Part II.

DUPLICATE

ROINN COSANTA.

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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.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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the first Earl of Cork, planted in the village of the Bandon River. Willie Big Jim, my host, had a farm of 150 acres or so which he worked intensively himself. He had two grown-up daughters, in their twenties; one, I think, was going to T.C.D., and his wife was from Galway. Despite disparity in political, social and religious outlook, I was accepted in his house with every mark of respect and even friendliness. Nightly we had discussions and arguments, in which his wife joined in, about many problems and questions, national, social and political, never religious. They had a liberal outlook on Irish affairs and their main concern was the working and development of their farm.

By day, Volunteers selected from the engineers' section of each company in the battalion area reported for training. Work began at 9 a.m. or so and was pretty diversified. A large barn of Willie Big Jim's was emptied and used as a drill hall, training and lecture theatre. The course dealt mainly with explosives, demolition work, dumps, booby traps, making and uses of bombs, explosives, land mines, also electrical and mechanical devices. Our young soldier engineers were eager and receptive enough, but they were country lads all and held me and my scientific and military engineering lessons in much awe. The first morning I took over command of the motley assortment of country Volunteers who had turned up for the course. I put them through a little squad drill to break them in and to give them confidence in themselves and their martial qualities. Then they were seated on all sorts of stools and benches and seats in the barn and the lecturing began. I fitted up a crude blackboard on a rough stand adapted from a step-ladder. My lessons had to be simple

and easily illustrated, and my talk plain, free ffom technicalities and jargon. I was confronted with some difficulty when I tried to explain the principles of current electricity and electrical detonation of explosives to these raw country youths. I well remember the blank looks on their faces as I spoke of positive and negative terminals and voltage. Then I began to go round in circles as I endeavoured to simplify things for them, and, at last, in despair, I dismissed them for dinner, instructing them to report for practical demonstration later. The midday meal for the camp was supplied and prepared in Shorten's each day during the training course - the trainees dispersing in the evening to their respective billets all round the district.

During the dinner interval I had rigged up an electric exploder with dry batteries and got some copper cable S.W.G., a low tension detonator and a few sticks of gelignite. When the boys reassembled, we moved out from the barn away up a boreen from the farmhouse. Here I selected a protruding rock at a corner in the wall of the boreen. With my wide-eyed audience ranged round, I placed the gelignite in position in a crevice behind the rock and inserted the low tension detonator. After connecting up the cable to the detonator, we withdrew forty yards or so back the boreen to a position where we could view the rock. Here I attached the cable to the terminals of the exploder, being very deliberate to explain the positive and the negative leads and connections. I noticed with satisfaction the glimmer of an understanding dawning in their intent eyes. Then I instructed them to lay down and take cover but to keep their eyes fixed on the rock, and at the command "Fire" the charge would be exploded. I shouted "Ready, fire"

and pressed the switch. There was a loud explosion, stones and pieces of rock were blown into the air and across the boreen. We inspected the result. Quite a sizeable breach in the wall of the boreen. They were duly impressed. I got them to repair the damage and to restore the wall as before. Ever afterwards my squad of engineers in that camp listened avidly to the scientific lessons in military engineering. They were all admiration for the method and precision of scientific demolition. Later, Willie Big Jim mildly, half-jokingly protested against the damage to his boreen wall and asked me as a favour to blow up a large tree which was obstructing the passage into his house, if and when I would again be using explosives in the camp vicinity. I promised to do so, though I never did.

Our next large demolition demonstration was with a large concrete mine. This affair was a large cube of about 2½ feet wide with a hollow space in the centre to contain the explosive. It was atrociously heavy and took three or four men to move and lift. An ambush position on the Enniskeen road about a mile away was chosen. The mine was loaded on an ass and cart and carried to the spot. A large hole was excavated in the road surface and the mine placed in position. A small charge of tonite, only about 1½ lbs., was carefully and firmly packed in the centre of the cavity in the concrete block. A low tension electric detonator was inserted and connected to copper cable about 60 yards long which was led across the road in a shallow trench and through a small hole in the bottom of the fence to the inside and thence to the operator's shelter - a kind of dug-out in the side of a fence meeting the roadside fence at a sharp angle and about 50 yards from the mine. The road surface was then carefully

replaced and road metalling in the shape of small broken stones, which were plentiful all around, used to conceal the buried mine and to restore the road to its ordinary appearance. Observation parties were then positioned under protective cover on the other side of the road in places more than 100 yards away, and finally the connections to the exploding battery were completed. I then made a tour of inspection of the different posts and placed warning parties in either direction on the road to detain anybody travelling along. I arranged for the timing of the explosion by a flag signal from the main observation party. Returning to the operator's dug-out, I signalled my arrival and got acknowledgement and then awaited the time signal. It came. The flag waved. I ducked for cover and blew a whistle. The operator pulled back the safety catch and pressed home the switch. There was a deafening roar. Pieces of concrete, small rocks and showers of stones were sent fifty yards into the air and for fully a minute rained down in showers all around. It was well that such a liberal margin and range of safety had been allowed for in taking up protective observation positions. One large rock, about 30 lbs. weight, was hurled 75 yards away.

The destructive effect of the 1½ lbs. of high explosive was amazing. A large crater was blown out in the road and debris was scattered all round for a radius of 50 yards or so. The effect and results were carefully noted. One fruit of this experimental blast was a modified type of tubular metal land mine. The value of concrete as a filler or tamping material was shown very convincingly. In this case the combination of small H.E. charge in a concrete medium had increased the explosive and blast effect sevenfold - a very useful discovery -

especially by an army in which explosive materials were more valuable than gold and in many areas just as scarce. The chemical section of the I.R.A. tried valiantly to eke out the tiny H.E. resources of the army. The amount of regular orthodox explosives - gelignite, dynamite, guncotton, tonite, T.N.T. - in I.R.A. dumps was pitifully small and restricted. This was supplemented by new home-made explosives - crude but effective, though very dangerous to handle. Among these the commonest were "Irish Cheddar", "War Flour No. 1", "War Flour No. 2", "Lumite", based on ingredients such as potassium chlorate, Chilean saltpetre and paraffin oil. These emergency explosives were largely used for filling bombs and grenades. They were not favoured for land mines owing to their instability and dangerous unpredictability. When the camp course at Willie Big Jim's ended, the Volunteer trainees were dismissed to return to their companies and there build up the engineering section on the basis of their own training. Buttimer and myself moved over to Callaghan's for a night or two. We usually adjourned to Nyhan's pub up in Kinneigh at night, where we drank a few pints, scrounged cigarettes and sang a song or talked for the entertainment of ourselves and the Nyhan sisters - great workers in Cumann na mBan. We, the I.R.A. officers training and organising throughout the brigade area, were chronically impoverished. We got ten shillings weekly from "White Cross" funds, through the Brigade Quartermaster, Tadhg Sullivan, but that hardly kept us in "fags". We all smoked and, let me admit it, we all drank, usually large pints of porter. We rarely had a half-crown in our pockets. But the people everywhere were very good to us and entertained us, often quite lavishly. At week-ends we managed a change of

under-clothes - a shirt and socks - at brigade or battalion H.Q. or at the houses in each town and village where the Cumann na mBan washed and laundered and stored the underwear for the"boys", the wandering whole-time A.S.U. men of the I.R.A. Occasionally female admirers would present us with a new shirt or tie, and I must say that in all my time wandering throughout Ireland on I.R.A. service I never had any problems about a clean underwear supply until I landed in gaol at the end of 1922.

Leaving Callaghan's after camp break-up, we set off driving "Mickeen" in our grand tub-trap to Enniskeen. Four of us were in the trap: Jack Buttimer driving, Lieut. P. Callaghan, I and "Jur" Hurley, a burly, jovial fellow of near forty years who had knocked about the world, served in the Australian army in the Great War, returned to West Cork, deserted from the Colonial Forces and joined the I.R.A., in which he served throughout the Black and Tan regime in West Cork, becoming Vice Comdt. of the 2nd Battn. under Comdt. Tim O'Donoghue. At this time he had been demoted for intoxication whilst on duty. He had been in charge of the I.R.A. guard of honour to President de Valera on his visit to Newcestown and Kilmichael ambush sites and he had celebrated this new martial notoriety all too well, even to the extent of parading obviously inebriated before the Chief. This joker was now seated in the back of the small trap. Not satisfied apparently with "Mickeen's" progress, he hit him a few resounding whacks on the rump with a heavy stick. "Mickeen" reacted violently to such insult. He bucked viciously, almost smashing in the front of the trap with his hind hooves, then tore off madly down the rough hill-track. Buttimer

tried to get him under control, but in vain. Mickeen continued his mad downhill career over the rough rutted track - there were no fences. Sixty yards or so ahead was a high rock at the right-hand side, round which the track turned sharply to the right. On the other side was a morass strewn with moss-covered rocks and bog holes. As we tore down to the turn, with Buttimer almost tearing Mickeen's mouth away trying to control him but all to no purpose, a crash was inevitable. As we reached the turn beside the rock, the right wheel rose high up off the road. For a second the whole trap load balanced dizzily on the left wheel as Buttimer pulled frantically to the right. The next moment Mickeen catapulted straight ahead into the bog, smashing harness and shafts, the trap capsizing in the pony's wake. Hurley was thrown over me and landed on a low moss-covered exposed rock. I found myself flung heavily on soft sedge-covered earth. For a moment I was dazed. Then I almost panicked when I saw the pony's hind legs on the ground just a few inches before my face. I scrambled up in terrified haste and surveyed the scene. Buttimer had actually landed on the fallen pony's body, suffering some cuts and bruises from violent contact with the harness. Callaghan had been thrown clear and landed in the sedge without a scratch. I, too, had escaped unscathed, but Hurley lay motionless. Callaghan immediately jumped up and sat across the pony's head. But Mickeen lay quiet and panting, strangely docile after all the mad tumult. With our aid, Callaghan brought the pony to its feet and it stood panting with heaving sides. Two broken shafts and some broken harness was the extent of the material damage. The pony was unhurt and, except for Hurley, so were we. Getting some rope, twine, an awl and wax-end

by sending Callaghan back home, we carried out emergency repairs to trap and harness. With "Mickeen" under the patched-up trap once more, we set off for Enniskean walking. We were a rather dolorous, crest-fallen quartette as we trudged along, Buttimer leading the pony and the other three of us behind. Hurley had recovered and now sported a big raw bruise on his temple where his head had struck that moss-hidden rock. Down in the quiet village of Enniskean, the trap was repaired in a few hours by a local joinery and carriage works which included an I.R.A. man on its working personnel. In the meantime, we relaxed in a local pub over pints and satisfied the pangs of hunger at a large table with huge consumption of cabbage, pig's head and spuds. Mickeen munched oats in a stable behind the pub until evening. Later we returned to Brigade H.Q. in the Bandon area, reported there and handed over our transport, pony and trap, to the Bde. Q.M., Tadhg Sullivan. We forgot conveniently to report our accident and damage and repairs to the trap. Yet Tadhg must have known or heard of it, for on my next mission, out west to the 3rd Battalion in the Dunmanway area, I was given a crock of a bike for transport. This was a tour of inspection and reorganising of engineer sections in each company of this scattered area. Arrived at Balteenbrack near Manch Bridge, about five miles east of Dunmanway, where Battalion H.Q. was located at Corcoran's, I reported to Pete Kearney, Battalion O/C, to arrange plan of inspection tour of battalion. First a billet was got for me at Kearney's, a large farmhouse about a mile nearer Dunmanway. Next day, Sunday, I travelled in with my hosts to Mass. There was a big athletic sports meeting in Dunmanway that day and I went there. I met many of the boys

who had gathered in town for the sports. Mick Price, Tom Barry's brother-in-law, recently arrived in West Cork to be assistant training officer to Cork 111 Brigade, met me on the sportsfield. We had drinks and dinner at Driscoll's of the Green, a great I.R.A. centre. It was a warm autumn day and the town was crowded. In the evening we drifted around from one pub to another, meeting many kindred spirits, mostly I.R.A. young officers like ourselves letting ourselves go. We felt very important and very conspicuous militarily, dressed as we were in column fashion - riding breeches and leggings, green shirt and collar, trench coat and slouch hat.

There was a Republican dance in town that night and, of course, we - Price and myself, with Pat Murphy of Ardcahan - decided to go there. After tea at O'Driscoll's, we did the round of the pubs again, talking, meeting the boys, arguing and drinking pints here and there. (The only drink we considered worthy of consumption was the pint - all others were deemed beneath notice and unworthy of hardy warriors). About 11 p.m. we were in Milner's pub when the Republican police entered and endeavoured to clear the premises. Price and I explained to them that we were I.R.A. officers just then moving through the area on reorganisation work and that we would be gone out of Dunmanway next morning. The Republican police then moved into the rear room and kitchen where a number of men were arguing noisily. They refused to move until and unless the party of strangers (us) outside were put out too. Hearing the commotion inside with the police, we entered and the fellows inside, now very hostile, demanded of the police that they put us (Price and myself) off the premises first. The situation was explosive. The police were in a very delicate dilemma. I opened my covercoat, exposing to view my Sam Brown belt

and holster complete with Colt .45, and quietly told them that myself and my companion were I.R.A. officers on active service in the district and that we were going to have a meal in Milner's and intended to stay there that night. Whereupon a big, rough-looking fellow blurted out angrily that he, too, was an I.R.A. officer and had been out with the column (Barry's) and he was not going to be put out by anybody, Republican police or I.R.A. officers or anybody else. "You're right, Neilus boy" cried his friends. "You're a column man too, don't go out for anybody". Then only did I understand the cause of the tumult. The men thought that I was helping the police to clear the place and that that was the reason why I had exposed my Sam Browne and gun, They thought I was threatening them with the gun to get out. It was an ugly moment. Price aggravated the trouble by telling me loudly in his strong Dublin accent to throw my weight around. But I was cool and prudent, and turning to the angry Neilus O'Driscoll I assured him that I did not care a damn if they stayed there till dawn, that it was none of my business at all. We then withdrew to our quiet corner in the kitchen while we waited for a meal. After some time the men inside departed, followed by the I.R. police. On the way out, O'Driscoll came up to me, shook hands and apologised for his hostile behaviour. We parted in most friendly fashion.

About fifteen minutes later, the same police again entered and told us that we would have to leave, that their C/O, the local police officer, had ordered them to clear us out. We refused to go and I demanded that the police bring along their officer to see us. He came in, a rather pompous and officious man in his thirties or more (much

older than any of us). I was indignant and so was Price. We lacerated him in unmeasured terms for his effrontery in insulting I.R.A. officers, strangers to the area too, and trying to treat them as drunken loafers. We finished by ordering him and his police to get out and stay out. They did. The policemen I believe rather enjoyed the "telling off" of their commanding officer. But the matter did not end there. Later that night we went to the dance in the hall, which was crowded to the doors and outside. I did no dancing, neither did Price. Neither of us could dance a step, nor muster up enough courage to take the floor and try. We chatted with the girls who were not dancing. I took a young lady to supper and sat out a while after. So did Mick Price. On returning to the hall, I was told that the Brigade Vice Commandant, Seán Lordan, wanted to see me. When I met him, he took me aside and in a most earnest voice told me that the local police officer - Ned Young - had made a serious complaint to him about me, that I had refused to obey the orders of the I.R. police on duty and that I had threatened P.O. Young with a revolver and driven off him and his men from carrying out their duty. Young notified him (Lordan) too that he was sending in an official report of the matter to Brigade H.Q. Lordan's sympathies were largely with me, knowing Young and his pompous self-importance of old, but he advised me to report the whole incident first to Brigade H.Q. so as to forestall the officious police officer. I explained the whole affair to the Vice Brigadier and he agreed that he could not see anything improper in my behaviour. Brigade, however, would not be at all pleased to hear of bickering and strained relations between the I.R. police and the I.R. army. I would get a severe rap on the knuckles if I was convicted of interfering with the police or obstructing

them. The position of the I.R. police was rather nebulous. In each brigade was a Brigade Police Officer in charge of police affairs, with a similar arrangement in each battalion. In each company a few Volunteers were usually detailed for police duties - which consisted mainly in enforcing the licensing laws, doing stewarding at public gatherings of all descriptions, races, sports, etc. Even though police officers were attached to I.R.A. units, the army did not administer or concern itself with police activities. The police were nominally subject to the civil authorities and to Sinn Féin Courts and the Department of Home Affairs. This ambiguous position of the Republican Police did not conduce to their efficiency or popularity. The ordinary I.R.A. soldier regarded them with amused superiority, as lesser breeds not tough enough for soldiering. However, Young's complaint and charge against me, though lodged with brigade, were never pressed, as the military and national situation changed so rapidly just about then that the Brigade Staff had no time for finicky little bubblings of this nature.

November came and with it urgent orders from G.H.Q. I.R.A. to be ready for a resumption of the fight. We trained and organised feverishly. In the Dunmanway Battalion area, each company had its engineering section, trained and equipped for all kinds of demolition work. Many of the roads in the area still remained trenched and impassable. In this area, close to Balteenbrack, a bomb factory was in full blast. It was situated, strange to say, in open country. Yet, due to its unique site in a depression in the corner of a large field, it was effectively concealed. It was disguised as a farmyard, with large cow-house, barn, piggeries and boiler-house. Power was

supplied by a gas engine, the boiler-house functioned as a furnace and the barn was the moulding shed. At night mostly the lads on the job worked. They were billeted in a couple of farmhouses closeby. Armed Volunteer guards at a safe distance away from the factory site prevented the approach of any prowlers. The locals kept closed mouths and the factory kept turning out grenades of the Mills type without interference or discovery. Frank Neville of Killeady, Upton, was the I.R.A. officer manager of this unique factory.

In early December, 1921, I was back again in the mountainous area of Kinneigh and Coppeen. I had with me my old friend - Mickeen, the pony - and a new model back-to-back trap. I was due to move on to the Clonakilty district in the 2nd Battalion area where Jim Hurley was the Commandant, to sharpen up and expand the engineering special service. I had been promoted Assistant Brigade Engineer in October when Jack Buttimer, my predecessor, returned to U.C.C. to resume his civil engineering studies. My place as Brigade Inspector of Engineering was taken by Bill O'Connor, another I.R.A. engineer of 'A' Company, U.C.C., who had failed to get his final and whom Mick Crowley brought along to complete the engineering staff of Cork 111 Brigade. I moved off early on the morning of December 6th for Clonakilty. Passing through Ballineen on the way, my attention was drawn to a telegram copy form pasted up in the post office window. It said "Peace negotiations concluded. Articles of Agreement signed 4.30 a.m. this morning in London". It was the treaty. I was astounded. For weeks we had been warned that the renewal of hostilities was imminent and we were geared to resume the fight at a moment's notice. The news then of this sudden and totally

unexpected peace was astounding. It was hard to credit it at all. What had happened?

Bewildered and full of doubts, I continued on to Clonakilty. I had hoped to learn something more there, but the same atmosphere of doubt and incredulity was everywhere in the I.R.A. quarters. At a loss to know what was now the position and what were the duties of the army, I decided to return immediately to Brigade H.Q. for information and instructions. Before dusk that evening I drove out of Clonakilty, passing the R.I.C. barracks en route. Outside, surrounded by huge barbed wire entanglements, was a big Tan doing sentry. As I passed he called out (strange conduct for a sentry), "Say, chum! Ain't you Shinners out of a job too"? I laughed as I pulled up Mickeen. I had not exchanged a word with Black and Tans for more than a year. Now overnight the whole picture had changed. I replied in kind to the friendly banter of the Tan. "We are apparently, unless we go out to give the Moplahs a hand". At that time there was an armed revolt in India by a sect called the Moplahs who made things very hot and hard for England's khaki warriors in India for quite a while. His jocose demeanour changed to a sneer. "Oh, those bloody little black bastards! I am for Blighty soon anyway. Ah well, not 'alf bad, it aint. Good luck, chum" he called as I moved on.

I reached Brigade H.Q. at Crossmahon, Bandon, late that night and stabled Mickeen there. Dan O'Leary, Asst. Bde. Adjutant, and Mick Crowley were the only brigade officers I met there. Both were as incredulous as I and knew just as little. We were all in a fever of anxiety to learn what were the terms of the agreement.

That night I had great difficulty in getting a billet. I tried six or seven houses unsuccessfully. I seemed to sense a new coldness in my reception at the various places I called, entirely strange to the usual hearty welcome and hospitality which greeted us in most houses hitherto. The people seemed to say by their manner "We are no longer obliged to provide food and shelter for you people. There is no further necessity for it". Rather significant indeed that I had to stay that night at a publichouse in Bandon - Duggan's I believe - whose doors were always so open to down-and-out I.R.A. men that it was a kind of a public shelter for wandering Volunteers. One house outside Bandon occupied by a middle-aged widow with two young daughters invited me to supper and offered me a bed in case I failed elsewhere, but, recognising the trouble I would be giving the generous lady, I thanked her sincerely for her kindness and moved on. Her warm kindliness relieved somewhat the gloom and the foreboding of my unpleasant experiences on that December night.

Next day we learned the full provisions of the Articles of Agreement. We read them, re-read them, studied and analysed them at Brigade H.Q. We were amazed (all but Dan O'Leary) that the five plenipotentiaries had signed such a treaty. Amazed, too, that it had been accepted by the Republican Government in Dublin. Next morning brought enlightenment. The Republican Cabinet was split on the issue of accepting the Treaty - four in favour - Collins, Cosgrave, Griffith and O'Higgins, and three - de Valera (President), Brugha and Stack- against. De Valera's public pronouncement disapproving of the Treaty was like a douche of ice cold water on the bewildered nation, reeling as if in a faint. And then, the realisation was borne home

that Irish Republican unity was shattered and that the leaders of the nation were disastrously divided. It was the beginning of Ireland's latest era of woe and sorrow, of fratricidal hate and bloody strife. England had smashed the great Irish Republican resistance movement by a stroke of the pen - by throwing the apple of discord in the form of the Anglo-Irish Treaty amongst the Irish leaders.

Then began the long drawn-out and stormy debate on the Treaty in Dáil Éireann. The bitterness of this debate showed unmistakeably how deep was the rift in the national front. Every day the arguments became more vitriolic, the insults more numerous and galling. Press, pulpit, property and professions vied with each other in their unbridled advocacy of the treaty. All the anglicising influences in Ireland massed their full strength, threw off the mask of neutrality and quietness which they used as a disguise for so long and boosted loudly and raucously the virtues of the treaty in an all-out attempt to stampede the Irish nation into intimidating its elected representatives into accepting the treaty. The more the articles of agreement of the so-called treaty were debated and analysed, the more convinced and the more unanimous were the I.R.A. in West Cork that the treaty should be rejected. At Christmas, 1921, I knew of no I.R.A. officer or Volunteer in Cork 111 Brigade who favoured acceptance of the treaty.

Seán Hales, Battn. Commandant of 1st Battalion, Cork 111 Brigade, was the T.D. for that region of West Cork. Nicknamed "Buckshot" Hales by all and sundry, he was mistakenly regarded by the British as the Chief of the Flying Column and was listed by them as the "Super Terrorist" of the Sinn Féin gunmen in all West Cork. Seán certainly

was a mighty fighter who had for almost three years defied the power of Tans, Auxies and Tommies to do their worst, had crushed them in several bloody ambushes and seemed to have a charmed life, so amazingly did he elude all the wiles and nets of the enemy.

Now before he set out for Dublin and the fateful Dáil vote on the Treaty, he discussed the situation with quite a gathering of us (brigade and battalion officers) in the convivial atmosphere of Hickey's pub near Bandon P.O. I well remember as we set out for the railway station with him as he took train for Cork and Dublin, how he assured us all as he bade us goodbye with hearty handshakes, that "whoever would vote for the bloody Treaty, he would not, even if he was the only man to vote against it".

What a shock of surprise we got then later when we saw Seán Hales's name prominent in the list of those who voted for the Treaty in that historic division. No wonder that Seán Lehane, our Brigade O/C, was vocal in his bitter criticism and voiced all our feelings when he said: "I never thought "Buckshot" would turn out such a twister, what harm but to vote for Griffith, who was never a Republican, against de Valera himself". "Buckshot's" volte-face swayed none of the I.R.A. in Cork III Brigade, and only two I.R.A. families in his own battalion area supported his attitude and these - O'Donoghues of Ballinadee and Murphys of Skeaf - were close personal friends and relatives of his.

I went home for Christmas, 1921. I drank a lot, caroused a lot and celebrated. (I had got a few pounds out of White Cross funds to help me over Christmas). I argued quite a lot too. The people in general favoured acceptance of the Treaty as an instalment of freedom,

as they wanted peace at all costs. All during the Holy Season the controversy raged throughout Ireland. In every household the merits and defects of the Treaty were debated and sides taken. On my way back to Bandon and Cork 111, I journeyed through Youghal to meet Jack Daly and welcome him back on his release from internment. (Before Christmas all untried political prisoners were set free from the camps and prisons). The very night I met Jack we went to an important meeting of the Youghal Sinn Féin Club where the Treaty was being debated. There, too, we met Paddy O'Reilly, then Battalion Vice O/C of 4th Battalion, Cork 1 Brigade. We three were at one in our disapproval of the Treaty and our attitude (we being three active I.R.A. officers) made a marked impression on the older club members. The S.F. Club, by a strong majority, voted against acceptance of the Treaty.

Jack Daly came along with me to West Cork and spent a few days in the Bandon district meeting old comrades of 'A' Company, U.C.C., now soldiering with the 3rd Cork Brigade. I moved on to Kinsale with Bill O'Connor, there to make and fit out and assemble bombs and grenades. Our improvised factory was the workshop of the Electric Light and Power Station in Kinsale, the private property of Eamon O'Neill, the biggest merchant in Kinsale. Bill Cremin, the electrician in charge, was an I.R.A. officer who had been made Lieut. of engineering to the 5th Battalion (Kinsale area) of Cork 111. We worked only during night hours, usually from 10 p.m. to 4 or 5 a.m. Nobody but Cremin was aware of our presence on the premises, even Eamon O'Neill, the owner, was entirely in the dark. We stayed, or billeted rather, at Dickie Hegarty's, the Town Clerk's house.

Dickie was an old Redmondite, a typical talker in the florid Parliamentary style who was extremely nervous at having us in his house and fearsome lest it leak out. We spent some nights, too, at Dr. O'Sullivan's up on Compass Hill, where we were royally entertained and played Bridge often with Mrs. O'Sullivan. The doctor had a daughter studying medicine at U.C.C. and we, being U.C.C. folk, were doubly welcome socially and as I.R.A. officers. I did not relish this kind of military engineering activity as it was too cramped, confined and secretive and there was little moving about and no training or organisation work in it. We worked with dies and lathes, fashioning the loading mechanism and screwing it into position on the grenade cases (which came from the bomb factory west near Dunmanway). I'll never forget the night on which the vote on the Treaty was to be finally taken in the Dáil. It was January 5th 1922. Next day was Twelfth Day and I went to Mass at the Franciscan Church. I was nervous enough coming out as I half expected to see armed patrols of the notorious Essex Regiment waiting to arrest. I had believed that the Treaty would be rejected and that "immediate and terrible war" would follow immediately and automatically. On emerging, I saw no soldiers; neither did I see any Volunteers. It was only late that evening that I learnt that the Treaty had been ratified by a vote of 64-57. I continued working in the Electrical Power Station workshop, but a few nights later I got a severe start. It was past midnight. Bill O'Connor and I were absorbed in our mechanical fitting operations when I looked up suddenly and there saw a face peering in at me through the glass partition which separated the workshop from the main room of the Power Station and also provided light to it. The face belonged to a British Tommy in khaki. He was gazing intently at us and at our work.

My loaded .45 Colt lay on the bench near me. Bill's weapon, also loaded, was near to his hand. My first impulse was to grab the gun. Then, surprised at my own coolness, I pulled out a packet of cigarettes, put one in my mouth, offered one to Bill, warning him at the same time that we were being observed, and lit up. Pretending that we were unaware of anybody looking at us, we fiddled away within easy reach of our guns. Then after some minutes our khaki watcher turned away. As he did I saw more British Tommies together near main exit door from station. They did not seem to be armed though. I noticed that our man who had been viewing us wore a Sam Browne belt with revolver holster. It was now our turn to watch. The armed Tommy (a Sergeant-Major I thought) joined his two comrades near the door and after some minutes of looking around and low-voiced talking, withdrew, closing the main door behind them. Not knowing what to think or expect, we decided to quit for that night. Putting away our stuff tidily and carefully and pocketing our guns, we emerged into the main station. Just then Bill Cremin came in. We told him of our mysterious watcher and the trio of soldier intruders. Bill, too, was puzzled. He agreed that it was wiser for us to slip away and lie low. Nothing happened next day or later. We were never raided and never heard anything more of our khaki visitors and to this day have never learnt what was the explanation of their presence. Soon after, I moved back to Brigade H.Q. and resumed my normal duties of reorganising and maintaining on an active service footing the engineering services throughout the brigade area. During January some of the barracks and posts occupied by the British forces in West Cork were evacuated. Garrisons of I.R.A. troops moved in in their stead.

One day as I was talking to Tadhg O'Sullivan, Bde. O/C, a Protestant farmer (a strong Republican) from Desert, about five miles from Bandon, pulled up his horse to tell us that a British army Crossley was broken down near his place and that he passed it on the way in. Tadhg ordered me to get a few of the I.R.A. immediately, commandeer a motor and go and investigate. The first I met was John Lordan, Vice O/C Brigade. We picked up two others within minutes, one a driver named Sullivan. We commandeered a Ford, driver and all, at Slattery's garage and raced out to where Casey Wilson, our Republican farmer, had directed. Sure enough, we located the Crossley, a large Red Cross ambulance apparently, in an avenue off the main road. About a dozen soldiers were round the Crossley and another car. We passed on for about a mile, returned and stopped at the avenue entrance. Leaving our car and driver at gate, the four of us approached the group of soldiers round the crocked ambulance. They eyed us nervously even though we displayed no weapons. "What's wrong"? I asked. "Break down, Sir," was the answer. They were in charge of a Sergeant and a Corporal and numbered nine in all. "Any guns"? I asked. "Oh, no, we are not armed". I was not satisfied. Looking into the ambulance, I saw some military great-coats hanging. I jumped into the car and searched. In three of the coats I got Webley revolvers fully loaded. I called Lordan who, with the other two, was keeping guard quietly over the soldiers. I handed two of the Webleys to Lordan, thrusting the other into my overcoat pocket. Jumping down, I pulled out a parabellum (lent to me by Tadhg) and ordered the soldiers to line up in one file with their hands up. They did so, looking very frightened. "Ye cowardly lying bastards"

I cried, "I got those loaded Webleys in your Red Cross ambulance. So that's the use you make of the Red Cross." Searching each soldier, I got two more Webleys, one with the Sergeant. "Any more guns or ammunition with you"? I demanded of the trembling Sergeant. He was unable to answer. "Answer or - if we find another gun around - you'll be shot on the spot". Nothing more of armament was found even though we searched again. Now we tried to seize the Crossley but failed to start it. We gave up hope of taking either of the cars but there was a metal barrel containing 50 gallons of petrol (a very valuable commodity then) in the ambulance. We determined to take that.

I ran out to the gate and sent the driver full speed ahead to the next farmhouse to commandeer a horse and cart. While he was gone I stood on guard on the road - parabellum at the ready. I was afraid that at any moment British military aid would appear in Crossleys or in armoured cars. In that case, I was to hold off the British long enough with long range parabellum fire to enable my three comrades to withdraw safely. Luckily no British appeared. I waited in a sweat of suspense and anxiety for the arrival of the horse and cart. At length, round the next turn, rattled a big farm cart under a heavy horse driven by Casey Wilson himself. He had just got home when my driver called to his house to commandeer the horse-cart. He came himself - under duress moryah - to drive the horse. The heavy petrol barrel was raised with much difficulty on to the cart and driven away by Wilson to his own farmyard, one of our men accompanying him with drawn gun (to duly impress the soldiers and to maintain the facade of duress on Wilson).

Our own car was waiting ready on the road. We retired to the car and sped away to the west, leaving behind a squad of relieved soldiers who had the 'wind up' pretty badly. We made a wide detour, returning to Bandon later by by-roads. We were exultant at our booty - five short Webleys, .45 ammuntion and a 50 gallon drum of petrol. Tadhg Sullivan - our Bde. Q/M - was elated too, so much so that he gave us £5 between us to reward us for the capture of the petrol. The Webleys were handed over to Brigade Q/M stores. We celebrated in convivial style our exploit. The British later complained to Cork Liaison Officer, Tom Barry, about the hold-up and search of their soldiers and the seizure of the petrol. Significantly enough, there was no mention whatever of the five captured Webleys.

During Christmas Week, 1921, I had an amazing experience in Bandon. There was a big carnival in the Presentation Convent and the Cumann na mBan ran the show in aid of the schools. Every night there were all kinds of fun and amusements with concert items and Irish dancing. It was generously patronised by the public, and the I.R.A. were specially welcome. One night, four of us, Mick Crowley, Mick Price, Bill O'Connor and myself, went in to Bandon from Brigade H.Q., then at Bigg's, about 2½ miles north. On our way up to the carnival we called in to a pub at the corner of The Square (near military barracks) for a drink. Who were inside before us but three Tans, English, drinking. On our entry, the Tans spoke and we returned the salute. I called for a drink but before it could be supplied one of the Tans, a small thick-set Cockney, butted in, "Have a drink on me, matey. Do you mind?". I agreed, so did the rest. He asked us individually what would we have. A glass of brandy was

mine. He looked a wee bit startled. Mick Crowley chose likewise. Price and O'Connor had small whiskies. The Tans had beer. The drinks were filled and the Tan proposed the toast of "Peace in Ireland". We all drank heartily. A second Tan then called for the same again, and after a little demur we all drank again - this time to each other's health. I then called for another round, still drinking the glasses of brandy myself. This time I remember the three I.R.A. men had stout and the Tans the usual beer. The company was getting a little loud by now when the third Tan, expressing regret for having to move off, called for a deoch an dorais. We all drank once more, I still taking another glass of brandy. Then the Tans departed after exchanging numerous handshakes and good wishes all round. I think they were a little nervous that the convivial spirit of camaraderie would not last and they wanted to be gone before any quarrel might arise.

The Tans gone, we went up to the carnival. I was rather hilarious, having consumed four glasses of neat brandy within less than an hour. Inside we were surrounded by many Cumann na mBan girls. I was doing a lot of talking and was, a rare thing for me, the life of the whole party. Dolly Crowley, a Cumann officer, came along to bring me to meet the Rev. Mother, a great Irishwoman from Tipperary and an enthusiastic Republican. I went. I was introduced to the saintly old Rev. Mother at the top of a stairs. The great patriot priest, Fr. Matt Ryan of Knockavilla, Co. Tipperary, was her nephew. She had but one eye, the other lost, so I heard, in a science room accident. We spoke of the I.R.A. and the country and of Tipperary. She was delighted to hear that I was half-Tipperary

and had many Tipperary associations. All the time we spoke, I had to hold on to the bannisters of the stairs as I found my balance uncertain and at times I could see two or three faces looking curiously at me. I tried to control my voice and words but alas! I felt I only partly succeeded. It was an immense relief then when two nuns came along seeking the Rev. Mother. I excused myself and retired in the best order I could. I made love to several young ladies that night in the convent. Round 11 p.m. Bill O'Connor and I wended our way back to Bde. H.Q. at Bigg's, escorting home the two young daughters of the house, one of whom, Peggy, a lanky schoolgirl of sixteen, was a devoted admirer of mine. Next morning at breakfast we were all round the big table - Mr. and Mrs. Biggs, Peggy and her sisters and brothers, Tadhg Sullivan, Bill O'Connor and Mick Crowley. I was feeling pretty sore-headed. Then up spoke Peggy across the table to her father. "Daddy, I don't know what was wrong with Mick last night. He walked me in to all the loughs of water coming home the road". The lads laughed and looked at me. I was speechless and confused. "Blame the Tans for it" said Micky Crowley. Poor Peggy! Poor Innocent! My consumption of so much neat brandy was an arrogant exhibition of bravado from a cocky youth of twenty-one who had developed an inordinate amount of conceit.

During January and February of 1922, the British forces, both military and police, evacuated one by one all their barracks and strongholds in West Cork. According as the British garrisons moved out, their places were taken by

detachments of I.R.A. Volunteers. These moved into the R.I.C. barracks as Irish Republican policemen and policed the district around maintaining law and order. I.R.A. units occupied the military barracks in small numbers as maintenance parties. The quartering and billeting of wholetime I.R.A. officers and men on the people came to an end. The battalion and brigade officers and staffs moved into the former military posts and set up their headquarters there, while relays of local Volunteers carried out maintenance and guard duties in the barracks. The invisible and elusive soldiers of the I.R.A. said goodbye to their mysterious, roving existence and gradually adopted the barrack life of a regular professional army. The change was welcome just at first, but very soon it lost its novelty and the average young, active, adventurous I.R.A. man began to get bored and restless from the routine and monotony.

Bandon military barracks became H.Q. of Cork III Brigade. Kinsale was the largest military centre in West Cork and the last to be evacuated. Here, there were three separate military establishments: (1) the military barracks garrisoned by the Essex Regiment and various other units of company strength; (2) the Hutments - a large military encampment three miles south of Kinsale, and (3) historic Charles Fort, a fortress and underground dungeon since the days of the Spaniards, adjoining the hutments and overlooking Kinsale Harbour. The handing over of Kinsale's military establishments to the Provisional Government of Ireland was an imposing ceremony. "Tod" Andrews - present chief of Bord na Mona - was sent down by G.H.Q. to represent the Provisional Government. Brigade Commandant Sean Lehane and Brigade Adjutant Sean McCarthy accompanied "Tod". I, as Assistant Brigade Engineer, was one of the official I.R.A. staff with Lehane and Andrews in the actual take-over.

I well remember the morning we arrived at the top of the very steep barrack hill outside the main barrack gate. We had come on time by arrangement. Nevertheless, we were closely scrutinised and checked for our authority before being admitted. Once inside, we separated into three sections. Each section was accompanied by a like group of British officers. I was joined by a Royal Engineers officer in uniform, a captain and the Clerk of Works, a middle-aged civilian, as we began the job of inspecting the fixtures in each building, noting their condition and serviceability and listing all in a written report. Our first inspection was in the canteen. As I entered, I got the shock of my life. There, facing me, with a pint of beer in his hand, with three or four others with him, was the sergeant whom I had searched and disarmed, relieving him of a short Webley revolver some time before, when we seized guns and petrol from a broken-down Red Cross wagon near Bandon. I am sure I changed colour as I felt myself very jittery with nervous foreboding. The sergeant and his pals surveyed us with critical, unfriendly eyes. I thought I saw a flash of recognition in the sergeant's eyes and my nervousness increased as he parted from his mates and moved towards the door. We finished our inspection of the canteen quarters and went along to the soldier's and N.C.O.s' quarters. The first barrack-room dormitory which we entered was almost full of Tommies polishing, cleaning, shaving, dressing, etc. and our entry was greeted with jeers and boos, cat-calls and loud and foul epithets of abuse. I was amazed at their course display of hostility; more amazed at their indiscipline and rowdy behaviour in the presence of their own military officer, a captain at that. The civilian Clerk of Works was nervous and ill-at-ease too. He whispered to me: "We'll get out of here quickly, I don't like the look of these bastards".

There were but few fixtures in these particular quarters, so I scanned them casually and passed them O.K. serviceable and moved out to the barrack square. Was not the open air a blessed relief from that atmosphere of hate and murder. While I was inside there, I was frightened of being set upon from behind and I felt that my British officer companion and escort was little protection indeed. I was now sure that my sergeant "friend" had recognised me and had told his comrades. To this I put down most of the ferocious hostility of the Tommies' attitude to me.

All through that day of inspection in Kinsale barracks I kept close to my British officer escort. In contrast to the Tommies, the officers of the Essex Regiment whom we encountered in the barracks treated us with frigid politeness or ignored us altogether. Later, our joint inspection tour finished, we adjourned to the office of Colonel Faber, the commanding officer of the Royal Engineers in Munster, in the officers' quarters in Kinsale barracks. We checked over the complete list of fixtures inspected. He, Colonel Faber, signed the handing-over document on behalf of His Majesty's - George V - Government. I, Michael Vincent O'Donoghue, signed on behalf of the Provisional Government of Ireland, that I had inspected the aforesaid list of fixtures and engineering equipment and their condition was as stated. I felt mighty proud of my authority in the whole matter. Colonel Faber, a real polished old-time army engineer, half-French (he came from the Channel Islands) did the honours on the occasion by producing cigarettes, cigars and a decanter. I accepted a cigarette and we drank a substantial glass of Scotch and toasted each other's health, in memory of the historic change over. I shook hands heartily with the Colonel on parting to join my own official party of "Tod" Andrews and Sean Lehane,

who, having completed their own formalities, were waiting for me in the O/C.'s quarters. We then left the barracks and retired to the Central Hotel, owned and run by the Fitzgerald sisters - Kit and Peg and Hannah - whose brother, Jack Fitz., was a prominent I.R.A. officer in West Cork. There we drank and smoked and talked of the day's happenings. The British were to evacuate the barracks that night. Special trains were to bring them, bag and baggage, to Cork city. They had been in a very ugly mood in barracks all day and some had threatened to wreck Kinsale before they left.

Sean Lehane, Brigade O/C., took the threat seriously, mobilised and armed the local battalion and posted them in defensive positions guarding the approaches to the town from the barracks. It was also suggested, but turned down, to send a party into an ambush position on the railway line to attack the departing troops if they did shoot up the town of Kinsale. It was a night of high tension.

One serio-comic incident I remember. A young green I.R.A. section commander reported to Brigadier Lehane for instructions. He carried a Thompson sub-machine gun and a drum of ammunition (these were just then <u>very new</u> to the I.R.A. as they had only come in a few months before from U.S.A.). He looked a very martial figure with belts, haversack, bandolier and what have you. Lehane ordered him to join the I.R.A. party on protection duty at the bottom of Barrack Hill and then resumed his talk with us. Minutes later, he noticed the same I.R.A. man loitering around the door. "Well, what's keeping you?" said he. "Who is coming with me, sir?", says your man. "Oh, Holy God", swears Lehane, "You're a nice republican soldier with a Thompson gun and you're afraid to go by yourself". It was true. The lad was in a sweat, and no wonder! He had never handled a firearm before and had been

sent with the Thompson to the Brigadier. Lehane took the accoutred youngster to be an accomplished gunner and the poor lad was aghast when he was sent along by himself to reinforce a defence position. After all, nothing happened. The entire British garrison slipped away without incident in their special trains in the depths of the night. When day dawned, Kinsale barracks was empty and desolate. That afternoon, the I.R.A. party went in, posted guards and occupied the place. The I.R.A. officers in Kinsale and district moved in too and were quartered there henceforth.

I found barrack life drab, cold and unpleasant compared to the warm society and hospitality which we experienced while having no fixed abode but moving from billet to billet in the homes of the people in West Cork. I did not stay long in Kinsale until I moved west to Ballineen-Dunmanway area on another training-cum-inspection tour. While I was quartered in Kinsale barracks I witnessed and experienced some extraordinary eerie incidents. Bill O'Connor, Mick Crowley, Sean Lehane, Jack Fitz. myself and some others slept in the officers' quarters. Each of us had a room of his own with fireplace, furnished with bed, table, chairs. Occasionally at night, we stayed in playing 'bridge', especially Crowley, O'Connor and I. We retired late. One large room was fitted with three beds for the convenience of I.R.A. officers coming along casually.

This night, I had gone to bed alone in this room. I awoke suddenly about 2 a.m. with a feeling of some great danger threatening me. I sat up, calling "who's there?" Not a sound. Then I felt an oppressive weight crushing down on my two legs. I felt paralysed. Now quite awake, I thrust out my hands to push aside what was crushing me (I thought it was one of the lads coming in late sitting on me for a practical joke) snarling at the same time: "Get off my feet, you bastard!"

There was nobody there. Cold sweat broke out all over me. Then, suddenly, I felt the awful weight removed from my feet. I heard what I thought was a mocking devilish laugh and then the door slammed. I jumped out of bed, rushed to the door and pulled it open. Not a sign of life or movement. Shaking now, I locked the door, went back to sit bolt upright in bed smoking a cigarette to steady my nerves. Hours passed and nothing happened.

In the morning, I questioned the others - Crowley, O'Connor and Lehane - who had slept in their quarters. They ha noticed nothing. A few nights later, shots rang out in the barrack square. The sentry on duty had ordered a shadowy figure approaching him across the square to halt, a round midnight. The figure kept advancing and the sentry fired, once, twice. The guard turned out and made a thorough search without finding anything. Then, in the guardroom, peculiar things happened nightly. The guards became scared at rattling noises. Weird blood-curdling shrieks, curses, yells and other terrifying phenomena kept the lads who stayed and slept in the place in a constant state of nervous tension and fear. The position became so bad that a priest was called in as the I.R.A guard parties were refusing to stay there. A Franciscan Father came. He knelt for a time on the stone floor of the guardroom, then arose, saying that his knees felt scorched from the burning heat of the floor. Moving closer to the walls, he prayed again. He stood up again and the beads of perspiration were large and visible on his forehead. "There is something terribly bad, some awful evil, in those walls", he said. We were all wide-eyed. Moving around the guardroom walls, the Franciscan prayed fiercely in the dead silence. Suddenly he turned around to the officer of the guard: "Tear down those walls", he ordered. The covering on the walls was torn off, a mixture of paint, plaster and paper. The timber wainscotting

was smashed off. There on the exposed surface of the wall were some frightful pictures, some painted, some pasted. They were horrible, diabolical, obscene. The priest ordered them to be destroyed, as they were, by burning them off the wall surface. It was done. The Father then prayed once more and assured us as he left that no more would the peace of the guardroom be troubled, that the evil spirits that molested the guards there had been exorcised. And so it was. From that on, no more was heard of mysterious ghostly prowlings in the military barracks of Kinsale.

While Tod Andrews was in Kinsale, a party of I.R.A. officers to the number of six motored one night to a show in the Opera House, Cork. We created a bit of a sensation as we occupied a box to which Sean Lehane, Brigade O/C., treated and entertained us. The audience gazed in surprise at the warrior officers of the mysterious I.R.A. displaying themselves, probably for the first time, in the prominence of a box at the theatre. It was an unique experience for men who, some months earlier, would have courted certain death by attendance at a theatre.

About this time, too, we received a month's pay from G.H.Q. of the I.R.A. at Beggar's Bush, Dublin. It was the first time that I.R.A. officers in the south had been paid as a regular army. Only those I.R.A. personnel on maintenance duty and quartered in the vacated military barracks were paid. I received a regular Lieutenant's pay, something about £7.13.0. I think. At the time it was riches. I remember I spent it buying a new suit of heavy Irish tweed at Tadhg Lynch's in Kinsale. Some of my comrades treated themselves to new uniforms. I never wore a uniform of any kind and had some inexplicable instinctive dislike to all military uniforms, which persists to this very day.

Tadhg Sullivan, the Brigade Q.M. (our Daddy Christmas

and guardian, more or less) twitted us at becoming so wealthy all of a sudden. "You'll be sending money home", now, Mickeen", says he to me. Alas! seldom I thought of home or mother or father in those days, and the idea of making some monetary return to the straitened O'Donoghue hearth-stone never occurred to me. I was too absorbed in soldiering (without pay) and in serving Ireland to think that my parents would ever be expecting "something out of me" after all that they had sacrificed to give me a University education. One month's pay was all I ever got from I.R.A. G.H.Q.

Before the next pay-day arrived we were proclaimed as mutineers by the Provisional Government of Griffith and Collins. An Army Convention of the I.R.A. was arranged to be held in Dublin. So far, political dissension had not affected the army. Even Sean Hales, T.D., who voted for the Treaty despite his most solemn promises to us at Christmas, continued to function as before in his capacity as commandant of the 1st Battalion, Cork III Brigade. He attended Brigade Council meetings and performed his commandant's duties just as if nothing strange had occurred. The brigade held elections to appoint five representatives to attend the Army Convention - Sean Hales was one of the candidates. He was not successful. The five delegates were, so far as we knew, strongly anti-Treaty, as were the vast majority - 90% or more - of the I.R.A in West Cork. Then some days before the Convention was due to take place in Dublin, Arthur Griffith, the President of the Provisional Government, issued a Proclamation forbidding the holding of the Convention. It was held, despite the Proclamation. Result - an immediate and serious split in the army of the Republic. All those army delegates, the I.R.A. officers who attended the banned Convention in Dublin, were officially denounced as mutineers and irregulars. They set up

an Army Executive Council to control and direct the I.R.A. At a modest estimate, they comprised 80% of the I.R.A. in Ireland.

G.H.Q. of the I.R.A. in Dublin, quartered in Beggar's Bush Barracks, accepted and obeyed the Proclamation. With them sided most of the Dublin Brigade and isolated army units here and there throughout the country. Beggar's Bush G.H.Q. immediately embarked on an intensive recruiting campaign to fill the huge gaps in the army caused by official dismissal and denunciation of all those I.R.A. who supported the new army executive set up by the I.R.A. Convention. The new soldiers who flocked to Beggar's Bush were the beginning of the "Free State Army", though the Provisional Government of the Free State still persisted in calling them the 'I.R.A.' (so as to confuse and deceive the people). Later, when the civil war started, this same 'Free State' army became 'The National Army', as officially christened by the First Government of the Irish Free State.

There had been some changes in the staff of Cork III Brigade early in 1922. When Tom Hales, brother of Sean, and Brigadier in 1920, returned from a convict prison after the ratification of the Treaty by Dáil Éireann, Sean Lehane resigned in his favour. Sean McCarthy, Brigade Adjutant, and Dan O'Leary, Assistant Brigade Adjutant, were offered staff jobs at G.H.Q. Jim Hurley became Brigade Adjutant with Tom Hales as Brigadier. Shortly after Sean Lehane was appointed by the Army Executive to be Divisional O/C. of the combined 1st and 2nd Northern Division of the I.R.A. Sean went off to the north bringing with him Mick Crowley, Brigade Engineer, Jack Fitzgerald and Mossy Donegan of Bantry. I was appointed Brigade Engineer of Cork III Brigade, I.R.A. on Crowley's departure and, straight away, launched another training plan

for the Engineering Special Service in the Brigade.

The 4th Battalion (O/C. Tim O'Donoghue) had its H.Q. at a large mansion (Conner's, Manch House) a few miles west of Ballineen. Thither I hurried to put the engineering services of this battalion through its paces in a series of night manoeuvres.

At this time I was in a bad way with an attack of 'column itch' or scabies, a frightfully irritating skin disease which I first contacted in Cork city in 1920, and which continued to afflict me in cycles at annual intervals or so The usual palliative of sulphur ointment did little good in my case. I scratched and scratched at night until the blood flowed from the tiny little blisters. Here in Conner's Big House there was a bathroom with hot water available. I determined to cure the itch once and for all. Into a bath full of tepid water I poured a bottle of Jeyes' Fluid, got in, immersed myself and rubbed and lathered my skin all over. After a thorough soaking for ten minutes or so, I emerged, dried myself and went to bed. In a little while I was in agony. My skin was on fire. It dried so much that it actually peeled off in spots. Scared that I had roasted mysel in the hot Jeyes' fluid bath, I called Tim Donoghue. I could not rest all that night as my skin burned and shrivelled, so Tim stayed with me and talked on. Next day, it was torture wearing my clothes, as my skin was dry, hot and cracked and felt as if I had ire all over my body, but by nightfall, the pain and awful discomfort had eased off a lot. In two days, I was normal again and my skin was cool and clean. The itch was gone, cured on that occasion by the antiseptic but painfully corrosive action of the Jeyes' fluid. Often afterwards, I fell a victim to the same column itch, but never again did I repeat that desperate cure.

Tim, like most fellows in that district, was given to taking salmon from the nearby Bandon river for Fast-day dinners. He asked me to fix up a little technical device to use for stunning and catching the fish. I readily complied Into a small canister a cylindrical stick of Tonite with a low-tension electric detonator attached. The leads to the detonator were carefully insulated and greased and passed through a small hole in the canister cap. The canister was then securely covered with a thick cloth covering and water-proofed by greasing thoroughly. With low-tension exploder of six 2-V dry batteries and a substantual length of cable, we set off for the river. As we searched for a likely deep pool, who did we see on the opposite bank but 'Sonny Dave' Crowley, 3rd Battalion engineer, and a notorious poacher. He, too, was prospecting. We spoke to him across the river and then arrived at a likely pool. I placed exploder on bank, then attached cable to greased canister. Tim went down the river for 50 yards or so, removed his clothes, all but his shirt, and entered the water. With a long stick, he moved upstream towards the chosen pool, chasing or trying to chase the fish before him. I connected cable to exploder, then dropped the canister out into middle of pool. All the time 'Sonny Dave' watched us curiously from the opposite bank. Then, releasing safety catch on exploder, I pressed home the switch. There was a dull muffled thud from bed of pool and myriads of bubbles rose to the ruffled surface as waves in ever-growing circles radiated to the edges of the pool. We watched intently for a few minutes. Then, a few yards downstream, a salmon came slowly to the surface, belly up. Tim grabbed him and brought him to the bank. It was our only prize. We examined the water for a half-hour or more, but not a sign of any other fish. I was exultant at my success

and secretly satisfied that we had got but one salmon. Tim was in wonder at the quiet effectiveness of this new fishing technique and asked me to explain and teach him the method. I promised.

Next day was Friday and the dinner in the I.R.A. Mess at 4th Battalion H.Q. consisted of broiled salmon. It was delicious, all the more so for being got in such a fashion. I wondered then what would the Department of Engineering at G.H.Q. I.R.A. say had they learned that their precious high explosive and priceless L.T. detonators (because so scarce) were being used by the Brigade Engineer in Cork III Brigade to put salmon on the menu for the officers at 4th Battalion H.Q.

A few days later, the Engineer Officer and N.C.Os. of the Battalion were assembled at Battalion H.Q. for the final training operations. It was an ambitious affair consisting of the simultaneous demolition of three bridges about two miles or more from each other like the vertices of a triangle. A party was detailed to carry out each operation. The charges (very small ones) were actually placed in the top of the parapet walls of the bridges and were to be exploded simultaneously at the signal of a single rifle-shot. I supervised the arrangements at one site, then motored to the other positions to see that all preparations were properly made. At one place there was a big delay as the exploder was found to be faulty and it took me quite a long time to repair the defect. I returned to the first position to find that the engineering commander whom I had put in charge there had got fed-up at my long absence and gone off home in a sulk. I motored after him (he was travelling by horse and cart), caught up with him and ordered him back to his post. He stopped the cart, answered me in an

insolent and insubordinate fashion. His whole manner was mutinous in the extreme. I ordered him back to his post. He went, grousing and grumbling and threatening, under duress. The engineering operations were completed and the men dismissed. Again, on his departure, this engineering officer, Lieut. Horgan from Shanaway, Ballineen, gave a display of mutinous insubordination, his parting offensive remark being that"he was having no more to do with de Valera's bloody army". Horgan's performance took place in the presence and in the hearing of the I.R.A. engineering personnel present. I was amazed and angry. It was the first time I had encountered deliberate and brazen insubordination in the I.R.A. on duty and the fact that an officer was guilty of such conduct aggravated the seriousness of the offence. It was the first indication in West Cork of a rift in the solidarity of the I.R.A.

Horgan was the first to break away from the army of the Republic because of his attitude towards the Treaty. It came as a surprise and a shock to me (and to the Brigade Staff in general) that <u>any I.R.A.</u> man in West Cork would secede from the I.R.A. because he was in fa our of the Free State. Even Sean Hales, T.D., who voted for the Treaty, <u>never seceded</u> from the I.R.A. in which he was battalion commandant, until the civil war started; and, even in his battalion area, only two I.R.A. families (whose sons were in the army) were known to side with Sean Hales - these were the O'Donoghue's of Ballinadee and the Murphy's of Skeaf, Timoleague. I reported Horgan's mutiny to Brigade H.Q. They took a serious view of it and ordered arrest of the Lieutenant. I accompanied Lieut. Jack Hennessy of Ballineen (a Kilmichael veteran who still suffered from a dirty thigh wound received in that bloody scrap) to Horgan's home. His folk attacked and abused me. He went, however, with Hennessy as escort in our custody to the I.R.A. barracks in Ballineen where he was detained for a few days and then released. Later, he assisted the Free State

army in the civil war and was, I believe, very active and envenomed against his former I.R.A. comrades.

Back in Bandon, I was involved in a curious episode in which a Black and Tan figured. The Essex Regiment and Tans had evacuated Bandon and were now quartered in Cork. This Tan, a radio operator named Carley from Claudy, Co. Derry, had a sweetheart in Bandon whom he visited surreptitiously. This night I was in Bandon military barracks when word was brought in that a disguised Tan was down in a house in Water Street. Four or five of us moved off to seize him. Arrived at the house, Jacky O'Neill kicked in the front window as there was a delay in opening the door to our knocking. The door was then opened and we rushed into the kitchen. The people of the house, mostly women, were terrified. The 'Tan' a low-sized fellow of about 25, was cowering in the kitchen, protected by a shield of crying women. He was roughly seized by O'Neill, Con Crowley and two others and hustled out. I was aghast at the savagery of my comrades and pitied the poor shivering wretch as he was dragged away. The young lady must have noticed my quietness, for I remained in the background all through. She threw herarms around me and implored me not to shoot him. She was hysterical with fear and foreboding. I tried to calm her, assuring her that he was only being taken for questioning. The other women gathered around me, pitiable entreaty in their eyes. I felt terribly embarrassed and guilty as I hurried after the lads. The Tan was taken to the barracks Tom Hales, Brigade O/C., convened a kind of drumhead courtmartial at once in the brigade office. About nine senior I.R.A. officers were present and there was no formal prosecution, defence or procedure. The Brigadier presided. The Tan was questioned about his presence in Bandon in disguise (he was in 'civies', well-dressed and muffled up). He said he slipped away from Cork city (where he was now quartered) down to Bandor

to meet his lady-love in her own house secretly; that he infringed his own police regulations and discipline in doing so, that he never thought that the I.R.A. - even if they did detect him - would molest him now and that, while he was stationed in Bandon, he had never done anything hostile to the people or the 'Sinn Feiners' there, that he had never carried arms or gone on patrol against the I.R.A., that his job was that of wireless operator and he had never done any other duty. After much interrogation by several of the I.R.A. Court, including myself, the Presiding Officer, Tom Hales, ordered his removal to the guardroom. Then the courtmartial went into session to decide his fate. For an hour or more, we argued about what to do. Three or four of the more blood-thirsty revengeful officers - Con Crowley and Jacky O'Neill among them - hardened and envenomed by the ferocity of the fight in West Cork, were all for executing the poor Tan and burying him and no more about it. "Why execute him?", I asked. "What crime has he committed and been found guilty of?" "Oh, he's a bloody Tan and deserves only a bullet. What brought him back here again?". "Love", I said, "but that's no reason to kill him". Tom Hales said that if we were to execute him, we would do it officially and that he would, openly, as Brigade O/C. take responsibility for the detention, trial and execution of the Tan <u>if the Court decided on his execution</u>. I asked the Brigadier "on what charge was the fellow being found guilty". He could not define any definite charge. I then asked him what reason would he give to the public press and the people to justify the execution. He was just as vague. I then stated that I saw no reason for the killing of the Tan except brutal revenge on a helpless and perhaps innocuous individual for the misdeeds of the Tans in general; that to execute him on that excuse would be murder

and cowardly murder at that, and that by a deed like that we would bring disgrace on the name and character of the I.R.A. in West Cork. That impressed Hales. Some of the others too, especially Mick O'Neill, Vice O/C. 1st Battalion, recently released from prison, and brother of Jacky, were reasonable and fair-minded and anxious to be just in their attitude. They supported my contention that the Tan should be freed and permitted to depart without molestation. At length, Brigade O/C. Tom Hales accepted our advice and decided on the Tan's release. I, accompanied by Mick O'Neill, went to the guardroom and announced to the Tan that he was free to go. We escorted him from the barrack, down a back-lane by a short cut to a footbridge over the Bandon river, and safely within sight of his sweetheart's house. The fellow's gratitude was intense, sincere and really pathetic - he overwhelmed us both with tearful thanks for our kindness and mercy. Little did he think how near he was to a lonely death and a secret grave! Had he known, he would have collapsed entirely, I am sure, judging by his agitated trembling voice snd fear-stricken appearance. He was lucky to escape death. Lucky, too, not to be waylaid and beaten up on his way back from the barrack after release, for, after parting with the Tan, we returned by the ordinary route to barracks. On our way back, we encountered three I.R.A. men who were laying in wait to beat him up, if not worse. When we accosted them, they admitted their treacherous purpose and, on learning that O'Neill and I had escorted their intended victim safely to his fiancee's house, they became very surly and angry. We insisted on seeing them back in barracks before us and into their own quarters.

I often wondered afterwards what became of the Tan from Claudy, Co. Derry, who was thus courtmartialled in Bandon

military barracks.

Poor Mick O'Neill! A grand chivalrous warrior of the I.R.A. Less than two months later, he called at the house of a British loyalist, named Hornibrook, to get help for a broken-down motor. As he knocked on the door, he was treacherously shot dead without the slighest warning by a hidden hand from inside the house. The I.R.A. in Bandon were alerted. The house was surrounded. Under threat of bombing and burning, the inmates surrendered. Three men, Old Hornibrook, his son and son-in-law, a Captain Woods. The latter, a British Secret Service agent, confessed to firing the fatal shot. Why? God alone knows. None of the three knew O'Neill or he them. Probably Woods got scared at seeing the strange young man in I.R.A. attire knocking, thought he was cornered and fired at him in a panic. The sequel was tragic. Several prominent loyalists - all active members of the anti-Sinn Fein Society in West Cork, and blacklisted as such in I.R.A. Intelligence Records - in Bandon, Clonakilty, Ballineen and Dunmanway, were seized at night by armed men, taken out and killed. Some were hung, most were shot. All were Protestants. This gave the slaughter a sectarian appearance. Religious animosity had nothing whatever to do with it. These people were done to death as a savage, wholesale, murderous reprisal for the murder of Mick O'Neill. They were doomed to die because they were listed as aiders and abettors of the British Secret Service, one of whom, Captain Woods, had confessed to shooting dead treacherously and in cold blood Vice-Commandant Michael O'Neill that day near Crookstown in May 1922. Fifteen or sixteen loyalists in all went to gory graves in brutal reprisal for O'Neill's murder.

In March, a public meeting was held in Bandon in support of the Treaty. It was addressed by Sean Hales, a William

Murphy from Crcokstown, and some other locals. A big crowd listened, but there were many interruptions and hecklings. Prominent among the hecklers were the young I.R.A. men and officers from the Bandon quarters, including myself. Sean Hales was known to all there and the I.R.A. men there were all known to him being his own comrades. His main case for the Treaty was based on the argument, which I first heard here from the lips of Sean Hales, and which I was to hear ad nauseam from every Treaty advocate for years after, that "What was good enough for Michael Collins was good enough for me". Collins's prestige, personality and status were projected into the whole campaign for acceptance of the Treaty and, without the magic of his name, the Treaty would never have been ratified and implemented. The verbal exchanges at this meeting between Sean Hales and the I.R.A. hecklers were in a very friendly strain, jocular and witty rather than critical, and Sean, a very jovial man, revelled in the repartee and seemed to get a great kick out of it.

Murphy, who had little association, if any, with Cork III Brigade, aroused hostility by his speech, an egotistical performance in marked contract to Sean's homely modesty and amiable attitude. Then, suddenly, the wagonette used as a platform by the speakers burst into flames. It had been set afire by a disorderly hooligan element who took advantage of the excitement and the confusion. Murphy and the other Treaty speakers got very indignant, but Sean kept his sang-froid and his joviality, an attitude which all, especially we of the I.R.A. appreciated. Sean stayed on the burning vehicle until the flames reached him, then, throwing up his hands in mute helplessness, he jumped down amid the crowd and mingled with his I.R.A. comrades who continued to watch the dying embers of the wagonette with mixed feelings. Their uppermost

reaction was that "Damn it all, this is hardly good enough for poor old 'Buckshot' (Sean Hales's beloved nickname).

Shortly after, another public meeting was held, this time by those opposed to the Treaty. The principal speaker was Tom Hales, Brigade O/C., and Sean's own elder brother. Tom, a very serious, solemn man, who had survived barbaric torture while in the hands of the Essex Regiment in Bandon Barracks, and who abhorred compromise and expediency, showed in simple yet eloquent logic how hollow was the so-called Treaty and how disastrous would be the consequences of accepting and working it. A man in the crowd asked: How is it that you are so much against the Treaty and your brother Sean voted for it?" I'll never forget Tom's answer: "If the first pair of brothers whom God Almighty put on earth quarrelled to the point of murder, is it any wonder that the two of us should disagree?" All were impressed by Tom's simplicity and burning sincerity and I thought of my R.I.C. brother, at that time somewhere in Tyrone, between whom and me were such tremendous differences of idealogy where Ireland and Irish Freedom was concerned.

Round the end of March, Sean Lehane returned from the north-west of Ulster. The first and second Northern Divisior of the I.R.A. had been amalgamated in the new 1st Northern Division with Sean Lehane as O/C. and Charlie Daly, vice O/C. Charlie, a stalwart Kerryman from Firies, Tralee, had commanded I.R.A. A.S.U. in Tyrone in 1920, and had spent a term in Kilmainham Jail unrecognised after arrest as suspect during Curfew in Dublin. Sean was now in West Cork looking for experienced officers for his Division. Mick Crowley had resigned his post as Divisional Engineer with Lehane and gone back to Bandon. I offered my services to Sean. He accepted. I interviewed Tom Hales, Brigade O/C., and asked

him to release me from Cork III Brigade. He agreed. I sensed that he wished to have Mick Crowley back with him in his old sphere as Brigade Engineer in Cork III, and as I had replaced Crowley in West Cork, I now replaced him in Ulster, while he reverted to my vacated post in his old home area. Dinny Galvin, Bandon, joined Lehane, too, as transport officer, and Jack Fitzgerald, Kilbrittain, and Jim Cotter, Ballinhassig. Galvin, Fitz and I travelled by train to Cork, where I bought a new trench coat from cash advanced by Tadhg Sullivan, Q.M. We travelled unarmed and in full civilian attire. I gave my Sam Browne to Lieut. O'Callaghan, engineering officer to 1st Battalion, and I left my trusty .45 Colt, my companion all through since the fight started, in a drawer in my engineer's office in Kinsale BKS. By night train to Dublin where we arrived at about 4.30 a.m. Reported to Clarence Hotel, a great I.R.A. rendezvous, where we stayed awaiting further instructions. The next night, strolling around Dublin, I met an ex-school comrade from Cappoquin who had joined the R.I.C. in 1917 and served in Limerick against the I.R.A. He recognised me and stopped; so did I. We adjourned to a pub nearby. John Lineen, the R.I.C. man was in civvies, Galvin, Fitz and I. I did not tell my pals that Lineen was an enemy peeler and, as he seemed nervous, we separated in a short time, he to go to Ship St. Barracks (Dublin Castle), where he was quartered.

I asked him to "poke out for me on the quiet" some .303 ammunition. He promised to do so readily and we arranged to meet the following evening. I never saw Lineen since. I believe he was scared as I afterwards heard that his reputation for anti-Irish activity in Limerick city was strong and widely-known. The alacrity with which he fell in with my arrangement for smuggling out .303 stuff to me was proof enough

that he was "windy" and only wanted an excuse to slip away from our dangerous and unwelcome company.

A day or so later, a large Hupmobile car came down from Derry driven by a Derry I.R.A. man, Alfie McCallion. Whelan's Hotel (Leo Whelan, the portrait painter and artist) was the house where Northern and Munster I.R.A. officers foregathered. (It was a great Kerry Republican centre too). There, Sean Lehane, Jack Fitz, Denis Galvin and I met Charlie Daly and Peadar O'Donnell of the 1st Northern staff. We all set out in the Hupmobile via Longford, Carrick-on-Shannon, Sligo and Bundoran, where we stayed overnight in O'Gorman's Hotel, another I.R.A. meeting house. Next day on to Letterkenny where we stayed at McGarry's Hotel. That night in McGarry's, a Divisional staff meeting was held. Those present were: Sean Lehane, O/C., Charlie Daly, Vice O/C., Peadar O'Donnell, Divisional Adjutant, Joe McGuirk, Divisional Q.M., myself (Mick O'Donoghue, Divisional Engineer), Sean Fitzgerald (brigadier), Mossy Donegan (brigadier) Denis Galvin (Divisional transport officer).

Two important decisions were made at this Divisional I.R.A. meeting: (1) To seize at once and garrison the Masonic Hall in Raphoe, and (2) To occupy Glenveagh Castle on the shores of Lough Veagh in the Derryveagh Mountains of north west Donegal and use it as the main base of the reorganised 1st Northern Division. Next day, in the forenoon, an I.R.A. armed party of ten or so took over the Masonic Hall in Raphoe, prepared it for occupation as an I.R.A. stronghold and fortified it with sandbags. A small garrison was installed forthwith. At the same time, the premises next door, a solicitor's office adjoining his private residence, was commandeered to be used as quarters for the divisional officers. The solicitor was also the gentleman who had the

keys of the Masonic Hall. Needless to say, he was both an Orangeman and a Protestant. We were quite gentlemanly in our dealings with this solicitor: he handed over keys, etc. quite readily. Lawyer fashion, he requested receipts and written authorisation, which he duly got. These were documents issued under the authority of the Army Executive Council, Four Courts, and signed by Divisional O/C. and Adjutant. I recollect our displaced lawyer asking us to allow him to store all his silver antiques and other valuable bric-a-brac in two large glass cabinets in his own bedroom which cabinets he duly sealed and then formally presented the keys of same to me. I think, too, he produced an inventory in duplicate to be signed. All went well for a long time. Then, one morning, in late June, after returning from the south, I was horrified to find that the sealed cabinets had been opened and examined in our prolonged absence from Raphoe. The valuable stuff seemed intact, though, and as far as I can recollect, when the cabinets were checked over by myself and the solicitor, only two small items - a pair of signet rings - were missed. Nevertheless, I felt greatly mortified and humiliated in the presence of the old Orange lawyer at this occurrence which reflected so seriously on the conduct and character of our republican soldiers quartered in Raphoe.

I was to find out later that there were a few dangerous characters with criminal tendencies scattered amongst the I.R.A. forces in Donegal, Derry and Tyrone.

For a short while, Raphoe was the official H.Q. of the 1st Northern Division. With the occupation of Glenveigh Castle I set up Engineering H.Q. there, assembled special groups of I.R.A. there from each of the brigade areas and put them through a rapid training course in military engineering. The arrival shortly afterwards from Cork of the famous Denis

McNeilus, the great Volunteer fighter rescued from Cork Prison in 1918, proved a great aid and relief to me on this job. McNeilus (known as 'Sean Murray' throughout Donegal and Ulster) had cycled all the way from Ballingeary, Macroom, with his Lee Enfield strapped to his bike. He was a mechanic and electrician by trade and between turns at marching with Cork flying columns had operated a bomb factory near Macroom. Lehane now appointed him Assistant Divisional Engineer and I put him in charge of training at Glenveigh Castle. Here was gathered whatever engineering and munition material we could lay our hands on in Donegal. With him, I drew up a scheme for the making and assembling of mines, bombs and other appliances of the military engineer. McNeilus was to direct and manage this manufacturing activity while I was thus set free to accompany the Divisional O/C. on his reorganising mission to the various brigades in the Division. At each Brigade meeting convened to overhaul and reorganise the I.R.A. in the area, I established the nucleus of a Special Engineering Service. It was tough going, for, as far as I could see, no Special Service of the kind had existed in the I.R.A. there heretofore.

For about ten days or so, the tours of inspection and reorganisation went on. Four or five brigades had been visited and reformed and new staffs appointed, i.e. The Derry Brigade under Sean Hegarty, the Lagan (East Tirconaill) Brigade under O/C. Jack Fitzgerald, the South Donegal Brigade, O/C. Brian Monahan, the North-West Donegal Brigade under Brigadier Frank O'Donnell, a brother of Peadar. The I.R.A. had but few barracks or strong-points in the area of the 1st Northern Division. All the military barracks and nearly all of the police barracks throughout Donegal evacuated by the British forces were held by the Free State army. Republican garrisons

occupied the R.I.C. barracks in Ballyshannon (our only outpost in the whole of South Donegal), the R.I.C. barracks at Carndonagh in Innishowen, and the R.I.C. post at Castlefin. Faced with such a paucity of bases in his area, and with so little experienced and battle-tired material in the re-grouped I.R.A. forces in Donegal, Lehane decided that audacity was his main weapon. In Co. Derry and Co. Tyrone, the eastern area of the 1st Northern were two British infantry brigades - one based on Derry - supported by strong forces of police and thousands of Special Constabulary. In Co. Donegal, the Free State forces greatly outnumbered the total effective I.R.A. strength. To imbue his scattered ill-equipped I.R.A. squads with the offensive spirit, to raise their morale and give them confidence, Sean Lehane abandoned his text-book methods of military re-organisation, at all events, temporarily, and called a hurried Council-of-War at McGarry's, Letterkenny. It was decided that war operations against the British forces, police and Specials in Derry and Tyrone be begun straight away. A small quantity of Mauser rifles and ammunition had arrived from the south, portion of a cargo of arms from Europe landed safely at Passage East and Ardmore Co. Waterford, by Charley McGuinness, a Donegal republican fighter, adventurer and wanderer who was an adept at gun-running. These were now distributed to specially picked men from our forces.

A two-pronged night attack was planned. Charlie Daly, vice-commandant of Division, was to lead a party of sixteen or so consisting of six Kerrymen and ten Tyrone Volunteers to attack and destroy Molenon House in Co. Derry, south of City occupied
/by a Colonel Moore and reported to be held by about twenty Specials and police. The main attack was to be delivered on a military camp on the Burnfoot-Derry City road, about

five miles from Derry Walls. Here was a strong garrison of police, military and Specials with armoured cars and machine guns. Lehane himself was in command of this attack. He had a mixed force of about thirty riflemen, including Brigadiers Frank O'Donnell, Sean Larkin (South Derry Brigade), Sean Hegarty, Jack Fitzgerald, also Divisional Adjutant Peadar O'Donnell, Denis Galvin, John O'Donovan and myself and all the other Cork I.R.A. men. We all moved as one compact attacking force under Lehane's personal direction. The double-attack was timed for midnight. It was certainly a pretty searching baptism of fire for the northern men, most of whom had never before been under fire or been on active service. A small party of five, led by Divisional Q.M. Joe McGurk, and Assistant Divisional Adjutant Pat Lynch, a dismissed bank official from Ballyjamesduff, who had been fired for his I.R.A. activities in Omagh, were to proceed to Buncrana and, in the early morning after the attacks, to seize all banknotes in the Ulster Bank there. This was done as planned, but had a series of tragic sequels which I intend to describe later on. Here is how the main onset on the enemy camp at Burnfoot, Derry, was carried out:

After sunset, the attacking column moved off from Raphoe (where they had assembled) northwards in all sorts of vehicles including motor cars (some newly commandeered) a lorry and a van. The men were armed with rifles, about a dozen Lee-Enfields, the rest Mausers. The officers carried revolvers and automatics as well and many of the men had hand grenades. There was no machine gun, land mines or explosives. Following byroads, the column proceeded slowly through the countryside. About eight miles from Raphoe, the advance guard encountered a large body of people, mostly young men, collected near a road junction. We surrounded them and searched the men for

arms. They submitted good-humouredly, so I assumed they were friendly disposed. I don't really know why we treated those people like that and I, for one, felt somewhat ashamed, just as if I was acting in Black and Tan fashion when I was searching them.

Nearing Burnfoot Station, we abandoned the transport and advanced cautiously on foot, with wary scouts ahead, until we reached Bridgend Cross. Here we halted and final instructions were given to the column by Lehane. It was now midnight. All civilians encountered from now on were to be detained and herded under armed guard into a large shed near the Cross. I, taking a Derry City Volunteer named McCourt with me as guide, moved down to Burnfoot village to cut the telegraph wires. Arrived at Burnfoot railway station, I entered and severed the communicating cables connecting the station with Derry and dismantled all telegraph and telephone apparatus. A lady, presumably the stationmaster's wife, was an interested and curious spectator, to whom I apologised for the intrusion, which she accepted with unusual calm and dignity. On leaving, a cyclist suddenly loomed up out of the dark moving silently Derrywards. I called on him to halt. He didn't. I dared not fire as it would ruin all our attack plans. As he passed me, I seized him around the body and dragged him from the bike. McCourt at the same time thrust the muzzle of a revolver into the stranger's face and asked him threateningly: "What religion are you?" I was shocked and disgusted. It was my first experience of sectarian animosity in Ulster and to see an armed I.R.A. man acting like a truculent and venomous religious bigot angered me. I turned on McCourt: "None of that" I ordered, "I don't care a rap what his religion is and I'll ask the questions". Turning to the man, who was now visibly frightened, I asked him why he

did not halt. He replied that he thought it was only a bluff by local lads to scare him. He lived near Derry, worked in the shipyards and was returning from visiting his sweetheart. On searching him, a large bundle of banknotes - about £70 in value - was found in his hip pocket. He explained that he was a Trade Union treasurer as well and that the money was the proceeds of a workers' collection. We brought him along and he was incarcerated with some others who had been rounded up in the shed. It was now about 1 a.m. The enemy camp, our objective, was about two miles away. From the Cross we entered a boreen, long and winding, but in general running parallel to and on the east side of the main Derry road. We advanced warily in two files close to the fences along the boreen. A deep trench filled with water blocked the boreen. We were nearing our objective. We scrambled carefully along the fences, skirting the six-foot deep pool and crawled ahead. Then we observed flashing lights on the hills westwards from us and the intervening enemy base. We stopped. The lights showed intermittently. Yes, it was signalling in the night. We tried to decipher the signals, but failed to interpret them. For a few minutes we thought our positions and plans were discovered and that the enemy forces in the camp were being warned. We pushed on grimly determined to attack that camp whether our presence was known or not. Another deep trench which we warily skirted creeping on our bellies. Then, down below, we spotted a flickering red light. It was the light of a fire. We were reassured. The enemy was unaware of our proximity or otherwise he would never be so foolishly negligent as to keep a fire lighted in the open. The fire acted as a beacon, outlining for us the enemy position. Moving up silently, we picked out firing positions along the boreen fence overlooking the main road, on the other side of

which was the enemy encampment. Our position was strong and safe, dominating the enemy from the security of the boreen which flanked the brow of the hilly ridge. A hundred feet below and within 150 yards range lay our objective.

Not finding a satisfactory fire position near the others, Billy O'Sullivan and I crawled further along the boreen past a wide gap of wooden spars. We had just taken up snug positions beyond the gap when Sean Lehane came along. "Get back to hell out of that, ye bloody idiots", he hissed, "I expected more savvy from the two of ye, with ye're experience. We don't want to lose any man on this job, and we don't want any recklessness or stupidity. I'm surprised at you, Billy", he said. Billy had soldiered in France with the British army in the Great War and had joined Tom Barry's column in the 3rd West Cork Brigade as a machine gunner. Smarting under Lehane's telling off, Billy and I crept back the boreen and crouched down against the low fence which consisted of 2½ feet of earth and stone with straggling bushes here and there. Lehane again inspected our whole line of attack. Satisfied, he instructed all to direct their fire towards and a round the flickering camp fire. A single whistle-blast was the signal for attack. The air was quite still. Suddenly, a shrill piercing whistle and the night was rent with a crashing volley from 30 or more rifles. My Mauser kicked like a mule. I fired the whole five bullets in the magazine, then started to reload. Billy O'Sullivan's Lee Enfield near me was spitting staccato fire like a machine gun, for Billy could maintain rapid fire at amazing speed. For some moments, there was no response from the camp. Then a Verey light sailed into the sky over our position, lighting up the whole hillside as it fell, then another and another

and another until we felt as if we were behind the footlights on a stage. Two machine guns opened up, the armoured cars went into action raking our boreen position with concentrated fire from below. Lehane ordered all to keep well down. The din was terrific. Bullets whined overhead and thudded into the fence at our rear; they tore strips and sent splinters flying from the fence behind which we kept hunched down. Sharp crackling explosions overhead and in front - the enemy was using explosive bullets. I began to feel a bit scared. Verey lights, machine guns, armoured cars and rifles made lurid with alternate light and darkness the hellish din of that calm May night. Then a heavier explosion on the hillside behind us. A rifle grenade. Whew! We had no answer to that. Our own grenades hand flung were useless at that distance. We began to feel uncomfortable. Derry City was but a few miles away and heavy reinforcements could be expected soon from that quarter. We gradually eased off in our own fire as we peered anxiously towards Derry Walls trying to pierce the now greying eastern skies. It was time to withdraw Quietly, Lehane ordered his men to cease fire, to collect their equipment and to retire back to Burnfoot. I, with Sean Larkin and two others, remained behind as rearguard. I took charge. The enemy fire was now desultory and we were entirely silent. I moved along our position searching. I picked up some clips of ammunition and a .38 revolver loaded

In their excitement and haste to withdraw, some of our raw I.R.A. Volunteers had neglected to take away with them <u>all</u> their arms and ammunition. A grevious crime for an active service I.R.A. man who had been drilled to regard ammunition as his most precious possession. I pocketed the stuff. The minutes dragged on as the four of us waited, alert, watching the Derry Road, the boreen and the enemy camp.

Then, as I judged that the main body had retired to safety, I ordered a last volley of parting shots at the enemy. Once, twice and, finally, a third time, we fired in unison and with parade-ground precision and deliberation. Then I ordered the other three to crawl back along the boreen fence while I examined again the spot where we four had lain. Where Sean Larkin had been, a few yards from me, I picked up a Parabellum pistol. With one last look back, I crawled rapidly along after the others. The enemy had again opened up with fierce machine gun fire and it was suicide to attempt to lift from off the ground as the bullets were whining inches overhead. Back, back on our bellies until we reached the first water-filled trench and round that clinging to and clutching the fence and our feet groping along for a grip under water at the base of the fence. Over and back along. Now we risked rising and moving along crouched on hands and knees. Then dark figures loomed up. Lehane! He had thought when he heard our sudden volleys that we had been surprised by enemy reinforcements, surrounded and captured. He had stayed the retreat and was about to send scouts back to investigate when we came along. He was relieved. He asked us if we had seen Jack Fitzgerald at all. We hadn't. Jack and four others were missing. They had retreated with the main body, but were now missing, having lost their way evidently. We were worried about them for they did not know that countryside at all. We reached Burnfoot at daybreak and fell in for inspectio Two slightly wounded and five missing.

As we moved away silently towards Newtown Cunningham, we were in exultant mood though almost exhausted physically. Reaching Newtown Cunningham about 6 a.m. we dispersed to billets in the locality. As was our wont, we picked out a large mansion about ¼ mile east of the village and approached

by an avenue. It was owned and occupied by an Orange loyalist named Black, the leader of the Black Preceptory in the area. Here six of us knocked and were admitted without fuss. Mossy Donegan, Jack Fitz, Sean Lehane and myself with Dinny Galvin and John O'Donovan (all 3rd West Cork Brigade men) comprised the six. Black accepted us philosophically and treated us as military officers of an occupying enemy, produced a decanter and refreshments and invited us to drinks. Some of us joined him in a glass and we discussed, rather desultorily, the general political and national situation in Ulster. He was quite curious to know our aims and attitude and upheld his own Orange viewpoint quietly and simply. It was his first meeting with Munster I.R.A. officers and he seemed pleasantly surprised to find that we were not masked diabolical assassins, thirsting for Protestant blood. He was amazed that we showed no sign of religious animosity and hardly mentioned religion at all. To his mind, we were indeed rare 'Papishes'.

Having ordered no one to leave the house while we were in it, we retired to bed in the family bedrooms, taking, of course, the precaution to post a sentry. We were but a few hours abed when we were wakened by a commotion outside the main door. A messenger had arrived breathless, asking for Commandant Sean Lehane. The house was bolted and barred and those inside were slow to open until they had aroused us. The scout told his tale: There had been fighting in Buncrana: our party raiding the Ulster Bank had been fired on by Free State troops as they made their getaway. Some of them had been shot and the whole I.R.A. squad, wounded and all, reached Newtown Cunningham where they were now resting.

We dressed hurriedly and came down to a substantial breakfast served by two daughters of the house with politeness and efficiency, but icily distant and formal in their manner.

We left abruptly without taking leave of our host, Black, and rushed to the village. Getting a complete report from Joe McGurk, Divisional Q.M., who was in charge of the I.R.A. party detailed to seize some money from the Buncrana bank, Lehane ordered immediate mobilisation of the I.R.A. available.

Charlie Daly with his I.R.A. party had returned shortly before from a fruitless attack on Molenon House. Here they found the place barricaded, fortified and steel-shuttered before them. They failed to gain admittance to the place. After a few of them had ruined their rifle-butts as battering rams on the strong main door and window, they retreated without firing a shot, they did not even know if the place was occupied or not. If it was, then the defenders inside never made a move, but kept as silent as the grave. It was an ignominious failure for Charlie to report and he felt it all the more keenly since we in Lehane's party had fought an all-out night battle against British camp garrison and Specials below Bridgend near Derry City.

The third action, the bank seizure in Bundrana, had resulted in a gun-fight with Free State soldiers in which the I.R.A. suffered two casualties, one a slight leg wound, the other serious. A Tipperary man named Doheny, an active and experienced Volunteer, working for some years in Derry and colloquially known as "Tipp", had been shot through the lung. He was still in the motor van at Newtown Cunningham awaiting medical aid when I saw him. He was in good spirits but very pale and weak and bordering on collapse. Strangely enough, his wound, high in the left breast, bled but little. The wound was dressed as he lay in the van and it was decided to send him to Lifford hospital; but, before he had been taken away, a new and appalling catastrophe occurred with the suddenness of a bolt from the blue.

The loud humming noise of Crossley engines are heard away to the south. Louder and louder grows the sound of a fast-approaching motor convoy. We, the I.R.A. assembled on the roadway of the little village of Newtown Cunningham, are momentarily confused. We know not who comes, friend or enemy. Memories of last night's prolonged gun-battle with the British forces makes us suspect pursuit and counter-attack by the Crown forces. I, with eight or ten others, clamber over the eastern wall hurriedly. Instinctively, I take cover behind the large stump of a felled tree, load the Mauser and shove a bullet 'up the spout' to a wait eventualities. The others of the party take cover behind walls, buildings and the western road fence. Some are still in the village street as three Crossley tenders loaded with Free State soldiers packed closely and sitting back-to-back in two rows with rifles at the ready on each tender. Some of our officers are still in the publichouse opposite and Comdt. Sean Lehane is actually standing in the open doorway facing the street. One Crossley cruises past; no sound except the purring of the engine. The second lorry follows with its load of silent grim-faced soldiers eyeing keenly the republican soldiers on each side of the street as they pass through with their rifles covering the I.R.A. men. As the third lorry comes abreast of the public house door, a Free State officer in the Crossley aims a revolver. A single shot rings out and the fanlight over Lehane's head is smashed with a bullet. For two seconds there is dead silence, then consternation. The second lorry almost halts and two or three Free State soldiers jump off and roll to cover on the far side of the road under our parked motor van. Pandemonium breaks out. Desultory fire is opened on the Crossleys. No one gives orders. It is a case of each man acting for himself. I fire at the tyres of the Crossleys as

they gather speed. I am reluctant at first to fire directly at the green-coated targets crowding the receding lorries. But then we on the eastern side find ourselves enfiladed from the south and all my scruples vanish. The five motor cars constituting the tail of the convoy halt at entrance to village and their Free State soldier occupants, having rushed over the eastern fence, occupy positions on our left flank about 200 yards away and direct heavy fire on us. We turn to face this threat and force the Free Staters to retreat first to a two-storey house where they make a stand for a while. Here the republicans have to hold their fire, for the house is occupied by a woman and children who can be heard screaming. As the I.R.A. close in to surround the house, the Free Staters evacuate and retreat east to the railway line. From here they are dislodged and dispersed in disorder across country. In the meantime, back in the village, the three Crossleys, having at first slowed up as if to halt, sped on and round the corner to the east about 200 yards north of the village. From here they fired a few volleys on the I.R.A. and then continued their journey towards Derry leaving behind the couple of their comrades who had jumped off to fight. These tried to use their rifles from their cramped position under the I.R.A. van. but, seeing themselves abandoned and deeming discretion the better part of valour, they came out with their hands up on being called upon to surrender. One of them was slightly wounded with a ricochet bullet from the wheel when he was fired on as he lay under the van.

On being interrogated, these Free State soldiers admitted that they had instructions to halt the lorries and jump off, taking up battle stations if they should encounter the I.R.A. They felt bitter at being left in the lurch by their comrades, About 3 p.m. or so, the fighting was all over and the village

was all quiet again. Lehane assembled the I.R.A. forces and collected all the captured transport, arms, ammunition and equip ment. Leaving myself, John Donovan and two others behind as a rearguard, the whole body moved off slowly in column of route towards Raphoe. We reached this without incident by nightfall.

A telegram was waiting for Sean Lehane as he entered Divisional H.Q. in Raphoe. It was from Liam Lynch, I.R.A. Chief of Staff. It had been delivered at McGarry's Hotel, Letterkenny, the previous evening. It was an official notification from the Chief of Staff that a truce had been signed between Liam Lynch, I.R.A. chief, and General Eoin O'Duffy, Free State G.O.C. and that this truce ordered a cessation of all hostilities between the two military forces since 6 p.m. on the previous evening. Hence the tragedy at Newtown Cunningham had occurred on the day after the truce came into effect.

We were shocked. But we, the I.R.A., had been entirely ignorant of this truce. Not so, the Free State forces. A similar telegram had been delivered to the Free State O/C. in Letterkenny (and to the C.O.C., General Joe Sweeney, in Drumboe Castle) on the evening of the truce. Yet this Free State expedition had set out the morning after the truce to round up the I.R.A. The Free State officers on the Crossleys and in the motors at Newtown Cunningham knew of the truce, the I.R.A. officers there did not. These circumstances added greatly to the bloody tragedy, inasmuch as it was avoidable. The casualties on the Free State side were very serious, four killed and seven or eight wounded, of whom two died of their wounds later. A coroner's inquest held on the dead soldiers brought in a verdict of "wilful murder" against the 'Irregulars' in Donegal. This shows the attitude of hate and

bias fostered at the time by the Press in general against the Irish Republican Army who accepted the authority of the I.R.A. Executive H.Q. in the Four Courts, Dublin.

Before leaving Newtown Cunningham village, I handed back a loaded revolver which I had picked up on the street to the I.R.A. officer who claimed it and who said that it had fallen from his holster on the San Browne belt in the confusion of the fight. I had already restored to Brigadier Sean Larkin the Parabellum which I had retrieved from the boreen dyke on our retreat from the assault on the British Camp near Burnfoot. This began a close friendship between myself and Sean Larkin which lasted to the death. Sean faced a Free State firing squad the following March in Drumboe Castle, Stranorlar, and, with his three Kerry comrades - Charlie Daly, Christy O'Sullivan and Timmy Enright - were callously shot, without charge or trial, after having been held prisoners of war in Drumboe for <u>five months</u>. They are immortalised in Irish history as the 'Martyrs of Drumboe'.

After the Newtown Cunningham tragedy, Sean Lehane, Charlie Daly, Jack Fitzgerald, myself and one or two others (among them Peadar O'Donnell) motored to Dublin, Lehane to report on all that had happened, to the Chief of Staff, Liam Lynch, in the Four Courts. I wanted to tackle the Department of Engineering, of which Rory O'Connor was the Director, in connection with the reorganisation which I had begun in the 1st Northern Division. I gave a full and candid report of our difficulties and our needs. We had an adequate supply of explosives, war flour, Irish cheddar, etc. We had, too, a sufficiency of electrical equipment such as cables, batteries and so on. But <u>one most important technical appliance we had not</u>, and, owing to its highly dangerous and delicate make-up, we could not improvise substitute gadgets, and that was

low tension electric detonators. The mines which Denis McNeilus was making in Glenveigh Castle and the electrical exploders which were being assembled there were all dependent on L.T.E. Dets. for their use as military weapons. Unfortunately, while Engineering H.Q. in the Four Courts had a variety of war material in fair supply, they had none of these detonators at all, as I was assured. I felt frustrated. I went back to the Clarence Hotel full of the disappointment of one whose mission has been in vain. We stayed at the Clarence usually, especially the southern I.R.A. officers, in our flittings through and to Dublin. Dick Barrett, the Q.M.G. in the Four Courts, provided the 'chit' which authorised our stay in the hotel.

Back in the Clarence, who did I bump into but Tom Hales, O/C. Cork III Brigade. He was in Dublin, having meetings with Dan Breen, Sean Gaynor and one or two other very prominent I.R.A. officers trying to arrive at a basis of agreement to re-unify the sundered republican military forces - the I.R.A. under the Four Courts Executive and the Free State forces under the Provisional Government, who still called themselves the 'Official I.R.A.', wore the uniform of the Free State army, and took their orders from Beggars Bush, official G.H.Q. Hales and Breen were looked upon with a certain amount of suspicion and disfavour by the generality of the Executive I.R.A. officers, and it was only their heroic records in the Tan struggle that kept their critics from being too outspoken. Their efforts to close the breach met with temporary success and, as I spoke with Tom that evening, his quiet tone was one of great relief, as he was quite satisfied that his mediations had averted a civil war in Ireland. So, too, were we. We rejoined at the prospect of an early restoration of all the I.R.A. forces to a unified command. This would mean for us I.R.A. officers (now dubbed

'Irregulars') recognition as regular army officers with monthly pay, uniform, equipment, emoluments and perquisites. I must confess I welcomed such a consummation, as I had by now made up my mind to continue the military career which I had adopted. At any rate, the thought of reverting to civil life or of practising my profession, never flashed across my mind. But my dreams of military glory were to be rudely dispelled within a few short weeks.

At that time, and all during the period 1917-1923, we, I.R.A. officers, wore our own civilian clothes, got no pay or emoluments at all, travelled by any and every means, slept and ate and drank in the houses of people wherever we happened to be, most of the people being always glad and often proud to provide for our sustenance in this way, without any payment or remuneration whatsoever. About the only things we paid for in cash (whenwe had such a commodity) were cigarettes and drink: The Cumann na mBan, though, usually helped us to 'fags' and tobacco. Tom Hales's peace formula, on the basis of which he secured a temporary rapprochement between the Free State and republican sections of the I.R.A. was: "We (the I.R.A.) do <u>not</u> accept the Treaty (Articles of Agreement), but we <u>do accept the position</u> brought about by the Treaty". At the time, this was too subtle for young aggressive minds like ours; we understood its implications but vaguely and the people in general did not understand it at all; but it brought agreement, even only temporary.

The unification of the I.R.A. so fondly desired by us young I.R.A. men was delayed from day to day and then from week to week. The delay was due to the failure to reach agreement among the upper brasshats on either side about the distribution of the re-arranged commands and posts in the 'unified' republican army. In the upshot, army reunification

never came, being sabotaged first by the jealousies of ambitious military chiefs and then denounced and smashed by scared political leaders.

As we were staying for a few days in Dublin and, as we had occasion to report to the Four Courts H.Q. frequently, I got a permanent pass from the Captain of the Guard - Noel Lemass. This was a small stiff-paper ticket about $4\frac{1}{2}$" x $2\frac{1}{2}$" with full name, rank, I.R.A. unit of holder typed thereon, the authority to enter Four Courts <u>at all times</u> was signed by the O/C. of the Guard and the Red Seal of the Four Courts of Justice in Ireland was impressed thereon confirming its authenticity. This pass enabled me to avoid an elaborate check and identification by an I.R.A. officer of G.H.Q. resident in the Four Courts every time I sought admittance at the eastern side gate, the only entrance permitted. Directly inside this entrance in the courtyard was the armoured car "The Mutineer", captured from the British forces in Tipperary town earlier in the year. The machine guns of this significantly though satirically-named car covered all entry from the east gate. Our men from the Northern Divisions passing through Dublin or quartered temporarily there were required to deposit their rifles and ammunition (should they be carrying such) in the guardroom at the Four Courts.

Inside in Liam Lynch's Department (Chief of Staff) were two southern officers from Cork II and Cork III respectively. Dan O'Leary, late Assistant Adjutant, Cork III, later attached to Adjutant General's staff in Beggars Bush, but who had left Free State G.H.Q. and offered his services to the I.R.A. Executive when they seized the Four Courts; also Maurice (Moss) Twomey from Mitchelstown, Liam's comrade and staff officer, who accompanied him from the 1st Southern Division. Joe McKelvey of Belfast, Assistant Chief of Staff, was another

young I.R.A. chief with whom I had many contacts, as well as Dick Barrett, Q.M.G., I.R.A. Executive, and late Q.M. Cork III Brigade. With these and Rory O'Connor, Director of Engineering, we discussed and examined I.R.A. activities and military engineering tactics with special reference to the peculiar circumstances of the reorganised and regrouped 1st Northern Division whose area included Donegal, Derry City and County Tyrone and North Fermanagh.

Failing to get those precious L.T.E. Dets. at G.H.Q. in Dublin, I now had a brain wave. I set off in the early morning mail train to Cork and arrived in Bandon that evening. I confronted Tadhg Sullivan, Brigade Q.M. Cork III, my old benevolent 'guardian' and paternal finance minister to us youngsters in West Cork, and wheedled out of him fifty Low Tension Elect. Dets. from his stores of armament material. I told him unblushingly that I had Tom Hales's recommendation for them as well as a strong request from Dick Barrett. I was surprised and delighted that Tadhg gave me the stuff, especially as in my first note to him from the north I had enclosed a large assortment of cancelled cheques which I had discovered in the commandeered house of an Orange government official. This I did by way of a joke, repaying Tadhg, moryah, for all his financial 'advances' to me. But 'tough' and all as he was about his stores, supplies and money, he enjoyed the joke.

I travelled back to Dublin by mail train from Cork next evening carrying my precious but highly dangerous parcel of detonators with me. I was very pleased with myself and with the success of my mission. I could now return to the 1st Northern assured that its engineering department was completely equipped for the effective use of the electrically-operated land mines which we were assembling.

About this time, I looked up Jack Daly, B.E., Youghal, my old pal of A/Company, 2nd Battalion, Cork City, who had now returned to his civilian job as junior electrical engineer to the Dublin Corporation. Jack worked in Pigeon House Power Station and lodged in Pearse St. and still continued active as an engineer officer in the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. He had got some back pay from the Corporation and offered me £10, which I gratefully accepted. It was to me, a wandering I.R.A. man, a huge sum of money at the time. With Daly, I went to see Jerome Twohill, ex-radio officer World War I, and also late of A/Company, U.C.C., where he was 'doing' medicine. Jerome had transferred to Dublin U.C.D. to finish his medical studies, but had dropped out of the I.R.A. after the Treaty. Jack Daly, too, handed over to me 60 or 70 rounds of .303 rifle ammunition which he was getting surreptitiously from a Free State soldier, an I.R.A. comrade of his from Youghal, who was stationed in Beggars Bush. I carried the stuff along with the detonators up to the north.

Next evening, walking with Jack Daly on O'Connell Bridge, we bumped into a mutual friend - our late A/Company O/C., Captain Garry Scanlan - now in a commandant's uniform of the Free State army. We adjourned to the Wicklow Hotel for a drink and a chat. Garry was on Major-General Prout's staff, he told us. He invited me to come along, as Prout was looking for an engineering officer and would welcome me to his staff with open arms and would have me appointed staff commandant (so Garry said). I declined on principle. Then we had an animated but amicable argument about the Treaty and the Free State. We shook hands with Scanlan on parting, each going his separate way. I have never since met with Garry, though I heard he retired from Free State army long after the civil war.

Jack Daly told me that Paddy O'Reilly, our mutual friend and I.R.A. veteran in Youghal, now battalion vice-commandant, 4th East Cork Battalion, Cork I, was very restless and dissatisfied at home. He was not "pulling" with his fellow battalion officers and was anxious to get to an active area where the war against the British was not "in abeyance". I told Daly that I would 'sound' Sean Lehane about O'Reilly's proffered services, but I feared that Sean would be very slow to 'grab' any more experienced I.R.A. officers from Cork I. I knew that Lehane and Sean Hegarty, Brigade O/C. Cork I, had it 'hot and heavy' already and relations between them were pretty strained, as Hegarty accused Lehane of 'luring away' some of his most active and efficient officers from Cork City for service in West Cork with the Third Cork Brigade. This was a reference to the departure of Connie Lucey, 'Nudge' Callinan, Bill O'Connor and myself from Sean Hegarty's command in Cork City to active service in the 3rd West Cork Brigade. Mick Crowley, the Kilbrittain man who actually did bring us down to Sean Lehane's Cork III Brigade, was of course attached to U.C.C. A/Company while an engineering student at college and a staff captain in his home brigade area as well as being deputy column commander to Tom Barry.

We returned to Ulster via Birr (where we rested in Crinkle Barracks, then under Sean Moylan's command), Portumna, Athenry, Tuam, Tobbercurry and Sligo, Finner Camp, Donegal and arrived in Raphoe two days later. The work of re-organisation was now intensified. More arms, armament and equipment arrived from the south and were allocated to various strong-points in the Lagan country. Many refugees from Derry and Belfast continued to arrive in Donegal; some driven out by the Belfast pogrom, others, young I.R.A. men on the run, or otherwise uprooted. The Derry Brigade, I.R.A., under Brigadier

Sean Hegarty from the Waterside, garrisoned a number of strategic points along Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle, including Inch Island in Lough Swilly, Fahan, Muff, Skeog House and Manorcunningham. Its ablest officers were: Alfie McCallion and Owen McDermott and Seamus Ward. The Belfast boycott was now rigorously enforced. Trains were held up and searched daily and all Belfast goods were confiscated, removed and stored. This activity was under the control of Paddy Shields, veteran Derry City Sinn Feiner, directed by the Divisional Q.M. Joe McGurk. Perishable goods, foodstuffs and the like were distributed to support the refugees, the victims of Orange fury in Belfast and Derry who fled to the comparative safety of Donegal. There was, alas! much abuse in the handling of the boycott goods. Individual republicans, whose moral sense had become blunted, 'acquired' various items of these goods surreptitiously and then traded them with unscrupulous shopkeepers and others. These goods, too, were stored in I.R.A. quarters occupied by republican garrisons and used for the feeding and support of the I.R.A. therein. This was something of a new departure. It led inevitably to a lowering of standards and a loosening of discipline all around which became very evident later on.

After the I.R.A. seizure of the Masonic Hall in Raphoe and its occupation by the Divisional staff, some of us southern officers found it necessary to replenish our wardrobes (most of us had no more than the clothes we were wearing few had any change of shirts and underclothing and fewer still a spare coat or pants). Moffatt's was the principal drapery store in Raphoe and here we 'commandeered' the clothing items we needed, presenting authorisations signed by the Divisional Quartermaster, and furnishing receipts over our own signatures I got a shirt, socks, whipcord riding breeches and velour hat;

the last two items were to see me through all the varied vicissitudes of an adventurous life for the next two years. The total value of the goods supplied by Moffatt to the I.R.A. Divisional officers and staff in Raphoe came to about £140 or so. After the Buncrana bank seizure and the Newtown-battle, cunnihgham/ Moffatt, a loyal Protestant Orangeman, was paid in full. I accompanied Lehane and Joe McGurk to Moffat's and I can still picture the incredulous look of gratified relief on old Moffatt's face as the banknotes were counted out and handed to him. What a pity then that, a few weeks later, this inoffensive business man should have his whole premises maliciously burned to the ground.

Activities were now greatly intensified in the areas of the Foyle, Mourne and Derg Valley. Hardly a day passed without warlike encounters between the British military, police and Orange Specials on one side and the I.R.A. on the other. By night and day enemy forces were attacked without respite. Roads were trenched and blocked to prevent free movement of enemy transport, especially armoured cars. Telegraph poles were sawn down and wires cut, and South Derry, West Tyrone and North Fermanagh were turned into a war zone. Our mobile republican active service units, using rifle, small arms and bombs, attacked enemy barracks and other posts at night, then disappeared. We had no machine guns. By day, we succeeded in ambushing on a few occasions travelling parties of the enemy. Great was our exultation to find that our heavy Mauser bullets for the light Mauser rifle (about 7 lbs.) were armour-piercing. Near Castlederg, a police armoured car leading a Crossley patrol was wrecked when its driver was shot dead (through the armour) by an I.R.A. ambushing party. The police were routed and scattered, suffering several casualties. We captured some rifles, revolvers and ammunition. After this, the police rarely travelled abroad in this area without being accompanied by strong English military forces.

Alas! the I.R.A. suffered casualties too. But they were mainly in reprisals carried out by the enemy after night attacks. The Specials - both A and B - were notoriously savage in their treatment of local men suspected of aiding the I.R.A. After every I.R.A. action, the Specials came long after the I.R.A. had gone and wreaked vengeance on known or suspected republicans in the neighbourhood. These latter were arrested, beaten up, maimed, tortured and taken away to prison. Frequently, they were brutally murdered on the way and their bodies thrown by the roadside. The Specials took no prisoners from our republican flying columns (if an armed I.R.A. man was taken by the Specials he was savagely beaten up and then maimed before being killed off). Hence very few armed republican soldiers fell alive into enemy hands.

After a particularly revolting deed of slaughter by the Specials one night in the Co. Derry village of Desertmartin where they mutilated before butchering three young men, their helpless victims, Sean Larkin came to me in Raphoe seething with horrified indignation. The foul deed was done in his brigade area and he knew some of the unfortunate murdered men. He asked me to go with him and a party of Derry I.R.A. to the Desertmartin district to harry the enemy forces there and to pay back the Specials for their atrocity. I appreciated his high regard for my guerilla value (I was the only southerner attached to the 1st Northern Division whom he asked). I would go with him eagerly, but I must first get official sanction from my commanding officer, Divisional O/C. Sean Lehane. To my surprise, Lehane forbade me to go. He reprimanded me somewhat for being on the reckless side, telling me that a Divisional engineer should have more sense of responsibility and that my whole concern should be with the duties of my own engineering department. He did not want to

lose any I.R.A. comrade who had come with him from the south, foolishly or needlessly or in any rash enterprise and, anyhow, let the northern lads act on their own initiative and strength without any southern stiffening in this case, as it entirely concerned them. He was anxious to see if the local I.R.A. could carry out effectively a military undertaking entirely off their own bat. I told Larkin that the Divisional O/C. had ordered me not to go. He was disappointed and so was I. However, the small I.R.A. punitive expedition set off, but returned after two days without having done a thing to punish the Specials for their misdeeds. While they were gone, Raphoe experienced a night of terror which brought disgrace and dishonour to the republican forces there. It happened like this:

In Raphoe at the time, Free State forces were in occupation of the evacuated R.I.C. barracks. The republicans were quartered in the Masonic Hall and the adjoining lawyer's residence. They also occupied in strength Oakfield Park, about one mile north of the village on the Derry Road, from which an Orange family of 'gentry' named Stoney had been dispossessed. Pat McGlinchey's pub in Raphoe was a favourite rendezvous of I.R.A. men. Pat had been in U.S.A. where he had met and married a small dark woman with a misshapen hump and a vile tongue. They had no family and at this time were in late middle life. Pat was a decent sort, a gentleman all through and a most enthusiastic republican extremist. The wife was a demon, especially when in her cups, which was often enough, and she had an insensate hatred of England and of her Orange and Protestant neighbours. She kept a revolver herself which she boasted she brought with her from America. She kept it to hand in the publichouse and was quite equal to using it. We (that is the southern I.R.A. men) dropped in now and then

for a bottle of stout, but gradually got disgusted with the old harridan's cursings and rantings. We pitied Pat and wondered how he came to be tied to such a type. I believed he was in real dread of her. However, on this night, some of the wilder and irresponsible 'refugee' republicans from Derry and Tyrone were drinking at McGlinchey's. Apparently Kate McGlinchey had drunk herself into a dangerous and murderous mood and incited the half-drunken desperadoes in her bar-parlour to have a wallop at the Orange 'bastards'. At any rate, in the dark of midnight, a small group of men led by a woman and wearing masks and brandishing revolvers, attacked Moffatt's premises, burst in and drove out the occupants; then, spilling paraffin oil (got from the pub) on the goods and counters, they set the place ablaze. In a short time it was a raging inferno into which the half-demented woman and her crazy drunken gang fired their revolvers. Then they disappeared. Both the Free State troops in their barracks and the republican police in the Masonic Hall turned out to maintain order and deal with the conflagration. Fire brigades came from Letterkenny and Strabane, but before the fire was finally extinguished Moffatt's drapery store and the business premises in either side of it in the square of Raphoe were tottering ruins.

I had been in Glenveigh that day and returned by Letterkenny where, in McCarrie's Hotel, I met Lehane, Charlie Daly and a few others. It was late when we left Letterkenny and, nearing Raphoe about 2 a.m., we saw the flames shooting into the air. On the outskirts we were stopped by patrolling Free Staters who told us what had happened. In the square we met our own I.R.A. patrols. The fire brigade from Strabane arrived and went to work. Rumours were everywhere that people were dead in the burning houses. Nothing could

be done about it at this stage as the raging flames kept all at a distance. Then a report came in that the Derry brigade were on the way, escorted by a large force of Specials and British military. All available I.R.A. were mobilised and moved into assault positions dominating the road from Strabane entering Raphoe, the road by which the enemy force was reported advancing. It was a scare story, but we believed it at the time. For hours after dawn next day, we stayed in those battle positions, but the Crown forces never came. Then, around 7 a.m., we were dismissed.

Back in Raphoe, the morning brought another tragedy. Ex-Head Constable Ballantyne, a quiet inoffensive man, recently retired from the R.I.C. and returned to live in Raphoe, was found in his bed riddled with bullets. During the chaotic confusion which reigned before or at the beginning of the burning, masked men burst into his house, forced their way to his room and brutally murdered him as he tried to get out of his bed. We were shocked and disgusted at such barbaric deeds done by miscreants in the dead of night. We knew only too well that the I.R.A. forces in Raphoe would be blamed for the arson and murder.

We learned the true facts about the Moffatt burning: Every circumstance indicated that the same gang murdered Ballantyne. The I.R.A. authorities in Raphoe denounced both crimes, but we realised with a shock that there were dangerous criminally-minded elements operating under the cloak of the I.R.A. and that some of this rabble had flowed in with the flood of refugees and were scattered here and there with the republican forces and were actually serving in them. It was a difficult matter to screen out this riff-raff, but we checked up as accurately as possible on

the membership, service and background of all our northern armed personnel in the republican garrisons, and any soldier among them whose career was questionable or unsatisfactorily verified was disarmed and dismissed. Many of these promptly joined the Free State army.

Sean Lehane had appointed Jack Staunton, a Mayo man, to organise and command the republican police in the divisional area. Jack was a tall strapping R.I.C. man of about 26 years who, a few months earlier, had been barrack orderly in the R.I.C. barracks at Pomeroy, Co. Tyrone. Charlie Daly with ten other republican soldiers at his heels knocked on the barrack door; Staunton inside removed the door chain and opened the door. Charlie and his men rushed in and, before the garrison of nine R.I.C. men could get to their guns, they were covered with revolvers and surrendered. The I.R.A. raiders bagged a large quantity of rifles, carbines, revolvers, grenades and ammunition. Having stripped the barracks of everything of military value, they bound the R.I.C. prisoners inside, locked up the barracks and cleared off. Constable Staunton, realising that he was deeply compromised by his performance, threw off his R.I.C. jacket and came away with Daly and the I.R.A. Eoin O'Duffy was now Chief of the Civic Guards force being formed, and he promised Daly that he would take Staunton into the Civic Guards. Duffy, however, broke his promise, and Daly brought Staunton along to I.R.A. H.Q. in Raphoe. Now he was given the tough assignment of building up an I.R. police force and putting them to work to deal with the wave of lawlessness which was sweeping through East Donegal especially.

On a Tuesday evening late in May, Lehane, Daly and Joe McGurk called me in to Divisional H.Q. I was detailed to accompany Joe McGurk (Div. Q.M.) on a secret and dangerous mission to secure and bring back a considerable quantity of arms and ammunition. An R.I.C. sergeant at Gormanston Camp, near Dublin, was about to be demobilised and planned to

return to his home town of Moville. He had (it seemed) always been friendly and co-operative with the I.R.A. and had now gathered a big cache of military stuff in a private dump of his own in Gormanston and was anxious to give it to the I.R.A. before being shifted. The Intelligence contact with Sergeant Curran was an Omagh man named Mullen. This contact could not leave Omagh, but he had a brother, a chemist in Ballymote, (an I.R.A. man), who could and would do proxy for him. Would I go with McGurk on the job? Sure I would. McGurk and I set off from Raphoe for Sligo in a ramshackle Ford car which we hired with driver. It was late that night when we reached Sligo. Realising that our ancient 'Lizzie' would never do the long journey ahead, we decided on getting another car in Sligo. We called to Sligo barracks where I explained to Divisional Adjutant Brian McNeill that we needed a good car urgently for an important secret mission and that we had Div. Commandant Sean Lehane's authority to ask for aid in emergency. McNeill had no serviceable car available, but he gave me a written authorisation to Comdt. Coleman in Ballymote to give me the Buick car in the barracks there. We moved on to Ballymote, arriving there about 4 a.m. Presenting ourselves at I.R.A. H.Q. there in the Town Hall, we were scrutinised and questioned by the sentry and guard on the door. Not until I showed McNeill's order were we admitted and, even then, the chit had to be taken and shown to the rudely-awakened Comdt. Coleman in his upstairs sleeping quarters before I was brought along into his presence. Another crux! The car was away in Tubbercurry. I insisted that the matter was very urgent and that we must have the car without delay. After some demur, he ordered the guard to rouse and send along the Buick's usual driver, a young lad named Davey. The latter

reported in about ten minutes and he was promptly sent along with our driver in our car to Tubbercurry. In their absence McGurk and myself breakfasted substantially on the fare provided by a sleepy though mighty curious barrack cook. Coleman had joined us. About 7.30 a.m. Davey arrived back with the Buick, followed shortly after by our driver in his 'Tin Lizzie'. I told Comdt. Coleman that we were leaving the Ford and our driver at his disposal until our return. This seemed to soothe his surly reluctance to hand us over the Buick.

When I told our driver that he would have to stay in Ballymote under Coleman's orders with his car until we came back for him, he was aghast at first, but I reassured him that himself and the Ford would be all right. Then we adjourned to Farry's publichouse at the corner of the Boyle road, a great republican rendezvous - the sons of the house, John Albert and Bernard, being active I.R.A. man. Here we ate again and drank some stout and I sampled a little of the local poitin. I found it vile stuff, the worst I ever tasted, far more corrosive and vitriolic than the Donegal brand. I was told that potatoes were used in its make-up.

During this time McGurk was looking up the contact man, Mullan. Round 10 a.m. we picked up Mullan, wearing a mackintosh, and moved off via Boyle and Carrick-on-Shannon, young Davey driving. All went well as we cruised along by the Shannon and on through Longford town. At Rathowen, as we turned for Castlepollard, tragedy struck us. A burst front tyre and luck alone saved us from being capsized. Out we got. A six-inch reef in the tyre and no spare. Now we were in the soup properly. We pushed the useless Buick into a convenient yard adjoining a residence on the roadside. I took the precaution of removing the pencil

from the magneto and putting it in my inside coat pocket. An inspired action as it afterwards transpired.

We walked back a quarter mile or so to Rathowen police barracks where I had noticed uniformed men at the door as we passed. They were Free Staters, but they lent us a bike on which McGurk rode back to Edgeworthstown where he hired a Ford car at McDermott's. The car came along and we piled in and away with us, the Free State police promising to keep an eye on our crippled car. We sped along through Castlepollard and Delvin on to Navan and by the Boyne to Drogheda. Here we stopped and had a meal. It was now about 5 p.m., hours too late for our contact with Sergeant Curran. We were to meet him at a crossroads between Bettystown and Gormanston round 3 p.m. We moved along slowly, passed Gormanston, turned and back the road to Bettystown. Here we stopped for a short time, then motored along slowly through Gormanston again and on to Balbriggan. Here we pulled up for a drink and a council of war. McGurk and I decided that we two would go on to Dublin in the car and return at 1 p.m. next day, leaving Mullan, Davey and the Edgeworthstown driver (whose name I forget) to stay the night in Balbriggan. Mullan was to scout along the Gormanston Camp road to try and contact the R.I.C. sergeant. The driver kicked up an unholy row, but calmed down when I told him that we were I.R.A. officers and were commandeering his Ford for the time being and it behoved him to stay nice and quiet if he wished to get back home with his car safe and sound.

On to Dublin, McGurk and I taking turns at driving. We put up at Whelan's in Eccles St., Joe garaging the car nearby. Next morning, after Mass - it was Ascension Thursday - we went to G.H.Q. at the Four Courts. I, as usual, tried to scrounge some engineering stuff, but failed. McGurk did better,

getting a new tyre and tube for the Buick whose dimensions we had noted. But McGurk was Divisional Q.M. and the Q.M.G. was Dick Barrett who was always generous with us. Back we headed in great fettle for Balbriggan. As we entered the town, two young men stepped out into the centre of the road and waved us to stop. We slowed down and they came running after us beckoning us to turn right. As we halted, two other men on the pavement ahead stepped off and approached us. I held my gun (a .38 automatic) ready, as I was mystified by the men's manner. Then one asked us if we were republican officers. I replied we were, but why so? They all seemed relieved. "Did we have three friends who stayed in Balbriggan last night?". Yes, why? Well, they were arrested and spent the night in the local barracks, garrisoned by Free State troops, where they still were. "Right" said I, "jump in and direct me to the barracks." Two of them did. Arrived there, I asked for the O/C. He came. I demanded the immediate release of my three men. Why had they been arrested and detained? He explained apologetically enough.

Late the day before, his men on patrol had noticed a man in Irish Volunteer uniform at a tavern door in Balbriggan It aroused their suspicions as the man was a stranger and the pub a resort of Black and Tans. Recently there had been some bloody clashes between Tans marking time awaiting demobilisation and Volunteers . There had been, too, some hold-ups and robberies in the district. They raided the pub and asked our trio to account for themselves. Mullan (the mystery man in I.V. uniform) said he came from the north; young Davey said nothing, but our Edgeworthstown driver panicked and told them that his car had been seized from him by two armed men and that he had been forced to

stay with Mullan and Davy. Convinced that they had stumbled on some great mystery, the Free State patrol arrested our trio and imprisoned them in the coastguard station garrisoned by Free State troops.

Informed by the scared driver that the two dangerous men who took his car were returning from Dublin to Balbriggan about noon next day, the Free Staters sent out unarmed patrols in pairs to intercept us entering Balbriggan. They had been warned not to halt us in summary fashion or to display arms or hostility as we would be most likely to shoot down any hostile interceptors, so the Free Staters had been assured. Hence the queer method of stopping us.

Our arrival brought relief and release to the three prisoners. I told the Free State O/C. that we were two republican officers of the Executive forces on active service in Ulster and the three were under our orders. The O/C. expressed his regret for detaining them and explained the reasons for his suspicions. I accepted his apology and explanation. He invited us to have a meal. I declined with thanks and asked him to come along and have a drink with us before we left Balbriggan in a few minutes time. Alas! He was on duty and could not stir up town.

The five of us then piled into the Ford with its Longford driver at the wheel. Mullan was in crestfallen mood as it was his conceited conspicuousness that got them locked up for the night and prevented him from contacting the R.I.C. sergeant. As we cruised along the long straight road past Gormanston Camp, Mullan kept a sharp eye out. Near Bettystown we overtook a big burly R.I.C. man sauntering lasily along. It was Sergeant Curran. We stopped. He recognised Mullan at once. McGurk explained our mission quietly aside to the sergeant. He got into the car and we drove to next crossroads turning right after leaving Mullan and Davey at the cross. Moving down a byroad for quarter of a

mile or so, we turned right again back towards Gormanston Camp. Further on, we came to a large disused quarry overgrown all round with bushes. Leaving the car on the road to be turned round by the driver, the sergeant, McGurk and I entered the quarry. In a deep hollow beneath rubble and gravel and concealed by bushes, he uncovered a large tin trunk. It was very heavy, almost 2 cwts. I'd say. It gave McGurk and myself all our time to lift it out and to stagger with it a few yards. With Curran's aid, we managed to get it out to the car where we had much trouble in loading it on the floor at the rear. Back we drove, picked up the other two and with our crushing load drove along to a crossroads pub near Bettystown. Here we stopped and went in for a drink. Sergeant Curran insisted on "standing" the drinks a second time. Then he had a drink from me and I bought a half-pint flask of brandy for the long road back as we would travel all night. We shook hands with Sergeant Curran as we parted, and he expressed the hope to see us all again soon in Moville where we would have another drink together. I never saw or heard of him since and often wondered did he ever return to a quiet life in his home by Lough Foyle.

We stopped in Drogheda for a meal and a rest. I went up to Millmount Barracks to see my old comrade organiser of West Cork days, Mick Price, Tom Barry's brother-in-law, and now Divisional Adjutant, 1st Eastern Division, I.R.A. We talked of old times by the Bandon water before I left to rejoin my party. It was about 6.30 or so as we left and headed for Navan. We travelled slowly and bumpily, for the Ford was carrying a dangerously heavy load. I was fearful of another breakdown as we rattled through Navan.

A short distance west of the town we crossed the Boyne again

and I noticed a large car in the field by the river adjacent to the bridge. Barely a mile further on, our overladen 'Lizzie' broke down. Only a punctured tyre, but still an ominous setback. Would we ever reach Rathowen? It seemed very doubtful. Then the big car back by the bridge flashed across my mind. Taking young Davey with me, we hurried back to the river. The car was still there. We ran to the car and jumped in. Davey switched her on and pressed the starter button. To our amazement and delight, the engine started up at once. It was unbelievable and miraculous good luck. Reversing the big Dodge (for such it was) Davey swung her out on the road. As we emerged on the main road, we heard loud and excited shouting after us from the river bank - the car owners presumably. Without a thought of the criminal nature of our desperate seizure of the car, we sped on to the broken-down Ford.

We transferred the tin trunk, the tyre and tube and our other effects to the Dodge whose engine was kept running. For the second time, we left the unfortunate driver from Edgeworthstown behind us this time with his crocked car and sweating furiously striving to repair his punctured tyre. Despite his frantic protests at being thus abandoned, we drove off consoling him with the promise that we would explain all to his employer, McDermott, when we reached Edgeworthstown. But, in the event, he was to reach McDermott's before us. Ten or twelve miles further west on the main road to Castlepollard, we stopped. One of us, Davey I think, climbed a main telegraph pole and with a pliers cut the telegraph wires; we wanted to prevent any message being sent ahead to Longford Free State H.Q. about our seizure of the car by the Boyne and we were fearful of being held up en route through Longford. At Castlepollard we stopped at Kennedy's hotel and pub. We

had drinks and a hurried meal there and I discussed with M.J. Kennedy, the local republican army leader, the feasibility of skirting Longford town to the north and reaching the Rooskey-Carrick-on-Shannon road. He said it could be done but only by a Longford man with minute local knowledge of the roads which, in that area, were both complex and bad. He advised against my attempting it as it would be impossible to me, especially travelling by night. I took his advice and we moved off to Rathowen. It was now getting dusk. Over-running a left turn some distance outside Castlepollard we found ourselves travelling a byroad to Rathowen parallel to the main road. Within a half mile of our destination, Bang! a rear tyre flat; we got out disconsolately. So this was the miserable end to our Odyssey. There was nothing for it now but walk on to the yard where we had dumped our crippled Buick the previous afternoon. Leaving McGurk and Mullan to guard the precious trunk and our personal gear in the disabled car, young Davey and I started off briskly, he carrying the new tyre and tube.

After 20 minutes marching we neared the cottage yard. We were astonished to see moving lights and many shadowy figures in the yard around our Buick. Two Free State officers and several Free State soldiers in uniform and a few civilians were so intent on examining the car that they never noticed our arrival. A soldier was endeavouring to crank up the car, another was at the wheel, and an officer had the bonnet lifted and was inspecting the engine with the aid of a small lantern. "What are you trying to do there?" I barked sharply. They jumped. The party around the car opened out making way for me as I walked up to the Free State officer at the engine who seemed to be in charge. He swung around angrily, then gazed fiercely at me, his eyes surveying me from head to foot.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "I am the owner of this car" I snapped back. His hand went to his holster. "This car belongs to us" he yelled. Young Davey was behind me with the tyre. I felt icy cool as I gripped the automatic in my trench coat pocket. "This car is mine", I said quietly, "I left it in here yesterday and nobody is going to take it without my authority". Then a civilian spoke: "Yes", said he, "That's the man that left the car there yesterday". It was the local Free State police sergeant. "Right", said I, turning to him, "and you're the man who promised to keep an eye on it for me". The officer was in a fury. "By ...., I'm taking the car, and I'm taking you too, whoever you are" he hissed, his fingers still on the holster. "I am an I.R.A. officer of the 1st Northern Division Executive Forces, and go ahead and try and take the car". He was taken aback for a moment. "Aha", he fumed, "I knew you were a bloody Irregular, the Irregulars that took that car from us down in Ballina, and we've got it back now". "I don't know anything about that", I said, "but I got that car in Ballymote, Co. Sligo, and I am taking it back there". I turned to Davey. "Put on that tyre and tube" I ordered. He got the tools from the car and started on the job. Captain Moore - for that, I learned, was the bullying officer's name - was at a loss for a moment. He felt he was losing control of the situation. "I am taking that car" he ranted. "You won't take that car - without shooting", I said firmly as I took a step nearer to him. "Oh, let there be no shooting" shouted the other Free State officer, moving between us and intervening for the first time in the drama. They all must have judged from my authoritative and confident tone and manner that I must have plenty of aid close at hand. Little did they know! I realised myself that cool audacity was my trump card.

Things were at a climax. "Be wary of Captain ...., he's half mad", a Free Stater whispered in my ear. Then I had a brain wave. "Do you want a car?" I demanded of the half mad Moore. He looked at me, a wild triumphant look in his eyes. "If you do", I said, "you'll find one back a mile or so on the road." I felt I knew my man. He was getting out of a dangerous situation with his face saved. He was a blustering bully, but with all his soldiers about him, he could have called my bluff. Now, I offered him an easy way out and a car to boot. He took the bait whole. "You're welcome to the car you'll find back there", I said, "I commandeered it in Navan". I was reckless at my success and at the brilliant solution of my extraordinary dilemma.

Just then, we heard the rattle of an approaching car. It was my old Edgeworthstown driver all alone threshing along in the repaired Ford. He passed on by us without looking or stopping. By now, the Buick was ready for the road. I took from my pocket the magneto pencil, fitted it back into its correct mechanical position on the car magneto and ordered young Davy to take the wheel. I swung her up gingerly with the starting handle and at the second or third swing the engine began to fire. Davy reversed her out on the road and all the time the Free State officers and their comrades gaped at the proceedings. I sat in at back and invited the two officers in. With them and the local F.S. sergeant, we drove back to our broken-down Dodge. Arrived there, one of the officers actually assisted us in transferring the heavy trunk to our Buick. Then McGurk, Mullan and I with the N.C.O. drove back to Rathowen with Davey at the wheel. We left Captain Moore and the other Free Stater examining with admiration the commandeered Dodge which we so tactfully and so generously bequeathed to them.

In Rathoven we stopped for a drink at the pub opposite the barrack. I told-off the Free State sergeant for his double-crossing act in aiding the attempted seizure of the Buick which I had committed to his care. He was most apologetic and explained all the circumstances, how, when he reported the matter to his superiors, the quarrelsome Captain Moore had come along with Free State soldiers to remove the car. He was delighted with the way I had handled that pugnacious bully and brought him down such a peg before his own soldiers. He gave me a brief sketch of Moore's I.R.A. career, of his rough and rugged acts and his domineering aggressiveness. I fancied myself quite a lot for having been so lucky and so resourceful at emerging so triumphantly from my strange encounter with that queer officer. Then, after a few drinks, I declined the meal offered by the N.C.O. and we hit the road again. Stopped at Edgeworthstown and entered McDermott's pub. The owner was delighted and mighty relieved to see us again. His driver had given him a lurid account of all his experiences with us and had declared that we were a mad bunch of Irregular desperadoes and that we would never show up again. Joe McGurk, the Divisional Q.M., dug into his wallet and paid McDermott handsomely for the use of his car and driver. His eyes opened wide with wonder at this as he had never expected to be paid when he realised that we were I.R.A. officers. He gave us ample petrol for the Buick. Free State A/Company Q.M. Sergeant was drinking at the bar as we made to go. He asked us for a lift to Longford. As he was in uniform, we agreed eagerly. It suited me fine. Now, with a uniformed Free State N.C.O. for company, we felt that there was little danger of our being stopped or molested in Longford, a town through which we hated to travel in those days. We dropped

our N.C.O. friend in Longford and declined his offer of a drink. He thanked us profusely and on we sped. It was now very late at night. As we reached the Shannon, a thick fog came down and our speed was reduced to a crawl. The fog got worse. Groping our way through Drumsna, we felt a heavy double bump, stopped and got out. We had driven across a shallow drain a foot or so wide in off the road surface entirely on the village green. We shivered with cold in the clammy fog. I thought of the flask of brandy. Heavens above! It was gone. Then the truth dawned on me. I had left it in the inside door pocket of the Dodge. I felt miserable. It was about 3 a.m. or so and here we were blanketed in fog on a village green more than 100 miles from our base, hungry and thirsty, cold and weary. Deciding to crawl on, we pushed the car back on the roadway and resumed our journey in low gear. I had my head and shoulders out the car window trying to penetrate the dark greyness and to direct the driver. On slowly and painfully to Carrick-on-Shannon which we reached before dawn and where a shock awaited us. I was trying to discern the road turning left over the Shannon when a loud roar of "Halt" startled us. We stopped instantly. I advanced as I was ordered, with my hands up, to be recognised. Four steps ahead, I all but crashed into the huge iron gates entering the military barracks. A sentry kept me covered while a soldier from the guardroom scrutinised and questioned me. We were lucky, for the garrison here were I.R.A. of the Executive Forces. I explained who we were and where we were going. We were invited to come in and eat and rest till morning. I declined, pleading that our return to Northern Divisional H.Q. was extremely urgent. We had overshot the turning for the bridge in the dense fog. Back we crawled again, located the

turning, crossed the Shannon and made off towards Ballymote.

Day was breaking as we reached a large schoolhouse, five or six miles from Ballymote. Here we encountered large parties of I.R.A. soldiers who had been enjoying themselves at an all-night republican dance in the schoolhouse. The dancers were just dispersing. Some of the republican soldiers recognised our car and its occupants. We got a great cheer of welcome. John A. Farry, an I.R.A. man from the town, got in with us to pilot and we entered Ballymote in triumph. We stopped at Farry's pub and ate and drank there copiously. Our Raphoe driver with his ancient Ford was brought a long - incidentally, he had driven a load of republican soldiers to the dance and had shared in all their fun.

The large tin trunk was now loaded on the Ford, we said goodbye to our youthful driver, Davey, and to chemist Mullan home again in Ballymote with greatly enhanced prestige and handed back the Buick. I was presented with a large bottle of poteen at Farry's/pub on leaving for the north.

Back through Sligo, where we called to the barracks and I thanked Brian McNeill for his kind offices in helping us so well on our mission. As we cruised along noisily by Cliffoney and Benbulbin, McGurk slept. I too was drowsy after all the exciting experiences of the previous day and night, and no sleep whatever for two days and only a few hours since we left Raphoe on Tuesday night. It was now noon on Friday. The car swerved suddenly into a fence and the driver pulled up. Another punctured tyre and no jack. McGurk is so deep in slumber that I failed to arouse him. Back the road with me to where I see two men working in a field. I asked them to come along with me to lend a helping hand. They came. I remove a large stone from the fence and

while the two men and myself exert all our strength to lift the left side of the Ford, the driver manoeuvred the rock beneath the axle. Another great lift and the punctured wheel rotated freely. I felt a scalding wet sensation around my loins and down my thigh. I thought I was bleeding. But no!, the cork had come out of the bottle of poteen with all my exertions and the virulent stuff was scorching my skin like acid. There was a little still left in the bottle. I offered it to my two helpers. One, the younger, refused. The other raised the bottle to his lips and drank a little very slowly with many grimaces. I tasted a sup of the stuff. It was vile. A burning soapy taste which almost roasted my tongue and gullet. I was almost smothered and spluttered and coughed as I tried to get my breath. Repairs were completed and we pushed the car off the improvised 'jack'. I thanked our pair of helpers, who dallied watching the whole proceedings curiously, then we rattled on once more, McGurk still oblivious to the world. We reached Raphoe that Friday afternoon without further mishap.

I did not even wait up to eat, but peeled off my clothes and threw myself into a bed at Stoney's mansion, our Divisional H.Q. I did not wake until 3 p.m. on Saturday, having slept soundly for almost 24 hours. I got up, dressed and went down to kitchen for a feed. Sitting down to the table, I noticed the burnt brown patch on the upper part of the thigh of my pants - the grand suit which I had got earlier that year at Tadhg Lynch's in Kinsale with my first month's pay from Army H.Q. It was ruined by the spilt poteen. Then the thogght struck me of what must have been its corrosive effect on my stomach and vitals when it scorched and rotted the Irish tweed in my trousers so badly. That scared me off drinking póteen for many a long day after. Ever since then, I have only sipped the stuff once or twice.

Another shock awaited me! Hardly had I finished eating when I got an order from Divisional O/C. to report that night at 9 p.m. to a rendezvous near Castlefin to bring a competent engineering squad with supplies of explosive, land mines and demolition equipment. Then I learned that the other Divisional officers had been mobilised too for the same place. I speculated on what was in the offing and decided that some big offensive job on His Majesty's forces was about to be launched. The contents of the large trunk (from Gormanston R.I.C.) had already been examined and taken over by Q.M. department.

That Saturday night, we mobilised at Brigade H.Q. (East Donegal) at the commandeered residence - a mansion - of Mrs. Fife Young, a widow in the late twenties, whose husband Captain Fife Young had been killed a year or so earlier while serving as R.I.C. District Inspector in Tyrone. It was a composite force of about 50 armed with rifles and grenades. My engineering section had two large land mines fully charged and detonated with electric cable and exploder equipment. The mines were heavy, so Mrs. Fife Young's hunter was seized from the stables and brought along as a draught horse for the land mines. He was harnessed to a light cart on which was loaded carefully all my explosive material. We moved out cautiously after dark, reaching Kelly's of Drumdait around midnight. Here we halted for a rest. This was a great republican house, the brothers Kelly being active I.R.A. men with Great War soldiering experience, and their sister a zealous member of Cumann na mBan. Twenty years or more afterwards, during World War II I think, the Kelly home was wrecked by an explosion and two of the veteran republican brothers there were very badly injured, one dying of his wounds

The whole operation this night was very much of a mystery

- we were told little of the plan of action. I had a vague inkling that we were to lay an ambush for an enemy convoy of lorries in the Castlederg area and, in the event of drawing blank, we were to enter the town of Castlederg by night and attack and blow up the barracks there garrisoned by a strong enemy force. We marched off from Drumdait warily and, an hour or so later, encountered deep trenches and other obstructions on the road. We abandoned the cart and the hunter was left with a local I.R.A. scout to be kept until next evening and, should we fail to return that way, he was then to be brought back to Castlefin. Then the mines were carried by four of the engineers on an improvised hand-barrow, stretcher fashion. About 2.30 a.m. we halted again, evidently waiting reports from local scouts. Again, we marched on, this time towards Castlederg. It was about 3.30 a.m. when a scout arrived breathless from the rear. He had an urgent message for the Divisional Commandant, Sean Lehane. Sean read it. He called an immediate halt. We were ordered to rest for a short time and to eat and drink whatever food we had with us. Most of us had none. I, however, had a half-pint of brandy, a possession which increased my popularity with Dinny Galvin, Jim Lane, John Donovan and a few more of the boys who liked a drink. Then we were told that the whole operation was 'off' and we retired as we had come, back to near Castlefin.

Here we entered a large farmhouse at a road fork near Doneyloop Church. Inside in the parlour before us was Tom Barry, I.R.A. Director of operations. Then I understood the urgent dispatch which caused Lehane to cancel our operation and retire. Barry welcomed us, shaking hands all round with the former 3rd West Cork Brigade men who had soldiered with him in faraway West Cork. Than he told us

that he had come specially from I.R.A. H.Q. in the Four Courts with an order to cease temporarily action against the British forces in the Six Counties. The cessation would be brief, only a week or so. A great combined offensive was to be launched throughout the Six Counties against Crown Forces, and fully-equipped columns were being sent up from Tipperary and from the two Southern Divisions to reinforce us in Ulster and to sustain our attack on a large scale. We were elated at this news from Comdt. Tommy Barry and we were filled with the offensive spirit and looked forward to smiting the enemy soon good and hard.

Next day or so, Barry returned to Dublin and, travelling with him were Sean Lehane, Charlie Daly, Peadar O'Donnell, Jack Fitzgerald, Dinny Galvin and myself. We stayed in Donegal town the first night on our way south and had lively and protracted discussions on religion, sin and nationality. Peadar O'Donnell and Barry were the main talkers and their peculiar antagonistic views on those subjects intrigued us youngsters immensely. Peadar at this time was accounted 'Red' in Ulster, and his assertion that he always said his night prayers, or rather, endeavoured to direct his mind towards God and heaven each night, met with some incredulity. Peadar was a jocular dissembler and it was never easy to detect when he was serious and when he was 'doing an act'. But his vocabulary was vast and his speech eloquent, and it was a pleasure and an education to hear him airing his views on a variety of subjects. Joe McGurk, Divisional Q.M., remained as senior officer at 1st Northern Division H.Q. near Raphoe.

We spent four or five days in Dublin on rest leave and relaxation from rigours of active service in the north. Most of our party - Lehane, Daly, Galvin, Fitzgerald and

myself amongst them - went to see the All-Ireland Hurling Final in Croke Park between Cork and Dublin. It was the 1920 Final now being decided in the early summer of 1922. I was mighty interested in this clash, for Bob Mockler of Horse-and-Jockey, Tipperary, my hurling hero of that age, was playing midfield for Dublin, having left Tipperary to settle in the capital in 1915. Bob had given me, as a juvenile of 13 or so, hurleys and sliotar (his own making) during my Tipperary summer vacations and I used be as proud as a peacock of being allowed to strike back 'wide' balls from behind the goal to Bob and the Jockey hurlers at practice.

On the Cork team were several I.R.A. comrades from Cork City and East Cork including Mick Murphy, Conny Lucey, Billy Ahearne and 'Sailor' Gray. My allegiance was very much divided. Dublin won, and that night in the Clarence Hotel there was many a 'hot' argument.

There was intense hurling rivalry and soldiering rivalry, too, between 2nd Battalion, Cork City, and 4th Battalion, East Cork, of the 1st Cork Brigade. It flared up that night in many a dispute and quarrel, so much so that it nearly came to blows. We were all behind in the billiard room, drinking and arguing. The 4th Battalion members there were boasting that they had fought more, accomplished more and suffered more in the fight against the British than had the City Battalion. The latter, from which came several of the Cork hurlers, stoutly maintained that they were superior as hurlers and as I.R.A. fighters. Among East Cork's protagonists were several officers in Free State uniform from that area. The West Cork I.R.A. were interested spectators for a while.

Then they, too, joined in the noisy discussions. Somebody interjected a question about I.R.A. fighters joining the Free State Army. The place was in an uproar. Now it was no longer a series of arguments about hurling and sport and soldiering. It was an angry cross-fire of taunts and growls about the merits and shortcomings of the Free State and the Treaty. Men were excited, the liquor was 'in' and guns were everywhere. For a little while things looked ugly. Then, a few of us West Cork officers who had kept more apart and cool during the raucous turmoil, intervened to counsel calmness and friendliness. Passions subsided and the assembly broke up with much handshaking and friendly leave-taking in the early morning hours.

We returned to Donegal to prepare for the coming offensive. A much more comradely spirit was now in evidence between us and the Free State forces in the North. We knew they were preparing to co-operate with us against the common enemy, and we rejoiced. We continued our activities on a reduced scale. One notable "stunt" which we successfully carried out was the capture of a whole train load of petrol going to the 165th Infantry Brigade of the British Army in Derry, coming from British Army G.H.Q. in Dublin. The train was quietly boarded in Strabane. Stopped and seized near Carrigans station on the left bank of the Foyle, it was directed into a siding at St. Johnston's and an armed guard put in continuous charge of the four huge rail tanks of petrol which were detached from the locomotive. Sixteen thousand gallons of petrol was the amount of the seizure. The British Army in Derry were exasperated. We, of course, were exultant at having captured such a very valuable wartime commodity, and one which we invariably found it difficult to procure anywhere in the area of the 1st Northern Division. A strongly armed

I.R.A. section mounted guard over the captured tanks night and day. The British made no serious attempt to recapture their lost petrol supply, as that would have involved crossing the River Foyle and using an armoured train or locomotive to shift the rail tanks to Derry. Sporadic raids and attacks flared up again all along the Foyle Basin. A British armoured car was blown up by one of our land mines at the Camel's Hump between Strabane and Lifford.

In Fermanagh, round Lough Derg and Lough Erne, hostilities broke out on a big scale. In an ambush in North Fermanagh, a combined party of British military and 'A' Specials were routed and an armoured car captured from them. A small I.R.A. column from the Ballyshannon area, aided by Free State army units from South Donegal, participated in this attack, and the captured armoured car was driven back in triumph by the uniformed Free Staters to the Free State H.Q. in Drumboe Castle, Stranorlar. We rejoiced! At last the sundered wings of the I.R.A. - the Free Staters and the Republicans - were fighting side by side as comrades again here in Ulster against the common English enemy. Now the Irish Republican Army had closed its ranks and were re-united once more.

The British reacted swiftly and ferociously. A whole brigade of troops moved from Enniskillen to attack and mop up the audacious Republicans. The Free State forces were in occupation of Pettigo on the Donegal-Fermanagh border; their Republican allies held Belleek Fort in Co. Fermanagh. The British attacked Pettigo first, laying down a fierce artillery barrage on the barracks and positions occupied by the Free Staters. Fifteen Free State soldiers were killed, dozens wounded, and the rest were forced to surrender. The Free State prisoners, in

uniform most of them, and including a high-ranking officer, a Colonel-Commdt., were taken away to Derry, where they were interned as prisoners of war. Here they were confined for many months before being released.

Pettigo was occupied by the Crown Forces. Without delay, the British swept on to Belleek which, they believed, was held in strength by the Republicans. Only a small garrison of I.R.A. were in occupation of the Belleek Fort, from which the Irish tricolour floated. The British artillery opened an intense bombardment on the Fort area with 18 pound shells from about ½ mile range. The first shell landed in a field west of the Fort and killed some cattle grazing there. The next shell fell sixty yards or so behind the Fort. The defenders, armed only with rifles, small arms and bombs, fired a few volleys towards the artillery positions and then retreated rapidly, but in order, to defensive positions a mile or so west of Belleek on the Erne in the Ballyshannon direction. Two I.R.A. men were wounded by shrapnel in the retreat. The British continued to pound Belleek Fort for hours after the I.R.A. withdrawal. Next day, their infantry moved in to Belleek and occupied the whole district in great strength, but they made no attempt to pursue or further engage the Republican column which continued to hold defensive positions a mile away.

We of the 1st Northern Division of the I.R.A. were thrown into a state of great anxiety by the British offensive advance on Belleek. We were mighty scared that they would drive on down the Erne to Ballyshannon five miles away, assault and occupy that town (held by

a Free State garrison) and thus bottle us up hopelessly in Donegal and cut us off, without hope of escape from the trap. Had they done so, the whole subsequent history of Ireland would assuredly have been changed, for a unified Irish Republican Army would have waged renewed war on the British in Ulster and prevented the setting up of the Six County statelet. But, strange to say, the British stayed put in Belleek and Pettigo and made no further move.

Michael Collins was called to London to explain the warlike activities of the Free State Army in Ulster. He went. What transpired between himself and Churchill there will hardly ever be fully revealed.

A few days later, Seán Lehane told all the southern I.R.A. officers that we were getting leave of absence for a week or so and that we were free to go back for a rest to our former brigades in the south and to visit our homes, if we wished. A number of motor cars were commandeered from British loyalists in the Lough Swilly area and a few of these were used by us as transport to Munster. As usual, we spent a few days in Dublin en route south, calling at the Four Courts and staying at the Clarence Hotel and Whelan's in Eccles St. We motored south through Naas, Carlow and Kilkenny. In the approach to this latter place, we found the roads trenched, barricaded and blocked with fallen trees, an aftermath of the confused hostilities there a little while before between Major General Prout's Free State forces and the I.R.A. After a meal in Kilkenny, we moved on through Clonmel to Fermoy, where we spent the late summer evening at a pub near the military barracks entrance in Barrack Hill,

owned by a relative of Jack Fitzgerald. Then on to Cork City. Next day, we were back again in Bandon with the old Cork 111 Brigade. Charlie Daly, with his Kerry comrades, had gone home to Firies, Tralee; Seán Lehane to his home in Bantry; Jack Fitzgerald to Ballinspittal; Jim Lane to Clonakilty; John Donovan to Ardcahan, Dunmanway; and Dinny Galvin was at home in Bandon. I was the only one still away from home. After a few days knocking around Bandon, I got bored and ill at ease. Galvin, our transport officer, had kept one of the cars which we brought from the North - an Overland. I asked Galvin for the car to drive home to Cappoquin. He was rather reluctant to give it over to me as he had never seen me drive a car. I invited him to come along with me for a little distance and satisfy himself of my driving ability. He came. I performed smoothly enough, even though I had never previously driven an Overland, or any car with gear changes for that matter. Galvin walked back to Bandon and I headed for Cork City. On the way, I noticed that the foot brake action was largely nominal but the hand brake was fairly good. Arrived at Western Road, I drove up to U.C.C. I had two objects in view: (1) to see any of my engineering fellow students of other days who might be about the College, and (2) to get Jimmy McCarthy, an experienced motorist and an I.R.A. man, to drive the Overland through the city for me. I did not meet any of my student pals, but I did contact Jimmy and he steered the car for me through the city traffic out beyond the city to Tivoli. From here I carried on alone towards Fermoy. At Watergrasshill village, I caught up with a large

funeral. Wishing to avoid the then difficult operation of passing out a big cortege, I drove straight ahead instead of swinging left after the funeral, my intention being to detour east and then swing round on the main Fermoy road again ahead of the mourners. This I did, but I spent a lot of time wandering around in a maze of by-roads until I struck the main road again about three miles further on from Watergrasshill. To my dismay, on rounding the next turn I saw the funeral just ahead of me again. This time, I pulled into the left and stopped. I decided on resting there for half an hour or so rather than attempt to pass out that funeral. To while away the time, I replenished my oil and petrol supply from tins which I carried. I then smoked and mused a little in the car. Out again inspecting the car casually, I noted a soft tyre. I got the pump, a crude hand-affair, and set to work vigorously. A car came round the corner behind me. Its pace was slow but its course somewhat uncertain. It swerved towards me. The next moment, the tyre I was pumping hit me a wallop in the thighs and I found myself sprawling on my back against the soft fence, the pump still in my hands. The car stopped. An elderly pair emerged and hurried up to me. Was I hurt? No, not at all. Any damage to my car? Only the hub cap knocked off the rear wheel where the other car struck mine. What happened? The gentleman and his wife were profuse in their apologies. Their daughter was driving and she was only in the learner stage. I was amused and curious. All this time the young damsel who caused the trouble was sitting at the wheel of her offending car. I went up to her to tell

her what I thought of her driving. She was good-looking, very good-looking, roguish and twenty or so. She smiled. She was so glad I was unhurt and no damage done. She was so sorry for the mishap, but the roads were terrible and narrow, and what a shock she got when she bumped my wheel. I found myself unable to say a word except to smile in return and to admire the animated beauty of the fair motorist, now all flushed and excited. She got out and came back to inspect my car. Her parents strolled on to their own car. For quite a little while we talked lightly and pleasantly there as young people will. We were frankly interested in each other. We were sublimely indifferent to everything else but our mutual attraction when the old couple came back again. This time the man regarded me curiously and enquiringly. He noted, I think, my military shirt, collar and tie. Again he offered to recompense me for any damage to my car. I assured him there was none. Then he thanked me, and himself and the old lady shook hands with me. Then he called to the daughter to start the car and move on. She lingered a little, I thought, before parting, and then she was off. Only when they were gone some minutes did I realise that I never knew or asked her name and address. On my way through Fermoy later, I saw their car stopped at Noble's garage near the Blackwater bridge.

Arrived home, I was welcomed with relief by my father and mother. They had a rather unpleasant tale for me. A few weeks earlier, my brother, James Ernest, then disbanded from the R.I.C., had returned home to Cappoquin from Galedon, Co. Tyrone, where he had been stationed. The local I.R.A. police had promptly

arrested him and ordered him to leave Cappoquin within 24 hours under threat of death. He had gone back straight to Gormanston R.I.C. H.Q., where he was retained in the R.I.C. for a few months longer. My parents were irate with the local I.R.A. for this bit of tyranny, and I, too, shared their resentment somewhat. But there was nothing I could do about it. It certainly was galling for me, an I.R.A. fighter in North and South, to dash home to see my parents and family and to find that my brother, a demobbed R.I.C. man, returned home, had been driven away as a dangerous criminal at the point of the gun by the local Republican police in Cappoquin. It was just one of the many acts of bullying and brutal tyranny indulged in at that time by petty local Republican "warriors" to show their arrogant authority and self-importance. These acts resulted in the name of I.R.A. police becoming abnoxious in many districts. In many places, the local Battalion Commandant claimed supreme authority in his area and ruled like a feudal baron.

Next evening, I took my mother and Mrs. Lineen, mother of two R.I.C. men, one of whom, John, I had met in Dublin in March, for a spin in my Overland. It was their first motor trip. I felt mighty important, and even the experience of having to repair a puncture on the roadside did little to deflate me. I went to a big dance in the Boat House the next night, and though I did not dance, I basked in female admiration. Escorting a few female friends home from the dance, I fired a shot from my automatic to notify the ladies' arrival at their home. This rather unorthodox signal produced hysterical reactions amongst my companions, and I suddenly found

myself all alone, the rest having fled. I was charitably reckoned as mad on the strength of this exhibition of gunnery. Willie Healy, a local I.R.A. captain from Ballyhane who had served in an A.S. Column in West Waterford, asked me to take him back with me to the North. He was willing to serve in any capacity and was "fed up" with inactivity at home. I agreed. Years later I was told that, at the very time when he went away with me, he was awaiting a call to the Free State Army from Major General Prout in Kilkenny, to whom he had already offered his services. Actually, I forestalled Prout, as Capt. Healy accompanied me to Ulster. After a few quiet days at home, I set off for West Cork again via Mallow. With me came Healy and a youth named Tom Cahill, a bank clerk in Mallow and a son of Head Constable Cahill, R.I.C., still in uniform at that time. I called in to Mallow I.R.A. barracks, then 1st Southern Division H.Q., where I tried to scrounge some petrol from Capt. Tom Daly, Charlie's brother, who was Assistant Div. Q.M. there. I got a tin and headed for Cork after a long chat with Tom Daly.

Crossing Patrick's Bridge in Cork, I braked to permit a horse cab to pass. To my dismay, the foot brake failed and I glided slowly into the cab, almost overturning it. The cabby, a typical Cork jarvey, dismounted, cursing prodigiously. After righting the vehicle, he took the horse's head, then turned on me, demanding an explanation and compensation. As his manner was ugly and threatening, I just showed him the butt of my automatic and told him to clear. He shut up instantly and, mounting his cab, drove off down

towards the Coal Quay. I continued on my way cautiously and heaved a sigh of relief when I reached the Gaol Cross on the Western Road. With faulty brakes and no horn (a referee's whistle in my mouth did duty instead), it behoved me to mind my driving. Passing on through Ballinhassig village, I swung left to get on to the Innishannon road. Two cyclists approached, one on each side of the road. I kept close to my correct side. The on-coming cyclist seemed intent on passing inside me on his wrong side. Then, when within three yards of me, he panicked and swung to his left right across my path. Desperately, I braked and bore hard left, trying to avoid a collision. In vain! The motor struck his bike broadside on. He was thrown up on the bonnet, his hat sticking in the windscreen. Then he fell heavily on his head on some loose stones as the car pulled up a few feet further on. I jumped out; so did Healy. I examined the victim. He was unconscious but his eyes were rolling. An ugly bruised gash over his ear was bleeding freely. He looked as if he were dying. His cycling companion joined me and I said to him how sorry I was. He replied that it was all his own fault and that I was in no way to blame. I felt much relieved at this. I sent Healy for a doctor, back to the village, and instructed him to 'phone Sullivan's Quay fire station in Cork to send along an ambulance. His companion went for a priest. Surmising a skull fracture, I removed my coat, folded it and placed it beneath his head on the road, otherwise not touching him. A few locals gathered curiously. Then the Parish Priest arrived and, after examining him, ordered his removal to Grainger's, the nearest house. The P.P. turned on me angrily, denouncing motor-drivers as murderers and accusing me of

having run down the man callously without any warning. His companion spoke up in my defence and declared that it was all an accident caused by the victim's own cycling error. Grainger, too, said that he had heard the warning whistle as the car came on and had seen what had happened, and that I was not to blame. Somewhat mollified, the P.P. drew in his horns, though all the time I observed a note of hostility in his manner towards me. The injured cyclist, still unconscious, was placed in bed at Grainger's and we all retired from the room as the P.P. prepared to anoint him. Out in the kitchen, I was talking to Grainger when the priest emerged hurriedly and asked for a drop of whiskey or brandy for the apparently dying man. "All right" said I. Grainger looked at me in alarm as the P.P. returned to the sick room. "Blazes", says he, "I've no whiskey at all, only a drop of poteen in the house, and I daren't give him that, as His Reverence would put horns on me for keeping poteen". "Give me the drop of poteen in a cup" says I. "There's a man's life at stake and maybe in the mercy of God it will save him". Grainger, looking like a man that was going to be hanged, got the drop and handed me the cup. I entered the room silently and handed the cup to the P.P. He took the cup, looked at it and then looked enquiringly at me. I said nothing. He looked at the cup again, critically, though I thought that the poor light of the room would help to hide the tell-tale colourlessness of the poteen it contained. I was fearful lest he smelled the stuff. He didn't. The injured man had opened his eyes feebly and flatteringly. He was semi-conscious now. The priest put the cup to his lips and he swallowed a few drops of the fiery spirit. He coughed and spluttered, but some colour rushed to his

features became animated for a moment. He tried to move. The P.P. handed me back the cup and told me to go. I did, to meet a very agitated Grainger outside the room door. "What did he say"?. "Nothing" I replied. "Here's the cup". He took it. "There's a sup in it yet" says he, "you may as well finish it". I emptied the cup in a gulp and, grimacing at the smoky taste and roasting potency of the stuff, lit a cigarette. Willie Healy now returned and we lingered on in the farmhouse, awaiting the ambulance from Cork City, about nine miles away.

The priest emerged, spoke a few low words to the man of the house, then departed. Grainger turned to me much relieved. "He never spotted it" says he, "but the lad is very badly hurt and has only a poor chance". I felt a cold douche of alarm sweep over me. I went in to the room, looked at the victim closely and said a silent prayer for his recovery. I was upset. I dreaded the ordeal of appearing at an inquest, which I most certainly would have to do if the worst happened. Then the Cork ambulance arrived. The patient, still largely unconscious, was placed on a stretcher and driven away to the North Infirmary, Cork. I never saw him again. Enquiring of his state a few days later, I was told that he had recovered consciousness but was still severely shocked, with a badly fractured skull. In a fortnight, he was out of danger, and after six or seven weeks sojourn in the North Infirmary was able to return to Dublin and resume his work. It was a miraculous recovery. What bearing poteen and prayer had on it, if any, I never did know.

Having done rough repairs to a damaged radiator and water pipe, I limped into Bandon. Dinny Galvin

was furious next day at the ramshackle condition of the Overland car which I handed over to him. We spent a week or so loafing about the Bandon district with nothing to do. Seán Lehane was away in Kerry. A letter arrived from Peadar O'Donnell, Div. Adjutant, 1st Northern, urging us to return at once as, in the absence of the southern officers, discipline was going from bad to worse. I contacted Galvin, Jim Lane and John Donovan, and we decided to return north without waiting for Lehane. I told Tom Hales, Cork 111 O/C, of our intention. He asked me, as a great favour and relief, to take Conneen Crowley back along with me to Ulster, away from West Cork altogether. Conneen was a tough little gunman, always in trouble, always fighting. When in drink, he was dangerous, merciless and irresponsible. He was a holy terror when he got going on his mad escapades, and Brigadier Hales was at his wits' end to restrain him. Conneen, a much-wanted man by the R.I.C. and Tans for his deadly shooting prowess, was captured by the Macroom Auxiliaries a few days before the Kilmichael ambush. Unrecognised, he gave the name of Paddy Murphy and was imprisoned in Macroom Castle. There he spent the whole night of Monday, November 19th 1920, with the corpses of the sixteen Auxies killed in Kilmichael, praying over them on his knees. At intervals, Auxies, crazed with drink, burst in to see that he did not ease off in his prayers for the dead or drop off to sleep. Hisdescription of the hell he went through that night would put Dante's "Il Inferno" in the shade. Miraculously surviving, he was interned in Ballykinlar as "Paddy Murphy" of Ballineen, and after the Treaty he was released. Since his return to his West Cork home in Kilbrittain, he had become notorious for quarrelling and brawling and acting the

'Wild West desperado', and now Tom Hales was much perturbed at how to handle such a fierce little warrior. I agreed to bring Conneen along to Donegal, to the Brigadier's great relief.

About June 12th or so we set off from Bandon, travelling by train. As we marched across Cork City to the Glanmire station en route for Dublin, we attracted no little attention - John Donovan and Jim Lane in front, carrying service rifles, Con Crowley and Willie Healy (both unarmed) next, and I, wearing slacks and swinging a walking-cane, bringing up the rear, an ordinary young civilian except for the Colt automatic pistol in my pocket. We boarded the night mail to Dublin, enjoyed the luxury of first-class travel - thanks to a young checker who was also an I.R.A. man. Needless to say, we bought no tickets; I just presented a requisition for five travel seats to Dublin, signed by myself on behalf of the I.R.A., and the rest was plain sailing.

Arrived in Dublin at 4 a.m., we walked to the Clarence Hotel from Kingsbridge and next day reported to the Four Courts. There I saw Dick Barrett, whom I told of our decision to return forthwith to Ulster. I was looking for motor transport North, or, failing that, travel vouchers by train to Sligo. Dick, as Q.M.G., sanctioned our stay in the Clarence and promised to provide for our travel to Donegal. Later that day, Tom Barry, Director of Operations, I.R.A., came in to the hotel and ordered me and my comrades to stay 'put' there for the present and to keep ourselves in readiness to act on instructions from him. Later still, we got an order from him to be ready at 9 p.m. to travel to aid in some secret operation under Barry's direction. We waited all night at the ready, but our services were never

enlisted. Next day, we learned that Barry had gone down with a special I.R.A. squad and the armoured car "The Mutineer" to the Garda H.Q. in Kildare. There, with some inside help, they had taken over what firearms and ammunition were in the guardroom of the H.Q. of the newly-established police force. Next day, too, I and the lads were sore with Barry for having ignored us after having mobilised us for special action. We dallied no longer in Dublin. Off to Sligo we headed that evening, deliberately choosing to ignore Barry's orders to remain in Dublin. Late that evening, tired of travel by train and car, requisitioned or borrowed as became necessary, we reached Div. H.Q. at Stoney's, Oakfield Park, Raphoe.

All was confusion throughout the area of the 1st and 2nd Northern Division. In our absence, discipline had collapsed. Peadar O'Donnell, Div. Adjt., and his assistant, Pat Lynch from Ballyjameaduff, Cavan, as the senior Div. officers, tried to keep things in order, but failed. Peadar, a revolutionary thinker and writer, was of the rover type, too volatile for an efficient Volunteer officer, sublime in theory - military, economic, social, political - but in practice a wash-out. He had no control over the I.R.A. under him and was constitutionally unfitted for military campaigning of any kind, guerilla above all. Lynch was an ex-bank clerk, forced on the run by his I.R.A. activities and too young and too soft to enforce discipline on the motley assortment of refugees, volunteers, wanderers and camp-followers which made up the greater part of the Republican forces in the 1st Northern Division. Joe McGurk, the Div. Q/M, another ex-bank clerk and a companion of Lynch, was of somewhat sterner mould. He, too, suffered from the handicap of being a Tyroneman

trying to command fellow Ulster Republicans. In general, as I saw it in the North, the Republican rank and file and the ordinary Volunteers in Ulster showed little respect or obedience to their own northern officers. On the other hand, they seemed to be in awe of us southern I.R.A. officers, and our merest word was law. Whether it was our reputation or our experience as hardened campaigners I know not, but the fact remains that, in our absence, the local I.R.A. officers in Donegal had failed to maintain even a semblance of military discipline in the forces under their command. Charlie Daly, Div. Vice O/C, arrived almost simultaneously from Kerry. We immediately held a Div. conference to deal with the situation of unrest and disorder. It was decided to tour all posts and billets of the I.R.A. forces in the Div., parade and inspect all the Republican occupying forces and ruthlessly cull out the irresponsible and disorderly elements.

Then a British armoured car under a flag of truce approached one of the I.R.A. posts between Strabane and Castlefin. The British O/C wanted to speak to the responsible I.R.A. officer in East Donegal. He had an important message from him. A reply was sent arranging for a meeting between the British and ourselves at a large farmhouse near Lifford at 10 p.m. next night - the British were to be directed thence by our forces. Charlie Daly and I awaited their arrival seated at a large table in the carpeted sitting-room. The British armoured car, with its white flag conspicuously displayed, drove up. Two officers alighted and entered the room. We welcomed them formally. One - a staff captain from the British Brigade H.Q. in Derry - formally presented a

written communication from his Brigade Commander, an ultimatum in effect. It alleged that units of our forces were attacking British military and British posts in Co. Tyrone and Derry and seizing British army supplies and property. It warned the I.R.A. forces to get out of Tyrone and Derry immediately or take the consequences. We read the ultimatum slowly and carefully and deliberately. Then the staff captain elaborated somewhat. His O/C was grieved and provoked beyond measure by the audacious seizure of his petrol train by the I.R.A. and by the continuous sniping which went on night and day between the I.R.A. guard on the seized train and the British probing and reconnoitring parties which made several advances trying to recapture it. Daly asked the officers would they mind waiting a little while a reply was being prepared. They would wait with pleasure, as those were their instructions. They then withdrew.

Daly and I drafted a reply. Tersely we declared that we would not quit Tyrone or Derry, as we, the Irish Republican Army, had a perfect right as such to occupy, protect and defend every sod of Ireland. We recognised no border, and re-asserted our right and our duty and our determination to uphold the authority of the Irish Republic throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. We regarded the British Army as invaders having no right at all to be in occupation of any part of Ireland. We rejected their demands indignantly and defied their threats. We both (as far as I recollect) signed this reply with our full names, and appended our ranks in the I.R.A. The document was then enclosed, sealed and addressed to the O/C, 185th (?) Infantry Brigade, British Army H.Q., Derry. The sealed reply was handed to

the Staff Captain, and the British officers then withdrew, departing almost at once in their armoured car on their return journey to Derry via Strabane. We expected a heavy British onslaught after this defiant reply, but the British forces never moved against us. They contented themselves with holding the line of the River Foyle. Less than a fortnight later, Free State troops were to attack us suddenly and unexpectedly, while British Crown forces sat tight watching the new developments with amazement, amusement and not a little relief.

The four petrol wagons in the captured British train were now almost dry. In our absence down South, the petrol had been sold, bartered, stolen and 'flogged', to use the soldiers' vernacular, to such an extent that barely one thousand gallons now remained in the tanks of the original sixteen thousand. The I.R.A. guards, on the alert continuously to thwart any British attempt at recapture, had been 'got at' in every conceivable fashion. Under their very noses, barrels upon barrels, as well as tins of all sorts and sizes, were being filled with the precious spirit all through the night, while by day some audacious bluffers presenting forged chits and fake orders continued to help themselves liberally. Most of the stuff had disappeared in this maze of thievery and corruption when the Div. Q/M woke up to the real state of affairs. By that time, it was well-nigh impossible to make out who was who, the I.R.A. men involved in the traffic had become so demoralised. No one was reliable. It was, I suppose, a fitting Nemesis on ourselves who had seized it as loot from the British, to find that most of it had been stolen from ourselves by an

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/A

(ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 4pp

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

(iv) The description of each document:

WS 1741/Michael V. Douglas
named individuals p296 - 299 (incl)

(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.

accomplished bunch of looters and hijackers who had infiltrated into the I.R.A. with disastrous results to discipline, morale, and efficiency. Fearing an imminent British attack on the wagons, we contemplated blowing them up. Then, when we discovered that they were almost empty, we abandoned the idea, more especially as we judged such a demolition operation fraught with great danger to ourselves and to the civilian population all around.

It was in this atmosphere of chaos and corruption that a report was brought in to Comdt. Daly which brought home to us how far license and demoralisation had gone in armed I.R.A. ranks. The sentry in Lifford Bridge had been approached in broad daylight by a Republican N.C.O. whom he knew. The N.C.O., mad with drink, had seized the sentry and disarmed him, then proceeded to do an arms drill performance himself. The frightened sentry had, after being manhandled, waited near, hoping that his ruffianly attacker would weary of his mad and drunken antics, and especially as he recognised him as a prominent Republican veteran. Instead, the sentry had to fly for his life as the bully covered him with his rifle and swore to shoot him. Such was the hurried report. Daly and I saw at once how alarmingly serious the matter was. Calling John Donovan and Jim Lane, we jumped into a car and drove straight to Lifford Bridge. No armed sentry there. We learned that the drunken I.R.A. N.C.O. -

of Monaghan - had cleared off, taking with him the sentry's rifle. He had gone back towards Raphoe.

Back we went. Reached there, no sign of
A few hours later in the evening, an Irish Republican Policeman rushed in to say that was walking up the street outside. John Donovan and I rushed out and made for him. With rifle slung from shoulder, he eyes us sourly. "Halt, put your hands up" I ordered as I neared him. He tried to raise the rifle, but John Donovan, close beside me, clubbed his rifle and brought the butt down savagely on shoulder. He staggered, dropped the rifle and started crying drunkenly. I picked up the rifle. John Donovan was now thoroughly roused and, but for my intervention, it would have gone hard with
Jim Lane had now appeared, and now cowed and snivelling, was put in a car and taken to Div. H.Q. at Stoney's. He was in a disgusting state. Whether through fright or through drink, he had excreted in his pants. He was, I believe, suffering from the effects of a drunken orgy. He was placed in a basement room, off the kitchen, where a few of the I.R.A. garrison were on duty. Later, he was notified that he was for courtmartial in the morning. Fearing that he would bully the I.R.A. kitchen guards to let him escape, he was changed up to my room. There his clothes were removed and he was put into a bed next to mine. There were two doors to the room. I undressed, locked both doors from the inside and pocketed the keys. Placing my loaded automatic under my pillow ready to my hand, I went to bed but not to sleep. I warned that I would shoot if he attempted to move from the bed without my permission, and lay down eyeing the ceiling and the prisoner alternately. I was not a little nervous, so strange

was the situation. After a while, began to talk. He was sick, sore and sorry. He was disgusted with himself for his disgraceful conduct. He had been in the British army and had served in the Great War, and later, after being demobilised, he had joined the I.R.A. in his home town of Monaghan. He had been 'on the run' from the Crown Forces before the Truce. Now here he was, a prisoner in the hands of his I.R.A. comrades, awaiting courtmartial on the morrow. I listened to him. I began to feel sorry for him as he bitterly upbraided himself for his dirty, blackguardly conduct. He talked on and I felt reassured that his repentance was genuine. Yet a vague suspicion persisted in my mind and I drilled myself into keeping awake and alert. Alas! I must have dozed off, lulled off by his talking, for I awoke with a start to find the morning sun flooding the room and the prisoner quietly awake in the bed next me. I arose and dressed and left the room.

was courtmartialled at 8 a.m. Those present included John Donovan and Jim Lane, Joe McGurk, Div. Q/M, Pat Lynch, Asst. Adjt., Comdt. Charlie Daly, who presided, and myself who prosecuted. The trial was short, and the procedure rough and ready but simple and forthright. was found guilty of outrageous misconduct and insubordination. He was sentenced to expulsion from the I.R.A. and was given 24 hours to quit Co. Donegal. He was stunned with sorrow and remorse. His spirit was broken and he was almost in despair. Yet, the soldier in him triumphed for, springing stiffly to attention, he saluted. "I'll be back again" he gritted. Then he moved off dejectedly as our eyes followed him curiously. We had to harden our hearts to suppress any signs of pity; the situation demanded iron discipline.

The banishment of at 24 hours' notice had a profound effect on the I.R.A. forces in the area. Discipline and general behaviour improved overnight and the military routine and garrison chores of the posts began to be performed in the strictest soldierly tradition. Wherever we went now, the I.R.A. rank and file showed awe and respect. Daly and myself, especially, were regarded as severe disciplinarians who would tolerate no nonsense or disorderliness or dereliction of duty amongst the I.R.A. forces under our command. This was the position on the military horizon in the north-west Ulster when the I.R.A. Executive forces held their last convention in Dublin on Sunday, June 20th 1922. To that convention from Donegal went Peadar O'Donnell and his brother, Frank, O'Doherty and O'Flaherty, Hegarty from Derry, Charlie Daly and others. On the Tuesday, all were back in Donegal again, except Peadar O'Donnell. The news they brought was ominous and alarming - the army executive was hopelessly split into factions, one section yelling for all-out immediate war on the British forces still quartered in Ireland; another counselled a waiting policy, and yet another demanded the breaking off of all further negotiations for army unity, or, rather, re-unification with the Free State representatives. Liam Lynch, the I.R.A. Chief of Staff, had been flouted by some of his own staff and had withdrawn from his supreme command office in the Four Courts. That very day came news of Sir Henry Wilson's death by shooting in London. Events moved swiftly. Churchill's angry but crystal clear ultimatum to Michael Collins. Collins's pregnant silence. Confusion and alarm in Dublin. Confusion and alarm throughout Ireland. Confusion and alarm and uncertainty in the area of the 1st and 2nd Northern Division of the I.R.A.

We held a conference of the available officers of the Division with some brigade officers. Still away in Dublin and the South were Peadar O'Donnell, Div. Adjt., and Seán Lehane, Div. O/C. Charlie Daly, Div. Vice Comdt., assumed command of the Division and appointed me as his deputy and assistant. Pat Lynch became acting adjutant. Joe McGurk remained Div. Q/M. Present also were Brigade Comdt. Jack Fitzgerald and Jim Cotter, his Brigade Q/M, from their Brigade H.Q. in Castlefin, Brigadier Seán Hegarty, O/C Derry Brigade, with his brigade officers Alfie McCallion and Seamus Ward. Brigadier Frank O'Donnell, Peadar's brother, commanded the Rosses Brigade with H.Q. at Gortahork. We decided on a rapid inspection and putting on an alert footing of the Derry and East Donegal Brigades, as we expected imminent British attack from that quarter. We never dreamt of civil war or anticipated for a single moment any attack on us by Free State forces. At the week-end, Charlie and I moved to Glenveagh Castle, our principal base, deep in the Derryveagh Mountains on the shores of Lough Veagh. There we put things into a state of readiness and awaited developments impatiently. Wild rumours reached us from time to time, and then on Monday evening, June 28th we got word of the shelling of the Four Courts in Dublin. Next morning, St. Peter and Paul's Day, we set out early to return to our Div. H.Q. at Raphoe. Four of us, Daly, Fitz., Cotter and I, with Dinny Galvin, drove through Letterkenny and went to Mass there in the Cathedral. We remained close to the door together as we were uncertain of the attitude of the Free State Army who held Letterkenny in strength and we were half afraid of being intercepted on emerging from Mass. We were the object of many curious glances in the cathedral

as we were recognised as southern I.R.A. officers directing activities in north-west Ulster. However, we reached our car without molestation, called to McGarry's Hotel, our regular rendezvous, for a drink. Our behaviour was calm, unconcerned and ordinary, and we masked our anxieties and uncertainties with an unhurried exterior. We drove from Letterkenny to Raphoe in the evening, where we found the Republican forces in a quandary, not knowing what to do or what to expect. After giving clear instructions to the garrisons in charge of Div. H.Q. and Raphoe posts, Daly and I entered Raphoe that night. We went to the police barracks, now occupied by Free Staters, and asked to see Willie Holmes, the local Battalion Comdt., who, though a Free State officer, was an old friend of Charlie Daly. Holmes was there, so we went in and the three of us discussed the situation. Holmes admitted he had got no instructions to open hostilities against us Republicans and declared that, whether he got them or not, he would not do anything anyhow. We, for our part, assured him that we would not break the peace that existed between us and that, whatever would happen elsewhere, we would refrain from interfering with the Free State forces under Holmes's command.

We went to bed late that night at Stoney's. Early the morning after, we were roused by an I.R.A. scout who arrived with the alarming news that the Free State had taken Raphoe. It was incredible. We dressed rapidly and rushed in. Nearing the village, we saw two sentries on the top of the tower of the Protestant church. Closer scrutiny disclosed a machine-gun mounted there aloft. This position dominated the whole town, and from

it our posts in the Masonic Hall and next door could be raked with gunfire. We were aghast. During the night, the Free State troops, with or without the approval of the church authorities, had seized the church and occupied it, and were now using it as a fortress. We were much disturbed by this breach of faith on the part of Holmes, and, moreover, their disregard for church and sanctuary showed a callous determination to seize every advantage ruthlessly. As we moved through the Square to our Masonic Hall post, we were fearful of being fired on from the church tower.

We decided to evacuate Raphoe without delay. Then news came in that two of our small posts on the outskirts of Letterkenny - one at Stewart Hall and the other at Rockhill, had been attacked treacherously during the night and taken by Free State troops from Letterkenny. A garrison of four were at Stewart Hall when the sentry outside was set upon and shot by Free Staters in "civies" who approached stealthily on their victim. They then rushed the hall and made the four Volunteers sleeping within, prisoners and whisked them in to Letterkenny. The attack at Rockhill followed a similar pattern, the place being seized suddenly by Free Staters in the guise of civilians who approached without challenge. These two treacherous, unprovoked and entirely unexpected attacks on minor Republican posts, roused our anger. We put a few armed squads in position to snipe at the church tower and to cover them with fire in case any attempt was made to interfere with us in Raphoe while we pushed ahead our preparations for evacuation. Late that evening, we moved out south towards Convoy, then turned west towards Dromkeen and Glenveagh. We were motorised, a few on bikes and a big section on foot.

The transport consisted of a large van and three or four cars. The van contained the personal belongings of each of the southern officers, packed in motley travel bags. Incidentally, I lost all my personal belongings in the departure from Div. H.Q. at Stoney's. I had a small Gladstone bag in which I kept my most cherished personal items - photos, letters, notes, shaving and toilet gear, ties, collars, socks, a spare shirt, also some loose .45 stuff and automatic ammunition. It contained items of confidential and personal correspondence over a period from 1917 until 1922. It was locked by me and deposited in the van on leaving Stoney's. I never saw it again. I was very disconsolate when I discovered the loss after a few days and I made frantic efforts to trace it - all to no avail. I felt like Isaac Newton did on finding his precious documents on gravitation burned to ashes, but I was helpless. The disappearance of the bag is a mystery to this day, all the more intriguing since mine was the only travel bag lost in the evacuation of Raphoe.

Numbering some forty or so, we pushed on slowly west and halted for the night in the hills about seven miles from Raphoe. Here we parked the transport, mounted guards and billeted the men in the barns of two large adjacent farmhouses. The officers dozed and smoked as they stretched in the farm kitchen before the fire. From time to time during the night, we visited the guards and sentries. After daybreak, the men were roused. In relays they were provided with breakfast of bread, tea and eggs - the latter boiled en masse in a large pot and two issued to each Republican. After breakfast, the whole I.R.A. party was drawn up in parade on the road outside. Comdt. Charlie Daly addressed them as follows:

"They were Republican soldiers. The Republic had been attacked in Dublin by Free State troops using British guns. It behoved every loyal Republican soldier now to defend the Republic in arms." Any I.R.A. man there who was not ready and willing to fight against the new enemies of the Irish Republic - the Free Staters - was quite welcome to drop out and go home. No one was or would be coerced to remain, and only earnest Volunteers prepared for any sacrifice and for all eventualities were asked to stay. None left the ranks. All solemnly re-affirmed on oath their allegiance to the Irish Republic. Later the retreat towards Glenveigh Castle was resumed. That evening, the Div. officers met in conference and drew up plans for I.R.A. operations. For the present it was decided that the Republican forces would remain strictly on the defensive against the Free State attack and endeavour to keep our armed A.S. units intact. In a desperate attempt to avert the civil war, already begun between the I.R.A. and the Free State army, and to line up re-united Irish fighting potential against the crafty traditional enemy, the British, a striking column was swiftly assembled to move rapidly under cover of darkness back to Clady over the border in Tyrone and there to attack the Crown Forces and so try to involve them in a resumption of the Anglo-Irish war. Jim Cotter, Brigade Q/M, and I were in command of this column. We wasted no time and arrived in Castlefin in all secrecy about midnight. Here we decided to rest until daybreak, when we planned to strike suddenly and strongly at the British in Clady, a few miles away. We slipped quietly into Castlefin House (Mrs. Fife-Young's) and posted sentries. Incidentally, I called in to the gate lodge, where I found Mrs. Fife-Young herself and her

maid. She welcomed me in and regaled me with a tumbler of neat whiskey (Belfast boycott stuff seized). We sat and talked for an hour or more until Cotter called for me round 2 a.m. We then retired to the Big House, where we both inspected the sentry before going upstairs. We undressed, placed our watches on a little bed-side table and tumbled in to snatch a few hours sleep. All was dark and quiet.

I awoke with a start at the loud rattle of something falling on the floor near my head. I jumped up in bed to see a couple of figures run across the room and out the door. Calling Cotter, who was dead asleep beside me, I snatched my gun from beneath the pillow, pulled on my pants and ran downstairs. Out on the lawn beneath some trees, I saw a number of uniformed figures - Free State soldiers. Cotter, too, had come up, gun in hand. We rushed towards the Free Staters. They carried rifles, but seemed uncertain what to do and made no attempt to threaten or molest us. We reached them. "What does this mean?" I demanded angrily. "Who's in charge here?". They looked at each other. Then an N.C.O. replied nervously, "We did not think there was anybody in the Big House, sir". "What were you doing here anyhow?", I asked threateningly. "Colonel Glennon sent us up here to occupy the place, sir" was the answer. I whistled in alarm. The Colonel was Major General Joe Sweeney's adjutant and second-in-command of the Free State forces in Donegal. "Where is Colonel Glennon now"?. "Down in Castlefin, sir, after the Irregulars". There was no doubting the truth of the answer. Moreover, it was obvious that these Free State soldiers did not recognise that we were "Irregulars". I decided on maintaining a

bold front as the only escape from the tight corner in which we were. The situation for us was mighty serious. There we were, Cotter and I, in our shirts and pants, with revolvers in hand, in the midst of a squad of Free State troops who evidently did not know what to make of us. Behind us in the Manor House were our column men, armed but asleep, as it was all too obvious that our sentries had either slept or been surprised; otherwise our room would not have been invaded as it was. A strong force of the Free State army under Colonel Glennon himself was down in Castlefin a short half-mile away chasing "Irregulars". Our problem - how to extricate our sleeping warriors from the house in which they were now trapped and all of them blissfully unaware of their predicament. "Who took my watch?", demanded Cotter, speaking for the first time. It seemed a ludicrous question in such an atmosphere of tension. "Here's your watch, sir", says a soldier coming forward shamefacedly. "You go back to the house" I whispered to Cotter loudly enough for those around to hear, "and see if there is anything else missing". Cotter understood and hurried off to warn the sleeping inmates. I turned to the N.C.O. "Come along and take me to Colonel Glennon" I ordered. We had not far to go. Coming up the avenue towards us were three Free State officers followed by some soldiers. As they approached, they regarded me curiously. I recognised the senior officer by his coloured tabs. "You are Colonel Glennon", I ventured. "Yes", he answered, "who are you?" "O'Donoghue", I replied, "I.R.A. Commandant in charge of a column operating against the British forces". "Oh", he said, "Is that so?" rather aggressively. "What is your business hereabouts, may I ask?". "Establishing the authority of the Free State Government" - curt and stiff was the answer. My manner was just as firm and my demeanour was that of one in complete control of the situation. We had turned and by this time had arrived back opposite the house. Just then, a number of

figures, half-dressed and carrying rifles at the ready, appeared in full view at some of the windows (Cotter had done his job thoroughly in rousing our men inside and organising them for a strong defence of the house). Glennon was impressed and his manner took on a conciliatory tone. He had no idea how many armed men were in the place and he could see that they were ready to fight fiercely. "They are tough lads", I said, "all Six-County Volunteers on the run who have been organised by us to make things hot for the British and the Specials - some of them are actually from Belfast". Glennon winced. He was from Belfast himself and had left it during the Pogrom to join the Free State army and become adjutant to Divisional Commandant Joe Sweeney. He said nothing for a few moments, but surveyed the scene, the house with its semi-naked defenders and his own forces scattered around. Then he spoke: "We have provided a refuge for Six-County refugees down in the Great Northern Hotel in Bundoran", he said, "and any of your fellows in that category who wish to go there may do so and we (the Free State) will provide them with travel tickets and admission cards". I thought for a moment. "Right", I answered, "I'll put it up to the fellows themselves and I'll let you know later how many of them will opt for Bundoran". Then he turned on me earnestly: "Is Charlie Daly with you?" he inquired. "No! Why?" Comdt.-General Sweeney is anxious to see him, to discuss things with him", replied Glennon. "I can arrange that all right if Charlie Daly agrees", I said. "Well, see if he does", requested Glennon. "I am returning to Stranorlar now to meet General Sweeney. I'll be back later in the evening with those vouchers and I'll have full instructions from Comdt. Sweeney and we can then make full arrangements for the meeting with Daly". "Very well", said I, "I'll be waiting for you here". I watched him go and, shortly afterwards, I saw the Free State

soldiers being withdrawn. I heaved a huge sigh of relief. I felt exultant at the success of my bluff. I was both curious and optimistic about the proposed interview.

In I went to the house to meet Cotter and tell him of the way things had turned out. Cotter had only retained a mere skeleton defence garrison in the Big House - these had been displaying themselves conspicuously to impress potential attackers with their toughness as fighting material. But the greater part of the armament and members of the active service column had been quietly withdrawn to a strong defensive position at the rear of the house about a mile away. Now, we reassembled the whole squad and told them that the offensive campaign against the British in the Six Counties was now called off. The armed republicans in the unit were ordered to retire back to Glenveagh Castle some 25 miles north west in the heart of the rugged Derryveagh Mountains. The refugees from the Six Counties (who had no arms and were largely camp followers) were informed that they had the option of travelling to the refugee camp in the G.N. Hotel, Bundoran as, being unarmed, they were more of an embarrassment than anything else to the republican army and, moreover, a danger to themselves. Those who chose to go to Bundoran would be given train travel vouchers. Some of them resented the Hobson's choice presented to them and I myself felt as if we were driving them away from us; but it was a very confused situation and at least those refugees were offered a sanctuary.

Colonel Glennon came along in the evening with the vouchers. He was surprised at the fewness of the Six County "Volunteers" for the refugee H.Q. in Bundoran, but he said nothing. His chagrin was obvious and he was angry at the

"token" response to his proffered solution. He had been outwitted and out-manoeuvred and he did not like it. However, there was nothing he could do about it. We completed the arrangements for the meeting and discussions with Charlie Daly. Cotter and I guaranteed a safe conduct and a safe return to Comdt. Gen. Joe Sweeney and Colonel Glennon whom we were to accompany as guide and escort to Daly's H.Q. Glennon would call next morning at 8 a.m. to take myself and Cotter to Stranorlar, Free State H.Q. Glennon duly picked us up as arranged in a big Lancia touring car, Joe Sweeney himself driving. We went in through Stranorlar from Castlefin. It was fair day in Stranorlar and the town was crowded. We crawled through the carts and cattle and many were the curious glances directed at the four in the car - Sweeney and Glennon in full Free State uniform and Cotter and I in ordinary "civvies". We had no firearms save revolvers - the Free State pair having their Webleys secured with lanyards in thigh holsters; we, the republican pair, had our pistols in our pockets. There was a short delay while Sweeney called to his H.Q. in Drumboe Castle.

Then we were off again, travelling the back road via Drumkeen to Rockmills. In the village of Churchill, Daly was waiting for us with some divisional and brigade officers. On arrival, we adjourned to Wilkins' Hotel. In a large room there we sat down around a table and explored the possibilities of avoiding the extension of the civil war in Donegal. Present were: Sweeney and Glennon of the Free State side, Comdt. Charlie Daly (acting Div. O/C.), Joe McGurk (Div. Q.M.), Jack Fitzgerald (Brigade O/C.), Frank O'Donnell (Bde. O/C.), Comdt. Jim Cotter and myself, Comdt. Mick O'Donoghue, Div. Engineer, and then acting as second-in-command to Charlie Daly. Sweeney and Daly did most of the talking. Glennon and I

contributed at intervals, the others were silent and somewhat awestricken. I, perhaps, having already had experience in "talking" to Messrs. Sweeney and Glennon, spoke more than my share after opening the preliminaries. The atmosphere and the exchanges were quite friendly. For hours the discussion went on. Sweeney offered to allow the republicans in Donegal to return unmolested to their homes and to allow the southern I.R.A. men to leave Donegal with their arms and their transport on condition that the republicans evacuated the posts which they held in the county. Charlie Daly would not listen to this offer as it meant in effect surrender by the republican forces to the Free State. The I.R.A., however, were agreeable to refrain from any hostile acts against the Free State forces if the latter on their part did not molest the I.R.A. on their occupied posts or arrest any of them. After protracted negotiations an impasse was reached. Sweeney insisted that the issue was one of Authority - that the Free State was the proper authority in Donegal and must be recognised as such. Charlie Daly spoke for all of us when he declared that the only authority we would recognise was the Irish Republic and that we were determined to uphold our position in Donegal, come what may. This was stalemate. Conversation became desultory and the conference began to disintegrate into three or four little groups. Refreshments were given out. Sweeney and Glennon declined joining in a cup of tea. Sweeney rose at last and, addressing me, said they would have to be going. All the time our men armed loafed or strolled around outside in the little village eagerly awaiting the result of the talks.

As Sweeney, Daly, Glennon, Cotter and I dallied at the door, Jim Lane of Clonakilty, a veteran who had fought in France and Salonika in the machine-gun corps of the British army and later had served as a machine-gunner with Tommy

Barry's famous column in the West Cork Brigade, slouched in and beckoned me over. I went. "Jordan and some of the northern fellows outside are threatening to ambush Sweeney and plug him on the way back" Lane whispered to me. I was startled. Knowing Jordan's reputation for recklessness and bloodthirsty callousness, I would not put such a thing beyond him. We had given Sweeney a pledge of safe conduct and he had trusted in our word of honour. At all costs, this act of treachery must be foiled. Approaching the group at the door, I called Charlie aside and asked the others to hold us excused for a few moments.

Briefly I told Daly what was afoot outside. He was appalled. The soul of honour himself, he could hardly believe that any republican soldier could stoop to such treachery and disgrace and dishonour a pledge of safe conduct. But he, too, realised that Jordan was reckless and undisciplined and given to bravado and that there was danger in his threats. Calling Lane, he ordered him to see that none of the republicans outside moved out of Churchill until Sweeney had gone, and to stay side by side with Jordan to prevent him from any rash attempt to carry out his threat. Then Daly and I rejoined Sweeney and the others. We emerged on the street of Churchill still talking desultorily. Sweeney entered his motor and took the wheel. Glennon stood ready to take his seat. "Aren't you coming along back, too?", asked Sweeney. "No", said I, "Cotter and I stay here. "Sure, ye'll make your way back all right without us". He looked momentarily worried. Glennon more so. "Oh, right-o! we'll be off so" - Sweeney spoke; the other was silent. "Sorry we could not fix up things", said I as I bade them goodbye. I am not sure that we shook hands for it was a kind of lame embarrassing parting. They were off. It was the last time I saw Sweeney.

We walked back slowly to Wilkins'. Outside, Jordan was cursing loudly. He was furious with Charlie Daly and raging at me for having frustrated his callous project. Both Daly and I felt very relieved that our republican honour was unsullied. Sweeney and Glennon returned safely to Drumboe, unmolested and unharmed. Did Joe Sweeney ever know that he owed his safe return and probably his life that fateful day to Charlie Daly? He hardly did. For, seven months later, he ordered the shooting of Daly by a Free State firing squad in Dromboe Castle after having kept him four months a prisoner-of-war.

A day or two after the abortive conference at Churchill, a general reorganisation meeting to plan the future operations of the combined 1st and 2nd Northern Divisions of the I.R.A. was held in Glenveagh Castle. Charlie Daly presided. Among the Divisional officers present were: Div. Q.M. Joe McGurk, Brigade O/C, Frank O'Donnell (Peadar's brother), Brigadier Jack Fitzgerald (West Cork), Comdt. Jim Cotter, with myself and Denis McNeilus (of Cork gaol fame), the Div. O/C. and Vice O/C. Engineering respectively. Intelligence men were sent into Counties Derry and Tyrone to contact Bde. O/C. Dan McKenna (afterwards Chief of Staff of the Free State army in Second World War period (1940-45), and Brigadier Curran. The object was to find out what was their attitude to the new situation in Ulster - up to this they had not committed themselves on the Treaty issue. Incidentally, within a week, the I.O. men were back with the information confirmed that McKenna had thrown in his lot with the Free State army and offered his services to the Provisional Government to suppress his former I.R.A. comrades. Curran was remaining neutral, having decided to take no further part in I.R.A. activities - he was quitting. Brigadier Sean Larkin of South Derry was away in Dublin and had not yet returned.

A hotel beside Lake Gartan, the property of Mrs. Johnstone, was taken over and turned into an improvised hospital. Una O'Connor, who had come from Dublin with two other Cumann na mBan, took over the care and management of this hospital-cum-convalescent home for the wounded, sick and incapacitated. A thorough screening of our forces in Glenveagh was carried out and all those who had not pre-truce military service with the Volunteers were sent home.

An active service unit composed of about 30 Tyrone and Donegal Volunteers under the command of Comdt. Manus O'Flaherty, was sent off back to the Finn Valley area to harry both the Free State army and the R.U.C. and Specials. Their morale was low, but O'Flaherty was an experienced officer. Two days later we learned that they had all been surrounded by Free State forces near Slieve Cearc in the Ballybofey vicinity. After firing a few shots, they surrendered en masse using handkerchiefs and shirts tied on the tops of their rifles as improvised white flags. This shameful performance on the part of this republican column showed that they had no stomach for fighting anybody - Free State or R.U.C. We in Glenveagh were furious at the loss of precious armament, rifles and ammunition. We considered the loss of so many prisoners as a riddance of rubbishy camp followers and so intrinsically a military advantage, but the amount of weapons lost was serious.

Another column moved out from Glenveagh Castle. This force consisted of the hard core of fighters from Derry, Tyrone and Donegal (about 20) strengthened by six Kerrymen - Patcheen Clifford, Seamus Quill, Dan Enright, Christy O'Sullivan and two others - and six West Cork men (Jim Lane, John Donovan, Conny Crowley (alias "Paddy Murphy"), Dinny Galvin, Jim Cotter) with myself and Charles Daly in command. We set off west to the Rosses marching down Glendowan at dusk on a Saturday night.

Nearing Doochary before dawn, we rested and slept in the heather by the side of the mountain road. I had contracted pyrrhoea of the gums some time before (through using another toothbrush by mistake) and my mouth inside was septic. Column "itch" around my ankles had broken out into small ulcers discharging pus and blood, and I had to wear linen strips inside my socks to soothe the agonising friction of the boots I wore. Next day was Sunday, and five of us entered a small cabin near the road where we had a meal of pig's head and cabbage. We were waited on by a lovely girl of 20 or so, a daughter of the house, working in a hospital in Glasgow and just then at home on holidays. She knew nothing of the Irish political situation and her eyes opened wide with wonder at the sight of the Lee-Enfield rifles. She had never been in any Irish town except to pass through Derry and Letterkenny on her way to Scotland, but she knew Glasgow fairly well.

In the evening, we got ready to continue our march. But, alas! my feet became so sore and swollen that I could no longer walk except with agonising pain. Daly had already advised me to rest and then return to hospital. I had refused. He now ordered me to stay behind, leaving a local Volunteer with me with instructions to have me brought back to our "rest" centre at Gartan, about 15 miles away. Next day I found myself back in the hospital in bed with my feet being washed and disinfected and copiously smeared with sulphur ointment. Frank O'Donnell was in the next bed to me; he had trouble with an old injury. There, too, was Willie Healy, whom I had brought with me from Cappoquin. Willie had suffered a harmorrhage; already his lungs were affected. Poor fellow, he was to die within a few short years with pulmonary T.B. The Cumann na mBan nurses were kind, cheerful and efficient. Some of the I.R.A. patients could sing, others play the fiddle, tin whistle or mouthorgan. O'Donnell was always at the fiddle. Musical evenings were the order with both patients and nurses participating. There was some

flirtation and light-hearted innocent courting too. Healy and O'Donnell were both ladies' men and got more than their share of feminine attention. I acted the hardbitten old soldier maintaining a veneer of cynical aloofness. Truth to tell, I could be as amorous as the next or even as the best, but I did not feel attracted to any of the ministering angels about me. They, for their part, regarded me, I think, as a cupid-proof young man, concerned only with soldiering. Right enough, I stood somewhat on ceremony and remained the cold serious senior officer.

Within a week the column returned to Glenveagh. They had passed on from Doochary to Dungloe where in a brush with some scattered Free State forces they made some prisoners. These they disarmed and released. Entering Dungloe, they found the town evacuated by its Free State garrison who had retreated into the surrounding hills. The republicans remained around Dungloe for a day or two but failed to bring the Free Staters to combat. They then returned by way of Gweedore and Dunlewey to Glenveagh Castle. By the time they arrived back I was fretting and fussing in the Lakeside Hospital to be out and about again. Bathing my infected gums with cotton wool soaked in chloroform (a rather drastic and dangerous remedy recommended by our friend and admirer, the lady doctor (Dixon) in Letterkenny, had cleaned up somewhat my sore gums and dirty mouth. Rest and care and attention plus copious amounts of sulphur ointment was healing the septic sores on my heels and feet, the result of scabies or 'column itch', as we called it. This skin disease was the most disagreeable and persistent affliction from which the republican soldiers in the flying columns suffered. While incapacitated on this occasion in the hospital, I had a most unusual experience, a head-on conflict with another republican officer.

Charlie Daly's reliance on and advocacy of propaganda and publicity was a source of amusement to most of the rest of us officers of the Northern Division. We were highly sceptical of publicity as being of any military value and I "codded" Charlie unmercifully about the attention he gave to this aspect of I.R.A. warfare. Charlie, the idealist of the extreme romanticism and all-embracing magnanimity, took it all with a smile and kept on diligently with his propaganda department. He had a publicity office set up and equipped with typewriters, paper and duplicating utensils. A publicity man from the Dublin H.Q. came along to take over this divisional activity, a Corkman named O'Donovan. Nothing would satisfy this O/C. Propaganda but to commandeer some rooms in Mrs. Johnstone's private manorial residence where she lived with her daughter, Justinia. Naturally, the old lady was much upset and bitterly angry with the republicans for such an act. In 1918, her husband, Major Johnstone had been shot inadvertently in a raid for arms on his house by the Volunteers. Despite this, sho and especially her daughter Justinia were friendly disposed towards the republicans and, apart from giving the lakeside hotel, their property, to the I.R.A. as a hospital, had, in other ways too, aided them. I was furious when I was told by one of the local Volunteers - I believe it was the local company captain, a young Presbyterian named Ferguson, who reported it to me. He, too, resented such a high-handed act of tyranny on the part of a strange republican, the victims moreover being two helpless ladies. I made up my mind to investigate it without delay. Getting up from my convalescent bed, I dressed myself, put a Webley revolver in my overcoat pocket. With the aid of a walking stick, I hobbled along to the Johnstone residence, about two miles away down at the end of a long avenue.

Arriving there, I was welcomed by the old lady herself,

a gentle, grey-haired woman of 60 or so. She told me the whole story and how surprised she was that a republican officer should force himself like that on her household. She was more surprised when she learned that it was a wanton unauthorised act by this man Donovan and that the competent republican authority - the First Northern Division H.Q. - knew nothing of it. I assured her that I would see to it that she would not be troubled with Donovan's presence and that no I.R.A. man would be billeted on her house. She was very much relieved and so grateful. She got her daughter to prepare refreshments for me and she insisted on my staying the whole evening with them, which, truth to tell, I did with alacrity. We spent a most enjoyable time around a warm fire in a heavily carpeted drawing-room. I, for the first time in my life, drank two whole bottles of champagne, small size of course, filled out for me by Justinia herself at the insistence of her mother. I made my leave-taking at last, long after dark, and as I wended my way back haltingly and a little uncertain, my mind was full of romantic dreams of renewing acquaintance with the fair Justinia, the heiress of the Johnstone estate. Alas for the fantastic imaginings of impressionable youth - I never saw the lady again. Next day I accosted Donovan, and we had a rare encounter. He was a fairly tall but weedy-looking fellow, skinny with long gaunt face and black hair, the poetic or intellectual type. I asked him for an explanation for his billeting himself and his propaganda impedimenta on an old lady. He was haughty and bridled at my question. I was much younger than he. He demanded my authority for interfering with him and his activities. He got it. I told him in a few cutting words what I thought of his behaviour in forcing himself in the name of a republican propaganda officer on a house occupied by only two ladies, mother and daughter who, moreover, were friendly disposed towards the republican cause and had already

made great sacrifices on our behalf. He had come into this area from Dublin and had tried, without the authority or even knowledge of the competent republican authorities there, to begin his publicity work by such a display of swashbuckling tyranny. I warned him that if he attempted to set up his H.Q. there in Mrs. Johnstone's that I would go personally and kick him out of the place. He produced a gun and swore furiously that he was taking no orders from me and that he would not hesitate to use the gun if interfered with. I laughed mockingly, taunting him that if he wanted gun play his place was with the fighting men in the active service units and not for the purpose of terrorising helpless women. My parting shot was a warning not to have me hear that he ever again showed himself next or near the Johnstone home, either himself or his publicity apparatus. He never did. Many years after I saw where O'Donovan figured prominently as a Local Government chief in a big political controversy. It was, I believe, my 'propaganda' man from Donegal. He had waxed powerful and prominent on 'publicity', reaching the top in public administration. My contempt for him and his 'propaganda' stunting grew with the years.

Back in Glenveagh we lived on food stores acquired by the enforcing of the Belfast Boycott. We had ample supplies of flour, meal, sugar and tea, with tinned, preserved and dried stuffs too. Apart from bacon, meat was very scarce. We supplemented the meat rations by shooting deer in the mountains around Lough Veagh. I had never eaten venison until then. But the way we got it cooked and served up, you would need to be starving for want of a taste of meat before you could eat it. The deer was shot in the morning, taken into our quarters and skinned while yet hot. It was then cut into large joints or junks and stewed that evening and next day. The venison appeared on the bare table in dark-red dry hunks. It was carved

with difficulty. On the plate it tested the sharpest knife and one might as well chew a piece of tarred rope. I found it tasteless and indigestible. But it was meat and it filled aching bellies. Attempts by our cooking staff - as well as Cumann na mBan girls , we had an American ex-sailor and an ex-soldier of the British army who had army cooking experience - to roast and grill the flesh of the deer only made the stuff blacker, more smoky and more unpalatable. Not for years after did I learn that venison should be hung for months or even buried for a while before it becomes tender enough to be used for human food as meat. And to think we ate it almost raw in Glenveagh. But our stomachs then were capable of anything. The deer besides being mighty tough have amazing vitality.

One morning, Con Crowley, myself and two others set out to shoot a deer. After careful stalking for an hour or more we got within 250 yards range of three or four grazing quietly on a green sward on the lower slope of a mountainside. One of the men took careful aim at the nearest animal and fired. The deer dropped and the others bounded away. We advanced to collect our booty. As we approached, the fallen deer started kicking convulsively, then stopped. Con Crowley ran forward pulling out his Webley .45 and stood astride the deer's head. Pressing the muzzle of the gun to the motionless head of the animal, he fired. The next instant we saw Con tossed into the air and the deer bursting forward several strides. It then staggered drunkenly, dragged itself for many more yards ahead. We were all too surprised to do anything but laugh uproariously at Conneen who, by this time, had picked himself up bewildered by what had happened. Con was accused of having given an injection instead of a bullet to the deer. At any rate, he had succeeded in restoring him to racing form. Later that morning, we got the deer, dead. There was no hole of a .45

bullet in his head. Apparently, Con's shot had ricochetted off the thick bone or horny material of the deer's head and had, amazingly enough, galvanised the stricken animal into a last frenzied burst of instinctive flight.

A few nights later, we moved off - about 18 of us - to the little village of Dromkeen, situated halfway or so on the main direct road from Stranorlar to Letterkenny. Free State H.Q. in Co. Donegal was then located in Dromboe Castle, Stranorlar. We had learned from I.O. reports that an armed convoy travelled daily from Dromboe to Letterkenny in the morning, returning by a roundabout way later in the evening. It was a kind of a motorised patrol column searching for the "Irregulars", as we of the I.R.A. were called by the Free Staters. We planned to surprise this F.S. force at Dromkeen. Arrived there after a ten-mile night march cross-country, we rested for a while in the early morning. I was almost completely crippled after the long trek, even though I carried no rifle, but used a stout walking-stick to help me keep up with the rest. I had of course a heavy Webley .45. We made our battle H.Q. in a large farmhouse on a hillside about 500 yards west of Dromkeen village. On reaching it, I lay on a bed quite exhausted. Charlie Daly and myself with Jim Cotter discussed the proposed ambush and decided on our plan of action A land mine, electrically detonated was set in the road on the Stranorlar side of the village and camouflaged with loose road material. "Captain" J. Quinn of Glendowan supervised the mine-laying. Two lorries (Crossley tenders usually) and a couple of touring cars ahead as scouting parties were expected. Our attacking force consisted of five Kerrymen, five or six West Corkmen and about eight Ulstermen, all experienced fighters. Charlie, having inspected everything, and it being still very early, sent those in battle stations in the village off to eat breakfast in the nearest houses. The Kerrymen and some of the Corkmen went no further than the village pub and

the little Post Office. The Staters would not be along for a couple of hours yet. It was a lovely clear calm morning with the sun shining brightly. The waiting would be irritating and irksome. Then away in the distance the drone of motors was heard - it could not be the F.S. convoy so soon! But it was! John Quinn and his section manning the land-mine position scurried helter-skelter to their places. The Cork and Kerry boys rushed from the pub out on the road with rifles at the ready. They had hardly reached the opposite fence when a large touring car with six men in it was upon them. As it passed they spotted the armed men inside. "Halt", they roared. The car sped on to a turn some yards further on. A ragged burst of rifle fire. The car swayed drunkenly then crashed into the fence as more shots rang out. Our men ceased firing and ran to the wrecked car. The driver and his companion in front were dead, shot through the head. The other four were wounded, two very badly. In the meantime, a large Free State lorry containing about 16 or 20 men with a machine gun had been following about half a mile to the rear of the advance car. Hearing the shooting further ahead in the village, they slowed up as they neared the lower portion of the hill where the mine was laid and where Quinn's men were under cover. Then, 50 yards before they reached the mined 'spot' the Free Staters swung right along a narrow byroad towards Raphoe, accelerated and tore away furiously in a cloud of dust to the east, leaving their unfortunate comrades to their fate. It was a callous exhibition of cowardice. As they raced away, Quinn's party could see their levelled rifles and the Lewis gun muzzle trained on Dromkeen village. But they never fired a shot. For an hour or so after, we remained on the alert awaiting Free State reinforcements coming to their comrades' rescue. But none came. Back in the village, medical and spiritual aid were sent for, but two of the Free Staters died on the

roadside after getting first aid from a Kerry republican soldier, Seamus Quill of Listowel, a chemist by profession.

Two hours later, Charlie Daly ordered a withdrawal to Glenveagh. We captured five rifles with bandoliers and ammunition and a few revolvers. As the column moved back in battle order, I brought up the rear with the two slightly wounded Free Staters whom we took along as prisoners. I had one of the captured rifles slung over my shoulder and wore an overcoat though the day was now warm. I had a loaded revolver ready to my right hand, while with the left I used my walking stick to help my poor feet. One of the Staters was wounded, with a bullet through the breast beneath the shoulder and his arm was in a sling. He was tough and strong and, though he complained of much pain, he was able to walk much better than myself. The other, a young lad of 19 or so, was but slightly grazed on the throat and in the forearm by bullets. He was severely shocked and beside himself with fear. I talked to them as we straggled along far in the rear of the main body. The tough lad, a British army war veteran by the way, answered my questions gruffly in few words and generally maintained a defiant though not an insolent demeanour. The other was too frightened to speak intelligibly, kept his head down and diverted and seemed likely to drop any moment, he was so scared and weak. His companion looked at him contemptuously. Only afterwards did I learn the cause of the young prisoner's terrified appearance. He had heard lurid stories about the bloodthirsty "Irregulars" and he was convinced that he was being led away to be tortured and then shot. (Poor lad! he was already suffering many deaths in his tortured imagination). As we trudged along west up Glen Swilly, I noticed our main body halted a little way ahead. I was curious and hurried on painfully. As I reached them, a wellknown West Cork voice rang out: "Hallo, Mickeen.

You've still got the bloody itch". It was Sean Lehane; Sean him self in the flesh, there chatting laughingly with Charlie Daly, Jim Lane, Dinny Galvin and Jim Cotter. Sean, who had left us to go to the Army Convention in Dublin ages ago, or so it seemed. Here he was back again to command his soldiers after having tramped on foot all the way back from Kinsale, through Counties Cork, Limerick, Clare, Galway, Mayo and Sligo to Mullaghmore on Donegal Bay and across to Dunkineely and north through wild Donegal to Glenveagh Castle, where he knew the I.R.A. were still in occupation. There he had learned of the column's march to the Dromkeen ambush and he had followed on. Now he was with us again and we all felt a new sense of security, confidence and relief. For Lehane, with all his boyish humour and lighthearted merry ways, was as solid as a rock and clear-headed as well. Among us, who had served with him in West Cork and who admired his daring, he inspired the utmost confidence.

The whole column now resumed the withdrawal up Glen Swilly towards our base in Glenveagh Castle. A little farther on we met a middle-aged farmer on horseback on the banks of the Swilly. He stopped as we came up and addressed us cheerily as he noted the rifles and equipment. "Hallo!", he cried, "I heard shooting away on yon hill near Dromkeen this morning. Was there a fight?". There was, and we told him of the scrap and of the rout of the Free State motorised column. He was glad that we had won the fight. "I am a republican", said he, "though last week a lad of mine left here and went in to Letterkenny to join the Staters. I was wild when he went, for I hated any of the Friels (?) (I think that was the name), turning over to the Free State. I hope he has come to his senses by now!" I was struck by his friendly apologetic manner to us and by his bitter denunciation of his own son. I noticed

our prisoners eyeing him strangely. We moved on. That night, we swung north to Templemartin, a small village between New Mills and Churchill. We ate a hearty supper billeted in the houses around. Then Jack Fitzgerald, Charlie Daly and I escorted the two prisoners to the local Dispensary Doctor who happened to be a Tipperary man. He took scant notice of the frightened young Stater. "A young chicken like you", said he, "has no business going out to fight these ferocious Munster men. Go back to your mammy, laddie". He daubed some iodoform on the grazed skin of the young lad and turned to the other casualty. This latter, an ex-Tommy, hard as nails, stood erect and stiff as the doctor removed his shirt exposing his chest naked to the waist. With a fine steel probe no thicker than a darning needle, the doctor entered the bullet hole low beneath the left shoulder. As the probe slithered and searched the wound, trying to locate the bullet (there was no exit wound) the wounded man never flinched. He must have suffered intense pain as the questing needle jabbed and poked in the raw flesh on the trail of the slug; big drops of sweat formed on his forehead, but he bore it all without a murmur, never even wincing. I had to admire his stoicism, so had the doctor. At length, failing to locate the bullet, the medico had to desist. I really believe he himself was exhausted from the probing. He then dressed the wound, remarking that he would try again in daylight.

We then left the doctor's house, bringing our prisoners with us to a large house in the village. He were held a hurried council-of-war with Sean Lehane presiding. It was decided to withdraw after a few hours rest to Glenveagh and to release our prisoners. Then we rested, smoked and chatted until round midnight. The two Stater prisoners were then brought before us. They were asked would they quit the Free State army.

The younger, the "softie", cheered up visibly and expressed his readiness to do so with alacrity. He grasped at the one chance of life and salvation (as he thought) and he evidently would do anything his captors asked him. Not so the other. He flatly refused to desert or get out of the Free State army. Asked why, he said he was a regular soldier and he had sworn allegiance to that army and he would do his duty no matter at what cost. He was truly a brave fellow. Then, to their amazed surprise, they were given cigarettes and told that they were free to go where they pleased. But Lehane warned them sternly that if they were ever again caught operating with the Free State forces, they could expect short shrift.

Back in Glenveagh Castle we rested, taking things easy as we waited the next move of the Free State troops. We trained earnestly and did our military chores conscientiously. Off duty, we boated and swam and fished in Lough Veagh on whose banks the Castle was situated. Owing to its inaccessibility, only one route led into it and that through miles of bog and mountainside, there was little fear of surprise attack. Surrounded entirely by high rugged mountains, in a narrow deep glen, the only approach a narrow winding avenue between sheer wooded cliffs on one side and Lough Veagh's deep waters on the other side and the nearest habitations eight miles away on all sides, the place was a veritable fortress, all but impregnable. As long as our food supplies lasted, we had there a safe and secure base. We went to Mass on Sundays on all kinds of transport to Gartan Chapel and once to Kilmacrennan. But the P.P. in Gartan denounced the irreligious "Reds" who were down in Glenveagh one Sunday in all moods and tenses. Moreover, he insulted the Cumann na mBan who were aiding us. We were so angry that we never again went to Mass in his church. Then

a young regular priest from one of the Orders (Augustinian, I think) came along to us in Glenveagh. He was a Wexfordman and had come from Dublin where he had seen the fighting in O'Connell St. He comforted us and reassured us and gave us all Conditional Absolution. Whatever little scrupulosities we had felt about the religious implications of our position and any doubts or qualms aroused by clerical denunciations were set at ease. We all felt much better and our morale was much higher as the result of Rev. Fr. Costelloe's visit to succour us spiritually.

The summer days passed by. The hospital at Gartan Lake filled up with our casualties, sick, hurt, injured and broken down in health and spirits. Willie Healy, whom I had brought with me from Cappoquin, got crocked after a haemorrhage, went in to be nursed back again. Patcheen Clifford, one of the Kerry lads, got knocked over by a combination of maladies including itch and he too had to lie up. The place was full. Then we heard yarns about the great fun that the patients and their nurses were having there. The stories persisted. Jim Lane and one or two others of the woman-hating kind were very critical of their fellows who had sought sanctuary and solace for their sicknesses in the hospital. Sean Lehane, Div. O/C., got riled at all the loose talk. He made a sudden inspection of the hospital. Charlie Daly, Jack Fitzgerald and myself were with him. He found everything in ship-shape order. Afterwards, he called the nursing staff - four or five Cumann na mBan, some of them from Dublin - into a room where we were. He repeated candidly to them (Sean could be very blunt) the rumours he had heard of the "goings on" at the hospital, assured them that he had full confidence in them and that there was no ground for complaint in their management of the hospital. We listened in some embarrassment as Sean lectured

them on the ethics of military hospitals. He was as fond of "courting" as any white man, he admitted, but he emphasised that the present - a time of bitter civil war - was no time for romantic distractions or cuddling or flirting especially in an I.R.A. hospital. And he ended by asking them to see to it that hospital discipline and routine was strict and that no cause to bring discredit on the I.R.A. or Cumann na mBan was provided. The nurses listened to all this in silence, some bashful, and one or two reddening a little. The chief nurse said that they were glad that Comdt. Sean Lehane had raised that matter. They, too, were aware of rumours and scandal whispers and they wanted a chance to refute them indignantly. They were Cumann na mBan first, and amorous diversions were a very long, long way from their minds. The nurses went back to their work.

Later, that same day, two strange men were brought in by the I.R.A. patrol. They were tough specimens of about 30 and obviously of the criminal class. They had come from Glasgow, they said, to join the republican force. They were Scotch and had wide Great War experience in the trenches. They knew the I.R.A. was not a paid army but they heard that republican soldiers helped themselves liberally to loot and plunder. We searched them thoroughly. They had no firearms at all, but they did have large sheath knives, sailor type, and about £100 in notes and cash including a few sovereigns. After grilling them thoroughly, we concluded they were criminals at large flying from Scotland which had become too hot for them and hoping to find an outlaw's paradise with the republicans in Ireland. What to do with them was the question. We debated it for a little while. A few wanted to try them as spies and shoot them. Others wanted to strip them of their money and hunt them away. It was eventually decided to give them 24 hours to be gone out of the country under penalty of

shot if they were found after that in Ireland. They were released, money and all, and told that they had one day only to get away from Ireland or die. I still remember the pained shocked look in the face of the smaller fellow, who, by the way had a noticeable cast in his eye. They disappeared. We never saw them again. Some days later, an English daily paper carried a description of two men "wanted for murder at Berwick-on-Tweed and believed to be hiding in Glasgow, but they may have fled to Ireland". Were they our two "Volunteers"? I think they were, as the descriptions corresponded to some extent. This incident illustrates the lurid idea of the Irish Republican Army which was held by the ordinary man-in-the-stree in Britain in those days of confusion,

Again I was crippled with ulcerated legs from the "column itch" and spent a few days in our lake-side hospital. Sean Lehane with the flying column moved out from Glenveagh towards Churchill. I left the hospital that night and, walking with the aid of a stick, joined the column as it rested in Glendowan. Frank Shields, who had walked back from Monaghan to serve in the A.S.U. (after being courtmartialled and banished) had been given my rifle. I now took the rifle from Shields, leaving him unarmed. He was a bit crestfallen. I gave him my Webley as a temporary weapon so that he would feel armed as a soldier. He was consoled, especially as he was assured that he would get the first Lee Enfield captured or becoming available otherwise. That night we marched down Glendowan through the mountains to Kincarrow, nearly 20 miles away south-west. I felt crippled and sore with my ulcerated legs after the first 6 or 7 miles. But I got used to it as I was stubbornly determined to move with the column as long as I could get my feet under me.

Next day we rested at Kincarrow, a wild primitive desolate group of four or five cabins in the mountains of mid-Donegal

near Fintown - a poor hungry spot almost inaccessible except on foot. Here our food consisted of potatoes, salt, yellow meal stirabout, with a few eggs as luxuries. There was no tea or bread and little milk. I don't believe there were three cows in the whole district. We planned to hold up the mailcar from Ballybofey to Fintown early next morning down on the main road. Before 6 a.m. we were down on the road and had arrived at a small roadside pub. Making a collection among those of us who took a drink, we made up the price of a bottle of whiskey and a pint of porter a man for the thirsty ones. We entered and quaffed our pints at our leizure as we smoked and joked with the man of the house who served us. At first he was nervous and suspicious, but became more friendly and chatty when he was paid for the liquor. I believe it was his first experience of serving customers in the shape of I.R.A. column men. We left after a little while taking with us the bottle of whiskey and moved further away towards Ballybofey to intercept the mailcar. We waited at a narrow hairpin bend, taking the precaution of manning offensive positions back from the roadway in case a Free State convoy came along or in case the mailcar was escorted. About 8 a.m. a jaunting car appeared round the bend with one solitary occupant. It was the mailcar. We halted it and took possession. Car and driver and all were brought back to Kincarrow where we told the rather scared driver that he was being kept prisoner for the present. Then four or five of us tackled the job of censoring the letters and opening the parcels. A large quantity of stamps consigned to Fintown P.O. was confiscated and kept by Jim Cotter. Quantities of cigarettes among the parcels were gladly received and distributed later to the men of the column. There was nothing unusual or of any value as information or otherwise in the letters. I opened a small neatly fastened parcel addressed to a Mrs. ... It contained about six small

buns of various shapes each wrapped in paper, a packet of sweets and a box of snuff. In it was a little note in a child's writing. I read it. It was from a little girl on her tenth birthday writing to her grannie and sending her a few little presents from her "store". I never felt so disgusted with myself in all my activities with the I.R.A. I was almost crying as I read the letter. I felt a downright ruffian and Connie Crowley "rising" me with "seizing" a child's parcel did not improve my wave of remorse, I was utterly miserable at what I had done to spoil a child's act of filial gratitude. As carefully as I could, I packed away all the things in the parcel and wrapped it so that the address was visible on the outside of the parcel and put it back with the censored letters. Late that evening the mailcar man was released, his car and horse returned to him as well as the censored mail, but minus the cigarettes and tobacco and the postage stamps and Postal Orders.

That evening, too, we learned that Free State forces in great strength had surrounded our base hospital at Cartan Lake the previous morning, the very day after I had moved out from it with the column. All the occupants were made prisoners and brought to Letterkenny - the patients who were all I.R.A. personnal, and the nursing staff all Cumann na mBan. Later, Annie Coyle, the "Pride of Killult", came along on a bike with a dispatch confirming the capture. Amongst those taken were Willie Healy, Frank O'Donnell and "Wee" Joe, his brother, also "Patcheen" Clifford from Kerry. After some days incarceration in Letterkenny, they were put aboard the gunboat "Helga" in Lough Swilly and brought round by sea to Dublin. There they were lodged in Mountjoy before being shifted to internment in Tintown on the Curragh.

The day after the mailcar raid we moved away from Kincarrow under cover of night and marched along warily towards Ballybofey. At dawn, we left the road, dividing into two sections, one, the larger, crossing over the River Finn and continuing east; the other and smaller continuing to advance along the main road. It was a lovely autumn morning as the advance guard on the road reached Cloghan village. As they approached the front door of a pub, shots rang out from a window. There was a crash of glass and our men scuttled back over the road fence for cover. We were on the south side of the Finn. On hearing the shots, Lehane hurried forward to investigate. A slightly wounded Volunteer reported that they had been fired on from the upper windows of the pub. Lehane ordered the house surrounded. I was sent round to the rear with one man to cut off any retreat in that quarter. When all were in position, Lehane advanced to the front door, gun in hand. Calling out in a loud voice to those men in the house to open the door and come out with their hands up, or at the end of two minutes the place would be bombed out. There was no bombing. Those within surrendered and the doors were thrown open. Five Free State officers were marched out and searched. No arms were found on them. Lehane, Daly, Fitzgerald and I carefully searched the kitchen and downstairs rooms without result. Then we went upstairs where there was a sittingroom and several bedrooms. We were accompanied by some of the people of the house, two young girls included. These were very hostile and denied that there were any firearms in the place. The sitting room yielded nothing but a few army trench coats (these were annexed promptly). In the bedrooms, too, we drew blank. One bedroom was locked. I ordered one of the angry young ladies - one of the three daughters of the house - to unlock it. She refused indignantly, saying that if was the

bedroom of herself and her mister and she would not have "Irregular robbers" rifling it. I threatened to smash in the door at once, raising the butt of my rifle as if I was about to do so. She looked at me with hate and fury in her eyes and then unlocked the door. I strode in, followed by Charlie Daly (who was as apologetic and courteous to the angry damsels as I was stern and callous). Lehane and Jim Lane searched around and under the bed and furniture. I threw back the bedclothes - nothing. I felt the bed. Yes, the sheets were hot. I felt something else too. With an exultant yell of triumph, I ripped back the under sheet. Four Webley revolvers were exposed. All the time the two girls had been watching me. I turned on them now. I looked at them and my look must have betrayed what I was thinking. All the Webleys were loaded. Two of them had been fired. "Officers and gentlemen", I snapped scornfully at the young ladies, one of whom was particularly furious with mortification, "hiding their guns in <u>ladies'</u> beds", and I emphasised the word ladies. We went outside. The five Free Staters were lined up and thoroughly searched. One had a lovely British army greatcoat of the type worn then by colonels and higher ranks. I wanted to strip it off him and confiscate it - I coveted it for myself. Sean Lehane intervened to forbid any seizure of clothing or any other property of a private nature from the captured officers. Interrogation gave us the names and ranks of the prisoners. One was a commandant, the others captains.

Two of our men had been slightly wounded by the shots from the pub. One had a miraculous escape as a bullet cut the top of his ear and burnt a furrow searing skin and hair downwards on the side of his head. The other had a bullet hole through his hat. What were we to do with those prisoners? We could not keep them. We could not bring them with us. We detained

them for a while, as was our wont in such circumstances. Then we moved off. Here at Brockagh (or Cloghan) we were only 6 or 7 miles from Stranorlar - the Free State army H.Q. in Co. Donegal. Large forces could be expected along soon searching for their missing officers. We decided to withdraw up Glenfinn into the heart of the Bluestack Mountains. All that long afternoon we marched up the mountain road on the south side of the River Finn. At dusk, we turned the five prisoners loose and let them go their own way with the usual final threat that they could thank us, the I.R.A., for their lives and their freedom, but they could expect but short shrift if they ever fell into our hands again.

That night, with Con Crowley and Dinny Galvin, I stayed in a little cabin about 10 miles up Glenfinn from Brockagh. The column, roughly 36 men in all, were billeted in cabins here and there around. A widow of about 50 and her daughter about 18 or so were the only occupants of the cabin. It was all a kitchen, there being no other room. Two beds, both home-made wooden structures, occupied the floor near a big turf fire although it was still early autumn. Two chairs, a few stools, a dresser, a large table and a small one were about the only furniture to be seen. It was dark when we entered, the door being opened by the young girl in her chemise - her mother was in bed. We sat around the turf fire after having taken off our coats, rifles and accoutrements. We apologised for the intrusion and told the women that we would not disturb them or their sleep and that we would lie on the floor. The old woman offered to get up and prepare a meal for us. We would not allow her; all we wanted was to be inside and get a rest. They did not seem to be the least alarmed by our presence. We talked in snatches, then dozed off. At dawn, the old lady got up and dressed herself without any sign of shyness or notice of our

presence, then called the young one. The three of us went outside so as not to embarrass the girl while she dressed. We went in again. The woman insisted on giving us a meal, stirabout and milk. We ate it with relish and then peeled off and went into the bed just evacuated. The woman went about the work of the house inside and out as if unaware of our presence. Before noon, Jim Lane and a few others came in. Jim told me that they had located quite by accident a poteen still near the house where they stayed. The still had been smashed (by Charlie Daly's orders) and the poteen spilled, much to Jim's disgust. I too thought it wilful waste. But we learned that the whole district around reeked of poteen, that it was in every house and that even the children going to school got a sup of it in their bottles of milk. That was why Charlie ordered such stern measures, and he also wanted to impress all and sundry with the high morale of the I.R.A. and their lofty sense of duty. It certainly amazed the locals, as they never dreamt that the "Irregulars" and "Reds" would be 'so hard' on the poteen industry.

We got up and dressed, somewhat abashed by the woman moving about in our presence. Before we left, I was talking freely with the old woman, though I could not coax a word from the young girl, much as I tried. I had to eat an egg, a great luxury, with tea and griddle cake. We left them with many parting blessings. Later, I learned that her only boy, a lad of 18, had joined the Free State army in Stranorlar. The mother knowing nothing of the difference between the I.R.A. and the Free Staters, took us to be soldier comrades of her own son. We moved further up Glenfinn. A few nights later, we reached the head of the Glen near the source of the River Finn. Lehane, Jack Fitzgerald, Dinny Galvin, Jim Cotter and myself chose a large two-storeyed house (the only one in the whole area) as a billet.

Inside were three women, no men. All the women were barefooted. Two of them were about 30, the other obviously their mother. They were hostile. They regarded us as evil, for the old lady sprinkled holy water on the doorway and kitchen as we entered. They did not speak. When spoken to, they looked blank. Sean Lehane addressed them in Irish - he had a good tongue of West Cork Gaelic. They answered him in the Gaelic. That was it. They knew no English and spoke nothing but Gaelic. We looked at them curiously. It was the first time I had set foot in an Irish home where English was unknown. Could it be possible? Their name was MacAloone, as I afterwards discovered, and they had a few brothers who were away from home; one, I believe, in the Civic Guards. We rested there that night, but it was only too clear that the people of the house regarded us with apprehension and hostility. We took no risks and posted sentries and scouts. There was no surprise.

Next day, we decided to cross Mt. Bluestack the following morning at dawn. We were to move down into South Donegal and lie low for awhile in the Lough Esk and Mountcharles districts. Guides were due that night at McAloone's to lead us across the Blue Stack passes. Charlie Daly with Joe McGurk and about 20 men, among them Denis McNeilus, were quartered about two miles further on in the Glenties direction. They were billeted in three houses in off the road in bogland with turf-ricks and bogholes all around. They had put sentries out - a wise precaution as it turned out. Round 10 o'clock, two I.R.A. sentries, who had met for a chat to break the tedium of watch, observed groups of men approaching in the darkness from the road They challenged: "Halt! Who goes there?" Back came the answer: "Dail troops". "Who are ye". Two rifles barked out again and again. Shrieks, shouts, running and confusion. Scattered firing from the "Dail" troops - the name by which the Free State

forces sometimes described themselves.

Charlie Daly, roused by the shooting and the cries, ordered his men out into the night. Seizing their rifles and equipment, they rushed out of their billets into the surrounding bogland, using the turf stacks as cover. They scattered as they emerged from their houses to come under broken fire from the Free Staters who were beginning to recover somewhat from their preliminary surprise and subsequent confusion. The shooting continued for some minutes, then gradually died away. Charlie regrouped his column half a mile away nearer us on the Glen road and counted his losses. Three men missing, amongst them Joe McGurk, Div. Q.M., and Denis McNeilus, my assistant in the Div. Engineering Department. McGurk and his comrades were trapped in a small isolated billet and were surrounded before they could escape into the open. They fought until their ammunition was exhausted and then surrendered.

The Free Staters suffered severe losses, three killed and five or six wounded. They reported that in the midst of all the confusion a priest, accompanied by a setter dog, appeared round a turf stack and blazed away at them, then crouched down and sped away zig-zag fashion between the turf ricks preceded by the scouting setter. They accused the republicans of disguising themselves as clergymen to deceive their Free State enemies. Charlie Daly, with his column reformed, awaited the pursuit of the Staters. As there was no pursuit, he retreated slowly to our H.Q. Meantime we, under Sean Lehane, hearing all the shooting in the distance, took up strong positions on the roadside facing west. Scouts were sent forward to investigate. In a short time, Charlie Daly and his retreating column loomed up through the darkness. Rapidly, Daly recounted the features of the fight and his escape. We held a hurried council-of-war.

It was apparent that the Free Staters had planned to squeeze us in Upper Glenfinn between two Stater columns - one column moving from Glenties eastwards, the other striking up Glenfinn from Stranorlar trailing us from the west. The Glenties column had acted too precipitately and spoiled the plan. But we were still in great danger. Bottled up in a deep glen at the source of the Finn River with strong enemy forces a few miles off blocking the only two escape routes, it was pretty clear that the morning would see us crowded into a position from which it would be impossible to fight our way out in daylight.

By this time, the moon had risen and the night was fine and clear. We decided to try the crossing of the Bluestack mountain range that very night without further delay. We had with us one local republican who knew the mountains here and who had crossed by this route before rounding up stray sheep, but in the daytime. He had no experience of mountaineering by night; we also had a guide from South Donegal who knew intimately the country at the south side of the Bluestacks. But, guides or no guides, we had little choice. The alternative was to wait for dawn. But that would surely see us caught in the Free State trap, like rats, with the total liquidation of our I.R.A. column as the most probable result.

It was not yet 1 a.m. when we formed up to essay the crossing. Sean Lehane in a few clear sharp words outlined our march and objective. It would test the courage, spirit and endurance of the men to the limit. They were to bring with them all their clothing and equipment and, no matter what the temptation or how exhausted they might be, they were not to discard any item whatsoever on the trek. Off we started down a narrow glen which led to the river Finn, here just a mountain

torrent rolling down out of a deep rift glen on the face of Bluestack. Lehane and the two guides led the way, the main body followed in single file; I, as usual, was in the rear with Charlie Daly, Jim Lane and Dinny Galvin. In deference to my ulcerated ankles I was wearing low shoes with long stockings and riding breeches; I had neither leggings nor boots anyway and I had discarded my walking stick. My overcoat was heavy frieze and with the 10-lb Lee Enfield rifle, bandolier of ammunition, haversack containing a few personal items, I felt weighted down like a hod-carrying labourer. We crossed the Finn and faced up the gorge. The going at first was fairly solid up through the heather interspersed with rocks. Then the climbing started and we laboured and ploughed and slipped and fell and struggled on. As we mounted higher, we reached a boggy table-land beside the stream. It was the mountain bog where the River Finn rose. Here we halted and rested, soaked in perspiration and gasping for breath. It was about 3 a.m. We moved on. The going was now killing as we floundered in the swampy waste. We sank to our calves in the soft wet turf. I felt myself deadly weary and began to despair of being able to struggle on. Then I sank almost to the knees in the sticky peat. I was stuck; I failed to pull out my feet. I called Charlie Daly. He saw my plight and came to my aid. Pulling with what strength I had left, I drew my left foot clear, but the right was held fast. A rest for a moment or two and another terrific pull. I hauled the foot clear but without the shoe. I had to leave the shoe there in that mountain swamp as there was no hope of recovering it engulfed in that darkness. I struggled on, doing my best with the one shoe remaining. But I was losing my grit as well as my strength. Feeling overcome and all-in, I lay down on that seeping bog steaming in perspiration. Charlie Daly came back and implored me to

struggle on; that if I gave up now I would inevitably die of exposure. After a few minutes I dragged myself up and floundered on through the morass. The clammy misty darkness began to lighten a little. Dawn was breaking as we at last reached the summit of the watershed. Over the top, it was heavenly to find ourselves moving downhill.

Here we all rested for a short while, some smoking. Dinny Galvin, I think it was, produced a naggin flask of whiskey and offered me a swig. I drank a few sups of the fiery stuff, but it almost choked me as it "went with my breath"; yet as it coursed through my veins, I felt a renewed vigour. It was now broad daylight as we plodded down the southern slopes of Mr. Bluestack. The clear day, the fine bright weather and the faraway outline of habitations in a valley to the south sustained our weary limbs and our aching bellies. Hours passed. The sum came up bright and cheerful and consoling. At long last, I'm sure it was around 11 a.m., we came to the head of a wide glen down which a mountain stream gurgled. The glen opened out into a valley with scrub trees here and there. We reached some cabins. Oh! what relief and what rest! Jim Lane, myself and two others entered a small thatched house on a hillock of heather. There seemed no road, boreen or track from the house. A turf fire burned inside and a woman and two or three children moved around the kitchen and the one room which led off from it. The man of the house was away bringing home the turf with the donkey, she said. We stretched on the floor before the fire and tried to sleep. But the bean-a-tighe insisted on our going to bed. Cotter and myself peeled off and fell into the old home-made structure and were soon lost in slumber. The other two lay on the floor, clothes on, and dozed. We were roused to partake of a meal of potatoes, salt and milk. We ate with relish. The man-of-the-house had

returned. Chatting with him, we learned that the "master" lived three miles away in a big slated house, that he was a 'great republican' and that there was a priest, a relative of his, visiting him. "Good!", I thought, "I'll get an old pair of boots there". There were plenty of mountain sheep around and the householder told us that a lot of them belonged to the people of the district in general - kind of communal ownership. We asked him would the people mind much if we killed one or two of the sheep for food. He told us we were welcome. It was now late evening. A commotion was heard outside, whistling and calling and dogs barking. Seizing our rifles we rushed out. There, strolling up the hillock to our billet was Denis McNeilus, complete with black coat and black leggings, the rifle at the trail in his right hand. A few yards before him trotted a big red setter dog. He was the "priest" leading the "Irregulars" at the "ambush" near Glenties, according to the highly coloured Free State newspaper accounts. He had escaped across the bog, accompanied by the faithful setter who, for some reason, had taken a fancy to him. The dog was both a liability and an asset as a companion but despite anything that McNeilus did to drive him away, he would not leave him.

Denis got back to McAloone's hours after we had faced the ascent of Bluestack. He learned where we had gone, waited for daybreak and then followed us. Here he was now safe and sound. We held a council meeting that night and planned to rest up and lie low in that secluded and almost inaccessible area for some days. Next morning early, we shot a few sheep on the mountain. One of the lads in my billet, a British ex-soldier, skinned and gutted and hung up the carcase of one sheep. That evening, the sheep was cut up and joints distributed among the billets. We retained a leg

for our cabin and later put it down to boil in the largest pot in the cabin - one used to boil yellow meal. That night we all sat around, the four of us and the man, his wife and children too, and we ate a solid feed of mutton and spuds with plenty of broth. I'd say it was the first time that household ever tasted boiled leg of mutton. To us who had not had a decen feed of meat since we left Glenveagh, that mutton, freshly killed and rare and tough as it was, was like a Christmas dinner We all felt the better of it.

Next day, Daly, Lehane, Galvin, McHugh (a teacher from near Frosses in South Donegal) and myself dropped over to the "Master". We got a regal welcome. Refreshments galore, whiskey and wine and afterwards high tea, as there were a few ladies in the house. I was somewhat amused and flattered too with all the fuss about us and the admiration which we seemed to arouse. Afterwards, sitting outside in the front of the house, the "Master" (Principal N.T. in the parish school), his friend the priest (a young man of 30 or so), Charlie Daly, Sean Lehane and myself discussed the treaty, the civil war, the present state of Ireland and probable future developments. Our host seemed to defer a lot to my views - I suppose because of my university education - and I basked in my new-found importance. We went back to our billets that night feeling much better and more optimistic and our morale heightened. It was an encouraging experience to visit people of standing and education who appreciated the republican attitude and to meet a Catholic clergyman who not only accepted us "Irregulars" as Christians but also gave us wide moral support. Despite the universal denunciation by the Irish Hierarchy and the bitter fulminations of the clergy in general against the republican army in this civil war, it was consoling to meet individual priests who refused to impose religious sanctions on the I.R.A.

Some days after this, the whole column was mobilised at dawn and divided into two sections with a small advance guard. We marched under arms in the early morning of a fine autumn day (Wednesday, I think it was) to a small country chapel about four miles from us. Here Holy Mass had been arranged for us by our clerical visitor friend with one of the local curates. The P.P., I understand, was unaware of the Mass parade. I commanded one of the sections as we marched across country to the church. Arrived there, we stacked the rifles outside. A Derry-born sailor, who had spent 20 years in the U.S. navy, remained outside guarding the rifles. Deeney was his name. A real tough guy who boasted that he never remembered being inside a church. He had served with the American navy in Irish waters during the recent Great War (1914-18) and had joined the I.R.A. during the Derry Riots in 1920. He was as acrobatic as a cat-burglar and as hard as nails.

Inside, we forgot the anxieties and the tensions of civil war as we waited our turn for confession. Most of us made our peace with our Creator in the sacrament of Penance. Then our confessor said Mass for us and we received the Blessed Eucharist. Afterwards, Mass over, the priest gave us General Absolution and blessed us in a body before we left the little chapel. Outside, we shouldered our rifles and marched away gaily back to our billets. The morning sun shone brightly and all seemed right in God's own world.

For a week or more we lay low in this secluded area of glen and valley at the southern foot of Bluestack to the west of Lough Esk. We rarely spent more than two nights in the same billets, moving always by night. Food was scarce and consisted largely of potatoes, oatmeal and yellow meal stirabout with occasional meals of mutton from the wild mountain sheep

which we ourselves shot and cooked. We did not enter new billets until broad daylight, though we usually arrived in the vicinity late at night. We sheltered and slept in out-houses; barns of hay or straw were rare luxurious shelters, though I never did succeed in sleeping in the deepest hay. I was always shivering with the cold in the early morn before dawn even though buried in straw with snoring comrades all around me. More often than not, we had to make do with turf houses and turf ricks as shelters. But when it rained - which it did often - it was heavenly to lie down under any sort of roof.

By now, many of us were in need of footwear, shirts, socks and underclothes. Several had no trenchcoats or overcoats of any description. I had the same shirt on now for several weeks ever since I got it back west at Paddy the Cope's store at Templecrone. Paddy's co-operative general store had provided us with a minimum ration of strong shirts and socks, paid for, I believe, by Sean Lehane in banknotes of which Joe McGurk, the Q.M., still held some from the Buncrana bank seizure in May. Socks presented no difficulty as the finest and heaviest wool socks could be bought in every second cabin at sixpence a pair. (Paddy the Cope bought them from the women who knit them by their own firesides at 4d or 5d a pair). Practically every man in the column smoked. Supplies of cigarettes were erratic and uncertain. Usually we replenished stocks from wayside shops and taverns paying in cash where we could. Often we had not a 'butt' of a 'fag' for a couple of days - those were our worst times. Rumours of round-ups by Free State columns reached us daily and kept us on edge.

After consultation with Brian Monahan, I.R.A. Brigadier in South Donegal, Sean Lehane decided to descend on Mountcharles one night to replenish supplies. Local scouts supplied by Brian

did the reconnoitring and guiding. About 10 o'clock we occupied the town. Our first concern was a drapery premises and bootshop. Here I helped myself to new brown soft leather boots. Footwear and underwear - mostly heavy shirts army fashion - were commandeered here. Then Con Crowley, Jim Cotter, Dinny Galvin and myself hurried off to the local Post Office. It was occupied by two nice friendly ladies of near middle-age. They invited us to tea. We joined in with relish. Then we traded in for cash all the stamps we had seized away back in Kincarrow weeks before. The good ladies paid us five pounds odd in cash and asked no questions though they smiled all the time. The cash was a Godsend to us as we used it to buy lots of cigarettes which we shared all round. After remaining most of the night in undisturbed occupation of Mountcharles, we withdrew in the early morning/five or six miles northwards to our new quarters bringing with us, as well as wearables, some bacon whichwas rationed out to the billets to supplement the usual scanty food supply available in the cabins where we stayed.

It rained heavily as we evacuated Mountcharles and we were all soaked to the skin as we reached the billeting area around 3 a.m. No clothing could keep out the blinding rain squalls driving in across Donegal Bay towards Mt. Bluestack. As we huddled by the roadside, before being allocated and directed to the particular billets assigned, we shivered in our seeping clothes. Four of us, told off for a billet in a small cabin by the roadside, knocked up the occupants before dawn. This was contrary to our usual tactics, but our condition of misery compelled us to seek heat and shelter. We entered, Jim Lane, Dinny Galvin, Deeney, the Yankee ex-sailor, and myself. We told the people in the cabin not to stir as we would not disturb them. We raked off the ashes from the

turf fire and stood around the hearth, crouching over the warm red embers seeking the heat. Steam a rose in a cloud from our clothes. We smoked and s moked and t alked a little. Bang! A tremendous explosiom and the red turf and white a shes flying into our faces, temporarily blinding us. I felt a sharp stinging sensation in my right shin, then a numbing stiffness. I limped back to the door. "Are you hit? What happened?" voices called. "I am, I think". I sat down, pulled off boot and sock and bared my leg. A reddish-blue lump as big as a pullet's egg showed below my knee almost on the shin bone. It was raw and ugly but there was no bleeding. A search round the hearth produced the empty brass case of a rifle bullet. So the mystery explosion was solved. A bullet dropped out from Deeney's leather bandolier as he bent over the fire to light a 'fag'. Nobody noticed it. It evidently fell into the hot ashes where the heat exploded it. The bullet itself, or more probably the metal case containing it, struck my leg. The injury was slight. The wound healed rapidly and did not cause me any inconvenience. Next day, Con Crowley, who had acquired a small camera, took a snap of the four of us as we lounged at ease under arms outside the cottage door.

But Jim Lane, an ex-British soldier who had fought in Flanders mud, Macedonian swamps around Salonika, and Mesopotamian deserts, was stricken down with fever. He got recurrent bouts of malaria, a legacy from his Mediterranean campaigns. He shivered with ague. He had only a wellworn trench coat against the foul weather and cold. I gave him my overcoat, a heavy frieze, in temporary exchange for the trench coat. It saved his life. Jim continued to move with us, refusing to lie up. For five or six days, he ate little or nothing, but drank copiously - hot milk, hot whiskey and poteen with plenty of cigarettes. At all events, in a week he was ship-shape again.

We moved along to Ballymacawl district where we hung out for a week or so. Sean Lehane with Jack Fitzgerald and a few Donegal men went off south west into Glencolumbcille seeking and arranging for a sojourn for the column in that wild district round Slieve League. They were gone a few days. Meanwhile, we rested and loafed and relaxed. I with a few others was staying in McHugh's (the local teacher's) house in the little village (which comprised ten houses at most). It was early afternoon as I with an Inishowen Volunteer named MacElroy (I think) relieved Jim Cotter, Dan Enright, Christy Sullivan and John Donovan from their outpost guard duty. As they made for a farmhouse a half mile away for a sleep and a feed, Cotter jokingly told me to send him immediate warning of any danger. I laughingly assured him that I would rouse him with a few rifle shots against the wall of his billet. Our guard post was a hillock in the garden behind McHugh's. From it a clear view could be had north, east and south for a radius of two miles. Behind me to the west was a steep hill covered with gorse and heather where Charlie Daly was quartered with the rest of the column. McElroy and I were joined by two other sentries, a young teacher named McHugh from this neighbour hood and a Tyrone man. It was a warm afternoon. As I talked and played with a couple of the McHugh children - a boy and a girl - who were overcome with delight to be allowed to chum up with us, McHugh and his comrade asked me for permission to be excused guard duty while they went for tea to a house across the valley on the main road to Frosses from Glenties.

The afternoon was drowsy and peaceful and there seemed no danger in the offing. I let them go. Off they went with their rifles across the fields towards the road a mile away. I lolled in the long grass and romped with the youngsters. The boy

beseeched me to show him the rifle. Lazily, I was explaining to the child, his eyes opened wide with wonder, the mysterious workings of the weapon. He asked to hold it. I let him. He called to his sister to watch him soldiering with the gun. McElroy, a quiet sort, smoked silently as he eyed us. Sentry duty was forgotten in that warm happy atmosphere. And then the rural peace was shattered rudely.

A burst of rifle fire away to the north east. I jumped up, grabbed the rifle and, slipping back the safety catch, slipped one into the breech. McElroy followed suit. The children scampered in as their frightened mother ran out the back door to bring them to safety. "What's wrong?". "Get back in and stay inside", I ordered. The shooting continued: heavy volleys answered by one or two shots. That was the rhythm. We located the firing. The house over on the Frosses road where the two sentries went for a meal was besieged. The two trapped inside were putting up a stout defence. "Come on", I shouted to McElroy. We raced down and across the village street and tore through the fields to Cotter's billet. As I burst into the kitchen, Jim and the lads were hurriedly pulling on their boots and clothes. They, too, had been alarmed by the firing. Quickly, I told Cotter what was happening. "Get out" I said, "and we'll try to rescue our two lads before their ammunition runs out". Out the six of us raced, McElroy and I in front. We extended to the north advancing obliquely across the rough hillside towards the north east, intending to outflank and surprise the besiegers. We were about 2000 yards from the enemy and between us and them lay a swampy valley beyond which the ground rose in small fields to the Frosses Rd. We reached a wide bank about 5-ft. high, stretching away north to meet another furze-covered bank extending west-east down

the hillside. Immediately in front was rough stretch of scrub moorland interspersed with moss-covered rocks and large boulders sloping gently away down to the boggy valley between us and the Frosses road. We took up positions of vantage along the bank, McElroy and I forward a little of the others who were extended along to the north. I endeavoured to size up the situation. All the time, the shooting continued over at the besieged house. Two fields down from the house and nearer to us, a mowing machine with horse still attached stood in the middle of a half-cut meadow - probably abandoned by the driver when he scuttled for cover. I could make out the figure of a man with his back to me pressed close to the fence above the machine. I thought I could discern uniform, leggings and military equipment - he seemed to be firing a rifle towards the house. I judged the range to be about 2000 yards. I adjusted the range sight on my rifle and took aim. When I had a spasm of conscience. Was I sure this was an enemy soldier? Perhaps it was the workman taking cover. I lowered my rifle. I would not shoot until I was sure. Moreover, if I fired, I would give away our position. I clambered up on the bank beside a small rock. As I did so, a shot roared out a few yards to my left, I thought. I saw McElroy close to the fence, rifle ready. Two or three more loud reports close at hand and as I dropped back down into the wide drain beside the bank, more shots quite near, apparently on my left front. I crawled up the drain to McElroy. "You bloody idiot", I hissed, "what are you firing at, wasting your ammunition like that?". "I did not fire at all, sir", he answered simply.

I was dumbfounded. He saw by the look on my face that I hardly believed him. "I did not fire at all, sir", he repeated. I stood up warily against the fence and, using a projecting

rock on top of bank as cover, I peered carefully to the front examining the terrain near me in the scrub. As I did so a shot rang out and a bullet knocked a splinter from the rock at my ear. I slid back. "Give me a grenade", I ordered McElroy. The situation was fairly clear to me now. "We are being fired on from behind that boulder and those rocks close out in front. "When I tell you, fire 3 or 4 rounds rapid at each side of that big boulder, then I'll let them have the bomb". McElroy took a grenade from his haversack and handed it to me. (Most of the men in the column carried home-made bombs of the "Mills" type in their haversacks - these bombs were kept undetonated for considerations of safety - the detonating mechanism carried separately could be fitted in less than 20 seconds). I unscrewed the grenade head to check if the detonator was 'in'. It was. I got a firm footing on the side of the bank. "Fire" I shouted. McElroy fired rapid. As the shots rang out, I pulled the bomb-pin and, swinging my right hand back to its fullest extent, I hurled that bomb with all my strength to land it behind that large boulder. With the momentum of my throw I sprawled forward belly on top of the bank. As I flung myself down into the drain there was a deafening explosion out front. Then a grim silence for a minute or more. McElroy and I cocked our rifles and aimed them on the rocky scrub. There was no movement - we saw nothing at all move. Five minutes passed and no sign of life or activity out there where the bomb had fallen. We were beginning to wonder if there were really anybody out there in the scrub when a burst of firing on the hillside to our immediate north alarmed us. We crouched down into the drain and slunk back up to where Cotter and the other three were about 80 yards away to the north. When we reached them, they reported that they had seen a body of men coming over the hillside about a half mile and moving towards them. They

thought that it might be Charlie Daly with the rest of the colum coming up to aid, but they had lost sight of the men for some minutes now and were uncertain where they were or what they were. As Cotter spoke, a shower of bullets screamed over our heads. God! we were enfiladed. We had rushed blindly into a trap. We lay down in the drain stretched in the squelching ooze. Bullets whined along the edge of the drain at our heels. One of our lads was hit, shot in the calf of his left leg through the legging. I was getting alarmed. The few times I ventured to raise my head over ground level, I could see no sign of our attackers. We were certainly trapped if they knew it. But we remained quiet as mice, never fired a shot in reply. Our enemies must have been deceived or else they were too nervous or cautious to press home their advantage and obliterate. They must have seen us, otherwise their fire would not be so concentrated. And yet! "Back to Ballymacawl as we came", I said to Cotter, "Keep down low and don't fire". As Cotter and his three comrades crawled back along the drain I and McElroy rose slowly from the drain and pressed closely to the face of the bank.

The shooting had eased off. What was happening? Were the Free Staters closing in on us and about to deliver the coup-de-grace? We clenched our rifles as we swept our gaze keenly in the direction of the expected final assault. We saw no enemy, no hostile stir. For the second time that day, I was mystified. We were no longer being shot at. Down across the valley, too, the shooting had ceased. All seemed quiet once more. Warily, Mac and I withdrew in the wake of Cotter along the drain. Reaching Cotter's billet and finding ourselves unobserved, we ventured to stand upright. Across the field of standing corn we moved in extended order and at the ready, the wounded Volunteer being now helped along. Thus we reached

the village of Ballymacawl. There we found Charlie Daly and the rest of the column in battle array. He was immensely relieved to find us back again at H.Q. safe and without loss (he had believed us wiped out or captured by the Free State forces). A quick roll-call showed only two missing - McHugh and his comrade. The shooting had ceased over on the Frosses road and everything seemed to be quiet. We withdrew slowly up from the village to a heather covered hillock near Charlie Daly's billet. There we took up strong defensive positions as we awaited the next Free State move.

Shortly after, we saw them marching slowly towards Frosses, the main body in extended formation along the road and a couple of flanking parties moving southwards through the fields which skirted the road on the east. We could discern a large group in close formation in the centre and two civilians, apparently prisoners, as they seemed to be tied together, but at that range - about 200 yards - we could not be sure. The whole Free State column numbered more than 100 in view, probably more whom we did not see. Charlie Daly forbade any firing at them - they were probably out of range anyhow, and then there was the danger of hitting our own two men who were obviously being exposed as hostages to discourage any republican attack. We discussed the chances of rescuing our lads by moving in the wake of the Free Staters on the assumption that they would halt for some time in Frosses village; but when we sized up the odds against a successful attempt (we were outnumbered by 5 to 1 at least) and realised that we would have to cross almost two miles of morass in an all-out rapid advance to keep on the tail of the Staters, we gave up the idea and decided to remain on the defensive. The enemy columns were hardly out of sight when Sean Lehane returned from Glencolumbcille with his small party.

I gave Sean a full and precise account of the day's events. As a consequence of our brush with the Free State forces, and as it was evident that they were now aware of our whereabouts, Sean decided on moving at once out of Ballymacawl. Not, however away south-west to the Glen, but to Coagh, a little hamlet surrounded by bog and mountain, 6 or 7 miles away.

Here we arrived under cover of darkness. At dawn we went to billets.. Next day was Sunday, but we kept all the inhabitants - men, women and children - confined to their houses and would not allow them go to Mass. Most of them were hostile and bitterly resented being prevented from going to Mass. They had heard of us as "Reds" and anti-cleric; our actions did not improve their opinion of us or their attitude to us. Now, we were proved "Reds" in their eyes. The day was cold and wet and miserable. We felt our confinement within just as much, if not more, than the people. That evening I wrote home to my mother, my first letter since the civil war started. I posted it later in Bruckless Post Office though I had little faith in it ever reaching its destination in Cappoquin, Co.Waterford, which just then seemed thousands of miles away.

We moved off next day from the hostile and depressing Coagh district to a quiet secluded but impoverished area some miles away where the local I.R.A. Commandant - Patrick Meehan - had arranged shelter and billets for us. I remember Meehan had forbidden us to approach one house - a large one - about quarter of a mile in from the road. He gave no reason. I was consumed with curiosity - I scented a mystery. So, with Cotter and Galvin, I approached the house up the boreen. As we entered the "street" (the yard in front of the house) we saw a young girl of about 17 very scantily dressed in coarse ragged garments moving across the yard with a sprong in her hand.

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/A

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

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

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

WS 1741 Miller v Dowling named individuals P363 and 1354

(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.

Seeing us, she started back in fright, wild-eyed. A strong middle-aged woman appeared in the doorway and advanced to meet us as the girl ran into the house behind her. At once, the solution of Meehan's mysterious prohibition flashed across my mind (these poor people - widow and daughter - were so poor and living in such wretched conditions that it would have been barbarous to seek food or shelter from them) and I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself for having deliberately ignored his admonitions. I spoke to the poor woman and apologised for having disturbed her household and said that we were only passing by. A lame excuse enough as we turned and retraced our steps. I stayed in Meehan's own house that night.

In this locality, one day, I got an urgent dispatch addressed to"Col. Com. Michael O'Donoghue". It instructed me to appear next morning as prosecuting counsel at an I.R.A. courtmartial. The accused was

He had carried on activities on his own in the Ballyshannon-Pettigo-Donegal area. His guerilla campaign was more in the nature of lawless depredation. At any rate, he had won unwelcome and dubious notoriety for the republican cause by his seizures and commandeerings. He was now specifically charged with raiding and looting a post office. To his credit, he had come along to join our column when he had learnt that we were in South Donegal. Brigadier Brian Monahan had reported dubious activities, and when appeared in our area he was promptly placed under arrest. Now I was hurrying along to prosecute him.

The Court was a large parlour of a farmhouse. In the kitchen adjoining were the witnesses, I.R.A. guards and column officers. Charlie Daly presided. I was prosecutor, and Comdt. Jim Cotter (I think) defended. I pressed the charges with vigour. admitted the major accusations against him but vehemently denied any selfish motives or any criminal intent whatsoever. He handed over all the proceeds of his P.O. raid (stamps, postal orders etc. and some cash). He was found guilty of the P.O. raid. I pressed for a sentence of expulsion from the I.R.A. and banishment from Donegal. But, taking all the extenuating features of the case into account, he was reduced to the ranks and suspended from the I.R.A. A full report of his courtmartial and findings were supplied to the press in South Donegal and the P.O. property was ordered to be restored. I do not know if this account was ever published in the newspapers to which it was sent. At the time, they were all (the press organs) bitterly hostile to the republican cause and to the I.R.A. and availed of every opportunity to vilify them.

Around this time, my health began to break again. I bled freely and often from the mouth - pyorrhoea of the gums was the real cause. But, as my stomach was affected too and I got thin and weak, it seemed as if I was breeding consumption. Moreover, I slept at night with a handkerchief under my head which, every morning was saturated with dirty blood which had oozed from my mouth during my sleep. There was a foul stench from my breath and my comrades began to avoid sleeping with me. Lehane and Charlie Daly both advised me to lie up and get medical attention. I got angry and resented their solicitous attitude towards me - protesting that I was as tough and strong as any of them. We moved down to the Killybegs area. As the column was preparing next day to move away, Lehane ordered

the fall-in. As Cotter, Galvin, Fitzgerald, Conneen Crowley and myself dawdled somewhat in hesitation, as we rarely numbered off in the main body, Dinny Galvin called out loudly "Fall in, the Divisional Privates". There was a roar of laughter all round. We laughed ourselves. The description "Divisional Privates" fitted us so aptly that we would have to be very dense not to see the humour of it..

From the heather-covered slopes of a mountain bog we looked down on the port of Killybegs. Though we were over three miles away, the day was so clear and sunny that we could see the fishing boats anchored in the harbour and the streets with the people moving to and fro. It was Sunday afternoon. As we lazed and lolled and smoked in the warm heather, we wondered if we, too, could be seen by any one down in the town. But no! we had a wonderful background of grey and purple heather to conceal us from searching enemy eyes. We lay there all evening. We had heard that there was to be a big dance in Killybegs that night and that Free State troops from Glenties and Ardara would be there. "Hughie" Brady, the local republican leader in Killybegs, had gone in, scouted and reconnoitred his home town and came back with a lot of intelligence and news. "Hughie" was a conceited type of republican soldier and fancied himself a lot. I did not like him - he reminded me too much of 'Donovan' the publicity 'nabob' whom I had suppressed back north in the Glendowan. Lehane thought a lot of him though, which notice added much to "Hughie's" vanity.

Acting on the strong probability, based on information that a Crossley truck of Free Staters would be returning after the dance (an all night) in the early dawn of Monday morning to Glenties, we moved west to lay an ambush for them on their road back. A high earthen back overlooking the road at a school house was the position selected. The school occupied the

northern corner of a small field (below road level). The bank, about 70 yards long, was the roadside fence of this field. From the southern corner of this field a boreen or track ran back downhill to a winding mountain stream on the other side of which rose a rather steep hillside broken by green grassy spots and cultivated patches with two or three houses further back. The bank was 8 feet or more high on the inside and about 3 feet higher than the rough road surface on the outside. A few scraggy bushes of thorn and elder grew atop and on the s loping inside. Lehane placed our riflemen in attacking positions along this fence for a front of 40 yards or so with small flanking parties at the schoolhouse and boreen. I was in an isolated spot in a clump of rocks about 100 yards to the south east of the position. I was reputed a bit of a sniper who had had plenty of experience of rearguard actions. Hence I was posted to this lone crag in the bog which dominated the left rear of the ambush position and which besides its offensive potentiality would also cover a retreat by the boreen in an emergency. I asked for McElroy as a rifleman in support. He had proved himself cool and steady. All were in readiness about 4 o'clock (a.m.) and we lay down to await the Free State lorries An hour passed. The silence was oppressive. There was no smoking and little talk. The men on the bank stirred often and settled down into fresh firing positions. It was difficult to remain prone and 'put' for any length of time on the sloping inside face of the bank. If the men s tood upright on the soft ground inside and leant against the bank, their attacking potential was nil. Hence they tried to use the roots of the bushes as supports to hold themselves in firing positions behind the cover of the brow of the bank. They began to get cramped and cold and s tiff in their uneasy berths. Lehane eased the t ension by allowing them in relays to stretch their limbs in the field behind the bank. Fretting and r estless from

watching and waiting at the crag, I strolled over to Lehane and Daly. We chatted a little as dawn came. It was cold and clammy with a weeping fog. I went back to my post. It was still before sunrise when a deep purring noise in the distance was heard, coming from Killybegs. On the alert immediately. A big dark vehicle loomed up in the greyness. It came slowly, showing no lights. It came abreast of the ambush position. Every instant I expected the whistle from Lehane, the signal to open fire. The truck passed in dead silence. It had hardly vanished out of sight past the school when I ran over to Lehane and Daly. He had allowed the truck to pass unmolested as, apparently, it was a commercial lorry with only the driver and a companion cooped up in the front cabin. We waited on. No further truck showed up. We were beginning to think that the Free Staters had fooled us when a lone cyclist appeared coming from Killybegs. He could he an advance scout. As he came abreast of the boreen, two of our men called on him to halt. He did. Then, to our intense surprise, he turned the bike around, mounted and away with him like the wind towards Killybegs. Our men dare not fire as it would give away our whole plans and position. Con Crowley seized an old rattler of a bike (brought along by one of our local Volunteer guides scouting for us) and tore away like mad in pursuit of the fleeing cyclist. In fifteen minutes Con was back with his captive. He had overtaken him and knocked him from the bike and forced him to walk back before him, bike and all. The captive turned out to be a local who had been so scared when the dark figures jumped up before him at the boreen that he had fled in terror (he took them for ghosts, so he said). His explanation was convincing enough; nevertheless, we detained him concealed under guard in the corner of the field as we were taking no chances. Soon enough, the Free State enemy would

learn of our presence and disposition. By this time, it was broad daylight. The fog was clearing and the morning sun began to struggle through.

As the morning advanced, the air got light and warm. It was now most unlikely that any Free State lorries would appear; still we held on in position. Two scouts were sent back way up the hill at our rear to collect some grub for the column. We expected bread and cake and some butter maybe. In an hour, the two men were back bringing a large bucket between them. It was full of eggs (both duck eggs and hen eggs) boiled rock hard. They had a little salt, too. It was the only food they had managed to poke out. It was very welcome. There must have been 5 or 6 dozen eggs in the bucket; we breakfasted on them and what were left were carried away in our pockets - a hard boiled egg is a great energy restorer to a hungry man on a long march.

The pangs of hunger relieved, we abandoned the ambush position and set off across moor and glen and bog to the mountainous country above Bruckless. Here we lay low for awhile My health got worse. The oral haemorrhage was becoming chronic. Yet I rejected all Lehane's advice to lie up and have medical treatment. Brigadier Sean Larkin and Tommy Mullins (Kilsale) joined us, having crossed over Donegal Bay after making their way from Dublin. I began to lie abed after my comrades; I was unable to do my turn on guard and keeping watch. I was becoming a burden on the republican column. This evening as I coughed and coughed, spitting often a dirty mixture of pus and mucus and blood, Lehane came in and sat on the bed at my head. "Look here, Mickeen", he said abruptly, "we can no longer take you along with us and we don't want you dying here on our hands in Donegal. Sick men are a burden to us now", he continued brutally, "and you are a sick man. You must get

rest and hospital treatment at once. The column is moving off tonight east towards Lough Esk. I am sending you back to near Dunkineely where you can rest up safely until you can be brought to hospital in Dublin. You may be waiting a few days before somebody comes along from Dublin for you. I'll arrange that. Here's a few quid - £6 odd - it's all I can spare. It may come in useful". I took it and put it away in my wallet with a few items and souvenirs of much sentimental value. He was right. But I was terribly lonely and depressed. It was a heart-breaking experience to be parted from the column, from the comrades with whom I had soldiered so long and with whom I had shared so many excitements as well as privations. I tried to resign myself to be wrenched away from the men to whom I was bound by so much friendship and comradeship. Lehane shook hands "Good luck, Mickeen, we'll see you again back in Bandon after this bloody war - Slán/Leat, Mick".

Charlie Daly came and Jack Fitzgerald, Conneen Crowley and Dinny Galvin and all the Cork and Kerry lads. Sean Larkin came and Jimmy Donaghy and the other Ulstermen of the column. Jack Shields came and I gave him over the rifle - the rifle which I had taken from him after his drunken escapade on Lifford Bridge in those mad confused days before the civil war began. They all took their leave of me. It was a sad farewell. There was a lump in my throat and I could only mutter broken words of parting. After they had gone, I sank back weak and dejected and Oh! so miserable. Hours later, a local Volunteer came along to escort me back to the Dunkineely district. I had kept my Webley revolver fully loaded with me. Sean Larkin had remonstrated with me, but I entreated him to leave the gun with me as long as I stayed in Donegal - I had a dread of being captured by the Free Staters in Tirconaill. A Derry jury had brought in murder verdicts against many of us southerners (some by name) after the Newtowncunningham fracas in May. We could expect little mercy if captured in Donegal.

I found shelter and rest over beyond Bruckless in Dorrien's house. He was the local captain of the I.R.A. but the place was very secluded and almost inaccessible. The only approach from the main road (a mile away) was by a track which led over a bog stream and which skirted Dorrien's farm. In Dorrien's I was confined to a room off the kitchen where I had a large cozy bed. Here I lay for a few days resting quietly. A fine well-dressed woman, a returned American of 35 or so, attended to all my wants. She had had nursing experience in U.S.A. and gave me a mouth-wash of hot water and salt before every meal. The food was surprisingly good and appetising and I ate with relish. I kept the revolver under my pillow. There was a little boy of 8 or so in the house. After three days, he was dying with curiosity to meet the mysterious man in the room. His mother kept him off at first with tall tales about the visitor. Finally, the lady asked me to let her bring in the boy who was craving her all the time. In he came. For the next few days, the child would hardly leave my side. We became fast friends. I ventured out into the kitchen at night and sat by the fire. The little boy would spend hours, big-eyed admiring & fondling the Webley. I was as nervous as a kitten and started at every sound or voice approaching the house. I dreaded the possibility of a raid which would force me to use the revolver and bring sorrow and fear and disturbance, if not worse, to that happy and peaceful household. Captain Dorrien was in touch with Lehane and brought me bits of news. I ventured out into the hayfield where Dorrien showed me where he had dumped the company's firearms (all shotguns) under hay ricks. I advised him on the better care and safer concealment of arms and ammunition.

The rest and care I got at Dorrien's banished my melancholy and I picked up quite a bit in the short spell I stayed there.

Then one night, 5 or 6 days after my arrival in the Dorrien home, a hefty stranger appeared. It was McCullogh, the son of a fisherman family from St. John's point, who had spent a year or two working in Dublin and was now back home. He had I.R.A. service in the metropolis and was now active in transporting republicans to and fro across Donegal Bay. He had brought across safely Sean Larkin and Tom Mullins and, earlier, Sean Lehane himself. He had been instructed to pick me up at Dorrien's and convey me across Donegal Bay to Mullaghmore in Sligo. I was to leave at once for the long trek to McCullogh's, a cottage near the extreme end of the long narrow peninsula jutting far out into the bay. I bade farewell to the Dorrien household and the little fellow was in tears at my going away. I felt lonely too as I thanked those good people who had cared me so well and harboured me from the Free Staters. Still, as I trudged along with my guide, my spirits rose. I was utterly exhausted when the McCullough house was reached and I went straight to bed. It was midnight, if not later. I was to be in the Divisional H.Q. of the wrd Western Division, I.R.A. at Lisadell (Gore-Booth Estate) by 4 p.m. the following day where Miss Una McDermott of the Dublin Cumann na mBan would be waiting to escort me by train to Dublin. We rose early. I shaved and spruced myself up and ate a hearty breakfast of fried mackerel. Off we set for the little harbour at St. John's point about half a mile away. The cows were being driven in to be milked in the early morn. Each fishing family in the many houses around had five or six acres of land (luscious pasture mostly) and kept a few cows. Arrived at the pier, we found upwards of a dozen small boats moored there. One large boat carried a little mast and sail. This was the vessel in which we were to cross. The owner was up the hill driving in the cows. McCullough went and helped him on the job, while

I saw down on the pier soaking the morning sun and breathing in the strong sea air. Six or seven fishermen sauntered down and began examining their craft. It was a lovely autumn morning. The mackerel were "in" and the local fishing folk were intent on "big catches" while they had the chance.

McCullough and the boatman came at last. They were talking, arguing rather, animatedly. The two went from boat to boat talking earnestly to the other fishermen. These latter, after a minute or two, turned back to get on with their work. I was beginning to wonder what it was all about when McCullough strode fiercely back to where I was. "Lend me that Webley a minute", he asked in angry earnest, "these bloody fellows won't man the boat for me". I handed him the gun, as I thought it better to let him handle the situation, as he knew his men. With the revolver swinging in his right hand, he walked rapidly back to the sulky, dour-looking men. I followed. "You and you and you", he ordered, pointing with the gun to each man in turn, "get into that boat there and lose no more time about it". The men demurred, some of them muttering sourly. "This man", pointing to me, "must be over there before midday", says McCullough. "It is a matter of life and death". I said nothing The men murmured that they would be losing another day's mackere fishing. "It was not fair", they objected, "after losing yesterday as well bringing over other men". "Somebody may lose his life", threatened McCullough, "and that's more valuable". That settled it. Four men took their places in the boat at the oars. McCullough handed me back the Webley and I stepped aboard. Himself took the steer and we pushed off.

Out south-west we headed into the Atlantic rollers of Donegal Bay. At first I enjoyed the gentle rocking and the slight lurching after every stroke of the oars. The boat was quite roomy. I sat amidships between the oarsmen. As we left

the shore waters and encountered the big rollers swelling in from the Atlantic, my initial dreamy rest was succeeded by a feeling of vague uneainess. Then came nausea and a headache of the really bad "hangover" brand. I stretched out full length on the seat. I lay down in the bottom of the boat. I felt superlatively miserable. An overpowering impulse to vomit and to vomit seized me. I lifted up my head and let it hang over the gunwale with my mouth open trying vainly to heave something, anything, up from my tortured stomach. Nothing came. As I lay there in anguished misery, the thought struck me of the extraordinary danger of my position. Here was I, being taken across Donegal Bay by a crew of hardy fishermen commandeered at the point of my revolver lying athwart the bottom of the boat utterly prostrate with seasickness and quite helpless against assault or attack. How easy it would be for my embittered crew to sling me overboard and to go back to their mackerel fishing. Even as I thought this, I felt in my woebegone state that it would be a relief to be tossed out into the waves. I would not give a damn if they did; and if they tried, I don't think I'd have offered any resistance, I felt so feeble and dejected in mind and spirit and body.

As we reached mid-channel in the Bay, the sun shone down in splendour. The rowers took no notice of me. A couple of them had now put out hand lines baited for the voracious mackerel. Every few moments they pulled in a squirming silver fish. Whether it was the soothing sunshine or watching with vague interest the fishing technique of the men with the lines, I could not say, but gradually I felt myself a little less miserable. Bit by bit, I found my spirits recovering and my physical pangs and discomforts easing off. Then McCullough called out to look at a large gunboat away in the distance in by Ballyshannon. It was the "Helga", as we afterwards learned. McCullough opined that it was a Free State vessel

discharging arms and supplies for the enemy garrisons in Ballyshannon Barracks.and Finner Camp. I shivered a little at the thought of being captured at sea.

Suddenly, I felt that, after all, life was sweet and freedom sweeter s till. Gone was the abject d espair of an hour ago. I was almost myself again. It was around midday when we pulled into Mullaghmore. The crew had caught five or six dozen mackerel on the hand lines. As we stepped ashore they were far more friendly. I invited them up to the hotel on the hillside, Hannon's of Mullaghmore. They came all right, though they were all anxiety to get back home to the fishing grounds. I called for a drink. Two of them drank pints; the others were abstainers. This surprised me. Such temperance was unusual in Donegal, especially with fishermen. I offered to pay them for rowing me across. Theywere indignant and emphatically refused. I was more surprised. After all, these same men had to be compelled at gun-point earlier that day to take the oars. Finally, I insisted on the whole six of us sitting down to a substantial meal at Hannon's for which I paid in cash out of Lehane's "few quid". Then as each of them got up from the table, they shook hands vigorously with me and wished me luck and Godspeed. McCullough was the last. To him I handed over my faithful Webley, enjoining him to return it to Sean Lehane. By the eager way he took it in his hands, admiring and fondling it, I had grave doubts of his ever doing so. It was, I believe, the first time in his life to be in full possession of a loaded revolver, to have and to hold all to himself. I guessed from his manner and from the haste which he showed to get back to the boat that he longed to display the weapon to impress the neighbours with his importance and newly-bestowed authority.

I waited at Hannon's for transport to republican H.Q., about 20 miles away at O'Rahilly Camp, Lisadell, some six miles from Sligo town. None came. As the evening wore on I got impatient. Finally, I importuned Hannon, who possessed a semi-derelict Ford of ancient vintage, to put his car at my disposal. Off we rattled towards Sligo via Cliffoney and Grange Round 4 p.m. we panted into 3rd Western H.Q. where I asked for Miss McDermott. She had just gone a little while before walking in along the road with Mrs. Devins (wife of Seamus Devins, T.D.) She would be returning again shortly as she had mentioned that she was awaiting my arrival. But she did not come. I decided to go after her, taking two Volunteers with me to guide me along the way she had taken. We tramped on and on, through Drumcliffe until we reached a republican outpost on a hill about three miles from Sligo. Here we learned from the I.R.A. guards that Mrs. Devins and another lady had passed by walking slowly towards Sligo an hour or so earlier. I waited at the outpost until sundown, but no sign of Una McDermott. Then I faced back to the camp. But my enfeebled health with the anxieties and tensions of the long day were too much for me and I collapsed after a mile. My companions helped me along between them, I explaining that I had been wounded and broken in health and was to be escorted to a Dublin hospital by Miss McDermott. A motor car came along. It was halted by my comrades who recognised the driver, a large local farmer named Clarke. The latter was asked to carry a wounded man back to Rahilly Camp. I was put sitting in the back with one Volunteer, the other sitting with Clarke as we travelled back to H.Q. Arrived here, Clarke and his car were let go and I went into the camp. This consisted of the great group of farm buildings serving the Gore-Booth Estate. An armoured car, the "Queen of the West," was parked in the great

barn with the hay. The 3rd Western Divisional staff and officers as well as officers and units of the Sligo Brigade occupied the main farm residence. I was given a bed, army style mattress on the floor, in this section. Billy Pilkington, Div. O/C., advised me to stay with them that night and await Miss McDermott's return there in the morning.

That night, there was a big gathering of I.R.A. veterans in the huge kitchen on the great hearth of which a big wood fire blazed, some sitting and some stretched in all manner of positions of comfort were the republican resistance leaders of North Connaught. With Pilkington, merry and gay in manhood's prime, the life and soul and natural fear-an-tighe, around the fire a social, a kind of ceili-cum-concert was started off. It was great. It was the first time for many months since I had had such a night of fun and entertainment. There was singing and step-dancing, fiddling and recitation. All had to contribute something. I, the passing stranger, was called on by Billy to do a turn. I could not sing, as the good God in his wisdom only equipped my voice with a "straight air", so I ventured a recitation or two. I could declaim fairly well. My version of the "One-eyed Yellow Idol to the north of Katmandu" was enthusiastically received. Much encouraged, I launched forth on "Dangerous Dan McGrew" as an encore. But, alas! I got bogged down after the "Ragtime Kid" has leaped round from his stool and I clean forgot the rest. But the company enjoyed it, my discomfiture as well as my declamation.

Among those there that night were Brian McNeill, Div. Adjt., my old friend who had helped me out with the Gormanston (R.I.C. Camp) expedition, Seamus Devins, Bde. O/C. Sligo and T.D., old, grey-haired Bradshaw, Town Clerk of Sligo, Protestant and republican veteran, Harry Benson, Tom McEvilly, whose brother

was killed fighting the Tans in Mayo, and many others whom I have forgotten. Alas! a few days later, six of them, including McNeill, Devins and Benson, were surrounded in neighbouring Ballintrillick on the slopes of storied Benbulbin and slaughtered to a man by merciless Free State troops from Sligo and Longford.

Next morning, I was about early. As there was no sign of Una McDermott, I assumed that she had returned to Dublin. After a long conference with Pilkington and McNeill, I decided on venturing alone to reach Dublin. Off I started on the long walk to Sligo town. At Drumcliffe I stopped at Meehan's publichouse and had a drink. I had collected all the compromising documents in my possession and tied them up in a small packet which I handed to Paddy Meehan himself to keep safely for me (until my return or until I would send for them). The packet included a "Permanent Pass into the Four Courts, Dublin, sealed with the Great Seal of the High Court of Justice in Ireland" issued to Comdt. Michael O'Donoghue, Div. Engineer 1st and 2nd Northern Div. and signed by Noel Lemass, Captain of the Guard in the Four Courts. It was a treasured possession of mine and I was very loath to part with it. But, on the other hand, it was a highly dangerous document which would seal my fate if captured. Another was a dispatch from Derry to Peadar O'Donnell, Div. Adjt. 1st Northern. Leaving Meehan's I had nothing whatever on me which would disclose my identity. I passed the last I.R.A. post on the sligo road. I met few on the way and aroused no interest as I sauntered along with as nonchalant an air as I could muster. Near the town, I went up the hill straight, avoiding the route in to the right by the river and the military barracks, and swung right into the town. Every moment I expected to encounter Free State military patrols. I met none. Nearing the bridge over the Garavogue river, I got the 'wind-up'. Why, I could not explain, as no

enemy was in sight. I met a man coming towards me, smoking a pipe and carrying a bucket, stopped him and asked him for a match. Then, lighting a cigarette (to steady my nerves) I asked him the shortest way to the railway station. "Straight on over the bridge, then turn left", he said. "Any military on the bridge"? I casually inquired. He looked at me keenly. "No", he said, and then "Good luck" in a tone which seemed to say "I understand". He was gone. With my heart going pit-a-pat, I reached the bridge and, walking easily, I got to the station unchallenged. A few people idled around the platform. The Dublin train was due to leave in 20 minutes.

I bought my third-class ticket and sat down in a quiet corner of the waiting-room. Then I got a shock. Clarke, my forced driver of the night before, appeared in the doorway, looked around and spied the ticket-window orifice. Out he went at once to the platform without looking around. I thought he had not noticed me. Fearful of being detected now at the last moment, I moved up to a window which gave me a view of the platform. Clarke was pacing the platform. I drew back. He passed the door. I moved quietly, peeped out, saw that his back was turned to me, then emerged boldly. I made for the toilet on the left, wondering what I had best do now. The train came in. Passengers took their seats. My decision was made. I strode out from the toilet (pretending to adjust my attire as I did) looked up and down the platform. No Clarke, no Free Staters in view. Good! I entered the door facing me and found myself in the narrow space between two carriages. I opened the door on the right, walked in and found myself in a first-class compartment. The lighting was poor. Its only occupant was an elderly lady to whom I spoke as I sat down. She smiled pleasantly and a few scraps of desultory conversation followed. The train whistled and pulled out into the bright sunshine.

I sighed with relief. At last, I was safely aboard, bound for Dublin and all danger past. I was in an exultant mood as I exchanged small talk with the dear old lady, obviously one of the "gentry" from her accent, her poise and her manner. What puzzled me was why she should be so 'nice' to me. Certainly she did not take me for one of those horrid "Irregulars". The ticket-checker came in. "This is a first-class compartment" he said, quietly, half-apologetically, "but perhaps you may wish to pay the excess". "How much?" I asked. He consulted his notebook. "One pound, seventeen and six" he said, as he passed on, "I'll be back again". The train stopped at Ballisodare. The station was swarming with Free State soldiers. For the few moments the train was halted there, armed Free State soldiers in uniform and full war-kit, moved to and fro on the platform scrutinising carriages and passengers. I was well back in the semi-gloom of my first-class compartment and the blinds on the rather wide window were partly drawn so that most of the interior was concealed from the view of anybody outside on the platform. Then the soldiers piled aboard the train which moved off. My anxieties vanished. I felt more elated than ever and imagined myself quite safe. The checker returned. "Oh, I'll change to a third class carriage at the next station", I said. I had decided that paying the excess would eat far too much into my attenuated reserve of cash and leave me with only a few shillings on reaching Dublin.

It was a fatal decision. As I stepped out on the platform at Collooney, the next station, I took a few steps, jostling aside a few people disembarking from the train, and reached for the handle of a third-class coach. As I did so, my right hand was seized from behind and I felt a heavy hand on my left

shoulder. I was swung around and found myself in the grip of two Free State officers. "We want you, come along". "You're making a mistake", I said, as coolly as my palpitating heart would permit. "What's your name, address, where are you going?" "Vincent O'Donoghue of Waterford, a student going back to College in Dublin". "What are you doing down here in Sligo?". "Spending a holiday in Mullamore with friends of mine". "Indeed; weren't you in Rahilly Camp last night with the Irregulars. And weren't you wounded and going to a Dublin Hospital?" I was flabbergasted and I am sure I looked it. During those few moments, I was the centre of all interest and curiosity to the mixed crowd of soldiers and civilians who filled the platform. The officers had searched me, feeling me all over with their disengaged hands (their right hands held revolvers). They pushed me between them back to their carriage. On the way, I noticed a civilian leaning out of a window further down talking earnestly to a group of Staters. It was Clarke. So that was the explanation of my being seized by the military! I had been betrayed.

In the train, I was minutely searched. Nothing was got on me. I had no letters or anything that would show my identity or prove my contention. I was further questioned. I was put seated in a corridor carriage with four Free State officers around me. The carriage was full of armed soldiers. They were nervous and jittery as they sat at the ready by the windows and scanned the country through which we passed. My military captors were friendly enough and offered me cigarettes and liquid refreshments. All the time I protested my innocence of any association with the I.R.A. They only smiled. I assumed that they were taking me to Dublin and I answered them that when the city was reached I would satisfy them that they were mistaken. They only smiled the more. Some of them were

chatty and spoke of their experiences down south in Tipperary. Then another surprise awaited me.

At Longford station, I was taken off the train and marched through the town to the Infantry Barracks. Two officers led the way with me prisoner between them. Behind us came the main body at least company strong. It was fair day. The streets were crowded with farm stock of all descriptions, carts and creels, farmers and drovers all over with cudgels and a shplants. As we marched through the fair day throng, threats and curses and jeers were flung at me from all quarters. I was a lone "Irregular" captive, of some importance evidently, and "Irregulars" at that time in Longford were fiercely hated. Sean McKeon, the local hero, had gone Free State and, being the military idol of the midlands, anyone hostile to him, that is any "Irregular", was regarded as anathema. Several times, angry half-drunken men crowded around me with sticks brandished threateningly. I was scared of being beaten up by that fair-day mob. I was glad when at last we entered the gates of the military barracks, and was handed over to the guard in the guard-room. A few moments later, to my intense surprise, my captors formed up again and marched away with their officers back out the barrack gate. I was kept in the guard-room for an hour. Then I was taken along to the orderly room for interrogation - a proceeding which had much sinister significance for some time. Who was the interrogating officer but corpulent Colonel Farrelly, a Free State officer whom I had met in a Longford hotel months before during the Truce one night that Lehane, Daly, Peadar O'Donnell and a bunch of us were on our way to Dublin. I recognised Farrelly at once. He gave no sign of recognition. His manner at first was bullying and his queries crude. He grilled me for information about Sligo and Rahilly Camp, about Pilkington and Devins. I clung to my story

and protested complete ignorance of I.R.A. matters. He lost his patience finally, stormed at me, boasting that he knew I had been in Rahilly Camp and had been knocking around Sligo with the Irregulars and that he'd make me talk after another session or two. I got angry too in my protestations of complete innocence. I was determined to bluff it out.

I was taken away and put in the prisoners' section. This was a large dormitory on the second floor of the main building facing the gates. Beneath was the military hospital and the guards' quarters. A single stairway was the only exit from the prisoners' quarters. About 40 prisoners were quartered in this one room, all from Sligo or Leitrim. The prisoners' O/C. was Comdt. T. Scanlon of Sligo town. I had met Scanlon before and he recognised me. I told him my story of my arrest on the train and of Clarke's treacherous hand in it. He was not surprised, as the informer had been suspect. He got a note smuggled out secretly from Longford back to his brother in Sligo. Result: Clarke was seized by the I.R.A., tried as a spy and informer and banished from his home and property, getting the usual 24 hours to clear out of the country. This happened while I was yet in Longford. I told Scanlon that my captors knew nothing incriminating against me or anything about me and that I was only being held on suspicion as a result of Clarke's tip-off. I was determined to persist in my attitude of injured innocence and, as a protest against my arrest and imprisonment, I was going on hunger strike. I asked Scanlon to disavow all knowledge of me. This he did to such purpose that my Free State captors began to have their doubts.

I was given a small mattress on the floor and a few blankets. Food was brought up in the evening to the prisoners. I refused it. I then stripped off and lay in bed, smoking an odd cigarette. That night I slept fitfully. All next day,

meals were brought to me but I refused food, taking nothing but cold water. On the third day of my fast, Scanlon told me that Captain Clarke, the Free State Prison Governor, had spoken to him of my case and expressed surprise that they, the I.R.A. prisoners, were doing nothing to support my protest. Scanlon told him that they (I.R.A.) knew nothing of me, that I was a total stranger and that they resented my being "planted" in their midst to spy on them, and they would have nothing whatsoever to do with me. Next day, I was removed downstairs to hospital. Here I was the only prisoner among a medley assortment of Free State malingerers, duty-dodgers and a few genuine casualties. I continued my hunger-strike. On the sixth day, Rev. Fr. Grey, the Administrator in Longford, came in to me. So far from being a spiritual comforter, he provoked an angry scene. In his arguments to persuade me to abandon hunger-strike he declared that Terry McSwiney (Lord Mayor of Cork) was a suicide. That ended the interview. I would not listen to him further and he departed in a huff. On the night of the seventh day, Captain Clarke assured me that my case was being investigated and that if they found nothing against me I would be released forthwith. On this assurance I abandoned the hunger strike. I was kept in hospital. Three of four days later, all the other prisoners were removed to Athlone and I was left, a lone prisoner, in the hospital. I was well treated. I had the honour of a special guard beside me day and night. Then, suddenly, one day, I was ordered to dress and get up. I did eagerly. I was taken under escort from the hospital and marched along to the Cavalry Barracks at the western end of the town. Here I was incarcerated in what was formerly a large cavalry stable. There were seven or eight other prisoners there, all locals, some political prisoners of republican views, others nondexcript.

My first night's reception by this bunch was terrifying. I was given a pallet and a few blankets which I put in a corner all my myself. Most of the others were lying round a large stove at the other end. After lights out (in the barracks) I tried to sleep. The cold, misery and dampness of the stable depressed me as I thought of the comforts of the hospital I had just left. Crash! a bottle burst on the wall a few feet away from me. I was startled. Then lumps of coke struck the walls all around me and my 'bed' was strewn with debris and cinders. Another bottle was thrown and another fusillade of assorted missiles. In a rage, I sat up and tried to pierce the gloom down round the stove. "Ye're a cowardly pack of bastards" I yelled. "Do ye call yourselves republicans?" There was a cessation of throwing. "Who are the cowardly bullies throwing the lumps and bottles?" "Stand up and be men if ye have any guts and I'll take ye on one by one. Wait till the morning and I'll talk to some of you fellows". There was silence. Then a scattered lump or two. Then a voice out of the darkness near the door called: "Stop that blackguarding. 'Tis a shame to treat any man like that and a republican prisoner too". There were murmurs. But I felt I had one friend and comrade at any rate. The bombarding ceased and I was left in peace for the rest of the night. In the morning I got up, dressed and advanced down to the stove and challenged the fellows lying there. None of them would confess to participating in the dirty attack on me the night before. I was emboldened by the success of my cheeky counter-attack. They were actually afraid of me. Afterwards I found out that there were only three genuine republicans in the crowd and these were from Ballinalee. The others were riff-raff hangers-on of minor criminal type who indulged in lawless and disreputable activities under the cloak of republicanism.

Weeks passed and no word of release. I became infested with vermin - lice and fleas, but especially lice. A large abscess formed inside my cheek, the result of infection from my diseased gums. A doctor came and advised me to submit to medical and dental treatment from the Free state army medicals. I refused, demanding release. The abscess burst - luckily for me o on the inside. Then one day I demanded to see Captain Clarke. Two days later, Clarke came. He told me bluntly that I would not be released as I was handed over to the guard in Longford as a prisoner whom they arrested on suspicion at Collooney. In the meantime, a few of us had been trying to burrow through the thick walls using knives, forks, pokers, etc. We succeeded in boring a hole 3" diameter into the neighbouring cell where two mysterious prisoners were confined day in day out without any exercise whatever. They were Free State soldiers who had deserted to the republicans and had been captured later. One of them named Keane, a fine sturdy fellow had been shot in the arm and should have been in hospital. But they were treated with callous brutality. Keane's wound had festered and his arm was a poisoned mass of rotting flesh, but he bore the agonising pain stoically. When we succeeded in communicating with them through the hole their spirits rose wonderfully. They were so thankful for regaining contact with the world outside even in this limited fashion. They had been kept in this dark gloomy cell for more than a month completely cut off from the world just as if they were buried alive. During our excavating efforts the body of Brigadier Reddington, Free State Commanding Officer, Longford, was brought in late one night to the mortuary beside our stable. He had been shot dead as he walked into a trap laid by his Free State comrades for the I.R.A. Commandant of Longford (Leavy?). The latter had been decoyed to a meeting at a secret rendezvous near Longford where Free Staters were in ambush to surprise him. Reddington, acting the decoy, went

ahead alone to meet Leavy (?) who, smelling treachery, did not turn up. The Brigadier, returning, was shot dead in mistake by his own men.

Now refused release, I went on hunger strike again. I stayed stretched in my lousy mattress and took no food whatever. Cigarettes helped to dull the eternal craving for food. For days I lay there and no notice taken of me. My comrades, with pity and good intentions no doubt, tried to persuade me to eat a little food which they brought from the cookhouse secretly. That only aggravated my sufferings. They wondered at me. Captain O'Callaghan, Free State O/C. Cavalry Barracks, came in, sat down beside me and, in a long confab, tried to persuade me (by flattery and otherwise) to give up the one-man strike. I refused. After ten days, my condition weakened and worsened considerably. I was weak and lousy and dirty and in a pitiable condition. The captain came again and again and then the doctor. On the thirteenth night, soldiers came in, rolled me in blankets, placed me on a stretcher and put me in a Red Cross ambulance outside. I, wondering and weak and shivering, the ambulance was driven off. I felt myself being jolted for hours, it seemed, and then we stopped. The back was opened and I was asked to take a drop of brandy. We were stopped opposite a pub in Ballymahon. As the Free State officer brought me the brandy, a curious crowd collected round the ambulance gawking in at me. I drank the stuff and felt a little warmer. After a long wait, we reached Athlone where I was put in a bed in a room by myself in the military hospital at Custume Barracks. I was stripped naked, washed and put into a lovely bed between sheets. I was given medicine and brandy. Next day an elderly officer came in, talked to me

for a long time and told me I would be released if I gave up the hunger-strike. I decided to do so. But I was not freed then nor for many, many months later on into the spring of 1923. I underwent many sufferings in hospital and later in the cells, but my prison life story must wait another day.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____