

The Fourth Siege of Limerick: Civil War, July 1922

By the authority of the Provisional Government, Michael Brennan of Meelick, Co. Clare, was given the rank of Major-General with authority over all former members of the Republican Army in Limerick and Clare. As the counties of Limerick and Clare formed part of the ancient kingdom of Thomond, it was considered right and proper that a Clareman with a known and honourable record should be given this appointment. In the apportionment of honours lesser men envy the great.

Envy was a major cause of the civil war. Those people opposed to the Treaty voted against it in the Dáil, and would not abide by its acceptance. Because of this opposition they could not share in the various appointments given to those who supported the Treaty. In making these appointments the Provisional Government could be most selective without giving offence to their supporters who valued patriotism before pride.

Whether the Treaty was accepted by a nine or ninety per cent majority, political adventurers could see in its acceptance their own eclipse and the exposure of their pretensions. Such adventurers, wise before the event, and wise in the frailties of their comrades, could by shrewd flattery play upon the conceit and fears of those men whose sincerity had led them to oppose the Treaty in principle. It could be pointed out to some that they had sworn an oath of allegiance to the Republic and that acceptance of the Treaty imposed an oath of allegiance to a British king.

All who opposed the Treaty because of this oath must be given a General Absolution. They did not know that an oath was a mere formula to be taken with mental reservations. That infamous doctrine had yet to be promulgated. Other men who had cast their vote against the Treaty, on returning to their home territory quickly perceived their loss of status. They had fallen from popular grace and the esteem of their fellow men. They gathered together such malcontents and others as would support them in militant opposition to the expressed will of the people.

Following the acceptance of the Treaty, the British garrisons started to evacuate

by P.J. Ryan

the city. The first to leave were the Black and Tans. They changed into civilian dress and left for Dublin. The month of March saw the last of the Royal Irish Constabulary. They handed in their rifles and military stores to the military in the New Barracks. About four hundred of them left by train. They were unarmed but still in uniform.

In May, the Castle Barrack was taken over from the Royal Welsh Fusiliers by Michael Brennan of Meelick, Co. Clare, acting on the authority of the Provisional Government of the Irish Free State. Brennan had about sixty men with him and was joined by Lieut. Collopy and sixty men from the city. Brennan and these latter men later went to Renmore Barracks, Galway, where they merged with the Western Division under Sean McKeown. Following the acceptance of the Castle by Brennan, the other three barracks were evacuated by the British.

On the departure of the British, the latter three barracks lay silent and

deserted. They were a challenge to curiosity. The first to enter the New Barracks were children, whose natural curiosity led them on a voyage of discovery. They were followed by their anxious parents, who were concerned lest their children should come to harm. The parents concern was turned to righteous indignation on seeing the many objects of interest which were not nailed down but left unguarded. They felt that many such objects should be taken to their homes and held in protective custody until lawful authority demanded their return. Acting on this laudable impulse, the parents and others removed blankets, bedding, tables and other barrack-room furniture, as well as cooking utensils and other implements in various parts of the barrack. Later in the day, several companies of men representing the Republican interest entered all three barracks and put a stop to all spontaneous altruistic labour.

When, in a most casual manner, the Diehards took over the New, the Ordnance and the Strand Barracks, their total strength amounted to over five hundred men. Within a week their number had swollen to over a thousand men, all of

ADMISSION CARD. (NOT TRANSFERABLE.)	
SINN FEIN.	
ÁRD-FEIS,	
23 rd BEALTAMH, 1922 (11 a.m.),	
(23.5.22).	
TIG AN ÁRD-MÁOIN, BAILE ÁTA CLIC.	
IR É REO	Ralph Blattery
TEACHTAIRE Ó CUMANN	"Seamus Heuston"
COMAIRLE CEANTAIR	Limerick City
	p. ó CAOIM, RÚNABÓ.

Sinn Fein Ard Fheis delegate card, May 1922.

(Limerick Museum)



Free State tenders on Athlunkard Bridge, from the Illustrated London News, 29 July 1922.

(Limerick Museum)

whom were armed with British Lee Enfield rifles. As day followed day their numbers increased and the position of General Brennan became more precarious. From his homestead in the Clare hills, Brennan had watched the castle since his childhood and knew its every weakness. Now in military command of the castle, he knew that he could not hold it.

A report was circulated in the city that Brennan was evacuating the castle and leaving for Dublin on the 10 a.m. train on Friday, 12th May, from the railway station in Parnell St. On learning of this report and believing in its accuracy, four hundred Diehards were concealed in the railway station and around Parnell St. They lay in ambush with the intention of disarming Brennan and his men and taking them prisoner. While the Diehards impatiently waited in ambush, Brennan and his men left the Castle and marched a mile to the Long Pavement railway station on the Clare bank of the Shannon. They were now on the Ennis railway line and entrained for Athlone, where they joined General Sean McKeon and eventually reached Dublin with the First Western Division of the National Army.

Limerick city was now in the undisputed possession of the Republicans, who even in the early stage of conflict were called Diehard Republicans or simply Diehards, as few people would concede

their pretensions ever to have done anything to gain a Republic.

Coincident with these events, all Southern Irish regiments in the British Army were disbanded. The Colours of the various regiments were escorted into the Throne Room of Windsor Castle by Sergeant Merrimer of the Royal Munster Fusiliers and of Mary Street, Limerick. The Colours were presented to His Imperial Majesty George V of Great Britain, Emperor of India, Canada, Australia and Dominions beyond the seas.

This was Britain's hour of glory. She could dictate the terms of a Naval Treaty to the United States of America. She could dictate terms to any country in the world. She dictated the terms of the Treaty which created the Irish Free State.

On a bright May morning long ago when the sun shone down on O'Connell Street, two Ford cars pulled up at Number Ninety Five. Five men left the cars and three of them entered the Bank of Ireland. Two men armed with Thompson sub-machine guns remained on guard by the cars – the well-dressed Patriot always wore a Thompson gun. They were the Guardian Angels of the infant republic. The three men who entered the bank waggled their revolvers with joyous carefree abandon.

They had nothing to fear as the Tans and R.I.C. had left the country. They held up the members of the bank staff and opened the large safe. They removed bundles of notes and bags of coins, which they dumped into two potato sacks. One of the sacks burst with the weight of coins, and notes and coins were scattered around the floor. The manager, who had a precise and orderly mind, protested against the scattering of what he called 'litter' around the premises. The leader of the raiders agreed that there would have been no mess if notes only were removed, but he wanted some small change to pay his patriotic men, who were so eager to defend the Republic now that the British were gone. He ordered his men to empty the two sacks into the back of the car and return for more, saying, "theres more where that came from."

The manager had many years of training in the stern-faced refusal of credit extensions and had hardened his heart against the most piteous appeals for clemency by bankrupt traders and poor farmers. Day by day he had rejected the appeals of presentable looking bums, wasters and chancers for a little overdraft. The effort would have exhausted any ordinary man, but bank directors select only extraordinary men for the post of manager. The many years of rugged financial warfare had given the manager



Free State barricade outside Cruise's Hotel, from the Illustrated London News, 29 July 1922.

(Limerick Museum)

an extensive vocabulary, a thesaurus of inventive expression. When the men returned for more money, he called them into a conference and made a strong and practical appeal to their common sense.

The manager gave the men a two minute lecture on the virtue of thrift, saying, "the true patriot is a thrifty skinflint who would sacrifice Ireland and all of Europe in order to increase his bank account." "Is it necessary," he asked them, "is it necessary to remove that money from the bank?" Could they not "return the money and open their own little savings account, which in time, with added interest, would make a nice little nest egg for their declining years - if they lived long enough to have declining years, as it takes such a long time to grow old."

"Consider," he said, "consider the danger of having that money in your possession. In the hours of daylight some evilly disposed men or some bandits might dispossess you of that money, or while you sleep some thieving scoundrel might steal your treasure; even your guardian angels with their Tommy guns might be tempted to place your names on the roll of the patriots who died for Ireland and decamp with the swag."

The word 'swag' broke the spell of the manager's eloquence. The raiders brushed him aside and having refilled the sacks, moved out to the cars. Here the manager showed his sterling worth. He followed

the men out and demanded and received a receipt for the money taken from the bank. As the cars moved up the street, banknotes of all sizes and colours went floating on the breeze and were collected by the industrious citizens. The manager returned to the bank, his heart bowed down with weight of woe, but memory recalled that he had a receipt for the money taken from his bank on Saturday 6th of May 1922.

On the same day and date, many other branches of the Bank of Ireland from Ballinasloe in Galway to Patrick Street in Cork were held up and raided, the total sum taken being over £75,000.

It may seem strange that so many banks throughout the country had such a large amount of floating cash or liquid assets on hand. The explanation for this state of affairs is a simple one. Because of the unsettled state of the country, all industrious traders took their daily takings to the bank, leaving themselves only some petty cash for the next days trading. Farmers and others took the family sock full of notes from under the mattress and the gold sovereigns from under the thatch and deposited them in the nearest bank. The result of this prudent forethought was that the farmers and others if 'held up' in their homes could truthfully and happily state that there wasn't the price of a bag of spuds in the house.

All the jewellers in the city were as

fond of music as any other citizen. They were always to be seen attending concerts and musical recitals in the People's Park and elsewhere. Two of them gave lessons on the pianoforte and harmonium for a fee of five shillings per week. When the Civil War started the city jewellers played the Gold and Silver Waltz (Lehar). All gold and silver watches, all diamond-studded jewellery and all pearl-encrusted pendants, were waltzed away to places of safety, concealed from the gleaming eye of avarice. Only Sheffield plate, cheap jewellery and five shilling watches shone in their windows; at closing time in the evening, heavy wooden shutters protected their windows and heavier steel bars reinforced their doors. During the weeks of combat those protective shutters remained in position permanently. The half dozen pawnbrokers around the Irishtown district remained open and played it cool. They did not accept in pledge any articles which they knew to be 'hot' or stolen property.

On the fifteenth of May a truck stopped outside a shop in Patrick St. where religious goods were on display in the window. A party of men descended from the truck and viewed the many objects of religious design with pious devotion. Drawing their guns they entered the shop. They informed the proprietor that they were commandeering the many items on display.

They removed statues of many



Free State barricade outside Cruise's Hotel. Photo by Robert Mitchell.

(Limerick Museum)

Christian saints, including St. Christopher the traveller and St. Patrick himself. A statue of Paddy Sarsfield was not overlooked. Religious medals, badges and beads in boxes found their way into the parked truck. The story of this religious raid caused some disquiet amongst the citizens until it was pointed out "these are saintly men, they do not neglect their religion."

Another shop was entered where buckets, enamel mugs and plates were signed for and removed. It has been shown that Limerick was a musically minded city. In the chaos following the departure of the British and the disappearance of law and order, the charms of music were not forgotten.

A music shop in O'Connell St. was entered by armed men who removed fiddles, which the manager insisted on calling violins. Accordions and melodians and other musical instruments were likewise removed. The manager laughed when two men sat down at some pianos. He was greatly surprised when they started to play. Tears came to his eyes when, with heavy hobnailed boots tapping the dainty pedals, one man played that heart-rending romantic air, "Let Erin Remember." His tears were dried and his eyes flashed fire as the other pianist with heavy boots crashed out that stirring martial air, "The Minstrel Boy." The poet Moore, who first played the air on a piano, would have smiled approval. Satisfied with the tone of the instruments, the removal squad went into action and the pianos were removed.

As the horse-drawn float with the pianos moved up the street, the manager remarked "the Minstrel Boy to the war is gone and my grand pianos with him."

The bacon factories, the flour mills and goods stores at the docks were entered and lorry loads of goods removed. In all these things the gun and the official receipt were sufficient authority.

Clothing shops were entered and lorry

loads of clothing, boots, trench coats and caps removed. Overcoats, whether expensive or cheap, were as welcome in the heat of summer as on any winter's day. As the lorries charged up the streets, trench coated men sat astride the booty, waving their rifles in exuberant display.

Seeing all these things happening, the citizens feared that the city was about to undergo a long and bloody siege. Long memories retold the tales of horror of 1691. Some few resourceful citizens gave kindly thought to the needs of the many. It was discovered that a brick can break a plate glass window. Many broken windows proved the truth of this discovery. Prudent forethought prompted many people to help themselves to all those provisions which a household might need during a siege. In this manner many shops were emptied of their stocks.

A boat at the docks was boarded and six new Ford cars were removed and taken to the New Barracks, where they became staff cars. Men who had never rode in anything grander than a donkey cart could now enjoy the pleasures of motoring in the grand manner of the landed gentry.

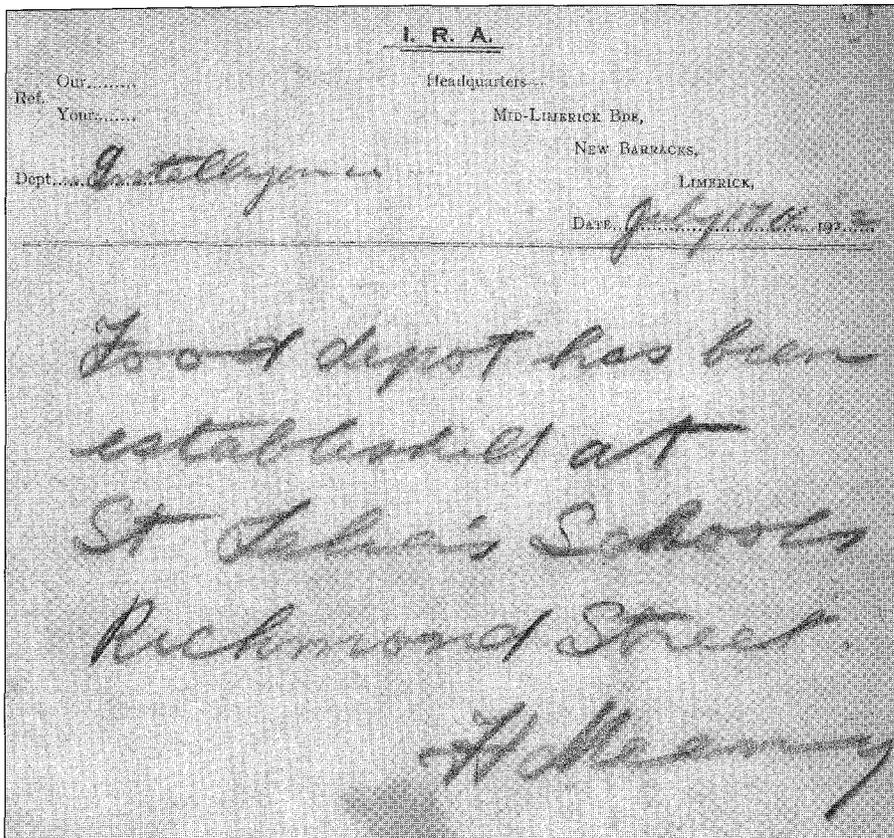
Most of the goods commandeered in the city were stored in the four military barracks. It must not be thought that the men in the barracks were dishonest. Every citizen has heard of Drunken Thady and the Bishop's Lady. The Bard of Thomond has given an exacting account of the affair. That the Lady should pay a return visit to the scene of her former joys caused no surprise to the citizens. On three consecutive nights in the Castle Barracks the ghostly lady appeared on the ramparts connecting the two towers facing the river. She always appeared after midnight: it was noted the tide was always out when the ghost appeared. The story, coupled with her appearance, caused terror in the Castle and none would dare fire on the unholy spirit lest evil should befall them. A recruit from the country,

hearing of the ghost, expressed derision, contempt and disbelief in the story. He accepted a challenge to go on sentry duty at two that night. At about half past two the ghost appeared on the rampart. The impious unbeliever promptly fired a bullet from a Mauser rifle at the bulky figure with amazing results. With a bellow of pain, the sheet-covered ghost collapsed in a cascade of flour which he had carried to the ramparts to lower to an accomplice on the riverbank below. It is clear from this that if the commander in the Castle were dishonest, there would be no need for this subterfuge to loot the hard-won stores.

An army is tied by its purse strings – no money, no army. The science of logistics includes the Paymaster with his bag of notes and the Quartermaster with his requisition form – "Please supply."

Again, the Diehards had no money and therefore no paymaster. A competent military commander can surmount these little problems of logistics by intelligent disposition of his forces. It was a simple matter to create a paymaster with instructions to do his act. The correct action having been taken, the newly created paymaster with his two assistant paymasters left the New Barracks and arrived at the Munster and Leinster Bank in O'Connell Street. They arrived in that status symbol of the day, a new Model-T Ford car. When they arrived, some groups of men in trench coats, who had been loitering around, lined up at the bank door, apparently forming a Guard of Honour. Some of them entered the bank with the paymaster and his staff. An eyewitness who was in the manager's office seeking an extension of an overdraft, which he failed to obtain, gave the following account of events.

Three men entered the manager's office with drawn guns. The manager received them courteously, affably asking: "Could he help them?" The leader said "No! They would help themselves. They wanted some money to pay their men, nearly a thousand armed men. They



Republican notice re food depot at Lelia Street. (Limerick Museum)

wanted money instantly, all that he had in the bank." The manager demurred, pointing out that a thousand pounds should be ample to pay the men. Being a conscientious man and anxious to keep down expenses, he suggested that if they called back later, he would have the money made up in pay envelopes, putting the right amount into each packet. He added that as they seemed to have but a primary education, they would scarcely be able to count up to a thousand. A thousand pounds, he reminded them, is a large sum of money, not easy to come by in these troubled times.

Incensed at the suggestion of illiteracy, the leader rapped his gun on the desk, and then put the muzzle in a comfortable position against the manager's ribs. He explained in some heat that all three had received a good secondary education from the Christian Brothers, having a Pass with Honours in their final exams: Not only could they count up to a thousand, they could count up to a million, but as they were in a hurry, they could count up to three and if the manager did not then open up the safes, they would open him up.

The matter being thus clarified and expedited, the raiders then helped themselves. Knowing that their need was great, they did not stint their efforts but helped themselves to the great abundance.

They sneered at thrift and damned all parsimony. The amount taken was around thirty thousand pounds, a large sum of money, not easy to come by in those troubled times.

On leaving the bank, the paymaster and his staff were met by the Guard of Honour with drawn guns, whose leader

explained that it was their honourable duty to protect the money by taking it into protective custody. It was not seemly, he said, that so much money should be taken in a fast car up O'Connell Street. The paymasters might lose their sense of direction and end up on an Atlantic liner in Queens-town. A tussle ensued for the Golden Fleece and banknotes went flying in all directions. Some shots were exchanged and one man received two bullet wounds from which he died later.

The bank manager had been given a receipt for the money taken from the bank. He was now taken to the New Barracks, where he signed a receipt for the receipt which he had received for the money taken from the bank. He signed a receipt for a receipt, which was a formal procedure in banking practice.

On arrival at the New Barracks, the paymaster and his entourage were greeted with smiles of joy. There was a feeling of deep content amongst all ranks. In the days following the bank raid, the happy smiles gradually faded. The feeling of deep content was replaced by feelings of deep suspicion. No immediate payment was made to the impatient men. Their impatient murmurs provoked a statement from the Paymaster General, as he now called himself. Assembled on the barrack square, the men were given a pep talk and an assurance that when the scholars had finished counting the money, due consideration would be given to all claimants.

They were reminded that as soldiers of the Republic, their primary allegiance was to their country and not their pockets. Their goal should be the roll of honour amongst Ireland's glorious dead and not a

roll of banknotes from the Munster & Leinster. No truly patriotic Irishman would look for money under the present difficult times.

Cowed by the noble words and shamed by the suggestion that they were not truly patriotic, the clamorous ones became silent. The timorous ones became resolute. They would continue to defend the Republic.

This raid on the Munster & Leinster Bank occurred on Tuesday, the twenty third of May, 1922. On the same day, seven other banks in County Limerick and adjoining counties were raided. The total sum taken was around £80,000 – a large sum of money, not easy to obtain in those troubled times.

When open warfare began in Dublin against the Provisional Government, units of the National Army in various towns in County Limerick were attacked. In Adare, the garrison was attacked and surrendered. On instructions, all other posts converged on Coolbawn House, Castleconnell, where they remained for some time. While the shooting was going on in Dublin, General Michael Collins arrived at Coolbawn House. He rebuked the commanders for their lack of initiative and inspected the men. Collins addressed the men, ending his address with – Go in and take that city. On the following morning, the companies marched on Limerick city: it was a forced march at a rapid pace.

It can be noted that when a company marches in a hurry, it presents an appearance of being actively aggressive. The men are likewise imbued with a feeling of hostility towards the cause of their enforced activity. This may have been the reason why they were not attacked on their march to the city.

There were many hostile elements in their line of march who were capable of destroying bridges and other acts of sabotage. The distance from Coolbawn to the city is about six miles. On the route the companies could have been attacked by snipers and ambushers. They could have been held up at Annacotty bridge over the Mulcair River and at Groody bridge. They were open to attack all the way to the city. They had not an advance guard or a rear guard, nor were their flanks protected.

Geographically Limerick city consists of some few little hills bounded by the Shannon and some swampy lowland. This swampy lowland is drained by the River Groody, the creek at Ballinacurra and the Barnakyle. Outside of these rivers are the Maigue and Mulcair rivers. All of these rivers enter the Shannon. In a wet year, most of the lowland was covered with water, so that the city became an island to be entered only by any of the bridges crossing the rivers. Any military force holding those bridges in 1916 or in 1922 could deny entry to an invading force and hold the city indefinitely. With the departure of General Brennan from the

I. R. A.

Our.....
Your.....
Dept. *Adj.*

Headquarters — **A.S.U. Cork I. Brigade.**
~~New Barracks, Limerick~~
NEW BARRACKS,
LIMERICK,
DATE *9. 7.* 1922

To all men of above Unit.
Meal hours from this forward will be as follows:-
Breakfast 8.30 to 9.30 am
Dinner 1.30 " 3 pm
Supper 6 " 7 "

1. Any man out of Barracks on duty must get a note from his OIC to procure food.
2. This applies to men on duty only.
3. Cookhouse to get 1 hour notice of men when out on duty.
4. Orderlies must not smoke while serving food.
5. Any man coming into Barracks intoxicated will be put in Guard-room. This also applies to men caught bringing in drink.
6. Any man coming in later than the time certified on his pass will be put in Guard-room.

All lights must be out at 11.30 pm sharp. This order will be rigidly enforced.

Micéal Mac Gearáin
Adj.

**Rules applying to Republican Active Service Unit, Cork No. 1 Brigade,
at Sarsfield Barracks, 9 July 1922.**

(Limerick Museum)

Castle Barracks, the Diehards were in absolute possession of the city.

A greedy child was permitted to keep any sweets which he could take in one attempt from a narrow-necked glass jar. In trying to remove a fistful he failed and lost all. The Diehards could have placed their men on the bridges near the city and held out indefinitely against the Staters. Like the boy and the jar of sweets, the Diehards held the four military barracks as a sweet and lovable possession.

The barracks were status symbols. They assumed that possession of the barracks rendered them immune to attack. They assumed that they could hold the barracks as the British had held them. They forgot or ignored the fact that the British had an armed police force in the city and on the perimeter of the city. The police barracks on the perimeter of the city were located a short distance from the bridges on the various rivers near the city. In grabbing the barracks rather than the bridges, the Diehards gained the prestige and lost the prize.

The Staters entered the city unopposed. The first company was led by Captain Timmy Murphy of Limerick City. The second company was led by Captain

Lynch of Caherconlish, Co. Limerick. The third company was led by Captain Troy of Limerick City.

As the four military barracks were held by the Diehards, the Staters could not occupy them except by force; this they were unable and unwilling to do. Because of their numerical weakness, they could not attack any one of the four barracks. In the event they would then be attacked by the other three forces.

The Staters represented the lawfully elected Government of the State. Their primary purpose and duty was to protect life and property, not to destroy them. The Diehards had no such authority or concern. Their purpose, as stated by one of their leaders, was "Destruction and terror to make government impossible."

The Staters marched into the city by Clare Street. They took possession of the Custom House and the Courthouse, which commanded the North Strand and Strand Barracks across the Shannon. As the four military barracks were occupied by the Diehards, they could not take over any one of them, as they lacked the strength of numbers which makes a take-over bid so happily successful. With commendable modesty and prudence, they were content

with a little – a little bit here, a little bit there. They occupied Cruise's Hotel and William Street (Police) Barracks and connected the two posts by breaking through the intervening walls. They cut a trench across the road from Cruise's and connected with the buildings opposite. In this manner they broke through the walls of the buildings in Sarsfield Street and reached the Turkish Baths by the Sarsfield Bridge.

They erected a double barrier across the bridge where the steps lead down to the quays below. In this manner they gained control of Sarsfield Bridge and the River Shannon. They could cover the quays with rifle fire as far as Barrington's Pier over a mile down the river and as far as the Castle Barrack and Thomond Bridge up river. They now had cover from fire and cover from view, so that none could know if their total forces were concentrated at any one point or were scattered over many points. They took over Mary Street Police Barracks and St. Mary's Cathedral. A party of fifty of their men marched up William Street and Mulgrave Street and took possession of the County Jail without opposition from the Diehard garrison in the Ordnance Barrack.

The Staters now held the four symbols of Law and Order and Established Government – the Police Barrack, the Courthouse, the Jail and the Custom House. It now remained to them to make those symbols into a reality.

In a matter of hours they had established themselves in the city with a line of retreat or a supply line to the east by the Dublin Road, and into Clare by the Corbally Road and the Ennis Railway. They now had possession of four of the five bridges in the city and had split the Diehard forces into three parts. The Castle and the Strand Barracks were immobilised and cut off from each other and from contact with the New and the Ordnance Barracks. In four hours they proved the truth of the Arms of the City, an ancient city studied in the arts of war. All the officers and most of the men involved in this occupation of the city were from Limerick city and county.

Having gained those many points, the Staters prepared to defend them. From Evans' hardware store on the corner of O'Connell Street – Sarsfield Street, they removed rolls of barbed wire, ploughs, harrows and wheel hay rakes; they removed milk churns and hayforks. With those fearsome weapons they formed a barrier across O'Connell Street and the Henry Street junction with Sarsfield Street.

With similar implements from New-som's hardware store in William Street they barricaded Wickham, High and William Street junction. They also placed barriers at the head of John Street. The Staters now held a semi-circle of territory from Clare Street to Sarsfield Bridge, and bounded by the Shannon and Abbey Rivers, which they now controlled. Into this territory could come supplies and



Free State barricade at the junction of William St and High Street, from the Illustrated London News, 29 July 1922.

(Limerick Museum)

reinforcements from Clare and North Tipperary. All this militant activity was accomplished in some hours without firing an angry shot.

These things having been done, the Staters looked for recruits within their territory, but though the citizens approved and applauded the efforts of the Staters, few citizens would give bodily support to their ambition. Within a week nearly two hundred men had volunteered and were uniformed and armed with supplies which had come in by the Dublin Road, but the explosive destruction of Annacotty Bridge had cut off that supply line. Almost three weeks were to elapse before reinforcements of men and supplies were to come into the city by the Ennis Railway.

Meaningless but terrifying, the words prurience and concupiscence were hurled from the pulpits in the various churches against a congregation whose weeks wages would scarce buy a dictionary. The words were spoken by young clerics fresh from Maynooth who were airing their profundity of thought.

It was the pious practice of some of the administrators of the city's churches to discover and pursue courting couples in the many lovers walks in the suburbs, and by administering some wallops with a shillelagh or a walking stick, to suggest to the frisking lambs the meaning of the words prurience and concupiscence.

When the Sinn Fein courts had replaced the British courts, one of these Rev. Administrators was appointed a judge of the Sinn Fein court in the city. He sat on the bench lately vacated by British judges and magistrates. His presence on the woolsack of the judge gave an air of authority to the court, whose officers and most of the citizens had never heard of the Spanish Inquisition.

The Sinn Fein courts were held in secret in any room or hall during the British regime, but came into the open following the truce.

With the arrival in the city of the many contingents representing the Republican interests, there also arrived in the city many ladies of democratic views whose numbers, when added to the numbers of resident democrats, suggested prurience and concupiscence. The ideals of those democrats were repugnant to the pure ideals of Republicanism. Many of those ladies were arrested by the Republican police and brought before the Reverend Magistrate. They were given a month in jail without the option of a fine.

When the National Army took over the jail they were faced with the problem of what to do with the virtuous ladies and other prisoners, before nightfall. Some of the prisoners accepted their liberty with pleasure, but others, including the ladies, rejected the offer of liberty and refused to leave the jail.

With modestly averted eyes and blushes, the ladies pointed out that they were safer in jail than out of it. The implications of the ladies preference for the jail was repugnant to the lofty ideals of the National Army, whose authorised commissariat did not include a harem. The prisoners were forced out of jail and marched down Mulgrave St. to the Ordnance Barrack, into which they were forced at gunpoint. The commander of the Ordnance Barrack was informed that, as his men had jailed those prisoners, it was up to him to look after their welfare.

One prisoner alone was permitted to remain in the jail. He was Jack Monday from West Africa. He was a brave black man with a heart of gold. Jack was a fitter on a boat which had arrived at the docks prior to the Truce of Dec. 1921.

When a boat is due to leave a port, it is the custom to hoist the colours of the

country from which it is sailing. On the day that Jack's boat was leaving port, the tricolour was hoisted. Several Tans came on board to remove the offending colours. Jack charged at them with a sailor's knife and stabbed two of them before he was overpowered and removed to the county jail. The Truce saved him from the death penalty. As Jack was a British subject, he might find difficulty in getting a job on another boat and, as at that time a black man was a curiosity in the city, he might find himself destitute without help from any source. He was permitted to remain in jail as a free man, free to come and go as he pleased. Some time later he was enlisted in the National Army as a fitter in the Transport Corps at Gormanston Camp and left the army in 1928.

Following his attestation it was suggested to Jack that he change his name to the Celtic form, Sean de Luin, and masquerade as a patriotic Irishman and in the fullness of time aspire to the office of President. Jack rejected the suggestion with black contempt.

Now that the city was occupied by two warring factions, the citizens were restricted in their movements. Trade came to a halt as people cannot live on unlimited credit or eternal "tick."

It became difficult to obtain food even at exorbitant cost. Rather than risk being shot at when going to their employment in the factories and stores, the workers stayed at home. The result of this prudent inaction was that all industrial work ceased. Outside the city, the producers of food would not risk the loss of their lives or liberty or the loss of their goods by entering the city.

Bakeries and grocers alone could continue working as long as stocks lasted. As both bakeries and grocers were small

family industries, great credit is due to them for their spirited courage and humanity.

Butchers and greengrocers had to journey into the country to buy meat on the hoof and greens in the bag. The trading terms were – cash on the Nail. No credit was asked for, as a refusal often offends. Having purchased their needs, the butchers and grocers then faced the risk of loss in transit to armed hoodlums who might pretend allegiance to Staters or Diehards – suchlike creatures gave both sides a bad name.

On arrival in the city, the goods might be seized by either faction as contraband of war, on the grounds that the goods were destined for the enemy. The butchers and greengrocers were the patriots and heroes of the day.

On account of these things, food was scarce in the city. The wealthy families and the thrifty ones had stocks of potatoes, flour, smoked and salted meats, as well as other groceries, in sufficient quantity for a week or more. The poorer families, who lived from hand to mouth or bought their meagre supplies each day, were first to feel the pangs of hunger. They, not having a stone of flour to bake a cake, could not be told to go and eat cake.

These people trekked out into the countryside to friends or relations. They tested the friendship and proved the relationship by the length of their stay. Through an arrangement by Stephen O'Mara, Mayor of Limerick, many hundreds of friendless and indigent poor trekked out two miles west of the city to the Jesuit College at Mungret. There they were kindly received and royally fed. The Jesuits always kept a good table. In this austere environment, they learned the practical value of Christian virtue – obedience, or else.

The stone corridor and the wooden corridor scarce felt the footsteps of children or of the feeble aged. The many rugged roughts and the stalwart youths who daily came for a meal were fed and sent further afield. The robes and collar of Parson or Priest often conceal a robust physique, most competent to deal with the threat of violence.

Those refugees from hunger spent two weeks in Mungret College, remaining there until after Bonfire Night, living with the cultured minds in cloistral security, surrounded by rolling green fields landscaped with grazing herds and flocks ensuring meat for dinner; their minds were raised to the contemplation of lofty ideals. The odour of sanctity was sweet to their soul. On Bonfire Night the rumble of heavily laden lorries moving from the city on the Cork Road a mile away sounded like the passing of a mighty host. On Bonfire Night the odour of burning bacon and other foods, wafted from the city on the eastern breeze, brought to their minds the odour of cooked pigs toes or "trotters." Those refugees were living a luxurious life in almost palatial surroundings, but like the poet who wrote "Be it ever so humble," they also longed for home. With shining

eyes they faced the dawn. They could hear the crubeen calling, a love song to the morn.

All the world knows that Brian Boru, King of Thomond and High King of Ireland, was slain by Broder the Dane. The event occurred at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014, in which the victorious Irish, commanded by Brian, drove the Danes from the country. The number of Danes slaughtered was great; every dead Dane became a Great Dane and was dumped in the Dodder near which the battle was fought. The bodies covered the river and were carried out to sea. This was a remarkable export of Danish bacon from Ireland. It was a fierce day-long battle fought on land and water, but as no boats were used, it cannot be classed as a naval battle. Many of the dead bodies were carried across the Irish Sea to the coast of the neighbouring island of Britain, where the astonished natives may have regarded the carcasses as salted bacon. At that time the natives of Britain were naked savages who painted their bodies blue with woad, *Isatis tinctoris*. The name of Brian Boru has stirred the minds of poets and patriots of every generation and recalls the triumphs and glories of that battleaxe age.

The Diehards in the city revered the name of Brian Boru. The Staters also held the name in high esteem, but neither reverence nor esteem can win a battle. In their own modest way the Diehards were practical men and knowing the advantage of mobile armour, they created an armoured car. It was created in the image and likeness of a battleship on wheels. It was a double turret and made of heavy steel plate. It had heavy iron wheels with solid rubber tyres and was a Declaration of a Republic in its own right. The Diehards called it the Hooded Terror. It was their secret weapon.

This armoured car was used by the Diehards in Limerick. Later in its career it was run off the road and abandoned. The Staters, finding it abandoned by the roadside like some rare botanical specimen fashioned in metal, plucked it from the mire, cleansed it, refurbished it and called it Brian Boru.

The entry of the Staters into the city was comparable to the Entry of the Gladiators, the cheers and applause of the citizens being as moving as that stirring piece of music by (Julius Fucik).

The Diehards regarded the entry as an invasion of the territory, to be repulsed with a display of strength. Only the pure cleansing flame of the Republic could burn them out of the city. That Declaration of a Republic, the Hooded Terror, left the New Barrack and, going downhill, moved slowly into Catherine Street and halted near the junction with Thomas Street. It could go no further, as the street was barricaded. It was armed with a Hotchkiss anti-aircraft gun, which fired incendiary tracer bullets at the wood and canvas aeroplanes of that day. The barrel of the Hotchkiss gun was

over an inch thick to withstand the heat of automatic fire. A curved vertical clip projecting from the barrel held 20 rounds. The Hotchkiss opened fire in bursts of twenty rounds at a draper's shop in William Street, setting the place on fire. The firing continued into each window of the four-storied building until the ammunition was all used, when the Hooded Terror returned to the New Barracks.

Next door to the draper's shop was J. & G. Boyd, the largest paint suppliers shop in the city. Its ground floor area covered a quarter of an acre. The basement and ground floor were stocked with thousands of gallons of turpentine, paraffin and petrol in wooden barrels, as well as hundreds of drums of paint and explosive chemicals. The upper stories contained other combustible goods. It was well known in the city that a fire in the drapery shop would cause a major fire in the nearby paint shop. Should such a fire go unchecked the city would be reduced to a mass of smouldering rubble in a matter of hours. The Staters acted with daring and promptitude, even while the Hooded Terror was firing incendiary bullets. They were preparing fire hoses, which were readily available in the paint shop and in the police barrack. In a short time the fire was controlled and extinguished.

The attempt to burn the city as the Tans had burned Cork caused angry comment in the city. While the citizens admired the daring comedy, they laughed in relief at its failure. In the New Barrack, the different contingents restrained their mirth and urged that more positive action be taken against the Staters. Only by gun-peal and slogan-cry could those enemies of the Republic be routed.

Fifty young men aged between eighteen and twenty-five, who had never fired an angry shot in their lives, were sent from the New Barracks to attack the Staters in William Street. To identify each other, they had red armbands sewn on their sleeves. Because the armbands were sewn on, they were committed men. To remove the armbands they would have to sit down and pick out the stitches. They marched ten feet apart on both sides of the street. On the route to attack, they were urged to enrich their political faith by reciting with fervour three verses of the Soldier's Song.

Their route from the barracks was Edward Street, Parnell Street, in a straight downhill march to Roche's Street, and from there to Thomas Street, which is parallel with Roche's Street. Theirs was a Death or Glory mission, but the path to glory stunk to the sky from the sewage dumped on the streets during the previous weeks. From Thomas Street they were to enter Fox's Bow and attack and rout over one hundred Staters established in William Street. They were to attack entrenched men who had a fortnight's aggressive firing practice. They were to attack the Staters who were aware of their movements and had watched their approach with interest and surmise. It was folly to send such innocents on such a witless enterprise.

They were halted in Thomas Street by a burst of rifle and Lewis-gun fire from across the river, at a range of three hundred yards. This line of fire was partly obstructed by a boathouse by Sarsfield Bridge. This was a flank attack, which caused them some surprise. The possibility of a flank attack had not been revealed to them. They were nonplussed and thrown into confusion. What should have been an orderly and militant advance was turned into a disorderly rout by the bullets raising dust and stones off the roadway. They were irresolute. Their orders demanded that they fulfil their mission. Reason insisted that they go places. The Staters emerging from some of the houses and from Fox's Bow showed them the error of their ways.

Those who were light of foot made a quick retreat. Those who were slow on their pins were taken prisoners. The fleeing ones were pursued by the Staters, who, firing over their heads, urged the need for greater speed or a full stop and surrender.

As the pursued and the pursuers entered Roche's Street, they were mixed together with those taken prisoner. On this account the Diehards holding positions in Roche's Street could not open fire and defend their positions. With reckless unconcern the Staters pursued the fleeing few into the positions in Roche's Street and routed the defenders. In this unplanned and unpremeditated manner the Staters gained control of Roche's Street. The route to the New Barrack via Parnell Street and Gerald Griffin Street was now sealed off.

The Staters had isolated all four barracks from each other, or nearly so. The New Barracks still had a route via Carey's Road to the Ordnance Barrack. Those two barracks still had a line of retreat to the south into the counties of Limerick, Cork and Kerry. Those who were taken prisoner were held in William Street Police Barrack and eventually were taken to the gaol in Mulgrave Street. It was a sad day for them and a waste of the joyous years of youth.

When the British were evacuating the country they handed over three armoured cars to the Provisional Government. These cars were used by the National Army in enforcing the will of the people by establishing a democratic government as opposed to a military dictatorship, which the opponents of the Treaty desired to set up.

The cars were christened Ballinalee, Danny Boy and Slievenamon. Ballinalee was so called in honour of Sean Mc Keon of Ballinalee, Co. Longford. This car had been captured from the British and used in an abortive attempt to rescue Sean McKeon from Mountjoy Jail, where he was awaiting execution just before the Truce. Danny Boy was named in honour of Dan Breen, whose daring exploits against the British had caused them to offer a reward of £5,000 for his capture. By

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THE TRUTH.

People of Limerick, an attempt is being made by our opponents to throw the blame for the present conflict on to our shoulders. In order that you, the people most concerned, should know the truth the correspondence which passed between our Chief of Staff and the Senior Officers of the Free State forces has been published in poster form, and copies of the poster have been displayed in prominent parts of the city. Now that the truth is placed before the people the Free Staters have fallen back on the tactics the English used against the I.R.A. when the Flying Columns were ambushing the Black and Tans and the Tommies. You, the people of Limerick, are asked now by England's ally to look at and think of us as murderers.

(The I.R.A. has no doubt as to how the people of Limerick will look upon this libel, and they also know that you will now, as ever, stand for and defend the Republic.)

You are told the Free Staters want one country—one Government. Yet they, by the acceptance of this so-called Treaty, sanction the cutting up of our country by the Welch Wizard, and the setting up of a bigoted Orange Government in the Six Counties whose sole object is the clearing out of the Catholic minority, and making Belfast and the rest of the Six Counties safe for English democracy.

There must be no misunderstanding as to our present stand, and the public must realise that the conflict that has been forced upon us at England's bidding is going to be of long duration before they see the destruction of the Republic which Tone, Emmet, Pearse, and the other Irish Martyrs set out to establish.

REPUBLICAN SUCCESSES.

Kilmallock Barracks was captured by our troops on 13-7-22. A large number of rifles, etc., fell into our hands.

A party of Free State troops, on the way to relieve Kilmallock, were put to flight by our forces.

Our troops have surrounded Thurles, and all communication in and out is now cut off.

A party of our troops mining a road in the vicinity of Birr, in anticipation of enemy movements, had not finished their job when the expected enemy arrived in two lorries. Our men opened fire immediately on them killing one and wounding five others. Our casualties nil. The enemy fled.

Republican news sheet, 19 July, 1922.

(Limerick Museum)

naming the car Danny Boy, it was hoped that this modest tribute to his daring courage might influence him to side with the Treaty party. Unfortunately, Dan was misled by alien influences and could not accept the oath of allegiance embodied in the Treaty. Some few years later it was discovered that the oath was a mere formula, but that divine revelation was withheld from Dan. Slievenamon was so called by Michael Collins, who liked the song, the opening air of which — "All alone, all alone, by the wave-washed shore, all alone in the festive hall" — seemed to sum up his position on the acceptance of the Treaty by a majority of the Dail: deserted by his friends in favour of aliens.

The names of the cars were painted in

white letters three inches high on the movable turret, so that anyone shot at from one of those cars would know which one had hit him. There were no lamps, candles, search-lights or other gadgets on any of those three cars. All three cars were alike and carried a Vickers gun projecting from the turret. During the Civil War it was found expedient to carry a ten-foot steel-bound ash plank strapped to the side of the cars. The single plank was often used to cross over many of the blasted bridges, which had a portion of one side undamaged.

Many of the "Engineers" with the Diehards had been quarry workers of the County Councils. The demolition experience of these "Engineers" was blasting

The enemy attacked our garrison at Abbeyleix but were forced to retire. The officer commanding the enemy forces was seriously wounded. Our forces captured 2 rifles and 10 grenades.

The following barracks, with equipment, have been captured by the Republican forces:—Baltinglass Barracks, six rifles; Ballymore Eustace Barracks and 12 rifles; Castledermott, 6 rifles, 2 revolvers, and 400 rounds 303; Rathangan Barracks and 15 rifles; Enniscorthy Castle and Barracks, 28 rifles, 1 Lewis gun, 13 revolvers, 2,000 rounds of 303, 10 shot guns and 36 hand grenades; Ferns Barracks surrendered 28 rifles, 400rds 303, 10 grenades and 37 shot guns; Borris Barracks, 15 rifles, 630 rounds 303, 11 grenades, 5 automatics, and 5 officers.

In almost all cases the rank and file captured have been allowed to go free, and in nearly all cases they wanted to go home.

LATEST WAR NEWS.

On Sunday night our forces attacked O'Brien's Bridge. After fifteen minutes conflict the garrison surrendered. There were 26 men in the barracks none of whom, except the Lieut. in charge had been in the Free State Army more than two or three months. The officer was questioned as to what he thought about the Constitution, and he stated that he had not read it. On being questioned as to what he was fighting for he stated he did not know. The whole garrison, with two exceptions, asked on being captured to be stripped there and then and be allowed home—they had had enough of it.

THE LATE TRUCE.

The following voluntary statement from a Free State prisoner will be of interest to Limerick citizens, in view of the lying statement made by Free Staters as to our responsibility for having broken the Truce:—

MILITARY PRISON,

NEW BARRACKS,

LIMERICK, 16-7-22

I went on guard at Anchmuty's at 12 noon on 10th inst (Monday) and came off guard at 12 noon on 11th (Tuesday). Most of the barricades around William St. Barracks were by this removed. I went to bed at about 1 p.m., and was called at 4 p.m. and told to get rifle and ammunition. I was sent to Butler's corner (William Street), and told to put up barricades and to sand-bag the windows. O'Brien and myself were ordered to go down Nelson St. by Capt. Casey, F.S.F. for cars, etc. for barricades. When passing Roche's St corner we were surprised by a party of men from Roche's St., who made prisoner of me. O'Brien was behind me when I was ordered down to Russell's Mill. I was disarmed and whilst going down I heard one shot; I looked round and saw O'Brien fall. I don't know who fired the shot or where it came from. I was taken to the Mill and detained there for the night. I was then brought to New Barracks. I make this statement voluntarily.

MICHAEL O'CONNELL,

Private.

Republican news sheet, 19 July 1922.

(Limerick Museum)

rock in a quarry; consequently their demolition of bridges often resulted in only a large bite being taken out of one side of an arch of a bridge and the bridge could be crossed on one side on foot. By using a strong plank across the six to eight foot gap, armoured cars and Crossley tenders would cross over quite often in the race to the South.

Two armoured touring cars were also handed over to the Provisional Government by the British. The cars were large, luxuriously comfortable and expensive in petrol. On turning a handle on the doors, steel shutters could be raised or lowered. A steel shutter could also be raised in front of the windshield. The shutters had a porthole from which rifles or revolvers

could be used. The canvas roof or hood of those cars could be raised or lowered or folded back if required. The cars were designed solely for protection of the occupants and were never used in attack. They had been used by British generals in France and were brought to Ireland for the use of British generals when travelling around the country. One of these cars was used by General Michael Collins when, as Commander-in-Chief of the National Army, he took over the country from the British, who for three years previous had offered a reward of £10,000 for his capture, dead or alive. This was the car used by Collins when he was killed in Co. Cork.

The first of the three armoured cars to come into the city was Danny Boy. It had

come in by the Dublin road and was concealed in the opening at William St. Barracks. The car remained hidden and guarded like a state secret until the need arose to reveal the presence of this secret weapon, which was the equal in fire power to three hundred men. On the day following the arrival of Danny Boy in the city, the bridge over the Mulcair at Annacotty was blasted, so that no more armour or supplies could come in by the Dublin road.

The Diehards held Upper William Street, which was barricaded and mined. They held the Ordnance Barracks in Mulgrave Street and the Munster Fair Tavern near St. Lawrence's Cemetery. The distance between William Street and the Tavern is nearly six hundred yards, almost in a straight line. Half way up Mulgrave Street, the Staters held the County Gaol as an impregnable post, but, because of the covering fire from the Ordnance Barracks and the Tavern, they were unable to use the gaol as a guest house, with a military governor as guest master.

They were unhappy and peevish at being unable to extend their hospitality to all those who were enjoying the "Freedom of the City" without the lawful authority of the Mayor and Aldermen, who alone could lawfully confer that great honour. It is most discouraging for the proprietor of a Grade A Hotel to find his premises practically boycotted. For several days the Staters approached the barrier in William Street in the armoured car, Danny Boy. They were trying to discover at what point the barrier was mined. Their tactic was to dash at speed towards one point and, halting suddenly at a safe distance, provoke the Diehards at a premature and panic pressing of the plunger to explode the mine. The ambition of the Staters was to take the Ordnance Barracks and establish contact with the County Gaol. Each time they came within fifty yards of the barrier they halted and cleaned the windows with machine gun fire. They were unable to enter Tanyard Lane or Cathedral Street because those streets were also barricaded and manned by the Diehards. Failing in their efforts to take the Ordnance Barracks, the Staters eventually by a roundabout route reached a point above the gaol in Mulgrave Street. With Danny Boy and ten men in a lorry they raced up to the Munster Fair Tavern and, eleven feet from the front of the Tavern, they cleaned all the front windows with a Vickers gun. The ten men from the lorry, pot shooting at the side windows, made the action seem hostile. In a matter of five minutes the little garrison was compelled to surrender. They were threatened that if they did not surrender, some hand grenades would be tossed into the rooms and yards. Fifteen men were taken prisoner. The leader was found unconscious from two scalp wounds. It is unwise to attempt to look through a window being cleaned by a Vickers gun. Led by Danny Boy, the prisoners were removed to the