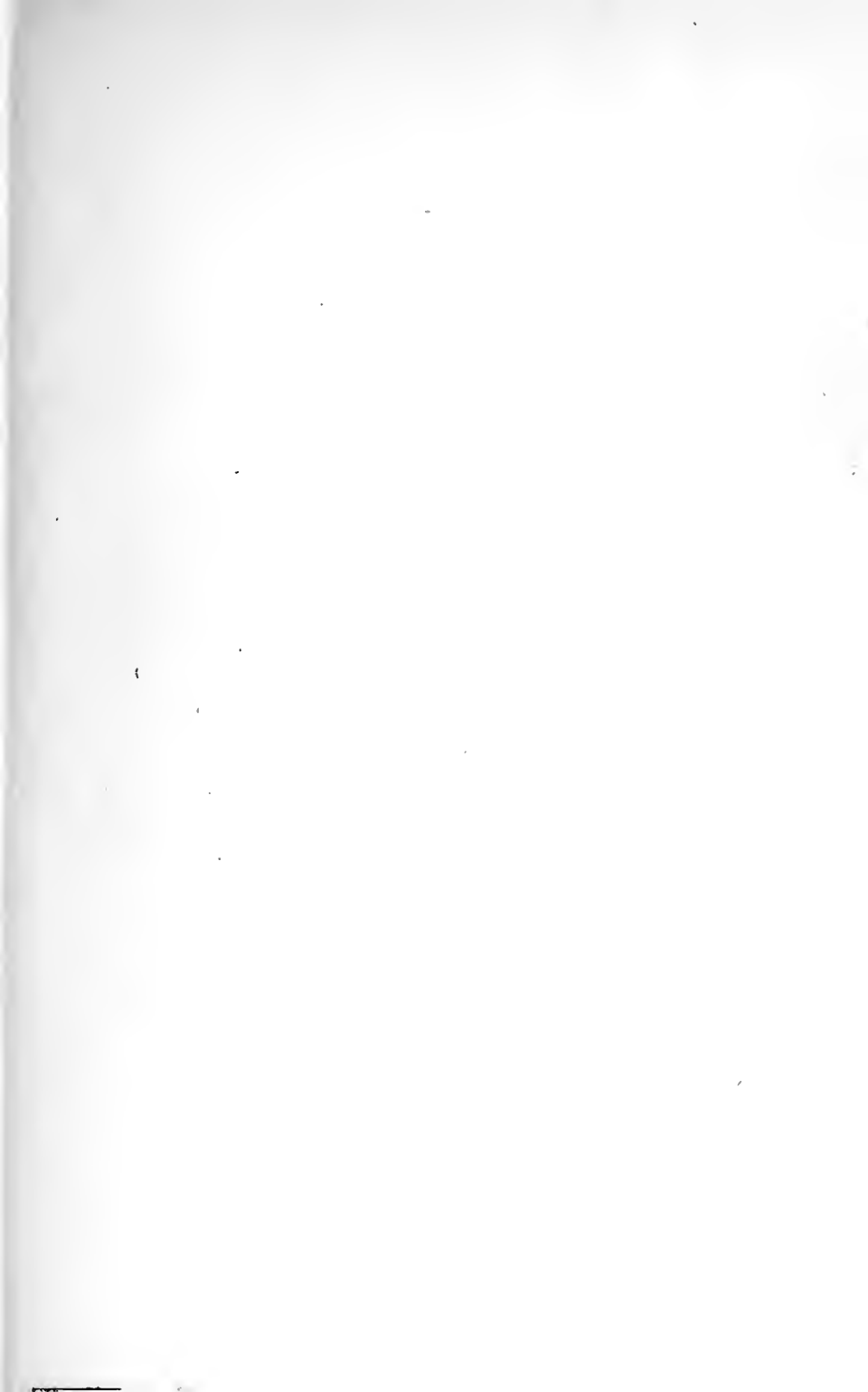




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RECOLLECTIONS OF THE  
IRISH WAR

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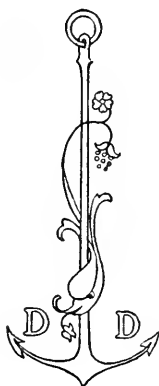


*(Photo: Claude Harris 1924 Ltd.)*

DARRELL FIGGIS

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE  
IRISH WAR

DARRELL FIGGIS



GARDEN CITY                      NEW YORK  
DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.



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### PUBLISHER'S NOTE

**D**ARRELL FIGGIS died on the 27th of October, 1925. The manuscript of "Recollections of the Irish War" was written, as far as can be traced, in 1921 to 1922.

The book gives the author's personal impressions of those outstanding personalities on both sides of the Irish Channel who figured as protagonists in that long conflict for Irish Independence from the founding of the Irish Volunteers in 1913 to the truce in July, 1921, which led to the establishment of the Free State Government.

Darrell Figgis himself played an important and adventurous part in these events. As a man of letters and a skilled observer of affairs he was peculiarly fitted to become the chronicler of this remarkable phase in Irish history.



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RECOLLECTIONS OF THE  
IRISH WAR



## CHAPTER ONE

### ARMS AND MEN

#### § I

EVEN in Ireland, folk in thinking of the war that ended in the establishment by International Treaty of the Free State go back no further than the Easter Rising of 1916. Little wonder that this way of thought should prevail outside Ireland. Life, however, does not work in this fashion. History, which is the record of Life, reveals a far-reaching series of connected causes and effects, difficult to disconnect into the trim order that the unimaginative mind requires. To follow any part of that record, from whatever personal standpoint it be seen, with understanding and interest, it is necessary, therefore, briefly to note the framework into which it is set.

The Easter Rising of 1916 reaches back through two personalities to older events. Noble minds planned that Rising as an heroic gesture of sacrifice. Other minds, not less noble, held aloof because they saw no justification for it on military or political grounds. But of them all two (one on each side) connected that event, and the causes that immediately produced it, with earlier history. These two therefore are specially significant.

The first of them is Arthur Griffith. He held aloof; but he took the Rising back to the fall of Parnell. On

him the creative mantle of Parnell fell invisibly; and none saw it about his shoulders till nearly the end of his days. There is an ancient tradition that to eat bitter fruit is to cleanse and strengthen the vision; and there is warrant for the tradition in the life of Arthur Griffith. The desertion of Parnell, and his death, were bitter fruit for the young Griffith, then a member of Parnell's organizing committee; and to the end of his days one could see that Griffith was wary and prepared for any disaster, was never wholly confident of, never unreservedly committed to, the winds that blew him to power. To the last he was ready to turn and face unpopularity; but the immediate result was to send him to South Africa, heart-sick, disillusioned. There, and in that mood, he saw that if the Irish people were to be strong they must look for salvation, not to agencies abroad, but to constructive, recreative work at home. Although he did not believe in the rightness of the Easter Rising, he believed in the rightness of physical force if necessary for the attainment of freedom, and he was one of the first to join the Irish Volunteers in 1913. Arthur Griffith was supremely a man with a national philosophy, and that philosophy brought down from the days of Parnell's fall a stubborn doctrine of self-reliance, without the teaching of which it is not easy to conceive of Easter Week.

The second of these two is Tom Clarke. His was, perhaps, the pure, lineal descent. Tom Clarke had himself spent over fifteen years in penal servitude. There, as he subsequently wrote, his precept was: "*Clinch your teeth hard and never say die.*" A man of unconquerable

mind, he took the Rising back to the Fenian faith of the Sixties, to the men who with pikes and shot-guns, and stubborn, undefeated faith, went out on the snow-clad hills of Tipperary in February, 1867, to fight an empire. From the moment of his release he spent his days preparing for the event that brought his life to a close. He took no part in political movements, judging them to be deceptive and corruptive. Knowing the future to be with youth, he gathered young men about him, taught them his simple creed of an ultimate appeal to arms, and waited to will that event when Time should bring it to his hand.

The two causes are seen to merge in one when it is remembered that it was the same Fenian faith that had given Parnell his strength. Thus the war of the past few years is folded into, becomes part of, an older, larger pattern. It is unnecessary to remember this. It was impossible to have taken any part in it without being perpetually reminded of that fact. The simplest, ordinary committee-meeting in some distant country town would suddenly be brought to tensivity by an old man rising in a corner and giving the new faith his blessing. What that meant none can fully appreciate but those who know Irish life and history, for in that blessing continuity was established and the new faith was confirmed of its antiquity and its authority.

All this is true; and it is necessary to understand it. Frequent, unsuspected reminders of it will shine from the most casual incidents like light from the sides of a crystal. Yet it is also true that the new war was a separate phase of the older war. It flamed to a height

never known before, and became, indeed, a beacon to the world. It had its own character, method, and associations. It had its own men and women. It had its own distinct psychology. Indeed, it critically changed the whole national psychology, bringing a new breed to birth in Ireland, in many ways obviously, in other ways subtly different from those that had preceded. And in the doing of these things it had its own beginning. That beginning was not the Easter Rising of 1916, but the establishment of the Irish Volunteers in the autumn of 1913.

## § 2

It is unnecessary to relate in any detail how the Irish Volunteers first came into being; but to be able to follow the story it is necessary to remember the main facts of their foundation. In every good tale the end is in the beginning, and life is a tale-teller of acknowledged accomplishment.

In 1913 the Irish people had long forgotten the use of arms. They had been well schooled for a generation not to think outside political agitation. For many years that agitation plucked wry fruit for the nation; and then Griffith with *Sinn Fein*, and Douglas Hyde with the Gaelic League, had turned its thoughts to prospect of better orchards at home. Then a few swift turns in political events in England changed the picture. The political agitation, with the Parliamentary Party at its head, gathered together its strength again; and the coming of Home Rule seemed to justify all that had been hoped of it or, if not all, certainly a measure of those

hopes; and by 1913 expectation had learned not to be too ambitious.

At that moment the nation saw a great Irishman arise to snatch the poor measure they had thought within their grasp. The manner of the threat was what surprised them most. The success of Sir Edward Carson was that he spun his ashplant in defiance of the rules of the very game Irishmen had so carefully been taught. Had not their fathers been put in gaol for drilling and arming and defying the Mother of Parliaments? But now here was he, former Law Officer of the Crown and Privy Councillor to boot, exhorting Irishmen to drill, pledging himself to arm them, and making every sound and sign of calculated, unmistakable disrespect towards the august assembly to which they had sent their representatives. Small wonder that at first they were baffled and angry, but they recovered slowly yet resentfully, for there were some to help the recovery.

It was for just such an hour that Tom Clarke had waited—he and his band of young men. Patiently he had waited, asking nothing for himself, prepared to pass on to another generation the secret sign of his tradition, but ready, too, if necessary, to write the sign publicly with the sacrifice of his own life. Odd, how Life transposes the parts men think to play on the world's stage! Little did the high and delicate who organized armies in 1913, and spake great words, and breathed threatenings, think of a worn, grey man in a little tobacconist's shop off O'Connell Street who was waiting for the opportunity they gave him to overturn their own world. They would not have stepped within his shop to buy a daily paper

or a packet of cigarettes. Yet it was for them he was waiting. And it was they who brought the opportunity to his hand, enabling his spirit to ride the storm they had awoken.

The impossible had come to pass. Under the most august patronage, and beneath the wing of an unimpugnable aristocracy, Irishmen could now enrol themselves in armies, and drill to their hearts' content. The plans were therefore carefully laid. The proposal was made to Professor Eoin MacNeill that he should call a meeting at the Rotunda. Eoin MacNeill was Professor of Ancient Irish History at the National University, and Vice-President of the Gaelic League, a man of great erudition and one of the leading research historians of his day. In many ways he was an ideal man to take the ostensible headship of the new movement. His integrity, the respect he inspired, his very touch of pedagogy (ancient Irish history, too!), gave an opportunity for the movement to gather way with the least possible friction, while Tom Clarke continued to sell unassuming cigarettes and still more unassuming journals that ran current among a few.

So, in October, 1913, a Provisional Committee was formed, from which a declaration of policy was published, calling a public meeting for the 25th of November, "to commence the enrolment of Irish Volunteers." The hall held 7,000 people, but when the doors were closed, there were as many outside as within. The new thought from the north had struck a responsive note in the south. Unquestionably there was in this awakening much of an answer to a challenge from the north; but this the leaders



were careful to remove. Of these leaders the most conspicuous were Eoin MacNeill and Sir Roger Casement; and both these men, in addressing meetings in different parts of the country, insisted always that the Irish Volunteers were in no sense opponents, that they were rather comrades, of the Ulster Volunteers. It is not surprising, perhaps, that this attitude was not always readily understood. Yet in several cities when cheers were called for the men of the north they were given heartily enough, and a new spirit was evoked that, had it been met with a like spirit, might have recast all the history made since that time.

In truth, a new spirit of comradeship had been created. With however awkward an enthusiasm that comradeship was regarded by the northern exemplars, it was quite genuinely felt in many southern bosoms. That it was also felt among many of the Ulster Volunteers can also be vouched from personal knowledge. And in the south not the least effect was that many who had kept aloof from the not very savoury business that politics had become were now enkindled with a new fire.

### § 3

Such, in briefest outline, was the beginning of the new rising wave that swept forward for eight years, gathering strength, volume, and unity of movement till it included all the nation, and brought the Treaty to triumph—or, as some would say, till it broke on the rock of the Treaty. It was a movement of youth, long overdue—youth, long baffled by sober age; adventure, long thwarted by dis-

cretion, and both enkindled by the material ardour with which their chance came.

Yet it is not history (as history) I am telling, for the time of that telling is not yet. My purpose is rather to gather together, before they are lost in or falsely coloured by the new period on which we have entered, personal recollections of some of the events created by the new movement, with memories of some of the personalities who figured in it. In order to do this it is necessary that I should turn aside to show how it was that I was gathered into the new movement.

At that time I knew little of movements in Dublin, and I had few political friends. Born of a family traditionally opposed to Nationalism, I had, however, long believed in Arthur Griffith's doctrine of national self-help, known as Sinn Féin. In common with many others, then, I had never imagined that I would be found in politics. My thought was only for the writer's and songman's craft, and it was partly chance, partly the inescapable obligation of honour, that brought me into touch with the personalities and made me in some degree a sharer in the events of this last phase of the Irish War. Certainly it was chance that threw me into the adventure by which guns were run through the British blockade and landed at Howth, and the Volunteers in this way equipped as an armed force for the future.

At that time I was resident in London, but for some years I had been in the habit of spending a good part of each winter in Achill, an island in the Atlantic, off the west coast of Mayo. There I bore each winter the accumulations of taskwork in London; and a busy life

had robbed from a wanderer, whose time was mortgaged to necessity, the opportunity of other than the most casual friendships even in his own native city of Dublin.

I was in Achill when the news came of the meeting in the Rotunda, and I had no knowledge other than the papers told of what the news might mean. Three months previously Dublin had been the seat of an industrial lock-out that closed the months of summer and passed into the winter. It had been less a lock-out, or strike, than a bitter war between worker and employer that included a great part of the city. Of it Jim Larkin had been the torchbearer and Jim Connolly the mind. At the height of the war Captain J. R. White had come forward with a proposal to drill a workers' army, to be known as the Citizens' Army. Jim Larkin was then in gaol, and Jim Connolly supported the proposal with all his strength. It is strange to remember now (though there seems to have been almost a conspiracy to forget it) that the actual decision to enrol this army was taken in a fellow's chambers in Trinity College, unlikeliest of all places for the quaintest of all ironies. At that meeting some of the gravest citizens of the city had pulled out their cheque-books to contribute for the establishment of this drilled force—a force that was to contribute mightily to the Rising of Easter, 1916.

At that meeting I had been present, and as I read the news from Dublin my thoughts naturally returned to it. No one who knew Jim Connolly, or had read his writings, had any doubt of the part he expected such a force to play in history. Connolly was one of the master intellects of the Ireland of his time, and a convinced

Nationalist who believed that all the great movements in Ireland for national independence had been seated in causes more economic than political, and for him therefore to take part in the organization of a Labour Army meant that he proposed to forge a weapon for future use. In conversation he said little of this; but he was a man who could make his silences in conversation as significant as he could make irony eloquent on a platform, and there was no doubt as to his meaning, for he had long nurtured the thought of an armed national rising with its roots in labour.

Yet the news in the papers definitely precluded a labour interpretation. In the first place, they spoke of labour opposition at the Rotunda meeting, and in the second place the published Manifesto quite clearly indicated a different sort of force from the existing Citizen Army. What was, at any rate, clear, whatever else was dark and strange, was that a revolutionary change had occurred or was about to occur in Irish affairs, from which it was impossible to abstain.

#### § 4

Therefore, though to move were to move in an unfamiliar world, I started at once to organize Volunteers in Achill. It is difficult to-day to realize the spirit of that time. Irish politics had long become (as politics always become) a close corporation, and to escape from them into such a movement was like breaking into fresh air. I knew very well that Volunteers in Achill could never prove of practical value, for the people of Achill live in great part by migratory labour, the little patches

of bogland to which persecution had driven them being quite insufficient to maintain their families, and out of such a population it were idle to expect to raise a permanent drilled force. To begin the drilling of youth in Achill, therefore, was rather an instinct than a reasoned plan—an instinct of comradeship and comradeship I believe I can truly say—and in that it was a symptom of what occurred, spontaneously or as the result of prompting, all over Ireland. But for me the result was that it brought me actively into touch with some of the leaders of the movement in Dublin, with consequences that drew me into politics in spite of my determination never to meddle with them.

The chief of the leaders with whom I came into contact at that time was Eoin MacNeill, O'Rahilly, and Sir Roger Casement. Eoin MacNeill and O'Rahilly I had known well before. Roger Casement I never met till then; and of all the men I have ever met, in a way-faring life, men of every sort and description, I have never met any man of so single and selfless a mind, or of so natural and noble a gesture of soul, as he.

At that time the thought in all our minds was how to equip the Volunteers with arms. If it were right to drill men it was essential to arm them. As to that everyone was agreed. The task was how to do it. As the work required secrecy, the Provisional Committee had constituted Eoin MacNeill and O'Rahilly a special Arms Sub-Committee, with powers to add to their number and to draw upon the Volunteer treasury without revealing their plans. Yet with an Arms Act in force, with British forces in possession of, and British

gunboats guarding, the coast, with detectives watching every movement of the leaders, and with all letters examined in the post, the task was obviously one of extraordinary difficulty.

During the early months of 1914 I had frequently discussed this problem with these men. O’Rahilly was in charge of the actual inquiries with certain houses on the Continent, and as I lived in London, where mails (then) were not examined, we arranged that these inquiries should pass through my hands; all letters to Dublin being sent under cover. Yet what with one difficulty and another, one preoccupation and another, April came, and still nothing had been done beyond the gathering of information. In the meantime the men were becoming restive for the lack of arms—for there is nothing to which the Irishman is more sensitive than to ridicule—and to drill with wooden guns was to offer oneself as a target for ridicule.

Then the political situation compelled a rapid decision. For an attempt was made by the politicians to capture the movement; and the only way to save it, and keep it independent (to keep it in existence at all, in fact), seemed to be—arms.

## § 5

During the early months of 1914 the Volunteers had spread too rapidly through the country for them to be looked upon with any favour by the older political leaders. Only slowly did they actually learn that the bonds of their control had been loosened. Preoccupied with the lobbies of Westminster, they had omitted to

keep in touch with events in Ireland, where they had been trained to think their kingdom was secure. I had occasion to meet John Redmond fairly frequently during these months, and I remember what seemed to me the amazing incredulity with which he heard the news of the spread of the movement that to me had become a commonplace. His incredulity was as incredible to me as my commonplaces were incredible to him, and nothing more surely convinced me than those meetings of the wrong Irishmen did themselves, as well as did their country, by absenting themselves from home to attend a Parliament in London.

Yet one could perceive the political leaders were vaguely apprehensive. Their thoughts were concentrated on London lobbies, where a difficult battle had to be fought, but their instincts were alert and discomfited. Human nature will not be denied, and to the minds of these Master Builders (whose building seemed so near completion) there came the ancient, horrible fear of Youth knocking at the door. Therefore, while they disbelieved what they were told, they planned to capture and control the new movement.

Moreover, there was another consideration in their minds. It must be remembered that at that time none doubted that within a few months Home Rule would begin to come into operation with the transfer of services. And John Redmond plainly said to me that he had no intention of forming a new government with so incommensurable an organization in the field in dispute of his authority.

In Ireland, therefore, the two chief political organiza-

tions, the United Irish League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, were warned; and the new movement began to encounter suspicion and hostility where once all had gone well. Thus the problem matured that had been perceived from the beginning. With great wisdom and skill the leaders of the Volunteers had, during these early months, avoided all suspicion of opposing political organizations, and so had averted their hostility. The fruits of the political crop were, apparently, ripe to harvest, and the Volunteers had been presented as a drilled alternative should that harvest be threatened. Indeed, this was true political wisdom, spoken in all sincerity by the leaders of the revolutionary side of the movement, such as Eoin MacNeill and Roger Casement. It was not the faith of revolutionaries like Tom Clarke. But both were agreed that, however their ends might differ, the Volunteers, to be an effective body, must be kept as a separate organization, free from political control. Otherwise (it was argued) they would cease to be a drilled, disciplined force, and become a parade of political fustian, neither picturesque nor practical. And now this danger, long foreseen and adroitly averted, became a continual anxiety, with the alternative of a disastrous split.

In such passes the natural tendency is to play for time. Early in the year, therefore, I had been desired by Eoin MacNeill to get into contact with John Redmond, and to keep the issue in abeyance as long as possible. I would therefore be able to report what was passing in his mind, and at the same time the Volunteers would have time to strengthen themselves in the country. It is



probable that, ultimately, some months of valuable time were gained in this way; but in April it became necessary that the actual leaders should themselves come to London to see the Parliamentary men. So on Thursday Eoin MacNeill and Roger Casement, who had been appointed for that purpose by the Provisional Committee, travelled to meet John Redmond, John Dillon, and Joseph Devlin at Westminster, and it was as a result of that meeting that the decision was taken to proceed without delay to the arming of the Volunteers.

## § 6

This meeting was held the day following, and on Saturday I lunched with them at Mrs. J. R. Green's house in Grosvenor Road, Westminster. After lunch we spoke of their meeting the previous day, and discussed the delicate difficulty that lay immediately before the Volunteers, for at the previous day's meeting John Redmond had suggested (what he later formulated as a demand) that he should nominate as his representatives as many members to the Provisional Committee as there were members already.<sup>1</sup>

This, then, was the method to capture or split the movement: directly to attack the head while the political

<sup>1</sup> Tom Clarke, according to his rule, was not a member of the Provisional Committee. Padraic Pearse was then in the United States, collecting funds for his school at St. Enda's, and at the Friday's meeting John Redmond had complained bitterly of his meetings there with the Clan na Gael ("my hereditary enemies").

organizations were busy through the country seeking to envelop the body. If this suggestion were once made as a public demand it seemed impossible to refuse it, yet not to refuse it would be to alienate the Republican Brotherhood.

There seemed but one way to save the position. The Volunteers wanted arms. Those who provided arms would control the force, whoever was appointed to the Provisional Committee. Moreover, if the Republican Brotherhood knew that arms were actually on the way they might accept the immediate demand as inevitable, secure in the knowledge that there would be a further inevitable beyond it, when the existence of an armed force in Ireland would bring the practical control into their hands.

I therefore had asked how O'Rahilly stood in this matter. Eoin MacNeill, I well remember, illustrated the practical difficulties by producing from his pocket envelopes of letters, that had been opened for examination with no attempt to disguise the fact. He told also of the detectives who followed them everywhere. The movement stood in daily fear of proclamation, and with these constant nets about their feet how was it possible to proceed?

Then it was that I made the offer that was to change the entire course of my life, little though I would have believed it at the time. Eoin MacNeill was returning to Dublin that night, and I suggested that O'Rahilly should come over some day early the following week and bring with him all the information he had collected, all the addresses on the Continent, together with all the money

on which they could possibly put their hands. The very night of his arrival, if necessary, I would leave for the Continent, while he returned to Ireland. I would use my best discretion and buy. "Let us buy the rifles," I said, urging my point, "and so at least get into the problem. Having them on our hands, we will have to land them somewhere in Ireland." But the first thing was to buy, and so to present our wits with a problem that they would have to answer. As I could move freely where they could not I offered myself for the making of a beginning.

Never while I live will my eyes forget the effect of my offer on one of the company present. The picture is indelibly written to the last detail.

It was a grey afternoon. The windows gave on to the Thames, and against the grey sky the warehouses on the southern bank were, through the gathering mist, lined in an outline of darker grey and black, the tall chimneys uplifted above them. The tide was out, and beside the distant quayside some coal-barges lay tilted on the sleek mud of the river-bottom, with their sides washed by the silver waters that raced seaward.

Against this picture, looking outward before the window-curtains, stood Roger Casement, a figure of perplexity, and the apparent dejection which he always wore so proudly, as though he had assumed the sorrows of the world. His face was in profile to me, his handsome head and noble outline cut out against the lattice-work of the curtain and the grey sky. His height seemed more than usually commanding, his black hair and beard longer than usual. His left leg was thrown forward,

and the boot was torn in a great hole—for he gave his substance away always, and left himself thus in need, he who could so little afford to take these risks with his health. But as I spoke he left his place by the window and came forward towards me, his face alight with battle. “That’s talking,” he said, throwing his hand on the table between us; and I remember the whimsical thought crossing my mind that language had wandered far from its meanings when one man could say to another that he was talking, when his appreciation and brevity betokened an end of talking.

## § 7

All this, it must be remembered, was some weeks before the Larne gun-running, when, on the 24th of April, Carson and his friends ran rifles into Ireland past the blockade of the British Fleet. It has been thought that the Howth gun-running was a direct consequence of the success at Larne. Actually one was well in training when the other occurred, and when the news came from Larne we were delighted, and not only because it gave us an excellent protection for the task at which we were engaged.

Before we left Mrs. Green’s that evening it had been agreed that I should act on my offer. Eoin MacNeill was not at first quite clear as to beginning without seeing the end. His mind was naturally disinclined from this course of procedure, and wished to see beginning and end together; but he was thoroughly convinced of the necessity of immediate action, and before he left he

formally committed the direction of the action into my hands, as, he explained, he was entitled to do under the powers given to him by the Provisional Committee.

In order to ensure absolute secrecy only he, Casement, and O'Rahilly were to know of my name in the matter until the rifles had actually been bought and landed. I was to make whatever arrangements I decided in London, and to communicate as little as possible with Ireland, even with Eoin MacNeill, about the matter. The action, in fact, was to be disengaged as completely as possible from Ireland, where MacNeill would assume general responsibility with the Provisional Committee. In case it were necessary for me to communicate with him he gave me a cover under which to write, and letters to me were also to come under cover. His name in the transaction was always to be John Nelson, and mine to be Edmund Farwell—a name suggested by Roger Casement, with some recondite meaning which he promised to expound, but which I forgot to ask and never got. Thus I would always have perfect cover under which to work while I made my arrangements in London and on the Continent. As for the arrangements in Ireland, these were to be in O'Rahilly's hands, and the two of us were to discuss the manner in which our respective plans were to interlock when he came to London the following week.

Then we left Grosvenor Road and walked to Casement's rooms in Knightsbridge as dusk was falling, still talking over the matter. We dined that night in some Italian restaurant opposite Victoria Tube Station, before going on to Euston, where MacNeill was to catch the

Irish Mail. Just before the train left Tom Kettle joined us. He had come over to London in connection with the meeting the previous day, and MacNeill and he returned together.

Roger Casement was in walking mood, and the two of us walked to Shaftesbury Avenue, till I left him to return to Hampstead, where I then lived. It seems a momentous night in my years as I look back on it now, with all that was to flow out of the decision taken that day. None of us knew the future, a fortunate fact, no doubt. The action on which I had entered was to achieve world-publicity; and prominent statesmen, to mask their mature plans, were to attach to it responsibility for a world-war. But that night it seemed that it would be a quiet and secret affair. It would be an affair of some risks, to be sure, but it would be an honourable service, with a joy of adventure; and after it were over one would return to one's notebooks and literary projects. So my wife and I thought of it, as we discussed it that night—and so much for human prevision.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GERMAN RIFLES

#### § I

THE supreme difficulty that confronted us at every turn was that ours was a poor man's movement. The rich did not smile on us, nor were the wealthy kind. Even while one began to put together the separate pieces of one's plan, Sir Edward Carson, unknown to us, was maturing (or others acting for him were maturing) his own scheme for just such a project, but where he was clad in soft raiment we were lean and naked, and where rich men filled his coffers we had to fare by our wits. It made a woeful difference—a difference that antiquity has not robbed of its sting.

I was faced with the difficulty in London, and O'Rahilly was faced with it in Ireland. He did not, indeed, come to London for a further fortnight for just this very reason. Only a few hundred pounds could be collected at so short a notice, and the inadequacy of this sum laughed at us. In the meantime he sent me the address of a firm in Hamburg, and I arranged with them to send samples of two rifles, one of an ancient pattern, the other of a pattern downright antique, to a firm in Houndsditch for inspection.

While he delayed I rehearsed all possible plans, that they might be made to fit to the plans he would bring,

and it was always at that point of juncture they failed. It was clear that whatever money could be gathered together would barely suffice for a presentable purchase of arms. Assuming that problem answered, and the rifles bought and ready to ship, how were they to be brought to Ireland for delivery where O'Rahilly arranged to have them? To charter a vessel was out of the question. Our more fortunate, if a little uneasy, comrades in Ulster were at that very moment devising just so splendid a gesture; but gestures of this sort were not for our humbler, though not less determined, folk.

Always in our conversations, therefore, Roger Casement and I returned to this problem. That it was always present in his mind I knew by the fact that during the first week a number of persons came from him with plans to discuss. Then he himself said that the daughter of an Irish peer had offered to contrive the use of her father's yacht, but she herself frankly indicated the difficulties to its use. The boat itself was not suitable, and it lay in a river creek near a police barracks. Its removal would certainly be noted and the boat marked. It was therefore decided that Casement and I should continue our inquiries.

Then on the eve of his leaving for Ireland he wrote saying he had discovered the very boat. It belonged to Mr. Erskine Childers, the English publicist who had written a book on Ireland, and who was ready to help. He gave me his address, and urged me to see him without delay.

On receipt of this letter I went at once to see Mr. Childers at his flat in Chelsea. He told me that Case-



ment had spoken to him fully concerning our project, and that he was willing to help in every way possible, recognizing the risks that were involved, and the necessity for absolute secrecy. He described his yacht, and said that he had laid it at the end of the previous summer at (if I remember aright) Criccieth, in North Wales, but that it could easily be put into seaworthy condition at very short notice. And while he spoke of his yacht, which was clearly the very thing for which we had been looking, I weighed in my mind a number of balances that had nothing whatever to do with yachts at all.

For I had, then and there, either to invite him or not; for though Casement had, it seemed, practically invited him, Casement had also invited others who had come to me, and I had found it necessary, for one reason or another, to set them to work that was not intended to come to anything. Childers' was a different case. He had either to be swallowed whole or rejected whole. And the balances, as I weighed them, always inclined towards him, quite apart from the matter of the yacht, which was the chief cause of his assistance being sought.

It then seemed to me strange, for example, that an Englishman<sup>1</sup> should desire to bear these risks in our service; but, on the other hand, his position in England, his social connections, his influence with a section of the Liberal Party, then in power, were safeguards not to be thrown lightly aside. I knew it would be said (as it

<sup>1</sup> In later years he maintained his right as an Irishman, but at that time none of us thought of him as other than a well-known English publicist who had eloquently and learnedly espoused our case.

very quickly was) that an Englishman, though his worth were gold, should not be told of our plans against his country; but then Roger Casement had already told him fully of them, and a man of his tradition would be bound by adding responsibility to knowledge, where he might not regard himself bound if that addition were not made. Besides, if he helped, he would help only at sea, where he was a yachtsman of known skill, and where his services for Great Britain had been such that he would hardly be suspected of trafficking with those who wished to run guns to her peril.

So, while he spoke, I weighed these things. O'Rahilly was expecting to come any day now, and I was still unable to join my plans to his where the sea stretched between us. That threw the last consideration in the scale, and when Mr. Childers had finished I told him my plans. My proposal was to distribute my responsibility to a selected London committee, each member of which would take charge of one part of the whole action. Mrs. Green should be invited to give her great name and large capacity to the care of its treasury, to collect, receive and account all moneys. Mr. Childers would take charge of all arrangements for the shipment of our little armoury. And I would, while generally responsible for their delivery (a responsibility of which I could not rid myself), take charge of their purchase and of their delivery on to Mr. Childers' yacht wherever we should arrange for this to occur. To this he added a suggestion that Mrs. Childers should be added to our committee, as the channel of communication when we would be at the separate ends of our common action.

Without delay we went then to Mrs. Green, who agreed to act as treasurer. Without her it is improbable that we could have brought our enterprise to an end. It was she who in great part covered the liabilities incurred, until they should be met by donations, promises, and the sale of the guns when landed. It was under her direction that a number of wage-earners were banded together, each one of whom, out of her or his poverty, covered a limited share of that liability until the final sale to the Volunteers, risking that much of absolute loss if the enterprise failed. At every hour of the day and night she was always ready to lend herself and her resources to our hazardous enterprise.

## § 2

Within a few days O'Rahilly came. I met him in the porch of the Victoria Hotel in Northumberland Avenue. There he told me that he had been followed from Ireland, and that Dublin detectives were even at that moment waiting outside the hotel for him. But London is not Dublin in the matter of following a sleuth, and that night he slept at Hampstead unknown and unguarded. His first and chief anxiety was concerning Childers. When he had been satisfied in that regard, he unfolded his part of the plan while I unfolded ours. Briefly, his plan consisted of a number of secret dumps around the southern and western Irish coast. He explained that at each of these dumps the yacht would, during June, as though cruising for pleasure, deliver agreed lots of rifles on agreed dates. In this way the difficulty of distribution from one centre in Ireland would

be avoided, and the dumps would be chosen (several of them, he said, had already been arranged) for speedy delivery to districts where it was known that companies were ready to buy.

I was not happy about the plan, and, when we discussed it at a meeting of our committee the following morning, neither was Childers. The risks of delivery at ten centres seemed a hundred times greater than delivery at one centre. But the plan had been approved in Ireland, and we had no alternative but to proceed with our part of the enterprise. The rest of our discussion turned on matters of finance, since it was imperative that we should know to what extent we could commit ourselves.

Casement was now back in London, and he took Childers and myself to see a friend of his in St. Mary Axe who was agent for a Belgian armoury firm. In the meantime the samples had arrived from Hamburg, and one of them, an old 9 mm. bore Mauser rifle, seemed the thing for our purpose, cheap and undeniably effective—as was afterwards proved. Rifles are one of the infernal inventions of man's wit—the prehistoric caveman's hunger and battle for life surviving as a slayer's lust in the finished craftsmanship of machinery. But if they are to be used it is right that they be effective, and our strange love (I have the original sample yet) would, we decided, be effective—patiently and weightily effective.

Thus, with O'Rahilly's information and our own separate inquiries, I was now ready to proceed to the Continent. Childers came with me. We went first to Liège, to the armoury firm of which Roger Casement's

friend was agent. While day dawned we sped through flat Belgian fields, where roads went straight into the distance, flanked by slender poplars, where every acre was alive with green cultivation, chill with dew, and clothed with the golden warmth of May, but where, presently, armies were to march and slaughter reign, in memory, for that cockpit of Europe, of a hundred other armies and a hundred other reigns of slaughter. And we, too, as we sped, went to buy instruments of slaughter in a city that was not only itself an ancient cockpit of war, but the armoury of the obsolete and obsolescent weapons of Europe, where poor nations came to buy discarded toys of their wealthy brethren.

Liège merchants, however, could not help us. Their toys were pretty but too expensive. We were not so foolish as to refuse them. Baffled sellers have other means of profit in such forbidden gear; but we left Liège that night knowing well that its merchandise was not for our purses.

We went to Hamburg, a city beautiful and modernly ancient, like a comely matron who can keep her place with the liveliest of youth. We lodged at a pleasant little hotel opposite the railway station, and after our morning coffee we went a few hundred yards down the same Strasse to O'Rahilly's firm of Michael Magnus, Junior.

It was a wonderful firm. It moved my admiration then, and has never ceased to move it since. It was conducted by two brothers—Michael, masterful and calm, and his elder brother Moritz, expressive and expostulant. In an adventurous life I had not suspected the existence

of such persons. A few months later Europe was to be loud with claimants for the honour of being considered the Friend of Small Nationalities. I did not hear my good friends Michael and Moritz Magnus then, but I thought of them. For here they were, the genuine Friends of Small Nationalities, professing nothing large, but practising their faith and friendship consistently, neglecting fine speeches and directing their attention to good deeds. They were not politicians looking to fill their sails with favourable winds. Practical men, rather, after the manner of their compatriot St. Peter, who held that faith without works is dead. Therefore, after every war, they bought armaments of all sorts from neglected battlefields, and established an armoury to which small nations might repair for the righting of their wrongs, and where they plied their faith, through good repute and bad, in the brief hope of immediate reward.

The tokens of their faith, from large shell-cases to small pistols, were about us as we sat in their upholstered room; but something had occurred to weaken that faith. That was evident to both Childers and myself. They had the article we needed; we had the small tribute they so reasonably required; yet the two brothers constantly retired to consult how they might make clear to us that they would not help. As a matter of fact they both spoke excellent English, but we found a curious inability to understand them when they came to rehearsals of that critical sentence. Oddly enough, we even sometimes understood them in a completely opposite sense, and so, baffled, they withdrew again. When they withdrew, Childers expostulated that we were wasting our time,

since it was clear they would not sell, whatever the cause might be. It was not easy to make clear to him that, since we had found the article we wanted, if we were patient enough, and bland enough, and imperturbable enough, nothing could prevent us getting it. The great thing was to husband our energy so as not to be the first to be fatigued.

Later I learned the cause of their reluctance. I little thought when I learned it how strangely I should afterwards remember it, when the whole world was at war. For, a few weeks before this, Carson had run his cargo of rifles at Larne, and these rifles had been bought in Hamburg. Germany, I was told, believed that Britain was looking for a cause of war, and the German Government had therefore warned all firms that they must under no circumstances sell arms to Ireland. Another affair such as Larne, with its noise and alarm, might bring serious consequences that Germany was anxious to avert. This, be it remembered, was told me before our affair at Howth, and two months before the European war. I thought it fantastic then, though I soon had cause to know that the fear was genuine.

However, at the time I knew nothing of this. We were puzzled but bland, immovably fixed in their capacious upholstery, and astonishingly unintelligent. Then, more by chance than through good wit, I let drop that we desired these rifles for Mexico. Mexico? The two brothers looked quickly at one another and withdrew for another consultation. Childers complained that no one in their senses would mistake us for Mexicans, and I had barely answered that lies like this were not told

for belief, but merely to give the other side a reasonable excuse for agreement, when the two brothers returned. They were very cautious, and they expressed their interest in the case of Mexico; but it was obvious that they were now in quite another mood. Their caution was now not reluctance, but a wary tread towards a business deal.

## § 3

We entered the office of Magnus at 9.20 in the morning, and it was after 12.30 before we had bought our rifles. It had proved an unexpectedly and unreasonably stubborn battle, and we had no knowledge of the cause of the difficulty beyond what we could infer from the catching at the Mexican straw. It was therefore necessary to have the matter in writing. I drew out then the chief heads of a memorandum of agreement. After lunch, when Michael Magnus was our admirable host, we continued to work at that agreement till nearly seven that night, when we exchanged signed copies, subject to its revision by consent on the morrow, Whit-Saturday, when we were to return home. The rifles, we were told, were warehoused at Liège, and Magnus was to wire me within one month to come for them—first to inspect them in detail and then to bear them away.

That night Childers stayed to examine the agreement while I went to the opera. No amount of banter could dissuade him from an examination word by word of that agreement. Yet actually it was worthless as a legal document. I had signed it as Edmund Farwell, and he had signed it also under his assumed name. Its only value



was for its effect on Magnus, and that did not require every comma to be in its right place. Our true safeguard was in our banking arrangements, by which no money would be released till a mate's receipt had been given for the cargo. Yet when I came down to coffee the next morning Childers was still worrying over that agreement, seeking for verbal perfection where we had the substance of what we wanted.

The following day we returned home. Before we did so, however, we went with Magnus to the *Direktor* of the Deutsche Bank to complete our banking arrangements, and to a shipping-house to charter a tug. Here we met another difficulty. We had already purchased a thousand rifles, with the option of another five hundred to be taken with them, and this committed us to moneys which it was doubtful if we could gather in the time. But now an extortionate sum of £300 was demanded for a tug down the river, and by no means could we get the price lowered.

Therefore we left this an open question, and the following week we went to Antwerp to see if we could better the price. We tried three houses there, and at each the price was £300. Clearly we were on another's trail, and that trail, as clearly, was Carson's. So at Antwerp, seeing that we were not to do business there, we were simple and ingenuous and frank. A fleet of Irish trawlers, we said, were to meet the tug we wanted, and we would send them fuller details later. I have been told, in such a way as to believe it, that all Irish trawlers were watched and carefully searched for some time after this. Yachts escaped attention.

## § 4

In the meantime Mrs. Green had her organization at work for the collection of money, and on our return from Antwerp, while I awaited the telegram from Magnus, Childers and I gave our attention to arrangements for shipment and landing. He was doubtful if his yacht would conveniently carry 1,500 rifles, if we found ourselves able to take the other 500, and he therefore proposed that he should ask Conor O'Brien, whose yacht was only slightly smaller than his own, to take a share of our cargo. We agreed upon this; but this meant that Childers, when on his way to Criccieth, would need to continue on to Dublin, and, while there, see O'Rahilly.

Then Casement wrote saying that he gravely doubted the wisdom of continuing with O'Rahilly, who was being too closely followed by detectives. Knowing the trouble O'Rahilly had taken in the matter since the beginning of the year, I was averse to breaking with him. Moreover, if we broke with him, this would have to be done unknown to him in order to leave the detectives to follow a false clue. The success of our enterprise would require this; but no one could have taken such a course with a man so loyal and loveable as O'Rahilly without mean thoughts of himself. Childers did not know O'Rahilly and did not share my feelings in the matter; but for some time I would not consent until Roger Casement crossed to London and explained that a change would have to be made. At that time I was waiting for the telegram from Magnus while struggling with arrears

of my own work. Moreover, about this time Casement was completing his arrangements to cross to America, and was due to leave within a week. We therefore agreed that Childers should leave for Dublin as soon as possible, taking letters of introduction with him from Casement.

Before he returned (perhaps before he left) Casement had gone, as I remember the unpleasant circumstances that followed. On the morning of his return I met Childers at his flat, where we all were to lunch. To my extreme surprise Childers would say nothing, but that he met a man who was to be known as "Dolan," with whom he had made other plans which he was not at liberty to divulge. I asked who "Dolan" was, and he claimed confidence there, too. The situation was awkward, for I was a guest in his house, yet with a responsibility of which I could not rid myself. I rose to leave, protesting another appointment and asked him to dine with me at my club. He countered me by the offer of his club. So we arranged an independent meeting for that evening.

I was greatly distressed. The situation was as unpleasant as it could be. There had been small earlier causes for discontent, but our common responsibilities did not allow of their entertainment. This, however, was a different matter. It affected not one's personal feelings so much as one's responsibilities. So, as we sat in a tavern in Whitehall, I spoke frankly, and said that whereas until that moment we had been two good comrades together, I had now to remember that he held his trust from me, whereas I held it from those who were

in turn my chiefs. I had no intention of delivering any rifles into his yacht until I knew what he proposed to do with them. In the first place, I wished to know who "Dolan" was; in the second, what the new plan was.

Then I learned that "Dolan" was Bulmer Hobson, a member of the Provisional Committee; and that the plan was to hold up the port of Howth, near Dublin, and land the rifles in the port openly in broad day, avoiding all the dangers and difficulties of manœuvres at night. Where the difficulty had been I could not perceive, for the name carried its own guarantee, and the plan was clearly the right one. It had the simple boldness that attunes and tempers the blood. Besides, audacity has always been its own best protection, since it is never expected and robs one's foeman of the initiative—a quality beyond price in manœuvre.

### § 5

Within a few days of this Childers left for Criccieth, and I left shortly afterwards for Liège to complete the last part of our enterprise. As nearly as I can remember I left for Liège on the last day of June, and as I was to take delivery of the further 500 rifles, and to purchase 45,000 rounds of ammunition, for none of which had we made banking arrangements, I took a considerable sum of money with me. My appointment was to meet Erskine Childers and Conor O'Brien at 12 noon at the Roetigen lightship at the mouth of the Scheldt on Sunday, the 12th of July. This would leave them a fortnight to get to Ireland, lest they fell becalmed in July weather.

Childers was to bring 1,000 rifles into Howth Harbour punctually at 12.45 on Sunday the 26th, and Conor O'Brien was to land 500 at Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, the night before to distract attention southward. My wife was to hold the line of communication, and before Childers left Cowes on his way outward we were to exchange telegrams through my wife that all was well on each side.

At Liège my troubles began. There Moritz Magnus was in charge, and though he was the kindest-hearted of men, the most expressive, and the most expostulant, he was not the most efficient. The rifles were all ready, and had each to be inspected, lock, stock, and barrel, but no arrangements had been made for packing them ready on rail for Hamburg. A friend of mine was on holiday in Bruges, and I wired him to help me with the inspection while I installed myself as foreman of works, and negotiated with trade-union officials for a staff. The result was the oddest collection of old women and men that I have ever been blest to see. The days were blistered with heat, and they all worked stripped to the waist. They were homely people, but the example was one I quickly followed, and, while we made a cheery and emphatically jocose party together, we got the work done. As the guns came from inspection we wrapped them in straw and tied them in canvas, twenty apiece. And so, by working early and late, we managed to have the whole consignment put on rail for Hamburg by Saturday evening, the 4th of July, and I was able to spend Sunday peacefully in Cologne and hear Beethoven's Mass in D major in the Cathedral.

At Hamburg our original difficulty took a new and anxious form. On returning to the hotel the first evening I was informed that a police official had been making inquiries. This did not of itself mean anything, but the next morning Michael Magnus told me that they had been warned. Both he and his brother consulted together gravely. It was, they said to me, a serious matter for them, for they could not act against their Government, though they could not think how their Government came by knowledge of our deal. I was being watched, and should be very careful of my movements. Fortunately, it did not appear that their Government suspected that business had already been transacted. They impressed on me that it was for Mexico I wished the rifles. I must always, they said, keep that to the front. England had no interest in Mexico.

These were anxious days. By Wednesday evening I had received no wire from Cowes; my wife had wired (in code) that she had no news, the bundles of rifles had not arrived from Liège, no ammunition had appeared, and I was being followed. Yet the tug had been chartered to leave at eight o'clock on Friday evening.

Lastly, to put the crown on trouble, the shippers informed Magnus that the port regulations required that all outgoing cargoes be examined and certified by a Customs Officer. This was a problem that none of us had suspected, and it seemed insurmountable, for the shippers were a firm of repute and could not afford evasion. But a careful examination of the regulations revealed that a pilot could act as Customs Officer. We decided therefore to engage a pilot, and the shippers

undertook to discover a pilot who could (failing Mexican) speak English, and who would have other suitable qualities. As for the skipper and his crew, these had already been provided for in advance.

On Thursday I received my wire from Cowes. On Thursday the "machine-parts" arrived from Liège. But the boxes of ammunition did not arrive in Hamburg till within three hours of our time for casting-off from the quayside, and did not reach the quayside till nearly seven o'clock. Neither anger on earth nor prayer to heaven hastened their delivery till the last point of exasperation. And when they were at last got into the hold, and a case here and there opened for examination, to my horror I found they were all dum-dum. No matter. I would have taken explosive bullets then, I believe, with considerable relish.

### § 6

All was now ready for the pilot. On him, and on the handling of him, depended everything. I do not believe I have ever scanned any man's face so anxiously, yet so guardedly, for signs either of beneficence or of corruptibility. Either would have been equally suitable. But he was a grave and stern man, with a face like a mask, out of the mouth of which dropped a very big pipe.

I was introduced to him by the skipper as a distinguished Mexican, and I realized with a shock that I had for the first time met someone who believed that I was a Mexican. For the two had spoken in German together. Speaking in English I asked him if he spoke Mexican. No, he did not; but he spoke English.

Excellent, that would do as well. He smoked a cigar? He stowed his pipe in his pocket and lit my cigar. He liked it? He did, and said twice, emphatically, that the brand was good. It was the only emphasis I had as yet got out of him, and he was right, the cigar was good. It had been chosen for him. I was glad to have found a man of taste; I hoped he would honour me by accepting the box from which it came. He took the box, stowed it under his arm, and shook my hand.

So he smoked in the cool of a July evening, and walked the deck of the tug as we lay amid the shipping of the port of Hamburg. Then I told him that unhappily I was not very well. He noted the fact without letting the unfortunate occurrence disturb his enjoyment of his cigar. What time would we reach the river mouth? At about 2.30 a.m., he said. At that hour, unfortunately, I hoped to be sleeping soundly and would deny myself the courtesy of his taking leave. He would permit me, therefore, to pay his fee now as I wished at once to turn in?

So we went into the chart-room, where I paid him his fee, and he gave me his receipt. When this was done I quietly passed him three English bank-notes. His blue eyes looked at me with simple wonderment. This was not customary, he said. We had come to the critical moment. Had it been customary, I said, it would not be the courtesy I intended. It was thus we liked to conduct affairs in my country. I hoped he would give me this pleasure. He put the notes carefully and reflectively in his wallet.

We took a few further turns on the deck before he went down to examine the cargo. I walked the deck



awaiting his return in an anxiety I could scarcely contain. I found it even difficult to breathe, and only by steady pacing could I control myself, for it would never do to let my anxiety reveal itself. Then I heard him coming up the ladder from the hold. He walked past me, and only as he passed me did he turn for one quick moment and look at me. The light of understanding was in his eye.

He went up on the bridge and spoke to the skipper. The skipper called to the crew, the hawsers were cast off, and the tug began to make way down the river. All was well. They had chosen a good pilot, who was also a Customs Officer.

## CHAPTER THREE

### TWO FATEFUL SUNDAYS

#### § 1

SUNDAY, the 12th of July, 1914, in the North Sea was heavy with ochreous-golden mist. Our world was narrowed to within a few cables' length of the tug, a distance across which heavy surgeless rollers swept, leaving the tug rocking in their wake. These rollers emerged from the mist, smooth and burnished, as from some distant world, lifted the tug upon them, and, while she slid down their sides, they rolled away into the mist, their flanks gleaming in the dull, golden light that fell through the curtain that had enveloped us. Not a breath of wind did they bring with them, not a breath did they draw after them. The day was sultry and close, and not a stir of air visited our faces.

From the moment when we cleared the river we had made only half-speed, and about ten on Sunday morning we lay idly rocking among the rollers, lest we should make the lightship too early. It was important that we should not draw the attention of those on the lightship, and for that reason the heavy mist suited us well, though it gave us and our yachts a greater difficulty in picking up one another. Towards noon we drifted nearer, till the lightship hove in sight, and then we lay out of sight to the westward, across the line on which the yachts should come.

It was not till 2.30 that a yacht was called. As she bore up out of the mist I examined her through my glasses, but though she was painted white like Childers' (O'Brien's being, as I had been advised, black), she was many times too large, and carried two masts. She bore down close upon us, and examined us so carefully as she passed that she left us greatly wondering who she might be when she had gone. Then we waited again, rocking in the waves, unnecessarily anxious as the hours passed.

Later in the afternoon the mist lifted a little, widening our world, and putting silver in the place of dull gold. At 5.30 another yacht was called. She was like what O'Brien's should have been, and she was evidently bearing towards us; but I had never met Conor O'Brien and was concerned to know how I should recognize him. He himself quickly settled this, however, by passing us close, and hailing: "Is that the boat with the rifles for the Irish Volunteers?" or some words of the like sort equally embarrassing to me, beside whom the skipper stood. So I called back in poor Irish asking him to speak in that language, and I was greatly relieved to hear the skipper's low voice asking if this were Mexican.

The hint was evidently taken, for as the yacht bore round again another man standing beside the first hailed me, this time in Irish. This was, I discovered when I made my way on board the yacht, Dermot Coffey, and I marvelled at the odd occurrence, for my last act before leaving London had been to send a review of an historical book of his to a London journal. Now I met the author for the first time in this fashion in the North Sea.

Conor O'Brien's sister and the two men comprised the

whole crew, and without delay we shipped his share of rifles on board his yacht, stowing them in the hold he had prepared for their reception. It was very nearly eight o'clock before we finished, and hardly had we finished, and were trimming his cargo, when another yacht was called.

This was Erskine Childers'. One yacht succeeded to the other with singular punctuality, for Childers hardly had time to greet O'Brien before the black yacht cast clear and lurched into the gathering dusk, and the white yacht took its place. The new yacht, however, was larger, and it had a greater burden to carry, though I wondered, as I looked on it after the difficulty we had had with the other, where the cargo was to be put. It was manned by a larger crew. In addition to Childers, there were Mrs. Childers, Miss Mary Spring Rice, two Donegal fishermen, and a young friend of Childers who was introduced to me as a clerk from the War Office.

With a crew so large (and so various) it was a hard task to stow the cargo and leave room for passengers. There were the boxes of ammunition as well as the rifles. Conor O'Brien's lot was to be landed at night at Kilcoole in motor-boats, and, therefore, we had stowed it in the original canvas parcels. Childers' had to be landed on to Howth pier, and the tug's crew therefore slit the bags while we stowed the rifles. We began the work at about 8.30 and we did not finish until about 1.30, through a hot and sultry night. By the time we had finished we could not but pity the voyagers on the yacht, for there was no place to eat or to sleep except on rifles or on cartridge-boxes.

When the task was finished, and while the yacht's crew trimmed cargo, we took her in tow to the Straits of Dover, where we cast loose about seven in the morning. She went on then down the Channel, while we made for Dover, where I was to be landed. She had a fortnight before her, and she had, we afterwards learned, the quiet satisfaction of bearing our forbidden cargo through the British fleet as it lay in review at Spithead, none suspecting what she bore beneath their guns.

## § 2

I waited a week in London, in an attempt to pull up arrears of my own work, before going on to Dublin for the final act. For my trust would not be discharged until the munitions had actually been put into the hands of the Volunteers.

In Dublin, Bulmer Hobson was in charge. Eoin MacNeill told me that O'Rahilly knew nothing of the new plans, and I therefore avoided him guiltily. The plans, as I heard them, were complete and elaborate. It had been agreed that Childers should lie up on the far side of Lambay Island, off Howth, on Saturday night; and I was to go out to him there that night on a motor-boat from Howth, with a small staff that would be told off to accompany me. In the meantime two other motor-boats were to come up the coast from Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire) and from Bray. While the yacht bore in towards the harbour, the three motor-boats, full of armed men, were to cruise about the narrowing waters, lest any

attempt were made from the coastguard station at Howth to intercept her.

In the meantime the Volunteers were to march out from Dublin. On the previous two Sundays they had been taken on route marches, and had on each occasion been accompanied by a posse of police—much stronger on the first than on the second occasion. It was expected that on this third occasion custom would have staled the adventure, and the expectation proved correct, for the posse on the critical day was but small. The Volunteers were to be timed to arrive a few minutes ahead of the yacht, to hold the port, receive and make away with the munitions, while the telephone and telegraph were cut so as to dislocate Howth from official headquarters.

The only matter that caused us concern was that a gunboat was posted in Dublin Bay, which could very quickly arrive on the scene to disconcert us. But in the end this gunboat was lured out of the way by a very simple ruse. For at this time Joseph Devlin and the political leaders were also attempting to land rifles; Italian rifles, as they proved, of an old pattern, without ammunition. An attempt had already been made somewhere in Wexford, but it had been foiled, and the boat bearing the guns had not come in from neutral waters. On the Saturday evening, therefore, as I went to Howth, I sent a clumsily coded telegram to a certain political leader making an appointment for 12 o'clock that night at Wexford, and later that night my comrade and I had the satisfaction of seeing the gunboat making southward under full steam, well out of the way of the events of the morrow.

It was as well, for our plans that night fell to pieces,

and the least interference from sea the next day would have brought the entire enterprise to disaster. That Saturday evening a fresh wind sprang up from the north-west, and the sea was bestrewn with "the white blossoms of the ocean." At Howth the owner of the motor-boat said that no arrangements had been made, and refused to take out his boat on such a night for any madcap fishing-party. No persuasion could change him, so we had to dismiss our party and make our way back to Dublin.

Sean McGarry had been in charge of the party, and he was my companion for that night's disappointments. At Dublin he and I took a motor to Kingstown, in the hope to catch the party there. There we saw the gunboat making south, but we found no party there, and met the same experience as at Howth. At about four that morning, tired and disheartened, we turned into the Marine Hotel for a few hours sleep, and by the first train the next morning we made our way back to Howth. There we met the party that had come from Bray, but the boat had been so battered on her voyage that morning that the skipper would not venture to sea again in her. So Sean McGarry posted her crew, who were all armed, at the base of the north pier, to head off any attempt of the Coastguards to make their way round by land.

## § 3

This was about 9.30 a.m., and already the yacht could occasionally be seen, as she cruised to and fro on the yonder side of Lambay Island. I wondered what Childers was thinking of our failure to keep our appointment, and we

made every effort to get even a fishing-boat out to sea, but without success. So we confined ourselves within our arrangements on shore, expecting Childers to hold to his time schedule whatever happened. We found a place for the yacht to berth, near the end of the south pier, so that, when her cargo was clear, she might easily ship to sea again, and we disposed our arrangements accordingly.

Then a little man, with a back like a ramrod, flowing moustache, and steel-grey eyes as clear and relentless as a sword-stroke, stepped up to me, spoke my name, and said he was instructed to report to me and put himself under my orders. He nodded to Sean McGarry at my side, and said he had fifty men with him, armed. I asked him to send couriers up the road to bring me word of the coming of the Volunteers, so to detail his men that at a sign every person on the pier and on boats in the harbour (the pier was full of holiday-makers) might be put under temporary arrest, and tell off others to keep close watch on the Coastguard station on the opposite pier.

This was Cathal Brugha. I have often thought how characteristic was that first meeting. I might have dropped from the clouds (and, in truth, very largely did) for all he knew of me; but his orders were to put himself at my disposal, and he would have leapt into the sea and swam to the yacht if required to do so. No one could look on that man without perceiving his consuming, terrific, relentless courage. He was a born fighter, without a crooked patch in him; a sword in other people's hands, that would be shattered before it would bend; bonny in battle, and the greater the odds the bonnier; and un-



questioning where he accepted and whom he accepted. One felt contented to know that he and his fifty men were on the pier; contented, though it were the first time one's eyes rested on him, or took the challenge of his own.

The yacht was now cruising between Lambay and the mainland, tacking to the north, obviously, so as to make straight into the harbour under the north-westerly wind on one long south-westerly course. It was now towards 12.30, and still there was not a sign of the Volunteers and no news from our couriers. The minutes passed on, and the strain on everyone was manifest on their faces. The Coastguards on the opposite pierhead had their glasses trained on the incoming yacht, at the helm of which, for our accepted sign that all was well, Mrs. Childers sat in a red jersey; and it is probable that the lady at the helm deceived the Coastguards. So 12.35 came, and then 12.40, and still there was no sign from or of the Volunteers. The yacht was now heaving slowly towards us with her sails shipped, slapping the seas, a few cables' length from the pier-head, and our men were taking their places to receive her.

Then, just as the yacht was off the pier-head, I heard Sean McGarry beside me say: "Here they are; look at 'em; aren't they a beautiful sight?" And they were a beautiful sight as they filed out of the town and marched company by company, across the road at the base of the harbour. There was beauty in their movement, and there was amazing beauty in their extreme punctuality. I told off an orderly to ask their commandant to send them up the pier, company by company, at the double, and signed to Cathal Brugha to make his arrests, when a hawser from

the yacht fell across our feet, and a number of our men, running forward, lashed it to the pier. As we drew the yacht to the pierside we heard, behind and beyond us, the solid tramp of hundreds of feet, as the Volunteers came up the pier at the double, and sharp words of command as they were halted and lined in two ranks down the long length of the pier.

It was not long till the rifles were brought out and passed to the Volunteers. Then a strange sight was seen, revealing to every doubter, and even to us who never doubted, what ancient national hopes were in the nurture of each man's blood. Seasoned men broke into tears when the first rifle was handed up out of the hold, and the ranks were broken by the rush towards the yacht. When order was restored, the command was given that each rifle should be handed down to the end of the column, but as each man received his rifle he put his foot upon it and passed the next down.

While this was being done the cry was suddenly raised that a boat-load of Coastguards had crept round beneath the lea of the yachts in the harbour, and had just reached the open space of water that lay around our own yacht. Instantly a number of men lined along the yacht, with their rifles trained on the approaching boat. Challenged to stop and return, the Coastguards did so. In none of these rifles, however, was there a cartridge—though there were revolvers ready for action if the need arose.

That was the only attempt to interfere, for, after this, the Coastguards were content to signal, by rocket, for a gunboat that was no longer there. The boxes of ammunition were at once taken away by motor; and the yacht

unloaded, the Volunteers took the road, rifle over shoulder, for a public march into Dublin.

## § 4

My task was done, and I went into the hotel at Howth with Eoin MacNeill to render account. Before I went, however, O'Rahilly came to me eager and enthusiastic, and I explained to him the shabby trick necessity had compelled us to play on him. But he would not hear of apology. Clean, generous man that he was always, all that had been done had been rightly done, he said, for it had come to a right conclusion.

Unhappily, as it proved, we had not yet made a conclusion. After we had lunched, Eoin MacNeill took me with him in his car to pick up the column as it made its way to Dublin. We found them on the road resting, and there we met Sean MacDiarmada, anxious at the critical time being wasted. He started the column again in motion, and we joined him in his car, moving continuously between the head of the column and Nelson's Pillar as the column approached Dublin and our journey to and fro continually shortened. We were troubled lest troops should be called out.

On our last journey Eoin MacNeill stepped off at the Pillar, for the head of the column was now within a quarter of a mile, or thereabouts, and all seemed clear. But as we turned back through Earl Street a man ran up to me, where I sat beside the driver, and said that two tram-loads of troops with police had just passed down Abbey Street to meet the advancing column. We raced

back to the head of the column, and as we reached the Howth Road, down which the column was advancing, we overtook the troops that had just dismounted there. Actually our car made its way through them, and they, not knowing who we were, stood aside for us to let us through.

So behind us the troops (the King's Own Scottish Borderers, with accompanying Dublin Metropolitan Police) blocked the end of the road, while in the distance we could see the Volunteers marching towards us as we raced towards them. A conflict seemed unavoidable. When we reached the head of the column the military commandant for the day could not be found, and in the general indecision the column continued on its way. Those at the head of the column, seeing the end of Howth Road barred by a double rank of bayonets, turned to the right down Marino Crescent into the Malahide Road that runs parallel with the Howth Road. At once we saw the military break and turn at the double down the tram road so as to confront the column again. Directly this happened several urged that the rest of the column should continue down the Howth Road, in order to surround the military on both sides, hoping thus to hem them in while the main body of the men made their way into the city. Had this been done the situation would have been entirely changed. The military would have been confined and restricted instead of, as happened, the Volunteers. But in the absence of any kind of direction or command all was confusion; the situation was left to itself, and no clear decision seemed possible just when it was most needed.

So a small knot of us, including Sean MacDiarmada,

Bulmer Hobson, and myself, hurried after the head of the column, that was already confronted by the military, again barring the road. Then, after a time of deadlock and indecision someone in civilian attire (whom I afterwards learned to be David Harrel, the Assistant Commissioner of Police) stepped forward into the open road between the two forces and asked to know who was in command of the Volunteers. Twice he asked the question and no one answered. The others were, of course, preserving order in the ranks; but the situation was a little tense—a little awkward—when finally I stepped out to meet him and assumed authority.

My authority had ended at Howth Pier, but it was necessary that someone should answer. So, not knowing who might come to dispute my assumption with me, I endeavoured to keep within my expired authority. I told him that to march with rifles through an Irish city was not illegal, seeing that such a march had been permitted the Sunday before in Belfast City with the Ulster Volunteers. The only offence of the day had been the illegal landing, and for that I took entire responsibility. I offered myself for arrest, on condition that the men should proceed on their way, since the right that had been allowed in one Irish city clearly could not, a week later, become an offence in another Irish city.

## § 5

During this conversation Bulmer Hobson joined me, but, as I remember, left before it was over. Mr. Harrel peremptorily demanded the surrender of our rifles. I

would not move from my point of legality and allowance, and, after we had each thrown warnings at each other, the conversation was ended by his stating that he intended to seize the rifles and by his ordering the police to that task. I stepped back and stood with the first company in the tussle that followed.

Our men were without ammunition and used their new rifles as clubs, some, including myself, being armed with heavy ashen truncheons as well. It was thus truncheon and helmet against truncheon and club, deft duckings and lusty layings-on. In an effort to come to the rescue of one of our men (a little fellow who was being swung like a pendulum by a huge policeman at the end of his rifle, to which he manfully clung) I was borne to the ground by two policemen, who belaboured my head with their truncheons. Half dazed for the moment, I was captured—when I found myself seized by one of the police themselves and pushed back to my place beside the head of the column, with a whispered adjuration (to my sore head) to “keep to the thinking and leave the fighting alone.”<sup>1</sup>

The first attack failed. The police were thrown back in confusion. But our first company was also thrown into confusion, and it was necessary to clear their confused ranks out of the way in order to meet the new attack with the second company. For now the Borderers were

<sup>1</sup> That day, a year later, the same policeman, in private clothes, warned a friend and myself that we were being followed by detectives. And that day, three years later, the same policeman, having by then retired from the force, and myself were organizing Sinn Fein clubs and Volunteer companies in the West.

ordered to a bayonet attack, and I have no doubt many another of our line beside me experienced ugly qualms and desperate promptings at the sight of a line of steel borne towards us, not with fine abandon, but at a thoughtful, thought-begetting slow march. Little wonder that some of our men pulled out revolvers and began to fire and that the ranks broke. Yet the fight was held. Give the Borderers their due, they fought with no enthusiasm, and when they heard the firing, and when some of their men fell with bullet wounds, their ranks broke also. If the steel was unpleasant, so was the sound of shooting. In the encounter that followed men fell on each side—the Commandant of the company, standing beside me, receiving, without an effort to move or defend himself, bayonet lunges between the arm and body that were not nice to see. The fighting was broken, desperate and confused, but in the end the Borderers also were thrown back.

## § 6

Then Mr. Harrel came forward again, desiring further parley. Swiftly a plan came into my head. I pointed to the ugly sights on the road and refused to parley there. If he would go to one of the gardens of the houses near which we stood, I would follow him. In the meantime I would restrain our men if he would restrain his. When he was gone I turned to the Commandant of the third company, a resolute steady man, told him to extend his men across the road, so as to mask all that passed behind him, and to send runners down the column at once, telling the men, while I held Harrel

in conversation, to disperse from the rear as rapidly as possible, taking their rifles with them.

At any other time there would have been humour in the conversation that followed in the excluded garden. Mr. Harrel was excusably surprised at hearing the entire controversy between North and South entered upon from the beginning, but he was resigned to silence when he found that each of his interruptions caused the amazing argument to return upon those beginnings. In the middle of our argument Thomas MacDonagh joined us, and he, too, protested against its curious irrelevancy. But I was playing desperately for time to complete the manœuvre that had been put in motion, and all the more desperately because I saw Chief Inspector Dunne seeking by a kind of mime-show to attract Mr. Harrel's attention. Finally the Inspector gave up his signals and drew his Chief's attention to the remarkable circumstance that while we had been discussing the Volunteers had gone, rifles and all.

Yet they were not all gone. The faithful third company stood awaiting orders, and while Mr. Harrel began to complain of a "discreditable manœuvre," I ran to its Commandant and told him to dismiss and disperse his men as quickly as possible.<sup>1</sup>

Instantly his command rang out, calling his faithful

<sup>1</sup> Two years after this, in Reading gaol, I learned from Arthur Griffith that he was in the ranks of this third company. He told me that the commandant's name was Kerrigan, and that he had been an old soldier. We agreed that his coolness and steadiness were the feature, as they were the salvation, of that day.



company to attention. It was apparent on every face that his men knew what was coming, and almost within seconds of their dismissal they had melted miraculously away, leaping over the wall of the park beside which we stood, and running quickly down the turning through which we had come. For a few moments there was the noise of the scurry of their going, and then all was still in their absence.

So, of all our Howth Company, I was left alone on the road, with the Borderers and the police still indomitably holding the pass against me. Less from a reasoned policy than from intuition I did not go my way, however, as I could quite easily have done, but continued walking to and fro across the road. It seemed to me that while I remained the military and police would also remain, and that they were better occupied standing there in idleness than in searching the neighbourhood. Behind them, in the distance, across the main road, stood the large crowd that had collected. I had been too occupied to notice them before then, but no one could help noticing them now, for they had seen all that had passed, and they were shouting with challenge and exultation at the armed forces that stretched between them and me. It was through them that the military would have to pass on their way back, and it was patent that the passage would not be happy, though no one could foresee how fatally it would end.

My intuition proved correct, for as I walked to and fro, Mr. Harrel and his officers, military and police, walked opposite me, manifestly determined that they would not be the first to leave. Then a rider on a horse came to me.

He was in Volunteer uniform, and he asked for further orders, saying that the rifles that had been flung into the bushes of the park were being collected and stowed away in the houses round about. I urged him to phone to Dublin, and to order every available taxi-cab and motor, so as to get the rifles without delay to safer places. I did not know that the others were already busy at this task, and, indeed, that all the undertakers also were being requisitioned for hearses and coffins, in which rifles were removed to Dublin during the better part of that evening and night. I suppose everybody knew the cause of the extraordinary number of funerals that night, but all the people had, in a manner we were yet in later years to learn so well, become confederates in the secret work, and in the upshot not more than nineteen rifles were found to be missing. In recompense for these, six rifles had been captured from the Scottish Borderers—a more than sufficient exchange.

Thomas MacDonagh and Bulmer Hobson then appeared on the scene from the work on which they had been engaged. By this time a number of couriers had been engaged, and they came to and fro with whispered messages, some pretended, some real; and while we remained there the military and police also remained, until at last we heard the Borderers called to attention, and saw them marched through the crowd that swarmed about them crying imprecations upon them.

The excitement had now passed, and I was sick and dizzy with the thwacking my head had received. So, leaving the others, I made my way back to my hotel. There I lay in bed, when, at ten that night, Colonel

Moore, Inspector-General of the Irish Volunteers, and Colonel Cotter, Chief of Staff, came saying that they had inquired concerning the day's proceedings, and had had some difficulty in finding me. They insisted on the necessity of my going with them to the papers to give an authoritative account of all that had occurred. Particularly was this necessary, they urged, because of the later events of the day, and for the first time, then, I learned from them that the Borderers, followed on their way back to barracks by a hostile crowd, had turned and fired upon them, with loss of life.

Indeed, the necessity of such an account had already been apparent to me; but what had also been apparent to me was that the prominence into which I had so strangely been flung that day would (human nature being what it is) probably be the cause of bitterness in some bones. I had already felt this before I had left the others. It was intelligible enough, for I had come that day into the midst of action from an outer desert, but I was certainly not disposed to invite more bitterness than I had already earned. Colonel Moore, however, characteristically put all this down to a sick head, and the two of them took me out with them, putting me under their orders.

It was as well they did so. Our statement that night displaced an official account which, with scattered and fragmentary stories pieced together, would not have proved comforting to us. To be sure, there are as many parts to a tale as there are tellers to tell it, and the philosopher has said that truth lies at the bottom of a well. Our statement merely recorded what I had seen exactly as I

remembered to have seen it. I have not seen it since I read it the following morning as I returned to London. Yet, as I was the only person at the head of our column from beginning to end of the action, and as the other side attacked and argued by different numbers, I certainly was the only person who could see it all of a piece and tell the different parts of it together.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE EUROPEAN WAR

### § I

THE task entrusted to me was completed, and nothing remained to keep me in Dublin. Troubled by reminders awaiting me in London of articles and reviews long overdue, I returned, therefore, by the mail early the following morning, reaching London that night in time for a debate at Westminster that seemed to me, hot-foot from the scenes of which it dealt, as remote and unreal as the mountains of the moon.

I found London shaken by the news from Ireland. I knew the minds of many of those in London letters and journalism on Irish politics. Arguments hitherto had left these minds unmoved—they had merely stirred traditional arguments in answer—but now I found that a breath of action had blown many clouds away. There was no mistaking the change. It was not a mere change of opinion, but rather a change from an attitude of disrespect to one of respect. Unfortunately it had little time to develop before Europe found herself at war.

I had hardly contemplated the arrears of work that awaited me than, on Wednesday, I received a telegram from Ireland asking me to cross at once. In Ireland I found the scene even more remarkably changed. Political boundaries had disappeared, having been submerged by a rising tide of sympathy and indignation. The Irish

Volunteers, instead of being a cause of division, had become the symbol of a new unity. This was not the desperate unity of six years later, when the people were knit together by the terror that raised its head among them. It was something free and expressed, spontaneous and comradely, the old landmarks having been washed away by waters rising from wells deeply stirred. Nationalist and Unionist, *Sinn Fein* and Parliamentary, had forgotten the distinctions that had separated them. If a political miracle could have accompanied the emotional, and political freedom have then and there been planted in the country, it is difficult to say to what height that annealment of spirit might not have risen. But miracles do not happen, and that which had brought unity was shortly to bring a disunity even profounder than before.

The change had spread even to Ulster. While I was in Ireland during these days I was invited by a friend to meet the executive heads of the Ulster Volunteers in Belfast, and it was explained that the meeting would be, not with those who shone in the social and political world, but with the workers, with those whose work had made the force what it was. I went, of course. There were some who regarded my going as either treachery or a defilement—perhaps both; but to me the memory of that meeting is a very pleasant one, and I brought away the warmest sense of friendship from it.

There were about sixty or seventy present, nearly all of them men in whom responsibility had tempered the asperities of politics, men to whom authority had brought a wider outlook than the past had taught them. They

were good fighters, but they were also hospitable fighters, who took hard knocks as comely as they gave them. They began, I remember, by contemptuously contrasting the Howth gun-running with their own exploit at Larne. I admitted the disparity; but I drew their attention to the fact that we had suffered from two disabilities from which they had by good fortune been relieved. The first was that Government officials had not been accessory to our task, and the second was that we were plain, poor folk, whom the wealthy and the notable had not patronized. At that they bridled, as befitted men in whom the stuff of independence lay. With that we passed to a frank discussion of our difference, and, because of the very frankness of that discussion, we found that our likeness was not less than our difference. We did not, to be sure, remove that difference or attempt to do so, but we shook hands when we had fought, and there is better virtue in that exchange than will ever be found in trim conformity.

Yet in that very city I heard the news that was to bring a greater distance between us than there had been in the past. It was there that I saw the news on the placards, and heard the newsboys harshly calling, that England had declared war on Germany.

## § 2

It needed no uncommon prescience to perceive (even though not many at that time expected the war to last more than a few months) that nothing after that news would be as it had been before. Neither for any nation,

nor for any person, could the past be relied on with any certitude. Continuity was everywhere being broken, and, in great affairs and in small, critical questions were everywhere being presented for decision with the oncoming of violence in Europe.

I was only one among tens of thousands to whom such a decision came during these unsettled days, and it came presenting an antique way-worn alternative. It came in the form of two offers, both of which arrived within a few days of each other. The first was an offer from a London newspaper to represent it in Europe, and it was profitable. The second was a letter from Colonel Moore asking me to undertake the honorary position of Inspecting Officer of the Irish Volunteers in Co. Mayo. A decision was not to be taken between such alternatives without some heart-searching, for the war had aroused England to her depths, and to go to Ireland in such circumstances meant (among other things, friendly and craftsmanlike) not only to relinquish a covetable offer, but to abandon one's career without the prospect of anything to look to for a livelihood. It meant sundering everything, and it meant going a road on which no return could be made.

Many hours were afterwards to arise when the choice then taken would tempt and taunt me and would be waived away. Good for us, perhaps, that passing bitterness cannot undo a decision once taken; but whether good or ill, so it is. It happened at the time that that year I had built a cottage for myself in Achill, and this fact made it possible for my wife and myself to decide that I should undertake the work suggested by Colonel Moore.



We therefore returned to Ireland, and I spent some days in Dublin in order to be instructed in the duties of my work, and to learn how the organization of the Volunteers in Co. Mayo stood. During these days, however, a situation developed out of which great matters were to flow, sweeping away the very ground on which any decision had been taken.

Some time before the gun-running at Howth, John Redmond had put forward his demand that an equal number of his own nominees should be added to the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers. With the expectation of arms that demand had been conceded, though its admission had nearly split the new movement. The two sides, therefore, that contended for the control of the Volunteers were joined together to make one single executive. The union, to be sure, did not prove an extraordinary success; but contention was kept to the committee room—until the Howth gun-running, and the fatal events that followed it, washed out, or for a time seemed to wash out, all differences. With feeling running high through the country, each side vied with the other to head it and give it voice. But with the outbreak of the European war all this was quickly changed. John Redmond, as the constitutional leader, led Ireland into the war by the side of England, whereas those who had conceived and created the Volunteers remembered the old rede that “England’s difficulty was Ireland’s opportunity.” Between the two sides, then, the contest was resumed with a bitterness that outmatched anything that had preceded.

Yet, even then, the situation might have been saved,

not only in Ireland, but over a wider area still. For the contest took two aspects to itself. The first was that which concerned the immediate political prospect; the second swung on Ireland's attitude towards the world-wide problems of the war, and the second was governed by the first. The Home Rule Bill of that time had passed all its stages, but it had not yet been enacted, and it was claimed in England that, as a contentious measure, it should remain suspended until the war was over. Beyond question, had John Redmond insisted on its being not only enacted, but put into operation as the price of Ireland's participation in the war, he must have carried his point. He really was in the position of a dictator, for England was faced by the gravest peril of her history, and the mere suggestion of trouble in Ireland would have gained him his point had he pushed his advantage to the utmost.

No doubt it was partly the very strength of his position that caused him to stay his hand, for there is in every excess of strength its own weakness, and relentless opportunities paralyze the will. Anyway, he did not press his advantage beyond insisting that the Bill should be inscribed in the Statute Book, whereas (as time has proved) he would have served both countries best had he insisted that the Act, with all its limitations, be put into force, for the wave of enthusiasm that this would have created would have swept the nation and might have prevented all that was to follow.

However, these are idle reflections. The fact remains that this was not done. The "Act safely on the Statute Book" became the butt of every bitter humorist, and

the Volunteers were split in twain. At first that split was apparent only at headquarters, and the rank and file, full of enthusiasm, were not aware of the wrangles that took place at each meeting of the Provisional Committee. But when John Redmond took occasion of a parade of Volunteers at Woodenbridge, in Co. Wicklow, on the 20th of September, to make a recruiting speech, it was decided by the original members of the Provisional Committee (or so many of them as could be relied on to act together) to eject John Redmond's nominees.

A moment was chosen when an announcement to that effect would make the greatest noise. Mr. Asquith was due to speak with John Redmond at the Mansion House, Dublin, on the night of the 24th of September, and, the night before, a statement was issued by the greater number of the original members of the Provisional Committee that John Redmond's nominees would no longer be deemed to form part of that committee, that the original constitution of the Volunteers would be resumed, and that a Convention would be called to elect a new committee, which would be entrusted with the formulation of a sound national policy.

### § 3

So, within a few hours of my arrival in Dublin to take up the duties to which I had been assigned, and for which I had put aside the work to which I had until a few weeks before held myself in fee, I found myself confronted by a situation that seemed to empty my act of its meaning. It was one thing to think of differences

clear and intelligible in Dublin; it was quite another to consider their effect on the people in the country, where their very alphabet was unknown. There is in every country a tendency to think of the capital as a microcosm of the nation, and in every country the assumption is false. Particularly false is it in Ireland, where perhaps the tendency is more pronounced than it is elsewhere. My life during the past few years had made me more susceptible to the thought of the country than to that of the capital. Indeed, the one was fairly familiar to me, whereas the elaborate network of the other was quite unknown. I knew, therefore, that the issue that was ripe enough in Dublin would be as unintelligible in Mayo as a Hebrew psalm. And since men will not rally around a cause they do not wholly understand, I saw only too clearly that the consequence of the intelligible conflict between the two sections in Dublin would be unintelligible in the country, resulting in the disappearance of the Volunteers.

I had, therefore, my own decision to take—a decision that was to bring bitter criticisms on me in after-years. It was not an easy decision to make. On one side stood Eoin MacNeill, with whom my inclination and judgment lay. On the other side stood Colonel Moore, who had ranged himself with John Redmond, and from whom I held my command. I therefore went to both men frankly. I made no disguise where I stood myself; but I pointed out that, if the Volunteers in Mayo were to be held together, controversy must be kept out of the ranks until time had brought some knowledge of the matters about which it was being waged. I proposed, therefore,

that I should bind myself to each of them not to commit myself publicly to either side for a period of three months, and to take up my command on the understanding that I was not to permit the raising of the issue among the Volunteers in Mayo during that time.

Each of the two men agreed with this course of action, each knowing that the other had also agreed. Each of them authorized me to act on that understanding, and said that no action would be taken from either side to injure the task that I was to attempt. On my arrival in Mayo I told the County Committee what I had done, and its members, and the men whom they had been elected to represent, were glad that a path had been found out of difficulties that they regarded as disaster. To the County Committee I proposed that I should now hold my command as from it, and that its members should also be pledged not to commit themselves publicly to either side.

For some weeks, therefore, the Volunteers in Mayo were held together, working heartily and happily and without strife. The strife in Dublin had, of course, its echoes among us, but there was an anxious, even a painful, desire to keep it from invading us. There were during these weeks no less than some five thousand men enrolled in the Volunteers in the county, and everywhere, among the rank and file, the men kept faith with one another and with the decision we all had taken.

Our good fortune, however, was not to continue. After some weeks letters appeared in the local press from my own friends in Dublin denouncing me, asserting that I held no authority whatever from the MacNeill Volun-

teers, as they then were known. To give them their due, the other side said nothing, and left me to enjoy my discomfiture in my own side of our house. That discomfiture was complete. By my own pledge was I bound to silence. The fact that my own side of the house attacked me (and attacked me with some virulence, as one who evaded the taking of sides) did not absolve me from my word given to Colonel Moore—an undertaking that I intended faithfully to observe until I had been freely released from it, as in honour due. Therefore, I could only point out what were the facts, and appeal directly to Eoin MacNeill, who did not know what had happened. The attack then ceased, but by that time the damage had been done. Controversy and bitterness had come, the best of the men dropped out of the ranks, the force melted away, and where, in October, five thousand might have been mobilized in the county, by the end of the year not one entire company remained.

Thus the very ground on which my decision to return to Ireland had been taken was now swept away. In my cottage in Achill, therefore, as far from intrigues in Dublin and wars in Europe as I could well be, once again I took up my notebooks and returned to my craft, ill-pleased that I should ever have forsaken it, and never dreaming that I should again be taken and unceremoniously flung anew into the hurly-burly.

## § 4

Not for another eighteen months, however, was this to be. During those eighteen months I moved out of Achill

but twice. Circumstance, indeed, did not allow of removal. London editors, personal friends many of them, assumed fronts of brass before one whose allegiance in that hour of national peril was not the same as theirs. Who could blame them? When old comrades of many a hunt, to whom one sent one's newest book, fresh from the mint, sent back a message that those who stood not with their nation ranked as personal foes, to whom hand would not be extended nor acknowledgment given, it was not surprising that the papers for which one had written should intimate that their columns were reserved for contributors who sang the same tune as they and in the same key. But the consequence was that there was not time or liberty for movement.

Fortunately, I had three contracts for books, and as there would be no aids to the exchequer till these were completed, I was held fast to my desk. In Achill, however, one is not utterly dependent on these aids. There were wild goats in the cliffs, game of sundry sorts on the mountains, and fish in the sea; and on many an occasion, when circumstance was untoward, the gun, the rod, and the deep-sea line helped us to stock the larder when other methods had failed. I do not pretend that it was pleasant, and I could not turn to the eternal shift of imagining myself a hero to escape from feeling a fool.

Nevertheless, these months live in my memory as among the richest, as certainly they were the peace-fullest, of my life. It was a most fortunate thing that I had built that cottage just when I did. I do not think there can be another house in the world standing amid a scene of such wild and natural beauty. It is built on a

bray above the headland running out into the waters of the Atlantic. Just off the headland, opposite our cottage, lies the little island of Inishgallun, capped above its wild, rock-bound sides with grass of the brightest green, over which the waves of the terrific winter storms would break in high cascades of spray. In the distance, to the south, lies Clew Bay, with the beautiful shape of Clare Island at all times to be seen, like a ghostly phantasy floating on the waters, and, when the waters lie quietly at peace and sunlight floods the bay, Inishbofin and little islands lying further to the south, with the mountains of Connemara frowning in the distance.

Some two miles to the west, across our own little bay, the mighty cliffs of Meenawn, known as the Cathedral Cliffs, rise sheer above the waters and shut off the inland of Achill. Behind the cottage bends a great bow of mountains, from the broad-based mass of Cruachan in the west swinging round to form the northern backbone of Achill to the highland behind Meenawn. Over these mountains, through a valley among the bogs, the road to the mainland wanders and disappears over the highland in the distance.

One lived very near to Earth during these months, and it proved a chastening experience. During the winter, when tempests swept upon us from the Atlantic, our cottage groaned and creaked like a ship at sea. Often it seemed as though no mortal structure could withstand the recurring blasts that came. Indeed, I have seen strong men, bending to resist those blasts, spun helplessly into the ditch beside the road. Then the ocean was like writhing serpents at play, the waves ruining



onward like mountains with flying manes to break against the torn rocks of the coast in soaring columns of spray, while the bays and inlets were thick with foam uplifted and suddenly downfallen on the crests and in the trough of huge rollers whose booming sounded above every other noise of the storm. And all the time hurricanes of rain went shrieking by over the land and mighty buffets of wind echoed about the mountains.

Never was Earth so savagely turbulent as on that treeless island bare to all Atlantic storms. Yet never could Earth be so tender or so ecstatically beautiful. In the winter itself pet-days would suddenly come, and during the spring and summer long spells would continue, when peace and beauty would wear so exquisite a loveliness that it was hard to conceive that it could ever be shattered. During the day, when the ocean idly lapped the shore, and sunlight steeped land and sea, the air between heaven and earth was as full of subtle beauties as an opal. And often at nights I stood by the hour gazing motionless on the vast stretch of land and sea flooded by moonlight, the mountains standing up against the sky like tall ghosts, and the ocean glinting as far as eye could reach like the spears of a countless host. Deep, inward peace pervaded such scenes, and if one spoke at all, one spoke reluctantly and very softly.

Moments such as these are not for naught. Nothing can efface their memory for those who have shared them. Often during the years that followed, when troubles darkened and hours of bitterness came almost too great to be borne, my mind went back to them and rested amid them in the assurance that Earth has of herself a beauty

greater than any that man, with his petty strife and ambition, can possibly hope to bring her. We vex her with our gifts and add nothing to her loveliness and dignity.

## § 5

Amid such scenes, during the early months of 1915, I wrote my novel "Children of Earth"—wrote it too quickly, under the pressure of a contract, and, therefore, sent it out untrimmed and untutored. Yet, with all its faults, and even because of its gnarled redundancy, it reflects, I think, the wild scenes and the strong life of which it dealt.

While it kept me occupied, however, Europe was torn with war, and earnest men in Dublin were planning to take occasions of that war to win national deliverance. I knew nothing of their plans—knew nothing till the storm broke which they had so carefully and so patiently prepared—would not, indeed, have been entrusted with knowledge, because I had failed to take sides energetically and emphatically at the first hint of divisions. Besides, I was divorced from understanding and knowledge by my enforced exile, and I afterwards learned, indeed, that I was doubly divorced; for the fact that I lived in Achill, and never moved thence, was judged by many to be strange and extraordinary, and, therefore, sinister. We are all apt to look for fantastic psychologies to expound the movements of men when the plain facts of livelihood are generally adequate.

However, it was not only my own side that harboured these thoughts. To Dublin Castle my presence on the

western sea-coast, while war raged in Europe, was judged to merit the worst possible interpretation. Had I not built my cottage during the summer of that year? Clearly I must have known the war was coming. It was true that while others planned to make a national revolution, I planned merely to make books, and to get contracts for their making. True, I seldom heard from friends in Dublin. Yet I was soon to learn that they and I were held impartially in official regard, and the incident by which that knowledge came to me is worth record, for out of what lay at the back of it very much of Irish history has been made.

It happened one wild night in January, 1915. An Atlantic storm was crying about the house, and hurricanes of wind were lashing the windows with spray and sleet, when two strangers stumbled over the bog through the inky darkness to our door. The leader of the two men announced himself as Captain MacBride, and said that he was the owner of a steam-yacht, on which he was cruising about the west coast of Ireland in pursuit of suitable fishing. His comrade, who spoke with a strong American accent, was introduced as the skipper of his yacht. He himself, as his name denoted, he said, was an Irishman, but he had spent the greater part of his life out of the country.

We are accustomed, in the west of Ireland, to accord travellers the best of such hospitality as is available. After Captain MacBride and his skipper had supped, while we sat about the hearth-fire with glasses of punch, he became more communicative. He had spent the greater part of his days, he informed us, in the Chilean

army, which he had helped to train. The Chilean army, I was to understand, was extraordinarily efficient. Little wonder. I was, of course, aware that the Chilean army was officered largely by Germans. And he lifted from my mantelpiece a little bust of Beethoven, and gently extolled the greatness of German gifts to the world.

I sought fuller information regarding his cruise. Had he not found it difficult to come across the Atlantic during a time of war? He had, he said; but, he added, he was an American citizen, and but for the fortunate circumstance that his yacht was registered under the American flag, and that he himself and his skipper were bearers of American passports, he would never have been able to manage. As it was, he was being considerably annoyed, and only frequent appeals to the American Embassy in London kept him under a continual immunity. Branching suddenly aside, then, he repeated that he was in search of good fishing. The waters thereabout were good for pollagh fishing, were they not? I said that they undoubtedly were, and he suggested that while he was engaged at his sport he would be glad to make my acquaintance more fully.

He made a quaint picture. He was less like a German than a caricature of a German. He wore German leggings, a German military coat, his moustaches were brushed upward in the fiercest and most approved fashion, and he spoke with the strongest and most undisguised of German accents. While he spoke a knock fell on the kitchen door, and when I went to see what was there, one of the men from the village, who usually tended the house, entered quickly to say that he had

made his way across the bog to tell me that the house was surrounded by the police. I was told, however, that I was to let my mind rest easy, for the young men of the village had marked the police, and had also surrounded them.

The concern of the police was certainly not surprising. Any mere stranger would have excited it, however innocent his enterprise and procedure. But for one who spoke with the accent my guest made no effort to disguise, who went on his journeys so remarkably attired, and cruised our waters on a steam-yacht looking for pollagh fishing while January's storms lashed the seas to fury, and the nations of Europe rent one another asunder, a little attention was surely merited.

When I informed our guest of what I had learned, he said he was not surprised. He was becoming inured to these attentions. In fact two British cruisers, unfortunately, accompanied his yacht wherever it went. Occasionally they fired across his bows, and their crews searched his craft. They were looking, he believed, for Sir Roger Casement. No; they had not found him. His yacht was a liberal craft; Sir Roger Casement might be there all the time, and yet not be found. Nothing would give him greater pleasure than that my wife and I should take a return of our hospitality on his yacht.

While he spoke, one thought only held my mind. It was that Mr. David Harrel (whom I had encountered at Clontarf, and who had been resigned from the Assistant-Commissionership of the Dublin Metropolitan Police because of that day's work) had, a few weeks before, been appointed an officer of the Royal Naval Reserve,

and I had already been informed from Dublin that his particular charge was the organization of secret service in care of coast surveillance. I therefore spoke little (and indeed he did not require much encouragement), but I instantly avowed my esteem and regard for Roger Casement.

He fired to that theme. He also, he said, had the high honour of Sir Roger Casement's friendship, and he held no purpose dearer than to help and befriend both him and his cause. He proceeded, then, to inveigh against the British and the French. He had travelled widely, and it was his opinion that French culture was only a veneer, whereas the British had none at all. . . .

At last he rose to go, and invited us warmly to stay with him for some days on his yacht, where she lay anchored in peaceful waters off Salia. We instantly accepted his invitation, and two days afterwards, when we were due to go, I wired regretting the illness of my wife. Within a week he was back again. He came, accompanied by a line of constables on bicycles, who cruised about the village in the pretence that they had come on other business altogether. It was, I thought, a master-stroke not to let the police be privy to the purpose of his coming, for their busy anxiety made a very pretty mask that might well have beguiled the unwary.

Once again Captain MacBride shared our hospitality. Once again we were invited to his yacht. Once again we accepted eagerly. And once again my wife fell inopportunately ill.

After that we saw him no more. Some years later I was told (with what truth I know not) that he was the

same Captain MacBride who won an unpleasant notoriety while in command of the *Barralong*. But within a week of his second visit the villages were placarded with notices that, in view of a possible attack by the German fleet on the coast, the people were to hold themselves in instant readiness to remove themselves and their goods inland on a few hours' instruction to that effect.<sup>1</sup>

Men stood in knots discussing this amazing tidings, and lamentations rose from the women, who saw ruin and starvation before them. Imprecations broke out against Captain MacBride and his yacht, and anger at last centred upon me, because he had visited me. I, therefore, at once called the people together and pointed out the utter absurdity of the notices, saying that their only intention could be to alarm the people and breed mutual suspicion. In a trice, then, anger turned upon the police, who found it wise for a while to keep to their barracks.

I knew from this visit, however, that the Intelligence Service of Dublin Castle had me in its care. I do not mean the police, who buzzed about like flies looking about for something on which to alight, each of them creating more annoyance in a day than a wise man could hope to appease in a month, but those in control at headquarters. Their forefinger had surely indicated me, and that indication was not to be without its certain consequences.

<sup>1</sup> The same notice was placarded throughout the greater part of the Irish coast-line, and whether it had any connection with the coast-wise cruise of the steam-yacht I do not, of course, know. No one doubted the connection in Achill.

Having regard to all that had happened, and particularly to the fact that my convictions were well-known, this was not surprising. But it took some surprising forms. Every little creek of the gnarled headland on which my house stood was searched constantly for traces of the submarines with which I was supposed to traffic, though the most landlubberly glance could see that a circumspect submarine commander would never have ventured his craft within a hundred yards of it. And when, that winter, I put above the cottage a new sort of chimney-cowl, the police could be seen for weeks on the hills behind the cottage inspecting this new device through their glasses, anxious to discover what manner of signalling apparatus it might be. For so they expressed their conviction to my neighbours, who bore the startling discovery to me in a twinkling.

### § 6

During that summer of 1915 I first met Michael O'Callaghan. He was afterwards Mayor of Limerick, and, during the days of the "terror" in 1921, he was done to death most brutally by Black-and-Tans even while his wife sought to shield and protect him. He was then on holiday in Achill; a business man who neither desired nor held any place in politics.

The friendship made then was one that I was to treasure deeply, and the memory of which must always remain for me as one of the possessions that men keep in a secret place apart, to draw forth and survey when tides run strangely. To know him was to love him. He



once described Arthur Griffith to me as a rock among men. The descriptions men give of those whom they most admire are often best clues to their own characters, and certainly no one could better have described Michael O'Callaghan himself. He had a mind of rare and unassuming independence. He took his judgments from none, being little influenced by the common run of opinion. He framed them for himself. When asked for them, he delivered his mind with energy of manner and close-knit sequence of logic, yet he seldom offered them till they were sought, but went his own way in the light of his own vigorous, robust common sense. He was that rarer thing than a leader of men. He was a supremely great citizen, neither obdurate and recalcitrant nor subservient and pliant, and because of that, when he died, his loss was one that could not be measured, especially among a people where the opposites of obduracy and subserviency are the rule. Above all, he was intensely vital. He is now three years dead, yet, so vital was he, his death seems still unbelievable, and if he were to walk into this room even while I write, his presence would be less of a surprise than seems the conception of his absence.

After he had gone we corresponded fairly regularly, and at his invitation I went to Limerick the following February to lecture on the financial consequences of the war to Ireland, dragged as we were at the rear of British war-taxation with our infinitely smaller resources. After the lecture he took me with him to the house of John Daly, a Fenian hero who had spent bitter years in gaol with Tom Clarke, and who now lived in the hope of

seeing Ireland arise in armed revolt. In proof of his constant hope, John Daly produced for me one of the rifles I had inspected in Liège, one of the rifles of the gun-running at Howth. He was an old man, enfeebled by his sufferings and stricken in years, yet he laughed like a boy as he fondled that rifle. It was, he said, one of the signs of Ireland's hope, and he prayed to see the day when it might be called to service.

While he and I spoke, Michael remarked to one of the daughters of the house that he had seen none of them at the lecture. What was the use of such lectures, was the reply. Ireland would be an independent Republic in less than three months, and then we would be able to make our own financial provisions, without subservient appeals to England. Casually and quietly was this said, as though one were to announce that the next day might prove wet. To be sure, one person's cause of astonishment is the next person's commonplace, but the saying, and the cold contempt of its delivery, threw a silence over the company. That the words were not idly said was apparent, moreover, from the significant glances that were exchanged about the darkened room, and already in that atmosphere my laboured statistics began to wear an air of nonsensical phantasy, shrivelled before the faith that reigned there as leaves shrivel before a fire.

That night Michael and I consumed many pipes in talk about that casual intimation, but we could make nothing of it. We had not the bricks to build the world that the household we had lately left expected so happily to inhabit. From every point of view we surveyed the matter, but we were baffled at every turn, and by the

next morning much talk had put it out of our minds. In his rapid, gusty manner, Michael laughed at the words, and then quickly added of their speaker, what all Ireland now knows to be true of her, that she was not one to speak idly or to greet desperate action other than heartily and happily.

On my return to Achill I took up again the book at which I was at work. It was due to be delivered by May, but it was violently interrupted, and has never been continued. While Easter hove toward, I delved deep in Calendars of State Papers, finding them packed with so many tangled interests that it was difficult to hold the trail that it was my concern to follow. About a fortnight before Easter I received a short, troubled letter from Frank Sheehy Skeffington, in which, writing of another matter, he interjected that the situation in Dublin was very tense and that he feared a storm would break.

Little I dreamed, as I read his letter, how soon that storm was to break, and that not its least consequence would be to quench the life of the sincerest pacifist I have ever met—who spent his whole life fighting every sort and manner of authority for the right of the individual conscience, the individual freedom of life and the individual habit of peace—and who died amid a city at battle organizing the service of peace, by the act of a man in whom unbridled authority had let loose a criminal lust for domination.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EASTER WEEK : A CHAPTER IN PARENTHESIS

#### § I

THE hour had at last come for which Tom Clarke had so long waited, for the coming of which he had so carefully prepared. Since 1907, when he had returned to Ireland from America, he had worked but for one end, and now the very conjunction he would have asked, hardly dreaming that time would bring it to his hand, had come to pass. Armed and drilled men were in Ireland, and England was at war, all her forces thrown into a struggle that would evidently charge her strength to the utmost. So perfect was the conjunction, set against the tradition of Fenian teaching, of which he was the living witness, that it would be hardly true to say that he willed the result. Truer, perhaps, to say that the consequence followed simply and punctually in his mind, and England had hardly declared war before he, and those he had gathered about him, are found planning and preparing for armed insurrection.

On his return from America he had undertaken the task of restoring and reorganizing the Irish Republican Brotherhood—the I.R.B., as the Brotherhood was known, for short, or the Fenians, as Padraic Pearse delighted to call them. An oath-bound, secret organization, its work was done under cover. Those who were sworn into its ranks knew only those who were immediately above them,

from whom they received their orders, and those immediately below, to whom those orders were transmitted. As such it might have lent itself to powerful political intrigue, but in Tom Clarke's hands and in his day of power this was not possible, for he despised politics, and he held the Brotherhood aloof, schooled to the thought of an ultimate appeal to arms.

It was this thought to which he gave new life by the service of an inflexible will and a complete disregard of self. In suffering he had acquired the rare combination of instant readiness and undefeatable patience. Suffering had taught him to think in long distances. Therefore, finding the Brotherhood in the hands of men of his own generation, accustomed rather to backward than to forward glances, he had taken care to surround himself with young men, by whom the lamp of his tradition might be trimmed, uplifted with new hope, and carried forward in a braver spirit, himself sitting among them, iron-grey, spectacled, and watchful.

## § 2

Among the first of these was Sean MacDermott. He was then an organizer for Sinn Fein, in the days of its early strength, and as such he was a close friend of Arthur Griffith. About this time Arthur Griffith was himself a member of the Brotherhood, but he fell out with its methods, caused himself to be sworn out of the organization, and always afterwards disagreed strongly with secret societies. To the end, however, Sean MacDermott remained the most intimate friend of both men.

In him an insatiable fire burned, consuming all natural desires in the faith by which he lived. There was hardly a parish in Ireland but he knew it, and knew every man and woman in it in whom he could place reliance when work was needed to be done. Young as he was when he was shot by a firing squad in 1916, he had ruined his health with overwork, and walked always with a limp, as the result of a stroke he had received, but in his steady eyes and delicate features a spirit shone that looked beyond all ruin, giving him an intense beauty, a beauty born of discipline and vision, clear and of compelling charm, like a flame shining in a slight crystal-like lantern of a body.

Some years later Tom Clarke found Padraic Pearse. Rather, it was John Devoy who found him in America, where he had gone to collect moneys for the school he had established at St. Enda in Rathfarnham. Joining the Brotherhood on his return to Ireland, he rose in time to a position of pre-eminence. He was a man of great gifts. His writings in Irish and in English prove him to be an artist of no mean order, sensitive to beauty, a grave, priest-like man with his own vision to utter and his own craft to find for it expression. But he put his gifts behind him; he shut eyes and ears (as far as a man may with a life to live) lest beauty should ensnare him from the sacrifice to which his life was by him dedicated. Consciously, with a quiet seriousness that in any other man might have been priggish, he prepared to cast away his life in the faith that out of the ashes of sacrifice the phoenix of a new life for Ireland might arise.

It is told that as a boy, reading Irish history, he had

declared that he would die for Ireland; and he was not one with whom boyish declarations are lightly forgotten, buried under the lumber of years or dusty with wayfaring. Something of the simple, uncomplicated gravity of boyhood remained with him to the end. In this very year he wrote one of the most beautiful of modern Irish poems, of which the following is a translation, the grave, beautiful music gone bare in the rendering :

Naked I saw thee,  
 O beauty of beauty,  
 And I blinded my eyes  
 For fear I should fail.

I heard thy music,  
 O melody of melody,  
 And I closed my ears  
 For fear I should falter.

I tasted thy mouth,  
 O sweetness of sweetness,  
 And I hardened my heart  
 For fear of my slaying.

I blinded my eyes  
 And I closed my ears,  
 I hardened my heart  
 And I smothered my desire.

I turned my back  
 On the vision I had shaped,  
 And to this road before me  
 I turned my face.

I have turned my face  
 To this road before me,  
 To the deed that I see  
 And the death I shall die.

It was in this mood Padraic Pearse prepared for insurrection, not in the hope of success, but in the conviction of a necessity for sacrifice. Such moods are unconquerable, and his slow-moving body, his silent manner and heavy, obstinate mouth and chin, had something unconquerable about them too. If it was Tom Clarke who brought down the lamp of tradition, and held it firmly, without any thought for himself, until others were ready to take it from him; if it was Sean MacDermott who served the organization of revolt with a fire that burned in him with a consuming flame, it was Padraic Pearse who gave insurrection a philosophy that was also a religion. And with him came others of smaller mould, Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett, who were in some sort disciples of his, who had received from him his doctrine that from the ashes of sacrifice would arise the new spirit of a nation.

At the other end stood two men of a different quality. One of these was Eamonn Ceannt, a dark, proud, aloof man, of so extreme a sensitiveness that he had schooled himself to wear for mask a cold and rigid manner. Padraic Pearse's doctrine found small echo in him. He went into insurrection looking for victory because the thought of defeat chafed his intractable spirit. He spoke with cold contempt of Padraic Pearse's slow and moving eloquence and appeal to sentiment as "green-flaggery." He would have none of it. It revolted his pride. The straight, nervous blow was, for him, its own jurisdiction, needing no other; and if defeat came, such as warriors could not prevent, it would at least not touch to tarnish his pride.



The other was James Connolly. In many ways he was the master-intellect of them all—among the master-intellecets of his people—but the splendid, massive machinery of his mind often produced results that were bewilderingly disproportionate to the intricate process by which they had been created. Of middle height, sturdy of frame and broad of brow, he suggested, and his Northern accent conveyed, the thought of a realist who lived to slay illusions. On the platform there were few more trenchant speakers than he. He would sit, a lifeless heap, the picture of gloom, till it came to his time to speak, when with three strides he would throw off his gloom like a cloak, and pour out eloquence like molten metal that scorched and burned all before it. In conversation he was quick to bring argument to the test of practical fact, and he ranged through Irish history for the advance of such tests, showing a reading as deep as voluminous, including books and documents difficult to obtain. Even for a student of leisure the range of his reading would have been unexpected—for one who was, as he was, self-taught it was extraordinary, and in the circumstances of his case it was also peculiar, for it was grouped about the economic and social doctrine on which his national faith was based.

Yet he, the mocker of national illusions, nursed illusions that none of the others did. Already, before the European War, he had, on at least one other occasion, advocated armed insurrection in the hope of a capitalist downfall, and now it was he who clamoured for immediate action, impatient at the delays of preparation. It was he who was mainly responsible during Easter

Week for the mistaken strategy of occupying public buildings that were a target for artillery. He believed that the capitalist class of one country would never destroy the buildings that were the pride of the capitalist class of another. He worked with the others, but from a different angle, relying on his own separate organization, the Citizens' Army, a purely Labour force created from the ranks of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.

Others there were, too, who were to come into prominence later, but who at that time held positions of lesser importance. There was Eamon de Valera, Professor of Mathematics at Maynooth. During 1915 he was promoted Adjutant of the Dublin Brigade of the Irish Volunteers. His immediate superior was Thomas MacDonagh, who walked with him of a night, after brigade duties were finished, thrilling him while he announced Pearse's evangel of a national awakening as the consequence of human sacrifice. There was Cathal Brugha, Eamonn Ceannt's second in command in the fourth battalion, grim, tense, uncommunicative, and utterly fearless. There was Richard Mulcahy in the second battalion. And there was William T. Cosgrave, also of the fourth battalion, whose pale, perpetually surprised and abashed appearance, innocent, large, light-blue eyes and flock of flaxen hair, and generally mild and innocent demeanour, belied his innate Dublin pugnacity.

### § 3

Such were some of the more conspicuous personalities (conspicuous then or thereafter) by whom insurrection

was to be undertaken. But it was by the first three of these—Tom Clarke, Sean MacDermott, and Padraic Pearse—that the decision was made and the plans laid. By them, the year before, the Volunteer Movement had been started. By them it had been decided to invite Eoin MacNeill to assume the presidency of the new movement. By them it had been decided to eject John Redmond's nominees on the Provisional Committee when the idea of insurrection was clearly formed in their minds. By them, incidentally, local commanders with minds of their own (such as one who lived in Achill) were removed, as a necessary step to unity of conception and purpose. And by them long and careful preparations were now begun with a view to a blow being struck at the most suitable moment.

All these measures were taken by the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., of which they were the chief leaders. Within a few days of the declaration of war Dr. Patrick McCartan was sent to America, to get into touch there with the leaders of the affiliated society, the Clan na Gael. Even before his going, however, a message had been sent to America informing the leaders there of the intention to take advantage of the war for an armed rebellion, and as a consequence of this message negotiations had been opened with Count Bernstorff, the German Ambassador there, for the provision of arms and military help but not money. On his arrival Dr. McCartan was informed of these negotiations, and furnished with money, provided by the Clan na Gael, to help the organization in Ireland.

There he met Sir Roger Casement, in whose hands a

critical part of the negotiations was to be carried. Long before the war Sir Roger Casement had come to the conviction that the only hope of Irish Freedom—either for its achievement or for its maintenance when achieved—was in an American-Irish-German alliance. He had written a pamphlet preaching such an alliance. Only by such an alliance, he held, could the control of the Atlantic, the most important of the seas for the future of history, be wrested from Great Britain. Only by the wresting of that control could Ireland be assured of national independence, or the other two nations be assured of freedom for their commerce. The alliance, therefore, he maintained, was indicated by nature and necessity, and he conceived it as his task to bring it to pass.

If other men had conceived such a project, however strongly it was knit by logic, it would have lain in their minds rather as a matter of intellectual interest than of practical politics. The more complete the logic, indeed, the more remote would it have been and the more idle. That, however, was not the texture of Sir Roger Casement's mind. The more impossible the task the greater the fascination it held for him. It was not easy to stir him to simple, ordinary, workaday tasks. To them he would listen with but the surface of his mind, erect and dignified and remote, with not a sign of interest on his pale, handsome face, and his eyes looking out over some other world of high romantic adventure. Only the difficult and daring could truly enkindle his imagination, and the more impossible a task seemed the more certain was it of stirring his whole interest.

He had proved that he could make possible the impossible, ride single-handed with success against vast powers, and unite romance and practice. When he had dared into the Congo, a solitary figure, with only his will, compassion, and sense of adventure to sustain him, he had opposed to him the entire Belgian administration of that territory; he had before him a vast, fever-stricken, almost uncharted land, in the "heart of darkness," with monsters of cruelty like dragons to be slain in the midst of that darkness; and he had behind him the knowledge that the British Government, whose servant he was, must disown him in the event of failure. Yet he succeeded, and became one of the chief, and certainly one of the most romantic, figures of the world of the time. It is doubtful if any other man could have succeeded. It is certain that no other man would have attempted the task.

It was the same on the Putamayo, to which his attention next turned. Here the difficulties were even more formidable, the territory even more distant, dark, and unknown. One who knew the territory (whose interest, as it happened, had been greatly injured by Sir Roger Casement's exposure of the cruelties done there) once said to me that he did not believe that the world had any more courageous act to show than Sir Roger Casement's adventure there. Not only, he said, was Nature against him, by night and day, to destroy him among the living, but he had also the knowledge that any morsel of food he put into his mouth might be poisoned, and would be poisoned if corruption and skill could achieve it; for he was known as the man who had exposed the

evils done in the Congo territory—a man who was hated because he was feared, who, if he was not himself undone, would undo the harvest of profit that flourished by cruelty. Yet here, too, he had succeeded. He had, finally, ruined his health, but he had won; he had made possible the impossible, and he had received the meed of praise among men that only indisputable success is judged worthy to receive.

He was, therefore, no mean protagonist, however seemingly fantastical the project that kindled his imagination and aroused his interest. Truly, an American-Irish-German alliance now seems fantastical indeed, though it is right to remember that time and all that has happened since has made it to seem more fantastical now that it seemed early in 1914. Yet the task in prospect was not more impossible than the hope of slaying the dragons of the Congo and Para, and the mere act of attempting it would of itself spell the beginning of success, for it would publish the idea in association with the esteem attached to his name.

Sometime early in 1913 he had formed the idea, and no one could speak with him about it without realizing how deeply it had captured his imagination. Everything in him answered to its fascination. Romance beckoned to him. Was not he an Irishman, whose people had for centuries fought for Freedom in vain? A high and difficult task beckoned to him. What more difficult could engage all his daring? But he was put out of the immediate road towards this goal, first by the organization of the Volunteers, that took him into all parts of Ireland, and then by the organization of the gun-running. It was

not, therefore, till June of 1914 that he had left for America to begin the foundations of his work.

There the outbreak of the World War found him. Hard upon the heels of that outbreak came news from Ireland that it was hoped to take occasion of that war for an armed insurrection. Instantly a new practical meaning was given to his original conception, and he at once planned to leave for Germany, to begin his work now for that end.

#### § 4

There was, therefore, a certain distance (not fully apparent to either of them at that time) between his ideas and the ideas of the leaders of the I.R.B. in Ireland and the Clan na Gael in America. They were planning simply for an insurrection in Ireland; his thoughts embraced a wider circle, of which Ireland was the centre. Moreover, their habits of work were different. They worked in and through the organizations of which they were the leaders. He brooded apart by himself, and struck out his own line of labour, consulting with men from whom they thought it well to withhold their secrets. It was perhaps inevitable that they and he should before long lose that intimate touch and consultation with one another, especially while he was in Germany, where private news could not be passed except at great risk, without which perfect understanding could not be reached.

Within three weeks of the outbreak of war, on the 25th of August, a letter was sent from the leaders of the Clan na Gael to the Kaiser urging him to make the

Freedom of Ireland one of Germany's war aims. This letter was signed by all the members of the executive of the Clan as well as by others, but it was written by Sir Roger Casement. That fact could, indeed, be easily traced by the thread of argument. "The British claim," the letter said, "to control the seas of the world rests chiefly on an unnamed factor. That factor is Ireland. . . . We are profoundly convinced that so long as Great Britain is allowed to control, exploit, and misappropriate Ireland and all Irish resources—whether of men, material, wealth, or strategic position—she will dominate the seas. Thus the Freedom of Ireland becomes of paramount—nay, of vital—importance to the larger question of the seas." In phrases such as these the very accent of his voice may be heard; but it was not of such thoughts that the minds of the men in Ireland were full while they struggled to perfect the organization of insurrection, and through the Clan na Gael and the German-American Embassy communicated their needs by wireless to Berlin.

Shortly afterwards, on the 15th of October, Sir Roger Casement, disguised and with a false passport, left America by way of Norway for Germany. There he at once got into touch with the German Foreign Office, but it was not long before he discovered that the thoughts of Germany ran not to Ireland in the Atlantic. They were too occupied with affairs in Europe, having been long trained to busy themselves only with the chancelleries encircled there. Nothing can better display the disillusionment and despair that settled on him, even during the early months after his arrival, than his comments in his own diaries.



“I thought of Ireland,” he wrote on the 2nd of November, immediately on his arrival, “the land I should almost fatally never see again. Only a miracle of victory could ever bring me to her shores. That I did not expect—cannot, in truth, hope for. But, victory or defeat, it is all for Ireland. And she cannot suffer from what I do. I may, I must suffer—and even those near and dear to me—but my country can only gain from my treason. Whatever comes that must be so. If I win all it is national resurrection—a free Ireland, a world-nation after centuries of slavery, a people lost in the Middle Ages refound and returned to Europe. If I fail, if Germany be defeated, still the blow struck to-day for Ireland must change the course of British policy towards that country. Things will never be again quite the same. The ‘Irish Question’ will have been lifted from the mire and mud and petty, false strife of British domestic politics into an international atmosphere. That, at least, I shall have achieved.”

A few weeks later, on the 12th of December, he wrote: “In my heart I am very sorry I came! I do not think the German Government has any soul for great enterprises; it lacks the Divine spark of imagination that has ennobled British piracy. The seas may be freed by these people, but I doubt it. They will do it in their sleep—and without intending to achieve anything so great.” On the 1st of February he retails a series of events that, he writes, “made me feel that I had made an awful fool of myself in ever believing that this Government would help Ireland. I never recovered faith in them.” And he adds a forlorn and biting irony: “Since that

affair many other things have passed that recalled the incident. I have already told you of Count Oberndorff at Christiania assuring me that Bernsdorff's letter of introduction was in a cipher '*they did not understand.*'"

This was written on the very day that he wrote his public letter to Sir Edward Grey returning the Order and medal, title and honour, he had received in the service of the British Government, and saying: "I came to Europe from the United States last October in order to make sure that, whatever might be the course of this war, my own country, Ireland, should suffer from it the minimum of harm." But it is evident that by that time he had already lost faith in the enterprise in the hope of which he had set forth.

## § 5

His, however, was not the enterprise that lit the minds of the men in Dublin—an enterprise that was so deeply to change the psychology of a nation—though the two, having gone asunder, were to run together so tragically in the end. From whatever different angles of temperament these men regarded their task, they looked, not to the seas of the world, not even, in any great measure, to European wars and policies, but to an armed insurrection in Ireland and the immediate and ultimate fruits to be gathered as a result of that insurrection. Tom Clarke might think of a return of the Fenian tradition, Sean MacDermott of a work begun that others should continue, Padraic Pearse of a reborn nation rising like a phoenix from the ashes of sacrifice, Eamonn Ceannt of a blow long overdue and soon to be struck, and James

Connolly of a revolt of the working people to change the whole course of social and economic history in Ireland, but all their thoughts began with and centred upon the actual revolt and its organization; and so completely were they centred upon that event that (whether they knew it or not) their hearts were utterly committed to it, whatever might happen elsewhere—unlike Casement, who, with his mind disengaged by bitter disillusionment, was free to think of retraction and withdrawal. They and he were widely divided, and they recognized this, while he did not.

All in Ireland, however, were not so committed—only a little isolated circle, responsible to none but their own resolution, knowing that the great mass of the people served gods whom they hated, working their will by a secret society, and determined to keep their plans close even from their own associates until they were ready for action. In Ireland, too, therefore, there was division.

There was, in fact, division within division. The little isolated circle was much smaller and much more remote than were the Volunteers themselves. The President, and later the Chief of Staff, of the Irish Volunteers was Professor Eoin MacNeill. He it was whom the country saw at the head of the movement, and, indeed, the Volunteers were often called after his name. By those who planned insurrection this was welcomed, for it masked the fact that the real control and decision lay elsewhere, not to be revealed until the moment had come for the candour of the first rifle-shot. Eoin MacNeill might preside at meetings of the Volunteer Executive Committee, but knowledge of what was

being planned was withheld from him. He was left to figure before public attention, while the real work was done elsewhere.

This was done deliberately, because it was judged essential that the closest secrecy should be maintained until it was too late for withdrawal. Secrecy was, indeed, more closely tightened. The Supreme Council of the I.R.B. was itself a body the identity of which not many knew; but even that body was abolished. It was displaced by an inner Military Council, consisting of Tom Clarke, Sean MacDermott, Padraic Pearse, and Joseph Plunkett. Not many of the Volunteer Executive knew of the existence of this Military Council, however they might guess at its existence. But it was by this body, working through the secret organization of the I.R.B., that the Volunteers were controlled, and were presented at last with the fact of insurrection. Roger Casement in Germany and Eoin MacNeill in Ireland were both kept from knowledge; and thus it was that they joined together on the eve of action in a desperate effort to stop insurrection at the last moment.

Yet all worked together at the task of organizing the Irish Volunteers, and this task was formidable enough. The bulk of the original Volunteers had gone with John Redmond into the National Volunteers, and only a few thousand through the country, in scattered handfuls, remained with the Irish Volunteers. These scattered handfuls became known generally, and increasingly as the months passed, as the Sinn Fein Volunteers. It was during 1915, in fact, that the public for the first time definitely associated Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers

as indistinguishable parts of one movement—an association that was to prove of the greatest moment in the future, although the two movements were not only, then and thereafter, separate, but actually in many respects opposed to one another. Both Tom Clarke and Padraic Pearse, for example, strongly repudiated identity with Sinn Fein, disagreed with its purely civil policy, and preferred to be known as Fenian and Republican. But it was inevitable that the Irish people should consider both sections of the protesting minority as parts of a single whole, for the two played into one another's hands, and between them they faced the heavy task of breaking the people away from the lead that John Redmond and the Parliamentary leaders had so successfully given.

During these days "Sinn Fein" was a title of opprobrium. It was the title of a small minority, considered to be more noisy than numerous, expostulant yet powerless. Sinn Fein speakers argued the case for Irish neutrality in the war, and Irish Volunteers, especially in Dublin, paraded and conducted military manœuvres in the most daring fashion; but the mass of the people followed the lead of John Redmond, and it is a simple fact that at this time Irish recruits went to the war in Europe in numbers, proportionately to the population they represented, not less heavy than those of England.

As the months passed this changed. Recruiting flagged. John Redmond's influence waned, and criticism gathered about his name. News came of heavy Irish casualty lists, as a consequence, it was said, of the front positions into which Irish regiments were always placed. A coalition British Government was formed, in which

Sir Edward Carson held high position, and the people wondered in suspicion as to the meaning of these things. But the people did not join Sinn Fein; they did not cease to use the title as a term of scorn; they did not help in any substantial measure to augment the ranks of the Irish Volunteers. The Military Council might plan an armed insurrection, it might send messengers to America, there to arrange the nature and condition of German assistance, but the task before it, as it worked in secret, seemed like that to which Sisyphus was committed in the fable, destined ever to remain at beginnings.

## § 6

During this summer of 1915 two events occurred that were to change the entire future. The effect of the first was almost immediate. The effect of the second was not to be realized for some time, and was then completely from within to change the social and political history of Ireland.

In June Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa died in America. He had been one of the leaders of the Fenians of '67—he dated, indeed, from the ill-fated Phœnix Conspiracy of '58, when he had flung aside his historical studies to organize the Republican Brotherhood. He was thus of the Fenian generation before Tom Clarke, and it was expected that he should be buried in the Fenian plot at Glasnevin Cemetery.

Now the people hated Fenians and rebels of their own hour, no doubt as a reflex of the affectionate reverence in which they held the memory of the Fenians and rebels

of history. But the organizers of insurrection were quick to draw down about their own heads the halo that is the safe prerogative of history, and they did so knowing full well that no one would more gladly have been willing to bestow that halo than the dead chief. Communications were therefore at once opened with America for a funeral that would outdo all records, beginning in America and rising in crescendo to a climax at Glasnevin of so immense a kind as to ensure that the attention of all Ireland would centre about the Fenian plot. And at that moment, while a salvo of musketry (in an Ireland where arms were forbidden) was fired over the grave, Padraic Pearse would in his slow and simple eloquence utter the Fenian creed and praise the Fenian deed.

So it befell, not merely as it was planned, but in a manner and on a scale that outdid expectation. The funeral was, in fact, the first of a series of mighty funerals that were, during the next six years, to draw deputations from every parish of Ireland at critical moments of history. The British military and the police were withdrawn from the streets of Dublin, and the Volunteers took complete control of the city. It was they who issued regulations for traffic, they who appointed pickets to order the huge multitude, they who arranged for special trains from every part of Ireland, they who caused these trains to be met from early that Sunday morning, so that the people who arrived from the country might know exactly where to go and what to do. While the coffin lay in state, first at the City Hall and then at the Pro-Cathedral, they formed the guard of honour. And everywhere the green uniform was to be seen, while the khaki was withdrawn,

the hand of the dead man being upheld over the city for a protection that the laws of the land could not disregard.

It was a remarkable transfiguration. Not less remarkable was the fact that the Parliamentary leaders had no part in these celebrations. They were helpless. History had been invoked against them, and they could do nothing. How could they, while urging Irishmen to enlist in the British Army, celebrate the passing of one whose place in history had been won because he had fought against that army? Many of them desired to do so, but the Volunteers were determined that they should not, and they dared not publicly contest that decision. Their own followers formed the overwhelming majority of those who thronged into Dublin during these days. Indeed, their own political organizations bore banners in the funeral procession. But they were compelled to stand aside, while their followers were marshalled, led, and, over an open grave, addressed by men who commanded no political following at all, and who, the week before, had been spoken of lightly throughout the country as "the Sinn Feiners."

For those who can see beyond the events that confront them to the historical life of which these events are but a stirring and tumultuous phantasm, that Sunday of June in Dublin staged a strange spectacle. So evidently thought the companion who walked beside me in the funeral procession. He was a man of middle age, who had come from Co. Mayo. "The tide is turning—the tide is turning at last," he whispered to me excitedly. "The people are answering to the old call." The old call, the ancient



habit! New life responding to the conjury of the past. New forces of unrest for the future being created unconsciously while a people followed a dead man to his last rest. It was certainly all that.

It was to this inevitable theme that Padraic Pearse addressed himself in his funeral oration. I stood opposite him across the grave while in his slow passion and deliberate eloquence he read his speech, and I can see him yet as he flung back his head, and can hear him yet as his voice rose to the close. "The defenders of this realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools! They have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves Ireland unfree shall never be at peace."

After all was over I saw him, with his curious, heavy gait, walking home alone, unheeded and unheeding, in plain simple Volunteer uniform, without a single decoration of rank. Soon after a motor passed me, holding Tom MacDonagh, the Commandant-General for the day, surrounded with staff officers, smart and resplendent with yellow tabs. I little dreamed that I should never see them again.

## § 7

The other event followed some weeks afterwards, at the end of that summer. It is notorious how, for half a century, since the calamity of the Great Starvation of

'47 to '49, the best blood of the country has been drained out in a constant stream of emigration. After the Land Acts the flow of that stream diminished with each decade. Security of tenure and economic hope for the future enabled a great and greater part of the population brought forth on the shores of Ireland to continue their life within those shores. No longer was it judged necessary for every son and daughter other than the eldest to leave Ireland to find a place for life in America. But still, in most homes, a part of the family emigrated. In great measure this was due to economic necessity, but it was due also to the circumstance that counterparts of communities in Ireland had been created in America, and these counterparts continued to draw upon their original sources, because that habit of life had been instituted.

Every family in Achill, for example, had, and has, at least as many members in Cleveland, Ohio, as in Achill. Every family in Aran had, and has, its larger end in Chicago. The thought of Cleveland or Chicago to an Achill or Aran lass or lad was, not the thought of a vast distance to travel, but the thought of the next parish, where there was a home ready, relatives and friends waiting to receive them into neighbourly community, whereas the thought of Dublin was the thought of a lonely, homeless city of adventure. And this, too, assisted emigration, till emigration had become a constant part of the nation's social habit.

This is important to note. It cannot be neglected in a right understanding of the history of these years. If anything were violently to stop this stream, the entire social and economic life of the nation would be affected.

Families would become enlarged, and would lose their equilibrium and central authority. The stream of youth that had gone to America would scatter like waste waters over the land. There would be no place of life for all those who stayed in Ireland. Unemployment would be suddenly and violently increased. More serious still, the habit of employment and the tuition of industry would be lost for a great part of a nation's life during the formative years of its youth.

This it was that now happened. Towards the end of this summer a rumour flew that the British Government meditated on the necessity for conscription. That rumour was not welcomed with any enthusiasm in England itself, where the war was felt in the blood to be waged in defence of national freedom. In Ireland, where history and habit had stopped the nurture of any such thought, it was received with dismay. Conscription, conceived of in England as the last necessity of duty, was in Ireland regarded as impressment and servitude. A recruit who joined at the wish of his nation's leaders was one thing, a conscript quite another. One went to the wars to gain his nation's political freedom as the bargain-price of his going (and that was the note sounded from nearly every recruiting platform), whereas the other was marched off by an alien press-gang, without a voice to exercise in the matter.

The consequence of the rumour was prompt. Family consultations were held (I remember many of them in Achill) as to which of the sons it was necessary to retain, and preparations were made for the passage of the others to their friends and relatives in America. A movement

began towards Dublin and Liverpool; but hardly had that movement begun than it was abruptly stopped—and stopped, as the event proved, for many years, with results that no one then could foresee.

The cause of this was that an outcry arose in the British Press. Young Irishmen, it was announced, were flying in cowardice, flying before the common danger, flying from the common duty. Idle, in those heated hours, to point out that neither the danger nor the duty were regarded as common while Ireland had not the freedom to defend that she had struggled so long and so vainly to obtain. Those who read the British Press were moved to the ready anger that is part of the war psychology of nations, and crowds moved towards the quays at Liverpool to await intending emigrants.

The scenes that were enacted on those quays were not pleasant. National hatreds are not pleasant to contemplate. Irish country lads were met by angry demonstrations they did not, and could not, understand. Hostility, and even violence, attempted to stop them going abroad, and finally the crews of the emigrant ships, catching the spirit from the shore, refused to carry them. There was nothing for them to do but to return home, and thus the old outlet was stopped and the old habit broken. Ireland, without a developed industrial life to sustain her population, had henceforth to maintain that population on her land.

### § 8

It was in such an Ireland that the tuition of arms was now to be given. For the first time for over half a

century Ireland was compelled to retain the full complement of her youth, without work to give them, without means for acquiring the training of industry. Moreover, as the news in the Irish Press of the scenes at Liverpool was read in every town and village, recruiting meetings that had weakened throughout the summer went finally barren of results. Ordinarily these things must needs have been fruitful of unsettlement in coming years. But they occurred at a moment when the standard of revolt was being prepared to be unfurled and the example of armed insurrection to be taught.

Throughout this year preparations had been carefully continued in and out of Ireland. Early in the year an emissary had been sent to America by the Military Council, and he had there met the military staff attached to the German Embassy, and had discussed the question of military assistance. This assistance was to take the form of arms, to be landed in Ireland immediately prior to revolt, and an offensive in Europe to chime with it. Later a member of the Council, Joseph Plunkett, found his way to Germany by way of Switzerland, and there arranged for the shipment of arms. In the meantime, in Ireland arms were being secretly gathered together, and munitions manufactured with such skill as was available. Manœuvres were being conducted with greater and greater daring, and the people and the authorities trained to the habit of seeing Volunteers in arms marching through the streets and practising the movements of warfare on hill-sides in their green uniforms. The Redmondite Volunteers, not to be outdone, did the same, though without arms, and as it was impossible for the

authorities to strike at them, and equally difficult to discriminate without weakening John Redmond's authority, the Irish Volunteers went free and became bolder and bolder with success.

In January of 1916, accordingly, it was decided that the moment had come to strike. The authorities were becoming alarmed, and immunity could not much longer be expected. Easter Sunday was therefore chosen as the day, and a lady was sent to America to acquaint the folk there, in order that they in their turn might, through the German Embassy, communicate with Germany so as to put in motion the plans that had been made. She returned with the message that the news had been sent by wireless to Germany.

Messengers and messages in code passed constantly between the Military Council and the leaders in America during these early months of the year, and the leaders in America were in continuous touch with the German Military Attaché, Herr Pape. In Ireland the Volunteers were steadily keyed up to action, the orders sometimes going through the Volunteer Executive and sometimes directly to units whose commanders were in independent touch with the Military Council. Most extraordinary manœuvres were undertaken, foolhardy to the point of madness, yet (even though this were not intended the effect was) skilful in psychological attunement.

In the early hours of one morning, for example, a mock attack on the Post Office was made by a considerable body of men, rapidly mobilized, in full equipment. The men met in the streets surrounding the Post Office, deployed, skirmished, were reassembled, and then dis-

appeared. On another occasion the Citizen Army at night surrounded Dublin Castle, skirmished in the neighbourhood, and then marched off with full honours. The minds of the authorities in Dublin Castle as a consequence of these manœuvres may be imagined as one of bewilderment, uneasily derisive, tempered alike by scorn and apprehension. The madness of attack seemed too strange to be credited, yet a close and careful watch was kept.

On St. Patrick's Day, a month before the intended stroke, a full-dress Review was held in College Green. This was meant as the first of a series of deliberate invocations of history; for it called back to another Volunteer Review in College Green in 1783, which led to the legislative independence of the Irish Parliament of that year. Eoin MacNeill (unsuspecting to what this was the prelude) took the salute as Chief of Staff, while all the Dublin battalions marched past him. The same day meetings were held in all the principal towns of the country. I had been invited to speak at Westport, and to that meeting came O'Rahilly, a bonny, handsome figure in his staff uniform. It was to be the last time I should see him and speak with him—whom I had been compelled to treat so summarily in our adventure two years before.

So the day of insurrection approached, the Volunteers growing bolder and bolder with that approach, while Dublin Castle held its hand half raised to strike, yet was reluctant to precipitate trouble. "Tralee Bay" had been passed over the waters as the spot at which the German arms were to be landed; and the wish had been expressed

that that landing should be at the same moment as the Rising in Dublin, in order that Dublin Castle should not hear of it in time to take precautions in the city. The arms so landed were to be passed to Cork and Limerick, and to Tipperary and the midlands, which were then to rise, equipped and ready.

The plans were carefully made. All the chief lines to be held converged on Dublin, and were intended to divide the country into sections, to keep the troops in the country fully occupied and prevent their freedom of movement. One line was to extend from Carrickmacross to Carrick-on-Shannon, and the Volunteers in Belfast were to come out from that city to Tyrone, thus to put a ring around the garrison at Enniskillen. Another line was to stretch across the Tipperary mountains in a north-easterly direction towards the Curragh. From Limerick another line was to extend along the Shannon to Carrick-on-Shannon, and along this line the arms landed at Tralee were to be passed to the north and the west.

Thus it was expected that the entire country would be held at least long enough (while a strong German offensive in Europe made it impossible for troops to be despatched from England to Ireland) to compel a settlement on terms. The plan was ambitious, and it was not without military skill. All depended, however, on German good faith, first as to the landing of arms, and then as to concerted action on the war-front in Europe. Expectation built, not on German altruism (there was in Ireland too deep-seated a cynicism as to all international altruisms), but on German military strategy, in the prescience and skill of which unquestioned trust was put.



But there was one man in whom that faith and trust had been completely shattered, as the result of bitter experience.

That one man was Roger Casement. He had learned that the German military authorities scoffed at Irish pretensions, and he had learned also that the German civil authorities were resolved to take no step that would make it too difficult for them to settle on satisfactory terms with Great Britain. It was he who now took action on his own, and by that action, fitting as it did with disaster elsewhere, brought all these careful plans to naught.

## CHAPTER SIX

### EASTER WEEK: A CHAPTER IN PARENTHESIS (*continued*)

#### § I

FOR eighteen months Roger Casement had been in Germany, and for twelve months of that time his faith in the purpose of his visit had lain in utter ruins. In June, 1915, he had met Joseph Plunkett at Berne, in Switzerland, and he knew (though how fully and how completely is not known) that the men in Ireland were planning for insurrection. In the same year, as Irish Representative in Germany, he negotiated a Treaty between Germany and Ireland, in which Germany undertook, in the event of victory, to recognize the Independence of Ireland. But this document was kept secret till the eve of Easter Week, when it was published in Germany by Liebknecht, though a summary of it had been published some time before this by the *London Times*. Since then he had been engaged, with Lieutenant Monteith, who had been sent from Ireland as the military man to take immediate charge of the work, in enrolling the ill-fated Irish Brigade from Irish prisoners taken during the war. Having caused them to be enrolled, he had found a great part of his time and ingenuity occupied in guarding the brigade from being used for purely German purposes.

It was not till March, 1916, that he learned that a rising in Ireland had definitely been planned for the following month. The information came to him, not directly either from America or from the German military authorities, but from Lieutenant Monteith, who, as the officer directly in charge of the Irish Brigade, had been informed that it was proposed to send the Brigade to Ireland to take part in the Rising. He himself was away from Berlin when Lieutenant Monteith wrote to him, asking him to come to the city, in order to be at hand to give counsel. In Berlin he discovered that the plan, long projected, was built on promises of German assistance, and this stirred in him the greatest apprehension, for his faith in such promises had been shattered. "My difficulty," he wrote in the new diary he opened to leave as his testament, "is that I don't trust these people in anything they promise. They lie always. They may or may not keep faith to-day; but I have no reason to believe that in anything they do they ever think of us, or of others, but only of themselves." His mind, therefore, at once turned to the thought of how he could himself get to Ireland, in the hope to prevent the Rising, and in the resolve, in the last resort, of sharing with the others the end that he foresaw for them.

First of all, however, he was determined to prevent throwing the Irish Brigade into that danger. The German military authorities, he learned, contemplated sending them to Ireland in trawlers, guarded by a submarine; and he knew that at the first sight of danger they would be left to their fate—a fate not difficult, in

that event, to guess, seeing that they had been enrolled, sworn, and had fought as British soldiers. As for these men, he wrote: "I felt a peculiar responsibility for their not being captured by the British Government." Therefore he fought their case with the military authorities. He refused his permission to send them, and said that without his instructions, or Monteith's instructions, the men would refuse to go. The struggle was a stiff one, provocative of anger and hard words on each side. The military men threatened to call off all their promised assistance, and to announce to the Irish leaders in America that the responsibility lay with him, leaving him to be charged with failure at a critical and decisive hour. "It is," he writes, "the most damnable position a man was ever put in." "Cads, scoundrels, cowards, and inveterate liars," he describes all the men, but one, against whom he fights.

So the struggle continued for days. "I saw Monteith," he writes. "We agreed that under no circumstances am I to consent to the men going, that Monteith will accompany me, but we go alone—and beyond that I can decide nothing. I am already a dead man, but not yet a wholly dishonoured one despite all my mistakes. God knows they were not for self." At last, however, the fight was won and his decision was accepted, not with any grace, that the Irish Brigade should not be sent on that enterprise.

So he escaped from the first net that had entailed him, and his diaries (locked up until he was dead and the war over) reveal the intensity of the effort to free himself. They are full of anger and pain. They show him as

seeing the question of honour in so intense and personal a light as to enrage those against whom he fought, just as that personal vision, at that moment, would no doubt have bewildered a good many of the men in Ireland. For both these sets of men, from their entirely different points of view, saw human beings as but part of the causes they espoused, whereas he saw causes as taking their worth and virtue from the personal worth and virtue of the human beings who espoused them; he was meticulous for personal honour with a passion that one set of them did not comprehend and the other probably would not have done. They show him, too, preparing to die, open-eyed and resolute, not, like Padraic Pearse, as an act of immolation, but as an act of expiation. Over them hangs the twilight of doom—the doom of one who perceives that he has stirred the envy of the gods in having, now at last, undertaken something beyond his powers, and about whom the coils of his fate are falling.

It is in this light he is seen essaying his next task. That task was to get a warning sounded in Ireland. It had been arranged that a shipload of 100,000 rifles, and ammunition, were to be landed at Fenit, in Tralee Bay, according to the wish of the men in Ireland. He, therefore, demanded to be sent to Ireland in advance by submarine; and in a memorandum prepared for the authorities he points out “that it was essential to send over before the shipment of arms certain intelligence to our friends in Ireland, so that the landing-place or places might be finally fixed, the date and all arrangements made in concert.” Such was the reason put before the

German authorities. But to his comrade, Monteith, he explains "that my only hope in going is to arrive in time to dissuade the leaders at home from the attempt. That, if I can only get ashore a little ahead of the rifles, I may be able to stop the 'Rising,' and arrange only for the safe delivery of the rifles. If this can be done (and only then) would the thing prove useful. Otherwise, it is an awful danger. Of course, the chances are that we will never get near the shores of Ireland."

In all this he moves as seeing only one thing clearly in the twilight of doubt and difficulty. He had learned that the men in Ireland expected German officers and artillery, whereas the only men to be sent were the Irish Brigade, roughly trained in artillery practice for that event. On this he based the reasons for his doubt; but it is clear that his doubt was really based on reasons far more widely spread and much less easy to define.

The German authorities, however, met his demand by a flat refusal. They would not treat with him—would hardly even discuss with him.

## § 2

While still continuing his demand, with a pertinacity both natural and desperate, he turned, then, to another means of communication. There was in Germany at the time an Irish-American by the name of John McGoey, who had come from America to assist him. He proposed, therefore, to get McGoey out of the country, as the bearer of a message to the men in Ireland. "I explained the situation to him very fully," he writes,

“and pointed out the imperative need of trying to get someone into Ireland to warn them there of the wholly inadequate help being sent, and to say that I strongly urged no rising.” McGoey said it would be criminal and that he had long suspected the Germans of playing a double game. He would do anything I asked him. I told him it was necessary for me to keep silent as to my real opinions before the German General Staff, and that when I took him to the Admiralty he must keep silent, too.”

So it was arranged. The German authorities agreed to let McGoey travel without papers or passport to Denmark, in the hope that he might get ship from Copenhagen to Scotland, and to send a police agent with him to the frontier; and on the 19th of March he left Berlin on his errand. “He goes,” writes Casement, “as an added string to our bow (an addition to my telegram to Devoy) to tell the Dublin Council to have the pilot boat ready at Inishtooskert, etc.; but he goes really to try and get the heads in Ireland to call off the ‘Rising.’ . . . It he gets safely through to Dublin he is to seek out Tom Clarke, and through Bulmer Hobson, and try to ‘call off’ the Rising.”

A few days afterwards he was sent for to the Admiralty, and charged with sending John McGoey to Ireland for his own purposes. “It was,” he writes, “a most unseemly exhibition of German military culture. I gave back as good as I got and insisted on the stopping of the whispering, and on the conversation being continued in a language I understood, either English or French. The chief cause of the fury was that I had sent

John McGoey to Ireland. I nearly laughed in Nodoling's face. He said it was a gross breach of faith. I told him he was a liar. . . . Their fear was that I had sent John McGoey to stop the Rising. They asked me again and again if I had so instructed him. I said I was not the master of the Irish Revolutionary Body, and whatever I might say would be advice or suggestion. When I avowed that John McGoey himself was dead against the Rising their fury was uncontrolled. How had I dared to send such a man to Ireland without letting them know?"

## § 3

In face of this, however, he continued his demand to be sent himself to Ireland by submarine. Everywhere throughout his diaries sounds the note of his personal responsibility, and his desire to make his personal effort or share his personal risk in the outcome. "How can I go on with it?" he asks. "What am I to do? Whatever way I turn, misery, failure, degradation, and no way out. I know not what to do. I have told Monteith the actual fear I have—not physical or for myself, but for Ireland and our national cause. We are being put in an abject position—and this by this great almighty power. . . . As for the 'Rising' itself in Ireland, to attempt it with this help is—well, a masterpiece of idiocy."

"The whole thing appals me," he writes again, "as a piece of the most ghastly folly—or, rather, as one of the most criminal attempts ever perpetrated. And I am debarred from saying so, and from the needed steps to prevent it, by fear of incurring a personal reproach of



cowardice (already grossly implied by some of those who are handling the matter at the General Staff), or worse still, by fear of perhaps not preventing the Rising, but only depriving my countrymen of the arms at the critical moment." "Irishmen," he avers, "will bitterly resent bloodshed and civil strife in Ireland, forced on, as will then seem apparent, by a filibustering expedition launched from Germany for that purpose."

In this mood—desperate enough to write: "I feel like a man already damned. . . . The sooner my life is taken from me the better"—in this torment of despair and agony of spirit, he fought unceasingly for the submarine. Two things only he demanded, and demanded as of right. The first was the submarine. The second was a bottle of poison. To so tragic an outcome had he at last been brought—he who all his life had been the knight-errant of lost causes.

It was at this moment that he received a letter, dated the 5th of April, from Berne. It was from Joseph Plunkett, and bore the sign agreed between them the previous June, by which he should know from whom it came. This sign was the word "Ashling," from the Irish *aisling*, meaning "a vision." But the letter was concerned only with the practical business of the vision, and was brief and immediate. It ran:

BERNE,  
5th April, 1916.  
"Ashling."

DEAR ROGER CASEMENT,

I am sent here as delegate by the President and Supreme Council of the Irish Volunteers, and through the courtesy of his Excellency the German Ambassador

I am enabled to give you this urgent message from Ireland :

1. The Rising is fixed for the evening of next Easter Sunday.

2. The large consignment of arms to be brought into Tralee Bay must arrive there not later than the dawn of Easter Monday.

3. German officers will be necessary for the Volunteer forces. This imperative.

4. A German submarine will be required in Dublin harbour.

The time is very short, but is necessarily so, for we must act of our own choice, and delays are dangerous.

Yours very sincerely,

A FRIEND OF JAMES MALCOLM.

Instantly he went to the Admiralty, taking the letter with him. The reply he received was that the submarine would not be given. He was in despair, and writes that the Germans must then have thought him mad; "I was for the moment," he adds, "and utterly angry when I thought of Ireland, of those poor boys on Easter Sunday and Easter Monday waiting for the steamer, the Rising already accomplished, and their only hope the ship with the rifles and the officers who will not be there." He prayed that the ship with the rifles might be captured, with himself on board, in order that this news might get abroad and so the situation be saved. "I pray God for this solution to save the situation in Ireland, and to save our young people from being made the victims of this callous conspiracy. Poor Ireland! God save her. Indeed, only He can."

We wired back to Berne :

7th April, 1916.

When did you leave Dublin, and what were your last advices from Germany?

Steamer with 20,000 rifles, 5,000,000 cartridges, 10 machine-guns, 1,000,000 cartridges will be off Inish-tooskert Rock, N.W. Hags, on Easter Sunday night.

No German officers or men going—impossible despatch.

No submarine can be sent.

Can you reach Dublin before Easter Sunday? A letter with fuller information follows.

Having sent this telegram, he wrote at once at length, and gave the letter to the only friend he had at the Admiralty to send by special courier to Berne. If that letter is anywhere available is not known. It would prove an interesting document.

As a result of the letter from Berne, however, the entire situation was changed. It would seem that the German authorities felt that the Rising was now determined beyond recall, and that the departure of Roger Casement could do nothing to prevent it. Perhaps, too, they felt relieved to be free of his presence, not only to be rid of his immediate importunity, but to be rid, also, of the public reproach his presence in Germany (not impossibly, his living presence anywhere) must certainly afterwards be. For the following day he was summoned to the Admiralty, and during the two and a half hours that he waited there, as he learned, "a full-dress debate" was held on the advisability of sending him to Ireland by submarine, as he had wished.

At the end of that time he was informed that his wish

was granted. A submarine was to be provided to send him to Ireland. "You will promise to land me in good time?" he asked, and that promise was given. The bottle of poison was also promised. A messenger was to be sent to Wilhelmshaven to arrange for the submarine, and from Wilhelmshaven came the message that the submarine would be ready at Emden at his service on the 12th of April. So on Tuesday, the 11th of April, with the faithful Monteith and, fatefully, one other (who afterwards turned King's evidence against him) for his companions, he left Berlin for his last journey.

## § 4

He is next seen, with two companions, about 5 o'clock on Good Friday morning (two days, that is, before the date arranged for the Rising) walking in the direction of Ardfert from the Kerry coast. He had earnestly pleaded with the submarine commander to be landed in Co. Galway, in order, first, to have another day to get into touch with Dublin, and, second, to have readier access there. But he had been refused. The commander's orders were to meet the ship bearing the arms off Fenit Head on Friday, the 21st, and to land Casement at that place on that day. In pursuance of these orders he and his companions had been placed in a collapsible canvas boat the night before, from which, wet and weary, physically ill and mentally worn, he had just alighted, leaving the boat drawn up on the beach for all to see.

The immediate thought was to get into touch with

the Volunteers at Tralee. It was decided that Roger Casement himself would make too conspicuous a figure in the town, whereas his two companions would pass unnoticed. He, therefore, took cover in a hollow, known locally as McKenna's Fort, while Lieutenant Monteith and Bailey went on into Tralee, there to get early Mass and to establish contact with the Volunteers.

In Tralee they met Austin Stack, who had been sent down from Dublin, with two others, to organize the landing of the expected arms and to assume the local command. In conformity with the message that had been sent through America to Berlin, the date for this landing had been changed from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, and the proper receipt of that message is to be seen as registered in the telegram sent by Roger Casement through the German Admiralty to Berne on the 7th of April. Now came the news that Casement had landed, and was awaiting relief; and with it came the news that the ship bearing the arms was due in Tralee Bay that very day.

At once all was activity. Austin Stack set out in a motor-car to find Casement, but he returned saying that he had been unable to proceed, as the wheels of his car had sunk in the sand. He proposed sending help on foot, but on his return he was informed by the police that he and his companions were to report themselves at the police station. Seeing that the police were suspicious as to his movements, and thinking to allay that suspicion, he proceeded to the station, where he was at once arrested. With characteristic courage he en-

deavoured to break loose, but he was unsuccessful, and so the local Volunteers were left without their commandant and their principal officers, in whose hands lay the details of all arrangements.

The truth was that the police had been advised that something was a-wind. Even before Roger Casement and his companions had been seen and their presence reported to the police, the collapsible boat had been found at dawn on the beach. The connection between the boat and the presence of three strangers walking the road towards Ardfert was obvious, and a search was at once instituted. Yet it was not till 1.20 p.m. that day, after Austin Stack had been arrested, that Casement was found hiding in McKenna's Fort. He gave the name of Richard Morton, but he was arrested, and taken to Tralee police barracks, where Austin Stack and his officers were already held.

In the meantime, the ship with the arms had been bearing towards Fenit Head. This was the *Aud*, that had separately found its way, under the Norwegian flag, round by the Hebrides, and had successfully evaded all dangers and reached Irish waters. A month before the American police had raided the offices of the German Embassy in New York, and had seized a document stating that "arms must not be landed before night of Sunday, 23rd." This document had at once been furnished to the British Government. Yet no special watch seemed to be kept, and no special difficulties were encountered when the *Aud* threw overboard her false cargo of pit-props and door-frames, made ready for the delivery of the rifles

hidden underneath, and made her way from the high seas towards Tralee Bay.

The difficulty was of another making. In spite of the telegram changing the date of the landing from Friday to Sunday, the instructions of the skipper of the *Aud* were for the original date of Friday. On Friday, therefore, he waited for the agreed signals, either from Casement, whom he was to meet there, or from the Volunteers. Receiving no signals, he assumed treachery (where there was no treachery, but mismanagement), and put to sea again. His hope was to escape with his cargo from the dangers that beset him where he lay, but his presence was now known, and he was given chase by the *Bluebell* and taken to Cork Harbour, where he blew up his ship.

Good Friday, thus, turned to a day of fatalities. The shipment of arms, on which so much had been built, had miscarried, and with it had gone the careful strategy by which it had been hoped to hold the country while the Dublin Volunteers seized the seats of government. Roger Casement had been arrested, without delivery of the appeal he had wished to make that the Rising be stopped, and that no more be attempted than the landing of the arms and the fuller equipment of the Volunteers. And Austin Stack and his principal officers had been arrested, leaving the local Volunteers without knowledge of the plans made in Dublin.

Only one person had escaped who knew Roger Casement's mind fully. This was Lieutenant Monteith, and for him the police were searching everywhere. That evening the last train of the day left for Dublin, and every

person in the station was kept under careful observation. The engine-driver stood to his post, the fireman was busy in overalls about the engine, and every passenger was known. So the train left. But the police did not know that the fireman of that train was Lieutenant Monteith, bearing from Roger Casement an appeal to the Military Council. Late that night he reached Dublin safely, and at once set out to discover the men in command of the Volunteers. He found that he had arrived at a critical moment.

## § 5

Having in January sent the message, through America, to Berlin that the Rising had been determined for Easter, the Military Council still kept its secret close. By that Council the decision had been taken—not by the Volunteer Executive—and few, very few, were let in the region of its confidence. There might have been, and there was, a good deal of loose talk about taking up arms against the national foe, and probably the Military Council and its trusted agents encouraged such talk, knowing that while folk talked nothing definite would be expected, and yet while folk talked the general mind would be bent towards the planned event. But the actual decision itself was a different matter. None knew of it but they, or of the appointment of a definite date, or of the arrangements with Germany by which it was to be accompanied and fortified. These were matters with which only the rarest were entrusted. It was inevitable that the general mass of the Volunteers and of Sinn Fein, even of those who held high positions, should be excluded from that



knowledge, but three persons were deliberately chosen for that exclusion, and it was the interposition of these three that turned the scale at the last moment and caused the abandonment of the plans in so far as they involved the whole of Ireland.

The first of these was Roger Casement. Little he thought, as he wrote his pitiful outcries in his diary, that the Germans were acting on the request of his own countrymen, in Ireland and in America, in withholding information and assistance from him. He had sought the counsel of men whom they did not trust. His mind moved towards world-politics with which they were little concerned, holding as they did the immediate position in Ireland before their undivided attention. Therefore the German authorities were requested to hold him at arm's length and fob him off.

The second of these was Eoin MacNeill, who held the title (that cannot be described, in the circumstances of the case, as other than completely ironic) of Chief-of-Staff of the Irish Volunteers. He was known to be opposed to a rising. He had expressed the opinion that if, and when, the Volunteers were attacked, or any attempt made to suppress them, they would be justified in taking arms and fighting in defence, but he was opposed to an offensive; and, indeed, an offensive could not have appeared as otherwise to him than as the plannings of lunacy. He had not lived in the close world that had looked so constantly and so fixedly, though from so many different angles, on such an event that it had evoked a visionary mood, beyond reach of the reason on which he naturally depended. Therefore he, too, was excluded from know-

ledge, and was left at the head of the Volunteers as a mask.

The third was Arthur Griffith. He had been invited to join the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., and to share its responsibility in whatever plans were made. But he had declined, disliking, as he did, the procedure of secret societies. He preferred to keep his place as the open publicist, but he asked that he should be kept in full knowledge of whatever was being planned or done. The promise of such knowledge was given to him, but that promise was not kept.

There is no apportionment of blame in these matters. Time has lifted them beyond blame. The men who planned a rising had brooded so long on that event that it had come to pass in their minds, and they avoided contact with other minds in which that finality had not occurred. They had, in a very real sense, passed into a world of vision, and they kept away from those who did not share that vision, not having passed through the brooding intensity by which it had been attained. They might have very carefully planned (they did, in fact, carefully plan) a complete military strategy for the country, and devise all the details of German military assistance; but, even though they did not know it, the event itself in their minds stood separate from these fortifications and accompaniments, and had to be completed in fact as it had already been completed in intention, whatever befell them. But the result was that there was a division. That division also was a fact, and it had finally to make itself felt.

It was not till the Thursday before Easter Sunday

(even while Roger Casement, unknown to him, in his submarine was approaching the Irish coast) that Eoin MacNeill learned definitely what had been planned for the forthcoming Sunday. Orders had been issued in his name for special parades and manœuvres over the entire country for that day, but such parades and manœuvres had now become habitual, and he (absorbed as he was by his historical studies, and seldom to be seen at headquarters) had seen nothing significant in these orders. He knew, indeed, that certain of his colleagues desired a rising, and that an organization to that end existed within the Volunteers, but he had never connected their ambitions with an event so near. It was Bulmer Hobson, the Secretary of the Volunteers, and a close personal friend of Eoin MacNeill, who, during that week, first perceived that special significance was being attached to the following Sunday's manœuvres. He instantly took steps to counteract the war party's moves and communicated his fears to the Chief-of-Staff. The two of them endeavoured to elicit information as to what was being proposed for the organization under their administration, but during Tuesday and Wednesday they demanded in vain, and were like men without a task in a house full of activity.

Then, on the Thursday, Eoin MacNeill learned that orders had been issued to blow up bridges and railroads at an appointed hour on Sunday. The naked fact now stood clear of all disguise, and the Chief-of-Staff confronted his colleagues, Padraic Pearse, Vice-Chairman of the Volunteer Executive, and Thomas MacDonagh, Commandant of the Dublin Brigade, and charged them with

withholding information from him. Pearse's answer was simple and final. "It was necessary," he said, and he added that it was now impossible to prevent the plans from coming into operation as arranged. The Rising had but to occur and was beyond recall. Eoin MacNeill thought otherwise, and expressed his determination to stop it by every means in his power, by the full exercise of his authority and responsibility.

So the two sides parted in confusion. The division had begun, and a trial of strength had opened. All that day Eoin MacNeill spent preparing orders to be issued by the Secretary as from the Chief-of-Staff cancelling the earlier orders for parades, manoeuvres, and route marches for the coming week-end. Learning of this, the war party struck their blow in reply. On Friday (at the very moment that the police in Kerry, unknown to all in Dublin, were searching for, and were about to arrest, Roger Casement) Bulmer Hobson was arrested by orders of the Military Council and placed under close guard in a certain Dublin house. At the same time possession was taken of headquarters, and as Friday closed, while a cluster of Eoin MacNeill's friends conferred with him, it seemed that the power of the Chief-of-Staff to reach the Volunteers, who looked to him for guidance, had effectually been cut off.

Early the following morning the positions were reversed. It was Padraic Pearse and Thomas MacDonagh who came to see the Chief-of-Staff. They came to say that the cunning of all their plans had come to naught. Roger Casement was arrested. Austin Stack was arrested. Worse still, there had been mismanagement respecting the

shipload of arms. The *Aud* had come too early, nothing had been ready for her arrival, and no arms could now be expected. Lastly, a message had been received from Roger Casement appealing (even in the belief that arms would be landed) that the Rising be called off, and saying that the Germans had never intended any help worth the having.

### § 6

Such was the situation that both sides (whether for war or for peace) had now to face as they conferred together. Disaster on disaster had befallen, and in the welter only one thing seemed clear beyond dispute. This was that the forcible suppression of the Volunteers must immediately follow—in fact, that the sequel was a mere matter of hours, now that Dublin Castle knew of the landing of Roger Casement and of the presence of the *Aud*. But this was the very situation in face of which Eoin MacNeill had declared that resort to arms would be justified. However earnestly he might protest against the measures that had been taken without his knowledge to bring such a situation to pass, there was no room now, he agreed, for division or recrimination. All must stand together to resist the oncoming blow, and he therefore declared his willingness to take his place in an immediate call to arms.

Padraic Pearse and Thomas MacDonagh left happy in that assurance, resolved to press forward arrangements for the morrow in the confidence that the action to be taken would be supported on every side. But as the day passed without action from Dublin Castle, the situation

seemed to change. Moreover, the message from Casement began to make its appeal, as it had not done immediately on its receipt. Eoin MacNeill therefore communicated with Arthur Griffith, and called Thomas MacDonagh (with whom came Joseph Plunkett) to another conference that Saturday evening.

Thus the three excluded streams of influence merged together. Roger Casement was present by the fact that his appeal was before this eleventh-hour conference (and it is strange to reflect that even while the conference was being held he himself passed through Dublin on his way to London under arrest), and Arthur Griffith and Eoin MacNeill were present in person. The merging of these three streams, even at that eleventh hour, was sufficient to undo all that had been so carefully planned. For it was decided to call off the Rising. Messengers were chosen, who speeded away to the country, bearing an order from the Chief-of-Staff. The same order was given to Thomas MacDonagh as Commandant of the Dublin Brigade. And, lest there should be any miscarriage, the same order was sent to be printed in the Sunday issue of the *Irish Independent*. This order was, that "owing to the very critical position all orders given to the Volunteer Corps" for the following day were "rescinded," and specifically that "no parades, marches, or other movements of Irish Volunteers will take place. Each individual Volunteer," it required, "will obey this order in every particular."

That night the churches had been full of Volunteers, going to Confession in preparation for the morrow; but on the following day all was silent in the city and in the

country. MacNeill's order had been successful. But on the same day two critical conferences were held. One was of the chiefs of Dublin Castle; the other was of the chiefs of the I.R.B. and those who with them had planned the Rising. The first had before it the knowledge of Casement's landing and of the presence of the *Aud.* The second had before it the order issued by the Chief-of-Staff. But while the first was anxious not to precipitate action, the second was anxious only to move immediately. Therefore, while the first decided to postpone decision till the morrow, the second decided to take action on the morrow.

That second conference met in Liberty Hall, the headquarters of the Transport and General Workers' Union and of the Citizen Army. While it was being held, Eoin MacNeill, fearing that some counter-move was being planned, endeavoured to communicate with Thomas MacDonagh, but failed to do so. He therefore sent an order direct to the Adjutant of the Dublin Brigade. This Adjutant was Eamon de Valera, and the order read :

As Commt. MacDonagh is not accessible, I have to give you this order direct. Commt. MacDonagh left me last night with the understanding that he would return or send me a message. He has done neither.

As Chief-of-Staff I have ordered and hereby order that no movement whatsoever of Irish Volunteers is to be made to-day. You will carry out this order in your own command and make it known to other commands.

EOIN MACNEILL.

At the same time the following further order was issued to be printed in the morrow's papers :

The order issued to Irish Volunteers printed over my name in to-day's *Sunday Independent* is hereby authenticated. Every influence should be used immediately and throughout the day to secure faithful execution of this order, as any failure to obey it may result in a very grave catastrophe.

EOIN MACNEILL.

Within Liberty Hall, however, these influences had little weight; in the minds of the men there the event had already occurred. That it should not have passed into action that day as expected meant for them an upheaval of all the meaning their lives had taken during many months of happy and confident hope. A balk such as this was a turning back of time. It was monstrous and incredulous; a challenge of perversity, not meekly to be embraced. With each man of the company the decision, taken long ago, had but to be completed. James Connolly was willing, for his part, to go out alone; would, if necessary, go out alone with the Citizen Army. Padraic Pearse, looking for the spiritual renewal of a nation in a sacrifice of blood, was willing to make that sacrifice with a handful of those who shared his faith. Tom Clarke's whole life had been lived in expectation of this hour. Frustration of his hope had turned Sean MacDermott from a young man into an old man overnight—shocking those who looked on him by the disastrous change in his physical appearance.

The conclusion, therefore, was foregone. The plans for the country had of course gone irretrievably. Moreover, even in Dublin, the general body of the Volunteers could scarcely be expected to act in defiance of Eoin MacNeill's order. Reliance could only be placed on those



who had been sworn members of the I.R.B., on the Citizen Army, and on such others as these might bring with them. The force could not but be meagre; yet with such a force it was decided to translate resolve into action. Thomas MacDonagh was accordingly ordered to mobilize the Dublin Brigade for active service at 10 o'clock the following morning, and each battalion was appointed to its place in the original plan.

### § 7

At noon the next day, while the chiefs of Dublin Castle sat in council there to determine whether action should be taken, the sound of a rifle-shot announced action had already begun. As part of the larger action, an attack had been made on that citadel. The attack there failed, and the failure profoundly influenced the action at every other point, but it was also curiously significant. Had the sudden assault there been carried, the Rising would have, for practical purposes, succeeded. The chief heads of government would have been captured and the machinery of government would have been destroyed. But the attack blundered, the policeman at the gates was shot, and the great gates at once were closed. Thus, though as a consequence of that blunder the citadel was held, the guardian at the gate died. It was a tragic symbol, for the historic effect of the Rising, so begun, was to remove the civic guardian and to open a war that was not to conclude until Dublin Castle itself had fallen.

Elsewhere there was better success. The Military Council occupied the Post Office. With its members

were the military staff, and James Connolly, in command of the entire operations in Dublin. The first battalion, under Edward Daly, occupied the Four Courts; the second battalion, under Thomas MacDonagh, occupied Jacob's Biscuit Factory; the third battalion, under Eamon de Valera, occupied Boland's Mills; the fourth battalion, under Eamon Ceannt, occupied the South Dublin Union, controlling Knightsbridge Station. In addition to these the North Dublin Union, controlling the Broadstone Station, was occupied by a force operating from the Four Courts, and a small force, under Thomas Ashe and Richard Mulcahy, operated in the county to the north of the city, to cut off railway and other access from that direction.

The intention of this disposition is easy to follow. A ring of forts was held around the city, placed at strategic points, and in buildings that lent themselves to defence. In this way it was expected that the city could be held for a considerable length of time. The disposition had been devised when plans were made for action throughout the country, and thus there were reasons to suppose that the city, so surrounded, could be held long enough for help to arrive both directly from the country and as a consequence of concerted action there.

Unfortunately for these plans, the action in the country had effectually been frustrated by Eoin MacNeill's order. Moreover, the effect in Dublin itself of that order was that only a section of the Dublin Brigade acted on the hasty mobilization at the last moment. The entire body that went into action on that Monday comprised about eight hundred of the Volunteers and some two hundred of the Citizen Army. During that

day, and during the following day, a scattered few joined their comrades, but these did not amount to much more than a hundred. Among them was O'Rahilly. He had been opposed to the Rising, and had on Saturday night carried Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order to Limerick and Cork cities. Finding on his return that some of the Volunteers were going into action, he threw in his lot with them and joined their meagre company as a matter of honourable obligation. Thus, through that week's fighting, not more than eleven hundred men were engaged in the attempt to hold the city.

With so few engaged in that wide-flung disposition, not much could be attempted. Yet, of all the commandants, only Eamon de Valera and Edward Daly showed any real tactical skill or recognized what their task demanded of them. The others held their fortresses against all comers. At Jacob's Factory none came, and the days passed without record of a single engagement. At the South Dublin Union the fighting was heavy, and that the defence was fearless and stubborn the presence there of Eamon Ceannt and Cathal Brugha is enough to indicate. But only Eamon de Valera and Edward Daly used their fortresses, not (as did the others) for defence merely, but as the centre and pivot of operations throughout the whole area of their command. The force in the country, under Thomas Ashe and Richard Mulcahy, had of necessity to operate over a wide area; and it is significant that the commandants of these three forces were the most successful of the week. Their defence was never pierced; and, not being confined to any one point, it could not be encircled and neglected.

The most conspicuous success fell to Eamon de Valera—who thereby afterwards became the hero and darling of the Rising. His operations were brilliant. Considering how meagre his force was, they were remarkable. He lay across the roads along which the reinforcements, that were hurried over from England had to pass on their way to the city. By placing small groups at strategic houses, chosen skilfully, he conveyed the impression of a strong force and made the way impassable. The heaviest British casualties occurred in his area. As troops were landed at Kingstown, they were hurried through the district he held. He waited till they were well enmeshed, and then opened fire on them from all sides. The result was that very heavy losses were incurred by them, whereas his own losses were small.

As a result, his area of command remained impregnable to the last. He was held engaged to the end, it is true; but the incoming troops were taken into the city by other ways. They swung to the west, and moved into the city by Clanbrassil Street, within a revolver-shot of Jacob's Factory, where Thomas MacDonagh's command awaited attack.

Further to the west, the South Dublin Union was encircled by attack; and while Eamon Ceannt's men were held cooped there, British troops on Tuesday night and on Wednesday morning penetrated to the city along Thomas Street, protected by the houses from raking fire from the Four Courts across the river. Thus they reached Dublin Castle, and on Thursday were passed across Grattan's Bridge and along Capel Street to surround the headquarters of the Volunteers at the

Post Office, so cutting off connection with, and any possible help from, those who, from the Four Courts to the North Dublin Union, had successfully held the north-west of the city, and by street operations resisted penetration from that side.

This was the beginning of the end. The circle had been pierced from the south and the south-west, and the Post Office was surrounded on all sides except the east. To the east no escape was possible because the broad avenue of O'Connell Street lay open to scathing fire, rocked by snipers and machine-guns. In the meantime, artillery had been mounted in College Green, and from there on Thursday evening incendiary shells had (contrary to all that James Connolly had so confidently expected) been poured on the Post Office and the buildings in O'Connell Street about the Post Office. The entire lower end of the street burned in a huge conflagration that lit the whole city. When an escape was made from the burning building, a ring of troops and fire barred all hope of escape from the network of lanes in which the last defence on Friday was made and the final surrender on Saturday agreed.

When news of that final surrender was conveyed from the scattered headquarters to the various units of command the men were indignant, and there was great difficulty in getting them to accept a situation they could not understand. At Jacob's, for example, no fighting had taken place. Under Eamon de Valera and Edward Daly fighting had been heavy; it had been continuous, and some of the men were maddened from lack of sleep, relief having been almost impossible with

so few to call upon during five days' and nights' continuous engagement; but their areas had not been pierced, or even seriously penetrated. Even at the South Dublin Union, where the outer buildings had been abandoned, a much longer defence seemed possible. Nowhere was it realized that the destruction of headquarters was strategic defeat, compelling surrender in the alternative of slaughter. The various commandants had the utmost difficulty in getting their men to appreciate a situation that was not immediate to them. Moreover, blood was up, and no man would hear of surrender. Hardly could the commandants succeed in winning compliance with that final order sent from headquarters; but by the end of that Saturday the surrender had been accepted by each unit, and lines of sullen, rebellious men marched out to be put under guard.

So ended six days of stubborn fighting; but so began the Rising. Time was to prove that what had happened was not the end, but the beginning. The thought of warfare had been kindled, yet to burst into flame throughout the country; and a lesson had been learnt for such warfare—never to be pinned to a building, never to abandon loose, guerilla tactics. In the day of black defeat, of surrender and disaster, these things were not to be seen. Time had yet to unfold them.

## § 8

Even in Dublin, within a few hundred yards of the actual fighting, none knew what was happening, beyond the bare information that the Volunteers had occupied

prominent buildings and were being attacked. The city, by night and day, rattled to the fusillade of firing; and, on Thursday and the succeeding nights, it became like a room illuminated by the monstrous torch lit in O'Connell Street; but news there was none. Rumour flew laden with fantastic stories—true and false, the true not less fantastic than the false—but they were evidence, not of fact, but of the fertility of invention. The area of fighting lay impassably removed from its adjoining streets.

There were two men to whom that impassable distance was the cause of a long agony. These were Arthur Griffith and Eoin MacNeill. On the Sunday following the previous night's decision to call off the Rising, Mrs. Griffith had gone to spend holiday in Cork at her husband's wish, and he was left in charge of the two children. It was while he was anchored thus that, early in the afternoon of Monday, a neighbour called to him: "How is it you're not with your friends at the Post Office?" And thus, for the first time, he learned what had been done that day.

What could he do? What was he to do? If he asked a neighbour to tend the children his intention would have been guessed, and it was unlikely that he would have been allowed to get as far as the Post Office. He lifted the children into his neighbour's garden, instructed them what to do, and made his way at once to the Post Office, to take his part in an enterprise of which he resolutely disapproved. He saw the end only too clearly; but he saw no alternative for him but to take his place with those who went towards that end.

At the Post Office, however, he met an unflinching refusal to permit him to share that end. The military men, said Sean MacDermott, knew to what end they were going; and they went to that end in happy confidence that all would be well for the nation, when it came to gather the fruit of their action; but Ireland, he said, needed Arthur Griffith living. The greater service for him would be to remain, when they had gone, to live and gather that fruit. They were playing their part. He must play his; and his was to live, as he had lived, the teacher of the people, according to the different services to which they had been called.

So he was compelled to return; and for two days he lived in an agony of spirit. Then on the Thursday he conceived the plan of a call to the country to come to the help of the men in Dublin. He rode northward by bicycle into the country, and went by country byways a long journey round to Rathfarnham to see Eoin MacNeill. There the two of them wrote an appeal to the country to rise and assist Dublin, and they arranged for that appeal to be despatched. But that night O'Connell Street was in flames, and the beginning of the end was announced.

The appeal was never sent. In any event, it must have come to nothing. All roads were held by military and by armed police, all travellers stopped, and a close watch kept on all persons thought to be dangerous. The state of the country, indeed, was one of helpless ignorance and uneasy fear.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### MY FIRST ARREST

#### § I

IN Achill, Tuesday, the 25th of April, was a day of unimaginable beauty. The air was filled with sunlight, like a crystal cup filled with golden liquid that brimmed above the lip. The mountains stood gaunt and bare against the pale sky, with a delicate mist clothing their dark sides softly. The bare fields and heavy boglands were scarfed with colour. The sea flowed to the western horizon, its winter rage laid by, the sunlight glinting in the waves of an offshore wind like the spears of a countless host; and the islands of the bay, from Clare to Inishbofin, lay in its waters like wonderful jewels that glowed under the sun. Earth, in that wild and desolate place, was altogether lovely, sunk in deep, reticent peace and clothed with delicate and exquisite colour.

The post that day was late, and, loth to begin work, I had spent the morning looking along the half-mile of road till it bent behind the heath for the rider on the horse that was our only connection with the big world. It was not till long after noon that I saw a friend pulling her bicycle over the bog towards the house. As she came nearer I saw the traces of tears on her cheeks, and wondered.

“There is no post,” she answered my inquiry; “but

there's terrible news. The driver of the mail says they've been fighting in Dublin. Dawson Street is full of dead and wounded men. The Volunteers hold the Bank of Ireland, the General Post Office, and buildings all over Dublin. The soldiers are attacking them everywhere with machine-guns, and the slaughter is terrible."

Hardly could I hear her. I looked on that day of breathless beauty, of peace poised in perfect balance. Voices rose up from the land, where the spring work, long delayed after a bad winter, was in full swing. Voices of men, voices of women, and the barking of dogs flowed over the land pleasantly. It was not strange that the mind found some difficulty in recognizing the meaning of this tale of war that came like a stream of blood violently across the peace and beauty of the day.

Yet already, as I looked, it was apparent that that stream was spreading. Knots of men were standing in the fields and on the road in discussion, and the women were leaving their work on the land and moving towards their cottages. All further thought of work was impossible; and I, too, went into the villages to gather what news was to be had. In one of the villages a Sunday's paper was discovered, in which appeared Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order. That only complicated the mystery. What was the occasion of this order? In face of this order how had fighting occurred? What was the "critical position" to which it referred? The original manœuvres, so countermanded, had apparently been ordered for Sunday. How, then, has fighting followed on the Monday?

The only explanation that expounded these mysteries

was that Dublin Castle had proposed to take advantage of the original manœuvres to strike their long-expected blow, and, finding itself balked by the countermanding order, had attacked headquarters the next day. This, therefore, was the version accepted by us all; but it was a version that raised a grave question in one's mind. If one's countrymen were being attacked, pretty plain and clear the duty seemed. It was difficult to sit idle while such a thing occurred. But how could help be given? Already, hard upon the heels of the news, pickets of police, with carbines slung about their shoulders, appeared in the villages; and during the afternoon word was brought to me privately from a member of the local force, who had helped me before, that they were under orders to arrest me if I moved outside a stated radius from my house. A special picket took up its quarters within a hundred yards of the house.

However, the same thought had come to others. After dark a gentle knock fell on our window, and two men softly entered the house. One was a native of the island, the other was Michael Kilroy, from Newport, on the mainland.<sup>1</sup> He had been sent from the men in the county to ask me to lead them in an attempt to help the men in Dublin by creating a diversion in the west. When he left after midnight, going across the bog, it was arranged that I should leave the island on Thursday. The roads were, of course, carefully guarded. It was

<sup>1</sup> Michael Kilroy afterwards fought with courage during the time of the Black-and-Tan campaign. In 1922 and 1923 he fought with the Irregulars against the Free State; and, as I write, he is now in gaol.

therefore agreed that I should go out by Currach, as though for fishing, and be rowed to Achill Beg. From there I was to be rowed to Newport, to arrive there about ten at night, when the men from Castlebar, Westport, and Newport would be gathered to meet me. We hoped, then, to take the police barracks at these places by rapid strokes before dawn, and beyond that we did not trouble to inquire.

We had no illusions about our plan. None of us expected to survive. Yet it was not in madness we made the plan, but as men who saw no alternative. During Thursday morning, however, a message came from Michael Kilroy saying that the priest at Castlebar (where nearly all the rifles were on which we relied) had intervened and had refused to allow the men there to make any move. In face of this, he said, he himself had cancelled everything, and was sending me word at once to make no move. The priest was a wise man. Action taken merely to relieve one's own distress is nearly always wrong; and nothing we could have done would have been of the slightest use.

## § 2

It only remained to wait. It was impossible to work by day, and it was even difficult to sleep by night. No week could have passed more slowly. No days could have been more full of anxiety. In the meantime rumours flew thick and fast, contradicted often as soon as they were current, giving way to others more fantastic still. It is curious to look back upon them now, for

they show how the moving yeast of public opinion works when it is cut off from certitude of information. We might in Achill during that week have been carried back three centuries of time, for we were without telegraphs, posts, and newspapers, without modern appliances of information (and misinformation), and were left to rely on just such windy rumours carried from mouth to mouth over long distances as the Elizabethans used for the interest of their lives. The rumours of that week, therefore, as corrected by what was afterwards discovered when the modern machinery began again to work, throw a curious light on the news-sheets of older times, on which historians rely in their grave compilations.

Particularly curious is it to note how nearness shaped a semblance of accuracy, and how distance magnified inaccuracy. On Tuesday news came that Co. Galway was "up." There, it was said (and said truly), that Liam Mellows was in command, and that he had returned from exile in England, disguised as a priest, to take the command. Later rumour told that he had marched on the city of Galway, but had retired under fire of gunboats, and was encamped at Athenry. Then that he had marched on Athlone, and had destroyed the bridge over the Shannon there, but had retreated before a strong force of military with artillery.

Verisimilitude began to receive its first serious warp at Athlone, apparently. Everything refracted from beyond that lens was unrecognizable—often the mirage of a mirage. Cork and Limerick, we heard with every accent of definition, were "up." Kerry had seized the Atlantic

cable and wireless stations, and the Volunteers were in direct correspondence with America. It was more than interesting to hear history make its contribution; for Wexford, we heard on Thursday, was "up," and that the whole county was in a blaze. It was agreed that little other might be expected from a county that had done so well in 1798, the changes of a century being dismissed without further thought—an intimate faculty, fruitful of much that was to come. Less easy to follow was the news that came with this, that Drogheda and Dundalk had risen, and had attempted to destroy the railroads leading to the north. Yet not all came from a distance that now seems unintelligible, for on Wednesday we heard that Ballina, some fifty miles away, had risen and had captured Killala Bay, but here again it is possible to see the historic memory at work. It was difficult to know whether all Ireland were in a flame, or a handful of Volunteers were being mercilessly slaughtered in Dublin. The two, in truth, were believed together. Yet no one doubted that Cork, Limerick, Wexford, and Ballina had approved themselves worthy of the seed got from the loins of their splendid past.

The police, of course, were busy correcting the flight of rumour. They posted reassuring bulletins each day on all telegraph-poles. Folk gathered around these and read them, and turned from them in silent, deep distrust. There we read for the first time that Sir Roger Casement had attempted to land on the Kerry coast with rifles from a German transport, but that he had been arrested on landing from a small boat, and that the transport had been sunk. "German help is now at the bottom of the

sea," declared the notice. Nobody believed a word of that notice, or of any notice that kept the same company.

From the coastguards on Wednesday news was circulated that the German navy had attacked in force on the east coast of England in the attempt to effect a landing of troops, but that all the German fleet had been sunk, the British fleet losing two battleships. This was received with measured scepticism. One of the coast-guard's wives, however, the following day was heard to say that not two, but eight British battleships had been sunk. This was whispered swiftly from village to village without comment, but with many a significant nod.

So the week passed anxiously, and as it passed the problem of food supply began to cause alarm. If the Rising had lasted a week, it might well last very much longer, and then where was food to be had? With the raising of that question anger turned definitely against the Volunteers in Dublin. Even those who had most stoutly stood for them now were heard to say that this thing had gone far enough. Freedom was all very well, but a people had to live. On Friday no old-age pensions were available; and loud was the outcry. Padraic Pearse's faith might well have been tested if he had heard the denunciations that arose, and included the names of the historic heroes of Irish Insurrection when those names were invoked to justify the present deed. The nation that was to arise in wonder like a phoenix from the ashes of sacrifice was, just then, when he was being driven by flames and machine-guns to surrender,

energetically thinking of imports of foreign flour and of weekly pensions from the British post-office.

Then on the Monday came news that Padraic Pearse had surrendered, and that the commandant under him were accepting the order, though reluctantly. At once the mood of the people began to make a slow change, such a change as he had foreseen. The first week's strain was released by news that told of defeat, an ancient tale in Ireland, full of old honour. On Tuesday the mail was resumed. Newspapers came and were passed eagerly from hand to hand. The people were afraid, for martial law was proclaimed, and the police moved about through the villages in small bands with carbines slung over their shoulders; but the people were sullen, and none passed the friendly time of day to the police that had been usual a week before. The Rising was beginning to take its place among Ireland's tragic efforts for freedom. Its immediate causes were not known. Oddly enough folk now ceased to inquire whether it had been planned or provoked. The fact of its failure was enough, and that fact became its chief success, for so it became kneaded into the subconscious memory of history.

The change spread rapidly. It was learned that a large part of Dublin lay in ruins as the result of artillery fire, and the papers printed illustrations of the ruin. Anger flamed high at that. Then, as the next week passed, came the toll of executions. The sullen fury and exasperations these awoke cannot be described. Afterwards I learned from Arthur Griffith that Sean MacDermott, when they began, and just before he was led to



his own trial and execution, said to him that now he was assured of the rightness of the Rising. The people, he said, would have turned against them had they not been executed, and never again would it be possible for men to rise as they had done; but now that they were to be executed, he was happy, happy in the knowledge that the people would rally behind their act. So he spoke on the eve of his own execution. In distant Achill I saw the change happen. Even those who during Easter Week had been most bitter in denunciation of the Volunteers, now turned all their bitterness and anger against their executioners. Before the executions were finished the change was complete, and no one who saw it happen could doubt that it was so deeply seated as to be permanent, and that Padraic Pearse's prophetic faith had been justified.

If anything were wanted to confirm the change, it came with the news of wholesale arrests reported from all over the country. Not a parish, it seemed, was to escape. No one who had been in any way connected publicly with Irish affairs was to escape, and even those who had in their own districts made for themselves a little local celebrity were destined not to escape the net that was being flung so widely. Every day the villagers came to me and urged me to go into hiding, bringing plans how this could be done. I did not do so. The day had not come when one grew accustomed to the thought of pending arrest and was prepared on an instant to find cover to evade it. Arrest still seemed, in Ireland then, a fantastic and unbelievable chance. Therefore I still kept my place, and turned back to the

work on which I had been engaged when the news of the Rising had come.

## § 3

A week after this I sat one night at work making notes from State papers. I had been at that task all that day, and I was still at it when, about two in the morning, just as I thought to turn in to bed, a strong presentiment fell on me that I was to be arrested the next morning. It came suddenly, and stood with me in the room almost like a physical presence; and it affected me (it itself, that presence, not merely the fear of immediate arrest) with such panic that I had the utmost difficulty in controlling myself. I thought to wake and tell my wife; I thought to leave the house and take cover with one of the neighbours; and there is no doubt but that I would have done so, except that to do so would have been to yield to fear of that which seemed to stand in the room with me. Simple opposition to that intangible presentiment caused me to control myself in its presence, and without change of intention to turn in to my bed, where for a long time I lay wakeful and wondering.

Not much more than two hours later we were wakened by the heavy tramp of many feet running down the *bohereen* in time together, and the sound of men scattering and running around the house. We leapt out of bed, and, peering through the curtains, we saw two constables at each window, with carbines held apprehensively at the ready.

A man who was down at the foreshore at dawn, with

my house between him and the village, afterwards described the scene for me. The whole force of eighteen constables, three sergeants and a district inspector had arrived by motor and on bicycles. At the top of the *bohereen*, not a hundred yards away, they had been assembled in martial array, and at the given word had charged down at the double on a house in which one man, one woman, eight hens, and fifteen chickens lay fast asleep. It must have been a thrilling sight to see.

Loud knocking sounded on the door, and I went to the porch to parley with the district inspector, in order that he might give my wife time to dress. But while I spoke with him the attack began. Some heavy balks of timber (flotsam, rescued from the sea) lay about the house, and using these as battering-rams the police charged the front door, which they soon splintered. They then burst into the house, seized hold of me, and rushed in on my wife while she was dressing. Nothing escaped them. They spat about the house as about a tap-room; and then began to tie all my papers, including literary MSS. and historical notes representing many years of study, into parcels. Only with the greatest difficulty did I rescue from them a parcel of unused manuscript paper, which they had triumphantly parcelled with the rest.

Then I was taken out into the hurricane of wind and cold, miserable rain of that dawn of day. A constable sat each side of me and one in front, with the district inspector and the driver, each with a carbine held grimly between his knees. I was to be taken to Castlebar Gaol, I was told, while we sped down through the sleeping

villages, and the rain, driven upon a south-western wind, lashed our faces and cried wailing about the car. It was a miserable journey to a miserable tune, with a miserable end in view. Yet before it started an incident had occurred that had furnished a glow and touch of warmth pleasant to reflect upon. It was an incident that could not in any circumstances (much less in those circumstances) have happened outside of Ireland.

Just as I had been put into the motor, while all the police stood by their bicycles, Sergeant Donovan, of the neighbouring station of Mallaranny, had stepped forward with his hand outstretched: "I am sorry to be taking part in this day's work, sir," he said. "I never heard the neighbours speak but good of you. You were always a good neighbour with the poor people, and there's no harm attached to a man that's that way. But these are queer times. I hope you may return soon to us the way we always knew you." "That's right, Donovan," said his district inspector; "but now we must be going."

## § 4

I had felt miserable enough, yet, all things considered, I had been strangely unperturbed and calm. Perhaps the swiftness of events had, to some extent, benumbed me. Partly, it was due to the fact that I was in face of my captors, before whom no one could permit a tremor to be shown, or for that matter to be felt, lest it should appear. But when the motor drove within the prison gates, a chill fear crept over me, and hardly could it be controlled.

However, it was not till all my things had been taken from me, and I had been placed in a reception-cell, that that fear rose like a spectre. A reception-cell is usually about two-thirds the size of an ordinary cell, with only a very small window high in the wall, and very dark. Its only furniture is a little stool. When the door clanged behind me, and I heard the key grating in the lock, I glanced quickly round the little space that held me, and a sensation as of suffocation came over me. I was almost overpowered by the desire to shout aloud, to throw myself on the wall and batter on it with my fists. This was followed by the thought of utter helplessness. Tears had need to be controlled. I remember standing in the middle of that little cell and vowing, if ever I came out of it, that I would never permit the caging of birds.<sup>1</sup> Not that I had ever desired to cage a bird, but now that the terror of confinement became a distinct and poignant reality, it expressed itself in that earnest protest.

I do not know how long I was in that little cell. Time ceases to count when emotion is so heavily charged. But after a time I was removed to my allotted cell, not nearly so clean as the other, but (though the difference was really not much) the sensation of having a larger amount of air to breathe and a larger area of floor-space over which to pace, was one of decided relief, in spite of that horrible sound of the clanging of the door and grating of the lock. There for the first time I saw the equipment of a cell. Beside the door a hinged flap served for table, and beneath it stood a deal stool. In the further corner stood

<sup>1</sup> I learned afterwards that this was the first thought of most of those who were locked in a prison-cell for the first time.

the bed-board, uplifted against the wall, with blankets draped over it. At its base was coiled the mattress. High in the wall opposite the door was the window, heavily barred, with little panes of dark grated glass. In the right-hand corner stood a zinc basin for washing purposes. The lower part of the walls was painted a dun, indiscriminate brown, and the upper part was white-washed. In the middle of the right-hand wall hung a copy of the prison rules and regulations pasted on card-board.

A cheerless morning, a cheerless experience, a cheerless abode. Even grimness, that faithful consolation in adversity, was hard to summon. I sat on my little stool to take stock of the occasion; and then resolved to take refuge in sleep. I put down my bed-board, and stretched my mattress and myself upon it. It was not to be so. The door had a little spy-hole, through which the warder on his rounds peered on his prisoners lest they might escape him. I heard the flap of the spy-hole move, and instantly the key grated in the lock and the door was flung open. The warder was a dark-visaged man, with a harsh northern accent. He shouted when he spoke as though he addressed a herd of cattle. He had got that habit from marshalling men over whom he had unlimited power. He shouted now. The whole prison resounded with his voice, the passages outside echoing with his threats and abuse. He would, he said, soon lick me into shape, grand and all though I thought I was. No bed-board was to remain down after six in the morning, or to be put down again until after eight at night. I was to put my bed-board as I had found it; and if ever

I was found interfering with it again, I would soon find how it was to do without one at all.

He left me feeling as though I had been flung into a cesspool. Yet his visit was salutary. It whipped one out of one's misery. It gave one something to fight for. I turned to the rules and regulations displayed on the wall, and read them carefully and completely. They were set forth in sections, according to different categories of prisoners. One of the sections related to "Prisoners Awaiting Trial," and this I mastered in all its details. Later in the morning the Acting Governor (he had been chief warder, and still wore that uniform, though these, then, to me were distinctions without meaning) came to see me, to give me general and particular instructions. By that time I was a master of the rules and regulations; and I interrogated him on their application to myself. It required some address at first to get him to converse, for he was prepared harshly and instantly to strike down any attempt at conversation. It was necessary, at first, casually and quietly to ask him for an interpretation of the rules; and then, when once the net of discussion was cast, it was not so difficult to hold him in its toils.

Whatever was there in the rules to be claimed, I claimed. I claimed the right to books, to tobacco, to daily newspapers, to daily letters in and out, to daily visitors, to my own meals ordered from the town, and to getting another prisoner, if I so wished it, to clean out my cell each day—nothing was omitted. At first he sought to put me by. But he could not deny that I was at least a "Prisoner Awaiting Trial"; and these were, his own rules declared, the rights accorded to that type

of prisoner. There they were in print: his responsibility and my right. He looked at that troublesome document with rising exasperation. Then he exploded.

“You forget,” he said, “these aren’t ordinary times. You are under martial law now. The soldiers are the masters of us all now, so they are. I amn’t very sure that I know where I am myself, rules don’t apply now. Nothing applies. Don’t I get my instructions from day to day only? They might take you out to-morrow and shoot you, so they might, and nobody to save you, and nobody to say a word again them. Isn’t the whole of the city of Dublin in ruins? I cannot give you but what I’m bid; and those rules don’t relate to you—they don’t relate to anybody—there aren’t such thing as rules.”

So I fell back on my prepared second line. If there were no such things as rules, then I might be permitted to keep my bed-board down, as a more comfortable place for reading than the stool. He accepted the concession. He also allowed me the book I had brought in my bag with me—it was, oddly enough, Doštöevski’s *The Possessed*; and he permitted me to write one letter each day, on a sheet provided for that purpose, subject to his censorship; and to send out for my meals if I wished it. I did wish this last particularly; and chose one whom I knew in the town, through whom I hoped to smuggle out letters.

The astonishment of my warder at my right to keep down my bed-board gave me singular pleasure. He was a baffled man, and thenceforth he merely grumbled at me instead of shouting at me. As for the Acting Governor, I afterwards became quite friendly with him,



and he showed me as much kindness as was possible in the circumstances. He did this in a strange way. He would enter my cell and shout at me as harshly as at any; and then he would close the door, sit on my stool, and in a quiet friendly manner discuss the situation in the country. My name was known to him, and it appeared he had little love for his military superiors; so that we spoke as Irishmen together. I remember him one morning bringing me the daily newspapers containing John Dillon's speech in the House of Commons denouncing the executions and imprisonments. He was glad, he said, that at least one man there had spoken out; and he insisted on reading to me those parts of the speech that pleased him most.

## § 5

Meals and exercise were the only alleviations of our silent monotony and misery. The meals were brought round by two prisoner-orderlies, both of them Gaelic League organizers whom I knew. Of one of them, when he brought me in my first meal, I in my ignorance asked for a knife and fork. He, in his week-old experience of gaols, slipped quickly out into the passage to control his amusement, and left me to the astonishment of the warder, who asked me if I knew where I was. So I was left to juggle with an old horn spoon; and that spoon I have yet, having succeeded in carrying it from place to place hidden about my person as a memento.

Twice a day we were taken out to exercise in the prison-yard. The yard was strewn with flints, and

surrounded by walls some twenty feet high. Near the walls the flints were trodden into a path, marked on the ground in a large oval, by many miserable feet. The first morning I saw that yard there were already some seven or eight men marching around in silence at equal distances apart. Afterwards I learned that, the previous day, some twenty or thirty prisoners had been sent on to Dublin, and that the police had been watching me in Achill, waiting for word that there was accommodation to house me. Those whom I saw had been left. The two Gaelic League organizers were there; there was an Excise Officer whom I knew, whose gait showed that he had not yet got over his fury; and others in the county, taken the police only knew for what reasons. One of the Gaelic League organizers, when he saw me, lifted his hand in a Connacht salute and shouted a greeting in Irish—and at once a bellow came from the warder for silence.

The following day an elderly man, with a grey beard and erect magisterial manner, made his appearance. Who he was, I do not know, for he never appeared again. The next day, among others, came the editor (and proprietor) of the *Mayo News*, who walked sedately round the yard in his black tail-coat and felt hat as though he were taking his customary constitutional at evening on the Mall at Westport. The same day, for the first time, appeared two men in blue prison clothes, one a particularly fine-looking man, who bore himself proudly. One of the Gaelic League organizers whispered to me, while bringing me my dinner that day, that these were soldiers (a sergeant and a corporal) from Irish regiments who had

expressed themselves too forcibly regarding the executions and arrests. We never saw them again.

It is strange how quickly prison-craft is acquired. Old criminals, I afterwards learned, develop it to such an extent that their communications with one another, in the friendships they establish, become almost as complete as in ordinary life, despite the close scrutiny under which they are kept at all times—with this difference, that they cultivate friendship and human communication as a crime against prison rules. I can well believe it; for here were we, new to the game, and without any experienced hand among us, bringing all our wits to work in order to establish that communication between man and man without which life is as unhealthy as a standing pool. Our minds became cunning and crafty; stealth and deceit became the first laws of our waking; the whole being became watchful and alert for opportunities caught swiftly as they passed, while the outward manner preserved a deceptive innocence.

The result was not conscious, or at least only half conscious; for a new kind of reflex seemed to be developed. As we walked round the yard we timed our journey with the warder, who walked up and down a small path by the prison door. While he walked away from us towards the door, we had arrived at the far end of the yard. Thus his back was turned just as we reached the most favourable part of our circle, and by that time the distances between us had been reduced as though quite naturally. Ordinarily, the manœuvre would have been difficult to execute, yet it was managed quite simply, and, as it were, naturally. Then a swift conversation would

proceed, in voices pitched just to reach the man before or the man behind, and without any perceptible movement of the lips. By the time the warder had turned, we were finishing the bend with lengthening distances between us, erect, and with calm faces forward.

This play of wit, at all times, became no small part of our daily lives; and the penalties involved gave spice to existence. Thus we came to know who we were, where we had been taken, and we planned codes for communication from cell to cell. Indeed, by the end of my first day I had a fairly exact knowledge of my fellow-prisoners, and of those who had been there before me.

In this we were assisted by one of the warders. He came on duty on my second day, and directly I heard his voice I scanned his face quickly for signs of friendship. He spoke with a southern accent, and muffled beneath his official brevity a human quality sounded. He, too, wore an official mask on his face; but its expression was not sour but sad. I therefore tried a venture with him. Quietly and without emphasis I said to him: "'Tis queer criminals you have these times, warder." He looked quickly at me. Then he went to the door, looked up and down the passage, and returned to me. "Faith, you're right, sir," he said. "'Tis a queer sort of criminals these times."

It would be hard to express all he managed to convey in those few words. That night he was on duty, and he came into my cell to ask me if there was anything further I wanted. I replied that there was not. Then he put his hand in his pocket and thrust something into my hand, saying, "That'll do you no harm." It was a noggin-

bottle of whisky; but before I could thank him he was gone, and the key was grating in the lock.

## § 6

Let no one ever speak to me again of prisons as reformatories of character. They are infernal contrivances for destruction of character. The prison system is one of a perfect inhumanity; and as I sat in my cell the first night, waiting for darkness to come, I felt that system closing upon me. The blank, bare walls, the high, dark window, the deathly silence, broken only by the shuffle outside of the warder as he went his rounds, the jingle of the keys by his side, and the movement of the cover of the spy-hole as he slid it aside to look in on me—all these things were unholy. Add to them the instant repression of every sign of humanity, in prisoner or in warder, and of every attempt to open communication with either, and the effect is to produce a mental blank and a complete absence of anything of the rhythm and colour of life. One never sees flowers in prison (save for one exception I was afterwards to meet, an exception rooted in literary history) and prison-yards are floored, without exception, with shards of flint, or with something like coal-slack, or something very like ashes. Colours never are allowed—I remember with what joy I later feasted my eyes on a blanket provided for me, crimson and yellow and claret, a wonderful vision of beauty and joy. Everything is toneless, featureless, colourless, expressionless, noiseless (but for the bark of a warder), void, and inhuman.

In the twilight that thickened in my cell, I felt these deathly influences closing on me. They advanced towards me with intent to blot out the thing that was I, the personality that was my being, without which I was not. And I was afraid, afraid as of some last obscenity. Life is meaningless unless it exist for the production and perfection of personality, and personality is meaningless unless it mean the utmost differentiation of mind, the utmost liberty of thought and action, the utmost stretch of desire and will, without regard for interdictions and frustrations, as the only conceivable basis for fearless exchanges in the commerce of mortality. But the system into which I was introduced had engaged itself to blot all these things, and to treat human revolt as crime. The prison system protects itself by a number of elaborate contrivances against suicide: the refusal of knife and fork, by which life might be bled to death, the mattings between the landings lest life cast itself to an end, the absence of all brackets and projections in cells, from which men might die by hanging. But suicide is indeed the logical perfection of the system. When personality has been so far repressed that it can make no demonstration of its existence by voice or signal; when personality looks on faces as expressionless as the whitewashed wall and flint-strewn yard; when the mind at last echoes the blankness it meets with a blankless as complete, and the outer world becomes forgotten, literally forgotten: what is the difference between this and the final quenching of the spark of life in a body whose only value is that a soul inhabits it?

Thought? I had sometimes in my folly imagined that

in the silence of a gaol one could give oneself to thought. That night my instinct informed me surely that in gaol thought would become sluggish and finally disappear, until the mere effort to recall faces and names of friends would be relinquished as too fatiguing. I divined this that night. Later I was to prove it. And I was afraid. Some of the others told me that they wept every night; and I understood them perfectly. But that night I slept in my clothes, as a sign to myself that, even though I suffered, I would fight the system with all my power lest it overcame me. Afterwards I was glad of that resolve, a resolve that I kept ever before me.

## § 7

The only communication I was allowed was the letter I had been promised each day. A few days afterwards the Acting Governor came to inform me that he had received instructions from the military authorities that I was not to be permitted any sort of communication with the outer world, by letter or by visit. I had written to my wife saying that my daily letters would be a sign to her that I was safe and well. I wish no man the hours I spent that night.

I thought at once of my original plan to communicate with her through the agency of the person who sent my meals each day, and I succeeded in passing a letter out folded in some unused bread. My hope was that he would expect some such attempt, and would search the utensils I returned. I was right. The letter reached its

destination, but it happened that the interval in my letters had turned to good account.

One morning, when I wakened at the usual hour of 5.45, I was informed that I was to be ready for removal in an hour's time. No information was available where I was going, save that in an hour's time a guard of soldiers would come for me. No doubt, said the Acting Governor reassuringly, I was to be taken for the court-martial in Dublin. That, at such a time of terror, meant anything or everything; and the news was not pleasant to hear.

The editor of the *Mayo News* and I were the only two to be removed, and we were marched through the town of Castlebar, under a corporal's guard of eight soldiers, before its people were awake. Yet the news of our going spread, and a muster gathered about us at the station, and a few timorous cheers were raised. I stood talking with the corporal while this occurred. He told his men to keep a close guard about us, but he refused to permit any attempt to quell the demonstration, sharply checking a soldier who made as though to do so. "It's your own people, sir," he said to me; "and it isn't right for us to be messing about here. It's a rotten job for us, and we oughtn't to make it worse than it is."

I knew his type, and as I looked at him I felt sure I could put him in his exact place at home in England. He was a tall, strongly built man, sallow of complexion, yet tough and hardy. He had a long head and (that morning at least, but I should think always) a grave, earnest face. He came from the Pottery district, and I judged that he had been employed in some clerical



capacity. Afterwards in the train he told me he was fond of books (he was, I remember, startled to find that the author of a certain study of Shakespeare and his prisoner were actually the same person), and that fact did not surprise me, for I had already placed him in such a company, and I felt that I could have told exactly what kind of serious, large, vague-thoughted, ethical book (or, better, work) he was in the habit of studying, and the high-sounding moralities and eternal verities he had been in the habit of discussing with his friends amid the drab sordidness of his surroundings. From them he had been dragged to Ireland; and he was distressed and a little rueful.

As we spoke the train swung round the bend, and, as it drew into the station, to my astonishment my wife leaned from a window and waved to me. Missing my daily letter she had come to learn what had happened; and had come by the very train by which I was to travel. Instantly I thought how to manage that we should travel together. I looked at my corporal, and put the proposition to him. I had, by this time, placed him, and I thought I knew his type: therefore I put my plea on the highest possible grounds—of humanity and virtue and international concord itself—and he succumbed with hardly a struggle. The plea was too perfectly attuned to the accustomed atmosphere of many Pleasant Sunday Afternoons for his new habit of military discipline to be proof against it. So my wife travelled with us to Dublin.

At Athlone and at Mullingar crowds surrounded our carriage and swarmed into the compartments each side

of us, and our corporal was very unhappy. He expressed himself freely about the position in which he found himself; without indignation, without criticism of those in authority above him, yet as one who wished to make it quite clear that their principles of behaviour did not meet with his approval. He had enlisted, he said, to fight for a small nation in Belgium, not to fight against another in Ireland. He spoke as though a grave problem had been placed before him for decision, a decision, however, that did not involve any necessity for action or criticism of his superiors.

## § 8

In Dublin we were taken to Richmond Barracks, a place of mark and fame for the years that were to follow. It was the clearing-house for rebels. From all gaols and police barracks in Ireland batches of prisoners were brought to Richmond before passing to execution, penal servitude, or internment. It was more. It was the university in which the doctrines, methods, and hopes of the men of Easter Week were folded into the life of men from every part of Ireland. Extraordinary to think with what care men were brought from all over the country (many of whom began by disagreeing earnestly with the Rising) to receive one pattern of thought and to know one another and to learn of one another. Yet this was, in fact, what happened. Nearly every man who took any kind of part in the events of the years to follow passed through Richmond Barracks, and there for the first time many of them met, leaders and followers

together. The exceptions could be numbered on the fingers of two hands.

There we were herded, thirty in each room, on the second and third stories. Troops occupied the ground-floor, guards were posted at the doors and on all landings, and the whole buildings were enclosed with barbed wire barricades, guarded again by soldiers. On entering we were each given a single blanket, and slept on the floor. The nights were so bitterly cold that we slept in twos together for warmth, one blanket beneath and one above. The floor was also our board, for at that time the rooms held no furniture, and we sat on the floor to eat, with our fingers for service, the bully-beef and hard biscuits served out to us. Afterwards, shortly before I left there, benches and tables, knives and forks, and extra blankets were provided for us; and as they came, they were received, not in meek gratitude, but with ribaldry and laughter.

Nothing, I think, more surprised our guards than the unfailing hilarity of our company. In every room it was the same, and when we met in the drill-yards it was the same. That was the oddest experience of all. Men had been arrested for drilling, yet at Richmond Barracks we were led out, in companies of fifty and sixty at a time, and drilled under some of the best instructors in the world. Men were drilled there who had never drilled before in their lives, and had even, a year before, mocked at the manœuvres of Volunteers. Many of them afterwards remembered their tuition, as they remembered the company in which that tuition had been received.

Indeed, there was some cause for surprise at our

hilarity, though we ourselves at the time did not note it. In one of the buildings, within sight of our windows, courts-martial were sitting daily, and daily men were being taken from those rooms to receive long sentences of penal servitude; and weekly batches were taken for detention in British gaols. The executions were over by the time I reached Dublin. The grim and bitter mood they had created in the country had stopped them—it was the same mood that ultimately lifted us from the unswept floor to benches and tables. Yet it was from these same rooms men had gone to meet the shooting-file at dawn. From the room above mine Sean MacDiarmada had gone to his death as knightly as he had lived his life. From the same room as mine Eamon de Valera had gone to penal servitude for life. And the process continued without intermission, until the mere weight of numbers, swept there from the country by a net of so fine a mesh, caused it to break down utterly. Then the rest were sent to ordinary detention as the simplest method of making an end of what had begun to wear the appearance of an unending procession. Yet, while I was at Richmond Barracks it continued, though none would have guessed at it who saw only the hilarity that was, in fact, our best protection.

I myself quickly encountered it. On our entry the two of us were greeted heartily, as though to an entertainment. We would not be permitted to give an account of our adventures until we had eaten; and then our first thought was to hear, rather than to be heard. For the first time we came into touch with those who had taken their part in the Rising. Three were wounded, and lay on the

## MY FIRST ARREST

floor covered by blankets when we entered. The majority had fought through the week. He would be a man of little emotion, indeed, who did not feel as I did at that moment, with a touch of awe and respect kindling in his blood.

## THE WHIRLWIND CAMPAIGN, 1917-1918

## § 1

SINN FEIN, as a political party, was now constituted, and the great October Convention of 1917 had adopted for it a scheme of organization substantially as laid before it by Eamon de Valera, the new President. It is interesting to notice that in this scheme of organization was a section dealing with the institution of the Constituent Assembly of the future, to which the name was first given which it was afterwards to bear—Dail Eireann: The Assembly of Ireland.

During the course of the Convention I had criticized certain parts of this scheme of organization; but now it fell to me, in the office to which I had been elected, to be the first to create and administer it. For Austin Stack, my colleague in the secretaryship, was in gaol, and the task, committed to us jointly, had, of necessity, to be undertaken by the only one of the two at liberty. As I remember, Austin Stack did not come out of gaol for another month or six weeks, and it was necessary by that time to have the scheme in working.

The form of organization that had been adopted is worth brief review, for it embraced the entire country, and entered as nearly, as any political organization may, into the communal life of the people. Rightly to see this, a larger review becomes necessary.

For the scheme of local government adopted by England for Ireland has never expressed in any real—economic or social—sense the life of the Irish people. It was taken over from England, where it was the result of historical origins, and put down in Ireland like a Procrustean bed into which the people's life had to be crushed. But, to change the figure, in Ireland it was not the fruit of a tree the roots of which were embedded in, drawing strength from, the soil of history. Rather it was an attempt (conscious at first, back in the centuries, and unconscious afterwards) to deny that history, to cancel and forget it. For until the seventeenth century Ireland had had her own form of political governance, strong in its local life till the end, but at one time with that local life gathered and comprised in a national system; and it was this form that the policy of Plantations had succeeded in uprooting and destroying in that century of violence.

Not completely, however. It had been preserved in the form of organization of the Catholic Church. For St. Patrick, as great a statesman as a churchman, had modelled his church organization on the political—the social and economic—organization of the country, so that one fitted precisely with the other, each expressing different parts of the people's life in an identical pattern. Therefore, though the form of political governance was destroyed, its pattern was preserved—in spite of all changes and vicissitudes very remarkably preserved—in the organization of the Church by half-parishes, parishes, and bishoprics.

It was by this pattern that Sinn Fein was now organized. The larger (what I may call the bishopric)

units were changed, so as to bring the organization to a head in the political constituencies, by which necessity required that it should operate, and which it was devised to influence. But it rested on, being constituted of, the smaller units. One Sinn Fein club (or *cumainn*) was allowed for each half-parish area, known generally as the chapel area. That is not to say that each chapel area in Ireland had its separate *cumainn*. Sometimes there was but one *cumainn* for an entire parish; and to the last, when in 1921 under the rule of the Black-and-Tans the organization broke down, there were parts of the country where several parishes united to form one *cumainn*. But the chapel area formed the unit, and not more than one *cumainn* was allowed in such an area. In the larger towns and cities, where a newer form of life had come into existence, a different system was adopted, the ward being taken there as the unit.

The result is obvious and plain to see. When we, as secretaries, had to administer a decision of the Executive Committee, we knew that our directions began to operate either within an affected district, or within a part of, or throughout the entire, country, from the following Sunday. For then the members of each *cumainn* met at worship, and they met with all the people of that area, to whom that decision could be communicated if it were—as many of the decisions at that time were—of a sort that called for concerted action. And, beginning then to operate, it operated within a life that had a certain social and economic cohesion, gaining from that circumstance a vigour and uniformity that were of the greatest value.



When the opposition against which we had to contend is remembered, the importance of this cannot be exaggerated. For after the October Convention the arm of Dublin Castle was stretched against Sinn Fein everywhere. Arrests and proclamations and restless police activity attempted to stop the increase of the organization. But these things were exerted from outside on the life of the people, whereas we were working from within through the life of the people; and the very oppugnancy of method gave Sinn Fein the strength of inwardness and subtlety, and increased that strength the more Sinn Fein was opposed.

§ 2

When once this organization had been created, pruned, and made flexible and efficient, the Executive Committee elected by the October Convention became in effect endowed with the powers of a government. That is important to note; for now, for the first time, a conscious effort is seen at work to unthread the web of British Government in Ireland and to replace that web by another woven at home. This policy did not achieve (and under the circumstances could not have achieved) its perfect expression until, after 1918, there was an elected assembly to appoint a government; but now the political party of Sinn Fein is seen to shape itself toward that national non-party ideal. And the measured success of the policy depended partly on the composite character of the party, partly on the stirring chance of the times, when danger compelled the suppression of disagreement, and partly on the efficiency of the organization.

It was as a consequence of this policy that the new Committee was organized as it was. For the leading members of it had what in State affairs would be called Portfolios divided among them. Cathal Brugha, for example, took industries and commerce, Frank Lawless took agriculture, and so on. The intention in this was excellent, but it inevitably fell into failure, for it extended beyond the time and powers available. Each of these two men, for instance, was too busy with his own occupation to attend to the work assigned to him; and their work, therefore, devolved on the secretaries so far as it was possible of accomplishment. It was not work, however, that in the nature of things could be accomplished with any success by a political party; and a political party, especially a new party, could not afford to undertake work at which it could not succeed.

One department, it is true, was a success. For at that time, it will be remembered, German submarines were busy making a network beneath the seas for the snaring of ships, and had succeeded in raising the peril of a shortage of food in England. A Food Controller had therefore been appointed there, and as Ireland has for many years been the chief supplier of foodstuffs to England, the British administration in Ireland was naturally used to cause those supplies to be increased. The consequence was that the same peril seemed likely to be raised in Ireland, a food-producing country, as already had been raised in England, a manufacturing country.

The fear was genuine, and was widely held. It also created an opportunity of crossing swords with the British

Government on the splendid ground of defending our own people. The policy of politics and the policy of creating a Home Government were, accordingly, most happily matched when Diarmuid Lynch was appointed Food Controller of the Sinn Fein Committee. His conduct of that Department was bold and vigorous, and led to an incident that aroused almost worldwide interest.

First of all a meeting was convened in the Mansion House to call attention to the peril. Then the country was circularized with a view to making a food census; and the farmers helped us so well that we found that we had not the statistical staff to tabulate the material we had received. Finally, it was decided to take action. So, on the evening of the 22nd of February, 1918, Diarmuid Lynch and a picked gang waylaid a drove of pigs being driven to the quays, seized them, killed them then and there under experienced supervision, and sold them to an Irish manufacturer for consumption in Ireland.

The noise this exploit made was astonishing. It put the European War in the shade, for both English and Irish newspapers made it the event of the hour. In Ireland the effect was permanent. For the event indicated at once a care for the home people and a deliberate, calculated defiance of British administration. So strong was the feeling in the country that, under this Department, local Sinn Fein markets were created for the sale of Irish foodstuffs to the poor at reasonable prices, and farmers sent their goods to these markets, protesting that they were Irishmen first and traders afterwards.

The success of this Department covered the inevitable failure of the others. For, after all, the chief task before

Sinn Fein was political, and not until that task had fairly been accomplished could a National Government come into existence to which such functions could be assigned.

Indeed, there was no time for other work. I doubt if a political campaign of such energy and fury has ever been seen in any country. At the time it was often spoken of as "the whirlwind campaign"; and the title was just, save that it is not often that whirlwinds last so long. Every week-end was given up to meetings, and a special sub-committee sat to control these as various centres called for them. Some twenty or thirty meetings would be held each Saturday and Sunday. To these must be added special meetings held on all holidays of obligation and during the course of the week. And this was continued week after week, and month after month; and few of us knew what it was to enjoy a night of leisure.

In the midst of this whirlwind that raged in every county, and called on us all to spend much of our time travelling, the conduct, creation, and administration of the organization had to be continued. And it is time to state clearly what this meant. For at the time it was freely asserted by our political opponents that, however our activity might wear the fashion of service, the service was profitable enough, for Sinn Fein was a large and, therefore, a wealthy party. Such stones, to be sure, are always flung in the like circumstances, and we made neither complaint nor answer. Yet (if it be to the credit of that service) let it now be asserted that all the work, save that of the permanent staff, was given freely. Business men travelled every week-end, and travelled all

Sunday night, after a heavy day of meetings, for the new week's work on Monday morning, and did that week after week for months, freely in the service of their country.

However, I am telling the history of these times as they gathered about the experience of an individual—looking at events framed through the windows of an actual house. Let me, then, relate my own experience in this matter, for it proved that there were others like it. The Secretaryship to which my colleague and I had been elected was an honorary post, as were all positions on the Officer Board. The scheme of organization strictly prohibited payment for such services. As certain of us, from de Valera down, were toiling day and night at the work entrusted to us, the consequence can be imagined. For myself, for three months my wife and I lived on a present of potatoes a friend had opportunely sent from the country. It was Arthur Griffith, whose experienced eye (had he not lived thus for many a year in the nation's service?) saw what was happening to those on whom the burden of the work naturally fell, who caused the creation of a special Sustentation Fund, raised outside the funds of the organization, to allay anxiety by meeting the mere requirements of livelihood, in order that the work might continue. And it was in this spirit that the war was fought.

### § 3

That war, now, turned to fierceness. The October Convention not having split the new movement, Dublin Castle recognized that it had mis-stepped in permitting

it to have been held. Therefore, in an endeavour to recover lost ground, a heavy assault was opened on every side and an extraordinary battle of wits was begun. It was a case of interdictions and force on one side, and wit at full race on the other; and as wit nearly always won, force was damaged severely in that dignity without which it is merely massive and ridiculous.

Indeed, Dublin Castle acted promptly enough. De Valera, as the new President, was announced to speak at Newbridge, beside the Curragh Camp, on the 4th of November. The meeting was proclaimed and strong forces were moved into the town to make the proclamation good. On our side nothing was said, but messengers were at once sent down to the county to alter the arrangements. On the appointed day the meeting was held in the neighbouring town of Athy, where nothing had been proclaimed, before the same audience. And Ireland laughed.

Learning from that error, future proclamations extended to a whole area, sometimes to an entire county. Then the sight was seen of a number of decoy meetings, which distracted the police and broke their numbers, while the real meeting was held without interruption in a quiet field or by quiet cross-roads. For it was then that Ireland put to use those secrets which a county keeps that were afterwards to prove so valuable. Though every one knew where the real meeting was to be held, the police never discovered; and the whole countryside, opponents and supporters alike, joined in the fun, while Ireland laughed.

The fun, however, was dangerous enough, for it was

conducted during the early weeks of this new campaign under the shadow of tragedy. In the middle of September Sinn Fein prisoners in Mountjoy Gaol had gone on hunger-strike to recover the recognition as prisoners of war which, accorded earlier, had now, in the shifting and changings of policy, been denied. Forcible feeding had followed. As a result, Tom Ashe had died. His death had created an extraordinary shock, so horrible was the thought of a man being forcibly held in a chair and done, as it happened, to death. Deputations to his funeral came from every part of Ireland, and in many of the leading towns simultaneous funeral processions were held. And thus, by so calamitous a price, the object of the hunger-strike was gained by the mediation of the Lord Mayor of Dublin, and written into a compact. But when the new campaign was opened the compact was thrown aside, with the result that the prisoners (removed now to Dundalk Gaol) had promptly gone on hunger-strike again.

During these weeks it looked as if the new strike (which was afterwards compromised on each side) must end in death, for Dublin Castle had declared that its resolve had been taken, and there lay the tragedy with which our comedy of wits was loaded. Ireland might laugh to see authority baffled, but those who were arrested went to join their comrades in gaol, and there, without further question, they went on hunger-strike too. Yet week by week men were arrested, and week by week men went to the meetings to which they were sent; and I do not remember a single meeting advertised to be held that failed to be held.

The procedure adopted in these arrests added to the danger. For this was the time of what became known as "Mental Notes." The Defence of the Realm Regulations were elastic enough to cover almost any form of words that could be spoken on a platform, but that speakers had grown practised in deft and delicate allusions and audiences had learned to lift a hint as high as a hillside. It went hard with a "peeler," too, who was seen writing in a notebook at a meeting. Therefore the practice grew of writing in the notebook after the meeting—an hour later, maybe a week later, perhaps only when the indictment was drawn on other grounds. These were known as "Mental Notes," openly confessed as such, and accepted as evidence. Many of them were plain fictions, and some were monstrous on the face of them. Tom Ashe, for example, was charged with words which he could not have used. We knew what he did say, and his words expressed the thought of a man of blunt and straightforward vigour. No doubt the Realm would have been deeply aggrieved by them, but the words on which he was charged (going thereby afterwards to his death) were not those. And this method of "Mental Notes" left speakers at the mercy of policemen of luxuriant imagination eager for promotion. What use to practice allusion when invention could supply the official need?

However, here, too, wit found an escape from the toils that snared even the wary. I remember one speaker who began to speak by saying, with portentous solemnity, that he did not propose to utter a word that would offend the Realm or endanger its security. But, unfortunately, it



was not easy to know in what words such offence or danger consisted. The best authorities, and even policemen in the making of their "Mental Notes," differed widely. He therefore asked the policemen who were present to assist him. If any of them thought him about to say something deserving of a "Mental Note," he would request him at once to blow his whistle; and lest there should be a doubt as to hearing, he would ask all the others to blow their whistles, too. When the whistles sounded he would withdraw what he had said, would refrain from what he was about to say, and would turn to other more proper fields. But so long as no whistles were heard he would assume he had the consent of the police in all that he said.

Having opened thus he broke into the wildest sedition, stopping at frequent intervals to ask if that were a whistle he had heard. The meeting became like one broad smile; and the police, knowing that they were being made fools of, but not knowing how to remedy their folly, disappeared, till there was not one of them left to make a Mental Note.

#### § 4

In this way Sinn Fein was strengthened and extended as 1917 closed and 1918 opened. It worked with the people, and the people worked with it; and there is no doubt that at the end of the latter year it had become the national organization. *Cumann* existed in almost every chapel area; and I do not believe there could have been many who had not been present at the hundreds of meet-

ings that had been held all over the country, familiar with the personalities of its public figures, conspirators with them while outwitting and defying the proclamations by which its activities were sought to be confined. Although the public representation was still held by the Parliamentary Party, Sinn Fein was the real power in Ireland; and it is difficult now to realize that that change had been wrought within the compass of one year.

Early in the new year an event occurred to prove the reality and quality of that power. Indeed, no harder test could have been put to any political party in Ireland. For it has been the destiny of every Irish political party sooner or later to have become engulfed in, or to have turned for dependence on, agrarian unrest. Elsewhere I have dealt with the causes for this; and it is only necessary now to say that this destiny has its origin in history, and that it is therefore inevitable, and, therefore, beyond complaint. For political independence in Ireland was never overthrown until in the seventeenth century the land was confiscated and the people uprooted from the ownership of the soil; and consequently the effort to restore the one has always been accomplished by an effort to restore the other, agrarian organizations becoming political, and political organizations becoming agrarian.

To this general cause a particular must be added. It also has its origin in history. For the greatest economic calamity of the past (which it will take many years and the wisest vision in the Free State to solve) was what is historically known as "To Hell or Connacht," when Cromwell endeavoured to cram the population of Ireland into the poor lands west of the Shannon in

order to distribute the rest of the land among his soldiers. The result can be seen to-day. West of the Shannon occur what are spoken of as "The Congested Districts," so called because the average holding of land there is insufficient to furnish the livelihood of a family. But immediately east of these Congested Districts lies a belt of rich land, for the most part untenanted and given over to the pasture of cattle. Every spring, therefore, as the families lying on the fringe of this belt dig their land for sowing, and survey its insufficiency, anger (truly an historic anger) works like a ferment in their blood, with the result that every spring lands are seized—demesne lands within that territory and ranch-land lying on the border of that territory. It is easy to censure such "agrarian outrages." It is better to understand their causes. For so always will compression, surrounded by a vacuum, bring forth explosions when time and occasion serve.

In this year, 1918, however, there was much talk of a shortage of food, and violent action, indeed, had just been taken to keep the food grown in Ireland for the Irish people. It did not, therefore, need much vision to prophesy an especially bitter outbreak of agrarian violence. And when it came, Sinn Fein was faced by an ancient, but at the moment particularly inconvenient, peril. For that spring came news from every quarter of the west of seizures of lands, generally in the name of Sinn Fein. Yet if Sinn Fein once slipped into agrarian revolution its national claim for independence would have been lost sight of, its hope for the Peace Conference undone, and its larger plans for the political creation of an independent

State through the formation of a Constituent Assembly scattered past recovery.

I need not go into detail as to the method by which the danger was controlled. Enough to say that orders were issued that no tenanted land, and no untenanted land on which the legislative requirement of 15 per cent. of tillage had been observed, should be seized. If such land had been seized, it was at once to be restored. As to untenanted land, where less than 15 per cent. was under tillage, this could not be seized until the Local Constituency Executive of Sinn Fein had given its sanction in each case; and in such cases Sinn Fein endeavoured to arrange fair terms of sale—which, indeed, the people were willing to pay.

In issuing these decrees, Sinn Fein, it will be seen, was acting as a Government; and in doing so it had the consent and support of all classes. There were internal difficulties; for many, including two members of the Officer Board, desired that the political work should be accompanied by agrarian disturbance. Indeed, the Ard-Chomhairle (the High Council) of Sinn Fein was especially convened to deal with the matter. This Council was comprised of one specially appointed member from each Constituency Executive. It met and discussed, in effect, as a Parliament, and supported the action that had been taken by the Central Executive. The result was that within three weeks order was restored; and that result is remarkable (though none since has referred to it), testifying to the popular strength of the organization, for nothing like it had ever been wrought in Ireland before, where agrarian revolution and politics have gone through history hand in hand.

## § 5

This result is important to note because of what accompanied it. Sinn Fein depended, as I have said, on popular strength. It is true that the execution of these decisions was assisted by the independent organization of the Volunteers, working side by side with Sinn Fein; but without the prestige of the party, creating popular consent, nothing could have been done. Yet during these early months of the year it was claimed that Sinn Fein was already a waning force.

I have said that Fortune had been kind to Sinn Fein in the matter of by-elections. But Fortune is seldom wholly kind to party or to person. It is trite to say that she is fickle. Rather, she is quaintly impartial, snaring with a smile to deliver a lusty knock. For now two other by-elections came in which Sinn Fein was destined to be worsted—destined, in strict terms, for they occurred in two constituencies of which we had no hope from the outset.

The first was in South Armagh in the north. There the Ribbonmen of the nineteenth century had been strongest, and of them the Ancient Order of Hibernians (a sectarian organization, whose leader was Joseph Devlin) was the lineal descendant. There, too, were enough Orangemen to ensure the defeat of Sinn Fein if they were required; for the Orangemen hated Sinn Fein, a strictly non-sectarian organization, more than they hated the Hibernians, a strictly sectarian organization. In spite of the propaganda of the time, let me say frankly they

were not required; but it was their votes which made the defeat of Sinn Fein as substantial as it was when it was announced on the second day of February.

Yet during that election an event occurred, very strange, yet very characteristic of the north-east of Ireland. For during the election I, a Protestant, was invited to meet the leaders of the Orangemen at the Armagh City Club. My prompt acceptance of the invitation horrified some of my Nationalist colleagues; yet I was hospitably received, was assured that I spoke as an Irishman among Irishmen, and till day dawned we discussed common national affairs with a common understanding, parting then to fight with a vigour on opposite sides, the greatness of which was only matched by the greatness of the hospitality and comradeship with which I had been received. Little wonder that other peoples cannot understand our national disagreements, seeing they are rooted in an understanding that can be so complete. Yet so it is; and of them is the augury of the future.

The second election was caused by the death of John Redmond, who (it is said, and the tragic story has been adequately told elsewhere by those competent to tell it), deserted by his friends at a critical issue of the "Lloyd George Convention," had left that body on the 15th of January, stricken by illness, to die on the 6th of March. Thus a by-election was caused in Waterford City, and John Redmond's son, Major William Redmond, left his own constituency in East Tyrone to fight the battle of his father's memory. The constituency was bad for us, and the nature of the contest worse. Long consultations we

had whether the contest should be accepted, for defeat was only too certain. In the end it was decided that, since to turn away was worse than to be defeated, Sinn Fein should fight every election as it came, win or lose.

So we fought, and so we lost. We lost also in East Tyrone, where the total Nationalist vote as against the Orange vote balanced always within a dozen votes, and where Sinn Fein had split the Nationalist vote. So, therefore, great was the outcry that Sinn Fein was a waning force during the very months when it had set itself to as stark a test of its authority as political party in Ireland had ever faced.

Yet, before the East Tyrone election was over, another vacancy occurred in King's County (now Leix), and both sides were hard at the campaign there when news came that startled the country, and in a few weeks transformed the whole situation.

## § 6

It was now April; and during the past seven months, while we in Sinn Fein had all been busy shepherding the nation into the fold of the party, the Irish Convention (known mockingly in Ireland as the Lloyd George Convention) had continued in session, unminded of the people. These sessions had yielded no event that could attract the people, whereas every meeting held by Sinn Fein was a challenge against authority. Now, however, that Sinn Fein seemed, as our opponents claimed, to be weakening in popular strength, it was decided to bring the Convention to an end and to open a new policy.

From the point of view of Sinn Fein the past months

had left little of personal event to record, for the whirlwind campaign and the accompanying organization absorbed all our time. Those of us, headed by Eamon de Valera, on whom the work mainly fell, had each his task; and the work went forward with great speed and efficiency and an excellent sense of comradeship. We were all full of hope, not much disturbed by our recent defeats, though we did not minimize the effect they might have on the public mind. The intensity of our work, and the speed at which we all lived, made us less like human beings, with social and personal relations to one another, than like parts of a machine, which it was essential to bring to the utmost efficiency. Our service and our hope, therefore, had put out of sight, had made to seem utterly unreal, the rivalries of ideals and contests of personalities that had preceded the October Convention.

The European War, too, seemed remote and unreal. Yet it was now to strike across our scene and change the whole course of the future. For it was at this moment that the German armies opened their great offensive towards Amiens; and faced by a peril that struck at her existence, the cry went up from England for more men. Inevitable that eyes should be turned to Ireland. Inevitable that the demand would be made that conscription should be applied there on the same terms as in England. During the Waterford election, indeed, we had claimed that the return of Captain Redmond would bring the application of conscription to Ireland. Yet there was a difficulty in the path, for it was obviously impolitic to charge conscription on a nation that was denied the self-



government it claimed, and which the Allies claimed to ensure for all nations. The conclusion of the Convention seemed to indicate a solution of this difficulty.

The three events seemed, therefore, to be precisely fitted together. For, first, it was alleged that Sinn Fein was weakening; second, the Convention was bringing its long labour to an end; and third, the application of conscription to Ireland was loudly demanded everywhere in England. These things seemed to be in a happy conjunction. Consequently the Convention was hurried on to a conclusion, with a view to framing a measure of self-government from its findings, in order thus to justify the application of conscription. And on the 9th of April the new policy was announced by Mr. Lloyd George in the British House of Commons. It is true he said that the two questions "do not stand together, each must be taken on its merits." But no one in Ireland was misled. Everyone knew what was meant; and we in Sinn Fein met in long counsels to decide how to meet this new peril, for which all our work now seemed to have been but a preparation.

### § 7

I will not speak of the Convention's reports. We had had our own sources of information, and we knew all that had happened in the Convention behind closed doors. But those reports were dead from the moment of their announcement. Conscription not merely eclipsed them, but slew them outright. Had there been any doubt before that Sinn Fein had become the national organization, that doubt was now removed. For everyone—in-

cluding those who had loved us little, but who loved conscription less—looked to the militant party to rescue them, and from every part of the country news came of new members joining Sinn Fein *cumainn* in large numbers. And the first, and immediate, result was that no candidate appeared in opposition to ours in the King's County election. Dr. Patrick McCartan, who had gone to America to represent Sinn Fein there, was returned unopposed—the first of Sinn Fein's unopposed elections.

For a while, however, it seemed that the very existence of Sinn Fein, with its purposes, its ideals, and its separate organization, was imperilled. For at a special meeting of the Dublin Corporation, which had been called to protest that Ireland would not accept conscription, to however ample a political settlement it was attached, someone moved further that the Lord Mayor invite John Dillon and Joseph Devlin, as representing the Irish Parliamentary Party, Eamon de Valera and Arthur Griffith as representing Sinn Fein, and representatives of the Trades Union Congress to meet him in conference, in order to give united opposition to conscription and to make and seal an All-Ireland Convention. The motion so amended was passed; and subsequently the Lord Mayor, in sending out his invitations, included William O'Brien and T. M. Healy of the Parliamentary Minority Party.

When the invitation came to the two leaders of Sinn Fein, shrewd were the glances cast at it, and long the discussions of its worth. At the time, and since, what has become known as the Mansion House Conference was, and has been, regarded as a cunning Sinn Fein device to win back to favour. Little they knew, who thus spoke of

it, what opposition it awoke. From the first Eamon de Valera was in favour of acceptance; and he was supported by Arthur Griffith, who said truly that, wise or unwise, the wish of the people left no alternative. But it took the united effort of these two men to carry the proposal with the Executive Committee.

It was urged that Sinn Fein did not object to this one isolated legislative act, but to the entire right of a foreign legislature to rule in Ireland. It was claimed that the national right asserted by Sinn Fein did not admit of compromise whatever the temporary danger, and that its purposes and plans must be pursued, not lost or laid aside, as they inevitably would be if its leaders stood side by side with those who regarded those plans and purposes with distrust, if not with hostility. No doubt some of these considerations were moved by the desire for separate possession and power. Impure motives move obscurely in the sincerest of folk; and even when men like Cathal Brugha spoke it was impossible for him to forget all the work that had gone into the making of Sinn Fein, the lives that had been lost, the sacrifices that had been gladly made. Those impure motives moved more in some than in others. But in all the real danger, not merely to Sinn Fein, but to all for which Sinn Fein stood, was frankly recognized—with justice, too, as the event proved.

In the end, however, it was agreed that our two men should accept the invitation. But it was asserted—on the suggestion of Eamon de Valera himself—that they went to the Conference as individuals, binding Sinn Fein in no way by their action. This was, of course, absurd. The suggestion was like a mathematical formula for which

no practical correlative can be found—looking very real on paper, but equating with nothing real in fact. Our two men were the two chief leaders of Sinn Fein, and when they went to the Mansion House Conference it was as the two chief leaders of Sinn Fein that they went. And for some critical weeks Sinn Fein as a separate organization was merged and its plans and purposes laid aside. For the nation, with the peril of conscription hanging above it, thought no more of separate parties or of distinct purposes for its future development; it thought only of the immediate need, and it looked only to the Mansion House Conference as the expression of national unity and national leadership.

How Sinn Fein was, in the end, extricated from this identity and resumed its plans, and the blow which the British Government struck at its leaders, giving it complete possession of the national field, changing the entire course of the future, form, however, a separate story.

## CHAPTER NINE

# THE "GERMAN PLOT" AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

### § I

IT is impossible to describe (it seems, now, even unreal to recall) the immense popular enthusiasm of which the Mansion House Conference was the centre and the occasion. The whole people looked to it as to a beacon by which they should be led out of darkness. I am sure there never has been such concord in Ireland. Enemies forgot their enmities and hastened to be first in friendship. Yet emotion did not rest at concord, but pressed on to an enthusiasm that was like the advent of a new national being.

That enthusiasm, indeed, was a sign of ancient fountains deeply stirred. It was very easy to sneer at it, and cross-channel journals did not fail to point the derisive finger at a nation stricken with cowardice at the thought of fighting in Europe. It was not that, however. No one who lived through that time can have failed to realize how very far it was from that. I do not say that the ingredient of fear (however legitimate a fear under the circumstances) was not present; but deeper far was the sense of outrage at the thought of what Joseph Devlin justly and eloquently called a blood-tax charged on the nation by another people, against whose rule it had never ceased to protest.

For the people expected to fight; but were resolved to fight at home in defence of their right. There was a story told at the time of an English officer, newly come to Dublin, who entered a tea-shop of the Dublin Bread Company in Stephen's Green. Inside he asked the meaning of the letters "D.B.C." over the doorway. The waitress looked him up and down in his uniform, and "Death Before Conscription," she answered. The story may have been apocryphal, but it was certainly typical. For the new mood was extraordinarily one of challenge and defiance, of outrage and of anger. Among parents fear for their children was naturally stirred, for the European War was to them a remote evil that threatened no Irish liberties, seeing that there were no Irish liberties to be threatened. But among the young, who were chiefly concerned, and who formed the strength of Sinn Fein, there was (particularly in Dublin) almost an eagerness to accept the proffered challenge. I remember myself hearing a Unionist saying to a friend of mine: "Damn you Sinn Feiners, you do nothing but smile. Don't you recognize how serious it all is?"

Before such a background was the Conference set. It first met on the 8th of April, when John Dillon and Joseph Devlin, representing the Parliamentary Party; William O'Brien (of Mallow) and T. M. Healy, representing the Parliamentary Minority; William O'Brien (of Dublin), Thomas Johnson, and W. J. Egan, representing Labour; and Eamon de Valera and Arthur Griffith, representing Sinn Fein, gathered at the Mansion House under the chairmanship of the Lord Mayor. At the same time it happened that the Catholic Bishops were sitting

in assembly on the same matter at Maynooth; and so one each of all the groups represented at the Mansion House proceeded to Maynooth with a view to getting common action. The following morning, therefore, the papers printed statements issued from both conferences strongly similar in tone. But the common action came on a more critical recommendation. For the Bishops directed their clergy to celebrate a public Mass of intercession the following Sunday "to avert the scourge of conscription with which Ireland is now threatened"; and further directed them to announce public meetings, to be arranged by the Conference, at which a pledge was to be taken in the following terms: "Denying the right of the British Government to enforce compulsory service in this country, we pledge ourselves solemnly to one another to resist conscription by the most effective means at our disposal."

I will not deal with these public events further than is necessary to give structure to the story. It is right to say, however, that the greater part of the credit of the leadership of the Conference belongs to Eamon de Valera. The immediacy of the problem, its freedom from distant visions and constructive planning, peculiarly well suited the faculty of his mind, and gave great play to the electric quality of his leadership. His very avoidance of difficulties chimed with the hour and the national mood. This was well shown in the phrasing of the pledge I have quoted. For clearly so disparate a Conference could scarcely be expected to agree as to the means by which conscription was to be resisted. On one side stood the Volunteers, who were in no doubt at all, who only awaited

their chance. But on the other side were the Parliamentarians, to whom armed resistance was a surrender of their authority. And it was de Valera who suggested the words "By the most effective means at our disposal," leaving each to interpret that blessed phrase according to temperament and inclination.

It was, indeed, his hour. His progress was everywhere a triumphal procession, and he was the idol of the people. Crowds waited outside the Mansion House for each dispersal of the Conference, and then no person was heeded but he. Arthur Griffith generally came out with him, but it was he who was wanted, and Griffith was rejoiced that it should be so. To all shifts were these men put, in fact, sometimes to escape their admirers, who thronged about them and followed them in great crowds through the streets.

## § 2

Within Sinn Fein our arrangements had all been changed to meet the new emergency. It was clear to all of us that the resistance to conscription would of necessity be an armed one, and therefore all members of the organization who were also members of the Volunteers were withdrawn to that service, to the end that it might be strengthened and sharpened to the new necessity.

Since the return of the Lewes prisoners that force had been reconstituted, and with the spread of Sinn Fein it had been enlarged everywhere by the enrolment of the young men. As I have already indicated, a keen rivalry in fact existed between the two organizations, many of the Volunteers despising the political movement, planning



always to bring it to subservience, and thrusting particularly against those of us who were identified only with it, these thrusts having at last culminated and failed at the October Convention. But the great problem had been that of arms, for with all armament houses under Government control for the European War, and with the British fleet sharply patrolling the seas, arms had been exceedingly difficult to obtain and bring into the country.

Now, however, the questions of armament and organized resistance became vital, and everybody available was withdrawn for that work. Cathal Brugha was placed in charge of it, and resigned from the Sinn Fein Executive. Austin Stack, my colleague in the secretaryship, also went to this work. And these two men, with Michael Collins, gave all their time to it, while Eamon de Valera and Arthur Griffith gave their time to the work of the Mansion House Conference.

Yet, as it happened, the brunt of the work fell on Sinn Fein. For our organization was now called to prove its worth. Its excellency, its newness from the mint, and the rapidity with which it, and through it, the people could be mobilized, gave Sinn Fein a commanding lead in the country during these weeks of tense emotion. Each day the Conference sat, and before it adjourned I was ready to receive, either from de Valera or from Griffith, a summary of that day's conclusions. These were not to be made public till the following day, when they would be announced in that bald form in the Press. But by that time they had already been transformed into definite executive instructions for our *cumann*. For our staff would be awaiting my return from the Mansion House,

and with a keenness of spirit that no toil could blunt would work all hours. Thus, within twenty-four hours of conclusions being reached at the Mansion House they had been put into executive form and were on their way to the country. And by the following Sunday, at latest, they had been communicated to the people by and in the name of Sinn Fein.

The first Sunday's meetings, for example, on the 21st of April, when the anti-conscription pledge was solemnly taken at meetings throughout the country, were nearly in every case organized by Sinn Fein. The gain in leadership this gave us was inestimable. Later I endeavoured to time the difference between our speed of work and that of the two Parliamentary organizations, and I found that common decisions, commonly arrived at in conference, reached our *cumainn* in form for action at least ten days before they reached our rivals—our rivals who had lately been, and who potentially remained, our opponents.

The consequence of this was the suggestion that leaders on both sides should speak from the same platform. This aroused the strongest opposition among many of us, naturally, for the line of Sinn Fein's opposition was different from the Parliamentary line. If, said Sinn Fein, it were right that Irish representatives should be present at Westminster, then Ireland was bound by the decisions of the majority of that assembly. The national protest against conscription, in fact, was the nation's acceptance of the Sinn Fein doctrine that to send elected representatives to any other than an Irish Parliament was an abnegation of the nation's integral

right. How, then, could Sinn Fein accept a common platform with those who were members of the Westminster Parliament?

So ran the argument. Nevertheless, two such meetings were arranged. At one of them, in Ballaghaderreen on the 5th of May, de Valera spoke with John Dillon; and at the other, in Magherafelt, Co. Derry, some days after, I spoke with Joseph Devlin. Neither meeting was exactly a success, and they were not repeated. For in the meantime other events had happened that had brought the two parties to opposite sides of the line of division.

### § 3

I have stated that when first the conscription menace fell like a shadow across the scene Sinn Fein had won its first unopposed election in King's County (now Leix). Not easily could the Parliamentary Party allow a repetition of this sort of reluctant abdication. Yet within a few weeks the well-known Sam Young died, having lingered a long time ill, and his death caused a vacancy in East Cavan, where both sides had been busy organizing in prospect of that lamentable event, in decency pretending to do nothing of the sort, but in fact giving strenuous energy to every square inch of the territory comprised. And before the Mansion House Conference had met for the first time this problem faced us, and, since the administration of Sinn Fein had been placed in my hands, by the withdrawal of my colleague to other work, it fell particularly to me—in so far, that is to say, as it could be treated as an administrative problem at all.

Ordinarily it would have been so treated. Ordinarily we would have instructed the Constituency Executive to place a name, or panel of names, before the Central Executive. It needed no reflection, however, to perceive that the present circumstances, with the Mansion House Conference about to meet, could hardly be treated as ordinary. But we knew whom our people in East Cavan had already selected: Arthur Griffith, a member of the Conference, and, outside the Labour members, the only member who had not the rank of a public representative. I therefore decided to treat the matter as arising in the ordinary course of administration, and, the week before the Conference was to meet, instructed the Constituency Executive to meet for the choice of its candidate, the date of the meeting to be the Sunday following the first meeting of the Conference.

In coming to this decision I had (though I will not pretend with what success) endeavoured to put out of my mind the love I bore for Arthur Griffith. I did not endeavour to put out of mind my deep faith in him, my respect for him, for these were essential to any decision of such importance. I knew, to be sure, that shrewd criticism would come, for I was not unaware that plans were being made for a non-contentious candidate, plans that I had reason to believe were not confined to the Parliamentary Party, and I was prepared to abide trouble.

The Saturday after the first meeting of the Mansion House Conference—the day before the appointed meeting of the Constituency Executive—I was going down to address some meeting in the south (at Cashel, if my

memory says rightly), and William O'Brien (of Mallow) came up to me on Kingsbridge platform. After our first greetings he spoke at once of the East Cavan election. He referred to the possible candidature of Griffith, and said he was deeply persuaded of the desirability of that candidature in the present circumstances. Speaking with that earnestness and sincerity that have been the marks of his public life, he urged that any measures that were necessary should be taken to ensure that Arthur Griffith be elected for East Cavan, and he went on to speak of intrigue of which he knew, to secure the return of another candidate who was named by agreement. I stated that I felt sure that Sinn Féin would put up a candidate of its own for the constituency, but he replied that no time was to be lost, for the matter was to be under discussion that very week-end.

He left me within three minutes of the departure of the train. When he had gone, I hastened to the telegraph office. There I wired to the Constituency Director of Elections, instructing that the choice of the following evening was to be announced without failure in the Dublin Press on Monday morning. Those were days when orders were carried out to the letter. This particular order meant (as I afterward learnt) a motor journey of over thirty miles late at night to the nearest telephone station, but that journey was made, and when I returned to Dublin by an early train on Monday there the news was in all the Press.

The first person who came in to see me at the office was Griffith himself. Pointing to the newspaper announcement he asked me if I had known the Con-

stituency Executive was to meet. I answered that it had met at my instruction, and that my instruction had included the newspaper announcement. Our further talk turned upon personal matters, and he concluded by saying that he did not think that the intrusion of his personality at that moment was in the national interest. The next person to come was de Valera, who asked the same question, and got the same answer. He then said that he had spoken of the matter with Griffith, and that they both agreed that the announcement was very unfortunate, for it was felt that it was better at the moment to put up a non-contentious candidate, who would be returned by agreement. He proposed that a statement should be sent to the papers to the effect that the choice of the local executive had yet to come before headquarters, which would consider the appropriateness of a party candidature at that moment. And I answered that this could be done, but it had to be remembered that the next day was the day of the National Strike against Conscription—when no papers would be published and when the entire nation would stand idle, displaying by that gesture its united protest against the “blood tax.” No announcement could therefore be made before Wednesday. By that time the news would be belated, and the candidature of Arthur Griffith would have been confirmed by the relentless action of forty-eight hours.

I can see him now as these words were spoken. We stood by the window in a corner of the long room in which we worked, and as we had spoken he had looked thoughtful and perplexed. But now he looked sharply at me, and then he laughed, with acceptance of the

inevitable. "I suppose," he said, "we will have to go through with it now, and perhaps it is just as well"—in some such words as these, and expressing at least that thought.

## § 4

So, while the Mansion House Conference deliberated, we were thrown into the midst of an election, in which two parties represented at that conference contended against each other.

The work was hard to begin. Since the days of the Parnell split, when family was divided against family and son against father, there has been a horror in Ireland of political divisions, a horror that has led to false unities and crushed out the practice (the rare, the vital, the manly practice) of friendship in opposition and a brave giving and taking of criticism. When Sinn Fein had first begun its campaign this had been our chief difficulty, for the charge chiefly cast at us was that of being "factionist." But now that Sinn Fein had been stayed on its course, its opposition folded and laid away, and some weeks spent in learning an uneasy psalm of peace, hardly would the people bear a renewal of opposition.

It was this repugnance, I believe, more than appreciation of the menace of conscription, that made the work so hard. The people did not want to hear of rival policies. In places where a few weeks before an election meeting would have brought forth a great hosting and resolute enthusiasm, now but a few came, and these few were silent and perturbed. They would have come in throngs to an anti-conscription meeting, but to a political meet-

ing they would not. It was necessary therefore to weave the two together, and this was done by pointing that the right of Westminster to legislate for Ireland had at least this much sanction in the eyes of the world, that Ireland was represented there with her consent. In the present election, therefore, held under the threat of conscription, it was vital that a candidate should be returned whose presence there would not continue that sanction.

By arguments such as these was the lost ground recovered. But our chief strength, of course, was in our candidate. Arthur Griffith's position at the Mansion House Conference, the recognition everywhere of his willingness to stand aside and his steadfast, unbreakable courage, were factors that became more important with each week that passed.

We were confident of winning the election at any time, for a year's detailed work had been given to the constituency, and the delay was sincerely regretted by all of us, and by none more than Arthur Griffith, for it embittered much more than the electoral contest; but the fact remains that each week's delay helped us more and more, for it brought us further from the talk of unity (where there was little real unity) and enabled our entire organization to be thrown in the constituency. Yet the Parliamentary Party constantly delayed the issue of the writ, and that delay could only be explained by us as born of a hope that some chance would avert from them a blow that could not help but be (as indeed it proved to be) of fatal consequence.



## § 5

Other eyes, however, were watching these events. For it must now have been clear to the British Government that the Man-Power Act could hardly be applied to Ireland without the help of more forces than could be spared from Europe—that application of the Act would in fact deplete rather than augment the necessary man-power for Europe. As for the Home Rule addition by which that application could be held to be justified, none spoke of it or thought of it. All this was due to Sinn Fein, which was organizing disciplined man-power of its own in readiness for another war, and which, by the logic of circumstance helped by wide plans, was now admittedly the master-power in Ireland.

Counter-plans were therefore made to strike so heavy a blow at Sinn Fein that it would not easily recover from it. The first parts of these plans were not observed at the time. They were afterwards apparent. The sequence of events may be outlined in a sentence or two, and it is important, for it influenced more of the future than could possibly have been imagined at the time, or than has been recognized since.

The first event occurred on the 12th of April, two days after Mr. Lloyd George had announced in the British Commons the intention of his Government to apply conscription to Ireland. For on that day a man landed on the coast of Co. Clare in a collapsible boat. This man was Joseph Dowling, who lies to-day in gaol,<sup>1</sup> despite special resolutions of both Houses of the Free State

<sup>1</sup> Released in February, 1924.

*Oireachtas* calling for his release in accordance with the amnesty accorded to all other political prisoners. The facts concerning his landing have never been stated, and may now be. For he was arrested immediately on his landing. He came, however, bearing a message from the German Government to the leaders of Sinn Fein in Ireland. In spite of this arrest that message was duly delivered, but it did not in the least influence anybody, and it certainly did not constitute negotiations between Sinn Fein and the German Government. During Easter Week reliance had been placed on German co-operation, and Sinn Fein was not again going to be made a catspaw of foreign Powers, either among the Allies or among the Central Powers. Dowling came only to deliver a message, and he delivered his message in spite of all difficulties, and that message neither constituted a German plot nor constituted Dowling a plotter. Indeed, Dowling played the part of a man, for had he at the time divulged the fact that his message was to his captors there is no doubt but that he would have been released. Instead of which he kept his silence, and for that he is still in gaol, though every other political prisoner has been released.

This landing, however, started all that followed, for it clearly gave the opportunity of a blow at Sinn Fein. And twelve days afterwards the first preparation was made for this blow. For two years before steps had been taken to test the legality, under the regulations of the Defence of the Realm Act, of our removal outside Ireland, but our releases had put an abrupt end to these proceedings. Now, on the 24th of April, quietly and without notice, these regulations were altered, so as to secure the

legality of such deportations without trial. Other more startling changes were on wing however. For on the 1st of May Mr. Shortt was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland in the room of Mr. Duke, and on the 6th of May Field Marshal Lord French was appointed Viceroy in the room of Lord Wimborne.

Then these things being accomplished, on the 8th of May Sir Edward Carson, not a member of the Government, issued a statement saying "that the Government have the clearest evidence in their possession that the Sinn Fein organization is, and has been, in alliance with Germany." No one who knew Ireland but knew that such a statement, coming from such a quarter, was ominous. But more was to follow. For, in the light of what has been seen, the last step follows with curious significance. On the 10th of May General Sir Bryan Mahon was moved from his command. He was then General Commanding the troops in Ireland: he is now a Free State Senator, and as such has been moving strongly for the release of Joseph Dowling, a matter in which he speaks with remarkable authority. On his leaving he took occasion to address the troops, so as to say that he left "with deep regret"—a singular procedure that struck us at the time as intended to be of public significance.

Such were the preparations for the famous "German plot," by which Sinn Fein was to be struck from power. There was no such plot; the real plotters sat in the seats of authority, and their plot was to have a very different conclusion from what was intended. It was, in fact, to change the entire course of the future by putting a

different body of men in control of the organization, and thus to compel the very conflict which they desired to avert, a conflict which (or at least the bitter severity of which) might have been avoided for the country had the plot not been framed. But this was hidden in the future. At the time we knew nothing of the blow that was about to fall. We took these administrative changes to mean the certain application of conscription in the very near future, and we were busy completing our arrangements for organized resistance.

## § 6

On Friday, the 17th of May, I had been busy all day at headquarters, and had returned home late in the afternoon quietly to consider certain matters which I was to bring before a meeting of the Executive that night. I returned to the office about 7.30 to find it a scene of bustle and activity and no little hilarity. Papers and files were being tied together and removed to places of safety, and I was told that we were all to be arrested that night. Those were times when everyone was ready to take all that befell with humour, for without that humour much of the strain of these hours could hardly have been borne. Bonnier and better to take the blows that came to us cheerily, since to consider them too deeply must have unmanned the mind. So each worker reminded his fellow of the prisons he was to revisit, and it was only with difficulty, amid the quips that flew about, that I could discover what had happened. Then I learnt that intelligence had come that widespread arrests were to

occur that night, that the detective division (the "G" Division, the members of which were known as Gee-men) had been mobilized for action, and that a fleet of lorries was even then ready in the "Upper Castle Yard."

So that night, while the staff worked, the Executive considered the matter. We finished our ordinary agenda first, had our decisions recorded for action, and it must have been well past nine at night before we turned to the matter of our threatened arrests. By that time, our full number having mustered, the house must have been surrounded by not less than thirty or forty detectives—for most of us were accustomed to be watched in all our movements—and these were in turn watched by our pickets. Yet we could have escaped without very great difficulty had we so decided. The problem before us was whether we should escape. For the question that required of us an answer was, assuming our intelligence to be correct (and it was sharp and precise, admitting of little doubt), what action on our part would best accord with the policy we had placed before the country. For in our answer that night, with the enemy preparing at that moment to strike at us, the whole national future would necessarily be involved.

As my recollection brings back that scene, in Arthur Griffith's private room at the back of the house, I am stirred by pride in my comrades and our comradeship of those days. No one thought of himself or herself, and all our debate was directed to the effect on the country. There were three alternatives before us, and we discussed each calmly in all its bearings. The first was to go into hiding, or as our Irish idiom runs, to "go on our

keeping"; the second was that of armed resistance; and the third was to acquiesce quietly in our arrests. We debated each of these in turn, from the point of view of national policy. And we decided that the first was unsound, for if we went on our keeping the national discipline would certainly be impaired by the thought of its leaders skulking under cover before the first blow offered by our foeman. That would be fatal. Under cover we would be useless and the national courage undermined. Turning to the second alternative, we dismissed this too. For if we offered armed resistance within a few hours the Volunteers would be forced into action. That, too, would be fatal. For while we had publicly advocated armed resistance in the event of conscription being enforced, we had been equally resolved that, to gain our point of view, the nation must act on the defensive in such resistance. To be forced into the offensive would undo our case. So we decided against this also—after a discussion that was much more collected than many a decision in chess-strategy.

Thus we were left with our last alternative, to acquiesce without resistance in our arrests, and we discussed this, too, in all its bearings. It seemed to us that our arrests could not but stiffen the national resistance. There would be many others to take our places, whereas the shock would startle and arouse the country. Moreover, the effect of such arrests on the East Cavan election would be to raise the issue there beyond all doubt. So we decided that each member of the Executive should return to his or her home, and stand to arrest, whatever the consequence of these arrests were to be—and we did not

then know but that they might be the prelude to State trials for treason.

When I reached home that night it was nearly eleven o'clock, and I told my wife all that had happened. I had been followed home by two detectives, who stood in a doorway opposite even while we spoke. She suggested the ease of escape, but that was out of the question, for we had to be faithful to the decision we had taken. So she packed my bag for my journey, wherever I was to be taken, and prepared a meal, since I did not know when next I should have another.

I was actually at this meal, and arranging a number of business details for my absence, when we heard stealthy footsteps on the stair. It was my captors surely enough, who came through the darkness to my flat with their pockets heavy with revolvers, and a few yards down the road was a lorry with twenty soldiers.

### § 7

I have written of this arrest and of the gaols that followed, in another place, and will not write at length of them again. It is enough to say that I was taken first to the guard-room at Dublin Castle, arriving soon after midnight. I wish to return my thanks to the sergeant of the guard, on whose "doss" (as he with simple friendliness offered it) I slept till the next party arrived about three o'clock that night. The first of these was Arthur Griffith, and I can see now that dear man's sharp turn towards me and his friendly greeting as I rose on my bed and hailed him.

At four that night a party of eight or nine of us (some among the great dead, some in gaol as Irregulars, and some supporters of the Free State) were taken down to Kingstown and deposited in the hold of a gunboat that awaited us. There was only one person already in that hold, and he arose out of the darkness to greet us with outstretched hand. This was Eamon de Valera. He had been taken on his way to his home at Greystones. But all that day we were joined by later parties, many of whom had been brought down from the election in Cavan. When our hold was full we heard them on the deck overhead being tramped to another part of the ship—to the aft-hold, as we afterwards discovered. And it was not till after four in the afternoon that the gunboat swung loose from the quay and bore us to our exile.

During the Sunday that followed we were kept in a camp at Holyhead, and on Monday divided into two sections, one party being taken to Usk Gaol and the other to Gloucester Gaol. I was in the latter party, as were most of the members of the Sinn Fein Executive Committee. On our journey we were treated with the greatest courtesy by the officers and men of the Welsh regiment from which our guard was formed—who spent their time collecting our autographs at foot of what purported to be our likenesses in the illustrated Press. Their friendliness was, indeed, of great assistance to us, for they protected us with no little truculency from the crowds that, innocently believing what they had been told of us, moved threateningly about us as we were marched through the streets in Gloucester city. Some of them, in fact, expressed their preferences as between prisoners and



citizens in language that was highly decorative and forceful, yet measured and sufficient. For they had learned of us as we had travelled together, whereas the others had only read of us.

At Gloucester Gaol, tired as we were, we had again to fight, long and stubbornly, for our rights—as political undesirables, let me say, as distinguished from prisoners. Prepared as we were to fight for these rights, they were conceded, for nothing was ever conceded to us in grace. Our party at Gloucester contained Eamon de Valera, Arthur Griffith, and William T. Cosgrave, each in turn heads of the Irish State, as well as others who have figured with honour and prominence in their nation's service. Some of our company then are now among the Irregulars, but the chief of them have supported the treaty from the first.

At Gloucester we read for the first time the published information of our "plot;" and nothing surprised us so much as the lack of skill with which the poor case was marshalled in the official statement.

We were not permitted to remain long as so complete a company at Gloucester. For a week later a party of us were taken out and removed to Lincoln Gaol. That party included Eamon de Valera, Sean McGarry, and Sean Milroy (now deputies of *Dail Eireann*), who escaped from there. And two days afterwards I was taken alone to Durham Gaol, where certain later arrests had been taken.

So began what was for me the weariest of my arrests. Durham Gaol is old and damp. Our company there was eventually thirteen, and the space available for us for daily association was not adequate. I had not before met any of those whom I at first saw there; and new com-

panions (particularly under such enforced conditions) have always created in me the extreme of discomfort and distress. No visits were allowed from friend or relation, except under conditions that it was well known would not be accepted by us or by them. So I spent most of my time making up arrears of reading; and as I was destined to be there for nearly eleven months, I had a considerable library to bring away with me in the end. But many things were to happen before that end.

## § 8

For our arrests created the very effect in Ireland for which we had calculated—an effect the opposite of that on which the Government had gambled. For a long time in gaol we were not permitted to receive any Irish papers; but we hardly needed them to know (what is the historic fact) that the people were stirred as they had been by few events. The enforcement of Conscription was put out of the question altogether in the face of a people so powerfully rallied. Sinn Fein was finally placed in national leadership and control. And for a sign Arthur Griffith was returned for East Cavan by an overwhelming majority.

Moreover, as we knew, and as we had arranged for at our last meeting on the night of our arrests, the Officer Board and the Executive Committee were at once reconstituted by those who stepped into our places. Our files and papers—of which duplicates, for that matter, had always been kept—were brought from their places of safety; and the work continued as before.

Thus a curious thing was brought to pass. I have already shown how, at various critical occasions, a strong internal rivalry, or opposition of forces, had threatened to rend the organization asunder. Since human nature may never be denied, this opposition of forces had been governed by strong personal reactions and antipathies, but it was based more deeply. Partly it existed in opposed politics: as between those who seemed, to judge from their speech, to think only of armed force and obedient, disciplined ranks of youth, and those who held that armed force was of little avail save in defence and support of a reasoned policy. But actually it had been deeper even than this. It had consisted of the struggle of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, generally known as the I.R.B., a pledge-sworn secret society, for political power and control. Michael Collins was at the time at the head of this body, and he was surrounded by a number of lieutenants, all of whom held prominent command in the Volunteers. Cathal Brugha, who then was at the head of the Volunteers, had actually left the I.R.B. after Easter Week; but his faith was his faith, save that he cared little for politics and political control, whereas the others sought always for control of Sinn Fein and desired to put out of power those of us who were not in the Brotherhood and were not, in the armament sense, fighting men.

This opposition had come to a head at the October Convention, when a voting list, from which certain of us had been markedly excluded, had been prepared by the I.R.B. and circulated to delegates. It has been seen how the exposure of this list had defeated its intention. Some

of those named on the list, including Michael Collins, had been elected to the Executive; but the I.R.B. failed to get the control it had sought. The consequence had been that, while some members of the Brotherhood had worked actively with Sinn Fein, others, and conspicuously Michael Collins, had taken little part in its political work, but had kept to the Volunteers—of which body he himself at that moment was Adjutant-General.

So it happened that neither he nor those who acted with him had been present at our meeting when we had decided to stand to our arrests. None of them were arrested; for they acted together, and went immediately “on their keeping,” including Harry Boland, who had been present at the meeting. The Brotherhood was, therefore, in a strong position now to capture the control it had sought so long; and it was to these men, indeed, that the organization naturally looked to take the places of those who had been removed. They did so at the very moment when the powerful revulsion of feeling all over the country, caused by the arrests, put Sinn Fein into undisputed leadership of the nation. And such was the curious chance by which the British Government made the I.R.B. masters of the scene.

In this manner, then, came Michael Collins to the control for which he had striven, which he held so tenaciously, and which he maintained to the end. A man of ruthless purpose and furious energy, knowing clearly what he wanted and prepared to trample down everybody to get it, he was the real master of the new Executive. The new secretaries were Sean T. O’Kelly and Harry Boland, but behind Boland was Michael

Collins, whose hourly companion and faithful adherent he was. The new President was Father O'Flanagan, the only one of the two Vice-Presidents who had not been arrested; and he also, at that time, was Collins' adherent—though he may have construed the terms of allegiance otherwise.

Others there were of the same kind, whose names and personalities do not matter, for they have passed out of the field, in the race that was yet so furiously to be run. But the real masters of the new scene were two, and they exerted their powers in very different fashions, according to the wholly different inclination of their temperaments. The two of them were to come into violent conflict in the end, and were to die violently on opposite sides within a few weeks of one another in the breaking asunder of the violent instrument which they then created. No passages of more bitter acrimony were to be heard in the national history than were yet to be exchanged between these two men, before the supporters of each wrought the death of the other. But at that time, though even then there was little sympathy between the two, they combined in all ill-assorted but most effective partnership of power.

The first of these was Michael Collins. His was the power he desired. With the secret organization of the I.R.B. behind him, and with the more forceful members of the new Executive acting at his behest, he could afford to remain in the background while exercising the real control of the public organization of Sinn Fein. It was during these months, I believe, when it seemed at the height of its power and authority, that Sinn Fein first

began to be bled of its strength. For nothing will more weaken any public institution than for it to be wire-pulled by secret forces. Yet Collins' control was very effective, and his energy was without limit in the exercise of that control.

The second of these was Cathal Brugha. He also had the power he desired. He controlled nobody, as Collins did; and he was quietly contemptuous of that kind of control. But in the end, when the organization had been manipulated by the restless energy of Collins, all issues of policy ultimately came back to him. For on these matters his rigid will could never be moved. Stubborn, unbreakable, intractable, there was now no Arthur Griffith to pit him will against will, and compel him to come down to the details of policy. His life in the dream of the Republic—a Republic of name, without definition or constitution—was his reality. The public declaration of that name was all that to him was required to complete the reality that existed indivisibly in his mind. And since it is in such attitudes of policy, rather than in the control and manipulation of organizations, that real leadership exists, it was to Cathal Brugha that the leadership passed during this period, as the event was to show.

It only wanted Father O'Flanagan to give the eloquent flourish to this combination for it to be publicly complete. And that public completion was most necessary to stir and hold the imagination of the people during the critical months that were to follow. For when the British Government saw the mistake it had made it moved ahead at once to the proclamation of Sinn Fein. Every effort was made to stamp out its activities; and men were seized

and thrown into gaol for merely reading a declaration of policy. All these efforts, however, were in vain. The people stood solidly behind Sinn Fein, with that quality of conviction that violence only makes more resolute; and a moment was approaching when this was to be seen in unmistakable form.

For the European War ended in the Armistice, and all thoughts (throughout the world, and peculiarly in Ireland) were turned towards the Peace Conference, the cardinal factor, at that time, of Sinn Fein policy. It was at this moment that Mr. Lloyd George dissolved Parliament; and this, of course, involved Ireland in the General Election. Now, therefore, had come the moment for which Sinn Fein had worked for two years; and every energy was thrown into the effort to make Ireland's demand for independence at the Peace Conference unmistakable because unanimous.

So the irony was refined and finished. It was in view of this moment that a long contest had been fought within the ranks of Sinn Fein—and before those ranks had, eighteen months before, been widened to include certain others of slower speed. The I.R.B., under Michael Collins, had struggled for the control of the organization of Sinn Fein, as it had captured and controlled the organization of the Volunteers. But it had been beaten in open vote in a Convention representative of the entire country. On the other hand, Cathal Brugha had fought stubbornly for a Constitution in which the Republic of his dream should be accepted as an inflexible, unquestionable fact. But he also had been defeated by Arthur Griffith, who had laid down the principle that this was a question the

people themselves must finally answer in the exercise of their freedom. And now had come the moment when the harvest of these victories should have been reaped. Instead of which, by the action of the British Government in arresting those whom the people had appointed, those who had been defeated were in power at the head of a triumphant organization at a time of General Election to carry out their purposes.

For some of us the consequence was to be serious. For myself, as will be seen, it practically meant that I was to be thrown out of the organization. Apart from the personal aspect, however, the irony was certainly masterly and complete. I have already said that the entire course of the future was to be governed by it during years of such darkness and intensity of violence as few peoples have been required to endure.



CHAPTER TEN

THE DECLARATION OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF IRELAND

§ I

WHAT is that fabled dragon of a man's life, his worst enemy? The measure of his infamy, or the tribute to his quality? Or both? Or is it the meed of the "insolence of talent which is expiated by dumb hatred, and calumnies not loud but deep," as good Jacques Tournebroche is alleged to have earned? I do not pretend to say; but I fear that there are some in my days who would vie with one another for that poor distinction. Yet, whoever they be and wherever they be, few or many, I would not wish them such weeks as I spent in the winter that closed 1918 and opened 1919. Not all winter fruit, I think, can be as bitter as the fruit I could not put away from me then; and I am sure that the taste of that fruit will never leave my tongue, or be forgotten by my mind. Always I shall bear the scar of the torture that body and brain conspired to bestow.

I have been housed in ten different gaols or places of confinement, and among them Durham Gaol is possessed of a peculiar distinction. It is built of local sandstone that loves to absorb the mists of that northern clime and nurture them for the refinements of wintry pleasure. It is built of two sections, one of an antiquity more vener-

able than comfortable, and the other, modern, yet warm. My cell was on the borders of the two. From another part of the gaol I stole a thermometer, in a morbid desire to study the degrees of my bodily torment. The theft is yet with me, and hangs before me now as I write. For over seven weeks I never remember to have seen it rise above 44 degrees Fahrenheit. For it must be remembered that at that time there was a coal shortage in Great Britain, and the Governor of the gaol was courteous to explain to us that his authorities had enjoined parsimony upon him. The furnaces for central heating were, therefore, kept low; and my cell was the last of the row, so that everyone else had exhausted the heat of the air before it came to me in a chill and deathly blast.

I asked for more blankets, with which I was readily supplied. But prison blankets are of strange manufacture. They are close-woven, hard, and heavy. They lie upon one like sheets of lead, weighty on the limbs, restricting the circulation of the blood; and I was glad to be rid of them, or as many of them as I reasonably could. I remember many a night feeling the life leave my limbs, and getting out of my bed to restore heat by hard and vigorous exercise. But this itself, as it began by being unpleasant, ended by being painful. For I got severe neuritis in my arms and shoulders, and lay wakeful, not knowing whether it were better to endure the pain and awaken heat, or endure the cold and evade the added pain.

Those nights were not pleasant. And it was to such nights that there came reflections that made bodily pain a mere pleasantry by comparison. I have shown how our

arrests in 1918 put into power in Ireland a body of men who had struggled for that power before, and who had not regarded with extraordinary enthusiasm those into whose hands it had been placed by popular vote. I am bound to say that I had never suspected that it would have been used as it was used. Nobly, courageously, it was used in all matters of national advantage; but not so nobly, not so courageously, in personal matters.

## § 2

Indeed, the meaning of the change was already apparent, though I had refused to see it. All letters from Ireland had, of course, to be guarded and allusive, but one had learned to read allusion as clear as a primer, and I knew that all those who were of what I may call the Griffith school were marked down for destruction. Now, as the General Election of December came forward, for which all our labours for two years had been but a preparation, that intention became only too clear; and as the result, and particularly the methods by which the result was attained, were to mean so much in the future, they may be related now with brevity, yet with candour, as they fell within my own experience.

For it happened that the assault was to centre most conspicuously on myself—so conspicuously as to make it appear that I must have been guilty of not less than treachery—a thought, indeed, to which many did come as the only possible explanation of what occurred. For before our arrests I had been invited to contest certain constituencies when the Election occurred; and in one

case the invitation had been given publicly before a township. But now that the I.R.B. was in control of the Sinn Fein organization, other dispositions were being made. For I had twice been offered the I.R.B. oath, and twice had declined it; since to be bound by an oath rather than by a conviction seemed to me an insult, not only to a man's intelligence, but to his probity, particularly when that oath is administered by a secret society. Therefore, among these other dispositions, it was only too apparent that I was to be completely eliminated.

It would be idle to pretend that I did not feel chagrin at being passed over so completely. Our mortal flesh is not so made; and even Arthur Griffith, than whom I have never met a man more selfless, might have felt mortified at so public a rebuke. And I held, by public vote, a position of high responsibility in the organization, and was in gaol because of that responsibility. But I chiefly felt the implication, so certain to be drawn, that the complete elimination of myself was due to some offence that I must have committed, and when, as the election proceeded, John Dillon at Ballaghaderreen pointed the finger of derision at so marked an omission—why, then I avoided even my comrades at Durham and kept to myself.

In Durham we had already established a secret post in and out (even to parcels, as the prison authorities may be surprised to learn); and by this means I communicated with my wife, asking her to see certain of my friends in the country. After a week I received a loaf of bread from her, home-baked, so the inscription ran, for my special comfort. This I bore to my cell; and, cutting it

open, I found a budget of documents that did not make happy reading. For they made it clear that the omission was being carefully and skilfully organized from within the new Sinn Fein Executive by the I.R.B.—and, let me add, that Cathal Brugha had sought to undo what others were determined to achieve.

These things, to be sure, are of yesterday, and do not now greatly matter. It is right, however, to look at them steadfastly, for they show the subtle, internal machinery of a political organization working behind the public, national demonstration, which was all that the world saw in the momentous Election of December, 1918, in Ireland. But at the time it made me feel as a soldier might feel in the front trenches of his army when he finds himself sniped from his own supports. It was not pleasant. It was certainly not pleasant. In a prison-cell at 44 degrees Fahrenheit it was most unpleasant, and calculated to put the iron into the mind and to bring it to rust there.

Solace came, however, from a strange quarter. For as I tramped my cell those nights, with my body in pain, and my mind in a storm, I suddenly sailed into quiet seas, looking out on waters of tranquil harmony. The change began by my attempting one night to recover one of the melodies from Beethoven's Symphonies, and to follow it through all its subsequent intricacies. Night after night, then, I sought to bring back from the chambers of memory all that they had stored of melody and harmony, and melody breaking into harmony. I went through all Beethoven's Symphonies in this way, patiently, persistently; and it was strange to note how

some of the motives most familiar to me would tease the mind, just beyond the margin of recovery, and then flood the brain like the vision of another world. I remember, for example, for nearly a week seeking to recall that perfect melody that Brahms, with so courageous a gesture, gives to the 'cello to open a movement in his Pianoforte Concerto, perfectly colouring it to that instrument, sonorous and reposeful, and then, as it falls to a close, awakening it on the pianoforte treble, crisp and clear, before it passes in wave on wave, blended and combining with the next succeeding theme, over the whole orchestra. For nearly a week it defied me; and then, when it was recovered, how blessed it was, with how God-like a voice it breathed power and repose and peacefulness!

I remember my next-cell neighbour (the Gaelic writer An Seabhac) asking me what I was doing, whistling half the night. He asked me more in wonder than vexation. But I whistled more softly thereafter. For the joy of my nightly world was that none shared it with me. The sniping from the rear had made me shy of my fellow-men.

### § 3

The national result of the General Election, however, was what chiefly mattered. And as I in gaol read the list of persons returned to form the Dail Eireann (the Assembly of Ireland) we had so long planned, knowing most of them and hearing of others from my comrades, it was plain that that assembly was to be less a house of

consideration than a regiment of battle. There was not a member of it but would do his duty, whatever the occasion; but most of them would look to a few men to know what that duty should be. The greater number were members of the I.R.B. and of the Volunteers; and this meant the very result that Arthur Griffith had sought to avert. It meant a contest less for liberty than for a name; it meant rigidity; and it meant the shock of violence where violence might conceivably have been avoided.

Over a year before, in the great struggle between Arthur Griffith and Cathal Brugha, this had been the issue. Cathal Brugha, let me say quite candidly, had had nothing to do with the skill by which the I.R.B. had worked the Sinn Féin organization in the Election; there was even some constraint between him and those who controlled the I.R.B.; but he was resolute now to take advantage of the occasion to have declared before the world the reality that existed in his mind, the Republic of Ireland. Circumstance had made him now the victor; and the declaration of the Republic was a foregone decision by that very fact.

What this meant is important to note, especially in the light of Griffith's prescience. Particularly it is important to note that the end to be gained was not in question. For nobody doubted that at that time the Irish people desired a republican form of government, as a matter of political preference as well as a symbol of freedom. The difference was one of method, of diplomatic and political wisdom, and of the retention of the freedom of decision to the end, having regard to

changing circumstances; and it was in these matters that Griffith's foresight was approved.

For two years our theme had been that Ireland should claim before the Peace Conference her right to determine her own form of Government. That claim had been in tune with the professed ideals for which the European War was being fought by the Allied Powers; and it was peculiarly in tune with the utterances of President Wilson, utterances which rang through the world as the words of no man have in history been known to ring, but quoted in Ireland as though they had been devised to meet her case. Two of these utterances had been made in the closing stages of that war, on the 4th of July and on the 28th of September; and most of the speeches during the Election in Ireland had been built out of this theme. The return of national representatives in that Election who repudiated the British Legislature, for which they had by the law been elected, and the creation by them of a National Assembly sitting in Ireland, ready to present the national case before the nations sitting in Peace Conference, ready also to make a frame of government for the people of Ireland, carried the argument of two years to a triumphant end, and put the Irish case diplomatically in a position of great strength.

Yet that strength depended on one critical consideration. It depended on the decision not being taken out of the hands of the body to which the appeal was to be made, but held in reserve lest that body declined to attend to the case ready to be formulated. For hardly, and only with difficulty, could Great Britain, one of the most powerful and conspicuous members of that Con-



ference, object to an ancient case being presented there, as long as the decision had not already been taken in Ireland before the appeal—as long as, indeed, judgment had not been snatched from the assembly to which the appeal was to be made. Such an objection could and might, of course, have been made, but it would have looked like fear of the result—and it is the first duty in diplomacy to stimulate an opponent's difficulties. The mere appearance of Ireland there could not of itself have been interpreted as prejudicial to her, since the case would, in that event, have still been under judgment in a court of which she was a member. And, as regards the court itself, the attitude of the appellant would have been one of deference and respect—an attitude in all courts ever beloved.

On the other hand, to declare a Republic before proceeding to Paris would have been to snatch the very judgment in hope of which the court was to be prayed. It was, in fact, the policy of the accomplished fact; and that policy, as every student of history knows, is only possible with a first-class power of great strength, or with a lesser power geographically difficult to strike. Even then it is resented. No body, sitting presumably as a court of investigation, and ostensibly acknowledged as such, likes to be treated as a place where decisions, taken outside its processes, may, if not must, be registered. It is to ride atilt, not only against an abused diplomacy, but even against a still more abused human nature. In addition to this, it was to present the most interested member of the court with the opportunity of saying to his brethren that if Ireland were permitted audience, such

permission would be tantamount to a recognition of an Irish Republic, and that any such recognition, without inquiry, must be interpreted as an affront to Great Britain. In that case, Ireland's very friends there, supposing she had them, would be turned from defenders into apologists—an unlucky and disastrous change—and her chance of finding her way there at all to present a case would be small indeed. How could she demand inquiry into her case for independence when to hear her at all meant the recognition of her as an independent State? It was to present the Peace Conference (even if it were a court of the most angelic impartiality) with an impossible dilemma.

So my thoughts went to and fro in my cell in Durham—as they have often gone to and fro since, in reflecting whether our policy of that time could have been made to yield a better result. It was clear (to me at least) that if the lines of Griffith's policy had been followed, as they had been accepted before our arrests, this impossible dilemma would have been avoided. And according to that policy, had the appeal to the Peace Conference failed—heard or unheard—a Republic could still have been declared. Such a declaration, following on a failure, instead of preceding and creating it, and made while the Conference was actually in session, would have made a greater effect internationally; and the great value would have been gained, that Ireland would have secured freedom of movement and of decision to the last moment. No one knew Arthur Griffith but knew that it was for this very freedom he had struggled—as he had, after three years of warfare, to win it again by bringing the

nation back to the position in which he originally had stood. But Griffith was in Gloucester Gaol; and Cathal Brugha was in Dublin with a Republic as clear before his eyes as the sun in heaven; and Michael Collins had got an Assembly of Ireland that could be trusted to confirm the decisions of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and to endure all terrors in their defence.

## § 4

Thus it happened that the vital condition essential to the success of Griffith's policy was thrown away. In the first place, the British Government had removed Griffith himself, and all those who had been chosen with him by the October Convention in support of his policy—including Eamon de Valera, who at that time was content to be guided by Griffith. In the second place, a further purge had been made by those who now controlled the I.R.B.—and through the I.R.B. controlled Sinn Fein; by sending representatives to be present at all Sinn Fein Conventions for the choice of candidates, arranging identical dates for Conventions in different constituencies, and giving each to believe that the name or names desired by it were that day to be chosen by some other; and by other adroit devices—with the result that a substantial majority of the newly created national Parliament was ready to move to the word of command. And that word of command was predestined and inherent in the circumstances to be the instant declaration of the Republic. For those who spake that word looked less to, and thought less of, the nations in assembly than the deliberate crea-

tion of disorder and the appeal to "physical force," as the phrase then ran.

For this was the meaning of the news borne to us by the papers that came from Ireland. They announced that all the national representatives available had met in solemn assembly as Dail Eireann in the Mansion House, Dublin, on the 21st of January, 1919. The roll had been called of the representatives returned in all Ireland, but some of these were in gaol, and others, opposed to Sinn Fein, whether of the old Parliamentary Party or Unionists north and south, were absent. One of the few remaining copies of the original published proceedings (entitled in Irish, *Irish Dail Eireann*) lies before me as I write; and there it appears that a brief temporary Constitution in five articles was moved and adopted in Irish. The first article declared that of the deputies elected by the Irish people from the constituencies that then existed, Dail Eireann should be constituted, with full powers to make laws. The second created a Premier-Minister (not, be it noted, a President: for the Irish word is *Priomh-Aire*, of which the interpretation is Premier-Minister), and four other Ministries—namely, for Finance, for Home Affairs, for Foreign Affairs, and for Defence. The second created a chairman of Dail Eireann, under the name of *Ceann Comhairle*, meaning Head of the Council, a name he still bears. The fourth made the Minister for Finance strictly accountable, in manner defined, to Dail Eireann. And the fifth declared this Constitution to be of a temporary nature, stating the procedure by which it might be changed.

All these things were wise and essential. But now

followed the famous Declaration of Independence—a right and proper prelude to war, but not right (as I thought) or proper as a prelude to an appeal to a World's Congress. This declaration is generally referred to as the declaration of the Republic; but the wording adopted, in Irish, French, and English, speaks deliberately of the ratification of the declaration of the Republic already made as the prelude to the Easter Rising.

Let me, in candour, repeat that the misgiving in my mind existed purely in regard to procedure, not in regard to the end to be sought. In the mind of none of us at that time (except, perhaps, Arthur Griffith) was there question of the intention to establish a Republic. But the next act of the Assembly was to appoint three Envoys to lay the case of Ireland before the Peace Conference, Eamon de Valera, Arthur Griffith, and Count Plunkett; and how, I asked myself, would Envoys petition a Congress to investigate the case made by their nation for independence, when their mere reception would imply that the Congress had already received them in the name of an independent State, proclaimed and established?

Obviously, those who had decided on this procedure had perceived this difficulty. This is manifest on the face of the official "Proceedings." For the next act of the Assembly was to adopt a "Message to the Free Nations of the World"; and the first paragraph of this "message" read: "The Nation of Ireland having proclaimed her national independence, calls through her elected representatives in Parliament assembled in the Irish capital on the 21st of January, 1919, upon every free nation to support the Irish Republic by recognizing

Ireland's national status and her right to its vindication at the Peace Congress." The "message" then proceeded to recite the arguments in favour of that recognition, and appealed, not only on the inherent justice of the national claim, but to the self-interest of other nations. And, so framed, it was clearly an attempt to avert the difficulty that had already been created; but, in spite of the great dignity with which it was made, it could hardly hope to succeed. For hardly would the free nations of the world be expected to give their official recognition to an act so hostile to a great Power like Great Britain, though they might have been asked, reasonably and without prejudice, to investigate a national claim—and that of itself would have been a notable advance.

Therefore I was troubled. I was troubled personally as well as nationally; for I had so often taken a different line from my colleagues that I feared to do so again, especially on so grave an issue, and especially when I had so summarily been dismissed from position and responsibility. Any action of that sort would leave them even more deeply angered with me, and leave me even more desolate, a pariah among politicals and an outcast among friends. More profoundly than ever I regretted that I had left my books, where at least a man's integrity could remain inviolate. Honour, however, derives not from circumstance or consideration; and honour dictated only one possible course. The decision that had been taken would lead assuredly into the thickest of difficulties, and possibly into war; but it had been taken by a national Parliament, properly elected by the people to undertake all responsibility. We were all bound by it; I could do

no other than stand by it and, whatever befell, uphold it and serve it faithfully among the rank and file. And I was resolved to give such service to the utmost of my ability.

## § 5

Other causes of distress I had during these unfortunate weeks. It will be recalled that at this time the epidemic known as post-war influenza raged in Europe, causing many deaths; and after Christmas I learned that my wife had fallen to it. I had not seen her since my arrest the previous May; and as the days passed I learned that her illness was so grave as to put her life in danger. I applied, therefore, at once for parole; and the only result of my application was to cause a detective in Dublin to burst his way forcibly into her sick-room to discover whether what I had said was true. But no parole was granted; and as all letters from home had first to go to London to be censored, at least three days intervened before I could hear of her state.

Finally, towards the end of February I received a telegram that, while she lay ill, my home had been burnt. Again I applied for parole; and this time, as a fire was too public a fact to be questioned, the parole was granted. And thus I returned to Ireland.

A few days after my return I received a letter by our secret post saying that the epidemic had broken out in Durham Gaol, that the men had refused to be removed to hospital, and lay in their cells. I was urged to make the facts public in the Press. To do this meant to strain the conditions of my parole, and to that extent to put it

in jeopardy; but it so chanced that the publicity was most opportune. For news came that the epidemic had also broken out in Gloucester Gaol, and that our men there were being removed to a hospital outside the gaol, some of them in peril of their lives. Publicity as to these facts, accompanied by intimate details regarding the conditions in the gaols, raised, therefore, the whole question of our imprisonment, a question that, it had been thought, could by iron silence be kept out of sight.

Afterwards I learned of an incident of the epidemic in Gloucester Gaol that is worthy of record. For there the leadership and direction had naturally fallen to Arthur Griffith, and it was he who had caused the removal of the sick men to a hospital outside the gaol, knowing that, once they had so been removed, they could not be brought back without rearrest. In the midst of this, however, he himself fell ill. But he took prompt measures with his illness. He got a bottle of quinine, and all one night, whenever he awoke in fever, he took a "pull" (as he himself described it to me) at his bottle. And in the morning he found that the bottle was empty, and that the epidemic had fled before his attack.

Others were not so fortunate. Before my parole had expired the news came of the death of Piaras McCann. And thus the prison gates were opened by the hand of a dead man. For it was not possible, now, to hold men in gaol, seeing that the hand of death had felt among them, and the original cause of their arrests, unbelievably from the first, had passed out of sight. Therefore, one morning, in the streets of Dublin, within a few hundred yards three detectives ("G" men) stopped me to say that they



were instructed to inform me that I need not return to Durham, that my parole was returned to me. I guessed that this meant a general liberation, but as I would not converse with them I could not ask them; and so I wrote instead to Dublin Castle to say that unless the return of my parole meant the freedom of all my colleagues I declined to accept it, but would travel to Durham in two days as I had originally intended to do. But my stiffness of back was needless. On the morning of the day I had resolved to return the first company of the liberated prisoners arrived. They were headed by one of the most lovable of all our comrades, Piaras McCann, a squire's son from Tipperary, dead, in a coffin. Of that first company was Arthur Griffith, and the following day the rest arrived. And so ended the German Plot, which opened with the intrigue of an English politician and closed with the death of one of the noblest of men.

## § 6

On my return from gaol I had not visited our headquarters. Partly this was owing to my parole, by which I was pledged to take no part in political action while in Ireland, and which I kept even to that extreme. Partly it was owing to the necessity of getting my home into repair. But in no little measure it was due to an extreme aversion to meeting any of the men now in control there. The only one I had seen was Cathal Brugha, who had sent me a message desiring me to see him. Him I had seen at his house; and, though a man of few words, he

told me that he had seen what had been passing, but that he had been powerless to change events.

It was at this meeting I saw for the first time the personal hostility between him and Michael Collins that was afterwards to bring Collins to the side of Arthur Griffith, and to change the whole course of Irish history. And, strange irony, when that happened I was found fighting the battle of the Treaty beside Michael Collins, while Cathal Brugha fought against us with all the furious intensity of which his character was compact. But I do not forget, and shall not forget, his gesture of friendliness when I returned to Ireland shunning all my colleagues.

Now, however, all the men were back from gaol, and the first to come to see me was Arthur Griffith. By this time I was back upon my literary work, and I was ill-disposed to leave it again, even under his persuasion. It is strange, and most pleasing, to reflect that I should have held the friendship of both these men, in each of whom so little of sympathy should exist for the other. Not only did they contend against each other from opposite ends of policy, but by temperament they mutually and completely repelled one another. Each of them, indeed, found it difficult to make friendships at all. The more pleasing, therefore, the more valuable, I found their hand of friendship on this occasion. But when I went to headquarters with Griffith the attitude of those now in control there was so hostile that I was not tempted to put my boat again into those waters.

Within a few days, however, an event occurred that brought us all again into the arena of conflict, and in-

deed nearly brought the country to a calamity. For at that time Eamon de Valera was in hiding in Dublin. Prior to the elections the previous December he had, with Sean McGarry and Sean Milroy, escaped from Lincoln. Since then he had been in hiding in England, and about the time of the general liberation from gaol he had secretly made his way into Ireland. The general liberation, however, did not affect him; or at least it had been assumed that it did not affect him; and he had therefore continued in hiding in one of the suburbs of Dublin, awaiting a favourable moment to emerge. And it was decided to make that emergence a dramatic one, thereby throwing a challenge in the face of Dublin Castle.

For on Saturday, the 22nd of March, the following announcement appeared in the Press:

“President de Valera will arrive in Ireland on Wednesday evening next, the 26th instant, and the Executive of Dail Eireann will offer him a national welcome. It is expected that the home-coming of de Valera will be an occasion of national rejoicing, and full arrangements will be made for marshalling the procession. The Lord Mayor of Dublin will receive him at the gates of the city, and will escort him to the Mansion House, where he will deliver a message to the Irish people. All organizations and bands wishing to participate in the demonstration should apply to 6, Harcourt Street, on Monday, the 24th instant, up to 6 p.m.

“H. BOLAND. }  
 “T. KELLY. } *Hon. Secs.*”

Not since Queen Victoria had paid her State visit to Dublin in 1900 had such a State entry at the gates

of the city been made. The present announcement therefore compelled a comparison with that event. It meant, of course, that de Valera would enter as the official head of an established and independent State. No one was, therefore, surprised when Dublin was at once placarded with an official Proclamation prohibiting all meetings and processions in the city.

Thus was the challenge made, and thus was it answered. If the original arrangements were continued, undoubtedly blood would be shed; and not the blood only of the Volunteers, who were prepared to undertake that risk, but the blood of innocent citizens who would go to the scene as sight-seers. The alternative was to withdraw the decision to hold such a national reception, and to make a further announcement to that effect. Neither alternative was pleasant. Yet of the two, honour clearly dictated the retraction of the announcement, for it would have been criminal to have enticed crowds of sight-seers to what might for them be a shambles.

Early on Monday morning a courier brought me a summons stating that both Executives (the old Executive that had been arrested, now at liberty, and the new Executive that had been elected in its place) were to meet at once to consider the situation. So we met at noon, with Arthur Griffith in the chair. I had not much desired to go; but since I was there I was resolved to speak my mind. I therefore asked to see the minute of the Executive on which the Honorary Secretaries had based their announcement, purporting to be official. After some fencing it was elicited that there was no such minute, and that the question had never come before the Execu-

tive. I therefore asked Alderman Tom Kelly on what authority he, as one of the signatories, had attached his name as secretary; and he answered with characteristic bluntness that, in point of fact, he had never seen the announcement, and had not known of it, till he read it in the Press.

Then, in the midst of the tangled discussion that followed these disclosures, Michael Collins rose. Characteristically, he swept aside all pretences, and said that the announcement had been written by him, and that the decision to make it had been made, not by Sinn Fein, though declared in its name, but by "the proper body, the Irish Volunteers." He spoke with much vehemence and emphasis, saying that the sooner fighting was forced and a general state of disorder created through the country (his words in this connection are too well printed on my memory ever to be forgotten), the better it would be for the country. Ireland was likely to get more out of a state of general disorder than from a continuance of the situation as it then stood. The proper people to take decisions of that kind were ready to face the British military, and were resolved to force the issue. And they were not to be deterred by weaklings and cowards. For himself he accepted full responsibility for the announcement, and he told the meeting with forceful candour that he held them in no opinion at all, that, in fact, they were only summoned to confirm what the proper people had decided.

He had always a truculent manner, but in such situations he was certainly candour itself. As I looked on him while he spoke, for all the hostility between us, I

found something refreshing and admirable in his contempt of us all. His brow was gathered in a thunderous frown, and his chin thrust forward, while he emphasized his points on the back of a chair with heavy strokes of his hand. He was a great foeman when he fought thus—a worthier foeman than when he manipulated organizations. But, by his contempt of his audience, he had touched the combative in Griffith. I had hardly begun that if it were to be a weakling and coward to wish to avert a shambles of unarmed citizens, caught between two bodies of armed men, then I confessed myself both weakling and coward with a certain measure of pride, when Griffith rose to his feet. Tapping the table before him with the pencil in his hand, he said that the decision was one to be taken by the meeting there, and by no other body. He himself was strongly opposed to the arrangements that had been made, but he would accept the decision of that meeting. He would not accept the decision of any other body.

For two hours the debate raged fiercely, and O'Connell's weakness at Clontarf was invoked to awe those of us who desired the cancellation of the "occasion of national rejoicing"—that looked as if it would turn to an occasion of national mourning. Finally it was decided that Griffith should see de Valera, and that he should report the result of his interview to the meeting, which stood adjourned till eight at night. In effect that of itself was a decision, for Griffith was not the man to return till, on a question so grave, he held the decision his own judgment approved. And so it proved to be. In the name of de Valera it was announced in the follow-

ing morning's Press that the occasion was not one on which he would call the people to incur any danger, and that the public reception would therefore be abandoned.

The little part I played in this episode, however, filled my pot of sins to the full, and we were approaching a dread assembly of judgment. For on our releases a new Convention (or *Ard-Fheis*) of Sinn Fein had been summoned. At that Convention a new Officer Board was to be elected, and the names of all the original officers, who had been arrested the year before and those who had acted in our place while we had been in gaol, were to be put to its vote.

I was warned that the I.R.B. was resolved to give the final stroke to my political extinction at this Convention. Indeed no disguise of this intention was attempted, for Boland warned me that I would soon be heard of no more in Sinn Fein. I was also kept apprised of the methods being adopted to secure this result, and they have an interest more important than the merely transitory and personal, for they reveal a movement that underlay much of the dramatic happenings of the succeeding years, and exhibit how easy it is to manipulate political organizations so as to make them, with all the appearance of freedom and finality, the mere agents of skilful intrigue.

The method adopted in this case was to work through those members of the Volunteers who were sworn members of the I.R.B. and held important commands in their areas. These were called to Dublin, and were instructed to see that their men secured appointment as delegates to the Convention, and, as most of the elder men during the past year had either stepped aside or had

been put aside, this was easy to do. All these tickets were then collected, and the Sunday before the Convention were brought to Dublin, a Gaelic Athletic Association meeting being held on that day to give occasion for their journey. Those who remained for the Convention on the Tuesday acted as delegates, though few of them were members of the *Cumann* they purported to represent; the tickets of the others were transferred to members of the Brotherhood living in Dublin. And to them all typed instructions how to vote were given.

One of those who received these instructions afterwards described the procedure to me. On arrival at the Mansion House, as desired by the Brotherhood, on the morning of the Convention, he was shown into a separate room. There a number of others were already present, and were being given delegates' tickets from a large pile on a table by a prominent member of the Brotherhood who now holds high command in the Army. In his turn he, too, was given a ticket with a typed paper containing instructions. These instructions he did not observe, and no doubt there were others who exercised their own judgments. But as I sat with the *Praesidium* looking down at the Convention, it was obvious to anyone who knew the movement in Dublin that only a small percentage of it consisted of delegates from the country. One of the members of the *Praesidium* (it happened to be the very person whom Arthur Griffith had chosen to ask the question concerning the secret voting "list" at the Convention of October, 1917) came to my side in great indignation to say that of his personal knowledge he recognized the mass of those present as men who lived in



Dublin, members of the I.R.B. and the Volunteers, not members of Sinn Fein, but rather holding Sinn Fein and all its political doings in steady contempt.

Beyond doubt, great organization and tireless energy were required to produce this result. It was the negation of all freedom, of course, and utterly corrupt, but it was completely successful. Incidentally, also, it strangled Sinn Fein, for from this moment it began to decline until it finally disappeared two years later. This was but natural, for the strength of Sinn Fein was that it gathered together and expressed the mind of a people, and when it became merely the register for a little group of men, it was withdrawn from its constituents, from its life, rather, and fell into decay. But at the time the intrigue carried all before it. So far as it affected myself, the vote I received was insignificant, and Harry Boland took my place as Honorary Secretary, with Austin Stack, another of the same group, as colleague.

As I left the great hall, the Convention over, I was suddenly stopped by a strange sight. Behind one of the statues with which it is surrounded stood Michael Collins and Harry Boland. Their arms were about one another, their heads bowed on one another's shoulders, and they were shaking with laughter. They did not see me. Their thoughts were with their triumph. Little any of us knew, then, that in three years both these two men, locked in one another's arms sharing a common triumph, would lie dead, each slain by the other's agents. Who will say that Life, and Time for servant, are not master-ironists, pitiless in their mockery?

## § 7

In the meantime the international scene was being set for failure. The problem was, how to get our Plenipotentiaries to Paris. For it was certain that the British Government would not issue passports for them. Not easily could it have, with dignity, refused had envoys been appointed to pray investigation into Ireland's case for independence, but when those envoys, by the terms of their appointment, claimed to act as Plenipotentiaries of an existing, independent republic, not one nation could demur to the refusal of passports by Great Britain. Nor could such Plenipotentiaries, in dignity, attempt to get to Paris otherwise than publicly. The problem seemed unanswerable. But it happened that chance was kind.

For in December, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson had visited England, and had been accorded public receptions in leading English cities. At once the Dublin Corporation invited him to Ireland. Whether that invitation was stopped in the post or was inconvenient to acknowledge will probably never be known, but it was not answered, and President Wilson proceeded to Paris without coming to Ireland. It was stated in his behalf that no such invitation was ever received by him, and the Dublin Corporation, expressing its sorrow at this unfortunate circumstance, resolved to send one of its members to Paris to convey personally to the President its felicitations and affection. For this purpose Councillor Sean T. O'Kelly was chosen. Now Sean T. O'Kelly was a member of Dail Eireann, and its Chairman withal.

As an envoy from a statutory body like the Dublin Corporation he could hardly be denied passports. Indeed, such a denial would be a discourtesy to President Wilson. But, once in Paris, that envoy, with diplomatic skill and wisdom, could have done much to advance the case of Ireland there.

Unhappily, that skill and wisdom were wanting. As the messenger of affection and felicitations from so august a body as the Dublin Corporation President Wilson must have seen Sean T. O'Kelly, and the matters discussed at such a meeting lay within the ambit of an envoy's adroitness. Instead of this the envoy's first act on arrival in Paris was to say no more of the Dublin Corporation (his best, indeed his only, cover), but to write a pompous letter to the President, asserting that he was there as Plenipotentiary of the Irish Republic. That letter, I remember, was sent the week before the liberation of the prisoners, and it brought dismay to some of us. For it was now certain that President Wilson could not meet the envoy from Ireland. To have done so would have meant, in the first place, recognition of the official character in which he described himself; and in the second place, would have implied collusion with him in getting his passport in one capacity and using it solely in another capacity.

A great opportunity was thus thrown away. Therefore George Gavan Duffy was sent after Sean T. O'Kelly to help with his greater experience and knowledge of affairs. Gavan Duffy had, until 1916, had a considerable practice as a lawyer among French clients, and it was as a student of French law that he received his passports.

Both these men remained on the Continent as official representatives of the Irish Republic until the Truce was signed in Dublin in July, 1921.

Other help, however, was coming. In February an Irish Race Convention was held in Philadelphia, U.S.A., to urge that President Wilson should espouse the cause of Ireland at Paris, and at this Convention a committee of three persons was appointed to assist the Irish Plenipotentiaries in their presentation of the case there. These three men were Frank P. Walsh, who had during the war acted with William Howard Taft as co-Chairman of the American Labour Board, Edward F. Dunne, sometime Governor of Chicago, and Michael J. Ryan. They were a powerful delegation, and they came to Ireland on their way to Paris. Here they received a remarkable welcome, large crowds following them everywhere. They attended a public session of Dail Eireann, and the British military provided them with some striking scenes that could not but give point to their plea when at length they arrived in Paris. On several occasions, indeed, they came into conflict with the military, and, though this was undoubtedly an educative experience, it was not calculated to be helpful in Paris, in spite of the skill, tact, and dignity with which they, out of their knowledge of public affairs, always negotiated such situations.

It was therefore a little pathetic to note the avidity with which the Committee was received everywhere in Ireland. It is certain that whatever men could do, these men would do. They were, besides, men of great experience in public affairs—one of them, Frank P. Walsh, being a man of great force, eloquence, and ability, one who impressed

us all as built of exceptional timber. But it was already obvious that the initial blunder could not be remedied. And every speech the members of the American Committee made, honourably endorsing the existent independent Irish Republic, only made their own difficulties greater, and every conflict with the British military only gave them a heavier burden to carry.

So it proved. Already in May it had become clear that we must think and plan for what should be done when failure, inwardly evident, should become outwardly patent. But that did not come till the American Committee in Paris had done its work, and the famous Lansing Note had been received. In that Note the American Secretary of State stated decisively that the American Delegation to the Peace Congress did not intend to interfere in what it deemed to be the private affair of Great Britain. So ended in failure all the careful plans that had been made during two years. So fell the brave structure of hopes that had been built.

The news, when it came, was not nice. De Valera, I think, felt it most keenly. He certainly showed it most keenly. For others of us anticipation had already blunted the sharp edge of our disappointment. On the Saturday night following, at a presentation that was made to Arthur Griffith at the Mansion House, he revealed his disappointment in a speech of gloomy foreboding. During the next week the whisper passed through Dublin that the night after his speech he had left Ireland on his way to America.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### FENCING FOR POSITION IN THE WAR

#### § I

I AM sure that when Eamon de Valera decided in June, 1919, on reading the Lansing Note, to go at once to America, he did so consciously believing that that course was the most practical amid the difficulties that thickened at the time—though I also do believe that he unconsciously reacted from facing those difficulties in Ireland. But not all is practical that appears so, and a good deal less is practical than says so, and what the eye sees may only be the skirts of a problem almost passed, vanquished, or triumphant. For this reason the most distant vision often begets the most immediate wisdom, for it is not the cure of that which has passed or is passing that is critical, but the cure of that which has yet to come.

America was important, not only because of the great Irish population there (though most people in Ireland naturally thought only of this), but because Americans, more than most other peoples, were ready to be quickened to the kind of interest that Ireland needed. Indeed, that kind of interest was exerted in Ireland's behalf more powerfully than is commonly recognized, and official archives hold the secret how great an influence that

interest was in bringing about the Treaty of 1921. But there were abler men than he already at that work—men of experience in public affairs, men who knew the factors and conditions in the States, men who had put aside old feuds and had built an Irish unity there unlike anything that the past had seen. A visitor from Ireland holding de Valera's position could, to be sure, have stirred up a vast enthusiasm, for that was never difficult to do. But a vast enthusiasm is as often an effectual way of stopping practical work as it is a hopeful way of beginning it. For a pent public emotion must find some outlet, and if it is not allowed to explode in enthusiasm it may set something in motion, but if it explodes the energy is wasted. So there were even dangers in a visit.

But however important America, Ireland, where the difficulties had so grievously thickened, was the place where destiny had to be decided; and the consequence of Eamon de Valera's secret journey was that the guidance of the nation during the next critical year and a half fell to Arthur Griffith. It could not have come to better hands. Every quality of his was suited to that tremendous occasion; and none will ever be able to estimate what, as Acting President, his mere presence at the head of affairs meant during that time. The fitness was too complete for its value to be measured; and the mind, therefore, can only appreciate a rightness that occurred, without being able to calculate the greatness of its public service. There was nothing spectacular about it, for there was nothing spectacular about the man. There was little about it on which the imagination could lay hold. It was silent and undemonstrative, having no need of eloquence because of

its sufficiency. Of itself it was a sufficient table on which to write his fame.

His steadiness and unbreakableness were a rock on which the people leaned in the worst of the storm. My work during these years put me in touch with folk in many parts of the country, when it seemed, often, that the people must break before the attacks made on them; and I remember his name being spoken always as a sign of their trust. The spectacular might have uplifted them, to let them fall when it was no longer available; but his steadiness gave them steadiness; and his acknowledged power of endurance gave them hope, bringing them strength also to endure. His qualities were the very qualities of which they themselves stood most in need; and thus he became the symbol of national resistance with a peculiar fitness.

It was the same within the immediate circle of his associates. When Eamon de Valera left for America Dail Eireann was somewhat sharply divided. Only the intervention of the British Government, in proclaiming all public sessions of that body, masked a division that was perhaps inevitable in the circumstances. The very creation of an Executive had created an opposition; and an attempt was made, during the secret sessions of this summer, to broaden responsibility by putting the chief heads of executive control (or attempt at control, where Dublin Castle held a complete and elaborate machinery of control) into the care of special committees. The proposal was an impracticable one; but it had at least this much of justification, that those who pressed it desired that Dail Eireann should be consulted as to decisions



about to be taken in its name. They were not content, for example, to hear from persons in the city, in touch with I.R.B. circles, that Eamon de Valera had gone to America, leaving Ireland in the thickest of difficulties, when they had been elected to responsibility for just such decisions. Nor were they content to let the responsibility for the failure at Paris go unsearched. And the proposal they put forward, impracticable though it was (since control by Committee is no control at all), was their attempt to bring within their sight decisions in which they were seldom consulted, and some of which, they believed, were not taken by the Executive of Dail Eireann at all, but by the I.R.B.

Such was the internal situation that Griffith had to face; and he faced it and brushed aside dissension with brief and masterly authority. He did not spare blunt words—he seldom spared blunt words—but he made it evident that he did not speak them for the personal satisfaction of speaking them, and still less because he had lost control of himself. He never turned to personalities, or bent to abuse, or left a sting in memory. He spoke with absolute unconcern of the person; spoke in the fewest words in which his judgment could be contained; and pursued unflinchingly the end he had determined. But, always, he strove earnestly, without surrender to any, to hold all sides together in unity. And he succeeded—succeeded as other men with greater amiability, and with less of a resolute will of their own would not have done. He won his opponents in the end by his character, not by indecision or by bending to them.

I remember speaking with several of those who

attempted to bring about the change. Particularly I remember the deputy who had put forward the motion containing the proposal. After the defeat of his motion he thought of resigning the responsibility the electors had placed on him (a course from which I earnestly dissuaded him); but in Griffith's own entire disinterestedness he had nothing but trust. That trust, incidentally, was one of meaning, for the marks of his opponent's strokes were fresh upon him. That was some time in July. We spoke again at the end of that year, when his opposition had been silenced. No man, he said, could have accomplished what Griffith had that year accomplished, turning a divided Dail into a united assembly, by his willingness always to annul himself, without, however, once consenting to the annulment of his purpose or intention. The basis of his earlier criticisms, he told me, remained, but he would do nothing to make Griffith's task more difficult than occasion had already made it.

## § 2

Indeed, the difficulty of Arthur Griffith's position, as the head of a State that bravely protested its separate existence, and was now required to make good that protestation by the creation of Government, was formidable enough. From my reading of history I do not recall a parallel to the responsibility that was now laid on him, so strange was it, so hedged with problems rising high above him, so set with snares on either hand. For the Executive of which he was the chief, having been called a Government, had now to function as such in a country

where another Government existed, with intricate departments fully staffed, with a long history behind them, and with an army of some 50,000 men, equipped with all the panoply of modern war behind them to enforce their administration, whereas his administration had no staffs, no tradition, no experience, no army well equipped, nothing but what could be fashioned anew with the support of a consenting people, whose consent had to be carried at every stage if disaster was not to occur, and with whom, therefore, education and propaganda had to march front by front with the creation of administrative departments.

Truly this was a formidable task, of itself enough to daunt the most indomitable courage. Yet this was not all—and perhaps it was not even the greater part of—his difficulty. Justice and candour compel the memory that Arthur Griffith was now the head of an Executive, the most powerful members of which had opposed him, and worked against him consistently by every available method for over two years.

I knew him well enough, meeting him daily and in quick sympathy with him, to feel that there were often occasions when he agreed rather with his critics, when they pressed for knowledge as to what was happening, than with his colleagues, who withheld it from them, and often enough from him. Feeling his difficulty, I never spoke of these matters to him of my own instance; and he very rarely spoke of them with me. When he did speak, it was generally to ask an opinion; and when the opinion was given, he would generally remain for a long time in silent thought before we turned to speak of

other matters. Without fantasy one may say that we conversed as much by silences as by words; and though this was always true of him, it was particularly true at this time; and I knew far more confidently than by the communication of words that he was troubled to discover where the nation was being led beyond his sight, and to an extent beyond his control. Some of us used to meet nearly every night in the ordinary way of companionship; but he always desired that he and I should meet for tea together before this; and I think that a stranger watching us unobserved would have found considerable amusement from the spectacle of two men sitting together for a couple of hours, and often not exchanging half a dozen sentences apiece during all that time.

In later days, when the Treaty was signed and division had absolved him from the obligation of silence, he turned back to these times; and then I learned from his words, what his silence had already conveyed to me with absolute conviction, that he had disapproved of many things done during this time, decisions taken beyond his knowledge, some of which he only learned when he read of them in the Press. Eamon de Valera's journey to America, and his assumption there of the Presidency of the Irish Republic, for which there had been no election, and for which no authority existed, were matters to which he made special reference.

Yet at that time he always stood sturdily by his colleagues, with the infinite patience that was one of the chief constituents of his strength. I have said before that loyalty was the first law of his nature; and it was

never so perfectly seen as during these months; for it was loyalty with men who were enforcing a policy on him with which he did not agree. They were preparing for war, believing this course to be necessary and proper, whereas he did not believe war to be either necessary or proper. For nearly twenty years his ideal had been the organization of passive resistance, an ideal now the more greatly strengthened that there was a putative national State about which that resistance could be rallied. It is idle to consider whether war was necessary or whether passive resistance would not have won its way to the same end—idle, because the past is past. But it is not idle to remember that he held his ground firmly, knowing that beyond his knowledge preparations were being taken for violent methods; and that he was prepared at all times to work for unity, even to the submission of himself and his plans, in order that the nation might face the future, and all that it might bring, with the high courage born of conscious unity.

“Sinn Fein,” he said before the *Ard-Fheis*, of the autumn of that year—an *Ard-Fheis* scattered by the police—“is not a party. It is a national composition. If it is a party at all, it is a composite party. No parts of that composition may claim its own individual programme until the national ideal of freedom has first been attained. Then we may press forward our separate ideals. Until then we must sink ourselves that the nation may gain from our unity.”

These were words wrought from his deepest meditation, expressing a thought fashioned in the long silences that had become habitual to him. For he knew (he could

not but have known) what was being prepared; and he knew that he was powerless to prevent it; and he accepted it as his simple duty to rally all sections together to face it.

## § 3

Following upon the establishment of Dail Eireann as the national Parliament, and the declaration of the Irish Republic, the title and standing of the Irish Volunteers were changed. Since that body had been founded in the autumn of 1913 it had been responsible to no authority other than its own elected Executive. Now, however, the Irish Volunteers as such ceased to exist, and the organization became instead the Irish Republican Army. It is significant of the independence that the Volunteers had always asserted that in the late spring or early summer of that year, 1919, they held a special Convention to consider whether they should accept the change, and submit to the authority of Dail Eireann. There were some who doubted the desirability of the change, who believed that the Volunteers should pursue their own ends in collaboration with, but independently of the authority of, Dail Eireann. I have sometimes wondered, indeed, whether that submission would have been gained but for the high authority of Eamon de Valera. In the end, however, as the result of the firm stand he took on that question, the Volunteers (with hesitations by some, and with reservations by others) became the Irish Republican Army, directly responsible to Dail Eireann, through the Minister for Defence appointed with the consent of that assembly.

In actual fact, however, it was not Dail Eireann that controlled the Irish Republican Army, but the army that controlled the Dail by creating a situation that of itself put the Dail to one side and put the army into power. For a sign of the change Dail Eireann, as the months passed, met less and less frequently, and was less and less thought of, while the army held the field, and the letters I.R.A. came more and more into prominence, until at last they became the very symbol of revolt. Indeed, the conditions of war finally became such—war in street and field, with spies on either side like a hundred eyes everywhere—that it was seldom possible for Dail Eireann to assemble; and the Executive Council of the I.R.A. was able to compel a situation in which its decisions reached further in their influence than the decisions of the Executive of the State.

This lay in the future, of course, and did not affect the year 1919, of which I am writing; but it is necessary to look ahead in order to see with what care the ground was being prepared during this year. For 1919 was the year in which the I.R.A. was, with great skill and no little subtlety, fencing for position: gathering munitions and perfecting its organization, on the one hand; and, on the other, preparing the public mind for what was to come. And, in view of the strong opposition of policy and personality that for years had existed between the two men, it is striking to remember that, whereas Arthur Griffith, as Acting President, was the head of the State, Cathal Brugha, as Minister for Defence, was the head of the I.R.A.

Early in that year, in fact, the fencing for position had

begun; for in March an attack was suddenly made on the aerodrome at Collinstown, Co. Dublin, and a number of arms and munitions seized and borne successfully away. For a long time after this nothing so striking was again attempted, but smaller raids for arms were from time to time reported from every part of the country. These were at first confined to private houses; but soon isolated barracks of the Royal Irish Constabulary began to be attacked.

Great subtlety was shown in this, for feeling had been stirred against the R.I.C., and demands had been made that members of that force, as Irishmen, should resign a hostile service and take their place with the rest of their people. Soldiers of the British Army, however, were regarded as men who were simply doing their duty, and the public mind was not ready at that time to accept with any enthusiasm the thought of hostilities with the British Army. Therefore the R.I.C. was chosen for a beginning, and all that year constant propaganda was maintained against that force. The two things played together. The civil action was conducted by Sinn Fein under the title of the "social ostracization of the R.I.C.," and this prepared the public mind for armed attacks on R.I.C. barracks. Where in many country districts and towns people declined to sit at Mass in the same pews as the R.I.C., however thronged churches might be, and while news came from all over the country of peelers resigning from the force and being acclaimed as national heroes, it was not difficult for the I.R.A. to attack this armed branch of the British forces with the entire consent of the people. And in this way the people's minds were



being prepared for a much larger and more ambitious campaign.

The ground was well chosen, and the gains were many. The first gain was that the civil work of the R.I.C. practically ceased. They became an armed force purely, and so the various departments that relied on the force for information or administration found it impossible to function as before, and it became not only possible, but even imperative, for the Republican Government to consider setting up rival departments in their stead. The second gain, from the point of view of those who planned this campaign, was that the people were being attuned to the thought of the appeal to armed force. The third gain was, the R.I.C. were steadily withdrawn from all isolated barracks and concentrated in the larger, more central barracks, leaving large tracts of country to be controlled and policed completely by the I.R.A. And the last gain was that arms were captured and distributed to put the I.R.A. on a war footing.

The fruit of these things were not to be seen till early in 1920, but it is important to remember that the work itself was persistently accomplished, little by little and week by week, during 1919. When I say that it was done as the result of a deliberate plan I must not be understood to mean that its consequences were all so clearly foreseen as they now may be reviewed. Not so presciently does human nature work. The plan was nevertheless deliberate. The management of public opinion was accomplished simply by avoiding anything that might too suddenly outrage it, and the withdrawal of the British Government to its central stations was

accomplished by attacking it where it was weakest, in outlying police barracks. The consequence was that the more ambitious plans of 1920 became possible because of the skilled fencing for position in 1919, and the appeal to armed force and the challenge to war were put beyond human power to change or recall. For long Arthur Griffith had fought against this very thing, and now, being at the head of the State, he was required to be its chief defender.

## § 4

For myself, during these months of summer in 1919, I had established a weekly journal entitled *The Republic*. I had earnestly considered keeping steadfastly away from all politics, but when it became apparent, as it soon did to one who had learned to read the strategy of the moves on the board, where the country was being headed, to what difficult and dangerous places, it seemed that to stand aside at such a moment would be very cowardice and faithlessness.

In June I had been elected by the *Ard-Chomhairle* (the High Council) of Sinn Fein to a seat on the Standing Committee, and in the same month I started my paper. The change was striking, for great is the power of the printed page. Some, of whose friendship I had not till then been aware, gathered about, and desired that the paper should be made the centre of an opposition. It had not, however, been started to harass, but to help Arthur Griffith, especially by bringing attention to bear on the constructive work that it had always been his

desire to further, and to that purpose it held during its brief life.

In the meantime Griffith had been pressing forward his own plans. For years by pen and speech he had advocated the development of the unused natural resources of the nation and the enunciation of a national system of economics. He was a convinced disciple of the school of Friedrich List, and he had urged that what List had done for Germany should be done for Ireland. It was the quality of his mind that when he accepted the general rightness of a doctrine he avowed that doctrine in all its details, and perhaps there are not many who would be prepared to support the unreserved advocacy he gave to all parts of List's book, or would love the picture he often painted of an industrialized Ireland. In our discussions in Reading Gaol on the course of lectures he delivered there on that theme, some, I remember, had expressed strong disagreement with him. Yet, generally when he thought he was expounding List he was in fact expounding himself—a much more interesting thing to do. His faith was that Ireland should frame a political economy for herself, adapted to her own needs, derived from her own special circumstances, and depend upon and develop her own resources for the maintenance of her own population by the building of industries that would make her less dependent on outside markets.

An opportunity had now come to put his faith to the proof. It was, of course, not possible to develop national resources, to build industries, and to frame a national economic policy while another Government had first to be driven from the field. But it was possible to direct the

people's attention to these objects. Therefore, in one of the secret sessions of Dail Eireann, on the 18th of June, he proposed a motion, which was seconded by Terence MacSwiney: "That a Select Commission be appointed to inquire into the natural resources and the present condition of manufacturing and productive industries in Ireland, and to consider and report by what means those natural resources may be more fully developed, and how those industries may be encouraged and extended."

## § 5

So was established the "Commission of Inquiry into the Resources and Industries of Ireland," the work of which was to run side by side with the fury of war during the next two years. It was a remarkable body. Indeed everything about it was remarkable. It was established by a revolutionary Government, and its establishment was the first act of a constructive character done by that Government. Yet it was composed of persons who did not necessarily believe in the political faith of, or the claims made by, that Government. Invitations were extended to leading manufacturers, men of commerce, and men of science in the country, and though some of these declined to serve, believing that no good grapes could grow from such vines, or that service in such a vineyard would but bring them trouble, and perhaps danger, others accepted the invitation who would have declined to be numbered among republicans, some of whom had, in fact, opposed Sinn Fein as a political party.

By its terms of reference, moreover, this Commission

was no ordinary Commission appointed to examine a specific problem and to present a specific solution. These terms were contained in the resolution of the 18th of June by the adoption of which the Commission was created, and that resolution meant an economic inquiry of the deepest and widest kind, the subjects to be taken, in the order in which they were to be taken, being left to the Commission itself, all those subjects to be considered as parts of a co-related whole. The Commission was, indeed, to be not less than a National Economic Council, every separate report of which had to be related to reports on other allied and cognate questions lying to right and left of itself. It is the common experience of Commissions appointed to report on specific subjects that their reports involve disturbance of such other questions, and that it is not within their competence or responsibility to decide whether such disturbance is justified. But this Commission had, by its terms of reference, within each report to accept responsibility for the effect of its recommendations on other reports which it either had already made or had yet to make.

This enlarged responsibility was dictated by the exigencies of the time and occasion, but the method it implied is clearly a right one, and it leads to an interesting question, not proper to be pursued here, whether a National Economic Council is not a right and necessary institution in every efficiently organized State. The same exigencies, moreover, enlarged the responsibilities in other ways also. For, to anticipate a little, at the first formal meeting of the Commission on the 21st of September, Arthur Griffith himself opened the proceed-

ings, and stated that it was the intention of his Government that the Commission should be regarded as "a responsible, autonomous and independent body." This meant that the Commission was in effect to be, in an advisory non-executive capacity, the national authority to which all economic matters were first to be referred in order that they might be fitted into a coherent framework of policy. Afterwards difficulties arose in regard to the interpretation of these words. I merely mention them now as a sign of his thinking on these matters, for it was his faith that advice on economic matters should not be crossed and confused with passing political issues, but should be framed by a competent body taking review of all the true and permanent factors of the national life. He desired in such matters the same kind of continuity and purpose that most nations give only to their foreign policies, and he particularly desired this detachment and coherency at that time, because it was clear that national politics were soon to be straightened out into the simple case of war and bloodshed.

Of this Commission of Inquiry I was invited by him, on behalf of his Government, to become the secretary. He explained that it was the intention of the Government that the Commission should elect its own chairman, but that the secretary should be appointed by the Government, and that the Commission should be held responsible to the Government through him.

The offer was a tempting one, for it gave an unrivalled opportunity of inquiry into the whole range of national economics—an opportunity, indeed, of a kind to be coveted in any country, but peculiarly in Ireland, a virgin

field for developmental and constructive inquiry. Yet I hesitated, for I had my paper, into which all my possessions had gone, to consider. That difficulty, however, was soon decided summarily by the British Government.

The offer was made to me some time in August, and at that time Michael Collins, as Minister for Finance, was busy arranging for the issue of a Republican loan, in the form of Dail Bonds, to be offered both in Ireland and America. From the subscription to this loan the work of the Republican Government was to be financed. How many of those who subscribed ever expected their money to be returned I do not know, but feeling was now running high, and it was known, as the event proved, that the people in Ireland were willing to subscribe generously to the support of the Government they had elected. The difficulty was to let them know of the loan. Dail Eireann had been suppressed, Sinn Fein had been suppressed, and though they could continue to meet in secret and work behind cover, for the success of the loan publicity was required and a wider and more wealthy circle than such secret work could reach. It was therefore decided to advertise. All of us who owned journals were to be thrown cheerfully into a conflagration, the blaze of which would prove a much more successful advertisement than any mass of printed matter.

The plan was characteristic of Collins. It had the touch of largeness that, with his new responsibilities, he was now beginning to acquire. I remember when the advertisement came to me in my editorial office on Ormond Quay how I held it before me in admiration of the tinder my poor paper was to make. Yet there was

nothing to be said, and the advertisement was published. That was on a Thursday early in September. On the following Saturday Ormond Quay was held by military, by police, and by detectives, while founts were melted, type broken, and a formal notice of suppression delivered on my publishers. The same thing was happening elsewhere in the city and in the country, and in all, as I remember, some dozen journals were suppressed in Ireland that day for daring to print that advertisement.

The result was that the Republican loan was advertised by the British Government with a military pomp and worldwide notoriety that the Irish Republican Government could never have hoped to achieve. And I was disengaged from all other responsibilities to undertake a task that was to occupy me for two years, till, with the signing of the Treaty, I was called to other work. I will ever regard that two years' intellectual discipline as one of the most valuable experiences of my life.

## § 6

Thus, during the winter of 1919-1920 the two parts of the work of Republican Government ran side by side. The Commission of Inquiry was as yet the only substantial attempt at constructive work to which it had put its hand. Other civil tasks had to wait before they could be effective till the network of the organization of the R.I.C. had been torn beyond recovery over large tracts of country, and gathered together to cover a less ambitious field. Then new departments had to be created to take the place of British departments that had ceased to function, and old



departments (such as the Ministry for Local Government, over which William T. Cosgrave presided) were able to exercise a power and consequently to organize an activity that till then had not been possible. But during this winter the Commission was the first sign of life on the civil side that the people had seen of the Republican Government, and some of us who, as we started upon the work, appreciated the stupendous task that had been committed to us, foresaw difficulties and disappointment in the eagerness with which some of the people expected the speedy establishment of a new heaven and earth from so hopeful a beginning.

Beside the work of the Commission went the work of other departments, but particularly the work of the army. That winter was one of preparation, and nowhere was that preparation more active than in the I.R.A. The old Executive Council of the Irish Volunteers, that had continued in the early months of the I.R.A., was displaced by a General Staff. Of this Staff a selected few, members of the I.R.B., with Michael Collins at their head, initiated new plans, schemes, and policies; but the Staff itself was responsible for the organization and administration of the force under Cathal Brugha, as Minister for Defence, and undertook the conduct of the plans and policies that were decided. The Chief of this Staff was Richard Mulcahy, now Minister for Defence of the Free State.

Moreover, during these months the limitation of finance, from which the I.R.A. (like every labour of the putative Government) had suffered, was relieved. The Republican Loan was succeeding. Its collection was

costly, for under the responsibility of each deputy in each constituency organizers and collectors were appointed, who moved from town to town, and from district to district, utilizing the Sinn Fein organization, with the consent and authorization of the Standing Committee of Sinn Fein, gathering subscriptions from every part of the country. Their work was extraordinarily difficult, for the police watched them everywhere, and detectives followed them wherever they could. Disguises were often necessary, and quickness of wit was essential. In one case, for example, an organizer had "worked" a certain town, and was proceeding by train to the next, when as the train was about to leave a lad who knew him (the whole town had known of him, though till then the police had not) came hurriedly to say that detectives had boarded another part of the train. To the astonishment of his fellow-travellers he therefore opened his bag, tore into shreds every document it contained, and threw them from the window. When, therefore, on his arrival he was at once arrested and searched, nothing was found that could incriminate him, and he was released. This meant a journey to Dublin for more bonds; and thus the expenses of collection were increased; but as a result of this kind of patient, detailed, and dangerous work the loan was made an extraordinary success; and the work of departments, and especially the work and organization of the I.R.A., was enlarged and strengthened.

Special organizers were engaged for the Army. They were not sent at first to places that were judged to be of importance, since the force was not yet in a position to

pick and choose, but only where small nucleus companies existed, in order that from them a larger organization might be extended and completed. And a special intelligence system was organized, of which Michael Collins took charge on the General Staff. It was his conduct of this system that so greatly demoralized Dublin Castle. Some of the leading members of the detective forces on the other side were in his pay, and he had his agents in the inmost circles where secret documents were received and filed.

I remember, for example, about a year after this time I was travelling in the West; and about a fortnight after my return I received from him, not a copy, but the original of the report from the police of the districts through which I had passed, or was supposed to have passed, containing the signatures of the district inspectors and head constables responsible for the remarkable information so accumulated. It was a most amusing document; and for one who had had occasion to study calendars of State papers it threw a quaint light on the worth of other similar, if more antique, documents. The greater part of it was pure imagination. Information of my movements had been required; and that information was provided by observation as to about one-quarter and by splendid invention as to the rest. Even the books I had read were noted, though some of them I had never seen. I had, for a part of the journey, travelled by motor-car, and had chosen roads that skirted police barracks. But did this dry invention at its prolific fountain? Not a bit. The gaps were filled in very fully and also very inaccurately, and signed by district inspectors, and gravely

studied at Dublin Castle, and carefully filed for the biography of my criminal life. Yet the fact that such an original document should have come into my hand was an example of the thoroughness with which Collins worked his intelligence system, and enabled the I.R.A. to know what its enemy was thinking and often what its enemy proposed to do.

The chief need of the I.R.A., however, was of arms. Small, secret importations of arms, munitions and explosives were organized from England and Scotland, but the I.R.A. was increasing in numbers faster than these importations could equip them, and so raids were conducted all over the country. Private houses were raided; the more isolated barracks were frequently attacked; rifles were bought and ensnared from soldiers; and, as time went on, bolder adventures were made. During this autumn, for instance, the guard at King's Inns was attacked in broad daylight, and, suspecting nothing so intrepid at such a time of day, they surrendered at once. All their rifles and ammunitions were put into a waiting motor-car, and almost before the guard was fully aware of what was happening the raiders had gone. The affair made a considerable noise; and it is unnecessary to say that the exploit stimulated recruitment to the I.R.A.

Yet bigger things were being hoped for and planned. On the first anniversary of Armistice Day it had been arranged that Lord French, as Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Ireland, should take the salute of a special march-past of selected units of the British Army. A platform was erected for this purpose opposite Parliament House in College Green—a prominent place,

on which he would make a prominent target. I wonder if he knew how nearly he went on that occasion to his death. For arrangements were being made by the I.R.B. to this end when Griffith heard of them and at once interposed his authority.

The project of striking at the head of the hostile Government was not, however, abandoned. Some weeks later, in December, he went to England, and arrangements were made to ambush him on his return. The road he was to take from Kingstown to the Viceregal Lodge had been devised carefully along secluded country ways; but the plans were known; and the ambush was laid so as to stop his cavalcade while gunmen opened fire on it. He travelled in the steel-plated motor-car in which he always now rode, and he was escorted before and behind by an armed guard and an armoured car, the entire procession running at full speed once it had been started. To this, indeed, it owed escape. Those who had been appointed at the cross-roads to pull a farmer's dray across its passage, once the cavalcade had been sighted, were unable to complete the manœuvre quickly enough, the result was that, though a furious battery of gun-fire was opened upon it, the car in which the Viceroy travelled being hit, its passengers crouching huddled on the floor, the procession slipped through before mortal injury could be done.

This was the first attempt at public assassination; and it is significant of the change that had already been wrought in public psychology that the people were frankly disappointed at its failure. Whether they would have been equally exultant had it succeeded, I do not say.

The reality of success might have brought revulsion, where the lack of fatality left the exploit decked with only its splendid adventure. Yet the fact remains. A few months before, even the attempt would, I believe, have startled and disquieted; but now it evoked a furious regret at its failure, and the change was significant. The exploit meant that war in its fullest sense was shortly to be opened, and the disappointment meant that the people would be carried into it with their consent, and even with their approbation.

## § 7

During these weeks the Commission of Inquiry had been busy. It had met in full session for the first time on the 21st of September, when its proceedings had been opened by Arthur Griffith as Acting President of the Irish Republic. At that meeting it had divided its work into the care of several committees, a Standing Committee for the conduct of running business, a Finance Committee, and other special committees according to its arrangement of the subjects of inquiry. The four most important of these subjects were decided to be Food, Power, Textiles, and Minerals. The last two of these were put aside for the time being, and, in fact, were never engaged before the Commission was brought to an end. Special Committees were appointed to consider Food and Power, to arrange for the hearing of evidence, and to report to the Commission in full session, which in turn would report to the Republican Government.

It is a sign of the care with which all details had to be considered at that time that the offices of the Commission

were chosen over the offices of the American Consul. Any raid on such premises would be so easily liable to misrepresentation by propaganda that greater safety would be ensured; and so it proved indeed; for later when other houses in the city were being searched for the secretary, these offices were always warily left alone; and once, when the pursuit ran close even there, the secretary took occasion to have a long and earnest consultation with the American Consul on matters of industrial inquiry, knowing that his rooms would be immune from search.

I do not propose to deal in any detail with the work of this Commission. Its work was of the greatest economic importance; and it instituted, I believe, a form of organization for such inquiry, and in the consideration of its numerous reports, that could very fruitfully be developed. These are matters, however, though important in themselves, that are hardly proper to my present purpose. What is more pertinent to that purpose is that the Commission found its work obstructed at every turn by the armed forces of Dublin Castle; and that that obstruction had a great deal to do, first with the preparation for open war, and afterwards with the conduct of that war.

Not at once was this apparent. The first public sessions of the Commission for the hearing of evidence were held in the City Hall in Dublin in December of that year. No interference was then attempted; for leading citizens, some of whom were strongly opposed to the political faith of Sinn Fein, were present to proffer evidence; and the precaution had been taken to have representatives of

the world's Press, a large number of whom were in Ireland then, present on that occasion. But the Irish Press was forbidden to print that evidence, or to report the proceedings of the Commission. The amazing spectacle was therefore seen of summaries of that evidence being printed in the English daily Press as well as in such English economic weeklies as the *Statist*, and advertised and sold all over Ireland for that reason, while the Irish Press dared not, under fear of suppression, suppose that such a body as the Commission of Inquiry existed.

It was different when the Commission proceeded to Cork, in February of the following year, 1920, to hear evidence there. On our arrival in that city I was informed by the Head Constable that sessions of the Commission, public or private, would not be permitted, but would be frustrated by armed force if necessary. Idle to inform him that the Lord Mayor of that city had granted us the use of the City Hall, and that leading citizens had agreed to give evidence. The edict was complete, and the warning summary. Nevertheless, it was a point of discipline among us that all arrangements should be completed according to intention, whatever the opposition; and so for three days an extraordinary farce was enacted in the city.

On the first day, when we and our witnesses arrived at the City Hall, we found it occupied by the R.I.C. armed with carbines. This had been expected. So while a few, who had been told off for that purpose, held the police in argument, the rest moved in small parties to the School of Art, and held the morning's session there.



After lunch the School of Art was found to be held by police with carbines; and so, by a similar manœuvre, we moved to the County Council Chamber, where the rest of the day's work was completed. The following morning I was informed by our pickets that every possible public building was held; and we therefore completed our morning's session in the Imperial Hotel, where we were housed. Soon after midday this, too, was surrounded by police; and, in response to the prayer of the manager, we moved elsewhere in the afternoon. We divided; and while one half of our body drew the police off in one direction, the rest of us went to a private house (accompanied by our witnesses, who by this time had been stirred to endure all the consequences of opposition), and completed our day's work there. The following day we doubled back upon the City Hall, and had practically completed our labours there, when we were summarily and forcibly ejected.

It may be imagined that these events aroused a good deal of attention. Owing to the arrival of a British Labour delegation at the City Hall at the moment of our ejection, indeed, they made excellent stuff for the chief Press news of the day; and prepared all people's minds, in Ireland and outside of Ireland, for the regular engagement of war between the Irish Republican Government, that claimed the administration of the country, and the British Government, that held it and was prepared at all costs to enforce its holding.

During all this time, persistently week by week, the attacks on the R.I.C. had continued. Barrack after barrack was being vacated; and reprisals had occurred.

During the very week of these events in Cork, for instance, the police had broken loose in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, and had "shot up" the town. In a wild night they had paraded the streets in small bands, taking their revenge by shooting through the windows of private houses. Terror had reigned in Thurles; but anger soon followed in the country; and it was apparent that the regular commitment of war could not long be delayed.

This regular commitment of war, however, could not, in spite of these things, be said yet to have been made. It was soon to follow. Every Easter since 1916 had been a time of suspense and preparation in an expectation of a celebration and commemoration of the Rising of that year. Particularly was this the case in 1920, in the light of all that the previous year had seen. Nor was the general expectation unfounded, though the commemoration took a form that certainly was not expected.

The plans were carefully laid, and in view of the difficulties of communication they were extraordinarily complete. For during the Easter of this year on one night nearly every vacated barracks in the country was burned to the ground.

This meant war. It meant that a definite struggle had been entered upon, and entered upon with a nation that had been prepared to support it in all its consequences. But it meant more. It meant that all the areas that had been covered by the administration of these barracks were now definitely removed from recovery by the British Government, except as a consequence of a military campaign, for its bases of operation in these areas had been destroyed. And, since a people cannot exist in any

orderly manner without some form of governmental administration, it meant, too, that the putative Irish Republican Government was placed under the obligation of creating an administration for these areas. Thus Easter, 1920, was even a greater landmark than Easter, 1916, besides being as pictorially complete, for it opened a definite state of war, with all its dreadful consequences, and it created an administrative change from which the nation was never to recede.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### WAR

#### § 1

WAR had definitely been announced. Wherever one travelled in Ireland after Easter, 1920, one saw roofless walls, stark and black, of burnt-out police barracks, loose casements rattling unheeded in the wind, sandbags piled still in the windows, through which the sky was seen, and steel, loop-holed sheeting, often twisted by fire, over the friendless, deserted doors. They were, with all their paraphernalia of defence, a sign and mark of the change that had come. During the past year they had been equipped for defence against the unsystematic, haphazard attacks that had been attempted, now here, now there, throughout the country. Now this manner of fighting was definitely and deliberately to be supplanted by a systematic guerilla warfare in which, while much was necessarily left to local initiative, a general directive and plan of campaign was to be observed, with bands of armed men, on each side, seeking one another, and evading one another, trapping, pursuing, and hindering one another, along roads and lanes, over field, mountain, and bog.

The change was quite definite, though the sequence of events seems to indicate a mere acceleration of fury.

The signal was unmistakable, and was not mistaken by Dublin Castle. Characteristically, its first reply was by subtlety. Its tradition was to destroy rebellion from within rather than by attacks from without. Unlike all earlier revolutionary movements in Ireland, the present movement, however, had proved incorruptible. A different method of winning a way within the organization so as to strike directly at those who controlled it had therefore to be sought. The plan failed, but it was not without a masterly guile of its own.

One evening in the late spring of that year I was returning homeward from my office at the Commission of Inquiry when I overtook and passed Arthur Griffith at Trinity College. My thoughts were full of many matters when his voice recalled me to him. Instantly I saw a change in him. Calm always, he was now like a well of waters deeply stirred. Hardly could he contain his humour, and he desired that all other work of mine should be banished for that day, for he had a tale to tell me.

So we went to a place where, at that early hour, we were certain to be alone, and with many chucklings and much delighted reflection in silence he told his tale. Rather, his tale emerged to light through these obstructions, with no order or sequence at first to commend it, in a manner much unlike the deliberation that its teller habitually practised. "I am not a very dramatic sort of man, am I?" he asked. "But I have just come from a strange and dramatic scene. It would make a magnificent scene in a play, I think. I am sure no dramatist has ever thought of anything like it."

Some weeks earlier, he said, a man by the name of Hardy had come to see him, desirous to do something signal to prove his attachment to the cause. He had just come from gaol in Belfast, where he had been committed for helping the smuggling of arms into the country. In gaol a plan of exquisite craft had been conceived by him, in pursuance of which plan he had offered himself to, and had been accepted by, Dublin Castle for service against Sinn Fein. He was now attached accordingly to the R.I.C. depôt at Phoenix Park, and he desired to meet the army chiefs of the I.R.A. He knew well the risks he incurred, but what were they to what his country could require of him? His full plan he would only unfold to the army chiefs themselves, but briefly it was that, by planning with his employers for their capture, he would, in fact, lead the heads of the British Army in Ireland into a trap by which the tables would be turned upon them.

Now Griffith was the last man in Ireland to whom to come with such a tale. Wary as a fox, he scented danger in all innocence that protested itself. So he made further appointments to meet Hardy, and diligently sought out his record. He found that Hardy had indeed just emerged from Belfast Gaol, and that he had been committed there, not for smuggling arms, but for fraud. Moreover, he found that only a few months before he had been sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, and, therefore, that he had been liberated when only a fraction of his sentence had been served.

With this record in his possession Griffith had arranged with Hardy to meet the army chiefs at his

office in Brunswick Street. Particularly had Hardy desired to meet Michael Collins, and it was agreed that Collins should be present, the meeting to be at five o'clock. This done, Griffith sent a message to certain chosen journalists in Dublin, representing Irish, English, and Continental papers, that he had an important statement to make punctually at a quarter to five on that day. Accordingly two representatives from French journals, one from a Spanish journal, two from American journals, three from English journals, and two from the Dublin Press arrived, and Griffith explained to them all that had occurred. They were, he said, to be the army chiefs. Only the Dublin journalists were to speak, lest the accents of the others betrayed them, but they were all to look as like revolutionary army chiefs as possible while he exposed Hardy before them.

Hardly had he finished before Hardy arrived, and was shown into their presence. Griffith sat at his table, with Hardy before him, while the others sat round the table grim and Sphinx-like, while Hardy slyly quizzed them all. One of them particularly attracted him. This was M. Berenger, a Gascon, into whose southern blood the genuine humour of the scene had passed, and who folded his arms and glowered down upon Hardy with a grim and furious contempt. (Griffith imitated Berenger's terrific and intimidatory manner, adding, through his laughter, that he was sure Hardy had taken him to be Collins.) Then Griffith drew from his victim all that had already been told him, including the account of his imprisonment for helping to smuggle arms for the liberation of his country; and led him on to his plan, by which

the I.R.A. was to capture the heads of the British Army in Ireland.

While this was being discussed in detail between Hardy and the two Dublin journalists, Griffith took from his pocket a type-written account of Hardy's career, which he placed on the table before him. The others fell silent; and, asking Hardy if the life story he was about to read was familiar to him, Griffith then read the document he had prepared. I could imagine the reading. Griffith could be relentless on such an occasion and as hard as a stone. He told me, however, that he watched Hardy's face change, and his pallor increase while he read, till at last he saw his hand go quickly towards his breast-pocket. "Stop that," he called then; "you have my word for your safety while you are here; but not if you draw a weapon": and Hardy's hand fell into his lap.

Then Griffith delivered his terms. It was, he said, not yet six o'clock. The night mail left at eight. By that night's mail Hardy must leave Ireland. Griffith said he would personally answer for his safety for that day; but not for one hour longer.

Arthur Griffith's humour had now passed, and he was silent and stern for a while; but his humour quickly returned. It was the recollection of M. Berenger's conspiratorial manner that brought his humour back again. In the meantime others joined us, bringing the evening's newspapers with them; for the story was now the property of the town. Later that night a pencilled note was handed to him. He passed it over to me. It was a report from an I.R.A. picket at Kingstown that Hardy had left by the mail-boat that evening.



So failed the first and the last attempt to strike at the organization of war from within. In fact, for the first time in history Dublin Castle found itself in the position in which hitherto it had placed revolutionary organizations. Hitherto it had had its tentacles stretched within the inmost councils of such organizations, while being itself aloof and unsearched. Now the case was otherwise. The I.R.A. (for Sinn Fein was now fast becoming less an organization than a name; and the Republican Government itself sometimes awoke of a morning to learn what it had done) was now aloof and unsearched, having its tentacles in the secret archives of the Castle. Whenever it struck (whatever final judgment history may give of some of its blows) it struck with desperate accuracy, whereas the R.I.C. and the military, whether moved by the Castle or not, struck blunderingly—harmfully perhaps, but blunderingly.

Two examples occurred of this at this time—one on each side. On the 20th of March all Ireland learnt with horror that Alderman Tom McCurtin (the Tom McCurtin whom we had known and loved in Reading Gaol, and now Lord Mayor of Cork) had been brutally murdered in his home the previous night. This was the culmination of a series of reprisals. A short time before a district inspector and head constable of the R.I.C. had been shot at, and missed, in the streets of Cork; and this was the reply. At once it was put about by the Castle that Tom McCurtin had been shot by his own comrades because he had declined to let the funds of the Cork Corporation

be used for warfare. Now we who knew Tom McCurtin, knew how fantastic and outrageous such a suggestion was. No man could have been held in higher respect, or regarded with greater love, than he, not less by those who disagreed with him than by those who shared his counsels. To his work, more than to the work of any other single man, the organization of the I.R.A. in South Cork was due. He held rather a midway place between those who (in a rather stupid terminology) were termed extremist and those who were termed moderate. He was trusted by both; and, though of what I may call the war-party, his influence was always conservative and constructive, drawing both sides to an agreed unity. His murder precipitated violence in the South; and the blow by which he was struck was a blundering one.

At the coroner's inquest the evidence indicated quite clearly that the crime had been instigated by District Inspector Swanzy. Even his superior, the County Inspector, so demonstrably washed his hands of responsibility in the witness-box, as to make it evident that he knew, or suspected, more than he cared to say. In any event, the jury returned a verdict that caused much derision at the time. They found a verdict of murder against a long list of persons, among whom were included Mr. Lloyd George, Lord French, Mr. Ian Macpherson, the Irish Chief Secretary, and District Inspector Swanzy. It was easy to deride a sentence so embracive and promiscuous, for indeed it was less a verdict than an indignant indictment. Nothing was done, however; and Swanzy disappeared. The I.R.A. decided, therefore, to execute the verdict; and five months afterwards, on the

7th of August, Swanzy was shot at Lisburn, where he was then stationed, as he entered a church. Lisburn being an Orange town, Swanzy's death was followed by the burning of nearly every Catholic's home there in a night of fury and terror.

Tom McCurtin's murder was a tragedy (in the strict meaning of an abused word); but it was also a blundering blow. Seven days after his murder, however, on the 27th of March, the streets of Dublin rang with the tidings that Mr. Alan Bell had that morning, in broad daylight, been taken out of a tram-car and shot before the eyes of his fellow-passengers, his assailants escaping without hindrance. When the news came to me, I at once made inquiries as to the cause of it; and I learned that Mr. Alan Bell had been working at the organization of a special spy service. He and John Taylor had, thirty years before, undone the Land League by the creation of just such a service. Since then Sir John Taylor had been knighted, and was now the dominant force in Dublin Castle as Assistant Under-Secretary. Mr. Bell had become a Resident Magistrate; but, shortly before this, Sir John Taylor had brought his old colleague to his side to organize this special service, from his intimate knowledge of the country and his experience in this kind of work. Little either of them knew that his labour was being watched by a service as intimate as any he could have wrought.

I do not write in any defence of his assassination. Of that kind of procedure I have always had my judgment; and later events have but confirmed these judgments, have confirmed my belief that the same end might have

been gained by other means, with a higher and better moral effect when national liberty was gained. As a mere matter of historical fact, however, the truth remains that the death of Alan Bell was a blow deadly in its accuracy; for it meant that the work at which he was occupied fell to pieces and remained undone.

### § 3

The contest, however, was not only being fought by force and fury. It was being conducted, perhaps even more keenly, in the civil sphere. In January, 1920, elections had been held for municipal and other local bodies throughout Ireland; and for the first time these elections had been held by Proportional Representation. This method of election had been ordained by the British Parliament with a view to weakening the power of Sinn Fein, since, throughout the greater part of the country, elections held by the old method would have swept all other parties from the field. When the intention to substitute Proportional Representation had first been suggested, a motion had been made, in the *Ard-Fheis* of April, 1919, to agitate against it, because of the intention that obviously inspired it; but Sinn Fein had always advocated P.R., in the days when it was in a minority, as just and right; and when the *Ard-Fheis* was urged, now that it represented a majority, to stand by its avowed principles, the motion had failed to carry a single vote. By P.R., therefore, the elections had been held; and by P.R., searching test though the method gave, Sinn Fein carried a sweeping majority on very nearly every public

board in the country, gaining representation even within the Orange stronghold of the Belfast Corporation.

All the public bodies, as a result, had elected Republican chairmen, and all gave their allegiance, by resolution, to the Republican Government, pledging themselves to take no orders from the Local Government Board of the British Government, unless instructed to do so, for purposes of convenience, by the Republican Government, and to act under the control of the Local Government Department of the Republican Government. It is hardly necessary to point to the drastic change that this meant—a change upon which history was never to return. It meant that an entire branch of the Castle's ornamental tree (once so bravely flourishing, and already grievously sickled from its prime) was lopped at a blow, and that the little branch of the Republican Government, calling itself by the same name, was strengthened and enlarged to take its place. The difficulties were, of course, stupendous; for the Republican Government was hunted; and to create a department of this magnitude under cover, with its Ministers "on their keeping," its officials unknown, and its instructions conveyed secretly, was a task as intricate as it was formidable. Yet the difficulties were overcome; and the task, now begun, was successfully accomplished, though its accomplishment brought some of the local bodies to the verge of bankruptcy for the lack of monetary grants-in-aid.

After Easter, moreover, another department of the Republican Government was started. The yearly land agitation had risen again, as usual, on the fringe of the congested districts; and it presented a problem that the

Republican Government could not neglect. It happened that I was the first from Dublin to come into touch with it; for I had rested during Easter in Achill, and passing through Mayo certain solicitors and others had represented the seriousness of the situation to me. Lands were being seized right and left, generally by those whose holdings were insufficient to maintain a livelihood, but in many cases by men who took advantage of disturbance and disorder to augment holdings that were, it is true, none too large, but sufficient for their needs withal. I was told that a situation had arisen that would, if it were not grappled instantly and in a statesmanlike manner, engulf that part of the country in a trouble that might overwhelm the straighter national issue.

On my return to Dublin I reported the matter to Arthur Griffith, and urged that a special department of the Republican Government should be created to deal with the situation. It was characteristic of Griffith that he should hesitate, for it was his rule never to undertake responsibilities for his Government unless he saw clearly in advance that they could be carried with success. No one recognized better than he that his putative Government would be judged, at home and abroad, not by its protestations, but by its accomplishment. He went warily, therefore, and looked askance at new commitments until they were forced upon him. Yet the enforcement was soon to follow. Cattle-driving and death-notices accumulated, and led finally to violence of a nature that could not be neglected. In Co. Roscommon a landowner who had defied threatenings was driven naked through a crowded fair; and in Co. Galway (both

counties through which ranch-land marched with the congested districts) a landowner was ducked publicly in a pond till he acceded to the demands made on him, and another landowner, Mr. Shaw-Taylor, whose property consisted mainly of ranch-land, was shot dead. Then action became imperative.

Action became imperative for a number of reasons that fitted together to make a tessellated pattern of persuasion. The Republican Government, in the first place, had either to be a Government or not to be a Government; and, in the second place, it had to keep the national demand for freedom clear from class issues or be caught in the snare of a class war. The inactivity of the British Government in the face of these threatenings was its own warning from both these points of view. It is true that that inactivity was due in part to the fact that the R.I.C. had as much as it could do to maintain itself in the stations to which it had been withdrawn, and that it was almost powerless as a police force; but it is also true that Dublin Castle would have been well content to see the larger pretensions of the Republican Government crumble into the general disorder of an agrarian war, especially as such a war would be internal and might split the ranks of the I.R.A. It was imperative, therefore, that some constructive action should be undertaken so as to cure the evil and save disaster.

Such was the origin of the Republican Land Commission that, during this year, saved what seemed an almost impossible situation, and made landowners realize that the national Government, to which they were so bitterly hostile, not only meant impartial justice to all

parties, but was, in fact, the only body to which they could look with confidence for the administration of such justice. Not at once was this Commission established. The first attempt to cure the evil was less ambitious; for on the 17th of May the Minister for Agriculture of the Republican Government, attended by Kevin O'Shiel as his legal assessor, sat in Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, to try the most urgent of the cases that had come to notice. His judgment in that case went against those who had seized the land in dispute. When that judgment was openly defied the matter was put into the hands of the I.R.A., who one night, a fortnight after the judgment, arrested the offending parties and removed them to "an unknown destination"—a phrase that afterwards became current to describe Republican places of detention for prisoners. This was startling; and I well remember that shock with which the news was received; for the men who effected the arrest were of the same social order as those who had seized land, and the test of discipline that this meant can only be realized by those who know how intensely agrarian disputes can bind a community in Ireland, particularly in the congested districts.

Quickly upon this followed a decree of the Ministry for Home Affairs, dated the 29th of June, establishing courts to try cases of seized and disputed lands; and then Dail Eireann (meeting always in secret) founded the Land Commission, as a separate branch of the Republican Judiciary, under the Department for Agriculture, to deal with all land cases. Thus was seen the remarkable spectacle of a land commissioner, sitting with full powers as a judge, moving publicly on circuit through



the country, holding open courts on behalf of a proclaimed Republican Government, with solicitors and counsel of the courts of the British Government appearing before him on behalf of landowners who supported one Government and on behalf of tenants who supported the other. Impossible to break up such courts—though this was afterwards attempted. Were they not administering justice, where there was none other to undertake this necessary duty? Were not landlords of unimpeachable reputation and loyalty represented by counsel, of reputation and loyalty equally unimpeachable, at these courts? Therefore, though the very Government that brought the Commission into being was proclaimed and its Ministers hunted, its land courts were publicly held and publicly attended, with the I.R.A. as its public officers, while the R.I.C. kept to their barracks.

I wonder if such a spectacle of such peculiar and delicious irony has ever been seen in any country. The land courts, indeed, did work of permanent, as well as of immediate, value. Their success was due to their first Commissioner, Mr. Kevin O'Shiel. I remember at the time reading the speeches with which he always opened the proceedings in a new place. Not only were they dignified, but they were specially educative and salutary, peculiarly suited to a country in which law had for centuries been regarded, not as the expression of the communal will, but as a subtle form of oppression. Always he emphasized that the courts at which he presided were the people's courts; that he was merely the expression of the people's will; that the judgments he gave were the people's judgments; and that it was there-

fore for the people to guard their dignities jealously and to regard those who quarrelled against those judgments as offenders against the people's will.

These truths were just what was needed; and Kevin O'Shiel recognized a further need by perfect candour, on the one hand, and scrupulous heed to dignity and manner and ceremonial on the other—excellent accompaniments one of another. I remember seeing him hold a court in a little dingy room in a dingy town in the West. The conditions were depressing enough; but pomp and formality invested even those conditions with dignity. The case being argued while I was there was brought at the suit of one of the largest landowners of that part of the country. Yet not only did he enforce dignity, but some of his judgments were uncommonly shrewd and wise. One aroused a certain fame at the time, and is worth recounting. A father had left his farm to his two sons. The elder, being married, worked the farm, and the younger lived with him—till he, too, desired to marry. Then the elder brother refused to divide the farm; and the younger brother sued him in the Republican land courts. Kevin O'Shiel's judgment was that the elder brother should divide the farm in two halves as and how he wished, but that the younger brother should have first choice which half he should take for his portion. Truly a judgment that Solomon might envy—and with the touch of humour well beloved of all honest folk.

## § 4

These land courts were of the greatest importance in the War. They were followed at once by an organized judiciary system for all manner of cases; but it was the land courts that prompted the organization of this system, and it was the land courts that ensured for the other courts the freedom of operation that was at first accorded to them, without which they might not have been able to establish themselves as they did. The land courts, in fact, not only effectually and remarkably cured the evil that had been threatened, but they made an admirable screen behind which other courts could begin their work. They did this simply because, whereas the other courts, for the trial of all ordinary litigation, were resorted to, not by the gentry who were the support of Dublin Castle, but by those who voted for Republican deputies, they themselves were chiefly availed of by the class that had landed property to save. To this fact they owed their immunity. Impossible to arrest the very garrison of the Castle. Impossible also to squelch courts without arresting those who took their cases. But impossible, too, to squelch other courts, handling smaller cases, while land courts were publicly held and immune from molestation. So it was possible to establish an entire Republican judicial system; and when finally it was decided to stamp out this system, to hunt its judges and magistrates, and to prohibit the holding of its courts, the system was too well rooted to be uprooted, and was able to continue its work under cover.

Here also a change was made upon which the country

was not to return. Lacking an administrative organization of its own, the only organization available for the creation of a judicial system was that of Sinn Fein, through which arbitration courts had already been begun in 1918. Within its units, of the parish and the constituency, therefore, courts were instituted for the hearing of criminal cases and cases in equity. At first there were a good many irregularities. The I.R.A. had already established a police of its own for the maintenance of order in districts from which the R.I.C. had been withdrawn; and army officers sat, often in uniform, as judges. But in time magistrates were elected by the Sinn Fein *Cumainn*, and they took over this work for both parish and district courts, while for larger cases, including appeals from the district courts, special judges were appointed from members of the Irish Bar.

Before many months had passed, the greater part of the judicial work of the country (except the larger commercial and Chancery cases that went to the Dublin Four Courts) had been swept from the British courts into the Republican courts. Judges went on circuit, but had few cases, sometimes no cases at all, to hear, and had difficulty even in getting jurors; whereas county courts and magistrates' courts were everywhere idle.

It was claimed, of course, that this result was won by pure intimidation. It is true that an occasional touch of the spur of intimidation was applied, for the conditions were those of war, and what is war but intimidation? Hardly could that spur, however, reach the sides of the litigious, though it was unquestionably used for jurors. Yet I know from my own experience that it was

not intimidation that brought the greater part of cases to the new courts. I had been elected chairman of the district court for South City Dublin; also I came in touch with folk who frequented the courts throughout the country; and I know that the people came to the new courts mainly because they desired to participate in the change of system, and to a considerable extent because they relished the simple, straightforward, frequently non-legal equity administered there. I remember an American lawyer, who was present at one of these courts, and had been speaking with some of the litigants, commenting upon this evident relish; and saying, after an examination of some of the judgments that had been given, that black-letter law, working upon an incrustation of precedents, inevitably withdrew further and further from a living, inherent, communal sense of justice, and required just so robust a return to reality occasionally for its refreshment.

Yet this charge of intimidation as the cause of the success of the new courts is absurd on the face of it. Not only is it manifest that no amount of intimidation could be sufficient to cause a change so prompt and widespread, but the new courts soon were hunted by the military and later by wild and fearful bands of Black-and-Tans and Auxiliaries. They broke in upon sittings of the courts, when these sittings were discovered, with bayonets fixed and revolvers brandished. Judges had to find their way to secret places stealthily and often disguised, litigants had to be escorted to them secretly and by appointment. For a time it became almost impossible to hold them, so great were the difficulties, so perilous the

dangers; and when stealth and secrecy, in the administration of justice, were better organized and worked more smoothly, the business of the courts thrived as before. It was certainly not intimidation brought business to the new courts under these conditions. Rather, intimidation went the other way, since terror strove to dissuade and not to persuade. I remember myself on occasion going to preside at one of these courts at night under the footrug of a motor-car, and in a lonely room in a dark lane seeing litigants, solicitors, and counsel find their way there furtively for the hearing of cases in which considerable sums of money were involved. Assuredly it was not intimidation that spelt success to such conditions. . . . Yet, perhaps it was intimidation: albeit an intimidation that went strangely awry in the working.

## § 5

During these months the Commission of Inquiry also continued its work. It had already learnt valuable lessons, as a consequence of which it had bravely changed its procedure—changed, indeed, the procedure till then adopted, and still continued, in all Commissions of Inquiry, great and small. It had intended to make an itinerary of leading cities, towns, and districts to hear evidence on the subjects it had selected for first reference, but circumstances helped to teach wisdom and economy.

At Limerick the Commission encountered the same difficulties as at Cork. On the morning when the Commission was to have sat in state in the City Hall—with Michael O'Callaghan, one of its members and Mayor of

the city, to open the proceedings—the local District Inspector of police waited on the secretary in full regalia to inform him that he was instructed to stop its work, by force if necessary. Yet he was a temperate and courteous man, having a sense of humour and wisdom withal. He admitted that however things went the Commission would probably complete the work it had come to do, and that he and his forces (sixty of whom, with carbines, we had just seen march to the City Hall) would doubtless be made to look lugubrious at the heel of the hunt. Yet what, he asked, was he to do? Orders were orders. We came, therefore, to an understanding by which each agreed to save the other much inconvenience. He agreed to watch the City Hall with his forces, and to watch it with such zeal that he would have none to spare for other parts of the city. We agreed to let the City Hall alone. He agreed not to become aware that we might perhaps have gone elsewhere till the third day. We agreed by that third day to have done our work and to have left the city without noise and publicity. And we each kept our parts of the pact. His forces marched and counter-marched round the City Hall while, as all the city knew, we heard our evidence from its leading citizens in the St. Mary's Hall, where the Mayor presided in his chain of office. At noon on the third day his forces marched to the St. Mary's Hall, and at noon on that day we returned to Dublin, our work accomplished.

Yet, when we had heard our evidence it was patent that most of it was to little purpose, indicating, rather, what had yet to be discovered than furnishing that discovery. We came therefore to the conclusion that this

method of inquiry by caravanserai was, like many other things more honoured in their antiquity than in their practical value, as purposeless as it was expensive. So we changed our method to that of direct inquiry by staff-work, to be augmented by special evidence as and when this was found to be necessary. To this change of method I attribute the fact that the Commission was able during the short time of its existence, to present so many reports covering so wide a range of subjects, for it was able in this way to economize both its energies and its slender finances. Also we reduced the chances of conflict with Dublin Castle to the smallest point, for, like every other branch of the work of the Republican Government, except the military, our ideal was to function and to get work done rather than to find opportunities of collision.

Nevertheless, collision occurred, and led to a scene that made a great noise at the time. It is worth retelling, for few things could be more typical of the terror that began this summer to prevail throughout the entire country.

In the absence of public departments on which to lean for skilled information it had been decided by the Commission to make use of the staffs of public bodies. The County Councils were therefore circulated, and asked to gather certain required information through their surveyors. To help further to this end deputations from the Commission waited on the County Councils. The first of these meetings was at Co. Monaghan, and when we went there we found that the County Council had been prohibited by the police from hearing us. A body of police was actually present at the meeting of the Council,



prepared to break it up if our deputation were heard. At Wexford we were more successful, for there we took the precaution to cause no notification of our business to appear on the agenda paper. And in July we went to Carrick-on-Shannon for a joint meeting of the Councils of Co. Roscommon and Co. Leitrim, to be held with a view to discovering if the coal-deposits of the Arigna district could, in the coal scarcity of the time, be turned to practical advantage. Our deputation on that occasion consisted of Colonel Maurice Moore, C.B., at that time the Chairman of the Commission, and myself. It was this meeting that looked at one time as if it would end fatally.

We were in the midst of our business when the door of the Council Chamber was flung open and a body of military entered, with bayonets fixed, led by two officers, a captain and a lieutenant, each with large revolvers in their hands. Their leader was in a state of great excitement, and at once strode to the Chairman of the Leitrim County Council, who was presiding, and asked him if he were responsible for the proceedings. Hearing that he was the captain ordered his arrest. Challenged to show his authority, the captain instantly put his revolver to his prisoner's head, saying, "This is my authority: is it good enough?" and I was in fear lest he should shoot, for he had entirely lost control of himself.

Having sent his prisoner to the guard-room, the captain turned his attention to the rest of us. We were utterly in his power, for the Council Chamber at Carrick is in the Court-house, and the Court-house was held as a military barracks and fort surrounded by wire entanglements, within which marched sentries, fully armed, from

point to point. At first we were told that we would all be held till the morrow, but then Colonel Moore stepped in, and, serious though the position was, it was amusing to note how our captain unwillingly, truculently, yet compulsively, reacted to the practised accent of military command. "We are the top-dogs here now," said he, shaking his revolver at Colonel Moore. "Yes," said Moore frigidly, "that is precisely what you are. You have said it." "Well, sir," came the instant rejoinder (as a soldier might instantly, beyond his volition, spring to the command of attention), "what are we to do?" "You will let us out from this now," said Moore. "Such preposterous nonsense as to keep us hanging about here."

So our captain decided to liberate us, but took our names in turn in order to know whom his company contained. As it came to my turn I hesitated. It would have been but ordinary wisdom to have given another name, but there was a large company standing by, and a question of public discipline was involved. So I gave my own name. The effect on the captain was startling. It is hard for me not to appear to exaggerate that effect, for indeed he behaved like a villain in melodrama—a dangerous villain, with almost unlimited power in his hand. He levelled his revolver at me and ordered my instant arrest, exclaiming excitedly, "I know you, Figgis; you are one of the leaders of Sinn Fein; you are one of the heads of treason"—a charge that I could not admit with truth or disavow without cowardice. "I have you now," he shouted. "Keep hold of him. Take him to the guard-room."

In the guard-room I found the Chairman in care of

a corporal's squad. The soldiers were amused at their officer's antics, but it was not an amusing matter for us, and we were soon to learn that fact. For when he had sent away the rest of the company he came to the guard-room, and covering us with his revolver, announced his intention to try us instantly by drum-head court-martial. I looked at the man in amazement. At first I had thought that he was drunk, but now I saw that he was not drunk. I wondered therefore how it came about that an officer, so clearly mad, should continue in authority. It was not till afterwards that I learned that he had but a few days been liberated from hospital after a drinking bout followed by *delirium tremens*. With every movement that I made he covered me at once with his revolver, his finger on the trigger, and had I once lost control he would certainly have shot. Only by speaking to him coldly, as though I and not he were in command, was he held in check. I had in fact to keep control of him by firm control of myself, without releasing that control for one instant.

So the monstrous farce of the trial continued. The Chairman was first tried, and acquitted after a harangue on the love due to his King. Then my turn came, and I was searched. A few old papers bearing the letter-head of Sinn Fein (the existence of which I had long forgotten) were found in my pocket-book, and these were taken as proof of my guilt. I was therefore sentenced to be hanged, the sentence to be executed at once without any delay. Turning to his sergeant he ordered him to purchase a rope at once, and went out with him to see that the order was executed.

That the situation was absurd did not make it any the less desperate, for it was clear to us all that he meant to execute his sentence. His soldiers were terrified, but when I protested to them in his absence they replied that they did not want him to turn upon them. Yet he was cunning as a fox. When, on his return, I pointed out that the consequences of his action might prove serious, he replied, "So that's what you're thinking. Well, if there's a little noise for a time they'll be thankful to me for having got rid of you, and it'll mean promotion in the end"—and as things stood then in Ireland he was probably not wrong.

My efforts were then bent towards getting into touch with the world outside. For the rope had been brought in, and I was playing desperately for time, using every shift to hold him in argument and never once releasing control, for loss of control meant a quick end. I asked to see a chaplain, and the request was refused. I desired to send a telegram to my wife, and this, too, was refused. I turned upon politics and brought him into an argument, and while this continued his lieutenant entered, spoke to him, and the two of them left the guard-room together.

On his return I noticed a change in him. He had lost his insolent assurance of manner. For in the meantime (the episode having lasted some hours) a wind of what was happening had blown into the town, and Colonel Moore had sought the help of the Clerk of the Crown of Peace, a Mr. Lonsdale, who had demanded to see the captain, informing him (in an assumption of authority that was fortunately conceived) that he was the

responsible civil officer for the district, and that without his consent and presence no sentence could be executed. He stated also that he had sent for the County Inspector of Constabulary, before whom he required that I should be brought.

By this ruse the situation was saved. When I was informed that I was to be taken to the police-barracks I knew that the danger was over. It had continued during five hours. I had been arrested at five o'clock and at ten o'clock of a peaceful summer's evening I was liberated by the County Inspector, having first been withdrawn by him from the control of the military.

## § 6

The episode, it will be said, was but a proof of madness, and that is true, but it was proof of a madness typical of the entire country. For by this time the military were in complete control and were unquestioned in all their acts, the civil authorities having been almost entirely displaced. At the beginning of the year the Republican Government through the I.R.A. had been the attacking party; but now that Government, through the departments which it had created, however intermittently and even fragmentarily those departments were administered, had taken into its hands much of the practical governance of the country; and the consequence was that the British Government became the attacking party, and its army was lifted above its own law, subsisting as it did in what had now overtly become a hostile country. I am not now seeking to

apportion blame. I am seeking but to estimate a situation that had occurred. Much of the terrible, desperate madness that was now to range in Ireland was due simply to the effort to recapture by military violence what had been lost in civil administration.

Not that the offensive was lost by the I.R.A.; for that offensive swayed to and fro during the entire war. By the end of this year, 1920, the I.R.A. was formed in what became known as A.S.U. (the Active Service Units); but these were merely the official formation of the "flying columns" that throughout this summer operated in Dublin and many parts of the country districts. These flying columns sought always to trap the military in ambushes, sometimes inflicting heavy losses. Then they would melt away to reassemble in some other place. Snared in this way by an unseen foe, the military responded with reprisals. In whatever district an ambush occurred, a local factory or creamery was burned to the ground and the ugly ruins of burnt creamery buildings began to mark the country side by side with burnt police barracks.

As this form of warfare developed, new forces were created for its better prosecution. During this summer the Black-and-Tans came into being, and they were speedily followed by the Auxiliaries as special "shock troops." Space does not permit here to trace the course of this war—how a definite policy of reprisals followed a definite policy of ambushes, flames following upon bombs, till Ireland became more than ever before notorious for her ruins, and hunters and pursued rapidly changed places according as their own good wits served

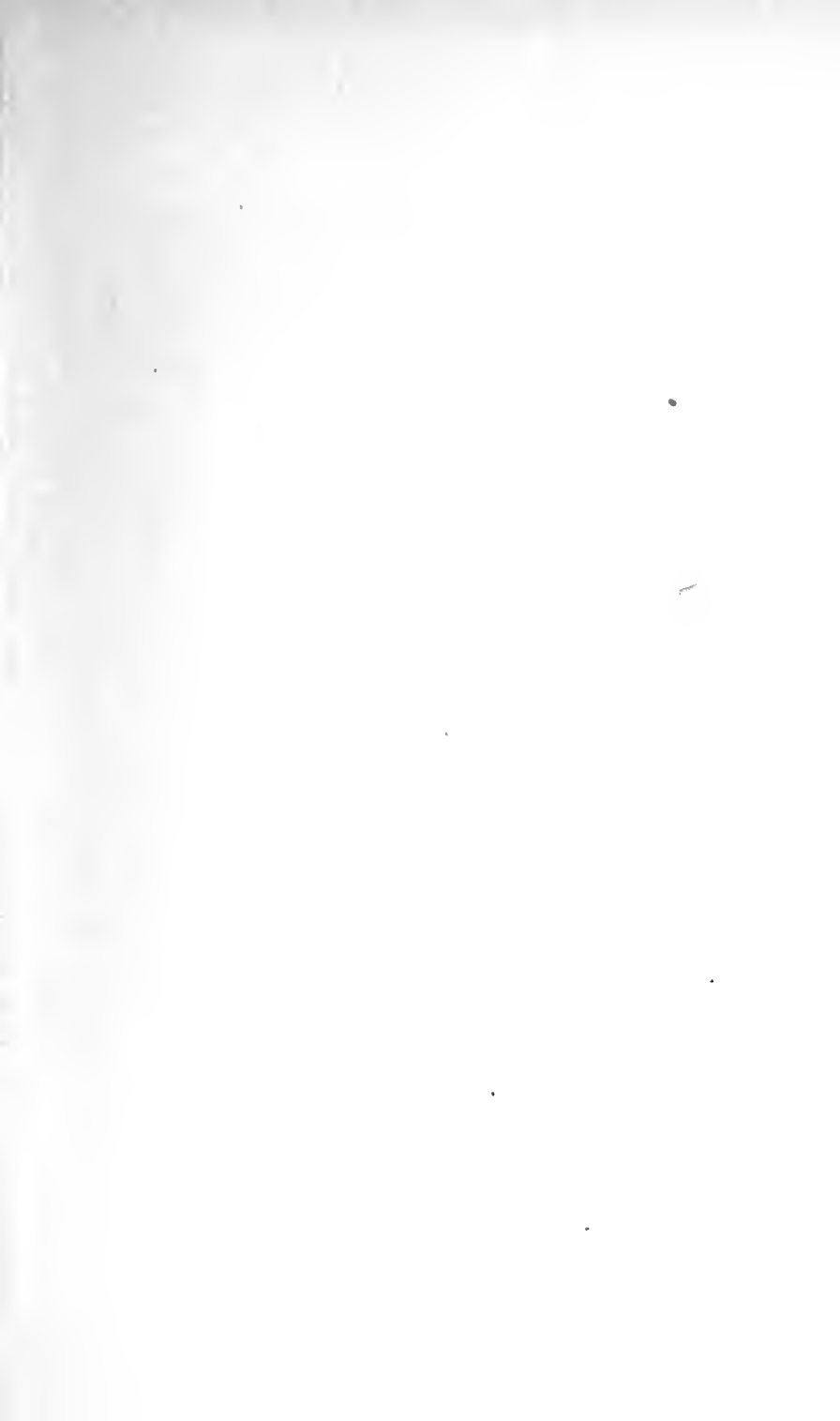
## WAR

them. It is only necessary to point out that this warfare meant but one thing and could lead but to one result. It meant that external government had ceased to be a government, war having taken its place, and this in its turn meant that a truce must inevitably follow, while it was resolved in what form, and subject to what conditions, an internal government should be set up and recognized.

In July, 1921, therefore, that truce was made, and as a consequence the Free State Government took the place of the Republican Government, by the will of the Irish people.











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