

The Volunteers, the 1916 Rising and its Aftermath



On the Whit Sunday of 1915, an excursion train arrived from Dublin. It carried the usual holiday crowd which is to be seen when the return fare was but five shillings. Over three hundred Volunteers arrived on that train. They were joined at the railway station by a local company. In all there were nearly five hundred men on parade. They were led by Mr. Patrick Pearse B.L. They marched through the Georgian part of the city without incident.

Having crossed over Thomond Bridge, the parade passed by King John's Castle where British soldiers on the ramparts watched their progress with interest. They were now entering the historic part of the ancient city - the Englishtown. From the castle onwards and over Baal's Bridge into the Irish town, the parade was greeted with evidence of hostility.

In that age, parochial hostility towards strangers from the next parish was commonplace all over the country and was particularly strong in country towns, where all strangers from Limerick or other cities were regarded as City slickers. Dubliners were regarded with particular prejudice and suspicion.

Amid growing hostility, the Volunteers marched uphill through the Irishtown and Mungret St. Here then was a parade of Dubliners marching like conquerors through the most historic part of "An ancient city studied in the arts of war." Their presence was as offensive as the memory of the Williamite army marching through the city after the siege of 1691, two hundred years earlier. Little as the citizens cared for the presence of the British, they cared less for an armed band of Dubliners swaggering through their city. They could not tolerate the presence of this army of men whose activities could only lead to bloodshed and the loss of innocent lives by violence. As the leader of the parade, Mr Patrick Pearse B.L. was a solicitor, the citizens regarded the parade as a deliberate provocation to a breach of the peace by violence.

Angry men and women came swarming from the houses by the city walls, from John's gate, Garryowen, Palmerstown and Watergate, and converged on the route to the railway terminal. The pressure of the surrounding crowds closing in on the Volunteers forced them closer together and open violence broke out against them. By the time they reached the railway station, were being attacked along the route by many hundreds of angry citizens. Their ranks were broken and scattered. With the greatest difficulty they reached

by P.J. Ryan



P.J. (Cushy) Ryan, from the Limerick Socialist Vol 4 No 10, 1975
(Limerick Museum)

the security of the railway. In their efforts to get into the station they received great help from the railway porters and staff who formed a cordon around the iron gate into the forecourt. One Volunteer mounted a Jarvey car and, like a charioteer, attempted to run down the crowds with the car. He used the Jarvey's whip right and left, but the horse was held and he was pulled to the ground. A few Volunteers fired some shots in the air and one was seen taking aim, but the gun was knocked from his hands and broken in pieces. Many wooden guns and real ones were likewise broken. The shots attracted and compelled the attention of the RIC, who arrived in large numbers and prevented the crowds from swarming over the iron railings or forcing the gates into the forecourt. The crowds were dispersed and the excursion train returned to Dublin. Any story that over a thousand men marched in that parade is absurd, as such a large number of men could ably defend themselves against any aggression.

On Thursday, 20th April 1916, three days before the rebellion in Dublin, a party of volunteers left Limerick in two cars. They travelled south towards Cahirciveen in Co. Kerry. The purpose of their journey was to seize an amateur's wireless transmitting set and so make radio contact

with the German ship Aud. This boat was due in Tralee bay with an arsenal of arms for the rebellion.

As the volunteers journeyed south, the thought may have occurred to them that the British in Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee, in the wireless and cable stations at Waterville and on Valencia Island, as well as British naval ships off the south-west Irish coast, would receive all messages sent on the air. This would have been most helpful to the British, who like to be kept informed on all such matters.

This fiasco did not occur nor was their journey necessary, as the British were well informed concerning the projected arms landing.

In their haste to carry out their task, a car crashed over a pier and two lives were lost. One man alone escaped from drowning. These were the first casualties in the 1916 rebellion. It is true that the volunteers could have broadcast in code to the Aud. The British, who had broken the most secret and confidential codes of the Germans, could in a few minutes break and code devised by mere amateurs. They would be quick to act on any information transmitted to the Aud.

The staff at the cable and wireless station at Waterville, at a distance of twenty feet from the reception rooms, could hear and decode any message on the machines without interrupting their conversations. Any message sent to the Aud would receive priority treatment from them.

Both Waterville and Valencia stations were heavily guarded by the military on land and by the navy at sea. They were a vital part of the lifeline of Empire. No ship (enemy) could approach them within shelling distance at sea. No commando-type party could approach them by land. Two companies of infantry were in huts on the perimeter of the Waterville station. The Irish and the Germans should have been aware of all this information, which was so easy to obtain. There is no evidence that either party gave any thought to these matters.

The Germans know and believe that the British are stupid. This belief is part of their literature. All their acts of war against the British are based on this great untruth. Their total defeat in two world wars by British diplomacy and small arms has taught them nothing. When the Aud entered Tralee Bay she was halted and boarded by a boarding party consisting of twelve men. The boarding party searched the Aud. When British naval ratings search a ship they enjoy the break from the routine duties on their own boat.

This stick, presented by President de Valera, has a little history. The history is this:

On Pentecost Sunday, May 1915 a company of the Irish Volunteers from Dublin visited Limerick. They met with a hostile reception. As they marched through the city missiles of various kinds were thrown at them and they were made the object of many insulting remarks. The Volunteers, in accordance with the command of their Superior Officers, Patrick Pearse, Tomás MacDonagh and Eamon de Valera bore every insult without retaliation.

In the evening, as they marched to the railway station, the hostile crowds gathered in large numbers and endeavoured to prevent them from entering the gates of the station. The situation looked very dangerous. Many police assembled to quell the disturbance but they were unable to dispel the hostile crowd. Then the Mayor of the city, Mr. Phil Donovan, asked the commanding officer of the police to send up two mounted police to the Redemptorist Monastery to ask Fr. C. Mangan, who was Director of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family and who had much influence with the men of Limerick, to come down to the station. Fr. Mangan did so, taking with him the oldest secretary of the Confraternity, Mr. Tom Duggan.

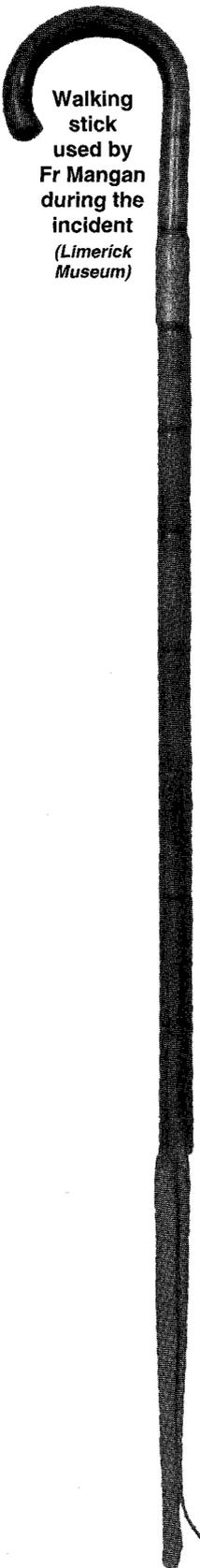
After much difficulty they succeeded in reaching the station gates. There happened to be a side-car near, on which Fr. Mangan mounted. Looking round he recognised a number of the Confraternity men amongst the crowd. This gave him an idea. He called upon these men to join hands and make an avenue for the Volunteers to pass in. This they did immediately and the Volunteers passed in one by one.

However, as one Volunteer drew near the station gate he made to change his rifle from one shoulder to another; there and then a big burly man from the crowd, not a confraternity man, caught hold of the rifle and tried might and main to snatch it from the Volunteer. He held on, but the aggressor dragged the Volunteer hither and thither till they reached the car where Fr. Mangan stood. Asking Mr. Tom Duggan, who was near the car, for his stick, Fr. Mangan struck the aggressor on the hand, saying, "hand up that rifle". This failed, and then Fr. Mangan struck again at the hand of the attacker, but in doing so struck the rifle, thereby splitting the stick. This time proved successful. Fr. Mangan rescued the rifle, but the Volunteer had gone. When all the Volunteers got safely inside the gate and the crowd had scattered, Fr. Mangan came down from the car and giving the rifle to the Mayor asked him to have it returned to the owner.

Years passed; the rising had come and gone. In the year 1920 Fr. Mangan was in the shop of the O'Hanrahans, 384 North Circular Road, Dublin, when a man came to speak to him. "Father", he said, "were you in Limerick in 1915 on Pentecost Sunday when the Volunteers were attacked?" Father said, "yes". "Were you the priest who was standing on the car near the station?" "Yes" was the answer. Then the man asked, "do you remember recovering a rifle on that day?" Fr. Mangan said, "yes". The man then said, "well, Father, I am that Volunteer you helped". "May I ask your name", replied Fr. Mangan. The Volunteer answered, "Peadar Kearney". (The same who wrote "The Soldier's Song"). "Did you ever get your rifle", asked Father Mangan. "Yes, the very next day", replied the Volunteer.

Father Mangan kept the stick for many years. In the year 1945 An Taoiseach Eamon de Valera, with his brother, Fr. Wheelwright C.S.S.R., visited the Redemptorist Monastery in Limerick where Father Mangan presented him with the stick.

The above is from the account written by the late Fr. Mangan. He wished it to be framed and kept near the stick.



Walking stick used by Fr Mangan during the incident (Limerick Museum)

When they have finished their search, it can be said: "That boat has been searched."

As a result of the search, the Aud was taken prisoner by HMS Bluebell. The captain of the Bluebell, M.A. Flood, ordered the Aud to proceed to Queens-town. Near Queenstown, the Aud was scuttled by her crew and sank. The crew were rescued by Bluebell. With the sinking of the Aud, there was also sunk the evidence that the cargo consisted of antique Russian rifles, captured by the victorious Germans from the Russians in the battle of Tannenberg, Poland, in August 1914.

In published accounts and photographs, the boat is called the Aud. The British who captured the boat would surely know the name of their prize, which meant 'prize money' for the officers and crew. The Germans would have some motive in concealing the evidence if the owners of the Aube (Daybreak or Dawn) were collaborating with the Germans.

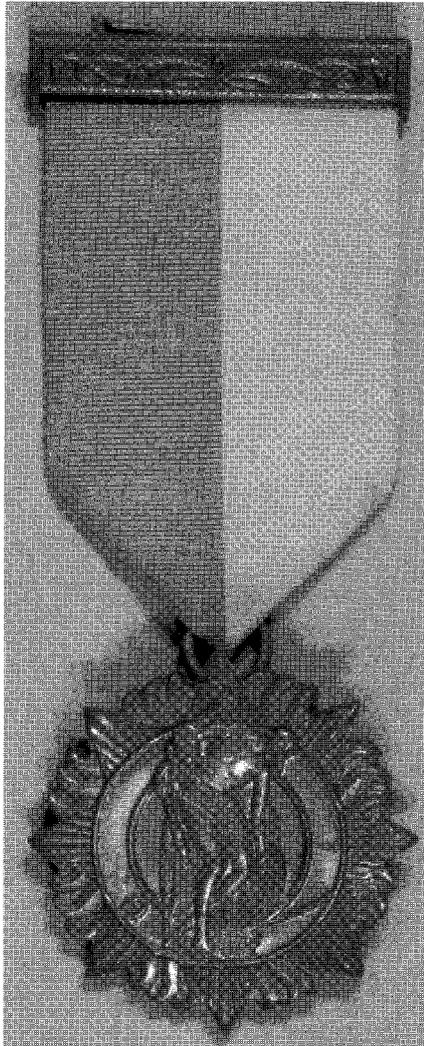
All the published reports of the attempted landing of guns at Fenit in Tralee Bay, Co Kerry, clearly display the incompetence, the ignorance and the bungling ineptitude of those who were responsible for the reception of the guns.

A better organised and most successful importation of guns was the Howth gun running in July 1914, when over a thousand and non-descript guns were successfully landed at Howth and other points. With the guns there was also imported one thousand rounds of ammunition. Some publications claim that ten thousand rounds were imported, but whether one or ten thousand were imported meant that there was but one or ten rounds per gun. A sportsman out for a days sport shooting wildfowl would be poorly armed with one hundred rounds for his shotgun; clearly then ten rounds per gun meant but poor sport for those Volunteers who were to use those guns.

The whole operation of purchase and importation of those guns was under the sole direction of Major Erskine Childers of British Military Intelligence. From the moment of decision to purchase those guns until their landing at Howth and elsewhere occupied a period of three months. On this account it must be accepted that the gallant Major had three months official leave of absence from his unit. On completion of his task, the Major returned to England with notable haste and presumably rejoined his unit.

At the end of the then world War Major Childers was decorated by His Majesty King George V with the Distinguished Service Medal for distinguished services to King and Country. Possibly because of his knowledge of things nautical, Major Childers was transferred to British Naval Intelligence. From this post he was 'loaned' to the Treaty delegation to assist the Irish delegates on naval matters in the Treaty.

Following the acceptance of the Treaty by the Dail and the outbreak of the Civil War, Major Childers was arrested by Free



1916 medal of Thomas A. McInerney
(Limerick Museum)

State troops in a 'round up' in Co. Wicklow. The Staters suspected that the Major was a British agent, but as there was no crime on the statute book for being a British agent, a court-martial found him guilty of being in unlawful possession of arms. The Major was found guilty and received the six a.m. salute from a firing squad; he was one of the bravest Englishmen that ever died for his country.

On Good Friday 1916 a company of about sixty Volunteers assembled near Pery Square and marched down O'Connell St. through the city, their destination being a field near Killonan railway station, about five miles from the city. They were going on a weekend course of training. Some of the men had wooden guns and some had real rifles with a few rounds of ammunition; while others carried shotguns and antique rifles of rare vintage. With them there marched some boy scouts of sixteen years and less, who played martial music with drums and whistles. It is true that the Company had no cannon but they had the sound of cannon from a big bass drum. As the Company marched past William St. police barrack, they were admired by District Inspectors, Sergeant and Constables of the RIC, who may have wondered at the

purpose of the marching men. On passing by the Ordnance barrack they were objects of interest to the military, who crowded outside the gate to see them pass by and wonder at the antique guns carried by some of them. Their route to Killonan carried them past the police barrack at the Pike, where the RIC turned out to observe them and possibly count the number of men.

On the long straight road to Ballysimon cross, a light drizzle of rain was falling. A halt was made at Arahill's pub and the boy scouts were sent home. The march then continued to Killonan. On reaching the field of assembly a quarter mile beyond the railway station, the men sheltered from the steady rain in a large open hayshed. The field belonged to a Mr. Batt Laffan. Another party of young men pushing a handcar loaded with cooking utensils and food arrived at the field around one o'clock. When they unloaded the car, it was found that the tea, sugar and butter had been left behind in Limerick. The only food available for cooking was potatoes and meat. Those two items boiled with a head of cabbage would make a light but nourishing soup to go with the loaves of bread. As they had also forgotten to bring salt, the liquid could rightly be called 'Beef Tea' which was highly recommended by the medical profession for convalescent patients and people of delicate constitution. As the rain continued to fall, a fire could not be lighted in the open nor could the hayshed be used because of the hay in the shed and the men were sheltering there.

An army marches on its stomach. These men had looked forward to a good dinner, but now, disillusioned by the absence of food, without even a cup of nourishing beef tea, they had little strength for marching; they gradually dispersed to their homes. The last to leave were the men pushing the handcar in the evening, in the rain. The most eloquent tongue could not persuade those men to go again on a route march during that weekend, nor would the parents of the children permit them to get another wetting. The giving of fancy names such as Fianna to those boy scouts does not excuse the indoctrination of children and the abuse of their innocent minds. All the modern dictators followed the same reprehensible practice with such titles as Jugend, Komsomol etc.

On Easter Saturday morning around 11 a.m. a horse-drawn bread van from Daly's bakery travelled out the Tipperary road to the field of assembly at Killonan, about five miles from the city. On arrival, Pat Carey, the driver, expected to be met by enough men to unload the van. He searched the fields around but saw no one. On returning to his van he saw that the doors were open and found that two loaves of bread were stolen. This unpatriotic act of petty larceny deserves the strongest condemnation. Naturally annoyed at the waste of his time, the driver climbed up to his high perch on the top of the van. The horse turned around, and without a

'giddup' from the driver, headed for home. The driver now had inside information straight from the horse's mouth, there was to be no rebellion.

That vanload of bread is the most remarkable item in the financial history of 1916. It is the only recorded case in which members of the Volunteers were offered or received something without having to pay for it. Everything which a Volunteer possessed, from his bootlaces to the cap off his head, was paid for out of his own pocket. He bought his uniform and sweated for the price of it. If he possessed one of the obsolete Howth rifles and a few rounds of ammunition, it was sold to him for a hard earned sovereign. A Volunteer could buy a cheap shotgun for six shillings and cartridges at two shillings a dozen, but six shillings was two days wages for some of them. When the Volunteers went on a route march or on training, they were told to bring a days ration of food. The Volunteers did not cost the central authority anything, yet an estimate of almost a quarter of a million American dollars were safely landed in Dublin between 1913 and 1916 for the purchase of arms. A glowing tribute is due to the American subscribers of the Almighty Dollars which, like faith, can move mountains, yet not one Irish publication mentions the divine mission of the American dollars.

At 5 a.m. on Easter Sunday 1916 all four military barracks were alerted and the garrisons quickly moved into defensive positions on the perimeter of the city. Corbally bridge and the railway bridge across the Shannon at the Longpavement were put under military guard. Sarsfield Bridge was barricaded, the troops being billeted in the nearby Turkish baths. Sentries manning the ramparts of King John's Castle controlled Thomond Bridge. The Roxboro road was barricaded beyond the railway bridge, the troops being billeted in tents. The Tipperary and Kilmallock roads were barricaded at their junction near St. Laurence cemetery, the troops being billeted in the Munster Fair tavern and in the RIC barrack nearby. The telephone exchange at number six, Upper Cecil St., was taken over by signallers from the Royal Army Service Corps, who listened to all calls and allowed no calls out of the city. Armed RIC sentries stood on guard outside every RIC barrack in the city and outside the city.

A party of six men travelling on a jaunting car on a days excursion to Killaloe were halted by a combined force of RIC and military at Birdhill, eleven miles from the city on the Dublin road. They were questioned and allowed to continue their journey. This halt was at 9 a.m. on Easter Sunday morning. They returned to Limerick that night, passing again through Birdhill. They were singing like nightingales, their voices going tweet-tweet, but they were not again challenged.

Birdhill is near the Shannon on the Limerick/Tipperary border. At vantage points near Birdhill a whole sweep of countryside, from Shannon to Newport

ÓSLAIG NA hÉIREANN.

City of Limerick Regiment
IRISH VOLUNTEERS.

Name, *A. Slattery*.....

Address, *2 Catherine Pl.*
Limerick.....

Co. *11*..... No.

Date of Enrolment.....

CITY PRINTING CO,

Membership card of City of Limerick Regiment, Irish Volunteers, 1914-15

(Limerick Museum)

several miles away, can be kept under observation. The area is a rough plain of bog and swamp. Any movement of armed men on the distant Newport road could be seen from Birdhill. Beyond the Newport road was more bog and swamp, drained by the Newport and Bilboa rivers.

At 11 a.m. on Easter Sunday morning a party of twelve Volunteers on bicycles coming towards the city, halted at Rosbrien crossroads, two miles from the city. Two of the men had some kind of rifles and four of them had shotguns. The other six men were armed with hayforks and hedge slashers. On being shown the cancellation notice in the Sunday Independent and informed of the military disposition in the city, they rightly accepted on advice to return to their homes and disperse. As they were not wearing uniforms it was easy to follow that

advice without attracting further attention. No one may doubt that those were brave men, nor can anyone doubt that it was an act of criminal lunacy to order that handful of men to attack almost two thousand British troops who were then stationed in the city.

From these events it can be seen that Colonel Sir Anthony Weldon, the British commander in the Limerick area, was well informed about the strength of the militant force arrayed against him. He took the correct and commendable course to safeguard his position and the lives of the citizens and Volunteers alike. A humane and kindly man, he saw nothing but comedy and ridicule in attacking and rounding up a handful of men armed with obsolete guns and agricultural implements. He may have been in possession of some as yet undisclosed information

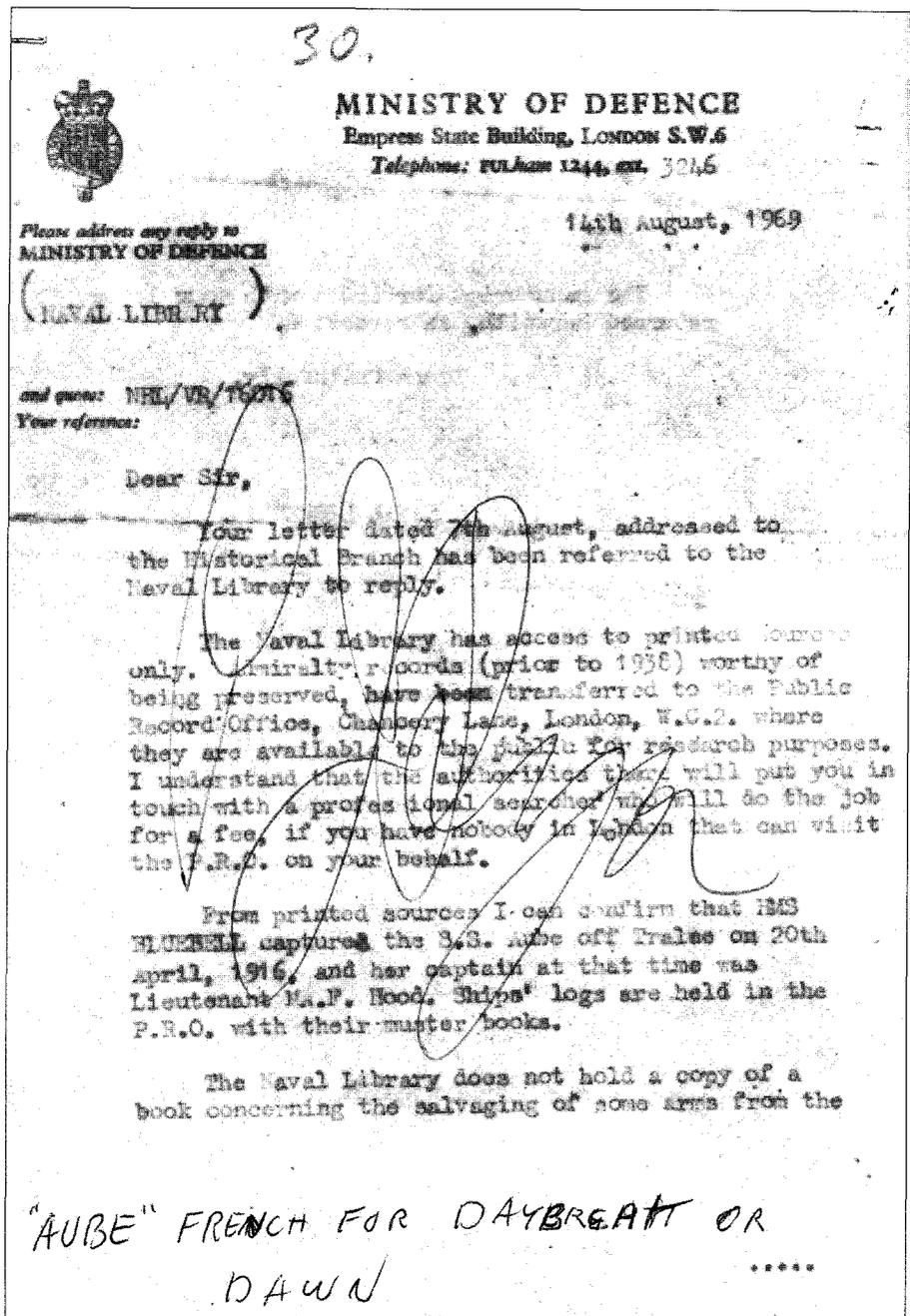
concerning this semblance of rebellion. The thought will also occur that the whole 1916 affair was meant to appear as a semblance of rebellion to appease the American Irish organisations which had lavishly supported the Volunteer movement for three years since 1913. It is reasonable to suppose that the Americans wanted more for their money than mere oratory, parades and route marches. The historian must not allow posterity to be deceived by published verbosity but ask - how much information has been suppressed, withheld or destroyed? All the foregoing events occurred a day before a shot was fired in Dublin city.

Following the unconditional surrender in Dublin, Sir Anthony demanded the surrender of all arms held by the Volunteers in Limerick. Because of their many parades and route marches in uniform, the names and addresses of all volunteers were known to the police, as well as details of the weapons in their possession. On this account the men had no option but to surrender their guns, which eventually were removed to the New Barrack and destroyed. Agricultural implements were not included in this surrender demand.

Meanwhile events in Dublin followed their predestined course. As two Limerick men were executed for their part in the rebellion it is pertinent to this story to examine the circumstances which led to their deaths.

All published sources are agreed that Pearse deceived his superior officer, McNeill, that he defied his superior officer and usurped his authority, and that contrary to expressed orders, he indulged in the semblance of rebellion.

It is also well publicised that Connolly, a Scotsman of four years residence in Dublin, was held prisoner for two days. Nothing is known as to what happened to him during those two days but wild surmise. It is particularly suggested that Connolly was prevailed upon, coerced or forced at gunpoint to join in the semblance of rebellion. If this wild surmise is accepted, then it must also be accepted that, on regaining his liberty, he was free to divorce himself from the shotgun wedding and denounce his captors. As he did not withdraw, then it is rational to conclude that something more attractive than death by a firing squad was offered to this 48 years old Scotsman who had spent most of his life in Britain and the U.S.A. A less publicised but rational surmise was that it was spelled out to Connolly that no gory revolution was planned but a confrontation in force, a show of strength, to be followed by a parley with the opposing British commander and a capitulation on terms, without firing a shot. This kind frolic had the precedent of Grattan's Volunteers in 1779 to lend it verisimilitude. It also had the more recent and equally successful and relevant case of Carson's Ulster Volunteer Force of 1913 which, without firing a shot, defied the British Government, caused a mutiny in the Curragh, and effectively postponed the Home Rule bill into the Kathleen



Letter from the British Defence Ministry to P.J. Ryan, 1969, confirming the name of the ship captured off Tralee in April 1916

(Limerick Museum)

Mavourneen class: "It may be for years and it may be forever."

Pearse, Connolly and other men occupied public buildings in untenable positions of defence. The absurdity of their positions would suggest to the trained military mind that nothing serious was intended. Pearse's men were not to fire until Pearse gave the order to fire. Connolly's men were not to fire until Connolly gave the order.

The occupation of public buildings by armed men should have been investigated in the first place by the Dublin Metropolitan Police. Instead, a British military scouting party led by a colonel arrived at the GPO. Contrary to expressed orders, a volley was fired and a British soldier and two valuable horses were shot dead. As men were expendable and horses were not, the loss of the two horses was a serious matter.

It is of no consequence whether the dead soldier was a Lancer in all his finery or a Gordon Highlander waggling his kilt, nor does the number of dead matter. A British soldier was killed in action, the circumstances of his death warranted a court-martial and a firing squad. Pearse, as a solicitor, would know the law on the matter. Connolly, as an ex British soldier (1882-1889), would be aware of the military routine in such matters.

The British scouting party retreated. There now could not be a confrontation and parley between Pearse and an officer of high rank. Pearse and Connolly were now committed men, their lives were forfeit to the firing squads, they now had nothing to lose, the battle was lost but the show must go on.

When eventually many innocent people were shot dead and the centre of the city lay in ruins, the two leaders of the



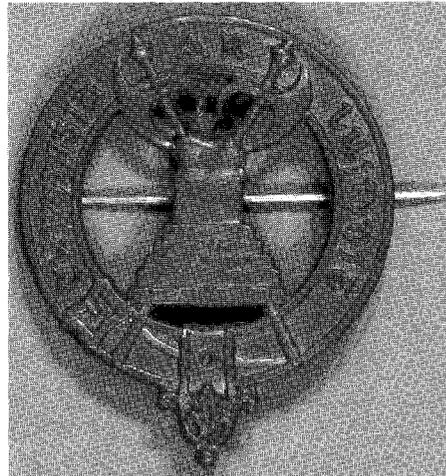
Group of Limerick Volunteers, 1916. The location is believed to be Killonan. Third from left is John McSweeney and fourth from left is Frederick Kenny. The man at the extreme left is believed to be Davy Danford of Gerald Griffin St.

(Limerick Museum)

rebellion surrendered and ordered all other posts to surrender. In this way a dozen men were thrown to the firing squads. Two Limerick men, Con Colbert and Ned Daly, as well as others, paid the penalty for not reading the small print or scrutinising their commitments in detail. Because of the surrender, the Proclamation of the Republic was discredited as so much high falutin' oratory, which like so many other such 'Proclamations', could have been written by any scrivener.

What might have been a glorious epic became a wretched fiasco, with commandants and others disguised as Capuchin monks dashing through the streets of Dublin to get through the military cordons. One man describes his desertion from his comrades who had surrendered. He paints a dark picture of his terror stricken flight through the lanes and alleys in trying to reach his home. This was the author of the Soldiers Song. His malfeasance to the 'Republic' did not go unnoticed however. By an act of the Dail, the song was declared to be the National Anthem. The author was richly rewarded. He received public acclaim, a cash bonus and royalties where no copyright existed. The line in the song about aliens from beyond the sea gave exquisite joy and helped to sweeten the kitty. In this manner the Soldiers Song became the most expensive and costliest song in the world since tribal chants or national anthems were first invented.

Fortunately the honour of the country was saved by those men who died fighting, the foremost of whom was The O'Rahilly. The O'Rahilly [was] a happily married man with a growing family, a successful thriving business, an honourable position in society, and the heart and fire of a Kerryman. He had everything to lose and nothing to gain. All these he lost



Badge of Limerick Volunteers 1914-16
(Limerick Museum)

and gained immortality. He died fighting, leading his men against impossible odds. Of him Pearse had said: 'The O'Rahilly is weak, he will not fight'. The bronze figure of Cúchulainn in the GPO, Dublin, commemorates The O'Rahilly and the men who, like him, died fighting.

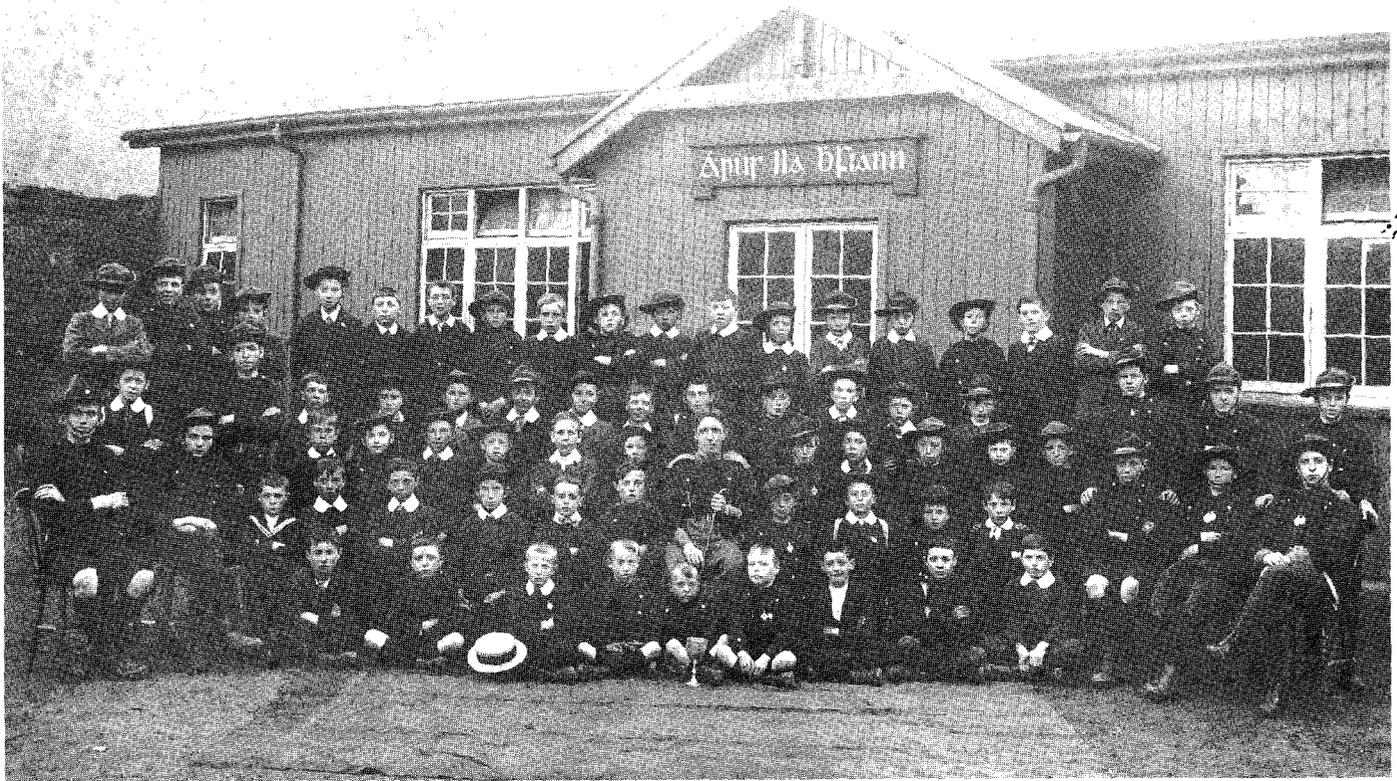
Tragic as those events were for the relatives of those slain in the rebellion, the event was not without a touch of comedy. It was the usual custom in that age for people to gather in numbers at the bakeries on the Tuesday morning following a bank holiday. The poor came for the cheap end loaf of a batch of bread, while others came early because of lack of forethought they had neglected to obtain sufficient supplies on the previous Saturday. Because of the shooting of a British soldier and other events on Monday, the bakeries in Dublin were thronged around by masses of people looking for bread on Tuesday morning.

Boland's bakery was under siege by

masses of starving citizens looking for bread and who would not be put off with cake, yet the small garrison of about thirty men compelled the starving multitude to go away. The garrison was continuously being sent on witless and futile patrols to discover the presence of the enemy. This is the only recorded case in Irish history where Irish rebels had to search around to discover the presence of the British Army.

The rebellion had little impact on British public opinion. The British Foreign Secretary, Earl Grey of Falloden, was enjoying a holiday at his country seat at Falloden, Northumberland. He was an amateur ornithologist and an ardent bird watcher. While engaged in his hobby looking through binoculars at migratory and alien birds, he was informed in a most casual manner of the executions taking place in Dublin. Shocked by the news, he laid aside his binoculars and hurried south and across the Irish Sea. On his arrival in Dublin, he ordered an immediate halt to all further executions. He then returned to Falloden and taking up his glasses, resumed his study of migrant and alien birds. The British military command in Ireland was a separate military command, responsible only to the Foreign Secretary. The executions were the military method of restoring law and order when civil government was disrupted. The military would have acted in a similar manner in any other country held by the British. Under similar conditions of revolt, any other government would have acted in a similar manner. During the then World War, the French military command decimated a whole regiment of the French Army for mutiny. Every tenth man was executed.

The Irish public were horrified by the death roll of innocent civilians. That some British soldiers were slain was of little



Group of Fianna at the Fianna hall in the garden of John Daly's house at Barrington Street, 1913.
In the centre is Sean Heuston

(Limerick Museum)

nationalism and Celtic scholarship. He spoke Welsh. He was known as the Demon Lover of Downing Street. The most confidential documents of the British cabinet were typed by his secretary typist paramour.

From the gaols and slums of Britain, George collected some thousands of mobsmen and hoodlums and sent them over to Ireland to assist the RIC in restoring British law and order. The hoodlums were dressed in an RIC mans bottle green tunic and a British soldiers trousers. Because of this mixed uniform they were called the Black and Tans. Months later George sent over a corps of ex-officers of the British army who were suave ruthless butchers. This latter corps of butchers were called the Auxiliaries. They were to assist the Tans if the latter should find any assignment repugnant to their elastic conscience. This second body of grenade tossing bravos, the Auxiliaries, were called Auxies for brevity.

Little notice was taken of the Tans until one of them was punched in a pub. An hour later they emerged from their several barracks firing their rifles and striking all around them. The Tan Terror had begun. The Tans arrived in the city in March 1920. Country people came into the city to look at them. Later the Tans courteously returned the compliment. They went out into the country and established posts in harmony with the RIC, occupying the same barracks. From that time on life in the country became days off horror and nights of terror.

In the three years between 1918 and 1921 almost thirty political murders were

committed in the city. Most of the killings of British forces were inadvertent: they were neither planned nor authorised.

Two IRA men coming into the city, fearing that an approaching RIC man was about to arrest them, shot him dead. They were summoned to a court of their officers and were reprimanded for their unauthorised act. The two men expressed their contempt of the court saying: 'There are too many paper soldiers in the IRA.' They told the three officers of the court that 'gun play was better than word play' and that should the court disagree, the members of the court would be next for the cemetery. As the two men now had notches on their guns, the court listened with respectful deference to the words of wisdom. Three other men held up some British soldiers in a pub and made off with their rifles. They also were reprimanded for their spontaneous act. Five men held up two RIC men in the Peoples Park and disarmed them. The RIC were aware of the identity of those five men, but waited two hours before reporting their loss at William Street barracks and disclaimed any knowledge of their attackers. The five men were abused for their daring acts and were ordered not to do the like again without authority. With such leadership and example the men were in greater danger from their own officers than from the British forces.

Following the incident in the park, three tenders of Tans arrived at the park gate in Edward Street. They fired several volleys into the park and up Edward Street, where they wounded a Tan who had come out of Edward Street barrack to

discover the cause of the shooting. The Tans then fired several more volleys up Careys Road and wounded five people. The Tans then returned to William Street barracks and having obtained sledgehammers, axes and crowbars they came again into Careys Road. Starting on the left hand side of the road they broke down every window and door and wrecked the interior of the houses.

There was joy in every stroke of the sledges, happy were the axe men as with notable craftsmanship they smashed the lustre jugs and furniture. Some people on the right of the road were laughing at the orgy of destruction until the Tans, having reached the end of the road by the railway bridge, crossed over and repeated the destruction on the right of the road. Because of their craftsmanship with the axe, few people remaining in the houses dared to resist or protest. While this orgy of destruction went on, the British soldiers in the New Barracks remained in the barracks.

All horse and cattle fairs in the country were banned, yet several hundred farmers brought horses into the city for a fair held between William Street and the Fair Green. Several lorry loads of Tans firing their rifles and revolvers charged into the mass of men and animals. The terrified animals surged around kicking and screaming and stampeded in all directions. Another mob of Tans with ash-plants laid on to any loiterer or anyone who protested against their loss. All those acts of violence by the Tans were carried out with happy carefree abandon. They laughed joyously, shouted obscenities and sang

IRISH REBELLION, MAY 1916.



Memorial postcard of Edward Daly, commander of the Four Courts during the Rising, executed on 4 May 1916

(Limerick Museum)



ED. de VALERA
(Commandant of the Ringsend Area).

Sentenced to Death;

sentence commuted to Penal Servitude for Life.

1916 postcard of Eamon de Valera, commander of Boland's Mills during the Rising

(Limerick Museum)

lewd comic songs. They were free from any fear of disciplinary action against them.

The Tans always acted in an intelligent manner - to cause the maximum of terror with the minimum of effort. One arch of Annacotty Bridge near the city was blown up to prevent the movement of British forces across the Mulcair River. The following morning the Tans arrived at the local creamery where the farmers were delivering milk. They collected all the men within a mile of the place and compelled them to tear down nearby stone walls and fill in the broken arch with stones and rubble. When at the end of the day the work was finished and the bridge usable again, the labourers were dismissed with gunfire and ash plants. Annacotty Bridge was not blown up again until July 1922, when the Tans had left the country.

While the military in the four barracks were content to blow up houses with explosives, they always acted in an orderly manner. They first removed the tenants from the selected house and the nearby

houses, then placing the explosive in the best engineering manner, up went the house and its contents. In this manner four houses were demolished in the city. On the other hand the Tans loved a blazing fire. When given a box of matches and a tin of petrol by their officer, they needed no further instructions. They burned down four houses deliberately and two more by accident. The Tans were not concerned whether the tenants remained in the building or not.

Several companies of Gordon Highlanders and Welsh Fusiliers occupied the four military barracks. They also had barricaded posts on every road leading out of the city. When a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on the city and country generally, patrols of those men walked the streets, while other patrols on bicycles moved silently around the city and country. Because of the silent movements of those cycle patrols, many people were caught out during curfew. They were held until a lorry or foot patrol arrived and took them to the nearest barracks for

questioning. When a Welsh Fusilier was punched in a public house, a company of men from the New Barracks cordoned off the street and burned the pub, but the customers were allowed to finish their drinks and have a last free drink on the house. Eventually a curfew was imposed from 4.30 in the evening until 7 next morning. During those fourteen hours of the twenty-four, lorries careered around the city and patrols played havoc searching houses, insulting and injuring the occupants.

In its own modest little way the Tan terror was memorable and had its many tales of cowardice and bravery, of skulduggery and knavery. The greatest heroes of those years were the plenipotentiaries, the representatives the delegates from Mother Ireland who bravely endured a terrible risk for the Motherland. Ere the Tans war started, those wandering Minstrel Boys, armed with British and American passports, sped from the country to far foreign climes to represent the country as ambassadors and delegates



SEOIRSE macFLANNCAODA, méine Luimnige
 A' d'únmairbuigeadó le Gallaid an 7ao Lá de Márta, 1921.
 "Cáim 'ran tásogal ir fíor nár bféoir
 O'rágal i ngníom ná i ngnáoi mo laoiḡ-re
 Do fáruig míle raoi aḡur raor-flait
 Igcáil, ingáoir, ir veimín 'r i' otreíte."

Memorial postcard of George Clancy, Mayor of Limerick 1921,
 murdered on 7 March 1921

(Limerick Museum)

of a non-existent Republic. Had any of those delegates entered any country as illegal immigrants without passports they would have been deported.

In Europe those delegates were to be seen in Paris, Geneva and perhaps in Istanbul. On the continent of America they were seen and loudly heard in the cities and towns of the U.S.A. They lived and travelled like caliphs of Baghdad on a magic carpet of almighty American dollars. They enjoyed the delights of public ovation and the pleasures of the

table. All of those delights were paid for by Clan na nGae1 and other Irish-American organisations in the U.S.A. to the tune of over a hundred thousand American dollars.

While the Tan terror raged in Ireland, those delegates also endured their moiety of terror. The great fear of their lives was that, because of some indiscreet word or act, they might be deported back to Ireland to endure the horrors of the Tan terror.

Like golden-voiced cuckoos in the

Springtime of another year, these delegates returned to Ireland for the Truce and Treaty debates, but the songs of the cuckoos had become the croak of the raven. Whether in the wilds of Connemara or on Cúchulainn in the GPO, the ravens are birds of ill omen in Irish history. The most rabid opponents of the Treaty were those returned exiles. They were rigid and inflexible in their insistence that the Treaty be rejected and that the country should continue to fight for an all green Republic. Because of their long absence from the country, they seemed to be unaware that a six county government with an elected parliament was in existence in the north-east. This was to be a 'Protestant home for a Protestant people,' who had the will and the means to keep it so.

Such then was the background scene when Michael O'Callaghan, Mayor of Limerick, unable to obtain a passport to leave the country, was smuggled across the Atlantic in a coal boat as a stowaway to Canada. Because of the British censorship of events in Ireland and disbelief in the stories of horror and terror which leaked out, it was felt that the 750th Mayor of Limerick was a voice to be heard and to be believed.

On his arrival at the United States-Canadian border, he was arrested and had to fight in the courts against the combined opposition of the U.S. and Canadian immigration officials.

He managed, however, to give a short interview to U.S. and Canadian journalists and was then deported back to Ireland. On his arrival home he was shot dead inside his own door at midnight, his wife being a witness of the murder. On the same night, the previous Mayor, George Clancy, was shot dead in his home, and a school teacher, Volunteer O'Donoghue, was also murdered. Those murders were committed by a sergeant of the RIC with some Auxies and Tans, who riddled the bodies with bullets.

Following these events, the British Prime Minister, the adulterous David Lloyd George, assured a startled British House of Commons that he had murder by the throat.

Despite the fears and terrors caused by bombings, shootings and wilful murder, the bedtime story continued with lusty vigour. A month or less to the expected time of a birth the women made due preparations for the happy event. The wealthy women entered 'houses of accouchement' where they received expensive attendance due to their status. The Lying-in-Hospital in Bedford Row catered for other patients.

Some women preferred to enter the city workhouse for their confinement. This carried the suggestion of poverty, but every woman had her own ideas and whims and acted accordingly.

The unmarried mother could conceal her condition as long as possible and have



Shell of the Theatre Royal, Henry Street, in September 1926

(Limerick Museum)

the birth in the security of her own home. If her good Christian parents denied her the sanctuary of her own home, then the roadside hedge or wood proved that the doctrine of Darwin - natural selection and the survival of the fittest - was superior to Christian dogma.

Parents and relatives visited the workhouse and gave comfort and assurance to the married mother. The unmarried mother was happy in having come through the ordeal alive, but was terrified at the thought of meeting her relations and acquaintances. Her fears and terrors were anticipated and relieved by the celibate females administering the hospital, who initiated a 'Mother and Child' scheme.

On visiting days, mother and child were on view standing behind bars in a corridor leading into the main building. Their shawls were taken from them so that they could be seen and recognised with the naked eye. Their efforts to conceal themselves behind each other were frustrated by a pious female attendant, who compelled them to face their public. In this way visitors to the workhouse could see at a glance that mother and child were well. Chairs were not provided for those tired and humiliated girls during their two hours ordeal, as the tableaux might suggest the title - Seated Virgins with Child. The corridor was

called the hall of shame and gave rise to the expression, 'holding the baby.'

On the afternoon of Monday 25th January 1922, the staff in the sorting office of the GPO in Henry Street were awaiting the arrival of mail from the railway station. Some of them were passing the time away by playing Put and Take. In this game, a small six sided top is spun and, falling over, shows on its upper side a brief order, which may be 'Put one' or 'Take two,' or the face may show all Put or Take all. A series of spins had resulted in 'Put all' turning up for six consecutive spins. As the six players were playing for pennies, the large sum of three shillings was in the kitty. It was at this point in the game when the excitement was high that three Ford cars filled with armed men halted outside the gate on Henry Street. The men entered the sorting office with revolvers at the ready and ordered the staff to put their hands in the air. They then ordered the postmaster to open the safe.

The postmaster, suspecting their intentions, pointed out to them that any interference with Majesty's mails carried a possible life sentence in prison, and as they were young men surely they did not want to spend the rest of their lives in jail. He further pointed out that their intended

action was a breach of Post Office Regulations, an abstract from which clearly states - not more than one pound may be withdrawn from the Post Office without giving a weeks notice in writing. He suggested that they follow the regulations by filling in an application in duplicate and return in a weeks time, as he had no intention of endangering his position or pension by negligence in the performance of his duties. The pressure of a gun on his ribs suggested that his position and his life were in greater danger by non-compliance with a lawful order issued on behalf of the Irish Republic.

He then opened the safe, which contained almost two thousand pounds in notes of small denomination. The raiders abstracted the contents, taking all. They also removed some sacks of mail destined for the British Military and sped away in their Ford cars.

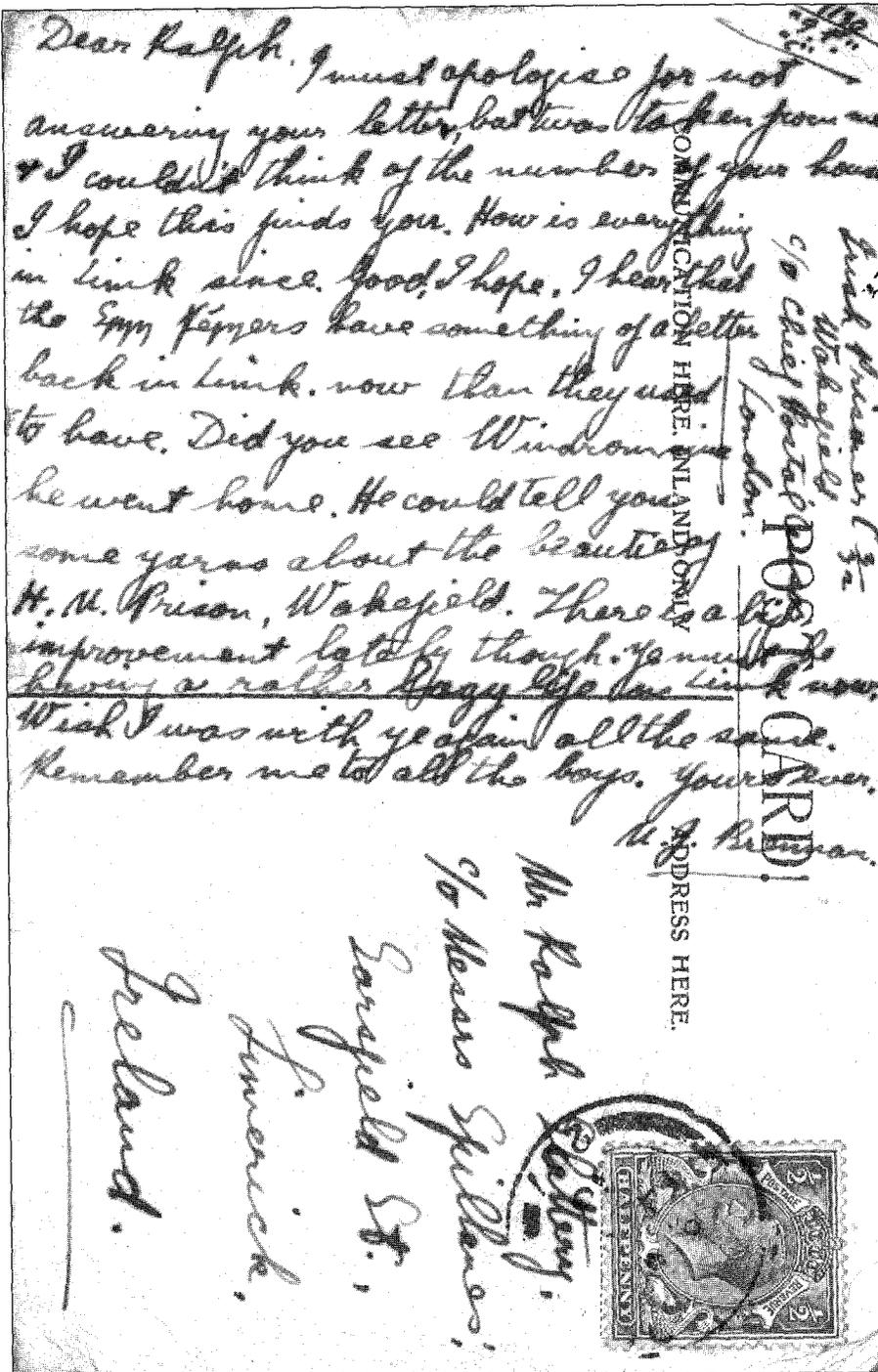
The six players were about to resume their game of Put and Take, when the supervisor coming on the scene confiscated the kitty, taking all. While these events were taking place, the attention of the British military and the citizens was concentrated on the Theatre Royal, a hundred yards away. It had taken fire and the flames were being put out by the fire brigade and military. This was the day of Put and Take.

Following the signing of the 8th of December 1921 of the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, a general ceasefire operated in Limerick city and throughout the country. Martial law and curfew were lifted and the public were free to move around the city without interference. The British military and Tans moved around the city unarmed. The Tans no longer lounged around their barrack gates, drinking in the nearest pub, but travelled around to any pub or entertainment as they pleased.

On the afternoon of Monday 25th January 1922, the Theatre Royal was accidentally burned down. The fire brigade were assisted by unarmed military and Tans in controlling the fire. The spectators were kept at a distance by civilians wearing IRA armbands and revolvers in leather waist belts. These were the republican police - seen in profile they looked patriotic. All patriots are shown in profile. Those republican police when seen in full face looked grim and menacing. The opinion was expressed that it was the height of folly for those men to expose themselves to the scrutiny and recognition by the Tans. Should the Treaty not be accepted by the Dail, those men would be dead in a matter of days or hours. The question was asked: 'Was it public necessity or conceit which brought those men into public view?'

The opinion was also expressed that to replace the RIC by armed republican police was the prelude to a military dictatorship. In Dublin, one man declaimed: 'There must be some form of military control until the people are brought to their senses.' The implications were that this little country, which had endured three years of British and Irish terrorism, was now to endure the horrors of a native military despotism. Like straws blown around before a coming storm, other and alternative ideas were mooted.

With the soft insistence of a chapel bell at sunset, the idea of a Theocracy was aired, warmed, cooled and damned by profanity into oblivion. The age-old dream of former glory found followers who favoured the restoration of the monarchy in the person of The O'Connor Don, lineal descendent of Roderick O'Connor, last king of Ireland. On the site of the mounds at Tara, royal palaces were to be built with the costliest of native and imported marbles. Singers [and] Bards were to assemble at royal banquets. From a high flagstaff, the kingly standard of royal blue with the golden harp floating in the wind would greet the rising sun in the east and salute the setting sun in the west, where lies the land called Tir na nOg and Hy Brazil, the Isle of the Blest. Those beautiful dreamers had many dreams. So many selfish people were so concerned with publicising their own grandeur and pretensions that they had little time for those modest dreamers, or for the pretensions of others. The dreamers returned



Postcard from Michael Brennan of Meelick, Co. Clare, in internment at Wetherby, Yorkshire, 1917. He was commander of Free State forces in Limerick during the Civil War and afterwards Chief of Staff of the army (Limerick Museum)

to their shells of reserve with the urgency of salted snails, thinking sadly: 'Erin the tear and the smile in thine eye.' Their last dying effort was the revival of the Tailteann games in 1928.

Because of public resentment against the militancy of the Republican police, they were withdrawn and did not appear again in public in the role of protectors. The Treaty having succeeded the Truce, the Tans and British military left the city. There was then no police force to safeguard the lives and property of the citizens. Petty larceny and grand larceny became commonplace in the city. Urged by humanitarian and other interests and to protect the citizens from predators, a number of public spirited merchants

held a meeting and arranged with the Republican commanders for the creation of a city police force. As a result of their deliberations, a total of twenty men who had never been involved in politics were assigned the duties of City Police. Their hours and duties were arranged in the Town Hall. They were paid three pounds per week, which was paid by the joint contributions of the city merchants. They wore a revolver held in a leather waist-belt. As they had no pretensions to having been former daredevils or bloodthirsty heroes, they were accepted with humorous relief. They patrolled the city for five weeks until the arrival of the national army, when they were relieved of all authority and returned to their homes.