

KEVIN BARRY

BY SEAN CRONIN





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

THE STORY OF KEVIN BARRY

BY

SEAN CRONIN

WITH FOREWORD BY COMDT.-GENERAL TOM BARRY

*I've a sad but true story to relate
Of a brave young Irishman's cruel fate.
It is written down in the roll of fame
And Kevin Barry is the brave lad's name . . .*

(Street ballad)

Published by :

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE,
56 GRAND PARADE, CORK

FOREWORD

WHEN first I read the manuscript of *The Story of Kevin Barry*, I felt there was no need of a foreword to Sean Cronin's booklet. The place of this brave young patriot is so well established in Ireland's revolutionary history, and his story is so well told by Mr. Cronin, without heroics or trimmings, that no embellishments or explanations are needed, or indeed, desirable. However, the author wishes for a few brief sentences from some Volunteer who was on active service during Kevin's arrest and execution, linking up his death with those of the hundreds of Volunteers from other areas who died in those years that the Nation might live.

From Dublin southwards seeped stories of Kevin's interrogation, his steadfastness under torture, and eventually his courtmartial and sentence to death by hanging. We heard and read of the many attempts being made to have the death sentence commuted and all Ireland waited with bated breath for that fatal morning of the 1st of November when the short notice posted on the gate of Mountjoy Jail told the world that Kevin Barry had died hanging from the end of a British rope.

From that moment onwards Kevin's name was joined to the illustrious list of Ireland's immortals commencing with Tone. The achievements of his young life could not possibly be great ones but his splendid character, his unselfish service with the Irish Republican Army, his great courage, and the manner in which he died became an inspiration to his comrades who were still fighting the terrorist forces of the British occupation. And so it is hoped it will continue to be down the years until the day when this island of ours will be a free and united Nation.

Mr. Cronin's booklet is an excellent one and should be in every Irish home.

TOM BARRY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author acknowledges with thanks the assistance of the following: Mrs. Jim Moloney, Mr. Sean O'Neill, Mr. Bob O'Flanagan, Mr. Diarmuid Mac Giolla Phadraig and Father Thomas Counihan, S.J. To the latter also thanks are due for the original photograph of Kevin Barry — taken from a school group in the 1919 Belvederian — which artist Bill Murphy has reproduced on the cover. I should like to thank the staff of the National Library of Ireland for use of their files of newspapers of the period and to the National Museum of Ireland for the use of pictures. Also to the *Kerryman Ltd.* and Mr. Denis Holmes for the quotations from the arms raid on the King's Inns, *Dublin's Fighting Story*, and to the editor *Irish Independent* for quotations from that publication. Finally, my thanks to Mr. Dan Barry of Cork who conceived the idea of a book on Kevin Barry and who asked me to write it.

Copyright: Sean Cronin

FIRST PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 1965

Jacket design by Bill Murphy

THE ARREST

(1)

AT 11.30 a.m. on Monday, September 20, 1920, a British military lorry drew up near the arched entrance to the yard of Monks' bakery in Upper Church Street, Dublin. Soldiers in full battle order lined the sides, rifles between knees. They wore the insignia of the 2nd Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment, based at Collinstown Camp, now Dublin Airport. They were collecting the bread ration.

Dublin on the surface seemed calm enough, but Dublin in 1920 seethed with tension. Incidents occurred daily. Searches, arrests, shootings, ambushes had become commonplace. Curfew emptied the streets at night, except for military vehicles prowling for prey. Thousands of troops garrisoned the city; the Black and Tans were six months old; the Auxiliaries had just been formed.

Sergeant Banks, N.C.O. in charge of the escort, stepped from the cab of the lorry and lowered the tailboard. The rays of the late morning sun, slanting across the rooftops of the narrow street, glinted off the shining brass buttons and buckles of the soldiers. The sergeant strode through the archway into the yard. Then he disappeared from view. The place seemed deserted save for a painter on a ladder. Pte. Smith, a member of the fatigue party detailed to draw the trays of bread from bakery to lorry, followed his N.C.O. into the yard. Pte. Noble, on similar detail, was about to do likewise when a voice from the street ordered, 'Drop your rifles! Put up your hands!'

Noble half-turned. He saw three men with drawn pistols standing beside the lorry. Rifles clattered to the floor. Seconds later came a shot; then a fusillade. A soldier fell with a bullet in the head. As Noble dived for cover a bullet shattered his foot. He could see the men with the pistols backing away, firing as they withdrew. From other points in the street small arms fire covered their retreat. Bullets whined and ricocheted off buildings and pavement.

The duel of revolvers and rifles lasted about three minutes. When the shooting began Sgt. Banks took shelter in the bakery yard. When it ended he dashed back to the truck. One of his men, Pte. Harold Washington, was dead. Two others, Ptes. Marshall Whitehead and Thomas Humphries, were badly wounded.

A crowd had gathered and some ex-soldiers tended the wounded. From the North Dublin Union nearby came a strong party of Lancashire Fusiliers. There was a great deal of confusion and shouting. Banks ordered his men back into the lorry and was about to get in himself preparatory to driving off when an old woman cried out in alarm: 'There's a man under the lorry!'

The youth tried to get away between the wheels, but the soldiers crowded around the lorry and trapped him. They threw him into the back beside the dead Pte. Washington, jabbing at his throat and stomach with their bayonets. The prisoner was 'respectably dressed and good looking,' a witness told a reporter later. As the lorry drove at high speed to the North Dublin Union, the soldiers kept their rifles levelled at the young man, fingers on triggers.

The old woman tried to explain why she called out when she saw the youth under the lorry: she feared he would be run over and killed. It was true, but her neighbours blamed her for the arrest. This preyed on her mind a great deal and later she suffered a nervous breakdown.

More infantry reinforcements poured out of the North Dublin Union. They cordoned the street, raided houses, searched passers-by. Shopkeepers shuttered their windows and locked their doors. Despite the military, large crowds congregated near the scene of the ambush. Witnesses told the story of the brief battle and subsequent arrest many times. Garbled accounts of the engagement appeared in the evening newspapers.

Pte. Humphries was not admitted to the King George V military hospital (now St. Brigid's) until 1 p.m. — an hour and a half after the ambush. He had a bullet in the hip and died the following night. Pte. Whitehead was wounded in the stomach. He was admitted to hospital at 12.30 and operated on immediately. He died two hours later.

The wounded were taken to the nearby Richmond Hospital, then transferred to the King George V. The long delay appears remarkable. The army ambulance service may have been over-taxed that morning: almost at the same time as the ambush two N.C.O.s were fatally wounded while trying to disarm a drunken sergeant in Portobello Barracks.

Whatever about the wounded, the military didn't forget the bread ration. A lorry returned to collect it at 12.30. Then they withdrew the cordons.

The British army's Irish Command headquarters issued the following statement on Monday afternoon:

'This morning a party of one N.C.O. and six men of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment were fired on by a body of civilians outside a bakery in Church Street, Dublin. One soldier was killed and four were wounded.

'A piquet of the Lancashire Fusiliers in the vicinity, hearing the shots, hurried to their comrades' assistance, and succeeded in arresting one of the aggressors.

'No arms or equipment were lost by the soldiers.'

A second statement later that evening announced the death of Pte. Whitehead.

(2)

A small crowd gathered at the gates of the North Dublin Union saw the soldiers lead their prisoner into the guardroom. A military police escort under a sergeant-major marched him to the defaulters' room where he was searched and handcuffed. Fifteen minutes later two officers and three sergeants of the Lancashire Fusiliers entered the room. The interrogation began.

He gave his name: Kevin Barry; his address: 58 South Circular Road, Dublin; his occupation: medical student. He refused to answer any other questions. The officers persisted; they wanted the names of all involved in the ambush. If the prisoner answered he would go free. If not . . .

In the sober affidavit drawn up in Mountjoy Prison some days before his execution, on the orders of Dick McKee, O/C Dublin Brigade, Kevin Barry tells what happened when the question of names was repeated:

I refused to give them. He tried to persuade me to give the names, and I persisted in refusing. He then sent the sergeant out of the room for a bayonet. When it was brought in the sergeant was ordered by the same officer to point the bayonet at my stomach. The same questions as to the names and addresses of my companions were repeated, with the same result.

The sergeant was then ordered to turn my face to the wall and point the bayonet to my back. I was so turned. The sergeant then said that he would run the bayonet into me if I did not tell. The bayonet was then removed and I was turned round again. The same officer then said to me that if I persisted in my attitude he would turn me out to the men in the barrack square, and he supposed I knew what that meant with the men in their present temper. I said nothing.

He ordered the sergeants to put me face down on the floor and twist my arm. I was pushed down on the floor after my handcuffs were removed by the sergeant who went for the bayonet. When I lay on the floor, one of the sergeants knelt on my back, the other two placed one foot each on my back and left shoulder, and the man who knelt on me twisted my right arm, holding it by the wrist with one hand, while he held my hair with the other to pull back my head. The arm was twisted from the elbow joint. This continued, to the best of my judgment, for five minutes. It was very painful. The first officer was standing near my feet, and the officer who accompanied him was still present.

During the twisting of my arm, the first officer continued to question me as to the names and addresses of my companions, and also asked me the name of my company commander and any other officer I knew.

As I still persisted in refusing to answer these questions I was allowed to get up and I was again handcuffed. A civilian came in and repeated the questions, with the same result.

He informed me that if I gave all the information I knew I could get off. I was then left in the company of the military policeman; the two officers, the three sergeants and the civilian leaving together.

I could certainly identify the officer who directed the proceedings and put the questions. I am not sure of the others, except the sergeant with the bayonet. My arm was medically treated by an officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps, attached to the North Dublin Union, the following morning, and by the prison hospital orderly afterwards for four or five days.

I was visited by the courtmartial officer last night and he read for me a confirmation of sentence of death by hanging, to be executed on Monday next, and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing same to be true and by virtue of the Statutory Declaration Act, 1836.

The affidavit was written by Sean O hUadhaigh, solicitor; witnessed by Myles Keogh, Justice of the Peace; and signed by Kevin Gerard Barry. The original is now in the National Museum.

For some days before the ambush he had stayed with his uncle, Patrick Dowling, at 58 South Circular Road. After the arrest military raided the house and pulled it asunder. Among the items taken and never returned were a new suit of Donegal tweed, a wristlet watch and a couple of fountain pens.

The Barry family only learned of the arrest after the raid on Patrick Dowling's place. It was Peggy Barry's birthday — Kevin's youngest sister — and they had a party at Fleet Street. Her sister Monty and young friends were there and some of Kevin's comrades



Kevin Barry wearing Belvedere College football jersey

(Courtesy National Museum)



The scene in Church Street, Dublin immediately after the arrest of Kevin Barry. Sept. 20th. 1920.

dropped in. After a time Mrs. Barry and Kathy — eldest of the Barry girls — slipped away. They visited all the barracks seeking information but learned nothing.

Next morning Patrick Dowling heard that Kevin was in the Bridewell and succeeded in visiting him. He was sore from the beating. The pain in his arm bothered him; probably someone would look after it soon, he said. That afternoon he was removed to Mountjoy. He had his arm in a sling and this was noted in the records. Dr. Hackett, the prison M.O., examined him. Kevin made no complaint about his treatment at the North Dublin Union. When a warder asked him privately what had happened, he replied : 'The soldiers hurt me.' He would say no more.

Some days later Mrs. Barry saw her son. She did so as a 'friend' not as his mother, for G.H.Q. had a slight hope the British might think a mistake had been made. She used an assumed name. She knew by then that Dublin Castle planned to try him for murder under a new Act. His arm was still in the sling, but otherwise he looked well. He was popular with the warders because he had given one of them a tip for a race and the horse won. The visit ended and she did not see him again until the court-martial.

THE PRISONER

(1)

KEVIN BARRY joined the Irish Volunteers in October 1917. He was only 15½ at the time, a student in Belvedere College, the Dublin day school run by the Jesuit Fathers. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Dublin Brigade were on the north side of the Liffey, the 3rd and 4th Battalions on the south side. Kevin was posted to 'C' Company of the 1st Battalion, later transferring to the newly formed 'H' Company commanded by Captain Seamus Kavanagh.

They trained at various centres: the O'Flanagan Sinn Fein Club in Ryder's Row, the MacDermott Club in the North Circular Road near Jones's Road, and at 41 and 44 Parnell Square; the latter is now called Kevin Barry Hall. They went to Finglas and north Co. Dublin for field exercises.

Kevin's first job was delivering mobilisation orders. In practice this meant cycling all over the city, generally on a Saturday evening following a rugby or hurling match. He might return home some time after 11 p.m., to be up early next morning for a Company parade at 8 o'clock.

Sean O'Neill and Bob O'Flanagan introduced him to the Clarke Luby Club of the I.R.B., the secret revolutionary organisation reorganised after 1916. Kevin at 16 must have been its youngest member.

A new era had begun in the struggle for national freedom. In the summer of 1917 Sinn Fein won by-elections in Clare and Kilkenny. In September thousands followed the remains of the 1916 leader, Thomas Ashe, to Glasnevin cemetery; he had died from forcible feeding while on hunger strike in Mountjoy Prison. In the 1918 general election, Sinn Fein won 73 of the 105 Irish seats, although the Irish Parliamentary Party told the people it was 'futile and insane' to vote for a Republic. The new representatives proceeded to establish Dail Eireann and ratify the Republic declared in 1916 when they met at the Mansion House, Dublin, in January, 1919.

Kevin Barry was a militant nationalist even before the Easter Rising. He attended a Manchester Martyrs' commemoration in the

Mansion House in November 1915 and afterwards wanted to join Na Fianna Eireann, the Republican Boy Scouts founded by Madame Markievicz. But his mother thought him too young at 13.

Kevin came to nationalism at an early age. He spent much of his childhood in north-east Carlow, an area rich in folk memories of the United Irishmen and the renowned Co. Wicklow guerrilla chief, Michael Dwyer. The Barrys and Dowlings, who had lived in that pocket of Co. Carlow for generations, were part of the tradition. Some of their people had been 'out' in '98.

The Barrys had a servant named Kate Kinsella, a Dublin woman from Cork Street, who was a friend of Tim Kelly, the young Invin-cible martyr. She was illiterate but had a brilliant mind and was a true patriot. When the firing started on Easter Monday she went out into the streets seeking information, then lit two candles on a little altar 'For the boys that took the Castle.' Her information was wrong, but there was great excitement in the Barry household. She died in 1937 full of years, still an uncompromising Republican.

From 1916 onwards, the Barry family became more and more involved in the national movement. Kevin's eldest brother Mick was O/C of the Volunteers in the Tombeagh (Co. Carlow) area; his sister Sheila was in Cumann na mBan. In the excitement of the times they discovered more and more people with the same national ideas as themselves. And Kevin made new friends.

(2)

Kevin Barry, fourth of a family of two boys and five girls, was born at 8 Fleet Street, Dublin, on January 20, 1902, and baptised in St. Andrew's Church, Westland Row.

Besides working the family farm at Tombeagh, Hacketstown, Co. Carlow, Thomas Barry operated a dairy business in Fleet Street. He rented land near the city as well. Before his death in 1908 at the age of 56, he and the family lived in Dublin, but spent all holidays in Tombeagh.

Mrs. Barry (née Mary Dowling) came from Drumguin, Co. Carlow. After her husband died the family life centred more and more on Tombeagh, although the Fleet Street house was retained. Kevin went to Rathvilly national school for a few years. He liked country life and when he returned to Dublin to attend St. Mary's College, Rathmines, he was a hardy lad and something of an athlete.

St. Mary's closed in the summer of 1916 and he transferred to

Belvedere. He was on the championship Junior Rugby Cup team and later the Senior XV. He became secretary of the newly-formed hurling club in 1918 and one of its keenest players. He joined the Irish Volunteers during his second year at Belvedere.

Despite his many activities, Kevin did not neglect his studies. He got honours in Middle Grade in 1918, honours in Senior Grade the following year, and won a Dublin Corporation scholarship to the National University.

Father Thomas Counihan, S.J., who taught Kevin Barry science and mathematics in Belvedere, says: 'He was a dour kind of lad. But once he got down to something he went straight ahead.' He did not try to hide his opinions from his teachers, nor did he proclaim them. Often 'playful,' he was extremely serious behind it all.

'He was a very unemotional boy,' according to Fr. Counihan, then a Scholastic. 'There was no waving of flags with him, but he was sincere and intense.'

His school essays reveal quite a lot. They show a boy who thought deeply on many matters: on politics, on people, on life itself. Writing about 'Kingship' he described it as 'the only surviving evil of the days when the people, the mob, were looked upon as dirt, as animals to serve the mighty king and his minions. When all believed or were forced to believe in the Divine Right of Kings'

'We are at present living in a time which marks the wane of this despotism,' the essay continues, 'In a day when the people are coming into their own. When the labourer — the backbone of every nation — has the same vote and the same right to live as those noblemen who in former times had almost absolute power . . . The belief in the Divine Right of Kings is dying out and the thrones of Europe are tottering. Sentiments which would have shocked our king-worshipping forefathers are floating about in the air. *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, the motto of the second greatest Republic in the world, will shortly become the war-cry of all and we hope our little island will not change her present views upon Kingship.'

An essay called 'Prejudice' considers the subject from three angles: racial, religious and personal. The young essayist believed that racial prejudice was the worst of all:

It usually masks a much worse thing — oppression or tyranny. It is also divided into two classes, namely that of the white man against his coloured brother, for brother he is whether black, red, or yellow, and that of the white man against his fellow-white man of a different nation. The two combined

form the origin of very many of the world's greatest wars and slaughter.

In an essay on 'Industrial Unrest' the young Kevin Barry stated these sentiments:

We are to-day passing through a crisis which is unparalleled in the history of the world. It is the culmination of four years of starvation, privation and misgovernment — it is the nemesis which awaited war profiteers, place hunters and grasping capitalists. It is probably the beginning of the end of aristocracy.

It is interesting to us to study this huge upheaval, its causes, its effects and its possible remedies. It is interesting also because it marks the triumph of Labour, of Trades Unionism and — as Martin Murphy's rag has it — of Syndicalism. When one contemplates the immensity of the trouble — the fact that in Belfast alone 95,500 workers are out on strike — the fact that the whole city is paralysed and that the whole country could be paralysed at an hour's notice, one is amazed at the stupendousness of this system and one can understand the elation of Labour.

The causes of a strike are not hard to discover. In nine cases out of ten it will be found that the cause is hunger. This itself may arise from two causes, bad wages or misgovernment. In former times it was the former. This crisis is the result of the latter

There is no remedy for a strike except to accede to the demands of the strikers. This may seem strange but it is sound common-sense as a brief examination of former strikes will prove. If the strikers are beaten they go back to work sullen and revengeful and it is short until they are 'out' again. But the usual procedure is the election of an arbitrator who effects a compromise.

We here in Dublin had an experience of a strike which has been looked upon by all the world as the 'model strike.' When W. M. Murphy refused to recognise the tramwaymen as a union they went out on strike bringing out every trade union man in Dublin with them.

The Socialists all over the world backed them and the food-ship 'Hare' was dispatched with food for the strikers, also money poured in from everywhere to keep up the strike. The men held out doggedly till they won or virtually won since the tramway union was recognised. Thus we received a forcible demonstration of the power of Labour and had an experience also of the power of an agitator in the person of that marvellous leader James Larkin and his able lieutenant, Commandant James Connolly.

This was heady stuff for Belvedere. Although Kevin's English teacher had no written comment to make, he didn't flatter the essayist with marks — 60 out of 100. A slighter piece on 'Imagination' received 85. Even in this innocuous essay he struck a blow at the ancient foe. The final sentence reads: 'Certain it is that the Irishman is much more imaginative than the phlegmatic Sassanach.'

He used an essay based on the quotation 'The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings' to explain Ireland's continued subjugation. The effort received only 40 marks. Someone — perhaps the teacher — wrote 'piffle' beside the following:

There are people who say that the reason Ireland is not free is because Irishmen are not united. Well, they can't give that reason any longer because Ireland *is* united or at least it is so unanimous that the dissenters do not count. But a word on this unity before passing to other things. It is remarkable that the very men who were always shouting for unity are the men who will not unite at this critical moment and the Hottentots, the Rainbow chasers and the 'grasshoppers' were first to respond to the appeal of a Dillonite bishop . . . No matter how bleak things look at present a brighter day is coming and if everyone does his share, instead of submitting to present circumstances, instead of being satisfied with present conditions, there is no doubt but that 'at a no far distant date,' we may be celebrating our - - - [a note in Kevin's handwriting follows: 'Deleted by censor.']

Finally, an essay called 'Ideals' opens thus: 'Idealism is an attribute of the soul and is a direct gift from God Himself. It consists of striving after the better things of life and often striving after glorious but unattainable objects. It brings out all that is good in a man and has given to history many of the noblest of its characters.'

(3)

Kevin Barry entered University College Dublin in the autumn of 1919 to study medicine. A fellow-student described him as 'open-handed, open-hearted and generous to a fault and first in every manly exercise.' He read widely, liked the theatre, went to dances, was popular and made friends easily. At the same time he carried out his duties as a citizen-soldier with vigour and enthusiasm.

His closest friend at Belvedere was Jerry MacAleer from Dunganon. They started medicine together at U.C.D. Other student

Volunteers included Frank Flood, Tom Kissane and Mick Robinson of 'H' Coy. They were together in the Church Street ambush. Frank Flood was later charged with 'high treason by levying war' and hanged on March 14, 1921, with five others.

A girl student at U.C.D. remembers Kevin and friends walking down Grafton Street at Christmas 1919. They were wearing false moustaches. 'The years roll back and I remember him as if it were yesterday — his twinkling eyes and wide infectious grin nearly swallowed up by that incongruous moustache,' writes Edith Kaye. 'We knew, though I expect we were not supposed to know, that these lads were some of the "boys," in other words members of the Volunteers in University College.'

It added to the romance of Kevin Barry to describe him as only an inexperienced schoolboy when captured. It is untrue and misses his significance as an authentic national hero, a rank-and-file representative of the Volunteer army then battling the world's greatest Empire.

For three years before his capture Kevin Barry had been a member of that army. He had taken part in a number of operations. Some were minor like the raid on the Shamrock Works for weapons which were about to be handed over to the R.I.C. and the raid on Marks of Capel Street for ammunition and explosives. But his dedication to duty won him recognition and promotion to Section Commander.

He was one of the Volunteers of the 1st Battalion who, on June 1, 1920, seized the King's Inns and captured the garrison's arms. The Inns, at the upper end of Henrietta Street on Constitution Hill, was occupied by the military as an outpost of the North Dublin Union. Dublin Brigade needed arms and Vice-Commandant Peadar Clancy — murdered by Auxiliaries in Dublin Castle three weeks after Kevin Barry's execution — picked the men and planned the operation.

Kevin was with the group assigned to take the guardroom. When all did not go according to plan, it was Kevin Barry 'who in a moment of doubt,' a participant states, 'stepped forward and led the section into the building.'

'Had it not been for his action in steadying one of the officers and leading the rush,' according to an article in *Dublin's Fighting Story*, 'the work of all the other men might have gone for nothing.' Equipment captured included 25 rifles, two Lewis light machine guns, and a large quantity of ammunition. Ironically, in view of Kevin Barry's ultimate fate, 25 British soldiers seized in the raid were released before the Volunteers withdrew.

During his last holiday in Tombeagh, Kevin got involved in a

local unit operation. A G.H.Q. representative arrived with orders to burn down Aughavanagh House, John Redmond's property, to prevent the British garrisoning it. Max Green and his wife, Joanna Redmond Green, were staying there. The Volunteers tried to explain why it was necessary to destroy the building, but the irate occupants wouldn't listen. Kevin took on the job of negotiator between the G.H.Q. man and Max Green, who was prepared to give his word he would not allow the British to occupy the house. Kevin eventually convinced the G.H.Q. man that here was a case where by following the spirit of an order one might get better results than by sticking to the letter of it. Aughavanagh House was spared. The British did not occupy it and it is now an An Oige hostel.

Sometime in the middle of September Kevin returned to Dublin. His officers told him to sleep away from home. He stayed with his uncle Patrick at 58 South Circular Road.



**Early teenage photograph of Kevin Barry taken from
a school group**

THE ATTACK

(1)

A MILITARY ration party with armed escort called three times a week at Monks' bakery and 'H' Company staff sought sanction to disarm the soldiers. This was refused at first because of the proximity of the strongly-manned North Dublin Union. But the need for arms in time overcame the objection and G.H.Q. authorised the operation.

Captain Seamus Kavanagh and his staff prepared a plan, picked the men and drilled them for the job. One was Kevin Barry. They nearly dropped him because he had a college examination at 2 p.m. the same day. But he assured them he would have plenty of time between the end of the action and the start of the examination not only to get to U.C.D. but home for dinner as well.

They mobilised early that morning at the O'Flanagan Sinn Fein Club in Ryder's Row and rehearsed the operation on a blackboard. Church Street runs north from the Liffey to Constitution Hill and Monks' bakery stood at the junction of North King Street. A maze of streets and famous old Dublin landmarks dot the area: the Linen Hall which became a military barracks when Belfast took its trade away and was burned down in 1916; the Four Courts, James Gandon's architectural masterpiece; the Smithfield market, a great quadrangle connected by narrow passages to nearby streets; Green Street courthouse, where many Irish patriots faced transportation, imprisonment or death; the King's Inns, the North Dublin Union, the Bridewell and the Royal Barracks fronting the Liffey.

The plan was simple: occupy the bakery; isolate the short stretch of Upper Church Street by siting grenadiers at each end to deal with possible enemy reinforcements; close in on the military lorry and capture it. They had a van in Coleraine Street to take away the arms. No real difficulties were anticipated and a whistle blast would signal the withdrawal.

Tommy McGrane, 1st Lieutenant of 'H' Company, Frank O'Flanagan, John Joe Carroll, Dave McDonagh and James Douglas (of 'G' Coy.) moved into the bakery by the private entrance

at 38 North King Street. They took over the office, dismantled the telephone, covered the yard and waited for the soldiers. The lorry was late. 'We had to prowl around the neighbourhood for practically an hour,' says Derry-born Bob O'Flanagan, 'H' Company 2nd Lieutenant. They split up into groups. Paddy Young and Jim Moran waited with grenades at the Brunswick Street corner, the route from the North Dublin Union. Maurice Higgins and Tom Kissane, also with grenades, were at the North King Street end covering the route from the Royal Barracks.

Sean O'Neill, Kevin Barry and Bob O'Flanagan were to follow the lorry into Upper Church Street and hold up the soldiers. Simultaneously, Harry Murphy, Thomas (Tucker) Reilly and Christy Boy Robinson were to close in on the lorry from the Brunswick Street side. Directly opposite the bakery yard, O/C Seamus Kavanagh with Frank Flood, Tommy O'Brien, and Mick Robinson, waited in a public house door ready to close on the lorry from that side and disarm the soldiers.

John P. Kenny, John O'Dwyer, Eugene Fox and Tom Staunton could cover a withdrawal from their position on Constitution Hill. Jimmy Carrigan was with driver Davy Golden in the van.

(2)

The lorry rumbled up the street. It stopped outside the bakery yard, some distance from the footpath. The sergeant got out and dropped the tailboard. Sean O'Neill, Kevin Barry and Bob O'Flanagan moved as planned: O'Neill on the left, Kevin in the centre and O'Flanagan on the right, guns at the ready.

'They were sitting around the edges of the lorry,' says Bob O'Flanagan. 'They had their rifles between their knees.'

'We ordered them to drop their arms and put up their hands,' says Sean O'Neill. 'And they did so — except one.'

'There was one fellow sitting with his back to the cab,' Bob O'Flanagan remembers. 'He seized his rifle, raised it and fired. He's the fellow that got me. The discharge from the rifle set fire to my cap and the bullet took part of my scalp on the right side. We were looking up and they were firing down on us.'

Kevin Barry was armed with a .38 Parabellum, Sean O'Neill recalls. It jammed. He knelt down beside the lorry, freed the stoppage and fired again. Kevin told his sister during an adjournment at his court-martial that the automatic jammed a second time on the fifth

round and he knelt once more to free it. 'This time it was more difficult. 'He was busy with the gun when he sensed a difference in the atmosphere and, looking around, he saw that he was alone,' says his sister recalling their brief conversation. He dived under the lorry, hoping to get away in the confusion when the soldiers moved off.

The Volunteers hardly expected to get out of Upper Church Street alive. Once the shooting started reinforcements were bound to pour out of the North Dublin Union. How O'Tolanagan stayed on his feet not even he can explain. Blood poured down the right side of his face; he thought his brains were coming out and that he was finished. He says:

'I was making my escape and bullets were digging up the street. A hawker in a pony trap suddenly wheeled into the line of fire out of North King Street. At Church Street chapel I saw a man with a cab and hailed him. Jimmy Moran ran all the way after me with my cap which had dropped on the street. He was afraid my name was on it. Part of the scalp was still in the cap.'

He went to Jervis Street hospital and a student poured iodine into the wound and stitched it. When he came out half an hour later Frank Flood was in the waiting room covering the entrance in case of a British raid for wounded Volunteers. Later that night a doctor washed and re-stitched the wound. Bob spent the next two months in hiding recovering from his head wound.

He doesn't remember Kevin Barry ducking under the lorry. 'You saw nobody,' he says, 'only the fellow over you with the rifle. But the .38 ammunition was always a bloody nuisance; it was always jamming.'

Casualties among the Volunteers would have been higher but for the erratic shooting of the soldiers. A ricocheting bullet hit Sean O'Neill. Harry Murphy was wounded. Tom Staunton and John O'Dwyer had their hats shot off. Bullets cut through the coat of Maurice Higgins and Tom Kissane. The men with the grenades feared to use them lest they maim or kill their own comrades.

That night the men of 'H' Company returned to the area to patrol it and protect the people in case of reprisals. Father Albert, the Capuchin chaplain of 1916 fame, came out of the Church Street Friary and appealed to them to go home. There would be no reprisals, he said.

It was an uneasy night for Kevin Barry's comrades. But there were no reprisals.

THE TRIAL

(1)

THE misnamed 'Restoration of Order in Ireland Act,' which received the Royal Assent on August 9, 1920, conferred wide powers on the military: arrest without charge, detention without trial, secret courts-martial, suppression of coroners' inquests. The *Irish Independent* called it a measure 'for the creation of disorder, and anarchy, and the abolition of law.' The editorial continued: 'Lynch law, under the name of reprisals, is rapidly taking the place of what did pass for law.'

The War Office ordered that Kevin Barry be tried by secret court-martial under the new Act. General Sir Nevil Macready, Commander-in-Chief of British forces in Ireland, nominated a court of nine officers under a Brigadier-General Onslow. They wanted a 'good President,' they said, and Onslow filled the bill. The news stories of September 21, 1920, give an idea of the state of the country then virtually under martial law. Balbriggan was sacked the night before. A newly-promoted R.I.C. District Inspector named Burke, a training officer for the Black and Tans, celebrated his advancement by motoring from Dublin to Gormanston Camp — 'the nursery of the Black and Tans,' as Dublin Castle proudly called it — with his brother, an R.I.C. sergeant and ex-Irish Guardsman, and some police friends. They were drunk when they reached Balbriggan at 8 p.m. An hour later two taxi loads of police arrived, singing and shouting. The publican refused to serve them. Local R.I.C. came to the bar and then left. Republican police cleared the public house. In the melee Burke was shot dead and his brother seriously wounded.

Lorry load after lorry load of Tans and Auxiliaries descended on Balbriggan from Gormanston Camp, three miles away. Twenty-five houses were destroyed, a factory burnt, and two men — fathers of large families — taken from their homes and bayoneted to death. The people fled from the town in terror and took shelter in the fields.

'It is only human that they should act on their own initiative,' was General Macready's comment on the sacking of Balbriggan.

'Punishment for such acts is a delicate matter, inasmuch as it might be interpreted as setting at naught the hoped for effect of the training the officers have given the men.'

Sir Hamar Greenwood, Chief Secretary for Ireland, told the House of Commons: 'I myself had the fullest investigation made into the case. I will tell the House what I found. I found that from 100 to 150 men went to Balbriggan and were determined to avenge the death of their popular comrade, shot at and murdered in cold blood. I find it is impossible out of that 150 to find the men who did the deed, who did the burning.'

Even Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff condemned the policy of 'unofficial reprisals.' He wrote in his journal an account of a conversation with Lloyd George and Bonar Law on Balbriggan. 'If these men ought to be murdered, then the Government ought to murder them,' said Wilson. His note goes on: 'Lloyd George danced at all this, said no Government could possibly take the responsibility.'

In Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick, on the same night police shot two civilians 'for failing to halt' when challenged. They burned a hall, raided houses and threatened the occupants. On September 20 also, police, military and Tans combined to wreck houses in Carrick-on-Shannon and in Tuam. In Limerick City two Tans were shot dead and an R.I.C. barracks at Kill, Co. Waterford, was attacked. In Brixton Prison, Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney of Cork entered the 40th day of his fast. In Cork Prison, eleven untried political prisoners had been on hunger-strike for the same length of time.

Government spokesmen and the British press generally — with some honourable exceptions — inflamed British public opinion by emotive name-calling: the Irish Republican Army was a 'murder gang' composed of 'assassins' who imposed their 'diabolical will' by terror on a frightened people. If soldiers and policemen 'took the law into their own hands in hot blood,' it was only because they saw their comrades 'shot in the back' from 'behind hedges and stone walls' while a 'cowed population' screened the 'murderers'!

For sophisticated Tories there was another line of argument, typified by Lord Hugh Cecil, M.P. in a letter to *The Times*: 'The ordinary Irish citizen should be taught, if necessary by being brought to grave economic distress, that it is his business to detect murderers and bring them to justice, and that, if he will not do his duty he must be made to suffer.'

This then was the atmosphere in which the trial of Kevin Barry took place. He was the first Volunteer taken in action since 1916 and

the soldiers killed in the Church Street ambush were the first fatalities among regular troops in Ireland since the Easter Rising.

(2)

Ernest A. Aston, a Dublin engineer, Protestant Home Ruler and advocate of proportional representation, knew Kevin Barry well and from the start took a personal interest in the case. Kevin's sister Kathy was Aston's secretary. Within days of the ambush on his own initiative and with the help of Sir Henry McLaughlin, a prominent Irish Freemason, he interviewed Sir Hamar Greenwood and learned that Kevin would be tried for murder.

'The boy is only a child,' said Aston. 'I know him well.'

'He may be a child in years,' replied Greenwood. 'But he is a long time mixed up with that crowd.'

In a number of messages smuggled out of Mountioy, Kevin told his family he did not want to be defended at the trial. Then Kathy (now Mrs Jim Moloney) was told by G.H.Q. to see Eamonn Duggan, a Sinn Fein solicitor and later a Treaty signatory. She told Duggan about her brother's objection to a defence; the solicitor explained he was acting under G.H.Q. orders himself and that Kevin and the Barry family would have to do likewise and follow his instructions.

Duggan had a cold legal personality and it was difficult to argue with him. Kathy explains her own feelings during those very difficult weeks:

'At that time nobody recognised the court and for us this was the most nightmarish period of the whole business. On Saturday, October 16, Mr. Duggan told me that the court-martial had been fixed for Wednesday, October 20. He was making frantic efforts to have the date changed, because he had to appear in another I.R.A. case before the House of Lords — I think it was the Silvermines case — on that day or the following day. If they refused to change the date of Kevin's court-martial, he would have to hand the case over to another solicitor.'

They refused to change the date and two days before the trial Sean O hUadhaigh took charge of the case. On the same day he received the summary of evidence and sent Kathy to Tim Healy with it; G.H.Q. had decided that Healy was to be Kevin's counsel. He read the summary. Kathy told him about her brother's fierce resentment at having to recognise a British court.

Healy said that on the face of it the British were determined to find Kevin guilty and that the only plea he could make successfully

was one of insanity. 'I refused this out of hand without consulting anybody,' says Mrs. Moloney.

The case saddened Healy greatly. If Bonar Law were Premier he might be able to do something, he said. But Lloyd George was 'an unspeakable cad.' Mrs. Moloney discovered that the old man was out of touch with the younger generation of Irishmen who sought no favours from British rulers.

'Towards the end of the visit I remember I was trying to cheer him up,' says Mrs. Moloney. 'I felt so sorry for an old man who could not understand a young soldier's point of view.'

But the result of Tim Healy's assessment of the legal position was satisfactory all round: Kevin could now ignore the proceedings and deny the authority of a British court to try him. 'A weight was lifted off our minds,' says Mrs. Moloney.

Wednesday, October 20, was a wet dismal morning. Mrs. Barry, who behaved magnificently through what must have been a dreadful ordeal, took her place in court with her brother, Patrick, her daughter Kathy, Father Augustine, O.F.M. Cap., some family friends and Sean O hUadhaigh, the solicitor.

On the stroke of 10 o'clock the nine officers of the court — ranging in rank from Brigadier to Lieutenant — took their places at an elevated table. The minutes ticked away but no prisoner appeared.

'At 10.20 there was a kind of subdued hysteria at the table,' says Mrs. Moloney. 'We all felt puzzled but beautifully detached. Then at 10.25 Kevin was brought into the room by a military escort. This was the first time that I had seen him since his arrest. He looked well and very cheerful and desperately amused when he saw the tablefull of British officers.'

The next minute he scowled when Sean O hUadhaigh sought a short adjournment to consult his client. The court granted the request.

(3)

Kevin Barry was 25 minutes late for his own trial because the armoured car bringing him from Mountjoy Prison to Marlborough Barracks broke down on the North Circular Road. It would not start again and there was near-panic among the escort while they waited for a relief car. The incident amused the prisoner who in consequence was the coolest man in the courtroom when the hearing began.

After the opening formalities and short adjournment, Kevin Barry announced: 'As a soldier of the Irish Republic, I refuse to recognise the court.' Brigadier Onslow gravely explained the prisoner's perilous situation: he was being tried on a capital charge. Kevin did not reply.

Sean O hUadhaigh rose to tell the court that since his client did not recognise the authority of the court he himself could take no further part in the proceedings, but would remain as a friend of the family.

Kevin was charged on three counts with the murder of Pte. Marshall Whitehead who died under surgery some hours after the ambush. One of the bullets taken from Whitehead's body was of .45 calibre, while all witnesses agreed that the prisoner was armed with a .38 Parabellum.

The Judge Advocate General said the Crown had only to prove that the accused was one of the armed party that killed three British soldiers in Upper Church Street, Dublin. Any and every member of the party was technically guilty of murder, he said.

As the witnesses gave their evidence the prisoner read a newspaper. Two soldiers testified that the accused had killed Pte. Washington, the first man to die in the engagement. But he wasn't charged with the death of Pte. Washington.

The Crown summoned 16 witnesses. As each one finished his story the President of the court would turn to Kevin to ask: 'Any questions?' Each time Kevin replied, 'No.' Eventually he grew impatient. He put down his paper and said: 'Look! I have told you I don't recognise the court. I have no interest in what anybody says here. You are only wasting your time asking me.'

Brigadier-General Onslow flushed. Then after a pause he said mildly: 'It is my duty to ask you. I think as a soldier you can appreciate that.'

'Righto,' replied Kevin. 'If it facilitates you, I have no questions.'

The parade of witnesses continued. They all said much the same thing: a party of men had attacked a detachment of the British army; many shots were fired; three soldiers were killed; the prisoner was captured with a pistol and ammunition in his possession; the pistol had been fired. But no one connected him directly with the death of Pte. Whitehead.

At 1 o'clock they adjourned for lunch. The prisoner was taken away first and the Barry family did not get an opportunity to talk to him. 'After luncheon there was not more than an hour of the trial,' says Mrs. Moloney. 'The President then announced a short adjourn-



1 nDÍL cuimne ar
CÁOIMHÍN DE BARRA

1 n-aoir a hoét mbliadna deus,
1 gComplaét H, an céad cat,
briogáio at cliaé, o'airm an
tSaoir Stáit.



Tógad 'na p'hoirúnaé 1 gcat ar
ron Éireann ar an 20ú lá de
meádon fógimair, 1920, agus
cuiread cun báir é maidin lae
Samna, 1920, 1 gCaricair Mount
Seóig.



Ar déir Dé 1 meafg na mar-
tar 30 maid a anam.

Obverse side of In Memoriam card

(Courtesy National Museum)

Kum Gerard Barry

Condemned Cell

Mountjoy Prison

30th October 1920.

KNOCKNAGOW

OR

THE HOMES OF TIPPERARY

Caoineáir De Barra

Complain H.

Cair a h-uig

Orang ara chair

~~up the Republic~~

up the Republic

Inscription by Kevin Barry on the title page of "Knocknagow"
(by Charles Kickham the Tipperary Fenian). This was written
only two days before his execution. (Courtesy National Museum)

K. G. Barry. M.S

A dangerous criminal

A decided menace to

the British Empire

Captured 20th Sept 1920.

Tried 20th Oct 1920.

Hanged 1st Nov 1920.

Up the prisoners of war.

Amongst the ^{many} crimes put down
to this dangerous man is that
he did put pepper in
the cat's milk and steal
a penny from a blind man
beside, wilfully, feloniously
and of his malice aforethought
smiling derisively at a policeman.

The above reads as follows: 'K. G. Barry M.S. a dangerous criminal. A decided menace to the British Empire. Captured 20th Sept. 1920. Tried 20th Oct. 1920. Hanged 1st Nov. 1920. Up the prisoners of war. Amongst the many crimes put down to this dangerous man is that he did put pepper in the cat's milk and steal a penny from a blind man, beside, wilfully feloniously and of his malice aforethought smiling derisively at a policeman.'

(Courtesy National Museum)

The dead who fell for freedom,
Grave, grave, their names on high,
That stainless youth and manhood
stern

Shall still know how to die—
That still the march shall onward be,
Whate'er the path may bar,
Up to the heights lit by the sun,
Where Peace and Freedom are.

—William Rooney.

**"Fight On! Live for the ideal
for which I am about to die."**

—Kevin Barry's last message to
his comrades on the eve of his
execution.

Pass on the gun—death makes the
best surrender,

The vacant place some soldier
comrade fill;

Yet long we'll mourn the soldier
and defender

That Ireland lost, as climbed she
freedom's hill.

—Maeve Cavanagh.

EW 1160

Reverse side of In Memoriam card

(Courtesy National Museum)

ment and during this time we were allowed to talk to Kevin in the barrack yard.'

The trial ended shortly afterwards. In accordance with military procedure the verdict was not announced in court. Kevin was returned to Mountjoy. At about 8 o'clock that night, the district court-martial officer — who had frequently visited him in connection with the summaries of evidence — entered his cell and read out the sentence: death by hanging. It was confirmed one week later. The Irish public learned on October 28 that the date of execution had been fixed for November 1.

MOUNTJOY JAIL

(1)

THE CONDEMNED CELL where Kevin Barry spent the last days of his short life is at the end of D-wing in Mountjoy Prison, a few feet from the barred doorway to the hang house. He exercised in a small yard to the rear of the cell. Walking its circular path, two warders beside him and armed guards around him, he could see the grimy grey-brick structure which officials called the 'execution chamber.'

Kevin Barry received four days final notice of death. During the last crowded hours he saw his mother, sisters, brother, uncles, some college friends, Father Augustine, O.F.M. Cap., Father Albert, O.F.M. Cap., Rev. Thomas Counihan, S.J., as well as the two prison chaplains, Canon Waters and Father MacMahon.

Little public attention was paid to the case of Kevin Barry up to the Thursday before execution. There were many reasons for this: the secret court-martial; the pace of events in the country at the time; the long ordeal of Terence MacSwiney in Brixton Prison; above all the extreme youth of the captured Volunteer. Few really believed the British would hang him.

With execution imminent, a reprieve movement grew in Britain and Ireland. E. A. Aston, as noted earlier, had taken a personal interest in the case from the beginning; his attitude influenced others, including Commander Jack McCabe, D.S.O., a naval hero of the first world war. Aston and McCabe crossed to England to plead with Lloyd George. They took with them a photograph of Kevin Barry. Mrs. Moloney (Kathy Barry) explains what lay behind this:

'Mr. Aston believed that it was only at the highest level that Kevin's execution could be stopped and he asked for this photograph. I was so terrified of letting Kevin down that I refused the photograph until I would get I.R.A. permission. I was told it was perfectly all right to give the photograph, since Mr. Aston understood our attitude.'

Aston believed he had succeeded in winning a reprieve. He was very gay on his return from London. 'It is all right,' he told Kathy.

'The reprieve is through.' She looked doubtful. 'I have Lloyd George's personal word of honour,' said Aston.

'This was so funny that I laughed,' explains Mrs. Moloney. 'He looked a little hurt but said very patiently: "I'll put it another way. If I weren't satisfied I wouldn't be here. I'd still be in London." I was so sorry that I had been ungracious, but I explained to him my deep instinct that Kevin was to die on Monday morning. He said, "Don't be morbid! Run home now and tell your mother the good news. There is nothing in that office that can't wait!"'

That was the Saturday before the execution.

Joe Devlin and T. P. O'Connor, Irish Parliamentary Party M.P.s, also interviewed the British Premier. They too believed he favoured a reprieve; Devlin said Lloyd George had tears in his eyes when they talked about the case. Some British newspapers and Labour M.P.s supported the call for clemency.

The influential *Westminster Gazette* wrote: 'We hope the prerogative of mercy will be used in the case of the lad Kevin Barry, who lies under sentence of death in Dublin. He is only 18, and his execution would be a painful and distressing act.'

The *Sunday Times* countered with the statement on the eve of execution: 'An example has to be made.'

Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, and Lord Mayor Larry O'Neill, went to see the Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Nevil Macready, who referred them to Sir John Anderson at Dublin Castle, who in turn sent them to the Viceroy, Lord French. French told them their views would be 'transmitted to the proper authorities.' Finally they telephoned Lloyd George at his residence in Hythe, Kent, on the night before the execution. He told them the Government would not grant a reprieve under any circumstances.

All these appeals, however well-intentioned, were concerned with 'mercy,' not justice. Erskine Childers in a powerful letter to the *Westminster Gazette* protested against both verdict and sentence on other grounds. He demanded fair treatment for captured Volunteers. He also put the Irish struggle for independence in proper perspective for English people when he wrote:

This lad, Barry, was doing precisely what Englishmen would be doing under the same circumstances and with the same bitter and intolerable provocation — the suppression by military force of their country's liberty. To hang him for murder is an insulting outrage, and it is more; it is an abuse of power; an unworthy act of vengeance, contrasting ill with the forbearance and humanity invariably shown by the Irish Volun-

teers towards the prisoners captured by them when they have been successful in encounters similar to this one.

These guerrilla combats with soldiers or constables — both classes do the same work with the same weapons; the work of military repression — are typical episodes in Ireland. Murder of individual constables, miscalled 'police,' have been comparatively rare. The Government figure is 38, and it will not, to my knowledge, bear examination. I charge against the British Government 80 murders by soldiers and constables: murders of unarmed people, and for the most part wholly innocent people, including old men, women and boys.

To hang Barry is to push to its logical extreme the hypocritical pretence that the national movement in Ireland, unflinchingly supported by the great mass of the Irish people, is the squalid conspiracy of a 'murder gang.'

That is false; it is a natural uprising: a collision between two Governments, one resting on consent, the other on force. The Irish are struggling against overwhelming odds to defend their own elected institutions against extinction.

In a letter to 'the civilised nations of the world,' Arthur Griffith — then acting President of the Republic — wrote:

Under similar circumstances a body of Irish Volunteers captured on June 1 of the present year a party of 25 English military who were on duty at the King's Inns, Dublin. Having disarmed the party the Volunteers immediately released their prisoners.

This was in strict accordance with the conduct of the Volunteers in all such encounters. Hundreds of members of the armed forces have been from time to time captured by the Volunteers and in no case was any prisoner maltreated, even though Volunteers had been killed and wounded in the fighting, as in the case of Cloyne, Co. Cork, when, after a conflict in which one Volunteer was killed and two wounded, the whole of the opposing forces were captured, disarmed, and set at liberty.

(2)

Almost from the day of his capture, Kevin Barry's comrades made plans to rescue him. As the date of execution approached the plans grew more desperate. The final one had to be abandoned on the night before he was hanged.

The first involved the seizure of an armoured car during the court martial in Marlborough Barracks. The car, under a one-armed British officer was near a bank at Doyle's Corner, Phibsboro, for a pay-roll collection. Volunteer Willie O'Connell was killed in the

operation which was under the command of Brigadier Dick McKee; most of the men involved came from 'D' Company of the 1st Battalion. Some blamed the failure on the fact that the Volunteers didn't like to fire on the one-armed officer initially; after that with the turret down it was impossible to seize the armoured car.

The second attempt was planned for the Saturday before the execution. The men involved met in the Typographical Union Hall, Lower Gardiner Street: nearly all Dublin printers were members of the I.R.B. and their premises was a centre of Dublin Brigade activities. Michael Collins was present at this meeting.

The plan involved the Barry family: Kathy Barry was ordered on Saturday morning to hand in her application at 3.15 for a visit at 3.30. The visits usually took place in the boardroom. The men of the Dublin Brigade would come through the main gate ten minutes after the start of the visit and take Kevin out. They wanted to be clear of the prison by 3.50 as the guard changed at 4 o'clock. Since a couple of lorry loads of troops would then be in the vicinity of Mountjoy they had only a few minutes to carry out the operation.

Charlie Byrne, O/C 'D' Company, was in charge. With him were Frank Flood, Benny Byrne, Paddy Kenny and Sean O'Neill. Collins sent along three G.H.Q. sharpshooters — Jimmy Conroy, Frank Teeling and Paddy Halpin — to take down the sentry inside the main gate and engage the guard of Auxiliaries. Paddy Doyle — who had been on the King's Inns operation with Kevin and was hanged in Dublin on March 14, 1921 — with Gussie Byrne and Phil Leddy were to hold the Circle while the prisoner was taken from the boardroom. Davy Golden and Jimmy Carrigan waited at Berkeley Road in a commandeered car to take their comrade to safety.

The Volunteers joined the crowd milling around the main gate. When the wicket was opened to admit visitors they could see the sentry on his beat inside the second set of gates. The Auxiliaries had a guard room to the right out of sight.

Kathy Barry, having been told to take one girl with her who would be 'absolutely dependable,' went to the prison with her sister Elgin, who was only 16. Their job in the boardroom was 'to mark the two Auxiliaries, one each, and at whatever cost keep them from shooting Kevin' while the rescue was underway. 'We were told not to trouble about Kevin or the warders,' Mrs. Moloney continues. 'We were told to think only of our own Auxiliary — provided we could take care of them, the I.R.A. men would take care of the rest.'

They were at the jail gate at 3.15 and handed in their names for the visit. At 3.30 a car was driven up the avenue and a tall priest

stepped out of it, went to the wicket and asked to see Kevin Barry. 'I naturally thought his visit would follow ours,' says Mrs. Moloney. 'And I remember wondering what his feelings would be when the row started. To my horror he was admitted at 3.30 and we waited and waited and were not called.'

Eventually they were admitted, were searched by the wardress and taken through the large barred second set of gates past a line of Black and Tans drawn up in formation and along the long hall crowded with Auxiliaries, wondering all the time how the 30 or 40 lads outside could cope with this armed might. They pulled their chairs as near as they dared to the two Auxiliaries guarding Kevin in the boardroom. And they talked to the prisoner but do not remember what was said. Then they heard the clock strike four and knew that the attempt had been abandoned.

The same Volunteers met next day (Sunday) in the Connolly College, North Great George's Street, and changed into British army battledress preparatory to moving down on the prison in the guise of 'reinforcements.' They got word, however, that real reinforcements had arrived in Mountjoy and that project too had to be called off.

On the same day Dick McKee and Oscar Traynor planned to visit Kevin disguised as priests in another attempt at rescue. Jack Plunkett acted as liaison with the Barry family. His account follows :

The day before Kevin Barry's execution I was summoned to meet a member of G.H.Q. staff and a member of the Dublin Brigade staff who were considering the possibilities of rescuing Kevin. I was sent to the Barrys house in Fleet Street to ask that Mrs. Barry would not take the visit that was arranged for her, but that the visit be reserved for two priests.

The Barrys considered that such action would be thought very suspicious by those who were guarding Kevin; they pointed out that they were just about to leave for Mountjoy to take the visit at the prescribed time and they asked me to go back and confirm either the existing arrangement or the new one for the two priests. It had been understood that I was to return and report in any case.

I went to Brigade H.Q., and after some delay was given a message that had been left with a junior officer for me. This was to the effect that the original arrangement was to be gone on with, that the Barrys were to take the visit, not the priests, as there was not time for the latter proposal, and that another attempt would be made later.

I met the Barrys as they got off the tram opposite the Mater Hospital and I gave the message to Kathy as they passed. Mrs. Barry and Michael were a pace or two in front.

For the final effort on Sunday night, the eve of the execution, they mobilised 'C', 'H' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion. 'C' Coy. covered the front of the prison from the Mater Hospital side; 'H' Coy.'s line ran from Doyle's Corner to the Parnell monument with orders to stop all enemy reinforcements once action had started; 'D' Coy. at Killarney Parade was to breach the prison wall with a land mine, then fight through to the condemned cell and take out the prisoner. To distract attention from the main effort, Kevin's own comrades of 'H' Coy. — Frank Flood, Sean O'Neill, Paddy Kenny and John O'Dwyer — were to open fire on the guard at the main gate. Brigade H.Q. at Connolly College timed the operation for 8 p.m. Jack Plunkett made the land mine.

'The materials were collected and I prepared the charge in a stable at the back of the north side of Merrion Square,' he wrote later. 'A number of men had been provided as guards, one at least being from the Dublin Brigade as distinct from any Headquarters unit. The assembly of the charge took some considerable time. Before it was quite ready a message arrived to the effect that the attempt could not be gone on with for the time being, at least. It was not gone on with.'

'The next day I was informed by a member of G.H.Q. staff that it had been called off on account of the fact that arrangements had been made by the British for one of the guards to shoot Kevin if any disturbance took place.'

'Even apart from the notification that the explosion would have given his guard, a heavy system of patrols had been located all round the jail.'

Armoured cars covered the entire area. It was obvious that any attempt at a rescue would result in dreadful slaughter of innocent people and the project was cancelled.

EXECUTION

(1)

KEVIN BARRY spent the last day of his life preparing for death. His ordeal and that of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, focussed world attention on Ireland. MacSwiney, who died in Brixton Prison after 74 days on hunger-strike, was buried in St. Finbarr's cemetery, Cork, on the eve of Kevin Barry's execution. Volunteers lined the funeral route; almost the entire population of the city joined the cortege. The British confined off-duty soldiers to barracks for the day; but out of sight in side streets a half-dozen armoured cars and a dozen lorries packed with troops stayed on the alert.

There were other deaths. Joseph Murphy, one of the Cork Prison hunger-strikers, died on the same day as Terence MacSwiney. His comrade, Michael Fitzgerald, had died on October 17.

Kevin Barry hoped for a time that death might come by way of a firing squad rather than the gallows; after all he had been condemned by a military court. But he didn't really care, friends said, because heroics were foreign to him. A colleague, who visited him on the day after he received confirmation of the death sentence, wrote:

'He is meeting death as he met life with courage but with nothing of the braggart. He does not believe that he is doing anything wonderfully heroic. Again and again he has begged that no fuss be made about him. "It is nothing," he said, "to give one's life for Ireland. I'm not the first and maybe I won't be the last. What's my life compared with the cause?"'

He joked about his death. 'Well, they are not going to let me like a soldier fall,' he told his sister Kathy when informed he was to die by hanging. 'But I must say they are going to hang me like a gentleman.' This was a reference to George Bernard Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple*, the last play they had seen together.

The *Freeman's Journal* and *Irish Independent* came out with strong editorials on Friday denouncing the proposed execution. Kevin was amused. When his sister went into the boardroom he

rubbed his hands and said: 'Did you see the papers? My death is going to be a national calamity.'

A college friend on his last visit did not know exactly what to say. For want of something better he asked: 'Who signed the confirmation of the death sentence?'

'I'm blessed if I know,' replied Kevin with a laugh.

'Was it Macready?' persisted the friend.

'For all I know or care it might be Charlie Chaplin,' was the condemned youth's reply.

A warder signalled the end of the visit. The friend looked very sad. 'I say, I'd like to leave you something,' said Kevin trying to cheer him up. His friend was still downcast.

'I would leave you the shoes only I couldn't very well walk barefooted to the scaffold,' said Kevin. And on that note they parted, laughing as of old.

On Sunday afternoon, October 31, Hallow Eve, he was allowed three visits of three people each. The last one was taken by his mother, brother and sisters. Military and Black and Tans lined the prison courtyard. Auxiliaries swarmed all over the hallway to the boardroom, revolvers swinging on thighs. In addition to the two Auxiliaries normally with Kevin, there were five or six warders in the boardroom. Conversation was difficult for a time. Mrs. Barry was composed but quiet. Gradually Kevin got them all talking quite naturally. Then the Deputy Governor came into the room and announced that the visit was over.

'We turned at the door for a last look and he was standing at the salute,' says Mrs. Moloney. 'When the door closed, my mother was battling with her tears. The hall was clear of Auxies except for a group at the end. But she was absolutely determined to show no weakness in face of the enemy. Before we reached the hall door we met Canon Waters whom we had not met before. He spoke kindly to my mother but expressed great worry about Kevin. He said: "This boy does not seem to realise he is going to die in the morning." My mother said: "What do you mean?" He said: "He is so gay and lighthearted all the time. If he fully realised it, he would be overwhelmed." My mother drew herself up and she said: "Canon Waters, I know you are not a Republican. But is it impossible for you to understand that my son is actually proud to die for the Republic?" He became more flustered and we parted. We were upset by this encounter because he was the chief chaplain and the nearest thing to a friend that Kevin would see before his death, and he seemed so alien.'

Actually, as it turned out, despite his political attitude, Canon Waters was a warm person and did all in his power for the condemned youth. He called to see Mrs. Barry on Monday afternoon and 'was full of kindness and sympathy and appreciation of Kevin's bravery,' as Mrs. Moloney points out.

One of Kevin's last visitors was Father Albert, the Capuchin Republican chaplain. 'We opened our conversation in Irish,' he said later. 'We chatted for a while over various things. He struck me really as a magnificent boy — wonderfully calm — and, at the same time, I could see that he undoubtedly appreciated the fact that within a few hours he was doomed to be put to death.'

Some newspaper had quoted him as saying: 'he was proud to die like Roger Casement.' And he joked about this; indeed he laughed quite heartily at it. 'I never made such a remark,' he said. 'Those newspaper people are well able to swing the lead.' When Father Albert asked him for a last message, natural as ever he replied: 'That is making such a fuss. The only message I have for anybody is "Hold on and stick to the Republic."'

When Father Albert told him that hundreds of students had joined the throngs keeping vigil outside the prison, he said a little wistfully: 'I wish I could see them once more.' Then they parted.

(2)

November 1, 1920 In the cold darkness of 6 a.m. a crowd began to gather outside Mountjoy Prison. Shortly before 7 o'clock the head chaplain, Canon Waters, and his assistant, Father MacMahon arrived from Clonliffe College. They had to wait outside the main gate until seven when warders opened the small door on the side and allowed them in.

An armoured car patrolled the North Circular Road. A lorry filled with heavily armed soldiers waited nearby. The crowd began to grow. A party of Cumann na mBan marched across the city from St. Stephen's Green. Women prayed aloud and men uncovered their heads to join in the responses. As light broke across the sky and the hands of the clock moved towards eight the streets were quiet except for the murmur of prayers.

Kevin Barry spent his last night in the condemned cell in the company of a warder and two Auxiliaries. He built a small altar for his last Mass, wrote some letters, and went to bed before midnight. He slept soundly until called at 6 a.m.

When the chaplains and prison officials entered the cell he greeted them calmly and cheerfully. Canon Waters celebrated Mass at the little altar the prisoner had erected in the cell, gave him Communion, then knelt beside him while Father MacMahon celebrated a second Mass.

Ellis, the hangman from England, and his assistants, entered the cell a few minutes before 8 o'clock. They pinioned the prisoner's arms with leather straps. The chaplain continued to pray and the condemned man continued his responses in a firm voice. Ellis turned to Canon Waters and asked: 'Are you quite done, Father?' The chaplain replied that he was.

Kevin Barry took up a position between Canon Waters and Father MacMahon and walked out of the cell towards the door at the end of the wing that led to the hang house. The executioner and his assistants, prison officials and Auxiliaries followed in procession.

'He went between Father MacMahon and myself to the scaffold with the most perfect bravery, without the slightest faltering, repeating his little ejaculations and the Sacred Name till the very last instant of his life,' wrote Canon Waters to Mrs. Barry after the execution. He described his courage as 'superhuman.'

At 8 o'clock the prison bell began to toll and there was a movement in the vast crowd outside the gates. Everyone knelt on the muddy roadway. The prayers grew louder. Women cried. The prison bell continued to toll. Then it ceased and the crowd rose from its knees. Some minutes later an official posted a notice high on the prison gate. It read:

'The sentence of the law passed on Kevin Barry, found guilty of murder, was carried into execution at 8 o'clock this morning.'

No inquest was held. The body was enclosed in a plain deal coffin roughly painted and buried at 1.30 p.m. The grave was in a little laurel plot near the women's prison. His friend and fellow-student Frank Flood was buried there four months later. A simple cross marks their graves and those of Thomas Whelan, Patrick Moran, Thomas Bryan, Patrick Doyle, Bernard Ryan, Thomas Traynor, Edward Foley and Patrick Maher who were hanged in the same prison for the same cause before the Truce of July 1921.

EPILOGUE

LATE on Sunday, October 31, 1920, Father Thomas Counihan, S.J. (not yet ordained, but a Scholastic in Belvedere) received a message to visit his former pupil. He went to Mountjoy 'in fear and trembling.' His memory of the place is 'barbed wire, machine guns, high walls, soldiers and Black and Tans everywhere.' The calmest man in the prison was Kevin Barry.

The significance of Kevin Barry lies in the final days of his life while the whole nation watched a youth of 18 prepare for death. Father Counihan believes it was the turning-point for the national movement at that time. 'The November 1 execution converted a great number of people,' he says, 'as witness Canon Waters.'

And the pent-up rage of a nation went into the cry of an old woman in Cork when she saw the poster — KEVIN BARRY HANGED. 'Oh Christ! So they have hanged that child,' she said.

Brigadier-General F. P. Crozier, commander of the Auxiliaries, was responsible for the 24-hour guard on Kevin Barry and visited him in his cell. He came away from Mountjoy full of admiration for Kevin Barry's gay courage in the face of death. Crozier was a tough, much decorated soldier who resented the role of policeman which the British Government thrust on him. Later he resigned in protest against the widespread terrorism and brutality practised on the Irish people by the forces of the Crown and connived at by Lloyd George and his Cabinet.

Major Mills, one of the Auxiliary officers guarding Kevin, was also deeply affected by the character and bearing of the condemned youth. He resigned after the Bloody Sunday atrocity when Crown forces opened fire on spectators and players in Croke Park, killing 16 men and women and wounding 60. The Government said armed men had fired on police approaching the G.A.A. grounds to 'search for arms.' Mills refuted the statement.

Three weeks after Kevin Barry's execution one of the warders in Mountjoy went to the Barry family with a strange story. He said that on the Sunday evening after Father Albert had left, Kevin was taken to the hang house and shown the apparatus of execution.

They asked him again for the names of his officers and comrades in the Monks' bakery ambush. In return for the information the Government would give him a free pardon and pay for his medical studies in any university in the world. In addition, he would receive a pension of £2,000 a year for life. Kevin listened in silence. Then he grinned and looking up at the beam of the hang house said: 'Yes, I think that will bear my weight all right!' They returned him to the condemned cell.

There is no confirmation of this story, but Mrs. Moloney says : 'Nobody could have invented the answer that Kevin is supposed to have given. His whole life is expressed in it.'

Kevin Barry's influence had only begun. It would continue from beyond the grave. It would spread to many lands. His name has become a symbol and a slogan; a hymn of freedom and of unconquerable youth.

NOTES AND SOURCES

THE ARREST

- (1): Based on newspaper reports of the ambush and of the inquest on the British soldiers.
- (2): The Kevin Barry affidavit was drawn up in Mountjoy on Thursday, October 28, 1920. Dick McKee was convinced there would be no reprieve as things were going and he told Kathy Barry to get a complete statement from Kevin on the torture after his capture. If this were published in Saturday's newspapers, Dick hoped it might do something to rouse the English conscience. He made arrangements with Desmond Fitzgerald, Director of Publicity, to meet Kathy Barry in Arthur Griffith's office at 5.30 p.m. after she had been to Mountjoy. She did so, but for some reason the affidavit did not appear in Saturday's papers; it was published on Monday, the day of Kevin's execution. On Thursday (Nov. 4) the affidavit was read in the House of Commons by the British Labour party leader, J. H. Thomas. He called Kevin 'a studious boy, loved by everyone who knew him, brave and educated.'

THE PRISONER

- (1): Mrs. Jim Moloney (Kathy Barry) gave me the background information on the Barry family. Father Counihan, S.J., and Diarmuid Mac Giolla Phadraig told me something of Kevin's time at Belvedere; the former was his teacher, the latter a fellow-student. Information on Kevin's connection with the Volunteers and the I.R.B. comes from Sean O'Neill and Bob O'Flanagan, both of 'H' Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, who were with him in the Monks' bakery ambush. Mrs. Moloney very kindly loaned me Kevin's school essays from which I have quoted extensively in PRISONER (2). The quotation from a fellow-student in PRISONER (3) is taken from the 'Freeman's Journal' of November 1, 1920. The Erith Kaye quotation is from an anniversary article in the 'Irish Independent,' November 1, 1961.

THE ATTACK

The detailed account of the attack is based on conversations with Sean O'Neill and Bob O'Flanagan and confirmed by other reports.

THE TRIAL

- (1): The sacking of Balbriggan is from newspaper accounts. Ballads often tell the story of those times. The following is from "The Bold Black and Tan":

The town of Balbriggan they burnt to the ground
The bullets like hail were all whizzing around.
Lloyd George said to Greenwood, 'Now this is our plan,
We'll conquer Ireland with the bold Black and Tan.'

From Cork on to Limerick, Clare and Mayo,
Lies a trail of destruction wherever they go,
We'll shoulder our rifles, we'll fight to a man
And we'll humble the pride of the bold Black and Tan.

Ah, then not by the terrors of England's foul horde,
For ne'er could a nation be ruled by the sword;
For our country we'll have yet in spite of her plan
Or ten times the number of bold Black and Tan.

General Macready, Commander-in-Chief of the forces, told a representative of the Paris newspaper 'Liberte': 'Nobody can say when peace will be restored in Ireland, but my deep conviction is that the country desires it, and that a very small band of terrorists is imposing its policy by force. We know most of their names, and the day may come when we shall be able to effect a definite clearance of them. I believe that, if that were done, Ireland would, a month later, know tranquillity and order.'

'Daily Herald' correspondent reported from Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, on St. Patrick's Day, 1920:

'A detachment of police attired in khaki tunics and trousers, but wearing Constabulary caps and greatcoats, arrived by rail at Nenagh, yesterday afternoon. Their mixed costumes attracted considerable attention as they marched to the local barracks.'

The Irish were seeing the Black and Tans for the first time. They were ex-soldiers for the most part, recruited in England, Scotland and Wales, and because of a shortage of Royal Irish Constabulary uniforms were given mixed military and police clothing at first. The Irish promptly dubbed them the 'Black and Tans.' They were paid ten shillings a day 'all found' and their avowed purpose was terrorism.

At the end of March 1920 General Sir Nevil Macready was appointed Commander-in-Chief of British forces in Ireland; the 'Daily Mail' said he had been 'given practically a free hand by the Cabinet' so that, as the 'Morning Post' put it, he could 'suppress the rebellion by whatever means may be requisite.' The Chief of the Imperial General Staff was Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson. Major-General H. H. Tudor became Inspector-General of the R.I.C., Sir John Anderson Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle and Alfred W. Cope his assistant. Sir Hamar Greenwood was named Chief Secretary in April 1920. Sir Ormonde Winters was Chief of Intelligence at Dublin Castle.

In July 1920 a new force was set up called the Auxiliary Division of the R.I.C. The Auxiliaries were ex-officers, wore special dark-blue uniforms and Glengarry caps. The members of this terrorist **corps d'élite** were paid double the Black and Tan rate—one pound a day 'all found.' Brigadier Crozier was their first commander. Tudor told Crozier it was easier to obtain money in Britain for police operations in Ireland than add to the military vote; hence the camouflaging of these forces as 'police.' The Royal Irish Constabulary itself had always been a para-military organisation.

- (2): The court-martial account is based on Mrs. Moloney's statement on Kevin Barry.
- (3): Also based on Mrs. Moloney's statement.

IN MOUNTJOY JAIL

- (1): The account of the reprieve movement is taken from newspaper reports and Mrs. Moloney's statement. E. A. Aston was quite confident Lloyd George would grant a reprieve. He told the Barrys that the reason Lloyd George had broken his word was that Sir Henry Wilson had threatened to resign unless the execution went through; that if a reprieve were granted he could not be responsible for discipline in the British Army.
- (2): The account of the rescue attempt plans is based on the recollections of Sean O'Neill. Jack Plunkett's letter to the 'Irish Press' (April 30, 1949), quoted in part here, concerning the events preceding the execution of Kevin Barry, followed a lecture by Oscar Traynor in which he was alleged to have said — as reported by the 'Irish Press' — 'A plan to send in two men disguised as clergymen in an attempt to rescue him was not agreed to by his mother.'

and Kevin Barry was executed.' The Barry family was understandably annoyed by this statement. On April 28, 1949, the 'Irish Press' published a letter from Oscar Traynor in which he wrote : 'On last Thursday evening, I stated in the course of a lecture that a plan to rescue Kevin Barry, who was under sentence of death in Mountjoy Prison, "was not agreed to by his mother, because of the possible loss of further lives." The last eight words were omitted from the Press report.' Jack Plunkett's letter stated the correct situation in regard to the Barry family's involvement in the plan and the Editor of the 'Irish Press' published the following statement: 'It was, of course, far from our intention to make any such suggestion (that Kevin Barry's mother was responsible for denying her son a chance of being rescued) and we sincerely regret that our report should have conveyed to Mrs. Barry the implication of which she complains.'

EXECUTION

- (1) : Newspaper accounts and Mrs. Moloney's statement; also Canon Waters's letters to Mrs. Barry. The following is from Mrs. Moloney's statement :

'We went home (on Sunday) and the house was full of people all evening. We went to bed about eleven and got up about seven. We all went to 7.30 Mass in Clarendon Street and stayed for 8 o'clock Mass. As we went to Mass in the dark November morning, his face met us in the newsvendors' stalls in Grafton Street. I think the "Daily Sketch" or the "Daily Mail" had a full-page picture of him and, around the lamp-post over it, a newsvendor had wrapped the "Freeman's Journal" poster, "He Must Die."

'When 8 o'clock Mass was over, we left the church and, as we walked down Grafton Street, we met University Branch of Cumann na mBan marching back from Mountjoy, Eileen McGrane Captain, and Kathleen Murphy, 1st Lieutenant, at the head. Eileen McGrane gave the order "Eyes Right" as my mother passed.

Among the crowds of visitors who came to see us for weeks after the execution were two to whom I must refer. On the Monday afternoon Canon Waters called to see my mother. He was full of kindness and sympathy and appreciation of Kevin's bravery. Any little bad impression of himself that he might have left on her on the Sunday afternoon was completely wiped out on this occasion.'

- (2) : The following is from Ernie O'Malley's "On Another Man's Wound":

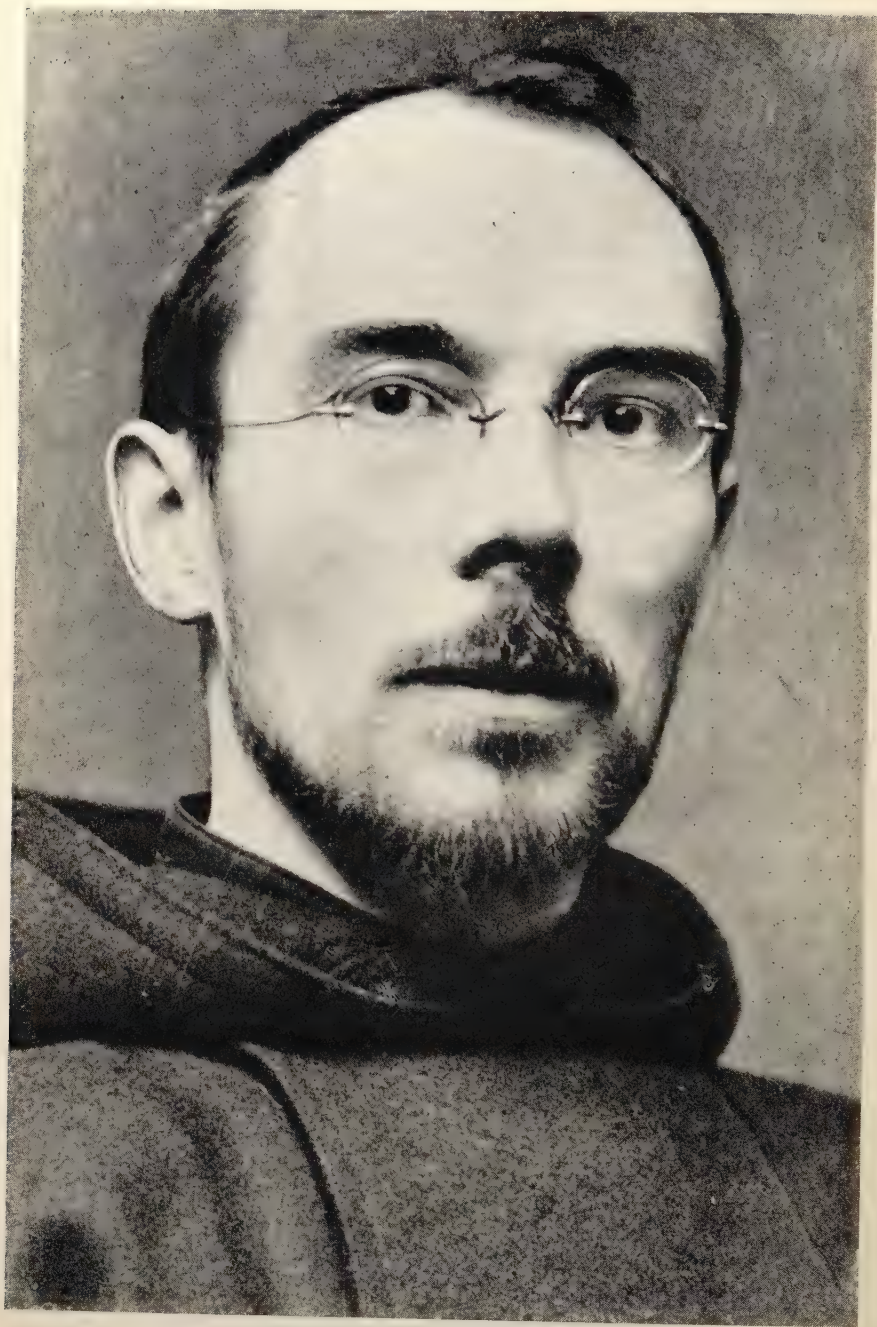
'After dawn on the morning of the hanging crowds walked along the streets to Mountjoy under a cold November sky. Outside the jail gate armoured cars moved through the kneeling people who said the Rosary aloud. Tin-hatted Tommies with fixed bayonets stood in rows on the sides of armoured lorries. A quiet crowd, tense with emotion, hardly speaking to each other. "The poor boy, the poor boy," a woman cried, "God help us all." Tears came as she swayed on her knees, both hands held up; those near her began to cry, some could not stop, gulping noises continued for a long time. A girl kept saying aloud: "Mother of Perpetual Succour, help us; Mother of Perpetual Succour, help us." Aeroplanes circled; with a metallic beat the noise crashed above the rise and fall of Hail Marys. "Bad luck to ye, wouldn't less than that do ye." shouted a man who straightened a fist at the sky. Kevin Barry was a symbol of the enthusiasm of youth; resolute in giving, he, for the people, was the nation, which, however warped, futile and misdirected, had youth, life and a spirit of sacrifice.'

EPILOGUE

Brigadier-General Crozier 'Ireland for Ever.' James O'Donovan's



Scene outside Mountjoy Jail (in background) is indicative of the period when Kevin Barry
(*Courtesy J. Cashman*)
was hanged



Fr. Albert, the Capuchin Republican Chaplain was one of Kevin Barry's last visitors. To Fr. Albert he said : 'The only message I have for anybody is HOLD ON AND STICK TO THE REPUBLIC.'

(Courtesy J. Cashman)

two articles in the 'Irish Press' (November 1 and 2, 1963) called 'The Kevin Barry Story' recount these incidents.

The following is from Mrs. Moloney's statement on her brother's execution :

'In 1922 and again in 1943 the question was raised of moving Kevin's body. All the other men executed in Mountjoy by the British are buried in the same plot. On both occasions, we said that, as Kevin had died for the Irish Republic, his body could remain in Mountjoy until the Republic was restored. The relatives of the other men followed our lead.'



There are many songs about Kevin Barry. The following is called 'The Prison Grave of Kevin Barry,' words by Richard Clarke, music by Joseph Stanley :

You are dead to-day, and the cold, cold clay of a prison graveyard
lies
On your body still, though your spirit still lives in the Land
beyond the skies.
With the martyred dead, who for Ireland bled, and who perished
at the tyrant's hand,
And inscribed their name on the roll of fame, of Ireland's patriot
band.

Chorus

Oh dear brave Kevin Barry! May your spirit guide us through
The path you tread of the martyred dead, that we shall follow too.

When the savage horde, with fire and sword, sought to crush Dark
Rosaleen,
And her grand old flag, in the mire to drag, the Orange, White
and Green.
You joined the fight, for your Motherland and Right, in the legion
of your comrades brave,
To strike a blow at the mighty foe, your own dear land to save.

The prison cell or the sad death knell no horrors hold for you;
Nor the cruel blows of ruthless foes could your young soul
subdue.
You preferred to die, on the gibbet of Mountjoy and to vindicate
the Nation's cause,
Ere you'd bow your head in fear and dread of the tyrant alien
laws.

You are dead to-day and your sacred clay in a prison graveyard
sleeps,
While out beyond those grim, grey walls, an anguished people
weeps,
And kneels to pray that the Great God may a million more imbue
With that courage pure that can endure, that we shall follow too.



The most famous of all the Kevin Barry songs begins :

In Mountjoy Jail one Monday morning
High upon the gallows tree,
Kevin Barry gave his young life
For the cause of liberty

According to Seamus de Burca (letter 'Irish Press' August 5, 1951) it was written by an Irishman living in Glasgow around the time of the execution and appeared in ballad sheet form. It was an instantaneous success. Protesting against the pirating of the melody for other songs, Seamus de Burca wrote: 'The melody, like the words, belongs to the man who wrote it, who gave both to the Irish nation without any reward. Let us preserve this song about a gallant soldier inviolate.' Paul Robeson recorded it and Eddie Calvert played it on the silver trumpet. It has been sung around the world.

In Mountjoy Jail one Monday morning
High upon the gallows tree,
Kevin Barry gave his young life
For the cause of liberty.
But a lad of eighteen summers,
Yet no one can deny,
As he walked to death that morning
He proudly held his head on high.

'Why not shoot me like a soldier,
Do not hang me like a dog,
For I fought to free old Ireland,
On that bright September morn.
All round that little bakery,
Where we fought them hand to hand.
Why not shoot me like a soldier
For I fought to free Ireland.'

Just before he faced the hangman
In his dreary prison cell,
British soldiers tortured Barry
Just because he would not tell
The names of his brave companions.
And other things they wished to know.
'Turn informer or we'll kill you!'
Kevin Barry answered 'No!'

Calmly standing to attention,
While he bade his last farewell
To his broken-hearted mother,
Whose sad grief no one can tell,
For the cause he proudly cherished
This sad parting had to be;
Then to death walked, softly smiling,
That old Ireland might be free.

Another martyr for old Ireland,
Another murder for the crown,
Whose brutal laws may kill the Irish,
But won't keep their spirit down.
Lads like Barry are no cowards,
From the foe they will not fly;
Lads like Barry will free Ireland,
For her sake they'll live and die.

Kevin Barry you must leave us.
On the scaffold you must die.
Cried his broken-hearted mother,
As she bade her son good-bye.
Kevin turned to her in silence,
And said: 'Mother do not weep,
For it's all for dear old Ireland,
And it's all for Freedom's sake.'

The following is a contemporary street-ballad in Kevin Barry's honour :

I've a sad but true story to relate
Of a brave young Irishman's cruel fate.
It is written down in the roll of fame
And Kevin Barry is the brave lad's name.

When scarcely eighteen years of age
To the Republican Army he was engaged
For Ireland's sake he struck a blow
To free his country from a tyrant foe.

In the fight with the foe against the crown
Young Barry shot a British soldier down,
He appeared and was tried by military
And sentenced to die on the gallows tree.

In the condemned cell awaiting his fate
He was asked to confess before it was too late:
Come tell us where your comrades may be
A pardon will be granted and we'll set you free.

Young Barry gazed with a look of scorn:
An Irish traitor never yet was born!
Carry out your sentence was the proud reply,
For Ireland I fought and for Ireland I'll die!

Outside the jail his comrades
On their knees in prayer to the prison bell
For to pray for the soul of a martyr friend
Who would rather die than to foemen bend.

Out from the jail then walked a priest
And the tears rolled down his manly cheeks;
Have they hanged him, Father? his comrades cried.
— He's gone, but a braver lad never died.



The following communique was issued from the Chief Secretary's office, Dublin Castle, on Monday, night, November 1, 1920 :

'The sentence of death by hanging passed by court-martial upon Kevin Barry, or Berry, medical student, aged 18½ years, for the murder of Pte. Whitehead in Dublin on September 20, was duly executed this morning at Mountjoy Prison, Dublin.

'At a military court of inquiry, held subsequently in lieu of an inquest, medical evidence was given to the effect that death was instantaneous.

'The court found that the sentence had been carried out in accordance with law.'

Dublin Corporation met that day, passed a vote of sympathy with the Barry family, and adjourned as a mark of respect.

Canon Waters wrote two letters to Mrs. Barry after Kevin's execution :

November 1st, 1920

'My Dear Mrs. Barry,

'Poor Kevin, your dear boy, is gone. Deep as is my own grief, I know it is as nothing to that which must fill your heart and I pray that God who alone can do it, will comfort and console you.

'I was with Kevin to the end. At seven o'clock, Father MacMahon and I went into his cell. I said Mass first and gave Kevin the holy Viaticum. Father MacMahon then said Mass and I knelt beside the poor boy while he made his thanksgiving. At the end of this Mass, I put him in a chair to rest as he had been kneeling nearly an hour. I stood by him and whispered prayers into his ear, which he repeated with the greatest docility and fortitude. He made Acts of Faith, Hope, Contrition, Charity, Resignation, Forgiveness, and also said prayers to the Sacred Heart, Holy Mary, St. Joseph, Angel Guardian, St. Patrick, Blessed Oliver Plunket, with the greatest fervour. He went between Father MacMahon and myself to the scaffold with the most perfect bravery, without the slightest faltering, repeating his little ejaculations and the Sacred Name till the very last instant of his life.

'His courage all the time was superhuman and rested, I am sure, on his simple goodness and innocence of conscience. He went to die as a priest to offer a sacrifice — in all humility and submission to the divine Will, with a full confidence that he was going into Paradise, and a hope that his death might perhaps do something to heal the wounds of his country. Kevin's thoughts, however, were on the things of Eternity. You are the mother, my dear Mrs. Barry, of one of the bravest and best boys I have ever known, his death was one of the most holy, and your dear boy is waiting for you now beyond the reach of sorrow.

'This, I hope, will be a consolation to you and I hope that God will comfort and strengthen you and poor Kevin's brother and sisters. You have my deepest sympathy and prayers.

Yours sincerely,

John Waters

'P.S.—Father MacMahon anointed him immediately after the bolt was drawn. I had previously given him Papal Blessing with plenary indulgence. The little book and picture, which I am sending, he used in his last minutes and I told him I would give them to you. — J.W.'

3/11/20

'Dear Mrs. Barry,

'I thought you would like to have an account in writing of poor Kevin's funeral — so I set down the few things there are to say. Father MacMahon and I were summoned to bury him at 1.30 p.m. We found the coffin already closed and fastened down, placed in the centre of a large workshop not far from the place chosen for the grave. The coffin was a plain deal coffin without breast plate or ornament whatever, but substantial looking; it was roughly painted. We began the Requiem Service in the workshop and then four warders bore the remains to the graveside and they were followed by a few others. The grave was made in a little laurel plantation in the left of the entrance gates and not far from the gate into the women's prison, a quiet spot not likely to be desecrated or walked on and still near enough to the highway to remind of him and say a prayer as we pass. The grave appeared to me to be about 3½ feet deep. There we laid all that was mortal of poor Kevin in blessed clay and with all Catholic prayers and rites. The warders covered in the grave and we said the *De Profundis*. Some half dozen soldiers who came to the door of their barracks close

by and some matrons who were looking on from a neighbouring window were the only spectators. It was a sad funeral indeed, but I hope to live to see him removed from this and to receive from his countrymen the honours due to his heroic virtues.

Yours sincerely,

John Waters

'P.S. — I did not see the remains but the Governor of the prison told me that his face was in no way changed except for a very slight discoloration and that beyond this there was no sign of violence — J.W.'

THE GALLOWS GRIM

The gallows grim a group of people kneeling,
The prison grey against a sullen sky,
To Our Lady of Sorrows they are pleading
As a youth of tender years walks out to die.

See, here he comes with footstep slow and steady,
With upward gaze and lips that move in prayer,
To sacrifice his young life he is ready,
God comfort his poor weeping mother there.

Those memories of the past seem left behind us;
What sorrow yet shall be our destiny;
The little wayside crosses 'still remind us
How brave men died to set their country free.

Such were my thoughts as shades of night surround me,
Living again the past as sad tears flow,
Saying a fervent prayer 'ere morning found me,
For the lad who died for Ireland long ago.

PADRAIG WIDGER

KEVIN BARRY

By CONSTANCE DE MARKIEVICZ

We knelt at Mass with sobbing hearts
Cold, in the dawn of day.
The dawn for us, for him the night,
Who was so young and gay.

Then from the Altar spoke the priest,
His voice rang thin with pain —
Bidding us pray, a boy must die
At England's hands again.

The cruel English tortured him,
He never shrank or cried;
Sublime his faith, the gallows tree
He faced that day with pride.

Proudly he gave his life for her.
To whom his heart was given;
His dying eyes knew Freedom near,
Saw death the Gate of Heaven.

Bright flaming dawn of a young life,
Simple and pure and brave;
One childlike prayerful sacrifice,
His end — a felon's grave.

His end! No end to lives like his;
With us he lives always.
Bright through our night, a shining star,
He lights for us the way.

And Christ, who died for love of us,
Tortured and bruised and shamed,
Gives courage to such hero souls,
Unbending and untamed.

I CANNOT FORGET

I cannot forget
The sight of that straight young neck
In the clasp of the hempen rope
That day in November.

And I see always
The minions of the Saxon foe,
And hear the wailing of the women
That day in November.

I think of his youth
And the years that beckoned him on,
And he dying in the grey shadows
That day in November.

Where was our manhood,
O sons of the sorrowful Queen,
To let the brutal foeman triumph undisturbed
That day in November.

Have you sworn deeply
That the day of reckoning is near,
For the evil crew who murdered Kevin Barry
That day in November.

TERRY WARD

BITTER THE DEATH

Air: "*Emir's Farewell*"

Bitter the death they gave you, soldier lad,
You of the boyish heart and fair blue eyes;
Hanged like a dog! God mercy, it would be sad
Did we not know you lived beyond the skies.
There nigh the Throne of Christ Who died to save,
There shall you plead for the land that claimed your love;
Silent you sleep in your lowly prison grave,
Many shall plead with you in the realms above.

Mary, beloved Queen of this land of Faith;
Patrick, who taught the truths for which you died;
Colm, who went into exile worse than death —
Every Saint of Eirinn stands by your side.
See through the Courts of Heaven what an array
Muster to second your pleading, Kevin lad;
Heroes of old and martyrs of to-day —
How do you wonder, boy, that our hearts are glad.

(REV.) D. A. CASEY

09-BPP-925

