ORIGINAL

PART V

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1770.

Witness

Commissioner Kevin R. O'Sheil, B.L.,
21 Ailesbury Drive,
Dublin.

Identity.

Judicial Commissioner, Dáil Éireann Land Courts, 1920-1922;

Commissioner, Irish Land Commission, 1923 to date.

Subject.

National Activities, and Dáil Eireann Land Courts, 1900-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 909.

Form B.S.M. 2

and, on the same day, a much more significant thing happened - Arthur Griffith resumed his editorship of his weekly journal, 'Nationality', interrupted by the Easter Rising. In an article therein, he denounced John Redmond for his speech of May 3rd, 1916, in which he had spoken of the "guilt" of the promoters of the Rising. From Griffith's own standpoint - that of a separatist, albeit a monarchist - that was quite consistent, but it must not be overlooked that Redmond's views were those of at least 90% of the Irish people at the date of the Rising. Now whilst excuses can be found for Redmond's attitude on that occasion, it is hard fully to justify it. Here is what happened. When the Prime Minister announced the news of the outbreak in the House of Commons, Sir Edward Carson, who, of all men there, should have had the decency to keep quiet, rose to say: "I will gladly join with the honourable and learned member for Waterford (Redmond) in everything that can be done to denounce and put down those rebels now and forevermore". And that was the one and only occasion in his whole career that he joined "gladly" or otherwise with Redmond; he would not even appear on the same recruiting platform with him, as we have seen. Having regard to his background and to his position as being the virtual "deus ex

machina" of the Dublin Rising, his intervention, particularly in the form it took, was shameful and in the most execrable taste. And poor Redmond, at Carson's gesture, hastened to tumble head over heels into his arms. Having referred to the "detestation and horror" with which he and his colleagues regarded the Dublin outbreak, he declared he "joined most cordially with" Carson in his statement. Enough said! Let us pass on.

During this period, the submarine warfare, carried on by the Germans against allied shipping, was at the peak of its success. That February was perhaps the worst in the war in this connection, and the food position in Great Britain, serious as it was, would have been calamitous had it not been for Ireland. Side by side, therefore, with the intensified submarine warfare, there went intensified food production in Ireland, with the result that Irish farmers, for the first time almost in their history, experienced what it was to be prosperous and affluent. The rigid system of food control that the necessities of the position imposed on England were not applied to Ireland. True, they were attempted, but, led by 'Nationality' with its cry of "the clutching hand is out to capture our food", the people

were put on their guard and the attempt was defeated. Ireland was thus excluded from the more drastic conditions of the Food Control, and the free export of bacon thereout was actually prohibited. "During the critical years of the war", wrote the late Professor Allison Phillips, with much truth, "Ireland was not only more peaceful and prosperous than she had ever been, but was the only peaceful and prosperous country in Europe".

An event, almost unnoticed at the time, but of much importance in the light of future developments, occurred in that February. After the Rising, two societies sprung simultaneously into being to organise funds to allay the distress suffered by the dependants of the executed, imprisoned and deported insurgents. They were the "Irish National Aid Association" and the "Irish Volunteers' Dependants' Fund".

In August, 1916, they amalgamated and established a common fund under one control, with the title the "Irish National Aid Association", the first secretary of which was Joseph McGrath. He now resigned and his place was filled by a completely unknown young Co. Cork man, Michael Collins, who had been released from Frongoch Internment Camp in Wales

just before Christmas. His subsequent career is a substantial part of latter-day Irish history, and it is not necessary for me to expatiate on it here.

(1) NORTH ROSCOMMON ELECTION.

February, 1916, saw the first of the series of by-elections in close succession that presented the "New Evangel" with a firm, though rudimentary political basis. A vacancy occurred in the parliamentary constituency of North Roscommon and Sinn Féin, or, rather, the then extremely variegated but rapidly growing body of dissident and anti-Irish Party Nationalism, decided to contest it. The original projector and, indeed, director of that purpose was a remarkable curate, Father Michael O'Flanagan, who, at the time, was stationed at Crossna, in that county. Before that, he had been Curate at Cliffoney in the Co. Sligo, where his strong criticisms of the Irish Party and the British Government ran him into trouble with his bishop, the late Dr. Coyne, who transferred him to Crossna. But so great was the effect of his powerful personality on his quondam parishioners that they refused to accept the curate who replaced him, shut up the local church where for a whole year Mass was not celebrated, the people meeting each Sunday outside the Church and

reciting the Rosary. It was only when at Christmas Father O'Flanagan made a special journey to Cliffoney and begged of them, "as a Christmas present to himself", to open the church and accept his successor as their curate, that they relented. Curiously enough, the very same thing was re-enacted in Crossna a few years later, when again he got himself into trouble with his conservative bishop by his speeches and campaigning for Sinn Féin, and he was either transferred again or silenced, I forget which. The Crossna parishioners, as the Cliffoney parishioners, ignored the replacing curate, Father Clyne, who, although himself a Sinn Féiner, had a very unpleasant time from them. They shut up the church for a period of months and only opened it again when Father Michael visited them and begged them to do so.

That remarkable, brilliant and most eloquent man was, as I say, the originator of the idea of facing the Party candidate and contesting the by-election against him. But the climate was greatly in favour of such action, and many other groups and individuals were gravitating towards the same idea. We have seen that the R.D.S. had, by a large majority, ejected Count Plunkett from its membership for no other reason than that he happened to be the father

of three prominent insurgents. Whatever about his sons, no one had ever regarded the Count as anything other than a conservative Catholic gentleman with harmless literary and cultural tastes which his job as Director of the National Gallery (bestowed on him by the Liberal Government) gave him ample time and opportunity to indulge in. True, he had been a Parnellite and fought, as we have seen, a hopeless election in that forlorn cause in Mid-Tyrone. But that was many years ago and, at the time I write of, the Count, as a politician, was a wholly forgotten number. Fr. O'Flanagan's imagination saw, not only the need to fight the Party, but to fight it with a candidate intimately connected with the Rising that was growing in popularity every day. What better candidate could be found for such a purpose than the elderly father of an executed rebel and of two penal servitude servitors? Such a one was even more effective than any of the prisoners or internees, for his was bound to rouse the deep sympathies of the warm-hearted and emotional Westerners. Having once hit on the idea, Fr. O'Flanagan lost no time in contacting the elements that would be useful to his end - such of them, at any rate, that were free: Separatists, I.R.B. men, Volunteers, Sinn Féiners, advanced constitutionalists, critical of the

Party. Eventually, the invitation to Count Plunkett to stand was drafted, signed by hundreds of prominent people and despatched to the Count, who at once accepted.
In the light of subsequent happenings, it is interesting to recall the more vital part of that document. "We declare our adhésion to the doctrine of Ireland a Nation", it ran, "which has been handed down to us by our fathers. We believe that the Irish Nation has as much right to freedom as any other nation..... The fact that the Great Powers at present warring on the continent of Europe have again and again appealed to this principle of Nationality is clear proof of its potential moral power..... We believe that at the present moment Ireland has a magnificent chance of reaching the goal of freedom..... by merely insisting on her National claims and making them known..... throughout the world. In this way we can secure a hearing before the Nations when they assemble at the end of the war to re-build civilisation upon its new basis".

An innocuous enough if pathetically hopeful statement, and, as a declaration of policy, extremely vague and shadowy. But it was a true reflex of the cloudy and undefined condition of a great part of Irish Nationalism at the time; and the idea of Ireland being given a hearing at the Peace

Conference provided something novel and stimulating, and a break from the stale and worn-out cliche of "winning Home Rule on the floor of the House of Commons", and, for the want of anything better, it unquestionably had its appeal in the country.

Another factor, and an important one, that has to be noticed, is that it was absolutely void of any declaration on abstention from Westminster or on separation in any shape or form. It was, indeed, a true verbal photograph of the nebulous outlook of the variegated mass of opinion backing Plunkett and was not capable of any clearer simplification. But that compromise was by no means easily arrived at. The Easter Week men who, not unnaturally, felt they should have the prior say in devising any future policy for the country, considered that after raising the standard of the Republic it would be a surrender move to re-organise any British-run election. The old-school Sinn Féiners wanted a definite abstention from Westminster plank, whilst a very large body of supporters, perhaps the majority, were not at all prepared for an absolute abstentionist policy. Two men, apart from Father O'Flanagan, were mainly responsible for smoothing out such claims and

keeping the objective broad and vague (as, indeed, it had to be kept). They were Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. Griffith, of course, never saw any objection to making use of the British-run elections; on the contrary, he was all for putting up candidates on a strict abstentionist policy. Collins, on the other hand, had a more difficult task to convince his men. Since his release from Frongoch, this remarkable young man had acquired great influence over the extreme elements in nationalism - the I.R.B (of which he was a member), the Fenian remnant, and particularly the Volunteers, the "fighting men". They were all believers in a full-blooded policy of physical force, and had such an utter distaste, not to say contempt, for constitutionalism in any shape or form, that many of them would not countenance its use even as an auxiliary to a physical force policy. But Collins, though a physical force man, and then virtually the leader of that party, was far too sagacious and far-seeing to subscribe to such a narrow, obscurantist plan of campaign. He saw clearly the urgent need to fight the election with a candidate of sympathetic colour, and deal a heavy blow to the still dominant Irish Party which had first to be got out of the way before the separatist policy could be firmly launched in the country. He had no doubt

that Plunkett should be backed; pulled his extremists round to that point of view, and threw his great energy and rare organising ability into the campaign.

Plunkett's supporters were not rich, and, whilst enthusiasm was abundant, money was scarce amongst them. There was a certain well-off if not wealthy Sinn Féiner of the Griffith school, who was prominent on the platform and in the press in airing his "Hungarian" views. To him they went, not for a gift, but for a loan of a few hundred pounds. But, alas, his enthusiasm for his Sinn Féin principles was confined to his tongue and pen - certainly not to his pocket. He said them nay. This was a big initial disappointment and, for a time, things looked gloomy, for an election cannot be fought without money. Eventually the money was advanced by the managing director of Messrs. Gill & Son, Ltd., the publishers in Upper O'Connell St., Dublin. His name has escaped me for the moment. I knew him well; he was a fine type of citizen - unassuming, quiet, and patriotic in the best sense.

The Nation Leaguers decided to support Plunkett's candidature, and numbers of them travelled to Roscommon to speak on his behalf. Those of the Nation League whom I

remember meeting there were Frank O'Connor of Omagh, Stephen O'Mara of Limerick, P.W. Kenny of Waterford, Paddy Lane of Cork, Michael O'Callaghan of Limerick and J.J. O'Kelly ("Sceilg") of Dublin.

I travelled from Omagh on 31st January. It was bitterly cold. The countryside was covered with a thick coat of snow, in many places from 4 to 8 feet deep, and, to make things worse, it was freezing hard. I reached Boyle after a cold and extremely uncomfortable journey, and was met at the railway station by Frank O'Connor. We put up at Mr. Bowle's small but very comfortable hotel. Anyhow, it was the only one open to a "Plunkettite". The big hotel, the "Royal", was owned by Jaspar Tully, a prominent local man, who also owned the local paper, the "Roscommon Herald". He himself was contesting the seat against the official Party candidate, Devine. Next day, Frank O'Connor and I motored to Carrick-on-Shannon where there was to be a great demonstration to meet the Count who was to arrive there that afternoon by train from Dublin. We had a very difficult journey through the snow-blocked roads and our driver had occasionally to cut a passage through the deep drifts with a spade he carried for that purpose. Despite the inclement weather and the bad

condition of the roads, we passed many making for the Count's meeting at Carrick, several of them sporting the new tricolour colours, green-white-orange, in their buttonholes, and a few actually carrying the tricolour flag, then generally known as the "Easter Week flag" and, later, as the "Sinn Féin flag". The Count duly arrived that evening at Carrick railway station accompanied by his daughter, the late Seamus O'Doherty and two priests. He was met by a great crowd who gave him a terrific reception, waving tricolour flags and cheering wildly. One thing that struck me as remarkable about that crowd was the big percentage of youth it compromised; large numbers of young men and, more curious still for those days, young women. In all the political meetings and demonstrations that I had witnessed previously, youth was poorly represented, and women hardly at all. They were composed almost exclusively of men, and middle-aged and elderly men at that. No doubt because of the war, the imposition of conscription in England and the stoppage of emigration to America, the country was then teeming with young men and women, and because of its great prosperity, due to the war, there was plenty of money and work for them. Nevertheless, that alone was not sufficient to account for the big turn-out

of youth at Plunkett's meetings. Seeing that not 1% of them had a vote to cast, and women of any age and condition were then wholly voteless, it was clearly the thrilling call of the new national "evangel", born, as it was, romantically in battle, that drew them and held them. What I saw was but a preview of the ensuing years. Youth was to get a great, indeed a dominant part in the Sinn Féin revolution that followed, and that led to the Truce and Treaty.

Plunkett's huge cortege halted on the bridge that crossed the broad Shannon just outside Carrick where several speeches were made, welcoming him to Roscommon and the West. And there, for the first time, I heard the famous Father Michael O'Flanagan orate; and "orate" is, indeed, the word. He possessed most of the attributes of the great orator - a fine erect presence, standing well over 6 feet, a great square head crowned by a mass of dark hair, inclined to curl, an expansive florid countenance lit by a pair of bright dark eyes. But his greatest asset was his voice. It was deep and strong and, at the same time, extraordinarily melodious and emotional and was given by his rich Connacht "blas" a strongly personal flavour. In speaking, he depended entirely on

that voice of his which, considering its unique quality and power, was probably sound, rarely, if ever, using his hands or arms. He had a vivid imagination and a mind well-stocked by much and varied reading which placed at the command of his tongue a wide range of material, which he was an adept at utilising and arranging, being helped thereat by a phenomenal memory, never having to use or refer to a note, not even for a quotation. He had never more than two main ideas in each speech that he always succeeded in getting over to his listeners, clearly and succinctly, making liberal use of parables, fables and homely symbols that enabled the dullest countryman to grasp his arguments and later to use them effectively in discussions in the market places, fair greens and pubs. Never have I heard another voice, or another orator like Father O'Flanagan, and I am convinced that he was far and away the most powerful single factor in winning North Roscommon for the Count. Indeed, he could literally do what he liked with his audiences, make them laugh, weep or rage to order.

One of the banners carried at that meeting bore the exhortation: "Vote for Count Plunkett, father of Joseph Mary

Plunkett, who gave his life for Ireland". The message of the Easter Rising was certainly coming through. A very eloquent and effective speaker was Frank O'Connor, and his sharp Ulster accent, a strong contrast to the soft Connacht brogue, interested and held his audiences in that country.

One of the three candidates was Jaspar Tully, a curious and ambitious local character, with a somewhat dubious past, the proprietor of the best hotel in Boyle, The Royal, and, more important still, of the widely read and influential only local weekly, the "Roscommon Herald". Tully was opposing both Devine, the official Irish Party candidate, and the Count, as an honest-to-God, free-from-guile and corruption standard-bearer; but, curiously enough, the weight of his propaganda fell, not on the party candidate, (Plunkett, enveloped in the Easter Week aura, he did not dare to attack) but on the Nation League. Our unfortunate body he ridiculed and lampooned in his widely read paper and in his speeches all over the constituency. He possessed a caricaturist of parts, and his paper was filled each week with caricatures and articles showing the poor "League of the Seven Attornies", as he always called it, up to scorn. But we had a shot in our

locker that he overlooked, a shot that Frank O'Connor, a formidable controversialist, let fly at him at that big Carrick meeting, and kept reminding him about all during the election. O'Connor revealed that he had been one of the first to apply for membership of the Nation League, had even asked to fight the by-election under its auspices, but the League, being by no means ignorant of his past, refused to have anything to do with him. And his attacks on it were probably due to chagrin.

One of the largest meetings during the election was held at Ballaghaderreen on the fair day. That town, though situated in the Co. Mayo, was, for some reason or other, thrown into the constituency of North Roscommon for the purpose of parliamentary elections. I travelled from Boyle to Ballaghaderreen with Fr. O'Flanagan and Frank O'Connor. We were somewhat late in arriving at the meeting as we had to address one or two meetings en route. When we reached the town we found a huge crowd of people in the big square and saw that there were two meetings actually taking place. At one end of the square was the official Party platform, replete with green flags, from which the Rev. Canon Gallagher, the administrator of the parish, was

addressing a crowd of some hundreds of elderly men. Opposite him at the other end was the Count's platform, decked out in the new national colours, green-white-orange, and with a large tricolour flag flying over it. From its side was suspended a large portrait of Parnell. The Count was addressing a crowd at least three times larger than the Party meeting and, again, with a very high percentage of young men and women in it. There was terrific enthusiasm, cheering and applause. Though there was a considerable amount of back-firing between the two platforms, there was little or no disorder. Anyhow, a large force of the R.I.C., in full war equipment - spiked helmets, carbines, handoliers, haversacks and bayonets - occupied the space between the rival crowds.

O'Connor, being an important man, was due to speak, and made his way to the Count's platform. When Fr. O'Flanagan was recognised an extraordinary scene ensued. They crowded around his car, cheering wildly and calling on him for a speech. So great a diversion did his presence cause that the Count had to stop speaking for the time being, the crowd insisting strenuously and doggedly that they must have a speech from Father Michael. Now, there was a big difficulty about this, as he himself

explained to us on the way over. It appeared that there was a rule of a Maynooth Synod that no priest could speak without first getting the permission of the parish priest of the parish in which he desired to speak. It so happened that the parish of Ballaghaderreen was a Bishop's parish, governed by an administrator, the actual parish priest of which was the Bishop of Achonry, Dr. Morrisroe. At Fr. O'Flanagan's request, I got up and explained all this to them and informed them that we were going up to the Palace to see his Lordship and get his permission. I added that when that permission was granted (about which we anticipated no difficulty, seeing that no P.P. in the constituency had refused him, even those politically against him) we would return and he would speak to them from the Count's platform. At this we made for the Palace with their cheers ringing in our ears.

The Palace was about a mile from the town and thither we drove, Fr. O'Flanagan, myself and two Volunteers. The Bishop saw us immediately, but, to our surprise and disappointment, flatly declined to give Fr. O'Flanagan the necessary permission. We argued with him, pointing out that no P.P. had, so far, refused him; but to no avail;

he was adamant. The Volunteer men were enraged at his attitude and took no pains to conceal it, pointing out to him that one of his own priests, Canon Gallagher, was "spouting below for the Party". Indeed, they were quite offensive to him and Fr. O'Flanagan had to pull them up, when they relapsed into a kind of surly silence. The Bishop's attitude was this: He began by reminding us that Roscommon was in another diocese than that of Elphin, which, doubtless, had its own customs that were different from his. In the diocese of Achonry the infrangible rule governing the attitude of the clergy to politics was that at an election such as this they came together and decided by a majority what candidate they would support. Once that was settled, they all supported the candidate of the majority. It was, he added, with a faintly sarcastic smile, majority rule, a practical example of democracy in the making "about which we hear so much in these days".

We returned to the town where both meetings were still in progress. It was the same as before. The great crowd swept round our car cheering and calling again on Fr. O'Flanagan for a speech. I rose, but could not make myself heard until Father O'Flanagan's great voice called to them to hearken to me. I explained what had happened, as

tactfully as I could. When they realised that their favourite was forbidden to address them, there was a roar of disappointment and rage, followed, to my great astonishment, by groans and boos for the bishop.

In that famous election, Fr. O'Flangan and myself, in our wanderings, spent the greater part of two bitterly cold snowy nights out on the roads endeavouring to hew our way through monstrous snowdrifts, 6 to 8 feet in height. On one such occasion the car got stuck in a drift up to the windscreen and had to be dug out by local squads of Volunteers whom the resourceful Fr. O'Flanagan had got organised for that purpose. On another, after great difficulties, we reached Strokestown at about 3.30 in the morning and knocked at the solitary hotel there. For quite a while no one answered our knock. After a bit a window shot up, a head popped out and, in the vexed voice of one disturbed in his slumbers, we were asked who we were and what did we want. The speaker was the late Paddy McKenna, a strong Party man, who, later that year, was to contest South Longford against Joe McGuinness. Hearing that it was Fr. O'Flanagan, he immediately came downstairs and let us in, getting us by some wizardry a glass of whiskey each which we badly needed, and ending by giving

Fr. O'Flanagan his room. As the hotel was packed out, he and I spent the remainder of the night in the sitting-room where we endeavoured to get some sleep on the floor.

On the day of the election I was posted to Croghan where I took my stance outside the national school where the polling was taking place. My job was to assist voters with information and distribute leaflets, pamphlets and copies of a special Plunkett issue of the "Ulster Herald" that I had brought with me. There was already a short, thick-set, bearded man there when I arrived, on the same job as myself. This turned out to be none other than Arthur Griffith, and that was the second time I met him. At first, I did not recognise him with his "gaol" beard, but, seeing I was on his side, he came up to me and made himself known to me.

The day passed without any serious fracas, but there might well have been such. In the morning there was little trouble other than cat-calls by the Hibernian element at our voters, from time to time. But, after lunch, things were different. It was clear that a number of that element had been well primed with "refreshment" for they soon manifested a singularly bellicose attitude towards voters coming along under the Plunkett colours. It was also clear that the

rowdyism that they engendered and that increased as the evening wore away was organised. The police were pretty well represented - three armed constables and a sergeant - but they made not the slightest effort to prevent the deliberate organised interference by the inebriated Hibernians with our voters, though we appealed to them on several occasions to do so. On the other hand, they were keenly on the alert to interfere promptly and effectively against any of our people should they attempt to retaliate. The sergeant was one Costello, a stoutish florid man, who could be arrogant or accommodating, as the position demanded. He was a curious case, by no means rare at the time, of a policeman who changed his religion from Catholic to Protestant, on his marrying a girl of the latter faith, for reasons, it was alleged, of advancement in the force. Such a change over, at the time, often opened the way for a ranker to attain the dizzy level of a District Inspector. Up to a certain occurrence, presently to be related, his attitude to Plunkett's men and voters had been supercilious and almost offensive, and he was clearly much amused at the harassing our people were getting by the Party drunks. Eventually things came to a head when a Hibernian, who had been particularly aggressive during the day, returned from one of his periodical

visits to the pub, made for one of our voters on his way to the polling booth and struck him a pretty severe blow on the jaw, staggering him badly and nearly felling him. Even that blatant assault failed to attract the attention of the sergeant and his police. This enraged Griffith so much that he went up to the sergeant and gave him a stinging tongue-thrashing, saying that if he and his police continued to neglect their duty, he would call for Volunteers who would protect our voters. I was surprised at the force of Griffith's anger and at the strength and depth of his voice. It had a remarkable effect on the sergeant. He took the name and address of the man who committed the assault and that of the assaulted, and ordered his men to control the rowdy element, which they promptly did, after which we had no more trouble of that kind.

But we had trouble of another kind, to Griffith, of a highly unwelcome kind. The sergeant proceeded to woo us. Thenceforward he simply danced attention on Griffith, coming to him every now and then to ask were things now all right, or was there anything else he could do for him. Seeing that Griffith had made a pledge to boycott the R.I.C. and members of the Crown forces, whom he regarded as part of

the army of occupation, it can be appreciated how very embarrassing those unsought attentions were to him. But there was worse to come. When the polling booth closed down at 8 o'clock in the evening, Griffith and I repaired to a pub kept by one of Griffith's oldest and staunchest supporters. Whilest there who should come in but the bold Sergeant Costello himself. He had obviously been refreshing himself after the rigours of the day and was in good chatty mood. And what should he do, of all things, but invite Griffith and myself to have a drink with him! Griffith was clearly distressed. His face stiffened and he said nothing for a moment. Then, to my surprise, he said: "Thank you, a stout". We, of course, had to stand the sergeant back, after which, having waited for a car in vain, we left and footed the 7 or 8 miles to Boyle.

On the way Griffith explained his action. He accepted the sergeant's drink because he realised, if he refused, the police had it in their power to make the life of his friend, the proprietor, unbearable. They could, if they set themselves to do so, break him and put him out of business altogether. Griffith knew that, and, at

all costs, wanted to avoid any such calamity for his faithful supporter. Hence his "deviation" from principle.

It was a cold, still night, with the moon well up in a sky studded with stars, lighting up clearly the white snowy world around us. There was one other person with us whose name I forget; and Griffith, who was in good talking form, held the two of us spellbound with his conversation. His knowledge of Irish history, particularly the darker side of the Parnell and Invincible period, was extremely wide; and, as he possessed a remarkable memory and a fine command of clear terse English, listening to him was a sheer delight.

At that election I made contact, for the first time, with men who led, or were prominent in the extremer national movements - such as the two famous Dublin men, Dan McCarthy and Joe McGrath. Dan was then the more dominant and more conspicuous of the two, and displayed, for the first time, his unrivalled qualities as a director of elections. It was there I think that I also met Michael Collins, George Lyons and other Easter Week men.

That election was fought on a wave of national emotionalism, and on no particular policy - republicans,

separatists, abstentionists, advanced constitutionalists - all came together to put Count Plunkett in, mainly because he was the father of a young man who had given his life for Ireland.

Pierce Beasley, in his Life of Michael Collins, gives the background of the loose national confederation supporting Plunkett, and I must quote him to complete my picture. When Plunkett announced his intention of going against the official Party candidate, Beasley writes: "A very interesting problem arose from the separatist point of view. The opponents of the Parliamentary Party had, at the time, no definite national policy to place before the country. They were composed of various elements, united only in dissatisfaction with the Party, and desire for a more forward movement. There were the survivors of Easter Week and their sympathisers in the country, who believed in upholding the ideal of independence, and had not abandoned all hope of a physical force policy; there were the adherents of Arthur Griffith's old Sinn Féin organisation; there were those opposed to Griffith's policy of abstention from attendance at the British Parliament, who believed what was wanted was to replace the

Parliamentary Party by more virile and aggressive representatives. The first group, among whom Collins was a leader, was confronted with a difficult problem. There were those who felt that, after the standard of an Irish Republic had been raised during Easter Week, it would be a retrograde step for any of them to take part in British Parliamentary elections, even in support of candidates pledged not to attend the English Parliament. Count Plunkett gave no pledge not to attend that parliament. He put no programme of national policy before the country. He appealed altogether to popular sympathy.

It would be natural for a young man who was regarded as a leader of the physical force party to prefer to adopt an intransigent attitude; but Collins had too much political sagacity not to realise the immense value, at that period, of an election result which would be at the same time a heavy blow to the still predominant Parliamentary Party and a demonstration of popular sympathy with the Easter Week insurrection. He threw all his energies into the support of Count Plunkett's candidature.

Arthur Griffith, for his part, made his attitude clear by the message - "If Plunkett goes for Roscommon, all

nationalists should support him". At the same time, Griffith was not enthusiastic over the candidate who had no declared national policy, even on the matter of abstention, and whose past political record was, to say the least, ambiguous - a fact which the supporters of the Parliamentary Party did not fail to emphasise.

The poll was declared on the morning of 5th February, 1917, from the steps of the Courthouse at Boyle. It was: Plunkett, 3,022; Devine, 1,708; and Tully, 687. The result came as a surprise to everybody, but particularly to the Parliamentary Party. The surprise to us was, not that we won; we were sure we would; it was at the size of our victory, a total majority over the other two candidates of 627, and a majority of 1,314 over the Party man. Jaspar Tully, in his speech after the declaration, magnanimously presented the Count with his 687 votes! The Count's victory encouraged and stimulated all in the vague movement that had spontaneously come into being to support him against a Party that, in the opinion of many, had failed in the discharge of its national trust. But no one was more stimulated and revitalised than the Count himself. When he arrived in the constituency

he presented the appearance of an old man, bowed down and rendered feeble by sorrow and misfortune. And well, indeed, he might be, for he was no longer a young man and the grievous blows he had suffered could not fail to have left their mark on him. For a time he seemed to be almost in a daze, but, as the campaign developed, that abstracted mood wore off and he entered into the spirit of the contest, spoke well, and, as far as there was any point at all in the nebulous programme put forward for him, to that point. Nevertheless, he seemed a sad and rather lonely figure and everywhere there was great sympathy for him.

After the declaration of the poll, however, a change, almost miraculous, came over him. From being a bent old man, he straightened up into a tall, vigorous one. The lines of sorrow and care vanished from his countenance and were replaced by those of purpose and resolve. He no longer supplicated; he commanded; and it seemed to all that he had made up his mind that he was going to rule whatever organisation was to take shape from his triumph. Indeed, there were those who saw in his transformation - his handsome, erect appearance, his flowing beard and proud eye, a remarkable similarity to an older Parnell.

We had not long to wait to see this "new look" of his in action. Immediately after the election a meeting was held in Bowles's Hotel, Boyle, to consider the inauguration of a new movement. It was attended by representatives of all the allied though disparate national groups that had supported the Count. He took the chair and opened proceedings by a short statement inviting proposals and suggestions, after which he lapsed into almost complete silence and aloofness - another change, as he had been most approachable and communicative before - until the conclusion of the proceedings.

I am to-day, 40 years after those events, somewhat hazy about those who were present on that occasion. I remember our Nation Leaguers - Stephen O'Mara and Michael O'Callaghan of Limerick, J.J. Kelly ("Sceilg") of Dublin, and F.J. O'Connor and myself of Omagh. Rory O'Connor was there. He was engaged to the Count's daughter; also Dan McCarthy and Joe McGrath. I think Seán Milroy, a strong Griffithite Sinn Féiner, was there also, and Michael Collins. Nor should I overlook Larry Ginnell, M.P., who, at that time, was by no means enamoured of an abstentionist policy. It is strange how one forgets. That's all I seem to be able to

remember out of a roomful of people, perhaps 30 or 40. Of course, many were local, and most of the Dublin men I was meeting for the first time. Despite the Count's new hardening, the great personality of Fr. Ml. O'Flanagan really dominated the meeting.

In due course, the discussion revealed that the majority favoured the abstention policy. Our Nation Leaguers did not; they thought such a policy was, to say the least of it, premature, and they feared that any inflexible adherence to it would damage the prospects of any new party in the north. The Griffithite elements, though pledged to abstention, considered that it would be better to postpone a decision on it to a more representative meeting in Dublin.

Finally, the Count, who, as I have said had been more or less silent during the discussion, got up and announced that he did not propose to attend the British Parliament. That announcement was not well received by us and F.J. O'Connor, Stephen O'Mara and "Sceilg" strongly criticised it and, like the Griffithites, asked that a decision on it be adjourned to Dublin. But the Count was adamant and made it clear not only that he would never go to Westminster, but that he would set about immediately to establish a new organisation of his own based on his "Liberty Clubs".

Soon there was another unmistakable manifestation of the Count's "new look". On St. Patrick's Day he dispatched a letter to all County Councils, Borough Councils, Urban and Rural District Councils and prominent nationalists throughout Ireland, in which he stated that he had been "elected to recognise no authority over Ireland; to maintain the rights of Ireland to independence; and to initiate Ireland's work of taking control of her own affairs", and that the task had fallen upon him "of inaugurating a new policy for Ireland". A long indictment of the Irish Party followed, and the statement concluded: -

> "I have therefore decided to convene an assembly of the representatives of the Administrative Bodies and National Organisations and other public men of Ireland. The first of its duties will be to address itself to the Peace Conference with a view to obtaining the support of nations which will be represented at the Conference. With its representative authority, this assembly will claim the recognition of the sovereign status of Ireland; that status to be guaranteed by the continental Powers of Europe and by the U.S.A. I ask your Council to give their adhesion to the principles and methods enunciated in this letter, and so, having expressed their approval, to appoint two of their members to take part as delegates in the Assembly to be held in the Mansion House, Dublin, at 11.30 a.m. on the 19th April".

Though the public bodies at that time were largely composed of strong Irish Party supporters, and though many of them ignored the Count's circular, a considerable number accepted the invitation and those with delegates from Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers etc. attended on the day appointed what turned out to be a large and representative convention.

Plunkett soon made it clear that he was out to scrap Sinn Féin and all other bodies and start a new organisation with himself as President. This did not find favour with many there, including Griffith, who proposed a simple, straightforward alternative, viz: that all existing organisations and bodies should unite on the basis of abstention from the English Parliament, and an appeal to the Peace Conference after the war. And, to give effect to this plan, Griffith further proposed that they should form a joint executive representing Sinn Féin, Irish Volunteers, the Plunkettites, Labour, the Nation League and other interests. This was defeated, whereupon Griffith announced that the Sinn Féin organisation would continue as theretofore, independent of the rest. Thus, the new national resurgence was threatened with a

deadly split almost before its birth. Wiser counsels, fortunately, eventually prevailed and largely through the efforts of Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, to whom Plunkett owed so much, the old man came to heel and accepted a solution on the terms of Griffith's motion. The Convention showed that there were still a great deal of people, like the Nation League, that were not yet ready for an absolute abstentionist policy. They, like the Nation League, were not popular with Plunkett and the Plunkettites who wanted to have nothing to do with them, and treat them, more or less, like the Partyites - national pariahs.

The new policy of going forward to the Peace Conference that would follow on the termination of the war with Ireland's case for soveriegn independence was founded largely on the goodwill and sympathy of the U.S. for Ireland, which, at that time, was particularly conspicuous, manifesting itself in the passing of motions to that end by the States' congress and even by the National Congress. Not much dependance was put on the support of other countries. The belligerent countries had their own grave matters to attend to thereat; and, anyhow, the Entente Allies - England, France, Italy, etc. - were more likely to be anti-

Irish if, for no other reason, because of the 1916 Rising and the avowed alliance of the insurgents with Germany in the Proclamation of the Republic. True, the United States was then neutral, but it was clear to all that so great, rich and powerful a country would and must have a say, and a big say, at such a conference. Part of the active pro-Irish feeling that was then so conspicuous in America was, no doubt, due to the deterioration in Anglo-American relations that had been growing for some time past. This was due largely to the traditional English attitude towards neutrals when she is not neutral. John Bull, as most of his histories will show you, never fights a war; it is always a crusade. He draws the sword, never primarily for himself but to save some other people, or to civilise and christianise them, or to destroy a dictator or a tyrant. And if at the end of a successful war (as it nearly always was) he collars the defeated enemies' colonies and possessions, he knows that that is the outward and visible sign of the Lord's approval of his battle for Righteousness against the cohorts of Iniquity, and but carrying out the declaration of the Psalmist: "Never have I known the righteous man to fail nor his need to want for bread".

John Bull was angry with Uncle Sam for not seeing the obvious righteousness of his cause, and for refraining from coming in and giving his warriors of St. George a helping hand against the forces of Satan. Some call this traditional attitude of John hypocrisy, and some his power of self-deception; but whatever it is called, there is no doubt of its existence, as we ourselves experienced when John was fighting his last crusade. An event, however, presently occurred which speedily changed all this.

On April 7th, the Germans, with that bone-headed stupidity they so often display in their relationship with other peoples, sank the great White Star liner, the "Lusitania" drowning thereby many American civilians. This wanton act caused such a violent outburst of indignation and rage against Germany in America that President Woodrow Wilson, who dearly wanted peace, had to declare war forthwith against the Central Powers. And, from the standpoint of the new movement in Ireland, that was a definite setback to its aims and hopes, as the country's greatest external friend was now the ally of "th' auld enemy".

THE FATEFUL BY-ELECTIONS.

After the rousing victory of North Roscommon, the confederated or allied groups that were opposing the official Party were presently presented with two more opportunities of putting their strength to the test and advancing their united objective. Vacancies in two more parliamentary constituencies fell due, and the by-elections that they necessitated came in close sequence. The first arose in South Longford, and, after much misgiving and, indeed, opposition from certain elements, it was decided not only to contest it but - greatly daring - with one of the men who were serving sentences of penal servitude in English jails. Eventually, Joe McGuinness, a Co. Longford man, then in Lewes Gaol, was selected, though, as I have said, not without much hesitation, as the organisations of the Irish Party were exceptionally strong in the area, backed by a widely read local paper, the "Longford Leader", belonging to the influential Farrell family. This trepidation was increased by the fact that the Redmondite candidate was a very popular man, none other than Paddy McKenna, the same who had been so kind to Father O'Flanagan and myself in Strokestown during the Roscommon election.

Actually, great difficulty was experienced by the promoters in Ireland in getting McGuinness and the Volunteers in gaol, or in internment camps, to consent to his candidature. Their outlook was that a Volunteer of the Easter Week tradition should not identify himself with a British-run election in any way. To do so appeared to them to be letting down the principles of republicanism that he had proclaimed in arms but the previous year. In his book, Pierce Beasley tells us that all the men in Lewes Gaol, including de Valera, their camp commandant, where the invitation to McGuinness to contest the election had been smuggled in, were, for those reasons, dead against McGuinness, or any of their company, going forward - all, that is to say, but Thomas Ashe and Harry Boland. Others doubted the wisdom of running the risk of defeat in the case of a sentenced Irish "felon". Would that not be regarded as a condemnation, not alone of the "felon", but of all he stood for, including the Rising? The leaders in Dublin, however, ignored McGuinness's refusal, and duly nominated him as a candidate. The Lewes men were very angry at this and considered repudiating that action. Wiser views, however, eventually prevailed and they decided to take no action and let things be.

I was all through that election, speaking on behalf of McGuinness at various meetings throughout the constituency. In going round South County Longford, it was obvious to us all that the position was very different from that of Roscommon. The opposition to us, especially in the towns, was extremely strong and articulate, indeed, arrogant and angry; an entirely different climate altogether to the other where our side had things very much their own way. No doubt, the heavy defeat of the party in the adjoining county contributed a good deal to the bitterness in the second election. Redmond's people were alarmed and, realising the danger they were in, fought the election with all the strength and determination that they were capable of.

The opposition was particularly strong in Longford town. Indeed, it was quite dangerous for any of us to go through the streets sporting our colours; the town was not only a stronghold of Redmondism, but of the British army, where there was a garrison of, I think, the Leinster Regiment. Large numbers had joined up in the British army and it was full of soldiers' wives and womenfolk drawing the separation allowance.

Unlike Roscommon, the Party sent their big guns to speak for McKenna, and their meetings in Longford and the towns, at all events, were larger and more enthusiastic than ours, all colourful with Union Jacks and green flags. I remember a very large meeting held in the main street at which Joe Devlin, the Hibernian President, was the chief speaker. Joe was an extremely eloquent speaker with an extraordinarily emotional ring in his penetrating tenor voice which his sharp Belfast accent accentuated, particularly to southern ears. In the course of his speech, he produced a large green flag with the golden harp and, waving it over their heads, he exclaimed: "Here is the good old green flag of Ireland, the flag that many a heroic Irishman died under; the flag of Wolfe Tone, of Robert Emmet, of Thomas Davis; aye, and the flag of the great Charles Stewart Parnell" (huge applause). "Look at it, men and women, it has no yellow streak in it, nor no white streak. What was good enough for Emmet, Davis and Parnell is good enough for us. Long may it fly over Ireland"!

Another speaker - was it Tommy Lundon, M.P.? - had gone to the trouble of getting the material in a Sinn Féin tricolour analysed and made the great discovery that it was cotton manufactured in Manchester. "There's Sinn Féin

principles for you"! he exclaimed triumphantly.

The "Longford Independent" called on the local Unionists to vote against MacGuinness. It referred to the Easter Week men as "the greatest scoundrels Ireland has ever had the misfortune to suffer from", and pointed out that if the Unionists did not vote for the Irish Party candidate they might have "Joe MacGuinness's heel on their necks".

The South Longford, as the North Roscommon, election was fought on no definite national policy by the varied amalgam that was supporting McKenna, nothing higher than anti-Irish Partyism, and an appeal to sympathy for "the men in gaol for Ireland". As the slogan on the walls and the banners ran - "Vote for McGuinness, the man in gaol for Ireland". Put him in to get him out"!

The result was declared on 9th May, 1917, in Longford town. On the first count, McKenna was declared elected by a small majority. We were dumbfounded, our misery being aggravated by the wild roars of the triumphant Partyites and their wilder "Separation Allowance" women who danced with joy as they waved Union Jacks and green flags. My dejection was particularly severe as, just

before the declaration, I met Jim Campbell (brother of Joe Campbell, M.P. for East Tyrone to-day) and he bet me a tenner that McKenna would win, a challenge that I rashly accepted. But, whilst I was gloomily meditating on my lost tenner - a considerable sum in those far-off days - the late Charlie Wyse-Power came to the window of the Courthouse (where he was assisting at the count) and, calling for silence, informed us that there was to be a recount, as a package of votes had been overlooked. A drowning man hangs on to a straw, they say, and we certainly (myself in particular) held with desperation on to the straw Charlie had flung us.

In what seemed an incredibly long time, the Sheriff came to the open window of the Courthouse and announced that our man, Joe McGuinness, was in by 37 votes; a narrow shave, indeed, but it was enough. He polled 1,498 against McKenna's 1,461.

It is not necessary for me to describe our rejoicings, particularly my own as the decent Jim Campbell at once wrote me out his cheque for £10.

I don't think that McGuinness would ever have won that election had it not been for the letter of Archbishop Walsh of Dublin to the press a few days before the poll, in which he stated that "from information that has just reached me I am fairly satisfied that the mischief has already been done and that the country is practically sold". He was referring to Lloyd George's Partition proposals.

Towards Revolution (contd.).

The two victorious elections of North Roscommon and South Longford, tho' not fought on any declared separatist policy, had succeeded in turning the mind of the country to the "men in prison for Ireland" to such an extent that demands for their treatment as prisoners of war, if not their release, arose throughout the country. Rumours, some of them very exaggerated, that the sentenced men were being ill-treated by their gaolers, made those demands more insistent and more frequent. Accordingly, on 21st May, a big meeting was held in the Mansion House under Sinn Féin auspices, the biggest since the Rising, to demand that the Easter Week prisoners be given prisoner of war treatment. At that great meeting it was not forgotten that that strange but true and courageous Irishman, George Bernard Shaw, had been the first to make such a demand. And he made it in an open letter to the "Daily Mail" immediately after the Easter Week executions at a time when England was burning with resentment against the Irish "stab in the back" - an extremely courageous act for an Irishman, especially one of his distinction and prominence, living in that country at the time.

Tho' somewhat out of place, let me record here what that fearless man wrote. "... The men shot in cold blood, after their capture or surrender, were prisoners of war." He wrote, "I remain an Irishman and am bound to contradict any implication that I can regard as a traitor any Irishman taken

in a fight for Irish Independence against the British Government, which was a fair fight in everything except the enormous odds my countrymen had to face". Only one like myself, who lived through those tense days, can appreciate the audacious and defiant courage of the man who penned those brave words.

Yet, despite the turning away from Westminsterism and the growth of Sinn Féinism, the latter movement, even then, was far indeed from dominating the Nation's political field. It was, of course, still, in a very nebulous and indefinite condition. That fact was demonstrated by the resolution of Redmond's National Volunteers at their annual convention in Dublin but a week later. The Irish National Volunteers, despite defections after the Easter Week executions, were still strong in the country, and, even then, greatly outnumbered their Easter Week rivals. At that Convention, its delegates unanimously expressed their "sympathy with their fellow-countrymen and ancient comrades who had lost their lives in the cause of freedom" - referring, of course, to those who had joined up in the British Army and died on the battlefields of Flanders and Gallipoli. There was no turning to the new national evangel with them. And, in truth, judging from the recruiting figures, it was clear that, even then, Ireland did not know her own mind. The official figures, published at the end of that year, showed that the enlistments from 1914 to 1917 in Ireland totalled some 123,584 men, of whom 58,438 were from Ulster's

Nine Counties where the Catholic population was just short of 50%, and 65,147 from the remaining twenty-three counties, where the Catholic population was just on 90%. Of that number, at least 80,000, probably more, were Catholic Nationalists.

The United States had been in the war since that April; and that great event had, of course, its effect on the Americans' traditionally benevolent and sympathetic attitude towards Irish autonomy. No nation, when at war, is more fiercely nationalistic than America; and amongst her heterogeneous but extraordinarily united populace, no element is more madly pro-American than the Irish - yet, on this occasion, seeing that American's ally or "associate", as she preferred to call her, was the "auld enemy" England, Irish-American feeling was somewhat tempered. The President had proclaimed that America had entered the war to abolish imperialistic aggression everywhere and to secure everywhere the establishment of the doctrine of self-determination. And Ireland's claim for such treatment had been before the American people for years, indeed, for generations. Accordingly, the U.S. had two strong reasons to desire a settlement of the Irish Question, viz. that the fact that one of the most famous or notorious of small nations was held down by one of the "liberating" Powers constituted a serious flaw on their "self-determination" war objective, and that such a settlement, by assuaging the susceptibilities of the large and politically powerful Irish-American element, as well as the Irish in Ireland, would be of great help in the furtherance of the war efforts of the

war efforts of the associated powers. Towards that end, the Americans exerted constant pressure on the British Government since they became that Government's "associate" in battle.

Hence it was that Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, yielding (in externals, at all events) to that pressure, announced on 10th June, 1917, the composition of his "Irish Convention" to frame an autonomy for Ireland "within the Empire". This Convention, presided over by Sir Horace Plunkett, was, indeed, a strange omnium-gatherum of different faiths, politics and interests, of County Council and Urban Council Chairmen, Lord Mayors and Mayors, of Orangemen and Redmondite Nationalists. Sinn Féin and O'Brien's All-For-Ireland League were invited to send each a small delegation, but both declined. Sinn Féin's reason for declining the invitation was because the Convention's scope was confined to drafting a measure of autonomy for Ireland within the British Empire. That body wanted no such limitation; and furthermore, wanted the majority decision that might be reached, guaranteed by the great powers. I do not propose to give any consideration to that Convention which, of course, came to nothing, its <u>raison d'etre</u> being primarily to satisfy the Americans that England, at long last, meant business on the Irish Question, and thereby to smooth the way for their full and keen participation and aid in the War. Anyhow, the great majority of the Irish people were not deceived by it, and took little interest in its doings. Of much more importance was one of its early consequences.

In June Bonar Law, then a prominent member of Lloyd George's Cabinet, announced in the House of Commons that in order that the Irish Convention might "meet in a spirit of goodwill and harmony", the Irish prisoners and internees in England were to be immediately released. "An act of political generosity", declared Allison Phillips, with much exaggeration, "without parallel in history".

On 17th June, some 4,,000 prisoners and detainees in various prisons and camps in England and Wales were, accordingly, set free, and made straight for Dublin, where they got a tremendous reception. I witnessed that reception, and never saw anything to equal it, save, perhaps, the reception of Fitzmaurice and the German fliers in Dublin after the East-West crossing of the Atlantic. The prisoners were paraded thro' the thronged streets of the city in brakes and lorries, many of the sentenced men proudly sporting their convict caps. The cheers and noise were deafening. All Dublin went wild with delight and was left to herself to do so, the forces of "Law and Order" being conspicuous by their absence. It was, in truth, an Irish version of "Mafekinging". The hero of the day was undoubtedly de Valera. His exploits during Easter Week as Commandant of the Volunteer force in occupation of Boland's Mills and Mount Street Bridge, the fact that he was the last insurgent commander to surrender, and his subsequent activities in Lewes Gaol, as leader of the men's revolt against convict treatment, all united to make this hitherto unknown man, the most famous and most sought after individual in Dublin on

that historic occasion, and in thus forcing him and his unquestionable qualities forward into the full public view, paved the way for his ultimate selection by the Nation as its accepted Leader. That same day the leaders of the released prisoners met and drew up a statement of Ireland's right to complete self-determination as advocated by President Woodrow-Wilson; and that statement was brought to America by Dr. Patrick MacCartan. Dr. MacCartan was (and is) a County Tyrone man, coming from the Carrickmore area where his people were farmers. He was, long before Easter Week, an avowed separatist, despising all manner of Constitutional Nationalism and relying purely on the sword for the liberation of Ireland. He was considered by the Tyrone people, Orange and Green alike, an odd fish, and a bit of a fanatic, but Orange and Green alike never questioned his sincerity; and, indeed, as a doctor and a personality he was very popular and held in high repute in the county. Before Easter Week I saw little of him though he was a connection of my father's. That he was that most dreaded of all species in the body politic, a "physical force man" was then enough to cause our elders to fight shy of him and his ilk. I have told how I met him and others in the office of Frank O'Connor just before the Rising. After that event I corresponded with him thro' the good Sammy Carson's special "postal service", but did not see him again until one day he met me in Dublin by arrangement about the time I have now arrived at. From that time until he went to U.S.A., a period of about six weeks, I saw the doctor nearly every day, and was much in his company and confidence. Indeed he stayed an odd

night in the "digs" I then occupied - that of Mrs. Casey, Cabra Park, under an assumed name of course, as he was, very definitely, "on his keeping" since the Rising. I used to take long walks thro' the streets of the city and suburbs with him, his only disguise being a pair of heavy-rimmed spectacles which he commissioned me to buy for him. He used to entertain me spotting for me the various detectives and "G" men, all of whom he knew and who, no doubt, were on the look out for him, and other wanted men.

The doctor was a member of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. and thro' him I met a number of prominent members of the Brotherhood - the late Seamus O'Doherty, the late Michael Staines, the late Padraig O'Maille, the late Sean O'Muirthuille, Sean Nunan, Fintan Murphy and others. The venue for their meetings was the home of Seamus O'Doherty, Connacht Street, Phibsborough. On one of our walks together the doctor told me that they had been discussing the sending of someone to America to represent the new national cause and explain it to our friends there, as well as to prepare the ground for Ireland's representation at the Peace Conference. It appeared they wanted him as their delegate for these purposes, but he was most anxious for me to accompany him, the point being that as I happened to be a grand nephew of General Shields, the American statesman, I might be found to be of use there. He explained that if selected to accompany him we would have to travel thither surreptitiously as Able Seamen, in an outgoing steamer from Liverpool and under forged papers as a regularised passport and British visa would, of course, be wholly out of the

question. He said, however, that there would be no difficulty whatever in getting me adequately fixed up and properly certificated in the name of some sea-going A.B. as "the Boys" were strong and well organised in Liverpool Dockland. I, of course, jumped at the idea and eagerly welcomed the unique adventure that it would undoubtedly have been. I was not, however, selected, mainly, I think, because I was not a member of the I.R.B. and could not be one as I had promised my father, who had a horror of Hibernianism, that I would never join an oath-bound society of any description, whether political or religious. Eventually the doctor set out alone, and in due course made his way safely to the U.S. by the underground or rather "under-sea" route.

I should have mentioned that before he set out for America he was sent on a mission to London to deliver a message to the Ambassador there of Kerinsky's new democratic Russian Republic, congratulating them on having achieved democratic freedom and requesting their support of Ireland's cause. The doctor, if I remember correctly, was to endeavour to get to Russia, if at all possible. He saw Kerinsky's people alright in London and had a long and sympathetic chat with one of them who, like himself, had been a doctor "on the run", but he told him there was no hope of his getting to Russia.

After that the doctor made all his preparations to go to America. A few of his friends, including myself, some young lads, and the late Miss Owens of Beragh, saw him off at Dún Laoghaire pier. As a

gesture towards disguise he wore an overcoat of mine (returned to me by the mysterious "underground" within a week), and, of course, the horn-rimmed spectacles. How he was not recognised and captured beats me, as detectives and "G" men were as "thick as leaves in Vallambrosa". They lined the gangway and scrutinised every male passenger as he passed up on to the deck. Judging from their numbers, the Government must have had an inkling that there was something in the offing.

Sometime later the papers announced the arrival in New York of the doctor, bearing with him a message to the President and Congress of the U.S., signed by Eamonn de Valera, Eoin MacNeill, and twenty-four others. From my introduction there by Dr. MacCartan, the home of Joseph and Kitty O'Doherty in Connacht Street, became a frequent visiting centre for me. Mrs. O'Doherty, as I have said, was a truly wonderful woman, combining great intellectual power with great determination and fearlessness of character and wholly inspired by a remarkable faith in the country and enthusiasm for the Cause. Her enthusiasm was catching and she inspired several young men and women by her ardour and her ballads. She was, of course, raided several times and her husband had to spend a great deal of that period on the run. It was at Mrs. O'Doherty's that I met members of the prominent men of the "Extreme" movement such as Dan Breen, Seán Hegarty, Seamus Robinson; and it was there, too, that I had my first meeting with my old friend, Diarmid O'Hegarty (R.I.P.). I also met there

other interesting people, survivals of past national movements, old Fenians and old Land Leaguers - amongst the latter a very interesting old priest who, because of his strong advocacy of the "Land for the People", had been banished for years from Ireland to America, and was there living in retirement. An old retired member of the R.I.C. used also, occasionally, to drop in, and I remember being present at a violent argument between him and the aforesaid priest on the morality of some aspects of the Volunteer movement. Through Arthur Griffith, who had resumed his editorship of the "United Irishman", I contacted a curious and rather mysterious individual. The name of this individual has escaped me; was it Blake or Fitzgerald? I may get it from Mrs. O'Doherty. He had held high office in the R.I.C. and had played a somewhat sinister part under the Balfour Coercion regime in the 'nineties. He was now ready and indeed eager to tell us all he knew and give us the low-down on his part and Balfour's at that period. His motive in doing so was twofold; which predominated was his own secret. He had fallen out with his old masters, and, indeed, had turned completely against them for having, as he alleged, grossly let him down and reneged all their promises to him regarding compensation and reward for his exceptional and dangerous services. Again, he declared he had an uneasy conscience in respect of some of his activities at the time and suffered remorse on account of them and wished, before he died, to make some amends for them by giving into the hands of his victims' friends a full and true statement of the

position in Balfour's days. However that may be, he was clearly in wretched health with a wife also in bad health. I have forgotten much of his story as it was about a period in Irish history that I was very ignorant of at the time; but he appeared to have been in the dangerous midst of things when the late A.J. Balfour was Chief Secretary in Ireland. I remember his telling me that in the Irish Office in London he occupied a room immediately over Balfour's office, and was at Balfour's constant beck and call during all that stormy period, influencing Governmental and Castle tendencies, policies and action, by his advice. Amongst the hectic events he played a big part in were the sinister Maamtrasna murder trials; and he held that the Joyces, sentenced and executed for those murders, were wholly innocent, but the Crown wanted victims, and victims had to be found for it.

After a few contacts with this person I reported the gist of what he had told me to Griffith who decided to meet him and do business with him. Griffith was extremely well up on that period and at once saw the great value of the information being offered. The meeting between him and Griffith took place at my then diggings, Muckross House, Whitworth Road, Drumcondra. My landlady was Mrs. Dagge, the wife of the retired Superintendent of the G.P.O. The family, consisting of the parents and grown boys and girls, were, of course, Protestant and Unionist; but they were very kind to me, as these pages will reveal in due course.

The upshot of that meeting was that the ex R.I.C. officer was commissioned to write a full account of his doings for which he would be paid, and, in the meantime, whilst he was employed on the work he would be maintained by the movement. Accordingly, he took up modest lodgings in Killeen Road, under an assumed name, as his work, which Griffith considered to be of a highly important character, reflecting as it did generally on Castle and police methods, would, of course, constitute a violation of the Official Secrets Act for which he would undoubtedly suffer. His work, accordingly, proceeded under very stealthy and secretive conditions. Once a week I would visit his quiet and unobtrusive digs, collect the MS and convey it to Griffith, who had it typed.

Its author, I must say, worked hard and continuously at his task, for he declared he wanted it completed and in safe hands before his feeble health gave out. In due course, it was finished and ready for publication, which event Griffith was satisfied would create something of a bombshell. But how or where was it to be published? Ireland, or indeed the British Isles, were out of the question. America was the obvious, indeed the only place. But how was it to get safely out there without detection, for it was a rather bulky document? The answer to this question evaded us; the regular "underground" and "undersea" channels would not serve on this occasion for obvious reasons. But just as we were about to admit defeat, a "Deus ex machine" turned up, to our

great relief. Rather I should say a "Dea" - in the person of a charming young lady, the late Leonora Burke of Rockforest, Roscrea. She was the sister of Seamus Burke, B.L., who later became T.D. for North Tipperary and was Minister of Local Government in the first Cosgrove Administration. Miss Burke owned property in New York, where she also had relatives, and was in the habit of making frequent visits across the Atlantic. As she was eminently respectable and not known to have any contacts with subversive movements (Seamus himself was not prominent at the time), she had no trouble in getting all the passports and visas she wanted. Of course, there was the risk of her ship being torpedoed, but she never seemed to think about that. I knew her fairly well at the time and asked her would she bring the document across for us. She agreed at once saying that she was only too happy to do anything for the "Cause", however small.

Meanwhile in the country at large the new movement, inaccurately, and, at the time certainly prematurely styled "Sinn Féin", was continuing to make progress and grow, tho' not without considerable opposition. The electoral reverses had alarmed and incensed the Irish Party people, and their orators and press were now in full cry against the new evangel and its leaders. Nor did they stop at words. Reports came in of attacks on the meetings and parades of the latter in different parts of the country. And the "Party" were not the only critics. The Church, too, was getting apprehensive,

particularly at the number of young clergy that were coming out openly on the side of the "Shinners". On 19th June, an "Instruction", signed by Cardinal Logue, Primate of All Ireland, and the Bishops of Cloyne and Ross, for and on behalf of the whole Hierarchy, was issued to all priests warning them against "dangerous associations and organisations that plot against the Church or lawfully constituted authority", and remainding them that it was strictly forbidden by a statute of the National Synod of Maynooth "to speak of politics or kindred subjects in Church".

On 7th June, the death of the popular Major Willie Redmond, M.P., of wounds in France, created a vacancy in the constituency of East Clare. The election for the filling of the vacancy was fixed for July and Eamonn de Valera, who was only out of gaol, was chosen to contest it on behalf of the movement, against the late Paddy Lynch, K.C., the nominee of the Irish Party. The fact that the late Willie Redmond had been one of the most popular members of the Party and that the candidate, Lynch, belonged to a powerful local family, possessing an intricate network of cousins throughout the constituency, gave our people great concern as to de Valera's chances. It would be, obviously, a very serious reverse for the triumphing cause if a convicted Easter Week man, and one so prominent as he, were defeated. So the call went forth to all supporters and sympathisers with the new movement to rally to its support and give all the help they could.

This call was responded to with remarkable enthusiasm and effect. Presently people from all over the country and in various walks of life headed for the constituency like a veritable pilgrimage and, in most cases, at their own expense. I, too, responded to that call although it was not very convenient for me, as the election campaign clashed with the summer assizes that I should be attending. The outgoing Judges of Assize on the North-West Circuit were actually sitting in Cavan Town which was where I generally joined the Circuit. But, like thousands of my contemporaries, I could not resist the powerful draw of that appeal. So, instead of entraining for Cavan at Amiens Street, I entrained at Kingsbridge for Ennis. At Limerick I had a wait of an hour or so before the train for Ennis, on the celebrated West Clare Railway, departed. To pass the time I took a walk round the vicinity of Limerick Station and was soon made aware that the election fever in East Clare had spread into Limerick, and that it certainly did not indicate that things were going to be too easy for us.

The area around the Station in those days consisted of numerous poor streets and drab, narrow lanes lined with broken-down houses and tenements whence issued hundreds of men into the ranks of the British Army. As in the case of Longford, their wives and female cronies were ardent and extremely noisy supporters of that Army and its cause, and trenchant denouncers of the "Shinners" and all that they stood for. In the wide, cleared space outside

the main entrance of the station a great mob of those warlike Amazons had gathered, equipped with flags, Union Jacks as well as green ones, to cheer the Party politicals and boo and groan the Dev. ones, as they entered the station to entrain for the seat of war. They sang many ballads of a loyalist trend such as "Tipperary", "Keep the Home Fires Burning", "We'll Hang de Valera on the Sour Apple Tree", and occasionally "God Save the King"; but they never got beyond the chorus of the latter as they clearly did not know the words of it. When some of Dev's supporters, passing into the station, would fire an "Up de Valera" at them, they would respond heartily, "Aye! Up with him on the gallows tree!" I thanked my lucky stars that I was not bedecked in the hated tricolour ribbon or badge; had I been, it would unquestionaly have lead to a much closer intimacy between me and those fair ladies than I would have cared for.

At Ennis I put up at the famous Old Ground Hotel which I discovered as a Dev. stronghold. There I met for the first time that famous man himself and many other notables in the new movement, including Countess Markievicz, Darrell Figgis and Harry Boland; and, of course, Joe McGrath and Dan McCarthy.

The hotel was packed to its fullest capacity - indeed beyond it, for they were sleeping two's, three's and four's in the bedrooms, many on the bedroom floors and on the chairs and sofas in the lounges. There was, of course, much discomfort

under such conditions; but nothing could damp down the atmosphere of enthusiasm that prevailed, everybody seeming to be animated by a terrific and wholly altruistic purpose. The wonderful organisation that those two Dublin wizards, Dan McCarthy and Joe McGrath, had fashioned out of nothing in the two precious elections was established over the whole constituency with remarkable speed, and was functioning beautifully under their magic hands. The biggest shock of all the Party people got at that time was that that empirically wrought machine of mushroom growth that they at first so naturally despised, had, in two elections proved immensely superior to their much-vaunted and long established United Irish League under the highly experienced direction of Hughie Martin, its Belfast born Chief Organiser.

Those elections, on the organisation side, resolved themselves into contests between the electoral methods of two cities, Belfast and Dublin, from which the latter emerged victorious, but not without some heavy reverses. Of course, while that was the case it is but fair to say that the old Party machine, which had proved itself in so many battles, was severely handicapped by the big turn in the tide of public opinion against them. And that is a tide that not the most brilliant politician can swim against.

But whilst all was enthusiam for the Cause within the narrow confines of the Old Ground Hotel, the position was very different without its walls. The town of Ennis, the capital of the County Clare, was definitely hostile to us - actively and bitterly hostile.

One evening as we were all gathered together in the hotel lounge, or sitting room (there were no lounges in those days in country hotels), word came in that there was to be a big rally of our opponents up in O'Connell Square which was to be addressed by V.I.P's from Dublin. Madame Markievicz was quite excited by the news, and thought it would be a splendid idea for some of us to sally forth and hear what they had to say. Madame believed intensely in the fundamental goodness of human nature - that is to say, in the best human nature, which, as everybody knows, is Irish human nature! Those decent Claremen on the other side were Irishmen, the same as ourselves, and Madame was convinced that they had only to receive that message of the new evangel when the scales of darkness would fall from their eyes and they would behold the light and turn from their schism. Accordingly, she forthwith invited me and another follow to accompany her thither. So, joined by her small and somewhat obese dog, gaily decked out, like his mistress, in conspicuous green, white and orange we rashly set forth to the Philistime camp. There was a huge crowd of Party supporters in the square, listening to the spate of oratory that poured down on them from the platform erected against the tall O'Connell column, its balustrades festooned with green flags. Despite our odious tricolour ribbon decor, no one said or did anything to us, though we were glowered at by many pairs of eyes, for, if you were in Madame's company you could not avoid notice. For a time things went along peacefully enough; everybody

appeared to be giving full attention to the orators. Presently, an orator arose with a deep, loud voice, who proceeded to abuse and ridicule our people as "Factionists", "German Agents" and "Betrayers of Ireland's Cause", to the immense satisfaction of his audience which satisfaction was registered by much cheering and resounding handclapping. Madame could not stay quiet for long under such a diatribe and was soon making sharp comments to us on his statements, showing how wrong or inaccurate they were. She possessed a clear, penetrating voice that carried quite a bit around her, so that the people in her vicinity simply had to take notice of her and listen to her rapid criticisms of the distinguished speaker's utterances. This, of course, caused considerable distration in the meeting and was certainly not "in ease" of the speaker. Soon we were the centre of an angry mob calling us every imaginable name - "gaol-birds", "killers", "cut-throats" - and commanding us to "go back to Dublin out of that!" I can still see the ring of angry eyes around us and still remember the odour of the national brew from their hot breath. First they shook their fists in our faces, then they began shoving us about and some of them had the heartlessness to visit their wrath on the Countess's poor dog, sending him off, howling with pain from their kicks, his tail between his legs. When she scolded them for their cowardly action, they pulled off her green felt hat, at the same time delivering a few punches on us men. The loss of her hat agitated the Countess as much as the ill-treatment of her dog. "Oh, men!" she cried, "do give me back my

old hat! That's the old hat I wore in the fight at Easter Week. And it's the old hat that went to gaol with me. Do give it back to me!" Not exactly the sort of appeal that would pay dividends in that company!

Eventually a strong detachment of armed R.I.C. men came along and ringed us in from the furious mob, now highly incensed and shouting for our blood. The R.I.C. were under the command of a young District Inspector. He was most courteous, particularly to Madame; but she wouldn't answer or speak to him at all, even when he retrieved her hat and returned it to her. She resented their presence, and more so, their protection, a resentment which, I can truly say, I certainly did not share! The police faced our antagonists with drawn batons and, bit by bit, drew us back within their defensive lines to a cul de sac lane at the end of which was a convent. In that position, it was much easier to protect us as the constables, drawn across the lane's narrow entry, sealed it off from our pursuers. We were then quite a while behind the lines of our guardians, listening in safety, to the raging mob that they were holding back. Eventually we were brought back to our hotel through the convent grounds under police escort, much to Madame's disgust which was not lessened by my thanking the young D.I.

Violence, particularly in the towns, was a feature of that election. For example, on the day of the poll I was present at another wild scene.

I was posted, again with Arthur Griffith, to the town hall as outside agents to distribute propaganda pamphlets and leaflets and to give what assistance to voters that we could. Everything went well till just on the close of the poll when a fierce row flamed up, the actual cause of which I forget. Soon a wild, milling mob swelled into the narrow hall of the town hall, and I was sure we were going to be "done for". However, with the help of other supporters, we managed to slam the large door against them, until the streets were cleared and we were rescued - this time, not by the R.I.C., but by a detachment of Irish Volunteers. And that was another outstanding feature of that election: the reorganisation and reforming of the Volunteers that, since the Rising, had been suppressed. The violence on the part of our opponents made that essential if our people were to have adequate protection, for, unfortunately, the adequate R.I.C. protection we got on the night of the meeting in Ennis was by no means general on the part of that force. As the election proceeded, it became a common sight to see, at our meetings, well-drilled and disciplined companies and squads of Volunteers, armed with hurleys, maintaining order and protecting our speakers and supporters. De Valera went about openly in the uniform of a Commandant, complete with Sam Brown belt and swordstrap, but, of course, minus the sword; and everywhere he went, he had a bodyguard of Volunteers, many of them also uniformed. So conspicuous were the resurrected Volunteers at that election that the English press called special attention to them, one

paper calling them "de Valera's Dalcassion warriors".

At the victory meeting in Ennis on the declaration of the poll, de Valera reviewed a great turn-out of them, said to be between five and six hundred. It may well be queried why did not the British Government suppress them, or take some sort of action to prevent their mobilisations and paradings. I think the reason why they did not do so, why they suffered them, was that they wanted no untoward scenes that would offend American opinion, in view of the sessions of Lloyd George's "Irish Convention" that were taking place. Thenceforward, until they were finally suppressed, or rather driven underground, the Volunteers were conspicuous at most of the ensuing elections where, indeed, their services were needed, often badly needed as in the case of South Armagh. On 11th July, the result of the election was declared by the Sheriff of County Clare from the steps of Ennis courthouse; it was, de Valera, 5,010, Lynch, 2,035. De Valera had won by nearly 3,000 votes.

To say that Dev's more than two to one majority came to the country as a great surprise is putting it very mildly indeed. True, as the campaign got into its stride, it became pretty clear that he would carry the day, but no one expected such a landslide in his favour. The Party people were dumbfounded, and we, their opponents, were almost swept off our feet with astonishment and delight. Across the water, the news was received with even greater surprise, and with consternation as an

onimous omen. It was clear that Dev's victory had spelt out the writing on the wall for the Irish Party, and for the future of the whole Irish national constitutional movement. One English paper equated it to a major defeat on the field of war, and another to a "tidal wave".

That evening, I left Ennis and caught the night mail at Limerick for Dublin, as, next day, I had to make for Omagh where the summer assizes were proceeding. The night mail was a slow old train, which carried the mail to Dublin, as the name implied, and took the whole night to do so. But, slow as it was, I shall not soon forget that journey. For the first few hours, I had plenty of company, and the stations, as we lumbered through them, were pretty crowded with people, all apparently overjoyed at the East Clare result, and all eager to pick up what they could from those, like myself, returning from the "battle-front". As daylight faded and the shadows of night came on, an extraordinary sight met our eyes. Every hill and mountain, as far as the eye could carry, was ablaze with bonfires, in many cases, with people cheering, singing and dancing round them. The whole nation appeared to be en fete as though it had won a great victory in war.

East Clare was truly a resounding victory for the new Cause. But, here again, as in the case of North Roscommon and South Longford, no definite policy or aim appears to have been put before the electorate, as Piaras Beaslai points out in his aforementioned work. "The Clare people", he writes,

"were asked to vote for the man who had fought for Irish Independence and suffered in British prisons, and thereby show the nations of the world, and the coming Peace Conference, that they endorsed Ireland's claim for independence. It was made clear that Mr. de Valera would not attend the English Parliament if elected; but he issued no election address".

True, de Valera did state during the election that "we want an Irish Republic because, if Ireland had her freedom, it is, I believe, the most likely form of government. But, if the Irish people wanted to have another form of government, so long as it was an Irish government, I would not put a word against it". (Dorothy Macardle, p. 233.)

And that was as precise as the republican objective was put in that election. He referred to the Ulster question. For example, at Killaloe he said, "Let the Ulster Unionists recognise the Sinn Féin position which has behind it justice and right. It is supported by nine-tenth of the Irish people, and, if those Unionists do not come in on their side, they will have to go under. Ulster is entitled to justice and she will have it, but she should not be petted and the interests of the majority sacrificed to her. Give Unionists a just and full share of representation, but no more than their just share".

A logical statement, indeed, which no logician could take exception to; unfortunately, the Ulster question was and is not capable of being

solved by logic, because, in its very essence, it is a wholly illogical concept, the more's the pity!

Whilst it is quite true that Dev., in a more concrete way than at any of the prior elections, represented in his person the fighting men of Easter Week and the Volunteers, and whilst the latter, unquestionably, provided the driving force in the campaign, there was as much vagueness as to national policy than as there was lack of unity between the various elements that had supported his candidature. Nevertheless the East Clare election of 1917 was a red-letter day, a turning point in the new national movement that was rapidly coming into being.

There was no question, of course, of Dev. attending Westminster in any circumstances, as he, himself, made clear both during and after the election. In this he followed the line adoped by Count Plunkett and McKenna; and, a few days after the declarations of the poll, they were to be followed by another: Larry Ginnell, M.P. for South Westmeath. Larry had always been very independent, and for years had been excommunicated by the Party from their midst for his aforesaid independence. This did not bother Larry much. He forthwith formed his own "Independent United Irish League" and got himself returned at each election as an Independent Nationalist against all Party opposition. In the big 1912 Home Rule Demonstration in Dublin, I remember seeing, in that parade of the orthodox, a big turn-out of his Westmeath men, headed by a

band and a great green banner bearing the words, "Westmeath Independent U.I.L. - No Dictation!"

Larry was, indeed, a formidable figure and, since the North Roscommon election, had been actively assisting the new movement. And so he became the first of the old parliamentarians to renounce Westminster and subscribe to the Sinn Féin doctrine of abstention from the English Parliament. A little later, another famous parliamentarian was breathing forth his inmost yearnings in Belfast. On 23rd July, Sir Edward Carson went to that city and unbared his heart to his worshippers there, thus: "I'd rather be a private fighting in the trenches and risking my life than any honours in the whole of my career that I have every received or would receive."

Were it not that the speaker of those words appears to have been accepted by friends and foes alike as the acme of sincerity, one would be tempted to consider him as something of a humbug, particularly seeing that there was no reason at all why he could not have given effect to so passionate a longing. True, he was well past military age. But a parliamentary colleague of his, Major Willie Redmond, though of the "rebelly" Home Rule variety, also well over military age and not so very much younger than himself, gave practical effect to a similar wish which led him to his death in action at Messines but a month previously.

On 25th July, the much publicised Irish or,

as it was generally known as, Lloyd George Convention, opened its deliberation in the Provost's House, T.C.D. And there we will leave it, for, save amongst a small section of the people, it was not taken seriously by the country and cut no ice at all.

Another by-election (which I did not attend) took place on 5th August when William T. Cosgrove, a Dublin City Alderman, was returned for Kilkenny City by a majority of 380 votes over his Party opponent, Maginnis, the actual voting being 772 against 392; in other words, nearly a two to one victory. The "tidal wave" was still in its full and heady course, showing no abatement at all. At that election, as at the East Clare election, Volunteers paraded in full force, armed with hurleys and, in some cases, arms. All over the country since Dev's return, Volunteer Companies were forming or reorganising, being drilled and instructed, despite a Military Order under D.O.R.A., issued by Sir Bryan Mahon, C.I.C. the British Forces in Ireland, prohibiting the use or wearing of uniforms in public places by unauthorised persons.

The new M.P. for East Clare, in his capacity as head of the Volunteers, was constantly going around the county, addressing his men and taking the salute from companies passing before him at Volunteer reviews. His speeches, too, became bolder and bolder. At Hospital, County Limerick, for example, he told them that "Sinn Féiners have a definite policy, and the people of Ireland are determined to make it a

success; that is to make English rule absolutely impossible in Ireland". History was, indeed, repeating itself with a vengeance. The birds that, five years back had been chanting a similar message from the Orange grove were settled now on the green bay tree, delivering therefrom an analogous message albeit from a different angle. Still, it was the message of revolt. Hearken back to Carson performing at the Criterion Restaurant in June, 1912, when he told his audience that "when he went over there (Ulster), he intended to break every law that was possible".

But, if the music was the same, the reaction thereto from Authority on its highest level was not the same. Dev's orations were disturbing the British Government very much indeed; and, despite the tacit stay in coercion on account of the Irish Convention sittings, the British Prime Minister was forced into speech. "I have read the speeches of the Honourable Member for East Clare", Lloyd George said in the House of Commons on 23rd October. "They are not excited and, so far as the language is concerned, they are not violent. They are plain, deliberate, and, I might almost say, cold-blooded incitements to rebellion. He has repeated them at meeting after meeting almost in the same studied terms ... urging the people to train, to master their rifles, to study their mechanism in order that whenever they are supplied with rifles they should be able to use them efficiently." And he asked, "How could the Government treat speeches of that

kind as if they were the sort of excitable speeches delivered by people of no consequence which would end in nothing?" And he added that "there is a great deal of talk among the Sinn Féiners which does not mean Home Rule. It does not mean self-government. It means complete separation ... it means secession. The words which are used are 'sovereign independence'". Lloyd George was certainly beginning to learn and perhaps to grasp, tho' in a vague way, the huge change that was in process in Ireland's political outlook. He added a stern warning that "this country could not possibly accept that (i.e. Irish Independence) under any conditions".

Yet another of the many "nevers" in history that became possible!

By that September, a considerable number of the more prominent Volunteers had been rounded up and interned in Mountjoy Prison for drilling, or the making of speeches against the regime. On 18th September, they demanded to be treated as prisoners of war and, when that was refused, they commenced a hunger-strike; and some of them had to suffer the barbarity of forcible feeding at the hands of the prison doctor, a certain Dr. Lowe. As a result, Thomas Ashe, a young man of fine physique and good health, collapsed and died. His treatment by his gaolers is succinctly and effectively put in the verdict of the Jury:

"We find that Thomas Ashe", it read, according to the medical evidence of Professor McWeeney, Sir Arthur Chance and

"Sir Thomas Myles, died by heart failure, and congestion of the lungs, on 25th September, caused by the punishment of taking away from his cell the bed, bedding and boots, and his being left to lie on the cold floor for fifty hours, and then subjected to forcible feeding in his weak condition after a hunger strike of five or six days. We censure the Castle authorities for not acting more promptly, especially when the grave conditions of the deceased and other prisoners was brought under their notice on the previous Saturday by the Lord Mayor and Sir T. Irwin."

That brutal deed stirred the country profoundly and greatly intensified the tide of feeling that was growing against the notoriously unpopular Castle. Ashe was a high-minded idealist who had written several patriotic poems, of which the best known was the sincere and appealing "Let Me Carry Your Cross For Ireland, Lord!" He lay in state in the Mater Hospital, clad in Volunteer uniform and surrounded by a guard of honour of armed Volunteers. It is said that between twenty-five and thirty thousand people passed through the hospital while his body lay there. The funeral was enormous, the first of the enormous patriotic funerals that became such a feature of those stormy times. The Castle, stunned perhaps for the nonce by the inhumanity of its actions, discreetly stood aside and permitted the vast

procession to proceed unmolested through the thronged and reverently silent streets, despite the fact that the coffin was escorted by armed and uniformed Volunteers. At the graveside, a squad of Volunteers fired three volleys, and the "Last Post" was sounded. Michael Collins gave the oration, surely the briefest and most pointed of all such orations. "That volley which we have just heard", he declared, "is the only speech which it is proper to make above the grave of a dead Fenian."

Ashe's death gave the incipient movement the first direct victory against its foes. Within the ensuing week, the Castle authorities gave in and accepted the demands of the prisoners that they be treated as political prisoners and not as criminals. The movement was definitely on the march.

The release of the prisoners from the various gaols and internment camps, in June, gave a huge fillip to the movement. The dispersion to all parts of the country of such large numbers of ardent disciples of the Cause, fully indoctrinated in its tenets during their period of incarceration, soon produced results. Everywhere Volunteer companies were springing into being; everywhere meetings were being held and addressed by those fiery missionaries; everywhere young men were enlisting in that illegal and outlawed body. The ex-prisoners concentrated almost wholly on the military, or Volunteer side. That was natural enough in their case, seeing that they were fighting men, soldiers, or had been in close and daily touch

with revolutionary soldiers for many months, and had thus acquired a strong military outlook that deeply coloured all their political thinking. Apart from that, an even stronger reason for their concentration on the military side was the fact that there was not in existence at the time a political movement that they could join. They would not, of course, touch the discredited U.I.L. which, anyhow, had lost much of its quondam prestige and was, in many areas, extinct or moribund. Griffith's old Sinn Féin organisation never expanded much outside Dublin, and was more attractive to intellectuals and national economists than to politicals; anyhow, its partiality for a monarchical solution of our sovereignty question did not appeal to those perfervid new republicans. And the same applied a fortiori to the Nation League which did not contemplate at all a full-blooded separatist solution, whether republican or monarchical. Such being the state of affairs in the country, it was clear that what was needed, and needed soon, was a sound political organisation that could contain and direct the great tidal wave of national resurgence before it got beyond control, binding together within its confines all men of good will and patriotic instinct, who were either attached to one or other of the several splinter groups, or not attached to anything. And already there was a strong, natural centripetal pull at work in the country, quite unorganised, of course, created by the very force of the mighty tidal wave then running fastly on his heady current. The splinter parties were petering out. We in the Nation League, sometime about then, came together and wound

ourselves as Nation Leaguers, and transferred ourselves and our clubs to the new Sinn Féin organisation that had just been created. Similarly, Plunkett's 'Liberty Clubs' that, like ourselves, never developed a nation-wide momentum, faded out too and joined in with the new Sinn Féin, as well as other smaller and isolated bodies throughout the country. The ground was clearing for the new structure.

I come to yet another significant date in the history of latter-day Ireland, the date of the first Convention, or "Ard Fheis" of the re-moddelled and revivified Sinn Féin organisation. That date was 25th October, 1917.

But before dealing with that famous Convention and in order to give an idea of the atmosphere then prevailing, I feel I must quote at some length from Pierce Beasley's book on Michael Collins, already referred to. That book is a well-written and valuable record of those times and, in my opinion, has never got the credit that it deserved. Unfortunately, it is now out of print; in itself, a sad reflection on our countrymen's interest in past history. Beasley, of course, was a pro-Treaty man as I was myself. That, no doubt, may be the reason why his estimates and summings-up of conditions and political thought during the various crises of the period under review appears to me to be in general accurate, fair and sound. The excerpt that I am about to give certainly reflects my own views thereon, even to-day, after the passage of more than forty years:

"The National movement", says Beaslaí, "which had arisen out of the ashes of Easter Week, had now begun to take definite shape ... The one tangible result that had emerged so far was that the majority of the Irish people, moved by the heroism and sacrifices of the Easter Week insurgents, moved also by dissatisfaction with the Irish Party, by resentment of the English Government's betrayal of Home Rule and the coercion of Ireland, and by fear of military conscription, had rallied to the support of those who stood for independence. The only practical policy put forward so far was non-recognition of a passive resistance to English rule in Ireland, and an appeal to the Peace Conference which was anticipated at the end of the war.

The basis of the new movement was, then, the assertion of Ireland's separate nationality and of her right to independence. Its programme was a refusal to recognise the English Government or its agents in Ireland, the abstention of the elected representatives of the people from attendance at the English Parliament, the establishment of a National Assembly of elected representatives, passive resistance to British powers and institutions, the revival and use of the Irish language, the encouragement of Irish industries, the maintenance of the Irish Volunteers, and an appeal by Ireland's National Assembly to the Peace Conference. It will be

"seen that, except for the last two items, this was simply Arthur Griffith's old Sinn Féin policy. It was, in fact, a continuation of the old Irish Ireland movement of which Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers, and the Gaelic League were different facets. The methods proposed were perfectly peaceful. Nobody at the time contemplated another insurrection. Even the Irish Volunteers only considered physical force as a last resort, in case the English Government introduced Conscription in Ireland. Passive resistance only was advocated, and for a a long time afterwards was alone resorted to. It was the continued violence of the English Government that ultimately forced a peaceful and constructive movement into a bloody revolutionary war."

THE TIDAL WAVE.

(I)

The great Convention of the new model Sinn Féin that assembled in the round room of the Mansion House at ten o'clock on that October morning, forty-one years ago, would actually have been the tenth meeting of the National Council of Griffith's original Sinn Féin which, like the other bodies, it had absorbed. Nevertheless, seeing that the new body had retained all the salient features of Griffith's self-reliant and positive national creed, and, as a tribute to that unique and constructive patriot whose almost single-handed labours over twelve weary years, prepared the way and sowed the seed for the national resurgence, the Convention was called, not the first, but the tenth Árd Fheis of Sinn Féin.

I was present at that Árd Fheis as a delegate from the Owen Roe O'Neill Club of Omagh, and still have a pretty vivid recollection of its proceedings. There were about 1,800 delegates from clubs in many city boroughs, townships, counties, but by no means all, and

in numerous parishes in the country. To those who had seen the old national conventions of the U.I.L. foregathering, two things were very noticeable in that one. These were the almost complete absence of clergymen and of greyheads. In the old organisation, clergymen of all religions were automatically granted membership, with full voting powers and eligibility for all offices without having to be elected members; and their black garb and clerical collars were conspicuous features at them - nearly all Catholic priests, of course, as none of the others, save a rare Presbyterian minister, took advantage of that privilege. True, there were some priests present apart from such prominent national figures as Father O'Flanagan, Father Mat Ryan and Father Wall; but they were there in their official capacity as delegates from clubs or office-holders in the organisation. True, also, there were a number of elderly men there, like Count Plunkett and Larry Ginnell; but they constituted a small minority in that great gathering of youth. I should say that the average age of the delegates could not have exceeded twenty-eight or twenty-nine years, and that

might well be putting it high.

The first thing the Árd Fheis had to do was to acclaim the new constitution of the new Sinn Féin. This had been laboriously hammered out beforehand by a specially appointed committee that contained advocates of the moderate, or monarchical right, like Griffith, and those of the radical and republican left, like Brugha. At first, there was quite a sharp cleavage of opinion between those two sections who, by the way, were strongly represented in the assembly. Griffith was not a republican and never was; he believed Ireland's finest and traditional sovereign development lay under a monarchy, and, as a compromise with England and as a gesture to the pro-English Irish, he saw no objection to the sovereign Irish monarchy accepting the British sovereign as its head. In other words, a dual monarchy after the very successful Austro-Hungarian model. Brugha, as I have said, was an adamant, fanatical if you wish, republican after the Fenian tradition. No other form of government for Ireland would do him. There was a third attitude that was best represented by de Valera. He was one of the fighting men and came into the national picture by his

exploits in the Rising, being actually the last commandant to surrender. Naturally, he shared much of the outlook of his comrades in arms. On the republican issue, he had said in Ennis after his election, "This victory is one which will be celebrated all over the world - a victory for Ireland. This victory will show the world that Irishmen, if they had a ghost of a chance, would fight for the independence of Ireland and for an Irish republic". And Beasley reminds us in his book on Collins that "it was in his presidential address that Mr. de Valera first used the significant and oft-quoted phrase: "We are not doctrinaire republicans"."

I understand that the pull between the monarchists and the republicans was very strong, and, for a time, showed no sign of solution. Griffith had no great gradh for a republic, and believed that in this the people were fundamentally behind him. Eventually, it was put to him that, unless we went out for a republic, our demand for sovereign independence would be misrepresented by England. She would say, "They are shouting for independence, and we are prepared to concede them a liberal measure of

Home Rule". And were we to say, "We are out for an independent kingdom", she would reply, "What are you shouting for? Haven't you got a king, and same as we have, and a kingdom? Is not the kingdom that of Great Britain and Ireland?" In this way, she would be given a handle with which to confuse the world on our sovereignty issue. Griffith, I understand, most reluctantly agreed to the movement's being pledged to secure the international recognition of Ireland as an independent republic; though convinced that that particular pattern of sovereign autonomy would be neither suitable for the Irish, or what the Irish, if free to do so, would choose. It was de Valera, I understand, who enabled him to agree by penning the important addendum to the clause, which was: "Having achieved that status, the Irish people may, by referendum, freely choose their own form of government". That, therefore, is the ultimate end of latter-day Sinn Féin; and that end has not yet been achieved. If and when it is ever invoked, in the future, it may well hold the solution of the partition problem.

One of the first tasks of the Árd Fheis was the election of a President. And it soon became known that, on this issue, there was every prospect of there being an acute division of opinion, perhaps resulting in another big "split", that almost traditional bane of Irish national politics. There were three candidates in the field, Arthur Griffith, Count Plunkett and Eamonn de Valera. Griffith, the father of Sinn Féin, the existing head of the parent body, and, to a large extent, the father and creator of the new nationalism, was, all things being equal, the obvious choice. But there were powerful elements opposed to him for various reasons. The Volunteers were against him because he was known to have opposed the Rising; the Republicans were against him because he was known to be a monarchist of a most conservative type actually, seeing no serious objection to the acceptance of the British king as a dual monarch; and the Labour and Socialistic elements were against him because of his inherent conservatism and of his strong opposition to the famous Larkin strike of 1913. Count Plunkett was distinguished more on account of his patriotic sons than on his own. Since his big victory in South Roscommon,

he and his supporters had come to regard him as the predestined leader of the Irish people on whom "the mantle of Elijah" had fallen, charged with the definite leadership of the country in the new struggle, and what influence and following he had was very definitely republican. De Valera was, to a large extent, the new man, the dark horse. His predilection, because of his associations and exploits, were certainly republican rather than monarchical, but, according to Beasley, he would appear to have arrived at that conclusion not so very long beforehand; actually during his sojourn in prison. He was not a doctrinaire republican; but, whilst that was the case, his conviction as to what form of sovereignty the Irish people wanted differed from that of Griffith. The latter, as we have seen, felt they wanted a monarchy whereas de Valera believed they wanted a republic. That being the case, and mainly for that reason, he backed the republican ideal.

When the item on the agenda, "Election of President", was called by the Chairman, a sudden hush fell on the assembly; everyone waited to see what would happen,

with suppressed excitement and anxiety. After a minute elapsed, which seemed an hour, Griffith rose and, to the astonishment of all, including his closest friends, announced that he was not going forward for the post and thereupon withdrew his nomination. He declared he wished to retire in favour of de Valera, adding that, "in Eamon de Valera we have a soldier and a statesman". The applause that broke out and lasted for some minutes at this wholly unexpected announcement reflected the assembly's relief at the solution and the removal of the severe tension. Most people that were present and heard it, whatever was or is their political outlook, will, I think, endorse Beasley's comments on it.

> "Griffith's unselfish patriotism on this occasion", he wrote, "has never received proper acknowledgement. For many years he had toiled in poverty and obscurity, giving the best work of his brain to the cause of Ireland. His ideas had prevailed, and, at the very time when he saw the country converted to the Sinn Féin policy, of which he was the pioneer, he surrendered the leadership to a new, almost unknown man, in order to avoid any cleavage in the national ranks. His self-abnegation will be the more appreciated when it is pointed out that, in the case of a contest, he would certainly have defeated de Valera, as was proved by the election of an

"Executive Council, where Griffith's supporters headed the poll and the I.R.B. candidates were either defeated, or came in at the foot of the list."

That certainly goes for me. In my view, and I came to know him very well and enjoyed his personal friendship, Griffith was one of the greatest altruists I have ever met, pledged to an ideal, in the furtherance of which he was prepared to and would readily make any personal sacrifice he might be called upon to, or considered he should make. He was wholly free from personal ambition of any sort.

Count Plunkett also withdrew his name; and de Valera, a young man, Griffith's junior by twelve years, was unanimously elected President of the great remodelled Sinn Féin organisation. In his speech, on accepting that office, de Valera referred to the republic-monarchy issue as follows:-

"This Constitution we are setting up says we are striving to get international recognition for our Irish Republic, and there is an added clause to it which I should like to explain, that, having achieved that status, the Irish

> "people may, by referendum, freely choose their own form of government. This is not the time for this, for this reason, that the only banner under which our freedom can be won at the present time is the Republican banner. It is as an Irish Republic that we have a chance of getting international recognition, to have a republican form of government. Some might have fault to find with that, and prefer other forms of government. This is not the time for that; this is the time to get freedom. Then we can settle by the most democratic means what particular form of government we may have."

Those words of Dev's constitute a sound summing-up of the state of opinion in the Árd Fheis on the issue of the particular form with which our sovereign independence was to be finally clothed; it presents a true picture of the assembly's uncertainty and lack of unanimity on that important issue. As P.S. O'Hegarty reminds us in his book, "the clinching argument in favour of the Republic was the notion that only as such could Ireland get international recognition ..." It also emphasises and stresses what was the big issue, the cardinal target that was the <u>raison d'etre</u> of the organisation on which they were all united, namely, "complete and absolute independence". On the point of monarchy, he added a

phrase that would appear to exclude a future Irish monarch being selected or accepted from a certain specific royal house. "I only wish to say in reference to that last clause", he added, "that there is no contemplation in it of having a monarchy in which the monarch would be of the House of Windsor". That, certainly, did not correspond with the outlook of Griffith and the old Sinn Féiners, an important part of whose national philosophy was built on the dual monarchy concept of the Austro-Hungarian precedent; and had it been put forward as a definite resolution and accepted by the Árd Fheis, it would, of course, have limited the ultimate choice of the people in that connection and to that extent. But it was not put to the vote; had it been, whilst a substantial element would undoubtedly have been found sharing the President's view, it might well not have got a majority, as the Griffith influence in the Árd Fheis (unlike the Volunteers) was extremely strong, if not predominant, and, apart from that, republicanism at that particular stage had not grown to the popularity that it subsequently did. Accordingly, that phrase goes on record as but the <u>obiter dictum</u> of the President, entitled, of course, to respect, having regard to its source, but not in that form, at all events, binding on the Convention.

Griffith was elected one of the two Vice-Presidents by a vote of 1,197, which was well night unanimous. The other Vice-President was Father Michael O'Flanagan who received 780 votes, the runner-up being Count Plunkett. Austin Stack and Darrell Figgis were elected joint Honorary Secretaries, and W.T. Cosgrave and Larry Ginnell joint Honorary Treasurers. Twenty-four persons were elected to the Executive Council; and, in view of the subsequent momentous happenings, it is curious to recall now that the last man elected was Michael Collins. He and Ernest Blythe got 340 votes each. I must not omit to refer specially here to the case of Eoin MacNeill who, since his action in calling off the nation-wide Rising at Easter, 1916, drew on himself the hostility of the fighting men and their supporters. When his name was proposed for the Executive Council, Countess Markievicz rose and objected strongly to it because of his aforesaid action, quoting Connolly as saying that, by that action, MacNeill had "cut the ground from under the feet" of the insurgents. She was answered with great spirit by Dev. who, to his credit, had already insisted on bringing MacNeill with him to Clare, thereby ignoring the violent and ill-conceived clamour against him. "I am

convinced", Dev. told his audience, "that John MacNeill did not act otherwise than as a good Irishman", adding that, "had I the slightest doubt of that, he would not have been on my platform in Ennis". This was undoubtedly very courageous of Dev. and, in his defence of MacNeill, he was, of course, strongly supported by Griffith. As a result, Eoin MacNeill was elected by 888 votes to 688 for the next candidate, Cathal Brugha.

"There were other interesting things at this Convention", wrote P.S. O'Hegarty "(History of Ireland Under The Union"). "Mention of another insurrection was greeted with laughter. A proposal by a clerical delegate to make it clear that a phrase about 'using any and every means' against foreign government did not cover 'anything from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter' was opposed by Cathal Brugha by an assurance that they did not propose to fight English rule by assassination, and by de Valera by a heated repudiation of the possibility of Ireland ever doing anything that was not moral or just".

As Beasley truly writes in his Collins book: "The methods proposed (by the Árd Fheis) were perfectly peaceful. Nobody at the time contemplated another

insurrection. Even the Irish only considered physical force as a last resort, in case the English Government introduced Conscription in Ireland. Passive resistance only was advocated, and for a long time afterwards was alone resorted to. It was the continued violence of the English Government that ultimately forced a peaceful and constructive movement into a bloody revolutionary war".

And Miss Dorothy Macardle in her "Irish Republic":

"Although at the beginning of 1918 the Volunteers were reorganised and although a determination to resist Conscription, if necessary, by force of arms, existed throughout the country, there was no intention among Republicans to attempt a second insurrection during the year. The Volunteers and the new Sinn Féin, united under de Valera's leadership, concentrated on strengthening the movement on its political side. It was foreseen that, when the European War ended and a Peace Conference came into session, the claims of nations long denied their freedom would be heard. Ireland was to be prepared to send representatives to that Peace Conference - representatives, not of a small party, but of a majority of the nation, who would be in a position to base Ireland's claims on an irrefutable declaration of the will of the people and on the

basic principle of government by consent".

Such was the famous Tenth Árd Fheis of the Sinn Féin movement, begetting as it did a reformed and remodelled organisation where room was found for every party and group and every shade and tone of advanced and progressive nationalist thought, provided only that it subscribed to the Griffithite doctrine of permanent abstention of Irish M.P.s from the English Parliament at Westminster. It was that great historic organisation, thus founded, that was the origin and prime artificer of the momentous achievements of the ensuring four years.

The day after the two-day Convention of Sinn Féin, a secret, nation-wide Convention of the Irish Volunteers took place in the G.A.A. buildings at Jones' Road. De Valera was elected President of the Volunteers - still a body wholly independent from the political Sinn Féin organisation. Unlike Sinn Féin, the I.R.B. men were predominant and powerful in the Councils of the Volunteers, and had no difficulty in dominating the Executive with sworn men like Michael Collins, Diarmuid Lynch, Seán McGarry, etc. De Valera, I should mention, was not then an I.R.B. man, having resigned from it because of religious

scruples as to the nature of its oath. Neither was Brugha; on the contrary, he, also an ex-I.R.B. man, had become its bitterest critic. As I have said, I was never a member of the Irish Volunteers and, of course, was not, as I could not be, present at the secret Convention. One of the most important results of the two Conventions was to put Dev. into the position of head or chief of the two national organisations, both the political and the military.

(11)

The months that followed the Sinn Féin Árd Fheis, certainly to the end of January, were peculiarly peaceful, or rather uneventful, politically. The "Lloyd-George Convention", as it came to be generally termed in Ireland, was holding its sessions in Dublin, Cork or Belfast, and what spece from the war news was given over to the proceedings, outings and feasting of that unreal consortium. But if matters were outwardly quiet, that did not mean that they were static. On the contrary, just below the surface there was terrific activity going on throughout the country, albeit in an inconspicuous and unobtrusive way. Sparked off by the tremendous momentum of the September Árd Fheis, the country was organising herself on her political and her military sides. Work had to be done,

clubs and Volunteer companies had to be founded; so the word went forth that the limelight, as far as possible, was to be shunned. Zealous and mainly honorary organisers went forth to the towns and parishes to aid an enthusiastic people in the construction of their political and military machines. The Government, because of the need for an atmosphere of peace and harmony with which to envelop its Convention, turned a more or less blind eye on the wide-spread and ceaseless activities that were quietly going on.

About September, if I recollect correctly, I was in Sligo at the civic reception given to Countess Markievicz when she was made a Freeman of that city, she being a native of that county. From what I saw, Sligo appeared to be a stronghold of the cause. The Mayor, the late Dudley M. Hanley, the Aldermen and the City Councillors went forth in their robes to receive her at the city boundary, and escorted her, through cheering crowds, to the Town Hall where she was duly elected a Freeman of Sligo Borough and her name enrolled on the city's records. In connection with that event, a series of propaganda meetings was arranged through the county, at which I spoke. During my visit to Sligo, I stayed with D.A. Mulcahy and his good wife in their

pleasant residence in one of the suburbs. "Mul", as he was known to his numerous friends, was Chief Executive Officer of the local Vocational School. He was, I believe, the son of the Fenian, Dr. Mulcahy of Limerick, who had served a prison sentence for his share in that movement. He and his wife were sincere and convinced republicans, and were, of course, in the local movement up to their eyes, so to speak. Indeed, "Mul" could be justly described as the "fons et origo" of the cause in Sligo, giving to it every spare minute of his time. That couple were two of the most genuine people in any cause that ever I met, and completely devoid of personal ambition or self-interest; all that they thought of and worked for, was the "Cause". And that was one of the reasons why Sinn Féin triumphed - because of the number of zealous, personally disinterested people like the Mulcahys of Sligo and the O'Dohertys of Connaught Street, Dublin, who were in its ranks.

During that winter, I was mostly in Dublin attending at the Law Library in the Four Courts, in pursuance of my calling as a barrister. But, I confess, my interests were much more in the great movement that was surging up allaround us and that it was impossible to ignore, than in my law work.

I had made many friends and connections through my political activities, and found myself being drawn more and more to their sympathetic company to discuss the multitudinous and all-absorbing affairs of that exacting lady, Cathleen Ní Houlihan. Though Sinn Féin was united in its ultimate aim - complete sovereign independence - there were many sets and groups within its comprehensive corpus that held varied and individualistic views on several matters that, to Sinn Féin, were subordinate to the main aim, and, therefore, in the new freedom, not only tolerated but encouraged. Birds of a feather, we know, tend to flock together; and, in accordance with that law of nature, those sets and groups, attracted by the centripetal force of their particular addiction, foregathered at certain times, each in its particular café, hostelry or tavern. It was a wonderful, unforgettable, exciting time, the dawn of a new Irish world, the "primavera", the "earrach" of a great Irish renaissance; and, as in the case of all great renaissances, men's minds were stimulated and quickened, and a powerful impetus was given to thought in all fields - politics, economics, labour, literature and art. It was, indeed, good to be in Dublin in these days.

At that time, Dublin was a city of cafés, of which there were at least half-a-dozen in Grafton Street alone. One of those was the Café Cairo. There, at a corner table in the long room on the second floor, a literary group would gather at certain hours of the day and, over their cups of coffee, discuss the Olympians of Irish and contemporary literature. The acknowledged leader of that group was Ernest A. Boyd, a tall, handsome man, with regular classical features, furnished with a regular, dark-brown, spade-cut beard, always elegantly attired, and probably the finest literary critic that Ireland produced in modern times. In his company would generally be found the late Larry Byrne ("Andrew E. Malone"), Paddy Little, Mario Esposito, Frank Gallagher, Liam Slattery, Fred Higgins, sometimes Desmond Ryan, James Stephens, Charles Bewley, the late Ferdinand Tuohy & Leo Whelan, the artists, and, very rarely, Darrell Figgis. Figgis was, of course, much more a literary man than a politician and that corner table in the Cairo should have been his particular Mecca. Yet he seldom went there. The truth was, he and Boyd did not hit it off. They were both egotistical and avid for the limelight. Also, they both "kept" beards; and in those universally clean-shaven times one rarely saw two bearded men as friends,

although Figgis used to boast of his strong friendship and psychological kinship with Roger Casement. Figgis, I fear, was jealous of Boyd. I remember meeting him one day in the Bailey, and he was in a state of exasperated and frustrated amusement. He told me that the nuns of a convent in North Great George's Street, I think, had engaged Tuohy to paint a picture for them of Our Lord; and what had Tuohy gone and done? He had selected Boyd - of all men - to sit for it. "Just fancy", commented Figgis, with an explosive, mirthless laugh, "just fancy, the holy nuns will henceforth be praying to that atheist, Boyd"! He went on to point out that, of course, Tuohy should have selected him, Figgis, as he had the authentic features and colouring of the traditional and historic Christ.

And here, perhaps, is as good a place as any to record my impressions of that very controversial figure, Darrell Figgis. I knew him well, and, despite his failings and oddities, almost because of them perhaps, I liked him and enjoyed very much his intellectual company. Figgis was somewhat above the average height, slim in build and of a quick and active temperament. He was pale in complexion, with light amber eyes and an abundant crop of dark red hair

which he wore brushed back from his forehead, and a bright red beard which concealed a none too prominent chin. Unlike his rival, Boyd, who was quite a fashion connoisseur in his elegant sartorial arrangements, Figgis affected a much less conventional, less starchy, a more bohemian ensemble. He always appeared in a thick tweed lounge suit, of a strikingly, gingerly hue, his head always crowned with a noticeable odd moss green velour hat. Indeed, it seems to me, in looking back, that I never recollect to have seen Figgis in any other garb all the years I knew him, save at national funerals when he exchanged the ginger tweed for a frock coat and striped trousers; but even then, the moss green velour was never discarded!

My poor friend, Darrell, certainly thought no small beer of himself, and, if his faith in a hereafter was weak, that certainly could not be said of his faith in Darrell. I have known many egotists in my time, but never a man with such an immense, overwhelming, unshakeable belief in himself and in his intellectual and physical prowess. In this particular connection he surely had the faith that moves mountains; and that applied to all his activities, in the past as in the present. He began life as a tea-taster in

in Mincing Lane, London; and I remember his telling me quite seriously that he was the acknowledged king of all tea-tasters, being gifted with a palate of such exquisite refinement and unerring accuracy that his judgements on the tea samples submitted to the tasters became celebrated. Indeed, so celebrated did they become that the whole tea world of London waited, spell-bound, until the master entered to do his sampling and record his verdict. And he used to tell me, with amused satisfaction, that he used, cruelly, to prolong the agony and tension of the tea world, keeping them on tenter-hooks, by turning up very late, maintaining, before the expectant crowd, a "poker" face, and then, even after completing his sampling rounds, not giving his verdict to the last minute of the session. When that weighty judgment had been cast, there was an immediate rushing forth of the swarms of agents to the various blending firms, to bring the news of Figgis's choice which, of course, instantly made the price of that particular brand soar up and up!

Once, in the Bailey whilst we were waiting for A.G., Figgis was holding forth on the sonnet as a literary form when, quite seriously (he was always serious when referring to himself), he informed the company that, in the whole history of that extremely difficult poetic form, there

were only two perfect sonnet writers, Shakespeare and himself! This drew on him the wrath of "N.W." (Nolan-Whelan), who told him his averment was the most preposterous and ridiculous claim he ever heard seriously made by any man. But did that disturb Darrell? Not a bit of it! He looked at N.W. with a pitying smile and, collecting his books (and any other books that might be lying around!) lordly took his departure from that soilful collection of philistines.

Figgis's egocentric nature was strongly supported by the most adorable, loving and sincere wife that ever man was gifted with. Millie was a most lovable little character, and I greatly fear me that her lord and spouse never really appreciated what a treasure Providence had bestowed on him in giving him such a wife. For it is very doubtful whether any other kind of woman could have tolerated Figgis and his incredible vanity, not to say, selfishness. Milly worshipped him. To her, his fantastic, vainglorious claims were real and true, and the only reason why they were not universally accepted was because of the jealous envy, almost hatred, of her god of a husband by crowds of envious people. Milly certainly had no doubts at all about his godlike qualities. Stella Solomons, now Mrs. Seamus O'Sullivan, one of the leading artists

and etchers of that time, used to give a salon of her pictures every year. I remember on one occasion when I entered the salon, which was full of people viewing the pictures, the first person I ran into was Milly, talking to Jimmy Montgomery. I remarked on the great numbers present and enquired what they thought were Stella's best works that year. "Monty" was beginning to give me his opinion thereon, when Milly, interrupting, said, "Look at the crowd following the magnet! Follow with them and you'll see her best work!" It took a minute or so for it to sink into my head; but presently I saw what Milly meant. The unerring, the godlike one was on his round, commenting and giving his verdict, and what better opinion could a mere mortal hope for than his!

I first met Figgis in the East Clare election, and, over a drink, told him I had been reading his latest "opus" which was entitled "A Chronicle of Gaols", telling of his recent imprisonment. He said to me gravely, but emphatically, "That book is literature"!

Two years later, in the spring of 1920, when I was going around the country as a Dáil Land Judge, holding surreptitious courts here and there, I got the tip from Michael Collins to lie low and make myself scarce. It appeared that

the Tans and the Auxies had formed the opinion that I was the Sinn Féin Judge that condemned them all to death in secret, the sentence being carried out later by I.R.A. executioners. I think their assumption as to my death-dealing functions came from the fact that I was the first person to go out, in a judicial capacity, under the sanction of Dáil Éireann. They were, of course, wholly wrong in their assumption, for I was not connected with the military side in any way, but, if I valued my health, it was not possible for me to go to them and explain their mistake! Accordingly, I lay low, and betook myself to my old friend, Mrs. Fox's house, the Hell Fire Club Tea Rooms, situated up near the Pine Forest at Glencree. I had often stayed there before. Mrs. Fox and her children knew pretty well who I was, but I was quite safe in their hands as they all sympathised strongly with the movement. From Mrs. Fox's safe retreat, I would sally forth to Dublin, where I would descend to Dublin every now and again and entrain for my several court venues down the country.

As it approached Easter or Whitsuntide, I don't quite remember which, who should arrive up but Darrell and Milly Figgis, with Dr. and Mrs. Frank Kennedy-Cahill, their daughters and friend - also mympathisers. The Cahills had a cottage there which they and their party occupied, but the Figgis put up with

Mrs. Fox. During the week, news came up of several arrests of the leaders and searches of their homes in Dublin. Every day the dutiful Milly went down to Dublin, and every day returned with the same story: More leaders' homes raided, and books and documents seized. To Darrell's recurring question, "What about our flat, Milly"?, Milly would have to return the same sadly disappointing answer, "Our flat, Darrell, is still untouched". Then Darrell would throw a fit of impatient chagrin, "The fools, the fools"!, he would exclaim, "The Castle idiots have mostly raided the houses of nondescripts, the playboys and the ostentatious would-be leaders, and left ME - the real brains behind the scene, the organising and driving force in the movement - untouched"!

The week of raids and arrests had nearly elapsed, with the flat of Figgis in Kildare Street untouched and unharmed, when Milly arrived one evening, her face glowing with pride and excitement, "Darrell, we've been raided! They've pulled your books about and made an awful mess. Something dreadful"!

Darrell said nothing, but his bearded countenance registered a smile of intense satisfaction and pleasure. At last, at long last, the idiots had accorded him the recognition he knew was due to his importance and power.

Having consulted with me as to an appropriate nom-de-guerre, I suggested he shouldn't make too wide a change from the original, that he should, at least, keep the "F". I also advised him, for obvious reasons, not to take unto himself a Milesian name. He decided on "Foster". Havong done so, he summoned Mrs. Fox, her sons and daughters to his presence, and, in a most dramatic way, informed her what had happened: that there was no one there of the name of Figgis who, patriot that he was, was now "on his keeping from the enemy". The person who was addressing her was Mr. Foster. Immediately, Mrs. Fox fell in with his humour and started calling him "Mr. Foster". She left the room but returned in a few minutes with a tray on which were two bottles of stout and two tumblers - "With our compliments, Mr. Foster! And may God protect you, sir"! She then hastily left the room. Darrell was profoundly touched by this gesture. "Ha, Kevin!", he exclaimed, pouring out his stout, "Yesterday I was but the paying client; now I am the honoured guest. Good luck"!, as he quaffed his stout.

I could write much about poor Figgis and his poor wife - a sweet, lovable little person with a heart of gold. Figgis had, unquestionably, his faults and failings, but I am not

going to record them here; and, anyhow, who hasn't? He was, in my opinion, a sincere and wholly convinced Irish Separatist albeit of the Griffith rather than the I.R.B. variety.

His contributions to the cause, though far from being as great as he imagined, were far from being small or insignificant. He had a good prose style, if, at times, a bit involved, and his booklets, "The Economic Case for Irish Independence" and "The Historic Case for Irish Independence", were better written and better thought out than much of the stuff that was being poured out then. He had plenty of physical courage, though some of his critics and enemies, and he had his full share of both, doubted that; but no one could deny him a large measure of intellectual courage and intellectual honesty. Collins, who, although not quite in love with him, never underestimated him, often praised him to me for one act of his alone, viz., his splendid letter published in the "Independent", under his own name, counteracting the letter of Father O'Flanagan and others calling for peace in 1921. It was Collins's opinion that Figgis's letter on that occasion did much to steady a nation that three years of an exceptionally sinsister and demoralising form of warfare had shaken to some extent.

On the literary side, he was well worth listening to as he was

extremely well read in English and French literature, and had a way of giving you the gist of his readings and studies in pleasant, palatable form. One of the accusations of his critics was that he was mean; personally, I never saw any meanness in him, and I knew him very well indeed. Another accusation was much more true: that he had no humour. Though I would not deny him a modicum of the "saving grace", I would have to confess that it was certainly not amongst his cardinal attributes; but what egotist really has humour? Humour is a sense of balance and proportion. Those who have it are amused when they behold the incongruous and things out of focus or balance.

And here I shall take my leave of the memory of my poor friend, Figgis.

... ...

The talk at the Cairo table was excellent and, at times, devastating and cruelly brilliant. It was a delight to listen to that group discussing our great ones in the republic of letters and art - Synge, Joyce, Yeats, Lady Gregory, Stephens, Seamus O'Kelly, Seamus O'Sullivan, Shaw, T.C. Murray, George Shiels, Patrick Column, Thomas MacDonagh, Joe Plunkett, Pearse,

as a writer, and younger men like Brinsley MacNamara, Austin Clarke and Fred Higgins - and a great host of others.

Across the Cairo in Duke Street was the famous Bailey Tavern. This had been the favourite resort of the great Chief, Charles Stewart Parnell himself; and whether it was because of that, or not, for his devotion to Parnell was great, Griffith made the Bailey his own particular haunt, all the more so since his other rendez-vous, Davin's pub, the "Ship", in Fleet St., had been destroyed in the Rising. There, in the evenings, after his indefatigable and poorly remunerated journalistic labours on behalf of his country, he would repair for his modest and sole relaxation, for he never took a vacation, having neither the money nor the time for such. He generally arrived some time after seven o'clock and made for the smoke room upstairs on the second floor. This was a small room, with two windows looking out on Duke St. It was simply but comfortably furnished with leather upholstered armchairs and couches and, of course, tables - very much a masculine retreat. Griffith had his own special seat that was, seemingly, respected by all frequenters, whether or not they were his friends. It was the corner seat on the leather couch that ran along the inner wall that divided that room from the dining-room between the fire-place and the window.

Should you enter the smoke room early in the evening, you would be sure to see "A.G.", as he was always referred to, esconced in his corner, a cigarette in his mouth, a silver tankard of stout on the table before him, going through a great pile of newspapers and journals. As he scrutinised the printed matter, he would now and again mark, with a blue or red pencil, passages that struck him for reference in his articles. There would invariably be some of his friends sitting around him, carrying on a whispering conversation as they smoked and sipped their drinks. Yes, one could not fail to note the curious quietness in the room, no matter how many might be present, as A.G. was engaged in scanning through the current news and periodical issues. When you opened the door and entered the smoke room, Griffith would look up and, were you a friend or one of his intimate group, he would tell you to press the bell. When one or other of the two well-known waiters, Louis or James, would appear, he would order you a drink and return to his scanning work. When the last paper was duly scanned, A.G. would put them aside with a sigh of relief and join in the talk and discussions with his friends. But I must qualify this statement. Griffith's part in those discussions was mainly that of a listener. By nature,

Griffith was an extremely silent, taciturn man, due more to his sensitivity and shyness than to his dourness, though he could be dour enough when he liked, for his was a strong, resolute, self-reliant character. Loquacity, however, was wholly alien to him, and speech he only resorted to when he felt he had something to say that was worth saying, and then he said it in the fewest possible words and with a most un-Irish lack of adjectives. It was this taciturnity, this quiet self-command and economy in speech and words that, allied to the intense sincerity and burning belief in his ideal for the nation, made Griffith the master of a superb and enviable prose style - simple, concise and as clear and fresh as a spring well. Griffith possessed a character extremely simple and direct, though thoroughly mature, quite incapable of subterfuge or pose, capable of deep though firmly controlled feelings and ardent but undemonstrative affection for his friends. He was, in short, that rare type of being, a natural aristocrat. And of friends he had many and diverse, attracting them from every class and level, high and low, Protestant, Catholic, Jew atheists. Indeed, their social, religious and political variety was as astonishing as their personal and temperamental differences not to say clashes and contests.

Griffith had two marked habits that one could not fail to notice. One was a habit of blinking his eyes. He was short-sighted and always wore pince-nez; but I think the blinking was not due to his sight but to his innate shyness and sensitiveness. The other habit was that of every now and again pulling up his neck-tie. He could never make the usual tie knot, and so had to confine his tie through a gold ring which required constant adjusting.

The conversations and discussions amongst the group of friends and acquaintances would proceed through the evening on a great variety of subjects, Griffith sitting in his corner, taking a draw from his cigarette or a pull from his tankard, or pulling up his tie, quietly listening, but putting in a word now and again, and always an arresting and very relevant word.

Many and many's the evening I sat with the others round Griffith in that Bailey smoke room, listening, sometimes with amusement but always with interest, and often with profit, to their famous discussions, making occasionally my own callow contribution. Let me now record the names of those who belonged to Griffith's circle of friends. Yes; they were all his friends but that does not mean that they were all friends of each other! Amongst the "steadies" that you found there

most evenings over the year were Seán Milroy and his friend, Seán Browne, George Redding, James Montgomery, Seamus O'Sullivan, Darrell Figgis, James Valentine Nolan-Whelan, B.L., Dr. Joseph Boyd-Barrett, Pierce Beasley, Philip Sergeant and Dr. Lyons. Others that would be frequent, though not "every-nighters", were Dr. Oliver Gogarty, Rev. Dr. Paddy Browne, then Professor of Mathematics at Maynooth, Liam Ó Briain, James Stephens, Dan MacCarthy, Michael Noyk and (whenever he happened to be across from London) Dr. Eddie Lipman. Occasional visitors were Pádraig Ó Conaire and Denis McCullough.

There were many others, not perhaps so prominent, whom I don't remember, and now and then people from England, America and other parts of the world would turn up to see the "Master". I remember a tall, distinguished Indian, a Sikh, if my memory does not fail me, coming in one evening with Michael Noyk. The size of the circle differed, of course, sometimes being as small as two or three, and sometimes up to twenty; but the average number present on an evening would be about half-a-dozen. When the hands of the clock were moving towards the eleventh hour, the closing time, Griffith would rise, don his hat and coat (if it was winter time), take his stick and leave for his home in St. Lawrence Road, Clontarf. Some of us - nearly

always Seumas O'Sullivan, George Redding and Jimmy Montgomery - would walk with him to the Pillar where he got the Howth tram. At times, he would be followed by a few G-men, i.e., plain clothed D.M.P. men of the G. or Detective Division. Why they followed him, I can't say, for there was nothing secret about A.G. Everything he did, or said, or printed was open and above board; and anyhow, a disguise would be useless in his case as his sturdy, deliberate and remarkably individual walk would always give him away. He used to tell us that, when in South Africa, he was known by the Kaffir name for pigeon or dove, and, on an admirer saying that that was because of the gentleness of his character, he laughingly denied it, saying that the nickname was given him because of his swaying style of walking which, to the Kaffir, resumbled that of a pigeon.

Occasionally, A.G.'s circle in the Bailey smoke room might be disturbed by the entry of an alien element, for, of course, the room was not private. When this happened, A.G. would pull his tie, indicative of his annoyance, rise from his seat, take his hat and stick, saying, "We'll move elsewhere".

The first place that would be tried would be Davie Byrne's just across the road. A.G. was always extremely forbearing

and tolerant, particularly with his friends, some of whom were apt, at times, to become long-winded and prolix. This must, I have often thought, have put a severe strain on the self-control and patience of a man whose whole nature rebelled against prolixity and hollow verbiage. But Griffith was a very loyal man where his friends and supporters were concerned. There were, however, three or four intolerable bores that used to haunt the bars and smoke rooms of the mid-town hostelries in those days that were proof against even Griffith's long-suffering. When one of that species appeared - they never hunted in pairs for they could not suffer their kind - he would inevitable make for A.G. to buttonhole him, and pour out on him a Kolynos-like tube of unbroken verbosity, intended to contain the bore's panaceae for all the nation's ills. The good Griffith, when thus transfixed, was far too sensitive and polite to break off abruptly and depart, as Mick Collins and, indeed, most men would undoubtedly have done. Instead, he would stay static, suffering in silent agony the ordeal, mildly blinking his intelligent, blue eyes behind his pince-nez, and pulling up his tie. Griffith was just incapable of escaping from such pests, and so his friends decided to take precautions in order to save him from the like. Accordingly,

when our little band of "refugees", driven from its wonted haunt, would arrive at Davy Byrne's, one of us would make a swift and cautious trip through the premises, and report back whether they were "safe" or not. That was a rather risky proceeding,sometimes resulting in the scout being collared and entrapped by the bore whose basilisk eye it was not easy to elude.

However, to our relief, we were presently saved from having to undertake such risks through a most unlikely medium. One of Griffith's intimates, the quiet Quaker, Philip Sergeant, possed a small nondescript, but highly intelligent female mongrel, called some short name like "Kattie". She worshipped her master as her master worshipped Griffith; adapting the words of the nursery rhyme, "everywhere that Philip went, the dog was sure to go". It goes without saying that Griffith's friends were Philip's, and Philip's Kattie's, and this, of course, applied a fortiori to Griffith's betes noires". Accordingly, little Kattie became scout to our party, and a highly useful and reliable little scout she was too. We would never enter Davie Byrne's (or any other hostelry) without first "drawing its coverts" by sending Kattie through to explore the position and report. If the coast was clear,

little Kattie would return silently to her master, jumping gleefully around him and wagging her pathetic knob of a tail for all she was worth. If she spied danger, she returned yapping her warning, her tail motionless. Yes., Philip's little Kattie served us well and truly, and never let us down, and, believe it or not, Kattie was always unerring in her judgment.

Another very interesting and now historic haunt was Vaughan's Hotel on the quiet side of Parnell Square. In a back room of that hotel on the hall floor, Michael Collins was wont to foregather with his chief men and friends, and combine business with pleasure; for, where Collins was, business, national business, was never wholly absent. Collins's men were, of course, the fighting men, and his intimates were chosen from the Volunteers, the I.R.A. and the Active Service Units. They were all men full of the Wolfe Tone and Fenian traditions, firm believers in the doctrine of physical force and, in the earlier days of the new movement, at all events, inclined to be severely critical, not to say contemptuous of leaders like Griffith and Eoin MacNeill, though Michael, personally, had far too much judgment and balance to encourage that spirit in his men to any extreme lengths.

However, at that particular stage, there was not much camaraderie between the Collins group and the Griffith group. The great friendship and affection that both those great men had for each other was to grow and develop later. Hence it was that, with rare exceptions like Pierce Beasley and a few others, a typical Collins man was never found at the Bailey evenings, or a typical Griffith man at the Vaughan Hotel evenings. My political outlook lent naturally more to the Griffith than to the Collins school as befitted one who had graduated in politics through the conservative and very moderate Nation League. I had, however, the good-luck to get Collins's goodwill early in our acquaintance, and so enjoyed the company and, in time, the friendship of both leaders.

Those Collins meetings in Vaughan's took place also in the evening, but were apt, at times, to last somewhat longer than the Bailey ones, generally breaking up at midnight or, in the event of an emergency, such as a raid warning, peremptorily. The post eleven o'clock sitting was possible because of the hotel character of the premises and of its unobtrusive and quiet setting. When you opened the door of the Collins room, you would make out, through the fog of cigarette smoke, a considerable number of vigorous young men,

sometimes as many as twenty, standing around; few seemed to sit in Vaughan's. On a large table in the centre of the room were tumblers and glasses containing the beverages of the company. You were not many minutes there before a certain thing became obvious to you - that one young man amongst them completely dominated the scene. That young man was Michael Collins. He was of good height and physique, sturdily rather than slenderly built, with a clear, pale, marble-like skin and hazel eyes. I have heard people describe his eyes as blue, but I saw them often and took note of them - they were hazel, very much the same colour as the eyes of his friend, Kevin O'Higgins. He had a head of thick, dark, lustrous hair which was always neatly brushed, with a parting on the right side. When he got excited in conversation, he would nod and shake his head vigorously, causing a great plume of hair to fall over his left eye that he would shake back to its place by a toss of the head. He turned out in a well-cut lounge suit of dark, clerical grey, a white shirt, soft collar, and grey tie, kept in place by a gold safety pin as was the mode of the time. This statement of mine is, of course, written for posterity, fifty years hence, with the object of giving all the assistance I can to the future historian of that thrilling period;

therefore I am deliberately putting down all the minutiae in respect of the famous that I can think of. One thing about "Mick", as we called him, I would particularly like to emphasise was the remarkable neatness and orderliness of his attire and general appearance. You never saw him turn out untidily or slovenly in any respect; always spick-and-span; and, on the other hand, never ostentatious or exhibitionist. Mick was far, far removed from the modern "Teddy boy" with his effeminate beard and outlandish garb.

Mick's neatness in his apparel was quite outstanding as, at that time, it was by no means the rule for the ordinary man to so turn out. The average young man then was curiously careless and neglectful in his garb, many of them wearing their hair long and unkempt, as though to register their revolt against formality and convention in any shape, thereby giving some cause to their enemies to sneer at them as "wild" and "uncouth". In hardly anything has there been, over the past forty years, so vast an improvement as in the dress and appearance of the average young Irishman. A priest of my acquaintance puts that improvement down to the subtle propaganda power of the cinema - one of its more useful effects. He says that, even in wild westerns, the cowboy turns out with

a well-groomed head of hair which, seemingly, no wind or rough riding is able to unsettle! My own view is that a higher all-round standard of living and better economic conditions had a good deal to say to it, by elevating the self-respect of the individual.

Yes: Mick certainly dominated, quite naturally and unconsciously, all present in that room. As I have said, he successfully combined business with pleasure in a most remarkable way. Only a man of genius could have done that, particularly in his difficult conditions; and that, of course, was what he was. One moment you would see him talking rapidly and seriously to one of his men, or with bent head, listening intently to what he was saying, or, perhaps, skimming through a document or letter, handed to him. Having finished what he was talking about, or reading, he would abruptly dismiss his man, and call over to him someone else from the company that he wanted to talk to. Sometimes you would see him shaking his head energetically and arguing with a fellow, when suddenly the firm mouth would snap down and the man would move off - he had made his decision on the point. I have seen him occasionally in one of his tremendous rages, and tremendous and mighty they were, but they never lasted long.

Mick held highly responsible, top-level posts in both the Volunteers and in the political movement, being Director of Intelligence in the former and ultimately Minister for Finance in the Dáil in which capacity he was responsible for the financing of the whole invisible Government, both on its military and civil sides. The amount of highly important business he transacted in that smoky room must have been fabulous. Every now and again he would relax for a bit, joke, laugh and exchange stories with the fellows and you would think he had given over the business side of things; but presently he would be back in his job again, as some newcomer came along, perhaps a Volunteer or I.R.A. leader up from some field of war in the country.

Yes, the amount of business Mick succeeded in transacting in those by no means conducive-to-work surroundings in Vaughan's Hotel must have been prodigious. It was work, too, of the highest importance both in regard to the movement's finances and to the Volunteers. The wonder was, not alone that it was accomplished so expeditiously and efficiently, but that it was accomplished so secretly. As I have said, I was never in the Sinn Féin Volunteers or the I.R.A., and, though I was trusted by all Collins's men, I never shared

their confidences regarding their Volunteer activities. None of them at any time ever breathed a word to me of the matters they were planning, or discussing with Mick, and, of course, I never put any questions therein to them. Probably ambushes and actions by the Active Service Units (A.S.U.) of the I.R.A. were arranged and decided on at that rendez-vous, but, if they were, the first thing I knew about them was when, like most citizens, I saw them in the news reports of the morning papers. And the well-kept secrecy was all the more extraordinary when it is realised that the men were all young, inexperienced and few of them teetotallers.

Mick himself, of course, had the remarkable capacity of himself holding many secrets that were far from being the common property of his friends and associates, even those closest to him. He was, in every sense, a revolutionary leader of genius.

He had a highly developed sense of humour, not a usual gift in the case of a leader of men; and, at times, to break through the tension that must have been constantly pressing on him, he would "play the goat" and become quite impish for a bit.

I remember one evening coming into the hotel drawing-room

with the late Des. Dowling. Mick was there all on his own. He was pacing up and down the room in a curious mood, humming to himself, tumbling over chairs and small tables, and shifting (not kicking) vases and ornamental knick-knacks about the floor with his foot. Beyond a short nod of recognition, he took no notice of us. After watching this performance for some time, I took off an undisturbed table a large, round, earthenware ash-tray, about the size and shape of a cricket-ball, and as he paced down the room again, I placed it at his feet, saying, "Mick, you missed this one"! Immediately, he burst out laughing, rang the bell and ordered drinks.

When the Dáil loan of £250,000 was floated, those of us who were parliamentary candidates, or actual M.P.s, were commissioned to go each to his respective constituency and induce the people to invest in that loan. In that regard, I made several visits to North Fermanagh, bringing down, every now and again, the money collected and in hands. The loan had been proclaimed by the British and persons collecting it could be arrested and the money forfeited. Hence great care had to be taken in securing that it found its way safely to headquarters in Dublin. The post could not be used, of course, and the only method of transmission was the personal one

through trustworthy individuals. Of the North Fermanagh total collection of £1,700, I must have personally brought to Dublin at one time or another anything between five and six hundred pounds. Much of the remainder was transmitted through sympathetic priests as they were not so liable to be searched or arrested as laymen.

One evening I arrived at Amiens Street from Enniskillen with something like £170 on me, and made for Vaughan's. Mick was there in the midst of his men, apparently in one of his happy, frivolous humours. I took out my biggish wad of notes (the lists of subscribers were, for safety's sake, retained in secure keeping in the County) and gave them to him, and stood by him, awaiting my receipt. But divil a receipt I got. With exaggerated carelessness, he stuffed some of the notes in his trousers pockets, some in his side pocket. That was bad enough but, to my horror, he began distributing fivers and tenners to the fellows around! Finally, selecting a twenty-pound note, he called in the indefatigible Christie, the waiter, and stood a round of drinks to the whole company, including, of course, myself. I must say that that was not the most enjoyable bumper I quaffed in my life! Anxiously I asked him for a receipt. "Arrah, what do you want with a receipt? Haven't I stood you a drink? Isn't that enough

for you? I went home to my digs in Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, that night in a doleful and apprehensive frame of mind, not at all happy about the way the Minister of Finance had dealt with the loan money I gave him. But my fears were of short duration. Two mornings later, I got a formal typed letter, headed, "Dáil Éireann, Department of Finance", beginning, "A Chara", and signed by Mick Collins, not only acknowledging the money but setting out the various categories which comprised it - so many bank notes and treasury notes, from £20 to £1, all duly specified, so many money-orders, etc. I was intensely relieved and quite staggered at that unusual demonstration of the man's amazing efficiency.

Before I take my leave of Mick and his friends, I had better give, as far as I can remember them, the names of those who were wont to frequent that famous back-room in Vaughan's. First there were Mick's close intimates and fellow workers in the cause: Gearóid O'Sullivan, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Seán Ó Muirthuile, Harry Boland, Fin Lynch, Pierce Beasley, Frank Thornton, Emmet and Charlie Dalton, Liam Tobin, Tom Cullen, Joe O'Reilly. All these were, of course, not merely in the Volunteers but high up in them.

Other prominent fighting men that turned up there, some more regularly than others, were the Fleming brothers, Seán Hales, Pádraig Ó Máille, Ernie O'Malley, Liam Lynch, Jerry Ryan, Seán Moylan, Oscar Traynor, Seán MacMahon, Dick MacKee, Frank Aiken, J.J. O'Connell, Tommy Gay, etc., etc. Sometimes Joe MacGrath, Dan MacCarthy and Seán MacGarry, but they constituted more or less a set of their own, though they were all, like most of the Collins men, sworn members of the I.R.B. All those were, of course, fully fledged fighting men, the nerves and sinews of the war that was going on against British forces. Outside the fighting men were those like myself who were either connected with the political movement or just friends and supporters of the cause. Amongst those were Des Dowling, Dan O'Brien, Dan MacLaughlin, Michael Noyk, Louie O'Doherty, Tim Plant, Jim Smith. For all I knew, some of those might have been in the secret movement or Volunteers. Indeed, I think the first two were. They were both graduates of the Royal College of Science and I have an idea that they had something to do with the engineering and bomb-making side of the military movement. Dan MacLaughlin, a final year medico, was, I know, actually in the G.P.O. during the Rising, but I don't know what part, if any, he had in the movement subsequent to that event. I do know that he was wholly

sympathetic to it and in the full confidence of Collins and his men. Louis Casimir O'Doherty - to give him his entire name - was a barrister on my own circuit, the North-West; he was the son of Hugh Camillus O'Doherty, solicitor - the only Catholic to have been elected Mayor of the historic and controversial City of Derry.

It is more than probable that I have omitted more than one prominent name from the above list; if so, the omissions are duly wholly to a fickle memory.

The reader of these pages, fifty years hence, may ask, how did Collins and his men, meeting so regularly in the evenings in the same trysting place, escape arrest, or worse? Reader of the twenty-first century, well may you ask that question! It was, indeed, remarkable how that highly important and much wanted company escaped so often, unscathed, comprising, as it did, most of the G.H.Q. top-level officers in the I.R.A. Furthermore, Collins and many of his associates had big prices on their heads, which made their capture very much worth while, from a monetary point of view; I think in Collins's case, the figure was £10,000. Again, it was common knowledge in Dublin that these meetings were taking place regularly. Vaughan's was widely recognised as

the "Gunmen's Den", as loyalists were wont to refer to it. Of course, it was raided time and time again; but the birds had all flown. Poor Christy, the hotel boots, had the life worried out of him by constant visits from detectives and secret service agents and, later, Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, who would put him through a strenuous cross-examination as to who were there the night before, or on such and such an occasion; and now and again he was badly beaten up by them so as to make his answers to their questions "less unsatisfactory".

One of the chief reasons why Collins's men were seldom caught on that premises was undoubtedly because Collins had organised an admirable system of counter-espionage, linked up with high police officials in the Castle and the D.M.P. Detective Branch. Again, the I.R.A. soon showed that it was in a position to hit back with deadly effect on any of their detectives, spies or intelligence men who made themselves too efficient or too curious. But, apart from that, there was the fact that the D.M.P. were, and had always been, a rather popular police force with the people - much more so than the militant R.I.C.

I have been in Vaughan's on a number of occasions when

the mysterious warning came through, and in a few minutes the company had dispersed and cleared, several, including Mick, Gearóid O'Sullivan and Diarmuid O'Hegarty, making off on their bikes. Gearóid O'Sullivan, or "George Caruth", to give him his nom-de-guerre, told me that, after one of these scatterings, he and Mick were cycling up the Rathmines Road, making for their dug-out. It was during curfew, and, of course, there wasn't a soul abroad. But just as they were passing a block of shops, a great voice boomed after them, "More power to ye, me bould Corkmen". It came from two D.M.P. men on night patrol who were standing back in the shadow of a doorway. That incident typifies the general D.M.P. outlook at the time.

Gearóid O'Sullivan told me also a thrilling story of their adventurous life. One night at Vaughan's, he, Mick and Diarmuid O'Hegarty just managed to escape from the hotel by the skin of their teeth. Coming out of Dominick Street into Dorset Street, they found the latter in the occupation of the British military. A double line of soldiers sealed off the eastern end, and sentinels were patrolling the streets as searches were being made of the houses. As they rounded the corner, the sentinel nearest to them had just turned his back on them on his return walk. Taking advantage of this, the three at once got behind the buttresses of the Dominican Church

beside them. It was a clear, frosty night in winter with a bright luminous moon hanging high up in the heavens and flooding the streets with her light; and, fortunately for them, also creating dark shadows against that light, which concealed the fugitives, and all night long those unfortunate men crouched behind those buttresses in the deep shadows of the moonlight, fearing detection every minute, as the armed sentry paced up and down on the footpath within a few yards of them. What made it worse, vastly increasing their peril, was that Diarmuid O'Hegarty had a bad, hacking cough, and nearly burst a blood-vessel in his efforts to suppress it, which, luckily for the trio, were successful. Had they not been successful, had but one cough escaped, their numbers would, unquestionably, have been up.

Those nights that I stayed with Mick were certainly an unforgettable experience. Immediately the warning came, we would dart out from the hotel, as quickly and quietly as we could through the dark and curfew-emptied streets. On all the occasions that I stayed at 44, Mountjoy Street, there were with Mick also Gearóid O'Sullivan, his constant companion, indeed his "fides Achates", and Seán Ó Murthuile, another fellow-Corkman. Mountjoy Street consisted of a row of small, two-storied red-brick houses. The bedrooms were, consequently, not very large.

Our room had two single beds, but six men slept therein on each of the occasions that I was there, two in each bed and two on the floor. I was given the privilege of sharing a bed with Mick. After some chatter, Mick would suddenly give the signal for sleep in a very typical way: "Good night, you so-and-sos", he'd shout, turn on his side and drop, almost immediately, into a deep slumber. Mick could do with extraordinarily little sleep, only a few hours, but it had to be deep and concentrated. When I awoke, about eight o'clock in the morning, his place in the bed was empty. He was gone hours before that. I could never make out how he never wakened me getting out of bed, all the more surprising seeing that he occupied the inner section against the wall. The landlady of 44, Mountjoy Street was a fine Cork woman, the late Miss MacCarthy, a very valiant lady.

One final word on the subject of drink and drinking in Griffith's and Collins's circles: undoubtedly there was a considerable quantity of drink taken in both cirlces, for the times were disturbing and strained. Men, particularly Collins's fighting men, were reckless and ran, every day of their lives, tremendous risks, and no one could blame them for taking some kind of dope to ease the often intense

pressure and strain. I remember Mick Brennan, the County Clare Commandant (and, by the way, one of the comparatively few teetotallers) telling me when he was on the run in Clare that he suffered agony from a tooth-ache, but never bothered going to a dentist because he felt he might be a dead man any moment and "What use would a dentist's work have been?". That was the attitude to life of most of the foremost fighting men.

The favourite drink in both circles was stout, in bottle or tankard. It was certainly Griffith's favourite, particularly in draft form; and at that time the only other thing I saw him drink was wine. For a period Griffith drank only wine, generally claret or burgundy but sometimes a hock, on the basis of his Sinn Féin principles, as, according to him, wines then either paid no revenue or excise tax, or very little, to the British Government, such as whiskey, stout and beer did. Collins for quite a while drank nothing but sherry. I can truly say that all during those stirring pre-Truce years I never saw either Griffith or Collins "the worse of drink". In those days, they both had a firm self-control in that regard.

Another haunt of mine was Oliver Gogarty's house in Ely Place. Oliver and his wife had a few friends in every

Friday evening, mainly folk in the literary and artistic world - poets, dramatists, artists. Those evening were very interesting and though Oliver was a Sinn Féiner of the Griffith school, the emphasis of his parties was mainly literary and artistic. He had renounced alcohol many years before I met him, and no stimulant stronger than tea or coffee was served at his evenings. And, in truth, no stimulant was required, the talk and repartee were so excellent under the brilliant guidance and direction of the doctor himself.

George W. Russell ("AE"), the able editor of the "Irish Homestead", the organ of Plunkett House and the Irish Co-operative Movement, was nearly always there, often accompanied by his great friend and secretary, Susan Mitchell, herself a fine literary woman in her own right. W.B. Yeats also was always to be found there. Other regulars were George Redding, James Montgomery and Dr. Joe Boyd-Barrett. The Gogarty evenings were never large - generally not more than those I have mentioned, plus an odd "lion", or VIP from across the water, or abroad. I met from time to time, amongst many others, in that famous drawing-room Augustus John, the painter, Patel, Chairman of the Indian Congress, H.W. Nevinson, Hugh Martin, Guy Moysten, Clemence J. France (Chairman of the

American Quaker Relief to Ireland), Jeffries of the "Daily Mail", and Bretterton, the notorious but bitingly clever "Morning Post" reporter. I often heard Gogarty in the Bailey pressing A.G. to come to his Friday evening, but he never could be persuaded to do so. Somehow, I could never see Griffith blend in with a sage like "AE", or a romantic poet like Yeats. Their outlooks on most things would hardly harmonise with his concise, concrete and eminently complete mind. Moreover, he was in no sense a socialite, or lover of salons. Much of a Gogarty evening would be taken up with the obiter dicta of "AE" and Yeats.

"AE" had a quiet, sonorous voice, rather light for so big and bulky a man, with more than a touch of his native Ulster Doric in it. Sitting back in an armchair, he would survey the company through steel-rimmed spectacles, puffing away at a vast pipe and pulling at an enormous flowing brown beard that almost hid his wide, pink "poet's bow", and hold forth on one or other of his numerous "ISMS". When he could get himself away from the vague world of his more esoteric thoughts and imaginings, or was diverted therefrom by the subtle Oliver, he could speak well and interestingly on current matters, revealing, in his approach to their problems, especially on his

own subject, agricultural co-operation, a sound, practical vein and well-informed background that his appearance certainly would hardly suggest.

Yeats would occasionally break into verse, quoting from his own work or that of some other poet in what I thought, a curious, monotonous and rather stilted sing-song, marking the metrical emphasis by the rise and fall of his hand. Gogarty told me that Yeats had convinced himself that that was the way that poetry should be recited.

I was present in Gogarty's drawing-room on the famous occasion when Mick Collins asked "AE" for his "point". Gogarty induced Mick one winter's evening after the Treaty to come along as "AE" would be there, and he was most anxious to meet Mick. If I recollect correctly, Yeats, James Montgomery, Joe Boyd-Barrett and George Redding were the others present. The "Mahatma" was in excellent form that evening. Reclining in the armchair in his comfortable loose-fitting suit of rough Irish tweed, he pontificated with great verve, realising that he had a most important and attentive listener in Collins. He was not, however, in one of his sound, practical moods; far from it indeed. He appeared to be propounding some of his more mystical theories - the tranquil

might of moral and spirit power as against the angry forces of evil in the contemporary "cosmos". Mick, with head bent towards him, listened intently and eagerly to "AE" for quite a while; then, pulling out his famous note-book that he was never without, and his fountain-pen, he asked, "But what is the point, Mr. Russell?". "AE" was wholly nonplussed, almost staggered at the question, and an uncomfortable feeling of embarrassment fell on the company at the enormity of putting such a query, of all queries, to the prophet. Everyone knew, or should have known, that there was not, nor never could be a point in the great man's philosophy which was composed of rotundities as smooth as the clouds and as endless and undefined.

There were other houses I was wont to frequent in those thrilling times where the talk and company were much different but, in their various ways, equally interesting. There were my friends, the Stephens, Ned and his wife, Lillo, first at 48, Upper Leeson Street, and later at 2, Harcourt Terrace. They were both strongly national, liberal, not to say radical and advancedly progressive in outlook. Ned had been turned from a rigid, narrow, ascendancy type of Irish Unionism to an advanced form of nationalism in his boyhood by his famous uncle, John Millington Synge. He told me when

he and his elder brother, Frank, were boys, Synge marched them out of the Mariner's Church, Dún Laoghaire, because, on the birthday of the Queen, the choir sang "God Save The Queen". And he said he could still remember how loudly Synge's footsteps sounded as he tramped indignantly down the aisle to the door, to the horror of the congregation and their own great alarm. As I have stated, I met Ned as a fellow bar student at the King's Inns dinners, and soon discovered that he was a much more advanced nationalist than I was at the time, and extremely well up in Irish history, archaeology, folklore and language.

Incidentally, his brother, Frank, was a fluent speaker and writer of Irish, and in his later years taught it at the Training College for Protestant Teachers. On Irish folklore Ned was exceptionally well informed, and used to write and lecture on the subject.

Now, whilst Ned was a good nationalist of the separatist type and put many a hunted man up in his Harcourt Terrace residence, his tendency and particular bent of mind favoured passivism and non-violence rather than physical force as a means for securing Irish freedom. He would, I think, have been more in sympathy with Griffith's original edition of Sinn Féin,

with its emphasis on passive resistance and moral force, though I don't think he would have subscribed wholly to its economic policy.

Such being Ned's fundamental views and leanings, I met in his house, from time to time, a type of people of kindred outlook - English pacifists and conscientious objectors as well as many kinds of moral and social reformers, including an English ex-Major who used to command the military depot in Omagh and who had abandoned his military career to devote his life to prison reform. Most of those were good, well-meaning people who had made sacrifices, in some cases, like the ex-Major's, heavy sacrifices for the reforming vocations they had chosen. But they were not all on that level; some, in my judgment, were sheer chancers and charlatans. I remember one such, a burly, half-educated Liverpudlian, with a deep raucous voice, which he loved exercising, and which he always used in a pseudo-dramatic, declamatory fashion when pontificating on his creed of absolute liberty, not to say, licence, in every field of human activity, involving the abolition of all armies and police forces, leaving everything to, and relying absolutely on the "liberated soul of man". This individual was holding forth one evening when I was present,

when someone praised P.H. Pearse. Immediately J.T. got up and, standing with his back to the fire, roared in his North English accent, "I'm greater than Pearse; Pearse only shatta'd buildings but I shatta h'idears"! Needless to say, the company was duly impressed at that wonderful axiom. Yes, Dublin was a vital, exciting centre in those days, humming with life, all manner of intellectual activities and new thought as all manner of things, forces released by the great volcanic eruption of the 1916 insurrection and its aftermath.

(111)

As I have stated, the winter of 1917-1918 passed fairly tranquilly in the sense that there was little open disturbance or unrest, due largely to the comparative inactivity and quiescence of the police which in turn was due to the Government's desire to create a good atmosphere for the functioning of the Convention, thereby enabling it to present a good face to the Americans. Nevertheless the movement was being efficiently organised throughout the country and, at such a rate that Count Plunkett was able to announce, early in the New Year, 1918, that there were then in existence upwards of 1,250 Sinn Féin Clubs. Another very significant

proof of the growth of the movement was the sensational rise in the circulation of the Sinn Féin weekly periodicals, or "mosquito press" as its enemies called it; for example, the "Irishman", Herbert Moore Pim's paper, which had a circulation of but 1,692 in February, 1916, rose to over 15,000 by November, 1918.

The first ripple on the calm surface of the sea of politics was the South Armagh by-election that occurred in January. South Armagh was the predominantly Catholic part of that county, and always returned a Nationalist member to Parliament. Dr. Patrick McCartan, who had managed to reach America by the underground or, rather, "undersea" route, organised very effectively by the Liverpool I.R.B., had been recently nominated our representative to that country; and it was thought it would be a good idea to have him elected as an Irish M.P. as that could be pointed to as showing that the people had confirmed him in his post.

I took part in that election, and a very rowdy one it was. The Hibernian element was extremely strong in the constituency and bitterly resented their encroachment on what they regarded as their exclusive preserve. On my way to the constituency I called in for a night at Armagh City, and put up

at the Charlemont Arms Hotel. Armagh City was outside the constituency, being within that of Mid-Armagh. However, it was only three or four miles distant from the northern extremity of the constituency, and, being the capital of the county and an important railway junction, it became kind of headquarters for its northern half, Dundalk in Co. Louth serving the same purpose for its southern half, there being no sizeable town with urban powers within the constituency itself.

It was evening when I arrived at the hotel where I found Darrell Figgis well established, in full command of affairs of Sinn Féin. I found him sitting at the head of a long table in a sitting-room, holding forth to a large number of farmers and countrymen, all rather elderly and appearing to be in process of conversion from Redmond's brand of constitutional nationalism to that of Griffith. They were plying Figgis with questions, and from those questions it did not take me long to ascertain their drift and what was behind the questions, in the minds of the questioners.

It was clear that they feared and distrusted the Volunteers and the fighting men, and abhorred the prospect of another rising. If they voted for Dr. MacCartan, a well-known Ulster figure whose name, for a generation, had been synonymous

with extreme nationalism of the Fenian and physical force type (-he had actually edited their paper, "Irish Freedom"-), did that mean that they would be voting for another Easter Week? Figgis answered them admirably, I thought, assuring them that the fighting and blood-shed stage was over, having accomplished its object of stirring up the nation, and that henceforth the policy was to be Arthur Griffith's policy - an organised, self-reliant nation, building up its case for independence to go before the Peace Conference after the war, and, for that purpose, utilising the British devised electoral machinery. In other words, it was to be a policy of advanced, virile, true constitutionalism as preached by Griffith in his papers for years. As for the Volunteers, their main, if not their sole raison d'etre from that on, was to defend the country in the event of conscription being forced on it - a threat then ever hovering behind the scenes. And that presentment of the case for the new Sinn Féin was no deception on Figgis's part - it was the belief held by us all, including the Volunteer chiefs themselves.

Figgis was excellent at a didactic task of that character dealing with their queries with patience and sympathy, and with a dispassionate, level-headed, sensible,

man-of-the world tone, far away from the hectic emotionalism of the "Wild Men", that, I could see, profoundly impressed them and gained their confidence. He was favourably known to them to be a Griffith man and Griffith was the leader in the new movement nearest in outlook to them. I remember they were extremely dubious about the advisability or practicability of the policy of abstention from Westminster, but, though not convinced, were prepared to swallow it if satisfied that there would definitely be "an end of the shootin'", as one old greybeard put it. That was the big point for them: no more "shootin'", no more futile blood spilling.

Things were going well with Figgis until, in an unhappy moment, Parnell's case was mentioned as, indeed, it inevitably is in any prolonged discussion amongst Irishmen. Figgis, of course, had a concrete, unmistakable answer here also. It was one that was typical, but also one that was wholly alien from, indeed abhorrent to the outlook of those good but austere and rather Jansenistic Northern Catholics. Putting it in a general and far from as definite way as he did, Figgis defended Parnell's conduct, declaring a man's private life had nothing, or should have nothing whatever to say to his public life. This declaration did Figgis little good amongst them,

and numbers of them, taking their hats, shuffled uneasily out of the room.

Most of my time in that election was spent at a backward place, six or seven miles south-east of Armagh City. I've a vague recollection that it was called Milltown. It was a poor, wild, hungry looking countryside, with ne'er a town or village, made more desolate by the cold, sleety rain that was continuous, the only centre being an extremely primitive publichouse kept by a husband and wife who were blest with a large family of small children. Our good host and hostess were kindness itself. Unfortunately, I forget their name. They were strong supporters of the movement which was the reason why they took us in, and for which they deserve much credit, for we were by no means popular with Authority which, through its police, could easily have brokem them as publicans and destroyed their livelihood. They certainly took on a big risk in befriending us. Of course, we did not let them do it gratuitously, though I have no doubt that, were that necessary, they would have done so; fortunately, it wasn't.

Four of us Sinn Féiners stayed at that poor, shabby pub for three or four days. Accommodation was, naturally, very

restricted, being hardly sufficient for the pair and their numerous children in normal circumstances, so that we four were constrained to sleep in one tiny room, with only a small two-feet by two-feet window in the roof, nailed down so that we could not open it and were well nigh suffocated in the mornings, with the stale oft-breathed air mixed with tobacco smoke as stale. There were two small single beds in that little cell of a room. Jim Dalton and myself slept in one, and Seán Nunan and another, whose name has escaped me, in the other. Dalton, a former pugilist, physically a splendid specimen of a man, was later shot dead in the street in Limerick, supposedly as an informer. That deed, as I have learned from Pierce Beasley, was a tragic mistake, indeed a crime. Poor Jim was no informer. He was an I.R.B. man who used to go, an odd time, to the Limerick R.I.C. barracks for an after-hours drink in their canteen, as he was rather a thirsty soul. That, undoubtedly, was rash of him, and naturally made him suspect. Some of his comrades in the Brotherhood accused him of being an informer. This charge he indignantly denied, and demanded an inquiry. Such an inquiry at top level was held, Pierce Beasley being a member of the court which resulted in his complete vindication. Nevertheless despite

that, an indisciplined group took it on themselves to go forth and shoot the poor fellow. Collins, I heard, was mad at what they had done; for, not only was an innocent man deprived of his life but the decree of the Supreme Executive of the I.R.B. was blantly disregarded. Seán Nunan, in due course, became the Irish Ambassador to the U.S.A. and ultimately Secretary of the Department of External Affairs.

Our only meeting place, outside the kitchen where we ate our meals, was the actual pub itself. That was a most primeval affair, with the earth itself as its floor through which seeped the rain, creating on its surface a thick scum of mud, beaten up by the heavy boots of the rural customers and the bare feet of the house's children. I need hardly add that there were no such luxuries as running water or lavatory. As the bitter, sleety rain, turning occasionally to snow, was non-stop, we were confined for hours to that depressing place during the long, dark, wet winter evenings, our only light a dim paraffin-oil lamp suspended from the low ceiling.

Great was our joy when, after three or four days in this habitation, Harry Boland turned up in a car, and took Seán Nunan and me with him to speak at a big rally at

Newtownhamilton on behalf of the Sinn Féin candidate.

As I have said, the Hibernians resented what they called "the invasion from the south", but, in reality, the challenge to their long-established hegemony. Being very strongly entrenched in the constituency, they embarked on a plan of organised disturbance of our meetings and molestations of our speakers and supporters. As the election proceeded, it became more and more difficult for our speakers to get a hearing with the racket the Hibernian mobs stirred up, and things looked blue, indeed, for our prospects. The R.I.C. made little or no attempt to restrain the Hibernian rowdies and seemed to adopt the role of spectators, considerably amused at the discomfiture of the "Shinners". It was clear that, in those circumstances, something had to be done to secure for our people a hearing if the prestige of the new movement was not to suffer a mortal blow in Ulster where, as it was, its progress had been slow. And something very effective was done.

Newtownhamilton consists mainly of one vast octagonal open space, or square if you will, on the confines of which stand in line the unexciting two-storied shops and business premises of this typical Ulster town. When Harry Boland,

Seán Nunan and I arrived, the meeting, a very large one, was in full swing in the aforesaid great space, which was crowded with farmers and countrymen. Harry and I pushed through the thick mass of people and got to the platform. There, we were stopped by a Volunteer officer and questioned as to our credentials for getting on to the platform. It was a surprise to be so addressed in that far-distant Northern town in a Southern accent. He commanded a protective guard of Volunteers posted round the platform.

We had no sooner mounted the platform than a terrific melée occurred. We saw the wide area being cleared by what, I thought, was a strong force of police but what turned out to be a section of some four hundred Volunteers under Michael Brennan, ordered from Clare by the Volunteer Executive to secure us the rights of free speech which the Governmental police couldn't or wouldn't. After two or three charges by the Volunteers, armed with hurleys, the organised hooligan mob that, up to then, had had it all its own way, swayed, broke and scattered, and gave up any further serious obstruction. Thenceforward the Claremen kept order at our meetings, rendering the services of the R.I.C. redundant, though in our case the said services were conspicuous by their absence and though that constabulary was there in considerable force in full battle equipment.

Anyhow, the R.I.C. made no attempt to interfere with, much less try conclusions with the big Volunteer draft from Clare; and those Claremen were certainly a surprise and an eye-opener to us all, and showed what a disciplined force, even a Volunteer one, was capable of achieving. We were astonished at their discipline and soldierly appearance and were full of admiration for the masterly way they handled difficult and dangerous situations, such as the melée in Newtownhamilton. They even had succeeded in attaining a certain uniformity in their dress - slouched, wide-brimmed hats, haversacks, belts and putees, their only arms being the hurley, a weapon by no means to be despised.

I have often wondered why the police tolerated those Claremen to the extent they did, virtually allowing them to usurp their functions. It might have been because they did not expect to meet anything like a disciplined force, hostile propaganda always representing the "Shinners" and their "gunmen" as a wild disorderly gang. They, doubtless, realised from what they had seen of them, that the Claremen would fight and that, if they had to disperse them, it would certainly have been a bloody business that would not have helped either the Lloyd George Convention or the Anti-Sinn Féin