

ORIGINAL

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Statement of Captain Seán Prendergast,  
Former Officer Commanding 'C' Company 1st Battalion  
Dublin Brigade Irish Volunteers and Irish Republican Army

now of

Upton Lodge, 30, Grace Park Terrace, Drumcondra, Dublin.

Chapter One.

Na Fianna Éireann (or Irish National Boy Scouts) was a couple of years in existence when, in 1911, I wended my way to No. 10 Beresford Place, Dublin, there to join one of its sluaighthe (or branches). The name of this branch, which met in one of the rooms overhead, was called Sluaigh Emmet - sometimes termed North Dock Sluaigh.

I had previously become aware of the existence of this boys' organisation, by reports in the public press, by seeing them on their several route marches and at public processions and demonstrations. It made a very special appeal to me, and of course boy-like I readily succumbed to the feeling that I could do worse than joining an organisation of boys with a true Irish outlook and pledged to work for Irish Independence, which was its principal aim and object. I own that I was particularly attracted because it was distinctly Irish, non-political and non-sectarian, its main characteristic being to inculcate a love for Ireland and for things Irish and national. Though quite young at the time I possessed not a little knowledge of Irish history, which I had acquired by reading various books and tracts, such as Speeches from the Dock, stories of Sarsfield and the Wild Geese, books on the Insurrection of '98 and various accounts

of '48 and '67. Indeed most of my knowledge of Ireland's history had been obtained from the numerous magazines, periodicals, journals and tracts which my good father, then a few years dead, kept apparently as heirlooms. These consisted of such treasures as "The '98 Centenary Records" which were accounts and narratives of the United Irishmen; the speeches and lectures of Father Kavanagh on the Ninety-Eight men; numerous copies (practically a complete file) of the "United Irishman" issued in the early nineteen hundreds during the Boer War, which extolled the deeds and valour of the Irish Brigade under Major John McBride fighting on the side of the Boers; the many anti-recruiting handbills, issued and circulated during that eventful period. My father too had often related stories of Parnell; he himself was a Parnellite and a member of the Irish National Foresters. These had made deep impressions on me. Hence it was not unreasonable that the idea of doing something for Ireland in a boy's way, and among boys, added zest to my desire to join Na Fianna Éireann.

Here was a chance for me to show that I was Irish and that I longed to see Ireland free; "The Complete Independence of Ireland", this was the Fianna ideal. It soon became mine, and found me responsive to everything that it stood for and proclaimed. As the name implied Na Fianna Éireann was synonymous with the Fianna of Fionn or boy-troop of Éireann. Fionn - the ancient boy warrior, who, it is told, kept the foreign invaders in check on the shores of Ventry until he had rallied the Fianna. Na Fianna Éireann of this our time, modelling itself on the saga history of Ireland and its ancient

predecessors, was striving to build up a boy corps or army in defence of Ireland. It was doing so through the medium of the Boy Scout idea, or rather taking advantage of the Boy Scout idea in pursuance of a well considered plan to create an Irish boys' organisation, pledged to Ireland and to Ireland only. True, this Boy Scout idea had "caught on" in Ireland, as witness the large number of troops of Baden Powell Scouts existing in Dublin and a few other centres in Ireland. These donned khaki shirts, and khaki hats so typically British in more senses than one. We on our part had found in the Fianna a weapon to "combat the anglicising influence of the Baden Powell Scouts".

The founders and promoters of the Fianna while embracing the scout idea, and accepting the principle of scouting were no imitators of the Baden Powell Scout organisation. It (The Fianna) had no room or thought for many of the foll-de-dols, ribbons and decorations so characteristic of the Baden Powell scouts; we could have no use for such meaningless designations as cubs, wolves, etc. impregnated in the latter organisation. The Fianna was fashioned on a semi-military basis, fabricated on a pattern that was truly Irish of the Irish, and, having its foundations firmly established on Irish soil, sought to cater for Irish boys in accordance with the cultural and historical background centred in the past. This was a significant move, a unique occasion, a very important task. Already, in its couple of years' existence, the Fianna idea had received ample support, and was progressing along favourable grounds. It had taken up the cudgels to wield, as it were, a mighty war against the forces of anglicisation and West Britonism,

which in this case was represented by the Baden Powell organisation, then showing signs of flourishing in England, and making no little headway in our country at the time.

If the Fianna had its roots deeply set on Irish soil, its rivals, the Baden Powell Scouts had its eyes, ears, heart and very being centred on England, where its headquarters were situated. It imitated and was responsive to the teachings and commands of its parent body in London, to whom was given full and filial obedience. The Baden Powell Boy Scouts in Ireland were true protégés of their British associations; they were one in allegiance, tradition and in many cases in flesh and blood, because of their English birth, English extraction or English proclivities. As such they could not claim or demand that they were anything but an English organisation; they proclaimed themselves in favour of one flag, one king and one empire, and had little, if any, use for such things as Irish Nationhood or Ireland's will to be free.

The Fianna had thus become a strong and an aggressive counter-blast to their rivals, the Baden Powell Scouts in Ireland. True, it adopted the idea of scouting, but not the trimmings and still less the policy and patronage associated with their rivals whom we looked upon with disfavour, suspicion and antagonism, believing them to be, as they boasted themselves to be, "English Scouts". The Fianna groundwork had been well prepared; it was growing strong, secure and prospering.

From my initiation in the Fianna Sluaigh I had, common to all its members, to plan dressing myself a la mode, and to secure equipment, so necessary if one were

to be termed a fully fledged Fiannuidhe. Every facility was accorded for doing this - an easy method to procure one article at a time was established, by means of which one could pay weekly into a uniform fund, and so dress oneself as per amount subscribed. This method of dressing oneself was tiresome and required much sacrifice and self denial to many of us who were "just ordinary boys" who would hardly be said to possess much of worldly goods or treasures. In addition to these payments, we had to have available a few coppers for outings and camping to pay for the little extras that might be required on occasions.

Was it not a labour of love to save for our uniforms of which we were so proud to wear. I think the first thing I secured was a haversack, next a belt, then a hat, and by the time I had these secured I was beginning to "look up and take notice". For while I was engaged in paying for these I had passed from the stage of recruit, and had learned my drill and to step out - quite an achievement in itself. I had also gone through a kind of quick course in semaphore and morse signalling which I liked very much. When eventually I obtained my full uniform and equipment I felt I was well on the road to destiny!

Our uniform at the time was of the boy scout pattern, <sup>light green</sup> a/tunic blouse, short pants and felt hat, turned up at the side (Boer style). The blouse had two breast pockets, shoulder epaulettes, loose turned down collar, and was of a green linen or flannel material. The hat was green in colour to match the blouse; the pants navy blue cloth; long black stockings turned down

below the knees. The aforesaid uniform was, if not spectacular, at least nice when it was new but not so when it was weather beaten or over washed, and to ordinary sized folk like me could be easy fitting and cosy; but pity the very tall members who found it hard to be fitted on the standard sizes available, or due to shrinkages in washing had to be contented with showing more limbs and angles than what were required.

On the night of my initiation into Sluaigh Emmet at No. 10 (by-the-by we always referred to our parade hall as "No. 10") I got a severe shock, and was surprised to witness an "all in" fight, for that was what it appeared to me, between the two brothers, Paddy and Garry Holohan. There they were on the floor "hammering it out". I did not know at the time whether it was a real or imaginary fight, but to me it had every symptom of a complete "set to", for they appeared to be in deadly combat, each striving for mastery of a situation that was anything but pleasant. Fortunately this did not continue for long; soon amends were made, and the row as soon forgotten, but not before many pleadings had been made by some of the elderly high lights who I perceived were holding a meeting in an adjoining room. Then our Capt., Mick Lonergan, appeared on the scene, and all were as quiet as lambs. I got over my first shock with flying colours, without any heart-breaks or headaches.

Our programme of training consisted of military drill, first-aid, signalling, scouting and map reading. We also indulged in physical and swedish drill. In addition one of our members taught, or tried to teach us shorthand. He was Dinny Gegan, a young man who, I

I was given to understand, was a clerk in the Land Commission. The outdoor exercises were the practical application of scouting, reconnaissance and tracking. In the winter we had route marches, in the summer camping out and manoeuvres.

The personnel of our Sluagh consisted of mainly working class boys, many of them apprentices to various trades, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, painting, printing etc. Our Capt., Mick Lonergan, seemed to be the best placed of the lot, and apparently living comfortably. He was so neatly, so tidily dressed, indeed he was outstanding, not so much because of his dress but because of his military bearing and generally good form and make up. He was a very active dashing type of character, especially when he was dressed in his neat and evenly fitting uniform - so distinctive, so elegant, so truly military. A fine genuine, manly type was Micheál. On or off parade he was still the same; or rather should I say, on parade he was the real officer type, who knew his work and knew how to get others to learn theirs. He was our senior in age, in position and presumably in intellectual gifts. Yet his general behaviour and conduct towards us never showed the strain of being high-headed or hard-hearted, but on the contrary consideration and regard of a very high order. Not only was he impressive, but he gave every example of kindness, consideration and nobility. His very presence too acted as a tonic to us, inspired us and made us feel a certain kinship to him.

Mick Lonergan was known to be a keen student of American military training, American army and American Boy Scout movement. Indeed, the impression one got of

him was that he modelled himself on those patterns. We could always feel proud to acclaim him as "Our Captain". Though older than most of us he had a heart as young and gay as any; yet one could ever look up to him because of his talents, and the interest he took in us, his boys, and also because of his eminently commanding ways. He set many examples, taught many lessons, in cleanliness, in discipline and attention to detail. His was a keen, practical, military mind that soon mastered the technique of drill. It was his pet hobby which he had learned from A to Z. Under his care one could easily advance in that onerous and exacting sphere of the "soldiers' trade".

We were soon to be accorded a new aspect of Lonhagan's inventive genius. That was to come about by the changing of our uniforms. It was contended at the time that he devised and arranged the new style. I have already described the old type; the new one was to be more striking still, and distinctly military in style and appearance - an absolute departure from the ordinary boy scout pattern! Mick was a clerk in Clery's drapery store in O'Connell St. There he <sup>dark green</sup> procured/hopsack material, made by Dripsey of Cork. This material was used to make the new tunic type shirt, to consist of a front panel breast-piece, on each side of which were placed a row of brass buttons, four to each row. At one side of this panel was the opening, button holes being provided there for the purpose. A high collar band that closed at the neck by means of hook and eye fasteners kept the collar which was attached to the shirt in position. Epaulettes on shoulders, long sleeves with tight wrist bands. This was the ordinary

Fianna uniform shirt worn by all ranks of our sluaigh; changes of the epaulettes and wrist cuffs alone denoted rank; squad leaders brown, section leaders red, Lieutenants blue, and so on. Our captain, of course, had a different shade of green for his tunic, which was even of different and finer material. It was through his efforts that a lady dressmaker living in Marlborough St. made the tunics, the charge being 1/6 each for making, excluding cost of material. We also were provided with a new style of hat - this time a flat rimmed Austrian green felt hat, of the Canadian Mounted Police type which cost us 1/6 each. There was no change in the style or make up of pants, though gradually the older and taller boys donned knickerbockers and knee breeches, any dark kind with long stockings. At later stage navy blue puttees replaced the stockings.

How proud we all were when in course of time, every one of us were so attired. Our Captain too was proud of us, proud of his handiwork, and we were prouder of him who in his new outfit was the ideal officer. Micheál was of medium stocky build, wide shouldered, who could look smart in any outfit. But he looked superb in this one which seemed to be well tailored, the tunic set off by a neat tailored pair of riding breeches, tan laced leggings and soft tan boots.

at that time

Among the boys who formed our Sluaigh Emmet/were the brothers Paddy and Garry Holohan, the brothers Joe, George, Eddie and Matty Connolly, Jack Poole, Mick Mackey, Tommy Meehan, Danny Gregan, Fred Holmes, the brothers Fran and Willie O'Brien, Peadar Browne, Peter Byrne, Tommy McGrane, Seán Burke, Jimmy Seville, Willie Kinsella and others.

Chapter 2.

A word here may not be amiss. Concerning the house in which our Sluaigh had quarters, No. 10 Beresford Place, which was then situated beside the loop line railway that traversed the space between Tara St. railway station across the river Liffey and the west side of the Custom House and continued its course to Amiens St. station. It was the headquarters of the Dockers' Union, Mr. Jim Larkin (senior) being its leader and spokesman. That house and the environs became the scene of great industrial activity, and many a bitter strike or lock-out was conducted from it. The industrial strife associated with the coal and quay workers was becoming of all too frequent occurrence. Mass meetings were often held in the square of the Custom House outside, while inside No. 10 organisation was going apace. Sometime in 1912 or 1913 this Trade Union transferred to more commodious premises, a large house at the corner of Eden Quay and Beresford Place. This house became "Liberty Hall", the headquarters of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Our Sluaigh had<sup>accordingly</sup> to vacate No. 10 and soon we secured accommodation in Liberty Hall. It must be understood that there was no connection between our Sluaigh and the Trades Union concerned, as our removing from one premises to another under their control might indicate. We were governed by our own Executive who had often held meetings in No. 10. Among those who attended same were Paul Gregan, an old man who always impressed me as being one of the Fenian men, his son George, as well as Eamon Martin, Bulmer Hobson, Countess de Markievicz, Padraic Ó Riain, Con Colbert, Liam Mellows, all of whom were elderly and yet all keen

promoters of the ideal for which the Fianna stood.

To revert back to the industrial situation at the time in question. The Dublin Port was becoming the arena wherein was fought many hard, bitter battles between the workers on the one hand and the employers on the other. Stoppages, strikes, lock-outs were becoming the order of the day. The culminating point was reached when, in 1913, an almost practical close down of industry in the port and a good part of the city occurred. What were termed the unskilled workers of Dublin were in the throes of an industrial upheaval, the biggest and most colossal port strike, port lock-out in Dublin industrial history. It was a fight to a finish by the organised Employers' Federation and the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. At the head of the former was Mr. William Martin Murphy, practically the wealthiest man in Ireland, a veritable king in industry, who was a strong power in the realms of the press, on railways and in many business enterprises, from whose source flowed the "Irish Independent" and "Evening Herald" newspapers, the Dublin United Tramways' Company, the Drapery establishment of Clery's and the Imperial Hotel, the Great Southern and Western Railway, to mention but a few of the many concerns upon which he bestowed patronage and support. On the other side of the picture was Mr. "Jim" Larkin (senior) who had come on the scene during the past few years, having spent a good deal of his life at the other side of the channel. 'Jim' spoke with a distinctly English accent and, in consequence, was often dubbed an Englishman and "English agitator". Neither one nor the other was true, however, judging by the proof of birth which he published in his paper "The

"Irish Worker" edited under his name. The "Irish Transport and General Workers' Union" was becoming a force in industrial life, and had thrown down the gauntlet of war, accepting battle on terms that were hardly favourable to them. The result of this was that the commercial life of Dublin was brought to an almost standstill while the two forces waged their war of attrition, a pitiless, merciless and vindictive class struggle, with many and varied ramifications and dangers.

It was this upheaval which gave birth to the "Irish Citizen Army", commanded by a Capt. White, an ex-British officer and son of a veteran hero. Capt. White became the Citizen Army drill master and officer. It had been organised to protect Labour meetings and Labour personnell against the often wanton and savage onslaughts perpetrated by the police authorities who sometimes used their power and their batons on slight provocation, and for small reason. Every strike, every lock-out, and every industrial stoppage of labour produced its quota of scenes and recurrent police intervention, attended by baton charges carried out against the strikers and working class people. The port of Dublin, "the old spot by the river" as the area surrounding the Custom House proper was called, was a regular cauldron from which emitted the blood-heat flame of social discontent that was to test and affect the Labour content in factory, workshop and office within and without Dublin city. How often had I witnessed the huge demonstrations, the "mass meetings" outside Liberty Hall or in the space of ground at the back of the Custom House; how often had I accompanied Larkin's band and other bands sympathetic to Labour through the city,

or to the workers' rendezvous, Croydon Park (so recently acquired by "Jim" Larkin as a recreational ground for members of his Union, and which had become the training centre for the Citizen Army) admired their drilling and their drill displays as their leader Capt. White, with the assistance of a few stalwart members who were ex-British Army soldiers, put them "through their paces". They may not have looked like soldiers with their ordinary working-class attire and carrying wooden broom handles, but one thing could be said in their favour - they were taking this drilling business seriously, and they were benefiting from their training and sense of discipline which was all to the good. Their presence at Labour demonstrations and rallies and meetings had a marvellous effect on the morale and general well-being of the working-class movement, for though only a small force it was exercising a power for good among a class of people who could easily be goaded or driven to extreme courses, not that the working class as a rule were anything but law-abiding or outside the influence of the law. Of the Irish Citizen Army it could in truth be said, it brought a new, an important lease of life to the Labour movement in Dublin, and brought out the best talents and characteristics in men who were fighting a warfare for better social conditions. The role which the Citizen Army played in that situation was one which embodied orderliness, discipline and restraint, and it is to their credit that the men of the Citizen Army were worthy of the trust imposed on them and obeyed to the full the orders of their commanding officer and N.C.O.s.

During this period I became attracted to the working class struggle; my leanings were toward Labour. I knew quite a number of men of the Citizen Army - some of our Fianna boys had gone over to that body when the Citizen Army formed their corps of Boy Scouts, such as three of the brothers Connolly, Jack Poole. I became a regular reader of the Labour weekly, "The Irish Worker", edited by Jim Larkin, which was a virile, pungent and outspoken organ of working class views and news. It carried a quotation from the writings of James Fintan Lalor which ran: -

"Who is it speaks of Defeat?

I tell you a cause like ours

Is greater than Defeat can know -

It is the Power of Powers".

I began studying the Labour movement, and often attended lectures dealing with social questions which were often given at the Ancient Concert Rooms in Brunswick St. (as it was then known, now Pearse St.) under the auspices of the Socialist Party of Ireland. Many of the Labour Leaders and Social workers spoke at these lectures, such personalities as James Connolly, Walter Carpenter, Tom Lynn and even an odd Nationalist like Thomas McDonagh. It was brimful of interest to me. There were other occasions too when one could allow full play to the enthusiasm to assimilate the labour and other problems of the day by listening to the almost unending flow of oratory which reverberated the Custom House square, under the loop line, where one could listen to the speeches of the different types of people who used this place for airing their respective views, such notabilities as Sheehy Skeffington, Seán Milroy, Bill Partridge, Jim

Larkin, Jim Connolly, the Countess Markeivicz, Thomas Foran, Miss Helena Maloney, Thomas Farren, Thomas Johnston, Thomas Lawlor, Bill O'Brien, Peter Larkin, P.F. Daly, Tom, Walter Carpenter, oratory on such subjects: as Womens' Suffrage strike meetings, Labour rallies, Nationalists' meetings, meetings of protest against the visit of England's King etc. Meetings that were held - meetings that were proclaimed, and some of them held, or tried to be held, in spite of the ordinances of the British law. They were such exciting times. On many occasions the police - the Dublin Metropolitan Police - came into conflict with the people assembled there and then pandemonium reigned supreme. How often had I witnessed the onrush of the police, as with drawn batons they made for the platform or the vehicle from which the speeches were made, the resultant stampede and scene of confusion as they tried to disperse the crowd or arrest the speakers. No kid glove methods were employed to give effect to their orders. The safest course for one to pursue in such a melee was to steer clear of the police and of their batons, had one the sense or intuition that they intended to intervene or stop such meetings.

Dublin city during the period of the Big Strike of 1913, was a "veritable hell". Passion and hate ran amuck. Even one's home was not a haven of peace or a place of safety. The wild orgies of destruction, the fierce baton charges, the sham battles indulged in by the strikers against the police and the stoning of the newsboys who backed up the strikers caused many a frightful fierce stampede, and in not a few places. The centre of the city was unhappily the arena of such outbursts, such displays. I experienced many a

thrill if not many an exciting moment, having been caught in many a baton charge or a sham battle in various places. One of these was on a Sunday. The police were in force in O'Connell St. - every corner of every street and laneway was guarded by police. Suddenly the cry was heard, "a baton charge", and immediately there was utter confusion. The whole street, or the people who were, unfortunately, traversing it, was set in motion. People ran hither and thither, the police on their heels chasing them. No time to ask questions, how or why this happened? I found myself, like other folk, running away from a group of policemen who were behind us wielding their batons. Discretion being the better part of valour, I made to get into one of the side streets and away from the excitement and, of course, the batons. But at every point that I tried to breach there was a sturdy posse of police in possession to drive us back into O'Connell St., and worst luck for some, into the line of fire of the police batons. The area around the Pillar was the worse place that day - even citizens on the footpath, regardless of age or sex, were belaboured by the police. In desperation after many fruitless efforts to get through, I, with some other people, made a dash for Prince's St. Oh, horror of horrors! We were met by an almost 'Charge of the Light Brigade' as the police bore down on us, while behind another set were thinning off our rear. During this scene of desolation, I had enough presence of mind to slip on to the footpath, mingled with the people there while the police had their hands full mopping up the people. The doctors and chemists were busy that day. The next day Alderman Dr. McWalter at the Corporation raised his voice in protestation

against the savage conduct of the police on the occasion in question.

Another exciting scene which I witnessed was a "set to" between the newsboys and a body of police. A posse of mounted Royal Irish Constabulary (members of whom had been drawn into Dublin for police duty) were lined up along the side walk between Elvery's and Chancellor's in Fr. O'Connell St. There were also groups of D.M.P. men about at various corners. Some of the newsboys got to teasing the horses and throw stones at the R.I.C. men. The D.M.P. men sought to drive off the newsboys, charging them across the street into Eden Quay. More stone throwing - this time against the pursuers, repeated charges by the police - the boys could not be thrown off. Viewing the scene from a safe distance - from the corner of Bachelor's Walk - I soon perceived that the group of policemen were sandwiched in between two groups of newsboys, who were giving them quite a rough time, until they were reinforced by another group who eventually drove the rear attackers away, thus extricating the first body of police from a delicate situation.

O'Connell St. was also the arena for another "hell let loose". Jim Larkin, the Labour leader, had arranged to hold a meeting in O'Connell St. on a certain Sunday. Dublin Castle intervened, and proclaimed the meeting. Larkin, however, protested that he would hold the meeting, and so he did, for he appeared rather mysteriously on the balcony of one of the windows of the Imperial Hotel over Clery's and spoke a few words. The police charged in and he was arrested. Prior to this date, arrangements had been made by Larkin's men to have an

outing and sports in the grounds of Croydon Park. I was present there that day and enjoyed the outing. Returning home in the evening, I heard stories of the scenes that had been enacted in O'Connell St. on that afternoon. Larkin was true to his boast that he would be in O'Connell St. dead or alive. The following day's paper gave lurid sensational accounts of the day's proceedings. That day became known as "Bloody Sunday" among the working class.

A public Inquiry was instituted by the Castle Authorities, as a result of the weight of public opinion expressed in not only Dublin and Ireland but also in England, protesting against the excesses of the police on that day. The powers-that-be, the British Government, had no other alternative but to comply to the demands for a sworn Inquiry, which if it secured nothing else threw light on the domineering and high-handed action of the police authorities in batoning everyone appearing in that street, without regard to age or class, or whether quietly passing through or assembled out of curiosity arising out of the occasion, many of whom were returning from Church Services at the time, only to find themselves caught in the police net from which there was little or no escape from the batons in the hands of the skilful and brutal minions of the British law.

In that wise the "Big Strike" of 1913 continued with unabated fury, each side endeavouring to bring the other to their knees.

### Chapter 3.

Our Sluaigh of the Fianna did not, however, remain long in Liberty Hall. We found premises in Nelson St. Hall, which led into the grounds attached to St. Joseph's Church, Berkeley St. We, in the meantime, had "lost" our Captain, Mick Lonergan, who had gone to the United States, his place being taken by Frank Reynolds. He in turn was later placed in charge of a new Sluaigh which had been formed in Sandwith St. and known as the Wolfe Tone Sluaigh. Garry Holohan was now our Captain.

An Céad Sluaigh (the first Sluaigh or Corps had headquarters at 34, Lower Camden St. It consisted of, among others, Padraig Ó Riain, Eamon and Christy Martin, Seamus Pouch, Harry Walpole, Fred Shelly, Andy Dunne, Liam Mellows, Barney Mellows, Joe Smith, Billy Christian, Eddie Murray, Tommy Crimmins, Tom O'Donoghue, Jack and Percy Reynolds, Theo and Leo Fitzgerald, Tony O'Carroll, George Campbell, Con Colbert etc. Some of the above were also members of the Fianna Pipers Band, such as Tommy Crimmins, Tony O'Carroll, Billy Christian, Tom O'Donoghue, as well as Jack Murphy and Joe Coffey.

Socials and ceilis were held in that hall, which was also the rallying point for most of the Fianna parades, demonstrations etc.

Con Colbert later took charge of a Sluaigh at Inchicore. Eamon Martin became Officer in Charge of Wolfe Tone Sluaigh at Sandwith St. at a later period. Leo Henderson was in charge of Fairview Sluaigh. Paddy Daly was Officer of Dollymount Sluaigh.

Garry Holohan later became Officer of a new Sluaigh formed at

Skippers' Alley, situated at the rere of the Franciscan Church, Merchants Quay. These premises, formerly a store, consisted of a large overhead loft which the Michael Dwyer Gaelic Club reconditioned, making it suitable for ceilis and other fixtures.

To throw a little light on our thoughts at the time or period! In 1912 or 1913 there was introduced into our Sluaigh a lethal weapon that was to "revolutionise" us - to wit a French Bayonet. Someone, I think it was Peter Byrne who lived in Marlboro Street and later joined St. John Ambulance Brigade, had the brain-wave that it would go well with our uniforms, make us look more military. Imitation being the highest form of flattery, the weapon was adopted as part of our equipment. Now we had side-arms! These bayonets were useful adjuncts to us in many ways, but chiefly they enhanced our status and made us feel like the real thing. We had no care that they were illegal by British standards; even the thought that they were such gave us a thrill. Strange how the minds of young rebels work! Even at this period many of us were thinking in terms of becoming armed, some did. We knew too that this was illegal, for the British law forbid Irishmen, or Irish boys, having or bearing arms except in the service of the Crown. A few of us - to be precise, Peadar Browne, Tommy McGrane and myself, set about procuring revolvers. Peadar informed us one night that everything was alright, that Mr. James Whelan who carried on a Sports Outfitters, Tobacconist and Newsagency business in Upper Ormond Quay had agreed to secure same and was willing to accept from each of us payment at the rate of a shilling per week, each revolver cost fifteen shillings. So far so good. The three revolvers arrived in due

course - short 38 calibre 5 cylinder revolvers - which were big enough for us with a double fill of ammunition to fit. Apparently we were moving up the line!

The Fianna was making headway in other directions. The uniform adopted by our Sluaigh had not been accepted by the other Sluaighs, some of whom clung to the kilts, particularly an Céad Sluaigh, Camden St. As time went on, however, our style was in whole or in part adopted by most of the other branches. Our time too was well spent in camping during week-ends in the summer, and also attending aeridheachtanna, and during the winter months we participated in several anniversary processions, one of which was to Glasnevin in honour of the Manchester Martyrs. Our annual pilgrimage to Wolfe Tone's grave at Bodenstown was to us an event of first rate importance. The promoters of the pilgrimage, The Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee, provided us with free travel facilities. We always sought to make a "gallant show" in the march from Sallins to the graveyard. Such pilgrimages were held, and succeeded in keeping the national spirit alive. Facility was afforded us to attend at the Manchester Martyrs and Emmet Commemoration Concerts under the auspices of the same body, the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee, where we sometimes acted as stewards or as guests, also the several functions and rallies organised by the Sinn Féin organisation, including Aonach na Nodlaig which was sponsored for the purpose of the Irish Industrial Revival and to encourage support for goods of Irish manufacture. The Aonach - as it became known to us - was held a short period before Christmas-time in the Rotunda or Mansion House; all classes of goods were on exhibition and for sale or for

booking orders, from the modest Irish manufactured Christmas cards to the aeroplane. Apropos of the latter, it may be interesting to recall that at one of the Aonachs there was displayed an aeroplane made by a Mr. Ferguson. Many visitors to these early exhibits became victims of the Christmas card craze, and the fact that the cards were so strikingly and artistically Irish went a long way to encourage the idea. Works of art, craftsmanship and manufacture of various ranges and stages were lavishly displayed. Aonach na Nodlaig, from its humble beginnings became a regular institution which people of national spirit looked forward to. It became, also, congenial rendezvous for those who were nationally minded as well as those who had the interest of the Irish Industrial Revival at heart. It also afforded the occasion for meeting fellow workers in the Irish Ireland cause.

Then again our services were often requested to participate in a band parade through the streets of Dublin to advertise some function or event of national concern. In this we often accompanied St. Laurence O'Toole Pipers Band. Besides these engagements we attended inaugural meetings of new Sluaghthe - one had been formed in Sandwith St., another in Dollymount, one in Emmet Hall, Inchicore, at Glenageary and Cullenswood, Ranelagh. The Dublin Mountains was generally the venue for our camp - at Balally and Ticknock where the Countess Markevicz owned a cottage; at Glendue, Kilmashogue, the Hell-fire Club, and sometimes the north side at Malahide or Baldoyle. Our main camping spot was at St. Enda's, Rathfarnham, whose headmaster Padraic Pearse we learned was a great friend of the Fianna.

In the grounds of the Hermitage, as it was generally described, we loved to wander and muse on the man, Robert Emmet, and his lover Sarah Curran. Even many of our days' outings brought us there when we would spend many happy hours at the flowing brook at the back of that picturesque house. We often met Padraic and Willie Pearse, Con Colbert, Thomas McDonagh and the boys attending the College during our visits to St. Enda's.

In our days' route march we often took in many of those places, and march home late at night after covering ten or fifteen miles. These marches gave us great scope for exercising our limbs and our lungs. More often they provided the opportunity to sing the songs of the Gael, as swinging in martial tread we let our voices ring, sometimes to the accompaniment of mouth organ, bagpipe or even the modest tin whistle. In addition to these we had a bugle band established in our sluaigh. Particular care was taken that only songs of an Irish and national character would be rendered. Music hall songs or those which might, even in the slightest way, be termed English were taboo. Such a one as -

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again  
Hello! Hello! Hello, Hello, Hello,  
Here we are etc. etc."

might be termed silly, but at least they were not controversial. Then again

"We all marched up the hill  
and we all marched down again".

But the one song which none of us would term offensive ran something like this:

"One man and a dog went to mow a meadow,  
 One man and a dog - went - to mow - a meadow",  
 and making the necessary inflections, pauses, and  
 repetitions to bring the number of men and dogs up to  
 any given number. I have often known this to have been  
 continued for a mile or more of a country road as a kind  
 of endurance test or vocal competition. Often, however,  
 more serious songs were sung on the march: "Step  
 Together", "Clare's Dragoons", "The Bold Fenian Men",  
 "Ireland Boys Hurrah", etc.

The first time I heard the strains of "The  
 Soldier's Song" was sometime in 1913 or 1914, when we  
 were marching on the mountains. This song became our  
 principal marching song:

"Soldiers are we! Whose lives are pledged  
 to Ireland,  
 Some have come from the land beyond the waves.  
 Sworn to be free etc".

It also became our favourite song at concerts, céillis  
 and aeridheachtanna. Another song that came into  
 prominence with us was:

"Oró sé do bheatha bhaile,  
 Oró sé do bheatha bhaile,  
 Oró sé do bheatha bhaile  
 Anois ar theacht an t-Samraidh."

A favourite song of ours was "The Dawning of the Day",  
 the author Brian O'Higgins, and "Twenty men from Dublin  
 Town", not to forget our own "Marching Song of the  
 Fianna" by the same author, the first lines of which  
 ran: -

"Hark to the tramp of the young guards of Éireann,  
 Firm is each footstep; erect is each hand.  
 Soldiers of Freedom! unfearing and eager  
 To follow the teaching of our hero's dead.

Chorus

On for Freedom na Fianna Éireann,  
 Set we our faces to the dawning day,  
 The day in our own land when strength and daring,  
 Shall end for evermore the Saxon sway".

Evidence was not wanting that we were anything but a national movement. We carried out socials and céilís at which nothing but Irish songs and dances were permitted, and afforded us opportunities of spreading the good work anear and afar, by gaining friends among even those older than ourselves, and among the cailíní. Some such friends were men like Mr. Buggy, Mr. Heffernan, Mr. Seamus McGowan of Drumcondra Sluaigh, Mr. Sutton, Mr. Devereux, the Fenian veteran Tom Clarke, Seán <sup>The O'Rahilly</sup> McDermott and many of Madame's lady friends and co-workers in the National and Suffragette movements. We received in return generous patronage and help in the many functions run for the benefit of the Fianna organisation. Madame, who stood out as it were alone in rank and prestige, was our main support. Whatever our shortcomings in worldly wealth or influence were amply counter-balanced by the quality and value of friendships made and reciprocated. We were making a deep impression on the national consciousness. Even British newspapers, and the British House of Commons, were paying us attention, not, of course, for our good, but to prove that our Fianna organisation was disloyal and anti-British, which forsooth it was, and we never claimed it

to be otherwise and were inordinately proud of the fact. These papers, and a few British military personages, were interested in trying to get the British government to suppress us, and for the sole reason that we were rivalling the Baden Powell Scout organisation in Ireland and alarmed that the Fianna was making rapid headway.

Perhaps I ought at this stage to make reference to the importance of a signal service rendered by the Fianna in the sphere of propagation, sedition and disaffection - or to be more exact the dissemination of Republican and Separatist doctrines. This was by way of rendering assistance in the dispatch and sale of "Irish Freedom", edited by Seán McDermott. The distribution office was at No. 6 Findlater Place. "Irish Freedom" was published monthly. It gave extensive space to the Fianna, reporting on its activities and publishing articles in Signalling, First-Aid, Camping, Map reading etc., Headquarters and Sluaight reports. We in turn came to look on it as a kind of official organ. This put us on a new plane. It revolutionised our movement which advanced with the spread of this paper throughout the country - new branches were springing up in various parts of Ireland. "Irish Freedom" paper was now a couple of years in existence (it was <sup>I think</sup> started sometime in 1911). I had been a constant reader from its first number, and on one occasion had entered a competition conducted by the paper under some slick title as a "Young People's Corner" for an essay on an address to the King of England. (By the same token, George V had about this time been crowned King of England and plans were being made for his Irish visit). I was, however, highly commended for

my attempt.

"Irish Freedom" had, of course, a stormy passage due to its anti-British and anti-Redmondite policy. It preached Republicanism, the Republicanism of Tone and Emmet - the doctrines of the men of '98, '48 and '67, the doctrine that the only cure for Irish ills, the undoing of the conquest of Ireland by England was by recourse to the policy of Separatism and armed revolt. It was consistently detrimentally opposed to the policy of the Irish Parliamentary Party as led by Mr. John Redmond, not so much because of their advocacy of Home Rule as that they were becoming Imperialists and were pandering too much to English parties and English statesmen. It spared neither them nor the British administrators in Ireland.

This was a bold policy to pursue at a time when Redmond and the Redmondite party were in the ascendancy, at a time when the whole country or that vast majority of the politically minded Irish people were being told and believed that Home Rule for Ireland would be secured at a "no far distant date" - "sooner perhaps than the most sanguine could believe". Hopes on that score were indeed very high. Who could dare question the propriety, the policy, the utterances of "the Party" who professed love for Ireland and sought to obtain from an unwilling England a measure of native government. Who could sit in judgement to accuse or condemn the Party because it offered loyalty to the Empire and were prepared to accept Home Rule as a final settlement of the Irish question? None other than the man who edited and the men who promoted the printing of this paper "Irish Freedom". A bold policy indeed, and one

that was bound to cause a certain amount of flutterings and bring on them not only the curses of the Parliamentarians but also the undisguised wrath of the Castle authorities and British government in Ireland.

"Irish Freedom" pursued a strong, virile, aggressive course, aimed at weakening the influence of the Redmondite Party and for the submersion of the British rule and authority in Ireland. It hit hard, dealt blows against both the Parliamentary Party and the British Government. It gave no quarter, it sought none. Even its posters portrayed a note of defiance and of hostility to the British administration; one of these "Damn your concessions, England", and "an open letter to King George V" printed at the time of the latter's visit to Dublin 1912 or 1913, which were the titles of leading articles, could easily have led to its suppression and jail for its editors. The British government did nothing of the kind. "Irish Freedom" was permitted to go its way in comparative peace although it preached "not peace, but the sword". But Dublin Castle sought other ways for curbing the activities of "Irish Freedom"-by the medium of the Post Office the circulation was interfered with. Then again the office in 6 Findlater's Place, now Cathal Brugha St. was under surveillance of the detective force, well posted and quite alert. These petty annoyances did not, however, prevent the total circulation of the paper, but they created certain difficulties which had to be faced and overcome if the paper was to survive. Possibly many efforts were made in the direction to keep it going, among them the utilization of a few of us members of the Fianna to help in the folding and posting

of bundles of papers for country dispatch. A group of us were given a number of copies to post in various parts of the city. We were trusted and, apparently, trustworthy.

#### Chapter 4.

As already mentioned our route marches on the Sundays took us to various places, principally the Dublin Mountains. These meant full days' outings, starting early in the morning and finishing late at night. We never used trams or other modes of travelling on our way out, and only on rare occasions on the return journey. Sometimes when camping at Ticknock we might avail of the train from Harcourt St. Station to Dundrum and vice versa, but on days set aside for outings unless we had an uncommonly strenuous time we would depend on "shanks' mare". Distance seldom upset us as we boasted the fact that we were young and active. Besides we were always sure of a halt on the way for refreshments and a rest of sorts. Rathfarnham and Dundrum were deemed to be two such places. We had what we would call half-way houses in both villages - shops where we could buy minerals, sweets and maybe cakes. Oh! The joy of spending our few coppers on minerals etc. in Keeley's at Rathfarnham or other shops which we were wont to frequent at Dundrum. Then "falling in" after our "tuck in" or appetiser we would be safe for another few miles. When reaching Glendue, Kilmashogue, Bohernabreena, The Pine Forest, Hell Fire Club or Ticknock, our favour haunts, we set ourselves the task of lighting fires and, brewing tea, enjoyed an alfresco meal. This over we engaged in many exercises, climbing

the mountains, scouting, tracking etc. After a few hours spent in this fashion we would reform and prepare for the return journey. Now for the real thrill, perhaps the most exciting and truly invigorating part of the outing, down hill. It was poetry, music, romance to the soul marching down the mountainside in the dusk of a fine summer evening, our steady tramp, tramp, tramp breaking the peace and quietude of the countryside. Below us, nestled in a hollow, our own beloved Dublin reflected in the red or crimson glow of the setting sun shining out in splendour; away to the east the lovely entrancing <sup>Dublin</sup> bay sentinelled by the lovely Hill of Howth and the even lovelier Wicklow Mountains. What a pleasing and engrossing picture for eyes to feast on, a panorama of beauty, a landscape of fine art and glowing charm - Dublin and its environs. A trained eye could easily discern the different landmarks, Kingstown (now Dunlaoghaire) harbour, the gateway to Dublin, the port of Dublin flanked on the one side by Clontarf and Sutton and on the other by Merrion and Blackrock; to the west the great expanse of woods, pastured lands and snug looking villages, with the fifteen acres situated in the Phoenix Park looking more like a huge billiard table. In the city itself one could easily pick out the most imposing, dominating building, the Custom House, Phibsborough Church, the Augustinian Church in Thomas St. Kilmainham Jail, the Four Courts, Mountjoy Prison, and nearer Rathmines Town Hall, the Pro Cathedral, these and a hundred other sights all looking their best in the setting which nature provides.

But even as nice, as captivating a sight was to be seen in the twilight; Dublin lighted, as it were, by a million lamps. It was enough to put one to silence or

into an ecstasy of wonder and delight. Seen from the mountains, this most enthralling and bewitching scene, is more reminiscent of a scene from the medieval places! Behold the spectacle! Dublin, the town of the hurdles, (Ye city of bellowing slaves), the Dublin of the heroic mould, the citadel of foreign domination, the capital of a brave historic nation looked majestic, resplendent in perspective. Over the city appeared as it were a cloud of light, a soft bright glow, and radiating from it and round, in various angles and forms, little dots of light that stretched in many directions, some to link up with others placed in residential areas, or coming to an abrupt halt were lost to view. East to west, north to south and vice versa, a similar picture painted itself. The sight was most impressive from the line running east to west or west to east. From the former point one could perceive the distant Bailey lighthouse at Ben Éadair (Howth) sending out its beams of light in regular sequence across and around Dublin Bay supported by the Poolbeg and the Kingstown (Dunlaoghaire) and other lighthouses in the near or distant spaces, flicking and flashing their signals of warning to the mariners of the sea and sending reflections across and about the shimmering waves. Look at the Hill of Howth (Ben Éadair) the little specks of light that can be just barely be seen resembling glow worm in the darkness, and from them follow the line westward through Sutton, Dollymount, Clontarf, reflecting on the waters below, and into Fairview where it gets lost in the greater volume that converges and mingles with the more dense array of illuminating lighting peculiar to the city, or taking the line from Kingstown (Dunlaoghaire) Harbour, or beyond towards Killiney, follow the coastline citywards and you

behold a sight equally enchanting and like the other spectacle the line merges into the greater density of light of the city. Continue a straight course along any of those points north or south of Anna Liffey towards the Phoenix Park and Inchicore and even a slight distance beyond each and you will readily admit to have witnessed a brilliant, a beautiful sight, as taking in the great expanse of water which is Dublin Bay and the landmarks surrounding it you have followed a stretch of the environs of Dublin and of Dublin itself split in half by her river Liffey. Could words describe the grandeur, the truly magnificence of that fairy-like illumination? How often had I viewed this same scene from the mountain top in daylight and had often seen our beloved Dublin even on a bright sunny summer day shrouded in an almost pall of smoke, sometimes looking dark and dismal, forbidding, if not entirely foreboding, and other times seeming to be clear, inviting and beautiful.

Who could not be impressed by such a scene, or variety of scenes, of the Dublin of 1912 and 1913 - the Dublin by lamplight, to be exact, the Dublin of gaslight and incandescent burners which threw a soft, gentle glow of light, limited in scope and range and within a short compass. The whole spectre when seen from a distance, and especially from high altitude, resembled a scene in Fairyland - an unbelievable spectacle to us who could never picture our Dublin in such romantic light. Yet there it was before us freely open to view, dimmed only by the dim, dark spaces which here and there broke the trail of light travelling towards us from the city to the miles and miles of space that separated us from it. There was something spectacular, elevating and romantic after all about a Dublin that was illuminated at

at nightfall. The route march home on such occasions, on any occasion for that matter, was ever a treat and always made us feel happy.

We had other happy moments too. The annual Árd Fheis or Convention was a big event in our lives. Then we would meet boys from various parts of Ireland and have our big "pow-wow" in the Mansion House, Dawson St. Each sluaigh sent its delegate or delegates, and on each occasion our photograph was taken by the reputable Keogh's of Dorset St. In the night time a céilidhe or reception would be held. One of the best of these was held in Madame Markievicz's house, Surrey House, Leinster Road, Rathmines, another in the Plasterer's Hall, Essex St. and Banba Hall, 20 Parnell Square. These were great occasions for us and our girl friends. At one session of the Árd Fheis a proposal was put forward to include girls into the Fianna. It emanated from the Belfast Fiannaidhthe. Already it seems there was such a branch in existence there. The proposal was, however, defeated. A strange feature of it was that some members of the girls' branch visited Dublin, were entertained by or with the Fianna here, even camped out at such a place as Balally, and Ina Ticknock. Two of these were Nora/Connolly, daughter of James Connolly, the Labour leader. There were two or three other girls there as well.

In one of the official photographs taken in 1913, appears the Countess Markievicz, Liam Mellows, Bulmer Hobson, Eamon Martin, Con Colbert, Seamus McGowan, Gerry and Paddy Holohan, the writer etc.

Another photograph taken at the Annual Árd Fheis in 1914 showed a large group including the Countess

Markievicz, Pádraig Ó Riain (our General Secretary), Eamon Martin and his brother Christy, Seán Heuston, Barney Mellows, Paddy and Gerry Holohan, Percy Reynolds and his brother Jack, Mr. Sutton, Joe Robinson, Peadar Brown, Tommy McGrane, Tommy Grimmins, Thos. O'Donoghue, Willie Christian, myself, Seán Burke, Willie Christian, Dan MacArt, Andy Dunne, Ross Mahon, delegates from Limerick, Cork, Wexford, Belfast, Glasgow. Liam Mellows was absent owing to his being on Fianna and Volunteer organising in the country.

At this Árd Fheis Madame Markievicz made one truly magnanimous gesture - she offered help to any member of the Fianna who might be in trouble or need of any kind. She even offered the hospitality of her home, or financial assistance should be availed of. Madame's gesture was very much appreciated by all. Only one possessing a big generous heart and a kind nature could pay us such wonderful attention and show such grand generosity. As it was her home was ever open to "the boys" - "her boys" as she so proudly called them. She lavished on them much of the world's goods, and better than all, consideration, a kindly, generous interest in their affairs. She was known to help the sick, to give financial assistance to the needy, to render advice and help to the talented. Nothing was too big or too small for her attention and care. She loved "her boys" - boasted of it. Her happiest moments were when she was showering her solicitude on one of our sick members or encouraging Andy Dunne, who had a sweet, soft tenor voice, to take lessons in singing. She even wrote songs for him. And was she not happy in her cottage at Balally on occasions when the Fianna shared

her hospitality to camp there! Balally, below the Three Rock mountains, the place for laughter, gaiety and happy hours well spent. But one day during the summer of 1913 a sad tragedy occurred there, in the quarry a little distance above. A boy, one of the locals by name Doyle, swimming there got into difficulties. The alarm for help was raised. Immediately we went running up the mountain to the spot. After frantic strenuous efforts to save him, in which the Fianna boys Joe Smith, Harry Walpole, Eddie Murray and Tommy Crimmins so nobly participated, Tommy Crimmins after labouring for three hours succeeded in bringing Doyle's body to the surface. Crimmins was acclaimed the hero of the day and Madame Markievicz presented him with a testimonial for his good deed. All the above boys were members of An Céad Sluaigh.

Nineteen thirteen saw the Fianna bristling with big business. We were getting strong numerically and becoming better trained. Our week-end camps were being made occasions for training purposes. We even carried out a system of posting of guards night and day. We had, too, the usual Sunday Church parade, the inspection beforehand and the march to the nearest church. Our own Bugle band or an odd Fianna Pipers' Band would help us on the way. When camping at Ticknock we generally marched to Dundrum - sometimes to Sandyford - for Mass. Madame, though not of our religious persuasion, not infrequently accompanied us when she was staying at Ticknock. Some of us young people often wondered at her doing so. Madame was in our minds a truly strange lady. Some of us might think she was forward - even her smoking in our presence often shocked some who themselves thought no lady should smoke, at

least not in public. Sometimes some of the boys were not even pleased at her wearing our uniform tunic. She generally walked beside us and not in the ranks. Yet withal she was a truly unique, distinctive personality, full of energy, talented, brimming over with enthusiasm for the Fianna idea. Even Bulmer Hobson walked beside us too, and he was a man!

### Chapter 5.

The Irish National Volunteers were inaugurated at a public meeting of Dublin citizens in the Rotunda Rink, Dublin, in November 1913. The Fianna acted as stewards that night. The hall, spacious as it was, was packed to capacity. The greatest enthusiasm was recorded. An attempt, however, by a section of Labour supporters to interfere with the meeting created much excitement. They apparently took exception to one of the speakers, Laurence Kettle, because of his so-called anti-Labour sentiments or tendencies. The din at times was terrific, which bewildered and amazed not a few of the many thousands present. It caused much speculation as to the cause of this sudden wanton outburst. To those of us Fianna and a group of men who were acting as marshals of the huge throng, the disturbance came as a great surprise. At first it was thought that some anti-national element was seeking to break up the meeting. One could not expect opposition from any other quarter. When, however, the word went round that it was the "Labour crowd" who were demonstrating, and that the demonstration was directed against one or two individuals on the platform, some little relief came to the assembled throng, but not before the interrupters had made their protests and departed. The meeting

continued to the end, the large concourse of people acclaiming the formation of an Irish National Volunteer Force. Thousands of men enrolled that night and specified drill halls arranged in various districts where men were advised to take up drilling. I joined a Company that drilled in the Gaelic League Headquarters 25 Parnell Square but did not continue membership, rather I remained with Fianna.

All shades of national opinion were represented at this meeting, Parliamentarians, anti-Parliamentarians, Home Rulers, Republicans, United Irish Leagues, Separatists, Gaelic Leaguers and Sinn Féiners. The rumpus caused by the group of Labour supporters did not seem to have any appreciable effect on the gathering in so far as to interfere with the purpose for which the meeting was convened. Nobody, of course, could have foreseen or anticipated that any opposition would be forthcoming from Labour. To say that this outburst represented the true mind and opinions of the overwhelming body of Trade Unionists would be stressing the point very far indeed. The fact emerged, however, that the Volunteer movement became from this moment a reality; that the men of Dublin, consisting of all classes, of all denominations and grades, had enthusiastically acclaimed its birth.

The Fianna, too, welcomed the institution of the Irish National Volunteer Force and gave it every assistance from the beginning, playing a particularly useful and energetic part in its training and growth. Its help was invaluable at the time. Many Fianna officers and members became drill instructors, first-aid and signalling instructors, some joined units of the

Volunteer Force. This was as it should be. The Volunteer Forces needed their help in these spheres. True there were many men who linked up with the Volunteers who had service in the British Army. Many of them were utilised as instructors. Some of them even were created officers of units in the early stages.

The Fianna had already reached a high standard of efficiency and was progressing by leaps and bounds. It was able to seize this opportunity of giving practical help to the Volunteers. Particularly was this so in the Dublin area. At a later stage Fianna officers/trained units of the women's section, the Cumann na mBan. Volunteer Headquarters paid the Fianna high praise and patronage. Many Volunteer officers in turn showed appreciation, and in many instances collaborated with Fianna personnel. The Fianna during this time retained its own individual and distinctive status; were at one with the purpose, aim and necessity of the Volunteers. It was complimentary to note that most of the Volunteer Executive were already friends of the Fianna and were alive to the value and quality of the assistance that the Fianna could render in the situation. But that depended on the Volunteers being a truly national force. This the Fianna possessed from the beginning. The Volunteers aimed to "defend the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland". We may not have had any sound reason for doubting the sincerity of the large number of men that flocked into the Volunteer movement at the time. But this we knew they were a mixture. The political situation at the time was responsible, we knew, for some of them taking kindly to Volunteers. Many people were disgusted with the dilly-dally methods

of the British Government in not putting the Home Rule Bill into operation; some joined the Volunteers out of disgust of Parliamentary procedure; many by way of protest against the actions of the Orangemen in forming an Ulster Volunteer Force against Home Rule; and quite a few who availed of the existence of the Ulster Volunteers to create a Nationalist Armed Force. All knew, however, that the only thing that counted at the time was to build up a real live Nationalist Volunteer Force.

Already the Carsonites and the Ulster Volunteers had put the established ban aside, even challenged ordinary British law and got away with it. That challenge, instead of being met by the application of the full rigours of the British law, was connived at, nay condoned by high personages of the Crown. Not only that, it received quite an amount of approval and blessing from political parties in England, and even members of the British Cabinet and Bar, some of whom were vociferous in their opposition to Home Rule and in praise of the establishment of "Carson's Volunteers". These Volunteers had already used the threat - "that Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right"; and the solemn determination which gave rise to the Orange Government to resist Home Rule produced a situation which put the British Government into a dilemma - with only the choice of granting Home Rule to Ireland, as it was pledged to do, against the wishes, the threats and the guns of the Orangemen, or else acquiescing to these same wishes, threats and guns again of the Orangemen, to turn somersault even against better judgement, most solemn undertakings and oft repeated promises to refuse to put the Home Rule Bill into

operation. It looked at the time that the latter course would be adopted by the British Government, thanks to the Carsonites, who by their drilling and possession of arms bluffed the British Government into adopting this weak kneed policy.

It can be readily understood that the Irish Volunteer movement sprung up at a most propitious time and under extremely grave circumstances. A new factor entered into what was then the "Irish situation". Special significance could be readily given and recorded to the fact that for the first time in over a hundred years, Irish citizens, whether as Unionists in the north or as Nationalists in the north, south, east and west of Ireland, were learning the "soldier's trade", drilling and arming in broad daylight without let or hindrance of the British administration of Ireland. The real novelty in the situation was that heretofore only people who took the "Saxon Shilling" could be soldiers or practise soldiering. Undoubtedly the Orangeman, knowing his rights and obligations under the British Constitution, had given a new headline to Nationalist Ireland and, incidentally, placed the one Flag, one King and one Empire - the British Constitution and British Government into a sorry mess. However, the situation was tackled by the British Government, certain repercussions were bound to be felt, not only in Ireland but also wherever Irish people were domiciled. The British Government would find it hard to appease and placate the Irish "beyond the seas", mainly the multitudinous groups and those of Irish extraction in the United States of America, not to mention in the British Colonies, and, nearer home, in

England, Scotland and Wales, who, feeling that Ireland was being cheated out of Irish self-government were showing signs of active resentment. The idea of volunteering had stirred the imagination of quite a large section of Nationalist opinion; had opened up a new vista and created a new element of danger to the British Government, the full significance of which could hardly be gauged, or even conceived, at least on the surface. A new force was coming into the realm of Irish politics! In the presence of the two Volunteer forces - the Ulster and the Irish National Volunteer Forces - what could, what would the British Government do? It had the power, and the machinery of the law, to suppress either or both of them. The strange inexplicable thing was that the law - British law - did not take such a course. The failure to suppress the Ulster Volunteer Force, who were now a considerable time in existence, breaking the law by drilling and arming and showing "dragon's teeth", could be deemed to be a fair indication of the impotence and difficulties of the forces of the British law and order. Even one of the most responsible spokesmen of the Ulster Volunteer Force and of the Ulster Orangemen, and a lawyer of great repute, Sir Edward Carson, K.C., had, in referring to the course which his Ulster Volunteers had taken, and were taking, openly and in the face of British Constitutional law, declared, "there are illegalities which are not crimes".

No one could question Sir Edward's great loyalty to the British Crown. No one could say that he was illegal, that he was a man who would willingly consent to breaking British law, which was bread and butter to

him; who even could question the loyalty of the many notable Lords and distinguished personages, English as well as Irish, or the loyalty of myriads of officers of the Crown, from Field-m Marshals to Subalterns, Privy Councillors, King's Counsellors, Solicitors, Naval Officers, who were giving personal active support, patronage and training to Sir Edward Carson's men. Having failed to take action against those people and the movement they encouraged and sponsored, the British Government showed supineness and weakness. The advent of the Irish Volunteers did not improve matters or solve the problems with which the British Government was faced. But it did nothing, or next to nothing, to curb the actions of the Ulster Volunteers.

The reverse was the case in relations between the British Government and the Irish Volunteers. Almost as soon as the Irish Volunteers were launched the British Government put on an Arms Embargo proclaiming the importation of arms into Ireland. This could have only one meaning - that the British Government did not want Nationalist Ireland to be drilled and armed, certainly not armed. It caused Irishmen to realise that the British Government, while permitting the existence, the drilling and armed displays of the Orangemen, did not consent to the formation of the Irish Volunteers. The fact that there were "thinking Irishmen" in Ireland at the time was evidenced by the writings and writers of "Irish Freedom". In its issue of December 1913 the writer under the title "from a Hermitage" put forth the following graphic points:

".... But modern Irishmen with eyes open have allowed themselves to be deprived of their manhood;

and many of them have reached the terrible depth of degradation in which a man will boast of his manliness, for in suffering ourselves to be disarmed, in acquiescing in a perpetual disarmament, in neglecting every chance of arming, in sneering (as all Nationalists do now) at those who have taken arms, we in effect abrogate our manhood. Unable to exercise man's rights, we do not deserve man's privileges. We are in a strict sense, not fit for freedom; and freedom we shall never attain.

.... and I know of no other way than the way of the sword; history records no other, reason and experience suggest no other, ....

....I regard the armed Orangemen of the north-east Ulster as potentially the most useful body of citizens Ireland possesses. In fact they are the only citizens Ireland does possess at the moment; the rest of us for the most part do not count...."

".... I do not content myself with saying in general terms that the Irish should arm. I say to each one of you who read this that it is your duty to arm.

.... If you cannot arm otherwise than by joining Carson's Volunteers, join Carson's Volunteers. But you can, for instance, start Volunteers of your own".

By way of resumé, "Irish Freedom", which had during the past few years been preaching for a more virile, a more manly policy than passing pious resolutions, and talking politics and clap-trap, was in the forefront of the new Volunteer movement. Even the writer of the above

anticipated the formation of that movement. In June 1913 he wrote in the same paper:

"This generation of Irishmen will be called upon in the future to make a very passionate assertion of nationality. The form in which that assertion shall be made must depend on many things, more especially upon the passage or non-passage of the Home Rule Bill. In the meantime there is need to be vigilant.  
 .....as long as Ireland is unfree the only honourable attitude for Irishmen and Irishwomen is an attitude of revolt. It is base for us to be quiescent",

and in the next month's (July 1913) issue he repeats the point of "asserting our Nationality" and then goes on:

"....the assertion must be made in other ways; I believe that if we who hold the full national faith have but the courage to step forward we shall succeed more easily than most people suppose in gaining the people's adhesion to our ideals and our methods - lesser ideals having proved unattainable and wiser methods more foolish".

Of the Orangemen, the writer of "From a Hermitage" in November 1913 ("Irish Freedom") declared: -

"Personally I think the Orangeman with a rifle a much less ridiculous figure than the Nationalist without a rifle; and the Orangeman who can fire a gun will certainly count for more in the end than the Nationalist who can do nothing cleverly than make a pun. The superceded Italian rifles which the Orangemen have imported may not be very dangerous weapons, but at least they are more

dangerous weapons, but at least they are more dangerous than epigrams..."

"Sir Edward Carson is a lawyer with a price".

"The rifles are bound to be useful some day. At the worst they may hasten Sir Edward Carson's final exit from Ulster; at the best they may crack outside Dublin Castle. The Editor of "Sinn Féin" wrote the other day that when the Orangemen fire upon the King of England's troops it will become the duty of every Nationalist of Ireland to join them; there is a deal of wisdom in the thought as well as a deal of humour, or negotiations might be opened with the Orangemen on these lines; You are erecting a Provisional Government of Ulster - make it a Provisional Government of Ireland and we will recognise and obey it....

"It is unquestionable that Sir Edward's Provisional Government would govern Ireland better than she has been governed by the English Cabinet; at any rate it could not govern her worse. Any six Irishmen would be a better government of Ireland than the English Cabinet has been....

...."The case might be put thus. Hitherto England has governed Ireland through the Orange Lodges; she now proposes to govern Ireland through the A.O.H. You object; so do we. Why not unite and get rid of the English? They are the real difficulty; their presence have the real incongruity".

In "Irish Freedom" of January 1914 the same writer has this to say:

"It has penetrated to this quiet place that some

of the young men of Ireland have banded themselves together under the noble name of Irish Volunteers with the intent to arm in their country's service. I am inclined to doubt the rumour. It has an air of inherent improbability. I could have believed such a report of any generation of young Irishmen of which I have read; but of the generation of young Irishmen that I have known I hesitate to believe it.....

The improbability is increased when I come to examine the details of the report. Thus a provisional committee including University professors, schoolmasters, solicitors, barristers, journalists, aldermen, public servants, commercial men and gentlemen of leisure, is spoken of....

....Consider the dislocating effect of such a movement. In the first place it would make Home Rule now about to be abandoned in deference to armed Ulster, almost a certainty; in a second place, should Home Rule miscarry it would give us a policy to fall back upon...."

In February the same writer wrote thus:

"...It would appear that the impossible has happened... and that the young men of Ireland are learning again the noble trade of arms. They had almost forgotten that it was a noble trade..... The fate of the Irish movement in our time will very likely be determined largely by the way in which the Volunteer movement develops:...."

An article by Professor Eoin MacNeill in an *Claidheamh Soluis*, the official organ of the Gaelic League, under the caption "The North Began" made a plea for the formation of Irish Volunteers. Pádraic Pearse in a speech at New York in March 1914 put the case thus:

"They had given the Irish faction, which is used as a cats-paw for one of the English parties, two years to organise and arm against that Home Rule Bill which they profess themselves so anxious to pass; to the Nationalists of Ireland they did not give two weeks".

and then going on to praise the spirit of the Irish Volunteers he said: -

"I think I can speak for the young men of the Volunteers. So far, they have no programme beyond learning the trade of arms; a trade which no man of Ireland could learn unless he took the English shilling. It is a good programme; and we may well commit the future of Ireland to the keeping of the Volunteers. I think I can speak for a younger generation still; for some of the young men that are entering the National University, for my own pupils of St. Enda's College, for the boys of Fianna Éireann. To the grey-haired men whom I see on this platform, to John Devoy and Richard Burke I bring then this message from Ireland: that their seed-sowing of forty years ago has not been without its harvest, that there are young men and little boys in Ireland to-day who remember what they taught and who, with God's blessing will one day take - or make - an opportunity of putting their teaching into practice".

Before the Irish Volunteer Movement was initiated the promoters of "Irish Freedom" had advocated the formation of "Freedom Clubs" throughout Ireland. Under the caption "The Coming Revolution" in its issue of November 1913 appeared the following:

"There will be in the next few years a multitudinous activity of Freedom Clubs, Young Republican Parties, Labour Organisations, Socialist Groups, and what not; bewildering enterprises undertaken by sane persons and insane persons, by good men and bad men, many of them seemingly contradictory, some mutually destructive, yet all tending towards a common objective and that objective: the Irish Revolution!

....We have allowed ourselves to be disarmed; and, now that we have the chance of re-arming, we are not seizing it. Professor Eoin MacNeill pointed out last week that we have at this moment an opportunity of rectifying the capital error we made when we allowed ourselves to be disarmed; and such opportunities, he reminds us, do not come back to nations.

.....I am glad then that the North has begun (quoting Eoin MacNeill's caption) I am glad that the Orangemen have armed, for it is a goodly thing to see arms in Irish hands. I should like to see the A.O.H. armed. I should like to see the Transport Workers armed. I should like to see any and every body of Irish citizens armed. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, to the sight of arms, to the use of arms.....

There are many things more horrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them".

One could not be other than impressed by the tone and temper of "Irish Freedom" since its inception and especially the few months preceding the rise of the Irish Volunteers. It was playing a particularly important part in advocating the use of arms and the establishment of a physical force policy among Irish Nationalists. When the "impossible" happened, and Irish citizens enrolled in the ranks of the Irish Volunteers, that paper threw the full weight of its power and gifts in support of that movement and behind the men "in the gap of danger".

### Chapter 6.

#### The Fianna stands in the battle-gap.

In the February 1914 issue of "Irish Freedom" there appeared an article: "To the boys of Ireland" which ran:

"We of the Fianna Éireann at the beginning of this year, a year which is likely to be momentous in the history of our country, address ourselves to the boys of Ireland and invite them to band themselves with us in a knightly service. We believe that the highest thing anyone can do is to serve well and truly, and we propose to serve Ireland with all our fealty and with all our strength. Two occasions are spoken of in ancient Irish story upon which Irish boys marched to the rescue of their country when it was sore beset - once when Cuchulainn and the troops of Ulster held the frontier until the Ulster heroes rose, and again when the boys of Ireland kept the foreign invader in check on the shores of Ventry until Fionn had

rallied the Fianna; it may be that a similar tale may be told of us, and that when men come to write the history of the freeing of Ireland they shall have to record that the boys of Na Fianna Éireann stood in the battle-gap until the Volunteers armed.

We believe, as every Irish boy whose heart has not been corrupted by foreign influence must believe, that our country ought to be free. We do not see why Ireland should allow England to govern her, either through Englishmen, as at present, or through Irishmen under the appearance of self-government. We believe that England has no business in this country, at all - that Ireland, from the centre to the zenith, belongs to the Irish. Our forefathers believed this and fought for it; Hugh O'Donnell and Hugh O'Neill and Rory O'More and Owen Roe O'Neill; Tone and Emmet and Davis and Mitchel. What was true in their time is still true. Nothing that has happened or that can ever happen can alter the truth of it. Ireland belongs to the Irish. We believe, then, that it is the duty of Irishmen to struggle always, never giving in or growing weary, until they have won back their country again.

The object of Na Fianna Éireann is to train the boys of Ireland to fight Ireland's battle when they are men. In the past the Irish, heroically though they have struggled, have always lost, for want of discipline, for want of military knowledge, for want of plans, for want of leaders. The brave Irish who rose in '98, in '48 and '67 went down because they were not soldiers; we hope to train Irish boys from their earliest years to be soldiers, not only to know

the trade of a soldier - drilling, marching, camping, signalling, scouting and (when they are old enough) shooting - but also, what is far more important to understand and prize: military discipline and to have a military spirit. Centuries of oppression and of unsuccessful effort have almost extinguished the military spirit of Ireland; if that were once gone - if Ireland were to become a land of contented slaves - it would be very hard, perhaps impossible, ever to arouse her again. We believe that na Fianna Éireann have kept the military spirit alive in Ireland during the past four years, and that if the Fianna had not been founded in 1909, the Volunteers of 1913 would never have arisen. In a sense, then, the Fianna have been the pioneers of the Volunteers; and it is from the ranks of the Fianna that the Volunteers must be recruited. This is a special reason why we should be active during 1914. The Fianna will constitute what the old Irish called the Macraadh, or boy troop of the Volunteers, and will correspond to what is called in France an École Polytechnique, or Military School. As the man who was to lead the armies of France to such glorious victories came forth from the military school of Brienna, so may the men who shall lead the Irish Volunteers to victory come forth from Na Fianna Éireann.

Our programme includes every element of military training. We are not mere "Boy Scouts", although we teach and practise the art of scouting, physical culture, infantry drill, marching, the routine of camp life, semaphore and morse signalling, scouting in all its branches, elementary tactics, ambulance and first aid, swimming, hurling and football, are all

included in our scheme of training; and opportunity is given to the elder boys for bayonet and rifle practice. This does not exhaust our programme, for we believe that mental culture should go hand in hand with physical culture; and we provide instruction in Irish history, lectures on historical and literary subjects, and musical and social entertainments as opportunities permit.

Finally we believe with Thomas Davis "that righteous men" must "make our land a nation once again". Hence we endeavour to train our boys to be pure, truthful, honest, sober, kindly, clean in heart as well as in body; generous in their service to their parents and companions now, as they have them generous in their service to their country hereafter. We bear a very noble name and inherit very noble traditions, for we are called after the Fianna of Fionn, that heroic companionship, which according to legend, flourished in Ireland in the second and third centuries of the christian era.

"We, the Fianna, never told a lie  
Falsehood was never imputed to us",  
said Oisín to St. Patrick; and again when Patrick asked Caoilte MacRonáin how it happened that the Fianna won all their battles, Caoilte replied:

"Strength that was in our hands, truth that was on  
our lips, and purity that was in our hearts".  
Is it too much to hope that after so many centuries the old ideals are still quick in the hearts of Irish youth, and that this year we shall get many hundred Irish boys to come forward and help us to build up a

brotherhood of young Irishmen strong in limb, true and pure in tongue and heart, chivalrous, cultured in a really Irish sense, and ready to spend themselves in the service of their country?

Sinne

Na Fianna Éireann.

This address, we learned afterwards, was penned by Padraic Pearse. The response to this appeal was truly heartening. There was a large influx of new members to the Fianna, our own sluagh was literally swamped, so much so that we had to form special groups for recruits. Besides, we, of the Fianna, were keeping pace with the progress and training of the Volunteers, which force in the short space of a few months was showing signs of advancement in numbers and efficiency, and was spreading rapidly throughout the country. In this latter connection a few of our Senior Officers - Bulmer Hobson, Padraic O'Riain, Eamon Martin, Con Colbert, Liam Mellows / were working on the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers; many other officers of the Fianna were in command of Volunteer Companies, some of the older boys were helping the Volunteers in various ways thus giving proof of the pioneer spirit and their desire to assist in the task of creating a Volunteer army pledged to the service of Ireland.

For four years the Fianna stood in the "battle-gap" awaiting the coming of the Volunteers, thus paving the way in true pioneer spirit for the birth of the new army of Ireland. During that short span many a Fianna boy had reached manhood, and this, and the training which the Fianna gave them, was to be of incalculable and invaluable

assistance in the part they were to play; not only in their own Fianna movement, but in the Volunteer force as well. The founders and promoters of the Fianna had planned well; were reaping the harvest of their seed-sowing. Circumstances in the early months of 1914 were favourable to them; were also favourable to the Volunteers. The Fianna had reached the point of being not a mere boy scouts organisation but a progressive semi-military body; having gone through several evolutionary stages to attain that position. Many of the boys and young men were, in consequence, fitted to take a very active part in forwarding the interests of the Volunteers. It was inevitable then that these two martial forces should be set on the high-road to Destiny; whatever that destiny was to be no person could foresee. But one thing was assured - the young men were volunteering; and this volunteering and the Volunteer spirit were the only things that mattered.

It may, perhaps, be necessary to pause in the narration of the historical events of the period in order to refer to the founders, promoters and highlights of the Fianna. First of importance, the name of Countess de Markievicz stands out pre-eminently among the group of people who saw the necessity for the formation of this exclusive national boys organisation. "Madame" to us boys of the Fianna exemplified all that was good and noble in Irish womankind. We considered her to be a fine lady. Every succeeding year had helped us to look upon her with greater kindness, respect and esteem, which she in turn reciprocated to the full. She was known and respected in our movement, and in various other national and social organisations, as a lady of great merit and distinction, one who had made

many friends and acquaintances by sheer hard work and good example. No cause was too big or too small for her. She had many sympathies, for many causes and for numerous people. In every movement in which she was associated she gave of her best; nothing but the best would or could please her. Perhaps the most notable exhibition of true lady-like greatness and charity was to be found in the service she rendered to the poor and needy during the big Industrial Strike of 1913 when she conducted a food kitchen in Liberty Hall for the victims of that holocaust. Her's was a character that could rise to great heights in the social scale and yet be humble in the service of people who were down and out. It did not take any effort on her part to be this - to serve fellow-beings. She was not the type of person who could sit snug and self-satisfied amid the welter of sadness, hunger and suffering which came in the trail of that tremendous conflict. She had to be up and doing to lend a hand in any work which she considered it her duty to attend to. It didn't need any condescension on her part to perform such work, as she had not to come down from any high pedestal to reach the lower strata whom she willingly succoured and assisted since many years before she had cast aside all semblance of aristocracy. In her desire to help ordinary folk she was showing natural and human sympathy. She strove to do good anywhere, everywhere, and always. She was as happy with the poor, working with and serving, women and children at Liberty Hall as in the company of the elite. The poor people profusely thanked "The Countess" for everything she did.

The boys of the Fianna had got to know

"Madame" real well during the past few years. She was

lovable, of a quiet, gentle disposition, effusive and excitable at times, one who was versatile in temperament and in talents - poet, artist, actress, orator, lecturer, writer etc. I remember seeing her working on the designing and painting of the Fianna flag (of Irish poplin, St. Patrick's blue, upon which was painted in gold and sunburst, surmounted in bold gilt letterings, Na Fianna Éireann). I was convalescent in her home, whither Madame had brought me, sometime in 1914. She also executed works in water colour, pastel drawing and oil paintings. She wrote much poetry, one of her special compositions being "The Battle-Hymn" written for Andy Dunne, of the Fianna to sing. She was an actress of high merit in the Abbey Theatre and at dramatic entertainments in Liberty Hall and on several concert halls and assemblies. She shone out brilliantly in rendering recitations, some of them her own compositions. In her home, Surrey House, Leinster Road, Rathmines, were to be seen marvellous works of art - pictures, sculptures, ornaments, books, and a well stocked, magnificent library, a special nook where one could sit in comfort to indulge in the luxury of a quiet read or study. The rooms of her home were simply littered with treasures; one wondered at her carelessness in leaving them so loosely around. Madame had, however, implicit trust in all the people who frequented her house.

Especially she trusted "her Fianna boys", many of whom were regular and almost nightly visitors there. I doubt if anything was ever disturbed or molested, though many of these boys were simple, poor folk, some might even be termed wild. Then she had quite a large clientèle of people of various walks of

life and attainments. During the time I was there she shared her hospitality with a large number of celebrities, some of them in the Citizens' League, the Women's Suffragette Movement, Sinn Féin, the Labour Movement, so wide were her attachments and beliefs. High tea was generally served in the garden at the rear of the house - she entertained us quite royally. Of Madame it could be said that she couldn't do anything by halves. She lavished care and attention on everyone within her orbit. I had personal experience of this particular trait in her character, for having learned that I was ill she visited me in my humble home and offered her home for the period of my convalescence. She would not leave until my mother and I promised I would come. I failed on the first occasion, but no excuse would satisfy her and eventually I had to yield. Thus I spent a good week or fortnight enjoying a lovely home and a lavish board. Everything that I wanted, and more than I wanted, was there for the asking. Truly Madame was a superb benefactress to me and to others whom I had learned had been befriended by her.

Madame's house, Surrey House, was the rendezvous of the élite and of the simplest folk. One could safely say that it was the busiest house in that select neighbourhood; visitors and guests always coming and going. It was hardly ever free of them. Seldom a night passed without its quota of Fianna boys showing up for a sing-song or other form of revelry. It was mostly frequented by members of an Céad Sluaigh of the Fianna, her own foundation branch. It was said that the house, and those who frequented it, were looked upon with deep disgust and condemnation by the inhabitants of that most law-abiding and respectable

locality, and if rumour was right they were of a brood more respectable than national a class, in the main, who were unconcerned with, and even antagonistic to such "silly thrash" and "nonsensical tripe" as National Independence or Social Reform. So the existence of such a noisy place as Surrey House, with its noisy callers and its equally noisy musicians and songsters, disturbed the peace and quietude of Rawthmines. By the same token, songs were written and sung in honour of the same Rawthmines, immortalising it as a district of Britons, shoneens and Castle-hacks. Surrey House was an intrusion and a challenge to the dignity and respectability and "loyalty" of Leinster Road. But Madame, the care-free, fond of fun and loving Madame, who years before had thrown to the winds the shackles, trammels and trimmings of a high social order had of her own free will and tuition come to earth to share the lot of those people of no property, or little property, and conceived it her duty by voice, pen and, if need be, by other stronger means to further any good cause, whether for the freedom of her country, the emancipation of her sex and the betterment of the lot of the workers and of the poor. She had no use for the toadyism and anglisation of the Royal Irish, whose stock in trade was imitating and mimicking the British and showing themselves to be not Irish but more English than the English themselves.

The work Countess Markievicz liked most was centred and had its being in the Fianna. She was its figure-head, and, as one, perhaps the big brains of the movement. Were she a boy or a young man, she should have ranked high, possibly have been accorded the status

of a Boden Powell, the head of the English scouts, or, by way of comparison, have been the modern prototype of Fionn of the Fianna, or as a James Stephens of the Fenian organisation - a leader of boys or a conspirator among men. Notwithstanding the limitation due to her sex, she fitted into the sphere wonderfully well, because as a promoter and figure-head she guided the destiny of the Fianna, inspiring when she couldn't lead, setting an example if she could not command. Madame, however, could not be a mere looker-on. She had to show her true colours and this she did right nobly, fearlessly, consistently - thus giving practical unmistakable emphasis to her belief in the things which she aspired to and upheld. She tried to keep near to the things she espoused, rendering support and offering encouragement at every and on all occasions. One thing the Countess had in abundance - namely moral courage. She would throw herself wholeheartedly into any good cause, whatever or however the hazards or difficulties; she had no concern for danger. She expressed her mind openly and freely in giving expression to her principles and tenets so dear to her, and however unconventional or unpopular they might seem to be or be taken by other people. Yet she had no hatred - no hatred but one and that the hatred of a patriot for the oppressor of her country. I doubt if she had any personal enemies. She lived her part well, she lived her life well, in these four years. She found all the happiness she wanted, the happiness to serve Ireland, which she wished to advance and put on the high road to freedom, and throwing herself wholeheartedly into that fight it was as it were a second nature to do nothing less than her best.

Her talent and her intellectual gifts were ever at the service of "the cause", a literary article for this or that journal; a song for this or that concert, possibly a sketch for some; preparation of a concert programme; scenery for a play; providing a speech or giving a lecture. She was fortunate in her friends, in her collaborators, her fellow conspirators and in the movements with which she was connected. She showered affection on everyone in the national effort.

How she lavished kindness and caresses on her dog Poppit - "my dear Poppit" as she endearingly called him. He was everywhere with his exceedingly thoughtful and respectful mistress, ever at her side. How often were we made aware of Madame's approach at sight of Poppit. He was part of the Fianna too- even though some played rude tricks on him at times.

Another prominent personage in the councils of Na Fianna Éireann was, as already mentioned, Bulmer Hobson. Bulmer was a journalist, at least I formed that opinion by reason of the information gleaned that he was the Dublin correspondent of the "Gaelic American", an Irish American publication. This paper was the advocate of Fenianism or Clan na Gael organisation of America. It expressed national, republican and separatist views. It is worthy of note that "The Gaelic American" circulated in Ireland during that period and was playing a part in the events of which I write. Those of us who from time to time secured copies of this paper could not fail to notice the column contributed by Hobson, and to deduce that he was very much in the forefront of political affairs.

Here was a man who personally appealed to me in a very special way, not so much because he was one of the leading lights of the Fianna or in the national limelight, or even because he performed any great deeds, or outstanding in talent, wisdom or fame, but chiefly on account of his easy going gentle manner, his pleasant and agreeable disposition. He was years ahead of us in age, and miles beyond our reach in intellectual and, possibly, other attainments. I could be pardoned at the time for picturing him as a Wolfe Tone or Robert Emmet - why I formed such opinions I could not explain. In my boyish imagination, the fact that he was eldest of the young men who, with Madame, were guiding the affairs of the Fianna sufficed to impress me that he was more than an enthusiast - he was the very incarnation of the spirit of the movement. But Hobson was less demonstrative in a public sense than Madame, yet he seemed to get on well with the boys and was all in all with the senior members of the Fianna.

Another notable character was Con Colbert, that small stocky, muscular young man. He was the very personification of the Gael; spoke the language of the Gael with notable frequency; everything about him was Irish. He always dressed in kilts on parade or assemblies. Here was a bold, serious, determined type. So my first impressions! In course of time, however, I had reason to form the opinion that notwithstanding a seemingly hard exterior or appearance, he was of a gentle kind and considerate nature. He carried himself with a proud, confident and military bearing, and took his work very seriously. Zealous and enthusiastic in our cause, he expected all similarly engaged to be

likewise. He was reputed to be one of our best officers, had great command of himself and was always worthy of being obeyed. Con was not the type that could be satisfied by doing things by halves or any old way. He sought perfection in every part of his work on behalf of the Fianna. So sincere was he on the question of the native language that he used issue commands in Irish. The first time I heard these was in Camden St. Hall when Con was drilling some of his boys.

Liam Mellows was another outstanding figure. Not only that, he was the most likeable and best beloved of the whole group of young men that guided the fortunes of the Fianna. He, too, was typically Irish, a hundred per cent every time, and a keen student and exponent of the language revival. Liam possessed the gentlest, kindest and gayest disposition yet. He was at home in the company of the boys - seemed to be especially endowed by nature to attract and to charm boys to his side. One could never picture Liam being sad or morose - he never seemed to show either of those characteristics - rather the opposite, for he liked quiet, simple fun and merriment; even helped in entertaining us on many occasions to a good Irish ballad or a rousing marching song. His singing of "Boo-lavogue" or "The Bog down in the Valley" were always delightful. He prided himself on his playing of the violin, and many a céilidhe and entertainment owed some measure of success to his rendering of selections of Irish music. He generally wore kilts, which suited him to perfection. Though in his teens, he had an almost girl-like personality and even quiet manner, an open countenance set off by a high forehead and a thick

almost golden sheaf of hair. By occupation a clerk in a commercial office, he would at once strike one as being fitted more for Holy Orders. One of the most notable features of Liam was that he took Fianna work very seriously, so seriously, indeed, that he undertook about this time, 1913 and 1914, to resign his ordinary employment in order to go about the country organising Fianna branches, and it was said that he did this for the merest pittance. He also organised corps of Volunteers in various parts of the country.

On route marches Liam was ever in the forefront to entertain us to a "bar of a song", and many a good stretch of road was shortened as a result.

Then there was Eamonn Martin, who appeared to be cast in the same mould as Liam Mellows - a quiet, easy-going, simple type. Eamon was of strong muscular and medium build, fair haired, a Celt to the finger tips. He too dressed in kilts, which were always becoming to him, and spoke Irish and, as we perceived, a good dancer. A tailor by trade, he was deeply sincere and enthusiastic, a very likeable person among the boys as he could make and hold friends.

Padraic Ó Riain, our General Secretary, was a particularly capable officer, practical and intelligent, one who had a great aptitude for work and could get things done well and expeditiously. He was sometimes easy to provoke, when he would bawl and rave and shout his head off, much to the merriment of those who knew that his bark was worse than his bite. Some even would call him severe and a bit too hard, as his manner at times gave the impression that he was such. Yet

he was neither rough nor vindictive, but rather exacting and commanding from the point of view of duty and discipline. At close quarter he was as nice a type of person as one could hope to find and be associated with in a good cause. Notwithstanding his quick and at times caustic tongue, he was of a kindly, pleasant and gay disposition. He, too, dressed in kilts and was proficient in the native tongue. One could not fail to be impressed by his smart alert appearance, for he was always spic and span in dress with true soldierly smartness which set him off as a distinctive personality. Padraic (Pawric to us, his associates) discarded the kilt for the new double-breasted tunic which at this time was being more universally adopted.

#### Chapter 7.

Early in 1914 there came to our sluaigh of Na Fianna Éireann a young man named Seán MacAodha (Seán Heuston). It was a very pleasing and propitious selection. Soon we were training under him in Dun Emer Guild in Hardwicke Street, now our drill centre. From that moment its activity increased immeasurably. From the first Seán captivated the hearts and won the affection of us all, which was not surprising when one considers that he was endowed with a pleasant, easy and simple nature, a bright and lovable disposition which, coupled with his natural understanding of boys, made such ready appeal to us. He soon became our ideal Captain. At first, however, when it was hinted that we were to get an officer from Limerick, many of us thought that the newcomer was to be none other than a slow easy-going (raw) fellow from the country. To our

joy, however, we learned later that Seán Heuston was Dublin born, and if he had Limerick associations it was due to his being employed there. Actually he was a clerk in the Great Southern Railway and had spent a number of years in the city of the "Broken Treaty" in that capacity. So Seán came, as it were, among his own.

From the beginning of his work with us Seán gave promise of being a worthy successor to our former Captain, Mick Lonergan, from whom we had learned quite an amount of drill etc. Seán, however, could not be a second best. Hence he sought and attained perfection in everything that he put his hands to or gave his mind to. He was systematic, lucid and exact in every sphere of military training - sparing no effort, and least of all, no time in drilling and instructing us in the arts of the soldier's trade. His knowledge of the various military subjects surprised us not a little. Where and how he acquired this were questions which many of us asked. It took time, however, to find out that he was a keen student of military training craft and technique extending over a number of years, especially during his stay in Limerick where he was associated with the Fianna Company, and he possessed many books, manuals etc. on various military matters. In course of time we benefited, our Sluaigh and the Fianna in general, by that expert knowledge in many ways, and not the least by Seán conducting officers and N.C.O. classes and specialised training of which he showed himself to be a keen and enthusiastic advocate.

It was noteworthy also, that Seán Heuston became

Capt. of "D" Coy 1st Battalion Dublin Brigade Irish Volunteers. This Coy met in the Columcille Hall, 5 Blackhall Street, and the notable thing about it was that this Company was regarded as Headquarters Company because of the great part it played in that connection. It did not, however, lose its identity with the 1st Battalion. In this way Seán Heuston, our Fianna Capt., had a double role to play in forwarding the interests of both forces.

To come back to the activities of our Sluaigh of which Seán was Captain! He was not long in our midst when we came into possession of a new, our first, trek-cart, and it was said that Seán planned and designed it. It was an important addition to our stores, our commisariat; - which comprised camping gear, first-aid, signalling and other accessories. This trek-cart would overcome much of the difficulties we usually had to contend with in transporting these stores when required from time to time. The fact that it was simply constructed, light and easy to manipulate, made it all the more acceptable to us. Of its construction, I might mention that the trek-cart was a two wheeled vehicle, fitted with a T shaped centre shaft, the body itself being about 4 feet by 2½ feet and the length of the shaft about 3 or 4 feet. The body was roofed by a brown waterproof hood fixed at the sides, back and front by patent attachment easily removable. There were two ropes, also detachable, a loop on each end. These loops were arranged so as to facilitate their being passed over the head and on

to one shoulder and then across the body and underneath armpit of opposite shoulder of the person using it. These ropes, one for each side, could be affixed to the cart wheel, and were capable of being used for pulling the cart forward or in reverse position to hold it back as when travelling down hill. The cart was of the collapsible type, could be assembled and dismantled in a few minutes by means of using nuts and bolts and slotted wooden panels easily adjustable and without the use of tools. Seán took a particular pride in this handiwork, and in the training of the "crews" to man it. This meant specialised drill, and a different form of words of command for the drill. It was the only one of its kind in the Fianna - perhaps in Ireland - and this, and the fact that it was manufactured in Dublin by Irish workmanship added immensely to its importance. We, too, in Seán's Coy of Fianna had every reason to be proud of it, and it was to be expected that we would vie with one another to become members of the "crew" to man it on outings, processions, marches and camping expeditions. Of the crew required for the purpose, it may be necessary to mention that two boys were placed on each rope, and two on the shaft, which formed the front portion of the cart, - six boys as a "crew". In this wise the cart was pulled, not "shoved". Relays of six were always available to relieve the pulling party as required.

Came 26th July 1914, what came to be known as the "Day of the Howth Gun-running". We had been mobilised for the early morning at Dun Emer Guild/<sup>Hardwicke Street</sup> - a picked body of senior Fianna boys drawn from different Companies of the Fianna, in full uniform and carrying rations for a

days outing. Of course, we had reason to wonder at the nature of this - we couldn't even guess where we were going. Only a days outing! Our trek-cart was in commission too, and, strange to relate, was heavily laden. It contained, as our Captain modestly informed some of us enquiring ones, "Only minerals", and to the equally inquisitive ones, Seán again modestly and politely said, "We are going on a march to Lucan". Seán's broad smile could be so disarming and bewitching, as we had every reason to know "only minerals" and "for a route march to Lucan" did not seem to convey very much to most of us. However, we soon proceeded on our way - down Temple Street, into Gardiner's Place, along Mountjoy Sq., and into Fitzgibbon St. Lo and behold, we literally ran down the hill in Fitzgibbon St. passing the police barrack there and on to Jones' Road. We wondered why the cart was allowed to proceed so unusually fast down hill without causing the boys on the ropes to come into reverse, which was the normal procedure and done by the four boys retiring to the back portion of the cart and straining at the ropes so as to prevent the cart from going down hill beyond walking pace. Again that broad, disarming smile from Seán!

We continued on until, having passed the bridge spanning the river Tolka at Ballybough, we entered Phillipsburgh Avenue, turning into a small avenue, Windsor Villas, on the right entered Father Mathew Park. Here we found that quite a large number of Volunteers were already assembled and undergoing various military evolutions. A short time afterward the Volunteers marched out of the Park and our group of Fianna accompanied them down Phillipsburgh Avenue

into Fairview. Strange we didn't "wheel right" and take the citywards route which would be the normal direction for our journey to Lucan! Rather we were turning our backs on it. Seán again beamed his broad disarming smile when some wag of a Fianna boy remarked that we were going a strange way to Lucan. This, of course, provoked someone else to remark, "Lucan looks lovely" which at the time was an endearing, enticing form of words used to boost up the place.

However, we continued along the former sea front road at Fairview, then known as "The Sloblands", into Howth Road, and after quite a spell of marching reached the coast road beyond Raheny. Nearing Kilbarrack we were granted a rest period which was well earned after the few miles of steady marching on a warm summer day. The respite was not for long, however, and we were soon on the march again. The village of Sutton looked lovely; indeed, every part of the country since we left Fairview was superbly splendid as we passed by going onwards. Near the railway station at Howth our Fianna group, which up to this was in the middle of the Volunteer column, was given an order to "right incline, double march" and brought in front of the Volunteers. In this fashion we entered Howth village and passed the sea front until we came to the corner of the road on the right which leads to Howth Hill where we were halted.

We perceived Seán Heuston in deep and earnest conversation with Bulmer Hobson. Then Seán called Paddy Holohan and myself and gave us orders to run as fast as we could along the pier, and if we saw a white yacht to blow our bugles as hard as we could. Paddy

and I ran that long stretch of ground up to almost the mouth of the harbour where the Lighthouse was situated. There before us was the "white yacht". Paddy, by the way, had beaten me to it. He was taller, head and shoulders over me, and had bigger strides. Instantaneously the Volunteers were rushing up the east pier, our own trek-cart rumbling along faster than I had ever seen it go before. Then a movement from the yacht when a man and a woman commenced handing out articles wrapped in straw, which when torn away revealed to our astonished gaze rifles, rifles and still more rifles. Oh, the thrill of it! We were gun-running! Who could blame us for being excited? We were frantic, hysterical with joy at the drama that was being enacted at that moment; the undescrivable scene of pent up emotion at first sight of that precious cargo. Some men cheered, some wept with joy; some others too overcome by emotion went pale with excitement. But only for a flash - because there was work to be done, and that quickly.

Our group of Fianna boys, with our trek-cart, were assembled in direct proximity to the yacht, receiving the rifles and passing them along the lines of Volunteers that stretched along the pier in human chain fashion to receive them. Another group commanded by Seán Heuston were loading the trek-cart with boxes. Some Volunteers were loading motor cars that had come on the scene. With willing hands, eager and willing to work hard, the task of unloading was quickly accomplished, although many of us wondered where all the rifles came from. We could hardly imagine that they could have come out of such a tiny affair as this

yacht appeared to us to be. It was a sight worth beholding - the excitement, the wonderful organisation, the superb discipline and good order of the Volunteers and the Fianna, all of whom laboured as hard as humans could in discharging the cargo, having but one thought - to succeed in the coup of gun-running.

An effort was made by a group of coastguards to raise the alarm or otherwise interfere with the good work of discharging the cargo. A few of them rowed across the harbour towards the yacht. They soon retired, however, having been summarily warned, and we were left to work out our salvation. They alone could not have stopped that work. Perhaps they realised this.

We had reason to be happy when eventually we were informed that the guns were unloaded, and we were re-formed on the pier for our homeward journey. At last we were armed. Irish Nationalists were armed at last. What an extraordinary spectacle to witness, as we marched away carrying with us the guns as the price of our labour and the kind "God speed you all" of the good people of the yacht, especially the lady member who was most vociferous in expressing her pleasure at the good day's work.

We Fianna boys were very proud of our part in this enterprise which we considered was a great privilege. The fact that we were trusted on an exploit of such daring and importance caused us to be "all out". It proved, too, that if we enjoyed the confidence of the Volunteers, (this was mainly due to our officers) whom we surmised were "well in the know" and earned the confidence of the Volunteer Authorities. These were

our thoughts as we swung out of the pier. We were startled to see before us a group of Volunteers lining the approach to the pier and they armed - with huge truncheons! Here were, we learned, the "minerals" we had carried in our trek-cart on our outward journey. Yes, some of the "knowing ones" remarked "these are the minerals". Seán Heuston, our Captain, could well afford to smile. Anyway they served a purpose in the day's work. The thought of their possible usefulness added to our elation, as with our trek-cart, now laden with boxes of ammunition and we carrying the big Mauser rifles beside it, we hastened our steps citywards. It was a happy, joyous and proud throng, this contingent of Volunteers and Fianna now marching with rifles in their hands, and right joyously we gave vent to our feelings as we sang and whistled on the way. Many a laugh we Fianna boys had over the brave appearance of strength which some were trying to show in carrying the heavy rifles, which on every mile of the road were becoming heavier. Fortunately for us, the relays of crews for drawing the trek-cart eased the burden of carrying the guns, for then they could be put in the cart for relief. Thus we progressed along the coast road passing Sutton and beyond.

But alas! The homeward trail was not to be uneventful. As we came to the end of the coast road at Raheny where the tram-line and not the road continued its course into Dollymount, we espied a large force of police - members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police - on trams. Were they come to intercept us? They, however, made no such move, but having got off the trams they marched by our side along the country roads.

through the village of Raheny, past Killester, into the Howth Road. So far so good.

Their presence, even some of their efforts to keep pace with us, was the occasion for much banter and fun on our part. Many of them before they had traversed a mile of ground were looking the worse of the wear, panting and sweating in the effort. Our youngest Fianna boys that day, having already traversed nigh thirteen miles were showing more alertness and freshness than they. On we went, passing the Clontarf Railway Station at Howth Road where we caught sight of Fairview by the sea, towards which we appeared to be going. But no! As we came to Claremount Road on our right we turned, and to our astonishment saw in the distance what appeared to be a group of British soldiers stretching across the road at the corner of the Crescent, a road that connected with Malahide Road and Howth Road. What was the cause of our change of direction? We sensed danger ahead; this was made evident to us by the strange remarks that we heard and the acceleration of the pace made by the advancing Volunteers then moving towards Malahide Road.

This apparently was a ruse. We soon reached Malahide Road still marching. Then suddenly there was a halt and we, the Fianna contingent, placed as we were in the centre of the Volunteer column, wondered if anything had gone amiss. The reason for the halt was communicated to us. There seemed to be quite a deal of excitement in front which lasted for a short space of time. Then suddenly the ranks of the Volunteers in front were broken and falling back, leaving us, in charge of the trek-cart, exposed to the view and

attention of the onrushing police. We could then see below the road the group of British soldiers with fixed bayonets, the police in front with batons in their hands. Shots were ringing out. I could see some of our Fianna officers on the wall of the O'Brien Institute, which stretched along the right side of the road down to Fairview, firing revolvers. Pandemonium reigned. In the midst of this we, Fianna boys, had a stiff time to keep off the Volunteers who were clamouring for the ammunition from the trek-cart. The police menacingly were approaching our group. We had to beat them off as best we could with our clubbed rifles, which for many caused quite an effort.

Suddenly an order was issued. It was our Captain Seán Heuston's command to us to retire. The trek-cart was turned around, and we drew ourselves and it back the road. Just in time too. We passed the rear column of Volunteers as we moved away from the scene towards Donnycarney. Turning into Puckstown we entered a field where we placed the cart in a secluded spot. In order not to attract undesirable attention, we took the special precaution of taking off our tunics and hats and hiding ourselves in the field. Fortunately we were far removed from prying eyes. Later due to Seán Heuston's effort, a lorry from Thompson's carriers of Brunswick St. (now Pearse St.) came and we loaded the boxes of ammunition, trek-cart and our rifles into it. This eased the situation immensely for us. Seán reformed us and we again moved back the way we had come, along the Malahide Road, passing the scene of the affray of a few hours previously, where to our surprise there were a good number of people. We were accorded an odd cheer as we passed on our way

citywards. We arrived at our Hall in Hardwicke St. without further incident.

But apparently our work was not yet finished for many of us were posted by Seán to perform various duties, delivering despatches, collecting rifles which had been deposited in the fields adjacent to Malahide Road and storing them in safe places in and around Dublin etc. I was posted to Mr. Tobin's house at Hardwicke St., a place of great hustle and bustle on that night. Before going on our several special duties we were given time to go home and change our attire, and during this respite we had opportunities to digress the news of the startling events of the day - news which the newspapers had broadcast in special "Stop Press" editions. Some parts of this news were unknown to us then, especially the shooting by the King's own Scottish Borderers of civilians in Bachelor's Walk. We learned too, that we had suffered casualties in the fracas at Malahide Road, some Volunteers, including Captain Judge of "C" Coy 1st Batt. being wounded by bayonet thrusts and other injuries.

Great prominence was given the enterprise of the successful gun-running coup at Howth; how the British warship engaged in patrolling in Dublin Bay was by a clever ruse diverted to Wicklow, and that the Volunteers had cut telephonic communications with Howth and took other "unlawful" steps to neutralise intervention on the part of the British authorities. Further, was the news that some of the Volunteer leaders parleyed with the British military and D.M.P. officials on the rights of the Volunteers to march into the city. This ruse, it was stated, enabled the Volunteers in rear to effect

their diversion and, at least, the safety of the arms. The awful blood-bath indulged in by the British soldiers at Bachelors Walk was vividly portrayed, showing at a glance that, disgusted at their failure to disarm the Volunteers, they returned to the city and, confronted with a mild scene of booing, they had opened fire on the assembled unarmed people with such fatal consequences. Dublin and Ireland were indignant at this exhibition of the British soldier rule; the Dublin Brigade of Volunteers and Fianna by their presence at the removal of the remains of Mr. Pidgeon, one of the victims of the Bachelors Walk massacre, gave silent, disciplined testimony of wrath and indignation. Truly we had our first baptism of fire.

Some short time after this another gun-running was effected, this time at Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow. On this particular occasion many officers and boys of the Fianna were engaged. Our Slnaigh of Fianna had been detailed to camp out at Oldbawn, Tallaght. We afterwards learned that a successful landing of arms had been carried through, and that Seán Heuston was one of the principal characters in the affair. Others were Eamon Martin, Garry Holohan and Barney Mellows.

### Chapter 8.

Then came August 4th 1914 - the outbreak of the World War. England declared war against Germany and in defence of little Belgium. What was to be our part in this conflict? How were the Irish Volunteers to exist in a situation in which Ireland, linked to the British connection, was being appealed to to throw her full weight on the side of England? The testing time

for the Irish Volunteers came with the declaration of war by Britain. This "testing time" came in several ways. The first recording was heralded by the demands of Mr. Redmond to control, or share control, of the Irish Volunteer force. He sought power, as a question of right, to the selection of nominees of his own party and affiliations on the Executive of the Volunteers. This was eventually denied them, the original Executive fighting him tooth and nail and refusing to agree to his proposal. The Irish Volunteers, who up to this had been united and combined as one body, were soon to be divided. The war accelerated it, and from the division was to arise two forces - one the original "Irish Volunteers and the other the "National Volunteers" controlled by Redmond, J.D. Nugent etc. When the split in the Volunteers occurred the World War was nigh two months old. In that time the Irish politicians had made overtures to Britain offering Ireland's support and appealing to Irishmen to join the English army to fight for the freedom of small nationalities, mainly Catholic Belgium. Accordingly, Mr. Redmond, backed by his Irish Parliamentary Party became recruiting agents for England, and thousands of Irishmen were influenced to join up "for their King and country". Even the English Premier, Mr. Asquith, to show his great love for the Irish and their desire to fight for England as stated by the aforesaid Irish politicians, visited Dublin and held an "admission by ticket" meeting in the Mansion House at which all the "loyal" people of note, even the baton-men of the A.O.H., were present to back up their leader Mr. Redmond who particularly distinguished himself that night. Mr. Asquith at this meeting referred to Ireland as "the

one: Bright Spot\* among a number of other wily platitudes about Irishmen being such gallant fighters etc. Hence Ireland was thrown into the vortex of the war while the Volunteer movement was split asunder.

No such split or contest occurred in na Fianna Éireann, however, which was not influenced by the actions of the politicians, by the advent or the cause of war, or anything else except the complete independence of Ireland. Unlike the Volunteers, the Fianna was more nationally contained, consisting only of those who stood for Ireland first, last and all the time and true to the Fianna faith and ideal. The ordinary boys of the Fianna had neither time nor thought for the political clap-trap of the wily ones who preached that the blood of Irishmen should be shed on "far foreign fields from Dunkirk to Belgrade" in a cause that was not Irish or concerned Ireland. Hence we laboured on, working after the split as before it, with the original Irish Volunteers.

Among the boys of the Sluaigh of which Seán Heuston was Capt. were 1st Lieutenant Paddy Holohan, Seán Burke, Tommy Meehan, James Cerrigan, Seán O'Neill, Jimmy O'Hanlon, Section Leaders Tommy McGrane and Peadar Browne, Seán Conway, Dermot O'Sullivan, The Brothers Dermot and Donogh O'Moore, - Ridgeway, the Brothers Jack and Peter Byrne, Patk. O'Connor, Jimmy Cashin, Patrick White, Willie Murphy, Eddie Connolly, Jimmy Seville, Joe Cullen, Dan Mac Art, Ross Mahon, Joe Cullen. The writer was 2nd Lieutenant.

~~XGarryXHolohanXwasXanXofficerXinXchargeXofXaXunit  
XRXFiannaXatXSkippersXAlleyX~~

Sometime, I think the late summer of 1914, the Dublin Fianna fulfilled an engagement at Castlebar on invitation of the local Sluaigh. Entraining at Broadstone Railway Station, after a pleasant journey we arrived late at night being met by several bands and escorted to a hotel where we dined on the best. That night we encamped in the grounds attached to the college. The greatest treat was in store for us when next day, Sunday, a huge procession of Volunteers from all quarters of the county, numbering several thousand, paraded in the town and marched to the Mental Hospital Grounds where a Volunteer Rally, Sports and Review were held. Our group of Fianna boys gave a display in trek-cart drill, signalling, first-aid and ordinary drill. The local inhabitants hospitably treated us and bore all expenses of our travelling etc. Capt. Seán Heuston was in charge of our party.

On another occasion we had a similar privilege to give a special display as above; that time, under Capt. Seán Heuston, we travelled to Courtown Harbour, Co. Wexford, on the invitation of Mr. Seán Etchingham. Anæridheacht was held there. We came back to Dublin that evening by the Dublin South Eastern Railway train. From that evening onward we had reason to make fun of the Dark, Slow and Easy Railway Company, for during our night travel it was true to that designation.

An event of unusual importance to a group of us Fianna boys - an event that proved our versatility - was that day when Mr. John Redmond reviewed his National Volunteers, now separated from our Irish Volunteers. This review was held in the Phoenix Park, after which

they marched, via the Southern Quays, to the Parnell Monument, O'Connell St., where Mr. Redmond and other speakers addressed them. They mustered in strength that day, having travelled from every part of Ireland. Our Fianna business had no relation to attending the event. Rather were we engaged, on Sean Heuston's orders, in obtaining information on the strength, the number of arms and the differeng types carried in the parades. We worked in pairs, stationed along different parts of the quays, each group was required to ascertain particulars under the various categories. Another Fianna boy and I were on duty at Guinness's wharf. That night Sean Heuston had information galore concerning the "other side", or Redmondite Volunteers, which they were then called.

Sometime in 1914 or 1915 James Connolly, the Labour Leader, gave a lecture to Fianna officers and N.C.O.s on street fighting. He impressed us as one who knew the subject thoroughly. Apparently he had given it careful, exhaustive study, judging by the sure easy way he disposed of his lecture, which was given, as far as I can recall, in No. 12 Kildare St. This house had formerly been the headquarters of the Volunteers, and when the "split" occurred the Redmondite section were evicted and it was seized by the original Executive. Regular guards were posted to protect the building. On one occasion I did duty there for one night. This house was not, however, held for long, for a new headquarters was opened in No. 2 Dawson St. In passing, it should be mentioned that the five Fianna Officers - Liam Mellows, Padraic O'Riain, Bulmer Hobson, Eamon Martin and Con Colbert - remained true to the original Volunteer Executive.

Towards the end of 1914 our Sluaigh of Fianna was fated to remove to new premises - this time to 28 Nth. Frederick St., a house rented or owned by the Ancient Order of Hibernians (American Auxiliary Division). Two other organisations, namely the "Hibernian Rifles" and the "Clan na Gael Girl Scouts", the former commanded by a Mr. Scollan, the latter by Miss May Kelly. Each of these groups had identical national aims - hence our Fianna group felt in good company. The place was a hive of industry, usually of a military nature, drilling, rifle exercises etc., with a number of musical and dance social evenings thrown in to break the monotony. Our Fianna Company, we were now styled such, in conformity with ~~military~~ military standards and the like, drilled in the rear of the building in what were stables and yards with loft overhead. We were quite happy there. The house was commodious. But the quaintest portion of it was the passage-way which connected from the back parlour to the stabling behind. How often did we enjoy marching through that passage in single file, no other mode was possible; even enjoy the sense, the thrill of delight which our steady tramp, tramp, tramp of marching feet and the din of the voices of some of the boys who loved to hear the sounds echoing through, to be answered by those on the other end. We took particular pride in our premises, even to the extent of washing it regularly. As well as that, orderlies were appointed to do duty each week, charged with the task of opening up the premises and keeping it tidy before and after parade. Certainly Seán Heuston, our Captain, saw to it that we would spend our time well and in true military fashion. He prepared routine of training and duties in advance, and displayed the notices in a prominent position in the

building as well as communicating them to us at regularly appointed periods. He even gave a hand in sweeping or washing the place. No one was more thorough or cleaner than Seán. Every drill night Seán inspected us, insisted on cleanliness, tidyness. During our stay here, our Company increased to enormous proportions, new blood coming in, including quite a force of juveniles. Indeed, so great was the number of these that a new section had to be formed under Section Commander Peadar Browne. Poor Peadar! He had more than his hands full trying to train them, the bantam section was <sup>what</sup> they were jokingly called. It was more than enough to test one's patience, but Peadar bore it manfully. None other than he could have managed them, although in the doing he fell in for quite a good deal of banter over his bantam section. Tommy McGrane was one of the Section Commanders. Much of our training was done in the open, quite a lot of it in the streets nearby.

Seán Heuston was particularly keen on night manoeuvres, route marches and street fighting. In our drill hall he taught us the rudiments of battle formations. In the streets outside he made us go through the movements, deploying extended order movements, taking cover and going into action. Many and varied were the looks of consternation and surprise on the faces of the poor pedestrians at seeing us "only Boy Scouts" going through these exercises. Many a start we gave them, too, as for instance, when marching along a street, Dorset St. or North Circular Road, in response to an order from our Captain to "Take Sides" we would break ranks and fly to both sides of the

thoroughfare, throw ourselves on the ground and make believe that we were coming into conflict with an opposing force. Other times we would perform extended order evolutions from marching formations, this time by whistle or hand signals, amazement in the faces of the onlookers notwithstanding. Practising soldiering was no easy task for us then, but we loved it - couldn't get enough of it. Sometimes policemen on their beat gazed open-mouthed at what they must have termed our peculiar "antics".

Then came the occasion of an important competition of picked trained sections of the Dublin Companies of Irish Volunteers to be held at St. Enda's College, Rathfarnham - a trophy for the best team. A group of Fianna boys were trained by Seán Heuston. Every night he put us through an elaborate extensive programme, a programme that was to include from battle formations to the care and treatment of the wounded. It was hard work enough, rehearsing, rehearsing, rehearsing. Some of those nights our "antics" were witnessed by one of the plain clothes detectives. One time he got in our way and some of the boys bounced into him, just after we had received the order from our Captain to deploy. Poor man! He must have thought that we were attacking him, but no, we were only practising our movements for the forthcoming competition. A couple of days before this event, Seán announced that another officer was to take his place. I was selected. The task was to memorise in the short space at my disposal the many terms and signals, to know all the movements, all the evolutions, which were mapped out on our programme. Seán had told us that his own

Company of Volunteers were competing also. Our final rehearsal was carried out in Clontarf Park.

The appointed Sunday arrived when we were required to show what we were made of. It would be true to say that it was a big day in our lives. As well as numerous units of Volunteers and our group of Fianna, the Irish Citizen Army competed. It was a very keen competition, quite a great amount of hard work must have been put into the training of the different contesting groups. James Connolly and Thomas McDonough were the adjudicators. The winning team was a section from the 4th Battalion. Our Fianna group was, however, highly commended. A feature of our display was the interest that James Connolly took in the various evolutions that formed our programme, even to the extent of asking individual boys questions on the different aspects of the work.

Mention has already been made of the point that the Fianna was becoming "militarised". This matter had been raised by one of the delegates at a session of Árd Fheis, who, in turn, expressed his mind against it, but his complaint did not, however, get much backing. One proof of the military spirit that had overtaken the Fianna was invariably borne out by an incident, small one perhaps but still significant, that occurred, which had reference to the arming of the Fianna. The scene was St. Stephen's Green, where on a certain Sunday a procession was to be formed which was to consist of various national, social and cultural bodies. This procession was to march to Glasnevin to commemorate some national historical event. Our Company of Fianna marched to assembly point, "The Green" as it was commonly known at the time, in order to

participate. Our our arrival there, we found a big muster of other Units of Fianna, some of whom were in possession of arms. Enquiries revealed that these rifles were the property of the Fianna. Some of our Company members raised a storm, demanding that they too be armed. "Alright", said our Captain, Seán Heuston, "we shall see what can be done". Immediately, we were marched away and brought to the Fianna Hall in Camden St. where to our greater surprise we were issued with a number of rifles. (These we learned had been smuggled into Ireland from America).

Back we returned to St. Stephen's Green to take our place in the huge concourse that made up the procession. None were happier, none were prouder than our little band on that occasion, not even the Volunteers with their big, heavy "Howth rifles", a name that was generally and fondly applied to the rifles that had been "landed" at Howth. The spectators that lined the procession route looked to us bewildered at the sight that they beheld, as we, stepping along in military precision, carried for the first time in public our small .22 bore Springfield miniature rifles, and carried them as gallantly as our elders in the Volunteers. Such people little knew, however, that we were expert in the knowledge, the use and the handling of rifles, even of the bigger and more formidable types. If there were any people present who elected to laugh in derision at the "pop guns" we carried that day, perhaps they, in their ignorance, would like to be aware that "these little fellows" were wiser in their generation than what they were given credit for.

The presence and the possession of these rifles put the Fianna on a new footing. No more broom handles, no more dummy rifles, thought we. Up to that time we had been trained, indeed well trained, with such makeshift "rifles", practised every movement of arms; drill and bayonet fighting with them. They had, it was true, stood us in good stead when nothing better was available for training purposes. We were an "army" now; we proudly thought ourselves soldiers as very deliberately we fashioned our ways on the new weapons. These were intended for the grown up boys, not the real juveniles or senior boys but the "in-betweens". Many of the senior boys, especially those who had participated in the Howth gun-running exploit, had come into possession of a number of rifles. The Howth rifles that we Fianna boys had transferred for safety into that lorry at Puckstown had been stored away under Volunteer control since that day. We felt it was our right to have them, considering the lengths we had gone to to protect them, and our Captain undertook and eventually succeeded in securing them. In this way quite a few of the members of our Company and of other Fianna Companies were armed. The "French bayonets" which we had been carrying for so long as part of our equipment were made adaptable for fixing to the rifle. A small bayonet to fit the new Fianna rifle was made - a bayonet that was the queerest thing imaginable. It caused us many a hearty laugh and gave rise to an amount of fun. "Butter knives" and "Putty knives" they were in turn jokingly called.

Since the formation of the Irish Volunteers the Fianna enjoyed greater prominence and popularity.

On many of the big Volunteer manoeuvres, Fianna members, often times specially selected, acted as guides or scouts to one or both group of contestants. One of the most notable of these occasions was the huge Dublin Brigade all day manoeuvres on the Dublin Mountains - the supposed attack on the village of Stepaside. A few of us, Peadar Brown, Tommy McGrane and myself accompanied the 1st Battalion. We knew the mountains almost inside out. Our task was to lead the Battalion which formed part of the attacking party from Rathfarnham through the most secluded spots. That was a particularly pleasant, though tiring, day. When the manoeuvre was over we marched all the way home. We won the friendship of many a Volunteer officer and rank and file that day.

Besides these big contacts with the Volunteers we had always, and at any time, the privilege of participating with Seán Heuston's Company of Volunteers (D Coy 1st Battalion). We soon became quite familiar on that account with many of the members of that Company. Only one stipulation was enjoined us; that no Fianna business was on that day. This D Coy was seemingly the smallest Company in the Brigade; what they lacked in numbers they gained in efficiency. Seán, we could see, was as popular with this Company of Volunteers as he was in the Fianna. Perhaps his popularity with his Company of Volunteers arose from the same causes that had their fruit in the Fianna - sheer hard work, a pleasant disposition and an indomitable spirit. A lesson, typical of Seán's go ahead methods, was brought home to many a Volunteer on the occasion of an "outing" in which the 1st Battalion

Volunteers were engaged. Seán was given charge of the Battalion that day. We moved off from Parnell Sq. bound for Finglas. It was a test march to find out how soon we could cover the few miles of ground in military order. From the beginning we kept up a more than usual quick march, accentuated by alternative double time bursts. A number of police accompanied us, for no useful purpose, as we often contended. The greatest test of endurance for us was when we had covered the best part of the journey and were "on the straight" along the Cemetery Road where we were given no respite, but urged on quicker and quicker. Gradually men were falling out through sheer exhaustion, winded, unable to keep up the pace. Even the police felt the strain and failed to keep up to us. On and on we went, amid the puffings and blowings of the Volunteers, intermingled with many imprecations and growls. Worse than all, the police, not to be failed, came on an outside car, which they had procured in the meantime, along the road. They must have thought this double quick march was staged for their benefit or that we were up to some fool business or "unlawful" enterprise. They must, however, have gloated over our fast mutilated remnant of our army as seen from their outside-car. Finally, we reached, or should it be said, some of us reached Finglas Bridge, having accomplished the journey in record time, where we entered a field of high prominence overlooking the cemetery and the road and practised the out of field engineering and trench making. The police, in the meantime, had been refused admission to the field. Many and varied comments were made that day about Seán's "wild" action, some not so very complimentary. "Why did they put him in charge,

anyway?. "Hope he doesn't have us any more on such wild chases". "That pace was enough to kill a horse". But many things have a happy ending; and so it was with us when, eventually, in a more leisurely and conforming pace we arrived back in town and felt not a whit worse for our experience.

The election of a new Officer Board of the Fianna in 1915 was an important step forward, not only from the point of view of organisation and administration, but because it stabilised affairs generally. Seán Heuston was appointed Director of Training .

### Chapter Nine.

Soon afterwards there was published and issued a "Fianna Handbook" which was a concise and comprehensive military manual, designed for use as a text book in the Fianna for all training purposes. This book supplied a long felt want in a military force that was progressing yearly. The subjects treated in it comprised Infantry Drill, giving all the commands and movements, Morse and Semaphore Signalling, First Aid, Camping, hints on Scouting, Map reading and Map making. Many of these articles, except Infantry Drill, had already been published in the paper "Irish Freedom". It was sold publicly and secured a good circulation. Many Companies of Volunteers, too, adopted it for training their men. Seán Heuston prior to its publication and afterward worked in Fianna offices in D'Olier St.

In this house was situated the office of "The Irish Review", a monthly literary and cultural magazine that had become famous by its publication of an extraordinary article entitled "Ireland, Germany and the Next War". Many other notable, eminent and divergent personalities contributed to that magazine. Even many of the outstanding Volunteer Officers - Patrick Pearse and Thomas McDonough - regularly contributed poems and anthologies. Other publications on a variety of subjects were issued from No. 12. Seán Heuston spent much of his time there. On many evenings I met him at Kingsbridge as he was leaving his office, and we both proceeded to that place. He always had a spate of writing to do, and we sometimes discussed Fianna and our own Company affairs. On one of those visits I received from him many copies of the "Irish Review". Rumour had it that he had a good share in the work of publishing "The Fianna Handbook".

Though he attained prominence in the different national spheres, it could not be said that he was a "lime lighter" or pushed himself to the forefront; rather was he by nature unassuming and reserved. How often had we noticed, rather ruefully and not a little sadly, his coming on parade without his full Fianna uniform. To our amazement he would display his hat which we often perceived he had tucked away under a loose rainproof coat that he usually wore or covered in brown paper. His light raincoat covered his uniform, tunic, haversack, waterbottle etc. Seán always wore knee breeches and substantial woollen cycling stockings. His raincoat would then be tucked away in his haversack when on parade.

After parade Seán returned to civilian attire, returning home as he came. He wore strong easy fitting boots of a military type, such as were made by Malone's of Nth. King St. This question of being well and suitably shod was one of Seán's big points; so strong was it with him, and of such importance, that he was never known to suffer from foot ailments or tiredness, which, as he often impressed on us, could be so easily attributable to indifferent footwear and want of proper hygiene. Many a lecture he gave us on these same matters. He also was a fluent speaker of the native language. We were given a proof of this one night when a blind man, a friend of the Fianna and other national bodies, named Frank McGinty came to our hall and engaged Seán in conversation for a considerable time, much to our great surprise, for although we knew that he possessed a good knowledge of it we hardly thought that he was so fluent.

The Fianna visited Limerick with the Dublin Brigade Units of the Irish Volunteers on Whit Sunday 1915. The Dublin Volunteers made this visit on the invitation of the Limerick Volunteers and for the purpose of meeting Capt. Monteith, a former officer of the 1st Battalion who had been forcibly ordered by the British authorities to leave Dublin and to reside in Limerick. Other notable Volunteer Officers, including our Fianna Officer and Organiser, Liam Mellows, were similarly deported from Dublin, but they, unlike Monteith, were ordered to live in selected places set aside by the British authorities of all places in England. This move was aimed to thwart the efforts and the progress of the Volunteers. The 1st

Battalion Dublin Brigade felt keenly the loss of Captain Bob Monteith, who had been a tower of strength from the inception of the Volunteer movement. The fact that he was a military man, had served a considerable period of time in the British Army, had voluntarily come over to the Volunteers, had been dismissed from his governmental position and then violently exiled from his home, relatives and friends added zest to the desire of his former comrades to pay him this honour. It could be truly said that few men gained the confidence and fealty of their fellows so easily or as freely as he. Here was a man unknown to them up to nigh two years ago, a man who had lived in anything but national environments and perhaps least credited, because of this, with any spark of nationality. It had happened before in Irish history that out of strange places, and from unlikely environments, men have come forward to take their stand on the side of those whose watchword was Ireland - only Ireland. So in Monteith's case.

He came to the Volunteers as a soldier. In his associations with the Volunteers he acted the part of a soldier. It was his make-up and he threw himself boldly, resolutely into the training of the Volunteers, especially the 1st Battalion, as few men would or could. He too had high ideals - fixed and firm ideals for Ireland's freedom, the soldier's ideals to train men to be soldiers, and training them as such to fight for the ideals that men proclaim to be just and noble. As a result of his indefatigable labourings, his thorough-going system of training and his magnanimous and magnetic personality, he was idolised by all who had the good fortune to be associated with him in the

Volunteer movement. In a word, he was looked up to principally by the officers and men of the 1st Battalion Dublin Brigade of Irish Volunteers.

Our visit to Limerick, or should it be said our stay and our appearance in that city, was on that auspicious occasion productive of the greatest exhibition of hooliganism and rowdyism. Part of our programme consisted of a march through some of the main streets. During the course of this, in passing through one of the thoroughfares, a drunken mob consisting of men and women assailed us, Volunteers and Fianna alike, threw missiles at us, spat at us, cursed us, and some even attempted to break our ranks and snatch the rifles we were carrying from our hands. But for the superb discipline and restraint of our men and boys, and the equally cool heads and steady nerves of our officers, much bloodshed would have ensued. It, however, to an extent helped to mar what might have been a pleasant historic march. We felt grossly abused. Many of the Volunteers, and indeed the Fianna, under the terrible provocation would have welcomed the order from their commanders to quell the disturbance, but to the credit of all no such order was given, with the result that we had to put up with, bear and grin as the saying goes, whatever the mob meted out to us and take them in as calm and orderly a manner as possible. Bad as were these scenes, they would have been nothing in comparison to what might have happened had the Volunteers got out of hand and retaliated by using their guns on the mob. Fortunately better counsel prevailed. We all gave a sigh of relief when we got through that troublesome

street and entered quieter quarters.

We spent the further few hours of that day adjacent to the Dalys' home. The Dalys' name stirred up memories of other times and other men. John Daly of Limerick, the veteran Fenian, was beloved by the Volunteers and Fianna, not alone because of the past but also on account of the part many of his family and relatives were playing in our movement. The Commandant, Ned Daly, of the 1st Battalion was his nephew. Tom Clarke, the veteran Fenian who was then deep in the Volunteer movement, was married to John Daly's niece. Besides, John Daly himself, though then advanced in years, approved and supported the Irish Volunteers, the Fianna and any movement having for its aims the complete independence of Ireland.

The Fianna party present at Limerick that day were the guests of the Limerick Fianna, whose grand hall was put at their disposal and right royally we appreciated their kindness. The Volunteers, too, were accorded facilities to use the hall until the evening when they entrained for Dublin. Our Fianna party remained overnight and slept in the Fianna Hall. The next day, after we had spent a fairly hectic night's "rest" that was punctuated by periods of intermittent bed-time "battles", growls, singing and revelry as we were wont on such occasions, we were treated to another sample of Seán Heuston's Spring-cleaning methods. True to form, he procured a brush and set about making the premises tidy, while we standing by sought to regale him to mild fun and merriment, all of which Seán ~~would~~ took in his usual good natured way. Example being better than precept, we soon followed his lead and had

the place put into ship shape, after which we were allowed our freedom to go anywhere we liked. Some of us toured the lordly Shannon, while others went sightseeing, even to the extent of viewing the mob ground of the previous day, and that without molestation, as it had returned to normal. Stranger than all, many of the towns-people expressed indignation and regret for the scenes of the previous day, some declaring that these were caused, not by local people as a whole but by an imported organised party consisting of supporters of Britain and Redmondites. Our leaving Limerick, after our not unhappy two days' stay there, was the occasion of a hearty send-off by our friends and hosts - the Limerick Fianna and a good sprinkling of Volunteers. Truly, Limerick was beautiful!

The Irish Volunteer movement at this time was going through an anxious and difficult pass, due to many causes. One was the war situation in which Ireland was held to ransom and her people expected to throw themselves on the side of England against Germany. The British Government in return for the measure of Home Rule, which had been placed "on the Statute Book", there to remain until "after the war", sought the young manhood of Ireland to enlist and fight in the British armed forces. Mr. Redmond and those around him acquiesced in this, with only one difference; the British wanted Irishmen to fight for them - would like to get them by any means, even by compulsion.

The Redmondites advocated the voluntary enlistment of Irishmen to fight for England in Irish Regiments - propagating the idea of giving these same Irishmen plenty of green flags, harps and shamrocks, and Irishmen to officer them. In either event they were to be under the control of the British Treasury. The threat of Conscription hung over Ireland; its application depended on whether Ireland rose to the occasion and made a substantial voluntary contribution of man power to the British War Effort or not.

Arrayed against Conscription and voluntary or any other form of enlistment into British forces were the Irish Volunteers and kindred national forces. "Ireland", they declared, "needed Irishmen at home in Ireland". "We serve neither King nor Kaiser" - this slogan, enunciating the Irish-Ireland outlook of these forces, was displayed on a streamer outside Liberty Hall, which as well as being the Headquarters of the Irish Transport Union was also headquarters of the Irish Citizen Army. But at this time thousands of Irishmen, on the advice of the Redmondites and otherwise, had joined the British forces, misled by the Redmondite slogans of "fighting for small nationalities". In many instances "economic pressure" was brought to bear, to induce enlistment, by commercial people and institutions; large numbers of young men were dismissed from their employment in the good cause of serving England. While these things were going on, Ireland, "the one bright spot" was being asked to furnish "more and still more men" to beat the savage Hun. Propaganda, threats, coaxings and inducements were the order of the day. The attitude of the Irish Volunteers, who preferred to remain in and to serve Ireland, was assailed from many quarters, even to the extent of their

dubbed "pro-Germans" and in receipt of German gold. Some of the Irish newspapers backed up the campaign of vilification and abuse of the Irish Volunteers for these and other reasons, in order to prove that the Irish were loyal to England and desirous of England's victory in the war. Yet, in spite of the incessant campaign of shoneenism displayed by the Redmondites and the so-called Irish newspapers, the Irish Volunteer movement held on, oftentimes under great stress and manifold difficulties.

During all this time British authorities kept a very watchful eye on the Irish Volunteers. Already by means of forceable deportations of some of the officers of the Volunteer movement they had struck hard and heavy blows. It looked as if the full rigours of the British law would be applied to counteract and nullify the influence and prestige which up to then the Irish Volunteers wielded. The British authorities knew when, how and whom they could strike effectively. They singled out those whom they considered to be the dangerous ones - and they were for once right in their choice. They planned well; in hitting at the dangerous ones their plans miscarried, for in stifling them, dispossessing them and deporting them the longed for break up of the movement did not materialise. They cracked the shell and left the kernel intact!

That they should have singled out Liam Mellows and the others for deportation, on the score that they were dangerous men because they were officers of the Irish Volunteers, was a new weapon placed in the hands of those who sought the destruction of the Volunteers. The men concerned considered themselves honoured as a

result. This could be said of at least one of them, Liam Mellows, who was one of the most indefatigable and consistent workers in the Volunteer movement. As an organiser of the Volunteers, which he combined with organising the Fianna, there was hardly any village of note that was not visited by him, and from which many recruits were forthcoming. It was not surprising that when repressive measures were to be taken, Liam would be among those singled out for punishment. Verily, the British knew their opponent!

It must be understood that during the period under review Ireland was living under conditions of virtual military rule. The common ordinary law in Ireland had been from the day when Britain entered the European War in August 1914 superceded by war-time regulations known as Defence of the Realm Acts. Freedom of speech, the freedom of the Press, freedom of assembly, and all the inherent rights of the citizens were prescribed by these harsh repressive British laws and ordinances. Special Courts were inaugurated for the specific purpose of dealing with all of those Irishmen and women whose utterances and actions were not favourable to the British cause in the war; in which case, and cases, full liberty was afforded to all and sundry, propagandists, politicians, recruiting agents etc. whose desire it was to see Ireland and her young manhood "fighting for Ireland's battles" in foreign lands, Flanders and elsewhere. Such silly rot as recruiting and training young Irishmen into Corps of Irish Volunteers for service in Ireland alone was neither encouraged nor condoned. The public Press, with few exceptions, were behind the British in the war and gave every encouragement to the policy of recruiting Irishmen for English service.

The Irish character was aroused at the operation of the Defence of the Realm Acts, even to the point of ignoring them, breaking them and even making fun of them. Humorous songs were written and sung about "D.O.R.A." (Dora), some Irish wag having already described it by incorporating the first letter of each of the words, Defence of (the) Realm Act. Such songs were sung at Volunteer rallies, at concerts and Aeriadheachtanna. "Your King and Country needs you", a recruiting slogan used by the British to entrap Irishmen, became the title of a satire that was sung up and down the country by Irish Volunteers and kindred people. Another song - "Sinn Féiners, pro Germans, alive, alive oh", sung to the air of "Cockles and Mussels alive, alive oh", was also a favourite wherever Irish Volunteers and Fianna gathered and marched.

In implementation of the close and active connection existing between the Fianna and Irish Volunteers, the Fianna authorities in the year 1915 adopted a new scheme whereby the senior members of the Fianna were encouraged to link up with the Irish Volunteers. This order had the effect of a large number of Fianna boys joining Volunteer Companies. Three of us, Peadar Browne, Tommy McGrane and myself accordingly joined "C" Coy, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, which at the time paraded at the Irish National Foresters Hall, 41 Parnell Square. This Coy was commanded by Captain Frank Fahy who had superceded Capt. Michael Judge of Howth Gun-running fame and who at a later period discontinued serving when the "split" occurred.

There was one special condition attached to our transfer to the Volunteers, and that was to the effect that

we continue membership of the Fianna and that we would only attend Volunteer parades etc. if and when we were free from Fianna business. Such an arrangement worked well. In course of time some, including myself, threw themselves entirely into Volunteer work. I found a new outlet for my energies as from the outset I was placed in charge of the Company rifle range to instruct and supervise shooting practice. This was carried out in the basement of "41". We fired with a .22 bore miniature rifle, the cartridges for same being distributed by the Company Adjutant, John E. Lyons, and payment made to him at the rate of a penny for five rounds. Every parade night, which was generally on Thursday of each week, would see a number of men testing their skill. This work had its humorous side. The portion of the basement set aside for shooting - a long narrow passage - could not boast of any form of lighting, at least not where the target was, and so we had to procure candles, one of which had to be placed very near the target area. That was where the fun arose, as generally the rifle shots fired close to it snuffed out the candle. It was trying, yet funny, having to work under such conditions. But why complain when man had to be trained to shoot?

Another place where target practice was carried out was in Father Mathew Park, Fairview. There we would repair on Sunday and enjoy the more congenial atmosphere and facilities for firing our allotted rounds of ammunition. Added to this was the pleasure of finding myself among new enthusiastic comrades, with whom I was getting quickly acquainted. Although at this time I severed direct contact with Fianna activities, yet I had not lost my interest in and concern for its

welfare. Friendships arose, however, in the new sphere, and a new interest in the affairs of "C" Coy opened up when in a short time I was made one of the Company mobilisers. Fate also brought me to share the companionship of many men, but in particular two - Frank McNally and Dinny Holmes - with both of whom, especially the former, I became closely associated, very fondly associated.

An event of unusual importance to the Irish Volunteers and kindred military forces was the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa, the veteran Fenian. He had died in America but his remains were brought to Ireland to be buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. This gave added impetus to the Volunteers. A public lying-in-state at the City Hall was accorded the remains; armed uniformed Volunteers and Fianna furnished guards of honour around the bier and the building, which was visited by tens of thousands of Irishmen and Irishwomen full of sympathy and honour being extended thereby. Then came the day of the funeral when thousands of people from the four quarters of the world came to pay respect. Most important and impressive of all was the presence of fully armed detachments of Volunteers from all parts of Ireland. Dublin was one armed camp and all the time the other forces (British) in Dublin Castle looked on at the sights that were being enacted before their eyes. Our own 1st Dublin Battalion under Commandant "Ned" Daly attended in strength that day. When "the greatest Fenian of them all", "the unconquerable Gael", he whom the ballad writer mused:

Robbed no man, and spilled no blood,  
 But they sent him off to jail,  
 Because he was O'Donovan Rossa,  
 And a son of Gráinne Mhail

was laid to rest the Irish Volunteers and other Irish militant forces paid him full military honours. Our Commander, Pádraic Pearse, delivered the graveside oration in the most moving, impassioned and solemn terms. No other man in the Volunteers was as fitted to render such signal homage and pay such effective tribute to Rossa than he who spoke in the name of the young manhood of Ireland and the new army of Ireland, the Irish Volunteers. To those of us drawn around the grave of the patriot dead it was a sad and touching moment. No monarch, few statesmen or warriors could be more fittingly honoured. Even the simplest and the commonest folk amongst us felt impressed, nay elevated and inspired, by the truly wonderful pageantry of this spontaneous demonstration. He, the dead Gael, had come home to rest in his native soil. Pearse standing there, dignified and respectful, in close proximity to the grave brought us in spirit into communion with the dead warrior. His every word, his every gesture, intoxicated us, awed us and inspired us. We seemed to sense the meaning of it all - this wonderful tribute to the dead, the touching eloquence of Pearse at the grave, the presence and purpose of the Irish Volunteers - "the new generation that had been baptised in the Fenian faith and tradition". Even the echoes of the "Last Post" and the rifle volleys fired as a soldier's tribute over his grave were less impressive and least expressive than the words spoken by Pearse on that eventful occasion.

We were now at the end of another year. The Defenders of the Realm and the Defenders of Small Nationalities were still busy seeking whom and what they would destroy - in Ireland of course. The entrance of the new year 1916 found the Irish Volunteers and Fianna

alive and showing signs of growing pains. It was noticeable, too, that the police authorities were paying greater attention than ever before; detectives in plain clothes and uniformed police were allocated to the work of keeping under strict surveillance the halls in which Volunteer parades were held, or where individual officers or special men congregated, and all Volunteer outdoor marches and other activities. Indeed many of the police detectives, throwing discretion to the winds, made it their business to be literally at the entrances, nay, on the doorsteps of Volunteer rendezvous. Some of them at least didn't seem anxious to conceal their identity, or even their mission of watchfulness, and the most brazen thing of all was their seeming delight in saluting according to the courtesies of the times individual Volunteers visiting the various haunts with a "Good-night Jim" (or Pat or Seán as the case might be), which seemed so strangely out of place under the circumstances coming from such a source. Yet, there it was! Sometimes, however, they were brought on a wild goose chase in order to decoy them from their vantage points of watchfulness, and then as was generally the case, eluded. It must be admitted, however, that that type of ruse did not always work out in our favour, although a few did.

One such instance may be cited. The story is told that one night Seán Heuston, who had been transacting Fianna or Volunteer business at Volunteer Headquarters, 2 Dawson St., came out carrying a neatly wrapped parcel which in length and appearance resembled a rifle. He was immediately shadowed by a detective. Seán it seems had deliberately planned the ruse in order to take the

detective away from No. 2. The latter personage fell into the trap and Seán rather joyously brought him for a good walk from College Green along the many streets that stretch up to James' St., then turned down Stephen's Lane, turning out at the Kingsbridge and along the south side of the Liffey. Arriving near the Queen St. Bridge Seán threw the parcel over the wall and into the river. His delight in doing that on the detective who had doggedly trailed him can be better imagined than described. It was only then that the detective realised that he had been fooled, and, alas, before he had recovered his balance Seán had boarded a tram on the North Quays, leaving the detective to bewail his utter humiliation.

There were other occasions when Seán Heuston foiled the efforts of detective officers "to keep him under cover". Seán was always acutely suspicious and alert to the point of extreme awareness of being shadowed. Hence he set out to play them tricks. One never knew when he would play these, which took several forms. But two of the most common types in which Seán excelled could be mildly described as a runaway boarding of fast moving trams or in playing his game of hide and seek in busy thoroughfares. Not uncommonly he utilised the maze of streets and alleys that he knew so well and were of inestimable value in shaking off would-be pursuers. More often he would rather suddenly "dive" around a street corner, walk a short distance and then as suddenly turn back. In that way he would come face to face with his pursuers should any such be on his heels.

Around this period, also, the police were very busy in trying to recover British Army service rifles that

had been lost, stolen or bought from members of the British garrison stationed in Dublin or soldiers on leave from the war fronts. Many of these had "fallen" into the hands of the Volunteers by devious ways and for different sums of money - sometimes a few drinks, other times a few pounds, or for neither one or the other but by means of forceful persuasion. Sometimes an innocent visit of a Volunteer to within the precincts of military barracks resulted in a rifle being found, and quite a few were passed through barrack railings or over the barrack walls or in pre-arranged rendezvous outside. Many a Volunteer could tell exciting tales of such "lost, stolen and found" British service rifles and how they found their way into the service of Ireland. But some of the lost rifles were re-captured by the police and punishment was duly meted out to the "avaricious" Irish Volunteers in whose possession they were found.

On St. Patrick's Day, 17th March 1916, an event of great importance took place in Dublin. It was the parade and review of the Dublin Brigade Irish Volunteers in College Green. A scene that was reminiscent of another memorable occasion when another set of Irish Volunteers paraded in the same place. It was a far cry between the days of Grattan and that March day 1916. The contrast was also more striking, more pronounced. Then Ireland had the semblance of a parliament of its own; even allowing for its many severe disabilities, and that it was prescribed in various ways, but in 1916 the Parliament House did not exist - it was the Bank of Ireland and Ireland was governed from London where the Home Rule Bill, the charter of self-government, resided nice and smug on the Statute Book. Then again Grattan's Volunteers were fully regimented, accoutred

and armed, could drill, parade and arm in public and, unlike us, lead cannons to back up their demands. However, on this day in 1916 there was a big muster of Volunteers. Our first Battalion, under Comdt. Ned Daly, paraded at Parnell Sq. and were marched to the church of SS. Michael and John in Essex St. for Mass. That was an edifying sight and occasion, after which we marched along Dame St. and formed a hollow square in front of the Bank of Ireland in College Green. All traffic was held up while we went through our various movements, which lasted for nearly two hours, after which we marched back to our several rendezvous. All the men on parade that day were thrilled to the quick at that magnificent, imposing assemblage, even more so by the wonderful array of modern service rifles on parade, one Company of the 2nd Battalion in particular being conspicuous in that respect.

Came a Sunday in April when, acting on instruction of our Battalion Commandant, we were mobilised at Father Mathew Park. We had previously been informed that the police contemplated raiding it. The Volunteer plan was to forestall that raid, which did not materialise though a large force of police were assembled outside. After waiting for a couple of hours they departed without making any effort to raid. We accordingly followed suit, none the worse for the tension and excitement. This experience brought home to many Volunteers the dangers and vicissitudes of the moment. The air was filled with rumours - strange ugly rumours concerning the Irish Volunteer movement, Dublin Castle and the Irish "situation" at the time. The average Volunteer had no doubt in his mind on that score because there was ample evidence available to lead one

to conjecture that "things were moving on". Few could say how or why, except to point to the seemingly watchfulness of the police and the interests they were taking in Volunteer activities during the period. Individual Volunteers might accordingly be pardoned for being "on edges". We were, as could be well understood, anxious if not wholly inquisitive for information. My good companion, Frank McNally, whose confidence I had gained since I joined the Volunteers was always to the fore with news as he seemed to know quite a number of "big shots" on our side, many of whom were "in the know" in Volunteer circles. Frank was well versed in Volunteer affairs generally. I had, then, reason to think, judging by what I then learned, that the Volunteer movement was, if I might be pardoned for again using the term "on edges", and that the situation was fraught with great possibilities and consequences. We had occasion, oh, how many times, during our habitually long walks together on week nights or Sunday afternoons of discussing current topics, and in particular the Volunteer affairs, and he, who was both candid and sincere, left no doubt in my mind about the serious trend of events. Of course I sensed that myself, and for more than one reason.

My position as a mobiliser in the Company - I was only one of several - had to an extent opened up my mind to unusual activities. It was noticeable that there was quite a spate of mobilisations carried out of late. The testing of the mobilisation scheme, with a view to securing the most rapid and effective attendance of the Company members at various times and centres, was one indication that conveyed to my mind that unusual things were afoot. These were called "test mobilisations" and

had no relation to ordinary drill parades or routine. An acquaintanceship between myself and a fellow mobiliser, Seán Kennedy, sprang up about this time. Then the feverish activity associated with the arming and equipping of our Company! Of course this was always carried out but it appeared to be more pronounced since the St. Patrick's Day Review. Shooting practice was also accelerated, greater scope was given to revolver and bayonet exercises. Another sign of the times was the innovation of carrying out night manoeuvres in the streets. One of these was conducted on a Saturday night around Stoneybatter, Arbour Hill, Oxmantown Road and North Circular Road, using the Colmcille Hall in Blackhall St. as Battalion headquarters for the operation. This was something new and unusual in our mode of training.

Our men were responding to these several forms of activity wholeheartedly and uncomplainingly. Indeed, they could not get enough to satiate their appetites, so keen and enthusiastic were they in Volunteer work. Again orders had been issued to the Irish Volunteers to take greater care for the safety of their rifles, and on a particular occasion at a public meeting held in the Ancient Concert Rooms in Brunswick (now Pearse) St. Eoin McNeill, the Volunteer Commander in Chief had expressed strong words on the score that the Volunteers would "protect their arms with their lives". As a direct warning to the British authorities, he declared that if force was used to disarm us, the Volunteers on their part would sell their lives dearly in order to frustrate any such move to disarm them.

How often did we, Frank and I, settle the affairs of Ireland, and always in the way that was fair and

equitable to Ireland. Any two Volunteers could do, and perhaps did, the same thing. Anyway, why should the British be here at all? Would we have to fight? If so, how and when? Ever and anon the adage "England's difficulties are Ireland's opportunities". The Irish Volunteers were a thorn in England's side. Everything pointed in the direction of a tussle, the nature of which few could foresee or comprehend. Would our movement go the way of the Fenian movement, the '48 movement and the '98 movement? Who could hazard a guess? Frank, however, always was in possession of real live information and that from reliable sources. Such news impressed me, for it appeared he was in the way of knowing many important personages in the Volunteers whose names became familiar to me by constant repetition. He would relate to me tit-bits of conversations which he had with such people on political and national affairs and generally Irish Volunteer affairs. He was, we both were, rankers - belonging to the predominant majority of Volunteers - rank and filers, and yet, common to all such folk, we were alive to some of the things going on and did not conceal our anxiety lest by chance or ill-luck that movement would be crushed. Thus we mused, argued and conjectured.

The following few days, the days of Holy Week, were given over to preparation for the field-day and manoeuvres that had been planned to be held on Easter Sunday. There was great anticipation for this event in our Company as well as all Companies of the Dublin Brigade Irish Volunteers. At our Company rally on that Thursday - Holy Thursday - night, April 20th, we received our final orders. Yet more striking than all, a special command not to leave Dublin unless for very urgent reasons was given to us. It was enjoined on us to keep as near home as possible,

and should we have to leave home, we were to leave news of where we could be easily found. Special care was to be exercised in protecting all arms and equipment entrusted to us, with the special proviso that they should be left in good working order. As well as these orders, the mobilisers were instructed to keep in immediate touch with the men in the event of a special mobilisation in the meantime. Many a Volunteer thought these orders - or some of them - unusual, and all were inquisitive.

On that same Holy Thursday night, during and after our drill parade there was brisk activity in our Company. The officers and adjutant were busy in distributing revolvers, various types of ammunition and equipment, to the men. Besides these things, groups of men were busy coming and going on various errands. A group of us were dispatched to Lieutenant Joe McGuinness's drapery shop in Lower Dorset St. on the task of transferring parcels of equipment etc. to "41". Arriving back, the stuff was duly distributed. Men were fitting on equipment, looking over revolvers, checking ammunition etc. Many of us were startled by the big quantities of material that changed hands on that night. We had reason to feel that we would not be the worst equipped Company on the following Sunday.

The next day, which was Good Friday and a holiday for quite a number of us, was given up to keeping in contact with each other. This was easy to do for outside religious service we had no means of disporting ourselves. Many Volunteers found the occasion a good one for looking over and cleaning their rifles and revolvers and seeing that their equipment was in good

serviceable order and put into safe quarters, which were the wisest precautions to take at the time. Many of us sought companionship of fellow Volunteers and thus repaired down town where we opined there would be sure to be a few of "the boys" to whom we could share confidences and, of course, discuss the "latest news". On this Good Friday it was quite a simple matter to meet fellow Volunteers in the principal streets and particularly at the Pillar. We were all eager for news. We had of late become addicted to the question "Any news?", so much so that there was no great impertinence or novelty in asking it then. Some had news which many of us were already aware of; others related news of strange happenings - or were these only rumours? They were of a mixed variety, extraordinary, and some seemed to be very far-fetched. Some of the Volunteers, who claimed that they were well "in the know" declared that there were strange things in the offing. Could they not argue with great gusto the strange "stand to" order which had been issued to us the night before? Was it not strange and unusual? But then some Volunteers were alarmists at times! Some even saw danger and feared danger when there was no apparent sign of it. There was sometimes the trouble that they knew too much or too little.

Truly we might and could be bewildered. Indeed many of us were, and for, as we thought, just cause. Of a surety the "stand to" order was a conundrum if ever there was one! Some considered it to mean that there was some trick in it. Some even thought that the British authorities were contemplating taking steps against us to put our movement out of commission, to disband us, to disarm us. Quite a likelihood too, and always a

possibility - perhaps more of a probability at such a time than ever before. It was so bewildering, so confusing. What if some of the rumours were true?

Easter Saturday - another day of rumours. Verily some of these rumours had a happy or unhappy knack of adding to our bewilderment and our confusion. Strange rumours about the war - German submarines in large numbers operating in the Irish sea - peculiar tidings concerning Volunteer affairs and supposed activities of Dublin Castle authorities. What was going on in the south of Ireland - in Kerry? Strange news about the motor car that went over the cliff at Killorglin. The sad news had been circulated that poor Charlie Monahan had lost his life in a mysterious motor fatality on Kerry coast. We felt sorrow for his loss. Some of the men who claimed to know things suggested that he was on Volunteer business. But some asked, "Why did he go there - why? Charlie was a good soul, a true and brave Volunteer, an expert mechanic and wireless operator who had come home from America.

Meanwhile the order about the big Field-day and manoeuvres for the following day held good. We mobilisers had confirmed that, and the men on our lists were notified. Our Battalion was to parade at Colmcille Hall. Still the inevitable question "any news"? which passed from Volunteer to Volunteer until it became threadbare and boring in the extreme. We didn't seem to be able to get away from using the words with greater frequency during the past couple of days. Everyone was eager for news, always in search for news and still more news. On this day we had more than a sufficiency of it, much of which was baffling and uncomprehensible. Volunteers spoke in whispers, in

secret, earnest conversation, one with another. It had become a common thing for them to act thus so that their words and opinions and the many confidential types of work in the Volunteers would not reach unfriendly ears. Even rumours they thought should not be too openly or too freely spoken. The element of mystery - or was it mystery - attaching to the various scraps of news or rumours seemed to be all too evident and found obvious responses in the conscious or sub-conscious minds of men who exchanged confidences in a situation which some people might term mystifying. There seemed to be no way of getting to the bottom of or to understand these strange rumours. Even as we eventually returned home, up to the fateful moment of going to sleep that night, the news and rumours which we had heard during that day disturbed us not a little.

The longed for Easter Sunday morning arrived at last. Undoubtedly every individual Volunteer would be astir early. It was and many a comrade living close-by was. Returning from early Mass I became suddenly aware of the cancellation of our programme for the day. The newsboys were more loud, more vociferous in advertising their sales of papers. The days issue of the "Independent" gave the news that Eoin MacNeill had countermanded the orders for that day - the proposed Field-day and manoeuvres for the day were cancelled. Was it true? Why should it appear in the public press anyway? Surely a strange procedure from the usual practice! Confusion confounded! Here was mystery - deep, hidden, peculiar mystery. Why should our plans be countermanded? Why should we be demobilised in this way? What was the compelling reason for it? These and a score of other questions flashed

across my mind - must flash across the minds of every individual Volunteer on hearing or reading this extraordinary news - the countermanding order.

What could any Volunteer do in such circumstances - obey McNeill's order? But what about the other order about "keeping in touch with one another", or better still to wait for Company orders. They would invariably be forthcoming if there was any alteration in the plans for the days work. Reason dictated that a good Volunteer would fall back on this procedure. It had been our guiding point, our guiding star, from the beginning of our career in the Volunteers. In the meantime, why not get into touch with some other member or members of our Company to find out what's what?

Strange as it may seem I was soon to receive orders from the Company Officer Commanding, Capt. Fahy. That order in effect cancelled the days programme and we were advised to await further orders. My position as mobiliser required me to notify a certain group of men of the changed plan. Before doing so I got into touch with another mobiliser of our Company, Seán Kennedy, who lived in a street nearby. He, too, had received the demobilisation order. Then to business we both went to acquaint our men, some of whom were in their homes and some absent for various causes. Any whom I met were alarmed, excited, bewildered by the news - especially McNeill's orders in the papers. Some even were in uniform ready to obey the original order for the days work and all were anxious to know the reasons for the cancellation.

There was alas nothing to be done that day.

Volunteers sought the company of fellow Volunteers

again to ask the fateful question "any news?" I met more Volunteers down town that day than ever before. The same tense, anxious atmosphere prevailed as on the previous two days. This bombshell of cancelling our orders had a very shattering effect on us. The men showed it in their faces, expressed it in words that betokened unreality, uncertainty and portensions. Some even spoke in terms that signified real or impending danger. Most Volunteers were wondering why and for what cause the original plan to carry out a days manoeuvre was cancelled in this fashion.

There stood McNeill's countermanding order cancelling the Volunteer Field-day. No matter how we would debate, discuss and argue the point, the fact remained that we were definitely forbidden to move. Then on top of all this was the demobilisation order which had been issued by our respective Volunteer Unit Commanders. One mystery on top of another. What could we think? What could we discern of a situation that had us baffled, mystified and embarrassed? What kind of situation were we in that could give rise to such strange extraordinary and sensational moves? These and scores of other questions we asked ourselves; other Volunteers asked one another or asked themselves. We seemed never to receive a fitting answer so mystifying was the whole thing, and we always came back to McNeill's cancellation.

It was a tragic and painful situation we Volunteers felt ourselves in that day, without real authentic information as to the reason for the calling off the manoeuvres. We had, however, enough sense left to know that there must have been good reason for that. How could we know what it all meant? We knew, however,

that somehow, sometime, an answer would be forthcoming when the mystery - if mystery it was - would be resolved, in which event we would be better able to judge the wisdom or unwisdom of the whole proceedings.

Perhaps the answer was to come to some by strange paths or in strange ways - "await further orders". Had these words any fateful important meaning. They might mean anything or nothing. Supposing they were intended to mean something, what could that something mean for us ordinary Volunteers? Here was presented another mystery. Yet the order said "await further orders". Probably the issuing of the further orders might clarify the situation.

That night a new element of mystery was introduced into the already over-laden atmosphere of suspicion, anxiety and speculation then prevailing. This was given emphasis by a meeting of our Company officers and N.C.O.s called by Capt. Fahy which was held in the MacHale Branch of the Gaelic League in their rooms at the corner of Blessington St. and Berkeley St., over J.J. Walsh's premises. The Company mobilisers, myself included, were also present. There was a ring of importance attached to this assembly, which many of us present regarded as unusual, if not to a degree ominous. Ostensibly intended to check up on the mobilising system as carried out that day, we mobilisers were required to give a detailed report of our own and the men's compliance with the demobilisation orders. This was regarded as a test mobilisation to find out if all the men of the Company were duly contacted, and also to ascertain the length of time it took to mobilise all the men. Another important feature of the meeting was the repetition of the enjoiner

to hold ourselves in readiness for "further orders".

After the meeting we had time for mutual conversation between comrades on the strange events of the day. The most inquisitive amongst us sought the company of confidants or those whom we considered well in the know in order to obtain a true account of the political situation. Indeed, as an index of this natural desire to communicate with one another, several groups were to be seen in earnest conclave. I found myself in one of these groups and in the company of a few men whom I had long since regarded as trustworthy and reliable in the sense that they knew something from the "inside" of the movement. What scraps of information I picked up therein convinced me that we were in some kind of a jamb. Further to that there were strange hints about "fighting". This word played tricks with me when eventually I left the company of my friends on that Easter Sunday night. Here again was yet another mystery thought I.

#### Chapter 10.

The next morning which was Easter Monday, 24th April 1916, started with an air of mystery - the mysterious movements of Volunteers and the mysterious rumours of the Volunteers mobilising and of the Citizen Army being mobilised. Volunteers and members of the Citizen Army in the street where I resided were astir, and, if I was not mistaken, engaged on some mission or other. What would be their business? Curiosity aroused me, with the result that I contacted a fellow mobiliser, Seán Kennedy - for the purpose of finding out if he had any orders regarding our Company. He had no news, however, except that he had heard from a neighbour in Jervis St. that B Coy was being mobilised. We wondered what was on now - would our Company

be mobilised. I returned home to learn that a man had called. My orders were to mobilise men to be at Colmcille Hall at 10, full arms and equipment. It was close to that time now. I again got in touch with Seán Kennedy who had similar orders and I left word that I would call for him when I had completed my rounds, allowing, as I thought, ample time for him to mobilise his men, most of whom lived on the south side. Hence this mobilisation was to test our speed and endurance. Certainly it did so in my case for I had never yet been put to it to carry out an order that required to be executed so quickly and urgently.

It usually took well over an hour for me to complete the mobilising of the men on my list for I had to cover a fairly wide area. On this occasion I had to perform the work in a shorter space of time. No dilly dallying, no little chats as formerly. Just the plain orders and away. I doubt if anyone was more relieved than I when it was finished, although in the process <sup>I had</sup> to "use" one of my brothers to notify one of our men who, I feared, was a bit out of reach for me. Then to get myself ready - uniform, equipment etc. When this was accomplished, taking leave of my mother I went to Seán Kennedy's home, and he having to undergo the ordeal of leave taking we both proceeded on our journey. We were going out to fight for Ireland! We both had enough information to suggest that although our mobilisation orders did not mention it, this hurried gathering of the clans denoted fighting.

We hurried on, making a short detour in our journey to avoid passing the Bridewell police barracks, on our direct route to Colmcille Hall. Arriving at the

latter place, we beheld a large muster of men of the 1st Battalion, including a fair mixture of officers and men of our own (C) Coy. Commandant Ned Daly, our Battalion O/C, looked as usual so spic and span, every inch an officer and quite in command of himself. The same could be said of all the other Battalion Staff officers - Eamonn Morkan, Eamon Duggan and our own Company Officer, Frank Fahy, and Lieut. Joe McGuinness. There was a certain quiet dignity about them all. One could not fail to notice the hub-bub prevailing in the hall; men were to be seen engaged in looking over their rifles and revolvers, adjusting and arranging their equipment, sorting out their various possessions of ammunition and placing them into bandoliers, pouches, haversacks or ordinary coat pockets. Quite a deal of ammunition and equipment was being distributed to supplement existing individual stocks. Rifles too passed hands; rifles of various demoninations and calibres. What a miscellaneous selection of material was "on parade" that morning, and the human element of a mixed brand too.

The men were entering and had entered into this form of activity as if it were just "ordinary routine" - with gay spirits, good humouredly, and orderly in the extreme. Some of these they had, time and again been in the habit of doing preparatory to going on marches and manoeuvres. But on this morning there was more animation, greater bustle and flurry than was in evidence on any previous occasion. There was a feeling too of restrained excitement, of controlled emotions; the very atmosphere breathed of something that was hard to define or explain. It would be hard to assess the relationship between the men and that something were one to judge by exterior signs or appearances that could be so

deceptive and puzzling. One would of necessity have to search deep and far into the hidden recesses of mind and heart to reach a solution of the problem that many of these men were nursing and had made their very own. For in the midst of this busy scene there lurked the premonition that some big move was afoot and that this sudden mobilisation was of a different kind and nature. Perhaps not all those Volunteers who were assembled there were fully aware that their presence signified anything out of the ordinary. Some there were, however, who knew that they were assembled for the purpose of playing a man's part - a soldier's part - in the affray that was inevitably to accrue.

At last everything is ready. The men are in harness - armed, accoutred, and having been put through the usual military evolutions, brought into line. Then our Commandant, Ned Daly, faced us - addressed us:

"Men of the 1st Battalion:

I have an important announcement to make.... to strike a blow for Ireland...The Irish Republic.. will be... proclaimed..to day.. We rely on.. you men.. to do..your..duty.. and. give. loyal obedience.. to your officers.. If there.. is any.. man.. here.. that is not.. prepared .. to take.. the risk.. let him fall out of the ranks. We will not think any the worse of him".

All present showed signs of deep emotion, were spellbound by this announcement. Only for a split second after they had been addressed by their beloved O/C did the full consciousness of the dramatic import of the words become perceptible. During this time a strange uncanny silence prevailed. Suddenly as if by common accord the spell was broken, restraint and quietude was thrown aside and a period of excitement ensued. Not a man moved out of the ranks - no one refused to go into the fight. As

if by magic life and movement came to the men! They gave unmistakable approval to the announcement. "Thank God the day has come at last" was given utterance to by many a Volunteer that day. The tension was over and men, many of whom were up to now preoccupied with their own thoughts and anxieties, gave vent and expression to their feelings in regard to the task awaiting fulfilment - the freeing of Ireland.

There was little time to spare for any prolonged demonstration or excitement, but full use was made of it to commune one with another in true Volunteer spirit and camaraderie so fondly born and tenderly nursed in a movement that had been initiated to uphold and defend the rights and liberties of the Irish people.

At last the bubble was burst! Was this the solution to the mystery or mysteries of the past few days? What bearing could this new move have on the previous cancellation order by McNeill and the subsequent demobilisation order by our Commanders? Were these part of the same mystery? Who could tell - who bothered to know at a time when we were going out to do and dare. We didn't even give a thought where and how the fight was to be waged. Our loyalty and trust were reposed in our commanders whom we idolised and respected.

Then a few more military movements in that Colmcille Hall and we were paraded outside in Blackhall St. where we were formed up in marching order and soon received the order "Quick march". Into Queen St. we went, turned left into Arran Quay. On reaching a point further down we entered Church St. where our "C" Coy was halted and the rest of the Battalion continued marching ahead along that street. We were soon brought to the

realisation of the importance of this move when Capt. Fahy and Lieut. McGuinness, in seemingly great haste, subdivided our Company, and appointing N.C.O.s to certain groups ordered the taking over of various positions in the area. One group under Peadar Clancy was to take over Church St. Bridge; the group in which I was placed, under Sergeant Mark Wilson, was entrusted with the task of occupying position from corner of Hammond Lane to Sharkey's Iron Foundry which commanded Chancery Lane and embraced a line of houses between these points. Another group was sent to both the front and east end of the Four Courts. We weren't long in position when a deal of excitement arose due to a big burly policeman endeavouring to pass through our lines. When challenged he refused to halt or surrender. A scuffle ensued and the brave bobby was overpowered, but not before he had received a slight revolver shot in his elbow. In the midst of the melee he could be heard to say, "I'm as good an Irishman as any of ye". We admired his pluck but not his indiscretion, and because a good deal of valuable time was wasted in dealing with him at a time when there was every likelihood of the British troops coming to engage us. Every moment was valuable to us to erect obstructions and barricades across street corners and selected places, to occupy commanding buildings, to have men placed in the most advantageous way possible, and mainly and principally to occupy the Four Courts which we had learned was our garrison post.

As it was our position was precarious; situated as we were then we were merely a stones throw from the nearest barracks - the Royal Barracks - which distance could easily be covered in the space of fifteen or twenty minutes. Assuming that the British were early

apprised of our activities, we had reason to feel apprehensive that they were then on their way to tackle us. We assumed, also, that the movement of the policeman in question had relation to the spreading of the alarm and for that purpose he was making towards the Bridewell Police barracks which was situated within fifty yards of the nearest point where some of our men were stationed. Here our men were in an exposed position. It was fortunate that while this melee was going on some other men of the Company had gained access to the Four Courts. We could see some of them in the west side - the Records Office side. Sergeant Tommy Allen was in charge. Seán Kennedy, too, was there. Later another group entered the north side of the building facing the Bridewell, Seán Flood among them.

Prior to this a regular fusillade of shots had been heard, apparently a short distance away. We had reason to think that these heralded the approach of the British. Our group, or some of them, at the top of Chancery St. were in position behind what was intended as a barricade but was only an obstruction which had been hastily placed there, consisting of various odds and ends of material taken, or as we termed it commandeered, from nearby premises. There we were in various attitudes, some kneeling, some standing, and the wisest lying prone on the ground awaiting the "attack", while in some of the houses behind us other Volunteers were in position. We must have looked a strange motley of soldiers there with our miscellaneous array of guns, dressed in various fashions, some in Volunteer uniforms and others in their "Sunday best" attire, accentuated by a not too pronounced military order, deportment or even aggressiveness. It might even be perceived that we lacked training in manning a position

if notice was taken of the poor or indifferent show we made in taking cover. But then, to give us our due, we were not veteran soldiers or war veterans but only plain Volunteers governed by certain limitations in training and in armaments. We had our anxieties - indeed more than our share - for none of us knew for certain whether we would be able to stand up to this test. Besides few, and very very few indeed, knew or could guess what our reactions would be in a real fight. Few had even fired a single shot out of the guns they were carrying.

A very strange thing occurred applicable to some of the previous remarks. I happened to be one of the unwary ones situated in the aforementioned position. As I knelt all alert and attentive a shot rang out, fired by one of our men from behind where I was placed. I felt a burning sensation in my right ear and presumed I was hit. The shock almost sent me reeling. Imagine my plight and feelings when I discovered that the "marksman" had been so benevolent as to place the muzzle of his rifle on my shoulder, which he considered was a good resting position, and without further ado popped at - above all things - a horse that was bearing mad on us. Fortunately I was not injured, but the side of my face was "blacked" with powder from his Howth gun. I made a vow from that time on not to afford resting facilities for any gun or gunner, and I was happy to breathe a prayer of thanks that the poor horse was spared even less discomfiture than I was. By the by, the horse belonged to "them Lancers down there", which was the description given by a woman who passed shortly afterwards.

That first alarm, caused by the shooting which

sounded so close, the reason for which was not quite clear to us, and the presence of that horse and a few others - army horses at that - prowling in our vicinity engendered in us the feeling that the British were on the move to attack us. It was later intimated that there was a troop of Lancers in Charles St. They had taken refuge there after being attacked by our men a while before. In the flurry and excitement of the initial stages of our activity we hadn't time to think of anything except the question, a burning and pertinent one at that, would our forces be afforded sufficient time to gain and consolidate their prize - the Courts? We were now quite a reasonable period in action, holding a line from Church St. bridge along Church St., and as far as we were concerned in our little space no sign of a British uniform or force was to be seen. The die was cast! The crack of rifle and machine gun fire could be plainly heard, which seemed to indicate that the British had come into action in various parts of the city. We were not in a position to discern the correct location of the firing. The only thing that mattered was - we were in this thing and that being so would have to face the job which we had set out to do.

Whether due to early shooting or a matter of military arrangement, the group of which I was a member were moved into adjacent houses, some of us placed in rooms over a public-house in Church St. This building was behind the obstruction which we had hastily erected and manned sometime previously. Further, it was situated almost opposite the Records Office and gave a good field of fire and view of Chancery St. Certainly it was a better proposition for us than the street below, and while these dispositions were being effected additional Volunteers,

some in uniform and all armed, were moving along Church St. or from other directions to supplement our small forces. A fair deal of excitement was caused me by seeing a few of my former Fianna comrades, Eamon Martin, Garry and Paddy and Paddy Daly Holohan/included, passing by, coming from the direction of the Quays. I learned that they were returning from a special mission concerning the destruction of the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park that day. Enquiring as to the whereabouts of Seán Heuston, I was told that they didn't know. He might be further on, in which direction they went.

Prior to this I had seen my redoubtable companion - Frank McNally. His rifle slung on his shoulder, he had walked all the way from his home in Ballybough, a good couple of miles distance. It was all hours when he was informed of "the scrap". There were mutual warm handshakes and exchange of hearty greetings and a lively sense of being together again, but not for long as Frank was soon afterwards brought into the Courts. He related to me some news of affairs "down town" which impressed me that others besides ourselves were "out" in the fight. News too was leaking out from various sources of activities in other parts, especially in O'Connell St. where the "Shin Fayners" (Sinn Féiners) were fighting, and later some women and girls carrying quantities of household articles and sports goods passed us. We did not know for sometime that looting had broken out in that vicinity.

We were not destined to be long in our new post. This time we were moved into the Four Courts to take up position in the Land Registry opposite the Bridewell police barracks. A few of us, however, found ourselves

placed in a green grassy patch at the end of that structure. A huge railing divided us from the street. We didn't feel anything secure in our new position although we had a certain satisfaction of being able to lie prone on a slope that continued around the building. This gave us a good view of the approaches leading to our position and afforded us a fair amount of cover. Behind us were other members of our group under Sergt. Wilson. Later that evening, when darkness was falling, we were transferred there. Oh, what a relief!

Our immediate concern was the group of Lancers who were sniping at our building, and other buildings in the Courts, our men replying to some from their different types of guns. The different sounds caused us many sensations until we got used to them. What a vast difference between the dull heavy report of the "Howth" gun and the sharp ringing sound of the Lee Enfield, or the different music rendered by the Martini Lee Metford and Snider rifles. Ping! Plonk! and so on. Even so we felt safer there. In our former positions we had spent many an anxious moment. We had learned in lectures and read in text books that the real testing time for a soldier was prior to his baptism of fire, the initial stages of a conflict, after that, provided he had "guts" enough to carry himself through, he was considered a campaigner. We were of that mould? Even a soldier was not free from the sensation of fear, cowardice and other unmanly failings. We were less so? We who had never been under the baptism of fire before in a big way! After all we were only human and less regimented than the average soldier. We were in the raw state - only Volunteers limited in numbers, in training and equipment. How could we be expected to be ultra brave, be expected not to show

signs of fear and dread in the midst of danger and possibly imminent death which was lurking at every corner in this conflict. After all we poor mortals were victims of many weaknesses. Some there were who showed great bravery and great command of themselves. Could I allay the thoughts that surged on me from time to time about physical incapacibilities to govern the slight tremors of dread and fear - or was it fear or only weakness - that assailed me. I owed to that weakness in the early stages of our going into action, but it was only of a temporary nature which when passed had left me in full command of my normal faculties. Outwardly I knew I showed no other sign but that of bravery and a keen sense of doing my bit faithfully and well. My testing time had long since passed away, leaving me nothing the worse for the experience.

The seizure of this building in which we were placed was the complete act for occupation of the Courts, which consisted of a big area. It was now our fortress if the Volunteers who seized it and controlled it were to have a say in the matter. The fact that it was spacious - indeed too spacious for the number of men garrisoning it - did not in the slightest degree detract from its importance as a military post that could be put to good use if and when required. Hardly more than a hundred men were in occupation of it on the first day. Much had been done to put it in a state of defence, doors barred and barricaded, windows barricaded, the various entrances closed and blocked, sniping posts established at various vantage points, special precautions taken to defend entrances at which points sentry groups were placed and other groups

to support them. Places considered vulnerable to attack were specially guarded. In this way quite a number of men were utilised. Other arrangements had to be made such as garrison groups in the various buildings, cooking, feeding and commissariat, first aid post, quartermaster and armourers' stores. Then men had to be allotted to guard prisoners, which on the first day amounted to a few. These were a few of the matters that had to be attended to from the first and continued during the occupation.

Our garrison officers were evidently alive to and showed great activity in making the best possible use of the place and the men under their command. From the moment of the entry into and occupation of this huge pile, a system of inter-communication between the various posts was put into operation. It devolved on the respective individual post commanders, who were mostly N.C.O.s, to ensure the proper and effective working of this system in order to keep in touch with their headquarters which had been established in the main Courts building. Early on Tuesday my N.C.O., Mark Wilson, conducted me through the net-work of corridors, stairways, rooms and buildings, including one of the Courts proper - upstairs, downstairs, across landings, into and out of rooms, offices and aforementioned Courts. He wanted me to become acquainted with the lay-out of the section which divided us from Headquarters. I was to be a runner for carrying messages.

What a maze of intricacies! Truly a job and a half! I sensed that to carry out this task properly I should have to know the place thoroughly so as to be able to move freely through it at all times, and particularly during darkness for lighting of every description was prohibited

in any part under our command. Oh what an effort it cost, entailing as it undoubtedly did the loss of direction at times until one got used to it and cat-like found ones way easily. It also afforded me several thrills and many surprises. One of these, or should I say a number of these, related to the wide awakedness or alertness of a couple of our sentries posted midway between our post and headquarters. They were stationed on top of a stairs which I had to negotiate on my rounds. How often was I unceremoniously challenged, "Halt. Who goes there?" That challenge in the stillness of the night was disturbing. Woe to me if I attempted ascending the stairs before disclosing my identity. I had to get used to it and to the challenger who as often as not was Mick Howlett. I wished he would have a few winks now and then, himself and his aggressive gun.

Somehow I always felt a thrill when passing through one of the Courts. How desolate it looked in daylight, how gruesome in the darkness of the night. Even my stealthy footsteps made thunderous sounds which echoed and re-echoed, as I thought, far and wide. In the daytime when passing that way I could not resist looking at the judge's seat or throne or whatever you call it, and taking a glance at His Majesty's Coat-of-Arms, but at night no such things were in evidence - the place seemed to be dead. What a sensation indeed to be there at the "bar" with no other "brief" than a message from my post commander on a matter saying that "his liege subjects" were without grub since such and such a time, or tendering or requesting some military news of importance.

On one occasion when bearing a message from Sergt. Wilson I was taken in hands by Lt. McGuinness. He was a

lively active character, full of vigour and resource and always attentive to details concerning the work in hands. He could be found somehow and somewhere. Generally I reported to him. On that particular day Lt. "Mac" caught me by the arm and said, "You're just the man I want. I have a little job for you to do". With that he conducted me to a room overhead. This room was the second nearest to the corner at the Winetavern St. Bridge end and it faced Keegan's gun shop. Pointing to a pile of tin cans arranged on the floor, he said coolly and casually "We're expecting an attack by the British. These "bombs" are to be used if they attack", then taking one of the tin can bombs in his hand he demonstrated how they could be lighted and exploded. "All you've got to do", said he, "is to light the fuse, count five and throw the bomb quickly out through the window". How awfully simple, thought I. Yet I did not like their appearance. I did not even wish to have anything to do with them for I was torn between disliking them and doubting their effectiveness, principally the latter. But there was the command. It had to be obeyed. Infernal bombs! How they teased me, intimidated me, frightened me. Along with the aforesaid instructions, the good Lieutenant informed me that broken glass had been strewn on the street below as a means to warn them of the British approach to the position. Crinkled glass makes sounds when trodden on.

In the next room were my "C" Company companions, Frank McNally, Seamus Byrne, George O'Flanagan and Jack Murphy of the 2nd Battalion and Con Donovan and Bon Carroll of some other units. Was I glad to see Frank - I hadn't seen him since Monday. He and they were covered all over with dust. Their room had, it seems, been subject to a good deal of "peppering" from an 18 pounder fired from Wood Quay, the far side of the Liffey. It could be said in truth that they

weren't of the down-hearted type - they were brave, humorous and chatty. Everything comes to an end, however, and so to my surprise, and partly to my regret, I had to leave good company and, as I thought, very doubtful bombs, and on the orders of Lt. McGuinness returned to my former post. But I carried back with me brotherly affection and good wishes in plenty.

Our little group, situated as we were at a point that afforded entrance to and exit from the Courts, was very busy at times. New Volunteers arrived for duty, dispatch bearers, officers and men moved hither and thither from there to the Father Mathew Hall which was our Battalion Headquarters, and vice versa. Even our wounded passed this way. One of these was poor Sergt. Tommy Allen. He had been seriously wounded in the early part of the week. It was with a pang of unutterable sorrow that we beheld him being carried on a stretcher bound for the Richmond Hospital. It was said that he was dead before he left the precincts of the Courts. Tommy Allen dead! He was one of our best, always so active, always so reliable as a man and as a Volunteer. His friends and confidants were legion, and he was beloved by all members of the Company - the "C" Coy he loved. Tommy was our first serious casualty. We felt the loss as a personal and national calamity.

Revolutions, insurrections and wars have sad and humorous flashes. One of the humorous ones which I relate centred around the figure and personality of one of our Volunteers, Seán Flood. Here was a dashing young fellow, about six feet high, alert, nimble and eager, one whom you might not seek to associate with a scrap, to wit an insurrection. He had often "popped" in and out

through that particular entrance. Dressed in white woollen sweater, khaki whipcord breeches and leggings, he looked anything but our type of Volunteer. He looked smart and business-like however. At the time in question, he had come to the gate claiming admittance, carrying, of all things, a nice fat lamb. This we learned had been commandeered from some butchers shop nearby. "Ma, ma", cried one of the funny ones of our party, to be replied to by a big round smile and laugh from Seán. Certainly he appeared to have the knack of carrying the poor beast, for it didn't take a feather out of Seán as the saying goes. Whether he "butchered" it or cooked it I was not made aware, but it must have been good food for the garrison.

Another time Seán was going out on some other errand - some said jokingly to collect chickens - a few of us were detailed to accompany him, to take up position across the roadway running from near the north east corner of the courts to the corner of a by-street that connected with Beresford Street. Less than a hundred yards away from where we were placed was Charles St. where the Lancers were in position. We were in a very exposed position there, having to "hug" the ground as there was no time to erect any form of protection. There was an exchange of "complimentary" fire between us and the Tommies while the Volunteers at our post supported us with covering fire. Seán's party made contact with another group of Volunteers on duty at a barricade outside Fenlon's store, Mary's Lane. To our surprise Seán did not return with any chickens, much to the chagrin of at least the funny one.

Things by that time had reached a certain pitch which seemed to suggest that the British were taking

energetic steps to dispute our mastery of a situation which on the first day had, by reason of our surprise coup, secured a foothold in Dublin. Our forces had since adopted a defensive attitude, content to hold what had already been won, indeed won at small cost in men and material.

Obviously we were not a huge force, judging by the small number of men that gave response to the roll call on the Monday and the all too few men in the Courts and, from what we heard, at other points held by our Battalion in the area. Neither had we an over sufficiency of war materials. Few of us could boast to the possession of more than fifty rounds of ammunition, fewer still possessed more than that number. Consequently care had to be taken to "nurse" our stocks as no guarantee could be given of any replenishment. Such even were not our only sources of trouble - insufficient irregular food and want of adequate sleep were two other factors that we had to contend with. Yet we went our way smilingly, uncomplainingly, oblivious of every hardship but the desire to serve the cause. Many of us wished for a good sound night's sleep - lucky if we got forty winks in the turmoil going around.

News and rumours circulated freely and gratuitously. One of these referred to the "Germans being on the Naas Road and marching on Dublin". That news gave us a thrill. Every moment we expected to hear of their presence in Dublin, fighting by our side. Hours passed, days passed, and we found ourselves fighting our big fight alone and no Germans to be seen or heard except the too frequent repetition that they were "on the Naas Road". When it became known to some that they were too long on that road some of our men indulged in wisecracks and merriment over the rumour. Of course the entry of a German force in

Ireland at that time would have been welcomed by the Volunteers and would have gone a long way in swinging the pendulum in our favour, in a military sense, by adding to our numbers and increasing our armaments.

Various other forms of news reached us, in particular the documentary sheet "The Irish War News" as issued by our supreme authority, the Headquarters of "the Army of the Irish Republic". That was our new designation. We were no longer Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army or Hibernian Rifles - all these were welded into the one armed and trained force known as the Army of the Irish Republic or Irish Republican Army. Surely a colossal achievement to combine these separate and distinct forces into one Army. We learned also that a Provisional Government of the Irish Republic had been set up - Ireland was declared a Republic. Póblacht Abú! The General Post Office in O'Connell St. was Headquarters of the Army of the Irish Republic. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic was signed by Thomas Clarke, James Connolly, Pádraic Pearse, Joseph Plunkett, Thomas McDonough, Eamonn Ceannt and Seán MacDiarmada. Though no mention was made of the Fianna or Cumann na mBan, we knew that members of these bodies were giving service. Some of the Cumann na mBan were in the Courts and at Battalion Headquarters, Father Mathew Hall, in Church St., engaged in first-aid, cooking and other capacities.

News was filtering through concerning the fighting in other parts of the city. Civilians passing by and Volunteers who were on outside duties gave us many snatches of various kinds and forms. One day, Tuesday, a man whom I took to be Mr. William O'Brien, the Labour Leader, cycling past our post related the progress of

the fight - that our forces controlled the G.P.O. and that there was heavy fighting in the City Hall. This convinced us that Dublin was in our hands. But what of the rest of the country? Why was there no news of the other parts of Ireland?

Then came Wednesday, a day of intense activity. All were required to be on the alert due to the very marked increase of shooting going on in various parts of the city and near us as well. Sometimes it was spasmodic firing then a burst of machine gun fire, or a regular cannonading of both resembling a pitched battle being fought somewhere. Now and then the sound of explosion, some slight, some heavy, the latter sending a tremor through our building or ourselves, or perhaps would take us off our guard. One wondered what these were and their possible location. An odd lull would come into the proceedings at one point, with increased shooting at another or other spots. Between each such burst might be heard a dare-devil single shot - a sniper's shot perhaps - a challenging one or a defiant one sent in true "here I am, get me" style. Would it ever cease. It came and went like the sea waves, ebbing and flowing, flowing and ebbing, with little respite. Would our time come too? We could not afford to waste our ammunition; it was against orders to do so. We had no idea how long we would be required to support the Republic in arms. One thing we were cognizant of - just one thing - to hold our position. This was the main consideration. This we were doing, so far, so good.

That same night (Wednesday) we were witnesses of a new and perhaps extremely frightful feature in the long series of thrills associated with the fighting then increasing in intensity hourly. That was the burning of

the Linenhall Barracks, which consisted of a number of buildings of various sizes adjacent to the Kings Inns or "The Temple" as it was more commonly termed. This place, which was British Government property, had been utilised from time immemorial for several purposes and in quite a number of capacities, serving in turn as a Military Barracks, a recruiting station for postulants to the British Army, a military pay-office, and years previously as a centre for an Exhibition under the patronage of Lord and Lady Aberdeen, the former being the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland appointed by the British Government.

Though the Four Courts was a good quarter of a mile distance from Linenhall Barracks, we knew enough at the time that it was in close proximity to the Battalion fighting zone situated at the far or upper end of Church St. and that portion of North King St. which led into Bolton St. Indeed portion of the Linenhall barracks was within hailing distance to several of the posts held by our men there.

During the course of the fire we were duly informed that the place was being destroyed on our Battalion orders and for sound military reasons. Concerning the fire itself we knew not how or by what method it was kindled. We had only the means of viewing its burning from a safe distance. What we did behold, however, was awesome, fearsome and amazing - a spectacle beyond description and comprehension. It resembled a huge burning furnace, a veritable inferno. The belching flames that shot skyward lit up a wide area, our own area included, and transformed an otherwise dark night into uncommonly lurid brightness, brighter even than daylight. That

lighting effect was detrimental and threatening to us who were following the course of performing our duties in the darkness and under the cover of night. Goodness knows we had many troubles to contend with in groping in the dark or semi-darkness, but in consequence of the fire these troubles were magnified considerably and we were freely presented with a too generous illumination which we dare not avail of at the peril of our precious lives. Discretion in such circumstances was better than valour. Accordingly our best and safest course was to lie low, to see without being seen. While it lasted a certain feeling of uneasiness and anxiety predominated, accentuated by the thought that our post and other posts in the area were exposed to view. Besides, we saw that our humble, slender and not too secure system of window barricading was insufficient to keep out the light which penetrated many crevices and openings into the rooms we were occupying. Thus movement on our part was difficult where such had to be done, especially in relieving sniping posts or changing guards: the greatest care and caution had to be exercised. When eventually the fire burned out many a person gave a tremendous sigh of relief.

On the Thursday our little garrison was allotted the task of taking over the Bridewell police barracks. During the previous few days many Volunteers wondered why this place was not occupied by our forces. Possibly it wasn't considered to be of much military importance whether occupied or not previously. It was the fortunes of war that an alteration in that plan should be made and become effective by the presence of Lieutenant McGuinness who came to our post and announced the decision that it should forthwith come under our control. He, accompanied by our post commander, Sergt. Wilson, and some dozen or

more of us took over the buildings. To our surprise the place was empty. It wasn't until a considerable time afterwards that some of our men came across a number of policemen huddled in a portion of the detention prison. They certainly looked the worse of the wear, dishevelled and hungry. Thus we acquired an additional block of buildings consisting of a court-house, a police barracks and a prison, and a few prisoners on our hands to feed.

This acquisition was not of any great military importance as a defensive position or post, for most of it was low-sized, cramped and sheltered from view at both ends. The only field of view we had was the rear of the Four Courts, garrisoned by our own forces, and an oblique view on its north east corner due to the position of a line of houses situated on the eastern part of our building. However, ours not to reason why; hence to your tents O Israel! We were placed to garrison it. Meanwhile we secured a little "booty", to wit a few revolvers of various calibres and an odd rifle.

By this time many if not all of us were feeling the worse for a good sleep. Some were indeed lucky to have got an odd hours slumber off duty, but the average among us had lost the sense of sleep. There were times when sleep would overtake us. Such occasions were when one was standing or kneeling at a window on the look-out for enemy movement. Then one might unconsciously dose off, oblivious of everything going on round about and suddenly wake up with a start wondering the why and wherefore of his presence. It was an awful predicament to be in - this human element that seemed to lull one, particularly during the night. Just a few times I had seen others while on duty at a window "napping". I myself fell a

victim to the same on that night in the Bridewell for I was 'dead beat' and unable to keep my eyes open for any other length of time. It might have lasted for seconds or minutes. When I came to I found myself standing at a window grasping a rifle, the muzzle of which was securely resting on portion of the barricading. Naturally I upbraided myself for the weakness and promised that I would not commit this error so easily again.

The following night our policemen prisoners were taken from our custody and brought to our Battalion headquarters at the Father Mathew Hall to be released as well as a group of soldiers and British personnel captured at the Linenhall barracks. Fighting had increased considerably in Upr. Church St. area, and reinforcements being required a number of the men, in charge of Sergt. M. O'Flanagan and including his brother Paddy, were dispatched there. Commandant Ned Daly visited us during this occasion, looking as he always was - the perfect officer and soldier. Carrying a service rifle slung on his shoulder, he conducted the police to safety. The transference of some of our men to re-inforce the position in King St. convinced us that the British were making a big effort there to obtain a foothold in our area, with a view to crushing us. We had heard accounts of the wonderful deeds of heroism and daring of the Volunteers there, who were contesting every inch of ground and fighting like battle seasoned soldiers. Judging by accounts given us of the fighting there, and the continuous fusilade of shooting coming from that direction, it was obvious that our men were going through a gruelling time. The chances were that we might at any moment be attacked.

Indeed it was hourly expected, especially since the day the British used artillery fire on the Four Courts, the south-east corner of which received a pouncing, and the increasing rifle and machine gun fire portended such a move. So we were held on the alert, always ready for any call and for any emergency. We had grown accustomed to the hide and seek tactics of the other side, and in turn had played not an inconsiderable part in the sniping "feats" appropriate to the occasion. There were, however, times when we couldn't give blow for blow owing to our limited supplies.

It did not require much reasoning on our part to realise the gravity of our position. There was every indication of impending danger; one such was the very threatening and serious movement being put into motion by the British on our positions at Nth. King St. This move, if successful, would imperil us who garrisoned the Four Courts proper. At the moment that position was not being assailed by means of a movable attack, like as was going on in King St., though it was under constant unceasing sniping fire. The expectations were that a similar move might be made sooner or later - might be launched from the Mary's Abbey direction. Every hour that passed brought us immeasurably nearer to the fateful climax which was bound to be reached in order to decide the issue of this struggle. Likewise every hour that passed increased the tension then prevailing among us.

We had our orders, which could be summarised in very simple words "lie low", hold your fire for the right moment, be vigilant, alert and well prepared. Everything depended on us to give of our best in any situation that might arise. We also had reason to be assured that our

comrades in the opposite buildings were alive to the situation, as we were, on that day - Friday.

Still the British made no attack on our positions. All through the day there was much coming and going of Volunteers in the vicinity of the Courts. Perhaps the attack will be launched in the darkness of the night! But the hours sped slowly and menacingly. The dawn of another day was ushered in and still the long anticipated order to get going in earnest was not issued. No such form of battle materialised, much to the surprise and wonder of most of us. What did occur was a strange lull in the fighting. What could this mean? It was unreal, unbelievable, that a sudden, an almost instantaneous cessation of hostilities should ensue at a time when many of us were thinking of, and were posed for, a big "show down". This new phase was in vivid contrast to the warlike activity of a few moments previously. What did it signify?

Perhaps we should not have been so unduly alarmed or unreasonably anxious about this new turn in events - the changing of the scene from lull to storm, from storm to lull. After all we had gone through several periods of such during the past six days and nights, periods of intense activity followed by periods of quietude and vice versa. Yet none were so perfect or so pronounced as this one. It gave one an uneasy troublesome feeling and got on one's nerves. Why should such happen at a time when there was no indication that the climax had been reached or that one side or the other held the battle in their hands?

Everything seemed to be moving in cycles. Rumours held sway, rumours of various types, various kinds, rumours of the sore trial of our Volunteer comrades at King St., rumours of the British gaining ground and moving in, of our men falling back, fighting all the time against heavy odds and a good deal of sacrifice, news of the continual movement of Volunteer officers through the rear entrance of the Courts (we could see some of this ourselves), rumours that our men along Church St. were also getting it hard, some were being forced back, rumours of a "last stand in the Courts", rumours of a truce. Then, at the height of all these nerve wrecking evil tidings, we are rudely brought to our sense of the reality of things and ordered to "report ourselves at the Courts". Thus we move again, back to our former positions and yet beyond it to the Courtyard. Here we witness an extraordinary spectacle. Quite a goodly number of Volunteers are already there. Here for the first time during that week we met comrades of whom we had had no tidings, some whom we knew were "out" and others whom we couldn't ascertain were in the fight or not. Greetings were brief and sparse. The weight of the rumours and the news forbid anything in the nature of gaiety and jollification. None showed the least eagerness for enthusiasm or animation. This was a sad and doleful scene.

The men too looked sad, dispirited and very much out of place. At other times, and in other circumstances, they were known to be so different, bright, joyous, good humoured, fond of raising fun or making a pun. But these things were for other days and other occasions. Yet withal, and in spite of all, they showed strength and

character, each man of them, those who had already assembled and those who were assembling. We were coming in, singly, in pairs and in groups, coming from various posts and positions in the vicinity. All looked as if they had gone "through the mill" during the past few days, some worse than others. It was in their faces, their general appearance, and even their clothes showed signs that they had been campaigning. Some were unwashed, unkempt, dust from head to feet. Some were even unrecognisable in their "war paint", their uniforms or their "Sunday best" being spoiled by the grime, rents and bulges of a service that was neither too kind or too personal.

Why? Ah, why? We were afraid to ask it. That word formed in our hearts and was on our lips - why? During this period of confused and of enforced humiliation we were brought to our senses by the issuing of orders of our officers. We were again on parade. Then Commandant Daly moved in front and faced us. He spoke slowly and distinctly. We listened attentively, hardly breathing lest we would miss even a solitary word: "Commandant Pearson orders.. unconditional surrender... to save...women and children.. Dublin". Commandant Daly praised us for the part we had played in the fight. No matter what may happen to us we had done our duty and redeemed Ireland's name. So the mystery was solved. We must surrender - unconditionally surrender. So that's it in its bold bald nakedness. Could it be possible that there was nothing else to do but to capitulate. It was too true. "Better to have fought it out" some one said. Were we beaten, over-awed, over-powered? Our minds lingered on the words, unable to make sense of the thing. We are dazed, dumb-founded and perplexed.

Yet surrender it was to be. Men bore it in their faces, mad with the very thought of it. This was the end, the tragic ending to a gallant fight, and possibly the end of us and our proud associations. No rumour was more true, clearer or better founded. Sad and bitter the news came to us that day. Here we were, Volunteers from our own C Coy, Volunteers from our 1st Battalion, Volunteers from other Battalions who had linked up with us in the fight, and even civilians with no past connections with our movement who had thrown in their lot with us in the venture to make Ireland free. Here were our officers - our loved and loyal officers - Commandant Ned Daly, Eamonn Morkan, Eamonn Duggan, Piaras Beaslaoi, Liam O'Carroll, Dinny O'Callaghan, Capt. Frank Fahy, Lt. Joe McGuinness, Peadar Clancy. They did not look happier than we. Sadness predominated the scene.

Oh, the striking contrast between this "gathering of the Clans" and that of a few days previously. Then we were called together to "go out" and fight. We had obeyed that call with a light heart. Alas our recall to the Courts on that Saturday April 29th 1916 signalled our surrender, to give up the fight. Much had happened in the meantime to support the idea that Irishmen could fight in Ireland and for Ireland. The doubting ones have been abashed and put to shame that dared to accuse us of being too cowardly or too respectable to fight. No more "down on your knees, you half baked rebels" and the other foul insulting epithets about us playing soldiers. That is all finished now. We had fought - we were beaten; we made the bid and whatever the cause of our failures, cowardice was not one of them.

Chapter 11.

Even in the moments of our misery as we stood there not one word of regret was uttered for the part they had taken in the fight. Rather did the men regret its sad termination in that way. They were beside themselves with anger, indignation and resentment. They knew, however, that they had no other choice but to acquiesce. Their course was run. We had lost the fight. It was a bitter pill to swallow. The full consciousness of our failure came to us when, as a proof of our token to surrender, we lay down our arms, some even threw them not too gently or too carefully in a pile on the ground, while others broke them or tore parts of the mechanism from them. That completed, the British soldiers arrived and formed a guard around us. A word of command then and we were marched out of the Four Courts into the street outside and across Winetavern St. bridge. At this point a few civilians and soldiers were assembled down Essex Quay. We marched across Grattan Bridge into Capel St., Parnell St., and coming to the Parnell Monument we turned into Upr. O'Connell St. where we were halted. Here we were searched, our small arms and equipment being placed on the ground. Then an inventory of our names, addresses and other particulars were taken. That completed we turned about again and marched into the green sward in front of the Rotunda Hospital under the watchful eyes of a group of policemen and soldiers. There we remained that night, cold, miserable, hungry and tired, and the canopy of Heaven for a roof. Volunteers from the G.P.O. area were there also. We numbered a few hundred, including some members of Cumann na mBan. What solace, or comfort, could we have in such a tiny space couped up,

cramped and resting at all points.

We must have looked frightful, judging by the curious peering of the soldiery. During the night some men were taken away from the group and brought to other places near hand. Oh, the agony of that night vigil, no privacy, no sympathy - nothing but threats and orders to keep in the grass - an odd kick if you didn't. We were glad when morning came? Glad even to be on the move again. We knew not in what direction we were to follow or the rendezvous. We were marched through O'Connell St. - O'Connell St. that was - past the G.P.O. which was still burning, across the city under heavy guard, up Cork Hill, Christchurch Place. We were not too kindly treated at one point there. Some women even spat at us, abused us and cursed us. On and on, our legs so tired after our week's ordeal we were unable to keep continual pace. At last we halted outside the Richmond Barracks, Kilmainham. When eventually we were marched into and rested in the Barrack square, we were guarded, ironically enough, by the Royal Irish Regiment, the men of which were none too fraternising or considerate and adopted the domineering and threatening attitude of being bosses of the show and showered on us much abuse, insolence and ill will. Brian O'Higgins was beside me as we stood in that barrack square. Brian O'Higgins - who amongst us was not familiar with Brian, his personality and his poems? The gay, brilliant, versatile Brian na Banban whose verses and songs had stirred us to such depths during the past number of years. Few men could be so sincere, more loyal and so true than he. Every line of his verses, ballads and ditties breathed of love for Ireland and love for the Gael. He could pen a song, make a pun in verse

and give vocal and musical expression to his compositions on concert platform. He was the soul of humour, the very personification of wit, anger and patriotism, which he welded into his poetical art with a practical and original flare that was compelling, impressive, endemic in the extreme. We had reason for considering him our Poet Laureate, our Poet of the nation. More than either of these, he was our Poet of the Revolution, Poet of the Insurrection. Unlike most poets in the world, excluding some of our own such as Pearse, McDonough and Plunkett, he combined the role of the pen with that of the sword and rifle, for he lived his part as poet, patriot and soldier.

Who among that throng of prisoners did not know Brian by his songs? And what a variety of songs he penned; songs of many types, themes and forms. Could I but recall many of these, the humorous ones in particular would act as a tonic. His ditty composed at the time when Lady Aberdeen was carrying on her "holy" anti-consumption crusade, which cost many a poor factory girl the loss of a job, was full of satire and humour:

Goats' milk will end all the rebelly schemings,  
 The storing of rifles, of guns and of pikes;  
 It will quieten our fears, our hopes and our dreamings  
 Of Irish and Orangemen lining the dykes.  
 The hens and the chickens may go to the dickens,  
 The cats and the kittens an anthem will sing;  
 And the first thing the babies will lilt in their cradles  
 Will be "God save our gracious and glorious King.

Chorus.

So hurry up boys, the wars are all over,  
 Rush to the barracks and get out your pay;  
 Nothing to do but to sit in the clover  
 Milking a goat at a shilling a day.

or his breezy satirical ballad on the "Dear D.I.", depicting the story of the loss of an "address":

In a place they call Dunmore,  
Where rogues and rebels swarm by the dozen and the score;  
Where they look on every peeler as a Dublin Castle spy  
And hate the very swagger of their own D.I.

And where it was and where it is; and where it will  
remain,  
Is a puzzle making porridge now of every peeler's brain,  
The ladies all are puzzled and the gentry curse and cry  
Because the "thing" has gone forever from the Dear D.I.

But in more sober, more patriotic vein, Brian's "Dawning  
of the Day" which was a favourite marching song of the  
Fianna:

Freedom's bright and blessed Day,  
Ireland free from Saxon sway,  
Lift your hearts and pray God speed us,  
To the Dawning of the Day.

Who had not heard of his Eight Millions of Englishmen,  
portion of which ran?:

Eight millions of Englishmen,  
Of mafficking manly men,  
Of beef-eating bulldog men;  
We're shy of the guns  
But we'll beggar the Huns  
Eight millions of Englishmen.

Who among the Fianna boys didn't remember him for his  
"Marching Song of Na Fianna Éireann"?:

On for Freedom na Fianna Éireann,  
Let we our faces towards the dawning day -  
The day in our own land  
When strength and daring  
Shall end for evermore  
The Saxon sway.

Strong be our hands like na Fianna Éireann,  
That won for her glory in days that are gone;  
Clean be our thinking and truthful our speaking  
That we may deserve her when the day is won.

So there was Brian in the flesh and, like us, a  
prisoner. He looked as carefree, sustained and brave  
as ever he was, showing no sign of a tremor, no trail  
of concern or nervousness, indeed less than any of us.  
But he did look a bit shaken, tired and spent. We all  
did after the ordeal of the week's fighting.

We had an endless wait before we were ushered into rooms in the barrack building. It was exhausting, humiliating, cruel. Some of us hadn't eaten a morsel of food within twenty four hours, some longer; hadn't known sleep for the past six days, no change of clothes in the same period. What a happy respite even to sit on the bare floor to rest for a while. Some even chanced to sleep, unable to remain awake any longer. Not much rest was forthcoming for detectives were busy picking out men from the group and taking them away. How our hearts ached for them. God only knew where they were going.

A strange murmur of voices sounded through the room. Starting from a distant corner, it gradually rose in audibility until at length it reached the ears of all assembled. Then a flutter spread through the room as men changed their positions and knelt in prayerful attitude to recite Mary's prayer - the Rosary - while our guards looked on wondering what it was all about. It was the one bright speck in the scene that gave us new vigour and increased courage.

We were detained some hours in that place. Our cup of sorrow and desolation we drank to the dregs. What care we what they do to us. After a long lapse we were given our first meal, a tin of bully-beef (pressed beef) between two persons and some war biscuits, hard, dry, insipid substance that tested one's gums and one's teeth if not one's digestive organs. That is the stuff the soldiers have to live on when on active service. Poor fellows! Some called the biscuits dog biscuits. Perhaps the 'dish' was better than starvation, not to mention the fun some of our men got out of trying to

unloose the bully beef from the tins. By the time we had digested the contents an acme of relaxation was granted us but that was not to last for long. Some other move was afoot and so it happened that we were conducted from the room and lined up in the Barrack square. But not all the men got that far for another weeding out of the good from the bad had been carried out as we were leaving the room. As we reached the door a couple of detectives gave us "the look over", closely examined us and put us some questions. Thus the segregation was effected. We knew not where the "bad ones" went or why they were held back, but we surmised that if the powers that be deemed them to be "bad" they were being detained for some special reason. It was only when we assembled in the square that the full import of the move dawned on us - our leaders were not present.

Another long delay there. Then we were got into marching order and with the inevitable guards we passed through the gates on to the streets again. Back towards the city again, along the quays. Would there be an end to this marching and counter marching. We were weary and worn out with the strain. We had to struggle on trying to keep step and some semblance of military bearing and precision. The Anna Liffey appeared long to us that day. We eventually reached O'Connell Bridge, and moving on tramp, tramp, passed the Custom House, wended our weary footsteps towards the North Wall. At last we were halted at one of the shipping sheds. Why here above all places? We boarded a ship that was berthed there and were safely and gingerly placed in one of the cargo holds - packed like sardines. Just a human cargo which when set right formed the right type of ballast for voyaging. Our

curiosity grew to suspicion.

We were being exiled. We knew not where the British were taking us or what they intended doing with us. We didn't even care one way or the other. Anyway Irish rebels had no choice in the matter. We deemed ourselves in a sore sorry plight. Pity we didn't expect; we didn't ask for it, we did not get it. One thing stood us in good stead - it was our mental balance. It somehow helped us to make light of our dreadful position and to show, even if we did not appear so, a resignation to our fate. We asked ourselves many questions. Our comrades asked questions of us: "What do they intend doing with us? Are they going to sink us in the Irish Sea? They could do it and say that a German submarine did it! Wish they would, couldn't be much worse than this. Supposing a German submarine does sink the ship, Then the Tommies will be "in the same boat" as us (meaning in the same fix as us) came the rejoinder. In that event would they try to save us?"

Our appalling misery was not in the slightest degree lessened by the sneering threatening attitude and behaviour of our guards. The atmosphere in that ship's hold was intolerable, unbearable. It stank in one's nostrils. We again said the Rosary - our only solace now. The ship began to move. We were on the way. Some of our men asked for a drink of water. A soldier hinted at the kind of water he would give him - a .. bullet. After a long delay a bucket of water arrived, but alas, we had no drinking receptacle. Drink it from the bucket? No. To ease the situation somebody produced an empty 'bully' tin to serve the purpose. The ship was well on its way plunging ahead,

we being tossed and rocked alternatively. It rocked some of our men to sleep. I awoke, or rather was awakened, and thought the ship was stopped. I wondered for what cause and learned that we had arrived at some port. We were disembarked then. Somebody said it was Holyhead. We were then conducted on to the platform and our party divided in two. The party of which I was a unit boarded the train on the right, the other party on the left side of the platform. More delays and many more orders issued. There were armed guards everywhere in the train, in corridors, in each and every compartment. English conscripts! We were not conscripts. Some of the guards were human, had to "do their duty and all that". Some showed pity, others harshness. Why should we mind, for after all we were only prisoners. The train was making headway. Some of our men knew some of the places through which we passed and said it was north Wales. The train stopped. We moved on to the platform, formed up and were marched under our strong armed escort into what seemed a nice residential district. It looked nice after our experience of the last couple of days. A group of people were assembled outside a big building where we were halted. They apparently did not relish our presence there. They looked and expressed themselves in unmistakable tones, unfriendly and aggressive. Our English guards had to show sternest measures in keeping a passage for us Irish rebels as we were moved into a gateway inside of which was a nice well-kept lawn and a prison. Knutsford Jail was its name.

Knutsford jail on Monday the first of May 1916  
looked to us Irish prisoners just what it was - a prison.

We didn't know anything about its geographical position, and, what was more to the point, cared less. Of course in other circumstances we might have cared to know all about the place, its history as a prison as well as all matters appertaining to the town or district of Knutsford in Cheshire. But prisoners like us had limited powers of observation and prescribed rights to ascertain such particulars. Hence we had no option but to wait and see, to learn and to wonder, leaving the future to furnish the required data on the subject. Suffice for the nonce to appraise that we entered the portals of that 'stately' institution on that May morning, and when all the usual formalities of handing over and receiving us prisoners were duly arranged we were presented to the interior. Horror of horrors! There it was, a prison, or to be more explicit, the "wing" of a prison, a substantial sized structure that communicated with the main hall or dormitory that communicated with other "wings" and so on and so forth. The wing in which I was "lodged" was well apportioned and spaced to admit of an equal number of rooms called cells, which continued from the ground floor up to the fourth storey or landing. There was a profusion of iron grills, iron railings and iron netting on the aforesaid landings and on the stairways which communicated to them. Everything seemed symmetrical and strangely orderly, even the heavy iron, or was it steel doors were more so. The whole lot when viewed from a prospective prisoner's angle looked what it was - durance vile, forbidding, threatening and melancholy.

In accordance with the usual traditions and normal routine of the institution, each of us were assigned to separate cells. From now on we would be recognised not by

our personal names only but by an alphabetical and numerical marking which ran something like this: a letter of the alphabet indicated the wing, a number indicated the particular landing and similarly a number was used to denote the location of the cell. As an example, if a person was described thus: B four six or C one nine the solution to the problem meaning B Wing, fourth landing and sixth cell, or C wing, 1st landing and ninth cell respectively. Thus I was allotted to one of the cells on the third landing B wing. The next and not the least important stage of our entry into possession of our new tenancy was soon vouchsafed us when each individual prisoner was ceremoniously locked safely in his cell. But before that had happened a simple formality had been introduced to make him aware of prison regulations and the dire penalties attaching to insubordination etc. We were, of course, to be under strict military surveillance and equally strict military control and discipline and no horse play would be allowed. We plainly perceived that the military caste controlling this guest house of His Majesty were the very essence of candour and thoroughness for they provided for everything even to the tiniest morsel of food, to the barest personal necessities, to the simplest of furniture and the absolute regulation of our time by day or night.

It was quite a simple affair to place one in a cell, and as simple a matter to feel that when there one becomes master of all he surveys. But it comes as a shock nevertheless to find oneself for the first time in such surroundings. It had that effect on me. One felt that the world had somehow ceased to be, that human kind no longer existed, that individualism as a quality of human progress was a thing of the past and that the only

value of one's relationship with life was represented by a card index system epitomised by a medley of alphabetical and numerical signs. To be suddenly thrown into a cell and to become aware of your insignificance and helplessness was forsooth an experience of no small moment. To look around and behold your small, compact "home" consisting of four bare walls, at one side of which was a big ponderous door and opposite it a window, big inside but tapered to small dimensions on the off side, with tiny panels of glass to permit light. Next to the door was a slot panel for serving meals. What thoughts could enter one's mind in the presence of this accentuated nothingness and shabbiness. With what concern could one feel the too meagre possessions with which the cell was endowed, the bed which consisted of three loose boards resting on two trestle frames that were intended to keep the bed about four inches from the ground, no mattress, spring or pillow, and for covering two army blankets; a built in table near the door and a stool to sit on. Our haberdashery consisted of a plate, a mug and a wooden spoon and a bed chamber. Truly an abbreviated assortment of personal ware.

Our regular routine of duties consisted of rising early in the morning, partaking of simple ablutions and as simple breakfast, cleaning and tidying of cell, inspection, and throughout the rest of the day other meals which were termed dinner and tea. We had no exercise and only saw some of our comrades on such rare occasions as parade to the toilets. Nothing to read, nothing to do but tidy the cell and pace up and down and across the allotted space of our cells. That pacing was laborious, maddening to a degree except that it helped to keep one's blood circulating to keep life and fitness in one's limbs.

This continual form of exercise got on one's nerves at times - one performed it mechanically, by impulse rather than design. At other times it had the effect of soothing the evil workings of one's mind, helped to keep one's thoughts and mental facilities alive and active. It became as it were a common ritual that had to be performed, that must be carried out in face of the ordeal of "close confinement". It was not confined to one cell or perhaps to one prisoner - this cell walking. My comrades on both sides of my abode, Seán Kennedy and I think Seán Hynes, were likewise addicted to the habit. Possibly each of us pursued this course rather than indulge in sitting down and brooding over our hard lot. Occasionally one would hear the strain of an Irish song or air, a few bars, and then the coarse command, "Stop that singing". The silence, dread and drear, of the day or evening was often broken by the melodious warbles of the whistling fraternity whose "Lark in the clear air" or "Cualin" would cause a flutter in our heart-strings and a thrill to run through our fibres, only to suffer the same sad fate of other performers, "Stop that whistling" from the altogether too assiduous sentry outside or his confrere military warder inside the prison. For no such exhibitions of vocal or musical talent and no noise whatever was permitted to disturb the grave-like gloom and calm of our majestic prison.

Time had little meaning to us. To our jailers it was of absorbing and paramount importance that recorded the rendering of some service or some service rendered. The jailers worked according to schedule, every minute, every hour of the day. Our working periods were few and far between and such had only relationship to such simple

matters of washing our hands and faces once a day, of cleaning our cells, of folding our blankets, of keeping our food and other utensils clean and of eating our meals, all of which tasks could easily be disposed of within the space of a couple of hours leaving four or more times that length of time to our dear selves and our thoughts and wandering the length of our cells. Time then for us was a nightmare. Nay more it was a misnomer, a hideous sham and a veritable riddle. Situated as we were under such a strict code of close confinement, few means were available to know the time of day, dates or months, excluding, of course, the regular sequence of meal hours, hours for rising and hours for retiring and a few minor regular performances. Outside of these we had to rely on some method of measuring time, one of which was by means of the sun. This was fascinating work indeed. Otherwise hours appeared like days and days like weeks.

To the credit of our jailers then we had more time on our hands than was good for us. They always made it a rule to observe that we did not fritter away our own time on any form of recreation, pursuit, or even to sleep in the daytime, anything that was not in accordance with regulations. Not that one could get much bodily comfort in resting or sleeping on bare boards which served as a bed. It was quite an ordeal enough to have to suffer pains and aches during the night without having to share similar hardships in the daytime. Oh such dire, such cruel punishment! A couple of nights of this "blissful reposing comfort" was ample time to blacken and bruise even the most hardened, seasoned human flesh and send pains and aches through every bone and muscle in the body until one felt the very personification

of the rheumatic sufferer embodied in the slogan of a then patent medicine advertisement "every picture tells a story". To add to our bodily aches we had no recourse but to suffer the thing in patience or impatience, with good grace or no grace at all, and hoping in the meantime that we might preserve our flesh at the expense of our bones although there was no guarantee that that would be secured on the hard and fast diet so liberally served to us under various guises and in devious forms.

This dieting, or dietary scale, was seemingly a prison tradition handed down through the ages like an old piece of furniture or a family heirloom from father to son and his heirs and successors. Indeed it was worse. It was the very opposite of anything imaginable or understood in the fine arts of cookery or domestic service or science. For breakfast we had a mug of tea, a plate of skilly and a junk of bread. I could never find out what happened to the tea, whether it got lost in the kitchen wash up or was incorporated in it. I never tasted anything that less resembled tea than this concoction. In the initial stage of one's incarceration a bad or indifferent brew of tea might be overlooked and passed over with the fervent hope that the next one would be better. But when the error was acutely repeated day in and day out one prayed that all kinds of things would happen the brew before it reached the humble board of the prospective diner. Along with it not having the slightest taste of tea it never released a single tea leaf as proof of its incarceration. Perhaps it had a guilty conscience - or was it shame - to preclude itself from association with a concoction that traversed its good narcotic name and shed no lustre on its reputed fame as mankind's best and beloved stimulant. As regards

the skilly, the best that could be said of it was that it was a cross between what we Irish call gruel and a double dose of some sticky sodden pulp with a very faint flavour of meal of a kind perhaps hitherto unknown to us.

Whatever its building qualities it gave bulk even in a small way for it was only served in small quantities and perhaps filled a gap. Regarding the bread, suffice it to say it was neither white nor brown but of a kind of dark colour.

Another strange concoction, or to be more explicit other strange concoctions, which served portion of our dinner could be summarised in the words soup and hash. The soup was watery, thin, and if at all flavoured hardly tasted so. Generally it was served with beans, big broad beans that seemed to look at you and say "I dare you". Of the potatoes they were generally too bad, or one bad out of two supplied. They were generally cooked to the point of soapiness. The tastiest of the dinner variety was the hash which consisted of perhaps anything or everything edible from over stewed pieces of meat and condensed vegetables of hardly discernable types. Yet it was palatable, not because of its known or unknown ingredients, but because it wasn't heavily laden with fat or oil of any description. The meat that was served with the soup was a something that no Irishman or Irishwoman would pass over as Irish beef of the bovine brand. This prison variety was a substance that however it was cooked was streaky and not juicy to the point of our Irish prime beef. One could only say of the owner of that pelt, "What did you do to deserve all this?" To finish up the round of the days dieting came the cocoa which was easily more palatable than the tea.

Knutsford prison was nothing if not orderly and well governed according to English prison standards, even to the extent of providing for all necessaries for all conveniences. What we lacked in bodily or mental comforts and preoccupations we lacked also in so far as having association with our fellow prisoners. We also wouldn't be permitted to communicate with our people at home in Ireland. This was the greatest torment of all. We knew not when permission would be given for us to write home. We had not seen our people since Easter Monday. Oh if they only knew where we were imprisoned. But rubs are rubs and orders are orders and prison routine says "thou shall do this", "thou shall not do that", all of which seem to savour of a new version of the Ten Commandments. Prison regulations omitted nothing - not even the medical examination which it dutifully enjoins on its subjects to undergo. Hence it came to pass that the prison doctor arrived at one's cell and, accompanied by the warder (in this case an army Staff Sergt) and an armed soldier placed at the door, proceeded to take soundings and to examine the prisoner. You divested of your clothing and then the doctor in the fulness of his authority queried, "Are you lousy? Any bugs, vermin or lice?" Having completed his job he proceeded to the next cell and you were left there wondering whether the other prisoners would feel sad or happy at his mission.

Weeks went by and still the same humdrum existence with only one thing to bring brightness to us - we were permitted to attend Mass in the prison chapel. It was the one joy in our period of incarceration so far. Prior to this an inventory of the religion we practised was made. The majority of the prisoners were Roman

Catholics, a few Presbyterian and Church of Ireland. Those of us who were Catholics were visited by a priest to whom we made our confessions. The Sunday for the celebration of the Mass arrived and we were marched under guard to the Chapel. Oh joy of joys! What exquisite happiness to be able to attend the Divine Sacrifice again even in such circumstances. We were conducted to our seats. Our military warders sat in high seats at every second row. From their high and mighty eminence they could watch our every movement, keep us orderly and insist that the rule forbidding us to communicate with one another was strictly observed. They little thought that we were overflowing with happiness to see our friends. Words could not have expressed our feelings better. They might close our lips but they could not close our eyes. Was it not good to see the comrades we knew intimately; good to see them in the flesh again, to know that they were alive and apparently standing up to the ordeal of watchfulness. The guards could not see everything, couldn't watch everyone. So we did communicate - by the medium of our eyes - and were thereby content with what we saw of our comrades. It was thrilling, secondary in importance to the celebration of Mass in which we dutifully participated with all due devotion and piety. We had reason to be very grateful and happy for this great and wonderful privilege. Even the fact that we were prisoners and under the charge of guards in "Our Father's House" did not in the slightest degree lessen the importance of the occasion or our indebtedness to the Giver of all things, the Source of all goodness, of light and of grace, to permit us to be present and offer up our prayers in our moment of sorrow and tribulation.

During the celebration of the Mass several hymns were played on the organ. We were unable to respond to many of these because the music was unknown to us though in some cases we knew the words of the particular hymns. It was only when our Irish hymn "Hail Glorious St. Patrick" was struck up that we felt our vocal organs coming back to life and vigour. The close solitary confinement we discovered had destroyed our sense of speech. We were happy to hear our own voices and the voices of our comrades again. How often during that silent agonising period had we reason to think ourselves dumb, compelled as we were to abandon talk unless when spoken to by those exercising authority over us. But, Thank God, we were enabled on that Sunday morning to open our throats and sing in no unmistakable way the praises of our national spirit. Indeed the hymn seemed propitious and suitable to our predicaments and environment. It afforded us a means to open our hearts in prayerful supplication to one whose "words were once strong against Satan's wiles and an infidel throng" to "come to our aid, in our battles take part". Oh how lustily and determinedly we entered into the singing of that hymn and that portion in particular. It seemed that these words had a personal appeal to each one of us, and the fact that it was our Irish hymn and that we were prisoners in an English prison and guarded by Englishmen encouraged us to "take the roof off". We also gave full vent to our feelings in the hymn "Faith of our Fathers" and many a tear stood in the eyes of these hard boiled rebels, these felons of our land.

This account would not be complete without mentioning that the organist was none other than our fellow prisoner Micheal Lynch of SS. Michael and John's

fame. Micheal could and did strike a chord of joy and pride in us before and after the Mass by introducing a few notes of Irish music and got away with it. In consequence of this he brought many a smile to the lips and vigour to the hearts of many of us and we blessed the day and blessed him for same.

Strange things were happening in our jail. A couple of innovations were introduced. One of these was the issuing of a religious manual "Think well on it!" This consisted of a daily lesson of meditation. It was very welcome for it supplied a long felt want for something to do, something to read or something to think about. We had more than our share of living within ourselves, and twenty four hours of the day of lone companionship without outdoor exercise, fresh air or communication with even one of our comrades did not tend to improve our mental or bodily health. Hence the book "Think well on it" which obviously was intended as an antidote to our "criminal" habits cut much of our time in parading aimlessly the length of the cell and preserved our mental facilities from the evil onslaughts of the demon of prison gloom and silence.

Then again individual prisoners were on occasions requisitioned or in other words ordered to wash the landings. What a relief to be out of the cell even for a half hour or so. I was one of the selected ones for that task. The rule of silence never relaxed, the guards saw to that. But sometimes you would meet a guard who was not over officious. At the time in question there was one such who tried to be nice to us. He kept a little out of ear range, so in consequence I had a few words in undertones with some of my friends as I washed in front of their respective doors. Even I learned a

a few things in this way about things in Ireland and some of the executions. Some of the soldiers had imparted the news while we were denied correspondence with the outside world.

One day a very strange thing occurred. Our cells were opened and we were ordered to stand to attention in our cells but facing the cell doors. Naturally one wondered what this was for. In a few moments our Staff Sergeant Warden gave an order which brought us to the landings. Then we were marched along the landing and down the iron stair down to the ground floor, keeping three feet apart. To our surprise we were brought to the exercise yard and put on the concrete paths which wound around in circles. How often were we reminded to "keep your three paces apart", "no talking" and "look to your front". We marched and marched the short space of ground as many other prisoners had done in the past and will do in the future. Sentries, armed and threatening, occupied places a few yards apart. We enjoyed the fresh air, the exercise such as it was and more than all the company of our friends. Notwithstanding the rule of silence broken snatches of conversation were carried on at points where there were no guards. There were several such rings in use at a time, rings within rings, and men marching in them. This gave us an opportunity to see quite a number of men and perhaps say a word or two to some of them. But always in whispers. In this wise we marched the ring for half an hour - truly a concession - and so our twenty four hours solitary confinement was cut by a half hour, leaving twenty three and a half to ourselves and our thoughts.

Six weeks is a long time to spend in prison in circumstances like these. Six weeks and then one day a strange, an utterly strange and positively puzzling thing happened that turned sadness into joy and darkness into light. We were performing our customary pacing of the ring in the exercise yard, stepping out in not our best marching order for we were none too robust and strong after our period of inactivity and under-nourishment, trying to keep a kind of military order three paces distant from each other and observing the rule of strict silence when we could not help it. As we marched in that fashion for a while a change in procedure became apparent. One of the military Staff Sergeants paced the ring with us. At a given moment he put a question to you: "Do you want to speak to one of your friends?" Naturally you do, but before you answer yes the thought comes "Was this a trick? Why should he ask this question in view of the regulations concerning the observation of silence? One hesitated to answer. He insisted, repeating the question and trying to assure you that you can speak. Taking a bold shot by answering in the affirmative the warder tells you to fall in with your friend. The marching continued. You greeted your chosen friend; he greeted you. Meanwhile you noticed that the same procedure had been adopted in a few other instances. More and more men fell out. Suddenly the yard resounded to the babel of voices, a strange shuffling movement ensued, a loud cheer rang out that sounded like an Irish war-cry and lo, the ranks broke. A change came over the scene of restrained silence and the men who up to a brief period before were tongue tied fell on one another, hugged one another in sheer delight and jubilation.

There was a magnificent spontaneity about the manner and the spirit of unrestrained unrehearsed greetings in our case. Oh celestial joy! We were alive again in the company of our friends. Oh welcome joy, our speech was not gone. What inestimable happiness to hear your own voice, to hear the voices of your friends again and yet how utterly impossible it was to give personal greetings to all your friends all at the one time. You felt caught in the maze of hands; you felt overpowered with barrage of greetings and lost in the midst of the groupings that had formed in different places in the yards. You wanted to see everyone, speak to everyone; especially you claimed renewal of friendships with those you knew most, and in the midst of all this flurry and excitement you either lost your head or failed to locate the object of your quest. When eventually you found them, in all probability they had the same story to relate, that they were caught in the maze and barrage too. Talk about the return of the prodigal son. This was it multiplied a hundredfold or more. Before we had all our say we were reformed and marched back to our cells.

### Chapter 12.

Our prison life had taken on a new aspect and we looked forward to the morrow for a continuation of our social intercourse and communion of spirits with our friends. These brief talking sessions afforded us opportunities for the interchanging of news and exchange of views on many matters that affected our personal and national interests. We learned quite a lot about the course of our recent fighting and particularly news about current events since we left Dublin. The news of the

executions of our brave leaders had filtered through, news that was accepted with sadness and pride and with feelings of personal bereavement for many of these men were looked upon more as brothers than leaders. Who amongst us could think of them in any other sense? There was a union and a oneness between us which even death - the soldier's death that they got - could never sever or destroy. Our love for them had grown with the years. Who could have anything else for good men and true? We could thank God for knowing them. There were few among us who did not know at least one of these executed men. Some knew many of them, others knew them all intimately. Their execution proved beyond doubt that they were great men, noble men, true men. Their enemies saw to that. We on our part could think of what they were to us and what they were to Ireland. Everything they did and every service they gave was for Ireland's welfare. Pearse, the kind, the gentle, the loving man of many parts and talents, the writer, the poet, the teacher, the seer, the soldier, the leader - he could be the humblest of the humble and the most exalted - who could rise to great heights and eminence, or in humility accept a minor role. Patrick Pearse you were our Leader. In your name and at your call we hazarded everything. We trusted you and you trusted us. We mourn you but not with useless tears or any outward sign of bereavement. We thank you for permitting us to know you, to trust you and to love you. Could we have done anything less knowing that you inspired us, showed us the road to travel and trod that hard and bitter road with us as a soldier and a friend.

Tom Clarke (Tom to us who knew him) - the father of them all, the grandest, noblest felon of our land, he who had suffered his gethesemene in English convict jails, who bore it all for Ireland, giving the best years of his young life for his Fenian faith and passed through the crucible of sorrow, suffering and mortification, weakened in body but strengthened in spirit - he who was a born conspirator in a good cause, a man who did not know the meaning of the word fear, who disdained the word caution, who prized honour, service and duty as the three most exalted and exalting virtues for a liberty loving Irishman, who would rather rot in jail than sell his own or his country's right to be free, he who had already made enough sacrifices for Ireland and yet would not be satisfied until he fired another shot, he who ended his days in old age fighting as he wished to fight and dying as he was proud to die - facing the firing squad.

James Connolly, the Labour agitator and Leader, the man who combined socialism with nationalism, the internationalist and the nationalist, the man who preached the rights of man and the rights of Ireland, he who could lead men in industrial conflict and lead soldiers in battle, a man who could hover high over his fellows, whose whole life was spent in the service of the under-dog, the ill-treated and the sufferer, who sought neither riches nor glory for himself and got none, for the principalities and powers of his generation were wiser, richer and saner than he and yet he had enough wisdom, richness and sanity in his small stocky frame to give in Ireland's service. Many an Irish Volunteer may have misunderstood you, may have questioned your patriotism and your tact, may even have doubted your

right to butt in on things national which Volunteers held sacred, but you have given proof of your greatness, your love for Ireland and her cause to be free. Irish Volunteers salute you. The Army of the Irish Republic pay homage to you.

Seán MacDermott. How few of us did not know "poor Seán", for this was how he was described. Poor he was in physical strength for he walked with a limp for years previous to the Rising. But that infirmity did not in the slightest degree prevent him taking a man's part in the national movement and especially the physical force part of it. He was no laggard, no weakling or a type that had to be coaxed to do things. Rather the opposite, he who knowing things had to be done made it a rule to set about doing them, and by these means encouraged or pushed others to the same course. Yet one could hardly associate him with taking a major part in, for instance, an armed insurrection. He was so gentle, so lovable, so gentlemanly. Indeed how often was it said "he was as gentle as the gentlest maiden, as docile as a child, quiet living and quiet mannered. But he was a fighter. His was the mind behind "Irish Freedom", the paper that had paved the way for the coming into being of the Irish Volunteers that led the way for the armed conflict consummated in Easter Week, who preached the doctrine "not peace but the sword" and the policy of a free independent sovereign Irish Republic. He was the sower of the seed and the reaper of the harvest, and right royally he signed his name to the parchment of life that was to cost him his death.

Thomas McDonagh, the gay young poet whose verses I had read in the Irish Review, Eamon Ceannt, Joseph

Plunkett - three of the seven signatories! . They must have been great men to have linked themselves with the other four. Other names were mentioned as having been executed, our own Commandant Ned Daly, Seán Heuston, Con Colbert, Major John McBride, Michael Mallin and Willie Pearse.

The first three whose names have already been recorded gave many of us a shock, especially the men of the 1st Battalion, a large proportion of whom were prisoners in Knutsford, and the members of the Fianna who knew the worth of these great men. It was hard to get particulars beyond that they were shot. Oh it was a big price to pay. It was a colossal sacrifice. Various rumours were about - these always seemed to dog us everywhere and at all times. Our communication with the outside world was very limited and such occasional letters as we were allowed to write had to be brief and, of course, proper. Besides, any letters sent us from home were censored and bore the stamp marking "Passed by Censor". We could not therefore expect to get much news through such channels. Would that we could.

It was noticeable that quite a number of what we termed prominent men in the Volunteers were also prisoners in Knutsford, such as Dick Mulcahy, M. W. O'Reilly, Eamon Morkan etc. We had reason to marvel at their escape so far and wondered how they slipped the net of police surveillance and detection. The fact that they were dressed in officers' uniform lent special colour to the idea of a charmed life in each individual case, but that in itself did not tend to guarantee immunity against future action by the British authorities in respect to their and our treatment as prisoners.

Likewise, not knowing the minds of our captors we could hardly essay whether they or any of us would be brought to trial later on. Suffice it to say we relished the thought and we were glad of the presence of these men.

Rumour had it that Dick Mulcahy was one of the prominent officers in the Ashbourne fight, an operation commanded by Thomas Ashe that reflected a noble feat of arms for the handful of Volunteers engaged. Some of us also had cause to wonder how Eamon Morkan, the confidant and staff officer immediately associated with the late Commandant Ned Daly, was not on the tried and sentenced list. Surprise or wonder, we were more than thankful that he was spared from the grim holocaust and none the less solicitous for his and our future welfare.

Another concession accorded us was the issuing of a mattress to each prisoner. This looked as if the powers that be were anxious to make up for some of their omissions or shortcomings. It was about time anyway that they condescended to do the big and useful thing. Perhaps by now we had become used to the boards. They were coming on, so some of our wags declared. Truly they were for gradual changes were being made to improve things in our favour. The period allowed for exercise or mingling with one another was also extended and the introduction of physical culture training at the expense and under the guidance of the British Military N.C.O. was appreciated by the men who responded manfully to the occasion. Even this caused rumours - somebody suggesting that it was intended as a means of getting us ready to fight for England at the front. On the part of the prisoners the Rosary was recited en masse during

exercise. At first the guards and warders did not know what it was all about. This had a strange sequel. The evening when the death of Lord Kitchener was announced the Rosary was recited. Strange as it may seem the soldiers believed that we had prayed in thanksgiving for the poor man's death. Still withal the recital of the Rosary had a deep impression on some of the soldiers when they got to know that it meant praying and quite a few of them sought to obtain the Rosary as they called our beads. They thought there was something of a charm about them and as they were apparently non-Catholics they were anxious to procure one for they might be sent to the front anytime. It's strange how human hearts can be stirred sometimes.

Parcels too started to come our way from home and some from quarters unknown to us. We had in the meantime learned that Knutsford was only a few miles from Manchester. Our own people sent us in articles of clothing and the many accessories men in our position might be in need of. I remember getting in some eggs kindly sent by a lady whom I had never known and who in her great generosity enclosed a note wishing me every luck. That lady was, I think, Mrs. McKean of Clareville Road, Dublin. She even inscribed good wishes on each egg. Others of our men also got eggs, books, parcels from unknown donors. We were getting to realise that we were not forgotten. There were even good Irish people in Manchester who came to our help in this way and in another of which mention must be made now. Visitors were permitted at certain times. This often caused embarrassment to us. It did cause embarrassment to me on one occasion. After that I was quite fortified.

This is how it happened. A visitor arrived at the prison requesting to see a certain prisoner. You, the named one, are brought out to an enclosure. To your surprise you are confronting a perfect stranger, one whom you have never seen before. "That's your visitor" the warden says. You must make a bold front and get over the preliminaries as quickly as you can. It even might be a nice girl or an aged lady - not necessarily always. You couldn't beat these Manchester Irish girls, women and men. We blessed them for the many kindnesses shown us. They behaved wonderfully and the prisoners knew it and appreciated all that was done on their behalf. I remember one time when out on this visitor business Larry Ginnell was there. He was a member of the Parliament and he made it his business to pay us many visits. If ever there was a human post man Larry was surely so. As a matter of fact he was a public benefactor for he brought many uncensored letters out of the prison. He did this in a very novel and unexciting way. He wore his long frock coat. In one of the "tails" was a good sized pocket. He had a habit of being in a group; while he was engaged in conversation his pocket was availed of for letters. Of course he never saw them going in but he knew he was made the medium for the underground traffic. No man could enjoy a situation like this better than he for he was an Independent member of Parliament and not a friendly one to the British Government. He couldn't hope to carry this out indefinitely so one time he was caught, so it was said, and his visits cancelled.

So sudden and unexpected did these strange innovations and concessions occur that we wondered what was in the air and the significance attaching to them.

We even had visitors from the War Office. These English never seemed to be able to pronounce their R. and S. What fun we made of this. Their failure to speak English the way the Irish speak it often evoked a broad smile from some of our men at the expense of the visitor. But off parade and among ourselves it provided quite an amount of mirth and mimicking of the men from the War Office. At every visit we were regaled with the question "Any complaints"? This in course of time became a kind of parrot cry. The person having a complaint was required to step forward. Most of the complaints centred around "tea" - tea that was not tea. Our visitor, who was always a military officer of high rank, generally would not appreciate the point of our complaint not knowing our taste and habit in respect to that precious beverage and although the complaint was repeated time out of number nothing was done to accede to our request for proper unadulterated tea of the consistency and flavour to which we were normally accustomed. Our real complaint was that we were not getting tea at all. Obviously there was no other option but to nurse our complaint and to drink or not drink the stuff as we thought fit. Many complaints were also made about the food in general, but beyond the usual comment "That I shall put it before the proper quarters" very little, if any, improvement in the quality or quantity of the vitamins was effected.

It must be said, however, that the granting of the few concessions in our regard contributed to make our life in prison a little tolerable and agreeable. The big fly in the ointment was the matter of the rule of silence and discipline as applied to us when inside the precincts of the prison proper. No relaxation of these

regulations would be permitted or condoned. Even the fact that we were dubbed prisoners of war, our correspondence from and to the prison bore this appellation and we were recognised by the authorities as such, we were not allowed free intercourse, communication and association except during the short periods of exercise in the prison yard. For the greater part of the day, and all night, our cells were locked and we were kept inside. The point put up by the authorities was that there were other prisoners besides our type in the prison, and in consequence were they to allow us full scope and liberty the discipline of the other portion would be jeopardised. We knew nothing and cared less for the niceties of prison etiquette, status or routine. We desired the full observance of the rules governing our status as prisoners of war. Either we were prisoners of war or we were not. Of course we knew the British claimed we were only rebels caught in arms levying war against lawful English authority. We were nevertheless thrown into jail without trial and without any prospect of trial. What was our status if not prisoners of war?

Why were we here controlled by the British army authorities under orders of the War Office? If we were not prisoners of war then we were not civilian prisoners - neither were we convicted prisoners for we had not been tried or sentenced.

Was it any wonder that we thought the English could do queer things in their treatment of Irishmen whom they classed as rebels. They could hardly see our point of view in claiming that we were prisoners in name as in fact and that we had just rights to be accorded treatment as such. The next thing to that would be treatment as

political prisoners. Even the suffragettes, the women warriors, secured that status for themselves. Why not we also - provided we were not prisoners of war. Your English jurist must have been in an 'Irish stew' in planning what they would do with us wild Irish, and we were so wild, so truculent and so haughty you never knew what we would be up to next. What a sad reflection on your intelligence, your sense of fair play, that after seven centuries of your ruling of Irishmen and Irishwomen you failed to understand and to know us. Even you could not understand our complaining about food etc. and our demands for better treatment and condition when we should be begging for mercy and seeking our liberation on any terms. They hardly knew that some of the complaints, not all of course for many were quite genuine and put forward in good faith, were made for the fun of the thing, just for a laugh, knowing quite well that they would not be entertained or granted. Even incongruity and humour can creep into the prison sphere sometimes. But our species of Irish humour could be so baffling, so beguiling, when directed against your so superior, so distinguished and so high and mighty English dignitary! How often did yon Irishmen - the easy going so-called crazy and illiterate Paddy - chuckle up his sleeve in making some complaint or other, oblivious of your misery or discomfiture and not even caring whether the complaint was granted or not.

It must be said in fairness that not all those placed in charge over us or looking after our welfare were so dumb. There were three types of nationalities attached to the prison regime. - Scotch, Irish and English. The first two might not always fall for our palaver, raíméis or leg-pulling. They could see a joke sometimes

and sometimes again they would have to fall over it before they could understand some types that fell from the lips of some of our men. When they did "get it", meaning the gist of the jokes, there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth, a volley of oaths and much threatening for the same. Now in charge of our wing there were two Sergeant Majors - one Scotch and one Irish. Though they had much in common, being good, strong and burly soldiers, they temperamentally and diplomatically were miles apart. Both, of course, had our interests at heart, to wit to keep us safe and sound as prisoners. Neither would tolerate monkey-tricks or horse-play. Everything under their charge had to be so so. They each made it their business to see that you got enough rope that was good for you, for your health and your pains, nothing more and certainly nothing less. Each saw to it that you did not turn to the right or your left or behind for that matter, insisting that you should always look forward to the front - even if that meant into space - and always according to rules and regulations, you know. But they differed somehow in their way of commanding. The Irish variety, perhaps like ourselves, was quick tempered, mischievous, haughty to a fault, hot and bothered sometimes over trifles, such as for instance trying to prove that he was "a better Irishman than any of you". The other, the Scotch variety, hadn't to trouble himself on that score, but he had the extraordinary distinction of being too fond of showing his authority, a blend that was truly in keeping with the huge bundle of keys that he, in his graciousness, carried for "our good".

The facilities granted us to mix with our comrades during the short periods of exercise, affording, as it did, a certain amount of liberty, within bounds, was

nevertheless frustrated by the longer periods we were forced to endure behind the locked doors of our cells, thus emphasising that there were two sets of regulations governing our conduct and status as prisoners of war or whatever title applied in our case. It went further than that, for it aggravated a situation which under the special circumstances of our incarceration was never and could hardly ever be considered just or fair. The prison authorities must often have felt themselves in a dilemma when confronted with the problem of trying, if they ever tried, and there was some slight reason to assume that they did try but failed in the attempt, to mitigate the hardships imposed on us by the ordinary prison code and failed to accord freedom of movement, freedom of intercourse within the boundary of the prison as prescribed by the usages and convention associated with the treatment of prisoners of war. As we understood the matter they were hopelessly at fault in granting only piecemeal concessions when it suited their purpose, and they were not prepared to go the whole hog even to please us. They held the ring and we, who were only to them just Irish prisoners, were required to acquiesce in their regulations and the arrangements made to maintain the strictest form of surveillance and control over us by means of the system of isolation and close confinement. Indeed as far as we could discern there was never a happy medium between the two courses, with the result that we wondered, as we had just cause to, whether they desired to continue treating us in the dread form of prisoners of war and ordinary convicted prisoners.

It is not always easy to know the military mind on such matters. It was hard for us to know the English

military mind when confronted with the task of deciding our rights and our privileges. Ordinary convicted prisoners and common criminals for that matter were not deprived of all rights and privileges when undergoing punishment for their crimes. If, as was declared, we were prisoners of war then there was no reason why we should be so wantonly and so unreasonably confined to our cells for the major portion of the day and all the night, and even then it was questionable whether our cells should ever be locked. The fact remained that in spite of repeated agitation and notwithstanding numerous complaints to the officers from the War Office on the matter, no proper amelioration resulted and we had no reason to hope that these people would ever treat us similar than their inveterate enemies, the German prisoners.

This remained a burning question with us. It must have been so with our British captors. We could not measure their minds, or know their plans in respect to our future existence as prisoners. But a time came when the matter reached a culminating point, settling once and for all the vexed question of our status as prisoners of war. We were to be interned - in other words we were to be thrown out of jail and placed in an internment camp. We were duly informed of this and as further proof of it each prisoner was served with an Internment Form. The respective internment form was worded thus:

"Notice with persons with respect to whom an order is made under Regulation 14B.

"Notice is hereby given to the above named that an order has been made by the Secretary of State under Regulation 14B of the Defence of the Realm Regulations directing that he shall be interned at the place of

Internment at Frongoch.

The order is made on the ground that he is of hostile associations and is reasonably suspected of having favoured, promoted or assisted an armed insurrection against His Majesty.

If within seven days from the date of his receiving this notice the above-named prisoner submits to the Secretary of State any representations against the provisions of this order, such representations will be referred to the Advisory Committee appointed for the purpose of advising the Secretary of State with respect to the internment and deportations of aliens and presided over by a judge of the High Court, and will be duly considered by the Committee. If the Secretary of State is satisfied by the report of the said Committee that the Order may, so far as it affects the above-named prisoner, be revoked or varied without injury to the public safety, or the defence of the realm, he will revoke or vary the order accordingly by a further order in writing under his hand.

Failing such revocation or variation the Order will remain in force".

Now, thought we, the question of our status as prisoners of war was unmistakably sealed, settled and delivered. D.O.R.A. had promulgated it, had willed it and guaranteed it, and it was exercised under His Britannic's Majesty's prerogative. To make it all the more sublime we were duly apprised in plain language that if we appealed within seven days against the order banishing us to an internment camp, our appeal would be

sympathetically considered and we might in consequence be released or not released, whichever was the best thing that could happen in our cases. But that depended on a few little factors which inevitably came into the reckoning, one of which was the matter relating to a good, proper and relenting disposition on our part. Here was where the Irishman's sense of humour and pride shone. The wise ones among us gave careful consideration to that 'blessed' document, opined that the purpose behind the order was to get us to admit that we were bad boys, or if we were not very bad boys that we were dopes led astray by clever tricky leaders; that we were walked blindfolded as it were into a fight against our wills and better judgement, and that if any of us thought that by reason of a sense of honour or because of comradeship we had already paid the price of our folly and wickedness, all things considered to be fair in love as in war, then it was possible, indeed necessary, that we should relent and take advantage of the opportunity thus afforded and secure a clean slate. Obviously the British made a bad shot there because the prisoners whether wise or unwise, learned or unlearned, showed neither sign and gave no approval to avail of the seven days' wonder preferring to see the matter out. In point of fact they preferred to wait and see and were in no mood to disclaim their share in the insurrection or to renounce their leader or their cause.

So it came about that the order for our internment at the place of Frongoch was to be put into effect. With great expectancy and deep anxiety we looked forward to the time when we should bid adieu to our prison abode and get away from the network of iron grills, iron bars and iron doors, seek new adventure and excitement in a

more liberal and freer atmosphere for in our minds we pictured an internment camp where prisoners would be provided with good food, be nicely housed and afforded middling good comfort. Even above and beyond these corporal things we looked forward to the greater freedom of leisure and recreation which we understood to be the accepted rule in respect to the internment code. Our main consideration, however, was the desire that we would be given greater scope and better opportunities of meeting larger numbers of our comrades, some of those whom we had not seen since before the Rising and some whom we had not seen since the first day or subsequent days. We were naturally excited at the thought and prospect of meeting these and the larger number of our Volunteer comrades - our Irish Republican Army - hoping, of course, thereby to obtain news of current events. We were avaricious of always seeking knowledge from newcomers of the recent trend of affairs in Ireland for the little we had heard had awakened our curiosity and encouraged us to seek more.

Tidings had reached us of the opening of a Dependants' Fund for the relief of distress among our people. We had reason to know that many of our dependants were hard hit on account of our long captivity. Yet few of our men complained although all were anxious and troubled about the matter. Then again we had heard news of a turning of the tide, that the Irish people had as if by a miracle largely turned over on our side due to the excesses and executions perpetrated by the British authorities. We had read the letter of the Bishop of Limerick, Dr. O'Dwyer, flaying General Maxwell who was Commander in Chief of the British Forces during the Rising, and we also read the sermon which Father Barrett O.P.

delivered in which he eulogised us, our leaders and our cause. The story of the brutal military murders at Portobello Barracks also reached us. These and a number of other matters interested us. Our main concern, however, was that we were not forgotten and that there were people in Ireland beginning to realise that we stood for something worth while. A new wave of nationality, a new interest in things national had come to light in our absence.

The day for our transference to Frongoch arrived and this movement started in small batches. I was among one of the éarly groups that found ourselves placed on a train under heavy guards and whisked through a good part of North Wales until we reached a small railway siding at Bala, near which was our destination. It was quite a thrill to pass through the lovely countryside of Wales, part of which was so much like our own lovely Ireland, and note the peculiar names on railway station, names which we in our ignorance thought so peculiar. How we tried to pronounce them. What a thrill indeed to feel that we were in a Celtic country inhabited by a Celtic people who had withstood the ravages of time to preserve their own national characteristics, traditions and culture. What a delightful experience it would have been to us were we journeying in better and freer circumstances to make human contacts with a race which we had learned was akin to our own. How often was one forced to make comparison between our own hard lot, the hardships imposed on our dear land so cruelly and arbitrarily deprived of not merely independence but national culture and tradition as well, and their lovely Wales which remained true to

everything that was racy of the soil, nationhood and national consciousness in the face of and proximate presence of an all pervading and overpowering foreign culture. Yet we could not help thinking that the country of Wales was less free than that which we aimed and desired our Ireland to attain. Why was it that the English exercised such unremitting and deliberate care to prescribe our national institutions, customs and culture, while at their doorstep stood Wales, a country that was permitted and encouraged to live its own life/<sup>somewhat</sup> free of interruption and oppressions? We pondered on these questions and thoughts as we made our forced journey on our way as prisoners to the Welsh portion called Frongoch.

At last we reached our destination. What a strange sight it was indeed! There before us stood a building that resembled a distillery - it was a distillery some time before flanked by several other structures and away from them a few wooden huts. These were surrounded by barbed wire fences and sentries posted at regular distances. The aforesaid posts were built on the camp and afforded a good field of view of a goodly portion of the enclosure. The sentries were on duty at these posts and inside the enclosure could be seen a number of Volunteers. These latter were the first consignment delivered some days prior to our entry. Some short, or long time afterwards, for strange as it may seem it generally takes time to comply with the formalities associated with the handing over of our bodies, goods and chattels, into "safe" keeping, we were dutifully ushered through the entrance and directed inside. More formalities: and where should we find ourselves but in the distillery portion of the camp, having in the meantime been handed over to the "custody" of fellow beings and prisoners. Then we were allotted to our "digs" and

assigned our beds and bedding and all the paraphernalia too commonly recognised as personal property for our use during our habitation in the place. Of course, we had been again card-indexed as per regulations, each prisoner being designated a number which, at the peril of the loss of letters, parcels, etc., he was required to cherish for the period of his internment.

It would not be fair or true to say that our new abode was such as one would choose to inhabit and still regard as a home. The only fanciful and beautiful feature attaching to it was that it was termed a dormitory - our bedroom was called a dormitory. It was hard to know how they arrived at calling it such a name for in reality it was an over-sized loft. Better to have named it "sleeping quarters", "class room", or - but why go on trying to fit a name to suit it? Anyway the distillery part consisted of three such rooms. Ours was large, low-size and dark. Its size was considerably reduced by the number of beds that it contained for it boasted of a big clientele - altogether too big for ~~for~~ its cubic space. This was particularly noticeable and felt during very wet weather when we had to "stay at home" or at nighttime, the essential condition being that one must sleep. On rising in the mornings one felt heavy, listless and headachey - a feeling akin to suffering from the effects of the night before, or left over spasm so common among people who dissipate and in consequence are liverish, an overdose of foul air, an underdose of fresh air, and a feeling of congestion were the three most potent agencies that contributed to the ailment of which we were victims in the "hole of Calcutta" so fittingly described by one of our many wags. They had originally been grain lofts during

the period of the existence of the distillery and prior to our entry had been used to "house" German prisoners of war. The only cure for keeping oneself in middling good health was by remaining out of it on all but sleeping hours.

Our wishes to meet others of our comrades was to a large extent fulfilled, and during the first few days of our stay one "bobbed" into some acquaintance or other. Sometimes we found it a big drawback in recognising many of our friends because they wore beards, and were attired a la mode as interned prisoners, some in Martin Henry suits and military Ammunition or Army boots, though some wore the tattered or faded remnants of Volunteer uniform or portion thereof - puttees or leggings. Such a mixum gathering of Irishmen from the four ends of Ireland, for strange as it may seem, though the Rising proper was only carried out in Dublin, Enniscorthy, Galway and Dundalk, the British took good care to rope in numbers of suspects and those they considered dangerous men during the Rising and subsequent to it. They had as a result their hands full with prisoners from all quarters. Frongoch then was the mecca, the enforced mecca, for such who "were reasonably suspected of having favoured, promoted or assisted an armed insurrection against His Majesty"; and in consequence many new arrivals were seeking shelter day in and day out until at last the camp could boast of having a "full house". The inhabitants had come from myriad jails in Ireland and England - to mention but a few, Wandsworth, Wormwood Scrubbs, Wakefield, Knutsford, Stafford, Woking, Reading, Arbour Hill, Galway, etc., so here we were forming one community - those who fought in the Rising co-mingled with those who for some reason or other did not fight then. Here was as complete a mixture - some would call it a conglomeration - of

Irishmen as could be found in any sphere or any place under the sun. It was rare as it was extraordinary - nay it was well balanced, complete and orderly - everyone giving of their best to make the stay as happy and comfortable as was possible under the circumstances.

We soon picked up the threads of our former lives and associations with good friends and accomplices, renewing old acquaintanceships, rehearsing old events and episodes of common interest and took up the trend of affairs, political and national, so sadly severed by our imprisonment. That got easier as Irish papers and periodicals found their way into the camp, the sermon by Father Barrett, O.P. in America, and the recent issue of the "Catholic Bulletin".

The "Catholic Bulletin" at the time published biographical accounts of the executed leaders. These could be termed personal and intimate narratives of the men concerned. To say that we were stirred by the splendid portrayal of good and righteous men would be to use quite a mild term. The few copies that were available in the camp were eagerly sought after, read, and even copied. It would be safe to say that we felt highly honoured by these grand and edifying tributes to our dead leaders at such a time when our fortunes could not be regarded as being in the ascendant considering our plight and whatever hardships may have to be faced before reaching the stage of our liberation.

Perhaps I may be pardoned for inserting here the accounts as they relate to Heuston and Colbert, because of my more intimate association with them over a number of years.

Seán Heuston, the "Catholic Bulletin" wrote, was born in Dublin on 21st February, 1874; was educated at the Christian Brothers Schools, Great Strand Street and O'Connell Schools, North Richmond Street. In 1907 he

secured an appointment as clerk in the Great Southern and Western Railway Company (now Córas Iompair Éireann) and was sent to Limerick. In 1910 he organised a slough of Na Fianna Éireann there. In 1913 he returned to Dublin and early in 1914 became Captain of the North City of the Fianna and in the same year became Captain of "D" Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers. On Easter Monday, 1916, at the head of his Company, he seized the Mendicity Institute building on Usher's Island. After the surrender he was tried by courtmartial and executed on May 8th, 1916.

In his last letter, written to his sister, an Irish nun, he wrote:

Kilmainham Prison,  
Dublin.

My dearest M \_\_\_\_\_

Before this note reaches you I shall have fallen as a soldier in the cause of Irish freedom. I write to bid you a last farewell in this world and rely on you to pray fervently and get the prayers of the whole community for the repose of my soul. I am quite prepared for the journey; the priest was with me and I received Holy Communion this morning. It was only this evening that the finding of the courtmartial was conveyed to me. Poor mother will miss me, but I feel, with God's help, she will manage. You know the Irish proverb: "God's help is nearer than the door". The agony of the last few days has been intense, but I now feel reconciled to God's Holy Will. I might have fallen in action, as many have done, and been less prepared for the journey before me. Do not blame me for the part I have taken as a soldier: I merely carried out the duties of my superiors, who have been in position to know what was best in Ireland's interests. Let there be no talk of foolish enterprise. I have no vain regrets. Think of the thousands of Irishmen who fell fighting under another flag at the Dardanelles attempting to do what England's experts admit was an absolute impossibility. If you really love me, teach the children the History of their own land and teach them the cause of Caitlín Ní hUallacháin never dies. Ireland shall be free from the centre to the sea as soon as the people of Ireland believe in the necessity of Ireland's freedom and are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices to obtain it. M \_\_\_\_\_, pray for me, and get everybody to pray for me.

Your loving brother,  
Jack.

Liam Staines, a member of E. Sluagh of the Fianna, serving under Captain Seán Heuston in the Mendicity, was severely wounded.

Cornelius Colbert, wrote the "Catholic Bulletin" was born at Monalena, Co. Limerick, in 1893, and educated at the Christian Brothers Schools, North Richmond Street, Dublin. He became one of the founder members of Na Fianna Éireann at its inception in 1909 in Dublin, being quickly promoted Captain of a Sluagh in which capacity he worked with incredible energy in imparting instruction to the boys under his charge, in signalling, scouting, etc. Later he became Captain of the Inchicore Company, Irish Volunteers. Pádraig Pearse always spoke of him as "Gallant Captain Colbert".

During the Rising of 1916 he commanded the garrison of Irish Volunteers at Marrowbone Lane area, taken prisoner at the surrender, he was executed on the 8th May, 1916. On the Christmas previously he had written to a fair friend:

"May sharp swords fall on Ireland  
 May all her hills be rifle foe lined  
 May I be there to deal a blow  
 For Erin, Faith and womankind.

And may the song of battle soon  
 Be heard from every hill and vale  
 May I be with the marching men  
 Who fight to free our Gráinne Mhaol.

Ar son Éireann agus ar son Dé  
 Dílis bíomar bailighthe."

He concluded a letter written from Kilmainham to his sister on the eve of his execution:

"Perhaps I'd never again get the chance of knowing when I was to die, and so I'll try and die well. I received this morning and hope to do so again before I die. Pray for me and ask Father Devine, Father Healy and Father O'Brien to say Mass for me, also any priests you know. May God help us - me to die well - you to bear your sorrow. I send you a prayer book as token."

"Con Colbert" said Eamon Ceannt, "abstained from meat all through Lent!" Of his last moments, Father Augustine, O.F.M. Cap., wrote:

"While my left arm linked his right and while I was whispering something in his ear, a soldier approached to fix a piece of paper on his breast. While this was being done he looked down and then addressing the soldier in a cool and normal way said, "Wouldn't it be better to put it up higher, nearer the heart?" The soldier said something in reply and then added, "Give me your hand now". The prisoner secured, confused, and extended his left hand. "Not that" said the soldier, "but the right". The right was accordingly extended and having grasped and shaken it warmly, the kindly human-hearted soldier proceeded to gently bind the prisoner's hands and afterwards blind-folded him. Some minutes later my arm still linked to his, and accompanied by another priest we entered the dark corridor leading to a yard and, his lips moving in prayer, the brave lad went forth to die".

He was second in command of the Marrowbone Lane garrison, taking charge of the surrender.

I also include "New York American": In the Leading Article of May 13th, 1916, it wrote:

"Thank God for Freedom Martyrs in every age and clime". Among Irishmen there were up to a few days ago, many who, if not loyal to England, were at least loyal to the cause of the Empire, and wished it to be victorious in its war. To-day we think that the Irishmen in America who are not burning with resentment against the British Empire and praying for its defeat and humiliation are very, very few indeed.

It was evident to any man of sense, the moment the British Government began the bloody work of reprisal upon the Irish prisoners of war, that it was making a blunder as stupid as it was. We hoped then that the outburst of horror in America as well as among humane Englishmen would open the eyes of the British Government and cause the shooting of British prisoners to cease. But the hope was disappointed.

The British Government has its military murderers steadily at work, and each day's cable has brought word of fresh executions, of killings, that would shame savages, of wounded and shot, shattered prisoners being propped up on their broken limbs long enough for their executioners to riddle again with bullets their poor mangled bodies.

No wonder that every Irish heart thirsts for vengeance - no wonder that the British propagandists who have prostituted American journalism and free speech to the unpatriotic object of dragging their own country into the war to do England's fighting, have been shamed into temporary silence. We should think that even if these bootlickers, to say nothing of decent Englishmen, would blush to pronounce the name of Belgium again, would never open his mouth to talk of 'antracities' or 'humanities' again. With the blackened walls and tumbled ruins of Dublin echoing the volleys of firing squads, shooting down surrendered prisoners whose crime was to love their native land and yearn for its independence and liberty, we hope, for decency's sake, we shall hear no more snivelling in America over broken stained-glass or shattered statues in Rheims or Louvain.

With the blood of Irish prisoners and patriots reddening poor Ireland's soil in streams, we hope, also for decency's sake, that we shall hear no more of England's passionate and heroic sympathy for the rights and liberties

of small peoples. With the spectacle of sorely wounded men propped up on their broken and shattered limbs to be shot to death, we hope, again for decency's sake, that there will be a final end of the cant about Britain waging war for humanity's sake.

We trust that from Mr. Wilson down to the "Providence Journal" there will be an end to the snivel and cant and humbug which has been so effectively belied by the governmental and military reprisals and cruelties and murders in unhappy Ireland. We hope that the American people will never again be deluded to the point of willingness to waste American wealth and American blood in the contemptible role of cats-paws to pull England's chestnuts out of the fire and ashes of a selfish and unsuccessful war, fought under the pretence of the independence of little peoples and of the rights of neutrals and of the humanities.

Those Irish scholars, poets, patriots and martyrs for freedom's sake, whose mangled bodies lie in bloody graves in shot, riddled and flame-swept Dublin, are the witnesses who give the lie to all the cant and humbug that England's American tools and propagandists have dinned into American ears to win America to plunge into England's war. In that sense these have done a noble service to America, as well as Ireland, by the sacrifice of their lives. In the very instant of their deaths America drew back from the insidious and unpatriotic propaganda of armed alliance with England. We are confident that from this on, that wicked and morally treasonable propaganda has no further power of mischief. The American people will never permit themselves to be dragged into Europe's war as the ally and saviour of the murders of Ireland's patriots and martyrs. The very stones in the streets would cry out against such an alliance with a government that has shot down men for doing

exactly what our own forefathers did when they pledged their lives, their fortunes and their honour to the support of the Declaration of American Independence.

The signers of that Declaration would have met the same fate at the hands of the British Government that the signers of Ireland's Declaration of Independence have just met, had the British armies been able to overpower our forefathers in America. One could almost believe that those fathers of ours would rise from their graves to rebuke their degenerate sons who would ally themselves to the slayers of men who were brave enough and devoted enough to risk their lives and stake fortunes and their sacred honour in the great cause of human liberty.

The American who applauds the butcheries, the American who has no sympathy for these victims, the American whose heart does not go out in compassion for Ireland, and whose heart does not burn with indignation against those who have again trampled her liberties under foot, and poured out the blood of her children as a sacrifice to subjection and oppression is not fit to enjoy the liberties and to wear the bright badge of free citizenship which our forefathers gained for us with arms in their manly arms.

Thank God that such men are not many amongst us, that the degenerate crew is far more confident of its noise than its numbers.

Thank God, that the real heart of America beats true to the cause of human liberty everywhere, that it sympathises and applauds above the graves of Irish martyrs for freedom's dear and holy sake as warmly and as gratefully as it remembers and applauds above the graves of all those who on many fields of battle and through many years of agony and endurance bought with their blood their children's heritage

of American freedom.

Thank God for freedom's soldiers and freedom's martyrs in every age and clime for Washington, for Tone, for Emmet, for Bolivar, for Lincoln, for Pearse and those who died with him.

And shame befall the false American who cannot repeat the Invocation to Freedom and to freedom's soldiers and martyrs with all his heart and with all his soul."

We compared notes with our confrères on the several aspects of the fight during Easter Week, and interesting ourselves in the individual narratives of the several participants of various commands and posts, kept ourselves from brooding too much over our then fate. That was easy with men of common interest and among those of identical points of view and outlook in life.

Of the many units of the Dublin Brigade our own First Battalion and "C" Company were very well represented in the two camps: Our Company Adjutant John E. Lyons, his son Charlie; Sergeant M. Wilson; Sergeant P. Byrne; Frank McNally; Seán Kennedy; Seán Hynes; Patrick O'Neill; John Ellis; Andy and John Birmingham; Tom Cassidy; Patrick Hughes; Tommy Munroe; Jack Richmond; John Lynch; Charlie Purcell; Paddy Swan; Seán Flood; Joe Musgrave; Joseph Bevan; Seán Farrelly; Mick and Frank O'Flanagan; Mick Howlett; Seumas Byrne; Joe Kelly; Jimmy McArdle; Patrick Byrne; Frank Pollard; Stephen Pollard; P. Nevin; Seán Quinn; George Whelan; Bob Lagget; Joe Sweeney; John Madden; Joe McDonough. All those had participated in the fight, most of them in the Four Courts, excepting Andy and John Birmingham, Patrick Hughes,

/Charlie Molphy,

J. Lynch, H. Manning, Charlie Purcell, John Madden/ who served in the G.P.O. area. Very likely there were others of our Company who were prisoners there, but the foregoing were men whom I was well acquainted with.

"C" Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers.

List of Men who served in Easter Week, 1916: Four Courts Area.

1. Allen, Thomas, Sergeant; promoted Lieutenant.  
Killed in action.
2. Byrne, Patrick J.
3. Byrne, Patrick, Sergeant.
4. Byrne, Séamus
5. Bevan, Joseph, and his two sons
6. Bevan, Thomas }  
7. Bevan, Charles }  
8. Brabazon, Joseph } wounded in action.
9. Bridgeman, Edward
10. Cassidy, Thomas
11. Clancy, Peadar, Lieutenant.
12. Cooling, Joseph
13. Cusack, John
14. Coyle, William
15. Dowling, Thomas
16. Derham, Michael
17. Ellis, John
18. Fahy, Frank, Captain.
19. Farrell, Michael
20. Farrelly, John
21. Fisher, John
22. Flood, Seán
23. Grimley, Michael
24. Hynes, John
25. Howlett, Michael
26. Holmes, Denis } part of week.
27. Hendrick, Edward
28. Kennedy, Seán
29. Kavanagh, James
30. Kelly, Joseph
31. Kenny, John
32. Ledwith, Peter
33. Leggett, Robert
34. Lyons, John E., and his son, Adjutant.
35. Lyons, Charles
36. Macken, Patrick
37. Musgrave, Joseph
38. Munroe, Thomas
39. McGuinness, Joseph, 1st Lieutenant.
40. McNally, Francis
41. McDonough, Joseph
42. McArdle, James, and his brother
43. McArdle, Patrick
44. McKeown, William
45. McDonnell, Thomas
46. Nevin, Patrick
47. O'Neill, Patrick
48. O'Flanagan, Patrick } killed in action  
and his two brothers,
49. O'Flanagan, Michael
50. O'Flanagan, Frank



Members of Cumann na mBan in the Four Courts.

(This list is incomplete)

Miss Molly Emmis.  
 Miss May Carron  
 Mrs. F. Fahy (wife of Captain Frank Fahy)

(The foregoing list was compiled in later  
 years from, say 1934).

A lot of other information was gleaned concerning a number of our Company officers and men who had been courtmartialled and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

Captain Frank Fahy, sentenced to death, commuted to  
 penal servitude for 10 years.

Lieutenant Joseph McGuinness, sentenced to death, commuted  
 to 10 years.

Sergeant-Major Jack Reid, sentenced to death, commuted to  
 10 years.

Lt. Peadar Clancy, 10 years, sentenced to death.

Liam Tobin, 10 years, sentenced to death.

Tommy Bevan, 10 years, sentenced to death.

Charlie Bevan (brother of Tommy), sentenced to death,  
 commuted to years.

Tom Walsh, sentenced to death, 10 years.

Michael Scully, sentenced to 10 years.

Fred Brooks (who had fought in the Mendicity under  
 Seán Heuston), sentenced to death, commuted  
 to years.

Dr. Paddy McArdle.

Mention must be made here of some of our company casualties - two killed in action: Sergeant Tom Allen and Volunteer Patrick O'Flanagan; and wounded - Joe Brabazon, Jim Plunkett and Henry Manning. There were a number of men of whose participation in the Rising it was impossible at the

time to ascertain, but according to the list then available, our Company had furnished a very large percentage of the effective strength of the Battalion. (See list, pages 196 to 198).

Concerning the camp at Frongoch it must be said to the credit of the prisoners that it was well run, which reflected greatly on the Committee of Management and the prisoners themselves. This Committee or Camp Council consisted in the main of Volunteer officers whose responsibility it was to maintain order and discipline and to provide for all internal matters respecting the welfare and interest of the internees. The camp was conducted on a semi-military basis, various officers being assigned to certain types of work in charge of a number of men. Thus we had O/Cs. of various services, such as cook-house, dining-room, wash-houses, etc., as well as hut headers and dormitory leaders, etc. The Camp Council undertook and carried out plans for the government and administration of the camp, the other ranks and the internees subordinate to them. No sounder and certainly no more practical policy or principle could have succeeded, and it is to the credit of all that the utmost harmony and willing co-operation prevailed from the start of what was an experiment - an unusual experiment for us. The nucleus of government or camp organisation was established from the first and as the numbers of internees grew, so, too, proportionally the various services were enlarged. It was all to the good, thus proving that our men could rise to any occasion as required.

All available accommodation in the South Camp being filled to capacity - and in places like the "dormitories" to more than capacity - there came times when arranging and

re-arranging necessitated the movement of men from one place to another. On one of these occasions I was transferred to one of the huts. The Hut Leader was Micheál Staines, a former 1st Battalion man. I got to know him through Seán Heuston and believed him to be a member of Seán's Company of Volunteers. Micheál was a very energetic, hard-working genuine type of Volunteer when I knew him. In the camp he was the same - always up and doing, attentive to any duty to which he was assigned, and solicitous for the welfare of the men under his charge. One thing that stood in his favour with the men was, he was just natural. There were men of different counties in the hut that was to serve as my abode; men from Kerry, Dublin, Galway and Wexford - mostly from Dublin: George Fullerton, Tom Maguire, O'Reilly Joe Foran, Mick Spillane; Seumas Mallin of Kerry; George Fitzpatrick or Fitzgerald, Jim Whelan, of Wexford. These and the other men formed what we were pleased to regard a happy family.

Life in the camp became in course of time a mere routine. Various educational classes were formed, study circles, concerts and various forms of recreation. But these after a while became boring and men were inclined to fall back on themselves and on the company of one or a few <sup>more/</sup> of their intimate friends. Even life that is too regular or too easy can become boring, and some men would prefer a game of cards or chess, to read a book or to have a bit of fun or frolic in preference to any concert or play. These, of course, came under the heading of individual likes and dislikes, and even facilities had to be provided for some of them or at least tolerance shown towards those who desired things other than as arranged. Our community perhaps then was no different than any others outside, consisting as it did of every type of people, with varied interests and of

divergent talents. Pity the poor Camp Council that had the task to provide facilities and to lend encouragement for the entertaining, education and recreation of such a mixed population. If ever a Camp Council deserved and won praise the one at Frongoch did. They secured it through sheer hard work, by good planning and by sound administration. Theirs was no easy job that could be or would be performed in slipshod fashion. It had to be done always, day in and day out, without respite or postponement. Failure to comply on the part of any man - the ordinary internee - did not necessarily imply failure on the part of the Council, each member of which had to share responsibility for the proper discharge of all duties within their several immediate spheres. The best thing that could be said in favour of the Council was that they did their work well; and in respect to the internees - what we might term the rank and file of the camp - they were not so very remiss in giving their support and encouragement to all the great efforts made for their welfare, comfort and happiness.

During the period of our internment in Frongoch we had opportunities to ascertain information concerning the part which other counties played or did not play in the Easter Week drama. Evidence was available that gave ample proof that in only a few places outside Dublin was fighting carried on. Enniscorthy, Athenry, and Dundalk, Maynooth, and Ashbourne were actively engaged in the fight or gave active assistance. The McNeill countermanding order was generally held to be the principal cause for the rest of the country units not engaging in the Rising. One very striking feature, which seemed to be stressed by all and sundry, was that most of the country units were on the move on the Sunday (the day of McNeill's order) and some on, or from the Friday or Saturday. In some instances several units were

almost in the initial stage of acting on the plan for the Rising when McNeill's order arrived, and as a consequence the men were disbanded or demobilised pending further orders. When finally Pearse's order arrived, if and when such occurred, additional difficulties were encountered because of the spate of conflicting orders, the confusion which these caused and the then weakened or weakening state of the respective units. Indecision and disorganisation were regarded as the prime cause for inaction or non-participation in the Rising. Judging by the lurid and perhaps true, accounts related by some of our country cousins, the full strength of their support would have been forthcoming had not the countermanding order been issued. Their subsequent inaction for the rest of the week while the Dublin Volunteers were fighting could be generally summarised thus. Some units acted on the countermanding orders regardless of whether they received or did not receive Pearse's order to come into the fight. Others on receipt of Pearse's orders sought to get on the move, but were unable to do so as the British forces, police and military, were on the alert by that time and had taken appropriate steps to demilitarise actions on the part of Irish Volunteers throughout certain parts of the country. Much valuable time had in the meantime been wasted. Unhappily the question of their coming into the fight passed from their grasp into the hands of the British forces. Wholesale arrests were made of all those officers and men alike who were known to be members of the Irish Volunteers, the result being that before the fighting died down in Dublin and the few other affected places in the country, the toll of prisoners captured by the British amounted to several thousands. Towards the end of the week that number was complimented by the number of men captured at the surrender of the different fighting areas.

Among the mixum-gathering of men incarcerated in Frongoch Internment Camp, were a large number who felt sore and downcast for being denied the chance to fight. Complaints there were that in some cases the officers, not the men, were at fault in not rising to the occasion. As against that was raised the question that the men, confused as they were by the entirely conflicting orders, were not as alive to the situation as they should have been. Under all the circumstances it was fairly obvious that allegations of this kind would be made, one side against the other, and becoming noise after the events, when remorse, or a feeling that they "slacked it" set in. The fact too, that men who did not participate in the Rising were sharing the rigours of internment with men who did participate added a certain spice of piquancy to the proceedings of mingling the might-have-beens with the has-beens. So it was, however, that men who had fought in the Rising, and those who did not so fight, held in a way common ground - as prisoners.

Was it not difficult to accuse some of the men for not being out fighting when the knowledge of the confusion caused by the countermanding order, as issued by McNeill, was even felt in Dublin where proximate contact with the leading lights, and General Headquarters itself, was in some measure established? How could we view the men who had not participated as being slackers or cowards in the light of the information that was now available to us, which suggested that whatever failure there was, could only be traced to or attributable to misadventure or a misunderstanding of the true situation as it appeared to be at the time? Could we lay the charge of cowardice against the bulk of the men, or even/ against some of the officers of whom it was said that they had tried to act, but were unable for some reason or other, to act on the appointed day for the Rising, or after the

receipt of the news that the Rising was to take place or was actually on? The case of Kerry and the southern counties might be referred to as affording some cause for not engaging in the fight owing to the change of plans, the confusion caused by the Casement affair and the failure of the German ship, Aud, that appearing off the Kerry coast was unable to land the so valuable arms cargo, which apparently was closely linked with the general plans for the Rising. Nevertheless more than one very useful purpose was served in interning men of such varied types as combatants and non-combatants, the main one being that of understanding the main points and to gain knowledge of the men, as well as the difficulties with which they had had to contend during Easter Week. One very striking and significant feature emerged - the men who had participated in the Rising were generally regarded by those who felt themselves cheated from doing so, with genuine respect, and in many cases with undisguised and absolute reverence akin to hero worship, many very typical examples were given of that respectful and reverential spirit by the establishing of intimate good fellowship and the cultivating of friendships which their mutually enforced domicile, together so significantly engendered. So it was that their period of internment served to be but means to an end towards bringing out the best in human traits of characters and of natures of a common stock, even though a marked dividing line seemed to exist and pretended to turn them against each other. Whatever other human frailties were exhibited or adversely affected them, none but the soundest sense of regard for each other were necessary assets in keeping a proper balancing account between those who were creditors and those who were debtors in the recent uprising in Ireland.

Our stay in Frongoch provided us also with a means for seeking and obtaining intelligence of the course of events since the Rising proper. Naturally we were thirsting for news of our former friends and associates who were separated from us since. The influx of new entrants into the camp not infrequently aided us in the matter. We sought other items of news and even clamoured for sight of and reading of papers and documents that in one form or other found their way into the camp. ~~How~~ attentively we studied them - nay literally devoured them, read and re-read them, and in many instances wrote copies of some of them for future reference, or to circulate them amongst our interned friends, so keen was our desire to supplement our hoard of knowledge for the things we held so dear and the cause we cherished. Did we not learn quite a lot of news, thereby? News of Bishop O'Dwyer's stand against the orders of General Maxwell, of Father Barrett's striking discourse extolling the bravery and attitude of the men of Easter Week, of the high praise of many a professed antagonist for the spirit, charity and chivalry displayed by our men during the occupation of the Dublin buildings, and the humane treatment accorded to prisoners. But above and transcending all these, <sup>was/</sup> the important and sensational news that the Irish people had or were turning in our favour as a result of the brutal executions of our leaders after their surrender. We thus learned that the tide was turning. Even from the "floor" of the British "House of Commons", much stinted praise for the humane behaviour of the "rebels" (we by the way were regarded by the British as 'rebels'), found echo in the reading matter surreptitiously imported into our internment demesne that made many of our men rub their eyes and search their consciences in wonderment and not a little wistfully as to whether they were reading

rightly or if they were after all on the right side of the barbed wire enclosure.

~~It was not until the arrival of the British soldiers in  
Dublin, that the people of the camp found their way into the camp.~~

Of course, it would not be right to paint a false picture of affairs in Frongoch, or to convey the impression that everything in the garden was lovely. That would be erroneous. After all where could you get a perfect community? Certainly not in an internment camp, and for several reasons. We had our minor clashes, difference of opinions, arguments, and growls. These we had at various times and in many ways. But the main bone of contention centred around not so much the Council but in relation to certain individual members thereof. It concerned in the main the question of ranks and also the individual status in respect to the part certain people played in the Insurrection. These were considered big issues especially among those who had participated, who held that no man who did not hold a rank outside should be permitted to hold office on the Camp Council or in charge of the different service groups and that a man who failed to turn out in the Rising should not hold any office in the Camp. Signs were not wanting that given time, these differences would be composed, if other and no less important matters were not brought to the fore to obscure the issue. One of these 'other important matters' was the demand made on us by the British authorities to present ourselves before the Advisory Committee then sitting in London for the purpose of considering appeals. Some of us were not long in Frongoch when this move was started, and as a consequence groups of men were being despatched for the journey thither. This move was intended to give effect to their Regulation 14B as embodied in the Internment Order recently issued to us. We thought this a strange and sinister

move, aimed to catch us out on the question of our complicity in the Rising, and for the purpose of obtaining much needed information in relation thereto. In view of the fact that the vast majority of the prisoners - one could say in truth all the men who had participated in the Rising - if reports were true, and we had no earthly reason to doubt their veracity, had refused, or ignored the request to make an application for an appeal against their internment, this Advisory Committee was just eye-wash and a sham. It puzzled us quite a lot for it opened up the question as to the relativity of our refusal and the strange action of the British to make it appear that we had availed of the machinery set up by them to investigate our claims, when we knew, as individuals, that willing consent was absent on our part, to such proceedings. What were we to do in the circumstances?

Before an answer could be given in the question certain considerations had to be given to the matter in all its aspects and implications. The average internee looked upon this latest move as something clever and subtle. The implication was that we each and all signed the application and that we desired to appeal against our internment. In other words, we, those of us who refused to appeal, were automatically put under a cloud of suspicion or doubt among our comrades. That was the main implication contained in the move: it effected to put us in the wrong among our fellows, that contrary to our open declaration that we ignored or refused to have anything to do with the appeal of our cases we in secret acted differently and so lent ourselves to be favourably disposed to the plan adopted by the British authorities. It was subtle from the point of view that it introduced the question of a plea of clemency, because as it was contended by many of us who had

participated in the Rising to make an appeal meant turning one's back on former associations and associates, and in turn threw oneself on the good grace, and at the mercy of our captors. Would it be that the British were at their "divide and conquer" business again?

We knew, of course, that there were quite a number of men who had been arrested on suspicions and that many men were arrested, not for what they did but what they were unable, or omitted to do, during the period of the fight. Indeed quite a number were arrested before the fight, and some in places where no fighting occurred; many of them after the event. These may or may not have appealed and perhaps with good reason, against their internment, on the grounds that they were not in the Rising. To the credit of some of these it must be said, however, that a not inconsiderable number actually refused to appeal, preferring to take their chances with their compatriots, content that they by their refusal were doing something 'for the cause'; and as some of these were sore over being denied the privilege of fighting, they would stand four-square with the fighting men.

This move by the British authorities did not permit of discrimination; it put us all, those who participated in the Insurrection in the same category with those who were non-participants, also those arrested on mere suspicion, and, if there were any such, those who refused to fight when the opportunity came or was available. Apparently we were all to be forced to attend this Advisory Committee, to give countenance to proceedings that were thrust on us, whether we appealed or not. That in reality was the position we were placed in, some of us more than perhaps others. How we debated the

question in all its aspects.' discussed this point, argued that and all the while keeping our thoughts clearly centred on a possible course of action to meet the contingency of our attendance at the Advisory Committee.

There was one possible implication contained, as we thought, in the proposed investigation of our cases. That was, as has already been mentioned, the question of complicity or non-complicity in the Rising. Dove-tailed into that was the bigger issue as to whether those who participated in the Insurrection, a word mentioned in the Internment Order, gave free consent or willingness to the fighting and/or whether they were dupes, played on by clever scheming leaders for ulterior motives. In other words, not only our cases were being investigated but also the question of our relationship with our leaders. Obviously we were asked to disown our leaders, to turn against the cause we had expounded and fought for. This question seemed always to protrude itself into the realm of things and caused us quite a deal of worry.

One thing we were assured of, the British authorities had their plans well set, and we, against our grain and, as far as the fighting men were concerned, our free will and better judgment were given no choice, or afforded no alternative but to allow ourselves to be bodily carried to the scene of the investigation then sitting in London, - Judge Sankey, presiding, assisted by Mr. Mooney, M.P., and others. It was a bit of an experience to travel by train under a heavy escort backward and forwards through England until at times, as one of our witty ones said "we resembled a travelling circus". Obviously we hadn't yet reached the stage when the word "finis" could be applied to our romantic careering around England, at the taxpayers' expense and

the bountiful benevolence of "Mother England". This ajourneying was to bring us from the farthest corners of North Wales down the length of England to one of His Majesty's prisons situated in London where we were required to spend possibly a day and night or vice versa as guests and return back to Frongoch, a distance of several hundred miles.

Actually the men who had participated in the Insurrection had decided not to co-operate in any way with the Advisory Committee. We had no option but to adopt an attitude of strict passiveness to the proceedings. We would refuse to tender evidence that would incriminate ourselves or our associates - if anything we reserved the right to refuse to give evidence at all as to the part we played in the recent fighting. There was one thing the men were particularly agreed on, namely, that they would not by word or deed give the impression that they were dupes, or that they were false to their leaders living or dead. For preference the men desired to make no statement at all that might be interpreted that they were fed up with their lot, and desired only to turn over a new leaf. The big difficulty with which we were faced was that no hard and fast rule could be applied when there was no indication as to the scope and nature of the investigation. This, we knew, could only be obtained by personal contact. Could we but know the minds of the Advisory Committee, to know the course they pursued; what they knew about our personal history or political activity and their dispositions towards us, we might have some grounds to work on. Some of this information was vouchsafed us by some of the men who had returned from their "visit" to London, information that was to act as a kind of headline, only a kind of but not a general guide to some of us.

The group, of which I eventually was a member, was brought to Wormwood Scrubbs Prison, having enjoyed the omnibus drive through part of London. On the occasion of our "interview" or investigation, a legal gentleman who claimed he was acting on our behalf, offered us advice, which few, if any of us wanted. Many stories could be told of the system adopted by the investigation. In many instances they did not know a lot; in some cases they were in possession of a lot of data concerning some men. Most if not all their information was presumably obtained from police and/or military reports. In the case of prisoners caught in the fighting, quite a deal of evidence was available, the main one being that you were taken a prisoner, having apparently borne arms against His Majesty.

The scene, inside the room in which the Advisory Committee held its session, impressed one by its orderliness and quiet dignity. It was much nicer, airier, and comfy than the dormitories in Brixton. The members of the Committee, too, seemed quite happy, charming and gracious. They might even disarm you with their smiles and good nature as they bid you "to sit down and make yourself comfortable". Many of the questions asked might not be of a serious nature - concerning your name, address, occupation, if married, age, purely personal. Such preliminaries over, other more serious questions were put, questions relating to your membership of the Irish Volunteers. "You were mobilised on Easter Monday and you were taken a prisoner at the Four Courts on the Saturday - Have you any statement to make? "No." "Are you sure?". "That will do, thank you", and you are ushered out of the "holy of holies". Of course the questioning varied in different men's cases and the circumstances responsible for a man's internment. As regards the men who had participated in the Rising they had

quite enough information at their disposal to declare them fit subjects for continued internment. And so the ordeal of investigation went on, during its course releases started. This caused no little surprise but greater surprise of all was the strange variety of men that were released. Some of them were men who had had a good record in the Volunteers. Was it possible they were being released? We even wondered was a mistake made in their cases or was it a trick, to cause us to doubt such great men. Each batch of releases had a fair quota of such. Maybe, we mused, the move is intended to release all in stages? The question was asked, who next? Some of my particular companions were released in this way. Then came my turn, and on a July morning I packed up my belongings, bid goodbye to my pals and wended my way to the assembly point outside the camp enclosure to liberty. Before doing so, I had made arrangements to smuggle out of the camp my uniform. A fellow prisoner, Mr. O'Reilly of the North Strand, kindly helped me by taking my tunic and wearing it inside his shirt. One of our officers, Dick Stokes, was deeply interested in the ruse. We had to undergo searching before entraining. I was able to give Dick the signal "safe through". So my short period in Frongoch ended, and though I was naturally glad of the change I was sorry to leave behind such good loyal companions. Unfortunately many of these were destined to undergo a longer period of internment.

### Chapter 13.

The British Government had, it seemed, struck a new note of clemency in favour of the internees. We wondered why! Many hundreds of men were in consequence released, when towards the end of July a sudden stoppage occurred.