

SEAN TREACY

(‘The greatest fighter in Ireland’)

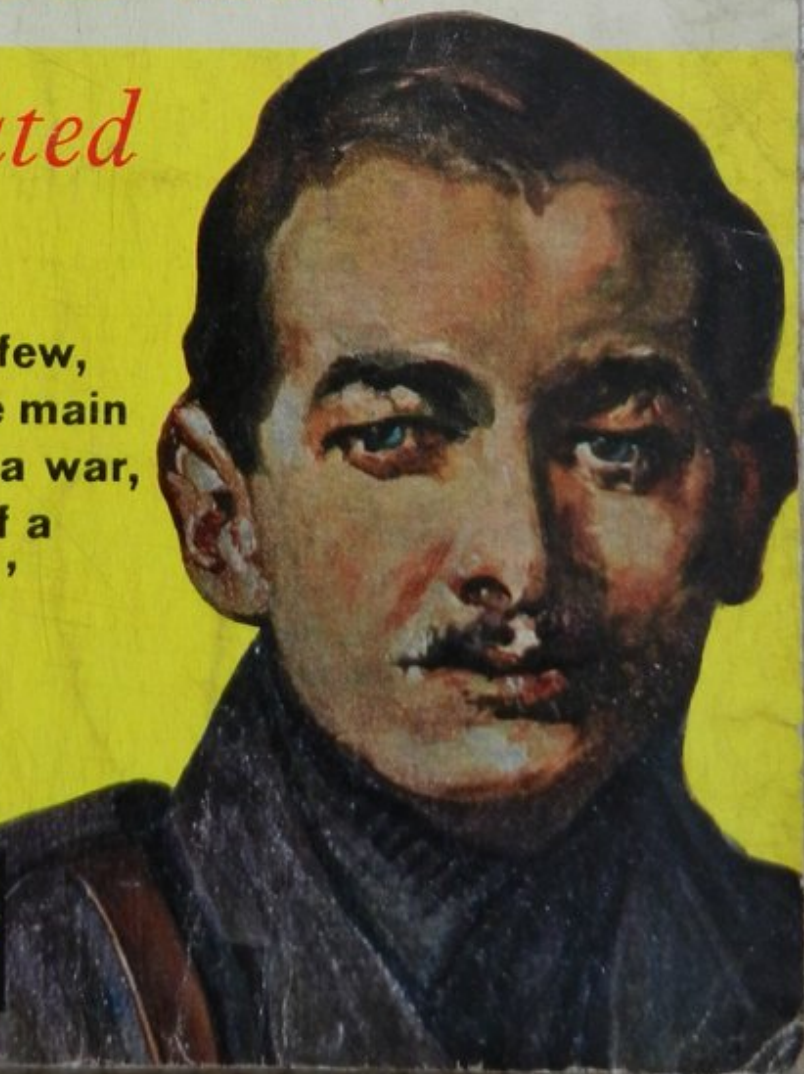
and the **THIRD TIPPERARY**

BRIGADE I.R.A. **DESMOND RYAN**

Illustrated

‘His years were few,
his story is in the main
a story of guerilla war,
his life the life of a
man of action...’

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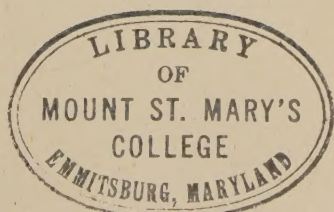
AND THE 3rd. TIPPERARY BRIGADE

by

DESMOND RYAN

Author of *The Phœnix Flame, Remembering Sion,*
Unique Dictator, etc., etc.

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PREFACE

The story is told of an Eastern king who, long before popular outlines of universal history, demanded from his wise men a concise summary of the story of mankind. He rejected all their efforts but one, the version that reached him as he drew his last breath: "They lived, they suffered, they died!" It may be that some critic of this record of Sean Treacy's life will be tempted to summarise it with the slight amendment: "He lived, he fought, he died!" His years were few, his story is in the main a story of guerrilla war, his life, although he always carried a book in his pocket and an ideal in his heart, was the life of a man of action.

Yet there is more to it than that. Across the Tipperary hills where he rests a living tradition fills in the fuller story; in many a small farmhouse like that in which he was born at Solohead fifty years ago, his best-known portrait hangs on the wall; and in the speech and memory of his county and his comrades Sean Treacy lives on: something more vital and human than a face in a gallery or a line in an obituary list. When I travelled over the scenes of Treacy's adventures in the autumn of 1939 it needed an effort to realise that he was not still living. His name was a key to open every door, a charm to take the farmer from the harvest, a power to sweep aside the lingering clouds of Civil War passion, a spell to conquer disillusion and dissipate rancour as few names in Ireland could or can.

In a word, Sean Treacy, living and dead, stands for the spirit of the struggle for independence at the height of its glory, with all the incalculable fire of Nineteen Sixteen behind it and a rose-misted future before it, something not yet commonplace by achievement, unblest as yet by the ever eager worshippers of the accomplished, a time of blood and sweat and tears, of hope and endurance and a dream upheld with a passion and an intensity unknown ever before in all the wars of Ireland.

Wherever he passed Sean Treacy left his mark on the minds and hearts of his people, a very Michael Dwyer of Tipperary in the days of the Black and Tans when with the men of the Tipperary Brigade, the friends linked to his fame in song and legend—Seamus Robinson, Dan Breen, and Sean Hogan—and a long line of other fighters, he struck, retreated and struck again under the shade of the Galtees or in the streets of Dublin. Soloheadbeg, Knocklong, Rear Cross, Hollyford, Drangan, Oola, Ashtown Cross, "Fernside," Talbot Street are the minor epics woven into the larger, packed, completed epics of his own life and of the Ireland of his time.

In his barrack attacks, ambushes, fights and escapes one quality stands out on the testimony of those who shared his perils and his hopes: a cool courage before the unexpected. Yet about him, all those who served with him agree, there was nothing of the military martinet or swashbuckling death or glory attitudiniser. He had too much humour and humanity, and, though he was austere and upright, to this day those who fought beside him scowl darkly at any solemn attempts to canonise him. "He never seemed to give an order," said one of them, "yet he was always obeyed. He never terrorised his men nor shouted orders. Even when you failed him, Sean would just give you a look from under his glasses, and, perhaps, a week later you might hear about it." Another adds, "Amongst ourselves Sean was always the peace-maker, and he healed feuds and settled disputes no other man could. But when it was a question of fighting the enemy, then Sean was no peace-maker!"

When on January 21, 1919, Sean Treacy at Soloheadbeg fired the shots which had many echoes in the stormy years ahead, and five months later snatched his comrade in that action, Sean Hogan, from death in the rescue at Knocklong, he was doing something in the tradition of County Tipperary where revolutions, peaceful and otherwise, have started ere now and become nation-wide. Father Mathew started one when he turned his people from taverns to teapots, for though in fact he began in Cork he was born at Thomastown. John Dwyer at Ballycohey brought the rack-renting landlords to their senses and sent a Land Act through the House of Commons by firing a few well-placed shots in anger. Charles J. Kickham and John O'Leary, Tipperarymen both, whose memories were around Treacy in his boyhood, fired no shots in anger, but their pens in the *Irish People* office in Dublin shook foreign rule in Ireland to the foundations. Thomas MacDonagh, poet and Tipperaryman, who signed his death warrant in the Nineteen Sixteen Proclamation, was in the same tradition.

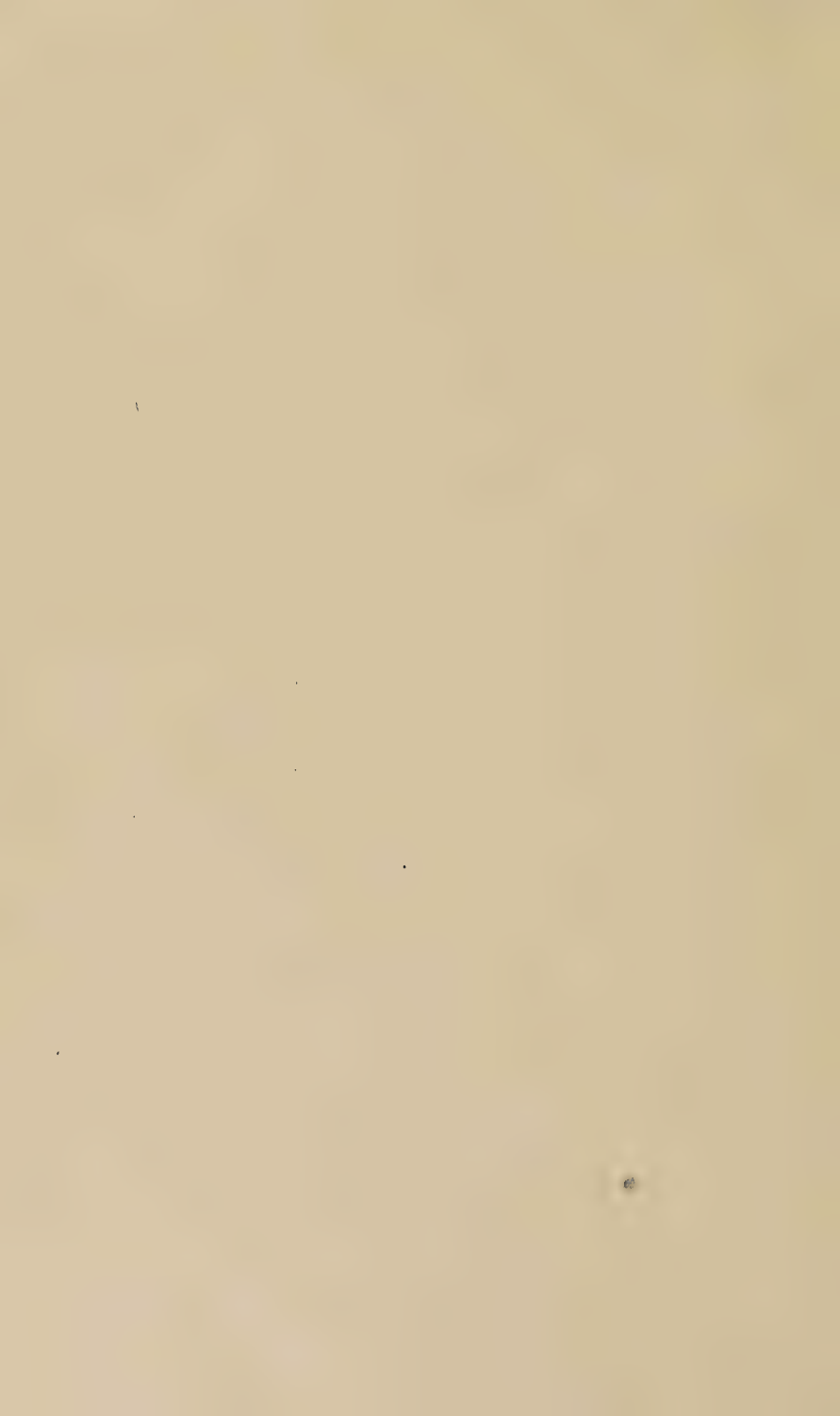
The passion and persistence of Tipperary's long fight for land and liberty were in Sean Treacy's very bones as he passed in the stirring years by Kickham's weather-worn statue in Tipperary Town on his way to an Irish class or an ambush, onwards dreaming and hoping and working, confident that the cause of his heart would triumph, fighting stubbornly on in the full knowledge that a bullet might send him to his last rest at Kilfeacle long before that day.

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CHAPTER I

BEGINNINGS

THE entry in Solohead Church Register says simply: "John Treacy born February 14, 1895, child of Denis Treacy and Bridget Allis. Baptised at Solohead, February 16, 1895, by Rev. J. Murphy, C.C. Sponsors, Michael Allis and Kate Allis." The night before he was born was long remembered because of a great fall of snow, and as he was born the snow lay thick upon the ground.

In the generations before Sean Treacy had seen the light there, Solohead and all Tipperary was a land of war. And the fight went on, an endless battle for the people's land and for the people's liberties.

After the great victory of the Elizabethan armies at Kinsale, nearly three hundred years before Sean Treacy was born, the tramp of armies had shaken Solohead when O'Sullivan Beare in his fighting retreat across the country to join O'Neill in Tyrone crossed Tipperary near the Glen of Aherlow, passed through Solohead and fought an eight hours' battle at Dundrum; and then away through Donohill to the Shannon, fighting his way fiercely northwards,—some four hundred soldiers and six hundred refugees, of which only thirty-five reached Leitrim in safety.

A grim tale, but only one of the grim tales which threw a shadow over Sean Treacy's cradle. In times nearer his own, resistance in that endless battle ran in his blood, from the days of the Fenians and the Land War, to go back no further. Twenty-four years after that February of 1895, Sean Treacy, already the leader of the rising revolt in Tipperary, was to engage in a fight near Solohead himself; less than twenty-six years later, he was to lie dead in Kilfeacle Churchyard, leaving a name that will never die in his native county nor in the history of Ireland.

Sean Treacy grew up in an Ireland that was darkened by the

passions of the Parnell Split, and in a county where the tradition of resistance to foreign and landlord tyranny was strong and proud. The Land War and Fenianism, Ballycohey and Ballyhurst, lived on on the lips of men who had known both; and on his mother's side, the Allis family had always been prominent in the land and national struggles. When Sean Treacy was three years old the Fenian John O'Leary unveiled the Kickham monument in Tipperary Town nearby. And Treacy heard in his childhood how a near relative of his own, William Allis of Gurtnacoola, Donohill, was out in the Ballyhurst rising in the Fenian times, and was a sturdy fighter afterwards in the Land League. There was a local tradition that when William Allis marched through Thurles with the Fenians in March, 1867, he carried a pistol in each hand. He survived to drill with the Irish Volunteers in 1913. While playing as a child on the Allis farm, Sean Treacy once unearthed one of his old Fenian arms dumps. The tale of Ballyhurst first stirred his imagination among all the tales of the Irish wars. It was a simple episode, but about it was a foreshadowing of fights and trials in Treacy's own life, even his last fight of all.

Ballyhurst Fort, a mile and a half from Tipperary Town, was the place to which General Thomas Francis Bourke, a Tipperary man and an Irish-American officer, led his thousand almost unarmed followers in March, 1867. When they got there they knew almost at once that the general rising they had hoped for could not be taking place,—they heard the mail train steaming into Limerick Junction. The plans had included tearing up the railway lines, and when they heard the train, it was the end of their hopes. General Bourke and a few men determined to remain and fight. At last the soldiers marched on them from Tipperary Town. One of the insurgents, Russell from Grantstown, wore a plume in his hat. A soldier fired at him; Russell fell mortally wounded. But before he fell he hurled his pike at the soldier and laid him low.

General Bourke, according to local tradition, was mounted on a carriage horse. A Captain of the British soldiers called out: "Your horse will not stand fire!"

"No," retorted General Bourke, "but my heart will."

Then Bourke was thrown from his horse and captured.

So ended Ballyhurst, but the memory lived on, and it was more real to Sean Treacy than any tale or song because among his friends and comrades, besides his own family, there were living links with that short-lived but unforgotten rising. Among them was Tom Rankins of Kilfeacle, who, furious at the collapse of the fight, rushed towards the soldiers pike in hand, until his friends dragged him away. He lived on to the stormy years when his cousin, Tadhg Dwyer, Commandant of the 3rd Battalion of the Tipperary Brigade, became one of Treacy's most enthusiastic lieutenants. The Fenian poet, J. J. Finnan ("Myles"), whose verse Treacy loved, wrote of Russell's grave in Lattin Churchyard:

*But faithful friends, whose souls are fed
With fire caught from our martyred dead
Will view with love the hallowed scene,
And keep the grave of Russell green.*

Such were the shadows of past and future which fell over the cradle of Sean Treacy amid the February snows of 1895. The farm at Solohead was a small one of fourteen Irish acres, and the house was a six-roomed homestead. Sean was not to stay there long. When he was three years old, his father, Denis Treacy, died suddenly, and Sean and his mother went to live at Lackenacreena, Hollyford, with his uncle, Jim Allis. Sean had spent some time there when he was only twelve months old. Until his eleventh year he passed his boyhood at Hollyford. Sean Treacy's father was remembered among his neighbours as a man of strong personality, and it was said that Sean resembled him in many ways. Sean attended Hollyford National School until, after the marriage of his uncle, Jim Allis, he returned to Solohead with his mother. With them came his aunt, Mary Anne Allis, a woman of strong character.

The memory of Sean Treacy that survived in Hollyford was that as a child he was very silent, determined and fearless. Throughout his life his eyesight was weak and even as a child he had to wear glasses.

Sean was a great reader, mainly of books relating to Ireland

and Irish history, and it was hard to get him away from the chimney corner in the dark evenings in Hollyford or Solohead, where he loved to remain deep in some book. His bent was revealed in his games, war games based on some of the battles he found in his books at the chimney corner. He played these games with the Hollyford boys, regular campaigns in which he stationed them at points, and issued orders and explanations at one and the same time. Among his early toys was a small rifle which he fired off from a back window of the farmhouse at a special target he had fixed up in a haggard. In his enthusiasm he did not scruple to commandeer the employee on the farm. As his friend Sean Horan has recalled: "After school hours Sean would take the man or boy his mother had in her employment out to the field where he would have a target fixed for rifle and revolver practice, and very often kept the boy firing at the target for hours at a stretch, and his aunt in a rage, having several jobs on the farm to be done, of more importance to her at the time than rifle and revolver practice."

There were tales of his courage, too. Once when he was driving a pony it bolted, but he held on with great determination until he had it under control again, although he was very young and almost helpless without his glasses, which had fallen off in the first wild rush. On another occasion, he outfaced an angry bull until help came.

After his return to Solohead, he was a familiar figure to his neighbours as he drove his mother and aunt to Mass on Sundays in pony and trap, a silent boy wearing glasses and knickerbockers. Shortly after their arrival in Solohead, he was sent to the Monastery which was conducted by the Christian Brothers in Tipperary Town. He had already made his First Communion at Hollyford and was Confirmed in Tipperary. At Solohead, Sean Treacy the youth was often seen serving Mass, and then again hurling with the boys of the townland.

On his earliest school books his name in his own handwriting is given as "John Treacy," and for a long time one of his uncles used to call him "Jack." He grew rapidly. In his manhood he was tall, some 5ft. 10ins. in height, fresh coloured, with expressive, keen, light-blue eyes, low-voiced, but with a

latent gaiety about him for all his reserve. This description with but obvious changes, might serve for Sean Treacy as youth and boy, as he matured early, and knew his own mind very well.

The Tipperary Christian Brothers had a high opinion of Sean Treacy during the years he was their pupil at the Monastery. He won an exhibition and several prizes, and went as far as Senior Grade before he left. He learned some French—an evidently closely-studied copy of Mérimée's *Colomba* and other French classics remain among his school books. But Latin and Irish were his favourite school subjects. In Irish and Irish history he was always easily the first among his school-fellows.

A deep enthusiasm for the Irish language marked all his boyhood, and he was remembered by those who knew him then for his habit of carrying round Irish text books in his pockets. As Eamonn O'Dwyer recalled Sean Treacy in the Gaelic League classes at Ballagh and Knockavilla in 1911, he was then, although only in his sixteenth year, a very keen student of the Irish language. Later he developed into a fairly fluent Irish speaker, and in his conversations with Eamonn O'Dwyer rarely used any other language. Treacy attended the meetings of the Gaelic League which were held in Jack McCarthy's house in Tipperary Town. The record still exists in Tipperary Technical School, for a somewhat later date, of Sean Treacy's attendances at the Irish classes from 1914 to 1917. By then Treacy knew Irish very well, but insisted on attending the various classes to encourage others; in the years 1914 to 1916 he had the highest number of individual attendances, while in the session from 1916, his record of attendances remained remarkably high in spite of his intense activities in the Irish Volunteers. One stormy night few students turned up. Sean Treacy came on his bicycle, drenched through with rain. He was suffering agonies from neuralgia and his head was swathed in a thick muffler.

A picture of Sean Treacy begins to shape itself around these facts, but another must be added. As his youth went by and his schooldays grew to a close, Sean Treacy showed signs that he was a good farmer. He was always of a contriving mind

and always making things, piers for a gate,—or mending the farm equipment. And always, where he saw it, reducing disorder to tidiness. He never had any patience, for instance, with the bushes, that later took half a day to remove, thrust by easy-going farmers into gaps. He realised very keenly the difficulties in the lives of the small farmers and labourers. Sometimes he said: "When Ireland is free we will harness the rivers to make the homes of the people bright." It was a frequent complaint of Sean Treacy's that the historians were to be blamed for not describing how the people lived, caring only to describe a battle, or reel off a list of kings and events. As he grew older and the care of the farm became his, all those who worked under him loved him for his gentle manner and consideration for the working people. He was never overbearing or ugly in manner or harsh-spoken. In particular he was very humane to animals and had a horror of cruelty to them.

Among the haunts of Sean Treacy's youth was the Solohead-beg quarry near his own home, and Coffey's Forge also nearby. In the quarry worked his friend Din O'Donnell, who knew Irish very well. Sean often met him, and persuaded him to tell him more and more phrases from his native speaker's store. Sometimes they discussed temperance and sometimes they discussed politics. Din O'Donnell once praised the practice of drinking pints, to which Sean replied laconically: "A barrel of that stuff wouldn't quench the thirst of some fellows. The more they get, the more they want." Din O'Donnell disagreed with Sean then, but admitted later that he was right. Once some English politician had been guilty of some slick conduct and hoodwinked the Redmondite party. It seemed to Treacy and Din O'Donnell that the Irish had foolishly thrown away some advantage. "Din O'Donnell," said Sean Treacy, "let that be a lesson to us all. It's no use sticking a bayonet in a twister's guts unless you twist the bayonet!"

To Coffey's Forge at Greenane Sean Treacy often came, and in particular he admired the militant spirit of Miss Kate Coffey, a tall, dark woman, with keen intense eyes and a quiet determined manner. In the coming years he was often to leave with her dispatches and ammunition and arms. But on his early visits

he generally had some volume or other from his collection of books, a large number of old and possibly valuable ones he gathered in various places. Once he brought an old pike he had unearthed, and his friends in the Forge made him another from the pattern.

The woman who impressed her personality on the Solohead household was his aunt Mary Anne Allis, a woman of handsome presence, keen mind and sharp tongue. She was very devoted to Sean Treacy and his mother in her own way, and helped to smooth out his father's financial affairs which had been left in confusion by his sudden death. She wished Sean to "make his way in the world," and so, as time went on, when she saw that the national struggle occupied all his thoughts and drew him into greater and greater dangers, she grew resentful of his pre-occupation with the Irish Volunteers; and though her affection for him never died, there was towards the end an estrangement between them. She felt that he would have made an excellent farmer, and she could not understand the force that impelled Treacy, who was an only child and the obvious man to manage and work the farm, to leave prosperity and security for risks and death. Her point of view was defensible, but when she thought the case unique, Mary Anne Allis was much mistaken. It was the clash between the old and the young generations which entered many households all over Ireland as the power of the dominant Redmondite party waned, and the World War and Sinn Fein transformed Ireland. Mrs. Treacy saw matters in much the same light as her sister, but forbore to try and alter Sean's mind.

By the time Sean Treacy reached his eighteenth year, his aunt began to reproach some of his friends, older than himself, for leading him astray. She tartly categorised them as a set of wild young fellows who ought to have more sense. She was unaware that Sean was already a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. His friends listened to the reproaches meekly and in silence, laughing to themselves: "It's Sean who is 'misleading' us!"

One member of the Allis family, at least, ardently supported him in his National leanings. This was his uncle, George Allis,

who lived mainly in Dublin, a man who had played some part in the Land League and the various national movements of the day. He invariably took Sean's side against family criticism and had some share in moulding and encouraging his nephew's militant spirit.

One of the turning points in Sean Treacy's life came with a visit paid by Sean MacDiarmada to Tipperary Town where he addressed a meeting in the Tivoli Hall, in November, 1913. Sean's membership of the Irish Republican Brotherhood had dated from 1911, he had been one of the earliest members in Munster after its reorganisation. In addition, he was the President of the Tipperary Town Branch of the Gaelic League, and Vice-President of the Coisde Ceanntair. He later became Centre of the Tipperary Circle of the I.R.B. It was there he first came to know Maurice Crowe, and the two became fast friends. Dan Breen was already a near neighbour, and a close friend of his.

Among the others who worked with Treacy in the Gaelic League and I.R.B. of the time were William Benn—then Centre of the Tipperary I.R.B.—Michael O'Callaghan, James Green of Greenane, Jack McCarthy (in whose house, always a national centre, the first meetings of the Gaelic League and subsequent I.R.B. meetings were held), Eamonn O'Dwyer, Jim O'Connell, leader of the C. J. Kickham Band, Matt Barlow, Con Moloney, Paddy Dwyer of Hollyford, Sean and Michael Fitzpatrick, Sean Duffy and Frank O'Meara.

Sean Treacy was in touch with such I.R.B. workers as Seamus O'Neill of Clonmel, Eamonn O'Dwyer of Ballagh, and J. M. Kennedy of Thurles. He was often to be seen in these days lingering over the books and papers in Carrigan's bookshop in Main Street, Tipperary, or in another newsagent's shop kept by the Misses Alice and Kate Ryan in Church Street. He was a close reader of all the Irish-Ireland papers of the time, of *Sinn Fein*, *Irish Freedom*, *The Irish Peasant* and *Nation*. He had a habit of buying up quantities of these papers to keep the sales alive. He became very friendly with the Ryan sisters after his first visit, and, a rare thing with him, told them much of what

was in his mind. They felt, as did the men whose leader he afterwards became, when they recalled the Sean Treacy of those days, that even then he knew his mind. "Sean," said one of them, Tadhg Dwyer, later, "had a mania for handing round books and papers with the advice to pass them on. He wanted to enlighten the ordinary man in the small farm houses. Sean Treacy was an out and out extremist when many of the rest of us were sympathetic enough but taking things rather easy and believing a lot of what we were told."

Sean Treacy worked enthusiastically in all the early agitation carried on by the various Republican and Sinn Fein groups against the Irish Parliamentary Party. He was particularly active in the anti-recruiting campaign. Once, on the eve of a Redmondite meeting in Tipperary, Sean Treacy helped to placard the town with anti-recruiting posters mostly written by hand. Those who were with him on this occasion included William Benn, Michael O'Callaghan, Jack MacCarthy and Eamonn O'Dwyer. The bills were posted up on the R.I.C. Barracks, the military barracks and even on the hall door of the amiable Canon Arthur Ryan, for whom the demonstrators had a kindly feeling, but no sympathy whatsoever with his moderate political views. (This was in the First World War years when Canon Ryan supported the Redmondite recruiting campaign, and feeling ran high.

As the days of the Irish Volunteers drew nearer, in which Treacy was to find his life-work, his activities in the Gaelic League and Irish Republican Brotherhood brought him into closer touch with many of those with whom he was later to work. Seamus O'Neill, for instance, records that his first contact with Sean Treacy at Eamonn O'Dwyer's in Ballagh, was in connection with the anti-recruiting movement. Seamus O'Neill was in close touch with the Munster Organiser of the I.R.B., Diarmuid Lynch, and the Tipperary delegate, Frank Drohan of Clonmel. From these early meetings of the Gaelic League and I.R.B. at Ballagh Seamus O'Neill and Treacy both carried away bundles of anti-recruiting literature for South Tipperary. O'Neill worked then in Clonmel and took his bundle of literature back there, while Treacy concentrated on Tipperary.

It was from the November of 1913 that the Irish Volunteers began to spread throughout the country after their inaugural meeting in the Rotunda, Dublin. A month later, Sean Treacy was present at the first public meeting held in Ballagh, to organise the Irish Volunteers. Soon after, Sean Treacy attended some of the parades of the Doon Volunteers, and approached his cousin, Dan Allis, about joining them. But as soon as the Volunteers started at Solohead and Donohill, Sean Treacy joined them in company with his friends Maurice Crowe, Dan Breen and some score others. They met and drilled twice a week. Their officers were known as "district leaders," but their resources in arms were very scanty.

With the outbreak of the World War in 1914, and the split in the Irish Volunteers after John Redmond, in the autumn of that year, had tried to commit the organisation to participation on the British side in the war, Sean Treacy and his comrades remained with the minority who backed the Provisional Committee's expulsion of the Redmond nominees on that body. Sean Treacy, Dan Breen and their small band broke completely away from those Volunteers in Tipperary who had gone over to Redmond's Volunteers, and from that time onwards, changed their meeting place to Lisheen Grove, some miles from Tipperary town. They were closely watched by the R.I.C., particularly Sean Treacy and Dan Breen, who were dubbed extremists and Sinn Feiners. They continued to gather what arms they could.

Among the men he met in 1914 for the first time was Denis Lacey, who was working at the same place as Maurice Crowe, in Tipperary. Through Treacy's influence, Lacey was in that year sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood. He was some five years older than Treacy, having been born at Attybrick, Annacarty, in 1890.

Already Sean Treacy was regarded as the leader of this small minority in his district. From the beginning of the World War he threw himself more and more into the work of organising the Irish Volunteers. Throughout 1915 he travelled all over the county at this work.

The tension in the country increased, and the small minority slowly grew. In that year Sean Treacy saw signs of the gather-

ing conflict and the gradual change in the national outlook. In December, 1915, he was present at a big parade of the Irish Volunteers in Dundrum, Co. Tipperary, where arms were carried openly by many of the Volunteers. Although a large force of the R.I.C. were present, the parade and a meeting afterwards passed off without a clash between them.

Such were the beginnings of Sean Treacy's career. As 1915 passed and 1916 came, Sean Treacy watched with growing expectancy for the sign from Dublin for which he and his comrades had waited ever since the summer of 1914; and at last it came.

CHAPTER II

NINETEEN SIXTEEN AND AFTER

As a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Sean Treacy learned a fortnight before the Rising of the plans for an All-Ireland insurrection fixed for April 23, 1916. His information came from Eamonn O'Dwyer, who, as County Centre of the I.R.B., was informed direct by P. H. Pearse. Tipperary, like many other places outside Dublin, was thrown into confusion by conflicting orders, the countermanding by Eoin MacNeill of the All-Ireland Easter manoeuvres of the Irish Volunteers, and the visit of The O'Rahilly to Limerick with MacNeill's messages.

Pierse McCann, the County Commandant, informed William Benn, the Tipperary I.R.B. Centre, of Eoin MacNeill's action. This was at 9.30 on Easter Sunday morning.

Late on Monday evening, a rumour spread abroad that "there was something on" in Dublin. As a small group of men watched the roads near Eamonn O'Dwyer's house at Ballagh for any movements of troops or police, a cyclist came down the road at midnight. It was Sean Treacy. He stayed with Eamonn O'Dwyer that night, and the following day cycled to various Tipperary districts in search of information.

In the meantime, during Treacy's absence, there was considerable excitement among the local Volunteers in Tipperary Town. On Monday a meeting was held to consider the situation. Dinny Lacey and Michael O'Callaghan were in favour of some kind of action, although it was difficult to suggest any definite course because of the lack of arms or of any clear information about the true state of affairs in Dublin itself. The conflicting orders had left everything in confusion. So William Benn and Tom Rogers argued with force that they might discuss as much as they liked, but in view of the general disorganisation and the silence that shut off Dublin from them, there was very little

chance of action. It was known that Sean Treacy favoured action, but he was away.

The Tipperary plans for 1916 had included the destruction of some important railway communications and a raid on Soloheadbeg quarry for gelignite. For the moment, it seemed as if history was repeating itself. As the Fenians at Ballyhurst had waited in vain for any sign of a general uprising, so, too, in vain the Volunteers and I.R.B. men in Tipperary waited on the Monday of Easter Week. The meeting was adjourned until the following evening, and again a number of Volunteer leaders met in the Workmen's Club. Michael O'Callaghan was again present. The meeting was smaller and no decision was reached. The members dispersed and Michael O'Callaghan went home-wards. Feeling was already running high in the town. He met a large crowd of British Army sympathisers who were strong in what was then a garrison centre of considerable size and importance. The crowd had been organised to overawe any Sinn Fein and Republican sentiment from being expressed. As Michael O'Callaghan's sympathies had been long very well known, he was immediately singled out for physical assault. Large stones were hurled at him, amid angry cries of "Clod the Sinn Feiner!"

The R.I.C. on duty sided with the attackers and took no notice of O'Callaghan's mobbing until he was driven to take refuge in a house. As his assailants began to break down the door, Michael O'Callaghan threatened to shoot if further molested. The police then rushed up and called on him to surrender. As they in turn tried to break down the door, he opened fire and they withdrew. A police guard was placed on duty outside until 3.30 in the morning.

In the meantime, O'Callaghan had eluded the police and made his way to Peter Hennessy's house at Moanour, Kilross, situated on the bleak mountain side about 6 miles from Tipperary Town. Peter Hennessy was his father's first cousin.

Michael O'Callaghan was a powerful and well-built man with a martial spirit. He was about to strike a blow, the one blow struck in Tipperary during Easter Week, a blow that was to rejoice Sean Treacy working, urging and hoping for action.

O'Callaghan had long before taken very seriously the advice of John Mitchel in the crisis of 1848: "He who has no gun, let him sell his coat and buy one." In his hip pocket, as he sat brooding by Peter Hennessy's fire about noon on the Wednesday, was the weapon he had used the night before, a Colt automatic which had cost him five pounds,—a deadly weapon in capable hands.

Lost in his thoughts, Michael O'Callaghan looked up suddenly and saw Sergeant O'Rourke and Constable Hurley making their way into the house. He knew that they had come to arrest him, but he looked back into the fire after glancing casually at the revolvers stuck in their holsters. They entered and asked Peter Hennessy his name. Hennessy answered. Sergeant O'Rourke placed his hand on O'Callaghan's shoulder to arrest him; but first asked his name and business, although Sergeant O'Rourke knew Michael O'Callaghan very well.

"Here's my card!" said Michael O'Callaghan grimly as he whipped out the Colt revolver and shot Sergeant O'Rourke dead on the spot. Hurley dashed for the door, but a second shot dropped him lifeless on the threshold. Michael O'Callaghan made for the door—prepared to open fire on the large party of police he believed to be outside. He stooped to pick up Hurley's revolver, but Peter Hennessy urged him to fly while there was yet time. "That's enough, Michael!" he said, and O'Callaghan took to the open country where he stayed with friends for several months, until he escaped to the United States after many adventures and delays, sometimes disguised as a priest, sometimes as a sailor. Eventually, he reached America in the following October. His most amusing adventure was his trip to Liverpool in a ship, or rather in a barge, styled *The Taffy*, on which Liam Mellows afterwards escaped too. Her crew was a Captain Harvey, Al the Swede, and Tom Callaghan, the fireman; her cargo was mainly pit props for the Lancashire coal-mines. Michael O'Callaghan sailed on this vessel with an old genuine seaman's book, bearing the name, "Jeremiah Toomey, Ballyhooley Road, Cork." Once when challenged, Michael O'Callaghan had to think very quickly and decide whether to sign his name as "Toomey" or "Twomey."

During this Easter Week, Sean Treacy was within an inch of opening fire with the same promptness as Michael O'Callaghan. When he left Eamonn O'Dwyer's on Easter Tuesday, Sean Treacy cycled to every district where activity might be expected, but found that all was quiet, including the R.I.C. He reported this to Eamonn O'Dwyer and decided to proceed to Galbally, and meet Eamonn O'Dwyer again on the Wednesday. In the meanwhile, Eamonn O'Dwyer arranged to meet the County Commandant, Piers McCann, who had, unwisely, been left in the dark by the Dublin leaders about the proposed insurrection, and without full and clear instructions. This was very much regretted by the local I.R.B. leaders, who had every confidence in Piers McCann.

Indeed, Sean Treacy had met Piers McCann in Con Deere's house near Goold's Cross on Easter Saturday. Piers McCann had gone to Dublin to discuss the position with the Volunteer leaders, and a small crowd of Volunteers were awaiting his return at Goold's Cross. Con Deere, Paddy English, T. and M. Sheehan, P. MacCormack, James Brown and Seamus O'Neill were among the party. Piers McCann on his return realised the imminence of the insurrection. Sean Treacy said very little to Seamus O'Neill as they parted that night beyond an exchange of personal good wishes and hopes for the coming fight. O'Neill gathered that Treacy was attached to Tipperary Town for whatever was to be done there.

From the Sunday night onwards, the situation was bewildering and obscure. On Tuesday night several local sections of Volunteers, including Tadhg Dwyer's at Grovestown, met and discussed the cutting of communications. The difficulty in all cases was the lack of arms and the absence of definite news as to how Dublin and the rest of the country were faring. Telegraph wires were cut near Goold's Cross by the Kilmanagh Volunteers during the week.

After his interview with Eamonn O'Dwyer, Piers McCann, as County Commandant, admitted that O'Dwyer and Treacy were right to press for action. The County Commandant agreed to Eamonn O'Dwyer's demands on condition that the Limerick and Cork Volunteers also moved; Piers McCann maintained

that the small local forces in County Tipperary could do very little. It was settled that Eamonn O'Dwyer should go to Limerick and Treacy to Cork on the Wednesday evening.

Thereupon, Sean Treacy set out for Cork by way of Galbally and Ballylanders in Co. Limerick, with word for the Volunteers to be ready. In Galbally, "the Galtee Battalion," as the local Company was called, had already mobilised for active service on Easter Sunday and, after news of MacNeill's countermanding order had reached their officers, demobilised about 7 o'clock the same evening. On the Tuesday of Easter Week, Eamonn O'Brien was standing in the Main Street of Galbally when he was informed that a stranger had arrived and wished to see him as leader of the Galtee Battalion. He went down to meet the cyclist, who was wearing glasses, and who introduced himself as Sean Treacy. Treacy told O'Brien that all Volunteers were to "rise" that night.

The two men next got in touch with the Company Captain, William Quirke, who, later, to the best of Eamonn O'Brien's recollection, sent dispatches and an escort with Sean Treacy to Commandant Liam Manahan at Ballylanders. Con Moloney (later Brigade Adjutant), was present at Treacy's interview with Manahan when Treacy urged action strongly.

Before he left Galbally, Treacy saw that full preparations were made to raid the Post Office (where some 4,000 rounds of shotgun ammunition were captured), to block the roads and to cut the telegraph and telephone wires.

At Ballylanders, Sean Treacy proposed that Anglesboro' Barracks should be attacked. He was informed that the demobilisation had put an end to that project, although during the manœuvres the barracks had actually been the centre of the Ballylanders Volunteers' activities. He continued his journey towards Cork.

Already rumours were flying everywhere and a spirit of unrest was abroad. Sean Treacy was chafing under the confusion and collapse of the plans. He had very clear ideas of what should be done. He wished the barracks to be attacked where possible, and an attack made on the signal boxes and lines at Limerick Junction. One of the stories current at the time

was that one barracks was thrown into panic when the news of the Dublin Rising reached them. The constables deserted in a body and the sergeant left a note for the local Volunteer Commandant which contained a plea for courtesy and consideration for the sergeant's family.

Sean Treacy, as he drew near Mitchelstown, received the news that in the South, at least, the insurrection had definitely failed. He met a motor car coming from the direction of Cork. It was flying a white flag. In the car were the Aide-de-Camp of the General Commanding the British Forces in Cork and some Volunteer officers. Sean Treacy was informed that the situation in Cork, owing to the general disorganisation, had become desperate; the local Volunteer Hall was covered by British heavy guns, and a truce had been arranged on condition that all the Cork companies disbanded. Such was the news Eamonn O'Dwyer received from Treacy when they met on the Thursday at the Hotel in Doon. Packey Ryan, one of the I.R.B. leaders in Munster, and proprietor of the Doon Hotel, was also present at this interview. He told both O'Dwyer and Treacy that the local situation was hopeless too, as the County Commandant had now disbanded the Tipperary companies. O'Dwyer decided that Packey Ryan should go home, and that Treacy and himself should make an attempt to reach Dublin as best they could. But at mid-day on Saturday Eamonn O'Dwyer was surprised at Killenaule by an R.I.C. force in two cars. It was not until he was a prisoner in Clonmel on the Sunday following that he heard definitely of the surrender of the Dublin Volunteers and their leaders.

Treacy made several attempts to find some means of reaching Dublin. The trains had stopped, and he had to give up a scheme to cycle to Dublin when information reached him that the journey was too uncertain and that the Rising was collapsing. It is said that he thereupon made inquiries about the chance of reaching Galway and joining up with Mellows and his men; indeed, according to one story, impossible to confirm, Sean Treacy actually started out on this second trip and got as far as the Shannon when, for some reason, he turned back with his companions, and returned to Doon. This picturesque story



would seem to be a legend because it is almost beyond question that Treacy, after his consultation with Eamonn O'Dwyer, remained in Doon. These stories have, however, one grain of truth that makes them worth quoting. There is no doubt whatever that of all the Tipperary Volunteer leaders—Sean Treacy at the time ranked as a First Lieutenant, but was a man with a stronger influence than this rank might suggest—Treacy was the man who made the most determined effort to set the County ablaze. His endurance as a long distance cyclist both then and later, when work was afoot astonished his comrades.

The account given by his cousin, Dan Allis, throws much light on Treacy's movements after his interview with Eamonn O'Dwyer. Allis and a crowd of others met Treacy in Doon as Eamonn O'Dwyer left for Dublin. Treacy gave them an account of his adventures during his trip to Galbally and Ballylanders, regretting characteristically that they had not included even a single skirmish. He, however, continued his efforts to do something now that the road to Dublin seemed closed. He was all excitement under his calm.

In Doon itself, nothing serious had occurred. There, as elsewhere, the demobilisation had broken the chances of any serious attempt at a rising. On Good Friday night some of the I.R.B. members in Doon had learned of a confidential dispatch from Dublin, announcing that a Rising was fixed for the Easter Sunday, but the secret was kept so well that the majority of the forty Volunteers, who left for the Sunday manœuvres at Castleconnell, suspected nothing.

Even to the very end Sean Treacy sought eagerly for any chance to strike some blow. As late as the Friday of Easter Week he went with Dan Allis to Limerick to collect from Michael Brennan 150 rounds of ammunition previously obtained from the Daly's. Treacy had already in his possession some 1,200 rounds of shot gun ammunition brought in by his friend, Paddy Keogh.

On Saturday, April 29, 1916, even as the Dublin fighters were surrendering—although this was not then known to the country generally—Sean Treacy and Allis were standing in the Main Street of Doon when the local R.I.C. sergeant, an elderly

and inoffensive man, approached them. The sergeant knew Dan Allis well, and said to him: "Mr. Allis, Martial Law is now in force." The sergeant then turned to Sean Treacy, whom he did not know, asked his name and business, and insisted that Treacy, under the new regulations, must answer. Treacy's only answer was a quick and significant look. The sergeant repeated his question. Treacy's hand went to his breast pocket where he had a large revolver concealed, and he told the sergeant sharply that he would give him no information. The words were spoken very quietly, but in another second Treacy would have drawn his gun and shot the sergeant. Only the tactful intervention of Dan Allis calmed Treacy and distracted the sergeant. Allis laughed at the sergeant as if he was wasting his time on a lunatic or a crank; the sergeant shook his head in agreement and walked away, never knowing how near he had been to a sudden end,—but with his questions unanswered.

Sean Treacy stayed with Dan Allis, at his house between Doon and Cooga, for several weeks after the collapse of the Rising. But finally, after an anxious message from home, he returned to Solohead.

And now came for Sean Treacy those days of resurgence of which he had long dreamed, and from then onwards his life became that of an indefatigable organiser and fighter. He was not very attracted by the political side of the Sinn Fein movement, and it was only his deep personal respect for P. J. Moloney that brought him into the General Election campaign of 1918 as a canvasser and election worker when his old friend stood for South Tipperary in that year. Treacy's life from the first days after Easter Week 1916 was more and more bent on one purpose,—the development, indeed, which had marked Treacy's daily life from the split in the Irish Volunteers in 1914. It was noticed then that, although he was still keen on the work of the Gaelic League, his main interest was the organisation of the Irish Volunteers, the study of military tactics, and the collecting of arms. From 1916 on this was more evident.

The account given by Sean Horan (who was later appointed First Lieutenant, Fourth Battalion of the Third Tipperary Brigade, and sworn into the I.R.B. by Treacy himself), gives a

true and life-like impression of Treacy as he was soon after their meeting in 1916:

“I felt a bit unhappy until I met Sean. In Easter Week 1916, I left my work with the intention of getting to Dublin to assist my fellow-countrymen there. In the town of Tipperary on Easter Monday night, I got to know there was no chance of getting into the city of Dublin, so I returned home. Sean got to know my mind; it was through Dan Breen that I met him. Sean questioned me and asked me if I belonged to any other armies or Volunteer forces. I told him that I was in the National Volunteers since they started, in order to be trained to fight against England for the freedom of Ireland, and not for sport. Before Sean and I parted that evening, he invited me to Lisheen Grove, two and a half miles from Tipperary Town. He gave instructions about the collecting of arms, and asked who in the company had any. I said I had a double-barrelled shotgun, and Sean said that was very good. The company was then small, about 10 men, and later it numbered 15.

“Sean Treacy was very cautious as to whom he would invite into the company in Lisheen Grove after the Rising, whilst training was going on secretly. That kept the company small.

“Sean Treacy was a very far-seeing man. He saw years ahead of him. He also had the gift of gaining everyone's favour. The Lisheen Grove officers decided to go to the outside parishes and get companies working. So Sean Treacy went to Mount Bruis. Dan Breen and I went to Solohead and Cappawhite. We paraded each company, and when we had finished, we went to Mount Bruis. When we met with Sean he was drilling about twenty ladies! I remarked to Sean: ‘What will you put the ladies to doing, Sean?’ ‘Well,’ said he, ‘they’ll be put to something. They can carry dispatches.’ He had a company of men there also.

“Sean Treacy was a silent and also a sincere worker. He and Dan Breen, Sean Hogan and Seamus Robinson—the Big Four as we called them in those years—often came to my mother's, Mrs. Horan, at Moate Quarter, Donohill, for in or about five years. They were always welcome, and she gave them financial as well as every other aid to bring the fight to a success-

ful end. Her home was a home for the Irish Republican Army even in its early stages.

“One day Sean was writing at a table there alone. I just remarked to him: ‘Do you think, Sean, the fight will soon be over?—I am deaf, stupid and blind from travelling and working for Irish freedom.’ Sean took off his glasses and said, ‘Jack, the fight could last a hundred years, one hundred years!’”

This first-hand and vivid picture indicates the immediate tasks Sean took in hand after the insurrection. For twelve months afterwards, and especially after the general Frongoch release at Christmas, 1916, he was reorganising the Irish Volunteers. Seamus O’Neill, after his release from Frongoch in September 1916, visited Tipperary and met P. J. Moloney, W. Ryan, Sean Treacy and others. He found very little activity on his first visit, but by Christmas the Volunteer movement was again well under way. Seamus O’Neill also met Sean Duffy who had just arrived in Tipperary, a man who was later to be a very active colleague of Sean Treacy.

By the end of the year the broken threads had been re-knit. Secret drilling was in progress, and the Tipperary Volunteers also used to meet at Jack McCarthy’s in O’Brien Street. Here also were held the meetings of the I.R.B. circle, and a new branch of the Gaelic League, the *Craobh Phadraic Mhic Phiarais*, of which Sean Treacy was President and Dinny Lacey, Secretary. The advanced classes were taken by Professor Sam Fahy; the other classes by Seamus O’Lehane. Sean Treacy, in spite of his pre-occupation with the Irish Volunteers, as already mentioned, continued to attend the Irish classes conducted by Tadhg Kelly, N.T., at the Technical School. Jack McCarthy’s house was used as the Volunteer meeting place up to 1920, although in 1917 a Volunteer Hall was founded at Eaton’s Cottages. But even then McCarthy’s was still used for the Battalion and Brigade Staff meetings.

By 1917 Sean Treacy was regarded as the leader in the Fourth Battalion area. In that year the Sinn Fein organisation had gathered strength in Tipperary Town, where meetings were held in the Labour Hall. Sean Treacy and his comrades took part in these, but by the February and March of 1917 their main

work was devoted to the Irish Volunteers. Sean was busily reorganising and had formed Volunteer companies, and sent, among others, Sean Duffy and Maurice Crowe to drill them while he pushed ahead with the formation of more. He was a very pertinacious collector for the Arms Fund. Eamonn O'Dwyer was from the first much impressed by Treacy's skill and tact in this particular work; Sean never took offence at the most brusque refusal, but smiled and tried repeatedly,—and he generally succeeded. This firmness of purpose and evenness of temper, Eamonn O'Dwyer also discovered, was characteristic of Treacy in all other matters. In the personal clashes of temperaments and disagreements common to all organisations, Sean Treacy was always the peacemaker.

Among his new activities were the military classes started in Tipperary Town. Through his influence, according to Michael Fitzpatrick, seven companies had been formed by the summer of 1917, each Company some fifty to sixty strong. These companies were: A & B, Tipperary Town; C, Donohill; D, Donaskeigh; E, Solohead; F, Bansha, G, Aherlow. (In the summer of 1917: H, Mount Bruis; I, Lattin; K, Kilross were also formed, according to Maurice Crowe). Among Treacy's officers who afterwards met tragic ends were: Sean Allen who was shot in Cork Jail after courtmartial in February 1921; Sean Duffy and Patrick Moloney, who were shot dead in an engagement with the Auxiliaries on May 1, 1921; Martin ("Sparky") Breen and Jerry Kiely, who were killed in the Civil War.

Eamonn O'Dwyer, on his release from prison in January 1917, met Sean Treacy and was amazed at the progress that had been made in so short a time. In the following month, Seamus Robinson came down from Dublin to work on Eamonn O'Dwyer's farm at Ballagh, and his arrival greatly helped the organising of the County which O'Dwyer, Treacy and the others had taken in hand. Seamus Robinson had behind him his record in the Easter Week fighting in Dublin, where he had held one of the O'Connell Street positions,—Hopkins & Hopkins' corner—through some of the toughest and most dangerous phases of the Rising. Sean Treacy had a very high opinion of him as an organiser and leader of men. In the estimation of others, such

as Seamus O'Neill, who knew the Tipperary of those days, Seamus Robinson's coming played a very large part in the rapid organisation of the Irish Volunteers there. Like many other Volunteer leaders after 1916, Sean Treacy was still galled at the failure of any action outside Dublin, Galway and Wexford, and he had a great admiration for any Easter Week fighter. These feelings caused Treacy to defer to Robinson's judgment, and, indeed, in due course to insist on Seamus' taking higher rank to himself. He also found in Robinson a fighting spirit and initiative after his own heart. They both agreed, too, in perceiving that the real power behind the British grip on Ireland was the well-armed R.I.C. with its universal espionage; and in the R.I.C. they both saw the most important cause of the collapse of the Rising in the provinces.

Among Treacy's close friends at the time was Michael McCormack, Mooresfort, who was closely in touch with him during his Easter Week activities, and later one of his drill instructors. Paddy Dwyer of Hollyford also came to know Sean Treacy at this period, and shared many of his perils and labours. He, too, in common with Treacy's other associates, found Sean silent and single-minded, but not above a merry prank on occasion. Once Paddy and he called round to a neighbour's house as they were feeling hungry. The woman of the house was out, and the doors and windows all fastened tightly. Sean asked Paddy for a piece of wire. Some time before a bullet had been fired during practice and left a small hole above the fastener of one of the windows. Sean and Paddy knew the good woman well enough to practise revolver shooting in her yard, but Sean knew, and Paddy knew, that she had a pungent and scorching vocabulary when aroused. Sean, with a quiet grin, worked away with the wire, opened the window, sent Paddy to the well for water, and then lighted a fine fire. They were both half way through a good meal, which Sean had prepared, when in burst the absent housewife and met the grins of the two.

"What divil from hell brought the pair of ye here? Only ye are who ye are, I'd knock the two heads of ye!"

And to all her questions as to how they had entered Sean Treacy replied, and Paddy Dwyer backed him up:

“ How else but down the chimney ? ”

Finally, after much diplomatic questioning by their neighbour, Treacy consented to give the right explanation.

Paddy Dwyer's memory of his conversations with Treacy included a whimsical discussion which arose as a group round the fire debated the famous “ Prophecies of St. Colmcille.” Treacy listened as Dwyer quoted some passages from memory, and proceeded to fit them to more recent incidents in Irish history than the rest of the company had done. He argued that the passages quoted by Dwyer must refer to the Parnell tragedy, to Easter Week and to the General Election of 1918. Fastening on another passage, Treacy raised the question of “ Dominion Home Rule,” forgot the argument about the prophecies, and pointing to his revolver, declared that so long as there was not complete independence he wasn't interested in peace parleys or political schemes. Dwyer's impression of the talk was that Treacy was amusing himself in his half-jesting interpretations of the passages which Dwyer had quoted, but the incident remained in his own memory as one example of Treacy's militant outlook in the days before Soloheadbeg.

Another instance of his single-mindedness was the advice he gave to Paddy Dwyer when Dwyer was invited to take part in a meeting called by some Socialist or advanced Labour organisation. Treacy advised Dwyer not to accept, saying: “ We'll use all parties and every possible means that will further the liberation of Ireland, but why should we be used by other parties ? ” Again, Sean Treacy spoke very strongly to Paddy Dwyer in condemnation of a proposal made by another Brigade that money should be raised by raids on Banks and on Old Age Pension money in the Post Offices. Sean said sharply: “ Whatever we get must be got freely from the people.” Dwyer summed up Treacy's confidence in his men by quoting Treacy's own words: “ The spirit of freedom is in the mountainy men.”

Treacy built up, with the help of another of his lieutenants, Paddy Deere, a signalling section where the Morse code and a system of signals by lamps and flags had been worked out. Eamonn O'Dwyer has recorded that Treacy also worked out a special fool-proof code, based on the substitution of one word

for another, with the code key known only to a few. One of Treacy's closest friends and confidants at the time was, of course, Dan Breen. Dan was the Captain of the Lisheen Grove Company, and Battalion Commandant from April 1916 to August 1917, when he was sent to Donegal. In the pre-1916 days, Treacy and Breen were already regarded with enmity and suspicion by the R.I.C. and came in for considerable surveillance and attention. Their activities were semi-secret while they waited eagerly for the chance to come out defiantly into the open.

There is a tradition that Sean Treacy kept a diary from the age of 14 until the last year of his life, and that in this diary he declared the ambition of his life to be that of leading his native County into an insurrection. In the diary he also claimed that no man influenced him. Certainly, he had a habit of noting down thoughts and projects, or instructions for his men, in a small note book. He left no doubt in their minds what his ultimate purpose was. On the front page of one such note book, now in the possession of Maurice Crowe of Tipperary, the following list of dates of which he constantly reminded the Tipperary Volunteers is written:

STAIR NA h-E.

- 1691.—Treaty of Limerick.
- 1693.—Landen, death of Sarsfield.
- 1702.—Cremona.
- 1766.—Father Sheehy.
- 1782.—Declaration of Independence.
- 1789.—French Revolution.
- 1791.—United Irishmen.
- 1792.—National Guard.

3-6-17.

—S. O. T.

This list of dates with all their varied historical associations of foreign duplicity and tyranny, and recollections of home, heroism and effort, shows more than a hundred speeches could Sean Treacy's purpose in training, drilling and arming his comrades for another effort to overthrow the British rule.

His library has largely disappeared, but those of his books that still remain in the possession of his friends show clearly the bent of his mind. Among the military books he left with Maurice Crowe were "Cyclist Military Training, 1917," "Military Cyclists' Vade Mecum" by Capt. A. H. Trapmann, "Field Service Pocket Book," and "Infantry Training." When Treacy was living in Dublin in 1919 on the run in Phil Shanahan's house, those who met him noticed he was constantly studying these military text-books. These were not his only reading. He liked historical romances of the rousing type, tales of distant wars, or such books as Hay's "History of '98," Mitchel's "Life of Aodh O'Neill." One of his favourite books was the novel by Canon Sheehan dealing with the Fenian Rising in Tipperary, "The Graves of Kilmorna." As soon as they were published he read the works of Pearse, and Miss L. Fogarty's edition of Fintan Lalor's writings which appeared in 1918. And to the end, Sean Treacy carried round his Irish dictionary and some Irish texts—the Gospel of St. Luke in Irish, *Gile na mBlath, Séadna, Laoi Oisin*.

The small six-roomed farmhouse at Soloheadbeg still bears evidences of Sean Treacy's militant activity. It was a nest of cunning hiding places for military equipment and secret documents. The very stair posts were hollowed out to conceal guns, and the very blocks in the rafters hollowed out to hide papers and dispatches. Sean Treacy constructed so many of these hiding places, and so skilfully, that many of them could not be located after his death. The kitchen to the right of the entrance had the hollowed blocks in the ceiling, a dump below the hearthstone, a second dump under a flagstone 1½ft. square in a small cupboard under the stairs. On the lefthand side of the chimney there was a small closet, and behind a shelf resting on a small panel a cavity where ammunition was hidden. The house was searched from top to bottom very thoroughly in several military raids, but Treacy's dumps and nooks were never discovered, nor were those he made outside on the farm.

A wooden flight of stairs ran to the landing above, where there were two rooms, and ample space on the landing for a spare bed. Treacy's bedroom, a large room facing the head of

the stairs, was near a small landing window through which he intended to escape during raids. The shutters of his bedroom windows were lined with steel, carefully painted to disguise this protection.

In the Harvest of 1917 Sean Treacy was arrested. This was a sequel to a defiant challenge to the British military authorities which the Volunteers of Tipperary organised when Eamon de Valera visited the town and addressed a public meeting. They deliberately held a parade which defied three proclamations: by marching in military formation, by wearing uniforms, and by carrying hurleys. Sean Treacy was in charge of de Valera's guard of honour, and met him at Dobbyn's Hotel wearing an improvised Sam Browne belt. Two days after this meeting, which took place on Sunday, August 19, in the Sports Field, Sean Treacy was arrested at Solohead and taken to Cork Prison to serve a sentence of six months' imprisonment. On this occasion Sean Treacy evidently made no effort to avoid arrest, but waited in his own home for the police to take him, although he urged others to go on the run. He clearly thought that by standing his ground he emphasised the Tipperary Volunteers' defiance of the proclamations.

On the eve of his arrest, Sean Treacy and Paddy Dwyer were shaking off a sergeant and constable who were shadowing Treacy through Church Street, Tipperary Town. As the police gained on them an old man in charge of an ass and cart fell heavily to the ground. Treacy stopped and helped the old man to his feet, and only when he was satisfied that he could do no more went on his way, without even glancing back at the shadowers.

At the end of August or early in September, Sean Treacy was transferred with a number of others from Cork to Dublin, and lodged in Mountjoy Jail.

CHAPTER III

PRISON AND HUNGER-STRIKE.

SEAN TREACY spent his days in Mountjoy Jail partly in study and partly in the turmoil of a great hunger strike which ended in the tragedy of Thomas Ashe's death. There, too, he met many old friends, including Eamonn O'Dwyer and Seamus O'Neill, and made many new ones. He studied Irish, shorthand, and military matters—in particular, the manufacture of explosives. A record exists in his own handwriting which outlines his life in the more normal part of his stay in Mountjoy. It is headed:

SEAN TREACY. MOUNTJOY JAIL, 1917.

AN ATTEMPT TO ACCOUNT FOR A DAY IN MOUNTJOY.

- 6 a.m. Bell goes. Did not hear it.
- 6.30 Warders waken me, unlocking the door. They make a lot of noise doing so as they must give three turns with each of two keys besides drawing the bolt.
- 7.0 A few fellows get up. There is little enticement to do so as 'tis rather dark without artificial light.
- 7.30 Get up in a terrible hurry. Tidy up cell, etc., if I have time.
- 7.45 Lift comes up with breakfast. Another chap and I have to carry it around in C 2. A tray of bread, a tray of 22 mugs with a pint of porridge in each. 22 eggs, tea and milk, a pint and a half respectively for each man. Six of us dine together in No. 27, Eamonn's cell (Eamonn O'Dwyer): Eamonn, T. O. Maoileain (Tomás Malone or "Sean Forde"), MacDonagh (Joseph), Coleman (Richard), and I. Two fellows have to do orderly—wash mugs, plates, clean up, etc., each day. After breakfast, *talk, talk*. In fact, it requires a strong effort to get away to do anything. We have to collect stirabout mugs and plates for dinner. The time gets used up somehow or other in washing, sweeping out cells—there are two orderlies on duty each day to sweep passages, etc.—talking, making up bed, listening to other people, talking, lounging around, and again talking.
- 9.45 Signalling class.

- 10.30 Physical drill. Doors open to go to exercise. Visits commence.
- 11.45 Irish class under Seamus O'Neill (new arrangement). Batch of letters come.
- 12.45 Dinner. We have to carry that around. Over about 1.30. More talk. Collect mugs. Wash plates, mugs, etc., tidy up and sweep out cells.
- 2 p.m. Warders return from dinner. Visits resumed. Knock around and talk. Write sometimes. Exercise if 'tis fine.
- 4.45 Tea. Parcels and more letters. Gas lighted. Talk.
- 6.15 Military class for an hour or so.
- 7.15 Irish class (junior) sometimes. Chatting in cells. Walking around hall. Writing. Dancing. Concert in No. 27. MacDonagh gives exhibition of dancing on a plate—upsets half-dozen mugs doing so.
- 9.15 Rosary.
- 9.30 Lock up.
Mass on Sundays at about 7.15. Church door is about 20 yards from me.

This account of Treacy's prison experiences bears no date and is written on prison paper. He left no account of the more dangerous and critical days he spent there. His description probably refers to the last stages of his imprisonment when political treatment and the right of association had been won. On September 20 the political prisoners in Mountjoy demanded this treatment, and it was refused. Two days later they began to smash up their cells. They were handcuffed and all furniture, bedding, clothes, boots were removed. Some of the prisoners were practically naked. A mass hunger strike was called and the prisoners were forcibly fed. The doctor who was called in by the British authorities had had no previous experience of forcible feeding. The three leaders of the hunger strike were Austin Stack, Fionan Lynch and Thomas Ashe, who had taken a leading part in the battle at Ashbourne in North County Dublin during the 1916 Rising.

Eamonn O'Dwyer has left on record the following significant story of the hunger strike :

“Ristead O'Colmain, who had been an Easter Week fighter and who later died in Usk prison, refused, for reasons of conscience, to join the hunger strike. Because of this the Claremen tried to hound him down, but Sean and myself stood up

to them and quashed the effort to arouse ill-feeling against O'Colmain. Sean was imbued with the spirit of fair play, and held that every Volunteer was a free man and a free agent. He was not of the type that would join the stronger side to hound down any man."⁽¹⁾

On the ninth or tenth day of the hunger-strike, Treacy and Eamonn O'Dwyer heard serious news. They had both undergone the ordeal of forcible feeding, which Treacy afterwards described as a sensation similar to tickling the gullet painfully and persistently with a goose quill. The news was brought to them by a friendly warder, vouched for by a note from Phil Shanahan. The warder told Eamonn O'Dwyer that it was so grave that O'Dwyer, in his exhausted state, must take a drink of wine before hearing it. Eamonn O'Dwyer asked O'Connor, the warder, whether he meant by this request to break the strike.

"Treacy took the wine," said O'Connor, showing the note from Phil Shanahan, "And so you had better as you will need it." O'Dwyer, who had naturally every trust in Shanahan and who knew Treacy's temperance principles, guessed what O'Connor had to tell him and took the wine. O'Connor said quickly:

"Tom Ashe is dead."

From below in another corridor, Fionan Lynch shouted a confirmation in Irish to a veiled question from Eamonn O'Dwyer: the other prisoners were not to hear the news. The strike went on, but two days later, after the intervention of the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Laurence O'Neill, the prisoners obtained the following terms from Mr. Duke, the Chief Secretary:

- (1) Cells to remain open from 7 a.m. to 9.30 p.m.
- (2) Freedom of Association throughout the day.
- (3) Smoking.
- (4) Parcels.
- (5) Improved diet.
- (6) A letter a day.
- (7) A visit a day.

There were other clauses, but these were the most important.

(1) *A Garland From Tipperary*, 1943.

The death of Ashe stirred Ireland. Demonstrations of protest were held all over the country. No other attempt to use forcible feeding against Irish political prisoners was ever made again throughout the Anglo-Irish struggle. Thomas Ashe was given a public and military funeral by the Irish Volunteers (some thirty thousand people attended his lying-in-state in the Mater Hospital—and Michael Collins, in Volunteer uniform, spoke a few words beside the grave. Three volleys were fired and the Last Post sounded. For the moment, an outburst of public anger broke the ban on the wearing of uniforms, and checked Dublin Castle.

One sentence from the jury's verdict tells the whole story of Thomas Ashe's last hours, and throws a light on what Sean Treacy and his comrades endured. "We find that Thomas Ashe, according to the medical evidence . . . died of heart failure and congestion of the lungs . . . caused by the punishment of taking away from his cell the bed, bedding, and boots, and his being left to lie on the cold floor for fifty hours, and then subjected to forcible feeding in his weak condition after a hunger-strike of five or six days."

Austin Stack, who was the chief leader of the hunger-strike, wrote in a letter from Mountjoy on October 9, that the price of victory had been very high, and that the life of Ashe was worth "the remainder of us all together." Stack added: "There are thirty-seven of us left here now, and I am glad to say we are all doing very well. Some of us are in our old form again. Except for the pain during the actual operation I did not suffer very much. I lost only 7 lbs. in weight . . . but, of course, there was the danger all the while of succumbing to the 'method' of a careless or inexperienced surgeon. But all's well now—with the terrible exception of Ashe's loss—and we are in enjoyment of the treatment which we demanded for ourselves and for our fellow-countrymen."⁽¹⁾

"It was an honour," said Sean Treacy simply when he spoke of these days afterwards, "to be walking in the prison ring beside Thomas Ashe." When Treacy was released, he and all Ashe's fellow-prisoners marched to the grave of Ashe and there

(1) *Austin Stack, 1880-1929. Dublin. P.7.*

took a vow that, should they ever be re-arrested, they would at once go on hunger-strike. Treacy was determined that never again would a British jail hold him.

For some time after the hunger-strike the British authorities kept the agreement, and Treacy occupied himself with the study of Irish. In the middle of November the prisoners were removed to Dundalk Jail and the terms of the agreement were at once broken. It was noticed, indeed, on their arrival that skilly was being served out. A conference was held at once, and at a signal the skilly tins were kicked away from the cell doors and a new hunger-strike began. The strike lasted eight days and the prisoners were released in batches under the "Cat and Mouse Act." The prison doctor, Dr. McCormack, came into the prison after the third or fourth day of the strike. Sean Treacy's condition caused some alarm and he was among the first to be released. Among those on strike were: Austin Stack, Michael Brennan, J. J. Walsh and a good many Claremen,—indeed the majority of the 39 political prisoners who had been on hunger-strike with Thomas Ashe.

Sean Treacy read with amusement the form served on him which stated that he was "this day discharged from Dundalk Prison in pursuance of Lords Justices Order of 16 November subject to the following conditions: "shall return if period of temporary discharge be not extended . . . abstain from any violation of the law . . ." and similar solemn verbiage. On the form he learned that it was to Dundalk Prison that he was to return when notified. He smiled. Hunger-strike . . . or a bullet rather!

Sean Treacy had made full preparations in Tipperary for the work of the Volunteers to go ahead if he were arrested. Treacy himself now took every possible precaution against re-arrest, and, in fact, was not recaptured until the early spring of 1918.

It was after his first release from prison that the one love story in Sean Treacy's life began, a gentle romance that was ruthlessly swept away by rifles and machine guns in a Dublin street on the very eve of its fulfilment. The story was known to Maurice Crowe, but to very few others. In March 1917 Sean Treacy met Miss May Quigley for the first time. She had

come down on a visit to her aunts, the Misses Alice and Kate Ryan, and stayed with them at their shop in Church Street where Treacy was a constant visitor. She was recovering from a severe illness which had broken in upon her work as a music teacher at a Convent. At first she was not much attracted by Treacy who made the same impression on her as he made on others who on closer knowledge were drawn to love and respect him deeply. But after his release in November of the same year she grew more attached to Treacy who had fallen in love with her at first sight, and very soon made his feelings known to her. They were accepted lovers for two years or so before they were formally engaged. He loved this lively girl with the close-cropped hair. It was to her he revealed his urgent chivalry and tenderness. He talked whimsically of the ideal home he was planning for her on the very top of the Galtee Mountains, all marble and gold ! He wanted to talk to her in Irish as he said that only in Irish could a man make love. So he sent her some special lessons, carefully set out. He put aside his distaste for dances and concerts to sit beside the piano while May Quigley played during a *céilidhe*. At first his friends were amazed at the incongruity—they could not understand it. But May Quigley was expressing a music in Treacy unheard by his friends.

He rarely spoke to her of his life as a hunted and militant fighter, and never of his adventures and exploits. But to her and her aunts he revealed more of his mind than to anyone else. Once Miss Kate Ryan praised him for something. Treacy knew that she could see the suffering and waste of war very clearly, and laughed at her, saying: "If you knew all about me and my doings, you might not have such a high opinion of me." The nearest reference he ever made to his fighting life was after Soloheadbeg when Miss Alice Ryan referred to the death of Constable McDonnell, an elderly and harmless man with a family, who was shot. "It was regrettable," said Treacy thoughtfully. Then he shrugged his shoulders, sighed, and added, "But it was unavoidable."

Treacy, too, often discussed in the Ryan household his own

family's lack of sympathy with his national activities. He had a deep affection for his mother and aunt, but their human and natural desire that he should leave fighting to others and devote himself to the family farm, as he had shown himself well capable of doing, jarred on him, even if his impatience with this attitude was expressed with restraint. Had not the men of 1916, he asked, left family, home, love, their private work, to strike a blow when the moment came, even as the fighting men of the great generations before them? Once Miss Kate Ryan reproached him for neglecting his mother, but Treacy turned the subject aside with the jesting question:

“After all she has done for me? Do you think if I had been a kitten she might have drowned me?”

The Ryan sisters were both actively engaged in the Irish-Ireland movements of the time, but their attempts—and the attempts of others who could understand without sharing the attitude of Treacy's family—to present both sides of the question to Treacy were invariably turned aside with silence or a jest. Treacy simply would not and could not admit that any claim on him was stronger than the fight for national independence. He stated his own view, once and for all, in a letter to his uncle, Michael Allis of Tipperary Town, during his second imprisonment in Dundalk in the spring of 1918:

“Now I'd like you and all concerned to know, once and for ever, that I've put Ireland over all long ago, and that I will not allow my own interests or the interests of anyone else to prevent my helping her cause all in my power. You may say this is nonsense *but it is the fact*. When I am released I shall at once devote all my energies to the furtherance of that cause in the best way I can.”

On the eve of his re-arrest on February 28, 1918, Sean Treacy had been hard at work organising the Volunteers. He lived in daily expectation of arrest and took precautions to make sure that the work of the Volunteers would be carried on without interruption whenever his arrest came. He appointed Sean Duffy, Dinny Lacey and Maurice Crowe to continue his work in such an eventuality. Therefore, when he was taken at last on February 28, his mind was at ease on that matter, at least. Miss

Madge Daly of Limerick saw Sean Treacy on this occasion as a prisoner at Limerick Junction, entered his carriage, and talked to him until the end of the journey. The police escort raised no objection. Miss Daly invited Sean to have some tea, but he refused, saying he had gone on hunger-strike from the moment of his re-arrest. The police allowed Miss Daly to talk to Sean at the terminus until the escort arrived. He was again sent to Dundalk, where among his comrades were Seamus O'Neill (then Professor at Rockwell College and later O.C. of the Cashel Battalion) and Michael Brennan of Clare (later Chief of Staff of the National Army). These three men were the only prisoners in Dundalk at the time, and they at once went on hunger-strike to enforce the terms won during the Mountjoy struggle. The strike went on for ten days and they won their demands.

Towards the end of the hunger-strike, Sean Treacy's friends made a determined move to save him. The World War had reached a critical stage and the danger of conscription had suddenly become very real in Ireland. The Tipperary Volunteers made preparations to kidnap an R.I.C. sergeant and some constables who went on patrol from Limerick Junction every evening, and hold them as hostages on enforced hunger-strike until Treacy was released. Some disused mines at Hollyford were selected as a prison for these hostages who, luckily for themselves, failed to turn up on the nights the Tipperary Volunteers lay in wait for them.

The scheme was later abandoned, but full preparations were made to rescue Sean Treacy from the jail itself. Towards the end of the hunger-strike, Maurice Crowe and Dan Breen arrived in Dundalk to carry out the rescue, which had been planned by Frank Thornton, who was then organising the Volunteers in Dundalk. Breen and Crowe duly arrived, followed on the next day by May Quigley, Tadhg Crowe of Solohead, and Sean's cousin, Nicholas Treacy. The hunger-strike had been called off that day as the prisoners had won their terms, so the rescue was cancelled.

Maurice Crowe and Dan Breen paid Treacy several visits and Sean sent out letters and a bunch of his own keys. This

letter to Maurice Crowe on March 25, 1918, explains itself, and shows that even prison could not damp his sense of fun:

"I meant to write to you before now, but was kept busy answering letters which arrived during the strike, including a few from Ailis (Miss Alice Ryan). I hope yourself, Dan and Tadhg got back from Dundalk all right. Did you get any stuff in Dublin? What a pity that rescue didn't come off, but perhaps Dan and yourself would be shoved in here, and I'd never stop laughing. Did you get the keys I sent you out ?

"The key with the bit of twine round it opens the little door at the foot of the stairs. In it you will find a few sticks of gelnite, detonators, bullets, fuse and two pikes. (Get some made like them in each company), also military books and note books, etc., which you can take charge of. There may be anything in the hollow pier, but I'm certain you won't find any money in it. In the note book you will find a map of Tipperary with pencil dots. The small dots are where Companies already exist or can be started. The large dots, Battalion centres. Thurles and Nenagh are important, but I'm sure they have these going already. Paddy Ryan will take care of Doon, but you should keep in touch with him. It will be better for you and Dinny to leave town and get the Battalion going. I think Dan has already left. Send letters under cover to James McGuill, and Miss Matthews, Dundalk, as already arranged. Will send you others later. Send me other covering addresses, as the S.S. may suspect Ailis, No. 8. Let me know every week the progress you have made.

"Tell Nicholas where to set the oats."⁽¹⁾

Other political prisoners by this time had arrived in Dundalk, among them were men with whom Treacy was to be very intimate in the dangerous years that lay ahead, including Oscar Traynor, Dick McKee, Ernest Blythe, and Terence MacSwiney. Seamus O'Neill records that Sean Treacy at this time, in conversations with the group, during their meals in Brennan's or

(1) The map of Tipperary referred to was a page taken from a Philips Atlas and marked to show Volunteer Battalions and Companies, as stated, in Nenagh, Thurles, Doon, Cashel, Tipperary, Cahir, Clonmel, Drangan and Tincurry.

Treacy's or Seamus O'Neill's cell, kept stressing one idea: the necessity of keeping the fight actually going on. They thrashed out immediate problems and expressed their views very freely.

On one occasion Terence MacSwiney was expressing pleasure at some *moral* victory when Sean Treacy replied:

"Damn it! I'd rather take *one* peeler's barracks than *all* your moral victories!"

Military classes were held at that time in Dundalk Jail under the guise of "Irish Classes." Irish was indeed taught for some of the time, but during the later stages these became classes dealing with explosives and lectures on other military subjects; they were mostly undertaken by Dick McKee, and Sean Treacy was very keen on them.

Following his argument with MacSwiney, Sean Treacy gave Seamus O'Neill an autograph: "*Go dtugaidh Dia cogadh le n-ár linn.* (May God give us war in our time).

What gave Sean Treacy's thoughts their direction at this time was the Conscription crisis. The methods recommended by him to combat the measure are shown best in the letter he addressed to Maurice Crowe on May 3, 1918:

"I received all your letters safely. I am delighted at the progress ye have made. Call a meeting of the Companies and elect the Battalion Officers, according to the Scheme of Organisation, which you will find amongst my books. Be sure and pick out the best men, and let me know. Try and get the Brigade going also, especially now that so many have left work and are doing Volunteer work. I note your present H.Qrs. That is good. Keep in touch with Seamus O'Neill, as regards the Cashel area. Find out the best men in Cahir, Clonmel and Drangan.

"It is now certain that the British Government intends to force Conscription on this country, and the following hints will be useful.

BARRACKS:—

"I don't think it possible to do anything about Tipperary Military Barracks, except to try and keep them inside. Barricade all roads leading to the town with felled trees. Build stone walls

across roads. Smash down bridges. Burn Station House at Tipperary, and destroy railway, wires, etc. Make all approaches to the town impassable. Snipe barracks from the surrounding hills with rifles and shotguns. Soak sods of turf in petrol, oil or tar, and throw them lighting on the Huts to set them ablaze. Hit the enemy every way you can.

“The Companies at Donohill and Solohead should be responsible for Limerick Junction, R.I.C. Barracks and Railway. Tear up rails, cut wires, smash down Junction Bridge, or use gelignite, if procurable. Destroy Signal Cabin. And also at Grange Crossing. Donaskeigh co-operate with Golden. Mount Bruis Company to be responsible for Lisvernane and Glenbane R.I.C. Barracks, and co-operate with Galbally. Bansha to be responsible for Bansha R.I.C. Barracks. All other Companies to be responsible for their respective Barracks, if any. The gunmen under cover should cover the windows whilst stormers smash in doors. Take the enemy by surprise. Hit first and don't let him hit you. Burn Barracks. Use gelignite bombs, if procurable. Show no mercy to resisters.

RAILWAYS:—

“Smash stone bridges on to railway. Tear up rails at Stations and throw empty trucks across lines—derail them. Smash signals. Cut telegraph and telephone wires as often as possible. Destroy Signal Cabins. Burn wooden bridges.

ROADS:—

“Barricade roads in as many places as feasible by felled trees, etc. Hold an inner line of communication intact. Defend working parties with strong guards. This is important, and at outbreak of hostilities, all lasting food stuff should be transferred to a Base Camp. Tinned meats, biscuits, potatoes, etc.

CAMPS:—

“Strongly entrench at the foot of the Galtees or any other suitable site. Dig deep in the hills for stores. Roof and prop underground chamber with timber, etc.

COMMUNICATIONS:—

“Open up as many new routes as you can. Slit a bicycle tube, put in dispatch and mend it again. Carry a load of turnips or mangolds, cut a turnip, put in dispatch, and mark turnip. Knock off a cow’s horn, put in dispatch, put on horn, and drive her along through the enemy. These are only ideas, but use your own judgment.

“In all cases destroy a dispatch before it gets into the hands of the enemy. Eat it, or get a little box in which ink is secreted, press a spring letting ink in on to the dispatch. I have been thinking over the latter way and how it could be devised, but haven’t it completed.

GENERAL:—

“Fight under cover, gunmen holding vantage points. When pike men charge, do so in close formation under cover, and then rush the enemy, look out for aeroplanes, and don’t let them catch you in close formation. Pick out your best shots with rifles to deal with them. Remember aeroplanes can easily bomb you out of houses. Deport all in favour of the enemy out of the district. Deal sternly with those who try to resist. Maintain the strictest discipline. There must be no running home to kiss mothers goodbye. Cause confusion in the enemy Camp, and strike terror into them.

“I hope there will be no need for these instructions, but if there is, do your part and place your trust in God. Remember you can only die once and may God defend the right.

“Get the men to go to Confession and Communion and remember Sarsfield, the men of ’48 and ’67, and the men of 1916.

“I’m sorry I can’t be with you as my term isn’t up until June, but you may rest assured that we will do our part here.

Go mbeannuighidh Dia duit agus go saoraidh Dia Eire.

Seán O Treasaigh.”

Once Sean Treacy summed this programme and himself up to Sean Fitzpatrick in the words: “I would fight conscription to the butt of my nails!”

In June 1918 his sentence had expired and he was released. But his comrades in jail were concerned about his possible re-arrest as two of his fellow-prisoners had been detained after leaving Dundalk Jail and deported under the "German Plot" round-up. Seamus O'Neill and the others feared for Treacy's safe return to Tipperary. There was a small fine or some warrant still outstanding against him in Tipperary. His fellow-prisoners discussed the matter with him, and advised him to pay, if challenged, rather than risk another term in jail at such a time, when he was the obvious leader in South Tipperary against any attempt to enforce Conscription. Whether Treacy was ever challenged or ever paid is not known.

Treacy reached Tipperary safely and was appointed Volunteer Organiser for South Tipperary. In October the Brigade Officers were elected.

A meeting of the officers of the six Battalions, which at that time made up the South Tipperary Brigade,—Clanwilliam, Kilnamanagh, Cashel, Clonmel, Cahir and Drangan—met at P. J. Moloney's, Church Street, Tipperary, and appointed the Brigade Officers. This meeting was presided over by Richard Mulcahy who came down from the G.H.Q. in Dublin. Sean Treacy gave a full description of his work in each Battalion before the meeting.

One result of the meeting surprised Seamus Robinson when he reached Dublin from Belfast Jail, where he had been through some stormy experiences with Austin Stack, Joseph MacDonagh and others of Sean Treacy's fellow-prisoners of Mountjoy and Dundalk. Robinson met Michael Collins, who asked him solemnly:

"Do you know what those fellows of the South Tipperary Brigade have done now?"

Robinson innocently asked how could he know? Collins grinned and said:

"They have elected a bloody fellow called Seamus Robinson as their new Brigade O.C.!"

This decision was mainly the work of Sean Treacy, who had been proposed as O.C. He refused very firmly and threw all his influence behind his proposal of Seamus Robinson. The

following officers were elected: Brigade O.C., Seamus Robinson; Brigade Vice O.C., Sean Treacy; Brigade Adjutant, Maurice Crowe; Brigade Q.M., Dan Breen. Treacy's insistence on Robinson's election was due to his high opinion of him as a leader, and his respect for his work in South Tipperary, and also owing to his own desire to have a free hand as organiser. It is possible, too, that Treacy believed that as Brigadier he would be too much under the irksome control of Dublin Headquarters, with the cautious policy of some of whose members he strongly disagreed. He trusted Seamus Robinson from past experience, and, when Robinson arrived, was delighted to find that their ideas on the need for a more militant policy were the same.

While Treacy was in prison, Dan Breen and the other officers of the Brigade had been very active. As Treacy's letter previously quoted shows, he had sent instructions to Dinny Lacey and Maurice Crowe to leave their employment in Tipperary Town and help to form the Battalion and Brigade. This was done with the assistance of Dan Breen, Con Moloney, Arty, Matt and Jack Barlow, Con and Paddy Power, and Tadhg Ryan, Shrough, Tipperary. Davie Burke, Coolboy, Emly, and Liam P. Manahan also soon joined in the work, and a Headquarters was set up in the Barlows' house at Shrough.

A constant visitor at H.Q. was Seán Fitzpatrick, who after the arrest of Sean Duffy and Tom Rodgers—the O.C.'s of A and B. Companies—took on their work in 1918, and much more again when Maurice Crowe, the Battalion Adjutant, left Tipperary Town early in that year.

At H.Q. also, a small munition factory was started, and soon after, a second one at Edmund Condon's, Knockharding, Lattin,—both under the supervision of Dinny Lacey. Davie Bourke, Shrough, who was a quarryman, taught the workers the use of explosives. The munitions were dumped at Whittager's, Mooresfort, where the Battalion arms and ammunition were also stored under the care of Dan Carroll, Mooresfort, who, in fact, during the entire struggle, guarded most of the available arms and ammunition.

During Treacy's absence, indeed, the work had gone ahead to an extent which gratified and astonished him. Apart from

the activities already mentioned, all the Companies had paraded and drilled every evening. After his arrival, and when the appointment of officers had put the Battalions and Brigade on a regular basis, Treacy gave all his time to organising the I.R.A. and only occasionally returned to the farm at Solohead to see his mother and aunt. From then onwards, Sean Treacy pressed ahead with all the preparations needed for the coming struggle which he and his comrades awaited.

CHAPTER IV

SEAN TREACY PREPARES TO FIGHT.

Some time before Christmas 1918, Sean Treacy, Seamus Robinson and Dan Breen received information that led them to make a very grave decision. They learned—through the interception of a letter to the military authorities—that a quantity of gelignite was coming to Tipperary, and they determined, whatever the consequences and whatever the risks, that the gelignite should be captured. Their information as to the date of its arrival was not so accurate, and this was to affect the outcome of their plans. They also knew that some of the gelignite would be sent to Soloheadbeg quarry, so Lar Breen, Dan's brother, and one of the Donohill Volunteers, was sent to work in the quarry to keep a close watch.

Sean Treacy and his comrades were now very active. The following dispatch speaks for itself as to the line their activity took:

H.Qrs.,
South Tipp. Brigade.
10.1.1919.

(Special Orders).

To O.C. Each Battalion.

You will have all Barracks, Police and Military, in your areas examined and watched with a view to raiding them. Some of the points to remember are :

- (1) Number of men in all Barracks—Number who sleep in and are in at different times—Number who go out on Patrol, to Church, on outside duty, etc.
- (2) Time of leaving on Patrol. Routes taken and time of return.
- (3) Precautions taken at night in opening doors. (Send someone to try).
- (4) Where arms are kept. If kept loaded.
- (5) Position of telephone and telegraph wires to Barracks or local Post Office.

(6) Best way and time to take Barracks by surprise.

Have reports covering all above-mentioned points and any others you may think necessary sent into Brigade H.Qrs. by Sunday 19th January next.

By Order,

SEAN O TREASAIGH
(For Brigadier).

In the New Year the decision was taken and the plans laid for the seizure of the gelignite consigned to Soloheadbeg quarry.

As has been shown in the record of Treacy's activities from boyhood onwards, his life until then had been dedicated to the renewal of the guerrilla struggle that came nearer and nearer ever since the rekindling of old fires and the national upsurge of feeling after 1916. In Treacy, as in so many others, that insurrection had lighted a fierce and constant flame. And in those opening months of 1919 he foresaw an inevitable clash between the British Government and the rising movement. Ever since 1916 events had moved in one direction. In the jails Sean Treacy had met the men who were building up the new military machine. He had lived through the disillusion of the collapse of Easter Week in Tipperary. He had gone to the edge of death in the Mountjoy hunger-strike, and he remembered Thomas Ashe. In long discussions, Treacy had debated the pros and cons of policy with moderate and militant alike. He had seen the Irish Parliamentary Party, that decayed colossus which had dominated the Ireland of his youth, crash in ruin overnight. He had seen constitutionalism buried alike in the General Election of 1918 and in Mr. Lloyd George's wastepaper basket where the Report of the Irish Convention ignominiously reposed. A majority of the people had endorsed the proclamation of the Easter Week men. Open insurrection in the old Emmet tradition had failed, and its leaders lay in quicklime graves.

Sean Treacy and Seamus Robinson and Dan Breen, as they planned the raid at Soloheadbeg, thought of the future in the terms of a guerrilla struggle on the lines of the plans drawn up by the Irish Volunteers before Easter Week. It might, as Sean Treacy jestingly said, take a hundred years. They believed in it just as Cathal Brugha and Michael Collins and many men and women throughout the thirty-two counties believed in it.

At the moment, in spite of these hopes and plans, the British Government, aided by the R.I.C. reports and a powerful importation of military forces, was very thorough-going in its efforts to keep the situation in hand. From 1917 to 1919 there were some 12,500 raids on private houses, thousands of arrests and deportations, several deaths on hunger-strike, over a hundred wounded in baton and bayonet charges, countless clashes between the Crown Forces and the Volunteers and the mass of the people, with half-a-dozen civilian deaths. Until then, the Volunteers had been passive as a body, and their policy had been a waiting one. There had been incidents here and there: a police hut attacked in Gortatlea, Co. Kerry: one attack on the R.I.C. in Co. Clare, and occasionally a stand like that of Daniel MacNeillis in Cork City, who had taken Michael O'Callaghan's example in Easter Week as his headline, and answered the R.I.C. with shots before they carried him off to Cork Jail, from where his Volunteer comrades celebrated the Armistice of November 11th, 1918, by rescuing him. But Michael O'Callaghan in Tipperary in 1916, and Daniel MacNeillis in Cork in 1918, were after all isolated acts, few and far between, which might be covered by the formula "defensive warfare."

As late as April, 1919, Dail Eireann would go no further than to pass a resolution, moved by de Valera, which called on the people "to ostracise publicly and socially members of the police forces acting in this country as part of the forces of the British Government and as agents of the British Government." The Dail accepted de Valera's description of the Irish Volunteers as "our last reserve." At the time de Valera spoke—with the exception of the Soloheadbeg ambush three months before—no member of the Crown forces had been killed since 1916, and no attack had been made on political spies or on the R.I.C. as a body.

Except among the more active Volunteers and other ardent workers in the national movements, the R.I.C. were not unpopular, certainly not with large sections of the people, to whom they were bound by ties of blood. Even if the R.I.C. were a distinctly military force, and an espionage force also, few realised this with the keenness of Sean Treacy or Thomas MacCurtain in Cork. Among the few, however, were members of the

R.I.C. themselves, stirred in spite of their discipline and surroundings by the national awakening, and repelled by the part they were called upon to play in combatting it.

Nor, with the exception of Michael Collins, were the members of the Irish Volunteers G.H.Q. prepared, at that stage, to sanction attacks on the R.I.C. as a general policy. Cathal Brugha himself resented independent action by any section of the Volunteers, and was insistent that all their actions must first have the sanction of the Dail. Sean Treacy was more swayed by the traditions of the Fenians and the I.R.B., even though he sometimes asserted that "the I.R.B. outlived its usefulness after 1916." In theory, the majority of the Dail maintained that a state of war existed between the British Government and the Irish people since the ratification of the 1916 Proclamation in the 1918 General Election. In practice, the majority deprecated any attempt to give too literal an interpretation to the phrases in the Declaration of Independence that spoke of foreign government as an intolerable invasion of national rights.

Some members of the Dail Cabinet were specially opposed to any general armed attack on the R.I.C. because, after all, as the individual members of that force came from Irish families, such attacks might antagonise their friends and relatives. These differences in the circumstances through which the country was passing were inevitable and natural. As time passed, many changed their opinions and camps. In Easter Week there had been the same clash of mind and policy, and this clash was to persist when Sean Treacy himself was beyond all controversy, safe in the immortality of the affection and memory of Ireland.

In theory again—and in more than theory, since they had been organising the Irish Volunteers from 1917 onwards, gathering arms, building up an intelligence system, and throwing all their influence behind the Republican Left Wing—in theory again, the majority of the Irish Volunteer G.H.Q. had no quarrel with such forward spirits as Sean Treacy, Seamus Robinson and Dan Breen, and their contention that the occupation of Ireland by a foreign army and government was in itself a sufficient justification for aggressive action at any time. But in the turmoil and transition, it was understandable that away in Dublin G.H.Q.

could not immediately appreciate and understand fully the circumstances and motives of the men who startled Ireland on the very day the Dail was proclaiming this principle to the world.

Another element entered into the question, and Sean Treacy saw it with painful clearness. Ever since the defeat of the attempt to introduce conscription, the strength of the Irish Volunteers had slowly dwindled, and the overwhelming rush to join their ranks had not only stopped, but the movement as a whole seemed to be slackening. Sean Treacy, more than most Volunteer officers, understood country conditions intimately, and how to manage with tact and skill the material to his hands, keeping alive the militant spirit under the most difficult conditions. Later, Sean was to glance somewhat cynically from under his glasses at the G.H.Q. men who descended on his Volunteers from the cities, with the simple faith that a regular army could be formed from men who waited to milk the cows with more regularity than they cared to come to parades, who were ready to attack a Barracks at a moment's notice, yet yawned at lectures and laughed at clocks. But the ebb in the ranks late in 1918 gave Sean Treacy and the other officers of the South Tipperary Brigade much anxiety. Seamus Robinson, Dan Breen, Jerome Davin, Con Moloney and the others were alarmed at the disintegration that threatened the laboriously built up Volunteer force. The excitement of the General Election and the Conscription crisis had worn down the first fresh post-Easter Week enthusiasm. The differences between the Right and Left Wings of what was popularly known as Sinn Fein still existed, hidden only by the convenient evasions of its new Constitution: "the international recognition of Ireland as an independent Republic having achieved that status, the Irish people may by referendum freely choose their own form of Government." Wait and see Time would tell!

Sean Treacy was alarmed by what time might tell. Jerome Davin recalled a Brigade meeting at Kilshenane towards the end of 1918 at which Treacy was present. Treacy was disturbed and dissatisfied by the reports that came in, and said suddenly: "If this is the state of affairs, we'll have to kill someone, and

make the bloody enemy organise us ! ” This was Treacy’s unusually violent reaction to a pile of reports with the one story of slack companies and dwindling parades. Con Moloney (who was Acting Brigade Adjutant) and Sean Fitzpatrick (who succeeded Moloney as Brigade Adjutant) remembered Treacy’s outburst and feelings at the time, but discounted the idea that Treacy would have countenanced “ shooting one of the enemy ” merely to stimulate any lackadaisical Volunteers. The idea behind his words was, apart from his impatience at the slackness generally, his,—and their—conviction that the Volunteers and the British forces must come to a trial of strength sooner or later. And this, in the circumstances and with their resources, meant a guerrilla struggle.

The preparations for the seizure of the gelignite on its way to Soloheadbeg quarry had been completed long before the plans could be carried out. Maurice Crowe afterwards described the vigil which the ambushers kept in the Tin Hut, a small outhouse belonging to cousins of Sean Hogan’s, which had been fitted up with simple furniture, and where Robinson, Treacy and their men could rest and hide themselves from the notice of curious neighbours—a very necessary precaution as the ambush had to be postponed day after day.

“ Those who were about to take part,” said Maurice Crowe, “ gathered on January 15. They were: Sean Treacy, Seamus Robinson, Dan Breen, Paddy MacCormack, Tadhg Crowe, Paddy Dwyer, Michael Ryan, Sean Hogan, Arty Barlow, Con Power and I. Sean Treacy and Arty Barlow went out to cut some bushes to make a fire from a moat near at hand. Someone remarked that it was not right to cut any wood off a moat, to which Sean replied: ‘ Ah, sure the fairies won’t say anything to us for trying to keep ourselves warm.’ The following morning, Sean got the breakfast ready at seven o’clock. Some of us were dozing round the fire while others slept on the remains of two beds in the room—this was a disused house. He called several times that the breakfast was ready, but the lads were slow in coming. When they did come, they had no milk as Sean had consumed the tin of condensed milk. Of course there was

general disapproval, to which Sean replied: ' That will show you that Volunteers must be punctual, even at breakfast ! '

"The ambush did not come off for several days, so Con Power, Arty Barlow and I were sent back to Headquarters, and Dinny Lacy and Sean O'Meara, Tipperary, were sent out. Dinny had to return to work after a couple of days." (Sean O'Meara, according to other accounts, was very active as a cyclist scout and dispatch rider).

The quarry near which the ambush party was stationed was well known to them all, and especially to Sean Treacy, as it was near his old home. He, as we have seen, had spent many hours there with his friend, Din O'Donnell, and learned many an Irish phrase there. He had often considered the quarry as a possible source of supplies. The military authorities apparently considered the place in the same light, and requested the Tipperary County Council to have an armed police escort for all explosives conveyed there. Treacy could get no definite information as to the exact strength of the proposed escort.

Rumours were prevalent that the police guard might vary from two to six, or even twelve. Seamus Robinson, during his discussions of the plan with Treacy, recalled that the possibility of a guard of at least six was mentioned at one stage, and in consequence, the plans—in the main the work of Robinson as Brigadier and Treacy as Vice-Brigadier—varied from day to day. The plans allowed for various contingencies. One was based on the possibility that the guard would be a small one, and provided for the overpowering and gagging of this small guard after surrender. Tadhg Crowe was instructed to be ready to march the police down to a certain point on the road while the ambushers drove off with the arms and explosives, to cover them with his gun, and after a reasonable time had elapsed, to retreat himself. Again, at another stage, bags and ropes were hidden near the quarry, the guards were to be held up, bound, and left in a neighbouring field or hut.

What made everything uncertain was the delay in the arrival of the gelignite in Tipperary, although information about its coming had reached Treacy before the Christmas of 1918. But in all the plans discussed subsequently it was emphasised that the

enterprise should be carried out without the taking of life, if possible. Breen says: "We should have preferred that they should surrender without bloodshed."

Seamus Robinson afterwards spoke to the writer with deep feeling on this point:

"It was untrue to say that our enemies at Soloheadbeg did not get 'a dog's chance.' Neither Sean Treacy, nor I, nor Dan Breen, nor any of us would have shot down men in cold blood, although certainly we had no intention of being intimidated by the armed guard."

Brian Shanahan was one of the Volunteers called on to relieve the waiting party at Soloheadbeg, but was sent away before the morning of the 21st. He spent three days in a fort near Soloheadbeg and lived on condensed milk and plain bread. The weather was bitterly cold. The party of eight men or so dwindled to five or six. He recalled the talks round the fire and the speculation as to the strength of the guard. He heard there were twelve peelers coming. Treacy was armed with a .22 automatic Mauser rifle and a .32 automatic Colt.

Tadhg Crowe's memories of the days before Soloheadbeg were also full of the discussions around the fire in the Tin Hut. He had no expectation of any violent end to the adventure, especially in view of the standing order that no shots were to be fired unless Robinson or Treacy gave the word. Tadhg Crowe had good reason to recall the coldness of that January of 1919: as he watched the roads from the tree one day, he half-fainted with the bleak and cutting winds after some hours aloft, and almost fell from his post on to the ground below. He was to pass a signal when received from a watcher on the road to another, and so on the message would pass from scout to scout until it reached the men behind the ditch.

Shortly after ten o'clock on the morning of January 21, two employees of the South Tipperary County Council, Patrick Flynn and Edward Godfrey, called at the Military Barracks in Tipperary Town with a horse and cart. They were given 160 lbs. of gelignite and 30 electric detonators. The gelignite was placed in the cart, and Patrick Flynn slipped the detonators into his pocket. They then set off for Soloheadbeg quarry accom-

panied by Constable MacDonnell, a man of 56 years of age with a family of seven children, and Constable O'Connell, a native of Coachford. Both constables carried loaded carbines.

Some evenings before, Constable MacDonnell, who was not unpopular in the town, where he enjoyed the reputation of being a somewhat heavy wit, had asked a friend in jest: "Do you think the Sinn Feiners would shoot me? I don't think they would myself." MacDonnell laughed at the notion, and with reason, as he had no enemies in particular. Nor had his companion, Constable O'Connell. They were typical R.I.C. men of the time. Little has survived of their ways and words in popular legend, except that Constable MacDonnell prided himself on his skill in spelling. Many a time he questioned some company in the local taverns.

"Can any man here spell rodydandron? Well, I'll tell ye: rodydandron—r-h-o-d-o-d-e-n-d-r-o-n. Rodydandron!"

For all their consciousness of their personal popularity, the two constables would have been very disturbed men if they had had the slightest suspicion that Sean Treacy, Seamus Robinson, Dan Breen and Sean Hogan were lying in ambush for them. Relations between these four men and the Crown forces were already more than strained. They were regarded as the obvious men to hunt for after trouble had occurred in South Tipperary. One constable who had tried to arrest Dan Breen in company with Sean Treacy one night in Tipperary had an unpleasant shock when he tried to take Breen by surprise. Treacy and Paddy Dwyer and several others had cycled past a police patrol which was lurking in the shadows. Breen had stopped to pump up a flattened tyre some hundred yards behind. The constable stole up to Breen and laid one hand on him. Dan promptly tapped him on the head with a small iron bar which he happened to have, and rejoined Treacy who was laughing heartily. Sean had seen everything in spite of the darkness and his bad sight, and had warned Dwyer and the others of the presence of the police. Treacy and Breen were blamed by the police for the many arms raids, and, in fact, for all the militant activities of the Tipperary Volunteers.

CHAPTER V

SOLOHEADBEG.

ABOUT 150 yards from Soloheadbeg quarry, Constable MacDonnell jumped down to join Flynn and Constable O'Connell. Edward Godfrey then led the horse, and Constable MacDonnell walked on the left hand side of the road with Flynn between himself and the other constable.

In the meantime Paddy Dwyer, who had watched the cart leave the barracks with its escort, had cycled ahead and waited for the party to reach the crossroads at Kingswell on the outskirts of the town. He was to find out whether they took the longer road by Bohertrime or went round by the Donohill route. He pretended to be repairing a puncture to his machine until they passed him and took the road by Bohertrime. When they were out of sight, Paddy Dwyer went ahead by the Donohill road and informed Treacy that the gelignite was at last on the way. He then took up his position beside Seamus Robinson. Michael Ryan dashed up from the Bohertrime side with the news that the police had been sighted and were almost upon them.

The ambush at Soloheadbeg, in the memories of the survivors, was later no more than a hazy record of a challenge, a quick show of resistance, the reports of an automatic rifle, a burst of revolver fire, and an end that seemed an anti-climax to the long vigil at the quarry. As the ambushers waited, the noise of the rumbling cart came to their ears,—the horse led by Edward Godfrey, the two constables walking behind it, rifles slung on their shoulders, chatting as cheerfully to Patrick Flynn beside them as the weather on that misty, cold, wet morning permitted.

Then the clash came, sudden, brief and bloody. As the cart came abreast of the gate of Cranitch's field, a challenge was shouted: "Hands Up!" A second time came that sharp command in a tone that convinced two hesitant and shaken

constables that those men from the shadows of the ditch were not practical jokers, but armed and masked raiders in deadly earnest. The R.I.C. men reach for their rifles. Shots ring out from the hedge-lined ditch, the sharp rattle of an automatic rifle and revolver shots. Flynn crouches behind the cart; Godfrey looks round in bewilderment, but, for all that, remains the most self-possessed of all the actors in this confused scene; the two constables fall dead on the road.

Treacy and Breen leap into the road across the gate from behind the first pier. Seamus Robinson and Paddy Dwyer, revolvers in hand, cover Godfrey and secure the cart. Sean Treacy bends over one of the fallen R.I.C. men whose carbine is held in a firm grasp. "Poor man," says Sean, "You would think that was your only possession in the world."

Such was the fight at Soloheadbeg, such were the first shots in a war for which Sean Treacy had dreamed, suffered and made ready through the years from boyhood through drudgery, disappointment, prison, hunger-strike, the round of drilling, arming, organising, planning and hoping; and now it faced him on a rain-swept roadside,—two dead men, a bloody pool. And as the rain fell on the still forms in blue-green uniforms at his feet, Sean Treacy was already weighing how his comrades with the captured gelignite and arms could be led through the police and military forces that would soon be speeding from Tipperary and the wide ring of enemy posts for miles around.

Of his fights in general Treacy rarely spoke; of Soloheadbeg he later said to his friend Miss K. Ryan of Tipperary Town that it was regrettable but inevitable.

Soloheadbeg was the one episode in Sean Treacy's life around which controversy and speculation were to rage for many a day. By a coincidence, it occurred on the very day, January 21, 1919, that Dail Eireann met for the first time and ratified the 1916 Declaration of the Irish Republic. Nothing stands out more clearly in Sean Treacy's life than his persistent purpose to strike a blow against the British forces which occupied Ireland. Yet on that morning at Soloheadbeg Treacy's primary purpose had been the routine work of capturing war materials—

the gelignite, arms and ammunition of the R.I.C. escort—because the Irish Volunteers were extremely weak in military stores and armament. Seamus Robinson, as O.C. of the South Tipperary Brigade, Sean Treacy and Dan Breen all knew that they were taking a more than ordinary risk; that the G.H.Q. in Dublin, above all if the plans miscarried, and especially if lives were lost, would most certainly take disciplinary measures; that the escort, whose numbers were uncertain, and which might range from two to twelve constables, according to intelligence reports, would certainly offer a sturdy resistance in which lives must be lost on one side or the other. In the last event, Treacy, Robinson and Breen had decided to fight to a finish.

Before the fight, Robinson urged Treacy strongly that, being Vice-Brigadier, he must not expose himself without Robinson's orders, and Robinson made it very clear that he would not give any orders of the kind. Robinson urged also that as this was the first time that any of the Tipperary Brigade, with the exception of himself in the 1916 Rising, had been under fire the plans for the capture of the gelignite should be carefully framed with that fact well borne in mind.

The fight at Soloheadbeg was described afterwards as the brutal and murderous ambush of two policemen from the safe shelter of a ditch. Even the Dublin Volunteers, that is to say the more militant section who had grown restive under the restraining hand of G.H.Q., and many country Volunteers, criticised Soloheadbeg sharply although they all hated the R.I.C. with as intense a hatred as anyone for its espionage and armed grip on the country's life; they believed that the capture of arms and gelignite could have been made without loss of life and by surprise; that, to be blunt, the Soloheadbeg ambush was a bungled business. The facts, however, as later given by the two parties involved at Soloheadbeg, do not support these criticisms. In retrospect, tragedy appears to have been inevitable. It is very clear that Sean Treacy shot and shot to kill, and that it never troubled his conscience afterwards. The one riddle of Soloheadbeg is what actually occurred, so rapidly was the fight begun and ended.

Certain it is that on Tuesday morning, January 21, 1919,

eight men lay in ambush behind the white-thorn bushes that lined the ditch of Cranitch's field near Soloheadbeg quarry, three miles from Tipperary Town and within a mile of Limerick Junction. They were nearing the end of a long wait for the gelignite coming under armed guard to the quarry from Tipperary Military Barracks.

Seamus Robinson, O.C. of the South Tipperary Brigade; Sean Treacy, Vice-Brigadier; and Dan Breen, the Brigade Quarter-Master, were present. The five others were: Tadhg Crowe, Paddy Dwyer of Hollyford, Patrick MacCormack, Sean Hogan and Michael Ryan. Robinson's and Treacy's instructions were emphatic on one point: there was to be no movement into the road and no shooting without orders.

The affray when it came was a matter of minutes. So brief was the violent clash that it is here that the very participants themselves could not agree as to what actually happened on that fatal morning. What is certain is that Sean Treacy fired his .22 automatic rifle after two sharp challenges; two constables lay dead on the roadside; and the ambushers shortly after were making a swift getaway along the winding road past the quarry.

Tadhg Crowe, as he recalled the scene, thought that the cart arrived suddenly after a shouted warning from one of the watching scouts; that the cart moved on with the driver in front and the two constables walking behind with their carbines. There were several shouts of "Hands Up!" Before the party had time to dash over the hedge, shots rang out from behind the first pier of the gate where Treacy was stationed. Breen was shouting orders to the ambushers to advance. More shots went off, aimless shots. No one seemed to move until the firing had died away, and then Dan Breen dashed over the gate and his mask fell from his face. Most of the ambushers came on to the road to find two constables lying dead behind the cart, their carbines unslung, and two alarmed civilians looking on. Tadhg Crowe was a very surprised man. His orders beforehand had been definite: he was to be ready to escort the constables from the scene, and then to cover the retreat.

To Seamus Robinson and Paddy Dwyer of Hollyford the incidents of that morning appeared in a different light, and their

account differed in several points from that given by Tadhg Crowe or Dan Breen. To Sean Hogan, who was also present, this divergency was very understandable and arose from the long delay in the carrying out of the expected raid. There had been so many false alarms, several changes of plan, and finally the clash came unexpectedly. The confusion in the several accounts of Soloheadbeg, a slight and not necessarily contradictory divergency in the participants' individual stories, Sean Hogan pointed out, is due to memories' distortion over the lapse of years, and to the many exciting events of the time. After the even more dramatic and prolonged episode of the Knocklong rescue some months later, in which he himself was the central figure, Sean Hogan could hardly have described with exactness what had occurred for a reason common to all the hard fights and swift retreats of the Irish Volunteers of those times: the first necessity was to succour the wounded, to remove captured war material, and to make arrangements to remove both to safety, rather than act the War Correspondent. Sean Hogan's own story of Knocklong and those of other participants showed the same differences in detail as did those of the participants at Soloheadbeg when the fierce hue and cry after the raiders called for similar swift action.

"The whole thing happened like a flash of lightning," said Patrick Flynn in his evidence at the inquest. According to the somewhat incoherent account he then gave, the masked men rushed out shouting, revolvers in their hands. When he heard the shouts, Flynn, as reported in the *Nationalist*, Clonmel, January 25, 1919, "stepped to the right-hand side of the road, and immediately I heard the report of firearms. It seems as if they all went off together in one volley. I was greatly excited When I looked round the two policemen were lying on the ground There was only one burst of firing altogether They took away the rifles the police had, and the ammunition I had a view of the cart one of the masked men led it away—only for a short distance, as there was a bend on the road. They went away like a shot—just as fast as they had come. They all went away with the horse. One of them led the horse by the head I did not know what happened. I was so excited." (The witness collapsed in the box, and had to

be removed—after a brief second examination—to hospital, suffering from a complete nervous breakdown).

Edward Godfrey's story was more clear, coherent and vivid. His account differed from Flynn's in several important points. He gave a more deliberate picture of the ambush; to him it lasted longer than a lightning flash.

"I was with the cart that was bringing the explosives to the Soloheadbeg quarry," said Godfrey, "and after passing Denis Ryan's gate I was leading the horse. At the gate leading to Cranitch's field, I heard the shots; I don't know how many. I think the shots came from Cranitch's side. They came from behind me. I saw the two constables falling down on the road. I was on the left-hand side of the horse. Two masked men came out in front of me and held me up. They had revolvers in their hands and wore masks. There were four or five more men inside the ditch. They wore masks also. They jumped out over the ditch and took the rifles off the constables. I don't think it was the two that came in front of me that fired the shots."

Both Flynn and Godfrey added that they could not say whether the police made any resistance, Flynn because he ran to the other side of the cart, Godfrey because he was in front and as excited "and as bad as the other man." Flynn could not say whether the attackers came off the ditch as Constable MacDonnell was between him and them. The Coroner declared that the constables were "nailed on the spot." He described the tragedy as one of the saddest cases that had happened in County Tipperary or any part of Ireland for many years. He knew the deceased constables well. Constable MacDonnell had been thirty years in Tipperary, and a more quiet or inoffensive man he had never met. Constable O'Connell was also a decent quiet man, who during the recent influenza epidemic acted as a nurse to his comrades. It was terribly sad to see these men shot down while doing public duty, and not doing anything that would injure anybody.

The jury returned a verdict that the deaths of the two constables were due to shots fired by masked men, and added a rider expressing sympathy with the dead men's relatives.

So far goes the outline of the ambush at Soloheadbeg as it

was reported at the inquest in the Military Barracks in Tipperary Town.

One juror asked the pointed question: "Why did they cry 'Hands Up!' at all, if they shot them on the spot?" The Coroner pressed the question, but Flynn could only confess, "I could not say. I ran to the other side of the cart." The juror repeated: "It looks very strange that the attackers should cry 'Hands Up!' and fire at the same time." The story of the ambush, as given later by the ambushers themselves, proved what point and truth there was in the juror's question; it also confirmed Godfrey's story—and supplied the gaps after both Godfrey and Flynn had told their stories at the inquest.

The medical evidence was that Constable MacDonnell was shot in the left side of the head and through the left arm, and his death was instantaneous; while Constable O'Connell was shot through the left side, and from the track of the bullet he must have been in a stooping position and been fired on from behind. His death, too, had been rapid, if not instantaneous.

Constable MacDonnell's son asked bitterly in Court whether the police had been given a dog's chance, and whether they had been given time to deliver up the explosives. The only two witnesses in Court who had been present at the attack threw no clear light on that matter. Godfrey's story and the persistent juror with his question as to why the challenge had been made if the attackers meant to shoot first, were pointers to the truth. What happened was this: On hearing the challenge "Hands Up!" the police prepared to fire, but Sean Treacy fired first. The picture grows clearer when the various accounts of the fight by those present are compared. On one point all these stories are consistent: that the challenge was given, and Constables MacDonnell and O'Connell made ready to open fire.

The news of their approach was brought to the waiting ambush party by a scout; the police were in sight and almost upon them. The weather was cold and rain was falling. Quick orders were given as the cart rumbled nearer and nearer. The party took up positions and stationed themselves along the ditch from the nearest pier of the gate towards the quarry.

Tensely they awaited the outcome, confronting an unknown future of dangers, pursuits and prolonged conflicts. For the majority of the ambushers it was their first time in action, an action so long postponed that they hardly believed in its reality. Then swiftly the moment came.

As the cart neared the gate Sean Treacy shouted his challenge to halt, and his cry was taken up by other members of the party. Sean Treacy had the armed guard well covered with his automatic rifle, and, from his position, he could not be seen immediately by the two constables. His challenge was peremptory. At least half of the ambushers were then visible to the police who, for a moment, seemed to think that they were the butts of a band of practical jokers. The sharp orders and the levelled revolvers in the hands of the masked men soon undeceived them. Constable O'Connell stooped behind the cart, unslung and levelled his rifle. Constable McDonnell, overcome with excitement, fumbled with his carbine. Sean Treacy then opened fire, and the report of his automatic rifle was followed by a burst of revolver shots. Robinson and Dwyer jumped on to the road, and Robinson caught the horse's head. Paddy Dwyer and Seamus Robinson later believed that the "cut-offs" of the police carbines were at the "safety" position, and this alone had prevented several casualties to the attackers. The R.I.C. carbines captured at Soloheadbeg certainly had these "cut-offs." Dwyer's memory of the ambush was his wonder at hearing the click of the bolts of levelled carbines, followed by no report.

The main responsibility for good or ill lay with Sean Treacy. When the constables ignored his challenge and prepared to resist, he opened fire. There had been explicit orders beforehand that life was not to be taken, and that there was to be no shooting without orders. Sean Hogan, Tadhg Crowe, Dwyer and the rest were unanimous on this point. But when Sean Treacy saw that the constables were preparing to shoot, he fired first and with deadly intent. Again and again, as a fighter, Sean Treacy acted with this promptness, generally in the form of exposing his own life to rally or preserve his followers when they were taken by surprise or at a disadvantage. As a leader of barrack attacks subsequently, Treacy was a humane and courageous man. He

preferred to frighten the police out of their barracks rather than kill them; but he was determined to get them out. "Tell those fellows," he said once during a barrack attack when word was brought to him that the garrison was reluctant to surrender, "that if they don't put up their hands quick, then they will put both their hands and their feet up!"

The Soloheadbeg attack had taken place beside Sean Treacy's old home. His friend, Kate Coffey, was watching from her cottage next to the Forge at the crossroads, and saw the ambushers leaving the scene. Sean Hogan was driving the cart while Treacy and Breen sat behind. Tadhg Crowe, already a wanted man "on the run," went off in another direction, after helping to dump the rifles and saying goodbye to Paddy Dwyer, who in turn made his way home to Hollyford by a circuitous route across the hills and fields. Seamus Robinson, having seen everyone out of sight, returned to the Tin Hut for his bicycle, and accompanied by Patrick McCormack, went back to his own area in the Kilshenane and Glenough districts.

Paddy Dwyer, on returning to Hollyford, still under the shock of surprise, took a risk which certainly invited detection. In spite of a suggestion from Treacy, which was repeated a week later, he refused to go "on the run," which in his opinion would only advertise his presence at the ambush. He knew that the details of the ambush could not reach Hollyford until the following afternoon when the daily papers arrived; and he knew, too, that the local R.I.C. were in the habit of calling into a house in the village for the newspapers. Paddy Dwyer was there before them, opened the newspaper and timed the opening for the entrance of the R.I.C. sergeant and constable. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "two policemen shot!" The sergeant and constable looked over his shoulder, asking questions excitedly. Dwyer read aloud the story of the ambush without showing much emotion, and had started on the leading article condemning it, when a friend of his, the only man among the local Volunteers who knew of his presence at Soloheadbeg, came to the door, called him and led him firmly away.

In the meantime, Sean Treacy had been compelled by an unforeseen hitch to make a serious change in his plans after he

had left the scene of the ambush. He had appointed a member of his company to go to a certain spot regularly and be in readiness to collect the gelignite whenever the raid might occur. This man, one of Treacy's most trusted and reliable associates, had turned up day after day until the day of the ambush, when he was delayed by an insistent gossip of a neighbour whom he shook off only with difficulty, and then hurried to the spot as usual. Unfortunately, in the meantime, the fight was over and the ambushers had been compelled to make off before he arrived.

Treacy ordered that the gelignite should be dumped in a ditch by the roadside at Lisheen Grove and covered with leaves, and then went ahead with his original plan: a decoy to mislead the searchers. The horse and cart were tethered near Aileen Creamery, and some sticks of gelignite scattered on the roadside and in adjacent fields to throw the pursuers on a false scent.

The Soloheadbeg raid had been for the gelignite, and the raid was now threatened with failure. The cases of gelignite, in fact, were to lie exposed to capture from the Tuesday to the following Friday, and only saved from discovery in the end mainly through the coolness and resource of Tom Carew of Golden Garden—afterwards the Intelligence Officer of the Brigade. Tom Carew was informed by Larry Power of Coolnagun that a small body of Volunteers were keeping watch on the dumped gelignite in a ditch near the Grove on the Dundrum-Tipperary road. Larry Power explained the mishaps which had prevented Treacy's messenger from arriving in time to make contact with Treacy and to remove the gelignite to a place of safety. It was very evident that the intense military activity which followed the ambush would make the safe disposal of the explosives a much more difficult task than it might have been if the police had surrendered and been captured. The rifles had been dumped in safety by Tadhg Crowe and Paddy Dwyer, but would the precious gelignite return to the police, even as the electric detonators which had remained safely in the pockets of Patrick Flynn?

Larry Power sent a guard to Lisheen Grove to keep watch over the cases from the opposite side of the road. There, day and night, the men lay concealed. Larry Power himself was constantly on the scene, and kept in touch with Carew who

determined that at whatever personal risk to himself he would do his best to prevent the British authorities from recovering the gelignite. He had not known beforehand of the Soloheadbeg affair, but when Larry Power appealed to him he did not hesitate. The discovery of the stuff would be a lasting discredit to the whole movement. Much of the local feeling would be turned to contempt and derision if the British Crown Forces succeeded in their thorough and frenzied search.

There was to be a week of constant alarms for Carew, Power and the men on guard, as military activity increased. Lorries and Black Marias were passing and re-passing on the main road. Once, a military lorry drove straight to the very spot where the explosives were concealed—and broke down! When this news reached Carew, in an urgent message from Larry Power, Carew decided to risk everything at the first opportunity he could find to carry out the plan he had formed.

Already Larry Power and his men had moved the dump at intervals, and with difficulty, from place to place along the ditch,—three cases of half a hundredweight each. The false clues of the scattered gelignite gave the watchers one respite. The police and military had been lured on a false trail, but who could tell when there might not be a chance find in one of their persistent and determined searches? At last, with intense relief, on the following Friday night, Carew put a very simple plan into execution. He and his brother drove out along the main road with two loads of timber in separate carts. Carew's brother went ahead a short distance until just past the dump. He signalled that all was clear, and then went ahead slowly. Carew drove up to the dump, dismounted, and placed the three cases on the driver's seat. He covered them with his overcoat, and sighed with relief. He reflected that on Wednesday the armoured car had broken down at this very spot. He lighted his pipe and drove on at a leisurely pace. He could see his brother away in the distance on the moonlit road. Ten minutes later, military cars and Black Marias hurried past.

"Halt!" Out into the moonlight from the shadows stepped an R.I.C. sergeant. Tom Carew noticed a police patrol, some thirteen strong, grouped in the semi-darkness from which his

friend the sergeant emerged. He knew the sergeant had dubbed him a "Sinn Feiner," although not such a bad specimen of a "Sinn Feiner" as Treacy, Robinson, Breen or Hogan. The sergeant, moreover, and his patrol had been searching near the spot where the decoy sticks of gelignite had been dropped. Before he gave Carew this information, the sergeant informed him that the summons to halt was to inquire why there were no lights on the cart. Carew asked pleasantly why, with so fine a moon, should anyone bother about lights? The sergeant agreed there was something in that, but even Sinn Feiners should keep the law. Sinn Feiners, proceeded the sergeant pointedly, who rubbed shoulders with the murderers of policemen, scum who fired from behind ditches, and ran. The sergeant then gave Carew full details of the search carried out by himself and the patrol, and held up a stick of gelignite:

"Do you know what that is, Tom Carew?"

Tom Carew replied blandly that he could not say, unless it was some of the children's sweetmeat known as "Peggy's Leg."

The sergeant retorted:

"No, it is *not* Peggy's Leg. It's some of the Soloheadbeg gelignite, stolen by your friends, the Sinn Fein murderers."

"None of my friends are murderers," said Carew, "And I have no sympathy with murderers, no, not even of you fellows. So that's the Soloheadbeg gelignite, is it? Well, when you have got one stick of it there, sergeant, you must be damned near the rest of it!"

And Tom Carew sat contentedly on "the rest of it," wondering whether all this back-chat and banter were not too good to last. There was an angry glint in the sergeant's eye. He was disappointed with the result of his long search, and Carew's jibe nettled him. He began to cross-examine Carew about his movements that day, and what his load was, and where it came from. Fortunately, Carew's story and a receipt he flourished under the sergeant's nose were very plausible. He had been down to a sale of timber in Tipperary barracks and was bringing home what he had bought. The load of timber had, in fact, been bought at a sale in the barracks some time before by Carew's father. Then

a sharp-eyed constable confirmed the alibi by pointing out that the load of timber bore the label of Tipperary Barracks.

Baffled, the sergeant bade Tom Carew a gruff farewell, with a parting word of advice to mind his lights in future, and to stop drilling with murderers.

Tom Carew went ahead, his horse plodding slowly along. Before he reached the family farm at Golden Garden, he halted once to dump the cases of gelignite in a neighbour's mangold pit, and cover them with hay. At early dawn the cases were shifted to a remote spot at the utmost end of Golden Garden farm near a stream. A sod was cut near a place where cattle foddered, and a pit dug to a few feet below the surface. All clay and sand were removed in a bucket, dropped into the stream near some cow-tracks, and covered with weeds. Inside the pit Carew placed alternate layers of clay and stone, with the boxes underneath. The sod was carefully replaced.

Whether the R.I.C. suspected Carew or not, or whether some vague information reached the British authorities, very shortly afterwards Golden Garden was the scene of military operations and police searches. The secret of the hiding place was known only to Carew and Larry Power, who were amused by the rumours among the local Volunteers and friendly neighbours about the location of the dump. Many theories were current, but none indicated Golden Garden, although Carew listened to several strictly confidential reports from others as to where exactly the dump was.

Military patrols became very active on the roads nearby. Police and soldiers in their methodical and continual searches often crossed the farm land. And then one day 14 lorries roared up to Golden Garden in force, spilled out some 200 R.I.C. and soldiers, armed not only with spades, picks and long spikes, but unrolling detailed maps of the farm. The raid went on for hours. When it started, Carew was out working on the land, and managed to conceal a revolver and get rid of some ammunition. As he entered the house, he was placed under arrest and armed guard, with the other members of his household.

He found the Tommies who guarded him friendly and very bored with their raids and searches. The searchers dug up and

prodded place after place, and their shouts came up to him. The maps, and the thoroughness of the search, pointed to a very definite suspicion, and, perhaps, to very definite information as well. So far as that was concerned, Tom Carew worried very little, since only he and Larry Power knew the exact location of the dump. And then all at once, the gravest misgivings. The raiders had found the dump !

From away below by the stream a whistle sounded sharply and there were exultant shouts. Only a few soldiers remained on guard over the household. At the whistle almost every man dashed to the scene. Down by the stream and on the very spot where the dump had been sunk the raiders were working furiously, spades, picks and spikes all in action. If he had been beside the dump, Carew's feelings would have been even less hopeful; the spikes were plunged full and deep into the dump itself so often and so fiercely that all around the spike marks made the earth above it look like a sieve. One spike, in fact, struck the first box and chipped off a splinter of wood from the lid. By a lucky chance, the stones that made up the layers of the dump caused the spikes to glance aside. In the end, the search stopped, and the soldiers and the police, who made up the majority of the party, tramped back over the fields, their long hours of work ending in failure. The Tommies who guarded Carew had very little sympathy for their police allies. As the first R.I.C. men came in sight, one Tommy turned to Carew and said with feeling: "These black sons of bitches have found nothing again !"

Peace reigned once more at Golden Garden, but not for long. Very soon afterwards, a deportation order was served on Carew and on Professor Sam Fahy of Tipperary. They consulted with Michael Collins, who told them to stand their ground, as the order might be a "try-on." There was no definite evidence against them, and the British authorities must not be encouraged to think that they could nibble away at local leaders and organisations. The forty-eight hours given by General Friend expired, and Carew and Fahy ignored the time-limit. They were both arrested, courtmartialled and sentenced to three months' imprisonment in Cork Jail. Collins sent a warning to Carew to

go "on the run" if a second order was served on him after his release. A second order was served, with only twenty-four hours' notice, and he duly went "on the run."

In the meantime, the gelignite remained in its dump at Golden Garden from January until the following November. On the 10th or 11th of that month the gelignite was removed and served out as follows: One case for H.Q. South Tipperary Brigade; one case for the Tipperary Town Battalion; and one for the Rose-green area. Larry Power and his men, assisted on one occasion by Miss Nora O'Keeffe of Glenough, made several journeys to remove it. The first use made of it was in the attack on Drum-bane Hall in January 1920, almost a year to the day from its capture at Soloheadbeg.

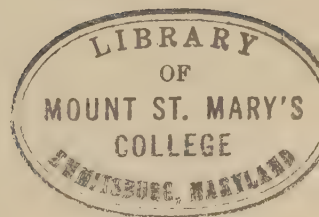
Within that twelvemonth it had become clear that that January ambush had opened a new and terrible chapter of history. At first there had been an outcry against "the cold-blooded murders of Soloheadbeg." Even in the ranks of Sinn Fein there was bewilderment, at least. The legend that the R.I.C. men had not been given "a dog's chance" had a good start. Some, indeed, asked why, if the British Government poured so many troops into Ireland, it could not use a few dozen to escort the explosives and arms it desired to keep out of the hands of the Sean Treacys of Ireland.

Although very soon, so far as the country in general was concerned, Soloheadbeg became only a vague and uneasy memory, in South Tipperary, on the other hand, it remained a very vivid and important episode. Martial Law was unloosed in its fullest rigours against the people, in spite of the fact that the people were in no way responsible for it. The inquest evidence was available to the British Military authorities, but they found the stilted phrases of their proclamations, and paper to print them on, nearer to their hands.

South Tipperary became an armed camp. Two days after the Soloheadbeg ambush the South Riding of Tipperary was proclaimed a Special Military Area. Fairs, markets, processions and meetings were prohibited by a further Order. The military police searches extended far and wide. Farms were raided and dug over. Through the streets of Tipperary Town dashed

powerful parties of police and soldiers in the hue and cry after Sean Treacy and his comrades. For miles around, district after district was scoured in the pursuit. Soloheadbeg in particular swarmed with police and military patrols almost immediately after the fight. Police were rushed from every barracks and soldiers from every garrison.

But where were Sean Treacy, Seamus Robinson, Dan Breen, Sean Hogan and the rest ?



CHAPTER VI

AFTER SOLOHEADBEG.

THE retreat from Soloheadbeg was at first an almost aimless one. When the explosives had been dumped in the ditch Treacy, Breen and Hogan began their search for shelter. The three men were obliged to pass many farmhouses and cottages because they were uncertain whom to trust or where a safe refuge could be found. Seamus Robinson, as before noted, had cycled back to his own area in the Glenough district. The military and police, they knew, must be already raiding and searching for them. The weather was growing worse. It was bitterly cold and a snowfall threatened. After abandoning the horse and cart near Aileen Creamery, the party changed their route, which until then had been northwards, and faced southwards by degrees, determined to cross the Galtees. In the early stages of their journey, they halted at Mrs. Fitzgerald's house at Rathcloghan near Thomastown where they had their first meal since morning. After some hours' rest, they continued their journey towards the Galtees, uncertain where to stop, almost without a plan. A blizzard raged, several times they lost their way. They pressed forward through the bitter cold and sleet and sharp winds across the mountain slopes, only to find themselves travelling in a circle back to the same spot several hours later. They had passed through the Glen of Aherlow and went far up the sides of Galtymore, but had to admit that they were hopelessly astray when they found themselves again at the spot from which they had started their long climb.

The three men were now in a state bordering on collapse through hunger, sleeplessness and uncertainty. Sean Hogan's boots had been worn to pieces. Sean Treacy had had one narrow escape during the climb up the mountainside. He had fallen some twenty feet into a ravine but escaped unhurt. When the attempt to break away over the mountains failed, the party

tramped ahead towards Cahir along the Tipperary-Cahir railway line. At intervals they saw the lights of military lorries speeding along the main road which ran parallel to the railway, in the general hue and cry after the Soloheadbeg ambushers. As they stumbled over the sleepers in the weary journey along the endless track in the darkness, Treacy remained calm and silent, occasionally cheering his comrades whenever they ventured to ask how far it might yet be to Cahir by a laconic, "Oh, the next turn of the road," and Dan Breen has noted the sly humour of such an answer when the long railway line stretched ahead without a twist or turn for miles at a time.

At Ballydrehid, near Cahir, they left the railway line, and, shortly afterwards, almost on the verge of prostration, reached the house of Mrs. Tobin of Tincurry, and knocked up the household. Mrs. Tobin recognised Sean Treacy's voice and coming down found the three men exhausted with cold and hunger, too tired to sleep. They stayed at Mrs. Tobin's house for two days, during which they heard that they were wanted men with £1,000 on their heads, and that martial law had been proclaimed in South Tipperary. They also learned that several young men—who had nothing to do with the Soloheadbeg ambush—had been arrested on suspicion, but released. Their friends did not allow the "Reward" notices to go unchallenged. When the R.I.C. posted one of these up outside Rosegreen Chapel, two local Volunteer officers tore it down and replaced it by a hurriedly pencilled note in block letters, affixed to the wall with soap obtained from a friendly local shopkeeper: "Take notice that anyone caught giving information as to the shooting of the peelers at Soloheadbeg will meet with the same fate. (Signed)—**VERITAS.**"

Treacy and his comrades had several lucky escapes. After leaving Mrs. Tobin's house, they went to their friend Ned McGrath of Tincurry, who later took them to O'Gorman's of Burncourt Castle. They arranged to go to Tubrid from there and sent word that they were coming. Fortunately they changed their minds. At the hour they were expected to arrive at Ryan's of Tubrid, the house was surrounded and raided. A week or so after Soloheadbeg, they called at Davin's, Rathsallagh, spent

a night there, and thence to Eamonn O'Dwyer's of Kilshenane. During a visit to Mrs. O'Brien of Kilshenane, one morning as they sat at breakfast, four policemen armed with revolvers and rifles marched up to the front door. Mrs. O'Brien met the police, and returned with great relief to the room where Treacy and the others were waiting with their revolvers ready, and told them that the police had only called to inquire about a dog licence.

"Wasn't it terrible?" asked Mrs. O'Brien.

With an air of great surprise, Sean Treacy looked at her and asked in return:

"What was terrible? That the peelers nearly spoiled our breakfast?"

"No," answered Mrs. O'Brien with some impatience, "No, but they might have come in and tried to arrest you."

"Don't worry about that," said Sean with a smile, "a couple of gallons of water would have washed away all the blood."

Sean Treacy's jokes about peelers always had a bite in them, as when he lightly replied to some friends who met him crossing a field with a machine gun "That's for dusting the flies off the peelers on hot summer days." The most friendly jest Treacy ever made at the expense of the R.I.C. was during his years on the run when he made an audacious call at New Inn Barracks with his punctured bicycle, although every Barracks in the country flaunted his description and the price on his head. The constables and sergeant on duty, quite unaware of his identity, obligingly repaired the puncture, and wished him a lucky journey.

His jest to Mrs. O'Brien was appropriate to the position that he, Breen and Hogan were in. News had already reached them of the close pursuit after them; of the many spies that the authorities had put on their track; of the criticisms that had been aroused in Dublin and Tipperary by Soloheadbeg. Already, however, they were in touch again with the South Tipperary Brigade. In their wanderings, they finally reached Mitchelstown, and after a short stay there with Christy Ryan, made their way by easy stages towards the East Limerick border.

Some eight or ten days after the ambush, Eamonn O'Brien of Galbally heard that Treacy and his companions were on their way to that place. O'Brien was then living in the country near

the village of Ardrahan, a mile or so from Galbally. Maurice Crowe, Brigade Adjutant, next arrived at Frazer's and was soon joined there by Treacy, Breen and Hogan. Eamonn O'Brien, his brother John Joe O'Brien, Jim Scanlon and Sean Lynch paid them frequent visits. They were warned that the roundup was at its height, and that it would be safer to move on again. O'Brien and the others—who were to prove staunch allies in an even more dangerous situation before many months were past—escorted them about a week later to Dan Maloney's of Lackelly. Maurice Crowe and Davie Bourke also accompanied the party. Then, after a full discussion about future plans, Maurice Crowe went on to Packey Ryan's Hotel at Doon to make all preparations for their arrival. Sean Treacy was anxious to meet Seamus Robinson and get in touch with Dublin.

As before mentioned, Packey Ryan was one of the leading I.R.B. men in Munster, and it was at his Hotel in 1916 that he, Treacy and Eamonn O'Dwyer had consulted on the collapse of the Rising in the South. Packey Ryan, Maurice Crowe and the two cousins of Sean Treacy, Dan and Ned Allis, met the three men just outside Doon at Paddy Keogh's house, and conveyed them from there to Doon. Some of them stayed at Ned Allis's at Cooga, and the rest in other friendly houses in the neighbourhood. The next night the journey was resumed, and they all travelled to Croughmorka. On the way there Seamus Robinson joined them. There were prolonged discussions as to future plans during the two nights Maurice Crowe passed with them all at Ryan's of Croughmorka. He was then sent back to the Headquarters of the Brigade in Tipperary Town with instructions to recover the rifles captured at Soloheadbeg. He and Tadhg Crowe removed these arms to Maurice's own house at Glenbane, Tipperary. His brother, Edmund Crowe, had charge of the two rifles, the ammunition, bolts and handcuffs seized at Soloheadbeg until Maurice was arrested in April 1919. Edmund then handed them over to Patrick Merrick, Ballinulty, Cullen, who was at that time Captain of the Lattin Company.

A fortnight later, Eamonn O'Brien had further news of Treacy, Breen and Hogan. In the meantime, he had left his

house at Ardrahan and removed to the village of Galbally. One morning a dispatch addressed to O'Brien was shoved under the door of his father's shop, next door to his own new house. In the early morning clean-up, the letter was nearly swept out and lost. One of the assistants happened to notice it among the rubbish, and brought it to Eamonn O'Brien some hours afterwards. The letter was from Sean Treacy and read: "Arrived here about 2 a.m. (Ardrahan) and surprised to find you gone."

Eamonn O'Brien at once collected some food, tins of sardines, bread, etc., and set out for the empty house at Ardrahan. He found his friends lying on bundles of straw brought in from a barn. It was decided that they should come and stay with Eamonn O'Brien at Galbally. And for the next week, Treacy and the other two stayed there unsuspected—only three doors away from the R.I.C. barracks. A visit under these conditions was more or less voluntary imprisonment. This imprisonment was relieved to some extent by light reading: in particular, of a collection of humorous tales, one of which bore the title "A Revolution in Central Africa." One of the three was seized with a very bad fit of indigestion owing to lack of exercise and eating a certain rice pudding. His two tougher companions chaffed him pitilessly and called on O'Brien "to behold the revolution in the Centre of Africa." They were all to meet again before summer,—the victim of the rice pudding and their banter, O'Brien, and the two,—in the midst of flying bullets.

In their wanderings after Soloheadbeg, Treacy, Breen and Hogan also visited their friends the Meaghers at Annfield, Patrick Kinnane at Upperchurch, and the famous Tipperary family of hurlers, the Leahys, at Boherlahan. These journeys were necessarily made on foot and with caution, so intense was the search for the wanted men. The reward for capture was increased to £10,000. Sean Hogan's brother Matthew, aged fifteen, and Timothy Connors, a boy of eleven whose father was employed on Sean Treacy's farm, were arrested on suspicion, as the police believed that the boys had seen some of the ambush party escaping after Soloheadbeg. Connors and Hogan were detained for months in the hope of breaking down their denials.

In the first case, the sequel was a legal action which ended in the release of Connors and a verdict against the R.I.C. for illegal detention.

A relative and namesake of Sean Hogan's was visited by the R.I.C., and they had become resigned to his refusals to give them any help or information, try what methods they might. The old man proved more than a match for themselves and their questions, subtle hints and half-promises that Sean Hogan would not suffer if only the three scoundrels who had misled him were arrested. These promises and hints were renewed when the Sergeant and constables called with a copy of the reward bill offering £10,000 for the capture of the four men.

To the surprise and delight of the Sergeant, the old man seemed to be impressed by his promises and above all by the £10,000 reward. He demanded to see the reward bill, read it slowly with great care, not missing a word, lingered over it thoughtfully, and handed it back. Then the old man looked up into the Sergeant's two eager eyes, and said with deep admiration:

"Well, sergeant, there is one thing certain. *It was a scholar wrote that!*"

Martial law was now in full force, raids and searches were the order of the day, and South Tipperary felt the full force of the Terror before the rest of the country. As a beginning the Soloheadbeg round-up had been very thorough. The mountains were encircled and combed methodically by British forces. The reaction of the people to this was not the reaction expected by the British Government. Around Soloheadbeg immediately after the raid, it is true, Sean Treacy and his band had many critics and few active friends, but, nevertheless, Sean Treacy personally had won general respect long before. In his pioneering days, his sincerity and single-mindedness had been recognised even by those actively hostile to his ideals. At a later stage in the Anglo-Irish struggle the R.I.C. and Dublin Castle sometimes received anonymous warnings about Volunteer activities through the post, a leakage which was finally stopped by I.R.A. raids on the mails in 1920. Similar information came also from odd touts or informers. But in their pursuit of Sean Treacy and his comrades

there is no evidence that the British Government ever received any reliable information whatever. On the contrary, and not altogether because of martial law (which in the Dunderum and neighbouring districts, for example, from January 1919 onwards, made it dangerous to open a window late at night because a challenge and warning shot were as often as not the sequel) the people were growing more and more sympathetic to the wanted men.

Often Treacy, Breen, Robinson and Hogan were recognised, but never betrayed, by chance callers to the small farmhouses in which much of this wandering life was spent. Sometimes, indeed, a cautious farmer ordered them into a barn for the night, or on to the roads, or sent them packing in a panic when he discovered they were armed. Once a farmer in whose house they were spending the night had a quarrel with a servant who was known to be friendly with the local police. She retorted: "You have three murderers sleeping above!" He roused them from sleep shortly afterwards and sent them off to a safer place.

A secret admiration began to burn in the popular heart for the "Big Four,"—a nickname which spread from the Volunteers to the people in general. One incident, in particular, was as a straw in the wind. Late one night they entered a small farmhouse where they knew the family was in sympathy with them. Neighbours came in unexpectedly—a group of five or six. They all chatted with Breen, Hogan, Treacy and Robinson, who were going under assumed names. The company broke up. Every man of the five or six visitors, as it happened, guessed the identity of the strangers, but every man of them was so cautious that he not only kept silent about it in public, but never admitted to any of the others until months later that he had recognised the men on the run.

Something, however, even more significant than the winning of popular sympathy was happening. To protect the fugitive from British pursuit was a national tradition whose force even the sharpest critics of Soloheadbeg could feel. But now in the ranks of the R.I.C. itself a sympathy stirred towards the militant-national movement. Warnings came to them from within the R.I.C. itself; some of them were coming to look upon their own

force in the same light as Sean Treacy himself did. Many an R.I.C. man felt himself drawn closer to the rising revolt.

Long years before, soon after Sir Robert Peel had first blessed Ireland with the new police force, the popular sentiments of County Tipperary had been expressed by Darby Ryan's "Peeler and the Goat." In a day nearer to Sean Treacy that popular voice was heard once more in the verse, indignant and ironic, of one who was linked by friendship and tradition with Sean Treacy: in the poems of "Myles" (J. J. Finnan), nearly the last of all the Tipperary Fenians beside whose deathbed Treacy's own uncle had sat.

In later years, those who heard him discuss the subject, found that Sean Treacy was not vindictive or bloodthirsty towards the R.I.C. as individuals, even if he once ended an argument with Paddy Dwyer of Hollyford, who insisted that an R.I.C. man who had been killed in an ambush was after all an admirable character and a good man, by the epigram:

"Ah, Paddy, all the good peelers are those we shoot!"

Sean Treacy sought no reward and nursed no rancour; he was silent even to his most intimate friends about his own hardships, risks and struggles. He often said, however, that every good fighter must stand his ground, that many good men had been lost to the national struggle because they were persuaded to seek refuge abroad.

Within a few weeks of the ambush, several voices had been raised in public to defend Sean Treacy and the Soloheadbeg ambushers from their critics in Volunteer circles and elsewhere. Eamonn O'Dwyer then in prison wrote at once in their defence when *The Tipperary Star* took its side with a large section of public opinion which was hostile, puzzled or bewildered. Eamonn O'Dwyer's reply was re-published in the official organ of the Irish Volunteers, *An t-Oglach*, edited by Piaras Beaslai, in the February issue:

"The Editor of the 'Star' did not howl his horror of the attempt by the police and military to kill young Maher, of Inch, at Drumbane, near Thurles, last summer. This boy of 16 was cycling on the roadway when he met with a crowd of peelers and some English soldiers. When called on to halt the boy either

got excited over the unlooked-for and blustering order, or could not control his bicycle, as he was speeding downhill at the time. At any rate, the ruffians commenced shooting at him. He was seriously wounded, but managed to get out of range of the cowardly bullies, and has, after months of illness consequent on a dangerous wound, come back to health and hope again. Several others have been fired on in the same locality, Seamus Leahy of Thurles being the latest to escape such polite attention from murderously inclined peelers. Poor Maher, Leahy, or the others had not weapons to defend themselves with

“The men who seized the explosives at Soloheadbeg risked their lives for Ireland in order to get war material to assist and defend Ireland’s freedom. In self-defence, they had to slay two of the armed enemy, and the true men and women of Ireland are proud of their bravery. By such deeds are tyrants terrified and bullies held in check.” The writer had every reason to see the events of Soloheadbeg with different eyes from the majority, as he had known long before the spirit and purpose of Sean Treacy. Piaras Beaslai, in quoting this letter in his life of Collins (Vol. I. pp. 272-73) also points out that many who agreed in theory that the English had no right in Ireland, and that Irishmen who acted as their armed agents were traitors, were somewhat illogically shocked when Sean Treacy put the theory into practice at Soloheadbeg. Beaslai also quotes extensively from editorials in *An t-Oglach* in defence of the policy that Cathal Brugha laid before the G.H.Q. of the Irish Volunteers, and which was unanimously approved, some days after the establishment of Dail Eireann. Beaslai notes that G.H.Q. uttered no disapprobation of Soloheadbeg.

The pursuit continued. The Big Four were often on the edge of a raid even when approaching shelter in the houses of their trusted friends. Such was the case on the occasion when they were entering the Meagher’s at Annfield, to whom they had previously sent word that they were coming. Fortunately Miss B. Meagher (later Mrs. Frank McGrath of Nenagh), intercepted Sean Treacy, Dan Breen and Patrick Kinnane almost at the very gate. She waved to them to halt, and then warned them that the police were in the house raiding for them. They lay behind a

ditch until the raid was over, and then gaily entered the house, and spent a sociable evening. The close pursuit went on long after Treacy and Robinson left for Dublin in the spring, and Breen and Hogan had gone south. Nor was the search only the open search of police and military raiding parties.

There were clever spies on the trail. William McCarthy of Gurtavalla, Doon (the "Yank Carty") afterwards told them of one man who arrived in Doon with remarkably plausible credentials, and inquired in particular for Seamus Robinson. This spy, who was afterwards shot in West Limerick, had been passed on from Volunteer Company to Company, after faking an escape as a deserter from the British Army. Previously he had stolen rifles and presented them to Volunteer units, and on the night of his "escape" from the Curragh Camp the "deserter" was laden with similar booty and fired on as he "escaped." A trail of police raids followed him wherever he joined up with the Volunteers, but he was for long unsuspected.

Unknown to themselves, however, Sean Treacy and his comrades were closely guarded by their Volunteer friends. When Treacy and the other three, for instance, stayed with Patrick Kinnane in Upperchurch, it was noted that Kinnane was so determined to prevent their capture that he mounted guard nightly until dawn as long as they were under his roof—a precaution which he took very great care not to let his guests suspect.

On February 20, Maurice Crowe received a note from Sean Treacy asking him to call a meeting of the Brigade Officers at Donnelly's, Nodstown, Cashel, for Sunday, February 23, at 3 p.m. Throughout the struggle Donnelly's was a favourite centre of Sean Treacy's. In the summer of 1920 it was from there that he went in Sean Hogan's company to the attack on Drangan Barracks. During his first visit to Donnelly's in 1919 he spent his days in reading and thinking over his plans for the future. Sometimes he laid his book aside, generally some military manual, smiled at Mrs. Donnelly, and say "I'll walk out and see Dan." Wherever Treacy went in these wandering years his affection for Dan Breen was noticed by those who sheltered the two men.

Treacy often recalled a story against himself and Breen during

their first visit to Nodstown. The Donnelly family were anxious for the safety of Treacy and Breen, and not being as skilful as Patrick Kinnane in hiding their precautions, did not conceal so successfully the fact that they remained up to keep watch. Treacy and Breen, on the other hand, thought this was very suspicious conduct, and began to have their doubts of the Donnellys. Whenever Treacy told this story he used to laugh, and add in a tone that left no doubt he was ashamed of himself: "Well, hadn't we an awful cheek!"

Throughout the Anglo-Irish struggle Donnelly's was never raided although Treacy often used it as a rendezvous. Once forty-two active Volunteer Officers arrived there to hold a meeting, and were introduced by Treacy with the words: "Well, here we are, whether you will or not!" Sometimes four or five cars were lined up outside the house, but no suspicion ever fell on the Nodstown headquarters, except the one and much repented suspicion of Treacy and Breen.

Mrs. Donnelly had a high opinion of Treacy. During his last visit to Tipperary within a few weeks of his death, he called at Nodstown. Mrs. Donnelly urged him to visit his mother before he returned to Dublin, and finally he consented to go, in spite of the difficulties. Treacy afterwards told Mrs. Donnelly that he had seen his mother, and as he was a man of his word, and not given to evasion or equivocation, she was convinced that Treacy must in fact have visited his mother before his death. Those of his friends in touch with him at the time, however, were convinced that such a visit at that time was an impossibility, and that at the most, Treacy could only have seen his mother coming from Mass.

Maurice Crowe attended the meeting at Nodstown on February 23 when a long discussion took place. A proclamation was drawn up, ordering all British military and police forces out of South Tipperary by a certain date. It was also stated that all upholders of the foreign government found there after the same date would be held to have forfeited their lives. This proclamation, which bore Seamus Robinson's signature as O.C. of the South Tipperary Brigade, was quoted by Lord Birkenhead in the House of Lords. Robinson's own explanation of the document

was that it was intended to put the fight on a war footing. It was no doubt also intended as a reply to the proclaiming of South Tipperary as a special military area. The Dublin G.H.Q. of the Volunteers refused their sanction to this proclamation, and added that they could not permit the Tipperary Volunteers to carry out the threats made in it against individuals.

Relations between the South Tipperary Brigade and G.H.Q., owing to the different outlooks revealed, were to become more and more strained, and feeling was already running high before the Nodstown meeting. Sean Treacy was fully in agreement with the terms of the proclamation signed by Seamus Robinson. In spite of the refusal of G.H.Q. approval it was made public, and posted up in County Tipperary.

The irritation of the South Tipperary Brigade was based on a feeling that Dublin exercised too restraining an influence, yet applauded success even when won in defiance of their orders, and was, to quote one present at this Nodstown meeting, too ready "to bottle other people's thunder and dish it out as their own." In Dublin the same criticism was made by those of the same active mood as Treacy, Robinson and Breen. It was argued that Dublin, as time went on, became bound in red tape, was out of spiritual touch with the country, asked for advanced plans and particulars that often meant dangerous delays and possibly failure for projects which depended on local judgment and information.

Echoes of this controversy, which must not be exaggerated, are to be heard in the records which Ernie O'Malley and Dan Breen afterwards gave of the time. It was not altogether any controversy about Soloheadbeg, or Seamus Robinson's proclamation, that led to the misunderstanding. It was rather the gulf between Dublin and the country. Rightly or wrongly, the men in the country believed that the men in the towns had no true idea of rural conditions, circumstances and difficulties.

In the circumstances under which the Irish Volunteers worked, this friction and controversy were inevitable. The case of the Dublin G.H.Q. was, of course, that it had to judge the situation as a whole, and sometimes, in consequence, to veto tempting local projects; that the intense Dublin activities held large bodies of the British military forces tied up in the Capital,

a great service to the fighters in the country; and that, moreover, the charge that G.H.Q. invariably acted as a brake on country activities was a prejudiced fable. One example given by the upholders of G.H.Q. was the Fermoy arms raid in September 1919. Liam Lynch planned this raid and was urged not to apply to G.H.Q. for sanction as it would be refused. Lynch, however, asked for sanction which was sent readily, with a warning that life was not to be taken except in self-defence.

Even Michael Collins, who understood the country needs and outlook, and who, almost alone on the Army Executive saw from the first the force of Sean Treacy's case after Soloheadbeg, used to groan over these controversies, frictions and woes of G.H.Q.

"Could you control the I.R.A. alone?" Collins was asked during the Treaty crisis. "No!" he replied. "Could de Valera?" the questioner persisted. "No!" replied Collins. "Could you and de Valera together control the I.R.A.?" the questioner went on. Michael Collins smiled very grimly and said: "Yes, only just, and it would take us all our time!"

Sometime after the Nodstown meeting, Treacy and his three companions, accompanied by Maurice Crowe, went to Castleconnell and met Sean Carroll (afterwards famous as a Column leader in the Black and Tan times, and later in the Civil War). Carroll and his brother-in-law, Joseph Herbert, conveyed them to the Falls of Donass across the Limerick border beyond North Tipperary. They spent the next three days in a watchman's hut there. A message arrived from Dublin summoning Robinson and Treacy to Headquarters. They went up at once, in spite of the long and dangerous journey, which seemed to them somewhat unnecessary. Seamus Robinson was annoyed, but regarded the summons as the usual precursor of some active work afoot.

Shortly before, William McCarthy of Gurtavalla, and Paddy Dwyer of Hollyford, had informed Treacy of hints received from Dublin suggesting that the Big Four should go to the United States. Treacy made the sharp comment that any such action would be in contradiction of all their work and plans from the beginning. "Any fool," he said contemptuously, "can shoot a peeler and run away to America!" Dan Breen, referring in his book to a similar suggestion, wrathfully dismisses it in like

manner as "a deportation order in disguise." The impression certainly was current in Tipperary that G.H.Q. at this time did want Treacy and his comrades to leave the country.

It does not appear that any formal proposal of the kind was made to Robinson and Treacy when they arrived in Dublin. Michael Collins was impressed by the directness and strength of the plans and projects in general presented by these two men. Robinson said bluntly that it was not their intention to kill two policemen and run away. Collins in this talk with Robinson made only a momentary reference to the subject, when he said drily: "Some people seem to think it is the thing to do to go to America."

Sean Hogan's health had broken down under the strain of the long wanderings and hardships of the previous months. It was decided that Dan Breen should accompany him to West Limerick until Treacy and Robinson returned from Dublin. Word was sent to Limerick to Tommy McInerney, the man who had driven to meet Casement on the Good Friday of Holy Week, 1916, and had escaped death by a miracle when his car had been submerged in the sea. In 1922 McInerney was killed in a shooting accident. McInerney drove Hogan and Breen to Limerick, passed through a convoy of military lorries that was actually searching for them, and reached West Limerick in safety. Sean Finn, the Brigade Commandant of the West Limerick area, took charge of the arrangements to get Hogan and Breen to safety. Finally they reached Keane's between Newcastle and Drumcollogher, and later settled down in Father Dan McCarthy's, in his home near what was later the site of Foynes airport.

In the meantime, Sean Treacy and Seamus Robinson were still in Dublin. Some time before his arrest in April 1919, Maurice Crowe received a message from Treacy to say that he was returning. A few weeks later, Treacy and Robinson rejoined Breen and Hogan at Lackelly. The four men resumed their hard and hunted and wandering life.

CHAPTER VII

THE RESCUE AT KNOCKLONG.

ON Tuesday, May 13, 1919, the name Knocklong became famous. A small Co. Limerick station on the main Dublin-Cork railway line won overnight a fame henceforward memorable and evocative. The events which gave Knocklong its new fame began at a dance in a Tipperary farmhouse and were rounded off by a song which swept through Ireland. That summer many a ballad singer drew his crowd with the lines:

Now rise up Mother Erin, and always be of cheer,
You'll never die while at your side there stand such Volunteers.
From Dingle Bay to Garryowen the cheers wiii echo long
Of the rescue of Sean Hogan at the Station of Knocklong.

Sean Hogan had been arrested early on the morning of Monday, May 12, at Meagher's of Annfield near Thurles. On the previous Saturday, Sean Treacy, Seamus Robinson, Dan Breen and Sean Hogan arrived in Rossmore, after a tour of the Clonmel district. They were persuaded to remain over the week-end and attend a dance on the Sunday night at Eamonn O'Dwyer's of Bal-lagh. The dance lasted into the small hours of the morning, and the four men waited until it was nearly over. Dan Breen was the first to leave with some friends for Rossmore, having arranged to meet the other three at O'Keeffe's of Glenough where they were to sleep. Con O'Keeffe and Sean Hogan stayed behind after Treacy and Robinson left to make their way to Glenough across the fields by Rossmore. They found Breen there before them. Exhausted by their wanderings during the previous weeks, and the long and merry dance, they went to bed at once and fell into a deep sleep, without worrying very much at Hogan's absence. It is true that Treacy had been at first disturbed when Michael Davern told him as he passed through Rossmore that Hogan had decided to go on to Meagher's of Annfield. But he knew that

Hogan was armed and, in ordinary circumstances, well able to take care of himself. It seems that Con O'Keeffe and Sean Hogan had heard as the dance broke up that Miss Brigid O'Keeffe was going over to see her cousins, the Meaghers, at Annfield and have breakfast there. They decided to go with her.

Although Sean Hogan was armed with a revolver, his visit to Annfield was to justify Sean Treacy's presentiment of danger. Unfortunately, Hogan had not a good knowledge of the house and the fields around Annfield, and he was also worn out with his night's dancing and the many sleepless nights and hardships of the weeks before. Hogan was so tired that he began to doze over the breakfast table. He finished his meal, however, laid his revolver and belt aside, and was soon sound asleep on a sofa.

The work of the Meagher household went on. Mr. Meagher and his two daughters, May and Brigid, were busy in the farmyard with preparations to send the milk to the creamery. They had a clear view of the road, and saw a raiding party of six constables approaching. In particular, they recognised one very officious constable from Roskeen whose presence in itself was a warning. One of the daughters rushed in and shouted to Sean Hogan, who could easily have escaped if he had known the ground better. He buckled on his belt, and dashed for the field beside the house, a long field above the level of the road; screened by hedges, which, he thought, gave the quickest exit to the road. Behind him lay the wide stretch of land northwards with ample cover where he might have eluded his pursuers, but unfortunately this was unknown to him. Hogan also mistakenly thought that the raiders were already entering Meagher's gate. In fact, they had seen him running down the field and were waiting for him when he dashed through the hedge right into their arms. Hogan, thus surprised, could make no fight for it because his revolver was in his belt. He was at once overpowered and handcuffed.

The raid was one of the routine sort to which the Meaghers were accustomed, nothing more than the periodical search made in the hope of catching the Meagher brothers (who were very active Volunteers) off their guard, and discovering compromising documents, arms and ammunition. Eventually, the R.I.C. by these continual raids drove the family to sell up the farm. Until

the chance arrest of Hogan, the police had found nothing to reward their almost bi-weekly swoops, although the Meaghers often escaped detection only by minutes, as they hurriedly dumped arms or documents in a safe hiding place.

The R.I.C. had no suspicion of Sean Hogan's identity. He refused to give his name or any information whatever. Sergeant Wallace, Constables Ring, Reilly, Batt O'Shea and the rest were very puzzled by their prisoner. All they could discover before they marched him down to Roskeen Barracks was that his Christian name was "Sean." Miss O'Keeffe had come up as they were leading him away, and said, "Good bye, Sean!" If the raiders had recognised her, and raided O'Keeffe's of Glenough, they would have found, besides a very hot reception, Treacy, Robinson and Breen. But they had no idea that one of the wanted Soloheadbeg men was in their custody. Indeed beyond the fact that they had captured an armed man with some seditious documents in his possession, the police were not very excited by the results of their morning's work.

Wallace, Reilly, Ring and O'Shea marched away. But the Meaghers had not seen the last of Sergeant Wallace. They glowered at the retreating sergeant and his men tramping off to their barracks in Roskeen with Sean Hogan handcuffed in their midst. The police were hardly out of sight before Miss B. Meagher was on her way to warn Patrick Kinnane, who lived between Annfield and Glenough, of the arrest. Kinnane at once rushed down to O'Keeffe's. He had guarded these men through the sleepless nights after Soloheadbeg, and now one of them was in the hands of the enemy. It could be only a matter of hours before Hogan was identified.

Kinnane found the three men sound asleep. "One of your fellows is arrested," he cried; "the young fellow, I forget the name." With his first words Treacy, Breen and Robinson were wide awake, and, in spite of their broken sleep, full of the resolution to rescue Sean Hogan, or go down fighting in the attempt.

At that moment their information of Hogan's fate was very scanty, apart from the fact of his arrest. They did not know then that he had been taken to Roskeen, nor the circumstances of his

arrest, nor that Wallace had sent a message to Thurles with news of the capture of an unknown armed man, nor that Hogan had been removed almost immediately to Thurles by police van, and there identified as one of the much-wanted Soloheadbeg men. Whilst Treacy and the others debated and sent out messengers to gather any available news, Hogan was already under lock and key—and persistent interrogation—in Thurles, where he was to be detained until Tuesday evening.

The police exhausted every effort to make him give information against his companions, from flattery to threats of violence; they insinuated that Breen and Treacy had turned informers and were on their way to London with a free pardon and a handsome reward; they offered Hogan money and a safe-conduct if he would give away the secrets and plans of the Volunteers. Sean Hogan laughed at the threats and bribes, and said nothing in reply. About 6.40 p.m. on Tuesday evening he was led out from Thurles barracks. His escort consisted of Sergeant Peter Wallace and Constables Reilly, Ring and Enright, the first three from Roskeen and the last from Thurles. The journey to Limerick Junction was uneventful.

At Limerick Junction, Sergeant Wallace produced the tickets he had bought for the party at Thurles, and said significantly: "Four returns, *and one single!*" The Sergeant himself had been the victim of hard and prophetic words earlier in the day when he had been present at a raid at Annfield in company with Inspector Hunt of Thurles, which had lasted from one to five o'clock without result. As Sergeant Wallace had come down a steep ladder from a loft to the kitchen he said jocosely: "This is like the descent into Hell!" The Meagher girls snapped tartly in reply: "You will be there quick enough!" Apart from Wallace's one grim witticism, Sean Hogan and his guard passed the journey mostly in silence, as all hopes of influencing Hogan by bribes or threats had been given up.

Between Hogan's removal from Thurles and the news of his arrest having reached Treacy thirty-six hours before, much had happened. In the very loft in Annfield which Wallace had searched, Philip Meagher had heard the night before from Patrick MacCormack not only the whole story of Soloheadbeg, but the

plans—or rather the first plans—for Hogan's rescue at, not Knocklong, but Emly. Miss B. Meagher, as soon as the news of Hogan's detention in Thurles reached her, boldly visited the barracks several times and asked a detective named Fox on what train Hogan was travelling. Fox knew Miss Meagher quite well, received her courteously, but evaded her questions. He laughed, shook his head, and said finally, "Oh, well, I suppose he's your young man, but I can't tell you." After the Knocklong rescue, Fox kept the incident of her visits and questions to himself. Sean Treacy remembered this to Fox's credit, and later intervened from Dublin and stopped a proposal to shoot the detective. Treacy could not forget Fox's kindness and his silence about the inquiries, which might very well, especially in view of the Meaghers' record, have implicated Miss Meagher in the rescue plans.

When Treacy learned that Hogan was in Thurles, he knew at once that Hogan would be taken to Cork, the usual destination for all men arrested under D.O.R.A. in Munster, and he knew, too, that Hogan would be removed there by train. An attempt at rescue en route was at once decided upon. Emly was first discussed as suitable as it was near the borders of Cork, Limerick and Tipperary, with the police barracks a mile from the station, and no military garrison nearby. Moreover, Treacy, Robinson and Breen had the trusted "Galtee Battalion" of Galbally at hand, if the need arose. The plans were several times, of necessity, changed; eventually Emly was dropped in favour of Knocklong at the last minute, and adjustments in detail were necessary.

This last minute alteration was responsible later for the misunderstanding which occurred about a message sent to Con Moloney, Acting Commandant of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, which informed him indeed of the intended rescue, but contained no demand for immediate help or reinforcements. This first message of Treacy's reached Con Moloney safely, but no further message was received by him or by Dinny Lacey in Tipperary Town on the critical date. A persistent belief arose after the Knocklong rescue, however, that Treacy, at some stage, sent an appeal for help to the Tipperary men which miscarried.

Exhaustive inquiries failed to trace any such message, although Con Moloney, Dinny Lacey, Sean Fitzpatrick and the other officers in Tipperary made every effort to do so. There was resentment among the Tipperary men at any suggestion that they would have left Treacy or the others in the lurch.

Con Moloney himself confirmed that the misunderstanding arose from the sudden change of plan. And this becomes clearer when the movements of Treacy, Robinson and Breen are considered. They rode by a circuitous route from Rossmore, having satisfied themselves that any attempt to attack the barracks at Thurles was impossible—at 11 o'clock on the morning of May 12, 1919—and in the small hours of the following day reached Maloney's of Lackelly, in the neighbourhood of Emly. It was between 3.30 and 4 a.m. They came by Donohill, Oola and Ballyneety and had been obliged to avoid the main roads. They knocked up the Maloney household and were warmly welcomed. Mai Maloney was impressed with the extreme agitation of Sean Treacy. He was, she declared, "nearly off his head thinking." And when he asked a question aloud it was about trains and timetables, about this station and that station. In those tense small hours of May 13, around the breakfast table, the Knocklong rescue was planned.

As the three men sat there it was very evident that they had reached a final decision. Knocklong it was to be. The countryside there was quiet and deserted on one side of the station, and the two nearest barracks were at least three miles away.

Sean Treacy was disturbed when he could not discover definitely whether Hogan would be moved or not. He asked Mai Maloney to go to Thurles and make inquiries, and when she agreed, declared that he would look after the house in her absence and do all the work. (She was very amused on her return to find that he had more than kept his word). Before she left, the final rescue plans had been fixed.

By now, all idea of summoning the Tipperary men, some seven miles away, had been abandoned. Nor would it have been possible to summon them. Four messengers only were available. In Lackelly, Mai Maloney, who had gone to Thurles; Jerry

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Callaghan who left for Galbally with an urgent message for Eamonn O'Brien from Treacy; Joe Taylor and Bill Fitzpatrick. None of these were, in fact, sent to Tipperary. Sean Treacy instructed Fitzpatrick to inform David Bourke, who was in charge of the area, to tell Thomas Shanahan of the Knocklong Coal Store to be on the look-out for code telegrams which would be sent to him. These telegrams would deal with Hogan's movements and should be brought to Treacy at Knocklong Station. Hogan would be referred to as "the greyhound." If Hogan left by any train the telegram was to state that the greyhound was travelling by that train; if Hogan was detained in Thurles, the telegram would read: "greyhound still in Thurles." Mai Moloney had arranged with Michael O'Connell who had a public house in Main Street, Thurles, and his friend, Joe McLoughney, to send these wires to Shanahan. Unfortunately, David Bourke was unable to get in touch with Shanahan, who was therefore very bewildered when he received a telegram in the early afternoon.

This telegram had been dispatched from Thurles at 1.45 p.m. and read: "Greyhound in Thurles still. Michael O'Connell." The 9.15 a.m. train from Dublin had reached Knocklong at 1.29 p.m. and left three minutes later. (Just at the time when Sergeant Wallace was busy raiding Annfield). The three men met this train at Emly. Seeing that Hogan was not on board, they returned to Maloney's, and prepared to meet the next train at Knocklong, which was due there about 8 p.m. On their return to Lackelly Jerry Callaghan was sent, as before mentioned, with a short dispatch to Eamonn O'Brien informing him, to quote the actual words of the message: "Will operate in Knocklong, 7 p.m. Meet Maloney's, Lackelly, and bring help." Eamonn O'Brien knew at once what this short dispatch meant and what Treacy wanted him for. He knew that Hogan had been arrested and guessed that it was a last desperate attempt to save Hogan from the hangman. The result of any trial of Hogan was a foregone conclusion, and Eamonn O'Brien understood quite well that Treacy, Robinson and Breen would stick at nothing, not even this desperate venture of intercepting the train and snatching their young comrade from his well-armed guards.

Nor was Eamonn O'Brien a man to count the cost. He and his brother, John Joe, had two revolvers between them, but he knew quite well that he had no arms to give the men whom he immediately summoned: Jim Scanlon, Edward Foley and Sean Lynch. He told his brother: "I'll be away this evening. If anything happens, and I don't come back, keep an eye on my wife and child." But when John Joe heard what dangerous work was afoot, he at once said that he, too, was coming to share the risks.

The five Galbally men set out for Maloney's at Lackelly where they met Treacy, Breen and Robinson. Treacy came to the point at once and explained the revised plan. Four of the Galbally men, John Joe O'Brien, Foley, Lynch and Scanlon were to cycle to Emly, board the train, find out if Hogan was on board, and signal to Treacy, O'Brien and the others at Knocklong Station. Word had been sent to Thurles that a local Volunteer was to watch and board any train by which Hogan might travel and to wave a white handkerchief from the window as a signal that Hogan was on the train. This man, "Goorty" MacCarthy, did in fact travel on the train. His presence aroused no suspicion, but he had no opportunity to give his signal as things moved much too fast. It is very probable, however, that it was he who gave Sean Hogan the first inkling that something was in the air. Hogan was unable to shake off the vigilance of the R.I.C. escort. Several times he asked to be taken down the corridor, but he was always under strict guard. He noticed a man, vaguely familiar in appearance, who persisted in hanging round the corridor and who edged near him as if to whisper. The incident set him thinking as he sat in the carriage. He knew that Treacy, Robinson and Breen were capable of the most reckless and determined efforts to save him, and in some way this hovering figure was a message of hope. Hogan was seated with his back to the engine, still handcuffed, between Sergeant Wallace and Constable Enright, both of whom were armed with revolvers. Opposite him were Constables Reilly and Ring, both armed with loaded carbines. He looked past Wallace into the corridor through the sliding door of the carriage. . . .

Already the party at Maloney's in Lackelly had broken up.

The four Galbally men had set out for Emly. Robinson and Breen cycled straight into Knocklong. Treacy and O'Brien went down to Knocklong Station by the chapel, and arrived about 7.45 p.m. They still had some twenty minutes to spare.

As David Bourke's message had failed to reach Thomas Shanahan he was still a bewildered man. O'Connell's telegram about the greyhound was in his pocket, and, by a coincidence, it might very well have concerned his own private business. He had not connected it with Sean Treacy or Volunteer affairs in spite of Michael O'Connell's name. The day before he had sent a greyhound bitch to Mr. Twamley of Rathcoole, Co. Kildare, by the morning train, and wired to Twamley that it had been sent. The telegram from Thurles puzzled him, but he connected it naturally enough with the previous day's business. After some discussion with the station master, Thomas Canty, he wired to Michael O'Connell to send back the greyhound; and then, still a worried man, went across the road from the Coal Store for a drink. Shortly afterwards, Treacy and O'Brien arrived in Knocklong.

Treacy had expected that a messenger would meet him at the station. He sent Eamonn O'Brien in search of Shanahan, and gave him a close description of the man as O'Brien did not know him. O'Brien was directed to the publichouse, where he looked round, and at once saw a man who resembled the description that Treacy had so minutely given. He called the man aside, asked him his name. It was Thomas Shanahan who looked very relieved when O'Brien next asked him whether he had any message. Shanahan knew then that the telegram was a code and that he could stop worrying about his greyhound in Kildare. He handed O'Brien the telegram which read: "Greyhound in Thurles still." As O'Brien hastened back to Treacy, he thought that there would be no rescue that evening. Treacy heard the message without comment, or giving any sign of his feelings. He decided to wait for the Galbally men coming on the train from Emly.

At that moment there was a warning of the grave risks the rescue party was taking. As a rule, the evening trains from Cork and Dublin arrived simultaneously at Knocklong, and very often

there were police and military on both. The Dublin-bound train came in first. Treacy and O'Brien stepped back into the shadow of the platform shelter. There was a party of armed soldiers in one compartment of the train, and in another some Galbally policemen who descended and made their way out of the station. The train moved out towards Dublin.

Treacy and O'Brien stepped out on to the platform, much relieved. They wanted no sideshows until Hogan was rescued, if indeed he ever was rescued. Sean Treacy as a much-wanted man could afford no risk of recognition until he had done the work upon which he was staking his life. Eamonn O'Brien was glad that he had escaped the eyes of the Galbally policemen, who knew enough about him to keep a constant watch on his movements. Away down the line came the welcome sight of the Cork-bound train and the whirl of smoke from its funnel as it swept rapidly in under the bridge. Just then, Thomas Shanahan came through the door and handed a second telegram to Eamonn O'Brien, which he was never to read. He found it in his pocket the following day, and tore it into small pieces. But Shanahan had read it, and the code was plain enough this time, although there was a new signature to the message, which ran: "Sending Wednesday evening, by 6.30. Bridget Fitzpatrick." The time for codes was past, however. There was to be a very full quarter of an hour at Knocklong Station.

As the train stopped, and before it quite came to a standstill, John Joe O'Brien, who was standing at the window of a carriage, opened the door and jumped on to the platform without waiting to use the footboard of the train. Behind him as he jumped, another of the Galbally men pointed to a compartment near the engine. John Joe said quickly to his brother: "They are there. Hogan's on the train." Sean Treacy had half-turned towards the station exit as the train stopped. He thought the evening's work was over. As Eamonn O'Brien turned and told him what John Joe's message was, Sean Treacy took off his glasses, placed them in the case, shoved the case in his side pocket, with the words: "Is that so? Come on, then!" Treacy was first into the corridor, his revolver drawn, with Eamonn O'Brien close behind him, his revolver ready too.

The two men passed down the corridor, the startled passengers gaping at them as they went. They threw back the sliding door of the carriage where Sean Hogan was sitting, with a sharp cry of command:

“Hands up! Come on, Sean, out!”

The challenge took the police by surprise, and for a moment it appeared that the rescue would be a bloodless one. Sergeant Wallace and the three constables half rose, half raised their hands. Then Sean Hogan felt the cold muzzle of Enright's revolver on his neck as the constable crouched behind him suddenly, using Hogan as a shield. Treacy and O'Brien promptly opened fire with their revolvers. Enright clutched Sean Hogan's shoulder tightly and fell back dead with a bullet through his heart. Afterwards, Treacy and O'Brien could scarcely remember why they fired, but they agreed that they would not have done so if Enright had not menaced Hogan. They resented the police evidence at the inquest later, and the ban on any questions which might have shown that the Knocklong rescuers had repeatedly asked Wallace and the rest of the guard to surrender, or that there had been any intention of shooting, except in a fair fight.

That Treacy and O'Brien should fire in these circumstances was very understandable in view of a rumoured order that all prisoners were to be shot in case of an attempted rescue.⁽¹⁾ O'Brien himself, in describing the opening shots, said that the action of Treacy and himself had been spontaneous. “We certainly,” he said with emphasis and feeling to the writer, “would never have fired if Enright had not made a move to attack Hogan.” As will be seen, too, in their subsequent prolonged duel with the determined Wallace, they made repeated appeals to him to surrender.

Hogan wrenched himself free and crashed his manacled hands

(1) This order was believed to have been issued to the R.I.C. after the rescue of Robert Byrne from Limerick workhouse infirmary on April 6, 1919. Byrne had been removed to the infirmary while suffering from the effects of a hunger strike, and he was guarded by armed R.I.C. men. A party of Volunteers rushed into the building and carried Byrne away. A constable who fired at Byrne and wounded him was killed in the struggle. Two other constables were badly wounded, one fatally. Shortly after, Byrne died of his wound.

in the face of his nearest captor. Treacy and Sergeant Wallace were locked in a death-grip. Enright's body thudded on the floor as Hogan hurled himself on Ring. Reilly had leaped on O'Brien's back after the first shots were fired, and now these two men wrestled fiercely together. The other Galbally men rushed in,—unarmed with the exception of a dagger and a small revolver, both ineffective and futile weapons as it proved—Jim Scanlon, John Joe O'Brien, Lynch and Edward Foley. They wrenched Reilly's carbine from his grasp, crashed it on his head, and he collapsed apparently unconscious on the floor.

Even at the height of the struggle, Sean Treacy was determined that Hogan, handcuffed though he was, should escape. Lynch was ordered to take Hogan away. At first, even if Hogan had been willing to go, it would have been impossible because the struggle between Treacy and Wallace barred the exit as they hurtled to and fro, from carriage to corridor. Finally, Hogan and Lynch got into the corridor, but they did not descend on to the platform until the fight was over.

Fierce and thorough as the Knocklong fight was it was a comparatively short one. The actual rescue in all lasted under fifteen minutes, between the arrival of the train at 8.13 to its departure at 8.27, according to the statement of the station master subsequently. The tussle between Treacy and Wallace—the central episode of it all—was finished in less than five minutes although to the participants every second was packed with effort and danger.

Sean Treacy remained cool and silent, not a word escaping from him in the heat of it all, except his appeals to Wallace to surrender. He admired Wallace's courage but his own was unbreakable as the two wrestled stubbornly for life and death. Panic reigned in the neighbourhood of the compartment, crowded with struggling men. Ring, dazed with the blow that Hogan had dealt him, and the reports of the revolvers ringing out in the narrow space of the carriage, jumped, or was thrown out of the window. Wallace was deaf to every appeal; his great physical strength defied the combined onslaught of Treacy and O'Brien. Ever after they spoke with deep respect of his courageous and stubborn stand. Wallace and Treacy battled for the possession

of the Sergeant's revolver, a short Webley. Sean's own weapon had fallen from his hand, and was lost in the scurry of the struggling mass, hurtling and heaving together, cramped and constricted. Treacy gripped the Sergeant's hand tightly; he stuck his thumb between the trigger and cap, and held on. None of the others could help him very much. John Joe O'Brien drew his revolver, a small .32, and fired at Wallace point blank but the weapon missed fire. He asked Jim Scanlon to give him Reilly's carbine which Scanlon was vainly trying to use as a bludgeon, hampered by the proximity of his companions. With the carbine John Joe O'Brien would have opened fire and finished the fight—and averted an approaching danger that was soon to threaten disaster to the rescue. But Jim Scanlon, who had come unarmed into the fight, obstinately refused to surrender the carbine.

At last, seizing a favourable opportunity, Eamonn O'Brien closed with Wallace from behind and shouted at him for the last time to give up the struggle. Wallace was twisting his revolver towards Treacy's head; O'Brien tried to throw the Sergeant to the floor, but Wallace with a powerful effort shook himself free. A shot rang out, and a sharp pain seared Treacy's throat. For a moment Sean believed that he was dying. With a violent concentration of all his will and strength, he wrenched the gun from his enemy's hand and fired twice. In that last stand against Treacy and O'Brien, Wallace's resistance had at last snapped, and now he collapsed on the floor, unconscious and fatally wounded. As the party turned to leave the train, a carbine cracked sharply twice outside on the platform, and O'Brien and Scanlon were wounded, although not seriously. Wallace had already wounded Treacy who was feeling himself grow weaker and weaker, though no word of this escaped him. "I thought I was a dead man," he told Brian Shanahan afterwards, "I had to hold my head up with both hands but I knew I could walk, and I could jump off a ditch."

It was Constable Reilly who was firing the carbine. According to his own story later, he had lain senseless on the floor—or shamming insensibility, as Jim Scanlon always contended. At all events, Reilly recovered either his senses or his nerve towards the end of the struggle, and noticed Ring's carbine, which he

knew was loaded, under one of the seats. He secured it and wormed his way out unnoticed while the last stage of the fight raged. His own story was that Wallace and two men were in the corridor struggling and the Sergeant was on the point of collapse. Reilly gave one look round the carriage, empty except for Enright lying on the floor, dashed on to the platform and fired through the window at the two men, and saw blood immediately on the face of the man who was holding Wallace from behind. He saw no more of the two men who then, according to his story, disappeared. But he certainly became very busy with his carbine. The *Tipperary Star* report of the rescue somewhat acidly commented that Reilly "when he recovered from the staggering jab he had received in the affray, dashed out firing shots like a man entirely out of his senses. The station master, among others, had a narrow shave from random bullets."

At this critical moment, the reports of the revolver and rifle fire brought Dan Breen and Seamus Robinson hurrying down the crowded platform thronged with excited passengers. The last phase of the Knocklong rescue was a fast and furious exchange of shots between Reilly and Breen. Just as Reilly had fired into the carriage, Breen rushed up, and distracted his attention by a fierce and determined fusilade of revolver shots. Reilly fell back, still firing his rifle, and turned his attention to other targets. Breen had saved a very ugly situation because his comrades were half-exhausted, some wounded—Treacy, as we have seen, almost fatally,—and they had lost nearly all their weapons in the struggle. Breen, however, himself was shot through one of his lungs and right arm. His revolver dropped from his hand. Half-blinded with blood and dizzy with pain, he picked up his revolver with his left hand and stood his ground.

Robinson and Breen had been on guard outside the station, and both had been misled by a message sent out to them earlier that Hogan was not on the train, that is, when O'Brien had read the first telegram, "Greyhound in Thurles still." Robinson had also been surprised by the suddenness with which the fight started. During the discussion of the plans, he had more than once impressed upon the party not to open fire without orders,

and as he heard the revolver and rifle fire as he entered the station, he first feared that a premature shot had ruined the rescue. Panic still reigned, and it was some minutes before Robinson could discover the actual position. He saw, however, that the worst had not happened. He prepared to intervene as soon as he could with effect. A thought flashed into his mind, a curious oversight in the plans . . . there had been no provision against any attempt to start the train. Robinson hurried quickly to a spot where he could keep his eye, and his gun, on the engine driver. The next minute he saw Treacy, Breen and Hogan, and knew the rescue had indeed succeeded.

Hogan had been snatched from an armed guard and death, but at a heavy cost. It was the merest chance that Sean Treacy left the station alive. Dan Breen was semi-delirious with pain, and on the edge of collapse from loss of blood. He had a vague memory of being helped from the station into the roadway by an Irish soldier in khaki who had previously cheered for the Irish Republic while the fight raged.

The rescuers hurried from the scene. Sean Hogan was taken into a neighbouring shop and his handcuffs broken with the aid of a butcher's cleaver and a heavy weight. At the first blow, the handcuffs flew open, and Hogan hurried forward to rejoin the others. Seamus Robinson was the last to leave the station.

The party pressed on quickly to Michael Shanahan's near Knocklong where Dr. Hennessy of Ballylanders (later a member of the Dail) attended to Breen and Treacy. Breen's condition was so serious that morphia was administered, at once, and both the doctor and a priest who arrived soon afterwards were certain that he would not survive his wounds. Treacy, on the other hand, kept on his feet, remained cool and silent, and apparently had recovered from the shock of the encounter. Breen and Treacy were soon afterwards removed to Clancy's of Cush. In the meantime, Volunteer guards had been posted at all approaches to the house and preparations pushed forward to place the rescuers beyond pursuit.

Treacy and Breen had been driven from Shanahan's to Clancy's in a pony and trap. They arrived early in the morning

and stayed there a day. Treacy had already met David Clancy with Liam Manahan at Ballylanders in 1916. Clancy was First Lieutenant of the local Company. His brother, Patrick, was in jail at the time. Patrick Clancy was afterwards shot and killed in Kanturk; he was a member of the Flying Column, a Vice-Commandant, and took part in many engagements during the Black and Tan war until the time of his death.

Dr. Fitzgerald of Cush townland (afterwards of Ardpatrick) was summoned to Clancy's soon after the two men arrived. He found Breen lying in a deep and drugged sleep. Sean Treacy was walking about, very calm and self-possessed. When the doctor examined him, Treacy merely complained of a loose upper tooth, caused by a blow during the struggle. Dr. Fitzgerald removed it with a forceps, and Treacy said no more. Ever after, the doctor judged Treacy by that request. He had had the narrowest of escapes, said Dr. Fitzgerald, and it was the merest luck that he ever left Knocklong alive after the throat wound inflicted on him, because the slightest deviation of the bullet to the right or left would have been fatal. The big blood vessels had just been missed. In its way the wound was serious enough: it was very near the jugular vein and carotid arteries.

"Sean Treacy," said Dr. Fitzgerald to the writer, "was not complaining about the big and painful wound in his throat. Most men, myself included, would not have bothered about anything else. Yet all that worried Treacy was the loosened tooth. Treacy was the coolest man there, far cooler than I was. That was Sean Treacy!"

Until the removal of the Knocklong party the Kilfinane Volunteers remained actively on guard with their scouts vigilant while Sean Finn completed the arrangements to remove Treacy, Robinson, Breen and Hogan as quickly as possible. Between eleven o'clock and midnight two cars arrived at Clancy's in charge of Garrett McAuliffe. Breen was still very weak and semi-conscious, was carried to one car which was left in darkness; and Sean Hogan accompanied Breen. The first car went ahead with lights full on, as a pilot car or decoy. The cars rushed along at a high speed right through the town of Kilmallock,

where the bodies of Wallace and Enright had already been brought to the local barracks for an inquest, and eventually reached their destination, Keane's of West Limerick, between Newcastle and Drumcollogher safely.

Eamonn O'Dwyer was raided at about one in the morning of May 20. The raid lasted some hours, and as the military and police departed, a Limerick Volunteer arrived outside on a motorcycle from Keane's with a dispatch from Sean Treacy giving full details of the affray, with a request for all available funds to be sent for the care of the wounded. He sent reassuring messages to his mother, to Mrs. Breen, Mrs. Hogan and a number of other friends. Eamonn O'Dwyer sent back some £80 which, however, was returned to the Volunteer funds because there was plenty of free and willing medical help available.

Eamonn O'Brien and Jim Scanlon were taken charge of by friendly Volunteers, and after some narrow escapes from capture reached County Cork in safety, where Sean Treacy sent them a copy of the *Hue and Cry* with unflattering descriptions of themselves. Jim Scanlon was amused by the words: "Jim Scanlon, Wanted for Murder . . . in appearance remarkably like a Jew!" The Knocklong fight left its mark on Jim Scanlon until the day he died in the autumn of 1939. He was closely connected with Treacy's fights and fortunes. He met Treacy and all the outstanding Volunteer organisers and leaders,—Monteith, Ernest Blythe and Sean MacDermott among the number, in the beginnings of the movement in 1913; he marched with the Galbally company (of which he was an active officer and organiser and gun-runner into the bargain) to the projected attack on Ballylanders in Easter Week, and there met Treacy when he arrived with the news of the collapse of the Rising in the South. Scanlon and O'Brien were not to meet Sean Treacy and his three companions again until the autumn, when the Big Four formed their guard to the s.s. *Killiney* en route to the United States with dispatches from Breen and Treacy for their friends in America.

During the summer of 1919 the Big Four spent a wandering life in the South. In West Limerick they stayed in turn with

the Longs, Sheehans, Keanes, Duffys and Kennedys, then with friends in Kerry, Clare and North Tipperary. Sean Treacy spent some of the time on an island off the Clare coast with Sean Carroll and Joe Herbert of Castleconnell. Among their friends in North Tipperary were Frank McGrath, Brigade Commandant of the area, and a prominent G.A.A. man, and "Widger" Meagher, also a famous athlete.

When Treacy, Breen and Hogan had been restored to health, they determined in consultation with Seamus Robinson to discuss the whole position with the Dublin Headquarters. Treacy and Breen cycled to Dublin, and after an interview with Michael Collins, then Adjutant-General of the Irish Volunteers, it was decided that the four men should go to Dublin. By the autumn of 1919 they all arrived there safely.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ATTACK ON LORD FRENCH

WHEN Sean Treacy went to Dublin in the late summer of 1919 it was not his first visit to the Capital. He had gone there with Seamus Robinson to interview G.H.Q. after Soloheadbeg, and some time before that with Dan Breen. In his organising days he had also made more than one trip on Volunteer business, and what he called the "geography" of the city was quite familiar to him. He was very keen on this "geography" and always impressed on the Tipperary Volunteers when they arrived, mostly on the run, to make short stays with him beside the Liffey, that above all they must learn to make their way about the city—main roads, bye-ways, short cuts and all.

And for this particular study Sean Treacy from now on had an excellent reason: his life, and the lives of his comrades, were to depend on it. Henceforward, Sean Treacy, although still Vice-Brigadier of the Third Tipperary Brigade, was also one of the most daring of the auxiliaries to the Squad attached to the Intelligence Department under the direct orders of Michael Collins. On the run, and with his own life and the lives of the Dublin Castle spies and agents in his hand, Sean Treacy none the less remained in close touch with the activities of the Tipperary men, and was a forcible directing influence behind their fights and everyday routine. This was true also of Seamus Robinson as O.C. of the Brigade, of Dan Breen and Sean Hogan, in spite of the new and dangerous work all four men had now undertaken themselves in Dublin.

During these times in Dublin, Sean Treacy and his three companions answered any call that the Squad sent them. Paddy Daly (later Major-General Daly of the National Army), who was second in command of the Squad when it was formed in

July, 1919, and later O.C., had the highest admiration for Treacy. The Squad consisted mainly of Volunteers who had been taken from their ordinary work to give their whole time to specially dangerous jobs. From their arrival in Dublin just after the Squad's formation, Treacy, Robinson, Breen and Hogan took an important part in all its activities. Paddy Daly was deeply impressed by Treacy's attitude to the work, and his high mental and soldierly abilities. "Sean Treacy," he declared to the writer, "always came readily to help us, and his attitude always was 'what can we do to help?—here we are!'" Daly found in Treacy a selfless fighter whose judgment was always sure and sharp; a cool and courageous man who faced drudgery and danger unwearingly.

It is probable that the full story of this side of Treacy's life was lost with the death of Michael Collins, who had the greatest confidence in him, and often gave him orders direct, knowing that without waste of words or time he would carry them out, no matter what the hazard. Collins had always trusted and admired Treacy since their first interview after Soloheadbeg. After that Collins, so far as he could, generally granted Treacy's requests for arms and ammunition. Treacy would arrive from Tipperary and inform Collins quietly and firmly that so many guns and so many rounds of ammunition were required. Collins in return would glance at him quizzically and say, "You want so many guns and so many rounds, do you? Well, I'll give you one gun and two rounds." Treacy would say no more because he knew by experience that he would get whatever Collins could give him. Collins had soon learned that Treacy in quest of guns or anything else was not a man to be easily shaken from his purpose. When Treacy and Robinson demanded that Ernie O'Malley should be sent as an organiser to their area in 1920, Treacy afterwards told O'Malley that he and Robinson "had worn Collins down" and won their point, although another area had already asked for him. Of Breen and Hogan also, Collins had the highest opinion as he learned of their daring in the many adventures into which their alliance with the squad led them.

The death of Tom Cullen, who was one of Collins' chief Intelligence Officers, removed a man to whom much of Treacy's militant career in the city was best known. Paddy Daly's testimony on the point, however, is emphatic: "While he was in Dublin, Sean Treacy was always on hand for the work of the Squad, and he was in some of our toughest jobs." He spent most of his spare time with Robinson, Breen, Hogan and other of the Tipperary Volunteers who arrived in Dublin from time to time, and he drew over his work in Dublin the same screen of silence and reticence as he drew over his fights and adventures elsewhere. Even many militant Volunteers in the Dublin of the time knew of Treacy only by hearsay and did not even know him by sight. Such close associates of Michael Collins as Frank Thornton and Joe O'Reilly, and members of the Squad itself like Pat McCrae, Jim Slattery, Vincent Byrne, and a chief Intelligence Officer of Collins' like Liam Tobin, found it difficult to recall in their memories of the troubled times a complete picture of Sean Treacy's activities. Frank Thornton and Joe O'Reilly knew that Sean Treacy reported regularly for instructions to G.H.Q. and was always available for any operation that had to be carried out in Dublin.

It was such men as Paddy Daly and Sean's own associates who really knew the details of Treacy's amazing gamble with death from the autumn of 1919 to the late spring of 1920.

Eventually the Big Four found many friends to shelter and protect them in Dublin during their several visits; but their first and staunchest friend was the Tipperaryman, Phil Shanahan, from their own countryside. He gave them food, good counsel and money,—and they were often in need of food and money. Sometimes Sean Treacy's uncle, George Allis, was responsible for getting sums of money from Sean's home, ten or twenty pounds at long intervals, because Sean was proud and independent and seldom made his wants known. When approached, and often when not approached, Phil Shanahan gave help freely, and Michael Collins would repay him. But Treacy and his three comrades were reluctant to impose—as it seemed

to them—on the generosity of Phil, who gave them a hearty welcome whenever they turned in to his public house in Foley Street. Racy tales were told of the colony of men on the run who came there from all parts of the country, and of the meals that Shanahan provided in a room upstairs.

In Phil Shanahan's Sean Treacy felt that he was back under the shadows of the Galtees. The hospitality reminded him of the many touching proofs he had had in the small farmhouses of the generosity of the people who fed him and his men,—not out of abundance, but often from scarcity. Treacy's eyes would twinkle when he heard the tale of some rascalion of a Volunteer who tried to pilfer a small bottle of whiskey from under the pillow of an apparently sleeping and trusting comrade, hoping to slake a mighty thirst,—only to have his hopes dashed by finding an empty bottle and hearing a sarcastic voice in the darkness of Phil's room: "What are you looking for under my pillow? Nothing. Well you'll find it in that bottle in your hand now!"

Or the tale of the reply to an inquisitive policeman who asked a man on the run where he belonged to, and got the answer: "When I'm sober I belong to Dublin, but when I'm drunk Dublin belongs to me!" Or of the wily assistant of Phil's who warded off a search of the premises by pretending to shiver with fright at the guns flourished by the Black and Tans as they entered the bar, by insisting on corking the muzzles thereof, and by eventually doing a handsome trade with the would-be raiders and helping them to their lorries after a lot of their money had passed into Phil's till.

While these humours in a tragic life made Treacy laugh, he himself was generally found to be deep in his military books. Sometimes he played a game of draughts or busied himself with fretwork. To those who met him for the first time, Sean Treacy had a somewhat chilling exterior. His manner was reserved. He never drank, smoked or swore. In Dublin those who came in touch with him noticed his austerity and piety, although he paraded neither. Even when he was racked by long foodless

days, overstrain and exhausting nights, he never gave himself the abrupt dispensations that other fighters gave themselves as a matter of course, from the fasts of the Church. On one occasion when he was teased about this he looked up and said simply: "Well, if you believe in anything, and belong to anything, why not keep the rules?" While he was a sharp critic and implacable enemy of clerical interference in political matters, he was a deeply religious man.

Peadar Kearney, who knew Treacy well in those Dublin days, later wrote of him:

To you! O Flower of Ireland's Youth,
 Across the grave we send a Nation's praise
 Hailing your name—the greatest name of all,
 Young Ireland's pioneers!
 Chanting your courage cool;
 Your deathless love for her,
 Your changeless hate for those
 Who sought her soul to rend—
 Those you pursued and slew
 Without remorse—
 Those you destroyed and conquered
 To the end.

In their lean days in Dublin, Sean Treacy and Dan Breen once in desperation decided to approach a certain lady of admirable national sentiments and records, combined with high business ability, who had been placed in charge of a fund to relieve distress among the fighting men and their relatives. Very properly the lady guarded herself against imposters, humbugs and shiftless persons by being very methodical and demanding documentary evidence before she allowed any claims. She thus guarded the money in her care, and naturally received very little thanks for an ungracious task, carried out with extraordinary efficiency.

Treacy and Breen, at the end of their resources and proudly determined to ask none of their friends for help, called into her office and met with a very cold reception. They

urged their claims and put their demands with politeness and firmness until the lady said very sharply, as if to get rid of them: "Before any grant can be made, the receipt and signature of your Brigadier or Vice-Brigadier is absolutely necessary. If you can supply me with these, I may be able to consider your applications." At these words, Treacy and Breen, who could look down all the rifle barrels in Ireland without blinking an eye, but who had just then felt their souls fainting away, revived and brightened considerably: "Oh, if that's all you want" said Treacy with a smile, "we can get down to business at once. I am Vice-Brigadier of the Third Tipperary Brigade, and Dan Breen here is Quarter-Master."

They convinced the lady by the production of documentary proofs, and Sean Treacy signed the authorisation. The lady frigidly opened a drawer of her desk, scanned the signature severely,—and handed Treacy and Breen *one half-crown* each!

History does not record the comments of Dan Breen, nor that Sean Treacy had any occasion or wish to reprove them.

When they approached William O'Brien, General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and member of the Anti-Conscription Conference, they fared better. Their approach to him was made through Eamonn O'Dwyer of Ballagh who appealed to William O'Brien for a grant of £50 apiece to Sean Treacy, Dan Breen and another Volunteer, from the Conference funds. There were ten members of the Anti-Conscription Conference. Power to pay out moneys was delegated to three members: William O'Brien, Alderman Tom Kelly, and John Dillon who in practice preferred to leave all decisions to the other two. William O'Brien used some diplomacy in phrasing the grant and made out three separate receipts for £50. The receipts were returned signed by Sean Treacy.

These receipts with Treacy's signature somehow escaped the Black and Tan raiders when they swooped on Liberty Hall to wreck it early in 1920 although the documents were lying openly on William O'Brien's desk. At that time, Sean Treacy was just a name to William O'Brien. What distracted the attention of

the raiders was probably the presence of much more sensational material, including a copy of the Dublin Castle Black and Tan organ, *The Weekly Summary*, and a confidential report seized by Michael Collins and sent on to Liberty Hall, recommending that every effort should be made to embroil Labour and Republican sympathisers in the Sinn Fein Courts, "and thus drive a wedge between Labour and the I.R.A." In a second raid on O'Brien's house, his typewritten reports giving full details of the grants were open on his desk, but again the raiders failed to notice them.

Sean Treacy and his friends were all the time in close touch with the Third Tipperary Brigade. Maurice Crowe, after his release from jail in October, stayed a week with them at Bolands, Clontarf; during his imprisonment in Cork and Mountjoy he received several letters from Treacy. About the end of October, arrangements were made to hold a Brigade Convention at Cashel. The search for Treacy and his comrades was still very active, as they learned on arriving at Goold's Cross Station to attend the Convention. The R.I.C. were waiting at the station for them. Sean Hogan noticed the police first and warned his companions. They turned towards the engine before the police realised what had happened owing to the big crowd on the platform. The four men at once replied with their revolvers as the police rushed towards them and opened fire on them. They jumped on the railway line and escaped.

Later Maurice Crowe received a dispatch from Treacy to hold the Convention at Meldrum Hall, Cashel, on November 9, 1919. In the meantime, Treacy and the others stayed at Davins, Rathasallagh. At the Convention, Robinson and Treacy were selected as South Tipperary delegates to the General Convention in Dublin which had been fixed for the same month. They later returned to Dublin where Hogan and Robinson amused Eamonn O'Dwyer, when they met him at his sister, Mrs. Duncan's, house in Irishtown, by solemnly informing him that they had been presented with an illuminated address by the R.I.C. at Goold's Cross. Maurice Crowe later travelled up, and stayed with Treacy and the others at Boland's, Clontarf.

Soon after they arrived in Dublin on this occasion, Sean

Treacy and the other three had their first hint of an adventure that had all the desperate risks, and more, of Knocklong. It was in November 1919 when Dublin was full of delegates to a G.A.A. Congress, and incidentally, to the General Convention of the I.R.A. officers just mentioned,—which in fact was cancelled later. The four men were staying, as before stated, in Mrs. Boland's house in Clontarf. They were wakened out of their sleep one night by Michael Collins and some friends, who tramped up the stairs, talking so loudly that it was evident that the newcomers were anxious to attract attention. "A wise precaution," says Seamus Robinson in his account of the incident. "The sound of stealthy footsteps was always the signal for us to get our guns out, in case of surprise by the enemy. Mick soon let us know the object of his visit, saying 'Get up at once, you are to ambush Lord French.' At first we thought he was joking, but he explained that he had received word that Lord French was to drive to Dublin Castle at 5 o'clock the following morning."⁽¹⁾

Treacy, Hogan, Breen and Robinson went to Church Lane off Dame Street with instructions to keep on the move, and not to wander from the appointed spot, an order which they found almost impossible to obey. The order was given so as to avoid exciting suspicion, or inviting a sudden swoop by military raiders. On this first attempt to attack Lord French there was great point in the warning, as other men had been stationed at different points along College Green and Dame Street, including Michael Collins, Joe O'Reilly, Frank Thornton, Liam Tobin, Dick McKee, Tomás MacCurtain, as well as all members of the Squad.

Seamus Robinson noticed Sean Treacy keeping closely behind him, and then edging in front of him when they found themselves in Suffolk Street. Finally, Robinson asked Sean Treacy what he meant, and Sean replied with a smile:

"Well, look here, Seamus, I want to have a crack at the old josses. Let you have the driver!"

Eventually, the men on the watch were informed that the attack had been called off, and they were dismissed. Some had been detailed to take part in the attack, and the larger body to

(1) In an article in the *Evening Telegraph and Press*, October 17, 1932.

cover the retreat of the attackers. According to one account, Lord French never put in an appearance that morning, and the information about his journey had been wrong; according to another, he arrived, heavily escorted by armoured cars, and any attack was out of the question.

Treacy, Robinson, Breen and Hogan had several similar experiences; indeed, Dan Breen has calculated that in all some twelve attempts were made to ambush Lord French, all of which ended in disappointment. The attack had been planned by the Dublin G.H.Q. as a demonstration against the head of the British Military Administration in Ireland, and reports as to Lord French's movements had been regularly submitted to the Headquarters' meetings by Michael Collins.⁽¹⁾

Sean Treacy and Seamus Robinson were told by Tomás MacCurtain, after the failure of the first attempt, that the only good thing about it was that he had been given a revolver, which he kept as a reward for his patience that morning, and as something he had vainly tried to get before. Sean Hogan, on another attempt on November 11, 1919, preserved a less welcome souvenir. The plan was to ambush the Lord-Lieutenant as his car passed over Grattan Bridge from the Viceregal Lodge en route to an Armistice Banquet in Trinity College. Sean Hogan had been informed of the actual moment French's car was due to pass, so within a stone's throw of Dublin Castle he drew the pins from his two hand-grenades and threw away the pins. The night was bitterly cold. Two hours passed while Sean Hogan held on grimly, but French failed to appear. Finally Hogan made his escape, still gripping the grenades, until he reached a place of safety and secured new pins. He never forgot his walk through the crowded streets, his numbed hands, and the effort of will that alone saved him or some innocent civilians from being blown to pieces. Dan Breen and Peadar Clancy, according to Breen's account⁽²⁾, on another occasion waited for two hours outside the door of a Merrion Square doctor whom French sometimes visited.

Robinson, Treacy, Hogan and Breen in the late

(1) Beaslai. Vol. 1. P.385.

(2) "My Fight for Irish Freedom." P.121.

autumn of 1919, were present at a meeting of the Active Service Units from the various Dublin Battalions over which Richard Mulcahy presided. "He explained to us," says Seamus Robinson in the article already quoted, "that we would have to carry out active warfare in such a way that there would be no casualties on our side, that is to say, that there was to be none of our men killed or taken prisoners. He said that this was necessary, because the Government was anxious that no military action should be traced to its authority or to the I.R.A., and that if an attack could be traced to the I.R.A. they might find it necessary to repudiate us. We accepted these terms, although they opened up very unpleasant possibilities for us, for we would then be outlawed by the British, repudiated by our own Government, and also might suffer the censure of the Church."

Sean Hogan also remembered the thorough-going character of Mulcahy's proposals and instructions to the meeting, and the remark: "There must not even be a laundry mark on your clothing to identify you." Unpleasant as the choice may have been, it was accepted willingly by those present who agreed to become, if the need arose, martyrs to this secrecy in the interests of policy. Later, in the bitter recriminations following the Irish Civil War, the controversy arose as to what extent Dail Eireann and G.H.Q. had taken responsibility for these militant activities. As has been seen in the case of Soloheadbeg, it is possible to exaggerate the issue. Certainly as the struggle progressed, the Dail and G.H.Q. accepted responsibility more and more openly. In January 1921, Oscar Traynor, Commandant of the Dublin Brigade, addressing the Active Service Units, informed them that their activities would be directed by G.H.Q. "and the Government of the Republic will accept full responsibility for your operations against the enemy and for your future welfare."⁽¹⁾

Among the many dangerous exploits of Sean Treacy and his three companions, from that evening in the autumn of 1919 when they undertook their somewhat thankless active service, the fight at Ashtown on Friday, December 19, 1919, stands out. Seven others accompanied them: Paddy Daly, who was in command of the party, Mick McDonnell, Tom Keogh, Martin Savage,

(1) "The Active Service Unit," *Dublin Brigade Review*, p.75.

Vincent Byrne, Tom Kilcoyne and Joe Leonard. One of that ambush party was to be killed that day, and two others—Treacy and Keogh—were to meet violent deaths within two years in the Black and Tan struggle and in the Civil War. It was only by chance that Martin Savage came with them, although he was a Lieutenant of the 2nd Dublin Battalion. It happened that through his activities he met Sean Hogan at a city house and spent the night of December 18 there. Hogan told him about the expedition and lent him an automatic pistol when Savage insisted on joining the party.

As they cycled out along the Cabra Road to Ashtown Cross, in twos, Martin Savage sang songs all the way. One of them came back to the minds of his companions later:

A soldier's life, the life for me,
A soldier's death, so Ireland's free !

Their information was that Lord French would arrive at Ashtown Station on the north side of Dublin, some two miles from the city, leave the train there, and travel the short distance to the Viceregal Lodge by car. This was an easy and obvious route, as one of the gates of Phoenix Park is so near as to be named the Ashtown Gate. About two hundred yards from the station, and a hundred yards from the Ashtown Gate stood a country Inn, "Kelly's," or "The Half-Way House." The station was under observation by the ambushers for about half an hour before the arrival of the train, which was due at 11.40 a.m. The plan to attack Lord French was animated by no *personal* feeling against him—indeed, the attackers without exception bore him no grudge afterwards for eluding their bombs and bullets. "I must say I am glad now that Lord French escaped," said Dan Breen. Seamus Robinson in the same spirit declared: "I am sure he was as delighted as we were disappointed!" What the eleven men were risking their lives for was to make a protest against the military occupation of Ireland by the British Government of which the Lord-Lieutenant was the highest representative. Why, they argued, attack the ordinary soldiers and political spies, and leave a Viceroy immune, especially when that Viceroy always went guarded by a considerable armed escort?

On this morning at Ashtown the attackers had only one advantage on their side: surprise, and as it turned out, only a brief and partial surprise at that. Against them were three cars, the occupants of which were well protected by rifles and machine guns.

Daly's orders to his men were to arrive in pairs, enter the Inn, and mix with the other customers as if ordinary cyclists on their way past. Shortly before the train arrived they were to line the hedge on the right hand side for about thirty yards. Dan Breen, Tom Keogh and Martin Savage would then at the last moment block the road by drawing a country cart, which stood handy, right across the path of the approaching cars. This would slow down the cars, which invariably were driven at a very high speed. It was necessary that Dan Breen and the other two should carry out this last order with a slow and stupid air, as any haste might arouse the suspicions of the other people in the Inn. The G.H.Q. instructions, in addition, emphasised that casualties among the attackers and among the civilian onlookers were to be avoided. To guard against the second danger, some of the party were to be stationed at the cross-roads to prevent anyone walking into the line of fire.

Daly also instructed the ambushers that the first car was not to be attacked. It was understood that Lord French usually travelled in the second car,—his first car conveyed his armed escort invariably preceded by a military motor-cyclist scout. Behind French's car there was always a third car with the rest of his armed escort. Seamus Robinson was somewhat disturbed by Daly's order that the first car must be allowed a free run through. He had not time to argue the matter with Daly, or point out to him at the last minute the danger of the escort in the first car opening fire on the attackers whilst they were in the thick of the battle with the second. Robinson decided when the time came to side-step these orders and withhold his own grenade until the second car had been dealt with.

Inside the "Half-Way House" the cyclists, who had dropped in two by two, mixed with the small crowd inside, greeted each other as if the meetings were accidental, and talked of every subject imaginable, except, as Dan Breen records, politics.

Outside some members of the party kept a close lookout on the station, and nearer to the station still was Vincent Byrne on the watch to signal the arrival of the Viceregal cars to the main body. As it happened, the train arrived some minutes ahead of time, and this was the first check to the attack, as the men had to take up their positions along the hedge at very short notice. At this moment, too, a policeman arrived from the Viceregal Lodge to keep the road clear for when Lord French's cars should arrive. In the meantime Vincent Byrne duly gave his signal, and the three cars had already set out from Ashtown Station. Breen, Tom Keogh and Martin Savage had begun to pull the heavy cart slowly across the road and the policeman, quite deceived by their acting the parts of slow and innocent countrymen, rushed from his position at the cross-roads to argue loudly with them that a passage must be "kept clear for his Excellency." They stared at him obstinately and stupidly, and not wishing to offer him violence or hurt him, tried to meet the situation by swearing at him and telling him to mind his own business and go away quietly. The argument held up the work of barricading the road with the cart. One of the party lining the ditch now made an unhappy intervention. Instead of leaving the dispute to Breen, Keogh and Savage, he hurled a hand-grenade at the policeman's head and stunned him just as Lord French's motor-cyclist scout dashed by, fifty yards ahead of the first car. It was now too late to barricade the road, as the party had been thrown into confusion. To the best of Seamus Robinson's recollection, the hand-grenade failed to explode; according to other accounts, the grenade fell wide, exploded, and the force of the explosion knocked policeman and barricaders flat, fortunately without injuring anyone. The slight contradictions in these accounts are understandable because of the deadly explosions, rattle of machine guns and flying bullets which assailed the ambushers within the next few minutes.

The second car took the full force of the ambushers' attack and was shattered by the rain of bullets and grenades concentrated on it as it came on close behind the first. Sean Hogan and Paddy Daly were thrown to the ground as a grenade slipped from

Hogan's hand and exploded. They were smothered in mud but escaped injury. Daly was able to land a grenade into the second car. Seamus Robinson hurled his grenade at the first car as it brushed past some slight obstructions which had been thrown on the road, but what effect his bomb had he never knew. Lord French's bodyguard, Detective Sergeant Halley, who sat next to the driver, was at all events slightly wounded; Halley hurled a hand-grenade at random behind him in reply while the car tore ahead at full speed. The ambushers' calculations were again upset: contrary to his usual custom, French on this occasion travelled in the first and not in the second car,—fortunately for himself, as the second car had swerved and crashed into the ditch, and the driver staggered out of the wreckage made by the bombs. He had been the only occupant.

Breen, Savage and Tom Keogh were protected only by the slight shelter of the cart behind which they crouched, their revolvers rattling as the road was swept with the terrific and accurate volleys opened upon them by the occupants of the third car,—four soldiers with rifles and a machine-gunner. Seamus Robinson has given a vivid snapshot of the scene: "In the back of the car stood a soldier with his legs braced between the seats, his rifle held tight to his shoulder with the left hand, and his right hand working evenly, almost gracefully, on the bolt and trigger. This soldier was a sharpshooter. His first shot gave young Martin Savage his death wound; the second went through Breen's hat and the third hit Breen in the leg."

Breen, badly wounded, had to seek shelter in the "Half-Way House." Robinson took cover behind a milk cart on the main road. The rear car flashed away out of sight into Phoenix Park with a final burst of gunfire. The driver of the second car staggered towards the ambushers who had now come out on the main road, from Dublin to Blanchardstown. Beside the ditch lay the wrecked car, armour-plated like the other two now hurrying Lord French to safety. The third car had been an open one. The mass of splinters and steel beside the ditch was a closed one, and this misled the ambushers; curiously enough they thought that Lord French lay dead somewhere within because surely no man could survive the fierce hail of grenades

and revolver fire directed on it. It lay neglected on the road that curved away towards the Park, the small narrow road in which they had fought. Martin Savage lay dead, killed outright by the bullet that had passed through his throat. Sadly his comrades looked down on him and abandoned the idea of carrying his body away. They looked at the trembling driver who came towards them with his hands up. He expected they would shoot him as they disarmed him, but to his relief and surprise someone said: "We are soldiers too, and do not shoot unarmed prisoners."

The ambush was over. At any moment reinforcements would arrive from the Phoenix Park. Martin Savage's body was carried into the Inn. Dan Breen was already weak from his wounds, and his left leg was useless; he was helped on to his bicycle and Paddy Daly mounted his own. Daly supported Breen with one arm and eventually both reached Mrs. Toomey's house in Phibsboro' in safety. En route they met Frank Thornton and some others who helped them to finish the dangerous journey.

Sean Treacy and Seamus Robinson remained behind until the others had gone. Treacy, like the majority of the ambushers, escaped without a scar. During the fight he was with the party on the crossroads, firing deliberately, unperturbed. Seamus Robinson mounted his bicycle, but had hardly started when one of the pedals struck a stone and snapped off. The bicycle was useless. Viewing the position most philosophically, Robinson threw it over a hedge and jumped on the step of Treacy's machine, holding on to Treacy's shoulders. Their progress was slow as the bumpy and uneven ground made Robinson press down on the rear mudguard. Just then a man came in sight wheeling a brand new bicycle. Treacy and Robinson knew that speed was a matter of life or death for them, and in this new bicycle they saw speed and safety. Very politely but very firmly they informed the astonished owner, an R.I.C. pensioner, that they must have it, although they understood his indignation. They cycled away from him with the promise that the bicycle would be left for him at a certain place in the city at a certain time that evening. The promise was later carried out.

Treacy and Robinson sped to their friends, the Lynch's at Dolphin's Barn. No one was more astonished than they when they read in the evening papers some very highly coloured accounts of the Ashtown ambush, and discovered that Lord French had, after all, escaped in that despised first car at which Seamus Robinson had thrown a disdainful bomb. They forgave Lord French, and with their friends the Delaneys of Heytesbury Street, sought consolation in a visit to the Cinema that very week where they watched somewhat dourly and not altogether silently an item, "Scene of the Ashtown Ambush."

Ashtown was but one of several attempts to shoot Lord French in which Sean Treacy took part. One has already been described, the first attempt near College Green. Treacy was also there when the ambushers waited for Lord French to pass along the quays to the Armistice Banquet,—when Sean Hogan had such a nerve-racking experience with the hand-grenades. Treacy was also present during a further ambush prepared for the Viceroy near the City Hall. He had also been to Ashtown previously when, with a party, he had lain in wait as Lord French left for Roscommon. Treacy and the members of the Squad believed that the journey to Roscommon would be made by car, and only a last-minute decision to travel by train saved the Viceroy then. It was on his return from Roscommon that the Ashtown attempt on Lord French was made. This was the last attempt. Sean Treacy and the Squad were given no further opportunities as Lord French gave up all public journeys and seldom left the Viceregal Lodge.

Among the secret service agents that Sean Treacy was within an ace of shooting was the British spy and former member of the Casement Brigade, Quinlisk, who tried to play a double game with Michael Collins and Dublin Castle. He was later shot dead in Cork, as Beaslai states in his life of Collins, after an attempt to get in touch with Collins in order to betray him. Collins had a false report sent to him that he intended to visit a certain hotel in Cork. The place was raided on the date given in this false report, and as Quinlisk was in Cork at the time, he was seized by the Cork Volunteers and shot. Quinlisk was also on the trail of the Tipperary Volunteers who were "on the run" in Dublin,

and, in some way, he came to know most of them, probably by mixing in Volunteer circles. His extraordinary communications to several of Collins' associates, and then his letters to Castle officials offering to betray what secrets he knew, had originally brought him under suspicion.

In the attacks on the "G" men, the political detectives attached to Dublin Castle, Sean Treacy was very active. He took a leading part in the attack on Detective-Sergeant Barton in College Street on November 29, 1919, and fired two decisive shots which finished the affray. Although he was not actually concerned in the attacks on Detective Wharton in the same month, nor in the shooting of Assistant Commissioner Redmond the following January, Sean Treacy was one of the party of scouts who were guarding the members of the Squad involved. On another occasion, when the Squad were waiting to attack a leading R.I.C. official in Beresford Place, Sean Treacy jumped on the footboard of the taxi as it passed round Beresford Place, fired point-blank at the R.I.C. official, wounded him, and jumped clear. The wound was not fatal; the car put on speed and escaped the rest of the ambush party. An onlooker said that Treacy calmly wiped his revolver, pocketed it, and went away before the excited crowd which rushed to the scene realised what had happened. Again, Treacy and some companions went to an outlying part of Dublin in search of an obnoxious Detective-Inspector with the intention of shooting him as he came out of Mass that Sunday morning. But when Treacy and the others saw he was accompanied by his wife and young family, they turned away and left him in peace.

Sean Treacy was also associated in an effort to attack Ian Macpherson, the British Chief Secretary for Ireland, but the plans were never advanced very far and were soon abandoned. Another failure, although not on the part of Treacy, was a projected round-up and general attack on "G" men in Clarendon Street and Grafton Street one Sunday morning. This, however, never came off owing to a change of plan on the part of the detectives, who disappointed Treacy and others of the Squad who were waiting for them.

The Big Four had a number of staunch friends in Dublin

where they stayed during their two periods in the city,—the Flemings of Drumcondra, the Bolands of Clontarf, the Malones of Grantham Street, the Delaneys of Heytesbury Street, Seamus Ryan of the Monument Creamery, Mrs. Fitzgerald of Hollybank Road, the Hollands of Inchicore, Seamus Kirwan of Parnell Street, Seamus and Mrs. O'Doherty of Connaught Street, Martin Conlan, Mr. and Mrs. Duncan of Irishtown, but, first and foremost, Phil Shanahan. The list must be incomplete since in their days of danger there were many more whose names have remained unchronicled. Around Phil Shanahan's there was a vast army of watchers, the people of the district, the newsboys who sent quick warnings of the approach of raiders and the presence of touts and suspicious strangers.

Among the first places the four stayed at when they came to Dublin in 1919 was the Duncan's house in Irishtown whither they were piloted after a preliminary call at Shanahan's. Mrs. Andrew Duncan was a sister of Eamonn O'Dwyer's of Ballagh. Sean Treacy, as an expression of gratitude, presented Mrs. Duncan with a fretwork clockstand of his own workmanship.

"I made it out of my own head," said Sean shyly.

"Golly!" commented Seamus Robinson, who was listening, "You have enough timber there to make an ass and cart!"

In the Spring of 1920 as the shadows of the Black and Tan Terror spread over the country, Seamus Robinson, Dan Breen, Sean Treacy and Sean Hogan returned to Tipperary and prepared to wage an even more thorough campaign against the British Forces.

CHAPTER IX

THE BARRACK ATTACKS

EARLY in the spring of 1920, the R.I.C. were exposed to attacks in their barracks throughout the southern counties. As the smaller barracks in outlying districts were evacuated the buildings were burned; in May 1920 over ninety of these smaller buildings went up in flames. So early as April 1919, Liam Lynch led a raid on Araglen R.I.C. Barracks, Co. Cork, where the garrison was overpowered and all its rifles and ammunition captured. In Clare there had been similar raids organised by Michael Brennan.

The attacks in Limerick, Clare, Tipperary, Cork and elsewhere, from the spring of 1920 onwards, however, were far more deadly and destructive operations. They were on the model of the attacks on Holycross and Drumbane Barracks in Tipperary and Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork, in January 1920. After his return from Dublin to Tipperary, Sean Treacy, as Vice-Brigadier, was very active in organising and in directing this work. Just before Treacy's arrival from Dublin, "Sean Forde" (Tomás Malone), Vice O.C. of the East Limerick Brigade, had electrified the fighters throughout Limerick and Tipperary by a daring and successful siege of Ballylanders Barracks, a type of operation until then regarded as beyond the modest resources of the Volunteers at that time. The R.I.C. garrison at Ballylanders was well equipped, the building itself was strong, indeed regarded as impregnable, yet "Sean Forde" and twenty men captured and burned it. Three of the garrison were wounded. What was more important and far-reaching, however, was that seven carbines, five Webley revolvers, and several hundred rounds of rifle ammunition were seized.

This seizure of arms and ammunition was far-reaching in its effects, because it greatly encouraged the popular forces and their leaders. Until then the I.R.A. in Tipperary and Limerick were very badly armed. Indeed, before the barrack attacks began, it was estimated that there were little more than a score of service

rifles available, and these were weapons for the most part which had escaped the surrender of arms after 1916. And here may be described the attack on Kilmallock barracks on May 27, although, as will be seen later, Sean Treacy had carried out an operation some weeks before which resembled it in many ways.

After his success at Ballylanders, "Sean Forde" decided on a more ambitious attack, and sought assistance from Clare and South Tipperary. He had decided to attack Kilmallock Barracks for reasons that made all the Volunteer leaders in the South eager to accompany him. Sean Treacy himself was unable to be present, but he sent explosives and ammunition to Dinny Lacey and the other men from South Tipperary who joined "Sean Forde." The fact was that the R.I.C. regarded Kilmallock Barracks as impregnable, and boasted that in the days of the Fenians and the Land League it had overawed the people, and would continue to keep the unruly and seditious in their proper places in the year 1920. These boasts rankled and inspired one of the fiercest and most successful of all the barrack attacks in the "Little War."

Kilmallock Barracks was a substantial fortress, strongly protected by steel shutters and sandbag defence works. The garrison, which generally consisted of two sergeants and eighteen men, when the attack occurred was, in fact, twenty-eight strong—well armed with carbines, Mills bombs and rifle grenades. The attacking party numbered some thirty men, while forty more were engaged in guarding the approaches and barricades that held the roads along which reinforcements could have been hurried to relieve the R.I.C. There was one weak spot in the defences which "Sean Forde" saw and concentrated upon. The barracks were overlooked by other buildings which an attacker could seize, in particular a hotel which dominated the rear. A signal was flashed from the hotel roof and fire was opened on the barracks from all sides. Three heavy weights crashed on to the roof from the top of the hotel. Bottles of petrol followed and then a shower of Mills bombs. The building failed to catch fire and the defenders replied with rifle grenades to the attackers' fire as they crouched behind improvised barricades in the hotel windows and the adjoining houses.

It was after midnight when the attack began. Two hours later, the "cease fire" order was given, but the R.I.C. would not listen to the call to surrender. The roof of the barracks was by then blazing. After the first failure to set the barracks on fire with bombs and petrol, "Sean Forde" had sent out a small party to commandeer an American paraffin oil pump from a yard in the town. The oil was pumped through a hose on to the roof for more than an hour, and at last a Mills bomb started the blaze . . . The R.I.C. fought on gamely. They swept the street in front of the barracks with rifle and revolver fire, and again directed a hail of rifle grenades towards the windows of the hotel behind, without much effect, as the grenades fell short. Hour after hour the siege went on. Three hours later it was dawn and the barracks were a howling furnace.

At five o'clock "Sean Forde" once more gave the order to "cease fire" and repeated his appeal to the garrison to surrender. The attackers had a whole-hearted admiration for the courage of the R.I.C. men who had put up so stubborn a resistance. Again the police refused, and the fight went on until a quarter to six. Then the garrison dashed out from the blazing barracks to a small detached and strongly protected building in the yard, leaving three of their number dead in the flames, with the bulk of their ammunition and grenades. One sergeant and a constable had been killed earlier, and six of the garrison wounded. At seven o'clock the attack ended as, with a final volley, the attackers withdrew. The police replied to this last volley, and in the exchange of shots Captain Liam Scully was killed.

It is well to bear in mind the details of this Kilmallock fight, especially when a similar action at Hollyford Barracks, in which Sean Treacy had been engaged some weeks before, is considered. He took a prominent part in this action at Hollyford (on May 10-11) and was wounded by bomb splinters. In some respects, Hollyford Barracks was a more difficult objective to attack than Kilmallock proved to be; and, as we have seen, despite the one weak spot in its defences, Kilmallock was indeed a formidable objective. The attack on Hollyford required very thorough preparations because the place had no weakness in position. So thorough were the plans made to isolate and burn out Hollyford

garrison and compel their surrender that the actual attack, timed for a Saturday night, had to be delayed until the small hours of Sunday morning.

It was in fact as the last trace of darkness was lifting that the full attack was launched against Hollyford. Tadhg Dwyer was the Battalion O.C. in charge of the area. Seamus Robinson and Ernie O'Malley led the attack in which men from four Tipperary Battalions and the East Limerick Brigade participated. They had only thirteen rifles with twenty rounds apiece and a few hand grenades among them; but they were well supplied with explosives. Sean Treacy, too, stood out as a cool and inspiring leader in the general direction of operations, and in the thick of the dangerous fighting which raged in front of the building. A body of some fifteen to twenty men from the Third Tipperary Brigade, under his leadership, bore the brunt of this frontal attack. O'Malley and Robinson were to play a particularly hazardous part in the capture of the building.

Hollyford Barracks were two storeys in height and in a very strong and favourable position for defence against even more formidable onslaughts than the one which Robinson, Treacy, O'Malley and Tadhg Dwyer debated in their long hours of preparation. The porch in front commanded a full view in all directions from its loop-holes. The gable end at the rear was fortified by a long lean-to building, some fourteen feet in height. Five diverging roads led through Hollyford valley and a river ran along one side of the barracks. The main cover for the frontal attacking party was a low stone wall on the road facing the entrance.

O'Malley, as the attack drew near, seemed to the waiting men unduly conscientious in his strict supervision of the outposts. These outposts had been placed on each of the roads, to hold back any enemy reinforcements that might arrive. Others were busy barricading the roads, cutting telegraph and telephone wires at particular points, or providing ladders and instructing the men who were to place them in position when the time came. And as O'Malley made his rounds from party to party some growled that he was spoiling the business with his "red tape." O'Malley

was to be entangled in more than red tape before very long. The attacking party in front was armed at the outset with shotguns and rifles. Behind these waiting men, busy on the preparations for the attack, moved the cool and magnetic power of Sean Treacy's personality; his very presence steadied and inspired. That night he was living up to his reputation of being "a bit mad on explosives" as he went to and fro supervising the making of rude grenades in Phil Shanahan's father's house nearby.

Very active, too, was a leading officer of the Hollyford men, Jim Gorman, who had not fought in the first World War for nothing. It was on his advice that the startling methods adopted by O'Malley and Robinson in the opening stage of the fight were adopted. He was a crack shot and bayonet fighter, an Irish-Australian who was to be at Sean Treacy's right hand in the coming fights.

Suddenly the attack broke with fury. A dozing sentinel on guard and the remaining eleven men of the garrison were awakened by the crashing sound of hammers on the roof, and feet trampling; and then again the crash of hammers and a sudden blaze of light from overhead accompanied by loud explosions,—and the stink of petrol. In silence the attack had started as Seamus Robinson and Ernie O'Malley, armed with a brace of revolvers each, and laden with grenades, detonators and hammers, began to climb the ladders towards the roof, forty feet above them in the darkness. On their backs petrol tins were tied and paraffin-soaked sods of turf were slung around their necks. At the foot of each ladder three men clamped their stockinged feet against the rungs to hold the ladders steady, and remained there under the loopholes of the barracks until O'Malley and Robinson reached the roof. O'Malley's ladder rested against the chimney; Robinson's against one side of the gable. Buckets of petrol and paraffin oil were placed in readiness near the base of the ladders. In spite of the menacing loopholes, the men holding the ladders disregarded O'Malley's appeal to them to retire to cover. Not until the crash of hammers on the slate roof and the leap of flame and the explosions came from above would they move.

Even while the men above gripped their revolvers and lay flat

on the wrecked and blazing roof, the police beneath exerted themselves to a furious defence. Through the loopholes came prompt volleys of revolver and rifle fire, followed by the bursting of hand grenades. Rockets and Verey lights shot up skywards as a summons to the police and military garrisons in the area to speed help and reinforcements. From the smaller lean-to building the police opened a heavy fusillade against the men on the flaming roof. O'Malley and Robinson had now been joined by Jim Gorman and continued their work of destruction with buckets of petrol. The slates were hot to the touch and the wind blew reeking smoke and flame in their faces. From the roof, and from the chimney, where O'Malley had climbed, came the rattle of revolver fire in reply to the police in the lean-to building. Robinson and Gorman made journeys up and down the ladders with buckets of oil and petrol to feed the blaze.

Sean Treacy, when he had stationed the party in front to his satisfaction just before the attack, went rapidly backwards and forwards to the neighbouring house to bring up more explosives. The party in front, in obedience to Treacy's final orders, held their fire until the first wild volleys roared and flamed from the loopholes, and the grenades burst around them. . . . Above sounded the roar of O'Malley's and Robinson's revolvers: the police were firing on them through the roof of the lean-to building and through the roof of the blazing barracks. . . . A hand grenade slipped from O'Malley's hand as Seamus Robinson was coming up the ladder with a bucket of petrol. . . . the grenade was of a make famous among the fighters of the time for its truly terrifying detonation . . . the grenade hurtled past Robinson's head and burst below with a deafening explosion. Robinson held on grimly and continued up the ladder to rejoin O'Malley.

The supply of explosives was running short and Treacy went back to make some more. Meanwhile the beleaguered garrison had opened a fierce fire on the only men they could locate, and grenades were bursting with ear-splitting noise. As Treacy hurried back by the river which flowed beside the barracks, an

“egg bomb,” thrown from the barracks, rolled along the ground towards him. He dashed forward, seized the bomb, and hurled it back against the building.

Hollyford Barracks was by now a blazing ruin. For all that, the attack was not completely successful, and insofar as the object of the raid was to capture arms, ammunition and equipment, it was a failure. The police retreated to the lean-to building and defied all attempts to dislodge them. From their new positions they kept up sustained rifle and revolver volleys. Moreover, reinforcements were now on the way to aid them. Seamus Robinson overbore the arguments of Treacy and O'Malley and ordered the men to disperse. It was broad daylight. Robinson insisted that the outposts could not hope to hold up the military and police hastening to the scene once darkness had lifted. Robinson and O'Malley were both wounded and scorched after their hours on the roof; their eyelids, eyebrows and hair were singed and blackened.

The attackers broke up into small parties and quietly left the ruins of Hollyford Barracks in flames, while from the lean-to refuge of the garrison bursts of rifle fire rolled on.

Some time later, Phil Shanahan opened the daily paper and read the news. He laughed and said:

“I will never speak to Sean Treacy again! He has burned the only decent house in my native village of Hollyford!”

On the night of June 3, 1920, within a week of the attack on Kilmallock Barracks, and the reprisals on that town which followed—the burning of houses, a creamery and a public hall, and wild shooting in the streets by the R.I.C.—Sean Treacy carried through an elaborate and successful attack on Drangan R.I.C. Barracks, within a few miles of the Kilkenny Border. He consulted with the men from Drangan, Mullinahone, Ballin-garry, the Commons and Callan, when he stayed at Nicholas Moroney's house at Ballynennan, a few miles outside Drangan. The plans and direction of operations were largely his. Seamus Robinson and Ernie O'Malley had left Tipperary some days

before to assist Michael Brennan in a projected attack on Sixmilebridge Barracks, East Clare, and Treacy did not expect that they could return in time. According to O'Malley's account, the East Clare attack was called off at the last minute because there were not sufficient explosives available. O'Malley and Robinson then turned back to rejoin Treacy who had already set somewhat original plans in motion. He gave orders that the siege was to be a silent one, and that a blockade of the roads leading to the barracks, with one road free through the maze, should be prepared. A petrol pump taken at Cashel, and a hoseline were to be used to pump petrol on the roof of the building, while the house next to the barracks was marked down for occupation.

The Drangan area and the Volunteers of the Seventh Battalion were well known to Sean Treacy. He had first visited Drangan in the harvest of 1918, and in the early period he stayed in the following houses: John Morris's in Drangan village; Jack Tobin's, Newtowndrangan; Thomas Barrett's, Crohane; and at Nicholas Moroney's, Ballynennan. And it was with Tom Donovan, O.C., and Nicholas Moroney as Battalion Adjutant, that Treacy discussed the plans for the attack. After some hesitation, Treacy changed the original date of Sunday, June 6, to the previous Thursday, the Feast of Corpus Christi which coincided with the local elections.

This last change was due to a discussion after a Battalion meeting in Ballynennan House on Sunday, May 30, 1920. All arrangements had been made at the meeting, and the first date agreed to. The meeting lasted until 12.30 a.m. Sean Hogan had gone to bed earlier that evening as he was tired out after a long day in the Kilkenny area. Treacy and Moroney were on the point of going to bed, too, when Moroney mentioned to Treacy that Corpus Christi occurred during the week, and that it was also the polling day for the Local Government Elections. He suggested that Thursday night would be more favourable for operations against Drangan Barracks because less notice would be taken of strangers in the area with elections in full

swing. Treacy agreed, but said that he must inspect Drangan Barracks before he made a definite decision. It was then one o'clock in the morning. Treacy and Moroney made their way to Drangan, some two Irish miles to the west, and Moroney led Treacy round the village and the barracks. Treacy made a long survey in silence. On their way home, Treacy suddenly told Moroney that he had made up his mind to attack on the Thursday night. The next day, Monday, Sean Treacy and Sean Hogan left for Brigade Headquarters.

The arrangements for the attack were completed the same day at George Hayden's, Parson's Hill, about two miles west of Drangan. George Hayden was the Seventh Battalion's expert on explosives, and his published notes on the subject have since been highly praised. With Treacy and Hogan at this final meeting were Commandant Tom Donovan, from the Seventh Battalion, who was to be especially prominent on the night of the attack, and J. Foley, Captain of the Drangan Company, who was wounded,—Captain Ned O'Reilly, Brian Shanahan and Jack Ryan (the Master). Dr. P. Conlan, of Mullinahone, was to treat some of the wounded.

The night came. The Volunteers assembled. Sean Treacy and Tom O'Donovan were in command. Nicholas Moroney as Battalion Adjutant was actively supervising the final arrangements. He placed in position the men who were to attack the barracks from the back, and sent word to Treacy that all was in readiness. By 11.30 the barracks were completely surrounded.

The accounts as to what happened immediately after this are somewhat confused. Some of the Volunteers saw Sergeant Robinson, Constable Glennon and a Black and Tan named King come out of the barracks and walk down the street. They were armed with rifles and revolvers—evidently suspicious and on the alert. As the Volunteers had moved to take up their positions all the dogs in the village had started to bark, and howled with mounting fury. This had awakened the R.I.C. and caused them to send out the patrol, which came into conflict with some of the Volunteers at their stations. In an attempt

to seize the three men, the Sergeant was captured, but the other two broke free and rushed inside the barracks, King with a bullet wound across his forehead. This gave the alarm and the firing became general.

According to another account, Sean Hogan, Ned O'Reilly and Brian Shanahan were completing final preparations when Ernie O'Malley and Seamus Robinson walked into the house where Treacy was supervising the manufacture of explosives. He showed them with pride the new incendiary mixtures, "Mud bombs,"—a blend of yellow clay moulded round a stick of gelnite with fuses and detonators attached. He gave them a quick outline of his plans, of his scheme to break into the house next door to the barracks, break through the roof, climb on to the top of the barracks and set it on fire with petrol from the hose-lines. All roads were blocked, as Brian Shanahan had just been in to report, except the back road to Cashel, left free through the maze of obstructions.

Whether or not the shots which now broke the stillness had been caused by the clash with the patrol as it left the barracks, or whether they were fired at a group of O'Malley's men who were boring a hole in a wall opposite the barracks and had been taken off their guard in their rear, is disputed. But what is certain is that there could now be no surprise. Volley after volley came from the sandbagged and loopholed windows. Treacy hastily darted from post to post to see that his men were all in position, and detailed Shanahan to collect any scattered units. He had soon regained control of the situation and made the slight re-adjustment of his plans which the alarm had called for.

The door of a house next to the barracks was smashed in, a hole broken in the roof, and a ladder placed in position from which the ascent to the barracks roof could be made. An oil barrel and pipeline were held in readiness to pump oil on to the barracks roof when the attackers had smashed it with sledge-hammers and plastered it well with mud bombs. Tools were collected to breach the barracks walls at an opportune moment.

Sean Treacy himself was at one moment on a ladder climbing upwards with sledge-hammers in company with Seamus Robinson and Commandant Tom O'Donovan. At another he was in the turmoil on the roof when hammers and mud bombs crashed, and a flame broke out in the darkness. Again, he supported the men scaling the ladder, his parabellum rattling away at a loophole which commanded a view of the attackers getting on to the roof. Treacy had detected this loophole at one end of the barracks and realised the danger. The loophole was a slit about 10 inches high by 4 inches wide on the outside. Treacy fired shot after shot, and every shot got home; as was proved later by the marks on the inside of the loophole which showed that the bullets had ricocheted from the top part into the room inside.

A petrol can filled with gelignite rolled off the roof without exploding. Poles with petrol cans attached were among the missiles which crashed on the slates. One pole missed its mark and fell among a section of the attackers; it, too, failed to explode. When Brian Shanahan explained to Treacy that the gelignite was bad, Treacy smiled drily and said: "Lucky for us!"

The flames lighted the countryside. The besieged garrison sent up dozens of Verey lights which illuminated the scene in ghostly fashion. The fire spread, and the attackers heard ammunition exploding inside the barracks. The Volunteers feared that Drangan would be another Hollyford, and their booty—the rifles and ammunition inside—would again be lost. But the pace of the attack became so fierce and the fire gained such a grip that the police hoisted a white flag—a shirt tied to a rifle—and agreed to surrender if their lives were spared. They were informed that their lives were in no danger, but that they must leave the barracks before the arms and ammunition were further endangered by the fire. O'Malley ordered them to drop their rifles out of the window, but they slung out their guns in a manner calculated to damage them as much as possible. However, the weapons escaped serious injury.

The garrison, headed by a Sergeant O'Sullivan who had been in charge of the defence, marched out with their hands above their heads. Seamus Robinson and Sean Treacy ordered their names to be taken. They were then released with a warning not to be over-zealous in their future activities. They marched away down the village road without looking back. The men rushed into the barracks to salvage what arms and ammunition they could, before the fire swept through it from the upper storeys. A burning beam scorched O'Malley's neck as he dashed out with a box of ammunition, and burned him severely. Ned O'Reilly also was badly burned about the head. Several large boxes of ammunition exploded in the flames. Rifles, carbines, shotguns, revolvers, ammunition and Verey light pistols were carried away to safe dumps. The garrison had left behind no wounded. King, the only one who was hit, had marched away with the rest. The fight had lasted seven hours and the barracks was a burning shell when the attacking party began to disperse over the countryside.

In the small hours of that same morning, June 4, Cappawhite R.I.C. barracks were also attacked and one constable wounded. The roof of the adjoining Courthouse was set on fire. After the fight had lasted three hours the attackers withdrew.

Some days later, Sean Treacy carried out a one-man ambush of a military patrol which had swooped on thirty Volunteers drilling near Cahir. Treacy, O'Malley, Robinson and others were raiding a rifle range at Rehill and had begun its destruction when some commotion at a distance attracted their attention. Sean Treacy left the others and went to investigate. When he reached the military patrol he found a large number of Volunteers under arrest. Treacy opened fire. The patrol replied with wild volleys into the darkness, and all the arrested Volunteers except one or two escaped.

In the attack on Rear Cross Barracks on July 11, 1920, Sean Treacy, Dan Breen, Ernie O'Malley and Jim Gorman were wounded by hand grenade splinters. After a fierce fight

which lasted over five hours, a number of the garrison, including the sergeant in charge, were killed and the building was set on fire and burned down. Treacy, O'Malley and Gorman were on the roof of the barracks when it was set on fire, and Gorman was wounded when the police fired through the roof. Some fifty men from the East Limerick, North and South Tipperary Brigades took part in the attack.

The sergeant in charge of the defenders was a man courageous to the point of recklessness. While Treacy, O'Malley and Gorman stood clearly outlined on the top of the building suddenly lighted by huge flames from below, they were exposed to a danger of which they were unconscious, and which might have been fatal to them if Paddy Dwyer, who was in charge of a party of riflemen below, had not acted with promptness. As the flames burst from the building amid cries to the police to surrender, the door of the porch opened and the sergeant came out, rifle in hand. "Surrender and your lives will be spared!" cried the attackers. The sergeant took no notice and stayed in the doorway.

"Isn't he a daring devil?" muttered one of the attackers. Paddy Dwyer called to his men to hold their fire, and covered the sergeant with his rifle. Again came the demand to surrender. The sergeant took no notice; perhaps, indeed, he did not hear. He aimed his rifle towards the men on the roof, steadily and deliberately. Treacy, O'Malley and Gorman were at his mercy. Paddy Dwyer fired quickly, twice in succession. The sergeant threw up his hands and collapsed, wounded in head and neck. A constable rushed out and dragged the sergeant back into the building. The attack continued but it was evidently nearing its end. Earlier in the fight, the police had made a sortie and charged from the barracks; they were driven back and one of their officers, a cadet, killed.

Treacy's wounds were not as serious as those of O'Malley or Jim Gorman, and, indeed, Treacy made no mention of the bomb splinters which had scarred his hands and arms until afterwards, and then only quite casually. O'Malley and Gorman,

however, collapsed as soon as the attack had finished and had to be carried from the scene by their comrades. Towards the end Treacy heard that a false alarm had begun to circulate that military and police reinforcements were coming, and that some of the men were preparing to break away. He went round and restored the confidence of the men. The police garrison was well armed and nearly forty strong. The fighting here was the fiercest that occurred during all the attacks on the barracks.

Some controversy arose over a projected attack on Clerihan R.I.C. Barracks on July 21. Sean Treacy as usual had made the preliminary plans and the men were actually ready in their positions when Seamus Robinson returned from Dublin. As O.C. of the Third Tipperary Brigade, Robinson hastened to supervise and take charge of the attack. Ned O'Reilly and Treacy had just given final instructions, and put the last touches to their arrangements. The coming attack was by this time known to the police on patrol, who were observed to be giving the barracks a wide berth. Now the Dublin G.H.Q. had just issued an order suspending all barrack attacks in the Tipperary area and elsewhere unless the plans had been previously approved by themselves. It is believed that a copy of this order was contained in a dispatch which reached Treacy just before Robinson arrived. A dispatch rider in search of Treacy had, as a matter of fact, called at Davin's, Rathsallagh, where Treacy had been staying, and had been sent on to Clerihan, where presumably he handed the dispatch to Treacy. When Robinson came up, Treacy showed him the order. He scowled at Treacy and at once called off the attack. According to his own version of the incident, Robinson asked Treacy what possessed him to produce the order at that moment; if only the first shots had been fired Robinson could not then have called off the operation. There was naturally much resentment when the attack was cancelled, and all Robinson's explanations failed to satisfy Ned O'Reilly and other officers, who could not understand why they should be deprived of the arms and ammunition in Clerihan because

Seamus Robinson refused to turn a blind eye on so untimely a dispatch. Treacy never disclosed to them that the dispatch had reached him first, nor did he mention that Seamus Robinson had reproached him for his conscientiousness in revealing it. O'Reilly and the others assumed that Robinson, coming direct on the scene from Dublin, carried the order himself. Seamus Robinson contended that they had the story the wrong way round, although he understood the feeling aroused by his countermanding order.

"Why the dickens," he asked Treacy, "didn't you hold back that dispatch and let the attack go ahead? Or at least show it to me when the first shots had been fired, when no one could have stopped the fighting? If I let the attack go ahead now, and there is any casualty or miscarriage of the plans, there will be a sworn G.H.Q. inquiry, and the entire responsibility will be mine." The story shows Treacy's unfailing loyalty to Robinson, his respect for his military judgment, and his insistence on Robinson's authority. "You are the Brigadier," was Treacy's laconic summary of his views on the matter.

A week later, on the night of July 29, General Lucas, a British officer, who had been held as a hostage by the I.R.A. in East Limerick, escaped and wandered over the countryside until morning. At last he reached the barracks at Pallas and was taken aboard a military lorry by which the mails of the British garrison at Limerick were carried to and from Limerick Junction in Co. Tipperary. As it happened, Sean Treacy had arranged to ambush this lorry and its special military escort that very morning, near the village of Oola, six miles from Tipperary Town. It was arranged that the ambush would fall into two parts. First, a military cyclist, who generally came in advance of the lorry, should be held up by a minor obstruction as he came round a bend of the road; and second, that the lorry should then be attacked by another party of men stationed behind a ditch. Several mishaps, however, nearly turned the ambush into a trap for the ambushers.

General Lucas was in the first lorry which was closely followed by a second. The motor cyclist's machine had been punctured and he and it were aboard the first lorry. Moreover, the main attacking party were armed mostly with Martini-Henry rifles, and by an oversight had been supplied with the wrong ammunition; at a critical moment this ammunition was to stick in the breach and fail to be ejected. The first lorry came round the bend and surprised the men lying in wait for the motor cyclist scout. Some distance ahead, the main barricade had been placed in position. The main party opened fire on the first lorry and shot two soldiers dead,—and then their guns jammed. The remaining soldiers jumped from the lorry and took cover. The second lorry came quickly on the scene. The alarm had already reached the R.I.C. barracks from which an armed body of constabulary could be seen hastening. The fire opened by the military was concentrated on the main body who could not, for the most part, reply. They broke from their positions and ran from cover over the open fields. They were exposed to the fire of the military, and their position would have been critical because they were easy targets in their flight across this open space.

The coolness of Treacy saved them by a daring diversion. He saw the danger and advanced to within sixty yards of the nearest lorry, stationed himself on a ditch on the right-hand side of the road, and opened a rapid fire on the military with his parabellum. Firing coolly and deliberately, Treacy retreated slowly as soon as the rest of the party had found cover. His attack distracted the military and prevented them from picking off at their ease the retreating ambushers. Three of the soldiers were wounded by Treacy's shots, and General Lucas in the nose. The presence of General Lucas, or indeed of his escape, was at that time, of course, unknown to Treacy.

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During the August of 1920, Sean Treacy, after Dan Breen's departure for Dublin, spent much of his time at Davin's, Rath-sallagh, near Rosegreen. Having to return to Dublin himself,

Treacy took steps to have Jerome Davin appointed Battalion Commandant, and with his help, drew up the Battalion boundary lines and discussed the reorganisation of the Third Tipperary Brigade. Before Treacy's departure in the middle of September, he had several very exciting adventures. A great part of his day was spent in writing. Sometimes he went down to a favourite seat in the orchard and sat writing there. The spot overlooked the obvious approaches to the house (which had become the Brigade Headquarters), and Treacy could detect from there the first signs of any military or police raiders. This position was very secluded among the trees, and it had another attraction for Sean Treacy. Once it had been a place where the local Fenians met and drilled in by-gone years. Strangely and appropriately enough, a Fenian dump had been discovered nearby: it contained eleven rifles, heavy old-fashioned Sniders with long rusty Russian bayonets. Two of these venerable guns were actually used in the Black and Tan war.

A subject to which Treacy gave much thought in these days, according to Jerome Davin, was the scheme for the Tipperary flying column, afterwards commanded by Dinny Lacey. Treacy was on the point of returning to Tipperary to form this flying column on the eve of his death. He had done the groundwork which led to its foundation, and had gone into the details of such a force a long time before. It is said that it was on his suggestion that the G.H.Q. considered and eventually sanctioned the scheme afterwards placed before it by Ernie O'Malley. Seamus Robinson called together a number of men from the Third and Fourth Battalions, South Tipperary Brigade, for the purpose of electing a Commandant for the new Column. The candidates put up for election were Tadhg Dwyer and Dinny Lacey, and Lacey was appointed. Before his departure, Treacy often met the group at Drangan and discussed plans for operations with them. Subsequently a second column was formed of which Sean Hogan was O.C.

Whenever they were in Rosegreen area, Treacy, Robinson,

Breen and Sean Hogan often stayed at Looby's of Milltown. Here, Treacy left the same memory as elsewhere of a reserved, silent, confident man, so quiet in company that his aloofness was often a damper on the more boisterous members. When the company played cards, Sean Treacy would join in games of solo whist. He was delighted when he won, and indifferent when he lost. He never took part in the games of poker, much favoured by his companions and the visitors who came to Looby's. He was very friendly with children, and it was noted that wherever he stayed they became his devoted allies. And this was no one-sided alliance, as Treacy would protect them from the wrath of their parents, no matter what their misdeeds. If their parents locked them up, Treacy would quietly unearth the key, and very soon he and the erring child were well beyond pursuit.

As at Oola, twice again before he left Tipperary on his last journey to Dublin, Sean Treacy helped to rescue his comrades from desperate situations by a cool and single-handed intervention at a critical moment.

First at the village of Rosegreen on August 12, where he had attended a Battalion Council. The meeting broke up, and some of the officers remained chatting on the roadside near the house. Treacy stayed inside, hard at work completing his notes. Suddenly a cyclist party of British soldiers appeared in the village. The Volunteer officers ran back into the house and gave the alarm. Treacy jumped up, reached for his gun, and told the others to break down the back door to secure their retreat. By this time the officer in charge of the raiding party, Lieutenant Woulfe, had reached the front door, gun in hand. Treacy immediately fired at him, wounded him seriously, and threw the raiders into confusion. Treacy rushed out of the back door, circled the house, and fired again at the raiders. He wounded two other soldiers, and with the rest of his comrades, escaped. The patrol made no further attempt to follow them.

The following night, Treacy heard that the British intended to burn houses in Rosegreen as a reprisal. He took up his

position in Sadleir's Lodge, about half a mile from the village, posted sentries and scouts, and prepared an organised resistance to any attempt at reprisals. A large "reprisal" party of British soldiers in fact arrived from Fethard and other stations. Three of Treacy's sentries were surprised and captured. The "reprisal" party guessed from this that an ambush had been prepared, and not knowing from where an attack might come, withdrew without carrying out their intentions.

A month later, Sean Treacy was even in more serious danger, and once again covered retreat from a raid where he escaped capture by good luck and hard shooting. The incident later was known as "The Blackcastle Races." On September 12, a Brigade Council was in session in a haggard at Meagher's of Blackcastle. The raid came unexpectedly and almost without warning. Every battalion in the Brigade was represented by three officers each, and the entire Brigade Staff was also present. A long avenue led from the gateway to the farm, up to which some hundred mounted Lancers dashed at a furious gallop. The raiders had staggered the scouts for the moment, and no warning from the outside had time to reach the meeting. The situation was only saved by Tom ("Charlie") Meagher, who, with great presence of mind, promptly slammed the gate against the on-coming soldiers and forced them to dismount. The delay gave the party in the haggard time to gather their belongings and scatter through the fields.

Sean Treacy gave a quick order to collect all books and documents, whereupon he, Jack O'Meara, Con Molony, Arty Barlow, Tadhg Dwyer, Jerome Davin and the others fell upon them and then dashed in various directions. Treacy pulled out his parabellum, found he had removed the magazine, and muttered: "Confound you, you are never ready when I want you!" He reloaded, waited behind the wall of the haggard until the raiders came into view, and then opened a rapid fire. Con Moloney had already fired with his automatic and one of his shots had glanced off the peak of Jerome Davin's cap. Seamus Robinson was nearly intercepted by a group of the soldiers and

ran before them straight for a pond surrounded by bushes, into which he slithered and, in the happy phrase of one present, "became a submarine." Robinson sank completely under the water near some reeds, placed one of these in his mouth, and breathed through it until the soldiers, who had seen him dive in, grew tired of the search and went away in bewilderment.

Treacy gave a last look round to see that nothing remained in the haggard after firing his first shots at the raiders, and then dashed off to rejoin the others in their flight across the fields. Arty Barlow could see Treacy pausing every now and then, the last of the retreating men. As he paused Treacy fired; then retired, paused and fired again,—until the pursuit died down. With the exception of three men who were captured, one up a tree some fields away, the entire meeting escaped. When he rejoined the main body Treacy made arrangements to reassemble later, and the meeting took place the same evening. There were several disquieting and mysterious points about the raid, and Sean Treacy at once ordered an inquiry.

There was a suspicion that the meeting place had been given away, as such accurate information of the time and place of Brigade meetings had not reached the military before. Long afterwards, a Clonmel I.R.A. officer was informed by an R.I.C. Inspector that the information had been given to the British authorities by a local Volunteer. The Inspector added that the reward offered some five or ten pounds, was rejected by the informer as too small, and eventually he was told to go to the devil and was paid nothing. The Clonmel I.R.A. officer was inclined to believe this story, and thought from the way the story was told that it referred to a man suspected by himself and others at the time. Treacy never hinted that the explanation of the raid might have laid in any treachery among his own men, but accepted a much simpler and more creditable reason: an I.R.A. dispatch captured near Cahir that day might have given away the time and place of the meeting fixed for two o'clock at Meagher's. Davin's, at Rathsallagh, was, as before mentioned, the Brigade Headquarters then, and Treacy had been busy all

the morning there with dispatch riders coming and going.

The conduct of the officer in charge of the raid surprised some of those present. It was felt that he must have been unusually sportsmanlike, secretly sympathetic, or, at any rate, disgusted with the alleged treachery that may have taken place. Those who backed the informer theory declared that this officer, who was shortly afterwards transferred, had been removed from Cahir because he had given a broad hint to a reputed Sinn Fein sympathiser in the locality who was really a British agent. This may have been merely picturesque folklore to embroider "The Blackcastle Races," but it did seem to those who upheld the informer story that, with a little more effort, the whole Brigade personnel could have been captured. As the Lancers had come dashing towards the top of the avenue, and the flight was beginning, the officer was heard shouting aloud: "Give the beggars a chance!" and he also refrained from giving an order to fire. What really puzzled Sean Treacy and the others, however, was why no warning from Cahir and neighbourhood reached them of the presence and activities of so large a military force. True, that as Con Moloney drove along the main road he had noticed no signs of any military activity whatever. . . . The cause of the "Blackcastle Races" still remains a mystery.

Such is the story of the barrack attacks, fights and escapes that marked Sean Treacy's last days in Tipperary. Some nights before his return to Dublin, he visited his friends the Looby's, who noticed how smart and well-dressed and cheerful he looked. He also visited his friends the Donnelly's, at Nodstown, and went over his old farm at Solohead with his friend Sean Horan.

His farewell visits over, he set out for Dublin with Sean Hogan. They travelled via Kilkenny, and not without a touch of excitement en route. At Callan they met John J. Dunne of that town, Commandant of the Seventh Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, who arranged to drive them to Dublin. After a short consultation with Michael Grace, of Callan, and Commandant James Roughane, Dunne, Treacy and Hogan left in a small 1915 Ford car, and a very heavy load in addition: two Webley

revolvers and a parabellum, held concealed in the hands of Treacy and Hogan beneath a travelling rug, seven tins of petrol, and enough ammunition to pack the small car to its capacity. The road they took brought them through Carlow and towards Naas. As they passed through Dunlavin village, Treacy and Hogan gripping their revolvers tightly, but joking and chatting away, Dunne suddenly swung round a bend and almost into two Crossley tenders,—full of Auxiliaries, evidently very active. Fortunately the tenders were stationed near a cross-roads, which gave colour to the ruse which Dunne adopted. He swore aloud in an assumed English accent, reversed the car with much heated language on the pretence that he had mistaken the route, and drove in another direction. He knew the countryside very well and decided to take no risks of further encounters with military and police, especially as he noticed soldiers on patrol. He drove straight to a neighbouring demesne, and bluffed the gate-keeper by shouting aloud in the same assumed accent orders to let the car through. When the gate was opened Dunne drove through with all possible speed. The short cut through the demesne brought the car on to the main road some miles ahead where there was no military activity. The journey ended without further incident after a record run through Blessington and Terenure.

Sean Treacy and his companions had no intention of making a very long stay in Dublin. Their minds were full of their plans for the flying column. Treacy discussed the whole scheme with G.H.Q., and then worked out details with Collins and McKee; and at the same time concentrated on lessons in the use of the Hotchkiss gun. As before, he reported daily to G.H.Q.; and, as before, he soon found that the chase was hot on his heels.

Before he had returned to the city his friend, Ned O'Reilly, had been very puzzled by Treacy's attitude towards certain operations that had been mooted for the last week in October. Sean for some reason seemed to wish that these activities should not be planned for those particular dates.

O'Reilly and Treacy were at that time staying together, on the run, and at night Treacy generally discussed the affairs and plans of the Brigade. O'Reilly noticed that Sean, even for him, had become very silent and uneasy. Captain Ned O'Reilly was puzzled. He knew that Treacy cared little and worried less about the obvious dangers of his life which a bullet might end in the Dublin streets, or in an ambush in Tipperary. O'Reilly knew, as all who had known Treacy's hunted life knew, that Treacy could sleep through the heaviest night firing—and wake ready and unperturbed even as the raiders swooped. O'Reilly was convinced that Sean Treacy was gravely disturbed about something, but could not speak out.

O'Reilly never learned the truth until long after Treacy's death, although he was one of the few of Treacy's friends who might have guessed it, knowing, as he did, of Treacy's engagement to Miss May Quigley.

It was not until a few days after Sean Treacy reached Dublin that he wrote to Miss Quigley's aunt, Miss Alice Ryan of Tipperary to let her know that the wedding was fixed for October 25, 1920—May Quigley's birthday—and that they were to live at Grange, Co. Tipperary.

The wedding was to be a doubly secret one, secret necessarily from the British authorities, and secret from Miss Quigley's parents, although the news of the marriage would hardly have surprised them. Her mother had known of the attachment between them, and then of their engagement. But May Quigley had long since refused to discuss Treacy or the Irish fight with her father; it was the old clash of the political views of two generations—the clash that had entered many an Irish home from the Rising of 1916, the shots at Soloheadbeg, and the triumph of Dail Eireann.

In October, Miss Quigley had arranged to take up work as a musician in an Ennis cinema on the 14th of that month. In the meantime she was in Dublin alone, in her aunt's house in Merrion. She had not seen Sean Treacy for some time and did not expect to see him before she left for Clare.

Suddenly Sean Treacy arrived looking very much alive and very trim in his trench-coat.

“Something made me come to-night,” he said, and she long remembered his emphasis of the words, “I had to see you. I flew here.”

Treacy's tone harmonised with a foreboding May Quigley felt that evening, a strong presentiment that she would never see him again, and that he would not live until the 25th to marry her on her birthday.

CHAPTER X

THE FIGHT AT "FERN SIDE."

IN the last month of his life, spotters, touts, detectives and raiding parties were close on the track of Sean Treacy. He surprised his friends, not only by his indifference to the search for him, but by his refusal to listen to appeals not to move around so openly. He defied his trackers and trusted to fate. Some days before his death he visited his friend, Miss Nora O'Keeffe, at the Labour Headquarters, where she was then acting as secretary to Thomas Johnson, Leader of the Labour Party. She asked him whether it was not very dangerous for him to visit a place so notoriously under observation. She knew of the narrow escapes of Breen and himself in the preceding weeks, their clashes with the Auxiliaries and Secret Service men which had become so frequent that it was clear that if they remained in Dublin their capture was inevitable. Moreover, local R.I.C. men had been brought to Dublin to mark down the Tipperary Volunteers "on the run" in the capital.

Sean Treacy replied without emotion, and as if he were merely stating facts which had no immediate concern with himself, that no doubt his visit, like other visits he was making, was a risk, and perhaps rash. But there was little chance in any case that he could escape death or capture in the end. Miss O'Keeffe knew, as all Treacy's friends knew, that he was determined never to be taken alive. Treacy added quietly, however, "Oh, they'll get me some day. So why shouldn't I do some good, and see my friends while there is time?"

This feeling of fortitude and defiance was common among the men who, like Treacy, lived with their lives in their hands, dogged night and day by spies and their creatures, the quarry of Dublin Castle's agents eavesdropping and prowling for the

slightest hint or clue that might lead to the capture of the leaders and fighters of the secret army. Treacy's comrade, Dick McKee, pressed hard by the touts and spies in the shadows behind him, a few weeks later threw caution to the winds, and was hauled away with his friend, Peadar Clancy, to the bullets and bayonets of the Auxiliaries in Exchange Court; Michael Collins roamed round Dublin openly, dismissing the frenzied hunt after him, and keeping a grip on sanity only by indifference.

Treacy and Breen knew many of their pursuers by sight, and had drawn their guns now and then to put them to flight. One minor villain, in particular, Sean Treacy noted, no tough gunman Auxiliary from the Castle gang, no plain-clothes R.I.C. man on the pounce, hawk-eye and gun ever ready, no polished Secret Service man weaving his web, none of these, nor even a familiar G. man, but an under-sized, slate-eyed, typical Dublin gutty with a bow-tie. This man, indeed, was lucky. He survived Treacy, and escaped the fate of the betrayer of McKee and Clancy, a tout much like the man with the bow-tie, who found himself dangling from a lamp post down a dark lane one night when a group of Clancy's friends decided that a rope must serve because they had left their guns at home. . . . But one persistent tracker, who prowled after Treacy through the backways of Drumcondra, and sent the raiders to "Fernside" in the autumn of 1920, escaped rope and bullet, and lived through all the wars, yet not wholly unscathed.

Once, long afterwards, when Treacy was in his grave, and many of Treacy's friends had fallen on opposite sides in the Civil War, this unsavoury rascal was haunted—and saved—by the very ghost of Sean Treacy himself, or at least by the spirit of Treacy, as this story may show. It was in the years after the Civil War, and this man had become a lorry driver. Luck had preserved him from the pursuit that followed him in turn when Treacy had fallen victim to spy and bullet. He evaded all traps set for him, missed death by seconds several times, walked abroad for a while in the first days of the Truce, confident that Sean Treacy's friends who eyed him grimly would

defer settling accounts with him at that time. There was a half-hint in their glances that while any vengeance in time of truce would be murder, if the war started again, then it would be quite another thing. Believing in not tempting Providence overmuch, the man with the bow tie vanished.

Civil War came and passed. Along the main road to the Curragh went a car with three Free State officers and one woman, who, by her activities in befriending Treacy and Breen, had good reason to remember the man with the bow tie. She was on the Republican side in the Civil War, but her friendships in the opposite camp had survived it. She had just recovered from a serious operation, and was on her way to visit some friends in the Curragh Camp. In the gathering darkness, she noticed a light approaching. The next moment there was a crash. As she lost consciousness, she thought that she was delirious, or back in the days of the Black and Tan war, when she heard one of the Free State officers shouting:

“It’s the bloody so-and-so with the bow tie! Give me a gun some one, quick!”

The crash had occurred outside a publichouse. The landlord greeted the officers enthusiastically when he heard the shouts, and in particular the references to the man with the bow tie. The landlord had fought on the Republican side and was a very handy man with a gun. In other days, he had waited with the Free State officers to settle accounts with this same man. The landlord saw him break free from a bout of fisticuffs, saw the wild and angry chase across the fields, but did not see him double back, enter his house, and make, terror-stricken, for an upper room,—very fortunately for him, as the landlord and the officers were congratulating themselves that something had dropped from the skies to unite them after their recent differences. Their delight overcame any nice scruples that might have checked them in calmer moments.

“We have him altogether, boys,” said the landlord, “at last!”

“But where is he?” asked the others. “He has the devil’s luck. He’s gone again!”

The man with the bow-tie had dashed into a room upstairs where the woman was just recovering consciousness. When he looked at her he had his second fright that day. He knew her very well: Miss K. Fleming of Drumcondra, whom he had often shadowed. . . There was the fear of death in his eyes.

"Mother of God!" he groaned. "Save me from them! They'll murder me! Don't let them get me!"

He was exhausted from his race across the fields. His eyes were blackened and his face covered with blood. Loud voices and heavy footsteps sounded nearer. Miss Fleming looked at him. She could not feel vindictive. The Truce had saved him once. To refuse him help would be a savage act, and across her mind flashed the memory of Treacy, trailed and betrayed by this very man, and she felt that the shade of Treacy would forbid an easy vengeance. . . Nearer and nearer came the footsteps and voices. . . . She pointed to the table in the room, covered by a long cloth that reached to the floor. He crawled underneath it and lay still, as a doctor came in. The officers and the landlord followed, and he heard them cursing him. The shivering wretch remained hidden until the room was empty and then made his escape.

Miss Fleming remembered the man with the bow-tie all too well. He was linked in her memory with the "Fernside" tragedy on October 12, 1920. The Fleming's house in Drumcondra Road had been a centre for the Tipperary men "on the run" ever since October, 1919. Eamonn O'Brien and Jim Scanlon had hidden there after Knocklong. Dan Breen and Sean Treacy often made their way there. Michael Fleming had been connected with the Republican Movement ever since he had gone into Jacob's in 1916 and thence onwards into one of the fiercest fights of Easter Week with Richard Mulcahy and Thomas Ashe at Ashbourne. His friend, Rourke, had first put his elder brother, James, in touch with Eamonn O'Brien and Jim Scanlon in 1919. As the chase after Breen and Treacy grew hotter, they often stayed with the Flemings. Sean Hogan, Seamus Robinson and Dinny Lacey came there, too.

James Fleming knew that his house was being watched, and that it would some day or other become too dangerous as a hiding place. So, fearing that his house might be raided, and knowing that Breen and Treacy were coming, he went to his friend, Professor Carolan, of "Fernside," Drumcondra, and told him the full facts, as well as he knew them, about their activities. Carolan at once declared that they were welcome to come to "Fernside" at any time. So Breen and Treacy went there, accompanied by another member of the Fleming family, Peter. Professor Carolan gave them a key, showed them over the house and garden, with a special word on possible exits in case of surprise. He invited them to stay there any night they wished. They slept there several times.

Early in October, 1920, Richard Mulcahy sent a very urgent warning to the Flemings after a raid on their house. It would be unsafe, he said, to shelter any wanted man, or have anyone who was active in the movement around the premises until suspicion had died down. This warning was phrased in the most emphatic terms, and Miss Fleming, who received it, took it very seriously. She had a suspicion that she was being shadowed by a man she noticed hanging around the neighbourhood; a "man with a bow-tie," with a mean air and furtive look. But spy-mania was in the fashion, too much so, she thought, and she kept her suspicions to herself—until October 11, 1920.

On that afternoon, Miss Fleming boarded a Drumcondra tram and went into the city to meet Mrs. Eamonn O'Brien in O'Connell Street. Mrs. O'Brien was in Dublin arranging with Michael Collins for papers and passports that would enable her to slip over to the United States and rejoin her husband, Eamonn O'Brien. Miss Fleming had just received the papers from Joe O'Reilly and the news that all arrangements had been made for this trip to America. Eamonn O'Brien's father had also come to Dublin and was staying with the Flemings; it was his second visit to the capital.

On the tram behind her, Miss Fleming noticed the "man with the bow-tie" again. But she forgot all about him when

she met Mrs. O'Brien at the Pillar. They began laughing over the pranks of Eamonn O'Brien and Jim Scanlon en route for Dublin after Knocklong—the first disguised as a priest, and the second as a very pro-British sailorman. They were on different sides of the partition in one of those open railway carriages as they made their way to Dublin, Ned O'Brien's clerical hat just showing over the partition. And the train passing along from Cork to Dublin, and stopping, of all places, a minute or two at Knocklong. . . A great cheer came from the lads beside Jim Scanlon, sailorman: "Up Knocklong! That was the stuff to give the peelers!" And says Jim Scanlon, the sailorman, in his best Galbally invective: "Easy for you so-and-so's to cheer Knocklong when loyal men were saving you all from the so-and-so Germans!" One word borrowed another and there was grave danger of Jim Scanlon, loyalist, going through the window right on to the rails on his head. And the language!—Jim Scanlon's not the least lurid for all his loyalty and good words for the King's Navy. Then the grave and reproachful face of Ned O'Brien, clerical hat and all, looked over the partition, and there was a great chorus of: "Sorry, Father, we didn't see you." And with a few growls, Jim Scanlon and the rest subsided.

Miss Fleming and Mrs. O'Brien went into a picture house and had no sooner taken their seats when Dan Breen and Sean Treacy came casually in and took two vacant seats in front of them. Sean turned and recognised them. He and Breen had had a very mixed day. Breen had backed a lucky horse and drawn the winnings. Before that, their fortunes had been bleak. Treacy told Miss Fleming that he and Dan were "wall-falling" from hunger as they had tasted no food that day. They were in so exhausted a state that even when they had got funds they had not bothered to break their fast, but had slipped into the cinema to rest. Miss Fleming's one idea then was to take the two men to Drumcondra, give them a quick meal before Curfew, and send them off to a safe place. She remembered Mulcahy's warning, but decided she could take the risk. Treacy and Breen

accepted the invitation. As they were leaving some time later she noticed that the "man with the bow-tie" was seated some distance behind her. She moved away from the group quietly, left by another exit and met the others outside. The man might be trailing her, but still she said nothing. She was afraid that both Treacy and Breen were too exhausted and, at any hint of danger that involved the Flemings, would make some excuse not to come. Treacy's phrase "wall-falling from hunger," and his casual mention of a certain house from which they had set out very early that morning with no more substantial fare than a cup of milk, had shocked her. Outside in the street she noticed the same man again, but still kept silence. She kept silence for a different reason now. She understood suddenly by Treacy's eyes and manner that both he and Breen knew that the spotters were again on the trail. (Breen afterwards in his account said that he recognised one of the Castle murder gang also on the watch). Treacy restrained Breen with a look from drawing his gun and dealing with the spotters. Breen, too, checked an impulse to open fire, and fell behind the party; he knew that an exchange of shots would endanger the lives of Miss Fleming and Mrs. O'Brien. The trackers disappeared.

But only for a space. Breen and Treacy took up positions at each end of the tram top to keep an eye for possible spotters. Once, before Drumcondra was reached, Breen and Treacy, with their guns ready, made a dash for the stairs—and a startled Castle tout jumped from the footboard and vanished down a dark side street.

When the Fleming's house was reached, Eamonn O'Brien's father gave Treacy and Breen a great welcome, and they held a lively conversation in spite of Miss Fleming's now open warnings of the dangers that dogged them. Treacy admitted that he knew quite well that they were shadowed when leaving the cinema. It was evident that Breen and he had other shadowers in mind besides the one suspected by Miss Fleming, but this gentleman was not to be long forgotten. Michael Fleming and Miss Dot Fleming next arrived and warned the party that "the

bow tie" was outside the house again. The meal went on, and it was decided that Breen and Treacy should leave by the back exit which led into Botanic Avenue. Michael Fleming left by the front door in the hope of distracting attention, but he could discover then no signs of any watch on the house. In the meantime, Treacy and Breen had made their way via the Tolka Bridge to "Fernside," some five minutes' walk away.

The spotter had vanished, but it is believed that he still kept the house and its exits under observation, that he had tracked Treacy and Breen to Professor Carolan's door, returned, and rung up Dublin Castle from a neighbouring house. Otherwise, since Treacy and Breen had left the Flemings only just before the Curfew hour, then at 11 p.m., it would be difficult to understand how the two men could be located, and Dublin Castle informed, at that late hour.

"Fernside," Drumcondra, was a small two-storey house with a long garden at the back, opening at that time on to fields since built over, near Home Farm Road. Breen and Treacy arrived shortly after eleven, and entered quietly without disturbing any of the family, who were unaware of their presence. They made their way upstairs to the back bedroom on the first floor, which Professor Carolan had told them they could use at any time. The bedroom overlooked a small glass conservatory. A high wall separated the garden from the neighbouring houses, but the wall at the end of the garden was low.

Treacy was restless, and he and Breen talked for some time, mainly about their approaching return to Tipperary. There was some strange shadow of a presentiment over them. Treacy insisted on saying the rosary. ("A nice pair of boyos," said Dick McKee to Leo Henderson when he heard this later. "Mixing revolvers and rosaries!") He placed his long parablellum within reach. Before they went to sleep Breen half-jokingly remarked that there might be a raid, as perhaps they had been shadowed. "I wouldn't mind if we were killed now, Dan," Treacy said. "The war is going on, whatever happens, and if we are killed I hope we die together."

Dublin Castle was astir. At last they had tracked down Breen and Treacy, whether or not they were certain of the exact identity of the men in "Fernside" whom their spies had located; but Dublin Castle's armed forces were gathering to speed through the darkened streets, headed by Major Smyth with vengeance in his heart. ⁽¹⁾

Professor Carolan was rudely awakened. He realised the danger to his guests and their presence in the house almost at the same moment . . . the noise of lorries with their engines running after a swift halt at the gate outside . . . an armoured car rumbling round the corner of Home Farm Road . . . a hurried rush along the short path in front of "Fernside" . . . a raid breaking suddenly in the dark hours of the night. Even as the raiders hammered on the door, Professor Carolan rose quickly, tapped an abrupt warning on Breen and Treacy's door, and rushed downstairs.

The glass panels of the front door went in with a crash; the angry voice of Major Smyth sounded in Professor Carolan's ears:

"The names of the men who are staying with you, quick, who are they?"

The commonest name in Co. Tipperary came to Professor Carolan's lips—it would leave the Major no wiser than before, and if he questioned the guests the name at least would match the accent:

"Do you mean the Ryans?"

(1). His brother, Divisional Commissioner Smyth, had been shot dead in Cork, after a speech in Listowel R.I.C. Barracks in June, 1920, which led to a mutiny in the force. "You must go out six nights a week," said Divisional Commissioner Smyth to eighteen glowering R.I.C. men, "and get out of the barracks by the skylight or the back door so that you won't be seen. The more you shoot the better I will like you. We want your assistance in carrying out this scheme of wiping out Sinn Fein. "You forget, Mr — Smyth," returned one of the R.I.C. men, "that you are talking to Irishmen. Your own brains may be plastered on that ceiling first. To Hell with you." Smyth ordered him under arrest, but the other R.I.C. men became so menacing that Smyth and his party had to hasten out of the barracks. A few weeks later two armed Volunteers entered the Cork County Club and shot him dead.

The house was surrounded now, and through the windows of the small bedroom where Treacy and Breen were springing out of bed to dress hurriedly and secure their revolvers, glared the powerful searchlight from the armoured car stationed in the rear.

They slipped into socks, shirts and trousers. They had only time for a whispered farewell and a handshake, then gripped their guns. Treacy had his long parabellum ready: Dan Breen had a weapon in each hand,—and none too soon. . .

"Where is Ryan? Where is Lacey?"

The shouts of the raiders rang through the house. . . Two bullets crashed through the door of the little room. Treacy's parabellum and Dan Breen's German Mauser cracked in reply. Louder and louder rose the chorus inside and without in the garden: "Where is Ryan? Where is Lacey?" The quick flashes from the raiders' guns lighted up the garden beyond . . . Treacy and Breen replying . . . A death trap beyond a doubt . . . a ring around them . . . no escape. Already Breen was wounded and blood flowed from his right thumb. . . Cries of pain floated in through the half-open door . . . the thud of falling bodies . . . Breen and Treacy feeling as if they were in some strange nightmare.

Dan Breen dashed on to the landing . . . the group of raiders there scattered pell-mell and beat a hurried retreat to the floor below as he fired on them.

Downstairs bullets were crashing through the glass door panels into the back room . . . the conservatory windows were riddled . . . the volleys were wild but had deadly intent. Breen returned to the bedroom . . . he thought Treacy's gun had jammed, and he shouted at him to stand back. But Sean had merely paused to re-load . . . he stepped back . . . just as he did so a bullet from without crashed through and buried itself in the wardrobe. . . Another. . . Treacy's parabellum volleyed into the dark. . . . There was silence on the stairs and in the hall. This lull did not deceive them. They knew that the forces were regrouping for an overwhelming assault.

Breen was beside himself with rage and defiance, as he saw half a dozen soldiers creeping up the stairs. Point-blank he fired into them, and rushed forward with a fury from which all calculation or thought of safety had gone . . . in his excitement he did not feel his wounds, although several times the shots of the attackers had caught him. From the room behind came a peremptory summons from Treacy to return. . . . Breen had emptied his gun with telling effect at the soldiers as they fled for safety down the stairs. He stumbled over two dead officers and a wounded Tommy as he made his way back into the room to Treacy. . . Major Smyth lay dead across the threshold . . . and his friend White. . . They had fallen in their first wild dash to get Breen and Treacy in their bed.

Dan Breen staggered into the room, and he thought that his guns had jammed. . . He had forgotten to re-load. . . . His wounds were telling on him. . . Treacy's sixth sense—the old instinct that had saved the ambush party at Oola . . . at Rose-green . . . in many a tight corner—had already told him the way out of this death trap. He pointed to the window and shoved Breen towards it, urging him at the same time to re-load. Breen swung down over the window sill and crashed into the conservatory roof, cutting his knees and feet severely. Outside stretched the night . . . the friendly darkness . . . the long garden and the fields. In a trance from pain and shock . . . with blood flowing from five bullet wounds and numerous cuts, Breen groped his way towards the low wall at the end of the garden, stumbling over the dead bodies of two soldiers. He crossed the low wall and called out to Treacy in the darkness . . . there was no reply. . . Into his numbed brain came the thought that his comrade, Sean, was dead . . . no reply but the rifles . . . and the armoured car at which he blazed as he turned down Drumcondra Road . . . in desperation then—he knew not how—climbing the high wall of St. Patrick's Training College . . . and so across the Tolka River towards a friendly lighted window and succour.

But what of Sean Treacy? He was not dead, as Breen had thought, nor had he yet quitted the house. When he pushed the

half-conscious Breen towards the window, Sean dashed back on to the landing and emptied the parabellum over the stairhead at the soldiers who were stealing up once more. Then he returned to the room and followed Breen through the open window. He lowered himself on to the broken conservatory roof and so to the ground, groping his way in the darkness towards the low garden wall . . . he, too, stumbled over the dead bodies of the two soldiers. Treacy called to Dan, but no answer came. He looked, but could not find him . . . the darkness had swallowed him up. Breen, he thought then, was dead somewhere in the garden or in the fields.

Treacy crossed the low garden wall, and as soon as he recognised his surroundings, pressed on towards Finglas, dressed only in shirt, trousers and socks. There would be safety there at least in the house of Big Phil Ryan whom he knew and where he had stayed before . . . if he could find it in time. Treacy's hands and knees were bleeding from the broken glass of the conservatory. He stanchd the blood with his handkerchief—a large red silk one bordered with yellow, a curious first-aid dressing, indeed! Dan Breen had chaffed him about it when he saw it.

"Why don't you buy a good Irish one, Sean?" Dan had jested, "and not that Gloucester rubbish!" Rubbish or not, Irish, English or Japanese, it was his only bandage. . . He came to Phil Ryan's door at last.

Sean Treacy knocked. A woman's voice replied. Treacy answered that he "was an Irishman who must get in." Big Phil Ryan knew the voice and the door was opened.

Sean Treacy was unusually silent. He told the company very little at first. His thoughts were with his old comrade, Dan Breen, dead in the Drumcondra fields . . . dead or wounded . . . probably dead. But Big Phil Ryan's questions drew him on and out of his mourning. They listened as he told them, briefly of the fight at "Fernside." They acted promptly. It was settled that a messenger should be sent to the Flemings to tell them what had happened, and see what aid could be sent

to Breen if he was still alive and free. Treacy's wounds were bandaged. He went into the room they got ready for him and sank into a deep sleep. It was now well into the early hours of Tuesday, October 12, 1920.

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A presentiment of imminent trouble and danger for Treacy and Breen had kept Miss Fleming wide awake after they left the house. Just before 12.30, hearing heavy firing, she rose and dressed. She knew that the firing was near enough to be at "Fernside," and she had no doubt that "Fernside" was being raided and that Breen and Treacy were fighting for their lives. . . . And she knew, too, that the Fleming's house would very likely be raided before long. Her sister, Dot, woke and argued with her: shots were not unusual during Curfew hours . . . but even as they argued, they heard the lorries rumble down the main road and stop. It was about one o'clock. There was the usual knocking, and the shouts for admittance, but this time there was an angry fevered note in the summons. From their badges and red hats and gold braid it was evident that some very high military officers had come out on this particular raiding party.

James Fleming had hardly time to dress before the raiders were inside the door. He noticed that the hand of the officer who first spoke to him was shaking. "I don't mind war," cried the officer, "but two of your men have shot two of our best officers in 'Fernside'." The officer recovered himself and asked a question about Breen and Lacey. The question was reassuring: the raiders were uncertain of the identity of the men who had escaped, but it was equally certain that the Castle spotters had connected the Flemings and "Fernside." It remained a problem how far the spotters knew the actual identity of Sean Treacy that night, and it was evident that the raid was a raid on suspicion, and that the raiders had little actual evidence that Breen and his companion had, in fact, been in Flemings earlier that night. (But, as Michael Fleming was to learn later, the raiders strongly suspected that Treacy, Breen,

Dinny Lacey and Robinson had, from time to time, stayed there).

The senior officer, after a sharp and very heated argument with James Fleming—who told him that he, James Fleming, could not answer questions until he was dressed decently,—allowed him to finish dressing, and then asked for the key of the safe. Fleming gave it to him, but the result was disappointing. The search went on, and a most extraordinary search it proved. From the outset, the raiders seemed to be suffering from nervous shock, and were almost hysterical in their inconsequence and aimless violence.

James Fleming felt a hand groping towards his pocket; he gripped the hand, jerked it downwards, and shot out his hip: an officer beside him cried out sharply.

"Do you see that," protested Fleming to the officer in charge, "why have you not ordered this man to search me before he tries to plant something in my pocket?" The would-be planter fell back, a silly dazed expression in his eyes. The senior officer snapped something at him and he left the room. The raiders were ransacking the house. A drunken or hysterical officer lurched against the wall, and half-a-dozen eggs broke in his pockets and oozed through the cloth. A third officer entered with a revolver and ordered James Fleming to sit down on a wicker chair. Soldiers stood with rifles at the ready at an open door.

"Sit down!" blustered the third officer with hell in his eyes. He backed to the door as James Fleming flamed up and refused, with the invitation to shoot him standing, if they must shoot him. Fleming continued to defy him angrily. Miss Fleming rushed in and called for the officer in charge of the raid. He came down and assured her that her brother's life was in no danger. He sharply told the third officer to put up his gun and control himself.

Already Miss Fleming had learned much about the "Fernside" raid. The raiders who dashed upstairs into the bedroom had been in the charge of an officer who assured

them politely enough that they had nothing to fear. He sat down on one of the beds, almost weeping. Miss Fleming listened to his story and was sorry for him, he seemed so grief-stricken. Mrs. O'Brien and Miss Dot Fleming refused to speak. But the sincerity of his words struck Miss Fleming at once; and even if they had not, what an extraordinary story he was telling!

"We have lost five of our best men," he was saying, "in the fight in 'Fernside,' including Major Smyth, my best friend. Smyth was the best Intelligence man we had in Dublin."

The officer rambled on, telling and re-telling the story and asking odd questions, now and then, but not with any great malice, and not pressing them. He did not get any information from Miss Fleming, in spite of her sympathy for him, and her opinion that he was the best-behaved officer on the raid. He, too, was suffering from the shock of the encounter in the darkness with Breen and Treacy. (When Treacy was told the story later that day, he said: "It was very sad for his friend the officer. Yes, it was sad, but wasn't it as well that we got him all the same?")

Like her brother James, Miss Fleming noted the thoroughness of the raid, the search for documents in vases, in and behind every article of furniture. She noticed the high rank of the officers—and, with the exception of the officer who mourned his friend, the evident thirst of the party: whiskey ran like water, provisions were scattered on the floor; the raiders were rattled, angry, beside themselves.

But before they departed, the full story of the "Fernside" fight reached the Flemings under the very eyes and noses of the raiders, officers, sentinels and all. Miss Fleming saw a woman halted at the door by the guard. She looked up and said quickly:

"That's all right. That nurse looks in here from time to time when she wants brandy for a bad case." Nurse Long came in.

Nurse Long, whom Miss Fleming knew only slightly—they differed in politics—was a messenger from Dan Breen, who was

lying seriously wounded in a neighbouring house. Nurse Long passed the guard and managed to say to Miss Fleming, almost within earshot of them, quite calmly:

"Sean Treacy is dead in the fields behind Home Farm Gardens. Dan Breen is badly wounded in Holmes' in Botanic Avenue. He wants clothes, stimulants and help." (The Holmes had admitted Breen after he had waded the Tolka and knocked at random on their door. Their political sympathies were Unionist and pro-British, but they took him in and dressed his wounds). Nurse Long made a second journey that morning to summon Joe Lawless, who made arrangements to remove Breen to safety, and inform Dick McKee.

As Nurse Long was leaving with the aid which Breen had asked for, Mary Lawless arrived from Finglas, and was stopped by the guard. Miss Fleming spoke again, guided by a sure instinct that surprised her later: "That's my aunt. Please let her through. She often comes in to see us."

Mary Lawless was the messenger from Sean Treacy. Dan Breen, she said, was dead or dying, somewhere near "Fernside." Sean Treacy was safe, though wounded.

Before the raiders left, the officer who had spoken to Miss Fleming first asked her if the women were remaining in the house that night. Her two brothers, James and Michael, were already under arrest, as well as Eamonn O'Brien's father. The officer advised Miss Fleming to close the shop, and take her sister and Mrs. O'Brien away for the following night. His warning was vague and kindly, but he pressed it. She thanked him and the raiders went off at last, with wild looks and threats.

Flemings' was a scene of utter confusion. The garden had been dug up. The inside of the shop was a wilderness of empty bottles, tumbled furniture and egg-strewn floors. (Eamonn O'Brien's father, when he arrived home later, after his stay in Mountjoy Jail with the Fleming brothers, related how the soldiers had held him in bed and threatened him, with an unconsciously comic side to their jumpiness and nervous antics. His hands were above his head, and a very excited Tommy stood guard over

him. After a while he thought he might lower his hands. He made a move, sighed and said: "Well, can I use the old dhudeen?" He reached down as he spoke for his clay pipe. A savage yell of panic came from his guard: "If you move, you so-and-so gunman, I'll blow the so-and-so heart out of you!" With resignation, the old man waited for the end of the raid when a dhudeen would be a dhudeen and not a menace.)

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Gradually the full horror of the night at "Fernside" came out. Professor Carolan was removed in a dying condition to a Dublin hospital. He sent for Miss K. Fleming and Miss Dot Fleming before he died and told the whole truth about the conduct of the raiders after the escape of Breen and Treacy. He said that he was ordered to stand with his face to the wall outside the room where Treacy and Breen had slept, and was then shot through the back of the neck. At first, a British Military Inquiry suggested that Carolan had been shot by Breen's and Treacy's bullets. He made this statement not only in the presence of the Misses Fleming, but also to Mr. Joseph Penrose, then on the staff of the *Freeman's Journal*. His account was published in the Dublin daily papers. No official denial was made, and the story that Treacy and Breen had been responsible dropped abruptly.

Bloodhounds had been employed by the raiders after the escape of Breen and Treacy. The waters of the Tolka had broken Breen's trail. But there are bloodhounds and bloodhounds. The second species, a human one, was still very active. Michael Fleming, after his arrest, was cross-examined in Dublin Castle. From the questions put to him, he guessed that the British authorities were still uncertain as to the identity of the men who had been in "Fernside" the night of the raid. The Intelligence Officers in the Castle told Michael Fleming that it was quite useless for him to deny all knowledge of Sean Treacy, Dan Breen, Dinny Lacey or Seamus Robinson. He was treated with great politeness, and it was urged that he was very foolish to persist in his denials. He was offered wine and cigars, with all this good advice, but showed no enthusiasm for either. No

threats were used, but the persuasion with a threat behind went on from day to day: if he would give information leading to the capture of Treacy, Breen, Robinson, Hogan or Lacey, any one or all of them, £10,000 would be paid into any Bank in his name, a safe-conduct and passage to any part of His Majesty's Dominions would be assured in addition; or, if he wished, the money could be collected by any friend or person he named.

When Michael Fleming refused, he was court-martialled and sentenced to three years' penal servitude; even on the eve of his court-martial, and after sentence again, the offer was repeated; finally they despaired of changing him, and the sentence was reduced to nine months.

James Fleming was taken to Mountjoy Jail. There he was called into the Governor's room, and interrogated under the Defence of the Realm Act about "Breen and Lacey." His interrogator was a Mr. McLean, Chief Intelligence Officer, afterwards shot on "Bloody Sunday," November, 1920. James Fleming was offered Egyptian cigarettes, much good advice, warnings about D.O.R.A., and many subtle questions. He refused the cigarettes, and for the rest, blandly fenced with the I.O. Shortly afterwards he was released and went home to his business in Drumcondra.

He was a very lucky man that he found a home to go to, or that his house had not become even more famous than "Fernside" in his absence. On the evening of the raid a skull and cross-bones warning written on a telegram form had been thrust through the letter-box, and Miss Fleming again recalled the threats of the raiders as they departed: "We are coming back!"—and the warning of the friendly officer, several times repeated. By the time the warning arrived, Joe Lawless was already in touch both with the Flemings and with Michael Collins, through Dick McKee. Collins had discovered through his sources of information that the Gormanstown Black and Tans had planned to descend on Fleming's and set fire to it and the whole block of buildings in which the premises stood. He told them to stand fast and sent an armed guard, fourteen strong, from the

Squad. An elaborate ambush for the Black and Tans was arranged. Miss Fleming and her sister, Dot, waited with the party until near Curfew. The hours wore on. As Curfew drew near, Joe Lawless discovered through Dick McKee that the raid and the ambush were off, to the mixed relief and disappointment of the armed party.

Much earlier, Joe Lawless had removed Dan Breen to safety. Lawless always had a car ready at Collins's disposal, and acted as his driver. Miss Fleming sent Nurse Long to Lawless to warn him about Breen's plight. Lawless drove down to Holmes's in Botanic Avenue where he found Breen lying on a mattress in the kitchen in great pain and semi-delirious. He communicated with Dick McKee, and returned with his car, accompanied by Maurice Brennan, Joe Vize and Tom Kelly—who had received word from Collins through McKee of the work in hand—and the arrangements made to receive Breen in the Mater Hospital.

They found Breen, semi-conscious, groaning from his severe wounds, and half-clothed, on the mattress; the gashes from the cuts made as he crashed into the glass roof of the "Fernside" conservatory very evident. The brandy, which had been given him in default of an anaesthetic, had gone to his head, and as its first effects wore off he began to shout. By then, the car was well on its way towards the Hospital, along Phibsboro' Road. At Phibsboro' Corner a policeman motioned to the car to slow down; it was to let a convoy of Auxiliaries pass through first. As they approached the Eccles Street entrance to the Hospital, Dick McKee appeared and waved them ahead. He re-joined them when they stopped further down and warned them that police and military were already raiding the place. (The cause of this raid was the fatal accident to a Volunteer named Matt Furlong who had been rushed in from Dunboyne in a dying condition, following an explosion while he was testing a shell in a trench mortar.)

The party drove away with Breen to wait until the raid was over. Breen's wounds were now aching painfully and he shouted aloud in agony. A stop was made at a neighbouring public-

house, a bottle of brandy bought, and this violent anaesthetic again poured into him. The car cruised aimlessly around. As they crossed Dorset Street, they again met the Auxiliary convoy speeding past, and again escaped notice. Soon afterwards they met Mick McCormack who guided them to an old disused stable in Great Charles Street, which was then used as a dump by the second Battalion of the Dublin Brigade.

McCormack opened the door and the car drove right in. The door was closed, leaving the whole party in darkness. They waited there a long time. Every now and then Breen moaned with pain, and sometimes shouted aloud. Gradually he came to himself. Time dragged on in the dark stable. Vize, Lawless, Kelly and Brennan talked in low tones. Breen became more conscious. Suddenly there was a sharp knocking on the stable door. Sean Treacy was outside.

Sean Treacy had cycled in from Finglas that morning to see Dan Breen once again. Mary Lawless told him of Dan's escape and the plans to remove him. Sean had traced him. He knew the old stable very well. Breen listened eagerly to Treacy's story, and was overjoyed to find his old comrade alive and well. And while they waited, Treacy told them all his impressions of the events of that night in "Fernside."

Outside the Mater Hospital small parties were on the watch. And after Pat McCrae—another member of the Squad—had told the waiting group in the dark stable that the road was clear, Breen was carried into the Hospital on a stretcher. Sean Treacy helped to carry him in. He shook hands with him and went away. Dan Breen was never to see Sean Treacy again.

CHAPTER XI

THE DEATH OF SEAN TREACY.

When Sean Treacy took leave of Dan Breen he had less than two days to live. It was on the afternoon of the 12th October that he left his old comrade. He spent the night of the 12th in Finglas, and was back in Dublin early on the morning of the 13th. The danger to Dan Breen preoccupied him. He continued to move openly around Dublin on his bicycle, doing his best to shake off the trackers that he knew were on his trail. Seamus Robinson and Dinny Lacey were expecting both himself and Breen in Tipperary, and, in fact, it was only some very urgent G.H.Q. business which delayed their departure to the South for so long. Their minds had been full of the coming organisation of the South Tipperary flying column. Sean Treacy himself had been taking lessons in the use of the Hotchkiss gun. And as we have seen, he had also definitely made full arrangements for his marriage on October 25.

Another reason for his persistence in moving around, in spite of many urgent warnings and appeals from his friends who were concerned by his disregard of the determined and undisguised pursuit of him, was the departure of his trusted friend, Brian Shanahan, to Tipperary. Afterwards Shanahan regretted that he had not listened to several appeals from Treacy to remain in Dublin until Breen and himself could leave the city. Shanahan, during his stay with them, usually delivered all Treacy's messages and made inquiries for him. Shanahan wrongly believed later that if he had been on the spot himself, Treacy would not have visited the Republican Outfitters on October 14, as it is clear that Treacy's determination to secure Breen's safety would in any case have overborne all other considerations and drawn him to the scene of his comrade's danger. Shanahan insisted on leaving for Tipperary because he feared the criticisms of Dinny

Lacey, who expected him on the spot for an approaching ambush, He could have ignored Lacey, as Sean Treacy was his superior officer; but finally Treacy accepted his explanation and let him go. The dangerous situation of Dan Breen on account of his wounds and the military search for him evidently made Sean Treacy throw all caution to the winds. In addition, Treacy was interested in a projected plan to ambush General Tudor, head of the police forces in Ireland.

On October 14, 1920, Sir Edward Carson was addressing the Constitutional Club in London. He declared that he sometimes feared to lunch at the Carlton Club because he might find himself beside a Sinn Feiner. "I see a good deal in the papers," he went on, "about the horrors of reprisals. For God's sake let's concentrate ourselves upon the horrors of murder and assassination." He alluded to the "Fernside" shooting and the death of Major Smyth, and of Smyth's brother in Cork, and linked the allusion with an appeal to Mr. Asquith to stop talking about Irish reprisals and speak a word for "these brave men who were upholding the Union Jack." Mr. Asquith, on the same date, in a speech at Ayr, made an unkind parallel between the position in Ireland and the work of the Germans in Belgium. He denounced the Government's "Better Government of Ireland Bill" as commanding the assent of no section of Irish opinion, and only tolerated by Sir Edward Carson, because that gentleman hoped the measure "would certainly postpone and perhaps finally prevent the attainment of Irish unity."

In Brixton Prison in London, Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, was on the sixty-fourth day of his hunger strike and within ten days of his death.

In Cork City the eleven hunger strikers were sinking rapidly. Michael Fitzgerald, one of their number, was reported to be delirious and his death was hourly expected.

And in Dublin, October 14, was a day of tragedies long remembered.

It was a day of intense police and military activity from noon onwards. The search for Dan Breen led to many raids on private

houses, shops, the Mater Hospital, Beaumont Convalescent Home, which was connected with the Mater, Jervis Street Hospital, and also the Clarence Hotel.

The raid on the Mater was the longest and most elaborate. The Black and Tan Auxiliary Force from Beggars' Bush Barracks and a strong force of military threw cordons round the building and its approaches, and for nearly three hours carried out a methodical search of every ward. It was the first raid on a large scale that this new force had carried out, although the Auxiliaries had already been on the streets. An armoured car was stationed on duty outside the Mater while other armoured cars patrolled the neighbourhood. Dan Breen saw Auxiliaries on guard as he looked down from the window of the Nursing Home attached to the Hospital. The search did not extend to the Nursing Home, but it lasted long enough to rouse Breen's friends outside. The alarm spread through the city, and something like a general mobilisation of all available Volunteers began. The Beaumont Convalescent Home was also surrounded by Auxiliaries and soldiers, all patients were questioned, and the raid lasted over an hour. An ambulance arrived while this raid was proceeding, but left empty before the three lorries of Auxiliaries and soldiers drove off at 1.30. By this time, Michael Collins, Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy were sending out warnings and messengers in all directions.

These raids from noon onwards were not the only sensations of the day. Between 2.15 and 2.30 an armoured whippet car halted outside the Munster and Leinster Bank at the junction of the North Circular and Phibsboro' Roads. An officer, whose right arm was missing, stepped from the back of the car and entered the Bank to withdraw the money for the payment of troops at Marlborough Barracks. A driver and machine-gunner remained behind in the car. This was the usual Thursday routine, and it attracted little attention—at least, among the general public. The ambushers, who had hung round since early morning in the cold and rain, were disturbed and uneasy. Usually the armoured car arrived in the morning. On this day

it was nearly closing time when it came, and, unknown to the attackers, with an extra man. The Dublin Brigade of the I.R.A., however, had no extra men available that Thursday. Many of its members had already assembled some three hundred yards away in Eccles Street, armed with hand grenades to attack the Auxiliaries if they succeeded in arresting Breen and entered the Nursing Home. Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy, Brigadier and Vice-Brigadier, respectively, of the Dublin Brigade, were with them. Five or six Volunteers were, however, waiting at Phibsboro' Corner with the intention of capturing the armoured car, revolvers in their hands. Two jumped on the bonnet and the back, and two others went to the sides, and opened fire. The soldiers inside first replied with revolver fire, and then the Hotchkiss gun was turned on the attackers. The driver was wounded in the shoulder, but the military account claimed later that his assailant was killed by a revolver shot almost immediately.

The attackers fired on the officer as he dashed out of the Bank; he rushed back and telephoned to Marlborough Barracks, and two armoured cars were soon on the scene. The street was crowded, and a panic followed the first shots. The rattle of the machine-guns cleared the streets. People hurled themselves into shops, or deserted the trams for the shelter of the back rooms of the most convenient shop. A drove of cattle and several hackney car horses stampeded. A tram car swept past as the machine gun opened fire—and escaped unhit with all its passengers. Eye witnesses declared afterwards that the dead man who lay on the ground in front, a few feet away from the car, had rushed under the muzzle of the revolving Hotchkiss gun as the attack started. Some of the attacking party had to scatter when the machine-gun swerved round in their direction, shattering the Bank windows and raking the street as it turned with a deadly and continuous rattle. Three of the party managed to hold on awhile, firing away with their revolvers. Some crouched and made away round the corner. At last the attackers pocketed their guns and disappeared in the crowd. The military who arrived held back the spectators and refused to allow any

assistance to be given to the young man lying in a great pool of blood with his brains protruding. "We are taking charge," insisted the British officers to all appeals, and when the Corporation ambulance arrived the same reply was given. The ambulance workers resented the refusal to allow them to give medical aid, and there was an angry exchange of words. The officers refused to allow the body to be taken away in the ambulance, and said that the military would take charge of it in King George V's Military Hospital. The young man was indeed dead to all appearances, and, as will be seen later, the military authorities were to pay him a melancholy courtesy. At the time the name of the dead man was unknown. He was William O'Connell, of Lombardstown, Co. Cork.

From the last moment he had seen Dan Breen, Sean Treacy was preoccupied with his comrade's dangerous situation. After he had parted with Dan, Treacy remained in the city and did not return to Finglas. That Wednesday night he spent in the company of Paddy Daly and other members of the Squad who met him in the Holland's house at Silverdale Terrace, Inchicore. Treacy slept that night at the Holland's. Bob Holland's mother was horrified at Treacy's condition. He was still suffering from the effects of the "Fernside" fight. He was also footsore from his wanderings, and Mrs. Holland insisted on bathing his feet and giving him a change of linen and fresh socks. Daly was anxious that Treacy should remain under the care of some members of the Squad. Treacy, however, was so tired that he remained in the house some time after breakfast and did not leave too early. Shortly after leaving he met Daly, Joe Leonard and Tom Keogh at the Republican Outfitters. They were all armed and pressed him to come with them. He refused, saying that he had an appointment with Dick McKee and must wait around for him. The others left and Sean said goodbye to them. There was much activity going on, and Treacy went off to make several inquiries. When Daly and the others left him there it was still early. Later they regretted that they had not insisted on his coming with them as they were armed; and although

Treacy was obviously shadowed, any attack on him would then have taken place under circumstances that would not have been so hopeless as the raid in which he was to be trapped. Shortly after the rumours of the raids in the city for Breen had begun to circulate, Sean Treacy was calling in to see his friends, the Delaney's, at 71 Heytesbury Street. He stayed there for lunch, and left shortly before two o'clock to go across to Peadar Clancy in the Republican Outfitters' in Talbot Street. When Miss Delaney (who was engaged to Seamus Robinson) arrived just after Treacy left, she found her mother somewhat disturbed about Treacy. She believed that he was being shadowed, and she suspected that a man whom she had noticed hanging round the street while Sean was there was a spotter. This man had disappeared as Treacy left.

Earlier that day Treacy had left a message with Mrs. Maurice Collins in Parnell Street, to the effect that he wanted to see D. P. Walsh whom he knew called in there regularly to collect dispatches left by Joe O'Reilly. Mrs. Collins did not know Sean Treacy, but she gave Walsh the message when he came in almost immediately. Walsh had only met Treacy once before. When he returned to Mrs. Collins Treacy asked Walsh to get him a bicycle with low handle bars, and a waterproof coat. At first Treacy suggested meeting him at the Republican Outfitters in Talbot Street to collect them, but changed his mind, and fixed Jim Kirwan's in Parnell Street as the place where the things were to be left. He also suggested a later meeting with Walsh in Phil Shanahan's at 4.30. Treacy seemed silent, abstracted and very obstinate. Walsh, who knew too well the danger Treacy was running in moving round so openly, urged him very strongly to lie low; the spotters were very active, and it was so soon after the "Fernside" fight. Treacy hardly replied to Walsh's arguments. Walsh took the coat and bicycle to Kirwan's about 11.30, and inquired for Michael Collins who had just called in with Gearoid O'Sullivan and gone off at once. Walsh went away again, too, after leaving the new coat for Treacy on a hat rack upstairs. This small hat rack was at the top of a

flight of stairs facing the street door to the left of Kirwan's public bar, on to which a door opened. From the flight of stairs there was a view of part of the street through the door fan-light.

As a Tipperary man, Jim Kirwan was one of the closest friends of Sean Treacy and Dan Breen who, during their days in Dublin until almost the end, slept there regularly at least once a week. He had first met them on their arrival in the city in 1919 at Mrs. Boland's in Clontarf, and at many gatherings at 25 Parnell Square. When Jim Kirwan set up his business in Parnell Street in March, 1920, all his staff were members of the Volunteers, and always had guns handy beneath the counters to repel a raid by force. Arms and ammunition were dumped and distributed from there. The house was a regular meeting place for the G.H.Q. Here Michael Collins often came to meet his Intelligence Officers and many others, in a snug or at the open counter. Once the Auxiliaries called in to the place, but they were bluffed by Collins and a friendly R.I.C. sergeant who had just handed him some very compromising documents. Jim Kirwan played a large part in saving this situation by restraining a member of his staff who was anxious to open fire on the raiders; Kirwan told him there would be time enough for that, and engaged the raiders in pleasant conversation. When one Auxiliary insisted on standing Collins a pint along with the friendly R.I.C. sergeant, who had convinced him that his friend was a most loyal man, Kirwan, knowing that Collins loathed the sight of porter, had the drink quietly removed, emptied, and the dirty tumbler replaced without arousing suspicion.

The house had never been suspected in spite of the many meetings and the much dumping and removals of arms. Jim Kirwan was never raided during Curfew, and many Tipperary Volunteers had slept in the upper rooms. The spotters and touts who were trailing Treacy and Breen before the "Fernside" fight tracked them one night to Parnell Street. Treacy, Breen and Kirwan noticed one of them watching the premises late one night from a shop on the opposite side of the street. After this experience Breen and Treacy decided that they would not expose

Kirwan to a raid, or themselves to capture, and ceased to sleep there. Jim Kirwan disagreed with them in this, and pointed out to them at the time that no raids had followed. It was his opinion, and it was confirmed by what happened on October 14, 1920, that the spies had never really located Breen or Treacy, and only suspected that the two men were hiding somewhere in Parnell Street.

But then Jim Kirwan in those days had difficult guests to contend with, not excluding Michael Collins himself. Once a Volunteer called to see Collins, and Kirwan innocently showed him up. Collins was busy at a meeting, gave Kirwan a peculiar look when he saw the man, but said nothing until later. Then he addressed Jim Kirwan in these terms:

“God, Jim Kirwan, no Castle spies or Black and Tans will be needed while we have you. You are a *dangerous* man.” And Collins departed banging the door angrily. Next morning he came in and apologised handsomely for his outburst: “You see, Jim,” he said, “that lad mustn’t know any of us are here. He has a long tongue, his wife hears what he knows, and as for her, she has a mouth as big as a pond.” Jim Kirwan spread a discreet report that Collins was no longer holding meetings in the house the next time he met the husband of the lady with the “pond of a mouth.”

Sean Treacy arrived in Kirwan’s on October 14 some time after two o’clock and went straight upstairs through the door on the left of the public bar. For as long as he had known him, Kirwan knew that Treacy would never linger in the public bar. He was a strict non-drinker. Under his pillow every night that he slept at Kirwan’s he placed a revolver—and the large crucifix found in his pocket after his death, and a rosary beads. Kirwan met him on the first landing and pointed out the coat which Walsh had left on the rack for him. Treacy seemed pre-occupied. He told Kirwan of his appointment with Walsh in Phil Shanahan’s later, but Kirwan urged him not to expose himself in the streets so much, and to lie low for awhile. He pointed out that there had been no raids on his own house in spite of the

previous alarm. As he spoke he turned and saw through the small fanlight over the front door the tin helmets and rifles of British soldiers in lorries outside the door, moving slowly past. When Treacy heard this, he said, "They have been after me all day!" Sean snatched the new coat from the rack and fitted it over the old one he was wearing. In his hurry he dropped a large silk handkerchief on the floor; it was still blood-stained from his wounds after "Fernside." He whipped out his parablellum, and turned towards the stairs. Jim Kirwan, to quote himself, "like the *amadán* I was," went down the stairs in front of Treacy, a target for Sean and the expected raiders at once. But the spotters had not traced Sean to Kirwan's, and the soldiers passed on to raid a neighbouring house.

With but a casual glance towards the raid in progress within a few hundred yards of Kirwan's, Sean Treacy vanished from the scene. He almost mounted his bicycle in the shop, moved swiftly out on to the pavement and away up Parnell Street, down Moore Street, into Henry Street, and towards the meeting with McKee and the others on which his mind and will were set. On his way he passed two friends, one of whom was anxious to delay him and discuss some important matter. Sean Treacy waved as he saw them and was gone.

The events in the Republican Outfitters immediately before his arrival some time around four o'clock are somewhat obscure. (1) The small group within consisted of: Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy, who had been on the move the whole day; Joe Vize and Leo Henderson. They were discussing the dangerous situation of Dan Breen, and the measures being taken to cope with it. Just before Treacy's arrival, Peadar Clancy left with a friend and went in the direction of the Pillar. Frank Thornton and Tom Cullen had also left before Sean arrived. Somewhere in Talbot Street Joe O'Reilly stopped them with an urgent message from Michael Collins to hurry to the Mater Hospital. Early that day O'Reilly had had orders from Collins to collect all the members of the Squad and all the Dublin Officers he could

(1) See appendices.

find. Before he met Thornton and Cullen he called at the Republican Outfitters to find that they had left. As he cycled after them Joe O'Reilly noticed Sean Treacy on his way to the shop.

The Republican Outfitters had been the meeting place of those who were determined that Dan Breen should not be taken. All day Peadar Clancy and Dick McKee had been active both at the Mater Hospital and in Talbot Street organising and directing the mobilisation of all the available Dublin men.

The experiences of Sean Brunswick, an active member of the Dublin Brigade at the time, bring out very clearly the heated and almost reckless atmosphere that prevailed from the moment it was feared that the British Forces were preparing to swoop on the Hospital. Brunswick, more than most men, was to be an eye-witness of the events of that afternoon of October 14 in Talbot Street. He was one of the links between the Mater Hospital and the Republican Outfitters. He had been active most of the day bringing reports to Peadar Clancy in the Talbot Street Headquarters. From two o'clock until nearly four o'clock, Brunswick noticed that the shop in Talbot Street was under observation. One man, whom he believed to be the Intelligence Officer known as Francis Christian, was walking up and down Talbot Street all that time. Sometimes pacing the pavement outside the Republican Outfitters, sometimes loitering outside the Masterpiece Cinema, sometimes outside Speidel's Pork Store. Brunswick noticed the loiterer's dress particularly—blue nap overcoat, velvet collar, and cap. On the other side of the street another spotter in civilian clothes also sauntered and loitered. Brunswick was very uneasy, busy though he was with the work he had in hand, and several times warned Peadar Clancy, who was impressed by what he reported. In the shop during his frequent visits Brunswick noticed the Plunketts, Leo Henderson, Sean Kiernan (who worked under Peadar Clancy then as Director of Munitions), and other members of G.H.Q. Brunswick was told to mobilise certain men, keep watch on the Mater Hospital, and report back at frequent intervals. When Brunswick started

back on his last journey from the Hospital, the meeting was ending in the Republican Outfitters. Only three members of the original party—Dick McKee, Leo Henderson and Joe Vize remained behind, conversing in a group near the door. Sean Treacy was standing at the counter midway up the shop, talking to the man in charge, Sean Forde. It was about four o'clock—or somewhat later, 4.15 according to Leo Henderson—when an armoured car, followed by two lorries full of armed soldiers and several plain clothes members of the Auxiliary Division and Intelligence Officers, turned into Talbot Street from O'Connell Street and came at great speed from the Pillar towards Amiens Street. The noise of the approaching cars made the group in the doorway break up quickly. Dick McKee was nearest to the door. He looked out, and then said: "They are coming—Get out!" Sean Brunswick was now walking down Talbot Street. He saw Dick McKee come swiftly out. A moment later the armoured car and the two lorries stopped dead at the Training College, Talbot House, and some of the soldiers, led by a couple of officers, rushed across the street towards the Globe Hotel and the Republican Outfitters.

In the confusion, Sean Treacy had taken the wrong bicycle, possibly one belonging to McKee who was a taller man than Sean. As Treacy tried to mount it beside the kerb he stumbled. The delay was fatal. He mounted a second time and had only gone a yard or so when two men in plain clothes rushed at him and knocked him off the machine. One of them, who had leaped from a lorry, seemed to know Treacy by sight. It was Francis Christian. He had gone off to join the raiders before Brunswick returned. He grappled with Treacy, now clear of the bicycle and with his parabellum ready. Treacy opened fire and drove off two other plain clothes attackers who were rushing towards him, and fired twice at Christian who collapsed. In the struggle, they had moved up some yards towards the Masterpiece Cinema. Now two of his assailants fired at him at close range. As Sean turned to tackle one of them he was shot through the head at five yards' range and fell to the ground—dead. One of his opponents,

Price, was killed outright and fell dead with Treacy. Before the fight ended Sean Treacy had left his mark on at least three of the enemy, Christian, Price and another. But he had done more than that.

A sudden panic swept the military. From the armoured car, one of the lorries, and the soldiers on the street, came a tremendous burst of gunfire in the direction of the struggling group, heedless of the safety of their own men or of the civilians on the pavements.

Sean Brunswick saw the scene—the street alive with rifle and revolver volleys . . . and the more deadly rattle of the machine gun. . . He caught a glimpse of Treacy falling on the pavement outside a shop which was then Speidel's . . . a glimpse, too, of the loiterer in blue cap and blue nap coat—Christian, closing with Sean Treacy . . . Christian falling. . . Shots . . . Stampede . . . and the struggle is shut off from Brunswick's sight. . . He sees the panic-stricken pedestrians stampeding and hears the rattle of the machine gun and the volleys which roll on for some minutes after Sean Treacy lies dead. Innocent passers-by are killed: young Patrick Carroll, a messenger boy just fifteen years old . . . the bullets catch him on his way up the street, and he drops dead; Joseph Corringham, who crashes from his bicycle on the pavement, dying with three bullets in his stomach. A policeman on duty is caught, too, as he seeks cover, and collapses with a bullet in his right side and a broken right arm. The volleys are continuous . . . for five minutes and more.

Some in the crowd kept their heads and went to the assistance of the struggling people, herding them into the shops and advising them to seek shelter behind the counters, under desks, or to throw themselves flat on the floors,—anywhere and everywhere to dodge the bullets that crashed through and speckled door after door, window after window.

Sean Brunswick was caught in the struggling mass. He had one determination: to get to Sean Treacy . . . to see if he lived . . . to save the documents that he knew Treacy must have in his pockets. He pressed forward and came nearer to the fallen

men on the pavement near the Cinema. The firing ceased and the soldiers spread out along the street, their rifles at the ready. Perhaps over it all the great spirit of Treacy lingered for a moment in a last farewell to the Dublin where he had suffered and fought, sending one last salute to the Tipperary scenes and folk, to his old comrades of Soloheadbeg, Knocklong, Drangan and Oola. For a moment or two a tension held the people and the soldiers still face to face. . . . Anything might happen.

Several men stepped forward and approached the officers in charge. They were trained ambulance men, and an officer told them to attend the wounded. One declared that he was a student who wished to give first-aid to the wounded. The officer let him pass. It was Sean Brunswick who hurried to Sean Treacy. Christian was dying . . . Another lay dead close to him . . . further off lay prone civilians . . . In the confusion Sean Brunswick bent down and saw that Treacy was beyond help. He quickly emptied Treacy's pockets, rose and slipped away in the excitement as the Corporation Ambulance came on the scene. The British officers told the ambulance men that the military would look after the bodies of the men killed in the fight. Christian and Treacy were lifted into separate lorries. The ambulance drove away.

(Just after the shooting, Paddy Daly, Joe Leonard and Tom Keogh arrived in Talbot Street and made their way towards the crowds. They could see the armoured car and the lorries. As they reached Olhausen's a girl came out and stopped them. She evidently knew them by sight, although they had never spoken to her before. She said quickly to Tom Keogh: "Clancy's shop has been raided. Come in here quick, lads. One of your chaps has been killed." They entered and dumped their revolvers in the shop and made their way out through a slaughter yard at the back. Then, unarmed, they came back and mingled with the crowd. They noticed Sean Forde in the lorry, and heard that Miss Katie Byrne had tried to get through the crowd to take away what papers Sean Treacy might be carrying, but the military and Auxiliaries prevented her.)

Sean Brunswick hurried back to the Mater Hospital and demobilised his waiting men. Then he examined what he had found in his hurried search of Sean Treacy's pockets. There were two fountain pens, a magazine of revolver ammunition and field message book. He glanced through the book; it was in code. Pages of code, the names of some men he knew in ordinary handwriting, seven or eight dispatches for Tipperary and Limerick, and a picture postcard of General Tudor. Brunswick took the book to Aine Malone in Grantham Street, and later met Dick McKee who had been anxious about the documents in Treacy's possession. Then he returned to Talbot Street. An armoured car was on patrol . . . Shots again broke over the heads of the crowds that ebbed and flowed from Talbot Street into the side streets. Peadar Clancy was watching the military wreck the Republican Outfitters with bombs. He pointed to the coat he was wearing and smiled at Brunswick: "Well, Sean, there *is* still some of my property left!"

D. P. Walsh, on his way to keep his appointment with Sean Treacy at Phil Shanahan's, was stopped by Aine Malone in O'Connell Street. She said "For God's sake, D.P., don't go down Talbot Street. There's murder and shooting going on down there." Walsh turned back and met Peadar Clancy shortly after, and warned him. Clancy exclaimed, "Good God! All the boys are down there." Walsh went along Findlater Place, Marlborough Street and Waterford Street, in the hope of meeting Sean Treacy. Instead, he met Phil Shanahan and, almost immediately afterwards, George Plunkett, who had just escaped from the raiders.

Phil Shanahan and Walsh soon learned that Sean Treacy had been killed. Both Father O'Flanagan of Marlborough Street, and Sean Brunswick were able to place the question beyond a doubt. It was learned, too, that Treacy's body had been taken to King George V's. Hospital (now St. Bricin's). A message was left at Hughes' Hotel with the Manageress, Miss Molly Gleeson, that Walsh was to report to Michael Collins and Dick McKee at the Typographical Association Offices in Gardiner

Street. When Walsh arrived he was told that the news of Sean Treacy's death had been sent to Tipperary by special messenger. It was agreed that Miss Mollie Gleeson should be asked to identify the body, and D. P. Walsh was placed in charge of the funeral arrangements by Collins.

But this was not the end of D. P. Walsh's experiences, even on that tragic and dramatic day. The night before, he had stayed at Mrs. Fitzgerald's, 18 Hollybank Road, had left in the morning and did not return there until five o'clock in the evening. Mrs. Fitzgerald informed him that a lady had called three times to say that a Mr. Shine, a patient in the Mater Hospital, wanted to see Mr. Quinlan; these names were those assumed by Dan Breen and Walsh himself. Just as Walsh sat down to tea, brooding over Sean Treacy's tragic end and many memories of him, the doorbell rang and Mrs. Fitzgerald came in with an even more urgent message from "Mr. Shine" for "Mr. Quinlan." Walsh had slipped into the front room, listened to the lady's voice, and satisfied himself as to the genuineness of the message. (His caution was justified. The night of Treacy's death a mysterious telegram reached Tipperary Town signed in Breen's name, or some variant of it, asking several prominent Volunteer officers to meet him at a certain spot. As the message was highly suspicious the place was watched from a distance—and at the time fixed for the meeting the military raiders who swooped on it were very disappointed.)

Walsh armed himself with a parabellum and went with the lady to 22, Eccles Street—the Nursing Home attached to the Mater Hospital.

A Sister Angela showed Walsh into a room familiar to him because he had previously visited Phil Shanahan there. Dan Breen was lying in a very weak state, quite exhausted, with his legs secured in a wire gauze netting stretcher.

"Why didn't you come when I sent you such an urgent message?" was Breen's first question, to Walsh's relief. He replied that he had been too busy. Then the question that Walsh dreaded followed quickly. Walsh would have much pre-

ferred to side-track Breen into a discussion on the shortcomings of D. P. Walsh than to face this question:

“Where is ‘Sean?’”

“Down town, waiting for you, Dan,” Walsh answered quickly.

“*He is not,*” Dan Breen replied, “he is not down town waiting for me, because I have seen him here with a big hole in his back.”

“Nonsense,” bluffed Walsh, “I have just left him.”

Dan Breen looked him straight in the eyes and said:

“I don’t believe you. You are leaving me here without a gun if they should come in for me.”

Walsh dared not hand over the parabellum he had on him without Collins’ permission. Breen pressed the question. Finally Walsh promised Breen he would find him a gun somewhere and return with it.

He was startled by Breen’s nightmare awareness of Treacy’s death as he made his way to Vaughan’s Hotel to meet Michael Collins, Rory O’Connor and Gearoid O’Sullivan. At first, Collins was very angry when he heard of the visit to Breen. Walsh might have been shadowed, Collins insisted . . . Some of those damned spotters might trace Breen through him . . . the pair of them would have been caught . . . the loss of Treacy was more than enough. But, in the end, Collins calmed down and burst out laughing when he heard that Dan Breen was pining for a gun. He told Walsh to give him the parabellum to keep him quiet. “We’ll have him shifted to-night.” Collins added. Walsh discreetly carried out these instructions.

Already grief and rage gripped the friends of Sean Treacy. Some ten minutes after the shootings, Joseph McGrath, who had been in touch with the Republican Outfitters that day, answered a telephone call in Liberty Hall. He gasped out: “Sean Treacy is dead!” William O’Brien, the General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union, was in the room. The name was vaguely familiar to him . . . a grant he had once made when Eamonn O’Dwyer had asked him.

Sean Treacy? He asked Joe McGrath what had happened. McGrath was sad and brief. He looked round and repeated: "Sean Treacy is dead . . . Sean Treacy . . . the greatest fighter in Ireland!"

There was some delay about identification of the body. Miss Nora O'Keeffe paid a visit to King George V's. Hospital. She had volunteered to go in as a relative and place the matter beyond any doubt that it was indeed Sean Treacy. His enemies had paid him an honour in death that moved her to tears. He was laid out in clean sheets under a coverlet with a purple border. He was smiling as he lay there in the bed, the death wounds in his head carefully plugged. There was a kindly British soldier on guard who told her that they had all done their best to show their respect for a gallant foe: "He was a fine looking man. What a pity to see him dead." As she wept, overcome by the sight and all the memories of Sean Treacy alive in the O'Keeffe's home in Glenough, the soldier went out, came back with a pair of scissors, cut off a lock of Treacy's hair and gave it to her, as well as a ring from Treacy's finger. "You may as well have it," he said, "otherwise it will be buried with him." In another corner, laid out with equal respectful ceremony, was the body of William O'Connell, killed the same day in the Phibsboro' Corner fight.

Before Miss Molly Gleeson finally identified Sean Treacy's body, Con Moloney and Sean's uncle, Michael Allis of Tipperary, met at the Crown Hotel to discuss arrangements. Tom Carew, of Cashel, also travelled to Dublin for the funeral. In spite of an appeal from Michael Collins, who feared that Phil Shanahan might be arrested, he insisted on attending the funeral publicly and going down on the train openly, although he was very much "on the run" at the time.

As Sean Treacy's coffin was being carried to the train, followed by many Volunteers, there was great activity all round Kingsbridge station by detectives. Leaning by a wall and closely observing the procession was a Sergeant Roche from Tipperary who had, when Treacy's body was brought to Dublin Castle

after his death, gloatingly identified it with unnecessary brutality. This was reported, Beaslai records, to Michael Collins by a detective who was present. Roche had been active in the pursuit after Treacy and other Tipperary Volunteers. He was noticed at Kingsbridge, and shot dead on the city quays—at the corner of Capel Street and Little Strand Street—the following day.

The last scenes before Sean Treacy was laid to rest passed quickly. On Saturday evening, October 16, the coffin was brought to the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, where it lay overnight. And on Sunday it was brought to Limerick Junction by a train which reached there at two o'clock. The coffin was covered with the Republican Tricolour and many wreaths; a glass panel showed his head and shoulders; it seemed to those of his old comrades who saw him that he looked as he looked in life. Tears were universal and there was silence when those who had shared his battles met together. The hearse was escorted by a large procession to Solohead Church. Volunteers lined the route and kept back the great crowds.

The funeral took place on Monday, October 18, to Kilfeacle. On the walls of Solohead Churchyard a notice was displayed asking the people to observe the day as a day of mourning. In Solohead and in Tipperary Town this tribute was paid, as well as in the surrounding districts. All business houses, including the Banks, were closed. But the dimensions of the funeral itself were even more eloquent of the general grief. One fact in itself describes how his own folk honoured Treacy in death; as the coffin reached the graveside at Kilfeacle, the last of the funeral procession was only then leaving Solohead, some five miles away. The streets of Tipperary Town were thronged as the cortège passed through.

Shortly after the funeral procession had started, a body of 150 British soldiers arrived at Monard Cross, near Solohead. Two of the officers in charge approached the Rev. Dr. Slattery and asked him if he could give a guarantee that there would be no military display at the funeral. Dr. Slattery, the then Administrator of Solohead Parish, replied briefly that he could certainly

give a guarantee that there would be no trouble if the funeral were not interfered with. One of the officers produced two documents and insisted that military displays at funeral were forbidden. Dr. Slattery declared that his functions at funerals were concerned solely with their religious aspect.

A large party of military had also left Tipperary for Solohead in the morning, and as the funeral was leaving Solohead an officer announced that no military formation by the mourners would be tolerated. The Volunteers retorted by marching in single file on both sides of the bier. As the procession was passing Limerick Junction a party of British soldiers stood to attention and saluted. At Barronstown, not far from the Junction, more soldiers, accompanied by several officers on horseback, approached the procession and seized a large number of bicycles, between a hundred and two hundred in all, and removed them to Tipperary Military Barracks.

At Kilfeacle another large party of British armed soldiery was stationed, who forced the marching Volunteers to break their ranks.

Sean Treacy's comrades buried him with dignity and simplicity. There was a vast sea of mourners assembled on the eminence overlooking the cemetery. The coffin was carried from the bier on the shoulders of six Volunteers. When the last prayers had been said, Con Moloney, Brigade Adjutant, came forward quickly and made a short oration:

"Sean Treacy is dead. His death is a great blow to us and to Ireland. But his loss must not unnerve us. Rather must it strengthen our resolve to continue on the path he opened for us; to strive for the ideals for which he gave his life; if necessary, to die fighting as Sean did."

The thousands of mourners dispersed, and, as the military and Volunteers returned to Tipperary, three volleys rang out over Sean Treacy's grave.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIGHT GOES ON.

Sean Treacy died, but the fight went on.

On October 18, Black and Tans, at midnight on the day Sean Treacy was buried, drove out to Ballydavid, a lonely but peaceful district at the foot of the Galtee Mountains, seven miles S.E. of Tipperary Town, and raided the Dwyer's farmhouse. Edward and Frank Dwyer and their brother Jerry were Volunteers. Ten men in military uniform and one in R.I.C. uniform burst into the kitchen. Frank and Edward were dragged into the yard under the eyes of their father, mother and sister, and shot dead.

Two months later, on December 20, 1920, Captain J. J. Looby and Volunteer William Delaney were taken from Cashel by Auxiliaries and shot dead near the gates of Kilfeacle Cemetery. A wayside memorial may be seen there to commemorate their memory.

The fight went on. Dinny Lacey took up the work Sean Treacy had begun in the Third Tipperary Brigade, and headed the Flying Column which Treacy had hoped soon to join in those fatal October days. Lacey continued the work of tracking convoy and armoured lorry and military patrol; of planning ambush and barrack attack. Seamus Robinson gathered together sixteen men from the Fourth Battalion and nine men from the Third, which originally formed this Active Service Unit. A second Column was also formed under the command of Sean Hogan. In all, the two Columns numbered about sixty-five men.

Lacey's Column was to march and fight from the Tipperary border in the west to Carrick-on-Suir, over the wild expanse of country between the Commeragh Mountains, eastward from Fethard to the Kilkenny border, during the Black and Tan and

Civil Wars until Lacey himself fell, even as Treacy fell, trying to rescue a comrade, close to the farmhouse where his friends the Dwyers had died at Ballydavid.

The first blow after Sean Treacy's death was struck by the No. 1 Flying Column under Dinny Lacey's leadership at Thomastown on October 28, 1920. The ambush party took up their positions behind a loose stone wall on the Tipperary side of the village, and barricaded the road. A lorry of British soldiers travelling from Templemore drew up as it reached the barricade. The occupants jumped from the lorry, and opened a heavy fire on the ambushers. The fight, which was one of great intensity, lasted for nearly an hour. Three soldiers were killed and five wounded. The British were surprised by the determination and recklessness displayed by the ambush party, and were reported later as saying that they would very much like to meet and shake hands with three men in particular—Jim Gorman, Treacy's old comrade was one—who at a critical moment in the fight had advanced into the road, lain down, and opened fire with rifles and grenades.

The officer in charge of the British was fatally wounded and died some days later. The news of the ambush reached Tipperary and Cashel, and strong military forces were sent out to capture the Flying Column. Lacey managed to withdraw his men after a brisk skirmish with the reinforcements which took up positions at Kilfeacle and were advancing with the object of surrounding him and his men. Michael Fitzpatrick, of Tipperary, was badly wounded and carried away unconscious in the early stages of the Thomastown ambush. There were no other casualties.

Sean Treacy was dead, but the fight went on. On November 13, 1920, No. 1 Flying Column also carried out a big ambush of R.I.C. and Black and Tans in the Glen of Aherlow, at Lisnagaul. The ambushers lined the ditch on one side of the road near a bend. Dinny Lacey, who was in charge, detailed two of his men to perch themselves on a high tree about fifty yards away in a field opposite. These men were to watch for

and signal the enemy's approach by firing a shot, and, incidentally, in case any of the Black and Tans sought to escape behind the ditch on their side, to make it as hot as possible for them. The police lorry, en route from Galbally to Bansha, was sighted by the watchers when it was about a quarter of a mile from the ambush position, and the prearranged signal shot was fired. The driver accelerated his speed and the car came round the bend almost on two wheels. There was a volley of shotgun and rifle fire. The petrol tank of the lorry was pierced, the driver slumped dead across the steering wheel, and the car ran into the ditch. As the fight raged the men watching in the tree found flying bullets clipping the branches all round them and were forced to descend. One only of the Black and Tans escaped injury and fled towards Bansha. The remaining members of the party lay dead or dying on the road, one of them actually in the track of the petrol which had leaked from the punctured tank. The lorry burst into flames, and the flames spread to the petrol on the road. The policeman stretched across the track would have been burned alive if two of the Flying Column, at great risk to themselves, had not rushed forward and removed him from the path of the flames in the nick of time.

Two of the police were shot dead, two fatally wounded, and two seriously injured. Tipperary Town, after both the Thomastown and the Glen of Aherlow ambushes, was raided by police and military forces. There was great destruction and violence. Windows were smashed, shops looted, and many houses set on fire. These violent and savage reprisals lasted several days after each incident.

And so the fight went on and on. Many comrades of Treacy were to fall before the fighting ended. His old comrade, Commandant Tom Donovan, was killed in the streets of Killenaule less than a month after his own death. Treacy and he had fought together in the attack on Drangan barracks. Others fell to firing squads or in fighting on their own countryside, Sean Allen, Patrick Moloney, Sean Duffy and many more.

A month before the Truce of July, 1921, Edward Foley and Patrick Maher were hanged in Mountjoy Jail, Dublin, following their trial by military court and sentence of death on murder charges arising out of the Knocklong rescue. Foley had been present at the Knocklong rescue, unarmed; Maher, although an active Volunteer, had not. They issued a farewell message to all their old comrades: "Our souls go to God at 7 o'clock in the morning, and our bodies, when Ireland is free, shall go to Galbally. Our blood is not being shed in vain for Ireland."

The fight went on, and the life and death and memory of Sean Treacy continued to inspire the fighters and all the men and women who had known him. He had travelled the winding and tragic road from Solohead to Kilfeacle, through all the Tipperary hills, through a hundred fights, through Ashtown, through Talbot Street, away home to the Tipperary hills again.

To-day may be read there on a high stone cross his epitaph: on one side the simple legend in English, "Vice-Commandant of 3rd Tipperary Brigade Killed in Action." And in front in Irish: *Le dil-chuimhne ar Sheán Mac Allis Ua Treasaidh Fo-Thaoiseach i n-Arm na h-E'n do marbhuigheadh i gcath le Arm Sásana.*

And there Sean Treacy rests amid the freedom of his native hills, rests from all his battles, fought as few have been fought before or since, not from love of fighting, not for lust of war, but for the love of Ireland alone.

APPENDICES.

I.R.A. REPORT ON THE DEATH OF V. COMMANDANT SEAN TREACY, TIPPERARY, No. 3 BRIGADE.

ON Thursday, October 14, at about 3.45 p.m., a party of military raided 94 Talbot St. They came in two lorries, preceded by an armoured car, from the direction of Nelson's Pillar. There were four men in the shop at the time, together with the shopman. Sean Treacy was one of the four and was standing midway up the counter talking to the shopman. The remaining three were conversing in a group near the door and away from the counter. The approaching enemy cars were heard some distance off, and one of the three men near the door looked out to see what they were; he turned back and said, "They are coming—get out," and then walked out of the shop. At this time the enemy cars were just stopping before the door. Sean Treacy followed the men who gave the alarm, and walked to the edge of the footpath where a bicycle was standing and mounted it. He had not properly mounted it when two men in civilian clothes rushed at him, and knocked him off the machine, and then grappled with him. When Sean was clear of the bicycle, and while the two men were still grappling with him, he drew his pistol, and holding it by the barrel with his left hand, and steadying it between his knees, he fired twice at another man in civilian clothes, who was coming to the assistance of the two who were holding him. This man jumped back into cover. The struggle with the other two continued, and in the course of a few seconds they had moved up some yards, on to the pathway, and against the window of Speidel's Porkshop. While there Sean got one of his assailants between him and the window and got the muzzle of his pistol against the man's stomach and fired twice. This man (believed to be Lt. Price) was falling and Sean was turning towards the

second when a man, also in civilian clothes, came up behind him and fired from a revolver at about 5 yards range. Sean's head immediately sank backwards, and while he was falling, fire was opened with machine-gun, rifles and revolvers, and he with the two men who were struggling with him fell almost together on the pathway.

Lt. Price was killed outright, and Sergt. Christian (the second man who grappled with Sean) has since died. Another Officer, Capt. Le Grand, was wounded. Whether he is the man at whom Sean first fired, or was hit by some of his own men, is not known.

Sean Treacy, in that fight, displayed soldierly qualities of the very highest order. He was not for an instant dismayed. Every action of his was deliberate—even to the end.

THE DEATH OF SEAN TREACY.

THE accounts of what happened in the Republican Outfitters on October 14, 1920, given by Sean Forde and Leo Henderson clear up some obscurities about the raid itself, Treacy's movements and the manner of his death. Sean Forde, who was then in charge of the shop, remembered that Treacy had called in early on Wednesday morning, anxious for news of Dan Breen. Wednesday and Thursday were busy days in Peadar Clancy's. The Active Service Unit were holding meetings in the back room of the premises on the Thursday during the early part of the day. The plan as regards Breen was that he was not to be taken, dead or alive; if necessary his captors and himself would be bombed; and it was determined that under no circumstances should any raiders who attempted to take Breen escape alive—not even if it meant Breen's own death in the attack.

After dinner, Clancy and McKee came in. McKee was very concerned at the unusually large number of people who visited the shop. He knew that the touts were very busy and later remarked on this. He was also concerned because Talbot Street was a dangerous place in case of a raid as the street in the vicinity of the shop was narrow, and there was no exit from the back.

Leo Henderson was also busy that day but decided to cycle home to lunch, sometime after one o'clock. He was surprised as

he mounted his bicycle and made off to see Sean Treacy coming up the street on foot from the Amiens Street direction, quite undisguised. He had reached Prescott's, some doors away from the Republican Outfitters. The two men smiled and winked as they passed. Henderson had a vague memory of having seen Treacy in the shop earlier that morning. It surprised and worried him that Treacy was moving round so openly just after "Fernside." But Leo Henderson had other things on his mind besides the apparent indifference of Sean Treacy to the shadowers and touts. He was very concerned about the outcome of the attempt to capture the armoured car which he knew would be in progress at Phibsboro' Corner. The car was wanted for a projected raid on the Black and Tan Camp at Gormanstown. Henderson hoped to be able to announce the capture of the car that night at a Battalion meeting where the final arrangements for this raid were to be discussed. He wondered why he had not had news sooner, not knowing then that the early morning routine had been changed and the car was not to call until just before the Bank's closing time with an extra soldier on guard inside. The Volunteers on the watch at Phibsboro' Corner had to hang round all day in the rain and cold.

It was a day for the unexpected. The Auxiliaries, for instance, had come out for the first time on raiding parties: they had made their first appearance indeed at the Mater Hospital, although for some time they had been familiar and sinister figures on the Dublin streets. Henderson went on . . . his mind full of these things and the sight of Sean Treacy outside Prescott's . . . Anyone who knew him would recognise him.

When Leo Henderson returned to the shop shortly before the raid to discuss the failure of the Phibsboro' attempt, he found Dick McKee even more disturbed by the activities of the touts and Castle agents in and around Talbot Street, by the position of Dan Breen, and by the comings and goings of members of the I.R.A. and the Cumann na mBan.

"It's a hell of a day," said McKee, "The Auxies are out. There are spies everywhere." He pointed through the window. "There's one of them now. I am waiting for a report from the Mater about Dan."

As Henderson and McKee talked on and waited for Sean Brunswick to bring another report from the Mater, Sean Treacy walked in, smiling and in very good humour. Henderson and McKee were under the impression that Treacy had come on foot and without his bicycle, which apparently he had left somewhere outside, perhaps at a nearby shop. McKee's own bicycle was standing at the kerb, and Leo Henderson had noted it as he wheeled his own machine into the shop, wondering why McKee left a bicycle in such an awkward spot. Then Sean Treacy and Henderson had a short conversation. Sean explained his presence near Amiens Street that morning:

"Of course," said Treacy, "I had to attend the funeral." He explained that the funeral of Major Smyth and White, the "Fernside" casualties, had taken place that morning, and he had been there, moving among the spectators. He was not aware that his friends of the Squad were also somewhere in the throng, too.

The counter was on the right-hand side of the shop, facing the street. After Treacy had finished his short talk with McKee and Henderson he turned back, walked to the counter, and began to chat with Sean Forde on general topics. He mentioned that he was attending an oculist, Dr. Cummins, in Clare Street, as his sight was troubling him. He said that his object in calling into the shop was to get some more news of Dan Breen. The door leading to the street was an awkward one to open, owing to its slope. McKee had a good view of the street. The armoured car and first lorry passed by the windows and stopped short, blocking any escape towards the Amiens Street direction. For a second or so the men inside the shop thought the lorries and armoured car had driven past.

McKee and Henderson realised the truth as Joe Vize came out from the back of the shop and joined them. Henderson and McKee shouted on the instant: "Here, Sean,—out!" And McKee cried, "Sean, take my bike." Henderson pushed McKee out, Treacy followed, but one second later, Henderson, Vize and Sean Forde were met by the raiders rushing towards them, young and nervous Tommies with the rifles shaking in their hands. Confused cries came: "Stop him!" . . . No, that's not him

... there he is That's him." Sean Forde thought that McKee had been caught when, in fact, he had just got clear. Forde, looking back on the scene, wondered how McKee had succeeded. It was evident that the raiders had come for Treacy and were ready to let even McKee escape to make sure of Treacy's capture. Almost immediately shots rang out; Henderson thought that McKee was killed. The trackers had no intention of shooting McKee that day. The watch for Treacy had not been relaxed—from the moment he entered the shop he was a doomed man: soon after Sean had entered the Republican Outfitters, Dublin Castle had been rung up from Marlboro' Street.

As Henderson and the others were pushed back they could see the plain-clothes men spreading across the street. Inside the shop there was a minor panic among the soldiers. One of them, through sheer nervousness, discharged his rifle. The bullet whizzed past Sean Forde. Henderson and the others put up their hands in response to frenzied shouts—Henderson saying, "Keep cool, we are not armed." The firing outside became louder the machine gun rattled they heard the cry of the wounded policeman An officer came in and called on the soldiers to pull themselves together. He searched the prisoners. Sean Forde had already locked up the shop, shoved some compromising letters into new overcoats hanging on stands, and kicked a bundle of the Irish Volunteer organ, *An t-Oglach*, under the counter. The firing stopped.

The officer ordered the prisoners into the lorry Sean Forde tried to pass the keys of the shop to Mrs. Mary Burke of the Globe Hotel, who was in the crowd, but was prevented. The prisoners could see Sean Treacy lying under Speidel's window he was still alive They could see Sean Brunswick persistently pressing through the crowds several times he was halted, but went on. Henderson noticed a priest reach Treacy and bend over him,—it was Father Eugene McSwiney of Fairview who acted as honorary chaplain to the Second Battalion of the Dublin Brigade. Father McSwiney had heard the firing and hastened down Talbot Street. He gave Sean Treacy, whom he did not know before, what spiritual aid was possible, and made way as Sean Brunswick arrived. Father

Sheehan from Marlboro' Street arrived, and Henderson, who knew him, attracted his attention in the hope that he would recognise him and warn his office in American Chambers of the raid and of his own arrest, so that papers and so forth would be removed. Father Sheehan in fact got in touch with Henderson's office later.

(The subsequent adventures of Henderson, Vize and Sean Forde that night included a melodrama staged by the Auxiliaries for their benefit: a drive from the Castle after interrogation, when gruesome competitions were conducted by six Auxiliaries in speculating about the coming fate of their prisoners: lamp posts, planks to be walked into the Liffey, and other equally cheerful suggestions, with some fervid praise of plugging gunmen on the spot, and much cursing of Breen and Treacy. "Are you Dan Breen?" asked the Auxiliaries of Henderson. "No, I'm sorry I'm not," he retorted, and the angry guards started to "mop" him. By this time the prisoners were nearing Mountjoy and the Auxiliaries had so overdone their theatrical turn that it had fallen flat. But when, with a final kick, the prisoners were handed in to Mountjoy, they were the happiest men in Ireland).

SOME LETTERS OF SEAN TREACY.

PRISON LETTERS TO P. DEERE

Copies of Letters lent by Mrs. Cleary (Patrick Deere's sister); written by Sean Treacy to P. Deere, Crocpor, Donaskeigh, Co. Tipp., from Mountjoy, 20/10/17; Dundalk, 5/4/18. S.T.'s No. in Mountjoy is given as 886:—

20/10/17.

A Pádraig, A Chara,

I received your letter of the 17th in due time. As regards visits the best thing you can do is to apply for a permit for yourself and another for Friday. Maybe three of you would be let in together, such often happens. Kathleen Ryan will be coming in on Saturday, and maybe you could come in with her. Apply for permit to Sir John Irwin, c/o. Mountjoy Prison. If I see him in the meantime I'll tell him I wish to see you on Friday. Of course you must get a separate permit if you wish to see other prisoners.

Bring all the news when you are coming. Of course we may be removed by then but I do not think we will. Tell Josie Sweeney I was asking for her. Don't bother me any more with remarks about Biddie, etc.

Write and tell me when you are calling.

Do chara sa chúis

SEAGHAN O TREASAIGH.

.....

PRISON LETTERS TO P. DEERE, 2.

Blue pencil: Prison, Dundalk.

CARCAR DUN DEALGAN.

5/4/18.

A Pádrúig, A Chara,

Have just heard that you have been arrested, got three months and been removed to Cork.

I suppose there is no chance of your coming here as there is no room.

I received the vocabulary from *Siobán* to-day. She said your "last words" were to send it to me.

Do you have visits? Tell all the Cork *cailini* I was asking for them, especially the Misses Good & Tennel.

Hope ye aren't kicking up any rows. The chief used to be civil to us. What'll the poor girl at (deleted in copying ink pencil) do after you? I suppose ye'll fix it up when you get out.

Mise Sean Treasaigh.

Blue pencil: I am, JOHN TREACY.

Another to his uncle, Michael Allis, Tipperary, reads: —

Dundalk Jail.

9-3-18.

My Dear Uncle,

I received your letter to-day. You seem to have been unnecessarily troubled about me. I didn't think you were so nervous.

Of course you know by now that the strike is over. We got word this morning from Stack.

I feel just as well as ever I did. We are having great times now. Am sorry to hear of your trouble. Hope 'twill go as quick as mine went.

Mise,

SEAN O TREASAIGH.

.....

COPY OF DISPATCH.

SEAN O TREASAIGH TO SEAN COONEY (CLONMEL).

26-10-'19.

A Chara,

I've heard from Con Moloney that you have some information about arms being available in England.

Please send me full particulars at once as to place, name of person, etc. G.H.Q. will put their men in that place on to it at once.

All arms so obtained will go to S. T. (meaning South Tipp.) Bde.

Address dispatches to me:

Sean O Treasaigh,

C/o. G.H.Q., Dublin.

Send them per Con M. or direct to Dublin. If sending by somebody coming up get them left to M. Collins, 65 Parnell St.

SEAN O TREASAIGH.

COPY OF LETTER SENT TO CAPTAIN NED O'BRIEN,
GALBALLY, WHEN LATTER WAS IN THE
UNITED STATES.

To E. O'B.

April 1st, 1920.

Received yours of March 6th on March 26th. We were delighted to hear of your safe arrival. You must have been pretty well worn out by so many trials and disappointments. I asked M. O'C. (Michael Gollins) about the advisability of your making a statement, and he said to lie low for the present, and they will let you know if anything can be done. Things are getting quite exciting here now so that men on the run are about the safest. They will probably get more exciting rapidly. Have no proper news about Knocklong case. There seem to have been no developments since. Have you met M. O'C. (Michael O'Callaghan) over? If you do, remember me to him. Tell him I am still sorry I didn't go to Tipperary that Tuesday night of Easter Week. All the boys are fine. When I have any news I'll send it to you.

Mise do chara sa chúis,

SEAN O TREASAIGH.

(The reference to "making a statement" refers to a suggestion that Capt. O'Brien should make a personal statement to save Foley arrested after Knocklong).

.....

To *Runaidhe,*
Craobh Eithne Cairbre.

24/5/20.

A Chara Dhil,

Please excuse my delay in acknowledging your gift. 'Tis partly my fault and partly the fault of circumstances. Thanks also for good wishes. *Tá sibh ro-fhial ar fad linn,* and much too flattering also—if there were many more like that our heads would be swelled in no time.

I can't agree with your opinion that marrying amounts to becoming a passive resister. History, past and present, disproves that theory. So don't let your members off work just because they're married.

Is there anything I can do for ye?

Mise,

Do chara sa chúis,

SEAN O TREASAIGH.

Letter to the Cumann na mBan; supplied by *Cait de Paor*, Tipperary.

SOME BALLADS OF SEAN TREACY.

I.

A Threasaigh cháidh! Molaim-se do lámh,
 Cé go bfuil tú go tláth 'san uaig anois.
 Ba láidir tú i bpáirt i n-aghaidh. Ropoirí Sheáin
 Bhí ar buile 'sar fán trid an nduithche.
 I dteangain na mBárd, béidh t'ainm go h-árd,
 Mar gheall ar do grádh d'ár stuaire—
 Do throidis gach lá go meanmnach grádhach
 Ag saothrú siothcán agus buaidh dhi.

II.

Is truagh linn tú ar lár id' óige 'sidh bláth,
 Nuair atáimid ag tnú le saoirse.
 Ach mairfidh do cháil an fhaid a bheidh trácht
 Ar fhearaibh gan sgáth 'sa tír seo.
 Roimh ghramaisg an áir do seóladh thar sáil'
 I leith go h-oileán ár sinnsear,
 Ag dóghadh 'sa robáil ar fuaid Inse Fáil,
 'S ag creachadh gan náir' ár ndaoine.

III.

Meireach tusa 's do shórt do bheimís go deó
 Mar bhacaigh ag cur stró ar gach éinne
 Mar do sgiobadh ár stór' sár maoin ós ár gcómhair
 Mar sguabtar an ceó des na sléibhte.
 Ba cheap-magaidh is spóirt ár mbuaidhreamh 'sár mbrón
 Ag an Sgriosadóir Seón úd an Eirligh,
 Gur airigh sé an gleó ar gach taobh de go beó,
 'S gur mhothuigh sé cómacht bhúr bpiléar-na.

IV.

Anois codail go sámh, a Oganagh breágh,
 'San roilg sin lámh led' ghaoltaibh,
 No go dtagaidh an lá nuair a ghlaodhfar go h-árd
 Ar ár shíolruigh ó Adhamh agus Eabha.
 I bhFláthas na ngrast go rabhair go h-árd
 I measg sgata breágh lághach de Gaedhealaibh,
 Is go raibh sé indá dom féin tar éis bháis
 Bheith i d' fhochair i láthair an Aon-Mhic !

(O Mild O'Treassaigh ! I praise your strong hand,
 Altho' you lie limp in the grave. Strong indeed
 Was your part against the Saxon ravishers running
 Stark mad through the land.
 In the Tongue of the Bards your name will be on high
 For your love for our own Love,
 Each day you fought with courage and yet magnanimously,
 Striving to bring her peace and victory.

We mourn that you are stretched low in your youth and
 Bloom even as we await Freedom,
 But your fame shall live as long as our heroes are
 Commemorated in our land.
 Before that slaughtering rabble that were hurled
 On us from beyond the sea on the island of our
 Ancestors, burning and ravaging all Inis Fail,—
 And shamelessly plundering the people—

Ah, well, but for you and your comrades, we should
 Have been for ever like a beggar asking alms from
 All and each. Because our wealth and store were
 Swept away like mists from the hills.
 Our sorrow and anguish were but a laughing stock and a mockery
 To yon John of the destruction and
 Slaughter: until he heard the noise of battle all around
 Him, and felt the power of your rifles.

Sleep gently then, brave Soldier in the Churchyard
 Beside your kindred. Until the day comes
 When all the seed and kindred of Adam and Eve
 Shall be called from their graves.
 In God's Heaven may you be among the kind
 And gentle kin of all the Gael,
 And may it be my fate, to be with you in the presence
 Of God's Only Son !).⁽¹⁾

(1) This Irish ballad was supplied by Michael Fitzpatrick of Tipperary Town. In a note to the song it was stated that *Miceal MacCártaigh, O.S.*, Bishopswood, Dundrum, had got it from *Labhrais O Cadhla, O.S.*, Cappaquinn, and *Colaiste na Rinne*. The author's name was not given. It was originally made to an air, older and more suitable to its subject than the one given, *Spailpin a Rúin*, an air resembling a *caoine*.

SEAN TREACY.

We often heard our fathers tell how in the Fenian times
 The noblest of Tipperary's sons imprisoned spent their lives.
 These tales we can hear daily and the deeds of valiant men,
 As the war goes on unceasingly through valley, hill and glen.

They searched for Sean at midnight, his comrade with him slept.
 Macready's murdering bloodhounds in silence on them crept.
 Our heroes fought as brave men should and made a gallant fight,
 With bullet food they did conclude the lives of Smyth and White.

In a crowded Dublin street Sean died on a dim October day.
 The story will be told with pride while men in Ireland stay.
 With trusty gun held in his hand two sleuth-hounds he laid low.
 'Twas well they knew this island through, they had no braver foe.

When the British saw the battle they shook with fear and dread.
 A machine gun then did rattle and our hero bold fell dead;
 " Sean Treacy killed, Sean Treacy killed ! " was borne along the
 breeze.
 No bells were rung, no *caoine* was sung, he died for Ireland free.

While grass grows green in Ireland we'll think of you, dear Sean,
 We'll sing your praise through hill and dale till grief and gloom
 are gone.
 And when the dawn of Freedom's sun shines out in Erin's skies;
 In the Gaelic tongue we'll tell our sons how brave Sean Treacy
 died.

TIPPERARY FAR AWAY.

The moon shone down in Talbot Street
Where a dying rebel lay,
His arms were crossed and his body was stretched,
And his life blood flowed away.

A passing comrade heard his moans,
And the sufferer soon was found,
He gently raised his aching head,
Up from the cold damp ground.

“Softly, gently, comrade,” he cried,
“No longer on earth must I stay,
“I will never more roam to my own native home
“In Tipperary far away.

“A lock of my hair I pray you take,
“To my mother so far away,
“And so as she will gaze on it,
“She fondly will think of me.

“Tell her it’s down by the Liffeside,
“My mouldering bones do lay,
“There’s a vision of light, before me to-night
“In Tipperary far away.”

His comrades gathered round him,
To bid him his last farewell,
He was as brave a young soldier
As ever in battle fell.

They dug a grave and beneath they laid,
Sean Treacy, brave and gay,
Who will never more roam to his own native home
In Tipperary far away.

THE STATION OF KNOCKLONG.

The news has spread thro' Ireland and spread from shore to shore
Of such a deed no living man has ever heard before,
From out a guarded carriage 'mid a panic-stricken throng
Sean Hogan he was rescued at the Station of Knocklong.

When a guard of four policemen had their prisoner minded well
As the fatal train sped o'er the rails conveying him to his cell,
The prisoner then could scarce foretell of hearts both brave and strong
That were planning for his rescue at the Station of Knocklong.

The shades of eve were falling fast when the train at last drew in
It was halted for an hour or so by a few courageous men
They sprang into the carriage and it did not take them long,
"Hands up or die" was the rebel cry at the Station of Knocklong.

Now King George's pampered hirelings they shrivelled up with fear
And thought of how they placed in cells full many a Volunteer
Now, face to face with armed men to escape how they did long
But two of them met with traitors' deaths at the Station of Knocklong.

From Solohead to Limerick such deeds as these were seen
And devil a tear was ever shed for Wallace of Roskeen,
They did Old England's dirty work and did that work too long
But the renegades were numbered up at the Station of Knocklong.

Now rise up Mother Erin and always be of cheer,
You'll never die while at your side there stand such Volunteers,
From Dingle Bay to Garryowen the cheers will echo long
Of the rescue of Sean Hogan at the Station of Knocklong.

ASHTOWN ROAD.

(AIR: "THE SNOWY-BREASTED PEARL")

'Twas a cold December day
A lorry ploughed its way
Midst bullets splash and play
On Ashtown road.

In that car a living tool
Of England's hated rule
There was begun a duel
On Ashtown road.

Young Savage, unafraid,
With rifle and grenade
Attacked them undismayed
On Ashtown road.

But a bullet laid him low
From a rifle of the foe
That's another debt we owe
For Ashtown road.

But another day shall dawn
Like that cold December morn
When a Martyr's name was born
On Ashtown road.

We laid him in a grave
Where the willows sadly wave
Oh, Son of Erin brave
Farewell to thee.

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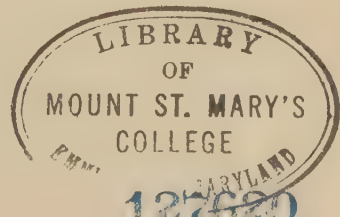
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Sean Treacy's Last Fight--

Sean Brunswick saw the scene: 'The street alive with rifle and revolver volleys... and the more deadly rattle of the machine gun... He caught a glimpse of Treacy falling on the pavement outside a shop which was then Speidel's... A glimpse, too, of the loiterer in the blue cap and blue nap coat— Christian, closing with Sean Treacy... Christian falling... Shots... Stampede... And the struggle is shut off from Brunswick's sight... He sees the panic stricken pedestrians stampeding and hears the rattle of the machine gun and the volleys which roll on for some minutes after Sean Treacy lies dead. Innocent passers-by are killed; young Patrick Carroll, a messenger boy just fifteen years old... The bullets catch him on his way up the street, and he drops dead; Joseph Corrington, who crashes from his bicycle on the pavement, dying with three bullets in his stomach. A policeman on duty is caught, too, as he seeks cover, and collapses with a bullet in his right side and a broken right arm. The volleys are continuous... for five minutes and more.'

The firing ceased and the soldiers spread out along the street, their rifles at the ready. Perhaps over it all the great spirit of Treacy lingered for a moment in a last farewell to the Dublin where he had suffered and fought, sending one last salute to the Tipperary scenes and folk, to his comrades of Soloheadbeg, Knocklong, Drangan and Oola.