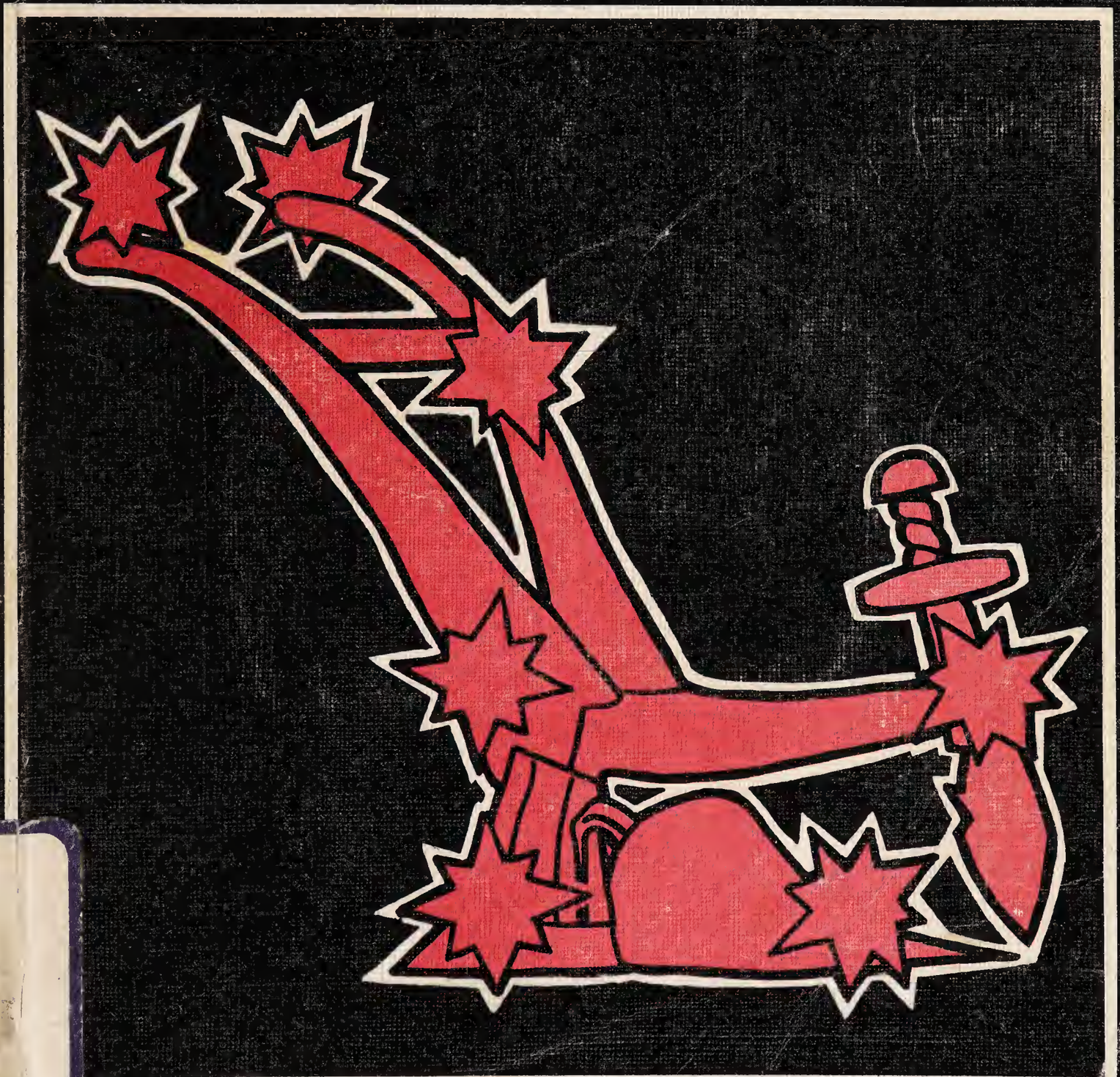
Frank Robbins

UNDER THE STARRY PLOUGH

Recollections of the Irish Citizen Army



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Frank Robbins in Irish Citizen Army uniform

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The Academy Press,
124 Ranelagh, Dublin 6, Ireland

To my late wife
Mary
and to my family
Maureen, Frank, Desmond and Liam

LABOUR'S RIGHT

Up Brothers up,
The drums are beating.
See on high our banners wave.
Close up your ranks let no retreating
Be ours, while earth contains a slave,
Till all alike, our triumphs won,
Shall know the Splendour of the Sun,
Shall drink from Wisdom's holiest spring.
This is the prize our armies bring.

James Connolly

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FOREWORD

By Dr Donal McCartney, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University College, Dublin

The crowded events of the revolutionary decade between 1912 and 1922 set the course of Irish history for the following half-century. The Rising of 1916, especially, not merely proclaimed but sanctified the ideal of the Irish Republic. The Rising also made sacred the means—physical force—by which that ideal was to be pursued. And the Rising, further, impressed its stamp on an interpretation of Irish history which became, in the Ireland that emerged from the revolutionary cauldron, the orthodox view of our past.

It is true that there were always those in the new Ireland who questioned the orthodox view. More recently, however, and especially since the Northern troubles began, the questioning has become, if not any more profound, at least far more extensive. The reaction to what has been for over half a century the official view of 1916 faces the danger of itself going to extremes in an opposite direction. No degrees of reaction to 1916 or to the charmed and sacred place which it has held in the Irishman's imagination can wish it out of historical existence. The Rising happened. It was glorified in the mind of the succeeding generation. A reaction is now evident. What the historian demands, however, is neither glorification nor denunciation, but historical understanding.

The great merit of a memoir such as this by Frank Robbins is precisely that it enriches our understanding in a manner that could never be done by the proclamations and propagandist writings of Pearse or Connolly or the other leaders, or by the immortalising verse of Yeats or the prose of Stephens, or by the evidence gathered by the Royal Commission of Enquiry, invaluable though all of these are. We now have a certain amount of information about the nationalist and labour leaders of the era. We know much less about the rank and file. What motivated those couple of thousand Dublin workingmen who chose to fight in the streets of their city in 1916 in the effort to haul down the

British flag, while far greater numbers of their colleagues were fighting in France and Flanders under that same flag? New biographical detail concerning the leaders of revolutionary movements is all very valuable. But the stage is eventually reached when what is required more than anything else are the diaries of the nobodies—those unsung men and women who constituted the rank and file and whose deeds were their only articulation of the political faith that inspired them.

The flavour of the ordinary man's reaction to great contemporary events shines through this memoir. Social problems of early twentieth century Dublin are seen not as statistics but in their effects on individuals and their families. The fatal divisions of the Irish Labour Movement at a crucial moment of its development become evident in their impact on the lives of ordinary trade unionists. And if the men in the tiny Citizen Army behind James Connolly did not read Marx, then it is important to have from this memoir the words of the marching songs which they sang so enthusiastically. The general military aspects of the Rising and of the War of Independence take on a different hue when viewed from behind the barricades. The tendency to romanticize the events of what was in part at least a poet's rebellion is balanced in the few notes of harsh realism recorded by one who had participated in the forceful occupation of the College of Surgeons. However much the Easter Rising may have impressed itself on a later generation as a kind of imaginative poetry, to the men behind the rifles it was simply war, and is seen as such in the pages of this memoir. Close-ups of people and events taken as it were with the box-camera of the amateur have a quality for the historian which is never captured in the skilfully arranged portraits of the professionals.

Here then is a valuable and largely unconscious contribution to our understanding of the revolutionary period of our history in the form of a memoir written by a man whose only university was the Irish trade union movement, but who found himself participating in events that shaped the destinies of the nation.

Preface

It was about three pm on Easter Monday 1916. With the tricolour flag of revolution rolled under my arm I stood on the roof of Dublin's College of Surgeons. Below me I could see the whole sweep of St Stephen's Green. Earlier in the morning there had been rain but now the sky was clear and in the soft afternoon light the buildings around the tree-clothed square stood out sharply. The streets were stangely empty, almost though not quite deserted. Behind the iron railings there was, I knew, a great deal of activity but little to be seen except the quickly moving figures of our men and girls as they built up their slender defences.

The normal bustle of the Green, so popular with Dubliners, was gone. The public had been ordered out and the gates were now locked. Occasionally one heard the snap of a nearby rifle shot. But from the centre of the city there came the crackling fire of many rifles. There would come a time, and soon, when the roof where I stood would become a deadly target for British marksmen. For the moment I was relatively safe—at least from enemy bullets.

Otherwise I was not so sure. The roof of the College looked green and slippery, treacherous under my heavy military boots. I thought wryly about the greater dangers that loomed ahead. My immediate objective was the flag-staff which rose from a little platform behind the front balustrade and directly above the main entrance to the building. This was where our flag must be flown.

It was not easy. The halyards were tangled, probably after long disuse. My Citizen Army comrade, Daithi O'Leary, like myself, eyed the prospect with distaste. There was nothing for it but to climb. We had to squirm half way up the pole before we could clear the ropes. A pretty target I'd make now for some sharp-eyed British soldier, I thought to myself as I struggled with the stubborn knots. There was

another danger. The base of the flagstaff where it had been screwed to the mount was loose and the pole swayed dangerously out over the pavement below. My weight made the job much too risky. O'Leary who was slightly built fared better and at length we got the flag ready and soon it was up and fluttering bravely in the slight breeze.

Was I conscious of a great moment in history as I looked at the flag above and listened to the spattering of rifle fire below in the city? I don't think so. I was elated, of course, that the long-awaited moment had come. We had flung down the gauntlet. We were now committed to the fight. My mind did, however, swing back over the years to the events and the influences that had led me, at the age of twenty, to take up arms in the fight for the freedom of Ireland. And it seemed to me that all my young years, from my brief schooldays, through my work-a-day 'teens, had all been a training and a preparation for the struggle that was now beginning.

That I was now so irrevocably committed to that struggle was, I suppose, the result of a series of circumstances, but I had no doubt about the main motivating influence that had me where I was. The influence was that of James Connolly who had been my idol and my guiding star for years past. And the last I had seen of Connolly was on Butt Bridge over the Liffey a short time earlier. The Irish Citizen Army, mobilised, armed and ready, was drawn up in columns in Beresford Place in front of Liberty Hall. My group of thirty men under Richard McCormick had received our orders to take over Harcourt Street Railway Station and other points in that area and were moving smartly enough over the Bridge when Connolly spotted us. He dashed after our leader. "Not that way, Mac," he cried, "Up the quays. Get to your positions as quickly as possible. We are already fighting in some parts of the country." That indeed was the last time I saw James Connolly. We wheeled quickly, heading for O'Connell Bridge and Westmoreland Street at breath-catching pace. Subsequent events matched our speed. The hours and days following—and indeed the years—were a blur of activity and excitement and danger.

Now in the relative calm of my retirment years I have

been persuaded to describe my impression of the events and the people that led me to the roof of the College of Surgeons on Easter Monday 1916, of the Rising itself and of its aftermath until the Treaty with Britain and the tragic Civil War. I can only hope that my recollections will throw some little light on that most important period in modern Irish history.

Whatever contribution to Ireland and her advancement my generation has made in the past, an even more immense task faces those who carry on that work today. The changed times require a changed approach. The new generations must of course learn from the methods of the past, but not just to copy them. The nation requires rebuilding not only by men of action but by men of thought as well. A canker has remained in the minds of our people North and South. It must be eliminated before we can hope to build an Ireland in which all can have a role in peace and harmony and happiness. Good thinking and quiet planning are the first essentials.

1·The Workers' Army

I was the fifth child of a family of nine, comprising five boys and four girls. My father's family came from Dunshaughlin, Co Meath, about four or five generations ago. We were descended from the Plunketts who owned a hostelry and land in that district and catered for travellers in the days of the postchaise. During Hallowe'en celebrations, the story goes, young Ann Plunkett caught the snap apple in her mouth. For such success, the prophecy was that she would marry the first man who entered the house after midnight. The first man was James Robbins (or McRobbins), the hedge carpenter and an employee of the family. The prophecy was fulfilled. After her mother's death Ann's father married a second time but died a few years later, making no will and leaving her without any security. It was in these circumstances that the marriage between Ann and James Robbins took place, resulting in a family of four sons and three daughters. The family migrated to Dublin and set up a wheelwright shop and forge near the Cat and Cage public house in upper Drumcondra. It was from here that the Robbins family emerged, in some cases losing the name to Robinson.

On my mother's side the connection with Dublin was much briefer. Her father, Denis Whelan, came from Wexford and settled in Irishtown, where he obtained employment in the glass bottle industry. Her mother and aunts were from Greystones, Co Wicklow. They were of Protestant stock, named Harris and Evans.

Earlier generations of my father's family worked in the timber-importing firm of T. & C. Martin, North Wall, Dublin, and my father and his brother John followed in the same line. As a young man my father became a friend of Matt Talbot and this friendship continued throughout their lives. Their early manhood was not exactly of a model course, both being very subject to the old custom of bending the el-

bow. They used to drink together before they started to pray together. Many stories were related in our family of the 'doings' of these two companions and of the remarkable change in their way of life. Their membership of the Confraternity attached to the Church of St Francis Xavier, life membership of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association and their practice of going daily to mass and communion—starting from their late twenties and continuing for over fifty years—were achievements much remarked upon.

My mother was indeed a heroine. How she survived the stress and trials of our family is beyond my ability to understand. Suffice it to say that my father had to face short-time employment every winter, which meant eighteen shillings per week income. Seven shillings of this went on weekly rent and eleven shillings on food and other necessities for a family of nine.

I still remember with affection my schooldays at Saint Agatha's School, North William Street, not least because of the influence on me in those early days of Sister Monica, the principal, an outstanding nun whose gentle smile and quiet manner won the love of the 700 children under her control. Indeed I still carry out Sister Monica's advice on sleeping at night with crossed arms, so as to be "near to God". But it was not long before I had my first experience of the working man's lot. In 1903, at the age of eight, I became a basket boy in a greengocer's shop, working early mornings before school and afternoons after school. My pay was one shilling per week. Some years later with less favourable conditions I took a job delivering milk twice daily at one shilling and nine pence a week. Eventually, at the age of thirteen-and-a-half, I obtained my first full-time job, in Barrington's Soap Works, King's Inns Street. The pay was four shillings for a fifty-six hour week. There were no holidays and when a bank holiday arrived I lost a day's pay. I remained in this job for about six years, during which time I joined the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and went on strike for Union recognition and an increase in pay—which were conceded. From 1911 onwards myself and my Union friends found ourselves in the midst of the strife and turmoil leading

up to the great lock-out of 1913, which left a trail of hunger, prison terms and untold suffering in thousands of Dublin families. There was loss of jobs, emigration to Great Britain and in many cases enlistment in the British army, in which thousands of Irishmen met their deaths during World War I.

I was just fifteen when I joined the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Through my constant interest in the work of the Union I made, even at this early age, many contacts with very fine people amongst the Dublin working class. The most interesting and exciting period of my early life was that leading up to the 1913 lock-out. All through the years from 1909 to 1913 there was increasing trade union activity. Meetings were held for every possible reason, particularly between 1911 and 1913, at first in No 10 Beresford Place where the Union occupied two rooms, and later at Liberty Hall.

During these years, like so many of my comrades, I came under the powerful influence of James Larkin. Some years later my faith in Larkin was to be destroyed, but at this time Jim Larkin radiated for me an aura of magnetism. His arresting and flamboyant figure, his dramatic attitudes, coupled with his oratorical ability to sway his hearers, all conveyed to me the impression of a leader to whom I could give my loyalty. And this for some time I tendered unswervingly, attending most of the Union and public meetings he addressed. Amongst the many who spoke at these meetings, there was, apart from James Larkin, one man who impressed me greatly, and that was James Connolly. His quiet way, his convincing arguments and the self-control of the man generally combined to make a deep impression. It was my eldest brother John who first brought Connolly's name up in one of our many domestic discussions in 1911. I noted this and promised myself to pay attention to this man when the first opportunity offered. I always wanted to hear Connolly from then on.

The first time I heard Larkin mention Connolly's name was at a Union meeting in Liberty Hall about 1912. I was very surprised to learn that some Union members apparently favoured Connolly over Larkin as leader of the Union. One

man questioned Larkin about Connolly and met with a rather barbed reply: "Indeed James Connolly is a good man—and a good socialist." I remember being puzzled by Larkin's comment, for it must be remembered that it was far from complimentary to be referred to as a "socialist" in Dublin of those days.

One night during October 1913 I attended a meeting in Beresford Place and heard Connolly, speaking from the central window of Liberty Hall, say that as a result of the brutalities of the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police, it was intended to organise and discipline a force to protect workers' meetings and to prevent such activities—by armed thugs—occurring in the future. This was the first open declaration I heard regarding the formation of the Irish Citizen Army. It was my intention to become a member of that army and I awaited with interest the first step to be taken. Some weeks later James Larkin made an announcement on the same theme, but made the stipulation that the men to be accepted as members would have to be at least six feet tall and would have to pass medical and other tests. No boys, only fully grown men were wanted! I listened with disappointment to this announcement because I knew that on account of my youth and stature I was temporarily prohibited from becoming a member of the organisation towards which all my youthful idealism was driving me.

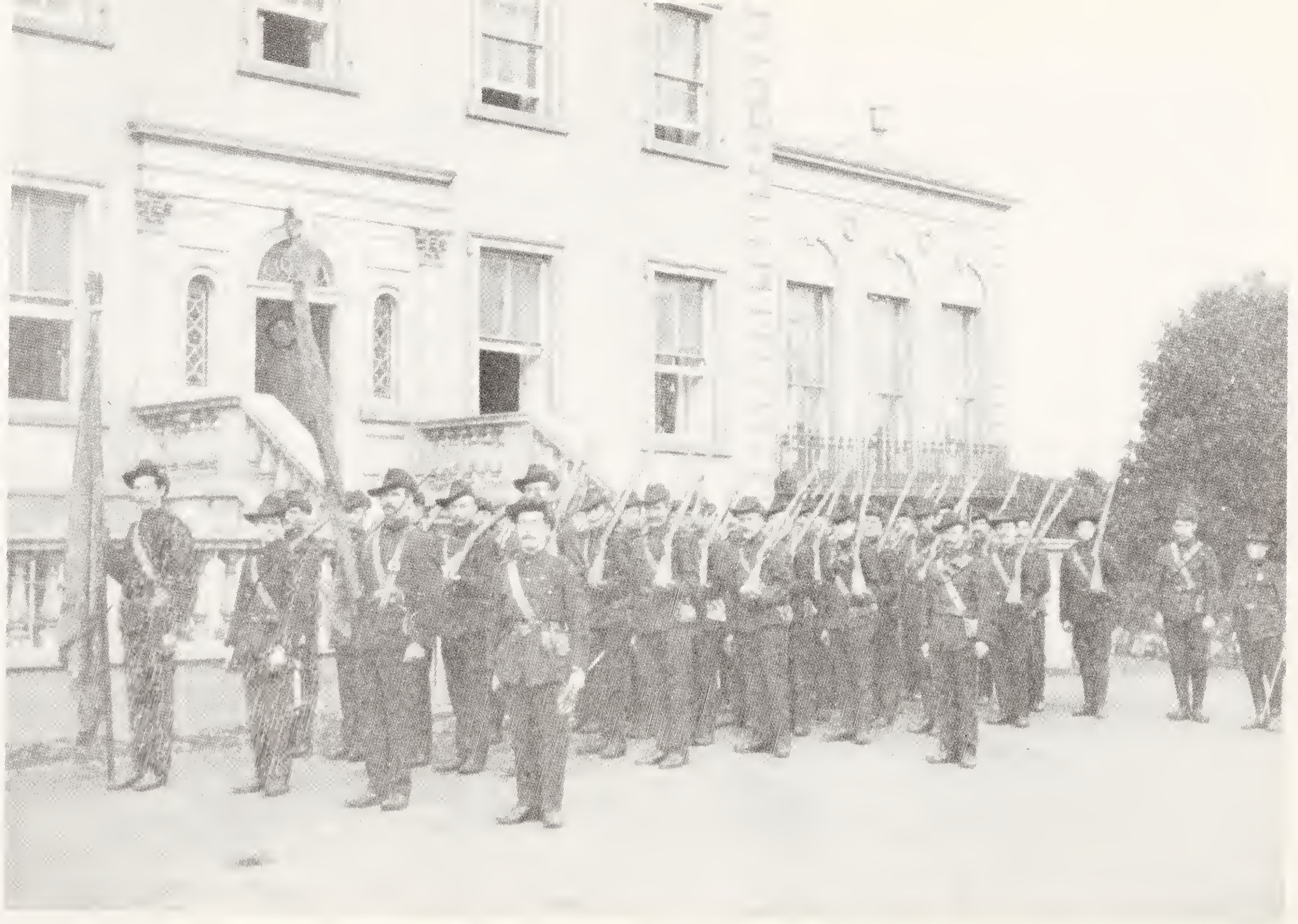
The organisation of the Irish Volunteers took place a short while afterwards. In that body I saw many young men of inferior physical stature to myself. The temptation for me was to join that organisation, but because of my labour and trade union outlook I felt such an action would not altogether meet my viewpoint. This battle went on in my mind for many months up to the day of the Howth gun-running and the subsequent shootings of Dublin workers at Bachelor's Walk on Sunday 26 July 1914, when I finally made up my mind that I would seriously seek membership of the Irish Citizen Army, in whose ranks I had already marched on several occasions during Citizen Army and Union parades. In the event of failure I would take my place in the ranks of the

Irish Volunteers.

A day or two after the shootings at Bachelor's Walk I presented myself at the rooms of the Irish Citizen Army in Liberty Hall and very timidly asked would they accept me as a member. To my great joy the three men who were seated around the table, Seamus MacGowan, Sean O'Casey and a man named Braithwaite, told me that it was young men like myself they were seeking. In the course of the conversation which ensued I made it known that were it not for Mr Larkin's description of the men he required my membership would have commenced on the first day of the organisation's existence.

From that day onwards I entered into the work of training and arms drill with all the zeal of a young man. Along with others I busied myself in perfecting a large rifle range in Croydon Park in the northern suburbs of Dublin which was leased to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and was used extensively by the Irish Citizen Army. This rifle range, when completed, attracted a good many of the Irish Volunteers from the Father Mathew Park (now the site of a children's school in Fairview Parish), and from many other areas. On Saturday afternoons and Sundays Irish Citizen Army men and Irish Volunteers made good use of the rifle range for the purpose of perfecting their marksmanship. A miniature rifle range was also constructed in a large room in Liberty Hall and was used extensively during the winter nights by those who could afford the charge of three shots per penny.

The supply of arms was very poor. Our weapons comprised a number of old Italian thumb-lock rifles and the Howth Mauser rifles, as they were termed, hardly more than about fifty rifles altogether. This was improved on to a very limited degree by some of us who were very eager, and who could afford to equip ourselves with more up-to-date weapons than the Howth rifle. (The German Mauser of 1871 was used in the Franco-Prussian War and was named the Howth rifle as a result of the gun-running in 1914.) We set about organising rifle and revolver clubs, as well as uniform clubs. This was accomplished by paying a subscription of one shilling per



The Irish Citizen Army at Croydon House, Croydon Park (1914)

week to the rifle club and sixpence per week to the revolver club. By this means a number of us became the proud owners of what was known as the Boer Mauser, which had a magazine of five bullets and one in the breech. We were the envy of our less fortunate comrades whose lack of means prevented them from doing as we had done. The Secretary of the club was William Robert Halpin. He was then, like myself, employed in a Dublin shipyard. The rifles, revolvers and other equipment were obtained through Messrs Lawlors of Fownes Street.

Controversy in the Citizen Army

About the end of August or early September 1914, shortly after I had joined the Citizen Army, the members were summoned to a general meeting in the large room of Liberty Hall overlooking Beresford Place. Some of us had learned a couple of days prior to the meeting that an attempt had been made at the Army Council meeting by the then Secretary of the Citizen Army, Sean O'Casey—later to earn fame as a playwright—to have Madame Markievicz expelled from the organisation and that his attempt had been circumvented by the activities of Thomas Foran, General President of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. In this matter, no assistance had been given to Foran by James Larkin, who seemed to be in sympathy with O'Casey's intentions. According to Foran, when Larkin was informed of the move he showed no surprise but advised Foran to keep clear of the controversy. The advice, however, fell on deaf ears. Foran was now convinced that Larkin's passive attitude was deliberate, and so Foran set about making plans to defeat O'Casey's move.

At the general meeting Larkin, as Chairman of the Army Committee, presided and during its course Sean O'Casey proposed that Madame Markievicz, because of her "fraternisation with the enemy" (in this case the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan) and her "general bourgeois tendencies" (meaning of course she had not been brought up in working class surroundings) was not a fit person to be a

member of the Citizen Army. O'Casey believed her to be a spy within the ranks on behalf of the Volunteers and requested her expulsion. O'Casey handled the matter tactlessly for himself by declaring in the course of his speech, while pointing to the platform that he was afraid of no man, physically or mentally, "not even the great Jim Larkin". O'Casey in taking this line must have known he was burning his boats. Had he taken a more diplomatic line, Larkin would probably have come in on his side. This tactless attitude immediately brought Larkin to his feet and he poured forth his scorn on O'Casey. The question ceased to be one of O'Casey versus Madame Markievicz and became instead one of O'Casey versus Larkin, who in effect killed O'Casey's second and last attempt to have Madame Markievicz expelled. That was the last that the Citizen Army saw of Sean O'Casey and his few followers. Less than eleven months after the foundation of the Army, therefore, O'Casey ceased to be a member. For about four months of this period, from April to August, he had acted as Secretary.

James Larkin was dominated to a considerable degree by his sister Delia, who was extremely jealous of Madame Markievicz and wanted to end her influence around Liberty Hall. An illuminated address of thanks to Madame Markievicz was given to her by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union for her work in the food kitchen during the 1913 strike. The presentation of this address was held up for a considerable period awaiting his signature by Larkin, the General Secretary. Eventually he went to America without putting his name to that address, and when James Connolly took over the position of Acting General Secretary he signed the document.

Later, in September 1914, an announcement was made that Herbert Asquith, the British Prime Minister, was to be the chief speaker at a recruiting meeting for the British army to be held in the Dublin Mansion House. John Redmond and other Irish Parliamentary leaders were to be present to support the recruiting campaign. The active Irish-Ireland leaders in the Volunteers, as well as James Connolly, were very keen on preventing this meeting from taking place. On

THE IRISH CITIZEN ARMY.

Chairman of Army Council :
CAPT. J. R. WHITE, D.S.O.
Hon. Secretary :
SEAN O'CATHASAIGH.
Hon. Treasurers :
COUNTESS MARKIEVIECZ.
RICHARD BRADFORD.

ROOM 4,
LIBERTY HALL,
DUBLIN, 17 July 1914

Irish Citizen Army letter heading listing Sean O'Cathasaigh (Sean O'Casey, the playwright) as Honorary Secretary

the night before the meeting was to take place the Citizen Army paraded at Liberty Hall. While there, Peadar Macken and William O'Brien arrived with a document from the Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers stating that a break had taken place between John Redmond and his supporters who had advocated co-operation with England in her war effort as against the attitude of Patrick Pearse and his colleagues who took their stand for the freedom of Ireland and non-co-operation with England.

Prior to the reading of this document a number of the Citizen Army members had been selected for a special job. I was one of that number. Haversacks loaded with cheese sandwiches and other refreshments were handed to each of the selected men. These were prepared by some of the girls attached to the Women Workers' Union Clothing Co-operative which was under the direction of Delia Larkin. This was the only time I ever saw Miss Larkin involved in the activities of the Citizen Army. We were informed by James Larkin that we were to proceed to St Stephen's Green, where we would be met by a man whom we knew and where we would also be joined by a section of the Irish Volunteers. The combined force was then to proceed to take over the Mansion House and hold it so as to prevent the recruiting

meeting from taking place. This announcement created considerable excitement amongst those who were selected. We were then told to await further orders before leaving the building.

It was at this point that O'Brien and Macken arrived with the document from the Volunteers and announced that the venture had been called off as the Mansion House had already been occupied by a section of the British army and the key positions manned with machine guns. We learned later that the man who was to meet us and take charge of the occupation of the building was James Connolly. We were never told how it came about that the Castle authorities were so quick off their mark. Looking back on this event in later years and taking into account the number of times we were caught napping prior to and after the Insurrection I came to the conclusion that there was a leakage of information. What was very certain was that the rift between the National Volunteers and my more nationalist-minded comrades was widening rapidly.

As a protest against the recruiting campaign three short meetings were held on the same night. A wagonette with the speakers left Liberty Hall surrounded by armed guards of the Citizen Army and proceeded to Thomas Street where the first meeting was held outside St Catherine's Church where Robert Emmet had been executed after the failure of the 1803 Insurrection. The procession then marched to the north-west side of St Stephen's Green and South King Street, where the second meeting was held at the spot which had been selected as the site of a memorial to Wolfe Tone. Amongst the gathering was a fair number of Irish Volunteers carrying small arms. When this meeting concluded, an effort was made to march down Dawson Street but the procession was turned into Grafton Street which was practically lined with R.I.C. fully armed and prepared for all emergencies. The marchers had almost reached the junction of Nassau Street and Grafton Street when the Redmondite Volunteers swung around from the Mansion House direction. It seemed inevitable, because of the close proximity of the two rival bodies, that a clash would occur. To avoid a confrontation James

Connolly, who had been a speaker at the two previous meetings, had the route changed to College Green, where the wagonette stopped and he addressed the gathering for a short time. This gave the Redmondite Volunteers the opportunity to avoid what seemed an almost certain clash between the groups of marchers.

It is worthy of note that on this night the Citizen Army carried, as well as the Howth Mauser rifles, old Italian thumb-lock rifles but were served with ammunition suitable for the Howth Mauser but too big for the Italian rifles. Had anything occurred requiring defensive action on the part of the Citizen Army it would have been at the mercy of the superior armed forces of the Crown.

The Parnell Anniversary on 11 October 1914 was an occasion for a display by all sections of the Volunteers and the Citizen Army. The Irish Volunteers and the Citizen Army combined in this commemoration with a march to Glasnevin. The National Volunteers (the Redmondites) also paraded to Glasnevin but at a later hour. On arrival at the north side of Parnell Square the Irish Volunteers, the Citizen Army and other kindred organisations held a public meeting outside the Municipal Art Gallery, at which Professor Eoin MacNeill was chairman. Larkin presented himself as a speaker but was refused access to the platform by the chairman and informed that he would not be a speaker at the meeting. He immediately hired a cab and brought it to the west end of the north side of Parnell Square where he addressed a meeting while the other meeting under the chairmanship of Professor MacNeill was still in progress. In the course of his speech Larkin complained bitterly that he was refused the Irish Volunteers' platform although he claimed he had been invited by letter to attend and speak. His speech was an attack on various leaders of the Irish Volunteers. Thomas Clarke presented himself at Larkin's meeting and he also spoke.

But there had been a more dramatic development. The National Volunteers approached along the north side of Parnell Square from North Frederick Street towards the A.O.H. Hall on the west side. This seemed to indicate that they planned to march through the meeting. Immediately the

order was given not to let them pass. The Citizen Army was called on to line right across the Square, near the Art Gallery, with fixed bayonets. In the meantime some of the leading officers of the Irish Volunteers endeavoured to persuade the National Volunteers not to make any attempt to pass but to go home by Frederick Street and Dorset Street. The officer in charge of the National Volunteers was firmly against this proposal, and the situation began to look very serious. Captain Monteith of the Irish Volunteers served four rounds of ammunition for the Howth Mausers to each member of the Citizen Army. Eventually, however, after some further consultation between the officers of the National Volunteers and the officers of the Irish Volunteers, the former withdrew their contingent from the position they had taken up and went home by the way which had been suggested to them earlier. This was regarded by some as a victory and by others as a very sensible decision, avoiding an almost certain clash between two bodies of Irishmen. To all came a welcome feeling of relief which prevailed to the conclusion of the activities of the evening.

The members of the Citizen Army were very annoyed at the treatment meted out to Larkin when he was refused admission to the Volunteer platform, particularly in view of his assertion that he had received an invitation to address the meeting. On inquiry later it was found that the letter of invitation had been addressed to Connolly at Liberty Hall, inviting Connolly to be a speaker at the meeting.

Larkin was not held in good repute by the leaders of the Irish Volunteers because about a year earlier when the inaugural meeting was held in the Rotunda to launch the organisation, Larkin made it known that he was against such a move, and a large number of his supporters attended with the sole object of breaking up the meeting. However, the organisers of the meeting overcame the disturbances and succeeded in carrying on the business of the meeting and achieving their object. From that day the Irish Volunteers' leadership was under continual attack. Thomas Clarke, by taking part in Larkin's meeting at Parnell Square, showed he was looking ahead. He knew that in a very short time

Connolly would be taking over the leadership of the Citizen Army and Clarke's action generally poured oil on the troubled waters.

Connolly Takes Charge

Three months after my joining the Citizen Army, James Larkin left Ireland for America, leaving the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union shattered by the effects of the 1913 lock-out and on the verge of collapse. Membership had dropped dramatically and there were little funds and many thousands of pounds of debts. The National Health Insurance Commissioners were threatening to hand over the running of the National Health Insurance Scheme, hitherto administered by the Union, to the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which, second only to the employers' leader William Martin Murphy, was the Union's greatest enemy.

On Larkin leaving for America and through the intervention of Thomas Foran, General President of the Union (and President of the No I Branch), James Connolly was brought from Belfast to Dublin early in October 1914 and immediately threw himself into the work of the Union and the organisation of the Irish Citizen Army. Earlier Larkin had indicated to Foran that it was his intention to make a public declaration that he was placing P.T.Daly in his position as General Secretary and that James Connolly was to take over the management of the National Health Insurance. Foran was horrified at this, his view being that this meant the end of the Union. He had no faith in Daly's ability to save the Union from complete collapse. He consulted a number of his close friends attached to the Committee of No. 1 Branch. Having received, in confidence, assurance of support he took an early morning train to Belfast and informed Connolly of Larkin's plans for the future running of the Union. Connolly told

Foran that under no circumstances would he go to Dublin to take over the National Health Insurance Section, work which he detested. Foran then asked Connolly if he would be prepared to come to Dublin to take up the position of General Secretary *pro tem*. Connolly indicated that it was the kind of work that was nearest to his heart and that he would go to Dublin only on such an understanding. But he expressed doubts as to how it could be arranged in opposition to Larkin's stated plans. Foran, on obtaining Connolly's agreement informed him of what he was endeavouring to do.

On arrival back in Dublin on the same day Foran again consulted his close colleagues on the Branch Committee and plans were made for a special meeting of the committee. He then informed Larkin that his presence was requested at the special meeting. Larkin inquired as to the reason for the meeting and was informed that it was to make an appointment to fill the position of General Secretary during his absence in America. Larkin became very annoyed, saying, "I have already told you what I propose doing."

Foran replied, "Members of the Branch Committee think otherwise and believe it is for them to make the decision."

Larkin became infuriated with this stand by the members of the committee. Eventually the meeting took place and on Foran's nomination James Connolly was appointed General Secretary *pro tem*. Little did Foran know that he had not only saved the Union from possible extinction, which was his only concern at the time but that he had unconsciously laid the foundation for Labour's participation in the Insurrection of Easter Week 1916. Without Connolly in Dublin the Irish Citizen Army would have probably dithered itself out of existence. The necessary contact between Connolly and Pearse, Clarke and McDermott and between Dublin and Belfast would have been very difficult and probably so intermittent that plans would have been almost impossible to complete.

Shortly after Connolly took charge Thomas Foran briefed him on how to get the support of the Dublin working class. "If you want to get on in this city," he told him, "you'll have to give a whole lot of moonshine talk. This is what they've been used to and it's the only way."

Connolly's reply to this advice shows a basic difference of approach between himself and Larkin. "If you or anybody else expects," he said, "that I'm going to waste my time talking 'bosh' to the crowds in Beresford Place, for the sake of hearing shouts—then you'll be sadly disappointed. I would rather give my message to four serious-minded men at any cross-roads in Ireland and know that they would carry it back to the places they came from and that it would fall on fertile ground and bear fruit for the future."

Prior to Connolly's taking over, discipline was not good in the Citizen Army. Parades, for example, were more often than not assembled up to an hour after the time announced. I remember on one occasion shortly after his arrival in Dublin, Connolly saying rather sarcastically, "I can always guarantee that the Irish Citizen Army will fight, but I cannot guarantee that they will be in time for such fight when it takes place."

Connolly set to work to cure all this. With the appointment of Michael Mallin as Chief of Staff the laxity soon disappeared, as also did a number of the then members of the Citizen Army who, without the glamour of Larkin, had no use for the serious kind of work expected of them by Connolly and Mallin. But with their disappearance came the determination of new and more earnest men, women and boys to do the work that lay ahead.

Dissension and Reorganisation

James Connolly and Thomas Foran were now the chief officers in control of what was left of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. The Union was completely bankrupt of funds, very heavily in debt and reduced to a very few members, all the result of the depression which took place after the long drawn-out struggle of 1913. As well as

having the official responsibility of keeping the Union alive Connolly also had the overriding desire to perfect the organisation of the Irish Citizen Army. Either of these two tasks was sufficient to test the courage and capabilities of even this exceptional man. Around this time he met with many rebuffs from various sources, including members and employees of the Union. In this connection Delia Larkin did everything possible to prevent him carrying out his work in the Union and in the Citizen Army. Connolly met with sustained hostility from her and from a number of her supporters. They picketed Liberty Hall and distributed handbills vilifying him and the No 1 Branch Committee because they would not allow her the licence which she had enjoyed while her brother controlled the Union. These disruptive tactics caused further confusion in the minds of the loyal few who still remained in the Union.

Miss Larkin was employed in the National Health Insurance Section. The Union was recognised as an approved society by the British Government to administer the National Health Insurance Act. Owing to the gross mismanagement of the business, the commissioners, who were appointed by the British Government as Chief Executive Officers, indicated their intention after an examination of the relevant books to withdraw their approval and transfer all the Union's health insurance members to the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin). Connolly in particular detested the Health Insurance Act from its commencement. He realised, however, that such a blow coming at that time could do irreparable damage to the Union. After some discussion with the commissioners it was agreed that they would appoint a manager to take complete control and bring order out of the existing chaos.

Connolly and Foran had the unpleasant task of reporting to No 1 Branch Committee that Delia Larkin, while a paid employee of the Health Insurance Section, had refused to carry out her duties. With the appointment of the new manager, there was bound to be a full inquiry into this state of affairs—from which grievous consequences to the Union could ensue. The Branch Committee unanimously decided

REASONS WHY

YOU SHOULD JOIN

The Irish Citizen Army.

BECAUSE It pledges its **members** to work for, organise for, drill for **and fight for an Independent Ireland.**

BECAUSE It places its reliance upon the only class that never betrayed Ireland—the Irish Working Class.

BECAUSE Having a definite aim to work for there is no fear of it being paralysed in the moment of action by divisions in its Executive Body.

BECAUSE It teaches that "the sole right of ownership of Ireland is vested in the people of Ireland, and that that full right of ownership may, and ought to be, enforced by any and all means that God hath put within the power of man."

BECAUSE It works in harmony with the Labour and true National Movements and thus embraces all that makes for Social Welfare and National Dignity.

Companies Wanted in Every District.

RECRUITS WANTED EVERY HOUR.

Apply for further information, Secretary, Citizen Army, Liberty Hall, Dublin.

Irish Paper.] *City Printing Works, 13 Stafford Street, Dublin.*

Recruiting leaflet of the Citizen Army

Members of the National Executive, Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, 1914. *Standing:* James Connolly, William O'Brien, M. J. Egan, Thomas Cassidy, W. E. Hill, Richard O'Carroll. *Sitting:* Thomas MacPartlin, D. R. Campbell, P. T. Daly, James Larkin, M. J. O'Lehane (Thomas Johnson, also a member, is not in the group)

that Miss Larkin be written to and advised that in view of the changing circumstances she should immediately take up her duties in the Health Insurance Office. At the ensuing meeting of the Branch Commitee it was reported that even though Miss Larkin had been advised by letter of its wishes she had failed to report for duty. The Branch Committee then decided to request the attendance of Miss Larkin at its next meeting. At that meeting a letter was read from Miss Larkin resigning her position as an employee of the National Health Insurance Section. From then until many weeks later Miss Larkin and her supporters were openly hostile.

Sometime before this development Miss Larkin had been in charge of and secretary of a clothing co-operative society run under the auspices of the women's section of the Union. The co-operative, which manufactured shirts, employed a number of girls who had failed to get their jobs back after the 1913 strike and lock-out. Most of these girls had to be trained in the shirt-making business. When Connolly came from Belfast to Dublin to take over the General Secretaryship of the Union he persuaded No 1 Branch Committee to give him the authority to open one of the idle shops on the Eden Quay side of Liberty Hall. An order was placed in the shop with Miss Larkin to the amount of twenty pounds. Instead of supplying the order she closed down the manufacturing section and sacked the girls. It remained closed for some weeks until she resigned her position in the Insurance Section. It was then re-opened by Connolly and afterwards became a very busy place doing contract work—even to the extent of making shirts for the British army! Many of these shirts found their way to the General Post Office during Easter Week.

During this period Connolly could never be sure of being free from abuse, even in the streets. It was not unusual for him to be subjected to vile and offensive language "in the best British army style"—to use a common phrase of the time. There were several attempts to assault him, and on one occasion the would-be attackers were handled very roughly by members of the Irish Citizen Army. In order to overcome these annoyances it was decided to close the front

halldoor of Liberty Hall when Connolly was about to leave for home at night. He would then leave by a side gate in old Abbey Street.

James Connolly slowly gathered together the broken threads of the Union membership. Late 1914 and early 1915 saw the first fruits of his work. Since the outbreak of the war the cost of living had taken a very big jump. In some cases decent employers were trying to meet the situation by giving small voluntary increases in wages to their staffs, but these employers were few in number. As a result of the economic pressures the Dublin dockers again turned their eyes towards Liberty Hall. The Union had no money and consequently was not in a position to engage in any long drawn out struggle. However, a claim was made by the Union on behalf of the dockers in the Burns Laird Line at the North Wall. This claim received scant attention and a strike was declared. Connolly made arrangements for the strikers to do picket duty with arms. In this connection, Citizen Army members were asked to give up their arms, an undertaking being given beforehand that the arms would be absolutely safe and that they would be used for a good purpose. Although the men responded to the request they disliked the idea of parting with their rifles.

This demonstration of armed pickets seemed to have the effect that Connolly desired. The strike, of short duration, was settled with a considerable increase in wages to the dockers concerned. Soldiers of the British army were also to be seen going up and down the Quays with arms, but while it appeared to be a dangerous situation no incidents of any note took place. It is well to record that some of the men employed in the firm of Burns Laird Line were not too happy with the idea of armed pickets. They considered Connolly a dangerous revolutionary. At a meeting in Liberty Hall Connolly met with strong opposition from a group led by a man named Patrick Murray who was regarded as, and claimed to be, a great trade unionist. He challenged Connolly's purpose of having a printing press established in the Hall, stating that he was against the printing of seditious literature and demanding that this should cease. If

not he would report the matter to the proper authorities in Dublin Castle. Connolly's reply was blistering and to the effect that Murray could do his worst and become a common informer.

Irish men and women of today are not backward in paying homage to the name of James Connolly and acknowledging the wonderful man he was. During his lifetime he was not considered in any way worthy of such tribute. In fact, apart from the Irish Citizen Army and a very limited number of members of the Union, including some of the leading officials and some outside friends, he was practically ignored and unknown. For instance, at a meeting of a section of Dublin dockers who worked in the firm of Michael Murphy & Co, Connolly had a very stormy time because he recommended the acceptance of an agreement after negotiations between the firm and Union representatives in which he took the leading part. In those days Michael Murphy & Co were regarded as being very fair employers. During the course of this meeting there was considerable opposition to the advice given by Connolly and he was denounced by the employees as being a "master's man". This view was strongly supported by some of the workers assembled. Connolly, having met this opposition for some time, finally left the platform, but before doing so, he said to the assembled workers, "You can go to hell and find somebody else who can do better for you." With that he left the room. This action brought the sensible portion of the meeting to a realisation of their position. Eventually they asked Connolly to come back and transact the rest of the business. This he did, but not before receiving an assurance that they had confidence in him and that there would be no repetition of the earlier conduct. In the end the meeting was glad to accept the advice which had previously been rejected.

I recall that Captain J. R. White, son of General George White of Ladysmith fame, who was responsible for the organisation and drilling of the Citizen Army expressed disappointment from time to time at the lack of support by the workers for the army. He could not understand why greater numbers did not participate, particularly in com-

parison with the Volunteers. What he failed to realise was that the workers, while trade unionists, were not by any measure socialists. For the workers to respond rather to the call of the Volunteer Organisation was more likely because of the years of popular agitation for national freedom. The socialistic ideals expressed in the constitution of the Irish Citizen Army, were not understood by the workers and where understood, were not acceptable. The hard core of the Irish Citizen Army who remained loyal to Connolly embraced the ideal of Irish independence as expressed in the very definite terms of the "Workers' Republic". There may of course, have been genuine reasons in some instances for the non-attendance of men at drill and parades, such as shabby clothing and lack of proper footwear. There was also the fact that in the aftermath of the 1913 struggle a deep depression had set in among the workers. Most important, however, was the fact that the workers did not understand the ideals behind the creation of a workers' army which were entirely new and most revolutionary in character.

2·Comrades in Arms

I have alluded to the reasons why so few of the Dublin working class were attracted into the ranks of the Irish Citizen Army. The small group of us who did share in the ideals preached by Connolly were not always very popular among our contemporaries. I was a member of St Vincent's Football Club (soccer) operating in the Parish of St Agatha, North William Street. Being several years younger than most of my friends I was very often on the receiving end of smart remarks and made to feel I was being just about tolerated as far as national politics were concerned. My continual advocacy of the rights of the working class gained me amongst my football colleagues the nickname of "Liberty". When it became known that I had joined the Irish Citizen Army there were many sly smiles and witty remarks, and suggestions from time to time, "Why not join the Volunteers". All these remarks were scouted by me on every occasion and very strong debates took place. Criticism of this kind was often expressed in a more unpleasant fashion by direct personal remarks, as when people shouted, "There is a member of 'the runaway army' " when I was passing either on my bicycle or walking to some centre of mobilisation. Such remarks were made on several occasions. They used to burn inside and I often felt like taking to task the persons making them. I found, however, it was better to ignore such individuals and eventually I became immune to anything they might say.

Several months after the conclusion of the big lock-out of 1913 many workers remained unemployed and in a serious economic plight. Captain White, anxious to alleviate their sufferings, made an attempt to head what was known as a hunger-march to the Lord Mayor in the Mansion House for the purpose of drawing attention to the victimised workers and their families. The marchers set out from Liberty Hall in military formation. At Butt Bridge they were met by Inspec-

tor Barrett and a large force of Dublin Metropolitan Police who drew their batons and dispersed the procession by force. Several members of the Citizen Army taking part in this parade stood by Captain White until they were beaten and overpowered by superior police strength. They were later given medical aid for extensive wounds received from the police batons. The remainder—the non-Citizen Army members—put up little resistance, scattered and fled. It took many months indeed to wear down the sniggering comments about "the runaway army". The Dublin press elaborated on this for the purpose of decrying the Irish Citizen Army. Although not a member of the army at the time, I was terribly upset on reading about this incident. Later on, however, when I learned the facts, I was more than satisfied.

Shortly after the outbreak of World War I De la Rey, the great Boer commandant, was shot dead when trying to join other Boer leaders like De Wet, with the object of planning insurrection against the pro-British regime then operating in South Africa under the leadership of General Louis Botha. After considerable fighting De Wet and his colleagues were defeated and forced to surrender. The event provoked considerable discussion at the time. In supporting the viewpoint of independence for the Boer people I was by no means a popular person among my colleagues who were very strong supporters of John Redmond and "Britain's fight for little Belgium".

During this period it was my habit to wear the Tricolour insignia on my coat. A member of St Vincent's Club twitted me about wearing the Boer colours. I insisted that he was wrong and that the badge bore the Irish republican colours of green, white and orange. This caused him some surprise as he was very nationalistic in his outlook but a great supporter —like all the other members of the club—of the Irish Nationalist Party led by Redmond. His name was Michael "Tiger" Smith. Why he was given the nickname of "Tiger" I do not know. On Easter Sunday, 1916, I had the great pleasure of talking to him at Liberty Hall. In a period of less than eighteen months he had completed the cycle, had become a militant member of the Irish Volunteers, took

part in the Insurrection and in the following years was very active up to the evacuation of the British forces and after. He was one of the men who took part in the making of the shears that cut the bolts on the gates of Kilmainham Jail which aided the escape of Frank Teeling, Simon Donnelly and Ernie O'Malley while they were under sentence of death during the War of Independence.

Late in 1913 he had answered an advertisement for a coach-painting job in a garage in Donnybrook run by a Mr Breen. I accompanied him on this occasion. Neither of us had any money to pay our tram fare so we walked from North William Street to Donnybrook and back, a matter of five or six miles. The job was supposed to have been for a month but it lasted many years. It was in Mr Breen's garage that most of the work was done in manufacturing the shears. After the Insurrection "Tiger" Smith and I were reviewing our experiences and he told me that he was greatly impressed by the writings of Arthur Griffith. Prior to this conversation we had many long drawn out discussions as to the rights and wrongs of John Redmond's policy.

In August or early September of 1914, a short while after I had joined the Citizen Army, I met another member Pat Fox. He was a Meathman from Drumree, had been a life long nationalist and a great supporter of Parnell and had suffered for his loyalty to him. Pat told me he had to sell his public house in Drumree and leave the district. In the drill room he told us that on the previous night there had been an attempt on the life of James Larkin. The attempt was made, according to Fox, by spies of the British Government who were anxious to put Larkin out of the way and prevent him going to America where he would be a greater danger to the British Government. He then asked for volunteers to do duty at Croydon Park grounds and house, leased to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, where James Larkin and his family lived. He empasised that this was work which young men could do best. A number of the younger men, including Michael Donnelly, Michael Kelly, Jimmy O'Shea and myself, volunteered. We did guard duty every night for a number of weeks, ensuring that Larkin was

safely inside Croydon Park House. We were often on duty till nearly midnight and some nights had to sleep on the stone floors in the out-houses attached to the house with no other covering than our overcoats. During all the time we were doing this guard duty, which entailed walking through the fields and very often getting wet up to the hips, we saw no sign of anybody trying to molest or interfere with Larkin. In fact, some time afterwards we came to the conclusion that no such attempt on his life had been contemplated. In effect all the British Government would need to have done, if it was so desired, was to prohibit his going to America. It had all the power to do so under the Defence of the Realm Act.

On occasions too there were differences of attitude among the members of the Citizen Army. I have already mentioned William Robert Halpin. A man of small stature, he was formerly an active member of the Irish National Foresters. He took it on himself to appear, if not exactly in the dress of an officer, in something very similar. His uniform even included a sword! He always endeavoured to impress his listeners, off parade as well as on parade, with his implied knowledge about things which were happening or supposed to be happening. Because of all this he incurred the wrath of some members of the Citizen Army. Unknown to himself he was often the butt of jocular individuals. After one of our parades Connolly asked the usual question, "Has anyone anything to say?" Lieutenant John O'Reilly stepped forward to ask Connolly if Halpin was an officer of the Army and if so why did he not march in the ranks the same as the other men. O'Reilly insisted that this must not be tolerated any longer. Connolly, his eyes twinkling with merriment, jokingly replied, "Every regiment is entitled to its mascot," and so ended the frontal attack on Halpin.

Connolly was not the only one who had a sense of humour for such occasions. On various occasions on our way home at night a centre of call was Holohan's tobacconist and newsagents shop at 75 Amiens Street near the Five Lamps, where some of our squad bought cigarettes and similar items. George Norgrove and Elliott Elmes prepared many a story for Halpin's benefit, the rest of our party always ensuring that

Halpin was delayed somewhat so that the story concocted for his benefit would be given to either of the brothers Patrick or Hugh Holohan for relay. We would eventually gather together again at the corner of Seville Place to hear our story relayed back to us by Halpin. Elmes was a droll character, small like Halpin but of a better build. He knew Halpin very well and always referred to him as "Robert Emmet" or "Napoleon". Many tears of laughter were shed by our little group because of the funny stories told by Elmes, and the way they were told was a treat. All this was fun which Halpin took in good spirit on the occasions when he knew the joke was on him.

There were two G-men (i.e. Castle detectives) who had the continual "care" of the Citizen Army in all their activities. One or other of them was present on all parade occasions in addition to the D.M.P. The first was Johnny Barton, who was nicknamed "Calf's Head". He was shot some years later by the I.R.A. for persistent activities on behalf of the British Government. The other was, I think, named Kirwan and nicknamed "Sheep's Eyes". Both these detectives were always most diligent in their work on behalf of Dublin Castle, and on many occasions we greeted them with very cutting remarks.

I remember on one occasion we were resting after a number of hours spent "skirmishing" around Santry and Ballymun. While we were sitting down for a rest along the ditches by the roadside "Sheep's Eyes" walked slowly from one end of the line of men to the other endeavouring to get complete and accurate information as to our arms and their quality. A number of us considered it fit to open out our magazines and show him the contents. This was done in order to mislead him, as between the depth of the Boer Mauser magazine and the stock of the Howth rifle there was little or no difference. The idea was to convince him that all our rifles had magazines.

The women's section of the Citizen Army was under the control of Dr Kathleen Lynn, Helena Molony, Madame Markievicz and Miss Ffrench-Mullen. Dr Lynn and Miss Ffrench-Mullen gave very thorough instructions by lec-

tures and practical demonstrations and were responsible for adapting the women very efficiently for their future task. Later on lectures and demonstrations on elementary first-aid were given jointly to all the men and women of the Citizen Army by Dr Lynn. These lectures had a fine psychological effect in so far as they bound the men and women of the Army much closer together.

A short while before the Insurrection I learned through a Volunteer source that James Connolly had been giving lectures on street fighting to Volunteer officers in the Dublin area. My informant was my friend Michael "Tiger" Smith, and he made it clear that the lectures were of very great assistance to the officers. He also said that each lecture by Connolly was looked forward to by them, and they were very appreciative of the clear and lucid manner in which he spoke.

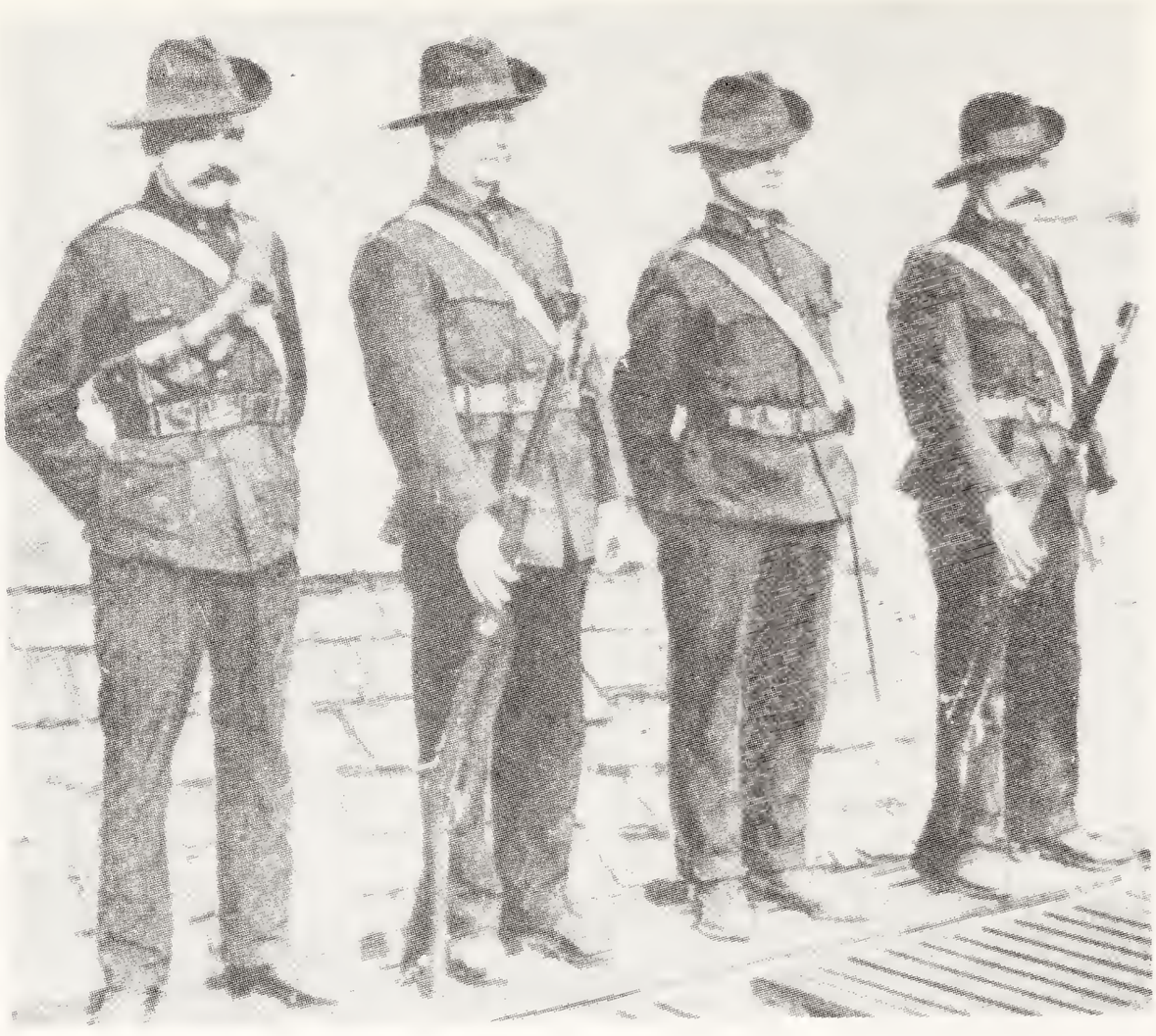
Citizen Army colleagues Richard McCormack, John J. O'Neill, Christy Poole and Vincent Poole had been attached to the British army in their younger days. John J. O'Neill is not to be confused with the John O'Neill who was then No 1 Branch Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and also a member of the Irish Citizen Army but who had never been attached to the British army. Vincent Poole, because of his turbulent nature, ceased to be a member of the Citizen Army either late in 1914 or early in 1915, but was back in the ranks for the eventual fight. They were very efficient drill instructors and in Easter Week they proved themselves to be very fine officers. Their temperaments were poles apart, but that did not in any way hinder them from inculcating the necessary knowledge of arms and drill into the inexperienced members of the Citizen Army who understandably comprised more than ninety-five per cent of the total number of our men.

John J. O'Neill had been in a cavalry regiment of the British Army and had seen service in India and elsewhere. He was very quiet and efficient, and the most neatly dressed member in our ranks. Untidiness was to him intolerable, and if the quietly spoken aside was not sufficient to make a change in the slovenliness of a member, that member was

spoken to publicly in more direct and effective language. O'Neill had a complete knowledge of the Morse code and induced a number of the younger fry to take up its study. About half a dozen of the younger members, including James O'Shea, George Oman and myself, had not only flag but telegraph instructions as well. O'Neill was hoping to extend the course to the heliograph but the opportunity never arose. Our knowledge was useful during our subsequent imprisonment in Knutsford Detention Barracks.

Christy Poole and Richard McCormack had seen service with the British army in South Africa, and in the course of their instructions they emphasised time after time the need for assimilating knowledge of the formation necessary to meet a cavalry charge. They told many a story of how the Boers operated, and of the effect of mobile methods in upsetting the British calculations time after time. Their method of mounting surprise attacks and then completely disappearing from the scene of action had proved most nerve-racking to the British troops. They never knew when the Boers would make a stand, and then the unexpected would happen which was "like hell being let loose".

This brings me to a dream which I had some three or four months before the Insurrection. I dreamt I was in a place like the Phoenix Park, at the Wellington Monument, yet it was not the Phoenix Park, and that quite suddenly and unexpectedly the Insurrection was on. Information was given to us of cavalry approaching our positions. Christy Poole was the officer in charge and he gave the instructions to prepare for cavalry. This we did, and were in position when the cavalry charged on us. We had always been told when being given this drill that cavalry would never face fixed bayonets, but in my dream, to my amazement, the cavalry charged on, jumped over our heads and never flinched for a moment at the fixed bayonets. We were then surrounded by the cavalry regiment and had to surrender. In my dream I was sorely disappointed at the sudden termination of the fight, and this woeful experience turned my thoughts immediately to our drill instructors of whom I had very harsh words to say, because they had always told us that the reverse would



A Citizen Army guard on the roof of Liberty Hall facing a British Army post on the railway line in front of the Custom House on the occasion of the outbreak of World War I in August 1914. *Left to Right:* Captain Joseph Byrne, Sergeant Christopher Poole, Philip Lacey and Patrick Fox.

IRISH CITIZEN ARMY.

SPECIAL MOBILISATION.

All ranks will parade at Liberty Hall

with full equipment, on Sunday at 5.15

James Connolly

COMMANDANT.

A Citizen Army mobilisation order

happen. I told this dream to George Norgrove, Elmes and the others the following night, but they laughed at me. After the Insurrection I associated my dream with the position in which I found myself after the fight and the ultimate surrender at St Stephen's Green.

On Sunday evenings in the summer the Citizen Army held aeriochtai in Croydon Park. An aeriocht never finished without a mock attack on a lonely post by supposed red Indians with all the war-paint, feathers and tomahawks well in keeping with the red Indian traditions as written of by Edward S. Ellis, or the adventures of Simon Kent and Daniel Boone in pioneering days in America, the subject of many books which I had borrowed as a schoolboy from the Charleville Mall Library. When they attacked the stockade they always wiped it out by fire. While the "Indians" were enjoying their victory the Citizen Army representing the old-time American army took them in turn by surprise, revenged their comrades who had been killed in the stockade and wiped out the Indians.

The men posing as Indians were members of the National Guard which was a breakaway group from the Fianna, the junior section of the Volunteers. All used blank ammunition in these manoeuvres, which always took place in the dusk of the evening, and made it very enjoyable and spectacular for the spectators. It appealed particularly to the young boys.

But it should be emphasised that while these activities provided much more enjoyment for the spectators, they were also an excellent means of training for the men and an encouragement to those who were not participating to join our ranks. The man chiefly responsible for organising the "red Indians" was Seamus McGowan who had previously controlled a number of young men in the National Guard. A number of these young men eventually came into the ranks of the Citizen Army.

Michael Mallin and his family lived in Emmet Hall, the premises of the Inchicore Branch of the Irish Transport Union, adjacent to Richmond Barracks, which is now known as Keogh Square. Only a fairly high wall separated this building from the actual barracks enclosure. The close proximity

was of great assistance in procuring rifles through contacts made with a sympathetic Irishman who was a member of the British army. By this contact we were able to increase our stores of up-to-date rifles.

On one occasion during the winter of 1915 it fell to my lot to be detailed to visit Inchicore at nine pm. My instructions were to get there sharp on time. My journey to Inchicore was accomplished on a bicycle. On my way up Lord Edward Street, just at Christ Church Cathedral a member of the Dublin Metropolitan Police stepped out and held me up because I had no light. My bicycle was not in perfect condition, the chain was defective, and I had no alternative but to halt. I was questioned by the D.M.P. man. He asked for my name and address and was given a fictitious one. During all the questioning one had to endure under such circumstances I was keeping my eye on the main purpose, to be at Inchicore by nine o'clock. This could allow of very little further delay. Thereupon I tried to impress on the police officer that I was on a very important mission of mercy, seeking a doctor to attend my mother who was very ill. He became suspicious and it seemed that little would have made him decide to take me to the nearest police barracks. My mind was made up that this must not be allowed to happen, but when it seemed certain that I must use my revolver, he decided to let me pass on, with instructions that I must not ride the bicycle without a light. This instruction was ignored, for I immediately hopped on the bicycle and set off for Inchicore. I arrived there on time, a Lee Enfield rifle was quickly strapped on my bicycle, and I set off again to the city. Less than a minute had elapsed from the time I had entered the premises in Inchicore. Other members of the Citizen Army made similar visits from time to time but eventually the source of arms dried up.

3·We Train for War

When Michael Mallin became Chief of Staff out-door exercises were added to the work of the Citizen Army. It was very rare to have a Sunday or bank holiday free. These days were often passed in training with Con Colbert's company of Irish Volunteers. Colbert's sections sometimes took part in a mock offensive against a certain point leading into the city and at other times would set up defensive lines against attacks from the Citizen Army working out into the country. As well as being informative these exercises also proved to be very healthy and a lot of good fun. They also created firm comradeship with the Irish Volunteers.

Another development with the object of perfecting our training was the carrying out of mock attacks on various buildings in the city. On one occasion when a force of men were "defending" Croydon Park House against an attack from an imaginary enemy, the defence party handled the furniture so energetically that Connolly feared for its safety. This method of training continued and one Saturday night in particular, late in 1915, a mock attack on Dublin Castle was arranged. One would have imagined that the supreme spiritual powers were on our side, because on that night we were favoured with a thick heavy fog such as was rarely seen over Dublin. Complete mobilisation of the Citizen Army had been ordered. All paraded at Liberty Hall and various companies and sections were detailed from there to go in different directions. Each officer in every section or company had his separate instructions known only to himself as to the route he was to take and the time he was to arrive at the final point. Our company arrived at Ship Street on the stroke of midnight and, as we marched in, our sections were also assembling from various other points. The tramping of feet from the different directions was slightly startling and some of us wondered was this the hour to which we had all been looking forward. Captain McCormack assured us that it

was not so. With the "attacking force" were James Connolly and Michael Mallin. It looked from the faces and from the attitude of both these men, and later from one of Connolly's usual short addresses, that the scheme they had planned had proved a success.

We were, of course, accompanied by the D.M.P., as was usual during these exercises, and consternation took place among the officers of that body when they saw the way in which we split up at Liberty Hall. They had not sufficient men available to cover the various sections that were operating. They were equally surprised when they found us all meeting again in very close proximity to Dublin Castle. In the meantime they had summoned other forces to their aid. Our work for the night was not yet complete because we were marched from Ship Street to Emmet Hall, the Inchicore Branch office of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union adjoining the Richmond Barracks controlled by the British, where we had the women's section of the Citizen Army waiting for us with light refreshments. We stayed there and had a sing-song until the early hours of the Sunday morning. The D.M.P. kept their vigil all through the night out in the cold. When they accompanied us back to Liberty Hall where the dismiss took place early that morning they had done approximately nine hours unbroken duty. This exercise was given great prominence at the British Government inquiry which was held after the 1916 Insurrection.

It was always the custom of the Citizen Army when on route marches, even though not at full strength, to sing marching songs, such as "Twenty Men from Dublin Town", "Wrap the Green Flag Round Me", "Clare's Dragoons", "O'Donnell Abu", "The Mountains of Pomeroy", "Sinn Fein Amhain", "The Harp or Lion", "Ireland Over All" and "The Peeler and the Goat". One of our own was "The Irish Citizen Army is the Name of Our Wee Band", and we also sang "The Germans are Winning the War, Me Boys" composed by Madame Markievicz. It was not what you would call a song at all. It was doggerel. Madame Markievicz also wrote the song "Armed for the Battle", and dedicated it to the Citizen Army. The music was not original; it was the

air of a revolutionary Polish song. We also sang some of Connolly's songs, "The Rebel Song", "Watchword of Labour", "Labour's Right" and "The Call of Erin". The music of the second and third songs was written by J. J. Hughes, a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and later a principal official of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and Assistant Director of Radio Eireann.

Another important method of strengthening the morale of the Citizen Army and its followers was the holding of concerts every Sunday night at Liberty Hall. Some of these concerts were built around plays from the Abbey Theatre repertoire and were performed by the Liberty Players who included, among others, James Smith, Sean Rogan, Moses Whelan (who was an uncle of mine on my mother's side), Sean Connolly, Miss Mary Geraghty, Miss Josie Pollard and Mrs Barrett (Sean Connolly's sister). For the concert items the list of singers generally included Sean "Gurra" Byrne, Andy Dunne, Joe Connolly, William Oman, Miss Emily Norgrove, Miss Connie O'Hanlon, Miss Mary Hyland, Miss Molly Reilly and myself—with Madame Markievicz often giving a recitation. One of the plays produced was written by James Connolly, entitled *Under Which Flag*. Michael Mallin organised a small orchestra of four including himself, Sean Rogan and two members from St James's Band, James Geoghegan and John O'Reilly. These players took part in the Insurrection. James Geoghegan was killed in the fighting at the College of Surgeons in St Stephen's Green. In 1948 the instrument played by Michael Mallin was presented to the National Museum, having turned up after thirty-two years. It then bore the inscription: "By Capt. G. Hewson, Presented to Band, 18th R.I. Rifles. Taken at Liberty Hall, Dublin—Rebellion 1916".

One of our Saturday night manoeuvres consisted of a raid for arms, but only superior officers of the Citizen Army knew the real purpose of the manoeuvre. The operations on this particular night cut off the complete north-east side of the city from the canal bridge at Phibsborough right down to the North Wall at the Liffey. The Baldoyle section of the

Citizen Army, with others, took part in the actual raid on the drill hall of the "George Rex", the British Auxiliary Home Defence Force. This hall was near Sutton crossroads between where the present Catholic Church is and where a large supermarket now stands. The raiding party, to their consternation, found that all their work had been in vain because the arms which were believed to be there turned out to be wooden. On that night the officers and men guarding the bridges which would give approach to any British forces that might be informed of our activities at Sutton were ordered to stop an advance by every means in their power. Dr Lynn provided transport with her own car and drove out to Sutton to bring in the arms which, unfortunately, were not there.

The internal organisation of the Citizen Army developed day by day. Formerly parades and drills were announced on notice boards in Liberty Hall. This method was superseded by the appointment of section mobilisers, and each section mobiliser was responsible for a given number of men living adjacent to his own home. The city was split into two sections, north and south of the River Liffey, with an area mobilisation officer in charge of each side of the city. These men received their instructions from the Chief Mobilisation Officer of the Army, Lieutenant Thomas Kain, all his instructions coming direct from James Connolly or Michael Mallin.

No drill or outdoor parade ever finished without a short address by either James Connolly or Michael Mallin, and such address would be pertinent to the work which had been done or was to be done at a future date. At the end of each address Connolly or Mallin always invited questions or suggestions. Out of this arose a suggestion from me that a box be placed at the disposal of all members of the Army who might be backward in asking questions or in making suggestions in public, such to be answered or acted upon if desirable.

One matter about which I was very worried was the fitting of the French bayonet on to the Howth Mauser rifle, which had been adapted however inefficiently by the ingenuity of some members of the Citizen Army. The bayonet blade lay diagonally across the muzzle of the rifle for about three-

The Citizen Army in front of Liberty Hall

quarters of its length. This understandably would prevent the successful firing of any rifle ammunition while the bayonet was fixed. All bayonets were called in for adjustment, which was done by heating the blade halfway up and putting a bend on it so that it would be clear of the path of the bullet. Many other suggestions on matters like this came from the members and were acted upon.

For some time James Connolly had been giving lectures on street fighting. He emphasised the various essential points to be observed, such as maintaining the water supply for human use; protection against fire; never to occupy a corner building without proper support from each flank; the necessity for breaching walls so that a complete street of any length could be occupied without having to emerge on to the street. In this connection he made it clear that when breaching interior walls no two breaches should be directly opposite because of the danger to our own forces if any of our positions were occupied by the opposing force. Many other essential points were brought out on this system of fighting, and, as usual, questions were invited. Questioners pointed out the necessity for implements suitable to this work. Sledge-hammers were regarded as among the best implements and members of the Citizen Army were expected to use their own ingenuity in obtaining and supplying them. Connolly, when asked by John O'Reilly at one such lecture, "Would we not require sledge-hammers, and where are they to be found?" gave the cryptic reply that he would expect a man of his intelligence to solve that little problem for himself.

A number of members of the Citizen Army were working in the Dublin Dockyard and kindred employments, and very often it was found that two or perhaps three of them would have their eyes on the one sledge-hammer. I have to confess that without the knowledge or the sanction of the Dublin Dockyard Company, I relieved the company of many of their 7-lb sledge-hammers, for which I had the "prayers" of many of my fellow-workers in the dockyard. Other articles among the many which the Dublin Dockyard lost from time to time, were files, lathe fittings and borings—last mentioned being used in the preparation of home-made bombs.

With the Volunteer organisations spreading all through the country the organisers of feis competitions in various areas included in their curriculum, competitions for the best drilled Volunteer Squad. The Citizen Army entered for a number of these competitions, the first being at Tullow, Co Carlow, about June 1915. On this occasion two teams were to represent the Irish Citizen Army. The previous evening most of us who had been selected had camped out at Croydon Park, Fairview, and proceeded to Kingsbridge (now Heuston Station) early on Sunday morning in full uniform and equipment. On our arrival at the station we discovered the train fully loaded. The station-master informed us that there was no room for us, whereupon Commandant Michael Mallin despatched a couple of men to look after the train crew and posted other men in strategic positions. Mallin then asked the station-master if we were still debarred from travelling to Tullow on that train, and suggested that extra accommodation should be provided. The station-master wisely agreed to this proposal!

At the feis in Tullow we were the object of a large amount of curiosity and conjecture. When our first team entered the grounds and went through the required exercises, Commandant Mallin, on presenting his compliments to the judges, was told to take his squad of "British army veterans" away, as there was nothing to cope with us in the field. This pleased us for most of the team had known nothing of the business end of a rifle twelve to eighteen months prior to that date. I was one of those with less than twelve months' part-time training. Our second team was given the honour of tying with the next best squad. The first prize was a flag and five pounds. We only got part of our prize, and the second team got no prize, but we did not let this matter worry us. It was an enjoyable day.

Rumours were prevalent around Tullow that we were going to be attacked by the Redmondite Volunteers, and as a precaution against this Mallin marshalled our whole force and paraded right through Tullow, headed by the Fintan Lalor Pipe Band which was part and parcel of the Irish Citizen Army. No adverse incident of any kind took place,

but rather did we receive the good-will and applause of the people assembled in Tullow town.

There were several incidents of attacks on the Irish Volunteers in different parts of the country by the National Volunteers and Redmond supporters. An outstanding example took place at the city of Limerick, when visiting Volunteers together with the Limerick City contingent were attacked by mobs for several hours one Sunday. From memory I would say that this attack took place in late 1914 or early in 1915.

Another competition which the Citizen Army entered was that initiated by Cumann na mBan (our women's auxiliary) in Dublin at an Aeriocht held in Father Mathew Park off Phillipsburg Avenue, Fairview, close to Croydon Park. The prize for the best drilled team was a bugle which was won by the Citizen Army and later inscribed. This bugle was presented to the then Taoiseach, Mr Eamon de Valera, in 1948. He in turn presented it to the National Museum.

The feis at St Enda's Rathfarnham was another occasion worth noting. The Citizen Army entered two teams. The judges that day were Willie Pearse, brother of Padraig Pearse, Commandant Mallin and Captain Eamon de Valera. The display given by our first team was so outstanding that the spectators gave us a tremendous ovation on leaving the field but to our great surprise and disappointment we were only awarded second place. Prior to the competition, rumour had it very strongly that Commandant Seamus Murphy's team was the likely winner and so it turned out. We returned to Liberty Hall later that day and our disappointment broke loose when we paraded in the large front hall. After Connolly's short address, a number of members of the Citizen Army stepped forward to ask questions, which were all on the one theme. Lieutenant John O'Reilly asked why the Citizen Army had been defrauded at St Enda's that day. Connolly's reply was characteristic. He said, "Why do you worry?" This answer was not sufficient for the men and a number of them pressed other questions as to the total marking. At this stage Mallin came into the picture and stated that of the three judges he himself had given the fewest marks to the Citizen Army. Mallin indicated that he felt he

was justified in doing so because of his experience in military matters. It would appear from the discussion that it was Mallin's marking that had deprived us of first prize. Both Willie Pearse and Eamon de Valera gave almost one hundred per cent marks to the Citizen Army team.

O'Donovan Rossa's Funeral

Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa died on 29 June 1915, and his work in the past for Irish freedom was remembered by the older generation. My generation knew little or nothing about him but our minds were fired by the stories we now heard of his fight in the cause of Ireland. Some weeks after his death his remains were brought to Dublin to the Pro-Cathedral, kept there for one night and then removed to the City Hall for a lying-in-state. A guard of honour remained in the City Hall during that period. It fell to the lot of the Citizen Army to relieve a guard of Irish Volunteers on the Friday evening, and we completed our twenty-four hour duty. I felt very proud that I was selected as one of the guard supplied by the Citizen Army.

While the remains were in the City Hall there was a continuous stream of Irishmen and women, young and old, seeking to pay their last respects to the great old Fenian. I remember my eldest sister, Mrs Kathleen Costello, being in that long queue. She had come from the White Banks beyond the Pigeon House Fort, Ringsend, and appealed to me to allow her to go in out of turn. This request had to be refused because of our strict instruction on this matter. I felt disturbed having to make this decision, but knew there was no alternative. In the Citizen Army a higher degree of discipline was expected. It had been impressed on our minds by Commandant Mallin that the professional soldier carried out orders because he knew the punishment that would await him if he failed to do so, but Mallin emphasised time after

time that he expected from us discipline of a much higher degree, given freely because it was the right thing to do and not from any fear of punishment.

On the afternoon of Sunday, 1 August 1915, the public funeral took place, and again I was one of the guard of honour supplied by the Citizen Army. The guard was in the charge of Captain James O'Sullivan, an officer in the Irish Volunteers. The twelve in the guard were equally divided between the Volunteers and the Citizen Army and marched on each side of the hearse carrying the remains of the dead Fenian. The funeral procession through the city was very impressive. The inspiring message at this funeral was not that we were lamenting the death of O'Donovan Rossa, but that we were celebrating his triumph in the cause of Ireland and honouring the remains of this man who was going to his last resting place. The streets of the city along the route of the procession were thronged, and along the way from the starting point at the City Hall until the funeral reached Glasnevin Cemetry, many, many thousands of people paid their last respects to Rossa. At the graveside a square was formed, and Pearse gave his now famous oration concluding with his condemnation of British policy in Ireland and adding, "But the fools, the fools, the fools, they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland, unfree, shall never be at peace".

A firing party was comprised of Volunteers and the Citizen Army and the Last Post was sounded by Bugler Oman of the Citizen Army. The reaction to all this was a further re-awakening amongst many of the younger generation. It gave a great fillip by way of new recruits to both the Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers. The *Irish Times*, commenting the next day on the procession, referred to the magnificent physical appearance of those taking part, and regretted that so many able-bodied men saw fit to ignore the call of King and Country, particularly when men were needed so badly for the war effort on the western front.

Three Questions

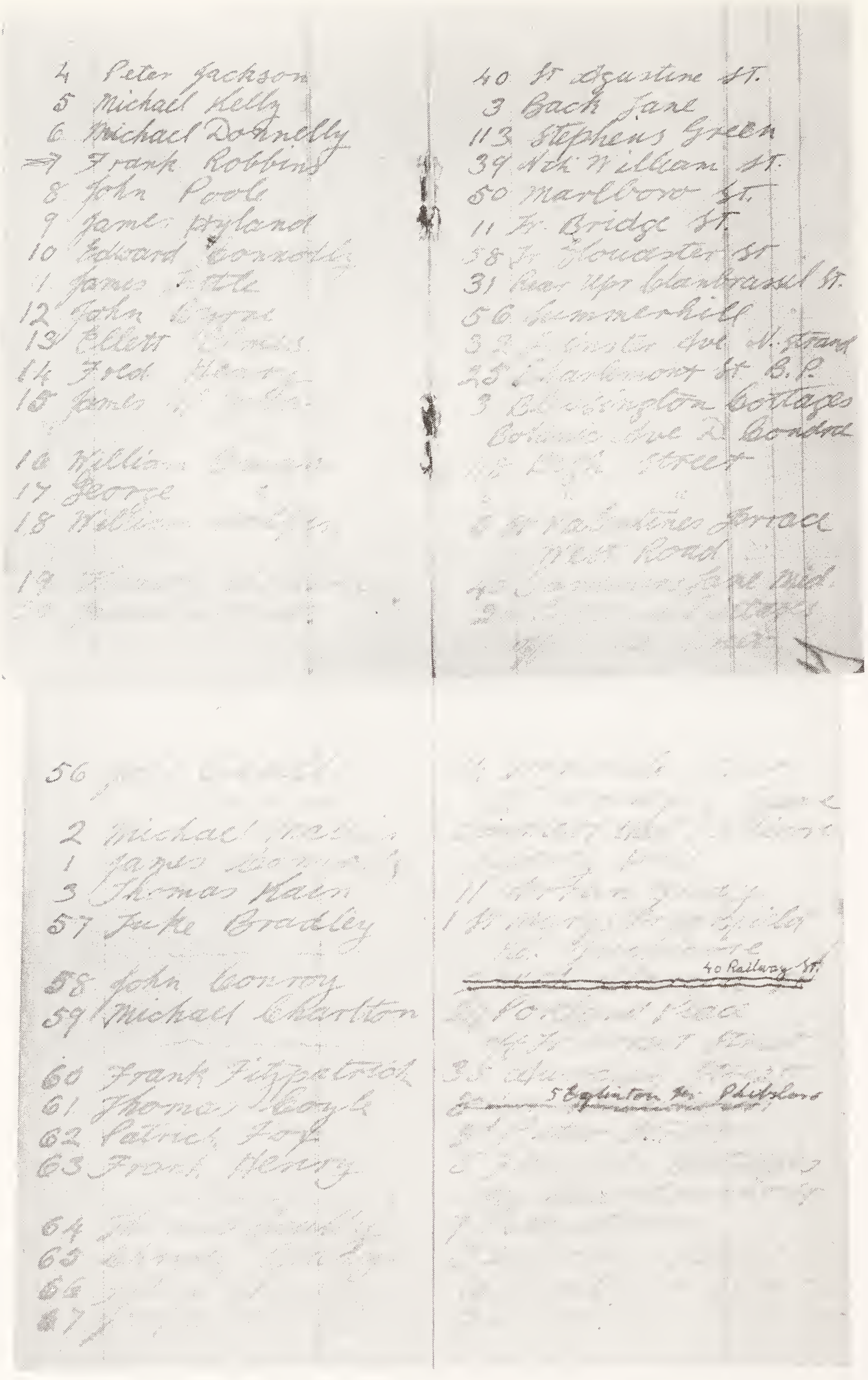
About the latter end of the third quarter of 1915 the climate

of revolutionary activity appeared to be warming up. Connolly ordered a complete Irish Citizen Army mobilisation which he regarded as being of supreme importance. He addressed the members, expressing his opinion that the situation was now becoming dangerous and that it might mean that the Citizen Army would have to fight alone without the aid of the Irish Volunteers or any other military force. He informed us that it was his intention to give every man an opportunity of answering privately three question which would be put to him that night. If all three questions were answered in the affirmative, the person would be given a secret number which would be embossed on a little wooden plaque to be worn round his neck for identification purposes. Corresponding numbers and names would be handed to a trusted person who would be able to identify any who might be killed in action. Connolly added that he would prefer that any man who felt that he could not conscientiously answer all three questions in the affirmative should say so frankly, as he, Connolly, did not want anyone to be forced into a position which he might later find untenable. He emphasised that answers to the questions would be treated in strict confidence.

The number of the Citizen Army were then asked to go one by one into another room in Liberty Hall which had an exit apart from the door by which they had entered. Present in the room when my turn came were Commandant James Connolly, Michael Mallin, the Chief of Staff, and Thomas Kain, the Chief of Mobilisation. I answered all three questions in the affirmative. The secret number given to me was No 7. To the best of my recollection, the questions could be summarised as follows:—

(1) Are you prepared to take part in the fight for Ireland's freedom?
(2) Are you prepared to fight alongside the Irish Volunteers?
(3) Are you prepared to fight without the aid of the Irish Volunteers or any other allies?

Thomas Kain as the Chief of Mobilisation was responsible for keeping a record of the secret numbers. He wrote out the list of numbers and names in a notebook. Many years later



Pages 1 and 4 of the notebook kept by Thomas Kain giving the secret numbers of members of the Citizen Army

Kain and myself were to go on an expedition to recover that notebook. On the Monday of Easter week, after they had vacated the guardroom at the gate of the Upper Castle Yard, Kain and his men had made their way up through Castle St. to Lahiff's Shop. They eventually took refuge in a cellar under the shop and remained concealed there even after the British had captured City Hall from the Citizen Army garrison and overrun the area. Kain told me later that they managed to obtain a supply of water by piercing the lead pipes and then replugging them again.

In 1927 I persuaded Kain to go back with me to the cellar to search for the notebook containing the Citizen Army lists. To our delight we found it where Kain had hidden it eleven years earlier. It is now in the National Library of Ireland. It will be noticed in the excerpts reproduced that the names are not filled in for the first three numbers. These names were No. 1: James Connolly, No 2: Michael Mallin and No 3: Thomas Kain. As can be seen the names are given further down the list.

Relations with the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union

In the years after 1916, there were several attempts made by people—not in my opinion competent to do so—to present as an historical fact the myth that there was open hostility between the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and the Citizen Army. Nothing was further from the truth. In actual fact there existed the utmost co-operation between the two organisations because of the dual position held by Connolly as Acting General Secretary of the Union and as Commandant of the Citizen Army. There was also the fact that Thomas Foran, the General President of the Union had, as previously explained, been responsible for having Connolly brought to Dublin. In addition, when one considers that Liberty Hall was used by the army; that the Proclamation of Easter Week 1916 was printed on the Union's printing press and paid for by the Union; that the pages of the *Workers' Republic* were used by the Citizen Army during

those active days; and that Croydon Park and other Union property in Dublin were always freely available to the Citizen Army, it is quite obvious that there could not have been hostility between the two organisations. The Citizen Army sprang from the trials and tribulations endured by the Union in its fight for lowly paid and despised workers who, in their efforts to improve the shocking working conditions of the period, were murdered, imprisoned and brutally beaten by the armed forces of the British Crown.

The fiction about hostility apparently sprang from the fact that a short while before the hoisting of the green flag with the harp over Liberty Hall on Palm Sunday, 1916, a member of the Branch Committee named Farrell moved a resolution that Connolly be instructed not to hoist the flag as this action would be regarded by the British authorities as an open declaration of war and would possibly result in the seizure of Liberty Hall by Dublin Castle. There was a discussion on this resolution in Connolly's presence during a meeting of the No 1 Branch Committee. Eventually Connolly asked the Chairman, Thomas Foran, for permission for himself and Farrell to retire for a few moments to discuss the matter in private. This permission was granted. A short while afterwards Connolly and Farrell reappeared before the Committee. The latter asked for permission to withdraw his resolution in view of a statement that had been made privately to him by James Connolly. Farrell said he was now perfectly satisified with Connolly's explanation and as far as he was concerned the matter was ended. Permission to withdraw the resolution was then granted.

This is the only incident which, to my knowledge, could have given credence to a belief in differences between Connolly and the No 1 Branch Committee. This incident can scarcely be described as "open hostility". There was, of course, a distinct cleavage after Easter Week, but this was due in the first place to mundane affairs that had nothing to do with matters of policy. A certain number of individuals put questions of personality above those of the Union and in doing so could claim little in common with the motives of the Irish Citizen Army up to and including Easter Week

1916. They certainly had no relation to our national ideals. The Citizen Army came into being as a result of the activities of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. It could not have been created and could not have continued to exist but for the help and co-operation of the Union.

A Mobilisation Order

On Friday, 24 March 1916, I arrived back from dinner to my work in the Dublin Dockyard at about 2pm. I was about to start on an urgent job when Elliott Elmes engaged me in conversation. We forgot all about our work while discussing the critical tendencies of the time. During the course of our talk a messenger from the foreman's office told Elmes he was wanted in a very great hurry. Elmes was away for some minutes. When he came back he handed me a mobilisation order from James Connolly instructing me to get my section mobilised and fully armed immediately. Each man was to proceed at once to Liberty Hall. The signed order had been given to Elmes by Lieutenant Michael Kelly who had gained an entrance to the dockyard on the pretext that Elmes's wife had taken very ill and that he must return immediately.

I knew it would be impossible for me to get out by the front entrance just then, so I had recourse to a longer route by the dry dock at Alexandra Road. Before leaving I asked Elmes to collect my bicycle from the cycle shed and meet me at the entrance to Alexandra Road. On my way out I recollected that in excitement I had overlooked a couple of my section who were working in the dockyard and I had to go back to inform them of the mobilisation order. Returning to the entrance to Alexandra Road and East Wall I was surprised to find that Elmes was not there waiting for me. All kinds of fears entered my mind. Maybe he had mis-

understood my instructions and had taken the direct road to his own home. A little patience brought its reward. I saw Elmes, who was a very short man, approaching rather erratically, wobbling from one side of the road to the other in his effort to reach the pedals of my tall bicycle.

My first objective was to get home to obtain my equipment and mobilisation book which listed the men of the section. In this book were not only their home addresses but also the shops or factories where they worked. The order meant visiting every factory or shop on my list. It was a much slower process than mobilising the men at their own homes. Worried at the time it took me to complete my job, I made a mental note to suggest a change for the future should another such occasion arise. However, having completed my task, I reported to Liberty Hall and found many of the men whom I had mobilised already at their post. Every entrance and window was guarded by the Citizen Army; it had every appearance of an active post. We were a motley looking collection. None of us gave a thought to our personal appearance. We left off work, went home, grabbed our rifles and other equipment and were off to Liberty Hall in the greatest haste and with black faces and dirty working clothes. So well did the members of the Citizen Army answer the call that Connolly and Mallin were exultant and proud of the result.

This activity brought from the pen of Maeve Kavanagh the following poem published in the *Workers' Republic* of 8 April 1916. It well describes the whole keynote of the mobilisation.

THE CALL TO ARMS

Make way, oh gaping, careless crowds,
Fall back, and let them by
Fate even now may weave their shrouds,
They go—to win or die.
Some moments since, at work they bent,
In factory, mill or street,

Till Eire, her Reveille sent,
Then thronged they to her feet.

Machines were stay'd, tools thrown aside,
Twas Eire's hosting day,
Ne'er bridegroom to a regal bride,
Went half so fleet as they.
With bandolier and trusty gun,
Each busy street they tread,
Whilst England's craven garrison,
Looks on in hate, and dread.

They needed neither bribe nor threat
'Twas love their service bought,
Had yielded life without regret,
If but its gift had brought
The great shy bird of Freedom near,
To fold her wings at least,
And nest upon their land so dear,
Till time should wind his blast.

They kept their vigil, brave and true,
No foe their fort assailed,
The British bulldog, loath to woo
New dangers, backed and quailed,
And slunk to kennel, baffled, sore,
Too scared to bark or bite,
To weave his dastard plots once more,
'Gainst men he dare not fight.

On that day men left their employment under the strangest conditions. Some who were carters and had horses to look after turned them into the stables. Others brought to to Liberty Hall. Many black-faced men cut a peculiar figure rushing through the streets of Dublin on bicycles or on foot with full equipment, rifle or shotgun, bandolier and haversack. Very few members of the Irish Citizen Army left Liberty Hall that night, and the guards were doubled. Those

who remained behind slept in rooms on bare boards and without covering of any kind and rose with very stiff joints the next morning.

The cause of this sudden mobilisation was an attempt by the Detective Force in Dublin Castle to seize copies of the previous week's issue of *The Gael*. At least that was the police explanation after two attempts to raid the shop where the publication was sold had failed. This shop at No 31 Eden Quay was a co-operative shop belonging to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. It sold shirts, socks and other wearing apparel, and also nationalist weekly papers. Adjoining the shop was the room of the printing press which led into Liberty Hall. There were two girls in the shop, Miss Rosie Hackett and Miss Jeannie Shannon. The former left the shop, went right through the printery warning the men on duty, and into Liberty Hall where she informed Connolly of the raid. Connolly took his gun with him, came around by Eden Quay, and on entering the shop, found the detectives with a bundle of papers in their arms. Connolly's command to them was, "Drop those papers, or I will drop you". They dropped the papers very quickly. He then ordered them out. Also present on this occasion were Helena Molony and Madame Markievicz.

Inspector Bannin next arrived on the scene and Connolly demanded his search warrant, but he had not got one. Later, having eventually got the search warrant, the detectives began searching for *The Gael*, but in fact there were no copies on the premises during the raid. All this was regarded by Connolly as a pretext. It was his belief that the real motive was to gain entrance to Liberty Hall through the pressroom and seize the type and any other matter which came their way.

As a result of experience gained during the sudden mobilisation I told Commandant Mallin that I had grave fears of falling down on another occasion. The number of men in my section had increased considerably during the previous months. My account of the length of time I had spent mobilising my men at their work was accepted and I was given Daniel King, another shipyard worker, who was also a mem-

ber of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, as an assistant in the task of organising the future mobilisation of my section.

On reporting for work in the Dublin Dockyard at six o'clock on the morning after the special mobilisation I was met by my angry foreman who charged me with leaving my post and being responsible for keeping many men idle. He accused me of going to Liberty Hall to take up guard duty. This I did not deny. He then requested me to give him information regarding Elmes, William Robert Halpin, King and other men who had also left their work. To this question, of course, I had no answer beyond saying that I did not know anything about them.

At that time I was an apprentice to my trade and a piece-worker. Arriving at the pay-box later on that day I discovered that my wages had been heavily slashed. This was something to which I felt unable to submit. I went immediately to the office of the foreman, James Miller. He was helpless in the matter. The Yard-Manager, Mr Crichton, who was the man responsible for my meagre wage packet then came into the office, but no appeal from the foreman would induce him to alter the decision he had made. At this stage I decided to part company with the Dublin Dockyard, and informed the manager and foreman accordingly. It was intimated to me that in that event I would be arrested under the provision of the Munitions Act and dealt with according to this British law. I scoffed at this threat and told them to go ahead, not fearing any action they cared to take. Needless to say no action was taken. From that day until Easter Monday, with the exception of a visit to my home on Sunday mornings for a change of clothing, Liberty Hall became my temporary place of residence. During all that time I was very busily engaged on guard duty and in helping to make munitions.

Making Munitions

Prior to the dramatic 24 March mobilisation a number of the unemployed members of the Irish Citizen Army were utili-

sing their spare time making munitions. This group was augmented by a selected number of members who frequented Liberty Hall in the evenings and were free from other duties. This work had been going on for many months and it was found necessary to have a guard for this purpose. The munitions being manufactured were grenades and bullets converted from ordinary shotgun ammunition. Bombs of all shapes and sizes were made from "baggin" cans, tin snuff-boxes, tobacco tins and other such receptacles. The shotgun ammunition was melted down and recast to a size which enabled four bullets to be packed into the space formerly held by the shot. Each cartridge was recompressed to create greater effect. A test showed that such bullets carried a distance of not less than 180 yards with much more deadly effect.

A man named Hughes (not to be confused with J. J. Hughes who composed the music for Connolly's songs "Watchword of Labour", "Labour's Right", etc.) who was reputed to have had experience in a South American revolution, made suggestions for the production of a machine gun which would take our improvised shotgun ammuniton. To forward this project every facility at our disposal was given to him and a lathe was provided. Most of the material used came from different engineering shops in the city and the Dublin Dockyard without, of course, the knowledge of the owners. After many disappointments the gun was completed but on being tested was found to be slightly defective. Under the conditions in which work proceeded the process of overcoming the defect would have taken more time than could be afforded; the date of the Insurrection was now close at hand. Connolly, not being prepared to take risks of this nature, gave instructions to abandon the work on the machine gun.

During our labours in Liberty Hall we had visits from Connolly, Mallin and Madame Markievicz. It was quite usual for Madame, Helena Molony and another girl called Marie Perolxg to drop in during the afternoons and present us with a bag of cakes for our tea. I recall Madame saying during one of those afternoon visits that a letter had arrived from her

bank manager with bad news. "I have already overdrawn my bank account for my next quarter's allowance to the extent of forty-five pounds", she declared, "and if this bally revolution doesn't take place soon I don't know how I'm going to live."

Some days before the Insurrection Commandant Mallin brought in to our workroom a weaving loom and in his spare time began to weave a square of poplin. He told me he hoped to get the piece finished before the fighting started and if this was accomplished he would probably get ten pounds for it. This money he proposed giving to Mrs Mallin to help her tide over the awkward period while the fighting was taking place.

It was during this period that Joe Stanley's printing works in Liffey Street was raided by the police. Practically all the type of a certain kind was seized. The police, however, overlooked a number of frames of type already set up, and Martin Kelly, myself and some others, whose names I cannot recall, went to the works with a hand-cart. We were carrying small arms. Our job was to get these frames of type, if possible without any trouble, but if we met with any opposition, we were to deal with it as we thought fit. When we arrived at the works we found several policemen on guard outside. We knocked and were admitted. Our appearances gave the impression of being ordinary printing trade members. We loaded the hand-cart and took the type to Liberty Hall without interference.

About a week before the Insurrection I was one of a party detailed to go to the North Circular Road to a house several doors from Fanning's public house which was at the corner of Russell Street and North Circular Road. As usual we were armed and our instructions were to brook no interference from the Dublin Metropolitan Police or any other forces. On making inquiries at this house, the home of Sean McDermott, we were told to go round to the back, which we reached down a narrow lane. When we arrived there we saw a large number of cases which we knew were filled with shotguns. We loaded up our hand-cart and returned unmolested to Liberty Hall.

Around this time money now more readily available was used to purchase hatchets and other equipment likely to prove useful in the coming struggle. All these incidents were signs that we were getting very close to the day to which we were all looking forward.

I should at this point recall that in November of 1915 when speaking at a meeting to commemorate one of our martyred patriots, Pearse emphasised the fact that insurrections in Ireland had always been just too late. Connolly, who was a member of the audience, rose and asked the question, "Will this one also be too late?"

The Citizen Army did not join in the Robert Emmet commemoration also held in 1915 at Parnell Square. Connolly and Mallin spoke instead in Liberty Hall. During Connolly's oration he said, "In case anybody may be wondering why there are two commemorations being held in the city tonight, I would like it to be known that it is because of the selection of two speakers on the other platform that the Citizen Army has refrained from participating and has decided to hold its own commemoration." He added that if the Citizen Army were present at the Parnell Square gathering these two speakers would have to be asked questions the meaning of which might be misinterpreted. The two speakers to whom Connolly referred were Professor Eoin MacNeill and Bulmer Hobson, a northern leader of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Connolly regarded MacNeill as a man of high principles and had no quarrel with him because he believed his views were honest even though he could not agree with them. He thought differently of Hobson.

Connolly went on to refer to MacNeill's notes in the *Irish Volunteer*, which suggested that the people of this generation or their children, could not expect to see the freedom of Ireland achieved, but would look forward to their children's children achieving it. This was completely at variance with Connolly's policy according to which "today was the time to fight", tomorrow could be too late. Connolly then said of Bulmer Hobson that he was the villain of the piece. "This man," he asserted, "who in public is preaching red revolution, at the secret councils of the nation does everything to

retard those who are working for the day that we all so much desire."

From that day onwards our instructions were that on no account were we to risk losing our rifles, that we should avoid coming to Liberty Hall or going home at night singly, and that at all times, we must have our weapons loaded and ready for action if any attempt was made by police or other forces to disarm us. These instructions were carried out to the letter.

One night, some months afterwards, one of the men left his loaded shotgun in the drill room at Liberty Hall, forgetting the instructions given to unload on arriving there. This neglect was the cause of an unfortunate accident. A new recruit not knowing it was loaded took up the shotgun and pulled the trigger. Two of our members, John Conroy, a Dublin Dockyard worker and John Hanratty, were wounded. Conroy was hit in the arm and Hanratty in the legs and stomach. The former's wound healed quickly and he was well enough to take part in the Insurrection, but Hanratty was confined to bed and was unable to play his part during Easter Week.

4 · Up, Brothers Up!

Captain Robert Monteith was formerly in the British army but on completion of his service was attached to the Ordnance Department, Phoenix Park, in a civil capacity. When World War I broke out, he was invited to rejoin the British army, but refused to do so. It was well known to the British authorities that he was actively connected with the Irish Volunteers. He was then dismissed from his position in the Ordnance Department and shortly afterwards an order was served on him forbidding him to reside within a certain number of miles of the Dublin metropolitan area. Monteith, on receiving this order, sought the advice of Connolly. Connolly advised Monteith to contact his superior officers in the Volunteers immediately, and offered the opinion that they should stand by him and not allow any residential ban. The Volunteer Executive, however, for tactical reasons told Monteith that he had no alternative but to accept the order.

Connolly held a public meeting in Beresford Place, with a complete mobilisation of the Citizen Army. At this meeting he threw out a challenge to the British Government, declaring that if they issued such orders to members of the Citizen Army they would be resisted in arms. No similar order was issued to any member of the Citizen Army, although there were a number of men in the same position as Monteith such as Michael Mallin, the Chief of Staff, Captain Richard McCormack, Captain John J. O'Neill, Captain Christopher Poole and his brother Vincent who held a lower rank. My belief is that Connolly visualised a spate of deportation orders and made known his intention to the Dublin Castle authorities so that they would have second thoughts before risking trouble. This he believed was the last thing they wanted.

Palm Sunday, 16 April 1916, was a day to which all Citizen Army men and many other Irishmen had looked forward. Elaborate preparations had been made and on that day

the green flag with the gold harp in the centre—without the crown—was to be hoisted over Liberty Hall. The whole ceremony was carried out with military precision. This was the first time Connolly appeared in uniform. Prior to this he had never worn anything of a military character except a short pair of leggings, but he always carried a gun. A hollow square was formed in Beresford Place outside Liberty Hall by the Citizen Army, and only those taking part in the actual ceremony were allowed inside the square. Many thousands of people gathered outside the square, crowding Butt Bridge, Eden Quay, North Wall East and Beresford Place. The traffic was completely blocked in the area. The ceremony continued amid mounting excitement and Miss Molly O'Reilly, a young red-haired member of the women's section of the Citizen Army, dressed suitably for the occasion, marched from the centre of Beresford Place where the flag had been presented to her by Connolly and, accompanied by a guard of honour, mounted the main staircase to the roof of Liberty Hall where the flag was hoisted, to the sound of bugles and rolling drums. When the flag floated in the breeze tremendous cheers from the huge crowd echoed over the Liffey, punctuated by individual cracks from revolvers fired by enthusiastic Irish Volunteers who were amongst the spectators. Connolly delivered a short address which concluded one of the most memorable occasions which I experienced as a young man.

A Strange Incident

On Good Friday 1916 between eleven am and twelve noon, Commandant Mallin and myself were in one of the rooms on the river side of Liberty Hall, he weaving poplin and I filling some shotgun cartridges. We were talking about the coming Insurrection and other matters, when suddenly Mallin said to me, "Robbins, would you like to take a walk with me?" I thought this was an extraordinary switch in the conversation, and consented to his request. We left Liberty Hall and as we were heading along towards Amiens Street Mallin said

to me, "You'll probably see some people in various places along this street whom you will know. On no account give them any sign of recognition." We continued our walk down Amiens Street over Newcomen Bridge, Ossory Road, around the West Road direction, up by the Black Church at Castleforbes and back through Seville Place and Amiens Street to Liberty Hall. The purpose of this walk was to make sure that our guards, who were posted near Holohan's shop at No 75 Amiens Street, close to the Five Lamps, where a meeting of the Military Council was in progress, had observed no evidence of the presence of police or soldiers in the area.

During the walk Mallin referred to a matter which had been worrying him considerably. He explained that when he was in the British army in India he contracted malaria and occasionally, at various changes in the season, it recurred in such a way that when he was having an attack he gave the impression that he was strongly under the influence of drink. It seemed that some days earlier he had had a recurrence of the complaint and Connolly came to the conclusion that Mallin had been drinking and spoke sharply to him. Mallin told me that his reply to Connolly was, "I gave you a promise when joining the Citizen Army that I was finished with all that. I have kept my promise. I am not under the influence of drink."

I asked Mallin why he did not tell Connolly about the malaria and he said he was so hurt by Connolly's lack of trust in his ability to keep a promise and by his sharp rebuke that he preferred not to say any more about it. Mallin went on to say that he was sorely disappointed that Connolly had doubted his word, particularly in view of the fact that Connolly knew of his (Mallin's) action in procuring his release from the custody of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. This was all news to me. The disappearance of Connolly in the previous January was something I had known nothing about up to this conversation with Mallin. It is probably true that those in the Citizen Army who had such information at that time were very few in number.

Mallin went on to tell me about this mysterious incident. He said that Connolly disappeared for a number of days. No-

body knew where he was nor could any information be obtained as to his whereabouts. Since there had been strained relations between Connolly and leading members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood who had charge of the Irish Volunteer Organisation and who were very annoyed at Connolly's criticism of their policy, Mallin came to the conclusion that they had something to do with his disappearance. He requested an interview with the Military Council.

When he appeared before the Council Mallin said, "Gentlemen, you probably know I am here in connection with the disappearance of James Connolly."

He was asked, "Why come to us? Don't you think that perhaps the British authorities would be able to tell you more about it?"

Mallin replied that he thought he was in the right place to get the necessary information, as he understood the workings of the British authorities and felt sure that if Connolly were a prisoner in their hands there would have been other reactions from that direction, but as this was not the case he concluded that they had nothing whatever to do with Connolly's disappearance. Mallin then told the Military Council that should Connolly not put in an appearance by a certain date the Citizen Army would take to the streets on its own. He also (he told me) said to them, "In case you may think of arresting me as you have arrested Connolly, I want to tell you that that will not have any effect on the situation. There will be no more talking or interviews. There will be action."

Eamonn Ceannt, who was sitting near Mallin, asked him in a sarcastic tone, "And what could your small number do in such a situation?"

Mallin replied, "We can fight and die, and it will be to our glory and your shame if such does take place."

With this Padraig Pearse banged the table saying, "Yes, by God, that is so, and here's one who will be with you."

The interview finished on a friendly note, but no admission was made by the Military Council that they knew anything about Connolly's disappearance. However, Connolly re-appeared within the period of time which Mallin had

stipulated.

Having finished this story, as related to me, Mallin then said, "I felt very hurt at the sneering way in which Eamonn Ceannt put his question. I hope that one day I will be in a position to show him how wrong he was in making that remark."

My own personal view of Connolly's disappearance is that he would not have left Liberty Hall of his own free will without informing Thomas Foran and William O'Brien that he was going away for a few days. He would have known how concerned the officials then in charge of the Union would be. Connolly was not a man to neglect his Union duties and would have made arrangements for someone else to carry out those duties had he planned to be absent for any length of time. I am convinced that his disappearance from Liberty Hall was because of some restraining influence or psychological struggle. Strangely enough he never explained his disappearance, beyond what he said to his closest friends, O'Brien and Foran. On the Sunday morning, following his disappearance on the previous Thursday, O'Brien visited the house of Madame Markievicz to find out if there was any news of the missing Connolly. To his surprise, on asking Bridie Goff, the young lady who opened the door, if Madame Markievicz was in, she replied, "No, but Mr Connolly is upstairs dressing."

O'Brien, on arriving in Connolly's room, expressed the concern caused by his disappearance over the previous three days. To this Connolly replied, "I have been through hell these last few days, and I hope everything will be for the best. I was very tired last night when I came home. I must have walked forty miles yesterday."

Thomas Foran told me some months after Easter Week, when we were discussing the affair, that he asked Connolly why he went away without saying anything. Connolly made the following curious reply, "In the spring of the year an urge comes on me to go on a walking tour through the country and I succumbed to the desire."

Looking back through the years and in a calmer atmosphere I can only conclude that it was assumption on the part

of Mallin and Madame Markievicz that Connolly had been kidnapped, perhaps a very reasonable assumption in view of his mysterious and unexplained disappearance. Connolly just vanished into thin air. His closest friends knew nothing and could give no explanation as to his whereabouts. In later years it has been established that Frank Daly and Eamonn Dore met Connolly as he was leaving Liberty Hall on Thursday, 19 January, bearing a message that Padraig Pearse, Sean McDermott and Joseph Mary Plunkett were anxious to have a discussion with him and would he please come with them immediately in a car which was provided. According to Daly, Connolly reacted immediately, sensing it was a message of great importance and without demur placed himself under their guidance. They took him to Dolphin's Barn Brickworks where the discussions took place.

Both Daly and Dore were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. This meeting turned out to be a very prolonged affair and Connolly appears to have dug in his heels. In later years when discussing the alleged kidnapping, Geraldine Plunkett, sister of Joseph Mary Plunkett, who subsequently became the wife of Professor Thomas Dillon, said she remembered the occasion clearly. She had waited up very late for her brother and he came into the room where she was waiting and lay down on the couch in an exhausted condition exclaiming, "My God, what an extraordinary man James Connolly is!"

I was unable to ascertain from Geraldine Plunkett what day in the week her brother made this statement. Another straw in the wind, as one would say, is the gift by Padraig Pearse to James Connolly of an autographed copy of *An Mhathair* bearing the date 21 January 1916. This would hardly be the action of a kidnapper! Knowing Connolly's character as I did, I am absolutely certain that he would not have submitted to the indignity of being held a prisoner, when the sole object of such an act would be to compel him to accept terms or conditions unacceptable to his way of thinking. He could only be won over by reason and conviction. Lastly, the fact that he freely became a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood from the date of the meeting is a clear indi-

cation that the story of his kidnapping was a myth. A very short time after O'Brien's arrival at Madame Markievicz's house, as previously described by O'Brien, Helena Molony came and, being an impulsive person, asked Connolly, "Where have you been for the last three days?"

The answer again was cryptic, "That would be telling." O'Brien, however, knowing Connolly, did not allow the inquiries to go any further and accepted the matter as closed.

I have personal evidence to offer of Connolly's recruitment into the I.R.B. In February 1916 Dan King, who worked with me in the Dublin Dockyard and was a member of the Fintan Lalor Band which was attached to the Citizen Army, approached me to join the I.R.B. I scouted the idea, using some of James Connolly's previous utterances in support of my refusal. It was then that King intimated to me that Connolly's name had been sent down to the various centres of the I.R.B. indicating his induction into the organisation. On hearing this I told him I had no further objections to becoming a member. The following week's *Workers' Republic* indicated that a change of great significance had taken place during that week.

The Great Day at Last?

It was the Tuesday before Easter. Between eight pm and nine pm, while at drill instruction in the long back room in Liberty Hall, I was ordered to report to Commandant Connolly in company with Captain Richard McCormick, Captain John O'Neill, Lieutenant Michael Kelly, Sergeant Joseph Doyle, Sergeant James O'Shea and Private James Joyce.

There were one or two of this group who appreciated the significance of the order. Those of us who were not in the know were forming all kinds of opinions, each in turn failing

to interpret its real meaning. We were not kept in suspense for long. We were conducted by Commandant Michael Mallin to No 7 room where Connolly awaited us. He informed us of the part each of us was to play in the Insurrection, which was then planned to start at six thirty pm on Easter Sunday in Dublin, while seven pm was fixed for the country areas. This timing was supposed to have been brought forward by a few hours but no concrete evidence exists to substantiate such a belief and I can only rely on the interview with Connolly to discount this story. Even now while writing this account, I can recall vividly how much I was affected by the intense atmosphere of suppressed excitement. I mentioned my feelings afterwards to one or two of my comrades and found that this reaction was shared by all.

Connolly went on to instruct us that our company would be under the command of Captain Richard McCormick, and that our job would be to engage and delay the advance of the British troops approaching from Portobello and Wellington Barracks long enough to allow the main section of our forces to dig themselves into their allotted defence positions in St Stephen's Green.

Having done this we were to fall back and place ourselves under the command of Commandant Mallin, who would have control of the operations in the St Stephen's Green area. The detailed plans of how the British were to be checked were next elaborated. Sergeant Joseph Doyle was to have a section of sixteen men. His job was to take over the public house owned by Mr Davy facing Portobello Bridge; to position his men so as to dominate the bridge; to allow the military to advance within reasonable range and then to hold them off as long as was possible. In taking over the public house Sergeant Doyle was to rely on the knowledge of James Joyce who was employed as a porter in Davy's. Lieutenant Michael Kelly was to have charge of another section, numbering sixteen men. Their job was to take up position on the railway bridge crossing the Grand Canal, to support Sergeant Doyle's section, and also to cover their eventual retirement. Captain John O'Neill was to support Lieutenant Kelly by defending the railway bridge over-

looking Harcourt Road, which would dominate any approach of the military along the South Circular Road. Captain McCormick, the Company Commander, was to set up his temporary H.Q. in Harcourt Street Railway Station with the balance of the company not previously detailed sent to the outlying posts. There he would be joined later by the various sections when they had completed their task of delaying the enemy.

I was also to have a section of sixteen men to build and defend barricades at both ends of Hatch Street. The purpose was to avoid a possible encirclement by the British which would have prevented the retirement of the whole company to St Stephen's Green. From Hatch Street we were to retire through the Iveagh House grounds and fall back on St Stephen's Green where we would find Commandant Mallin already in position.

Connolly requested each of us to repeat the orders he had given us and the posts to which we had been assigned. Satisfied that each officer thoroughly understood his instructions, he then gave a general direction to the effect that we were, if such a chance came our way, to encourage Irishmen in the British army to come over to our side. Regarding our attitude to the R.I.C. and D.M.P. he left that to our discretion with the words, "Remember how they treated you in 1913." For some years many of the D.M.P. were a semi-military force, well-trained in the use of arms, and in our opinion they had placed themselves in the category of an armed force to be dealt with as we thought fit.

Captain Monteith, in his book *Casement's Last Adventure*, quotes Sean O'Casey, the playwright, as alleging Connolly to have said that "As soon as the old green flag flew from the roof, the Irish soldiers in the British army passing by would swing left, assemble before the hall [Liberty Hall] and vow that they would serve neither King nor Kaiser but Ireland..." This was a childish view to ascribe to Connolly. I would like to take this opportunity of saying that, to my knowledge, there is no foundation for O'Casey's statement. Connolly and O'Casey were poles apart. Connolly gave all his thoughts and energies to building a new Ireland, but he was not a man

likely to be deluded about the behaviour of Irishmen—in the British army or elsewhere. O'Casey was very critical of Connolly's ideas, even to the point of hostility. I understand from Michael "Tiger" Smith—for the accuracy of this I cannot vouch—that on one occasion at a *ceili* in the Oriel Hall off Seville Place O'Casey referred to Pearse and Connolly as "two damned fools". The story goes that he was saved from a bad beating only by the intervention of Paddy McDonnell, the well-known Dublin G.A.A. footballer of the twenties.

As I have already said, Connolly did instruct us when giving us our commissions on the Tuesday before the Insurrection to encourage Irishmen in the British army to desert to our side. He explained that there were many of our countrymen in the British army who were there from economic necessity rather than desire and might therefore be persuaded to change uniforms and fight for their own country. These, however, were not the sentiments of a man who had naive expectations about the matter.

Connolly told us that a ship-load of arms, including some machine guns, with officers and men to operate them would be coming from Germany. The utmost secrecy about these plans was to be maintained. One of our last instructions was to visit the area of our allotted positions before Sunday and familiarise ourselves with the terrain. When the interview concluded I felt extremely happy and very excited. When we left Room No 7 some of us displayed our elation by doing a jig in the passage.

There was little sleep for us that night. My greatest desire was to get out to survey the positions entrusted to my care. The next day Captain McCormick agreed to accompany me, but did not do so until Holy Thursday. During the rounds our only conversation was about the coming event on Sunday. From our talks I got the impression that Captain McCormick had been aware of the plans before the Tuesday evening interview.

In Hatch Street there was a hazard for hackney cars and cabs and I noted with satisfaction that the vehicles would make excellent material for the barricades; I remember

Captain McCormick saying that the plans put forward by Connolly for the Rising were accepted practically in full by the Irish Volunteers. From this remark it appeared to me that Connolly must have recently discussed the matter with McCormick and possibly with some other officers of the Citizen Army.

A Hitch in the Plans

Easter Sunday morning arrived bright and sunny. Early afoot, my first job was to mobilise my section for two o'clock that afternoon. During the morning also William O'Brien handed me a document signed by Connolly appointing me a sergeant of the Irish Citizen Army. This had been in the offing since the briefing of the previous Tuesday, and a number of men also got their papers on Easter Sunday. My main reaction was one of wondering whether I would be able to live up to my new responsibilities.

I attended to my spiritual duty by going to Mass in St Agatha's Church, North William Street, and also paid my first visit home for a week. There was no telling what lay ahead. I had a private talk with my elder brother John who was attached to the Volunteers, and without giving anything away I conveyed to him the importance of that evening's mobilisation. Knowing that there was a possibility of that morning's visit being my last I felt somewhat sad. I pictured all kinds of things, as one does under such circumstances. Would I come through the campaign alive? I would cause sorrow and anguish to my parents, brothers and sisters and they would be upset, thinking of me in danger and praying for my safety. Many other thoughts of that kind were continually passing through my mind. I did not dare tell my mother and father or my brothers and sisters what I was about to do or discuss with them what was likely to happen.

I wanted to say goodbye to them all, yet how was it to be done without disclosing my secret?

Then my thoughts turned to my comrades. I realised they had similar problems. They had wives and children to consider. Those so placed had a much harder role to fill than I, if they were to keep faith with the insurrectionary movement. Reasoning in this way I felt strong enough to say good morning to my father, and, finding my mother in the parlour, to shake hands with her, and casually remark I was not likely to be home again for a few weeks. Leaving the house, I secretly wished each in turn what could have proved to be my last good-bye.

That morning while talking to my brother Jim we discussed Eoin MacNeill's order cancelling that evening's parade which appeared in the *Sunday Independent*. I advised him to ignore this order. When I arrived back at Liberty Hall the same matter was under discussion. Some were inclined to treat it lightly. I was one of this number. However, a little later on, we knew the real significance of the order. Captain Sean Connolly was on special duty leading to the room where the Military Council was in session. The result of the meeting was quickly known to him. In a state of terrific excitement he burst into the large front room overlooking Beresford Place where a number of us were gathered. All present were preparing to move to the position allotted to them. We included McCormick, Michael Kelly and James O'Shea. Off came Captain Connolly's hat, belt and coat and he cried in vexation that "the whole thing was off". MacNeill's order cancelling the parade had seemingly ruined our hopes.

How I remember the way in which this galling information was received! Some cursed. Some prayed that things would be righted. Others went gloomily, while others forced a smile, saying better luck next time. After the first reactions, the gathering broke up into smaller groups, most of us with a prayer in our hearts that this would not be the end of all the hopes which each and everyone had worked and struggled so hard to realise.

The early afternoon wore slowly on with discussion among many of us on the new trend of events. The order went round

to officers and N.C.O.s to get ready for a route march. This created fresh discussion and new hope. Perhaps after all something was going to happen! These thoughts were soon dispelled when Commandant Mallin privately explained to a number of us that nothing was to happen that evening but that we could keep hope alive for the morrow.

Bugler Oman sounded the fall-in, and we were soon marching in column of route with Connolly and Mallin at our head. The march was perhaps the shortest ever taken by the Citizen Army. From Liberty Hall we went, to the best of my recollection, via Butt Bridge, Tara Street, College Street, Grafton Street, St Stephen's Green, York Street, Aungier Street, South Great George's Street, Dame Street, to the City Hall, then we turned sharply to the left, bringing us almost to the Upper Castle Gate. Here we wheeled to the right through Castle Street. The Castle Gates were closed, and the sentry on duty shouted, "Guard, turn out!" This they did and by the look on their faces they got quite a jolt. They must have been relieved when we marched on to Christ Church Place, down to the North Quays, past the Four Courts and back via Henry Street and O'Connell Street to Liberty Hall. As we passed along the North Quays Captain O'Sullivan of the Irish Volunteers stood to attention and saluted. There was a very close bond of friendship between this officer and the Citizen Army.

On our arrival at Beresford Place Connolly gave his last address, not only to the army but to the general public. He referred to the secret session of the British Parliament which was to take place that coming week and said the Irish issue was bound to be under consideration and that there was likely to be a question of peace with Germany. He declared it essential that Ireland should be represented at such peace negotiations and concluded by declaring that the Citizen Army would stand to arms as soldiers of the Irish Republic until that claim was heard.

We were then ordered into the front hall. The company officers received their instructions and in turn detailed a number of sections for various duties. I was ordered to take charge of the guard of Liberty Hall for twelve hours. The

usual Sunday night concert was to be carried on as advertised so as to cover any unusual movements from the many shrewd-eyed individuals who made it their business to watch all activities inside and outside the hall.

Later that night a message reached me that my father wanted to see me. I guessed immediately the nature of this visit. For the first time in my life I purposely tried not to see him. A message was sent back saying it was impossible for him to see me as I was too busy. A second message was brought saying that he would wait until I was disengaged. This was followed by a request from Madame Markievicz to come down to the Concert Hall, as the time was approaching for my turn to sing. It was arranged that another would fill my place for the present and that I would go down later when my father's patience was worn out. However, I had to face the music—and my father—in the end. It is not necessary for the reader to know the details of that duel of words. It is sufficient to say that I did not go home, which was the object of my father's visit, motivated by the anxiety of my mother. She was not enjoying good health and sensed that something serious was afoot. How right she proved to be!

5 · Into Action

HYMN ON THE BATTLE FIELD
(Dedicated to the Citizen Army)

Armed for the battle
Kneel we before Thee,
Bless Thou our Banners
God of the brave.
Ireland is living!
Shout we triumphant,
Ireland is waking,
Hands grasp the sword.
Who fights for Ireland
God guides his blows home,
Who dies for Ireland
God gives him peace.
Knowing our cause just
March we victorious,
Giving our hearts' blood
Ireland to free.

The spirit of freedom
Floats in the aether,
Souls of our heroes
March by our side,
Tone is our battle cry,
Emmet inspires us.
Those who for freedom fall
Never shall die.
England is shaken!
Shout we exultant,
England is beaten!
Ireland is free!

Charge for the old cause,
Death to the old foe,
Living or dying,
Ireland to free.

Constance de Markievicz

The night wore on slowly. A very strict watch was kept throughout Liberty Hall and outside the building as well. Some of our scouts who were watching British military barracks reported all quiet at a very early hour on Easter Monday morning. Eventually we were relieved by Lieutenant Michael Kelly and a squad of men at about nine am. It was my duty to see that my men were given something to eat. Other men were being served in batches and we had to wait a little time before we sat down to breakfast. It was simple fare, tea, bread and butter; not much on which to start an insurrection.

That morning saw Liberty Hall and its surroundings once again a scene of great activity. Members of the Irish Citizen Army who had the previous night been given passes to go home were returning at an early hour. Senior officers and section mobilisers of the Irish Volunteers arrived early and the latter were leaving on their bicycles every couple of minutes with special mobilisation orders. One would imagine from the number of bicycles inside and outside the Hall that there was a special attraction for the cyclists in Dublin that day. I was having something to eat about eleven am when Captain Sean Connolly came looking for me.

The previous day I had been complaining that my uniform had become too small, particularly the trousers. Sean promised to help. We adjourned to another room in Liberty Hall where he opened a brown paper parcel which contained a pair of pants, and I set about making the change. My dressing was almost complete when Bugler William Oman sounded the fall-in at about eleven forty-five am. There was a rush of feet from all directions throughout the Hall. That was a thrilling moment. Fear of being left behind made me

finish my dressing in the shortest possible time. Down the top passage I ran as fast as I could. At the same time I was buttoning this and buckling that. By the time I reached the main stairway my dress was fit to pass inspection. Sean Connolly was already outside Liberty Hall taking charge of his company.

When I reached the main entrance my comrades were already lined up in Beresford Place. Just then a section of Irish Volunteers from St Enda's, led by Pearse—whom I saw for the last time—was filing into Liberty Hall. I was making for the ranks when Pat Fox caught my eye—Pat did guard duty in Croydon Park during my early days in the Citizen Army. He drew a youth about seventeen years of age towards me saying, "Here is my lad. Take him with you for the Citizen Army. I am too old for the job. " My reply was, "Right you are Pat, good-bye."

Little did I know then that in less than twenty hours this youth was to die in the cause of Ireland's freedom. Young James Fox was handed over to Commandant Mallin before I took up my position. He was killed early next day in St Stephen's Green.

We were waiting long in Beresford Place before James Connolly gave final orders to his officers to occupy the positions which had previously been selected. Then Connolly signalled to Captain McCormick to take over his company. McCormick had the company moving immediately and was marching in the direction of Butt Bridge when Connolly ran after him and shouted, "Not that way, Mac. You might be slaughtered before reaching your positions. Get there as quickly as possible. The fight has started in some parts already." This was the last time I saw James Connolly and the last time I heard his voice.

I think Sean Connolly's group actually was the first company of the Citizen Army to move from Liberty Hall to take up their positions in the City Hall area. Captain McCormick told me later that Sean Connolly prophesied to him that he would be dead inside one hour and he was not far wrong in that grim statement.

As the company moved up Eden Quay Lieutenant Michael

Kelly dropped back to chat with me. "Well Frank," he said, "we're going to take up our positions at last. We are to be there by noon." As far as I can remember I started off by singing our usual marching song "Step Together". However, the pace was so hot that I was unable for lack of breath to finish the song. A group of us, when on route marches, had made a practice of singing. This was encouraged by Connolly and Mallin as a means of maintaining the morale of our men. The practice was also taken up by the Irish Volunteers at a later stage. As far as my memory serves I was the only one of that group in our company on this occasion so it fell to me to lift my voice in this stirring song. Whether it was a musical success I cannot say for I was in a state of intense excitement and elation.

When passing the Ballast Office, the well-known Head Office of the Dublin Port and Docks Board at the corner of Westmoreland Street and Aston's Quay, I noticed the clock. It was eleven fifty-five am. We had just five minutes to get to our posts. "My God, Mick," I exclaimed to Lieutenant Kelly, "We will never do it." Captain McCormick must also have noted the time. Generally he was able to make us stretch our legs when we were in a hurry. That morning he drove us hard. Some of us were almost running in order to keep the swift pace he set. The company had almost reached the top of Grafton Street when a young recruit of the D.M.P. annoyed by our singing of "The Peeler and the Goat" foolishly lost his temper and intervened. He was lucky not to lose his life for our lads were certainly not in the mood for interference from that quarter.

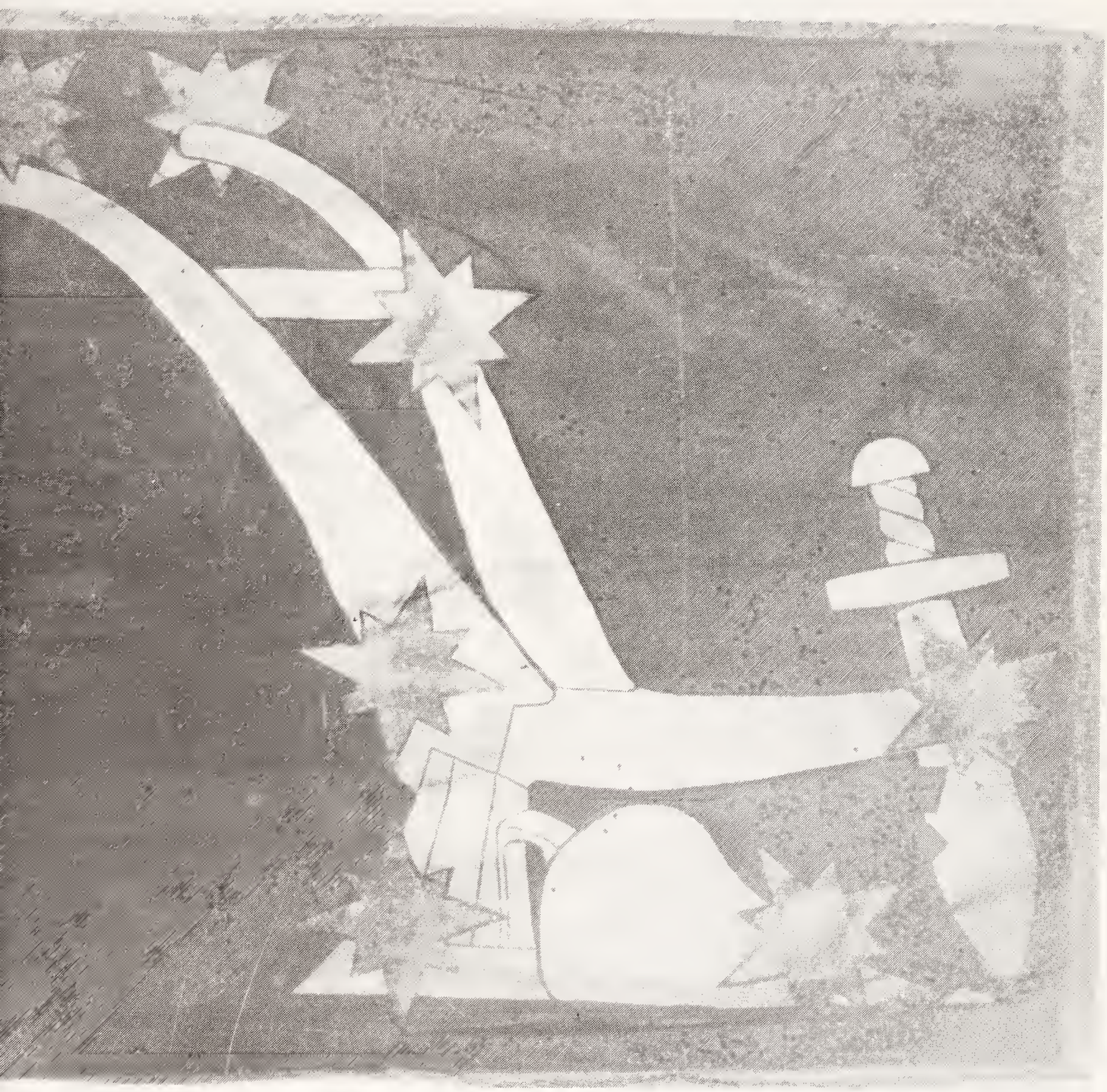
On reaching St Stephen's Green we saw Commandant Thomas MacDonagh and a number of Irish Volunteers lined along the roadway and preparing to move towards their positions in Jacob's Factory in Bishop Street. Captain McCormick, who with Lieutenant Kelly, was then leading our company, dropped out when beckoned by Commandant MacDonagh. He joined us again a minute later. On our way along the west side of St Stephen's Green to Harcourt Street we were intrigued to find ourselves following a young British officer on horseback. Subsequently the young man received

a bit of a jolt when Sergeant Joseph Doyle in a friendly but very convincing way prodded the horse with his bayonet. Understandably enough the officer quickly made himself scarce. Eventually our company was halted outside Harcourt Street Railway Station.

It was there our bayonet-wielding friend Sergeant Doyle was detailed to take up his position in Davy's public house at Portobello Bridge about a quarter of a mile further on. He took with him seven men, under half of the total strength allocated to him under the original plan. The names and numbers of these men were: No 14, Fred Henry; No 37, John Kelly; No 74, James Kelly; No 75, James Joyce; No 76, James Kelly; No 77, Joseph Kelly; No 78, Owen Carton. (Nos 76 and 77 were brothers.)

Sergeant Doyle's section was given time to get around the corner into Harcourt Road. During this waiting period we had two very interested spectators, a superintendant and an inspector of the D.M.P. Captain McCormick was giving instructions to me and, nodding over to the gentlemen in blue, remarked that they would be "our first job". Were it not for the fact that MacDonagh asked him not to have unnecessary bloodshed we would have taken more punitive measures. As it was, MacDonagh's humane request saved their lives.

The main body of our company then entered the railway station. Captain McCormick and myself closed and bolted the main entrance doors. An order was issued to the general public to leave the foyer and get up on the platform. We then announced that the Irish Republic had been proclaimed and that the building was now under our control. This caused consternation among the many holiday trippers, including women and children, who became very frightened. At this stage my attention was drawn to a number of men inside the ticket office which was on the ground floor and to the right of the main entrance. They had locked the door against our men. The door was strong and an attempt to burst it open failed, but a revolver shot into the lock had the effect of convincing the men inside of our determination. The result was that one of them removed the



The Starry Plough

The flag of the Irish Citizen Army, which later gave its name to Sean O'Casey's play, was designed by a man named Megahy. There were, it appears, a number of versions. The photograph is of the one flown on the Imperial Hotel during the Insurrection and preserved in the National Museum. The plough is in yellow on a green field and the stars are in silver. There is yellow braid around the edges.

bolts for us to enter. While this was happening some of the office clerks were making their way through another door leading to the street. They were stopped immediately. One of these men had almost got outside when a hand fell on his shoulder and dragged him back. All the doors were quickly bolted and the windows barricaded.

We next turned our attention to the restaurant and bar, also on the ground floor and to the left of the main entrance. Suddenly I espied a uniformed staff officer of the British army, obviously on holiday, looking out from the restaurant. My first impulse was to shoot. But seeing no visible side arms I called on him to surrender. He very foolishly ran behind the door banging it shut. The upper portion of the door was smoked glass. This helped to save his life, for on reaching the door I kicked it open, called on him again to surrender, while at the same time watching his figure as he flattened himself against the wall behind the door. He had no fight left.When he surrendered I handed him over to Captain McCormick, who was satisfied with a hurried search, but much to my disappointment he was not made a special prisoner. I assume that on our evacuation of the area he, with all the other people in our custody, was set free. I cannot recall whether Captain McCormick obtained this officer's name. He was of average height, well built, though somewhat stout, with grey hair and aged between forty-five and fifty years.

The lower portion of the station was cleared. Everyone, whether willing or unwilling, was now on the platform. Lieutenant Michael Kelly called on a British soldier to take off his uniform coat and join his fellow-Irishmen in their fight for freedom. The soldier was about to do so when an old gentleman jumped between the soldier and Lieutenant Kelly and appealed to the soldier "not to disgrace his uniform". At the same time the belligerent old fellow tried to seize Kelly's rifle. This unexpected attack ended as quickly as it had begun. Michael Donnelly lifted the gentleman's top hat off with a bullet and made him realise that we were not standing for any such nonsense.

Lieutenant Kelly had instructions to send an engine down

Madame Markievicz

Dr Kathleen Lynn

Helena Molony

Rosie Hackett

Madame Markievicz and some of the women who fought side by side with the men of the Citizen Army

the line to the block line. The plan was to overturn the engine and so block the points. But he failed in this because the signalman locked the points and Kelly for lack of man-power could not afford the time to deal with the problem. He then proceeded with three men to take up a position on the railway bridge overlooking the Grand Canal from which he could enfilade the British troops should they endeavour to cross Portobello Bridge. He was also in a position to cover Sergeant Doyle's retreat from Davy's when the job entrusted to him was carried through. Captain John J. O'Neill and three men were in position on the railway bridge overlooking and commanding Harcourt Road and South Circular Road. This section was to support Sergeant Doyle and Lieutenant Kelly's section and also to provide against a possible thrust along this roadway by British troops from Wellington Barracks. Such an action, were it successful, would have isolated Doyle's and Kelly's sections from the main body in the Harcourt Street area.

My main function now was to oversee the building of two barricades near both ends of Hatch Street. To accomplish this there were, not sixteen or twenty men as originally planned, but three whose names and numbers were: No 84, James Dwyer; No 36, Patrick Lawlor and No 79, Edward Tuke. This paucity of men during the early days of Easter Week was one of the direct results of the confusion that followed the cancellation by Professor Eoin MacNeill of the order for the Easter Sunday mobilisation. Lawlor and Tuke were members of the Fintan Lalor Pipe Band, which was always regarded as a unit of the Citizen Army.

Captain McCormick took charge of the station, directing and surveying operations for the area. Patrick Lawlor was detailed to throw everything moveable over the wall and down into Hatch Street, while Tuke, Dwyer and myself went down by the goods entrance to Harcourt Road and around by Earlsfort Terrace to see after the erection of the barricades there. We had gone halfway down the terrace when we saw a horse and van belonging to the White Heather Laundry, which we took with us into Hatch Street, where signs of Lawlor's work were already noticeable. The horse

and van were drawn across the roadway. When the horse was relieved of its burden it was sent galloping away.

On my tour of inspection with Captain McCormick the previous week I had noted a numer of cabs and hackney cars in Hatch Street. These were to my mind likely to prove very useful for making the barricades along with the materials from the station. I was, however, sadly disappointed on this score as Easter Monday was the day of Fairyhouse races and consequently a busy day for the Dublin jarveys. There was not one cab or car in sight! Luckily the Earlsfort Terrace motor garage was very much more suitable for our needs since it had a plentiful supply of motor cars of all makes. The staff was very reluctant to help us with the task on hand and only responded at the point of a gun. Lawlor was not able to keep the supply of material from the railway station going quickly enough to build the barricades. This necessitated an order from me to Dwyer and Tuke to commandeer all possible help to take the motor cars from the garage. I went back to the station to obtain more help for Lawlor. During the time I was away on this mission a civilian was, unfortunately, shot for refusing to aid in the work. A companion also refused and would have been shot but for my intervention: when I returned from the station I heard him saying, "You have shot my friend and you might as well do the same thing to me." I considered him a very brave young man and ordered him to be released.

There were no more men available which severely handicapped us in the erection of the barricades. When the job was nearly completed Captain McCormick, Captain O'Neill, Lieutenant Kelly and Sergeant Doyle, and the men under their control appeared on top of the railway wall. They looked down on us and some, in fact, dropped down into the street before we were aware of their presence. This was a very risky performance because of the height from the top of the wall to the street. With their aid our barricades were soon completed.

The important job of repulsing the first advance of British troops had in the meantime been accomplished by Doyle's section in Davy's public house and by Lieutenant Kelly and

his men. The British had in fact attempted to advance from the barracks in Rathmines by way of Portobello Bridge, but after a brief encounter with our men in Davy's they beat a hasty retreat.

Hyde Diaries

The Easter Week diaries of Dr Douglas Hyde, later to become the first President of the Republic of Ireland, throw some further light on the events I have just narrated. Dr Hyde who was living at Earlsfort Terrace at the time, kept a very observant eye on some of the happenings of that drama-packed week. He records the following in his diary for Easter Monday.

> Miss Dease . . . Una and I . . . were told by a hatless and excited man . . . that both Hatch Street was held up and also Harcourt Street Railway Bridge. Within a few yards of us was a barricade drawn across Hatch Street of motor cars from the garage and empty barrels which had been pitched over into the road from the railway station. Here a few minutes before we arrived a man had been shot dead because he refused to move one of the cars when bidden. This happened just opposite Miss Boland's window and she telephoned and got the ambulance to take him away so that the body was not there when we came up, and the Volunteers who had manned the barricade had also disappeared, having climbed over the wall of the University Buildings.

Occupation of the College of Surgeons

The tactical plan provided that our whole company should fall back on St Stephen's Green. Instead of going through the

grounds of Iveagh House (now the offices of the Department of Foreign Affairs) our retreat lay through a gateway which took our men by the rear of University College—then in the hands of a building contractor—and from there to Earlsfort Terrace, and so into the Green, where Captain McCormick reported "all correct" to Commandant Mallin. This was approximately between two and three pm. On our arrival we found Mallin's meagre force well entrenched and with all outlying streets covered. Our men were well concealed and could not be seen from outside the Green.

The shortage of men in the fight compared with the numbers envisaged in the plans—disconcerting as it was to us in the Harcourt Street Sation area—created a very much more menacing situation in St Stephen's Green. It had been the intention that the role of the woman in our ranks should primarily be the care of the wounded. But when the Green area was taken over by Commandant Mallin it was with the help of a number of women not attached to the Red Cross unit.

To the best of my knowledge, when all our units had fallen back to the Green there were about one hundred Citizen Army men altogether involved. In addition there were approximately twenty-five volunteers, some of them women. Apart from the men with James Connolly in the G.P.O., the other Citizen Army men in action were those in the vicinity of Dublin Castle, under the command first of Sean Connolly and then of Lieutenant Norgrove after Sean Connolly was killed.

Our company was posted to the defensive points assigned to it. Trenches were being dug to give cover in the event of an assault by the enemy. Shortly after our arrival two men approached the railings surrounding the Green. They were seeking some company of the Irish Volunteers. We could give them no information about their company but we invited them to join us. This invitation was accepted very willingly and in their anxiety they tried to climb the railings. We dissuaded them from this slightly hazardous exercise. We managed to discover the key of the gate nearby and so enabled them to make an easier entrance. I remember the two

men distinctly. One was the late Liam O Briain, who became Professor of Romance Languages at University College, Galway, and the other was Harry Nicholls, an engineer in the Dublin Corporation.

We experienced an incident of a somewhat different kind at the south-east gate facing Leeson Street and Earlsfort Terrace. A dairy cart with a tub of wash for cattle drinking was passing by. The man in charge was ordered to back the cart right up against the gates. Having done this he surprised us all by calmly asking "What else am I to do?" He was then told to unharness the horse and take it and himself home.

The key to this gate was not to be had in time; otherwise one of the Dublin United tramcars would have provided useful material for a barricade at this corner. Our effort to seize one tram was not successful. The driver was called on from inside the railings to stop the tram. This he did, but not to our entire satisfaction. The car was approaching the city down Leeson Street, and was brought to a standstill opposite the laneway leading to the back of the then St Vincent's Hospital. The driver proved to be an enterprising chap. He whipped off the control handle of the tram and changed to the other end, while the conductor reversed the trolley. It was the quickest bit of work on the part of two tramway employees I have ever seen. Detecting their intention, I, as the officer in charge, gave the order to fire. We planned to frighten the tram crew but not to kill and our widely aimed volley had no effect whatever. The driver and his mate were not to be frightened and undauntedly stuck to their post and drove the tram out of danger. We were furious at the loss of our potential barricade but we could not but admire the crew's adroit manoeuvre and their coolness in danger.

Shortly after these incidents a messenger came to me with an order to report immediately to Commandant Mallin near the Cuffe Street gate. Mallin instructed me to select four men of the Citizen Army along with eight volunteers whom he would detail to me. The plan was to take over and hold the College of Surgeons and to search the premises for rifles and ammunition belonging to the Officers' Training Corps attached to the College. The job of finding the number of

men required for this sortie raised problems. All the men available had been allocated posts with strict instructions not to leave them as they could not be spared for any other duty. After some trouble we scraped together a small group. It included Fred Ryan, John Joe Hendrick and David O'Leary. O'Leary who had been working in London, came over specially to take part in the fight; later he became attached to the Head Office of the I.T.G.W.U. Before issuing final instructions Commandant Mallin called on Countess Markievicz, Mary Hyland (now Mrs Michael Kelly) and Lily Kempson (now Mrs McAlerney and living in Seattle, U.S.A.) to join the group. It was then I understood what Mallin meant when he spoke of volunteers. On finding the arms the women were to transport them back to St Stephen's Green. I was to occupy the College and remain there with my three men.

We had an early stroke of luck. When we approached the gate of the Green we saw the caretaker of the College engaged in animated conversation with another man in the doorway. As he was about to open the gateway Mallin told us to saunter quietly across as if going straight up York Street. He was afraid that the caretaker would "smell a rat" and shut the door in our faces. As the gate was opened I glanced around saying. "Keep together and follow me." With one eye on the College door I led the way in the direction of York Street. I had every intention of obeying Mallin's instructions but when we were half-way across the road, the man in conversation with the caretaker seemed to be having trouble. In fact, the caretaker was using some force to get him out of the doorway and was succeeding fairly well. Too well, indeed, for my liking. Acting on the spur of the moment I took the shortest cut, dashed across the road and shouted to the others to follow. The caretaker gave his companion a push and slammed the door. I jumped from the pathway to the top step. As I did so a shot rang out and a bullet whizzed by my ear and entered the top right-hand side of the door. While it was a remarkably close shave for me it helped to save the situation. It must have unnerved the caretaker because he failed to shoot the lock home on the first

attempt. With the full force of my weight and strength I crashed against the door. It gave a few inches, enough for my foot to jam it from being closed. I then saw that there was a porch inside which the caretaker was using as a leverage to help him against our entry. He abandoned resistance very promptly when I shoved the muzzle of my revolver against his throat. There was no further obstruction and our party entered the College. It was to prove a very useful headquarters for the St Stephen's Green area.

Our first objective was the seizure of the hoped-for rifles. The caretaker was closely questioned but no information was forthcoming. We tried a few threats but this poor "innocent" knew nothing. He had no knowledge of an Officers' Training Corps being attached to the College. He denied that his signature was appended to the Covenant organised by Sir Edward Carson to fight Mr Asquith's Home Rule Bill. He did not even know that the Orange Sash in his rooms belonged to him, nor did he know where the keys of the premises were. The patience of our group was soon exhausted. Had not Madame Markievicz intervened he would certainly have had a very rough time. Eventually we got some keys which turned out to be for the caretaker's apartments. He objected to going to the bedroom with his wife and son. But when he saw that this objection was about to be forcibly overruled he changed his mind. It was in this room we found the evidence of his Orange loyalties. They were placed safely under lock and key. A hurried search was made for the rifles but it proved fruitless. Door after door was burst open but all to no avail.

Tiring of the search the three women left to report to Commandant Mallin and to ask for further instructions. Word was brought to us to hold on until further orders and to take up positions on the roof. A supply of bombs accompanied the messengers who then returned to the Green. We were a short time on the roof when one of our party observed a young woman with a bicycle on the far side of the road. She waved to us. To my surprise the woman proved to be Margaret Skinnider who a week or two previously had come from Glasgow Hillhead district where she had been

employed as a school teacher. She had taken holiday leave in order to be in Dublin for the fight.

Sometime later we were ordered to hoist the tricolour flag of the Irish Republic on the flag staff. This proved to be quite a job. The halyard of the flagstaff was jammed and would not move. I tried to climb up but my efforts were a failure because of my weight and the unsteadiness of the pole. David O'Leary who was thin and small in stature tried it next and was a little more successful. Eventually I hauled the flag to the top of the pole.

As the day passed those manning the defences in the Green were kept busy. Sortie parties were holding up all motor cars and vehicles and commandeering them to make barricades at all approaches to the park. A number of women, presumably wives or relatives of Irishmen in the British army, were bent on making trouble for our men by prevailing on motorists and drivers of other vehicles to go by alternative routes. They also obstructed my comrades who were detaining the vehicles. They lived in the vicinity and were aggressively pro-British.

From the roof of the College we could hear persistent hammering on the doors below. Our first impression was that it might be some messenger from Commandant Mallin but when we realised that the noise emanted from the trio in the bedroom making all kinds of demands, we decided to take no further notice of their hammering. Eventually they became quiet. Actually, though they did not appreciate it, they were far safer locked up. The caretaker was the obstinate type of man who was bound to do something calculated to infuriate us. In the result it could have meant an untimely end for our Orange captive.

Evening came with little of a startling nature developing. We could hear rifle fire from the south-west corner of the Green and from Cuffe Street as our men engaged the advance parties of British troops. Patrols of our men were moving around endeavouring to locate the positions of the enemy. It was nearly midnight when our little group on the roof decided to take turn-about on sentry to prevent us being taken unawares by a sudden assault. This gave us a much needed

rest, even though it only meant two hours off duty, and sleep was out of the question.

I should explain that David O'Leary and John Joe Hendrick were attached to other sections, but had not been able to locate their comrades and so had joined us. It was Hendrick who fired the shot that upset the caretaker and very nearly ended my participation in the struggle. Although he was attached to the Liverpool contingent he had been a playmate of mine when we were both young boys going to North William Street School. Meeting him again after a number of years and under such extraordinary circumstances was a very welcome surprise. I could not have hoped for a stouter comrade-in-arms.

Isolation of Dublin Castle

I can state authoritatively that it was never intended that our forces should capture Dublin Castle. In the first instance this would have required hundreds of men and the most that could be spared was a round score. To these few fell the job of isolating the Castle. William O'Brien, later General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and a close personal friend of James Connolly, told me that some time before the Insurrection Connolly had disclosed his intention to cut off the Castle from the other operational areas. O'Brien was disappointed by this revelation of a limited aim. He emphasised to Connolly that Dublin Castle was known throughout the world as the symbol of British imperialism in Ireland. If it was not the intention to capture it why not burn it, he argued. Connolly agreed that the suggestion had merit and said he would have the matter considered further. Later he informed O'Brien that the burning of the Castle was not practical. He pointed out that there was

a Red Cross Hospital in the Castle and that it contained a large number of wounded British soldiers. Were any of the patients to die as a result of such action, the repercussions which would be fomented by the British in all parts of the world, would gravely damage the Irish cause.

What was planned was the occupation of certain buildings commanding the entrance gates. The buildings eventually occupied were the City Hall, the *Evening Mail* office, the Guardroom at the Upper Castle yard, the premises of Henry and James at the corner of Parliament Street and Dame Street (which commanded the Lower Castle yard gates in Lord Edward Street), the Synod House in High Street (to delay troops advancing to the relief of the Castle) and a position in Ship Street to cover the entrance gates. The Rates Office—opposite Dublin Castle and the City Hall—for which a special key to gain an entrance had been made weeks in advance, was also to have been occupied. Lieutenant Thomas Kain had this key in his possession and was preparing to occupy the office but the shortage of manpower made it impossible. Captain Sean Connolly then gave new orders to him to occupy the Guard Room and make the soldiers prisoners. This operation Kain successfully completed. The guards were surprised, overpowered and tied up with their own puttees. They were left, still tied up, when ten hours later, Kain and his men left the Guard Room in an effort to join forces with Commandant McDonagh in Jacob's.

It is well to emphasise that Sean Connolly's attempt to isolate Dublin Castle was made with a force of twenty-five to thirty men. After the attack on the Upper Castle yard had been successfully concluded this small contingent had to be spread over six subpositions, with the City Hall as the main centre. When word was received in the G.P.O. that Sean Connolly had been killed (by a shot fired from the Clock Tower in the Castle) and that they needed more men to try to hold the positions effectively Lieutenant Norgrove was taken from his (second) assignment in O'Connell Street and sent with a small group of men to help out in the City Hall. This meant that even the important job in the G.P.O. which had involved Norgrove's transfer from the St Stephen's Green

garrison had, in turn, to be neglected to buttress the rapidly deteriorating situation around the Castle.

It will be seen, therefore, that Dublin Castle was completely surrounded for a certain period, even though the High Street position was occupied by one lone man, William Oman. The Rates Office, had it been occupied, would have dominated the Castle and would also have given added strength to the insurgents' position in the entire area.

The Failure to Occupy the Shelbourne

It has been said repeatedly that the occupation of St Stephen's Green by the Republican forces in Easter Week was "an act of suicide". This view ignores both the original plans and the actual circumstances of the Rising. St Stephen's Green itself was occupied for only about eighteen to twenty hours, from twelve noon on Monday until about six to eight am on Tuesday, when the evacuation of our forces took place to the College of Surgeons. The College, as I have already related, had been occupied on Easter Monday at about three pm by myself and three comrades, together with, for a temporary period, Madame Markievicz, Miss Lily Kempson, Miss Mary Hyland and one other woman whose name I cannot now recall. We had strict instructions to hold the College, as it was an important link in our defence plan.

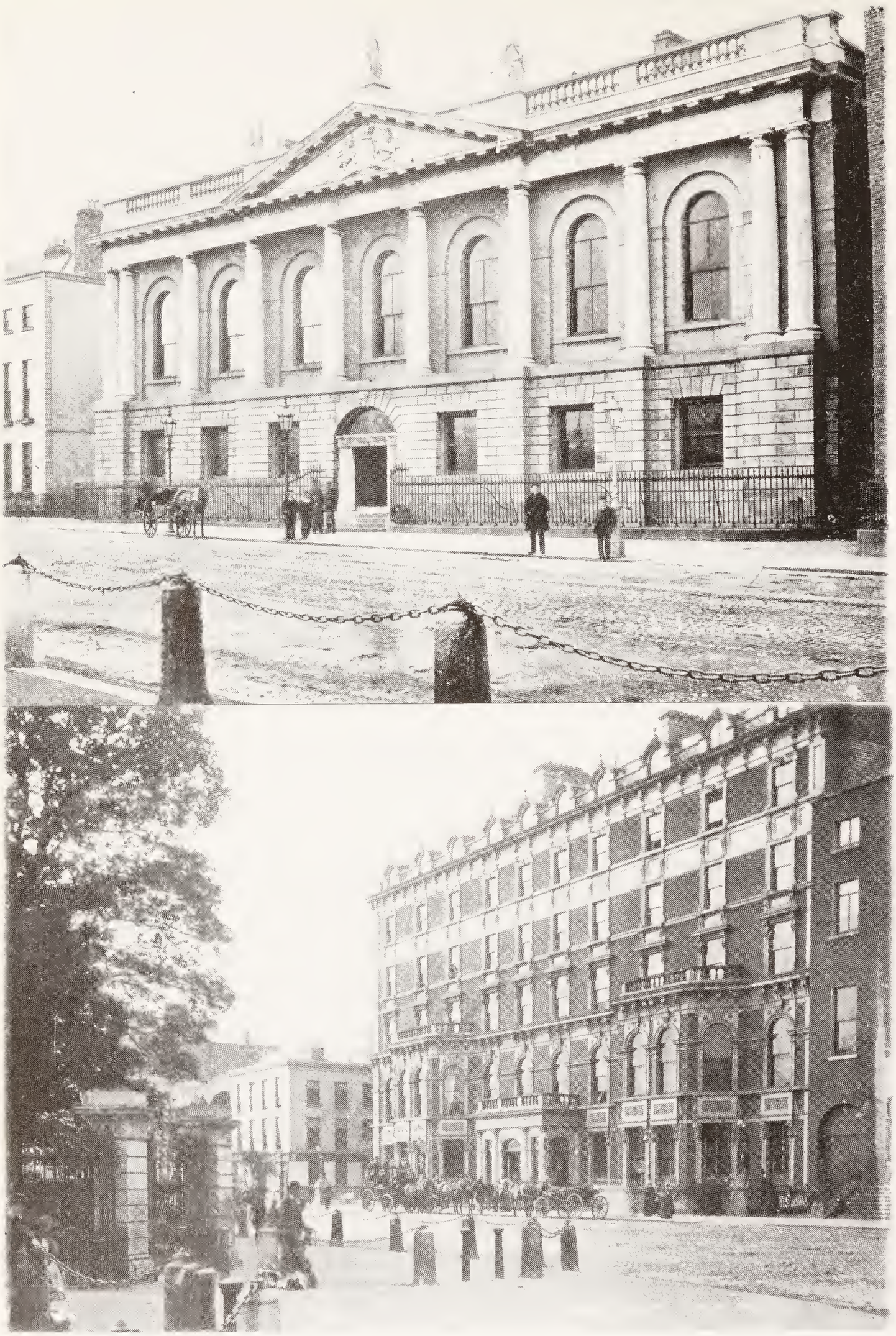
Criticism also centres around the fact that such a commanding edifice as the Shelbourne Hotel was not occupied. Actually, of course, in the original tactical plan the Shelbourne Hotel was to have been occupied by Lieutenant George Norgrove, who was to have fifty men under his command. At the last moment this part of the plan was dropped and Norgrove was detailed first for action at the G.P.O. and later to replace Sean Connolly at Dublin Castle.

No alternative arrangements for the occupation of the Shelbourne were made simply because as a result of MacNeill's countermanding order there were insufficient men available to seize and secure the hotel.

The manner of taking over St Stephen's Green on Easter Monday demonstrated how adversely our plans were affected by the lack of manpower. As I have said already, Mallin had actually to avail of the services of members of the women's section of the Citizen Army to guard the gates of St Stephen's Green and to eject citizens who were inside the Green when the take-over began. Madame Markievicz, Lily Kempson and Mary Hyland gave invaluable assistance. It was lack of manpower therefore and not of planning that was the most significant factor in the defence of our Stephen's Green positions.

Under Attack

The dawn of Easter Tuesday was breaking. The peace which had reigned hitherto was suddenly broken by the staccato fire of enemy machine guns and the chatter of our rifles in reply. Shortly after the first outbreak of firing my attention was drawn to someone shouting from the right-hand side of the College of Surgeons facing St Stephen's Green. We located it as coming from the far side of York Street. Eventually we saw Captain McCormick, Lieutenant Michael Kelly and Michael Donnelly on the roofs of the houses there. Donnelly lived with his brother at No 113 St Stephen's Green and had gained an entrance with his own latchkey. Michael Kelly yelled at us to find more secure cover, that the British had occupied the Shelbourne Hotel and were armed with machine guns. They had succeeded in advancing from the Castle through Dame Street into the grounds of Trinity College and from there had occupied the Shelbourne, from where with superior fire power they were able to dominate our men entrenched in the Green. The firing on both sides



The strongholds of the insurgents and of the British in St Stephen's Green *Above:* The College of Surgeons in which Commandant Michael Mallin and his men barricaded themselves on Easter Tuesday. *Below:* The Shelbourne Hotel from which the British attack on the insurgents was directed

increased in tempo and continued incessantly.

The danger to our men would certainly have increased considerably had Commandant Mallin not acted promptly. The men in the trenches, exposed to fire from posts overlooking them, were instructed to withdraw from the more dangerous positions. In small numbers of twos and threes they slipped back to the shrubbery which gave much needed cover. Finally the British soldiers had only empty trenches to fire into.

The British flagrantly abused the sanctuary of our Red Cross shelter erected on the previous day near the south-west corner of the Green and which had a large Red Cross flag flying from it. Miss Rosie Hackett reported to me on her arrival in the College of Surgeons that the shelter had been machine-gunned from the Shelbourne Hotel. I take this opportunity of putting on record the lack of regard for the Red Cross flag by the British troops who were in occupation of the Shelbourne. There was no legitimate reason or excuse for their action.

At about seven or eight am having withdrawn his little band of insurgents to temporary safety, Commandant Mallin issued orders for a general evacuation of the Green to the College of Surgeons. My first intimation of this move was when I saw our men leaving the Green. It was then my job to get down from the roof and allow them into the building. Mallin issued instructions that they were to take up positions on the roof. Mallin and I then went out on to the pathway in the expectation of aiding other sections that had not yet arrived.

During our stay outside, Mallin took off his hat and, speaking in a quiet and even tone, said, "Wasn't that a narrow shave, Robbins?" I agreed that it certainly was. There was a piece taken out of the hat about an inch above the hat-band. When asked how it occurred Mallin replied, "I was trying to get one of our lads, who had been wounded, into safety." It was afterwards I heard that Mallin had dashed out in face of machine-gun fire to one of the gateways opposite the Shelbourne Hotel to drag a wounded man to safety.

The British forces had by this time become aware of

reinforcements on the roof of the College and concentrated their guns on the building. Their fire level at first was very low, so low in fact, that Mallin and myself had to make ourselves scarce and dive inside. One advantage to us was that the trees around the Green were tall enough to obscure the view of those in the Shelbourne Hotel.

A number of our men were set to work building barricades in front of the windows and hall-door. Necessity knows no law, and acting on this axiom we decided to use books as barriers. The amount available was more than sufficient, although as a book lover I was saddened by the thought that some of man's most ennobling thoughts about the saving of life should be reduced to the simple function of stopping bullets.

On re-entering the building I went to the side-door leading out into York Street. This was now the only entrance available to the men and women who might not yet have retreated from the Green and other outposts. Shortly after-

The respective views of the protagonists of enemy positions. *Left:* The Shelbourne Hotel as seen from the College of Surgeons. *Above:* The College of Surgeons as seen from the Shelbourne

wards we heard a loud knocking at the back gate leading into the laneway alongside the premises of the Direct Trading Mineral Water Co. On opening the wicket gate we saw to our great surprise a Lieutenant O'Riordan of the Irish Volunteers, later to be joined by Lieutenant Seamus Kavanagh who had taken over the Turkish Baths (now the Stephen's Green Cinema) in St Stephen's Green with a section of men, and was reporting to Commandant Mallin. They had been sent by Commandant MacDonagh who was in command in Jacob's factory, in answer to an urgent message for reinforcements sent him the previous day.

More men and women were now entering the College by the York Street entrance. After a short time my attention was drawn to shouting out in the street. Looking up York Street towards Aungier Street I could see Captain McCormick, Lieutenant Kelly and Michael Donnelly making their way towards us with difficulty. They had left No 113 St Stephen's Green by a rear laneway to reach the College of

Surgeons and on the way were beset by a number of civilians of both sexes. One man had a hatchet, others had different weapons, including iron bars. Blood was oozing from Captain McCormick's forehead. All this took place outside the line of fire from the British.

There were about ten or twelve civilians involved in this incident. The most prominent was a young woman who had been extremely obnoxious on a previous occasion. This woman followed our three men down the street and was using very offensive language. The men were endeavouring to ignore her, but my patience had been exhausted as a result of my previous day's experience of watching her persistent interference with our outposts. Only one thing had stopped me on the Monday from endeavouring to quieten her. That was the fear of hitting one of our own men. There was no such danger on this occasion. With my mind firmly made up I ran into the centre of the roadway, dropped on one knee and took aim with the feeling that this woman would be a good riddance. Captain McCormick was the last of the three and he was still on the roadway. I remember waving my right arm and shouting, "Get out of the way, Mac." Captain McCormick was moving away when Lieutenant Kelly, who was almost at the door, guessed what I was about to do and shouted, "Frank, don't shoot." At the same time he ran into the roadway and grasped my arm. I felt sore over it and wondered would the same consideration have been shown by the British forces if they had been obstructed and abused in the same way. However I obeyed the order of my superior officer without any question but with extreme reluctance.

One of our men Michael Doherty, of Mayor Street, North Wall, had in the meantime been badly wounded on the roof of the College. Little hope was entertained for him. It was a hazardous and very tedious job to get him down into the building and the name of David O'Leary deserves remembrance for the way he risked his life in an exposed position to help his wounded companion. When I opened the door to allow the ambulance men out with the stretcher and saw the amount of blood Doherty had lost and was still losing I thought, You're a gonner, and the Lord have mercy on you.

Altogether he had received twelve wounds from machine gun fire. I never expected to see him alive again, but a month or so later, to my great surprise, he was a fellow prisoner at Knutsford Gaol. He later died as a result of the 'flu epedemic which was raging around the world during the latter end of 1918.

In such moments as those, so full of excitement, time passes in a flash. Incidents took place more quickly than it would take to relate. On this day the only recollection I have of eating was early that morning just before the retreat from the Green. The four of us then on the roof felt that we could give a much better account of ourselves if we could obtain something substantial to eat. David O'Leary was entrusted with this job, but alas, his reconnaissance revealed that the only food on the premises was two eggs and some tea. Fred Ryan and myself were the first for breakfast, leaving O'Leary and Hendrick on duty above. Fred had some rations left from Sunday, which consisted of bread and bully beef. With this, and an egg between us, we had to make do. In the event we were the lucky two. Afterwards we found that it was more than O'Leary and Hendrick got. Joseph Keeley, one of our young scouts, claims to have served tea to our party on the roof, a matter on which my memory is faulty, so I willingly bow to his recollection.

I recall another incident which happened during the morning when the retreat was taking place. A tall man with a beard was handed over to me by Lily Kempson with instructions that he was an important prisoner and was to be well guarded. The man was Laurence J. Kettle, then Chief of the Dublin Corporation Electricity Department. The reason, I understood, for making him a prisoner was that one of the women who had been detailed to watch the military barracks prior to the Insurrection had identified him as a man who had paid many visits there. His brother, Thomas Kettle, was an officer in one of the Irish regiments of the British army and it is reasonable to assume that the innocent purpose of such visits was to see his brother.

Mr Kettle's first experiences as a prisoner were not very

pleasant, but later in the week his confinement became much more comfortable. On the Monday one of our outposts had taken him prisoner and commandeered his car to help make a barricade. He was apparently convinced that it was our intention to shoot him. How or why he got that impression I do not know. I understand he made this observation to one of my comrades at the latter end of Easter Week. Who gave me this information I cannot recall. To my knowledge, he was treated well. In many ways he proved an unusual prisoner. On one occasion when I threw myself into a chair to take a few minutes rest, Mr Kettle remonstrated and advised me not to sit in that position as I was exposing myself to a possible line of enemy fire. I also learned that he passed some of his time making barricades from the unfailing supply of books! My first inclination was to ignore his advice but recognising his attitude as friendly I followed his safety-first injunction and expressed my thanks.

The following extract from Dr Douglas Hyde's 1916 diary gives a further perspective of the situation in Stephen's Green on Easter Tuesday.

> Got up before the rest of the household and walked down Earlsfort Terrace to the corner of Stephen's Green to see if it had been evacuated during the night as I felt perfectly certain it must have been, for it appeared to me to be a place impossible to defend for any length of time, as all the trenches and cover for machine guns could be searched by machine guns and rifle fire from the tops of the surrounding houses. To my astonishment I found that not only had it not been evacuated but that a lively interchange of shots was going on from all sides of it but who was firing and from where I could not see. Walked back up Earlsfort Terrace, met Miss Boland and Miss Barton coming back from Mass. Stood talking with them in the middle of the street when a machine gun went off with so loud a noise that I was sure it was fired from the scaffolding of the University College building 40 or 50 yards behind me and three bullets lodged in the window and rain pipe of a disused house in Earlsfort Terrace about

eight feet over my head. I felt inclined to jump but was ashamed and walked in as leisurely a manner as I could up the rest of the Terrace, but did not feel in any way comfortable till I had turned the corner. Though I thought at the time . . . that the shots came from just behind me I think now that they were fired from a machine gun stationed on the top of O. Gogarty's [Dr Oliver St John Gogarty] house near the Shelbourne which had been occupied by the military. If so it was criminally careless of them to shoot up a street in which there were only two or three women and myself walking quietly and from which no shots had at any time been fired.

Fighting Back

As Tuesday advanced fresh plans were being made to meet the changing situation. I was relieved of the position at the York Street entrance to the College of Surgeons with instructions to report for special duty. A company of about twenty men was to get ready to break through and occupy the houses, beginning from the Turkish Baths, towards South King Street. We left the College of Surgeons by the back gate. The password being given—to the best of my memory it was "Wolfe Tone"—we were admitted to the Turkish Baths. One of the guards on duty there was John Rooney, brother of the late William Rooney of the Celtic Literary Society, a fine poet. Then the operation of breaking through from house to house began. With 7-lb sledge-hammers we made a hole in each wall big enough for a man to get through on hands and knees. As the dusk fell a number of us were sent through the back outhouses to gain entrance to some of the houses ahead, with instructions to work back towards

the other party. By adopting this method we made quicker progress.

The reason for this operation was two-fold. The first was that we should occupy these new positions and thus forestall a similar move by the British forces. The second was that on that night we planned to operate from the top of Grafton Street and the north-side houses of Stephen's Green with the aim of checking the activities of the British forces in that area. Several houses on the north side had been occupied by the British. One of these strong points was the United Services Club and the soldiers there had been giving us a great deal of bother during the day. Their presence motivated our decision to set fire to the houses on that side of the Green.

As we broke into each house we examined it thoroughly to ensure that it had been vacuated by the former occupants. Each house was then secured by barricades wherever necessary. There was no shortage of supplies for making the barricades. We made use of every article of furniture. Sideboards, chairs, wardrobes, bedsteads and every kind of material, good, bad or middling, was jammed into every gap. Whether any of us showed any regrets for this destructive treatment of valued possessions I cannot recall; survival and the desperate need to halt the enemy took precedence in our minds.

The barricading done, we set about making other preparations. While making our tour of inspection in these houses we came across numerous articles that could be useful for our Red Cross Hospital which had now been established in the College of Surgeons. Among the items which were fairly plentiful were bottles of brandy and other spirits. Realising the temptations some of our men might be under to make personal use of this stuff, especially in view of the conditions in which they found themselves, I gave strict instructions to the men under my control to hand over to me personally all the liquor they found. This order put the responsibility on each individual and to their credit, it was loyally carried out. This order was conveyed to Captain McCormick, who issued a general order applying to all the occupied houses. As a result many bottles were handed to

me and were promptly sent to the College of Surgeons.

It was approaching ten pm when orders were issued to enlarge our sphere of operations. Every man in each section was to be ready for action before ten o'clock. Each window in these houses provided sufficient space for two men to operate. The firing of two shots was the signal for an intense fusillade against the Shelbourne Hotel, the United Services Club and other positions occupied by British troops.

Tunnels and Tragedies

Wednesday morning dawned to find us still engaged in the arduous task of breaking through various premises in an effort to reach South King Street corner. One of these houses was operated under the auspices of the Alexandra Ladies' Club, whose ideals and beliefs were poles apart from ours. When taking over this house we found to our surprise that there were a number of women inside. We told them bluntly that they must be prepared to leave. One of them pleaded for permission to stay but this was refused. It was thought afterwards that her profession of sympathy with our cause was not sincere but was rather a ruse to extract information. Our reasons for suspecting this were strengthened by the fact that the ladies in question had hardly vacated the building fifteen minutes when the telephone rang. Against all previous advice given by Connolly and Mallin in their lectures to the Citizen Army Captain O'Neill lifted the receiver and spoke. I forget what exactly was the conversation from the other end of the line. Of course the call was only a pretext. The phone was in a direct line with one of the windows. The conversation came to an abrupt end when intense machine-gun fire

Some of the premises on the west side of St Stephen's Green occupied by the insurgents by breaking through from one house to another

was directed to the windows of this house. This could have been fatal to some of us had not precautions been taken. When the women left the premises the place had been made secure and an order given to retire to the next house, leaving only two or three men in the club. Need I say that when the firing began they were not slow in throwing themselves flat on the floor and thus escaped the hail of lead. The trick was clever enough and might have led to casualties. But we were now learning the hard facts of house-to-house fighting and, if I do admit it, had a little bit of luck thrown in as well.

The experience was good for us. Our men were inclined to underrate the dangers surrounding them. Under no circumstances could we allow this subterfuge to go unanswered. Some of our best marksmen were placed at vantage points, each accompanied by a spotter equipped with field glasses to watch the windows of the buildings occupied by the British. Any moving object was subjected to a closer observation before being sniped at, a method I believe which had much better results than those obtained by the British in their onslaught on the Alexandra Club.

On that day we had a visit from Miss Nellie Gifford (later Mrs Donnelly, a sister of Mrs Joseph Mary Plunkett and now deceased. She brought us the rations we so badly needed. She also sought utensils and other things which would be useful in the College of Surgeons. Her search was successful and as I accompanied her back to the College with a large store of brandy, whiskey and different kinds of wine, she told me that her trip had been much more profitable than she had anticipated. On both journeys she came and left by the laneway to the Turkish Baths and from there through the houses via the holes broken in the walls.

During this short return visit to the College I saw Commandant Mallin leaving his quarters, situated in one of the central rooms on the first floor. He had just finished court-martialling an Irish Volunteer officer from the Turkish Baths for leaving his post without permission. The punishment for this offence was reduction to the ranks and the transfer of the offender to our company. When conveying his decision Mallin gave the man some sound advice. Concluding his

admonitions and pointing to me, he said, "Take an example from Sergeant Robbins and you will do well."

Needless to say I felt sorry for this man and hoped he would profit by his indiscretion. It was on this visit I learned that a search party in the College had been more successful than ours had been and had found the miniature shooting gallery of the British Officers' Training Corps attached to the building. My recollection is that they got 89 rifles and about 24,000 rounds of .303 and .22 ammunition. The haul proved of considerable value in the difficult hours that lay ahead.

On the previous day Lieutenant Robert de Coeur and a small party of our men had taken over a number of houses on the west side of the Green, south of York Street. They put into effect a very novel defence measure, one which hitherto we had not adopted in our area. Instead of barricading, as was done in almost every other place, the bottom portion of the house was left as if nothing unusual had taken place. The idea was to invite the opposing forces to regard the house as an easy position to occupy. The stairway had, however, been carefully sawn through, with sufficient left intact to bear only its own weight. However, the exercise was in vain for the British did not attack. The men who had expended so much labour and ingenuity to bait the trap must have been disappointed. Such are the fortunes of war!

A Day of Rest

Throughout Wednesday there was continual sniping from all our posts on the Shelbourne Hotel and the Russell Hotel (which had now also been occupied). The United Services Club and other positions which we believed to be occupied by the British also came under fire. It was a hectic afternoon. Somewhere about six pm Lieutenant Peter Jackson, with a company of men, relieved our section at the South King

Street end of St Stephen's Green. This guaranteed for us a rest of some twenty-four hours and badly we needed it. It will be appreciated that the order was received with satisfaction and welcomed by all concerned. Except for a few hours on the roof of the College of Surgeons on Wednesday night, I myself had been without sleep since the Saturday night.

Our base was again to be the College of Surgeons. When we arrived there the whole company was paraded in what seemed to be a lecture hall, and which we used as our dining hall, dormitory and general area of recreation. Before being finally dismissed we had to pass through the doctor's hands. Miss Ffrench-Mullen, head of our Red Cross detachment, was appointed to his position by our Medical Director, Dr Kathleen Lynn, and filled it very efficiently. Here I should confess that I proved to be a very disobedient patient, so much so that Miss Ffrench-Mullen threatened me with arrest and court-martial for refusing to take a drink of spirits, proferred by her as "medicine". Madame Markievicz was called in to discipline me and I was charged with disobeying an order given by a superior officer. When I explained to Madame that I had a conscientious objection to taking spirits my misdemeanor was forgiven. When our company was finally dismissed from duty we all sat down on the floor and someone suggested a song. One song led to another. Margaret Skinnider records me in her book *Doing My Bit for Ireland*, published in New York in 1917, as singing "A Soldier's Song" by Peader Kearney which is now our national anthem. I can imagine that songs like "Armed for the Battle" by Madame Markievicz (set to a Polish revolutionary air), "Step Together", "Twenty Men from Dublin Town", "The Bold Fenian Men" and many other such favourites expressing national sentiments were also rendered. Evenually tea was served. Following the meal we all gladly turned in for a sleep. The bare wooden floor was to be our bed, with the carpet which was lifted from it to serve as covering. Many of us were so tired that we were unable to fall asleep for quite a long time.

On Thursday morning I was awakened by Lieutenant

Michael Kelly and Jimmy O'Shea. They gave me the sad news that Fred Ryan had been killed during the previous night. It seems that Commandant Mallin had sent out a small party to set fire to an antique shop in Harcourt Street, just around the corner from the Russell Hotel in the hope that the blaze would spread to the hotel which, as I have recorded, had now been occupied by the British. In addition to Fred Ryan, another of the party was the late Councillor William P. Partridge, and another was Margaret Skinnider who was ready for any hazardous enterprise. To my great sorrow I was also told that Miss Skinnider had received four bullet wounds and was in a very critical condition and not expected to live.

Partridge later related the incident to me and I can still picture him standing before me with a bandage on his head. He had not been wounded but had been involved in an accident on the previous day when a trap-door fell on him while he was getting out on to the roof of the College of Surgeons.

The evening before I had seen Fred Ryan and Margaret Skinnider during our little concert, and both were then in the best of spirits. To be given the information ten hours later that one was dead and the other dying would under normal conditions have given any person a great shock, but under the circumstances one seemed to take such incidents as part of the days's work.

During the early part of this day four men were picked out for a very special operation. All were to be of the same height or as near to this as possible. The four men chosen were Joseph Doyle, Owen Carton, Michael Kelly and myself. We were brought into the room used by Commandant Mallin and there we learned from Miss Ffrench-Mullen that our job was to transfer the wounded Miss Skinnider from one bed to another in such a manner as to avoid any further loss of blood or causing her any more pain. It proved to be a very exacting task. Each pair of us locked hands with the couple on the other side of the bed making a cradle underneath the body, and lifted her shoulder high. Another bed was then slipped under her body. We had to remain in the lifted

position for a few minutes and frankly it seemed like an hour. When it was finished we gave a sigh of relief. Of the four I was slightly the smallest and for that reason was under the greatest strain. Throughout the transfer Miss Skinnider was deeply unconscious. She had lost a great deal of blood and appeared to us be on the verge of death.

It was a happy day for me when, months later, after my release from an English prison camp, I learned for the first time that Miss Skinnider had made an amazing recovery and was safe and well. Looking back on it now it appears to me in the nature of a miracle that she survived to live happily and actively for many years until her death in 1972.

With plenty of time on our hands during Thursday, we moved around the different posts inside the College. Although there was intense firing going on all the time, we were relatively safe in the College. We now had time to speculate on what was happening elsewhere in Dublin, but our only contact with the other units engaged in the Insurrection was through the dispatch carriers. We were not, however, appraised of the information contained in these dispatches. We were told only that everything was going alright. There were, of course, rumours—rumours of a great fight at Mount Street, of Larkin arriving in Ireland, of Casement coming with German assistance, and others. We had very little real knowledge of what was happening elsewhere in the city—indeed prior to our rest period, we had little time to think about anything other than our immediate tasks. We remained confident, however, that the fight was going on.

While visiting the posts within the College I noticed that Miss Chris Caffrey had come in. She had been sent by Mallin with a dispatch to the General Post Office a couple of hours previously but had failed to get through. Her journey was a very perilous one and she was now in a very distressed state. In case her story may not be on record by her I give it precisely as she gave it to me. She had been carrying dispatches from Mallin to the G.P.O. and to Jacob's Factory since Easter Monday. Her dress suggested a young war widow and she added to that impression by wearing a red, white and blue badge. She set off as usual with a dispatch

that Thursday morning and some of the unfriendly people in the area noticed her leaving the College of Surgeons. They tailed her through various side streets into Dame Street and when they saw some British soldiers they denounced her as a spy. She was accosted by two officers and questioned. Her replies did not satisfy them and she was asked to accompany them into Trinity College for further interrogation. She made no demur and knowing the tight spot she was in decided to try and bluff her way out of her predicament. On the way through the gates of Trinity she put the dispatch in her mouth and began chewing it. One of the officers saw her gesture and immediately asked what she had put in her mouth. Without a moment's hesitation she replied "A sweet", and taking a paper bag of sweets from her pocket asked him if he would like one. The officer refused her offer very abruptly.

The officers then took her into a room and informed her they proposed to search her. She protested, tearfully expostulating that it was a poor tribute to the memory of her late husband who had "given his life for the Empire". They were not convinced and seeing this she demanded to be searched by one of her own sex. They were sorry, they retorted, to be unable to accommodate her with a woman searcher and proposed to do the job themselves. Without going into details Chris assured me they did a thorough job of work. Having found no incriminating evidence on her person they released her. When she gave me her account of this harrowing experience I could well understand her distressed state. But having related her story she was as collected as ever and awaited the next call of duty. Of such fibre were the women of Easter Week. I often wonder whether they ever received the recognition they deserved.

Back to our Posts

Our time to resume active duty was nearing. After a last meal in the College, which consisted of tea and scones (the

latter being cooked by Miss Gifford and her staff) we were lined up to receive our final instructions, and then we returned to the positions we held the previous day. There was very little that could be done this evening as darkness was settling over the city. We had many problems to discuss that night but I think that foremost in our thoughts was the question of obtaining food. Requests for supplies to the outlying districts around the College had produced little results, although later in the week some flour and other items, were sent from Commandant MacDonagh's post at Jacob's Factory. Edward Tuke gave it as his opinion that there was a French pastry shop near Strahan's furniture store, but of the actual position he was a little vague. Our clamouring stomachs dictated our decision to continue next day to break through the remaining houses to find the elusive pastry shop.

As usual a number of us got out on the roofs that night to have a look at the city. The sky over the entire centre of Dublin was lit up from the fires then raging. The view was picturesque and awe-inspiring but our reactions were tempered by the sobering thought that our comrades-in-arms in these areas were having a strenuous and difficult time.

The dawn of Friday morning, like each other morning of the week, brought us the opening salute from the British machine-guns. This was answered as effectively as possible by our snipers. The British fire would reach a climax, ease up for a short while and then resume again. Sometimes the machine-gun fire would be extremely heavy and it was our surmise that our snipers had registered hits on such occasions and this was by way of enemy retaliation.

Nothing of an extraordinary nature happened on this day, as far as I can recall, beyond the fact that our food problem was hourly becoming more acute. We had not yet found that pastry shop! Tuke was, however, very insistent that this establishment was not a mirage and really did exist. Late in the evening of the previous day we ascertained from the section of Irish Volunteers in the Turkish Baths that they had not yet tunnelled through any houses extending towards the College of Surgeons. We decided to direct our wall-breaking

operations in the opposite direction to that which we had followed up to this.

Our change of plans was spectacularly successful. Tuke was justified! We finally located the pastry shop between the College of Surgeons and the Turkish Baths. Everything that went to the making of the pastry was there in large quantities. Delighted with our success, a report was immediately sent along to the College. The bearer of the report came back with the news that large supplies had also been brought to the College from Jacob's.

The brighter prospect cheered everyone up. The tension caused by the food shortage was eased and despite the growing hazards of war we all became uplifted and lighthearted once again. Napoleon was obviously right when he emphasised the close relationship between wars and stomachs!

However, sad and bewildering news was about to break.

Surrender

On Saturday afternoon a dismaying rumour was in circulation to the effect that our comrades in the O'Connell Street area had surrendered. This was at first disregarded. We were convinced that it was untrue. A few of us made our way over to the College of Surgeons to seek reassurance but little or no information was to be had. A large number of people had gathered out of curiosity at the College end of York Street and shouted up to us that the surrender was a fact. Some of them seemed sure that peace was near and their presence on the streets certainly strengthened the impression that our resistance was coming to an end.

As the evening drew on there was talk among the officers that Commandant Mallin was dissatisfied with our positions and that a break-out was contemplated and plans made to fight our way through the British net to the Dublin hills,

where the struggle would be carried on along the lines of guerilla warfare. There was no news of a firm decision but Lieutenant Michael Kelly suggested that all men in uniform should, if possible, obtain civilian clothes to make easier an escape through the British lines. I could not believe any of the rumours floating around, and it was not until the next morning (Sunday) when I had actually seen some of my comrades already rigged out in the fashion suggested that the truth began to press on me.

Eventually I found myself doing as they had done. A funny figure I must have cut in a suit of good Irish tweed about four sizes too big for me! This outfit I had commandeered in the house attached to the pastry shop. It contained a flat seemingly occupied by a man who must have lived elsewhere during that week. I don't recall that I had serious regrets at purloining the property of the absentee tenant.

An order now went out to the men manning all the houses to report to the College of Surgeons immediately. When I got there the first thing that struck me was the atmosphere of awful gloom that had settled over the place since my visit of the previous day. A number of men and women who had then been gay and light-hearted were now crying. The general feeling seemed to be that something terrible was going to happen.

My first thought was that the British had planted a number of big guns outside and were going to annihilate us. Then the truth was made known. We were to surrender. Commandant Mallin, William Partridge, Madame Markievicz and some officers appeared. On the impulse of the moment I ran to Mallin and Partridge hoping against hope that they would deny this talk of surrender. Sadly they confirmed it as being true. Mallin showed me a dispatch which had been received informing him of the surrender of the General Post Office area. I suggested it was false and a trick. A flicker of hope seemed to spring into Mallin's eyes and he asked Partridge for his opinion. How sorely disappointed I was when Partridge shook his head saying, "No, the messenger who brought the dispatch is to be trusted."

The whole St Stephen's Green Garrison was paraded into the long room. Mallin read out the news and spoke a few sad words. He was followed by Madame Markievicz and William Partridge. In the course of his address Mallin said that it was quite possible for a number of the men and women then present to return in safety to their own homes. Should they desire to avail of the opportunity nothing worse would be thought of them for doing so. For himself the worst that could befall was to be shot by the British. This was only to be expected and he hoped to meet it as an Irishman should.

A small number of those present jumped at the opportunity of getting away. Any who did this had a definite motive for their action. A few were given instructions to leave for different reasons, though much against their own will. Those who left were in no way influenced by the prospect of the punishment which awaited their comrades who stayed behind to surrender to the British military. When Mallin made the suggestion that anyone who desired could leave some of my comrades shouted, "No! We have worked together, we have fought together and, if necessary, we will die together!"

The most unpleasant task that fell to the lot of Mallin was the lowering of the Tricolour and the flying of the white flag of capitulation. While carrying out this act he and those with him heard a rifle shot from one of the British posts. It was the signal Major Wheeler of the British army was waiting for. The scenes that were occurring inside the College were heart-rending. Strong, brave, upstanding men and women, all of whom had taken risks of one kind or another during that week, not knowing and not caring whether they would forfeit their lives, were now broken-hearted. It was apparent that at that moment the act of surrender was to each one a greater calamity than death itself. Men and women were crying openly with arms around each other's shoulders.

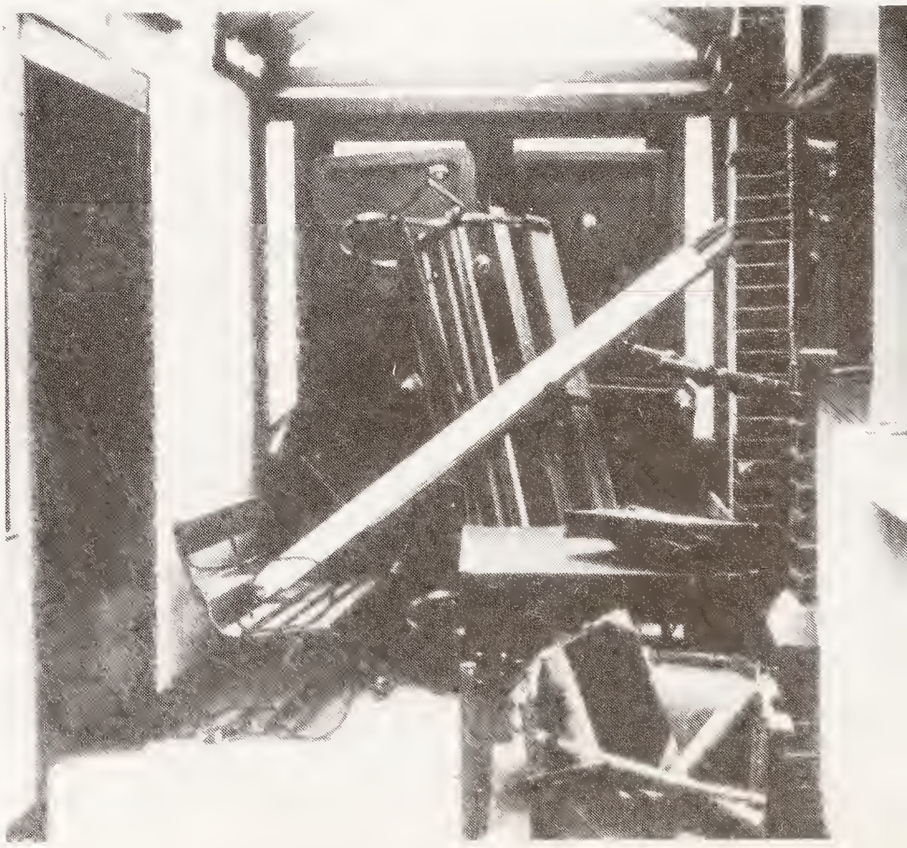
A British soldier appeared in the building to make arrangements with our Commandant for the surrender. Curiously enough this visit changed the whole atmosphere. Instead of a continuation of the prevailing depression a new spirit of independence, hope and exaltation arose like a rekindled

FROM THE NATIONAL MUSEUM'S 1916 COLLECTION

Right: A barricade in St Stephen's Green
Below: The British at City Hall

St Stephen's Green:
p Left: The British on the
arch
p Right: The British in
nt of the Shelbourne Hotel
ttom Left: An ambulance
in the Green
ttom Right: The College of
rgeons

Right: Madame Markievicz being taken away after her courtmartial
Below: Bombs and barricades in the College of Surgeons



flame. We were satisfied that all things that were possible to do had been done. We had nothing to be ashamed of. A manly part had been played for the vindication of our principles. True, we had failed in our object. But others had failed before, and they had not been ashamed or afraid of the consequences. Why should we?

It was in this spirit that we marched from the College of Surgeons out into York Street,* between a strong force of British soldiers under the command of Major de Courcy Wheeler. At the head of our column was Commandant Mallin and Madame Markievicz. The Countess looked very picturesque in that strange and rare scene if only by the manner of her attire. She was dressed in an Irish Citizen Army tunic, a pair of riding breeches and puttees, and a jaunty lady's hat with an ostrich feather around the band, part of which showed slightly over the top. Hundreds of people around the vicinity were standing about, some out of curiosity, a very small number sympathetic towards us, but the vast majority openly hostile. The order being given to march we turned down Grafton Street.

Our party was halted beside a big trench, freshly dug, by the wall near Trinity College. It brought the most sinister implications into our minds. Were we to be summarily executed? In answer to a question whether he thought it was for us, as some understandably suggested, Captain McCormick said, "If I'm one of them I'll call for three

*An extract from Dr Douglas Hyde's 1916 diary for that Sunday, 30 April, pays its own tribute to the Stephen's Green garrison.

> Met Father Sherwin in the street and brought him in to the garden for a talk . . . . He brought me the important intelligence that the men in the College of Surgeons had at last this afternoon hung out the white flag and surrendered. These men had dominated the whole of Stephen's Green since Monday and until they surrendered at 2 o'clock today no soldier dared show his face inside the Green though they themselves passed in and out of it freely. He said that the positions round Stephen's Green had been chosen with much strategical ability. I asked him how many were taken prisoner and he said he saw them come out and that there were about 100 and a good many of them were women who shot as well as the men. I suppose these were the Countess Markievicz's girls.

cheers for the Irish Republic as they are about to shoot me."

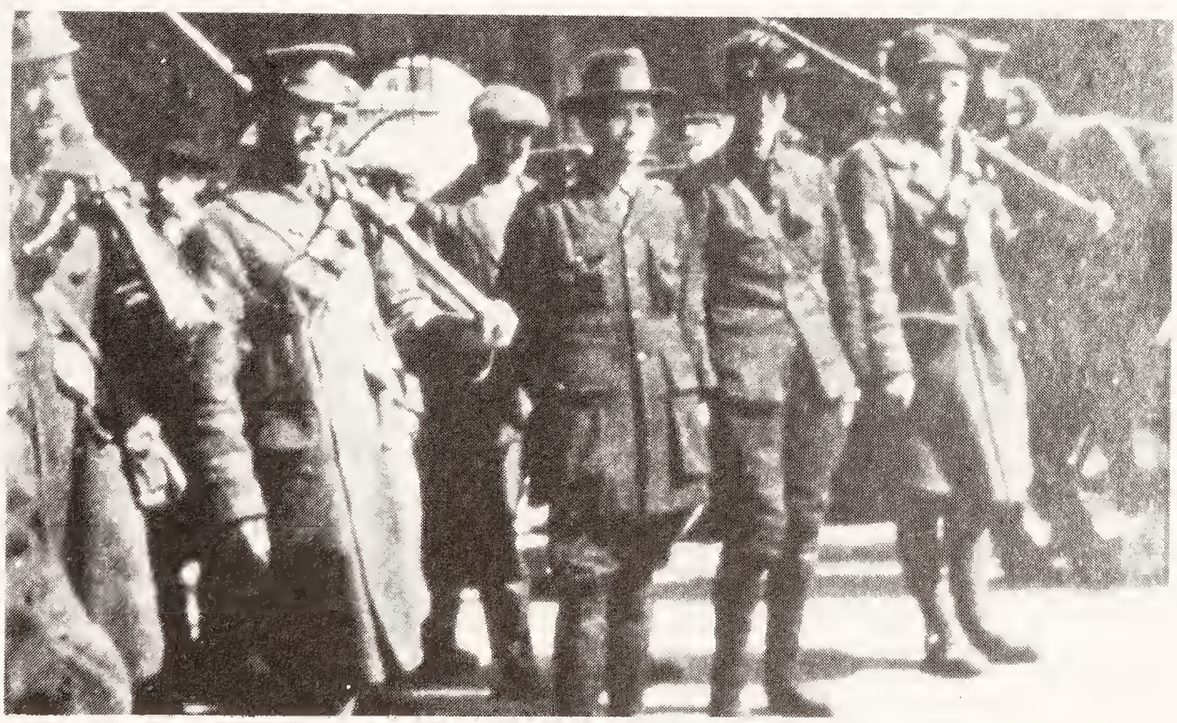
Our fears were not realised. We were marched up Dame Street and through the gate of the Lower Castle yard. After being detained in the Castle for a time a fresh order was given to march and we then proceeded out by the Ship Street Gate to Christ Church Place and so by High Street, Thomas Street and James's Street to Richmond Barracks in Inchicore. Throughout this journey we were left in no doubt as to the opinions of the vast majority of the citizens of Dublin. They were expressed in no uncertain language and manner, and the British military were given every encouragement to wreak vengeance on us. Little did we think that Dublin citizens would ever go so far as to cheer British regiments because they had as prisoners their own kith and kin—Irishmen and women.

The cheering and waving of hats and Union Jacks for the Staffordshire Regiment particularly at Inchicore as they marched us into Richmond Barracks; the cries of encouragement to the young Englishmen in that regiment; the shouts of "Good old Staffords", "Shoot the traitors", and "Bayonet the bastards" seem now almost incredible.

I discussed this experience with some of my comrades later and they were in agreement with my view, that were the British army to have withdrawn at that moment there would have been no need for court-martials or prisons, as the mob would have relieved them of such necessities. A very small section of those assembled did spread a ray of hope amongst us by raising their voices in our support. They were indeed blessed with stout hearts, though considerably in the minority.

Inside Richmond Barracks we were subjected to a thorough search, even though we had previously been searched in Dublin Castle. While this was being carried out some of our searchers, no doubt motivated by their idea of good clean British fun, entertained themselves, and angered us, by remarks such as, "You won't want this anymore, you are going to be shot presently."

We were relieved of our personal effects such as watches,



Above: A painting by Kathleen Fox of the surrender of the Stephen's Green Garrison. *Below:* Commandant Mallin and Madame Markievicz at the head of columns of prisoners in Dublin Castle

money and other possessions without any record being taken. Few of us ever saw those articles again. The search over, we went through an inspection as each one passed into a large room or hall, giving name, address and occupation. It was here that Commandant Mallin and Madame Markievicz were separated from us, as well as some others. This was the last time we saw Mallin alive.

Johnny Barton and a number of other detectives were being exceedingly officious and obnoxious. Particularly Barton. He did more than his duty when the official military inspection had concluded. Even though he was present at the original inspection he came around to us after it and in the presence of armed guards stood tauntingly in front of each one in order to identify those whom he considered to be officers or people of note. I remember two incidents that occurred to me. As Barton stopped in front of Joseph Connolly, he opened his conversation by saying, "What is your name?" though he knew perfectly well beforehand that Joseph was a brother of Sean Connolly. The next observation was, "Sean is dead."

Joe replied, "He died for his country."

To which Barton retorted, "He was a disgrace to his country."

Joe replied, "That is what you say. I am proud of him. He's a better Irishman than you will ever be."

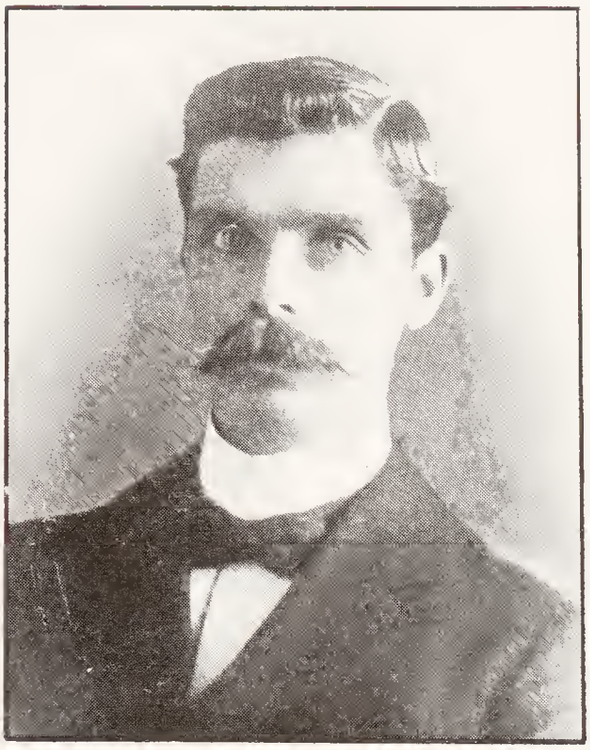
This spirited and courageous reply under extremely adverse circumstances in defence of his brother changed Barton's sneering manner to one of vindictiveness. Barton called the guard and listed Joe Connolly for special investigation. He was taken away.

The second incident took place in this way. Stopping in front of Michael Donnelly, Barton began by saying, "I think I know you."

Donnelly replied, "So well you might."

Barton then said, "Do you remember the day you laughed at me when going down the quays?"

This question was answered by the asking of another: "Hasn't the cat leave to laugh at the king?" Barton passed by Donnelly with a final "I suppose so."



Two who gave their lives. *Left:* Commandant Michael Mallin, executed on 8 May 1916. *Right:* Captain Sean Connolly, shot dead at City Hall on Easter Monday

After a short time another move took place to a different part of the barracks, where we received our first meal, of bully beef and ships biscuits, as guests of His Majesty King George V. Our stay here was of short duration, possibly no longer than two hours. After that we were assembled outside on the barrack square with other sections of comrades who had fought in other areas. Here again we were served bully beef and biscuits. As a result of our first meal everyone was thirsty, and two or three soldiers were kept going for about an hour supplying us with water. Eventually, just as dusk was falling, we were marched off. Whither, none of us knew.

Outside the barracks the column of soldiers and prisoners was halted. The mounted British officer in charge rode down the ranks, impressing upon the soldiers that they were to carry out instructions which they had been previously given and that they were not to waste time on prisoners who stumbled and fell. It took very little thinking on our part to understand the full implication of that order.

The column was on the march again, four deep, with two prisoners in the centre and a soldier on each flank, not to mention advance and rear guards. As we were moving towards the city a group of us led by Robert de Coeur near the end of the column began humming some of our marching songs, "A Soldier's Song" and "Step Together". Then some became bolder and sang. The singing was spreading right through the whole body when a number of N.C.O.s came hurrying along speaking in the usual British army fashion and threatening dire results.

The guards were given orders to use their bayonets on us if we did not keep silent. This dampened our musical ardour somewhat. Some thought that while there might be an objection to singing, whistling might be over-looked. Again it was Robert de Coeur, the unquenchable optimist, and we set about testing the issue. The answer was not long forthcoming, and in very forcible language too. So strong indeed that beyond carrying on a conversation with a partner, silence was maintained until a halt was called at the sheds of the London North-Western Railway (now British Railways) on the North Wall. We were there to await deportation to England. During the journey to the North Wall we had to cross and recross the various Liffey bridges on several occasions to avoid barricades and other obstructions.

6 · Knutsford Prison

Defeated and exhausted but still defiant, we waited at the Dublin docks for our deportation to England. On the Sunday night (30 April) we were put aboard one of the London North Western Railway boats. We were a very tired and dishevelled group of men, very much in need of a wash-up and a long rest. Before leaving Richmond Barracks we had been given some bully beef, biscuits and water. The bully beef created a great thirst. Finding all the water gone, I took the bucket that had been placed in the hold with the intention of having it refilled and made an effort to get up the companionway. On reaching the top I was confronted by British soldiers with fixed bayonets. When one of the soldiers halted me, I told him I was seeking water as there was none in the hold. His reply came quick and sharp. "You dirty Irish pig", he snarled, "get back into the hold or you won't need any water."

This reaction came as a shock because, generally speaking, the ordinary British soldiers had earlier shown a more tolerant attitude towards their prisoners.

Most of us then tried to get some rest, but there was very little space to stretch out. We made all kinds of attempts to be as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. A group of us managed in this way: two sat back to back, and one at each side, and across our legs lay the bodies of other comrades. In that sitting position I went to sleep and did not waken until the ship arrived at Holyhead early next day.

During the trip some of the men became ill and, having no room and being unable to move, had vomited on their nearest colleagues or on themselves. This will give an idea of how closely packed we were. There were, of course, no lavatories. The stench in the hold was overwhelming. How long we had suffered under these conditions I can only hazard a guess. It must have taken about eight to twelve hours from the time we embarked until our arrival at Holyhead.

While lined up at Holyhead railway station we were the object of a great deal of curiosity. Most of the people assembled there indicated by personal signs and rude remarks that we were anything but welcome visitors. According to them we were traitors and murderers. Some of the other epithets directed at us were even less complimentary. At Holyhead our party was divided, 200 going to Knutsford Military Detention Barracks in Cheshire and 289 to Staffordshire Detention Barracks. I was in the group sent to Knutsford.

During the journey from Holyhead to Knutsford I made another attempt to get a drink of water. Some of my colleagues had recourse to the cistern of the lavatory in the railway carriage to obtain water to drink. I tried but failed. Remembering my experience of the previous night aboard the ship I felt reluctant to speak to any of the army guards but finally made up my mind to ask for water. To my very pleasant surprise the soldier whom I addressed replied, "Certainly". Unscrewing his water-bottle he filled my cup with water. This action was very much appreciated.

On arrival at Knutsford arrangements to receive us were well in hand and we were allocated separate cells. My cell number was B2-21. In cells on either side of me were my old friends Captain Richard McCormick and James O'Shea. O'Shea's cell (B2-22) was the last on that side of the wing. On the opposite side, directly facing O'Shea's was Lieutenant Michael Kelly's cell, and directly opposite mine was Michael Donnelly's.

Hearing the door of the cell slam and the double lock grating home I realised for the first time that I was all alone and that I was really a prisoner. Tired and despondent I lay on the bedplank and slept almost the round of the clock. The only interruptions were by the guard on duty hammering on the door to wake myself and others like me, since it was against the prison regulations for prisoners to sleep during the day. No sooner had he passed than I relapsed into sleep to be awakened again by fresh hammering on the cell door. I regarded this action as a form of punishment.

Knutsford Military Barracks was used for the detention of soldiers who had been convicted of various crimes. After

some days we discovered that our guards, excepting officers and non-commissioned officers, were actually prisoners themselves. This duty was a welcome relief for them. A number of us who had succeeded in holding on to some food, cigarettes and such things, found on arriving back in our cells after exercise that all these articles had disappeared.

Some days after our arrival at Knutsford the first daily exercises began. They consisted of half an hour each day spent walking around the prison ring three paces apart, with guards stationed at various distances from each other. Any attempt at conversation between prisoners was immediately interrupted by the nearest guard calling for silence. Any effort to break silence was punished by removal to a cell on a bread and water diet which sometimes lasted for several days. Still we always found some way of saying a few words to each other. Everyone was intent on keeping his chin up, even though every aspect of the prison regime seemed to mitigate against optimism.

We rose at about six thirty am and then had to wait our turn to be taken from our cells in pairs to the centre of the wing where one of the soldiers would have prepared a half bucket of water, soap and towel for our face wash. We were then bundled back to our cells where we waited until seven thirty for breakfast. The breakfast consisted of a pint of skilly (gruel or oatmeal soup) and four ounces of dry bread. Very often we would find on our plates one lump of what was presumed to be porridge with, in the centre, raw meal. The only flavouring was salt. In fact salt and water were the two items which were plentiful in our cells at all times.

At twelve o'clock, after returning from half an hour's exercise, our dinner was brought. This consisted almost always of two small potatoes, a very small morsel of meat, with a very meagre measure of soup that looked—and tasted—more like dish-water than anything else. The potatoes were of very poor quality and there was hardly a day that one, or even the two of them, wasn't coated with a green skin. This meant that they had to be heavily salted to make them eatable. The evening meal was generally served around five o'clock and that was also skilly with a small amount of

dry bread. According to the prison regulations we were supposed to be given butter, cheese and other things of that nature, but never once during my period did cheese appear in my cell.

After every meal James O'Shea and I would have a conversation in morse code on the wall—as I have mentioned, we had learned a little of the code in the Citizen Army under Captain John J. O'Neill. Apart from the comments which we made on the meal which had been served, we often travelled into the realms of fancy and wishful thoughts. On one occasion I explained I had got two very green potatoes which had to be peeled very thoroughly. O'Shea replied that he never peeled the potatoes, and always ate them with the skins. The peeling, when such took place, was done with the fingers; knives and forks were not permitted by the prison authorities.

One morning while I was washing, one of the prisoner-soldiers looking after me said, "You blokes are going to get improved rations as from to-day. You are going to get tea and bread and butter."

I thought that this was in addition to the skilly and felt that it was one of the best things that I heard since my detention. But later, when breakfast was brought along, and I looked for my tea, bread and butter and skilly, I saw the bread and what was termed tea but no butter or porridge. A day or two later we did get a small amount of butter and we got it regularly from that time onwards.

We were supposed to retire every night at eight pm. Our orders were to keep our quarters clean and for this purpose a small handbrush was placed in each cell. This meant that we got down on our knees to sweep a cell in which there was no dirt because we never had an opportunity of dirtying it. Once a week we were obliged to scrub out our cells and were supplied with buckets, scrubbing brushes, floor cloths and soap for the purpose. Our beds consisted of three planks, a centre plank with a division of at least two inches between it and the two outside planks. There was no mattress and at the head of the plank bed was attached a raised piece of wood to serve as a pillow. The breeze came right up through the

divisions between the planks and it was impossible to get a restful sleep. We were supplied with what were supposed to be two blankets. Both of my blankets were so thin that they would have been suitable for straining milk and to make matters worse one of them had several big holes in it.

Before leaving the College of Surgeons the British N.C.O. who had come to prepare the surrender for Major de Courcy Wheeler advised us to take warm clothing with us as we would probably be going on a long journey. I acted on this advice and took from the College of Surgeons a carpet rug which had formerly been the property of Strahan's of St Stephen's Green. This rug proved to be a life-saver. After about five or six weeks in Knutsford we were supplied with a mattress and a pillow, which made life somewhat more comfortable.

"Don't Sign, Don't Sign"

We had been about two weeks in Knutsford Detention Barracks when, one morning, we were all ordered to assemble in the main hall. For the first time we got a glimpse of comrades who were detained in other wings of the prison. Some of them we could not recognise as they had grown beards in the meantime.

From the centre of the hall the military commandant addressed all the prisoners. "His Majesty's Government", he said in effect, "knows that there are among you a number of innocent and loyal subjects of the King. To facilitate these loyal subjects, a form has been prepared which will be given to each prisoner in his cell. Each prisoner will fill in this form giving particulars of his activities during the week of the Rebellion. If innocent and if he requests his release, he will, as a loyal subject, have the immediate attention of His Majesty's Government."

On hearing this much of his speech a number of us realised that an attempt was being made to split our forces and to

give an opportunity to those who might have been weakened by their imprisonment to renege on the principles for which we had fought. Whereupon the whisper went round, "Don't sign. Don't sign."

Within a few moments the whisper became a cry and soon one could hear nothing but the chant, "Don't sign, don't sign, don't sign." The cry echoed from the prison walls until the sound actually dinned our ears. The commandant of the prison obviously became alarmed and roared at the guards, "What's happening? What's happening? Keep order." The guards endeavoured to do so but in vain. The cry, "Don't sign!" continued to reverberate around the hall until we were all hustled back to our cells and locked in.

The forms were distributed later. The number who took advantage of them was negligible, and these may have been, as the commandant suggested, people who had taken no part in the Insurrection but had been arrested by the British forces on suspicion of involvement.

Conditions Improve

We were about a month in Knutsford when we had a visit from Major-General McGregor. He came to inspect the prison and to hear complaints, of which he heard many, but little or nothing was expected from his visit.

We were all assembled in line. The Major-General while passing along each line asked were there any complaints. One man close to me saluted and said he had a complaint. He said that being a Catholic he objected to eating meat on Fridays. The reply he got was, "We are at war, and these difficulties are bound to arise." I think it was the same man who complained about clothing, and some men were later given second-hand clothing.

After the Major-General's visit things altered a little for the better. We were allowed a weekly hot bath and Mass

was celebrated for the first time after about one month's detention. It was quite an occasion for us. The church was thronged and Douglas Ffrench-Mullen played hymns on the organ while 500 prisoners sang lustily. Indeed, so loudly did we raise our voices in devotional song that the people of Knutsford Village, we learned later, were amazed at the volume of sound. A great many of them were hearing some of our hymns for the first time. This religious service, although only lasting half an hour, was a great fillip to us all, and many a prison regulation was broken before and after the Mass.

While in our cells our efforts to communicate in morse code continued. Ted Tuke, who was in the cell beside me—the one formerly occupied by Captain Richard McCormick—did not know the code. I managed to throw a small ball of brown paper containing the morse code alphabet into his cell and I whispered to him to study it. With plenty of time on his hands, it did not take him long to learn it.

At first when I had endeavoured to communicate in the code with James O'Shea in the cell on the other side of me, we had found that it was impossible to give the dot-dash in the way we had been taught. We therefore had to adapt ourselves to the circumstances. At first for the dash we scraped the wall with our hands but this method did not prove very successful: eventually the skin on our hands began to break so we began to use the back of the floor brush instead. This proved more successful.

Another way of putting in the day in the cell was by inspecting the walls which were covered with inscriptions by sentenced British soldiers. They had given names, their term of imprisonment and the regiment to which they belonged. These inscriptions could only have been made with the aid of a pin or the fingernails. A further means of occupying my mind and also providing extra exercise in addition to tramping the length of the cell—six steps one way, six steps back—was to stand on my hands and do a little upside-down walking. I never became quite as expert as others but I managed well enough. One does curious things while alone in a cold prison cell for twenty-three and a half hours out of

every twenty-four.

The first real piece of news that I got through the wall from O'Shea was that Mallin had been shot with others on that very day. He also tapped out a message that Madame Markievicz had been sentenced to death but that the sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment. The reason given for Madame's reprieve was that the British Government was "too humane to shoot a woman".

Naturally I asked O'Shea where he got the information and he told me he had extracted it from the talkative British army corporal in charge of our section. A man named Moy, he had been wounded at the front. O'Shea explained to me that he had induced Corporal Moy to talk by complaining that he was not feeling too well. During the course of the ensuing conversation he gleaned the information from the corporal about Mallin and Madame, on the understanding that he would never repeat it. O'Shea and the corporal continued to have short friendly talks. The fact that O'Shea's cell was the last one in the wing provided the opportunity, to say nothing of his ability to coax information from the corporal or for that matter from anybody else. He had an unusual capacity for creating confidence.

One Saturday morning about six weeks after our arrival at Knutsford Prison we were told by the officer, in charge of the guards that we could speak to each other, but they still kept us three paces apart when marching. This too was soon eased and we were told we could break up and walk around without any restrictions. The buzz of voices had a tremendous effect on us all after our weeks of almost absolute silence. We got a feeling that everything was going around thereby causing a slight dizziness. This, fortunately, only lasted a short while.

The change from solitary confinement proved to be just the first of many unexpected but very welcome concessions. We were allowed out for two hours in the forenoon and for two hours in the afternoon. We could mix freely with any of our comrades and also carry on conversation without any restriction whatever. When we arrived back to the various wings of the prison on the first day of the changed con-

ditions our doors were locked as usual, but we had freedom to shout and sing and to do practically any normal thing that we wished. I remember that on that same Saturday evening I felt like singing and had sung a number of songs at the highest pitch of my voice. I was half way through "My Dark Rosaleen" when a knock came to the cell door. The warder, speaking to me from the outside, said, "There are some of your boys attending Confession. Would it be possible for you to sing in a lower tone of voice?" This was indeed a shock to me, but I thanked the warder for giving me the information and said I would cease singing immediately.

Only those having the experience before and after the change of regulations could possibly understand the extraordinary effect on us. The day before we could not make a sound. Now we were free to make all the noise we wanted and were only requested, as in this particular instance, instead of being ordered, to observe silence.

A Visitor from Dublin

On that same Saturday morning we had our first visitor in the person of Mr Alfie Byrne, MP, later to become Lord Mayor of Dublin. It would appear that he had advance information of the changes which had taken place on that day but he came amongst us unannounced. On his arrival a group of Citizen Army men who had been together in many operations prior to and during Easter Week were in conversation and seeing who our visitor was I suggested that we should sit down at the wall and ignore him. This suggestion was accepted by our group. Eventually, much to our disgust, the numbers around Byrne increased. This necessitated a change of tactics on our part. Again I suggested that this was too much to be endured and that we should go and break it up. We approached the group that was surrounding him and wormed our way through. He was asserting that "every-

thing was going to be all right", that the Irish Parliamentary Party was doing everything possible to obtain the release of the prisoners and that they had a definite promise of Home Rule.

I broke into his talk. "Listen to me for a few moments, please. We have brought about a situation by blood and by the sacrifice of some of the greatest men in Ireland and we are not going to allow you or the Parliamentary Party to undo that good work. If any action of yours or of the Irish Parliamentary Party harms or interferes with the work that has been done we will hold you personally accountable for it and we will deal with you accordingly."

Then turning to the men who had been listening to Byrne I said, "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, allowing this man to fool you. Have you forgotten why you are here? If you haven't you will cease having any further conversation with him."

At this stage the crowd broke up and left Alfie to himself. That was the last we saw of him in Knutsford Detention Barracks. He did visit individuals afterwards in Frongoch Internment Camp, but that was something outside my control. The occasion at Knutsford was the only time in my life that I have spoken to Alfie Byrne.

My attitude to him was caused by his activities when the members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union were fighting for recognition. He and others tried to break their solidarity by forming an opposition union which had the support of the Dublin employers. A member of the Dublin Corporation, Byrne was elected to the British Parliament early in 1915.

Meanwhile a large parcel of sandwiches and cigarettes had been taken into the prison by fellow Irish men and women who were living in Manchester. This gift earned the praise of every prisoner for the good Irish people of Manchester. It was an unexpected treat and so all the more appreciated. And then on the following Sunday I had a very welcome visit from my relations who lived in Warrington, eleven miles from Knutsford. As time went by I like many of my comrades had further visits from relatives in England and Ireland. Their

visits gave us all great heart and our visitors too were very glad to see that our spirit remained unbroken.

Knutsford to Frongoch

Despite the easing of the prison restrictions and the temporary relief provided by the occasional visitors, life at Knutsford had become increasingly depressing, especially for the younger and more high-spirited of our colleagues. The grim aspect of the prison itself, with its red-brick wings and high encircling walls, was hardly calculated to create an atmosphere of joyousness.

It was therefore with a release of tension, amounting almost to excitement, that we welcomed the news that we were to be transferred to an internment camp at Frongoch, near Bala in North Wales. The news of our new "home" came in the form of internment orders served on each prisoner. The immediate prospect pleased us. We knew nothing of internment camps. I cannot now recall what we envisaged. Barbed wire, perhaps, but you could see green fields through barbed wire. And we had had more than enough of high walls, cold cells and clanging iron doors.

In the event our introduction to this former German prisoner-of-war camp was not entirely unpleasant. But our arrival was certainly not propitious. When the first prisoners were transferred they were met at Bala railway station by some officers of the camp who instructed the Knutsford guards on how we should reach our destination. At the camp the internees were lined up and handed over to the commandant. There was a sergeant major in charge of the camp arrangements, an officious customer who had seen long service in the British army in many countries. He breezed along our ranks like a ship in full sail—it could have been amusing had he not insisted on questioning each prisoner and searching for prohibited articles. This he announced loudly.

We had nothing because of the rigorous conditions of Knutsford. As each batch of prisoners entered the camp the sergeant major whose name has escaped me, always insisted on looking particularly for jack-knives. Because of this he was known as "Jack-knives". The commandant of the prison was nicknamed "Buckshot" because he, like the sergeant major, insisted on reminding each new group of prisoners that all the guards were armed with buckshot, that they were excellent shots and that they had instructions to shoot any prisoner who ventured to approach the camp perimeter wires.

It had been arranged that the prisoners would be transferred from Knutsford in small numbers and by the time my name was reached the South Camp at Frongoch was filled almost to capacity. When I arrived at the South Camp I was allocated to No 5 dormitory and had for some of my companions Jimmy Slattery, who was later to have a distinguished service in the fight for freedom, and Henry Dixon, solicitor. Dixon followed daily a very rigorous regime. Every morning at six o'clock, half an hour before the whistle went for Reveille, he went to the shower-room and took a cold shower after which he walked around the compound, irrespective of the weather, until call. When this was finished he resumed his walk until breakfast hours. I would estimate that Mr Dixon was then a man of over seventy years. His vigour earned our admiration.

Breakfast was at seven thirty, dinner at noon and tea at six. The food, although on ration, was very much more palatable than the Knutsford menu. We had another welcome culinary diversion: parcels were coming in to prisoners very frequently and there was always a little extra at tea time. In addition, for those prisoners with cash available there was a shop which sold a limited number of commodities, eatable and otherwise.

Regulations laid down that all prisoners had to be indoors by nine thirty both morning and night for a check-over. The lights were put out at ten pm. As might be expected the younger spirits were always in trouble because of their activities after "lights-out".

Within our in-jail organisation we had our own officers

in control of camp affairs, subject of course, to rules laid down by the British. There was a tendency on our part to be rebellious and to refuse to carry out orders. Many of us felt that co-operation should not be given to the British, but appeals were made from time to time by our officers who argued that this was something that we were doing for ourselves, and that at least we should show discipline and do nothing that would prove to the British authorities that our officers could not control us. It took some time for many of us to accept this point of view, but eventually we did and things went much more smoothly than in the early stages of our internment. At a later stage it was indeed to prove a blessing when efforts were being made by the prison authorities to select some of our colleagues for punishment or for conscription into the British army. We made their efforts impossible by hunger strikes and by refusal to answer roll call. It was our united action under our own leaders' orders that convinced our captors that they were wasting their time and that we were not to be coerced.

We had concerts practically every night and football during the mornings and afternoons. Looking back on it over the decades one could say that the conditions in the camp were much better than in the prison. I had my first shave in about two months in the camp from James Mallon, who later in civilian life traded under the name of "The Frongoch Barber" in an Eden Quay shop which was attached to Liberty Hall.

At the evening concerts songs which we used to sing in Dublin before the Insurrection were eagerly demanded by the men from rural areas who were interned with us. This was probably how the songs of the pre-1916 period became so widely known and sung all over Ireland in the next couple of years, during the Black and Tan period.

Our comrades in the North Camp made daily visits to collect letters, visit the doctor and for various legitimate reasons, but the number coming down grew so rapidly that further visits were banned. After a short time more stringent rules were introduced. The British authorities probably felt that there was some danger in large numbers of men

coming from the North Camp on these visits and the change was considered necessary in the interests of security.

But as internees we enjoyed a new concession. Route marches were introduced. These marches took place about three times a week, which meant that we got outside the camp for fairly considerable periods. These outings proved to be good exercise and were most welcome. They took us away from the camp surroundings, gave us an opportunity to admire the countryside, and also provided a certain amount of mental relaxation. The frequency of the marches was generally dictated by the numbers of guards at the disposal of the camp authorities. These guards were all older men who had enlisted in the British Home Guard. During one of the marches the British officer in front discovered that he had left the guard behind and was marching smartly at the head of the column of prisoners. On realising this—and it must have given him a jolt—he called a halt to enable the guard to overtake us. I am sure that our singing helped in creating this little bit of confusion as all the marching songs which we used to sing prior to the Insurrection were rendered with great gusto on the route marches.

On one occasion there was no route march for an interval of several days because no guard was available to look after us. I cannot vouch for its accuracy but the story that went the rounds of the camp was to the effect that the camp commandant was approached by a young officer about giving his consent to a route march. The requisite guard was not available but the young officer was undaunted. "I don't want any guard with these Irishmen," he told the commandant. "I'll put them on their word of honour, and I can state now that I will bring back every man who marches out of the gate with me."

Sad to relate the commandant did not agree to his proposal. I often wondered if that young officer had Irish blood!

From time to time in Frongoch Camp we had meetings attended by our own officers. I remember "Dickeen" Fitzgerald attending the first meeting. The first I saw of him was at Jones's Road, as Croke Park was then known to me, when

I was a nine-year-old boy. On that day a Kerry versus Kildare match was played and Kerry won by five points to three. Dickeen was the hero of the Kerry team and was carried off shoulder high. General opinion had it at that time that Dickeen was on the eve of leaving for the U.S.A. On the day of the Frongoch meeting Dickeen was very impatient, and at one stage he snapped at his Volunteer colleagues to stop talking. "I want to hear from the Irish Citizen Army men for whom I have a great regard," he said. This, of course, made us very proud.

An Advisory Committee

A short while after this we were informed that an advisory committee had been set up to investigate each prisoner's case and to recommend to the British Government what action should be taken. The prisoners were taken in batches in alphabetical order from the camp and sent to London, which was a whole day's journey. Men were sent each day, some to Wormwood Scrubs Prison and others to Wandsworth Prison. The batch of prisoners in which I was included was taken to Wandsworth. We were each given a separate cell. On my way to the cell a prisoner in British army uniform polishing the floor said to me in a low voice, "Is the war nearly over?" I told him that by the look of things it was not, but that "the Germans were hammering hell out of the British." The next thing I heard from the prisoner was a long drawn out sigh of despair, as if he were saying, "Will all this never end." I learned next day that he and the other prisoners in Wandsworth were conscientious objectors.

On our second day in Wandsworth we were brought before the advisory commitee. It was under the chairmanship of Judge Sankey, who afterwards became Lord Sankey and Chancellor of the Exchequer in the first Labour Government. On our way to the room where the investigation was being held we were met by a solicitor, a man called McDonnell. He had been engaged by fellow Irishmen and

women in London to advise as to how we should act and how we should answer the questions that would be put to us by the committee. I was one of the first few of my batch to be seen by the committee and I heard the advice which the solicitor was giving. My youthful impetuousness drove me to interrupt him and say that we were very thankful to our London Irish friends for their kind thought in providing his services. I did not, I said, wish to cast any reflection on his advice or on the good intentions of our London friends, but I thought it was a waste of effort on his part and a waste of good money on their part. As far as we were concerned, I told him, we were not retracting in any way from the stand we had taken. This line, I am glad to record, was followed generally by the remainder of the prisoners and our friend McDonnell's advice was disregarded.

In the centre of the large conference room where the Sankey Commission met, a group of men sat along one side of a large table, I was ushered to the opposite side of the table and found myself facing Judge Sankey. He addressed me by my christian name and opened the conversation rather surprisingly. "Good day, Frank. Won't you sit down?" I did so and thanked him.

He then said, "Your name is Frank Robbins?"

"Yes."

"Your home address is 39, North William Street, Dublin?"

"Yes."

"You are a member of the Irish Citizen Army?" he asked. The answer was again in the affirmative. "You did not reside at your home address since 24th April?"

"That is not correct." With this reply there was rustling and shuffling of papers and I was asked to say when I had last resided at my home address.

I gave them the date, Thursday 23rd March.

There was a further rustling and shuffling of papers.These straightforward answers seemed to have upset those holding the brief prepared in Dublin for the use of the advisory committee.

I was then asked by Judge Sankey where my place of residence was between 23rd March and 24th April, and I

replied, "Liberty Hall."

He then asked me what I was engaged in at Liberty Hall. My answer was, "Guard duty and helping in the making of munitions."

Judge Sankey then said to me, "Frank, you are down here as having the occupation of a driller. Tell us what that means."

I replied, "That is the designation of my trade in the Dublin Dockyard."

"I thought it meant that you were drilling holes in soldiers", said Judge Sankey with a wry smile. At this there was a general laugh.

His next question was in the form of a suggestion that I had been forced to take part in the Insurrection against His Majesty's Government. I replied, "That is not so. I entered into the Insurrection of my own free will and with full knowledge of what I was doing."

He then suggested that I did not take an active part in the shooting, that I was probably attached to the Red Cross. I told him that that was not so, as I did not know anything about Red Cross work. He then wanted to know whether I had fired many shots, and my reply was that they were uncountable. He then asked, "Do you think you killed or wounded many of His Majesty's soldiers?"

To which I replied, "I could not say, not being at the other end." This reply was followed by more general laughter.

After some other incidental questions Judge Sankey turned to the rest of the committee and asked had they any questions to put to me. None of them having any further question the Judge said to me, "Well Frank, would you like to go home to your own family again?" My reply was that it was in his hands whether I would be able to do so or not.

Again he turned to the other members of the committee asking if they had any questions to ask. Having ascertained that there were no further questions, Judge Sankey brought the interview to a close saying courteously, "Thank you very much, Frank. Good day." I was ushered out through another door so that I could not communicate with any of my comrades who had yet to be interrogated.

The next day we were taken from Wandsworth under military guard in large charabancs and a few people en route waved tricolour flags as we passed. This brought us to the unfavourable notice of some citizens of London who threw missiles, shook their fists and made other rude gestures. When our vehicle was stopped because of traffic jams some of the spectators shouted filthy expressions at us. On such occasions we retaliated by calling our abusers slackers. "We fought for our country, you go fight for your country."

Eventually we arrived at the railway station and were entrained for our return to Frongoch Internment Camp.

7 · Freedom and a Mission

It was not long before we learned the first results of the advisory committee's work. Lord Sankey worked quickly. While batches of prisoners were still going before the committee for examination, others who had already been interrogated were now being released and sent home. Those set free under the advice of the committee were apparently regarded as the least recalcitrant type as far as the British Government was concerned, but how the committee arrived at some of their decisions is hard to explain because some of those held in prison were more innocent of hostile action against the British Empire than were some who were released. Perhaps it was a case of the committee shutting their eyes, taking a pin, sticking it in certain names and recommending the lucky ones for release. I was one of the lucky ones. I was released about the middle of August, 1916.

On our arrival at Dublin's Westland Row Railway Station I experienced one of the greatest surprises of my life. What a contrast with the humiliating day of our departure. The reception given to us by the Dublin people was beyond description. A very large force of D.M.P. was around Westland Row but they were simply overwhelmed by the throng of people that greeted us on our appearance at the exits. From there up to Tara Street not one of us had a moment without some man's or some woman's arms around us, kissing us, slapping us on the back, and practically carrying us through the streets. It was our moment of real triumph which well repaid us for our day of surrender and the subsequent insults.

One of my younger brothers, William, met me at Westland Row and gave me a wonderful welcome. When eventually and unexpectedly we arrived at our home my mother and my eldest brother, John, and my two younger sisters, Agnes and Margaret, stood dumbfounded for a few moments

The scenes as Dubliners welcomed home the released 1916 prisoners—
a sharp contrast to the attitude of the public during the Insurrection

and then tears of joy rolled down their faces. What a moment of emotion and excitement!

My father was not at home and I was told I would find him with Matt Talbot (to become Blessed and soon, it seems, to be canonised) either at the Charleville Mall Library or on Newcomen Bridge when the evening devotions were over in St Agatha's Church in nearby North William Street. After a short reunion with my family I went out to seek my father who, when I had last seen him on Easter Sunday at Liberty Hall, had given me a stern ultimatum. "Come home with me tonight," he said, and when my answer was, "No, I cannot," he retorted, "In that case you can never come home to our house again."

I had replied "Father, I am sorry to hear you say that, but if that is the way it is to be, it will be so."

Now my mind was turning over what would happen when we met again. What would he say? These were the questions swirling through my mind when I arrived at Charleville Mall. We saw each other when a short distance apart. He came hurrying towards me, put his hands on my shoulders and with tears running from his eyes said, "Son, I am glad to see you." My reply was, "Thanks, Father." I could find no other words to say. None were needed. We stood there for what seemed an hour but it could not have been more than a few minutes. No other words passed our lips. When the spell was broken we talked freely to each other. Neither he nor I had any more worries regarding our feelings resulting from our strained conversation on Easter Sunday night.

On my release from Frongoch Internment Camp a number of us, including Michael Donnelly who had been released a short time before me, began to pick up the threads of the Citizen Army organisation. We held a number of meetings at the Eden Quay end of Liberty Hall, and one of the first things we decided to concentrate on was the procuring of arms. How to do this was the question. There was neither money nor contacts nor any form of organisation. But at least we laid a basis for the future and had one or two small successes in obtaining arms in the short period that I remained in Dublin.

A few days after my return to Dublin, believing that re-employment in the Dublin Dockyard was out of the question, I accepted an offer of a job as a fireman on the S.S. *Ramore Head* belonging to the Head Line. My first trip was from Dublin to Montreal and then back to Belfast. Some weeks after my return from this voyage, Thomas Foran, General President of the I.T.G.W.U., entrusted me with an important mission. He gave me the Chicago address of James Larkin and instructed me to contact him and to acquaint him of the Union's situation, to inquire about his plans for the future and in particular to ask him whether he was returning to Ireland.

I planned to cross to Glasgow and from there to get a job on one of the Anchor Line ships which left Glasgow for New York every Friday. Foran, with whom I had many conversations before my departure, arranged for me to be given the sum of two pounds by way of financial assistance. I judged that this would be sufficient as I expected to have a job and be on my way within a few days. However, I did not know that one of the Anchor Line ships (the *Cameronian*, I think) had been sunk by a German submarine. As a result I did not get away from Glasgow for almost a fortnight and was saved from a shortage of funds only by Foran's Glasgow contact, "Joseph Kinsella" (his real name was Joseph Byrne and he was a former captain in the Citizen Army).

Foran also gave me a letter of introduction to Emmanuel Shinwell, the General Secretary of the British Seafarers' Union, later honoured for his services to Labour and made a member of the House of Lords. His Union was a break-away from the national Seamen and Firemen's Union of which Havelock Wilson was the General Secretary. Emmanuel Shinwell's Union controlled the port of Glasgow and some other British ports as well. Foran said that Shinwell was a good socialist and could be relied upon to help me. When I called to the Union office in the Bromilaw I met Mr Shinwell who turned out to be a smallish young man some years my senior. He read Foran's letter, asking his assistance to place me in a job. I then got the bad news that no ship would be sailing until the following Friday week. Then it would be the

Tuscania. I agreed to wait for this signing, so Shinwell gave me the particulars as to the day of signing and where the ship would be docked. He took my name and promised to arrange to submit it to the Anchor Line on the official list supplied by the Union. On the day of signing I had to pass through a group of detectives. The first two took one of my hands and arms testing for roughness and strength, and at the same time engaging me in conversation. This close examination was designed to prevent men from leaving the country to escape conscription. During the war almost every British ship leaving American ports on its homeward trip had a depleted crew because of men jumping ship.

But to return to Byrne, alias Kinsella. A picture (reproduced earlier) of Byrne with Christopher Poole, William Lacey and Joseph Fox (all in Citizen Army uniform on the roof of Liberty Hall facing a British army post on the railway line at Butt Bridge at the outbreak of World War 1) was in many English and Irish newspapers. He had been in the British army and had been recalled to his regiment at the outbreak of the war in 1914. Jospeh Byrne answered the call-up and was given a short home leave. As far as we knew he returned to the British army on the expiration of his leave. He was seen boarding the Liverpool boat on his way to France, but with the help of some friends he left his army kit on board, dressed in civilian attire, came ashore and boarded another boat going to Glasgow. It was like meeting an old friend and I stayed with his family until I obtained a job on the *Tuscania*.

When I was in Glasgow Byrne brought me to several labour and socialist meetings. My first visit was to the Catholic Socialist Party meeting on a Sunday afternoon which was attended by between 400 and 500 people. When the lecture was over the chairman announced that as Miss Margaret Skinnider was present he would ask her to sing an Irish song. It was a tremendous pleasure to me to see Miss Skinnider again. The last time I had seen her, as I have previously recalled, was in the College of Surgeons during Easter Week when three other men and I helped to transfer her in a badly wounded condition from one bed to another. On that oc-

casion I thought it was the last time I would see Miss Skinnider alive. The meeting over, Miss Skinnider and I compared notes, and on learning that I was seeking a ship for New York she was most anxious that I take certain messages to her brother Thomas. I need hardly mention that what I was taking to the brother were documents that would not have passed the British postal authorities. She expected to be in New York before the end of the year.

I Meet John Devoy

On the day of my arrival in New York my worldly wealth consisted of the princely sum of ten cents. I had had about one shilling in English money when I boarded the *Tuscania* in Glasgow, not the sort of money normally associated with those who undertake a mission to New York.

I struck up a friendship on the ship with a young Donegal man who had a sister living in Brooklyn and placed myself under his care to ensure myself getting at least that far in my search for Thomas Skinnider. He took me to the 33rd Street ferry. The fare was three cents. I do not know in what part of Brooklyn we arrived but I do know that I walked for more than four hours before reaching 432 Emerson Place, off De Kalb Avenue. I walked for neary three hours after parting with my Donegal friend and during my long trek I must have sought directions from every police officer I saw. Each and everyone of them was very helpful in directing me to my destination but they were frankly astonished that I should go by way of shank's mare. They were, of course, unaware of my economic problems. I had crossed the river by boat and by boat must return. A street car would have cost me five cents, leaving me with two cents. Supposing Thomas Skinnider was not at home, how was I to get back to the *Tuscania* with only two cents in my pocket? It was not an auspicious introduction to New York.

I was tired and hungry when I finally contacted Thomas Skinnider. I handed him over the documents which his sister

Photographed during Eamon De Valera's visit to New York in 1917. *Standing:* Harry Boland, Liam Mellows, Eamon De Valera, Dr Patrick McCartan and Diarmuid Lynch. *Seated:* John Devoy

had given me and told him of her plan to visit him in the near future. That evening he brought me to the flat of Captain Monteith's wife and family at 118th Street and 3rd Avenue in the Bronx where we had an interesting evening, recounting old times in Dublin. Monteith, who had returned from Germany with Roger Casement and who had landed from the U-boat at Banna Strand, Co Kerry, was at this time still in Ireland and on the run from British troops.

Before leaving me that evening Skinnider gave me a half dollar for car fare and warned me that should I lose my way I should under no circumstances accept directions from anyone other than a police officer. He then left me at the Monteith flat to go to work. I was entertained by Mrs Monteith

and her family until about midnight. Her son by her first marriage, David McEvoy, a fine intelligent young man, left me to the subway station, giving me instructions on where I should go when I got out at 14th Street. I am afraid his advice did not register with me. I found myself on the East Side of Manhattan instead of the West Side. There was neither sight nor sign of the Cunard Line Sheds and at this time I had not realised that Manhattan was an island. I wandered around lost and very tired. Eventually I met a working man and asked directions to the Cunard Line Shed. He said in broken English, "You come, I show." At 12th Street I dug my heels in and refused to go further. Realising that his insistence was not bearing fruit he ended up by saying, "You go to bloody hell." Gladly I parted company, found my way back to 14th Street, and eventually to the ship, very much relieved.

Before leaving Monteith's Thomas Skinnider had given me an invitation to stay with him. I turned his suggestion over in my mind for a number of days and eventually on the Sunday, the day before the *Tuscania* was due to sail on her homeward trip, I decided to leave the ship.

Next day Skinnider took me down to the *Gaelic American* office to introduce me to John Devoy, the great old Fenian and the moving spirit of the Clan na Gael organisation. Devoy was not there when we arrived but I met John Kenny, a very close associate of Devoy, Seamus McDermott, brother of Sean McDermott the 1916 leader and James Reidy, a confidant of John Devoy. These introductions over, Skinnider took me to a place called Greenville, outside Jersey City, where he had some very old friends from Donegal. Between them all I was fixed up with a job in the Thompson Freight Yard. I will always remember the kindness of Thomas Skinnider. He paid my board and lodgings in advance over a period of weeks and helped me with other necessities.

I continued to visit the Monteiths, as they were the only other Irish people of our circle that I knew, but, not being very suitably dressed, I refused invitations from the family to go to see some Irish societies' functions. With my first half month's pay I bought my first American suit for seven

dollars. The exchange rate of the dollar at that time was four shillings and twopence. My first visit to an Irish function was arranged by Miss Florrie Monteith who took me to the Philo-Celtic Society which met at that time at 59th Street and Madison Avenue. There I was delighted to meet a few of the men who had taken part in the Insurrection in Easter Week, Paddy and Hugh Holohan of Amiens Street, Dublin, whom I have mentioned earlier, and also Dan Hannigan from Louth and Martin Walsh who was wounded in the Ashbourne fight during the Insurrection. The Philo-Celtic Society was conducted on the same lines as our Gaelic League classes, one part of the evening being devoted to learning Irish and the other part to Irish dancing, with Irish songs in between.

The president of the Society was an O'Rourke from Mayo or Roscommon. He was looking for singers and Miss Monteith informed him that I could sing many Irish songs. On being introduced by Mr O'Rourke as a native of Dublin and a member of the Citizen Army the crowded hall gave me a tremendous welcome. After my fourth song the crowd was still looking for more, but Mr O'Rourke intervened. That night brought me to the notice of Irish-American clubs and other Irish organisations and many invitations were extended to me to attend various functions. One of my contributions was inevitably "A Soldier's Song" and the words and music were later published by Father O'Reilly under the name "Soldiers of Erin" and sold at twenty-five cents a copy. David McEvoy, whom I coached in the correct music and timing, used to give it a rousing rendition.

Shortly after the Cuman na mBan in New York were having a function and among those present was John Devoy. This was the first occasion on which I had the very great pleasure of meeting this wonderful man. The two of us seemed to strike a sympathetic chord, so much so that during my stay in New York he gave me many confidences and our friendship grew with time. He was so perfectly natural and down to earth in his always practical approach to the many problems he experienced. He detested humbug and gave straightforward answers to any questions put to him. He expected the same approach from others. I must

have entered a special niche for on many occasions at the *Gaelic American* office in William Street he gave me much time and attention.

Devoy's knowledge of world affairs was amazing. He could foresee developments well in advance of most writers. Had he not been single-minded in the cause of Irish freedom, and had he chosen instead to seek personal fame and fortune, he could have commanded a very high salary in the American newspaper world. He preferred to travel a lonely, tortuous and unpopular path for the meagre salary of twenty-five dollars per week, which he regarded as being sufficient to take care of his very simple way of life. His only regard was the advancement and, if possible, the achievement of the freedom of Ireland, and to be counted as one who had given service to that cause throughout his whole life.

While I was in America James Connolly's daughter Nora, whom I met on many occasions, had some interesting things to tell me of her activities. She described a visit to New York prior to the 1916 Insurrection. Around 1915 it was well known that concrete ships were being built in the shipyards in Belfast and presumably in other shipbuilding ports. Information leaked out that these ships were to be used for the blocking of the Zeebrugge Canal which was the operational headquarters of the German submarine command. Such a scheme, if successful, would have blocked the U-boat exits and Connolly thought the news important enough to warrant sending his daughter to New York to see John Devoy, and have him arrange an interview for her with Count Bernstorff, the German Ambassador. As her mission was of a highly confidential character her father had impressed upon her that on no account must she make contact with any one prior to giving her information to the German envoy. Subsequently she could use her own judgement as to who she would tell of her mission. John Devoy arranged the interview and Nora gave the information directly to the Ambassador.

It was through Nora that I first made my acquaintance with Liam Mellows, recognised as their leader by all the "1916 exiles" and a man who was to feature prominently

in my life until his tragic execution in 1922. We were at some function and she gave me Mellows's address. I met him at the home of Mr and Mrs Patrick Kirwan at 73 West 96th Street, New York City, in early January of 1917. It thrilled me to talk to a man who had been so influential at home in revolutionary circles. We became close friends even though over the years we were often in strong disagreement as to the best method of obtaining national freedom. In appreciation of our friendship Mellows subsequently gave me a copy of John Mitchel's *Jail Journal*. On the fly leaf he wrote:

"Éire am in Éire nuadh,
More a bládh, ro mór a buadh;
No boi an druim domoin donn, Do Phroinsias MacRoibín
Tír soir no siar co degfonn." Saighdiúr na hEireann

ó Liam O Maeliosa Nodlaig 1917.

Soon after meeting Mellows, I with the rest of the 1916 men received an invitation to attend a Clan na Gael convention. As far as I can remember it was held in the Central Opera House. The floor and the balconies were packed with Irish-Americans, all leading members of the various Clan na Gael Clubs. On the platform that day were John Devoy, Judge Daniel F. Cohalan, Laurence Rice, Richard F. Dalton, John Kenny, John Carroll, Peter Golden and other well-known Irish-Americans. All the speeches related to the history of Ireland's fight for freedom and referred to Easter Week as another chapter in that long struggle. The climax of the convention was when all the Easter Week exiles were introduced, and the different areas in which we had fought were named.

Then came the real purpose of the meeting. John Devoy and Judge Cohalan made a moving appeal for funds to carry on the good work. Various delegates in their enthusiasm jumped to their feet claiming the attention of the platform. They announced the amounts they themselves were personally guaranteeing and what the various clubs which they represented would contribute. They were almost shouting each other down in their anxiety to be heard.

James Larkin with Big Bill Haywood, the American labour leader

The gathering was a wonderful success. John Carroll, the Senior Guardian of the Napper Tandy Clan na Gael Club, invited me to become attached to that 'Circle'. At my first meeting he brought Martin Walsh, referred to earlier, and myself to the platform. A great deal of interest and curiosity was displayed when two young men unknown to them were given the place of honour alongside the Senior Guardian. When the normal buisness was concluded John Carroll introduced us. We received a warm reception. Walsh was then asked to describe the fight at Ashbourne. I anticipated that I would be expected to tell my story also and while Walsh was speaking I was in a flood of perspiration. Had I been able to escape from the hall without making a fool of myself I would not have hesitated for a moment. When my turn came to make my first-ever speech my knees trembled so much I wondered how long my legs would bear me up. I began to speak. To this day I cannot remember a word I said. After a short time my confidence returned and when I finished speaking I got a wonderful ovation, not perhaps for a great speech, but for the story I told which was so near to the hearts of my hearers.

My Encounter with Larkin

About the end of November 1916, in pursuance of the main purpose of any trip to the United States, I had written a letter to James Larkin. Late in December 1916 or in the very early days of the following January I had an express letter from Larkin in reply. He asked me to meet him at eleven am in the Continental Hotel, off 41st Street. The letter did not reach me until ten thirty that same day, and I had at least one and half hours' journey from where I was living in Greenville, Jersey City. Besides that, I was now on night work and was in bed when the letter arrived. However, in my anxiety to meet Larkin, I rushed off to the Continental Hotel where I arrived around noon.

In his letter Larkin stated that he had registered into the hotel under the name of James Lawson. On inquiry I found that he was not in and I decided that I would wait no matter how long it would take. After some time a middle-aged man arrived at the inquiry desk and I heard him ask for Mr Larkin, insisting that he had an appointment with him at that time. The attendants in the hotel made inquiries but still the answer was that there was no Mr Larkin residing there. I thought it best to contact the gentleman and explain to him that Larkin was registered in the hotel as James Lawson. The man was surprised at hearing this, and at first regarded me with some suspicion. However, having recovered from his surprise, he showed me Larkin's letter which did not reveal that he was staying under an assumed name. My new acquaintance turned out to be a Cork man named Twomey. He and I became very friendly. On learning that I was a member of the Citizen Army and only recently arrived from Ireland, he was anxious to get all the information concerning the fighting in Easter Week. We spent a number of hours together, during which time we had lunch in a restaurant close by. Before going to lunch we left a message for James Lawson (Larkin) in case he returned to the hotel while we were absent. There was no appearance and finally Twomey could not wait any longer.

Larkin finally arrived at the hotel around eight pm. I had waited over eight hours in my anxiety to give him my message from Thomas Foran. Larkin seemed less interested in hearing the message than in making charges against John Devoy, Judge Cohalan and other Irish people in America. The interview took place in his room. To my surprise his targets included Connolly, Clarke, Pearse and MacDonagh. Connolly, he said, had no right to be connected with the Insurrection; it should have been left to Pearse, MacDonagh and the other poets. He, Larkin, had sent Connolly a cable, over the signature "Mary" telling him to call it all off.

At this stage, I intervened. "Mr. Larkin", I said, "you don't know what you're talking about. Connolly could do nothing else, and if you had been there you could have done nothing else either, unless back down, which would have meant the

complete defeat of the Irish nation ending in the conscription of Irishmen into the British Army."

Larkin's reaction to this was that he felt very sore against Connolly for sending his sister, Delia Larkin, away from Liberty Hall. I was disappointed and incensed at this and replied, "Mr Larkin, you have got one side of the story and I am going to give you the other side now." I recalled the activities of Delia and the other "soreheads" who supported her including P. T. Daly and Sean O'Casey. I told him of her conduct towards the people who were trying to save the Union from extinction. I reminded him of the Union's low ebb before he left for America. Membership had almost vanished. There were many thousands of pounds of pressing debts. The fact was that were it not for the house game (an early form of Bingo) which provided receipts of from £40 to £50 per week, and which paid current expenses, the Union would have collapsed.

Larkin then switched his tactics to a further condemnation of Devoy, Cohalan and other Irish-American leaders. He said that in his opinion Devoy, although a good man in the past, was now out of date and too old, and that Cohalan and the crowd around him were just "cheap American politicians". Larkin went on to tell me of alleged hairbreadth escapes he had had from time to time. Then he drew his valise from under the bed and in a dramatic fashion showed me two small sticks of gelignite, stating, "This is the kind of work we are doing here."

Having just survived a revolution at home in Ireland this bombastic episode left me cold, particularly when I recalled that only a few minutes earlier Larkin had been condemning Connolly, Pearse, MacDonagh and our other leaders.

From that night onward I could not keep Larkin on the high plane which he had held in my esteem hitherto. In fact he went down to rock bottom in my estimation. The fact that he tried to belittle his own colleague, James Connolly, not to mention Pearse, Clarke, MacDonagh and the other men who had willingly given their lives in the cause of Irish freedom, was something I could not accept. In the intervening years since I had last seen Larkin, I had prepared for

and had come through a revolution which he was now decrying. Suddenly there flashed through my mind a small news item which I had read in Knutsford Detention Barracks. It was from a Dublin daily newspaper giving an extract from a speech made in America by Larkin. One quotation seemed to have embedded itself in my memory: "The British Government in shooting James Connolly destroyed one of the cleverest men of Labour thought in Europe. He was my lieutenant." I now began fully to realise just how great a man Connolly had proved to be!

After this dramatic confrontation Larkin took me to a socialist meeting that same evening somewhere in New York. These meetings were held for the purpose of keeping America out of the war, and to advocate pacifism. Eugene V. Debs, a man who suffered much for his principles, was the spearhead of the movement. Larkin intervened in the discussion and asked some question which was apparently intended to be devastating to the chief speaker. Actually it turned out to be a boomerang and the audience laughed him into silence.

In the next day or two Larkin introduced me to a friend and admirer of his named Eamon McAlpine. In my presence McAlpine paid tribute to Larkin saying, "If it was not for you, Jim, and 1913, there would never have been an Easter Week Insurrection in 1916. It was not the poets, Pearse and MacDonagh who made Easter Week, it was you, Jim."

McAlpine was a reporter on a New York Socialist paper *The Call*. Earlier I had promised to give him my story of the Citizen Army and Easter Week. But having heard these comments and with no attempt by Larkin to correct him, I resolved that McAlpine would not get the story about Easter Week from me. Larkin, my idol for many years, had failed me. Instead I saw now a man with feet of clay.

8 · Experiences of the Irish Movement in America

To Obtain Guns!

In March 1917, Liam Mellows told me of a projected trip to Germany to arrange for the landing of arms in Ireland. The plan provided for three separate landings in counties Wexford, Down and Clare. He was to procure a job on a fruit boat leaving New York for Montevideo and from there take a ship to Spain, where arrangements were to be made for his transfer to Germany by submarine. He thought the job was too big for one man. Thinking he was seeking assistance I volunteered to join him in the venture. Mellows said I would be his first choice were he free but "our friends down town" (meaning the Clan na Gael Revolutionary Directory) had expressed the view that it was a "one man job". It was not for me to make a comment but I thought that had Mellows pressed the need for a second man it would have been conceded. He was not very conversant with dockside life, so I spent a number of days with him sniffing around the docks but without success. In many ways I found him to be a bit of an introvert which made it very difficult for him to mix with the many different kinds of men one meets in sailors' haunts.

In all this project Mellows bound me to absolute secrecy. I was a little shocked when he emphasised that I must not discuss it even with James Larkin. I also told him that if he objected to Larkin on the grounds that he was a socialist,

To the President and Congress of the United St

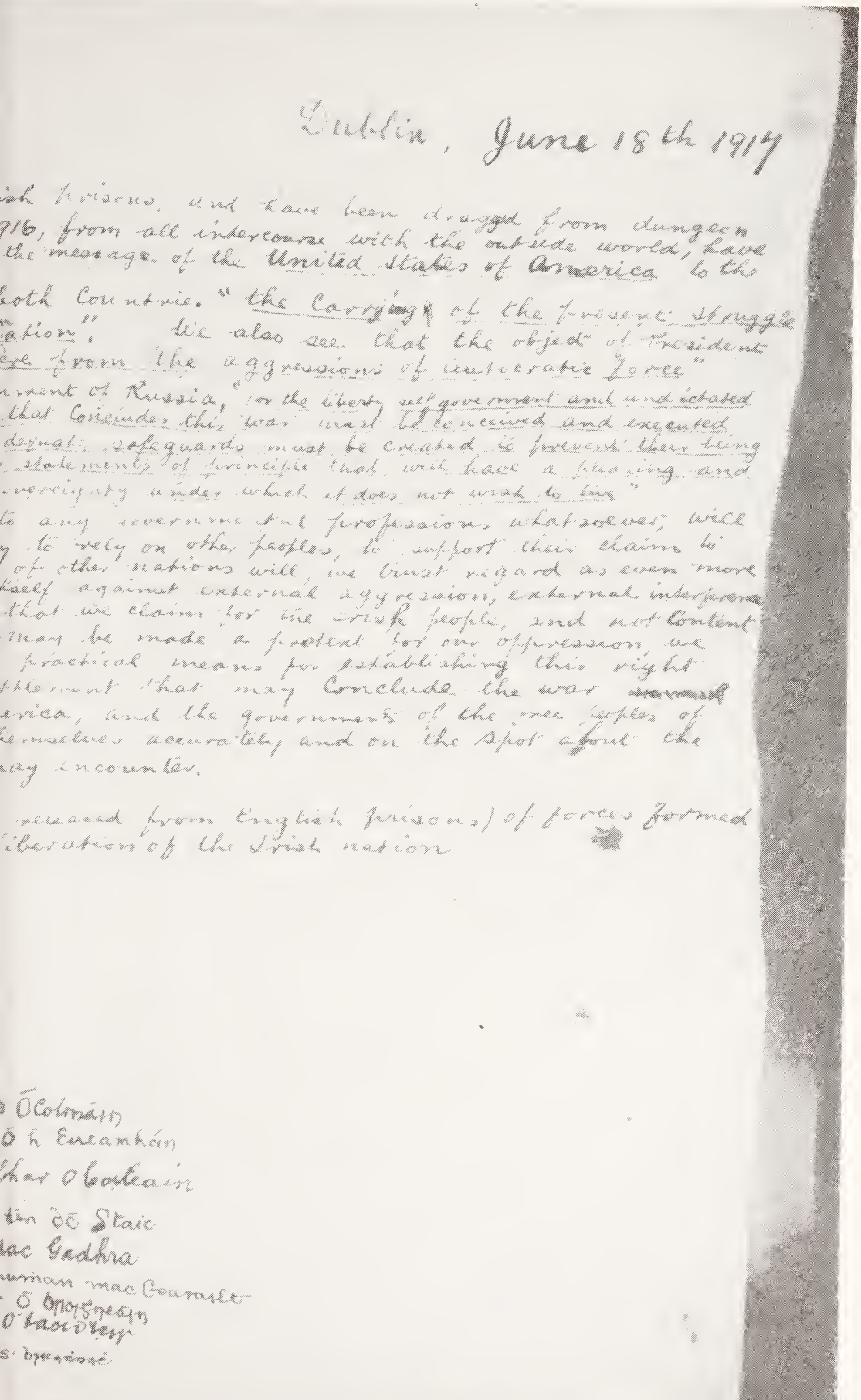
Gentlemen

We, the undersigned, who have been held
to dungeon, in heavy chains, cut off since Easter
just had an opportunity of seeing the printed
Provisional Government of Russia:
We see that the President accepts as the
for the freedom of all peoples to a successful
Wilson's own Government is "the liberation of
"We are fighting" writes the President, to
development of all peoples and every feature of the
for that purpose. Wrongs must first be righted and
Committed again. Remedies must be found
sonorous sound" "No people must be forced un
we trust that such remedies ... in prep
be held to include the right of each people, n
national liberty, but what the Governments
sacred, the right of each people to defend
and external control, It is this particula
with statements of principle, though these them
are engaged and mean to engage ourselves
without awaiting the issue of the war
we ask of the government of the United States
the world to take immediate measures to
extent of liberty or attempted repression which

We the undersigned, are officers
independently in Ireland to secure the Co

Éamon de Valéra
Eóin mac Néill
Doṁnall Ua Ceallaċáin
Séamus Ua Lonnḋubáin
Riobard O'Breandain
M. E. L. C. ...
Fionán O'Loingsigh
Proinsias O'Fiataig
Tomás Ua ...

Sean R. Etchingham
Richard mac Connraoi
Sean Mac an t-Saoi
Risteard O'hUdhna
Seumas Doyle
Peadar Galligan
Tomas Ashas
Diarmuid Ua Loingsig



Dublin, June 18th 1917

...ish prisons, and have been dragged from dungeon
...916, from all intercourse with the outside world, have
...the message of the United States of America to the
...both Countries." the Carrying of the present struggle
...ation". We also see that the object of President
...ere from the aggressions of autocratic force"
...nment of Russia, "for the liberty self government and undictated
...that Concludes this war must be conceived and executed
...dequate safeguards must be created to prevent their being
...statements of principle that will have a blessing and
...overeignty under which it does not wish to live"
...to any government but profession whatsoever, will
...y to rely on other peoples, to support their claim to
...of other nations will, we trust regard as even more
...tself against external aggression, external interference
...that we claim for the Irish people, and not content
...may be made a pretext for our oppression, we
...practical means for establishing this right
...ttlement that may Conclude the war
...erica, and the governments of the free peoples of
...hemselves accurately and on the spot about the
...ay encounter.

...released from English prisons) of forces formed
...iberation of the Irish nation

...Ó Colmáin
...Ó h Eucamháin
...thar Ó Briain
...tin Dé Staic
...Mac Gadhra
...uman mac Conrastle
... Ó Bróigheáin
...Ó Taoidleig
...s. Breathnac

Fascimile of Address to the President and Congress of the United States specially written on linen cloth for the purpose of concealment.

then he could rule me out as well, as I also was a socialist. Mellows became extremely disturbed, declaring such was not the case. He knew nothing about socialism but had read Connolly's book and agreed with it. I then pressed Mellows to say why he had singled out Larkin as obviously a person not to be trusted. He replied that this information could not be revealed by him at that stage. I continued to press him on the point and he finally gave me an undertaking that he would disclose the whole story at a later stage—unfortunately he never had an opportunity to do this. We then got down to details of the plan. I was to cover Mellows in New York and await his message that he was on the way to Spain. It would then be my duty to go to Ireland and make Michael Collins aware of the plans so that the landing and distribution of the guns could be organised. However, the arms plan never came to anything.

A Missing Document

Dr Patrick McCartan came to New York in the middle of 1917 and I met him for the first time in the *Gaelic American* office one Monday, three days after he arrived. Devoy, McCartan and Mellows came in from lunch shortly after my arrival at the office and I was introduced to the doctor by Mellows.

Discussion arose about a valuable document written on linen which Dr McCartan had left behind him on the ship. It was sewn into the lining of his waistcoat. The reason he did not bring it ashore was his assumption that he had been watched by enemy agents and was likely to be arrested as soon as he left the ship and the document seized.

This important document was a statement of Ireland's case for freedom addressed to the President and Congress of the United States of America and bearing the signatures of twenty-six officers who had been involved in the Rising and who had only recently been released from English

prisons. The linen had been specially prepared and starched by Mrs Seamus O'Doherty, 32 Connaught Street, Dublin, so that the message could be written on it in indelible ink. Then she washed it to reduce it to its original pliable state and sewed it into the lining of McCartan's waistcoat.

During the course of the discussion, Dr McCartan did not appear to be able to make up his mind as to whether it was very important, important or unimportant. I drew Mellows aside and asked him to find out from the doctor if, in fact, the document was important. If it was I undertook to try and obtain it from aboard ship. Mellows asked me how I proposed getting the document and I told him that I would endeavour to obtain a job aboard the ship and thereby get Dr McCartan's waistcoat from the fo'c'sle where he had spent his time on his trip to America. On hearing this proposal the doctor seemed very relieved, and he, Mellows and myself left the newspaper office and went to the West Side where the ocean-going ships were berthed. I left them waiting at the corner of the street while I walked to 14th Street where the Cunard ships docked.

I knew that there was a special guard on all the sheds there, and the plan was to bluff my way through. At the entrance to the docks I walked very smartly in without taking any notice of the guard. As I walked on I heard a voice shout "Halt" but paid no attention. Next there was a rush of feet, a few swear words and I was asked did I want a so-and-so bayonet into me. I casually looked around and said to the soldier, "Were you speaking to me?"

"Yes," he said angrily, "Where is your pass?"

"Pass, for what?" said I.

He answered, "You can't get in here without a pass," to which I retorted, "But all I am looking for is a job. Surely one doesn't need a pass to get a job on a ship which I know has vacant berths for seamen and firemen?"

"You can't get in here without a pass," he said again.

I said, "Well look here, I'm in a pretty bad state. I've been on the rocks in this city since the week before last. I missed my ship through going to a party the night before she was due to sail. I got very drunk. When I woke the next day and

came looking for the ship she had already gone to sea. I am living on friends here in New York since then, and that is something that I don't like doing. Will you please stretch a point and allow me to go aboard?"

The story softened the soldier's heart somewhat, but not sufficiently to allow me to go aboard without a pass. He advised me to stand outside the gate where I could see the bosun who passed in and out pretty often. Once I spoke to him and he OK'd me everything would be all right and I could go aboard. He asked me did I know the bosun and I said I did. I realised then that I had said a little too much. I waited a while and then left because if the bosun came along the soldier would see that I did not know him and would get suspicious. I went back to where I had left Mellows and McCartan and told him that my attempt had failed.

I do not know how the document was brought ashore eventually. Dr McCartan in his book *With de Valera in America* says he took it ashore with him on the Saturday, the day the ship docked. Yet on Monday he was deploring its loss, and was party to and in agreement with my effort to get it by boarding the ship. The question must now be posed: at which stage was he telling the truth? Was it on his third day after arrival in New York, or some years later when writing his book? Could it have been a lapse of memory on his part or did he do something else? In his book he asserts that after the ship docked on the Saturday in New York he went down on the following day to Philadelphia to see Joseph McGarrity, a leading figure in Clan na Gael. It is suggested that it is possible he gave the document to McGarrity, which was something he should not have done. John Devoy was the direct personal contact with the home organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood. To bypass Devoy on an important matter of this kind would undoubtedly raise problems. Having been present at the discussions on the Monday with Devoy, Mellows and himself, I formed the opinion that McCartan was genuinely concerned about leaving the document on the ship, and that it was afterwards rescued by contacts made by Devoy.

Some years later when speaking to Richard P. Dalton,

who was a very important member of Clan na Gael, about the linen document, he said that Devoy found out that McCartan had handed it over to McGarrity. According to Dalton there was a show-down on the matter, Devoy demanding the immediate handing over of the document to him and it was duly handed over. I personally thought Devoy had made contact with some friendly person on the ship or at the docks and succeeded where I had failed. The document is now in the National Museum, Dublin, to which I presented it on behalf of Mrs Alice Comiskey of New York. She had received it, with many other documents, under the terms of Devoy's will. One thing seems certain. Whatever document President Wilson eventually received it was not the original writing on a square of linen.

A short while after the incident of the missing document when Devoy and I were in conversation at his office, he suddenly said to me, "Frank, McCartan would never make a good revolutionary and do you know why?" I thought for a few moments and said, "No."

Devoy replied, "Because he can never make up his mind and I attribute that weakness to the fact that he smokes too many cigarettes." I often wondered afterwards was there any deeper significance in Devoy's raising the matter with me.

Liam Mellows

A few days later Liam Mellows and I were walking together on our way to transact some business. I noticed that he was in very low spirits and jokingly I said to him, "A penny for your thoughts, Liam, or are they even worth that much?"

Mellows replied in a very despondent manner, "If I had known as much in Easter Week as I do to-day, I would never have fired a shot."

This immediately brought my response, "Ah, ah, Liam, you have been listening to Dr McCartan."

Liam was very angry at this remark. He actually stopped in the street and stated very emphatically that he had not been talking to McCartan. I said in reply, "Liam, no matter what part of the world you go to, two and two make four. Dr McCartan was the only arrival in this country from Ireland during the last week or so, therefore I still contend that McCartan has been saying something to you, endeavouring to justify his own inaction, and the inaction of Bulmer Hobson and Eoin MacNeill and others in Easter Week."

Liam still protested that I was wrong, and I suggested that if it was not a breach of confidence he should tell me what was troubling him. With that he told me that the Military Council had taken unto themselves powers to which they had no right. They had usurped the authority of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., which was the only authority with power to declare the Insurrection, and they had set themselves up as a military junta and ignored everyone else. These were the reasons for his astonishing statement, whereupon I asked him would he like to hear my point of view on the matter. He said he would be glad to hear it. I said, "Liam, you have been going around this country telling the Irish people and the American people that the Insurrection of 1916 has regenerated the soul of Ireland; that it has brought Ireland's case for freedom before the world; that Irishmen can never be conscripted into the British army; that is has saved the manhood of Ireland from being drafted into foreign wars in the interests of British Imperialism. You have eulogised Connolly, Pearse, Clark, and all the other men who gave their lives so willingly for Ireland's freedom. Now, if you believe this story of Dr McCartan's—and I still repeat that it was Dr McCartan who told it to you—you must go to all these people and tell them that the signatories to the Irish Republic were nothing but a military junta who had usurped the authority of another body and taken its power unto themselves. But before you do that, I would ask you to examine the whole matter thoroughly. I repeat to you that Dr McCartan, Eoin MacNeill, Bulmer Hobson and a number of

other people, through their inaction in Easter Week, are due to give an explanation to the Irish people. The only way by which they can whitewash themselves is by attacking those who are dead, and, therefore not able to defend themselves. If there is any doubt in your mind on this question, Liam, in christian charity you must give the benefit of the doubt to the men who made the supreme sacrifice, and made it so willingly for what they believed in. That sacrifice, you and I must agree, is now bearing the fruits which we are looking forward to gathering."

Liam turned to me and said, "Thanks Frank, I never looked at it that way. You have eased my mind considerably. I was very worried about the whole matter."

On one occasion Mellows told me how he got to America. The insurgent forces were disbanded in Galway during Easter Week with grave misgivings. The view held by many was that they should continue operations even though they were ill-equipped to cope with the up-to-date fire power of the British. In later years Father Fahy of University College Galway informed me that he had great difficulty in inducing Mellows to disband. Had there been a conflict his men would have suffered heavy casualties.

When the decision to disband was taken, Mellows with two other colleagues, Alf Monahan and Frank Hynes of Athenry, departed on a lonely trail into the Clare mountains. They had to avoid contact with anyone. After about four days, when deep into the mountains and hungry and weary, they were confronted by a tall, gaunt individual, made of muscle and bone. They welcomed the hospitality which he offered. The first meal was very enjoyable. Their host watched them eagerly and, without causing embarrassment, told a story of a hungry man, whether true or invented, who had not had food for several days and who became very ill after his first meal because he had eaten more than was good for him.

Their host took them further up the mountain and made them comfortable in a byre. This was their first shelter for several days. The daughter of their host brought them food each evening. One day she did not come until very late, the

reason being that the R.I.C. and military were active further down the mountain. They shaved each day—the mountain brook not only supplied the water but was also the looking glass.

Mellows then moved into Limerick and adopted the disguise of a nun. Being small in stature and fair in complexion the attire was most effective. There was only one snag, his feet were so much bigger than those of a woman! However, he reached Cork where he was placed under the guideance of a Captain Collins, a ship's captain, who took him on board ship to England. Some days later he signed on another ship as a fireman. I cannot remember the ship's name but she must have been unseaworthy. Prior to her attempt to face the Atlantic Ocean she had been in dry dock for a couple of months. When a few days out she broke down off the south east coast of Ireland and had to limp back to England to dry dock again. When the repairs were completed she essayed the Atlantic again. About 500 miles off Ireland another breakdown occurred and repairs were carried out to the engines at sea. The voyage took so long that ordinary food supplies ran out and most of their meals consisted of ship's biscuits. On one occasion supplies had to be obtained from a passing ship. They eventually made it to New York, however.

On his arrival in New York Mellows had become acquainted with Patrick Kirwan through Donal Hannigan, who was the Vice-Commandant of the Co Louth Volunteers and, like Mellows, had earned the special attention of Major Price, Chief of British Intelligence in Dublin Castle. At their first meeting Kirwan detected the Wexford accent and asked Mellows if he knew Sean Kirwan and Sean Etchingham and was delighted to know that Sean Kirwan was a brother of Patrick. The two Seans were kingpins in the advanced nationalist school of thought in Gorey. After that first meeting, Mellows, at Kirwan's insistence, went to live with Kirwan's family at 73 West 96th Street, and remained with them for about two years. Many people called on Mellows and the Kirwan home became a centre of hospitality for his friends. Amongst many others these included Eamon Martin

from Dublin, Eamon Corbett and Callinan (The Hare) of Craughwell, Co Galway, Peter, brother of Terence, McSwiney from Cork, Patrick and Hugh Houlihan, Nora Connolly, Margaret Skinnider and Miss Allwell, whose family had a dairy in Townsend Street, Dublin. Some of those visiting, including myself, must have caused great inconvenience to the Kirwan family owing to our late hours but we were always made welcome. Mellows had a very happy time while living there.

Devoy took a deep interest in Mellows and employed him on the *Gaelic American* at the same salary as himself. Mellows wrote the history of the Fianna during his period on the paper. He could have remained indefinitely but for some reason unknown to me, in the latter half of 1919 he was to leave his job on the paper and also the Kirwan family. He went to live on the Manhattan East Side and worked in the Carmelite Schools, East 28th Street, as a teacher of Irish. I learned subsequently that before leaving Kirwan's he had been taking bundles of books away without telling the family of his intention until the last day or so. Owing to the veil of secrecy none of his friends knew where he was living. Mellows was subject to spells of despondency and was inclined to neglect himself. During September 1919, he became ill and the doctor diagnosed malnutrition. Mrs McCarthy and Miss Mary Ward who was a sister of Mrs Kirwan, both members of Cumann na mBan, learned of his illness and nursed him back to health.

One foul story in circulation alleged that Mellows had been starved by John Devoy. The Kirwan family name was also smeared by innuendo. But the scandal-mongers were not aware that Liam was god-father to the Kirwan's third son. While Mellows never publicly repudiated the story about Devoy he did send a Christmas card in 1919 expressing his best wishes to Devoy—hardly the act of a man who had been starved by his former editor. Two letters from Mellows to the Kirwans, one from the Tombs Prison in New York and dated Saturday, 27 October 1917, and the second from Mountjoy Prison in Dublin nineteen days before his execution in 1922, show Mellows's high esteem for the Kirwan

Miss Mary Ward, a member of Cumann na mBan in New York, and the author who were married in February 1920

family. Here is the letter from the Tombs Prison.

Dear Mrs Kirwan, Sat. Oct. 28.17

I must thank you for your great kindness sending in the clothing—it but adds to the many and great debts I already owe you. I can never forget all you and Paddy have done for me and no words of mine can express my sorrow for upsetting you so and bringing so much trouble on you. I hope to hear from you that the upset did not give you too bad a shock and that your health is well. I hope Mary and Sus. are both well—remember me to them please.

I am quite well and happy—the same as ever, so let ye not worry about me. God's will be done. I am neither afraid or ashamed.

Needless to say, the papers lie—*I am no informer.*

I want for nothing except a clean shirt.

Hope to see you some day.

Hope the children are well.

God bless you all,

Yours sincerely, L. Mellows.

Republic or Monarchy

I was shocked one night in Kirwan's home when Mellows introduced the question of what form of government should be established in a free Ireland. He contended it was for the people to decide in favour of a republic or a monarchy. In the belief that he was joking I was disinclined to treat the issue seriously. But the discussion became more serious and, as he was a doctrinaire republican, I contended that the whole discussion was ridiculous. He continued to uphold the view that it was for the people to decide. He had not expected opposition from me but having taken his stand he would not retreat. So the talk ended in disagreement.

An interesting story about Mellows has been told by the late Father Timothy Courtney, parish priest of Causeway, Co Kerry, better known to Irish speakers as an tAthair Tadhg Curnain. It relates to the pre-1916 deportation order which restricted Mellows to a certain area in Britain. Father Courtney, who was curate at Cross Hill in Glasgow for some years before and after 1916, was sympathetic to Sinn Fein. One day Maggie Aikens, a parishioner, called to see him and said that Mellows and Nora Connolly wanted to see him at Maggie's house. Father Courtney went along. Mellows asked him for clerical clothes.

"Do you want me to ordain you?" said Father Courtney.

"The very thing", replied Mellows. So the priest produced a coat and a clerical collar, but because he was taller than Mellows, his fellow curate Reverend Patrick Hackett had to supply the trousers. In this outfit Mellows escaped to Ireland via Belfast, and thence to Dublin. I am indebted for this story to Leon O Broin, who had it from Reverend Kieran O'Shea, CC, Causeway, who heard it from Father Courtney himself.

Arrest of Mellows

After the plan to get guns from Germany had fallen through, a second plan was mooted when Dr McCartan arrived in New

York about July, 1917. Mellows informed me of the project and reminded me again of the necessity of complete secrecy. The trip would be via Holland to Germany and Mellows and McCartan would travel. Both were provided with false British certificates and seamen's books. When they went to have their papers endorsed by the Shipping Board numbers of questions were put to them by the official in charge. According to Mellows, when McCartan was being questioned about the ships he had worked on he blundered somewhat. Asked what his last ship was he gave the name of the ship that was his second last according to the seaman's book. He was also asked whether he had worked as seaman or fireman. To this McCartan gave the wrong answer. The official excused himself for a couple of minutes. On his return he passed the seaman's book as correct but Mellows said that from that day he had the feeling of being constantly watched. On one occasion all the letter boxes in his house were broken and the letters torn open and thrown in the hallway. On the far side of the street at the corner of 96th Street was a saloon and according to report, a "growler" stove was burning to keep warm the detectives who were watching the house where Mellows then lived with the Kirwan family.

Dr McCartan and Mellows were constant visitors to a house in New York occupied by a German lady. Devoy told me he had advised Dr McCartan that this house was under constant police surveillance and that it would be advisable that the visits should be terminated.

Eventually McCartan secured a cook's job on a ship. Mellows told me that McCartan was ordered to report daily at seven am while the ship was in port in New York. This he failed to do, turning up as late as ten o'clock on many occasions. On the night of the day it sailed Mellows was arrested leaving the German woman's house. While in the car with the detectives he kept cool. He had compromising papers in his pocket and these he managed to throw out the car window. The Kirwan home was raided and searched by the detectives early the following morning. Miss Mary Ward called to my lodgings on Columbus Avenue and 103rd

Street, with the news of Mellows's arrest and some papers and some pictures of Dr McCartan and himself. Deciding this was a matter which should be reported to Devoy I went to the office of the *Gaelic American* and found it closed. I then went out to Brooklyn to give the bad news to Margaret Skinnider and Nora Connolly.

On my way to visit Mellows at the Tombs Prison, I broke my journey to make another call to the *Gaelic American* office and gave the news to John Kenny, as Devoy was out of town. When I arrived at the Tombs Prison I was flabbergasted by a scene of complete bedlam. The din was indescribable. It took me a while to make out what was happening. One of the wardens showed me into one of a string of half-open cages. By this time I realised what was out of tune with my ears—it was that there were so many people speaking in so many different languages. It was a regular "Tower of Babel". Mellows added to the confusion by speaking or shouting in Irish. Even had I been fluent in Irish it would have been most difficult to hear or understand. When he reverted to the English language, we still had to shout to each other but conversation was really impossible. It certainly was an experience never to be forgotten. Nora Connolly and Margaret Skinnider visited him later that day and by speaking Irish got to the heart of Mellows's problem. They went to the Kirwan house and found the papers which he had hidden behind a picture in the dining room.

Mellows appeared in court and was remanded on bail. Each time he appeared in court, bail continued and his case was adjourned. Early in 1918 he and I had a long discussion about his forthcoming trial. I contended that the case would not be decided as a matter of Government policy until the conclusion of the war, as the U.S. authorities did not want to create any further hostility among the organised Irish people, either by his imprisonment in America or by his deportation to Ireland.

Larkin to Go to Russia?

Early in 1917 the Russian Revolution had taken place and a

government headed by Kerensky had been formed. This was heralded as the Russian people's fight for freedom and the end of Czardom. We were highly elated with this news and our sympathies were with the Russian people. We regarded this movement as calculated to end Russian participation in the war, and visualised Britain's defeat as almost certain and Ireland's independence as a nation almost in sight.

Larkin came to New York around this time and I met him by appointment. He gave me, in strictest secrecy, the details of a plan which he had devised in order to get to Russia. He would, he revealed, represent himself as an automobile salesman for a big American company. When our talk concluded we went to Donnelly's printing works in 62nd Street where we found a number of people, including Donnelly and some of his staff with what appeared to me to be some customers. To my surprise Larkin announced loudly that he was going to Russia. He gave more detailed information to Donnelly and others within hearing. His attitude was in strange contrast to his insistence on strict secrecy when telling me his plans earlier that day. I found it difficult to accept that everybody present was well known to him and could be accepted as trustworthy. Why he acted in this way I can only guess.

Having left Larkin I went up to see Mellows at the Kirwan residence and there met James O'Connor who in later years became City Sheriff of Dublin. O'Connor had come across from the west where he stayed in Butte, Montana, for a couple of days. While the three of us were talking, O'Connor suddenly said, "By the way, did you hear that Larkin is going to Russia?"

Stifling any desire to tell what I knew I said immediately, "I was with Larkin to-day. I left him only a short while ago, and he said nothing about that to me."

"Oh," said O'Connor, "that is strange." It appeared that every third or fourth person he had met in Butte had whispered into his ear, "Did you hear the news? The chief is going to Russia."

All this seemed very extraordinary, but when I recalled the incident earlier in Donnelly's printing works I felt that there must be a great deal of truth in what O'Connor had said,

particularly as he had really been only passing through the town of Butte, and to hear such news during a short stay meant that it must have been in almost general circulation. This whole affair made me rather sceptical of Larkin's avowed plan to get to Russia. His abortive attempt a short while afterwards convinced me that he had never had any real intention of visiting that country.

A Question of Citizenship

Throughout the United States, now in the war on the side of Britain and her allies, feverish preparations were being made to build up military strength. A special day in June 1917 was announced to allow for the registration of all adults irrespective of whether they were citizens or foreigners. The purpose was to assess the muscle of the nation. The office which I was obliged to attend was in Ocean Avenue, near Greenville, Jersey City. I found queues of men waiting their turn to register. There was quite a number of booths to accommodate them and when it came to my turn the clerk asked me questions from a prepared form. Some of the questions and my answers, as far as my memory goes, were as follows:

"What is your name and address?"

"Frank Robbins, 81 Gates Avenue, Greenville, Jersey City."

"What is your nationality?"

"Irish."

"Were you in the armed forces in your country?"

"Yes."

"What rank did you hold in the army of your country?"

"Sergeant."

"Did you ever work in munitions factories?"

"Yes."

"For how long?"

"About two years."

There were many other questions but the final query before signing the document was "Of what country are you a citizen?"

I replied, "The Irish Republic."

The clerk became nonplussed at this answer and said, "Wait a moment." He brought the Chief Supervisor to the booth. The supervisor, whose name I think was Mr McCarthy, in blustering fashion wanted to know "what the hell was all this damn nonsense about my being a citizen of the Irish Republic". I replied that it was not nonsense, that I had answered the questions truthfully. He then said in real authoritative fashion, "There is no such state as the Irish Republic".

By this time all the other files of people, as well as the police on duty, began to notice that there was a heated argument at my booth. I replied, "I beg to differ with you. The Irish Republic was declared in Easter Week 1916 in Dublin."

This argument continued for some time. Finally he said, "You are a British subject."

I replied, "I am not, and should I sign that form as a British subject it will falsify every answer I have given above. I was not a sergeant in the British army. I was a sergeant in the Irish Republican Army. I never worked in British munitions factories, I worked in the munitions factories of the Irish Republic."

Finally the pressure temporarily broke down my resolution and as a number of police officers had closed up around me I signed the document as a British subject, but not before the official had agreed to accept responsibility for the falsified document should the question arise later.

That afternoon I went to New York and met Liam Mellows and Miss Mary Ward at Kirwan's flat. I told them the story of my registration and they were quite delighted with the line I had taken. The three of us decided to go to the nearest registration booth for 96th Street and register there. This was a very small office with only one clerk. We all signed the papers as citizens of the Irish Republic and were accepted as such by the clerk in charge. In the course of

answering the questions Liam Mellows used his knowledge of Irish to advantage and had the clerk tied up in a black knot. When asked his name Mellows said, "Liam O Maoiliosa" and the clerk asked him was that Greek. Mellows replied, "No, I am Irish and it is the language of my country."

"I am afraid I cannot spell that name, would you mind writing it yourself," said the clerk. All this was delightful to us. We left the office with the very best thanks of the man in charge.

My second registration was under a false name, Hughes, and I gave my place of birth as Drogheda, Co. Louth. I felt that perhaps at some other time the false registration might be of use to myself or some other of the Easter Week exiles who were staying in New York at the time.

In the early part of 1917 I paid a visit to Mrs Monteith's flat on 3rd Avenue and 118th Street and there to my surprise I found Captain Monteith. He was also taken by surprise and gave me the impression that he was suffering from a bad case of nervous tension. His bearing was that of a man who expected something unpleasant to happen at any moment. One could scarcely blame him for this, for a British order had gone forth that he was to be shot at sight. If he had been arrested during this period on the run in Ireland it would have meant certain death. I was very pleased to meet him once again. From then onwards Monteith was to be seen fairly often with the rest of the Easter Week exiles at different functions in New York.

All the exiles were invited to a meeting of the Shamrock Club at which John Devoy spoke. He made a special plea to all the young men who had recently arrived in America from Ireland to take out their first papers as American citizens. His reason was the tremendous influence of the British government in official circles in America, particularly in view of the fact that America would in a few days be lined up on the side of Britain and her Allies. He was convinced that the Irish organisations in America could not succeed in a stand-up fight against this influence. Devoy mentioned that amongst the Easter Week exiles were a number of wanted

men including Mellows, Monteith, Donal Hannigan and Michael O'Callaghan (Tipperary) and said that if the British government applied to the American government for extradition orders for these men he held no hope of being able to block such a move. This was his primary reason for advising them to obtain citizenship papers. Were the British government to apply for and succeed in getting extradition orders these men would be brought home to Ireland, tried and executed. This, he argued, would have a damaging effect on the morale of the people of Ireland because it would show the power and prestige the British government enjoyed with the United States government.

Before leaving the hall that evening we met in a group. Finally it was decided that Mellows, Monteith and myself would act as a deputation to interview Judge Cohalan, to ascertain if United States citizenship would mean a repudiation of our citizenship of the Irish Republic, which we felt in honour bound to uphold.

Some days later we were advised that Judge Cohalan would see us on a certain evening at eight o'clock, but there was an error in the date. When we arrived at his house we found that the Judge was giving a dinner to a number of very influential people, one of whom was Dr Kuno Meyer, the well-known German Celtic scholar. The judge was surprised at our visit and very upset at having to disappoint us. He apologised very sincerely for the mistake in the date of the appointment and advised us to see his assistant, Mr Roderick Kennedy, at his office, which was a short distance from the house. Captain Monteith was annoyed; he regarded it as a deliberate rebuff. Mellows and I were left to go to Cohalan's office to talk the matter over with Mr Kennedy who quickly made it quite evident that we would have to forego our citizenship of the Irish Republic.

Depressed by this information Mellows and I left the judge's office to discuss our problem. Mellows asked for my opinion but my view was that it would be better for him and the others who were in a similar position to review the situation in a much more detailed fashion. Not being one of the wanted men, I had not to worry in that direction, but

Mellows and the others might be sought for. As far as I was concerned I would not take out the first paper of the United States citizenship. Mellows agreed and that was the recommendation which we made to the Easter Week exiles, and which was accepted by them as the only correct attitude to adopt. I also felt it my duty to discuss the danger of extradition with all who were involved with the exception of Martin Walsh who had been in the Ashbourne fight and who, prior to this date, had already taken out his first citizenship papers.

Around this period Mellows told me that Captain Monteith had been called to a conference with the Clan na Gael Revolutionary Directory where he was interrogated closely as to his part in Irish affairs in Germany and later in Ireland. According to Mellows the Directory were not too pleased with the report which he made on his activities. This came as a surprise to me but I made no comment as the information was given to me in confidence by Mellows and I now record the matter for its historical value. Those comprising the Directory then were John Devoy, J. T. Ryan of Buffalo and Joe McGarrity of Philadelphia.

On one occasion I accompanied Mellows to Boston and surrounding districts. Our purpose was to resurrect a Clan na Gael Club which had fallen by the wayside. We successfully accomplished our aim. The fact that it was Mellows who had been given the job, allied to his role in the Insurrection, seemed to me to have been the deciding factors in the success of the project. Mellows introduced me as a member of the Citizen Army and naturally I had to say a few words. The following day we paid visits to some of the districts around Boston to contact some kindred spirits. This was my first official organisational work on behalf of Clan na Gael.

An Offer from Victor Herbert

Shortly after America entered the war a meeting was organised in the down-town Cooper Union Institute, 9th Street

and 2nd Avenue district, by Mayor Mitchel, a grandson of John Mitchel, and some of his Irish-American associates who were regarded by the advanced nationalists as being of the shoneen type. On the platform by invitation from the chairman was a member of Clan na Gael, Richard F. Dalton, formerly from Co. Tipperary. His connection with Clan na Gael was unknown to the organisers.

It was suspected by Clan na Gael that the meeting would claim to represent the Irish people and declare its loyalty to the U.S.A., now at war with Germany, and that a call for conscription would be made. A resolution to this very effect was proposed and Dalton, speaking from the platform, opposed it. He endeavoured to have an amendment considered but the chairman thought otherwise. Many attending the meeting opposed the Chair's ruling and demanded free speech. Disorder broke out because of what they regarded as the chairman's unfair conduct.

The meeting was for selected people only and admission could be gained only by special tickets, but all the members of Clan na Gael and Cumann na mBan in New York had been provided with forged tickets which were an exact copy of the originals. By this means they were able to obtain admission and they succeeded in turning the friendly atmosphere expected by Mayor Mitchel and his association into a quite hostile gathering. Small Tricolour flags and United States flags suddenly appeared in various parts of the building and cheers for the Irish Republic were raised on all sides. Ushers intervened but failed to quell the uproar. Then efforts were made to seize the Tricolours. The fact that each person who displayed the Tricolour had also the Stars and Stripes placed the ushers in a quandary. Eventually a riot-police squad was called in and we got very severe handling. Seamus McDermott, a brother of Sean McDermott, one of the executed signatories of the 1916 Proclamation, was badly beaten and had his jawbone fractured. Miss Sara McKelvey, a native of Ballybay, Co Monaghan, and President of Cumann na mBan, was also badly manhandled. Another protestor Miss Mary McManus, draped her legs and arms around a steel pillar in the hall, cheering for the Irish Re-

public and gave the members of the riot squad a deal of trouble before they could force her loose. The meeting was held up for more than an hour and proved a complete fiasco for the organisers.

Despite the bumps and bruises, and some more serious injuries, we were well pleased with the result of our tactics and particularly with the role played by our courageous lady supporters. Indeed a great deal of credit must be given to New York Cumann na mBan under the leadership of Sara McKelvey, Rose and Kate McDermott, Mrs Molony (sister-in-law of Helena Molony) and Mrs Alice Comiskey and her sister Lily Carragher, not only for the physical support they gave the menfolk but for their many successful efforts to raise money for the purpose of obtaining arms for use in Ireland. They were prominently associated with a big bazaar held in Madison Square Gardens after the Insurrection, and continued to collect money in many ways by holding ceilis, concerts and meetings. They visited Celtic Park every Sunday, where there was always financial support to be obtained from Irish people gathered to see Gaelic football, hurling and other sports.

The Clan na Gael organisation was also very active at this time holding many functions and meetings at which prominent Irish-Americans spoke. A short time after Dr McCartan arrived in New York he was one of the leading speakers at a meeting in Carnegie Hall which was packed for the function. On another occasion Mrs Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington proved a big draw. At all these meetings I was usually called upon to contribute Irish songs. My choice would normally include "A Soldier's Song", Connolly's "Call of Erin", "Wrap the Green Flag Round Me" and Madame Markievicz's song, "Armed for the Battle", as well as "Felons of Our Land", "Sinn Fein Amhain", "The Valley of Slieve na Mon" and "I Sat Within the Valley Green".

On the occasion of a Robert Emmet commemoration at which I sang, Judge Cohalan, who was chairman, called me to his side. He had found out that I was working as a labourer in a freight yard in Greenville. He told me in very emphatic terms that I was wasting my time in America; I had great

musical talent and if properly trained I could make a name for myself. He made me promise that when he concluded the meeting I would go immediately and speak to him.

At the first anniversary of the Easter Week Insurrection in Carnegie Hall there was a tremendous gathering of enthusiastic people, including Victor Herbert and a number of the leading singers from his opera *Eileen* which was then running in the Metropolitan Opera House. Again I met Judge Cohalan and he introduced me to Victor Herbert saying, "Victor, I want you to do me a favour."

"You know, Judge," replied Herbert with a smile, "that it is already granted with the asking. You don't have to ask any favours from me, Dan."

The Judge beckoned me forward. "This young man has a soft, natural, untrained voice," he said, "and I believe you could make him a very fine singer. Will you look after him?"

Herbert replied, "I certainly will" and he then plied me with many questions. He asked me whether I had sung in public and did I do much singing. My answer was in the negative. How then had the Judge come to think that I had a voice which could be trained? To this I replied that I sang a few songs from time to time at Irish gatherings but that I felt that it was not my voice but the songs I sang which had an effect on the people listening.

"We will see about that", said Herbert and he produced his business card, wrote on the back of it "To be admitted whenever calling", and signed it. The address on the card was the Metropolitan Opera House.

One of the greatest regrets of my life is that I did not avail of this generous offer. For my failure to do so I was abused by my many good friends in New York who made it clear that I was one in a million to get such a wonderful opportunity. Their approach was usually wrong. They would emphasise the monetary advantages. I disliked intensely references to the dollars I could make. I am afraid I was very rude to them on several occasions, and they finally gave up in despair. Had they only known how vulnerable I was! It would have been of great benefit to our cause had our patriotic songs been recorded and so became more widely known.

Perhaps my real reason for not availing of Victor Herbert's invitation was that though I loved singing I did not want to become caught up in a new way of life. I was dedicated to a cause and I knew the time was coming when I must go back to Ireland. Letters from Michael Donnelly, my old comrade in Dublin, had made clear to me the shape of things to come. The call to arms was sounding clearly again.

Opposition to Clan na Gael

About March or April 1917 all the Easter Week exiles in New York received written invitations from "John Brennan" (Miss Sydney Gifford) to come to her flat in Amsterdam Avenue. Most availed of the invitation. They included Liam Mellows and Patrick Brazil from Waterford, who some years later became Town Clerk of Waterford City. Our hostess unfolded to us a scheme for the launching of a new Clan na Gael organisation, the hard core of which was to be the Easter Week exiles. The new organisation was to take the place of the old Clan na Gael which was still under the leadership of John Devoy. "John Brennan" was convinced that Clan na Gael was out of date and required fresh blood in order to get things done in the cause of Irish freedom. A number of questions were put to "John Brennan" but her replies did not create much confidence in the minds of her hearers.

On leaving her flat Liam Mellows asked me what I thought of the proposal. I told him plain and straight that I thought it was mad-headed and foolish. I did not mince my words. "How could we expect to build up a new organisation? We are unknown and know nothing about the conditions of the country. We would not make any progress whatever. We would do more harm to the Irish cause than anything else."

Mellows agreed with me. We heard no more of this suggestion from "John Brennan", but as time went on there were other signs that some people were intent on creating

another Irish organisation. I sometimes think the Irish have an inbuilt genius for disagreement and disunity. A new organisation did in fact come into being. It was known as the Irish Progressive League and carried on outdoor propaganda. It did not receive much support from Clan na Gael nor from its twin organisation the Friends of Irish Freedom. The life of the Irish Progressive League was short and futile.

A short while after I came home to Ireland yet another new organisation was founded by Mellows known as The Irish Citizen's Association. Among other things its purpose seemed to be to act as a pressure group on Clan na Gael and the Friends of Irish Freedom. Whether these two organisations were the fruit of "John Brennan's" first attempt I cannot say. In later years I often asked myself if Liam Mellows was partial to the first project and founder of another. Or was he under the influence of someone else? I still do not know and could not understand such an attitude, particularly as he had agreed with my conclusions about the foolishness of "John Brennan's" abortive effort. Most significant in all this undercover activity were the continual references by Mellows, and in most glowing terms, to John Devoy.

On one occasion an attempt was made by Mellows to interfere with the agenda arrangements at a gathering of the Friends of Irish Freedom. Mellows was not a platform speaker but it was his intention to make some form of protest from the balcony. This protest was built around the Irish Citizen's Association. Larkin also took part in a protest at the same gathering, but I do not consider the two of them were working together by any sort of prior agreement.

Devoy and Mellows

During one of my many discussions with Liam Mellows in New York we returned once more to the activities of the Irish movement in America. Mellows would put over his points intensely. "All that we can expect from the Irish

people in America is continued financial help and propaganda and agitation to keep Ireland's case before the American people and the Peace Conference."

"I fear for the Irish movement in America when the 'Old Man' [John Devoy] dies," he said earnestly. "There is no one here to take his place. His death will be a terrible calamity. He is the life and spirit of everything here. He is a wonderful old character and I love him very much."

He repeated these sentiments on many subsequent occasions. This affection was reciprocated by Devoy who had tremendous respect for Mellows. This was clearly demonstrated again when I met Devoy in his room in the Shelbourne Hotel during his visit to Dublin in 1924. With me were William O'Brien, Cathal O'Shannon and Archie Heron who had married Connolly's daughter, Ina.

"Frank", he said to me with evident emotion, "we have had a terrible time in New York since you were there. We have gone through hell; we were tearing the guts out of one another. There was a terrible story going round that I starved Mellows. I did not mind what other people said, but Mellows's silence hurt me more than anything else. A card or a line in a letter saying that this story was not true would have been a gesture I would have appreciated very much. You know how much I loved Mellows. I loved him as if he had been my own son."

In my opinion the cause of the rupture between Devoy and Mellows was the influence brought to bear on Mellows by Dr McCartan and others. This was probably due to McCartan's long-standing associations with the Irish Republican Brotherhood and his status as a senior member of the organisation. These considerations would have had a tremendous influence on Mellows. I have already indicated earlier how confused he was by McCartan on the issue of the decision of the Easter Week Insurrection and by the failure to make the trip to Germany.

Recall to Arms!

America was in the meantime pushing ahead with her preparations for war. Shortly after the registration of all adults I

received a summons to attend a physical fitness examination for military service. On declaring me fit the doctor said he felt sure I would make a good soldier. He was taken aback when I told him that I had no intention of joining the American army. He disclosed that his parents were Irish and that they always had the greatest respect for the American constitution. He stressed Irish-American sympathies and spoke of all the great Irishmen who had fought in the interests of the United States. My reply to him was that if circumstances were as they had been in the past and if the American army was fighting the English I would probably have been in the American army before now, but that as the United States had entered the war to save Johnny Bull from being whacked by Germany, I had the strongest possible objection to serving in the American army particularly in view of the fact that only a little over twelve months prior to this I had been one of a number of Irishmen who had fought against England for the independence of Ireland. The doctor endeavoured to dismiss the Insurrection of 1916 as being something like a Donnybrook Fair where shillelaghs were used. He was considerably surprised when he learned that it was actually an insurrection to win freedom and that the British had used every modern weapon at their command against us. He heard for the first time that many parts of Dublin, particularly in the centre of the city, had been destroyed by British artilliery. When he realised that I was obdurate in my objection to joining the American army he shook hands with me in a very friendly way and wished me good luck.

My physical examination was soon followed by an official communication asking me to state my reasons for refusal to serve in the army. I gave all my reasons. The last question on the form proved to be a trap question. It read: "Do you waive your objections to becoming a member of the United States Forces?" This question was a puzzle for many thousands of persons who for one reason or another did not clearly understand its import, and who gave the answer, "Yes" when they really meant "No". The next thing these men discovered was that they were called up for service in the United States army.

I was now employed in the Edison Electric Power Station at 201st Street, New York. On one occasion about October 1917 I found myself at loggerheads with the engineer of the plant, whose name was Murphy. I was on day shift and noticed that he was following me around very closely. Finally, when we were some distance from all the other men in the fire-room, he spoke to me. He charged me with carrying on anti-American propaganda, which included alleged statements to the effect that I was abusing the American people. He told me in very plain language that I had better stop this kind of talk or I would find myself in very grave difficulties, and possibly also have him in trouble for employing me. I denied the charges and told him that if my presence there meant trouble for him it could be solved there and then by my quitting the job.

This attitude took him by surprise and he replied that he did not desire me to leave the job but was more or less warning me in a friendly way to refrain from any further anti-American propaganda. I asked him to face me with the people who had given him this false information. I admitted that as far as President Wilson and his administration were concerned I had criticised them, not only there but anywhere I went. I told him that as far as the American people were concerned I had nothing but the highest regard for them and I could truthfully say that they were decent to me and to others like me. I contended that the American people did not want to be in the war, but that they were tricked into it by the machinations of President Wilson and his advisers. To my amazement the engineer said, "Perhaps you are not alone in that point of view, but my advice to you is to be careful whom you speak to in this place."

A month or so after this I was again on day shift and I was passing the engineer's office when he called me in. I felt that this was going to be a repetition of what had passed on the former occasion. I determined that if so I would quit the job. Imagine my surprise when he told me that he was promoting me to a more responsible position. Having listened to him for some time explaining my duties in this new post, I thanked him and suggested that he should seek somebody

else for promotion. I indicated that I was about to go home and would only be able to hold the position he was offering for a short time, and so would cause him further inconvenience. He was mystified by my attitude and finally when I explained that going home meant going back to Ireland he said to me, "You will be conscripted if you go back to Ireland. Don't you know that Lloyd George is about to bring in conscription for the Irish people. Why not join the American army instead?"

My reply was that I knew of the British Premier's intention to conscript, if possible, the Irish people but that the young men of Ireland would fight and were not going to be conscripted. I then opened up my mind a little more because of his frankness towards me, and said, "I have had letters from time to time from comrades of mine in Ireland telling me how conditions are there. They believe that conscription is likely to be brought in during the early part of 1918. As soon as conscription is brought in the Irish people will oppose it tooth and nail. Colleagues with whom I fought in the 1916 Insurrection will be taking part in that opposition and I would feel, should I not go back to Ireland and take my place in the fight, that I was deserting them. I would personally feel myself a coward."

To my gratification he put out his hand and said, "I don't agree with you but at any rate I admire you. Shake hands. It is not often I meet a young man like you."

9 · The War of Independence

– LOST OPPORTUNITIES FOR LABOUR

Towards the end of 1917 Mellows and I had a long discussion on, among other things, the possibility of conscription being extended to Ireland. As a result I decided that it was time for me to make my way home. My arrangements provided for a return to Ireland early in the new year. About the middle of January 1918 I was introduced to a Mr Lynch, Secretary of the Seamen's Union in New York, by Marcus O'Sullivan, a Corkman who is now living in his native city but was then a courier between John Devoy and John T. Ryan of Buffalo, a leading member of the Clan na Gael Directory. After a casual introduction O'Sullivan left. Then came a curious interlude during which not a word was spoken. For the want of something to do I was looking at the pictures on the walls when suddenly I was startled by a choice selection of swear words. Mr Lynch displayed an impressive and blistering vocabulary which brought me with a jerk back to my days in the Dublin Dockyard and to the ships on which I had worked as a stoker.

Gradually it was made clear that Mr Lynch, before attempting to do any business with me, wanted to "look me in the eyes"; he obviously regarded the eyes of an individual as reflecting his whole character. I had remembered my father saying something similar some years before this so I obliged the Seamen's Secretary by staring him out of countenance, and when he had enough I encouraged him to have a little more. Apparently he was convinced of my sincerity and trustworthiness and soon arrangements were made to get me a ship. It was to be the *St Paul*. A number of preliminaries were necessary before I could be fixed up. I would have to prove to the American Shipping Board that I had been a seaman, and would have to get official permission from the

Board to apply for such work. All these difficulties out of the way, there was then only the question of presenting myself for employment in the usual manner. As identity I had my baptismal certificate from the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, stamped officially by the American Shipping Board.

On the trip home I had as a comrade Donal Hannigan who had been Vice-Commandant of the Louth Brigade prior to Easter Week. Needless to say our proposed activities in Ireland were known only to a very few people. The *St Paul* left New York on Friday, 15 February 1918. Hannigan and myself shared the one seaman's bag, and with the exception of a slight accident to my head caused by falling coal we had an uneventful trip to Liverpool, where we had a little problem when leaving the ship. We had revolvers near the bottom of the bag. It required some bluff to pass the policeman at the docks without the bag being examined. I explained in an offhand sort of way that I was taking dirty clothes to my sister's house on Scotland Road for washing before the return trip to New York. To our great relief the unsuspicious officer waved us through. Barney O'Hea, an Irishman and an official of the National Seamen and Firemen's Union, helped us out with "digs" that night and the following day we paid a visit to the shop on Scotland Road of a man named Murphy, a famous old stalwart in Ireland's fight for freedom.

That night we left Liverpool and travelling by way of Holyhead arrived in Dublin the following morning, the 1st of March, much to the surprise of our relatives and friends. One of the first things I did on arriving back in Dublin was to see Michael Collins at the National Aid Office, Bachelor's Walk, and tell him of the projects of Mellows and McCartan in New York to get arms into Ireland. Collins and I discussed the matter for a short while, and we agreed that it was unfortunate that these attempts had failed, as guns were very much needed by the whole Volunteer force. He requested me to keep in contact with him and I promised to do so, but as it turned out I was unable to fulfil my promise because of the considerable misunderstanding and antipathy which had grown up between the Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers. As a result of this situation I was to find myself, in the

years following, torn between my loyalty to my comrades in the Citizen Army on the one hand and my loyalty to Liam Mellows and my other friends in the Volunteers on the other.

An Incident on O'Connell Bridge

I was home a little over a month when the second anniversary of Easter Week came around. One of our Citizen Army men who had taken part in the Insurrection died. It was decided that as many of his former comrades as could be contacted should attend the funeral, scheduled for Easter Tuesday. I had by then obtained a job at my trade in the Ringsend Dockyard, but did not go to work on that day because of the funeral. Lieutenant Michael Kelly and myself were in charge of the arrangements. The funeral cortege was on its way over O'Connell Bridge going towards Glasnevin when our attention was attracted by a crowd on the opposite side of the bridge. Some instinct told me that what was happening might be of interest. Michael Kelly gave me permission to fall out with the instruction that if anything serious was happening I was to contact him immediately and he would give me assistance. When I reached the east side of the bridge and got close to the scene of the trouble I recognised Michael Collins, who was in the custody of a number of detectives. He had not then become the celebrity he was to be during the following years.

Believing that there would be no need of assistance from the Citizen Army I said, "Aren't you Michael Collins?" He replied, "Yes. Three cheers for the Irish Republic", at the same time making an effort to break from his captors. With that I said to the crowd of people around, "Come on, let's rescue him", and I immediately struck the detective nearest to me and to Collins, believing that the rest of the crowd would follow my example. There was only one attempt beyond my own, that on the part of a youth whose name I do not know, and whom I have never seen since. I was taken aback

when a tall, middle-aged man with a very striking appearance jumped into the centre of the dispute saying, "Stop this. Stop this blackguardism. There is a legal way of fixing all this."

I saw my hopes of averting the arrest of Collins dwindling and looked up O'Connell Street to see how far my colleagues in the cortege had gone. I knew by the time I could overtake them and obtain help Collins would probably be in College Street police station, so I again appealed to the crowd to intervene. One or two more blows were struck at the detectives but seeing that rescue was hopeless I slipped away and rejoined the funeral procession which by this time was almost at the Rotunda. I reported the matter to Lieutenant Kelly who was prepared to send some men back immediately. But I felt that the time lapse was too long and that Collins was by now near College Street police station if not inside it. Collins, surprisingly enough, was released on bail and of course failed to appear in court to answer any charge. That was the last the British saw of him until he faced them at the conference table in London to negotiate the Treaty.

I arrived home from my colleague's funeral to find my mother dead. It was a dreadful shock. She had been ill and bedridden for a long time during my absence in America but since my homecoming had been up every day attending to the household duties as if nothing serious were the matter. Many of the neighbours had remarked that my return home had proved to be more beneficial than the doctor's prescriptions, but as it turned out, it was for me a very sad homecoming indeed.

Citizen Army Problems

One of my first actions on my return to Ireland was to contact my old colleagues in the Citizen Army. I had an early opportunity of discussing the affairs of the Army with

Michael Donnelly prominent in the attempt to have the Citizen Army play a greater role in the War of Independence

Michael Donnelly, Michael Kelly, James O'Shea and others of my former comrades. Somewhat to my discomfiture I found that the situation was anything but akin to that of the pre-1916 period. There was a new atmosphere, a new outlook, entirely different from that which had been moulded by Connolly and Mallin. Many of those who had been recruited into the Army during my absence seemed to lack the spirit, the understanding and the discipline which were so characteristic in the earlier period. The close co-operation which had previously existed officially between the Irish Transport Union and the Citizen Army seemed to have disappeared completely. Relations had indeed deteriorated to such a degree that it would not be an exaggeration to say that but for stalwarts such as I have named, an openly hostile situation would have been inevitable. As it was, a number of incidents did occur and were initiated and encouraged by individuals outside the Citizen Army who used some of our misguided or unthinking members for their own personal partisan interests.

Practically all the women who had taken part in the 1916 Insurrection had ceased to be members of the Citizen Army. This was due to the fact that some new members recruited into the women's section had a very questionable background as far as trade union loyalties were concerned. At least two of them, in defiance of Union orders, had worked during the 1913 strike for a very prominent Dublin firm. This, of course, was deeply resented by the women who had lost their jobs fighting to uphold trade unionism. There was, too, a bitter memory of the trials and tribulations endured by those who had taken part in the Easter Week Insurrection.

The new Commandant of the Irish Citizen Army, James O'Neill, was a carpenter and small contractor who had been useful prior to the Insurrection in several ways, and had been attached to the G.P.O. garrison during Easter Week. I regarded him as being chiefly responsible for the post-insurrection situation and left him in no doubt as to my viewpoint. His failure was entirely due to his lack of desire or ability to pursue the Connolly philosophy. When questions of policy arose O'Neill's attitude was to procrastinate rather than to take the line which would have been laid down by Connolly or Mallin, were either there to lead. The kernel of the problem was that without such a man to guide the organisation the majority of the newer members, strange as it may seem, did not hold or advocate the social and political views that had motivated those who fought in 1916 and which were responsible for the courage and tenacity the men and women displayed in many actions during that historic week of struggle.

The Citizen Army held elections every three months to elect a new Army Council. Early in 1918, on my return from America, I was nominated for one of the vacant posts and was subsequently elected a member of the Council. During the short period which I served I endeavoured, with the help of other colleagues, to bring the Army back to the state of mind and of operational effectiveness which obtained when it was under the control of Connolly and Mallin. One of the points which I pressed vehemently was that there must be greater co-operation between ourselves and

the Irish Volunteers soon to become better known as the I.R.A. There was quite a lot of opposition to this policy. The argument used most consistently against it, and against Michael Collins in particular, was that the Volunteers, as a result of I.R.B. activities, had been and still were endeavouring to bring about the absorption of the Citizen Army into the larger organisation and so bring it under I.R.B. control.

There was a certain amount of truth in this assertion. Connolly's view had been that the Citizen Army had become an integral part of the Republican Army as from Easter Week, and should remain so. I always had an understanding that the correct approach was to have co-operation with both parties working together but unfortunately every effort was made to thwart such co-operation. A number of reasons were given why we should remain independent and keep the Citizen Army as a separate unit. Most of us in fact favoured retaining our separate identity, but antagonism on the subject of co-operation, nevertheless, increased and many other matters were raised which were not helpful. Even the question of Connolly's alleged kidnapping by the I.R.B. in January 1916 was represented as a reason why we should retain our independence.

My proposals for greater co-operation with the Volunteers did, however, get the official sanction of the Army Council but it was tacitly arranged on Commandant O'Neill's suggestion that I and not he should explore every avenue in an attempt to create a better understanding between ourselves and the Volunteers. We arranged a meeting with Seamus Robinson, Archie Heron and Captain Frank McCabe of the Volunteers: the latter was then an organiser in the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and had contacts in many parts of the country. Michael Donnelly, Lieutenant Michael Kelly and myself were the unofficial representatives of the Citizen Army. The meetings took place in Liberty Hall and our problems were discussed openly and frankly. While negotiations were still going on, however, there was another election and I lost my position as a member of the Army Council. At that stage there had been a prospect of a

more progressive policy towards the I.R.A., designed to embrace the whole country. It was regrettable that no positive joint action resulted.

Afterwards I realised that my efforts to bring about a better understanding were most unpopular with the majority of my new colleagues. O'Neill's methods of controlling power were remarkably subtle. He had an answer for every question raised and was a most convincing talker. A whispering campaign was a favourite device—you were "a very decent fellow" but "off balance in thought"—and so with a glib tongue he always went his way. When challenged at the many meetings held from time to time on matters affecting his authority he would deny that the allegations were correct and his denial would be buttressed by evidence purporting to come from "a high officer in the Volunteers to whom he had spoken only a day or two before". Another device which proved effective was his repetition of the old argument that any effort to achieve co-operation was just "another effort by the I.R.B. to capture the organisation". At one stage O'Neill issued an order forbidding contact with Collins. It was subtly suggested that Seamus McGowan, Michael Donnelly and a few others, including myself, were "soreheads". Donnelly was at this time Secretary to the Army Council but was soon to lose his position and also ceased to be a member of the Council.

As a footnote to this account of relations with the Volunteers I should mention that when Miss Mary Ward, to whom I was engaged to be married before I left New York, arrived in Ireland in October 1919, she had a message for me from Mellows. He was very anxious that I should leave the Citizen Army and join the Irish Volunteers. This seemed unbelievable. I often meant to ask Mellows why he made such a request but the times and conditions never provided an opportunity to do so.

Lack of Action

I must at this stage clear up some doubts which in the succeeding years have been expressed as to the lack of action

During the burning of the Custom House in 1921 Citizen Army men sat on the steps opposite unaware of what was happening

The memory of James Connolly inspired the foundation of the James Connolly Labour College in 1919

from the Citizen Army during the period of the Anglo-Irish War. To put it bluntly the full potential at our command was not used. Under more positive leadership our contribution would perhaps not have equalled that of 1916 under the dynamic personalities of James Connolly and Michael Mallin, but this much can be said, there would have been the same close co-operation as had existed prior to and during 1916. As the struggle increased in intensity, with almost daily conflict in the streets of the capital, O'Neill was faced with increasing criticism from a growing number of the members. Why was the Citizen Army not involved in the attack of 12 April, 1921 on the London North Western Railway Hotel near Spencer Dock on the North Wall? This building was a strong link in the lines of communication of the Auxilliaries. It was well guarded and from its dominant position commanded the whole area of the docks. The command post got a terrific peppering that morning at 8 o'clock. The garrison hardly knew what was hitting them, so the "Auxies" lay low and did nothing until the attack was over. The post was badly damaged by bombs and rifle fire, but worse than anything else from the British point of view, their prestige was dented considerably. This was one of the many instances of lack of action which O'Neill did not explain to the satisfaction of the members.

Another action much closer to Liberty Hall was the burning of the Custom House also in 1921. Some of our unemployed members were actually sitting on the steps opposite the Custom House while the attack was taking place inside and knew nothing of it. Pressure for involvement was mounting but O'Neill's answer again was, "the big day is getting nearer for the Citizen Army." This was not generally accepted. Individual members were now known to be preparing for a more active role against the British forces, some even leaving the Citizen Army to achieve more independence in their decision to fight.

The failure of the Citizen Army to play a worthwhile role in the fight against the British forces during the period 1918-21 was due in the main to our failure to throw up leaders with the dynamic vision of Connolly and Mallin.

This failure was indeed a costly one for those of us who accepted the socialist principles of the workers' republic preached by James Connolly, for it meant that we missed a unique opportunity to play our part in the struggle for Irish freedom and in the subsequent shaping of a free Ireland.

Divided Loyalties

From the Autumn of 1918 I had become foremost in promoting the reorganisation of the Fintan Lalor Pipe Band which had gone out of existence with the collapse of the Insurrection. My first effort was to gather money from every available source. As far as Dublin was concerned the financial response was meagre because of many other demands and, more important, because of the high rate of unemployment and want. With the aid of some local support and an unexpected contribution from New York through the good graces of Mary Ward, the musical equipment was purchased and the band launched.

The Municipal elections of 1920 were due to take place and the various parties participating included Sinn Fein, Labour and Independents of all varieties. Walter Carpenter (Senior) a member of the Socialist Party of Ireland stood as a Workers' Republican candidate, while Dr Kathleen Lynn, a member of the Citizen Army, was a Sinn Fein candidate. It was not intended, as far as I was concerned, that the band should become involved in the elections. There was strong pressure however for support for Dr Lynn. I contended that if there was to be any participation it should be in support of the Labour Party candidates. The matter was taken to the Army Council and they, in their wisdom, decided that the band should parade for all Republican candidates. The Labour Party candidates, however, were not regarded as Republicans! So the proposal that the band turn out for the

Workers' Republican candidate was rejected. Dr Lynn was a member of the Citizen Army; Walter Carpenter was not, though his two sons were. Here again I saw in operation the divisive policy of the new Citizen Army Commandant, James O'Neill.

Because of what I regarded as a deliberate policy of ignoring basic principles I decided to resign from further association with the Fintan Lalor Pipe Band, or as it was known then, the Irish Citizen Army Pipe Band. It was a decision I would like to have avoided, particularly as it caused more than a little unrest among the band members who tried extremely hard, but in vain, to have me reverse my decision.

Connolly Commemoration

To honour the memory of James Connolly, in 1919 the Socialist Party of Ireland decided to hold a commemoration in the Mansion House on the anniversary of Connolly's birth—the 5 June 1868. They had asked many from outside the party, including the Citizen Army and other national organisations, to co-operate. The support of all was promised. Arrangements had been complete when Dublin Castle decided to ban the concert. The Socialist Party, of which Connolly had been a member, felt they were bound in honour to make an effort to hold the function. They therefore sought the active co-operation of the Citzen Army for stewarding and for other duties.

On the night of the concert Commandant O'Neill mobilised the Citizen Army and told the men that while he had been responsible for the call-up he wanted to make it clear that any member who did not wish to participate was free to abstain. This line was taken by O'Neill because of the active and organised antipathy of a section of members to the Irish Transport Union and to the Socialist Party of Ireland. In the background, and inspiring the opposition, were Miss Delia Larkin and P. T. Daly who lost no opportunity to gain their own ends and bring about the resultant disunity.

O'Neill wanted to know who were in favour of supporting the Socialist Party's effort to carry on with the banned concert and who were against it. A division took place and more than half of the Citizen Army at that night's parade declined to give any assistance.

It fell to the lot of those of us who were prepared to take part in the function to make hurried preparations to meet the crisis. A meeting took place about an hour before the concert was due to commence and it was decided that those Army members taking part should immediately assemble at points of vantage. The Mansion House had by this time been completely cut off by the Dublin Metropolitan Police who were armed with revolvers and were using force to prevent people gathering near the Mansion House. They had been pushing people around, using their heavy rain capes—a favourite police weapon—to beat up anyone in the vicinity of St Stephen's Green and Dawson Street. It was here that Lieutenant Michael Kelly's squad was stationed, and one of them, James O'Shea, was singled out by one of the D.M.P. He gave O'Shea the heavy end of the cape with stunning effect. O'Shea attempted to draw his gun but was seized by a number of the police. An inspector gave orders to arrest O'Shea and bring him down to the police station. O'Shea was still struggling and tried to throw his gun to a Citizen Army man but it did not reach him. The police made an effort to capture the gun but Lieutenant Kelly jumped in with a drawn revolver shouting, "Release that man immediately or I will shoot." The police indicated they would not release O'Shea and Kelly opened fire. His shooting was deadly accurate. Four policemen fell wounded to the ground; it seems fairly probable that Kelly could have killed them had he wished. Two civilians were also wounded, by whom it is hard to say. One of them, a young girl, was wounded in the leg and lay bleeding at the entrance steps of the St Stephen's Green Club. The bullet that struck her, according to witnesses, had evidently come from the place where the police were posted near Dawson Street.

The shooting created a tremendous sensation in the city and crowds milled around the area for some time. The

following day's paper gave the story big headlines by the standards of the time. The *Independent* splashed it over two columns: "Shooting Sensation In Dublin: Sensational Scenes". The paper also said that at the scene of the shooting a pistol had been found, a United States army issue colt.

Despite an extensive hue and cry Kelly was never apprehended though I do not recall that he took any particular steps to avoid recognition. All the wounded recovered. Kelly and O'Shea continued to work. Following the shooting all the police were withdrawn from the Mansion House area.

In the meantime a small committee of the Socialist Party who had charge of the final arrangements and who were determined to carry on with the concert, had transferred the venue to the Trades Hall in Capel Street. Many of those who had assembled in Dawson Street were informed by word of mouth of the change. The Citizen Army members engaged in this incident got to the venue about an hour later and were amazed to find the hall packed and the concert in full swing, though the programme had been considerably upset.

The James Connolly Labour College

A development of a somewhat different kind with which I was associated during this period was the James Connolly Labour College, which was founded late in 1919 and commenced classes on 18 January 1920. I was the registrar of the college and was responsible for keeping the attendance records and reporting on any increase or decrease in students. I was also responsible for keeping a supply of books covering the subjects taught and selling them to the students.

The director of the college was a Scotsman Reverend Malcolm McColl who acted under the assumed name of J. M. M. McDonnell. He was a member of the Social Democratic Party in Glasgow and a deeply religious man with a commanding knowledge of the history of his own country and of the world. Thomas Kennedy, who was for a time General

President of the I.T.G.W.U., told me that he met McColl in Glasgow about 1912. Kennedy used to be a speaker for the Catholic Socialist Party. At all its outdoor Sunday meetings he noticed a tall thin young man who was persistent in asking questions about the relationship between religion and the socialist philosophy. One particular Sunday it was decided to have their meeting in the Orange sector of the city. A well organised Orange mob was waiting and soon made short work of the meeting. Kennedy and the other speakers decided to clear out fast. After a short while he went back to survey the scene. To Kennedy's amazement there was the tall young man in the centre of a section of the mob, holding forth on his religious and socialist views. Eventually one of the mob struck him. The young speaker's reply to this treatment was to say, "When Christ was stricken so, he offered the other cheek." This was too much for Kennedy. Pushing his way through the crowd, eventually he got hold of McColl and took him away to safety. McColl spent the last years of his life in Ireland as a rector in Portlaw, Co Waterford.

The Connolly Labour College held its classes on the top floor of 42 North Great George's Street, where it shared the accommodation with the Socialist Party of Ireland. The college had approximately 230 registered students. These were offered classes in five subjects: economics, industrial history, law, speaking and general. Among those who helped McColl in running the college were Cathal O'Shannon; Hugh Gemmell, a member of the Social Democratic Party in Glasgow; Hector Hughes B.L., who was to serve as a Labour MP in the British House of Commons for many years; and Seamus J. Hughes, a member of the I.R.B. as well as the I.T.G.W.U. and later Assistant Director of Radio Eireann. Among the students at the college that I remember were the brothers Diarmuid and David O'Leary, who had come from London to join the 1916 Insurrection; Miss Rose Timmons, National Teachers Organisation and a member of the National Executive of the Irish Trade Union Congress; Mrs Margaret Buckley, Irish Women Workers' Union; Joseph Wickham, later to become Secretary of the Football Association of Ireland; Larry Doyle, General Manager of the

Clothing Co-operative Society; M. J. Solan and Stephen Murphy, two young Irish Citizen Army men and Jack Scully who was a member of the Special Branch at Dublin Castle some years later.

On the morning of "Bloody Sunday", 21 November 1920, the Auxiliaries and Black and Tans were on their rampage of reprisal through the centre of Dublin. There were many incidents of ordinary people going about their business being beaten up on that day. It was mid-day before people realised what was happening. I was having dinner when a heavy outburst of rifle fire broke out. There was no doubt about it being live ammunition. Earlier I had been debating in my mind whether I should neglect the Connolly College and go instead to Croke Park to see the football match between Dublin and Tipperary. The call of duty won, but only momentarily. With my student register and other books under my arm I set out to attend the college. I met a man running by the house in great agitation. I asked him if the match was over already. He snapped back at me, "Is that all you know? Men, women and children are being murdered in Croke Park."

I was about to continue to the college when I realised that if I were held up by the British forces with the records in my possession, not only would it be dangerous for myself but also for the students. This decided me to return to my cousin's house, where my wife and I were living. Unable to contain myself I left the house and went out on the streets where people were rushing in a state of fright. While I was trying to calm a very nervous neighbour, an armoured car came over the canal bridge from Ballybough, unknown to my neighbour who had his back to the bridge. I told him what was happening and advised him on no account to lose his nerve and run or we would both be dead men. The armoured car by now was almost level with us. The gunner slowly but surely turned the muzzle of the gun directly on us and then passed by. What a relief!

I was very worried about my younger brother, Willie, who was playing for Dublin in Croke Park that day. I went to my father's house which was about fifty yards away and when I

got there Willie had arrived home. There was one of the Tipperary men with him. Each member of the Dublin team had taken charge of one of the Tipperary men, less one, Sean Hogan, who was shot dead on the field of play. All members of both teams left the ground minus their clothes and other belongings. My brother was able to obtain the loan of two overcoats from a house in St James's Avenue for his friend and himself.

"The Bishop"

We nicknamed my friend Michael Donnelly "The Bishop" because of his habit, when advocating socialist theories, of supporting his arguments with scriptural quotations. His strong line on most occasions was the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel passage that it is harder for a rich man to get into heaven than it is for a camel to get through the eye of a needle. Donnelly worked as a casual docker at the North Wall. One evening in 1920 he was very worried about a possible development next day at the docks. It concerned what was known as the Military Hay Boat, which regularly loaded up horses and hay for export. It was suspected that this boat was bringing ammunition for the Black and Tans and the British army. Donnelly's view was that these supplies should be stopped at the docks and that any attempt to unload ships carrying arms to supply the British forces should be resisted. We both agreed that some effort should be made to prevent the unloading and later in the evening Donnelly contacted William O'Brien and Thomas Foran and convinced them of the logic of this. Their reaction was to send a telegram to the Union delegate, Larry Redmond, who lived in Ringsend, instructing him to go to the North Wall Extension next morning and hold up the ship if necessary. As it turned out the report on this occasion of the impending arrival of the Hay Boat was incorrect and strike action was not required. But this was the germ of the idea that eventually resulted in the Munitions of War Strike.

Donnelly was a very active member of the Citizen Army from its inception. He had imbibed much of Connolly's teaching and after Easter Week he gave lectures on Connolly's philosophy to recruits coming into the Citizen Army. He had taken part in the big lock-out of 1913 and had suffered very considerably for his national and labour principles. He could have lived very comfortably with his brother who was well endowned with this world's goods. Rather than give up what he believed to be right he had chosen the harder way of life.

Some years later I was at Donnelly's bedside in Steevens' Hospital when he died. Anxious to convey the news to his former colleagues in the Citizen Army and the labour movement I decided that the best means would be through Radio Eireann. The officials at Radio Eireann accepted all the information I had to give regarding Donnelly's work for Ireland and I was convinced that I would hear it on the radio that night. To my indignation no announcement was made. I made a second contact. This also failed. Following a written inquiry at Radio Eireann some days later I was informed by letter that it was the policy of the station only to announce the deaths of well-known people. What gratitude towards the memory of one for whom no task was too great whenever it meant advancing the freedom of our country. Yet a national institution which he had helped to establish would not pay him a small tribute in death.

The Fall of Commandant O'Neill

In the oft-professed view of Commandant O'Neill the Citizen Army "must be kept intact for the big day that was surely coming". Little we knew then of O'Neill's efforts at self-aggrandisement, or we would have been less content to accept this slogan. It is no part of my intention to go into the whole sad story of the events that eventually led to O'Neill's dismissal from his command and his conviction before the courts for grave misdemeanors. But for the sake of historical accuracy some murky matters must be made clear.

One of these concerned the acquisition of twelve rifles by the South Tipperary Brigade of the I.R.A. As we understood the situation the rifles were to be the gift of the Citizen Army to Tipperary's gallant fighters. The Citizen Army Council had so decided, and it was almost by accident that a very different state of things was revealed. One day I had met Sean Russell who had been with me in Knutsford and Frongoch and was now on the Headquarters Staff of the I.R.A. We discussed O'Neill and some matters that had come to our attention. I mentioned how much we were inhibited in our approach to some of our Commandant's dealings by the fact that he was on the Headquarters Staff of the I.R.A. and then went on to speak of the Citizen Army's gift of the rifles to Tipperary. To my complete surprise Russell vehemently denied that O'Neill held any position on the G.H.Q. Staff and, as for the rifles, the Tipperary Brigade had *bought* them from O'Neill. This information came as a great shock to me and I determined to have the affair probed as deeply as I could.

Through the good offices of Russell we met Oscar Traynor, then commanding officer of the Dublin Brigade of the I.R.A., whom I had met with his family when I was a boy. Traynor, Russell and I discussed the whole situation and it was eventually agreed that Traynor would obtain a written statement from the Quartermaster General, Sean McMahon, confirming the sale of the twelve rifles to the Tipperary Brigade. Many weeks passed and I had almost given up hope of obtaining the document. Then one day Russell informed me that Traynor had the statement. I called on him that every evening and was handed a short typewritten note signed in a particular way. I asked why the person's name was not written in full. Traynor replied that it was simply a precaution in case the document fell into enemy hands. The document, he assured me, came from the Quartermaster General, Sean McMahon.

I wasted no time in looking up Michael Donnelly. We then had to consider our next move. Lieutenant Michael Kelly was trusted absolutely and as he was a member of the Citizen Army Council it was agreed that he call a special

meeting of the Council. The result of that meeting terminated the career of James O'Neill as Commandant of the Irish Citizen Army. So my labours on this very distasteful subject ended.

The Army Council decided not only to remove O'Neill from the position of Commandant but to set up a court-martial to try him on a number of charges. Doctor Kathleen Lynn was appointed Chairman of the court. While the court-martial was proceeding the Truce took place and the civilian authorities under the existing law proceeded against O'Neill, who was arrested on a number of charges, convicted and sent to prison.

O'Neill's incarceration led to a somewhat dramatic confrontation between myself and Michael Collins. Learning of a plan to rescue O'Neill while he was being conveyed from prison to the court in a Black Maria I contacted Madame Markievicz at the Mansion House where the Dail was then in session. She decided to enlist the aid of Collins. When Collins came into the room I detailed the rescue plan. Collins was, as usual, quick to make up his mind. With a characteristic jerk of his head he said, "All right. I will attend to this matter. They [those who were planning the rescue attempt] will all be arrested and charged with armed robbery."

My reaction to this was immediate. "You will do nothing of the kind." His head jerked again in surprise and we stared into each other's eyes in a challenging manner. I was expecting an outburst but instead he said, "Give me a good reason why this should not be done."

My reply was, "A number of the men taking part in the rescue bid will be there through a sense of loyalty to O'Neill. They know nothing and were not associated with the matters with which he is being charged."

"Oh, I see," Collins replied quietly. "Well, leave the matter with me, another way will be found." I left Madame and Collins, feeling very satisfied with my morning's work and confident that everything would turn out satisfactorily. Need I say that O'Neill was not rescued the next day.

The reward for my part in the dismissal of Commandant O'Neill was promotion to the rank of Lieutenant in the Irish Citizen Army.

The Part Played by Trade Unionists

It can be claimed with some justification that the trade union movement itself as well as individual trade unionists in their roles as members of the Volunteers to some extent made up for the abysmal failure of the Irish Citizen Army to play a significant role on behalf of the working class in the shaping of Irish independence during the crucial years of 1918 to 1921. In the continued absence in America of James Larkin, who was still nominally General Secretary, the leadership of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was principally in the hands of Thomas Foran, General President, and William O'Brien, General Treasurer. O'Brien perhaps more than anyone else had a feeling for Connolly's philosophy but his physical disabilities prevented him from stepping fully into Connolly's position. Furthermore, antagonism between the Union and the new style Citizen Army seems to have arisen very soon after the Insurrection. Commandant James O'Neill was at the centre of the trouble, a dispute having arisen over his contract for the repair of Liberty Hall, which was badly damaged during the Insurrection. In this connection, it seems likely that Foran and O'Brien were aware of O'Neill's shortcomings considerably earlier than the rest of us.

From 1917 onwards there was a rapid growth in the membership of the I.T.G.W.U., paralleling the upsurge of nationalist feeling during this period. The Union's leading branch officials were in many cases prominent officers of the Irish Volunteers and the branch halls were often the headquarters of local Volunteer companies. In Dublin there was frequent communication and consultation between labour leaders and members of the Dail Government, some of these meetings being held in Liberty Hall. During the War of Independence, to my personal knowledge, Michael Collins, Madame Markievicz and Joe McGrath, among many other representatives of the Dail and of Dublin Corporation, conducted their business from time to time in Liberty Hall. On one occasion, about September 1919, I was deputed by Thomas Foran to watch out for the arrival of Michael Collins at Liberty Hall.

A meeting had been arranged with Collins and some others. Liberty Hall, because of the numbers of workers coming and going, was regarded as a safe place for such a meeting. Foran wanted to ensure that Collins would not be left standing around the Hall but would be brought straight into the room where the meeting was to take place. I was on the look-out for Collins for some time. Then Foran came to tell me that word had been received that Collins would not be coming as he had information that Liberty Hall was on the list for raiding that morning. The raid, however, did not take place.

I remember another occasion in 1920 on which Madame Markievicz attended a meeting of the Citizen Army Council in Liberty Hall. The meeting was in progress for some time when a message arrived that Madame Markievicz should leave immediately as a raid was anticipated. James O'Shea and myself were given the job of seeing Madame safely out of the area. When she was handed over to us we saw a very old woman dressed in old-fashioned clothes and wearing a Victorian bonnet. Her make-up conveyed an impression of a feeble old lady between seventy-five and eighty years. Of course she had to maintain that illusion as O'Shea and I carefully linked her out of Liberty Hall. We left her as far as Spencer Dock Bridge where she insisted that she would be quite safe for the rest of her journey. This was about half past nine or ten o'clock at night during the winter time and in this area of the city the lighting facilities were bad. We were rather reluctant to agree but she insisted and went the remainder of her journey alone—and in safety.

In Cork Tadhg Barry, who was shot dead in Ballykinlar Camp in 1921, had been one of the Union's chief officials in the city, while Dom Sullivan, Secretary of the Cork Branch, was adjutant to Sean Hegarty. Archie Heron eventually became Union Treasurer while Cathal O'Shannon was, of course, also a prominent I.R.A. man. Michael Smyth of Kildare, Peadar O'Donnell, the writer, and Seamus Dempsey were others to be found both in the Union and the I.R.A. There were many more, of course, and the name of Tom Hand, Secretary of the Skerries Branch of the Union brings to mind all those killed by the Black and Tans. He was taken

from his cottage on 5 December 1920. His body was found close by where he had been murdered by the Black and Tans, who gave the usual report: "Shot while trying to escape."

One of the men just mentioned with whom I myself had considerable contact was Dom Sullivan, Secretary of the Cork Branch. One of his several visits to me at my father's house in North William Street, Dublin, took place in1921 with a view to capturing, if possible, a British armoured car. A few possibilities were investigated, particularly at Aldboro House, Portland Row, but conditions were not regarded as favourable and attention was directed elsewhere. At that time, according to information at our disposal, there were only three privately-owned Rolls Royce cars in Dublin. We went up Grafton Street and located one. Sullivan then released me from any further action. Next day I read in a Dublin paper that a Rolls Royce had been stolen in Grafton Street.

I had a subsequent visit from Sullivan in connection with plans to arrest an English journalist named Keyes who we considered had dishonoured his profession by writing an article which had not an atom of truth. It purported to describe an interview with a leading officer of the Irish Republican Army in Cork, declaring him to be in favour of the Treaty. A previous decision had been made by the officers of the Cork Brigade to leave the decision on the Treaty to Dail Eireann. No officer was to give publicly his views for or against the Treaty. A letter to me in 1966 from the celebrated fighter "Sandow" Donovan recalls that he came to Dublin at the time of the Keyes affair, also that suitable cars were being sought to armour. He confirms Dom Sullivan's prowess, noting that he went neutral in the Civil War.

Thomas Johnson

The Irish Trade Union Congress, of which the I.T.G.W.U. was the driving force, worked in close co-operation with the

Dail. Thomas Johnson, an Englishman by birth, was secretary at the time. Johnson, while not an advocate of physical force, was certainly not lacking in moral courage. At the time of my return to Ireland in 1918 the Trade Union Congress was playing a powerful role in the anti-conscription campaign. This campaign had widespread support even from trade unionists of the area we described as the "Black North"—any workers there who had been desirous of joining the British army had already done so voluntarily.

Johnson, a very active campaigner against conscription, was the principal speaker at many meetings in the North, some of which were very stormy affairs as a result of the organised opposition of the Orange Lodges. During the course of the campaign an all-Ireland one-day strike was called by the Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, and this move met with widespread support throughout the country.

Shortly afterwards, Johnson was victimised by his employers, the London-based firm of Day, Son & Hewitt, for taking part in the anti-conscription campaign. Although he had given many years of loyal service to the firm, he was given the choice of disassociating himself at once from the anti-conscription movement or severing his connection with the firm. The exchange of letters betweeen Johnson and his employers on this matter was published by the Dublin United Trades Council, over the name of William O'Brien who was secretary at the time, and circulated to trades councils and trade unions. The following is the text of Johnson's reply to his former employer.

Belfast,
April 29th, 1918

Gentlemen—Your letter dated 19th was received on Wednesday last. It is true, as you have been informed by some loyal friend, that I have been for many years interested keenly in political and social questions and that I have even acted as chairman at an anti-Conscription meeting.

I had not thought it was a crime to do either of these, but rather the right of every citizen.

Thomas Johnson

Cathal O'Shannon

It has never been my practice to discuss politics with your customers, very few indeed know anything about my political views. Outside of business connections I have exercised such rights of citizenship as are left to me and propose to continue to do so. I have never compromised the firm in any action I have taken, and I resent any attempt to deprive me of my liberty in these matters. Such steps as I have taken in connection with the opposition to Conscription in Ireland were inspired, not by what you call disloyalty, but by love of Ireland and her freedom. To me tyranny is equally detestable whatever the name of the tyrant, be he Kaiser, Tsar, Sultan or British statesman. To attempt to enforce Military Service upon an unwilling, subjugated nation under pressure of military necessity, while at the same time professing to fight for freedom and the rights of subject peoples, is to show how slight is the moral gulf that divides the warring powers.

May I say with all respect that your own attitude towards me is fairly parallel with England's conduct towards

Ireland. I am in a measure economically dependent upon you as Ireland is, by virtue of British trade policy and fiscal machinations, dependent upon England. Being so dependent you think I should adjust my intellectual and moral standards to fit your conception of justice and loyalty. Anticipating a refusal to accede to your demands you ask me to sever my connection with the firm. At this point the parallel fails. England declines to say that to Ireland, but the attempt to compel me to sink my Liberty of action as a citizen under threat of dismissal is in perfect accord with your country's habitual conduct towards weaker nations.

I greatly regret that our relationship, always so pleasant, should end in this manner, but liberty must be subserved whatever occurs.

Yours truly,
Thomas R. Johnson.

For all its good work in support of the national cause, the labour movement in Ireland during this crucial period showed immaturity in its political policy and strategy as it did in the strategy of its military wing. I have already alluded to the disputes about which candidates and parties at elections should be supported by the Irish Citizen Army Pipe Band. A much more serious instance of Labour's political immaturity arose in connection with the now-famous 1918 General Election. An attempt was made at a meeting in the Mansion House to announce the intention of the Labour Party to contest the elections. The supporters of this move were howled down by the very workers who earlier in the year had obeyed the call for an all-Ireland strike against conscription. It is well to point out that the Labour Party was of recent birth, as a sequel to James Connolly's resolution at the 1912 Congress at Clonmel. Its influence as a political force was so far practically nil. It had a very small membership without any proper form of organisation. The real strength of organised Labour in 1918 was still along the lines of the traditional trade union movement. Workers by

and large were not attuned to the potential for organised Labour involvement in politics. Hence although Madame Markievicz after the 1918 election became the first Minister for Labour of the Irish Republic, the bulk of trade unionists thought of their trade unionism and their nationalism separately and did not share in Connolly's attempt to unite the two.

The Supreme Sacrifice

One of the events of the War of Independence that held for me a special poignancy concerns what came to be known as the Drumcondra ambush and involved the lives of six young men some of them fellow trade unionists and some of them workmates and friends of mine. This dramatic clash between a band of young Volunteers and the British forces took place at Clonturk Park near Richmond and Greenpark Roads in the early period of 1921. Clonturk Park had been selected by the group as an ideal place to set up an ambush. Unfortunately their presence was discovered and they were caught in a military trap. In the shooting that followed one Volunteer was killed and five were captured. All five were subsequently sentenced to death but one, a seventeen-year-old youth named Dermot O'Sullivan, was later reprieved.

The four young men were Frank Flood, Thomas Bryan, Patrick Doyle and Bernard Ryan and with them in the death cells of Kilmainham were Patrick Moran, a leading member of the Grocers Assistants Trade Union, and Thomas Wheelan. The execution of all six by hanging had been fixed for Monday, 14 March. Some days before the dread date I called to the Irish Trade Union Congress at 32 Lower Abbey Street to find out were there any plans for trade union action on that day. Thomas Johnson and Thomas Foran, Secretary

and President respectively, were not available. Present in the office that afternoon were Thomas McPartlin, President of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, and Thomas Farren of the Marble Polishers and Stonecutters Society. They were also members of the National Executive Council of the Irish Trade Union Congress.

I made them aware of our intention to close the Dublin Dockyard. I was also conveying a request for a call for a general strike as a further protest on the part of the workers against British militarism. McPartlin and Farren made it clear that this was something which would require a National Executive Council decision. They gave me a promise to take the matter before the Resident Executive Council members' meeting the next day.

A call was then issued on behalf of the National Executive Council of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress to all workers to abstain from work until eleven on the Monday as a mark of respect to the six brave Irishmen, and to observe the morning as a period of mourning and solemn protest.

On the Monday morning Moran and Wheelan were the first to be hanged at six am. Moran had had an opportunity to escape from Kilmainham with Frank Teeling, Simon Donnelly and Ernie O'Malley in February, but refused, being absolutely sure that he could not be found guilty of the shooting of the British intelligence officers in Mount Street on Bloody Sunday. The execution of Frank Flood, Thomas Bryan, Patrick Doyle and Bernard Ryan followed between seven and eight am.

Events like these probably inspired the fine poems of Sir William Watson, "Ireland's Madness", which appeared, significantly enough, in the *Freeman's Journal* and in the London *Daily News* of 15 March 1921, the day following the executions.

> Is it all folly, yonder, hour by hour,
> To choose, not peace, but strife, and there to dare
> The lion couched in his unnative lair,
> The world famed lion, mighty to devour?

Oh, that some folly as splendid were a flower,
Not, on all shores but those, so wonderous rare!
Common as weed in Ireland everywhere
That splendid folly blooms, and hath the power
To make a mere slight boy not only face
Death with no tremblings, with no coward's alarms,
But like a lover woo it to his arms,
Clasp with a joyous and rapt embrace
Death's beauty, death's dear sweetness, death's pure grace,
And count all else as nought besides death's charms.

The Floods—and no family made greater sacrifices in the cause of Irish freedom—lived on Summerhill Parade less than fifty yards from our home in North William Street. There were eight boys in the family: Sean, Aloysius, Thomas, Frank, Peter and Edward (the twins), Harold and Alfred. I played football with the boys and Sean and Eddie worked with me in the Dublin Dockyards. All who were old enough were in the movement. It could be said that two of them gave their lives for Ireland for while Frank, as I have told, died on the scaffold (he was then a brilliant engineering student in his second year in University College, Dublin), Sean, the eldest of this family, died soon after his release from Peterhead Convict Prison in Scotland where he had completed a five year sentence. He had been involved in an effort to rescue some men under sentence of death in Derry and had been captured in, I think, Enniskillen. By a singular coincidence he had been sentenced on 14 March 1922 on the very first anniversary of the death of his brother Frank.

It is probably not so well known that the third of the brothers, Thomas, escaped only by a miracle from the same fate as his student brother. During the attack on the Custom House he was captured, and with five companions, was charged with treason. This involved an almost certain death sentence. On the night before the trial of the six was due to open Tom awoke in his cell screaming with agony. Doctors were called and diagnosed a case of acute appendicitis. He was removed to the King George V Hospital (now St

Frank Flood, a brilliant engineering student, was was one of six young men hanged by the British on 14 March 1921

Bricin's Military Hospital) where he underwent an urgent operation. The trial was adjourned to a later date. Fate again intervened. On the day before the trial was due to be held the Truce was declared. The lives of all six were saved.

It was surely a curious quirk of history that when the Treaty was signed and the British troops were leaving, young Commandant Peter Flood, proud in the new green uniform of the National Army, marched at the head of his men into what is now Collins Barracks, to take over the post from the British. Later Peter Flood, the young Irish Army Commandant, became a brother in the Marist Order. I spoke to him at a dinner in Collins Barracks some years ago. I reminded him of the time he was on duty in Grafton Street in 1922; we had not met since then. Earnestly he told me he wanted to live for Ireland and would advise other young people to do likewise. Too many were dying unnecessarily. Coming from Brother Peter, two of whose brothers, Frank and Sean had died for Ireland, his statement moved me deeply. On a happier note it is pleasant to record that the youngest of the Flood brothers, Alfred, served with great distinction in the Garda Siochana and retired a little time ago as Deputy Commisioner of the force.

10 · Treaty and Tragedy

On 11 July 1921, the first day of the Truce, I met Captain Michael Kelly at Liberty Hall. "Well Frank," he said, "what do you think of the situation now?"

"Well, Michael," I replied, "it has been a tremendous comeback since last October, but it does not mean the Irish Republic."

Kelly retorted, "Why do you say that?"

My answer was, "It cannot be regarded as a military victory; if such success were the case then the only discussions would be for making arrangements for the evacuation of the British forces from Ireland."

Kelly looked at me as if an unexpected message was being received for the first time. What I could not have foreseen then was the terrible tragedy which the failure to achieve the Irish Republic was to occasion.

Disagreement with Mellows

Some time after Liam Mellows came back to Ireland, early in 1921, I went to 22 Mountshannon Road, Rialto, his parents' home, I had called on Mellows's mother several times after my return from America and had not been surprised at seeing the Union Jack on the mantlepiece since Liam had warned me about it. Mellows's father was a Sergeant-Major in the British Army—Liam and his brothers Barney and Herbert had been attached to the British Military Academy in the Phoenix Park. Although the flag would remain as long as the father lived, it was clear that the mother's influence on the family was the decisive one. Indeed it seemed to me that this was the reason why Liam, in my opinion, placed over-emphasis on the part played by women in Irish history. On the present occasion Liam's mother gave me an address not too far from her own where I should inquire for a Mr Nolan. On doing so a man represented himself as Mr Nolan,

and I told him the Mr Nolan I wanted to see had only shortly come home from New York and was a much younger man than he. I mentioned some other items of interest and gave my father's address where my wife (the former Mary Ward) and I lived. Mellows called within a few days and took on the job of nursing our baby daughter, Maureen. I had earlier received a printed document from Judge Cohalan which I had not had an opportunity to read yet. Having mentioned it to Mellows, he asked to see it and, reading the document, he expressed a wish to take it. To this I agreed. At this stage I did not know how deep-seated the dispute had been in America between Clan na Gael and our own delegation headed by Eamonn de Valera, President of the Executive Council.

Mellows's second visit to our home was on the day of the burning of the Custom House. I was not at home and did not see him. He arrived dressed as a woman and one of my sisters was refusing him admission when my wife recognised his voice and corrected the misunderstanding. He was worried about that day's casualties and the number of men taken prisoner.

Sometime before this incident I met Mellows in O'Connell Street, a meeting which was to end unsatisfactorily. After the usual greetings we talked of more serious things. I inquired casually how Mike Collins was. The answer shocked me. Mellows replied,

"Oh, he pays too many visits to pubs."

My reaction was sharp. "Liam, I am extremely disappointed with you. Don't you know that pubs are the safest place to do the sort of business that Collins has to do. I never expected a comment of that kind from you."

Mellows replied, "Frank, I am sorry, I should not have said that."

He was very upset by the sharpness of my manner and brought our conversation to an abrupt end. I was left wondering why Mellows should make a comment like this; it was so unexpected and so uncharacteristic. I hoped he was not another outlet for the current stream of anti-Collins propaganda.

My next disagreement with Mellows was on 7 December, the day after the signing of the Treaty in London, again in O'Connell Street. He was in the company of Seamus Robinson, whom I knew very well, and another man whom I met for the first time but whose name, unfortunately I cannot now recall. The conversation had hardly opened when Mellows, with a great deal of emotion, left no doubt as to his views on the Treaty. He made statements to the effect that John Redmond could have got better terms without firing a shot. I considered his approach so irrational that I felt obliged to counter it without discussing the question of "yea" or "nay" about the Treaty. I put the point that he was being unfair by making statements not in accordance with facts. I asked why the British sacrificed so many of their own people's lives over the years to prevent Irish freedom? Why did the British break faith with Redmond and in doing so destroy an Irish leader who was friendly towards them? Were the British ever sincere in their many public statements?

I recalled a conversation Liam and I had had in Kirwan's home in New York when he declared that the Irish people's road to freedom would be very difficult. Our country was so near to the heart of the Empire that Britain would fight to the end before easing her hold on Ireland. However, our conversation, like the previous one, was unsatisfactory, because of lack of time and proper opportunity and the now ever-present atmosphere of tension.

With the Dail accepting the Treaty by a majority vote, I became very concerned with some of the day-to-day happenings. I had remembered Mellows's declaration on 7 December of his intention to oppose the Treaty at all costs. About the end of January or early in February 1922, I went to Kevin Barry Hall in Parnell Square where I spent the hours from about ten pm to three am in a long and unyielding discussion with Mellows. He had a hard and fast approach. Nothing but the straight road to the Republic would do. When told this would mean civil war he dismissed such a possibility as out of the question. How, I persisted, was a civil war to be avoided with two armies acting under two different authorities and with these authorities implacably

opposed to each other?

The straight road to the Republic would be maintained, said Liam, there would be no civil war. "We regard ourselves as engineers mapping out a new country," he said.

"Good engineers would not drive into impossible obstacles," I replied. "They would find a way of circumventing or evading the problem. The Republican movement might realise that their ideals had suffered a reverse but this could only be of a temporary nature."

"No," he maintained, "there must be no compromise."

"Then must there be a civil war?"

"Such will not happen," said he, "but the straight road to the Republic must be maintained."

We again ended our conversation in disagreement, but were still very good friends.

Trade Union Intervention

The threatening tendencies pointing towards an inevitable armed confrontation continued. William O'Brien, then General Treasurer of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, knowing of my friendship with Mellows, asked me to arrange a conference with him and Rory O'Connor and Liam Lynch. On Thursday night, 13 April 1922, crossing the north end of Parnell Square to contact Mellows at Barry's Hotel in Gardiner Row, I saw quite a number of men in groups hurrying in the opposite direction. Among them was Tim Roche, an engineer in the Dublin Dockyard and a great friend of mine. When I got to Barry's Hotel the porter was asked to tell Mellows that I wanted to see him. In a short time a tallish man with rimless glasses appeared and, in a voice of some arrogance, asked who I was and what was my business. I am afraid the same attitude was adopted by me, as I replied, "I came here to see Liam Mellows, and who might you be?"

He announced, "My name is Liam Lynch, Mellows is not here. What is your business with him?"

Having told him Mellows was a friend of long standing and that my business was with him, Lynch then brought the conversation to an end by intimating that Mellows would not be back at the hotel that night. The news broke late that night of the occupation of the Four Courts. This step brought us to the brink of civil war.

The next day I called to the Four Courts and had no difficulty in gaining admission. I inquired for Mellows and was shown to the main section of the building where a meeting of officers was in progress. When the meeting finished we met and under the dome exchanged the usual friendly greetings and family inquiries. These being disposed of I brought the conversation around to the occupation of the building. Why had such a step been taken? Mellows replied that the matter of having a suitable headquarters had given some concern. They had looked around many buildings which included the Fowler Hall which was already occupied by anti-Treaty Volunteers, Port Sunlight at Parliament Street, the Ballast Office, Kildare Street Club and the Freemasons' Hall in Molesworth Street, but none suited more than the Four Courts.

I then put the question directly to him, "Liam, are you quite sure it is only because you want a suitable headquarters? Is there another motive?"

He replied, "That is all." I pushed the matter further, saying this reason might be accepted by the men who had come there with him but surely he did not expect me to accept such an explanation of the occupation. He held his head sideways and looked at me and said, "Well, what do you think it was?"

"Liam," I replied, "this is the last vestige of British authority left in this country. Your action is a direct challenge to that authority, which will not go unanswered. The British will put pressure on Collins and Griffith to honour the London Treaty, which was accepted by majority vote in Dail Eireann. Collins and Griffith must act. If they fail to do so it will be regarded as an act of bad faith and a breach of trust placed on them by the majority vote of Dail Eireann. If they don't act the British will regard such in-

action as a repudiation of the Treaty and will act accordingly, and put you out of here and we will cut a very sorry figure in future."

He looked at me and smiled, but it was a very sad sort of smile and he made no reply to my outburst. Looking away from him, I said, "Oh, there is Seamus Robinson." This break seemed to be a relief for Mellows, who replied, "Did you hear of all the soviets Seamus has established down in Tipperary?"

To this I made no reply. I was in little mood for evasions.

I then told Mellows of the purpose of my visit, that William O'Brien, the General Treasurer of the Union, had asked me to make arrangements for a meeting between Mellows and his colleagues on the one hand, and Foran and his colleagues on the other. Mellows agreed to recommend that such a meeting should take place.

This was the last time I saw or spoke to Mellows. What happened afterwards I do not know precisely. Suffice it to say the meeting took place with Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Joe McKelvey and another present on the side of the Four Courts Executive, and Foran, Thomas Johnson and Cathal O'Shannon (then editor of the *Voice of Labour*) on the labour side. It was held in the Four Courts and ended without agreement. Later a one-day strike took place on the decision of the Trade Union Congress and Labour Party National Executive Council on Monday, 24 April 1922. A very large meeting took place in O'Connell Street where there were a number of platforms from which, at a given signal, a resolution was proposed deploring the spread of militarism within the country. A guard of the Citizen Army was on duty at each platform under the command of Major Michael Kelly—Kelly was promoted to Major after the fall of Commandant O Neill.

It was alleged that Kelly took this action on his own authority following an important meeting between representatives of the Citizen Army Council and representatives of the trade union and labour movement including Thomas Johnson and William O'Brien. This meeting was held in 35 Parnell Square, the then head office of the Union. As far

as my memory serves, among those present, in addition to O'Brien and Johnson, were Cathal O'Shannon and, I think, Thomas Foran. Prominent members of the I.T.G.W.U. present included P. J. O'Brien, Tipperary; Gilbert Lynch, Dundalk; Michael Smyth, Kildare; myself and some others. Those on the Citizen Army side included Major Michael Kelly, Captain Richard McCormack, John Hanratty, Sean Byrne and Michael Donnelly.

The meeting discussed several points of immediate interest—among them the question of extending the Citizen Army over the entire country in order to combat the growth of militarism and to ensure that workers' meetings, now in danger, could be held without interference; and the question of co-operation with the trade union movement to ease the effects of the economic crisis then existing.

The Citizen Army representatives explained that arms were in short supply, and the question was discussed, would arms be available if money were forthcoming, and what amount of money would be required? Agreement was reached on the following:

1 The Irish Citizen Army would be extended beyond the Dublin area and the force would be known as the Irish Workers' Army.

2 That initially as an act of good faith a certain amount of money would be given to provide for the immediate purchase of certain small arms. The Union premises at 17 High Street were to be placed at the disposal of the Irish Citizen Army.

3 Further meetings were to take place in pursuance of future development.

No other meeting in fact took place and nothing of worth seems to have come from this attempt at creating Labour solidarity. The reason given was that Major Michael Kelly had acted without the authority of the Army Council in providing the guard for the O'Connell Street meetings. The Army Council further decided without prior discussion to declare the agreement freely entered into with the trade union representatives to be ended. One hundred pounds had been provided as a first contribution to improve the arms

Liam Mellows, one of four Republicans executed as a reprisal by the Freestate Government on 8 December 1922

situation. A second hundred pounds given to me was lodged in the Land Bank in Dame Street in an account in the name of "The Workers' Educational Society". Michael Donnelly and I were trustees for the account. The money was given to me by William O'Brien. As a result of the breaking of the agreement no further sums were put into the account.

Meanwhile the drift into internecine strife continued. From the day I spoke to Mellows in O'Connell Street about the signing of the Treaty I could foresee an emotional upsurge which could end only in warfare. I made a vow not to be involved in such a tragic sequel and, as the situation became worse, I finally decided that on no account would I fire a shot. My comrades were taking sides and raring for the opportunity to go shooting. When the Civil War did break out I heard of friends and comrades being killed. The death of Michael Collins almost saw me in the National Army. How I resisted the impulse I do not know. Some few months before that terrible tragedy, Jimmy Mallon ("The Frongoch Barber") approached me to induce me to accept a Captaincy in the Army, which I refused. On another front, however, during the first week of the Civil War Michael

Kelly, Jimmy O'Shea, Sean Byrne ("Gurra"), Michael Donnelly and myself took over the I.T.G.W.U. Head Office at 35 Parnell Square. Our reason for such a step was to forestall a threat of a *coup d'etat* by the Irish Communist Party.

Execution of a Friend

The day of the execution of Mellows, O'Connor, McKelvey and Barrett was one of the blackest days I have ever experienced. The pain endured in mind and body on that occasion is beyond my powers of description. Liam was the only one I knew personally. From time to time I still recall the happy times we spent together, the many disputations we had during our friendship and I remember the many occasions when he wanted my point of view on the numerous problems which arose. And then, when leaving the U.S.A. in February 1918, there was his message to me for Michael Collins and for him alone. What a terrible tragedy that in a little over four years both were dead in the urge to do the right thing by the Irish people, though from different sides of the road to freedom.

George Bernard Shaw gave gratuitous advice to the then Irish Government. He wanted every man to be given a gun so as to cancel out the use of the gun! I preferred the road I had taken. Were I on either side it might have been from my gun the bullet came to destroy the lives of a Collins, a Mellows or of some other good man needed for the building of the new Ireland. Such a memory would have been a terrible burden to carry through life. Our country was and is the poorer for their loss. The vacuum created then has not yet been filled and may not be for some time to come.

During all this period of mass emotion I was suspect by both sides. My home was raided by a Captain Moynihan of the C.I.D. as was the I.T.G.W.U. shop on Eden Quay. I was given until six o'clock that evening to attend Oriel House at Westland Row. There could be no misunderstanding the import of the message. The officer of the C.I.D. held me for a couple of hours, incessantly questioning me, before my release. I returned to the shop at Eden Quay and inside of

Trade Union leaders tried to prevent the slide to Civil War in 1922. This group includes (front row) Thomas Foran and Thomas McPartlin; (second row) Thomas Farran (second from left), William O'Brien and P. T. Daly (fourth and fifth from left)

The author in a group with An t-Uachtarán Éamon De Valera and An Taoiseach Seán Lemass at Áras an Uachtaráin

minutes there was a third visit in one day from Captain Moynihan and more questions.

It was a heart-breaking period. My friends who had taken the side of the Four Courts Executive would pass me by on the street; the vicious expressions on their faces and the hate in their eyes depressed and saddened me beyond description. We lived through a period of unbelievable discord and tragedy. Were any man to predict such a change taking place twelve months previously he would have been a certified case for Grangegorman.

The civil war situation was brought about by, on the one hand, Collins and Griffith and their colleagues accepting the Treaty and declaring it to be "a stepping stone to the Republic" and, on the other hand, Mellows and O'Connor and their colleagues, with the support of Eamon de Valera and Cathal Brugha, seeing no possibility of compromise on the question of Treaty versus Republic. It is of course relevant that Collins never wanted to be one of the negotiating representatives to London. He protested vehemently but de Valera insisted.

In any case the great national tragedy was that these men who had led a united people now found themselves in opposite camps, one side trying with all its might to negate everything the other tried to do. All this brought about the terrible vacuum which almost destroyed the nation. The nation, however, has survived and is now on the road to higher achievements. There are no difficulties too great that good husbandry will not overcome. The will to win must be our watchword.

Appendix·The Shelling of Liberty Hall in 1916

I have been asked to record any information at my disposal regarding the shelling of Liberty Hall during Easter Week. Peter Ennis, the caretaker of Liberty Hall, was trusted implicitly by Connolly and by the other officials of the Irish Transport Union. He was a native of Tinahely, Co Wicklow. Before taking up his position as caretaker Peter was employed in the Dublin docks. He was a very diplomatic person and there were many occasions when he was obliged to use all his gifts of persuasion to overcome awkward situations. On Easter Monday, after the main body of the Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers had left Liberty Hall to take up their positions at the G.P.O., the City Hall, St Stephen's Green and other points, a small number was left behind in the building under the command of Captain Seamus McGowan. This number was reinforced by a squad of men under Captain Frank Thornton whose initial job was to take all the supplies stored in the hall to the G.P.O. In the event of a surprise attack they made preparations to escape by breaking through the wall in the top end room of Liberty Hall into the next house, which was a public house then called the Colonial and now known as the Liffey Bar on Eden Quay. Later that evening the hall was completely evacuated and the holding party moved to the G.P.O. leaving the premises empty but for the caretaker.

Peter Ennis reported daily to Connolly in the G.P.O. on developments, if any, around Liberty Hall. Ennis used the side entrance at 29 Eden Quay instead of the front entrance in Beresford Place. He had the grim experience of seeing Ernest Kavanagh shot dead by the British in a cold-blooded manner on Tuesday morning. Kavanagh was employed as a clerk in the National Health Insurance section of the Union. The portion of the Custom House facing the main entrance

to Liberty Hall on Beresford Place was occupied by British soldiers during the previous night or early on Tuesday morning. It was from there the shots were fired that killed Kavanagh as he approached the main entrance to Liberty Hall. What his object was in coming to Liberty Hall I have never learned. He was not connected with the Citizen Army and I do not know whether he was attached to the Irish Volunteers. He was responsible for many very funny, fine cartoons in *The Irish Worker*, signed E. K., and was a brother of Maeve Kavanagh, the poetess.

Peter Ennis had nothing unusual to report until Wednesday, when he informed Connolly of an attempt on the part of HMS *Helga* to fire a direct shot at Liberty Hall from the river. The shell struck the lower portion of the steel framework of the railway bridge below Butt Bridge. The *Helga* then moved down the river in order to obtain a higher trajectory and so enable the gunners to clear the bridge and lob the shells on the roof of Liberty Hall. This also proved a failure and she moved from this scene of action futher down the Liffey near to the Grand Canal basin to attack a disused distillery from which flew the flag of the new-born Republic. At least one shell, if not more, landed in the Phoenix Park. This extract from the log of the *Helga* makes an interesting footnote to history. It is dated 25 April – 1 May, 1916.

25 April At Dublin.

Steamed out and made fast in River berth—gun crews and rifle party standing by for all emergencies. (5.20 a.m.)

Proceeded up River. Two rounds from gun fired into kill (near Grand Canal Dock) held by rebels (2.15 p.m.) by request of Military C.O. Commandeered 34 short deals from quay for defence for gun platform and bridge. Built up barricade with deals and coaling irons on front of nav. bridge—sand bags placed round foscle (3.0 p.m.). Proceeded (10.45 p.m.). Rebels attacking Power Station at Pigeon Ho.

Fort. Anchored off Pigeon Ho. Fort (11.45 p.m.).

26 April Proceeded up River. Stopped near Custom House. Opened fire on Liberty Hall in conjunction with Military. Fired 24 rounds (8.0. a.m.). Backed down river.

Off Pigeon Ho. Fort, 26–27.

27 April Proceeded up River (12.0 a.m.). Opened fire on building of Dublin Distillery. Fired 14 rounds into it (12.15 p.m.). Ceased fire (12.30 p.m.), and backed down River. Boarded schooner *Cambletown* and searched her for fugitive enemy.

27 –
30 April At Dublin

1 May Depart Dublin

Commodore Thomas McKenna, recently retired O/C of the Irish Naval Service, informed me that according to the *Helga*'s records, the ship eventually, by a strange stroke of irony became a fishery defence vessel of the Irish Free State Government and was renamed the *Murchu*. There were at least two (named Dwan and Lorimer) if not three members of her crew who refused duty during the hostile activities against Liberty Hall and the disused distillery and were put in irons for three days. It took men of great moral and physical courage to make such a stand and risk losing their lives by disobeying orders from the captain of a ship of the Royal Navy.

Some years afterwards Michael Costello, who was in charge of the outflow station between the Pigeon House and Poolbeg, found a quantity of rifles, completely rusted, when digging in the area. It is possible that these rifles had some connection with the attack on the Power Station mentioned above.

Early on Thursday morning Peter Ennis was awakened by a terrific bang and dressed hurriedly to seek the cause. He saw the preparations being made to shell Liberty Hall from across the Liffey wall near Tara Street. After firing one shell the artillery officer realised that the muzzle of the gun had not sufficient clearance of the river wall to permit a direct shot at Liberty Hall. A number of soldiers with the aid of crowbars then loosened two coping stones and toppled them into the river.

Ennis told me that when the first shell hit the building he thought that the whole place was collapsing around him and he made his way to the top landing of Liberty Hall in double quick time to try to escape through the hole already broken on the previous Monday into the Colonial Bar. This hole in the wall emerged near the ceiling of the room in the house next door and he had no alternative but to throw himself from a considerable height to the floor below. He was lucky enough to fall on a bed and suffered no injury.

During all this time the shelling of Liberty Hall continued. He then made his way to the G.P.O. to report the bombardment to Connolly, who advised him not to go back to Liberty Hall but to find some safer place. He stayed at his brother's house in Marlboro' Street for some time afterwards.

The main damage to the front of Liberty Hall and the house on the other side in Beresford Place was caused by this direct shelling from the Liffey wall at Tara Street. The shells entered the Eden Quay side of Liberty Hall and passed right through the building before exploding in the other house. The military was misled as to the extent of Liberty Hall by the fact that on the Eden Quay side of the building at street level there were a number of shops which extended up to the Colonial Bar. Between the Colonial Bar and the corner of Eden Quay and Beresford Place there was another public house known as the Butt Bar run by a Mr O'Neill.

It seems extraordinary that the British military went to such trouble to shell Liberty Hall for, as I have explained, the only occupant from Monday night up to the Thursday morning was Ennis the caretaker.

Ernest Kavanagh's cartoon on the Mansion House Recruiting Meeting, 1914 (see text pages 20-24)

The damage caused by the shelling of Liberty Hall

On the other side of Beresford Place the British army were in occupation of the Custom House and all that was required was a small section of men to walk across and take over the building without the slightest trouble. This course would have been less expensive to the British army, and possibly the gunfire they used to demolish an unoccupied building would have helped them elsewhere if used more intelligently than it was at Liberty Hall.

Acknowledgements

The preparation of this volume of reminiscences has for me been a long and arduous task. Undertaken in my advanced years, I often queried the wisdom of its beginning and had serious doubts of the possibility of its completion. It was my firm intention to be content to record the history of the Irish Citizen Army up to and including the events of Easter Week 1916 which I had compiled at the request of Thomas Foran and with the help of Commandant Kearns of the Military Historical Bureau, for publication, if thought worthy of such distinction, after I had passed on. My many friends thought otherwise. They considered my recollections of events in which I had played a prominent part deserved a wider exposure. For a good many years I held out against the pressure they so kindly and considerately exerted. I pondered the problems involved gravely and at length. The dripping water, it is said, eventually wears away the hardest stone. In the end I capitulated.

It remains for me now, when all the effort has resulted in this publication, to offer my thanks to all my friends for their help and guidance. If I single out for special mention the names of Sean O'Luing and Imelda Hallahan it should not be taken in any sense as a reflection on those others whose names remain unrecorded. They were many. Their encouragement and their help were consistent and entailed a great deal of labour. To one and all I acknowledge my debt. They have earned well my deepest gratitude.

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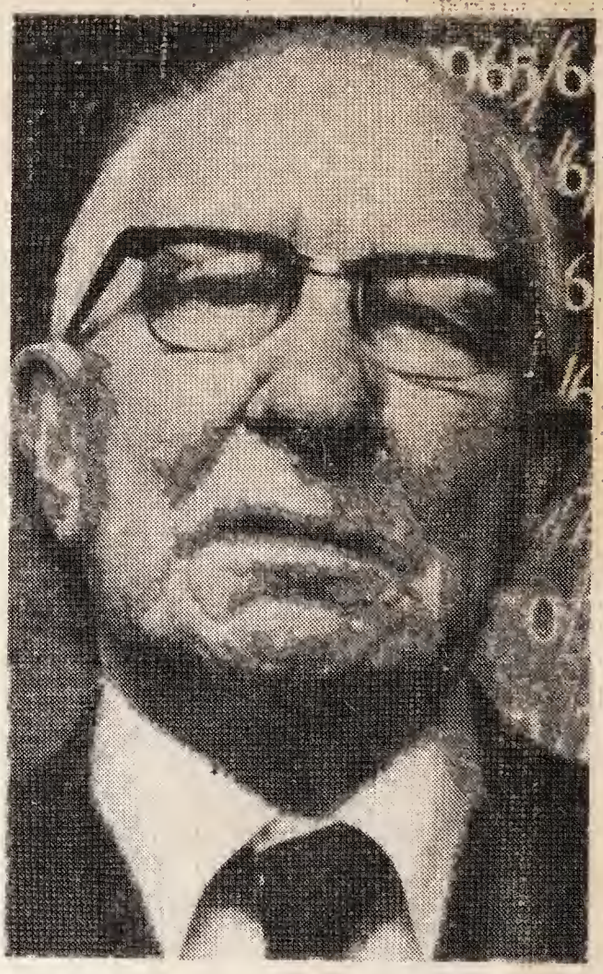

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