the returning Republican Volunteer youths, and I and young I.R.A. men like me basked in the sunshine of female smiles and admiring "glad eyes". It was a time when it was grand to be young and alive. It was a unique time in Irish military history. You, a young Republican soldier, had fought the might of the British Empire in the field, and lo and behold, for the first time in many centuries, you, a rebel, could now victoriously carry yourself as an Irish soldier, and recognised as such, before the Irish public. It was indeed a great transformation. Death, defeat, disgrace and destruction had been the lot of the Irish soldier fighting his country's battles at home against English tyranny for centuries. But now we were the first Irish soldiers who had broken that melancholy tradition of failure, who had stood up to all the terror and tyranny of British rule and who had forced an amazed and exhausted England to call for a truce and to recognise the despised Irish rebel as a belligerent and a nation soldier of Republican Ireland.

At home in Cappoquin in late July, I tried to get down to serious study and concentrate on passing the B.E. exam. in September. It was difficult, very difficult. The

weather was gloriously fine and warm all through that summer, and I sweated and fretted within, wrestling with knotty problems in mechanics, dynamics and electrical generation and design. The days passed all to quickly and the fear grew on me that I had far too short a time to prepare adequately. As September approached, I realised all too grimly that I would need an unusual amount of luck to have even a sporting chance. The course was so wide, so academic and needed so much concentrated application that I despaired of completing even one cursory revision before exam. day. I trusted in God and in my own good luck, of which so far I had enjoyed a rather copious measure. I set off for Cork, then, owing to railroad and bridge destruction, rather inaccessible from Cappoquin. I left in the early morning and rode in a jaunting-car, driven by Jimmy Gaynor, in U.S.A. now for 30 years or more, down by the Blackwater to Youghal. Here I took the train to Cork, arriving late evening. Installed in my own den at the Shamrock Hotel, I did my last hours of preparation for the B.E. degree. I shall never forget the ordeal of that exam. in the musty exam. hall of U.C.C. My luck held. On the various papers I encountered a sufficiency of questions which suited my rapid attenuated studies. I attempted no question of which I was doubtful or of which I had but a hazy knowledge. I answered thoroughly at great length the questions which I knew and understood. Yet, in general, I only dealt with about half the questions requiring answer on the various papers. I wondered would that answering be sufficient for a pass. I felt that what I had done would need to be 100% correct to permit my getting through. When the results were read out, the name of Michael Vincent O'Donoghue was in the pass list of students who had succeeded in the final exam. for the degree of B.E. (mech.

and elect.). I was astounded at my success. No one knew better than I myself that I had not deserved it, but it was such an immense relief. I wired the good news to my parents and celebrated in traditional fashion for a few days. Then, without going home to Cappoquin, I headed without further delay for West Cork and reported for duty at the H.Q. of the 3rd Cork Brigade.

At that time Bde. H.Q. was at Barrett's of Ballymountain, a large farmhouse south of the Bandon river between Innishannon and Bandon. There, with Mick Crowley, Bde. Engineer, and Jack Buttimer, his assistant, an elaborate plan for intensive engineering training in each of the five battalions was formulated. About four of the Bde. Staff were billeted in Barrett's - usually Seán Lehane, Bde. O/C, Seán McCarthy, Bde. Adjt., Dan O'Leary, Assistant Bde. Adjt., and Tadhg O'Sullivan, Bde. Quartermaster. I managed to get a billet there too, teaming up with Jack Buttimer. The days there were very busy with the comings and goings of many brigade and battalion officers and numerous dispatches and communications. The nights usually found the elder and senior brigade officers absent from H.Q. and the place occupied only with the young juniors (all in their very early twenties). There was a young lady in the house, a student of U.C.C., a piano, a gramaphone and a fiddle. Naturally enough, some of the young ladies around dropped in late in the evening for a social call on Miss Barrett. It was just a coincidence that we were knocking around and the result was a bit of a sing-song or céilí a few times a week, usually at week-ends. These were happy gatherings, plenty of music and laughter, song and joke. Everyone contributed his item to the impromptu programme. Occasionally we had dancing - in which,

incidentally, I did not participate, never having ventured on a ballroom floor - and games such as forfeits and postman's knock, in which I joined with great gusto. Mick Crowley, Jack Buttimer, Dan O'Leary, Mick Price and myself were the usual young males attracting female admiration at these homely gatherings, and many were the flirtations, mild and otherwise, in which we figured and many were the combinations, and complications, too, which arose. But more serious work was afoot. The situation at the time - mid September or so - was very fluid. All the signs and tokens pointed to a resumption of active guerilla warfare against the British occupation forces at any moment. The negotiations going on since July had led nowhere and, seemingly, Anglo-Irish relations had reached a stalemate.

The I.R.A. in West Cork were poised for immediate action in the imminent prospect of a renewal of hostilities. Training in camps had been carried out in each battalion area and now the engineering service launched an intensive drive based on battalion training camps to bring this special service up to the height of efficiency for waging guerilla warfare. The advent of the Truce had seen a large influx of man-power into the I.R.A. Not all of the new material was ideal. Some of it was indeed poor stuff and, from the military and prestige viewpoint, undesirable. It was only natural that when the Truce focussed the spotlight on the national status and military prowess and resistance glamour of the I.R.A., there should be a rush to leap on the band wagon for sections who, from personal and selfish motives, were very quiescent and mild and moderate, if not actually neutral, during the Black and Tan reign of terror. Now, with the guns quiet and the Tans

on leash, they evinced unexpected depths of military ardour, hitherto latent. They paraded swaggeringly in the ranks of the local companies before an admiring populace, and in places, especially where the I.R.A. activity had been slight or largely nominal, they stole the whole show and limelight from the real Volunteers who had served. The fact that the vast majority of the I.R.A. were modest, self-effacing young men who were proud of their anonymity and that so much secrecy and mystery surrounded the whole I.R.A. machinery, helped the "Trucileer" or the Truce Warrior to pose in an exaggerated patriotic light and to deceive the Irish public as a whole. Later, when the treaty came and the new Free State government services were established, there was a big scramble by the "Trucileer" element to muscle in to all the cushy corners and soft jobs of the new infant state. The split in the I.R.A. made the going all the easier for the Truce Warriors "on the make" to feather their own nests. These footlight-hungry warriors who came along after July, 1921, lowered the character and status and fighting potential of the I.R.A. and later were to prove most embarrassing not alone to the Provisional Government set up to operate the Irish Free State but also to the Republican forces who opposed the I.F.S. in arms. This is not to say that all those who joined the I.R.A. after the Truce were slick clever chancers of this type. Many youths in their teens who were already in the Fianna or who were too young from 1918-1921, joined the Volunteers in the autumn of 1921 to serve their country and strengthen its war potential. The vast majority of these youngsters were impelled by idealist and patriotic motives, loyal and devoted to Ireland. This they proved later in the searing fire and flame and fury of the tragic civil war.

But the men, the over-twenty and under fifty group, who joined the I.R.A. for the first time after July, 1921, proved beyond yea or nay by their subsequent manoeuvres that they were out, first, last and all the time, to serve their own private selfish interests and to help themselves and to cash in on the fruits of the achievements of others. The natural desire of the local Company Captain to increase the numerical strength of the Volunteers under his command in his own area and the understandable rivalry in this regard between neighbouring companies, led to a saturation influx of recruits in the late summer of 1921. The strength of some companies increased two-fold or more. Town companies especially, which pre Truce counted an effective strength of thirty or so, now mustered as many as one hundred men. It was a mushroom growth reminiscent of the days of the conscription scare of 1918 when the Irish Volunteers numbered more than one hundred thousand. It was as if overnight the great underground resistance army of the Irish Republic had emerged into the open, exposed all its secrets and its organisation and thrown open its ranks indiscriminately to all and sundry. It was a fatal blunder by the I.R.A. supreme authorities. The effectiveness of the I.R.A. lay in its elusiveness, its unpredictable military tactics, its secret and mysterious character. The reticence and anonymity of its leaders, local and national, helped to build up a formidable picture of a rigidly and ruthlessly loyal military body whose intangibility and mobility had reduced the British War Office to a state of distraction. The publicising of the I.R.A., plus indiscriminate recruiting, proved a God-send to the British Intelligence Service. The veil of secrecy and mystery was drawn aside and Ireland's underground army of the Republic was exposed as consisting of

a number of small commandos, pitifully few in number and poorly armed. The psychological effect of this discovery on the British attitude was profound. There was a pronounced stiffening by the Empire negotiators in their dealings with the Irish Republican delegates, culminating in the "immediate and terrible war ultimatum" of Lloyd George which finally forced the hands of the bewildered five Irish plenipotentiaries to sign the treaty of ill omen. How far the exposure of the real military situation viz-a-viz the I.R.A. influenced the trend of negotiations and undermined the bargaining position of the Irish Republican delegation will always be a question mark on the pages of Irish history.

On my first arrival in the Bandon area of the 3rd West Cork Brigade, I had come equipped with Sam Browne belt and Colt .45. The Sam Browne I got from a first year engineering student from Clare, a recruit to 'A' Company, 2nd Battalion. His brother had been a lieutenant in the Dublin Fusiliers and had been killed in the British attack on Gallipoli against the Turks in 1915. His personal effects had been retrieved from his body at Suvla Bay and sent home to his parents in Clare. Young McNamara had brought his dead brother's Sam Browne with him to U.C.C. and presented it to me when I left College to join the I.R.A. Flying Column in West Cork. The slacks and mackintosh coat I wore going down to Cork lll were not considered suitable wear for a column man, so I was provided with a heavy though battered-looking trench-coat (the all-service type worn by British officers in the Great War), a pair of heavy brown gaiters - my own strong brown boots were alright for army service.

I'll never forget the first training camp in which I conducted a course in military engineering. Accompanied by Jack Buttimer, I set out in a pony and trap for the hilly country between Enniskean and Newcestown where a training camp had been organised for the 2nd Battalion, Cork 111 Brigade. The Lieut. of Engineers in this battalion was Pat O'Callaghan from near Kinneigh who had had some service with Barry's column. Our pony's name was Mickeen - to distinguish him from the three other Micks at Bde. H.Q. viz, Mick Crowley, Mick Price and Mick O'Donoghue (myself). He was a "Protestant" pony, having been confiscated from a Loyalist family near Ballineen who had been driven out for anti Sinn Féin activities, namely, actively helping the Auxies. For some obscure reason, he seemed to take to me - his namesake - although he was usually a bad-tempered animal whom few could approach in his stable. He had one peculiar habit, probably a throw-back to his peaceful pre-war days. He stopped automatically at every big demesne entrance gates and only tactful handling succeeded in getting him to move on. It seemed he had in those far-off days been used largely to convey Loyalist ladies on their social rounds of tennis, croquet and high tea. Now he was employed to convey I.R.A. "terrorists" on their travels organising and training Ireland's invisible army. He must have felt the change very much indeed.

I took up my quarters in the house of a Protestant farmer - the largest in that hill country. His name was William Shorten, but to distinguish him from many others of that name - both Protestant and Catholic - round about, he was universally called "Willie Big Jim". This was a remarkable submission to Gaelic customs by Planter Protestants descended from the English colonists whom Richard Boyle,