

Part I

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
LUGO STAMPE NILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1,741

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

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

Identity.

Engineer Officer, 2nd Battalion, Cork No.

Subject.

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

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DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1813

No. W.S. 1,741

STATEMENT BY MICHAEL U. Ó DONNCHADHA

(Michael Vincent O'Donoghue)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Within a mile of Cappoquin lived the Fitzstuart family,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By March 1918, the Cappoquin Company numbered 120. Its

officers now were: Jack O'Brien, captain; M.J. Walsh, 1st Lieutenant; Jim O'Brien, 2nd Lieutenant, and William Kennedy, quartermaster. I had transferred from Boy Scouts to Volunteers in January, being now 17½ years of age and old enough for soldiering (within the meaning of the Conscription Act).

I brought along with me an assorted armoury - a Winchester sporting rifle, an old pin-fire revolver, bullets of many calibres of heavy lead type and a sword bayonet. The latter was presented to me when I was Boy Scout captain, by one of my Boy Scouts - Declan Fitzgerald, a young brother of Jim Fitzgerald, the reservist who trained the National Volunteers pre 1914. The latter brought it home from France as a souvenir. Declan stole it from him and bestowed it on me. Later in 1918, this same Declan deserted from the Scouts and joined the English army as a drummer boy. I suppose he could not help the bugle in the blood of the militia breed. Incidentally, four or five of our "conscript" Volunteers, including two brothers named McGrath, also deserted about this time and joined the English army. It was August 1918 when the German armies were weakening and the Yanks were coming and an Allied Victory was in sight. Significantly enough, those who leaped on the band-wagon like this were all employees in some form or another of the local 'gentry'.

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

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

There was a hurling team of sorts. I had introduced the game into Cappoquin in 1913, but no progress was made here until 1917 when we formed a club, affiliated and rented a small scrubby 'inch' beside Glenshalane River about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from town as a playing pitch from Sir John Keane. All the hurlers were Volunteers and the tricolour flew over the pitch entrance whenever a game was played there. In neighbouring Mount Melleray, a strong hurling team had grown up, all Volunteers too. A match was arranged between Melleray and Lismore in support of the National Aid Association (the Fund assisting the dependants and families of the imprisoned rebels). The match was played in Matt Coffey's land at Carrigeen and was the first hurling match ever played in Cappoquin. Witnessed by a large crowd, it was exciting and a bloody affair. Pulling was wild and reckless but honest, and casualties were numerous, especially in the Lismore team owing to the unsuitable pitch (the grass was thick and high) and the awkwardness of the players. Lismore was captained by Jim Madden, who was also the O/C. of the Volunteer company there. A Nenagh man, he had come from University College, Dublin, in 1917, to become a lay Secondary Teacher at the C.B.S. where he tutored me in Latin, English and Irish. He was a zealous Volunteer officer and kind for him as a Tipperary man a fine hurling full-back. He was the first Volunteer officer whom I saw wearing uniform.

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

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

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

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Moloney

Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

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

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

ing to shoot an invalided Tallow ex-soldier named Pender in a drunken brawl in a pub yard, and got a term in gaol. A year later, he was expelled from the Volunteers for thefts and robberies which he carried out under the guise of raids for arms in the Strancally and Ballinatray districts on the west bank of the Blackwater. Banished from West Waterford, he took refuge with relatives near Skibbereen. Arrested there by British troops for having some military uniform or something stolen, he was tried at the Cork Assizes. He recognised the Court, publicly recanted his Sinn Fein associations and pledged himself to be henceforth a loyal British subject. Even the stern British Judge commented on the abject figure he cut in the dock as he sentenced him to twelve months in gaol.

Years later, turned up as a dangerous criminal and he got 20 years penal servitude under Free State regime for armed robbery. He reappeared in the Tallow district during World War II Emergency. Incredible though it may seem, he served in the L.S.F. and L.D.F. during that period and tried to wipe out his criminal past, living alone in a lonely cottage in Here he died of T.B. sometime after the war and was buried by the charity of the Local Defence Force.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Round this time I got news from home that disturbed me somewhat, not that I was entirely unprepared for it. My twin brother, James Ernest, had joined the R.I.C. He had always been a big strong fellow, but, not being over keen on the books, he had never gone to a secondary school, and left National School at 15. He had worked continuously since then on the farm at Sir John Keane's Estate; later at the bacon factory, and during 1918 in the Corn Stores of Paddy Walsh, where his great frame and enormous strength were a big asset. During conscription crisis of 1918, my father had encouraged him to join the R.I.C. rather than have him forced into the British army, but he would not be accepted then, being too young. My father had persisted, arguing that an R.I.C. man's life would be better for him than handling huge sacks of corn. At any rate, now with the Great War over, he was up in the Depot (at 18 $\frac{1}{2}$, like his father before him) doing his training. A letter from my

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That mass funeral of the Macroom "Auxies" was unique

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

sent back men from rural columns to the city. We knew that this was true and that Mick Murphy, 2nd Battalion O/C, had just returned to the city from a period of service with Brigade Column in the Macroom area. Kennedy told us that we were far more valuable in Cork City where the two city I.R.A. battalions were holding down very strong enemy forces.

Every active, zealous Volunteer was needed in Cork City, he said, to intensify the offensive against the British. Every action in the city, no matter how small, helped to distract the Crown Forces and to lower their morale. By keeping the British "on the jump" in Cork City, the City I.R.A. were keeping thousands of enemy forces occupied and preventing them from being thrown into the campaign against the Flying Columns in the country. Besides, there was no necessity for I.R.A. men to "take to the country" either "on the run" or for column work, as the British Authorities in Cork City hardly knew a single I.R.A. officer either by name or by description. Shortly afterwards, Commandant Mick Murphy himself was arrested by a curfew patrol in a house in Douglas St., and after serving a prison sentence of some months was actually released by the British. This shows how very little the Crown Forces Intelligence Department knew about the personnel of the I.R.A. fighting forces arrayed against them in Cork City.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the College and his Leitrim St. digs on Monday. He never saw Cork City again. On Saturday he met with Diarmuid Hurley's 4th Battalion Flying Column who had just moved into the Clonmult neighbourhood near Joyce's home. Next day, Sunday, he shared the column's quarters and was inside in the Clonmult farmhouse, their main billet, when it was surrounded by a large force of military who had come directly from Cork City about twenty miles away. The column was hopelessly trapped. But the I.R.A. fighters fought with desperate valour all that Sunday evening to break through the British ring of steel and fire.

Within the dwelling man after man fell mortally wounded beneath the terrible withering fire of machine-gun and rifle. The house burst into flames. The survivors rushed out to scatter for cover in the yard. They were mown down pitilessly. The rest, now unarmed, surrendered. The Tommies closed in savagely. The wounded still alive were slaughtered mercilessly, so, too, were most of those who yielded. Almost twenty corpses of young Irishmen strew the floor and the ground slumped in their gore. Amongst them was the brutally mutilated body of John Joe Joyce, twenty years old engineering student of U.C.C., Fitzgibbon hurler and bowler and the merriest heart and cheeriest soul in every game and frolic. Joyce's end filled me with pain and woe and sorrow and foreboding.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My final engineering examination in mechanical and electrical engineering was due early in June. I had done little, if any, preparation for it. Nevertheless I was going to take my chance and sit for it anyway. And then Mick Crowley, second in command of Tommy Barry's 3rd Brigade Column, came along to Cork, met me at the College and asked me to come along to Cork 111 Brigade and help him to reorganise the engineering services of that I.R.A. brigade. I accepted eagerly but told him that I would not be available to go to West Cork until after my June exam., then about to begin. He agreed. So I began my final exam. After I had answered the first three papers it was clear to me that I had not the remotest chance of a pass. Rather than mess up the rest of the exam., I withdrew and appeared no more that June in the exam. hall. I wrote home to my father and mother explaining how I had missed doing some of the papers and to prepare them for the disappointment which they would suffer at not seeing my name in the pass lists for the B.E. degree. Of course, they knew little of my almost exclusive preoccupation with I.R.A. operations and activities and did not realise at all that my own engineering career and University studies were only a very secondary consideration. I told them, too, that I was going to a temporary engineering job down in West Cork in Kinsale and that I might be back home later in the summer to prepare for the autumn exam. This was how I explained my departure from Cork City to West Cork in June.

Off down west I went after my abortive exam. to take up my new appointment as engineering inspector, 3rd Cork Brigade, I.R.A. At this time, the army in the martial law area had just been reorganised into divisions. Liam Lynch, Bde. O/C, Cork 11, had taken over command of 1st

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

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

Battn. Cómít.

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

Engineering

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

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

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

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

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

Late June of 1921 was very fine and warm.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part II

CONFIDENTIAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
LORD STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1741

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,741. Part II Pages 186-377

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.

File No 8,2676.

Form M. 2

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 from 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 $2\frac{1}{2}$ 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 $1\frac{1}{2}$ 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 $1\frac{1}{2}$ 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 - gelnite, 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 "Mickey" 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 Batta. 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 "Mickey's" progress, he hit him a few resounding whacks on the rump with a heavy stick. "Mickey" 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 "Mickey" 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. Mickey 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. C.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 Ardahan - 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 Browns 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, Sean 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 Shinnars 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 kindness 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 unmistakably 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 boasted 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 Ill, 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 Ill. 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. Q/M, 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 Jordan, 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 crooked 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 Jordan who, with the other two, was keeping guard quietly over the soldiers. I handed two of the Webleys to Jordan, 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 ammunition and a 50 gallon drum of petrol. Tadhg Sullivan - our Ede. 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 Knockvilla, 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 Bds. 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 Mick 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 whole-time 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 Leahane and Brigade Adjutant Sean McCarthy accompanied "Tod". I, as Assistant Brigade Engineer, was one of the official I.R.A. staff with Leahane 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 coarse 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 very new 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-Dummanway 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 had 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, around 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 wainscoting

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. He 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 myself 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 fire 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 waterproofed by greasing thoroughly. With low-tension exploder of six 2-V dry batteries and a substantial 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 traveling 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 any I.R.A. man in West Cork would secede from the I.R.A. because he was in favour of the Free State. Even Sean Hales, T.D., who voted for the Treaty, never seceded 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 her arms 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 Bandon

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 if the Court decided on his execution. 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 and 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 fiancée'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 slightest 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 Crookstown, 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 contrast 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 sangfroid 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 ideology 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 Divisions 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 Tadgh 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 Tirconail) 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, a 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 Kerry men 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 breen 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 breen 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 breen 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 around 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. Verrey 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 all their arms and ammunition. A greivous 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 inspection. 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ 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, a sking 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 Burdrana, 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 await 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 publichouse 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 equipment. 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 breen 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 five months. 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 one most important technical appliance we had not, 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 McNeillus 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 (when we had such a commodity) were cigarettes and drinks. 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 not accept the Treaty (Articles of Agreement), but we do accept the position 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 at all times 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-cunningham^{battle,} Moffatt, a loyal Protestant Orangeman, was paid in full. I accompanied Lehane and Joe McGurk to Moffatt'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 neighbourz. 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 drunkengang 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. men. 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 Rathoven, 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 lazily 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 crooked 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 Rathoven. It was now getting dusk. Over-running a left turn some distance outside Castlepollard we found ourselves travelling a byroad to Rathoven 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 Captzin, 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 Rathoven 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. Heaven 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 shocka waited 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 thought 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 poteen for many a long say 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 Donogal) 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. Then 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-Comdt., 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ 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.^P 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 Galédon, 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. Linsen, 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. His description of the hell he went through that night would put Dante's "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 Ballyjamesduff, 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 Tyrone man

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

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J. Moloney
Name: (J. Moloney.)
Grade: Col.
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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-maneuvred 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 Drumboe 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-~~vious~~ 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 Kerry men - Patcheen Clifford, Seamus Quill, Dan Enright, Christy O'Sullivan and two others - and six West Cork men (Jim Lano, 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 haemorrhage; 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, she 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 Justina 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 Justina, 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 ricocheted 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 Kerry men, 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 Kerry men 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} they 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 himself 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. Here we 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 Lehané 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 Lebane, 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-street 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 leisure 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 Gartan 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. personal, 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, Lebane hurried forward to investigate. A slightly wounded Volunteer reported that they had been fired on from the upper windows of the pub. Lebane 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, Lebane 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. Lebane, Daly, Fitzgerald and I carefully searched the kitchen and downstairs rooms without result. Then we went upstairs where there was a sitting room 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 it was the

bedroom of herself and her sister 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 bed-clothes - 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 ladies' 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 MacAloone'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 McNeillus, 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 sun 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. Gotter 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 McNeillus, 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 McNeillus did to drive him away, he would not leave him.

Denis got back to McAlloone'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 carcass 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 decent 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 which was 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 arose in a cloud from our clothes. We smoked and smoked and talked a little. Bang! A tremendous explosion and the red turf and white ashes 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 neighbourhood 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

beseached 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 northeast. 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 column 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 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.

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 1741A
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 2 pp
- (iii) The date of each such document: 17 August 1958

(iv) The description of each document:
WS 1741 Michel vs Dwyer
names individuals P361 and P354

(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 commandeering. 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 bank 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 sloping 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 stood 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 stiff in their uneasy berths. Lehane eased the tension by allowing them in relays to stretch their limbs in the field behind the bank. Fretting and restless 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 be an advance scout. As he came abreast of the breen, 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 breen 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 ^{beo} 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 McCullough, 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 McCullough'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 mackerel 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 uneasiness. 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 utter^{-ly}/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 still. Gone was the abject despair 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, Hamon'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. They were 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 Hamon'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. Adj., 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 McEvelly, 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. Adj. 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 mate. 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 a round. 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 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 or 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 nondescript.

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 by 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 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: _____

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