

ORIGINAL

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Eamon O'Duibhir,
Ballagh,
Gooldscross,
Co. Tipperary.

Identity.

Tipperary County Centre of Irish Republican
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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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STATEMENT BY EAMON O'DUIBHNE

Ballagh, Gooldscross, Co. Tipperary

For some years my first getting in touch and being interested in national matters was seeing the Irish lessons in the "Weekly Freeman" which was the principal paper then of the countryside. I wondered at what this was all about and my curiosity was stirred, and also by the news of the Boer War which came along somewhere about the same time. Most young fellows in the neighbourhood and the older people were equally stirred and we were all pro-Boer and anti-English.

In the years that followed I got in touch with the "United Irishman", Griffith's famous paper, and also with the paper of Liam P. O'Riain, "The Irish Peasant" and, as a matter of fact, I and a couple of others in the locality wrote articles for the "Irish Peasant" during the period it was in existence. Other papers (or I should say "Weekly Periodicals" that helped the good work were: "St. Patrick's", published by William O'Brien, M.P., and the "Irish Emerald". These contained articles on Irish History, the Fianna and the Red Branch sagas. They were very stirring to young people and very interesting. The stories were, of course, at that time entirely in English, except for a few small items in Irish which we did not know. Writers like Alice Furlong and others were writing for those papers.

About the year 1904 or 1905 (I cannot be too sure of dates) the Parish Priest of Knockevilla, the famous Father Matt O'Rian, announced at Mass one Sunday that Irish classes were being started in the following week with a native Irish speaker from Ballyvourney (Baile Mharnai).

Before going ahead with what happened there, it is well I should state what was my own education. I left the Primary School at Ballagh when I was 13 years of age. I had reached the 6th standard. I was not too great a dunce and any education I got afterwards was through reading and the national movement in general. I may say that in those years too we were greatly stirred by Dr. Hyde's literary history of Ireland. Quite a number of us from the Clonoulty Parish were stirred when the news went around that this wonderful thing - the Irish language - was about to be revived, and so we went to the Irish classes, filling up the schoolhouse at Knockavilla. The teacher was a brilliant lady who, I think, is still living, and, if I am not mistaken, she is now (1956) the Mother Superior of a Convent in Kilkenny. Then, she was a Miss Annie Dennehy - or Aine Ni Donnacha (Bean Dubh a Ghleamha). She was a first rate teacher, to our minds at any rate, but, better than teaching ability, she was enthusiastic in the work and so were we, and coming home late at night, the first thing we did on arriving home was to get out the O'Growney books and try to wade through the lessons we had already been taught. "Tá an tobar glán" was a wonderful thing to be able to say, but as we got to know Irish we found that there were quite a number of old people that had some smattering of Irish, and even at that time in one of the districts near Cashel, quite a number of the old people were Irish speakers. That was Camas. From there came a man who was famous in many ways - Padraig Breathnach (Walsh). Now, at that class in Knockavilla, as time went on I got acquainted with several of the young men and women who played a great part in the struggle for freedom. There I got acquainted and became an intimate friend with Richard Treacy of Bishopswood, who became the Chairman of the Sinn Fein Club in the years that followed

and was one of those who, in later years, defied the British Government by reading publicly the Proclamation of Dáil Éireann, and was imprisoned for a long time in Belfast Jail under very trying conditions, He was one of those who smashed through the roof of that jail when the fighting took place there and hoisted an improvised tricolour flag above the Belfast Jail at Crumlin Road.

Another man I met at this class was Michael Sheehan who, like Richard Treacy, has gone to his eternal rest. He was a workman. Treacy was a farmer, but Michael Sheehan and his brother, Sean, were working with one of the local land holders and in the years that followed, they took a very active part in the struggle. Mick Sheehan in later years became a column leader and, when he died, he was a captain in the Irish army. There were many others and I must mention in passing some of them. Michael Madden, who died in the United States. The first secretary of Sinn Féin, Thomas O'Dwyer of Dundrum, who, having emigrated to England, was conscripted in the first World War and killed in action in France, fighting against his wishes for the old enemy. There was also Paul McCormack from Dundrum whose son played a prominent part in the later struggles, and Sean O'Dwyer of Dundrum (a second Sean O'Dwyer) both of whom came to fame as amongst other things being expert gardeners, and were employed renovating and making beautiful some of the big places through the country. Then there was Seán O'Kearney from Cappaghmarragh, again in Clonoulty Parish, and quite a number of others. In later years we had Tadhg O'Dwyer who became O/C. of the 3rd Battalion of the Irish Volunteers, and W. O'Dwyer of Lislowran, captain of A/Company.

Now, as the years went on, we discussed politics as we came home from this class, and the next thing was that we

formed a branch of the National Council. The Dungannon Clubs had been established about the same time, and as far as we were concerned, their principal use for us was to send along stick-up literature, i.e., anti-English literature urging men not to join the British army, navy or constabulary forces, and these we used unsparingly. Once an R.I.C. man was seen coming out from Mass in Knockavilla with one of these leaflets pasted on the back of his tunic. It added to the gaiety of the countryside, needless to say.

When the first of the big military manoeuvres came along through the countryside, we dished out a lot of this stuff and, amongst other things, we seized a couple of rifles, but somebody informed on the hiding place and they were recaptured.

As a result of statements made by me in "The Tipperary Star" when the British regiments on their march reached Templemore, they seized all the copies of the "Tipperary Star" and made a bonfire of them in the street. Following this action, one of the assistants at the "Star" office (the Assistant Editor I think he was), and, as far as I can remember, a Michael Fitzgerald arrived in Templemore on the next train after hearing the news of the burning of the "Star" and carried with him a huge bundle of the papers. As he stepped out on the platform where the British soldiers were hanging around, he drew a revolver and said: "Come on and burn the "Star" now and see if you can get away with it". He succeeded in distributing the "Tipperary Star" again without an attack being made on him.

Before 1908 we had formed a Sinn Fein Club with Richard Treacy as President and Sean O'Dwyer as Secretary, and I think I filled the role of a sort of general organiser and was

regarded, I must admit, as being the leader in anything that was being done.

We called a public meeting at Dundrum to spread the Gospel of Sinn Fein and that meeting was addressed by Alderman Cole from Dublin and by Mr. Looby of Cashel and, I think, Francis Phillips of Cashel and other local speakers. Just before the close of the meeting Father Matt Ryan arrived and came on the brake from which the meeting was being addressed and spoke strongly in favour of Sinn Fein. Up to that he had not been a member of Sinn Fein, but now he joined the Club. He was probably the first priest to join Sinn Fein in the County Tipperary. Sinn Fein lived on in the area all the time, but for some of the period after that it was pretty weak in most of the countryside until after the Rising when it was revived and became powerful once more.

In the anti-enlisting campaign and putting up those posters we had quite a good many adventures. Once, two of us escaped from Boherlahan down a laneway and we waded waist deep through the flooded Suir, getting away from a group of R.I.C. men who were armed and who fired on us, but they were unable to cross the river. There were many minor clashes and a few of us took a very active part, though quite young men, in the Anti-Ranch struggle, the leaders of which were Martin O'Dwyer and J.J. Hassett. John J. Hassett passed away quite recently - at the end of the past year 1955. He was a member of the North Tipperary Co. Council when he died. He was prominent at the time of which I speak - with Martin O'Dwyer of Ballagh and Rossmole - in breaking up the ranches, a campaign in which they were very successful, and we gave them our utmost support. One of the big struggles in it was a day of serious baton charges in Thurles. In the forenoon we were beaten off the

streets by the R.I.C., but when reinforcements arrived with Hassett and O'Dwyer from Barmane and the Devil's Bit country we rallied and swept the 200 Constabulary, batons, rifles and all, off the streets. I deal with this to point out that from those struggles grew the idea that the R.I.C. or even the British army weren't such invincible forces at all, that had we the means, they could be beaten, but, at any rate, even without arms we could make it impossible for them to hold the country, that is, by using the Sinn Fein policy and by being determined to put up with a good deal of abuse and hardship. Now, those years were eventful and they were stirring years in the countryside.

The Gaelic League, aided by Sinn Fein, was holding feisean and great outings all over the countryside, and Irish classes were very plentiful, and quite a crowd of young men and women who had never known Irish before, and whose education was on the whole only National School standard (and the National School standard then was not anything near as high as it is today) had got a good spattering of Irish and they were keen on it, and we were apparently on the way to becoming an Irish-speaking nation.

The I.R.B. next featured in my life. One day I was in Thurles and Mr. James Kennedy, who was later the very efficient Town Clerk of Thurles, brought me in amongst the machinery in the "Tipperary Star" office and there he administered the oath of the I.R.B. to me, which I kept (I think) faithfully through sometimes under serious difficulties, I mean especially in the very later years when we became unfortunately disunited.

After that I became local Centre and I went out to

administer the Oath and get our forces strengthened by getting our members in Sinn Fein and The Gaelic League to become oath-bound members to the I.R.B. and, undoubtedly, the I.R.B. was a great help to us to hold our friends together in the difficult years that followed.

Around 1911 and 1912 the Irish Party in the Westminster Parliament seemed to be about to get some results from the long campaign for Home Rule. We were not opposed to the Irish Party in getting Home Rule, but we certainly didn't believe that they were going to get anything worthwhile, nor did we think that the men themselves were poor Irishmen. We thought they were good Irishmen, but that they were going to the wrong place to get results. I think the manoeuvres I have been speaking about previously were in the years 1910 or 1911, and our attitude to them and the struggle that arose through them helped to intensify the power behind Sinn Fein in our particular locality, and most of the workers and the small farmers of the boglands and the mountains came into our ranks or, at any rate, became our friends, and we began to have quite a formidable following.

Our friend, Martin O'Dwyer, had stood for mid-Tipperary as an independent candidate against the Irish Party candidate and, although we liked Martin O'Dwyer, we took no part in this campaign. He was beaten in the election as, at that time, only the older people had the vote. In later years Martin O'Dwyer and John J. Hassett took a very prominent part in the Sinn Fein movement, and Martin O'Dwyer, before he died, was a member of the County Council of Meath where he had gone to live at Clonee, Co. Meath. Prior to this he had a business premises at Ballagh.

John J. Hassett was in prison for a long period in Belfast

and he was later elected as a T.D. and was a member of the Cumann na Gael party in the Dáil for quite a number of years. He was an educated and able man.

We came to a period when Sinn Féin was again at a low ebb although not low in our part of the countryside, and then the labour troubles in Dublin came into my life. We were, in our countryside, pretty much in sympathy with Jim Larkin in his struggle to lift up the downtrodden, and despite all the whispering and open campaign against him and against the Dublin workers, in our area we raised some small funds to help the men who were locked out in the city. Some of those days a letter came from my sister who, by this time, had been married some years to Anthony Duncan, and dwelt first at Grand Canal St., and later, after 1916, at 93 Stella Gardens, and you will find that address in both books on Sean Treacy and Dan Breen, because those two men and Seumas Robinson and Michael Sheehan and Sean O'Meara and, I think, one of the Plunketts were frequent visitors there, but especially the Tipperary men. Now, this letter arrived from my sister to say that my brother-in-law had been arrested on a charge of throwing a brick at a Constabulary man (D.M.P. or otherwise) in the Market yards in Dublin, and I decided to go up and take his place in case there was any bit of help to be given in one direction or another. I went up, but by the time I had reached there, he had been released. It had been proven that he did not throw any brick, but that some old women threw a cabbage head at a constable and the constabulary brought out their batons and batoned everyone indiscriminately. Dublin was in a serious condition; the constabulary were having a fairly free hand, but the crowd were inclined to fight and I had the opportunity of giving a little help on the quayside in one of these altercations, and I think on that occasion we got

the better of the argument. I was very foolish at the time in getting into it, as I had just bought two revolvers for the I.R.B. and had them in my pocket at the time and never dreamt that I had such compromising implements in my possession when the struggle with the R.I.C. began at the quayside. At Liberty Hall, I had the pleasure of seeing the Countess, who was in charge of the Soup Kitchen for the workers.

We come to the period following the later period of 1913. The fight in Dublin died down. I was in the city only for about a fortnight and that was in the height of the struggle there. Some time after coming home, I should say in November of that year, the news had come that the Irish Volunteer Organisation had been formed at a meeting in the Rotunda. I don't know ^{what} talks we had before that, but we had a great many talks, and we had been very busy in many ways with the Gaelic League, the Sinn Fein and the I.R.B., and we had quite an organisation built up and a crowd educated to think on really Irish lines; but by no means had we the majority of the people, but we had a considerable number of workers - what is called ^{and modern} parlance "cells". They were all a fine type of young men and women and when we passed the word around that the Irish Volunteers had been formed in Dublin and called a meeting in my old home in the fields in Ballagh, a great crowd of young men came there that evening and we formed the first company of the Irish Volunteers in Co. Tipperary. Later, it became the centre of a battalion and as it grew, we called it the Kilnamanagh Battalion.

I will refer to that again, but, first and foremost, there are some things I have forgotten to speak about; one was that some time in the years around 1907 or 1908, we had the honour of being visited by Sean MacDiarmada. He was either

an organiser for the Dungannon Clubs or Sinn Fein, I am not sure which. He had called to Richard Treacy and he had some sort of ramshackle motor car. I don't suppose there was any of those splendid cars there at the time. Treacy brought him along to me. I remember distinctly that I was cutting hay with a scythe in the meadow at the time when he arrived and we had a talk, and then my sister, later Mrs. Cussen, had an apple cake for tea and Sean MacDiarmada enjoyed it very much. We were - Treacy, myself and the others - very much impressed by him.

Again, on a night in some of the winter months in one of these years, somebody arrived from Gooldscross, and who the somebody was I cannot now recall, with Liam Mellowes. He was organising for the Fianna and he was hoping we would be able to do something as to getting up a group of the Fianna, but that was beyond our capabilities at the time, but we had a long talk with him in the old house at Ballagh over some tea. I remember distinctly - it was one of the things that used to be done in the Irish countryside then - that we had a pig killed that night and some of the neighbours were in cutting up the pig, and Liam Mellowes was very interested in the work that was on hand and the salting of the pig.

We were very pleased with the call of those prominent people and, of course, that of Alderman Cole when he came to speak in Dundrum.

There are quite a good many other things in that period, but it is hard to remember them and it is hard to fit them into a statement like this.

I have been forgetting to talk about the I.R.B. The I.R.B. meetings which I attended were held in Cashel, in

the house of Padraig C. O'Mahona, who is now, or has been for some time, either Secretary of the Kerry Board of Health or the Kerry Co. Council, and lives in Killarney. He lived at that time in Cashel and was a Postal Clerk, but under cover he was the County Centre for the I.R.B. and to his house quite a number of us came to those meetings. One of those who used to come there was Proinnsias O'Driocan (or Frank Drohan) of Clonmel, one of the best men that was ever born in this county, and he was in later years the O/C. of the Clonmel Battalion of the Irish Volunteers. There was also Seamus Kennedy, whom I have mentioned already, from Thurles, and quite a few others, all of whom gave pretty good service to the country according as they could. Those meetings were very interesting and we were able to get quite a good deal of work done that was a help to the general forward efforts and make the way clear for the Irish Volunteers, as well as making easier the work of Sinn Fein and the Gaelic League.

The Gaelic League, of course, kept clear of politics. We were very keen that the Gaelic League should not touch politics at any time.

Now, to come to that meeting, at which we formed the first Volunteer company in Co. Tipperary, we had all those brave men that I have mentioned there that night. We had the Sheehan brothers, Jack Halloran, Bill O'Dwyer Ryssell. J. Sheehan is still alive, but the others are dead. We had the Kearney brothers from Cappamurragh, Conor Deer from Gooldscross, Jim Ryan (Kennedy) from Brahavarella, Ryans (Eamoinin) from Dundrum, Tadhg O'Dwyer, Pat McCormack (now in Clare), Pat Hayes from Ballydoyle, Bill O'Dwyer, Sonny and Jack and quite a host of others, and there we joined the

Volunteer organisation, and from that meeting grew what was probably the best company in the county - A/Company - which included members from parts of the parishes of Knockavilla and Clonoulty. That was 1913, and we set to work.

Prior to this meeting in November or early December 1913, which we held at my old home in Ballagh to form the first company of the Irish Volunteers in Co. Tipperary, we had already built up a considerable organisation in the three parishes of Clonoulty, Knockavilla and Rossmore in the Gaelic League, Sinn Fein and the I.R.B. Following this meeting, we had another body to raise funds for and to maintain, and before the summer of 1914 had come, still another a rose in the formation of Cumann na mBan for the women.

We began organising a local company of Irish Volunteers and its off-shoots in the surrounding parishes and getting down to a course of drilling, mostly footwork and extended order. For this purpose we secured the services of an ex-British soldier - I think an N.C.O. named Jack Morris - and, of course, we paid him for his work. He was very good at the business and a very decent man. Later in that year a District Council was formed in the area with Pierce McCann in charge, and he was later again elected Volunteer O/C. for Co. Tipperary. A few of the Irish Party followers joined us in the early summer after the Irish Party intervention. One of the jobs that came my way was looking for equipment, bandoliers and haversacks and also a .22 rifle for shooting drill. I think we got those at the time from Lawlor of Fownes St., Dublin. We did not care for the attempt of the Irish Party to control the Volunteers and this was roundly condemned by the I.R.B. The meetings of the County Centre held in Cashel had at all times full information on various matters from the Supreme Council. Amongst other things the information coming along was very interesting. We

oaths of the Hibernian organisations, but also occasionally of Freemason stuff. Funny enough, both Hibernian groups sought me as a member some time in this period. They were the A.O.H. Board of Eireann and the American Alliance. They did not succeed in getting anybody to join, but I secured one of their parish secretaries and a number of members for the I.R.B.

Not very much was happening beyond the usual work of organising and drilling and, of course, distributing the various Irish Ireland papers. Griffith's "Nationality", I think, came along some time in the summertime and that had a great many readers locally, as also had "Irish Freedom".

On the evening of July 27th of that year (1914), when our company had gathered for drill in Knockavilla Parish, news reached us of the happenings of the previous evening at Bachelor's Walk, Dublin, and the landing of arms at Beann Edair (Howth). There was great excitement and all the members of the company volunteered to take the field if required. At that time, and for long afterwards, the feeling of the Volunteers was that they were invincible.

In August began the first World War and some of the pro-British landed people made up their minds to join us, and some Irish Party followers induced us one evening to march to Killenure, near Knockavilla, to be reviewed by Major Cooper of the Cooper family that lives at Killenure. Rather decent people at all times and naturally, holding the ideas we had, we were anxious to get all those people into our ranks if they would accept the policy of Tone, or, I should say, the ideas of Tone. Our men drew up in two ranks and we hoped that nothing untoward would happen and that it would not be necessary for us to take any action to prevent pro-British

propaganda. Unfortunately, the untoward thing happened. When Major Cooper had reviewed the men he turned on the propaganda and he asked them all to help and any of them that could should volunteer to fight for King and Country". I immediately called on the Volunteers to march off the field and they did so, leaving him standing astounded and speechless and with only about half a dozen of the Irish Party followers and some other toadies with him.

I remember, at one of the I.R.B. meetings somewhere about this period - certainly after the commencement of the World War - being told of the Supreme Council decision to work for a revolt now that war had begun. There was a chaotic situation by this time in the Irish Volunteers and it remained until Redmond declared himself for aiding Britain on September 20th, 1914. Now we knew where we were. Meetings were called all over the county so that the Volunteers would decide where they stood. Were they to go with Redmond or were they to stand with what we will call, for want of a better word, Sinn Fein and for the Irish Volunteer policy?

We called a meeting at Carmody's Cross, which happened to be in the parish of Knockavilla. On the way to ^{the} meeting with a crowd from Ballagh, and before we reached within half a mile of the Crossroad, I heard great commotion, some shouting and apparently some lurid language, but when I reached the Cross all was serene. The crowd was sitting down waiting for the officers to come along, so I ordered everybody to line up and I said: "Our first business is to take a decision here tonight as to where we stand. It will be a free vote and you can do whatever you think is right and we won't be any worse friends. I am for standing with Sinn Fein". One of the men, a William Ryan of Clonkelly, said: "We have already taken the vote. My

own brother, God help him, and two other fellows came along to the meeting and spoke for John Redmond, and we pelted them with stones for about half a mile of the road and they are not coming back and that is the vote". "We are for Sinn Fein, we are not going to be recruits for Britain or to aid the Empire in its dirty work". All voted for the Irish Volunteers. Only two centres in the county had a majority for to stay with the Irish Volunteers. One was the Upperchurch-Arnfield /^{Company} and the other our own.

I remember attending the Dublin Convention in October 1914, at which Eoin MacNeill presided. We were circulating the Volunteer paper "An t-Oglach", and, when "Nationality" was suppressed, we circulated "Scissors and Paste".

Recruiting meetings for the British army had already begun and one of the biggest of those was called for Tipperary town. Now, let me say before I go any further, that it was some time that year, or perhaps earlier, that I met Sean O'Treacy for the first time. He lived about ten miles from my place and he came frequently after that to the Irish classes that were held in Ballagh, and when the Volunteers were formed by me at Ballagh, he came along, and after that he began to recruit the Volunteers in Tipperary town. He was already an enrolled member of the I.R.B. Now, this great recruiting meeting was called for Tipperary town and we decided we would make things lively. We did our own hand printing, as no one would print stuff for us and we put up a lot of anti-recruiting posters around the town and neighbourhood, some of it fairly strong, perhaps indeed, too strong, because, unfortunately, some of the men in control of that meeting on the other side were good Irishmen, and it was a pity what happened, but we bitterly opposed that meeting,

and bitter and terrible things were said and posted up both the evening before and at that meeting. Amongst the leaders against the recruiters were Sean O'Treacy, William Benn, Louis Dalton, Jim O'Connell, Michael O'Callaghan, Jim Ryan and myself. There were others, but I cannot remember the names. We were in battle fighting mood.

Other recruiting meetings held in Dundrum and Clonoulty were broken up by our fellows. In fact, they were broken up so quickly that most of us could not get around to the fun in time. In this connection, a funny incident occurred. Recruiting placards were going up all over the area for the British army and a man named James Featherstone, a big tall man from Dundrum, who was fond of a little drop of porter, was employed putting up those posters, and he came to me one evening in Dundrum and said he wanted to have a talk with me. It was about those posters. "Oh, don't worry, Jim" I said, "if you are getting a bit of money out of it, keep putting them up, we will get them down in good time". "Well, I wasn't suggesting that I'd withdraw at all from the job unless you asked me to; of course, if you did, I would; all I'm asking you to do now", he said, "is to make my employment a little bit more lucrative. In other words, to get down those posters a good deal quicker than ye are getting them down". "We will help you in that" I said laughingly.

In this year I made journeys to Dublin to get some arms and ammunition. My sister, Katie (Mrs. Duncan), who still lives in Dublin, then lived in Grand Canal St. I remember vividly one incident. I had brought some money with me to buy arms and I think my dealings were with Sean McGarry, and, as far as I know, he was working for a company called "Ediswan" in what had since become Pearse St. There was a

good deal of delay about getting this stuff, which was to be delivered at Grand Canal Street for me. I had arranged to come down on the evening train. I had to leave Grand Canal St. well before midday and when the stuff came to my sister's home, she sent the driver of the car to follow me to the "Ediswan" place where I was calling on Sean McGarry. I took up the parcels of stuff there from them. There was a couple of shotguns and perhaps an automatic pistol and a few things that way and some ammunition. There were two very heavy long parcels and I went around the city and picked up a few small items until I had spent all the money, except, as I thought, a few shillings that I had in my pocket. I went back to "Ediswan" and picked up my parcels, but when I searched my pockets on coming to O'Connell Bridge, I found to my horror that I had no money except a couple of pence and had not enough to pay the tram fare to Kingsbridge. I had to walk down the quays and take those parcels in turn, as they were heavy - carry one a few hundred yards and go back and carry the other and so on until I reached Kingsbridge. I knew no one along the quays in those years. In later years I knew James Whelan and many others and I'd have had no trouble in getting money and food; but then I knew nobody. I was a very hungry and tired man when I reached Gooldscross that night, where I got food and help to get my stuff home.

Somewhere in that period, too, Diarmuid Lynch came to us with some automatic pistols. Those, I think, were a .32 pistol, and I had one of them for some years, but they were practically useless weapons, because they jammed upon the slightest provocation.

In turn, now, we held Irish Volunteer recruiting meetings all over the area and these were addressed by P.C. O'Mahony,

who was County Centre of the I.R.B.; Seamus O'Neill, who was a professor in Rockwell College, Piaras MacCana, Richard Treacy, myself and some others. One of the greatest gatherings we had was some time after the division in the Irish Volunteers, when we called a big meeting for Knockavilla in the night time, and, headed by the Irish War Pipers band from Ballagh and a crowd of torch bearers, we led a force of a couple of hundred Volunteers and over a thousand of the general public to Knockavilla where the meeting was addressed in defiant terms by Father Matt Ryan, P.P., Richard Treacy and myself. The Irish Volunteers had rallied again in many quarters. The three parishes I have already mentioned had a hard core of resistance to the foreigner, and so too had Ballycahill, Annfield and the Ragg, with the Meagher family and many others. Upperchurch, with Padraig O'Kinane, was in the van. Sean O'Treacy became a frequent visitor to me at Ballagh, and southward in Tipperary town and around it Sean, with William Benn, Louis Dalton, Michael O'Callaghan, the Roche family, Jim Ryan and several others were rallying the people of that area. In Dualla and Cashel, Piaras MacCana, P.C. O'Mahony, Frank Phillips, The Loobys and Seamus O'Neill were to the fore. Proinsias O Druachain, with Sean Morrissey and others, held firm for Ireland in Clonmel (Cluain Meala). In Thurles J. O'Kennedy, Town Clerk for many years, D.H. Ryan, Charlie Culhane and many others were doing wonderful work for the movement.

At the close of 1914, we had a loosely organised battalion which we named the Kilnamanagh Battalion and to which I was either elected O/C. or appointed thereto by myself. I had to do most of the appointments for some time. There were battalions elsewhere similarly loosely fashioned.

Finance, as before, came out of our own pockets in 6d and 1/- weekly subscriptions, and by those means we bought any equipment secured by us, and that was the position for several years. The I.R.B. and Sinn Fein were similarly maintained. Comradh na Gaeilge had its annual collection, dances, concerts and feiseanna, but sometimes these did not pay their way. The Gaelic League at that time, and for some years after, paid the Irish teachers, and so it remained for many years, and so it should have remained until the present day. I acted as voluntary Irish teacher in Ballagh, Gooldscross and Rossmore for some time and so saved the Gaelic League that liability.

The Parish Priest of Knockavilla was the famous Fr. Matt O'Ryan - 'General' Father Matt - of the Land League, and he had joined Sinn Fein about 1908 or 1909. In Clonoulty the Parish Priest, Rev. Canon Dan Ryan, was a very fine Irishman, strong for the Irish language, but opposed to us in party politics. He was a prominent supporter of the Irish Party. He thought highly of us after the Rising. Even the Parson in Clonoulty, the Church of Ireland Minister, was a supporter of the Gaelic League and a subscriber to it, and some time about this year, this gentleman (Rev. Canon Pike) urged me to take up a farm seed agency for friends of his. I did so and found it a very good business, and it gave me some very necessary finance to help in getting around and working for the movement. On the whole, the Protestant people in that countryside, if they didn't join us, were at least friendly and were certainly, in later years, not in love with the Black and Tans, and so we built up an organisation for Ireland on the three fronts of Irish Culture, Politics and Defence. We made British recruiting propaganda impossible. The

National Volunteers brought off some big parades at first and had some followers locally, but they gradually dwindled away.

For several years before 1914, the countryside had been growing in prosperity. There was a fairly dense population and everyone was employed. It was growing more Irish too.

I come to 1915, and now things were growing more interesting. I have made a mistake, I think, in mentioning "Nationality". That paper did not appear until June 1915. One of the big things of that year was, first and foremost, the Gaelic League Ard Fheis at Dundalk, where the I.R.B. got control, and Hyde resigned. In later years we came to the conclusion that that was a very bad mistake, that the Gaelic League should have been kept out of politics all the time. Some time in that year Earnan de Blaghd (Ernest Blythe) came organising to Tipperary and he stayed at Gooldscross for a time at the house of a friend of mine named James Kearns. James worked on the railway and I think he was threatened not to have anything to do with Sinn Fein by his employers (the Great Southern Railway), but he said to some of his friends: "When the big fellow asked me to do a thing, I could not refuse". I happened to be the big fellow.

On 1st August Con Deere and I were at the O'Donovan Rossa funeral and Pearse's address at the graveside made a great impression on us, as it still makes an impression on any decent Irish man or woman.

Drilling and organisation still went ahead, and I remember also being at an I.R.B. Conference in Dublin in October or November, but where it was held or what the decisions were I cannot now remember.

Some time in that year The O'Rahilly, who was handling the question of securing arms and supplies for the Irish Volunteers, got in touch with me - why or how I don't know - but, at any rate, I was called to Dublin and he asked me to get around and buy up all the shotguns and ammunition, rifles, revolvers or anything I could get hold of throughout Munster, and see if it were possible to get any of the National Volunteer arms. I tried that and I covered a good deal of the Co. Tipperary and some of Cork and Waterford and Limerick (especially Limerick City) in an effort to get stuff. I got quite a good deal. The principal helper I had in securing shotguns and shotgun cartridges was Michael Dolan, hardware merchant, in Cashel. Michael was a nervous man, but he was a very genuine Irishman and he took a great deal of risks in that business and I secured, through his help, a great deal of stuff that was sent here and there by The O'Rahilly's orders.

As regards the National Volunteer arms, I was not able to get very many of those, but I helped to engineer one coup in Dungarvan with the aid of P.C. O'Mahony, who had been transferred to Dungarvan from Cashel, Miss Lizzie McCarthy, Dan Fraher and Willie Walsh of Waterford. Dan Fraher happened to be treasurer of the National Volunteers in Dungarvan. Dan, as most people know, was a fine old Irishman, very prominent in the Gaelic Athletic Association. His son-in-law, Pax Whelan, was later commandant of the I.R.A. in Co. Waterford. Dan had no authority to give those rifles away, but he gave me a minute description in Irish one night at O'Mahony's, as to where they were to be had, and he didn't say anything more, but I knew what he meant and so, 25 Lee Enfield rifles found their way eventually to Dublin, and, as far as I know, were in the hands of the Volunteers there before the Easter

Week Rising. There were quite a number of incidents in connection with this business and, for one reason or another, I was getting a good deal of trouble from the R.I.C. Scarcely had I arrived in any town - especially Thurles, Cashel or Tipperary, but a bunch of armed R.I.C. men followed me around the streets, and a good many of the shopkeepers were not one bit interested in my business. They would prefer that I went somewhere else with it, such as it was.

Once, in Cashel, Michael O'Grady (whose place is still in the Main Street in Cashel - a restaurant - now with the name of Grant over the door, O'Grady's son-in-law) came to the door of his restaurant to which two R.I.C. had followed me and told them to begone, and he called them some very fancy names; so they went rather than hear any more of this abuse, but in most other places people were afraid and I suppose that was understandable.

Now, in that year, as far as the organisation of the Volunteers went, I could say that we increased our number very much, but we had done a lot in 1914 and there wasn't very much more we could do, nor could be done until after Easter 1916, but we were pretty strong and the only thing we were short of was arms and it was not easy to get them. Shotguns were fairly plentiful but, after all, they were not proper, warlike weapons. Now, I don't know when I finished this business with O'Rahilly, but it must have been some time in 1916, and I had a good deal of stuff got in that period for the Irish Volunteers Organisation, and O'Rahilly was very pleased with my work. He even told me so on Easter Sunday morning 1916. He just mentioned it when he called to my place with the order from Eoin MacNeill. One of the big things we helped (the Volunteers, Sinn Fein and, of course, the Gaelic

League being mixed up in it) was a great gathering at Doon, Co. Limerick, on a Saturday night. This was a combination of dance, concert and monster meeting. We went there, bringing with us the Ballagh War Pipers and a huge crowd. There must have been anything from 1000 to 2000 people at this gathering. It was addressed by Dr. Sean O'Dea, Eárnán de Blaghd and other speakers.

In Doon we had contacted, long before this, another famous man - Padraig O'Riain (Paddy Ryan of The Hotel). He has gone to his eternal reward long before now. The meeting at Doon was a great business in every way and was a great fillip to the movement in that countryside. As we reached Doon late that evening with the long cars and the Pipers, a crowd of Irish Party followers behind stone walls near the village 'shelled' us with a liberal supply of stones, but Con Deere and I jumped out of our car and fired some shots in the air from revolvers and the crowd scattered.

This Doon gathering was held at the farmhouse of James Duggan of Ballybane. The home, the barns and a huge marquee tent were used for the meeting, dances and suppers. Members by the score, or hundred maybe, were enrolled in the quadruple alliance of Connradh na Gaeilge, Sinn Fein, Oglagh na hEireann and Cumann na mBan that night. We stayed over and got Mass in Doon that Sunday morning.

In the domain of educative national propaganda, the greatest event of the year organised by us in our local area was the great Ballagh Aeriocht of 1915. Great it was in every sense, but we were to hold a still greater one in 1917. This was held on a September Sunday in 1915 in a field belonging to the late John Ryan (Matty). It aimed in its programme at enthusing all who came to it and to working for

an Ireland really Irish and free. The ideal that Pearse was to clothe in magnificent words.

Ballagh was the storm centre of the national struggle for many years carried on in our day by us in the anti-Ranch war and the clearing out of the great families, of the arch-evictors of our people. Of these arch-evictors, be it noted, some were Catholic and others Protestant. Gone since those days are the Maudes from Dundrum, Carden from Barnane, Clarke from Holycross, Matthew from Thomastown, Scully from Baile na gCloch and many others. Then we joined Comradh na Gaeilge, Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers and under the surface of things the hidden I.R.B. It is in Clonoulty parish and the principal speaker at this aeriocht was Fr. Matt O'Riain, the doughty Parish Priest of Knockavilla. He spoke glowingly at the opening of the gathering about 1.30 p.m. and again at 5 p.m. when people went home to milk the cows and have tea and came back again. Enthused by all he saw and heard that day, Fr. Matt spoke again at 10 p.m. that night when he wound up the proceedings. Doubtless Piaras MacCana, Seamus O'Neill and Richard Treacy also spoke there. The Pipers Band discoursed stirring music. Sean Stapleton led in the Volunteers of Cullen and Oola, uniformed and with bayoneted rifles on their shoulders.

Dancers, singers and reciters by the score were there and included a contingent from faraway Waterford. This contingent included the famous reciter Maire New who later became the wife of Austin Molloy, the black and white Celtic designartist. A few years ago there was published a beautiful and bulky Christmas book in Irish, written by their daughter and illustrated by Mr. Molloy.

There were fences around the aeriocht field and when we put out the R.I.C. at one gap they came in at another, so we got tired of chasing them out and both parties ended by laughing good-humouredly at one another. Not all our clashes ended so nicely. We did not allow the R.I.C. into any gatherings run by us for years before this. I remember our having a concert and play in Ballagh one night. Jim Ryan (Kennedy) was in the thick of acting a part in "Orange and Green" when suddenly he jumped off the stage shouting to me that 'peelers' were in. After an unpleasant scene, Jim, Terence Deere and I shooed out the constables.

What we had heard and read of the eviction days was the mainspring of our hatred for the R.I.C. It is nauseating to think that those men stood there with arms in their hands to protect the evictors' hirelings who were throwing the poor people of their race out of their homes.

In the R.I.C. of our time there were, roughly, four very well-defined types. Firstly, a minority of decent men who answered Ireland's call; secondly, a big percentage of decent men who feared poverty too much to leave the constabulary, but who avoided as far as they could doing anything to injure their country; thirdly, decent men who were very loyal to Britain and fought to uphold its rule here, and fourthly, a percentage of hellishly anti-Irish ruffians who were the guides and masked killers of the British murder gangs.

A Sergeant Horgan was in charge of the R.I.C. at Clonoulty. He and a Constable Hayes were no friends of mine. They occasionally came along to pimp around the place and trying to scare the parents of this bold boy. Not long after the beginning of the 1914-18 War, those two R.I.C. paid me a visit.

Horgan told me that some of my neighbours were informing on me and saying that I was pro-German. I replied that this old 'peeler' stunt was outworn and that the day would likely come when his comrade constables would inform on him - a prophecy that came true. Continuing, I said: "Horgan, you can write it down in your notebook for your masters that I said that if England were at war with the devil, I'd be pro-devil".

My relations with that fourth element in the R.I.C. were definitely hostile, but in later years some of those from the other groupings were secretly helpful, or quitted the force - for instance, Dick Walsh, after some talks with me, quitted Clonoulty and joined the I.R.A. in Co. Mayo; also Paddy McGovern left one of the North Tipperary stations. There were others in the Clonoulty, Dundrum and other stations who showed their friendship secretly, and were very helpful in passing information of intended British raids.

I have already stated that I and several others - small farmers and labourers - in our countryside were in sympathy with Jim Larkin and Connolly in their efforts to make life better for the Irish workers, and for about a fortnight I was in Dublin in 1913 and in the thick of the struggles on the quaysides.

Long before this time I had met William O'Brien of the Labour Party. How this came about was as follows:- A neighbouring girl - a Miss Bridget Ryan - of Bishopswood in Knockavella Parish, went to work with the Misses O'Brien, William's two sisters. My sister Katie, who later became Mrs. Duncan, also worked in Dublin, and she called to the O'Brien's home to see Miss Ryan. She was made very welcome by the Misses O'Brien and they became lifelong friends. I probably accompanied her on a visit to O'Brien's and I think that is

how I first met William O'Brien. At any rate, I got to know him very well indeed, and also, in the years that followed, I got to know Larkin, Tom Johnson, Tom Foran, P.T. Daly and other Labour Party leaders. I am not too certain if I ever had a talk with Connolly or knew him beyond what I saw of him until this time in 1915 when he sent for me.

I had known for some years Sean MacDiarmada, Tom Clarke, Major John McBride, The O'Rahilly and others, and, for one reason or another, I was quite frequently in Dublin. Owing to earning a nice bit from Agencies and my wants being simple, I could afford this small expenditure. I never drank intoxicants or smoked.

At any rate, my sister, Mrs. Dundon, wrote to me late in 1915 and told me that William O'Brien wanted me to call, without fail, on him at Liberty Hall on my very next visit to the city. There seemed to be some urgency in the matter, so I went to Dublin a week or so later and from Kingsbridge went direct to Liberty Hall. William O'Brien was there and he was pleased to see me. He told me that it was James Connolly desired to have an earnest talk with me. I asked what would be the subject of the talk and he replied that Connolly wanted some information about the outlook of the Volunteers in regard to a Rising, and that he was now in his office and we would go there and he would discuss matters with me if I were agreeable to do so.

I had read most of Connolly's writings and, more important still, his recent editorials in the "Workers' Republic" and in which he castigated the Volunteer Executive for its tardiness in setting a Rising going. It came to my mind at once that he would seek some information from me as to whether the general run of officers in the Irish Volunteers had been made aware of an impending Rising.

William O'Brien ushered me into Connolly's office and I do not now remember whether he introduced me to Connolly, or if we had met on some previous occasion. Connolly came the point in his forthright way. He said he knew that Clarke and MacDiarmada, Pearse and O'Rahilly regarded me as a trusted Irish Volunteer officer, and that O'Brien had told him of my already long association with national affairs and my friendship for labour. He had been told by O'Brien that I also regarded him, Connolly, as a national leader. I intimated that such was correct. Connolly then said that as that was my viewpoint I would have trust in him as he had trust in me. "Certainly", I replied, "but in case of our discussing any matter that the I.R.B. would be concerned in, I will have to report on it to my chiefs as I am an I.R.B. centre". "That is all right with me", said Connolly. He pointed out then that he feared the national leaders, if they intended a rising at all, might put it off until it would be too late. The time to act was whilst England was engaged in this war, and the war cannot last forever. He further said that he was determined to strike and that before long, unless he had some assurance that the Irish Volunteers would strike soon.

And now he queried me directly on this point and asked me if I could tell him if a rising were projected. I replied that there appeared to be every certainty that a rising would take place and that if he came out prematurely with the Citizen Army the planning for a rising by the bigger organisation would be gravely injured. He agreed that this was the general opinion of Irish Volunteer members, but that he could not wait much longer, and then he asked me if I could give him any assurance as to when the rising might take place. I told him that I had no knowledge of dates, but from many hints and indications I felt that there was every probability of a rising

in the coming year and, continuing, I said that the wisest course was for him to meet Pearse, Clarke and MacDiarmada and reach an agreement with them, I said that I was going directly to Parnell St. to see Clarke and report the talk to him.

"Do", said Connolly, "and I am hoping now that something may come out of our talk". He thanked me and shook my hand warmly in that firm grip of his.

I went directly from Liberty Hall to Parnell Street and told Tom Clarke what had transpired and I said that, in my opinion, a meeting with Connolly and The Supreme Council should be brought about. Clarke agreed and said that it was vital that this should be done and that my talk with Connolly was very valuable.

This statement contains the kernel of Connolly's talk with me, and the time was either late November or early December 1915.

In 1915, or early in 1916, I published "The Gael", a weekly paper of nationalistic propaganda. The printers were the "Gaelic Press" Dublin, and the distribution was done from there by my direction. I was entirely responsible for this paper though, as time went on, it was warmly approved by Tom Clarke and Patrick Pearse. The writers were Seamus O'Neill - then a Professor in Rockwell -, P.C. O'Mahony, who wrote under an assumed name, Miss Lizzy MacCarthy of Dungarvan, who wrote on Greece, in which she lived for some years. O'Mahony's writings were on Brazil, where he had lived for some time. J.M. Kennedy, later Town Clerk of Thurles, wrote on various cultural and educational matters. Maura New of Waterford conducted the youth section.

Along with this work and my own business of agencies,

I continued to work for O'Rahilly. The stuff as bought went here and there and sometimes I had very little to do with its distribution, having only to report on the purchases and where the stuff was to O'Rahilly, and he attended to most of the distribution. Occasionally I had to attend to the distribution. On one occasion, some shotguns and a good deal of ammunition were stored at my home. I will come to what happened there later. I had got a good deal of shotgun ammunition. Later, just before the Rising, we left a big quantity of this at the house of a Mr. Sayers, a Protestant Solicitor living near Gooldscross.

The usual work of the I.R.B. went steadily along, but sometime in 1915 P.C. O'Mahony was transferred from Cashel to Dungarvan and I was appointed County Centre in his place. There was very little to be done in extending the organisation, as far as centres were concerned, as we had centres in most areas. I was also appointed Co. Secretary for the Gaelic League in this period. The Gaelic League at that time employed all the Irish teachers and organisers and amongst my duties as Co. Secretary was to pick out suitable men for posts as teachers. One of the first appointments was Padraig MacCormaic, who took part in the Soloheadbeg affair, and he became an Irish teacher in the local district. This appointing of Irish teachers became very important in 1917 and 1918, as I will show later.

We had been in the habit of using a piece of ground at Cappaghnammurragh Bridge, and belonging to the Great Southern Railway, for drilling and also for a shooting range, and the next thing that happened in this connection was that a number of us received summonses for shooting off guns on prohibited premises and the trial was arranged for Dundrum. Trials then

of that sort were carried out by the local J.P.s. and a Resident Magistrate, and it was a bit of a problem for those local J.P.s what they were going to do. Some of them were of nationalistic outlook, others were Unionist or pro-British. Again, some of the pro-British J.P.s - one in particular - were very conscientious and would not like to injure their neighbours. At any rate, the Volunteers were inclined to show them that this thing was not going to be a soft business any more, and on the day of the trial Irish Volunteers poured into Dundrum from as far north as Upperchurch and the Ragg and from all over the whole area and made a show of force and determination. The R.I.C. were there in force as well. The trial went on and there was no question then of not acknowledging the Court, but, as far as we were concerned, we simply said we had done what was charged and would continue to do it. After a secret discussion amongst the J.P.s, it was decided that we would have to pay a fine of £1 each. I don't think that many of those fines were paid.

Amongst the parties we had at that gathering at the Court in Dundrum was Michael O'Brennan from Co. Clare, who was later Chief of Staff of the Irish army. Seamus O'Neill was there from Rockwell, Kinane, the Meaghers and other leaders. What was intended to frighten us gave us a good laugh and a fillip to the Volunteer movement. On St. Patrick's Day we paraded in the area with arms.

"The Gael" was suppressed on 24th March. On the following morning, the 25th, I had been out in the fields early and away from the house and when I looked back I saw seven or eight R.I.C. men coming in from the high ground at the back and entering the house. I rushed back and picked up a two-pronged hayfork on the way in. I was very much alarmed as to what

their business was. I never thought of this newspaper suppression, but I thought it was a raid for arms and we had already received orders that we were not to allow arms to be taken and that such was to be resisted to the death. Amongst the arms I had in the house was a consignment for the Volunteers at Doon, and Paddy Keogh, who was a great worker in the movement, along with Padraig Ryan at Doon, was to come for them on that very day. There were some shotguns, probably a revolver, a good deal of shotgun ammunition and other stuff. This was stuff I had picked up in my work for O'Rahilly. I charged into the R.I.C. in the doorway with the hayfork and a moment later Sergeant Horgan from Clonoulty Barracks and some other R.I.C. men were trying to grapple with me and had a grip on this fork. District Inspector Henderson (who, I think, is now or has been a Unionist M.P. or Independent M.P. in Belfast) was shouting at the top of his voice something or other. In my father's bedroom was a pike, one of those we had made to see if they were any use in warfare. My father, who was an old man (he died later in that year at the age of 77) intervened with the pike principally to save my life. He was an Irish Party follower, but he ceased to be so after that morning's struggle. Michael Kearney, who happened to be in the house, was trying to work a tongs on another R.I.C. man. I heard Henderson shouting at the top of his voice: "Do you want bloodshed?" and I said: "No", and he said: "Go easy until we discuss the matter. I shouted in reply: "You will take no arms out of here". "Well, I have no orders to take arms and when I have not I am not going to look for arms" he said. "What is your business?" I replied. "A paper in which you were interested was suppressed yesterday and I have orders to seize all copies that you have in this house. Will you fight on that issue?" "Oh, no" I said, "certainly not". So they

took the papers and departed. Some time later on that day Henderson met Piaras MacCana, the Brigade O/C., in Cashel and he reported to him on what had happened in Ballagh, and he said: "O'Dwyer, one of your officers, attacked us like a man-eating tiger". So Piaras MacCana got on his motor bike and came hurriedly to Ballagh and he was very sour at first with me. He told me I was imperilling things and that we didn't want to provoke any encounter at the moment. I explained how the thing arose and that I thought it was a raid for arms and that I meant to hold them and that the order was there from Headquarters to that effect. So, instead of dismissing me from the Volunteers, he forgave me on those grounds.

A few days later, in early April, I got a call from the I.R.B. to go to Dublin and to call, on my arrival to Tom Clarke's shop in Parnell St. I knew all those places very well. I knew Tom Clarke, John MacBride and Sean MacDiarmada and various others for some years prior to that. When I called to Tom Clarke's shop in the late evening, he told me that I was to call there in the morning at 9 o'clock and to go with him to see Pearse at St. Enda's. I did so. We reached St. Enda's and were taken in to one of the rooms for a private talk and Pearse discussed with me the position of armaments in the south and the question of the Rising which, he said, was coming in the very near future. I said that, except in Limerick and Cork cities armament was very poor. Then he raised the question of the I.R.B. and the Volunteers and said that they wanted men everywhere in command who were I.R.B. men. I had done this fairly well in Tipperary already, not choosing men for Volunteer posts/^{simply} because they were I.R.B. men, but that they were in every case the men best fitted for the posts. There were, of course, some exceptions. Piaras MacCana was

one of those. He was not a member of the I.R.B., but I am not sure that I ever asked him to join, but P.C. O'Mahony asked him and he would not agree to any time to join, but he was a first class man and a patriot of the sincerest type. Pearse raised the question of MacCana. He (Pearse) said that I would have to take up the post of County Commandant and that MacCana would be dropped from that rank. I said that before he went any further how could he do this. He said that the company officers were practically all members of the I.R.B. and they would vote him out and vote me in. I said I would not agree to it on two grounds. One - only perhaps a minor one, but the other a very important one. In the first place, that Piaras MacCana was a good and sincere man and it would be a very low thing for me to engineer any such plot and I wouldn't do it. "What is your second reason?" said Pearse. "My second reason is that he is better fitted for the post than I am from educational and other standards".

Pearse reminded me of my oath to the I.R.B. and that I would have to obey the orders of the Supreme Council, but I replied that "whatever the Supreme Council may do, I am not going to do this thing and that is definite". He accepted that and said: "I have asked you to do something that well may look a mean and tawdry thing to do, but in our position, and in our eagerness to get off the Rising we are trying to do everything to make it certain that there will be a Rising and we are not at all certain that we can carry the I.V. Council in general with us. Now that the Rising is coming very speedily, will you agree to do your utmost, whether or not you get orders from the County Commandant?" "Well", I said, "if I can get a sufficient body of men to come out, I will certainly do that, but I think you can rely on the County Commandant".

I returned and I did not inform MacCana of what had occurred. In fact, I never informed him of that matter, and it has been a secret until now, and if he were still living I would not make it public now.

I was from home, it must have been on Tuesday or Wednesday, but, according to all other details, it must have certainly been on 19th April. I had gone to visit my uncle's home at Rathnaveen outside Tipperary Town, and I was out in the fields with my first cousin, Jack Crowe, who was home from the United States, and who was a member of the I.R.B. and Clan na Gael. We saw a man coming hastily out from the house and on to us and he said to me: "I am from Dublin and I have a dispatch for you. I would like to deal with this matter privately". "Is it an I.R.B. dispatch?" I asked. "Yes", he said. "Well, this man is an I.R.B. man; he is my cousin". So he handed me the dispatch and asked me to read it and I am certain that the statement in the dispatch was that the Rising was to take place at 2 o'clock on Easter Sunday evening. The dispatch carrier, I don't know who he was, at least I cannot remember him now, but it is quite possible that the information to that effect is in Dublin.

Now, as regards the dates, owing to the matters that arose out of it, the day could not be later than Wednesday. Thursday is the day given in the Chronology. The dispatch carrier had to go elsewhere so I returned hastily to Ballagh. I cycled to Dualla that night and saw the County Commandant. He hadn't got any orders such as I had. He was a bit put out about it. I said to him that I could not help the matter, that it was the mix-up between the two organisations and the best thing to do was for him to go to Dublin and discuss the affair there with the Volunteer Executive. He went to Dublin

by train from Gooldscross on Thursday the 20th. On the way to Dublin he met other southern officers and they were in a state of confusion too, and when they went to the Irish Volunteer Headquarters, the confusion grew worse, as he told me on his return.

I placed an armed guard at Gooldscross station to watch from under cover all trains coming from Dublin and to be ready to guard Piaras MacCana on his return. I feared an attempt might be made to arrest him. At all times until his return we had three men on duty. Late on Friday night, or early on Saturday morning, Piaras MacCana arrived from Dublin and brought the joyful news that after many hours of almost frenzied efforts Eoin MacNeill had, in view of the arms about to be landed, consented to the Rising.

Here is an interesting matter. Sometime late on Friday evening or night, our men at Gooldscross saw ⁱⁿ a carriage of a Dublin-bound train a number of armed constabulary and with them a gentlemanly-looking man in civilian clothes. Afterwards they wondered if it could have been Casement.

Saturday was spent sending dispatches, holding conferences and getting ready shotguns, revolvers and a few pikes. We waited orders from the County Commandant. The general plan was to rush the constabulary barracks and to guard all roads by which the arms from Kerry would be borne eastwards. In the Kilnamanagh Barony we were sure that the parishes of Clonoulty, Ballycahill, Drombane, Knockavilla, Rossmore and Upperchurch would give of their best as they gave in later years. To show the spirit of the countryside of that time, I will tell the following story: Amongst our members were two young men - Tom and Michael Kearney.. I went to their mother on Saturday and told her that I was bringing them out

in a Rising and what did she think of it. She said to go ahead, that they were eager to fight and she would not hold them back. Such were most of our womenfolk. My mother, in particular, knew that the Rising was fixed for the following day, but otherwise everything was kept a secret, and on Sunday morning we went about our business as usual. The Volunteers were to begin in the march after the 12 o'clock Mass.

I was going to a nearby creamery with some milk in the early morning and, as I reached the road gate, one of the Dublin men arrived and handed me a dispatch. It was the dispatch signed by Eoin MacNeill. I read it to him and he agreed that it was a terrible business. My sister, Mrs. Cussen, who had got married some short time before and with her husband had gone to live near Clonmel, was at home with my parents. When I came back from the Creamery I told them what had happened and my father said that it was the Fenian Rising over again. A little later we saw a motor car halting on the roadside and two men came down a cross the fields. As they came nearer I saw that one of them was a neighbour of ours named James O'Dwyer of Ballagh, and with him was The O'Rahilly. O'Rahilly had the dispatches down inside his stocking and he took one out and I told him I had got a copy a couple of hours before. I asked what was to be done and what had happened. He said that when MacNeill got the news that the 'Aud' had been sunk and all the arms had been lost on Saturday, he at once set about calling off the Rising and the dispatch carriers had gone out in all directions. He said the I.R.B. had agreed to the calling-off of the Rising and, when asked if this was the end, he said: "I don't believe it is, and now I am going to Limerick and will give out dispatches on the way. I am then going back to Dublin as I

want to have this evening in the company of my wife, because I am strongly of the opinion that the I.R.B. will call the Rising for tomorrow, and if they call the Rising, though I do not agree with it, I will certainly be in it".

My mother supplied him with some tea or milk and, after something to eat, he took to the road again and that was the last I saw of that gallant man.

On Sunday night there was a dance that had been arranged for some time previously and it was held in one of the local homes, and we were there. The Volunteers discussed the matter, not knowing what to think of it. Monday came and no news came from Dublin or from anywhere as to what was happening or would happen, and we were sowing potatoes that evening when Conor Deere of Gooldscross, with a gun in his hand, came across the field from the road and as he came nearer he shouted: "Dublin is fighting". I at once went into my house and got on my Sunday clothes, got whatever arms we had there and we went out to round up all the Volunteers who would come out with us. The countermanding orders had finished the Rising to a great extent and, after a long struggle all we had rallied that evening were nine in all. By the following day two others arrived, making the total number who came out eleven. Several definitely refused and said the order was there from Headquarters and that was that and, naturally, they did not know what to make of it. The news that Dublin was fighting was brushed aside as if it were news of some extremists fighting.

We held the roads on that Monday night and expected at any moment to have some news from Dublin as to what we were to do or when and where we would do it. Some time after midnight, Sean O'Treacy arrived from Tipperary. He had the same story to tell. Nobody in Tipperary Town knew anything further

than what was in the countermanding order, but he thought that we might have some news. He returned to Tipperary Town that morning and came back again on Tuesday, but on Tuesday we were in the same position - no news and no trains running. On Wednesday when he came I called some of the crowd together and said the best I could do was to go to the County Commandant in Dualla and ask him to bring out the brigade. I went to Dualla and Treacy and the others waited for my return at my old home. I saw Piaras MacCana and with him was Brian MacNeill, who was later killed on the republican side in the civil war. He (MacCana) had no news further than this countermanding order and, after a long discussion with him, and putting up a plea that it was a shame that Dublin was fighting on its own, or practically so, he agreed that he would bring out the Tipperary Brigade if Limerick and Cork would also come out, and he said: "Could you get a message to them?" "I can, and will" I said. "Sean O'Treacy is waiting for me at Ballagh and I will bring one of these messages and he will bring the other. I'll go northwards to Annfield, Upperchurch, Newport, Coole and down to Limerick, and he'll go southwards to Tipperary and Cork". "Good", he said, and he wrote two dispatches stating what he wanted done and that if those two brigades came out, he'd also bring out the Tipperary Brigade to do what they could. I returned to Ballagh and, after we had something to eat, Sean and I separated, he going southward and I northward, and as I went I felt very joyful again.

When I reached Annfield and opened the gate into Meagher's yard there was a crowd of men there armed with shotguns and revolvers. Amongst them was Paddy Kinane looking every inch a soldier with a gun in his hand and a bandolier strapped around his shoulder. The Meagher family were also there, also the Hayes's, Long's and Seamus Leahy, and many others that I

cannot now remember. They gave a great cheer of welcome when they saw me entering and a further one when I told them my business and, in the meantime, I told them to do nothing more than cutting communications, especially the telephone and telegraph wires, and to await further orders from the County Commandant. Similar orders had been delivered by me in Ballagh.

Now, before going any further, I would like to give the names of the men who came out in the Ballagh, Knockavilla area. Those were Conor Deere, Gooldscross; Jim Browne, Postman of Clogher, Tom and Mick Kearney, Pat MacCormaic and myself, all six from Clonoulty Parish. Tadhg O'Dwyer, Michael Sheehan, William Russell O'Dwyer and John Halloran - four from Knockavella Parish, and Phil Ryan (Mason), Rossmore Parish.

It was dark night when I left Meagher's house of Anfield that Easter Wednesday night and I took the road to Upperchurch and on to Milestone amid the mountains. I carried no bicycle lamp for obvious reasons and I had difficulty sometimes in finding my way. I had to get down a gulley to get a drink in mountain stream, as I had been taking Oxo tablets which Mrs. McCann had given me earlier in the day to aid me on the night journey and, as a result, I was very thirsty. When I reached Milestone I saw a light in the publichouse there and I knocked. A man came to the door and I asked if there was any chance he would make a cup of tea for me and that I would pay for it. He asked me in, saying "I will make the tea, but there will be no payment. What is the news? You are on some mission". "Do you know me?" I said. "Certainly I do, you are Eamon O'Dwyer and I am Jim Condon, one of the people of this publichouse". "Yes, I am on a mission all right" I said. "Where do you stand, are you a member of the Irish Volunteers?"

"Certainly", he said. "There are all sorts of rumours amongst the mountains. Masses of men marching everywhere". "Well, I hope it is true" I said. "I don't know", he replied. "Suppose Tipperary is deciding to fight, could you get anything done here?" I asked. "Certainly, I can" he said, "there is a bunch of fellows will come out here". I said, "in that case we will give you word sometime tomorrow and Kinane will send a dispatch courier to you". So I drank the tea and bade goodbye to Jim Condon and I took the road to Newport on the other side of the mountains. It was sometime after midnight at this time and it must be near three o'clock in the morning when I reached Newport. I called there to the residence of Jim Ryan, who was one of the I.R.B. Centres, and I knocked him up. He was rather astonished to find me at his door and I told him what my mission was and asked him if anything could be done in Newport. He thought not, that the countermanding order had knocked that on the head and it would be next-door to impossible to bring the Volunteers out again, and, after discussing matters for some time, he gave me directions to find the road to Coole where I intended to call at the home of people named Coleman.

I took the road out from Newport and I found when I reached some crossroads that I could not decide which was the way to Coole, so I thought the best thing to do was to wait for the morning. I got over a roadside ditch and brought my bicycle with me and I lay against the ditch in a position where I would be facing the rising sun. I was awakened by the sunrise which was some time about 6 o'clock in the morning. I got on the road again and knocked around until I met a man going to work who showed me the turn for Coole and told me where I would find the Coleman's home. I had met with some of the Coleman family some time previously on some of my

organising missions, and Miss Coleman and her father had been doing a great deal for the movement in that district. This was in the County Limerick beyond the Tipperary border and on the western side of the mountains. The Colemans were just getting out a round their work and they saw that I got a wash-up and a good breakfast. Mr. Coleman brought out a pony and buggy and he and his daughter scouted the road before me into Limerick city. A strange thing was that on all those movements of mine during those few days I never saw an R.I.C. man or British soldier, nor did I see any in Limerick city. When I reached the city I bade goodbye to the Colemans and I went to Daly's shop. The girl there told me when I disclosed who I was that I would meet the Brigade Council in Sullivan's saddlery shop in the same street. She came there with me and was admitted. After telling them that I was anxious to see them, I was admitted to the Council. There was a James Leydon, a Dalton, Michael Colivet and an O'Sullivan present. I handed them the dispatch from P. McCann and after they had read through it, we discussed the matter, and they told me there was no possibility of anything being done, that the Volunteers were all disbanded and they could not possibly be got together again. They didn't think the fighting in Dublin would come to anything, and Michael Colivet said that their information was that there was nobody out in Dublin only Larkin's men. Now, this was a very big setback to me, and I took it as being all the truth and the whole truth.

Later, probably after coming out of prison at the end of 1916, I had to make a report to the I.R.B. Supreme Council and I included this statement in it. I thought at the time that Michael Colivet was making a statement of what he believed to be true and that the other men who were with him believed

it to be true and that they had no other information whatsoever about the happenings in Dublin. Some short time after making my report, Michael Colivet called to me at Ballagh and he was very troubled about it. I said: "If you thought it to be the truth, why be troubled about it?" "It was not the truth" he said. "You probably have heard already that the Daly sisters had arrived in Limerick an hour or two before you called, and they brought back news of how things were, but I thought that there was no hope of doing anything and it was a question of having to say something to put you off". I said: "what can I do now; I have made the statement and the statement was true and it is your own fault. Could you not have put me off without making such a statement and it would have given me a chance of doing something, maybe and maybe not. I could have understood your position and would not blame you at all for it. The only thing I blame you for now is that you made such a statement to me at the time and put me in the position of making such a report to the I.R.B. implicating you - a thing that I would certainly have avoided if I had known the facts".

I left Limerick pretty downhearted and, outside Limerick on the way to Boher, I saw the first R.I.C. men I had seen that week. Two of them were sitting up in a cart with a fellow and both had rifles. I wondered if I would make an attempt to get those rifles and then I decided, well, I can't do that; I will have to keep going and get back to our fellows, so I cycled on to Doon. I don't know if I had arranged to meet Sean Treacy there or not. I am not too sure that I had. I think he was to report back to Ballagh or, if to report there was impossible, to carry on in Tipperary - probably the latter was the truth.

In Doon, as I was passing the R.I.C. Barracks, I saw one of the constabulary men looking out through a window. As I passed he shouted something and, when I took a side-ways look back, I saw that they (the R.I.C.) were shuttering the windows and I thought - this looks good. There is maybe something doing in the county and they think I am coming along with further news. I went to Ryan's hotel and there was Treacy awaiting me. He told me what is already told in the book "Sean Treacy and the Third Tipperary Brigade" - that he had taken the road southwards the previous night and had called to Tipperary Town where there was some activity. I had better state here for the purpose of the record what the activity was. On Monday night, Michael O'Callaghan arrived in Tipperary Town where he was working as assistant Creamery Manager at one of Cleeve's Creameries. Going down the town a mob of people who were connected with the British army attacked him and pelted him with stones. He drew an automatic and fired one shot at least in the air to protect himself. The bullet bounded off a wall and struck some young fellow in the knee, and there was great hubbub. O'Callaghan went to his own house in Henry St. and he was not long there when a rmed R.I.C. men came battering down the door and shouting what they would not do to him. He fired a few shots and they ran away. He then went into hiding in the town and that night some friends induced him to go out to Coolbawn near the Glen of Aherlow. He was there on Tuesday morning when an R.I.C. sergeant and a constable arrived and came into the dining room where he was eating his breakfast. They said: "You are Michael O'Callaghan and we are arresting you". "Yes, I am Michael O'Callaghan", he replied. "This is my card" and he drew an automatic revolver, fired, and the sergeant fell dead with the first shot. A second shot, and the

constable fell dead in the yard. O'Callaghan got away and he was sought for very keenly especially when the R.I.C. had large forces at their disposal, but after many adventures he got away to the United States.

Sean Treacy was very disappointed, too, at how things had turned out and from Tipperary he had gone to Galbally and had got in touch with the Ballylanders men. They were all keen on a rising and had come out in force. The R.I.C. deserted Anglesborough Barracks and I heard - I do not know how true it is - that the sergeant of the R.I.C. Barracks left a note to the Volunteers asking them not to ill-treat his wife and children. Needless to say, they would not have been ill-treated anyway. Treacy told me, too, that an order had been issued by P. McCann disbanding the Volunteers in Tipperary and that nothing could be done. I said: "How is that; that was a very quick decision of his after agreeing that he would wait on the news from Limerick and Cork". "Well", he said, "probably the news had already reached him that Limerick and Cork were not going to do any thing". "Now", he said, "what are you going to do?" and I said: "I have to go to meet our fellows and then go to Anfield and tell them of the position. I don't know what they have done". "Well, at any rate" he said, "all the telephone and telegraph wires are down in a tangle on the railway at some points, but they have got the counter-order from P. McCann. After going to Anfield, what then?" he continued. "I am going to Dublin" I said. "Well, I'll go with you" said Treacy. "No" I said "I'll only be responsible for myself from now on and I won't let you come to Dublin with me and, anyway, I think you'd better wait and see what is going to happen". So I left Doon and I came on to Brittans of Bishopswood, where

I met our fellows. They told me, after cutting the wires and making other preparations, they sent two men to Dualla to get a couple of rifles they thought we were to get there, and when the two men reached McCann's place at Dualla, the house was all locked up and, after knocking and making noise around for an hour, they had to return without meeting anybody. Some time in the morning the order came from McCann that they were to disband. They did not do so, but had awaited my arrival.

In the meantime, the R.I.C. had come out in force and they were patrolling the railway between Goldscross and Dundrum and protecting linesmen who were repairing the wires. They (the Volunteers) asked: "what are we to do?" and I said I could not take the responsibility for such a small number, "the only thing you can do is to go home and see that any stuff we have is secreted and left in safe places". One or two wanted to make an attack on Dundrum Barracks. They said that some local people around Dundrum had gone in there with their shotguns to aid the R.I.C. I decided that we could do nothing in the circumstances and Bill Griffin brought me that night to Carroll's in the Glen of Ceherhue which, he thought, would be a safe place, and I certainly slept soundly there for the first time for over a week.

On Friday, I came along on the bicycle and, leaving it on the roadside near Cluain, I crossed the fields and the river to reach my home. Now, my sister Winnie (Mrs. Cussen) who, as I have said before, had gone to live with her husband near Clonmel some time previously, when she heard of the Rising, she started on Wednesday morning to come to Ballagh knowing that I would be on the move. She had to walk most of the way. She arrived in Ballagh sometime on Wednesday evening.

She was there when I arrived on Friday from this futile attempt to get the rising going throughout Munster. We were talking for a few minutes when I said I would be on the move again as R.I.C. men were in force on the roadway some few hundred yards away and on the railway. As we spoke we saw two R.I.C. men coming down across the fields and coming very carefully. Both had rifles. I had a revolver in one pocket and an automatic in the other and I said I'd wait and see what it was all about. They came in to the front of the house. It was Sergeant Hourigan and Constable Hayes from Clonoulty, two gentlemen whom I did not like and who certainly did not like me. They queried me about those wires being cut and I said: "Well, it is your business to discover who cut the wires". They said they could arrest me and I said: "Well, try it and see if it will work". Hourigan said: "Yes, I suppose you would shoot us like your pal, Callaghan, shot the men in Tipperary". "Well" I said, "I won't be arrested anyway, I can assure you of that". After some further words, they turned and went away and I am strongly of the opinion that they thought that others of our fellows were in the house behind me with shotguns and that they would not have any chance against them. Otherwise, I imagine they would have tried to shoot me or capture me at that time. So I bade goodbye to my father, mother and sister and left Ballagh in a hurry.

I reached Annfield sometime that evening and met the Volunteers who were there. They had already done what they could and they had got the countermanding order from Pierce McCann. They were at sea as to what further could be done. I told them there was nothing I could do now. I could not take responsibility to bring out two small parties of 20 or 25 and badly armed at that, and that I was going to Dublin, but first I would have to see McCann. It was late and I stayed at

Annfield that night and got to McCann's very early on Saturday. When I reached McCann's, Pierce and Brian MacNeill were there. We discussed matters and I asked him why he had changed the orders. He said that he had discovered that there was no hope and that the fighting was dying down in Dublin and that it was too late to do anything. "Well", I said, "they are still fighting there apparently and I am going there". "Well", he said, "if you have fully decided to go there, the best way is to go unarmed and try to find your way into the city and if there is anything that can be done, you can send word back to me. I'll bring out the Tipperarymen if you see there is a hope that the fight can be continued". Something like those were his words. I surrendered my automatic and revolver to him and after having dinner there I took the road for Dublin on my bicycle.

All went well until going up a hill on the road near Killenaule my bicycle got punctured and I had to walk. I thought for a moment "will I take to the fields and try to reach Dublin by cross-country?" Then I saw the dust of cars coming along the road behind me and I wondered what they were, but I was not left in wonderment very long, for when I looked back I saw there were two cars and one of them pulled right in front of me. Armed R.I.C. men jumped out of it while the other car pulled up behind me. They covered me with rifles and revolvers and my bicycle, which was on the roadside, was shoved into one of the cars. A District Inspector from Killenaule was driving the car and a sergeant got into the back seat with me. He put a revolver up to my head and I thought the barrel of it looked very big, but I kept a firm grip upon my courage and I said to him: "You will either shoot yourself or shoot me with that revolver". The D.I. looked around and said: "Sergeant, will you put down that gun; there

is no need for it at all". They brought me into Killenaule Barracks and the D.I. queried me as to what my business was and I sprang him a very good story, that I had relatives in Dublin and that I wanted to see them as I was very troubled lest something might have happened to them in the fighting and that I was just a plain everyday man on my way. He looked at me and said: "Well, if that is the truth, I don't see why we should detain you. You have explained things very clearly and I will get on the 'phone to headquarters in Clonmel and see what they will say to it". When I heard that I just wondered what the reply would be, but I wasn't long in doubt. The D.I. returned and he looked at me very quizzically.

"Now, judging by appearances" he said, "you are an honest man and in general I would believe anything from you, but that story was a marvellously good concoction for an honest man to make". He said: "the reply I got from Clonmel is that you are to be brought in there and that if you make any attempt at escaping you are to be shot at once, and that is that".

I was taken to Clonmel Barracks that night. I had no news up to then as to how the rising was going or to what had happened. When I got out of the car at the avenue into the barracks, a mass of young soldiers were lined upon each side of the roadway, or pathway in, with rifles and fixed bayonets, and I wondered what the devil it was for. I was brought into the barracks and put into an old storeroom. There I slept on one of the shelves for the night. I was a little thinner then than I am now. I could not do that now. In the morning I saw that there was a soldier of the Leinster Regiment on guard outside the window. He looked in and said: "you are awake, I must pass the word to get something to eat for you. I'm sure you are hungry". "Oh, no, thank you", I said. "By the way, who are you?" he said. "You must be

a rather important prisoner". "Ah, I don't think so", I replied. "Well, that is strange", he said. "Did you see that crowd lined up along the roadway last night". "Yes", I said. "Well," he said, "that was the cadet corps. They came here from Waterford and when they lined up like that, we thought it was the Kaiser had been captured". "Well, no, it is not the Kaiser nor the President of the Irish Republic". "Well", he said, "I will get the breakfast". He got the breakfast and then he discussed the Rising and said it was all over, that there was a surrender in Dublin". "Is that true?" I said. "It is" he said, "and why the devil didn't you tell us that the Rising was on and the fellows in the Irish Regiments would have taken part in it; we had arms and we would have done something". "Oh, well" I said, "it is too late now. The next time we'll surely tell you".

On Sunday I had a visit from the commanding officer - some General or other - and he said to me: "Have you got food and all" and I said "yes, very well treated, thanks" and he said: "Now, are you prepared to make a confession"? "Well, I don't mind" I said, "if you end in a priest. Am I going to be shot?" "Ah, now, that is not what I mean at all", he said. "A confession of your part in the Rising is what I want". "Well" I said, "I am not going to make any confession of that kind at all". "Are you sure of that?" he said. "I am certain of it, no possibility whatsoever". "That is all right", he said. "I am only a plain soldier, I am not going to press you on that matter at all", and he left.

On Monday some Clonmel Volunteers who had been arrested on Sunday night joined me. Frank Drohan and Sean Morrissey were amongst them. On Tuesday, I think it was, we were brought out of Clonmel Barracks under escort and taken by train

to Cork. In the meantime, this soldier of the Leinster Regiment and a few others were talking again to me from where they were on guard outside the place where I was confined. This soldier said: "There was an R.I.C. man on duty in the streets with us yesterday. He was a big black fellow. Do you know him?" "No", I said, "I do not". "Well", he said, "he knows you, and all he had to say yesterday until we got tired of it was the pleasure he would have of sticking a bayonet in you". "We got a bit sore over it in the finish and we said to go to hell or we would stick a bayonet in him". "Well, good men" I said, "I don't know the fellow; he could be any of them".

On Tuesday, at the Limerick Junction while waiting for the Cork train, we saw Mick Sheehan and Conor Deere on the platform. They were prisoners, too, and were hemmed in by a crowd of R.I.C. men. Armed British soldiers were also on the platform. It was a Fair day in Tipperary Town and quite a good many people we knew passed up and down that platform, but they were too much afraid to speak to us or to recognise us. The only one who came near us to shake hands and wish us well was a Protestant farmer and butcher from Dundrum, named John Price.

After the Rising was over, the R.I.C. raided my home and that of the Kearneys. They captured Mick Kearney and threatened him with dire treatment, but he managed to escape from them. They called several times to our home and dug up some of the holding, searching for arms. Sergeant Horigan threatened to shoot my sister - Mrs. Cussen. In later years she had to face up to many nerve-wrecking raids at Kilshenane culminating in the terrible final raids by the murder gang which I will deal with in a later statement.

On our way to Cork I was handcuffed to Frank Drohan. From Tipperary Town we had with us some other prisoners including that sterling man, P.J. Moloney, Chemist. He is gone to God for many years past. His son, Padraig, was killed a few years later in a fight with the British forces, and another son, Con - one of our brigade staff - died a few years ago. They were a great family.

Arriving at Cork, we were conveyed by a large escort to the military barracks on a hill. British soldiers' dependants gave us a rough reception with stones and clods outside the barracks. We were held there for some time and some of the R.I.C. were gloating at what had befallen us, particularly a black-visaged R.I.C. man from Clonmel, who must have been the fellow of whom I have already spoken. He showed soldiers how he would like to bayonet me. From the barracks we were marched downhill to Patrick Street. As we came in view of the street, we saw that it was thronged with a surging excited crowd. The black policeman, who marched alongside Drohan and myself, was fit to burst with joy. "Ye bastards", he shouted, "ye will get another belting now", but to our delight and to cheer our drooping spirits, we found the surging crowd was composed of our friends. There was roar after roar of cheering for the "Tipperary Rebels" and the crowd sang: "Who fears to speak of '98", "The Felons of our Land" and other songs as they marched with us, and there were continual clashes with the R.I.C. escort. They did not interfere so much with the soldiers, but scarcely any R.I.C. man of the scores in the escort but got a wallop of an ashplant or cane of some kind and perhaps a well-aimed brick. The black-visaged fellow beside Drohan and myself came in for his share of trouble. As we passed two rather well-dressed nice girls, they got up with their umbrellas and they smashed them in

fragments on the R.I.C. man's head, of course to our delight. Strange to say, years later I met one of those girls. I was seeing my brother Jim off to the States. He had been home on holidays and it was my first time seeing him because he had gone to America just after I had been born. He was 22 years my senior. He was a famous hurler in his time and he is still living in this 1956 in the United States and enjoying good health. We called with another friend to the principal hotel in Cobh and we stayed for the night until the tender was going out to the liner. I got back to the hotel with a friend after my brother had gone away on the liner. I asked the lady who was the manageress for my bill and she said: "There is no bill for Eamon O'Duibhir". "How is that?" I said. "Oh", she said, "I know you of old. Do you remember going as a prisoner into Cork after the Rising in 1916?" "Yes" I said. "Do you remember two girls on the sidewalk who hampered a Peeler with umbrellas?" "I do indeed", I said. "Well, I was one of those. My name is Murphy". "Well", I said, "it is I should give you a reward unstead of your giving me a reward, for the things you did that night cheered our hearts immensely".

We were brought on to Cork Jail and, far from being dispirited, this great demonstration of the spirit of Cork fired us with new determination. A crowd remained outside the prison cheering and singing all the national songs and occasionally hammering the prison gates with stones or anything else they could lay hands on, whilst we were ushered into the prison. Now, a prison was a rather strange place for all of us. We had never been in one before and the cheerless cells and the food were certainly not to our liking. The hard bread, the cocoa and the 'skilly' for dinner were poor stuff which we were not used to. Also, all the regulations as to the fixing of the bedboards and the laying out of the

blankets properly and keeping the tins shined was all new to us. They - the tins - had to be shined remarkably well. There was one red-faced warder there and he was very officious and very impertinent. I had done my best, being a tidy fellow always - to have everything fairly 'ship-shape' for my own comfort, but he was not pleased at all and, for the third time in one day, he came in to give me a rating and say that those tins were not shined properly. He picked up one of the tins and said it would have to be done again. I said: "Give it to me" and he gave it to me and I let him have it on the head and he went out of the prison door after getting a few wallops of it and said he would report me to the Governor right away. The Governor came along and he said what was my explanation and I told him. "Um" said he. Nothing happened to me but I did not see that red-faced warder any more, but I apparently changed his views somewhat, for I heard in after years that he was pretty decent as a warder.

Amongst the prisoners we had were the Brothers O'Donovan from Cork. The younger brother was quite happy, but the elder was a sort of alarmed about how things were going at home and wondering when would he get back. He said the only comfort he had was P.J. Moloney and myself. He said when P.J. Moloney appeared in the cell door with that fine handsome face of his it was like the rising sun coming out, and he would be happy for the day, and then I always had a pleasant word for him too. Well, after a few days there, we were on the move again and we were sent by train to Dublin. Going through Tipperary we first learned of the executions in Dublin. A copy of an issue of the 'Irish Independent' found its way down along the train and it was handed to us by the soldiers. It carried a statement of the first or second group of executions. Our friend O'Donovan was with us in the carriage

and he thought things looked very black and he said: "I wonder what will happen to us". "Well", I said, "you were not very much in things and the devil a much will happen to you. I am sure you will be out all right" (this to cheer him up).

"What about the rest of you?" he said. "I don't think we will be shot, but we will probably be in for life" I replied. The soldiers in the carriage grinned and laughed heartily and the officer said: "This is a good way of taking things; probably it won't be like that, but no use in grumbling about things. I suppose it is the fortune of war".

The black-visaged peeler happened to be there too and he made some scathing remark about Piaras McCann and that he was one of the chief leaders of the insurrection. "Oh, that is a lie; that is not quite correct" I said. "Oh" said he, "none of them want to be leaders". "Damn it" I said, "we would all like to be leaders and not dirty rats like you, and if this officer would take off these handcuffs I would hammer hell out of you". The officer said: "No, I cannot do that, but, Mr. Policeman, you had better go to another carriage, we don't want trouble if we can avoid it". That was the last I saw of the fellow.

We reached Kingsbridge and, needless to say, there was nobody there to welcome us. We were brought to Richmond Barracks. On our way we met a few people in the street, probably British soldiers' wives and dependants, who were a bit hostile to us, and we were ushered into Richmond Barracks. Our party were separated into different rooms. One of those barrack rooms held 17 or 18 of our party and there was no bedding or anything in that line in it. After a few days we got blankets and those small mattresses that the soldiery called 'biscuits.' We had no complaint to make and the military

officers said that they were no bit better off themselves at the time. Food was hopeless as well, and the 17 of us had some dog biscuits and a 5-lb. tin of 'bully' beef to do us for four or five days, but we made out on it.

Then, Mr. Asquith, the British Prime Minister, came along to pay us a visit on the day after his visit to Dublin. Things were then changed, and a Sergeant Major Byrne, who had been a chef in the Gresham Hotel, was put in charge of the food supplies and from then on we were fed like kings or princes. The Notts and Derby Regiment, or the Sherwood Foresters, or whatever they call them, were in charge there. They had lost heavily in the Easter Week fighting, but we did not find them unfriendly, and some of their officers were quite helpful to our relatives when they came to see us. A great many people passed through, and amongst those we had in our room for some time was Count Plunkett, but he was soon taken away. Another prominent man who happened to be with us was Joe McBride, who was later a T.D. His brother, Major John McBride, was executed after the Rising.

Time slipped away in Richmond Barracks with very little to do. Of course, we had endless discussions, and the party in our room changed as the days passed by. Some were taken away and sent to various prisons overseas, and some to Frongoch Camp. After a time, the number remaining in Richmond was small, and there was an idea that all of us who remained were being held over for courtmartial. Some people said that there was a grave dug for 400; of course, that was to get the 'wind up' us, but most of our people did not worry about anything like that. Then, finally, there came a day and we were told to pack up whatever kit we had, to shake off the dust that was on our clothes from lying on the floor, and be ready to get on board ship for Britain. They did not tell us where we were being sent.

We were marched down right through the city of Dublin and we could see a great deal of the wrecked buildings all around us. There was quite a big crowd lining the quays as we were marched down to the North Wall, and put on board a cattle boat. The only ones to give us a cheer were our own relatives. There were hundreds of those there from all over the city. After bedding down, some of us alongside the cows, for the night, we arrived in England next morning. I am not sure what port we arrived at, but we were taken from the port of disembarkation to Wakefield Prison in Yorkshire. There we met some of the crowd who had been with us in Richmond Barracks and some fellows from all parts of Ireland. The food was hopeless, and, after being there some short time, Irish people resident in Wakefield city, and especially some nuns, got permission to come in to see us and to bring in food. As a result, things were improved a good deal.

Amongst our visitors there was one who was afterwards Lord Mayor of Dublin and who was an M.P. at the time. I refer to the wellknown Alfie Byrne who has recently gone to his eternal reward. Not alone did he call to see us, especially the Dublin men, but he brought in a big supply of food and drink as well for those who took a drink.

Nothing very much happened in Wakefield except that I had one clash with a heavy burly sergeant major one morning. He and some other soldiers had lugged in two young fellows and were shoving them down to the basement cells under our floor. He and another caught those lads and, after striking them a few times, they threw them down the stone stairs to the basement floor. I did not know whether they were English or Irish, nor did I mind; but I was shocked with this brutality and I said to the sergeant major that I had a great

mind to give him a few blows for the brutality he was after perpetrating on those two men. He said: "It is none of your business". "Well" I said, "it is the business of any decent man to stop a brute from blackguarding people who are unable to resist". "But you don't understand", he said, "those are not your people at all. Those are Englishmen". "Well, what of it?" I said. He said: "These are men who refuse to fight; they are called the C.O.s, the Conscientious Objectors; they refuse to fight and you should not have any sympathy for them. We understand that your men came out in Dublin with shotguns and hatchets, and those damn men would get good Lee Enfield rifles and yet they would not fight". "That is all right" I said, "they might fight for their country, but not for the Empire which is blackguarding other people". So he said: "I am not going to fight with you now" and he went away.

Now, these men were in cells underneath us and we got in touch with them by lowering messages on cords from our windows to their little slit of a window. We were also able, occasionally, to pass down fruit and something to eat and we got letters back in return. I still remember the names of the two men - one of them was from Derby Town, and the other from Derby countryside - Percy Bird and Will Roughdox. In after years I had letters from them, but I have now lost track of them. All those letters and a lot of other stuff were destroyed in my house in Kilshinane in 1920 when the murder gang burned it.

Later in the year we were shifted to Reading Prison and, on our way, we passed down through the English countryside, down through the Black Country with all its dirt and squalor and into the beautiful West English countryside, so much like our own. There we met a number of the very prominent

people of the movement, amongst them His Excellency Sean T. O'Kelly, Uachtarán, Poblachta na hÉireann anois; Arthur Griffith, the man who made most of us see the right things in Irish nationalism; he was there. Terence McSwiney and Thomas MacCurtain from Cork; Darrel Figgis; Herbert Moran, who used to write under the name 'Mr. Newman'; Captain G. O'Connell, Frank Bulfin, Pierce McCann and Conor Deere were there for some time and were released later. P.T. Daly of the Labour Movement, George Nichols from Galway and Ernest Blythe, Alf Cotton and others, whom I cannot now remember, were amongst the crowd of about 38, and I am not forgetting to mention that it was there I first met Seamus Robinson, his brother Joe, and Seamus Reader from Glasgow, who was probably the youngest prisoner that was taken up at the time by the British.

Life was very circumscribed in Reading, but our inner life there was very full and very interesting. In one of the autograph books I remember seeing a piece written by Arthur Griffith and it was: "Reading makes a full man". Now, Reading is written R e a d i n g, but the pronunciation is Reding.

In many ways the life in Reading Prison did help to make us better men, or at least to become more educated in Irish matters.

One of the things that we got up in Reading was a weekly lecture by some member of the crowd. The lecturers touched on very many aspects of Irish life and there was also a weekly talk on military matters or on the war then being waged in Europe. Captain O'Connell gave those talks and they were very interesting, as he seemed to be able to prophesy pretty well what was going to happen. Arthur Griffith, Terry McSwiney, Darrel Figgis, S.T. O'Kelly, P.T. Daly and Ernest

Blythe were amongst the speakers at those various talks. We used to have a little tea party as an ending to these talks and as a prelude to the discussions which followed them. The tea was served in the prison mugs, but whoever had to lay the table (we all had to do that in turn and wash out the place) managed, as a rule, to get some flowers from the prison garden and put them in mugs decorating the table, so everything was done in style. Grace before and after meals was said in Irish always, and another man who was there and was a speaker was Sean Milroy. It is difficult now to remember correctly all the names of the prisoners.

Amongst the things got up there was a jail journal, and this was edited by Griffith, and the artist was Sean Milroy. Needless to say with all those writers, it too was very interesting. When leaving the prison, Griffith gave me the copies of the journal. I was delighted to have them and they remained in my possession for some time. Then, when the 'Southern Star' was being reorganised in Skibbereen, Connolly, the editor, asked me to loan him those copies and I gave them to him and I have not seen them since. It is possible perhaps that the Bureau would be able to discover them and add them to their store of records.

We decided also that we would have prayer (public) in Irish in the small hall of that part of the prison in which we were confined every night before the cells were locked on us. That would be at 9 o'clock. When this decision was made known in the prison, our Protestant fellow members, including Blythe, Cotton, Seamus McGabhan, Herbert Moran, a farmer from Co. Limerick, one of the Palatine people whose name I cannot remember, and Darrel Figgis came along and asked S.T.O'Kelly if it were true. "Yes" he said, "but that is not s topping

you from having your own prayers publicly as well". "Oh, we are not going to do that; all we want to know is, in what language are they being recited". "In Irish, of course" said Sean T. "Well, in that case, we'll participate in it; we will show our solidarity if nothing else for the language of our country" and they did. They (the Protestant prisoners) found serious fault with Darrel Figgis on the first night those prayers were said, because Darrel knelt up on a chair instead of kneeling on the ground. They had a very heated discussion with him, saying that it was not the proper thing to do. He said he was just as good a Protestant as any other Protestants. As it was the Protestants had the discussion with him, we said nothing, for we did not mind the thing at all. They alleged that he did not have the slightest idea of what it was to be a good Protestant, and the matter ended at that, but Figgis knelt on the floor from that on.

To keep our hearts alive, Tomas MacCurtain, Terence McSwiney and some of the others came a round every night before the cells closed and gave us a little music. A couple of them had got in musical instruments. I think Terry was a good violinist; certainly Tomas MacCurtain was. They played tunes and the last thing we heard as we went to sleep was some good national airs ringing through the place.

In great measure, these discussions helped to lay future policy. We, the younger men, had our own talks as regards what we would do on our return to Ireland. Seamus Robinson and myself had very lengthy talks on that subject and I told him that my idea was, provided I could borrow the money, to buy a suitable farm and house and make it a community centre from which to spread the organisation of the Gaelic League, Sinn Fein, the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan all over the countryside, and to use any profits that would come out of it

for those purposes. Again, we would have some staff working there who would be members of the movement, and I asked him if I could get anything like that done, would he come to Tipperary and help with the organising. Hewelcomed the suggestion very dearly, saying it was a great thought and that he would come.

Some time in November, the Governor called me to his office. He had a telegram for me saying that my father, who was then 77 years of age, was seriously ill and that my release for a week on parole was being sought so I said: "Can I get it?" "Certainly", he said, "if you sign the parole". I signed the form and I left Reading that evening on the train for Paddington. I did not know my way a round London and, of course, I knew the city would be all in darkness owing to the war, so I was in a bit of a quandary as to how I would get to Euston Station from Paddington. At some station down from Reading, a lady dressed in furs and with a couple of children with her, got into the carriage. When they were there for a start I asked her if she could inform me as to the best thing to be done about crossing the city. "You are going for the Irish night mail, I know by your accent you are Irish" she said, "and have you come from Reading?". This young lady shook hands with me when I told her I was an Irish Volunteer prisoner coming on parole from Reading, and she told me that she was a Miss Ward and that her brother was a captain in the British army - a Redmond man - and that the executions of the Easter Week men had shocked them. She told me that she hunted with the fox-hound pack from Fethard and that she had seen Piaras MacCana at those meets and had heard that he was in Reading Jail. She was pleased when told he had been released. She said that he was a brave and splendid man and that she had seen him risking his life to rescue a member of the Meet who had been unhorsed in the flooded *Suir* and was in danger of drowning.

She said that a car would be waiting for her at Paddington and she would get me across London to Euston. She did this and insisted on dining me at a restaurant and put a tea basket and papers for me in my carriage.

I got to Dublin and my sister, Mrs. Duncan, met me there. I wired home that I was on the way and so when the train arrived in Gooldscross that November of 1916, there was a huge crowd there to meet me, silent because of my father who was dying, but there were hundreds to shake hands with me and to carry me to a waiting car. My father was happy to see me. He passed away the next day at the age of 77.

After my father's death I called on the Parish Priest of Clonoulty, Rev. Canon Dan Ryan, to make the funeral arrangements. Years before he had spoken from the pulpit against my efforts to spread the Sinn Fein policy. On later occasions he used say to me: "Edmond, I will do all I can to help your work for Irish and the Gaelic League, but I am opposed to your work for Sinn Fein". Now, he shook me warmly by the hand and said that, though he remained a staunch supporter of the Irish Party, he was proud that I was a parishioner of his and, said he: "Your leaders were brave and noble Irishmen". A great, sincere Irishman was Canon Dan Ryan.

At the wake that night all the local crowd crammed the old home and the sheds and yards around. Sean Treacy was there, and to the huge funeral hosting came Drohan and the Clonmel men, Treacy and Benn with the Tipperary men, Piaras MacCanna, J.M. Kennedy and a multitude of others.

I had got only a week's parole and so had to be on my way back to Reading after the funeral. I was at my sister's home in Dublin - Duncan's - when that sinister and slimy hound -

Detective Hoey, arrived with a notice that, in view of my father's death, I had got a further week's parole. I got the late night train to Gooldscross and, as everyone was in bed, I walked the couple of miles home and woke up my sister and her husband and my mother. They had gone to bed in tears and now, great was their joy!

It was known in Dublin that I would be going back to Reading, and so friends of those in prison loaded me with gifts for them, and when I reached Reading Station after midnight on a November night, I had two heavy travelling cases to haul uphill to the Jail. After hammering at the door for some time, a warder opened a slide and he thought for a moment that I was either drunk or mad, when I said that I wanted to get into the jail.

A few more weeks passed by and the morning of Christmas Eve came and many were disappointed that there was no news of release. Late in the evening the Governor came along and told us to pack up and go home. Joyful tidings indeed!

On our way down to the station there were British soldiers walking down on the far side of the road to the station. Some of them came across and inquired if O'Dwyer was amongst the crowd! One of them was a Walsh from Cashel. His family were publishers of the "Cashel Sentinel". They shook hands with us and were very friendly.

And so, that Christmas Day of 1916 we were nearing the green fields of Ireland.

Signed: *Lamon O'Duibir*

Date: *20/4/1956*

Witness: *J. Grace*

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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