

TALES OF THE R.I.C



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TALES OF THE R.I.C.



I.

THE INFORMER.

IN many parts of the west of Ireland one finds small mountain farms of from five to twenty acres, generally consisting of twenty-five per cent rock, twenty-five per cent heather, and the remainder of indifferent grass-land. On such a farm a peasant will rear a large family, and how it is done is one of the mysteries of Ireland; but done it is, and often.

Patsey Mulligan was one of a family of ten, brought up on one of these farms until he was seventeen, when his father told him that it was time he thought of keeping himself, and, incidentally, of earning some money for his mother. Patsey quite agreed with his father, but soon found that it was much easier to talk of getting work in such a poor district as Cloonalla than to get it.

In the end Patsey made up his mind that the only thing to do was to go to England

in search of work, and one cold winter's morning he set off from his home, in company with three other lads from the same townland, to walk the fifteen miles across the mountains and bogs to the nearest railway station at Ballybor. Arriving in England, they made their way to a town in Yorkshire, where one of them had a brother working in a coal-mine, and within three days of leaving his home in Ireland Patsey found himself a Yorkshire miner.

Hardly had he settled down to his work in the coal-mine when the war broke out, followed by a rush of young miners to enlist, amongst others Patsey Mulligan; and before he realised what he was doing, he was a full private in a famous Yorkshire regiment. Patsey had, however, enlisted in the name of Murphy, hoping to keep his people in ignorance of the fact, knowing it would break his mother's heart if she knew he was fighting.

Patsey thoroughly enjoyed the training, and within seven months of enlisting embarked for France; and after a few weeks' pleasant life in billets, gradually moved north until finally the battalion took over trenches in the famous salient of Ypres—a great contrast to Patsey's home in the west of Ireland.

There happened to be in the battalion a young Irish subaltern by name Anthony Blake, and when Blake told his Company Sergeant-Major to find him a servant—an Irishman if possible—Patsey at once volunteered for the job, and between the two young Irishmen

there soon sprang up a friendship through the common bond of danger and discomfort.

After some time Patsey learnt through one of the boys with whom he had first crossed to England that his mother was dangerously ill, and that she had repeatedly written to Patsey to come home and see her before she died, but had naturally received no answer. In his trouble he appealed to Blake, and that night found him waiting at Popperinghe Station for the leave train with a return-warrant to Ballybor in his pocket.

On his arrival at Ballybor he set out on his long fifteen-mile tramp to his home at Cloonalla, and late on a summer's evening the family of Mulligan were startled by a British soldier in full marching order walking into their home.

Before his mother died she made Patsey promise that he would not go back to France, and that he would stay at home and help his father to mind the other children. It is hard for a son to refuse his dying mother, and doubly so for an Irish boy.

When his mother's funeral was over, Patsey buried his uniform and equipment in a bog-hole at night; but his rifle he hid in the thatch of an outhouse, and it was given out in the neighbourhood that he had been discharged from the Army as medically unfit.

After the usual time Patsey was posted as a deserter in his battalion; Blake found a new servant and forgot all about his late one, while Patsey settled down to work with

his father, and the memory of Blake and the British Army faded from his mind.

Though wounded three times, Blake was one of the lucky men to return home to Ireland at the end of the war, and at once set about looking for a job. The son of a country doctor in the south of Ireland, at the outbreak of war he had just left school, and had not had time to settle on a career.

But if in England it was hard for ex-officers to get employment, in Ireland it was doubly so; and Blake soon found that it was next to impossible for a man who had worn the King's uniform to get any work or appointment. The power of Sinn Fein was beginning to be felt in the land, and though many people would have gladly employed men returned from the front, they dared not.

At last, when he had quite given up hope, he received by post an offer to join the newly-formed Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and, gladly jumping at such an offer, was soon in training at the depot in Dublin. After a tour of duty in the south, the authorities offered him a cadetship in the R.I.C., and in the course of two months Blake found himself the District Inspector at Ballybor.

At this time the R.I.C., after about as bad a hammering as any force ever received, were beginning to get their tails up again; and whereas previously no policeman dared show his face outside his barracks after dark, they were now occasionally sending out strong

patrols at night-time, to the great concern of the local Sinn Feiners, who for a considerable time had had things all their own way in the south and west.

The police district of Ballybor is, like many others in the west of Ireland, large, consisting chiefly of mountains, bogs, lakes, and a few small scattered villages, some of them hidden away in the mountains—an ideal district in peace time for a D.I. who is fond of shooting and fishing, but in war time a hard district to control with the small force of police at a D.I.'s disposal.

Previous to Blake's arrival all the barracks in the district had been vacated with the exception of Ballybor and "Grouse Lodge," a small barrack at the foot of the mountains in the Cloonalla district; and as each barrack was vacated, it was blown up or burnt by the local Volunteers.

In all former rebellions in Ireland the Government have found that to get information it was only necessary to pay money. Sometimes it did not cost much, other times they had to pay generously, but always money produced information; and at the beginning of the Sinn Fein trouble the Government naturally assumed that money would produce the informers as before. But this time they were wrong, and it was only—when the Government were at their wits' end—by a lucky chance of finding important papers on a man, who was shot at night during a military raid on a Dublin hotel, that at last they received

the information which enabled them to grapple successfully with Sinn Fein.

There is no doubt that the originators of Sinn Fein had read their country's history carefully, and were determined that this time there should be no informers; and to this end they organised a "Reign of Terror" throughout Ireland such as few countries have ever seen at any time in history. Their chief obstacle was the R.I.C., and once this force was reduced to a state of inactivity—they thought they had broken it for good and all—their task appeared comparatively easy. Every man, woman, and child in the south and west of Ireland knew that if they gave any information to the police they would be shot, and shot they were.

When Blake took over his duties at Ballybor, he found that the police had no source of information whatsoever, with the result that each attack on a barrack and every ambush of a patrol came as a surprise to them. So great was the "Reign of Terror" in the Ballybor district that no person dare speak to a policeman, and the shopkeepers were afraid to serve one, even with the necessities of life.

Blake quickly realised that if he was ever to get the upper hand in his district, he must discover some source of getting information, and find it quickly, before the whole population were driven to join forces against him.

One of Sinn Fein's principles has been that the fewer who know the fewer can tell, and,

as a rule, there has only been one man in a district—usually the local captain of the Volunteers—who has information of coming events ; and Blake knew that his only chance of reliable news lay with this man, and with him alone.

About the only information which his men could give him of his area was that a young man, who lived in the townland of Cloonalla, named Patsey Mulligan, was the captain of the local Volunteers, and that his house was close to the barracks at Grouse Lodge ; so he determined to go out to Grouse Lodge Barracks and stay there until he had either come to terms with Patsey Mulligan, or saw that it was hopeless.

On a fine winter's morning Blake set out from the barracks at Ballybor in the Crossley tender with an escort of six police, the most he dared take with him for fear of weakening the Ballybor garrison. It was market-day in the little town, and all along the road to Grouse Lodge they met the country people coming in—some in horse-carts, others in ass-carts, and the poorer ones on foot—but not one of them would speak to or even look at the police, the people on foot even getting off the road into the fields directly they caught sight of the police-car approaching.

On learning from one of the constables that Mulligan's house was not on the main road to Grouse Lodge Barracks, but on a byroad, Blake ordered the driver to go by this road, and when he came to Mulligan's house to

stop the car and pretend that something required adjusting in his engine. After a time the driver stopped outside an ordinary thatched cottage on the side of the road, and, as Blake had expected, the inhabitants came to the door to see who it was.

The first to appear was a young man, and as the constable whispered to Blake that he was Patsey Mulligan, Blake nearly shouted for joy, for he saw that the man was none other than "Murphy," his former servant in France, and a deserter from his Majesty's Army in the field!

At once, before Patsey could get a good look at him and possibly recognise him, Blake ordered the driver to go on to the barracks as fast as the bad road would allow them.

The question now was how to get hold of Mulligan alone, and this was settled by the information which a constable at Grouse Lodge was able to give. It appeared that this plucky constable had for some time past been in the habit of slipping out of the barracks by the back entrance at night in plain clothes and returning before daybreak. He had discovered that Mulligan was in the habit of meeting a girl nearly every night at a certain lonely spot about a mile from his house; and from overhearing their conversation, had found out that Patsey wanted to marry this girl, but that she had refused to marry him until he had enough money to take her out of the country and to buy a small farm in America.

On questioning this constable, Blake was

able to get a detailed account of Mulligan's movements since the time of his desertion. It appeared that for a considerable time after he came back he hardly left his home at all, contenting himself by working on his father's farm, and it was not until the Sinn Fein Volunteers were started in the district and Mulligan was elected captain that he appeared in public.

About the same time there was a report in the neighbourhood that Patsey Mulligan was courting a girl called Bridgie O'Hara, who lived in the Cloonalla district; also that another man in the same townland with money was doing his best to make her marry him.

Bridgie had two brothers in the Royal Irish Constabulary, and as the Sinn Fein movement grew stronger and the resistance of the Government weaker, the Volunteers started to boycott the O'Hara family. So savage had the boycott become lately that not a soul dared speak to them, and it was only by going to a town several miles away that they were able to obtain food.

As soon as it was dark that night Blake and the constable, both in plain clothes, slipped out at the back of the barracks and made their way to Mulligan's trysting-place. As usual, Mulligan and Bridgie met, and when they parted Blake and the constable followed Mulligan until the girl was well out of hearing, when they called on him to halt, at the same time covering him with their automatics.

Mulligan at once stopped and put up his

hands, but did not speak, and while Blake continued to cover him, the constable searched him for arms. Blake then ordered Mulligan to walk in front of him until they came to a mountain track which was off the road ; leaving the constable on guard, he ordered Mulligan to walk up the track in front of him.

After they had gone about a hundred yards, Blake stopped and asked Mulligan if he knew that he was liable to be arrested and shot for desertion from the British Army, and waited to see the effect of his words, as the whole success of his plan depended on this.

By now Mulligan had recognised Blake's voice, and knowing well what would happen to him if he fell into the hands of the military, fell on his knees and begged Blake to spare him. Blake at once explained his terms, which the boy eagerly accepted, thankful to get off at any price, though not counting the cost and danger of what he was doing.

Blake's terms were that Mulligan should give him information well beforehand of every contemplated outrage in the district, and, in return, promised him, on behalf of the British Government, a free pardon, £500, and a passage for himself and Bridgie to any country he wished to go to, but not until the Sinn Fein movement was crushed in the district.

As it happened, only the evening before, Bridgie had told Patsey that she could not stand the boycott any longer, and that if he could not take her away to America at once she would marry Mike Connelly ; hence the

promise of the £500 seemed to poor Patsey like a gift from heaven.

It was arranged, in order that no suspicion should be drawn down on him, that Mulligan should leave his letter at night-time when going to meet Bridgie O'Hara under a certain large stone a few feet from where they were, near the point where the track and road met. As there was nothing more to settle, Blake told Mulligan to go home at once, while he and the constable made their way back to the barracks, and the following day Blake returned to Ballybor.

At this time Blake found that several of his men showed a strong disinclination to leave the barracks, and remembering how hard it used to be sometimes during the war to get men who had been stuck in trenches for months to go "over the top," he decided to organise strong daylight patrols so that each man should leave his barracks for a certain number of hours every day. In addition to patrols round Ballybor, he sent out a strong patrol on certain days to work its way across country—always by a different route—to Grouse Lodge Barracks, where the patrol spent the night, returning to Ballybor across country the following day.

Taking advantage of mistakes made in other parts of the country, he sent no patrols on the main routes, but made them all go across country, only using the roads for short distances when they were open, and when it was practically impossible to be ambushed.

For some time there came no information from Mulligan, and when at last a note was brought from him from Grouse Lodge, it only contained the laconic news that the price for shooting a policeman had gone up from £60 to £100; and though no further message came from Mulligan for another ten days, as no outrages had been committed during this time, Blake had no reason to think that he was not fulfilling his part of the bargain.

Early one morning a bicycle patrol arrived at Ballybor Barracks from Grouse Lodge, and the constable who had been with Blake the night he met Mulligan handed him a note to the effect that two car-loads of arms were to arrive in the Cloonalla district that night for the purpose of an attack on Grouse Lodge Barracks the following night. Mulligan gave the route the cars would take, but did not state at what hour they might be expected.

On looking at an Ordnance map, Blake noticed that the cars would have to pass through a small wood, and that the road took a sharp bend where it entered the wood. Taking a leaf out of the Sinn Feiners' book, he determined to ambush the cars at the bend, and to try and seize cars and arms.

The difficulty was to know what to do with the cars once they had gained possession of them. The Volunteers would no doubt collect in the Cloonalla district to take over the arms, hence it would be dangerous to attempt to take them to Grouse Lodge Barracks, which was much the nearer barrack to the proposed

scene of the ambush ; so in the end he settled, if he came off victorious, to take the cars by byroads to Ballybor and risk being attacked in the town at night. A few days before this Blake had received his first batch of "Black and Tans," bringing his force up to a respectable number, so felt quite justified in making the attempt.

As soon as it was dark that night, Blake with five of his men left Grouse Lodge, and made their way by the starlight across country to the wood. The men brought axes with them, and soon had the road blocked with two small fir-trees, after which they took cover on each side of the road and waited.

At ten the moon rose and the night still remained fine, but it was not until after two that they heard the cars approaching. The leading car came round the bend at a good pace, pulling up just clear of the barricade, while the second car, failing to see the obstacle on the road, was unable to pull up in time, and ran into the back of the leading car.

[Blake at once stood up and called on the men—there were two in each car—to put up their hands ; but for answer they opened fire with automatics in the direction of Blake's voice, whereupon the police fired a volley at the cars, and three of the men were seen to collapse, after which the fourth put up his hands.

They found that two of the men were dead, while the third was shot through the chest. After removing all papers and arms from the

dead men, they hid their bodies in the wood, removed the trees from the road, and started off to Ballybor, where they arrived without mishap, and soon had the two cars safely in the barrack-yard.

On investigation they found that the cars contained thirty carbines and rifles, several thousand rounds of ammunition, and two boxes of home-made bombs.

This capture had a great effect on the police *morale* in the district, and, in fact, marked the turning-point in the Sinn Fein campaign in that area, while the two captured cars made a welcome addition to the police transport.

Shortly afterwards Blake received a warning from Mulligan to expect an attack on a named night on the barracks in Ballybor, and that an attempt would be made to blow up the gable-end of the barracks. The night before the expected attack Blake brought all the men that could be spared with safety from Grouse Lodge, and made his preparations for defence.

The attack opened with heavy rifle-fire from all the surrounding houses, which drove the unfortunate inhabitants of Ballybor in terror from the town, and after an hour a determined rush was made under heavy covering fire to ram the barrack door; but the fire of the police forced them to drop the ram and run for shelter. Only one attempt was made to blow up the gable, the police allowing the attackers to start laying the gelignite, and

then dropping a Mills bomb from the window above, where a projecting V-shaped steel shutter had been put up, with deadly effect.

After this the attackers kept up an intermittent rifle-fire for another two hours, and towards daybreak withdrew, leaving the police victorious; and although several men had been seen to fall during the attempt to ram the door, by the time it was light their bodies had been removed.

A subsequent attack on Grouse Lodge Barracks was also successfully beaten off without any police casualties; but an attempt Blake made to capture an important Volunteer staff-officer in the Cloonalla district one night failed—the bird had flown a quarter of an hour before the patrol surrounded the house where he had been staying.

This attempt to seize the staff-officer convinced the Volunteers that there was a traitor in the district, and a Volunteer intelligence officer was sent down forthwith from Dublin to investigate.

Blake now felt that he was really beginning to break the Sinn Fein in his district, and decided to take the offensive to the full extent of his power. Not only did he have the town and country patrolled night and day, but he also sent out parties of “Black and Tans” to search houses in the country for suspected stores of arms, and also to try and obtain information by all means in their power.

Though at this time the people were beginning to get restive under the Sinn Fein tyranny,

yet so great was the terror that not a single person in the whole district dared to give the police one word of information of his own will ; and though the information from Mulligan was of vital importance as regards attacks and movements by the Volunteers, yet Blake was still in complete ignorance of the names of the most dangerous Sinn Feiners.

Blake felt that he was winning, but he knew that there would be no peace or rest in his district until he had arrested the leaders : the others would then be like sheep without a shepherd. To this end an interview with Mulligan was necessary, in order to get from him the names of these leaders.

This time Blake waylaid Mulligan as he was going to meet Bridgie O'Hara, and at once saw that the boy's nerve was fast breaking. Mulligan gave him the names and addresses he wanted readily enough, and then implored Blake to have him arrested at once and taken to a place of safety, as he was in terror of his life.

He told Blake that the Volunteers were already suspicious of him, and that an intelligence officer had been specially sent down from Dublin to watch him and report on the leakage of information, and that he could not stick it any longer. Blake, knowing that once Mulligan was removed, he would not get any information at all, managed after a long argument to persuade him to carry on a little longer, by promising to arrest him when the other leaders were taken.

After parting from Blake the unhappy Mulligan met his girl, who by this time was half-mad from the misery of the boycott of her family. In despair she told him she had made up her mind to marry Connelly, and they would sail for America as soon as they could get passports.

Patsey, at the end of his tether and racked with terror, implored her to wait a little longer, saying that very soon he would have £500, and directly he got the money he would take her away.

The girl went home in the seventh heaven of delight, forgot all about the promises of silence she had made to Patsey, and told her mother, who, of course, told her husband, and it was not many days before the good news was common property in the district. A few days afterwards the intelligence officer returned to his H.Q.'s—his mission was fulfilled.

Having got the ringleaders' names, Blake at once set about his plans for arresting them, realising that not until they were safe under lock and key could he truthfully say that he had won; but it is one thing to arrest two or three men, and quite a different story to arrest thirty or forty, as, if not all arrested at the same time, the majority would get warning and disappear on the run.

Once again Blake met Mulligan at night, and arranged with him to call a meeting of the ringleaders the following Sunday at early Mass outside a wayside chapel in the Cloonalla district, when he proposed to arrest them, and

promised Mulligan he would be separated from the others at once and conveyed to England on a destroyer. At first Mulligan refused, being now demented with the fear of assassination, but when promised the payment of the £500 on his arrival in England, he consented.

Blake arranged that on the following Sunday morning as many men as could be spared should be sent from Grouse Lodge and Ballybor Barracks to meet near the Cloonalla chapel at the same time, when he hoped to surround the crowd and make the arrests without any difficulty.

On a typical soft Irish morning Blake and his men set out early from Ballybor Barracks on their drive to the chapel, full of hope that the day's work would clinch his victory, and that then he would apply for leave, as the strain of the last few months was beginning to tell on him, and he needed a rest badly.

When the Crossley was within half a mile of the chapel and still out of view from there, Blake stopped the car, got out his men, and proceeded to surround the chapel, while Blake himself advanced alone towards the chapel gates. When he drew near he could see that the road in front of the gates was a mass of country people, who did not move until Blake got close to them, when they divided, forming a lane towards the gates.

And to his last day Blake will never forget the sight which met his eyes as he advanced through the people in a deathly silence. Lashed to one of the pillars of the chapel gates was

the body of the unfortunate Patsey Mulligan with two bullet-holes through his forehead, and pinned on his chest a sheet of white paper bearing the single word TRAITOR, while at his feet lay poor Bridgie O'Hara, her body heaving with sobs, and her long dark hair, which had been cut off, lying on the ground beside her.

II.

ON THE RUN.

PADDY FLANAGAN stood in the doorway of his small shop in the main street of the mean and dirty little village of Ballyfrack, watching the rain coming down in torrents, while he listened with one ear to his wife arguing with a country-woman in the shop behind him over the price of eggs, and with his other ear for the high-pitched sound of a powerful car.

Presently the woman in the shop, having sold her eggs and bought provisions, wrapped her shawl over her head and started to make her way home. As Paddy moved aside to let the woman out, his ear caught the dreaded sound he was expecting, growing louder every second, and culminating in a shower-bath of mud as two Crossley tenders, full of Auxiliary Cadets, dashed past the shop and disappeared as suddenly as they had come.

Hardly had the noise of the engines died away than Paddy's quick ear caught the sound of cars approaching again, and two Ford cars—the first carrying a huge coffin and the second apparently mourners—drew up

at the small hotel almost opposite Paddy's shop.

Some two years previously Flanagan had become a rabid Sinn Feiner—he had previously been as rabid a Nationalist—with a keen eye to business. For a long time it looked as though Sinn Fein was the only horse in the race, and the dream of an Irish Republic seemed more than likely to become a reality; lately, however, the British Government had been sitting up and taking a quite unnecessary interest in Ireland.

First, the British Government had formed the Auxiliary Division—"those cursed pups of Cromwell," as Paddy described them to his friends, while Mrs Paddy used to say that the Government had recruited them from all the prisons and asylums in England; then, to crown all, the Government had had the audacity to put several counties within easy reach of Ballyfrack under martial law.

So far Paddy had carried on the war for freedom with words only, but a week before this story starts he had found to his great alarm that he would be called upon for deeds. On a dark Sunday night, just as the Flanagans were preparing to go to bed, there came two short sharp knocks at the shop door, followed by a long one.

Now Paddy had always had a great dread of night work, and swore that come what might he would not open his door to any man, be he policeman or Sinn Feiner: for a minute there was a tense silence in the stuffy

dark shop, save for the heavy breathing of Mrs Flanagan, broken suddenly by a blow which threatened to break in the street door, and a loud voice called out to Flanagan to open in the name of the Irish Republican Army.

“God save us,” said Mrs Flanagan, and dived under the bed; and Paddy would have liked to follow his wife, but he had heard of the unpleasant results which always followed a refusal to open to the I.R.A. Before another blow could be struck on the door he had it open, and at once three dark figures slipped into the shop, the last one closing the door.

And in the darkness of the shop Paddy Flanagan listened to his fate: it seemed that in the adjoining county, where martial law had recently been proclaimed, the military were making life quite unbearable for the Volunteers, and the Auxiliaries had openly declared that they would shoot John O’Hara—the chief assassin of policemen in that county—at sight.

Before Flanagan could realise the horror of the situation, two of the men had disappeared into the night, and he found himself face to face with the notorious John O’Hara, with instructions to pass him on without fail to the port of Ballybor (some eighty miles), where O’Hara would be smuggled on board a vessel bound for England.

It was some considerable time before Flanagan could induce his wife to come out from under the bed and produce a meal for O’Hara. Before they went to sleep his wife reminded Flanagan — quite unnecessarily — of the fate

which the Auxiliaries and "Black and Tans" had assigned to any one who gave shelter or help to John O'Hara.

For days past Paddy had been racking his brains, spurred on by the laments of his wife, how to get rid of O'Hara, and every day the danger seemed to grow greater, until at last Paddy could stand it no longer.

The outstanding feature in a western peasant's character is always curiosity, and the longer Paddy stood in the doorway of his shop gazing at the coffin on the car, the greater his curiosity became. He had never seen so big a coffin; if there was a man inside he must be the "devil of a fellow and all," but perhaps it might be a woman—until at last the coffin drew him as a magnet draws a needle.

A close inspection of the two cars told him nothing, so there only remained to go inside in the hope of meeting the occupants. Inside the hotel he found the mourners seated round the fire in a back room, drinking porter and discussing the disappearance of John O'Hara, and after ordering a drink he drew a chair up to the fire and joined in the general conversation.

Paddy soon found out that the coffin contained the body of a policeman who had been murdered in a recent ambush in the adjoining county, and his relatives were bringing his body home, a village close to Ballybor. Probably the name of the town gave Paddy the idea, but in a flash he saw his way clear to get rid of O'Hara, and that at once—if a dead

policeman could be taken in the coffin to Ballybor, why not the live John O'Hara ?

For the next two hours Paddy plied the relations of the dead policeman with porter, whisky, and poteen, and by that time had learnt all he wanted to know : they had permits to the police for the two cars to travel to Ballybor, they were all strong and noisy patriots (in spite of the murdered policeman outside), and were as ready as the next man to turn an honest penny.

Now Flanagan, being no fool, knew that no sane man—drunk or sober—would take upon himself the responsibility of John O'Hara unless he was forced to, and bearing this in mind during the negotiations which followed, he used the threat of the magic letters "I.R.A." freely—pretending that he himself was a member of the dreaded Inner Circle. In the end, after much drink and a lot of haggling, it was settled that the cars should be taken into the hotel yard for the night.

Then, during the night, the policeman's body was to be removed to a hay-loft and buried secretly the following night, under arrangements to be made by Flanagan, in a bog outside the village, where several unfortunate Volunteers, who had fallen in an attack on the local police barracks, were buried. Meanwhile the hotel boots, who was a carpenter by trade, would make ventilation holes in the coffin, and the "funeral" party would set off for Ballybor before daybreak.

The last part of the negotiations resembled

the selling of a horse at a fair, and the price he had to pay sobered Flanagan and nearly turned his hair white,—not one yard would they go with O'Hara until they got £100; but by now Flanagan was desperate, and if they had demanded £200 he would have paid it.

At last all the details were settled, and Flanagan went home to warn O'Hara of his coming journey in the coffin: the thought that in a few hours he would be free of the man for good and all made life worth living again.

But his joy was short-lived. On entering the kitchen he found four long-haired young men making a hearty meal—more victims of British tyranny, all on the run for the murder of policemen—and his heart sank at the thought that there would probably be more to follow: in fact his house was being used as a clearing-house for all the “wanted” men of the adjoining county.

Flanagan woke up O'Hara, told him of the arrangements which had been made to get him to Ballybor, and added that four more men had just turned up, and that it failed him to know how to pass them on. O'Hara thought for a moment, and replied, “Sure it's easily known how—why wouldn't they do for the mourners?”

As soon as O'Hara was ready, and the young men could be persuaded to stop eating, the party set out for the hotel in order to get away before the mourners woke up. O'Hara took command, found out that one of his com-

panions could drive a Ford, but that none of them had any idea of how to get to Ballybor, and told Flanagan that the driver of the coffin-car would have to go with them as a guide.

On arrival at the hotel Flanagan roused the boots, O'Hara gave his instructions about the driver, and they then proceeded to the bedrooms of the poteen-logged mourners, who offered no protest while O'Hara removed their topcoats and hats for his companions, Flanagan seizing the opportunity of transferring his £100 from the sleeping chief mourner's trousers pocket to his own again.

By the light of a guttering candle O'Hara was packed into the coffin, and in the darkness of a raw early morning the two cars pulled out of the hotel yard, and disappeared down the road which leads to Ballybor. Flanagan, with a sigh of relief, wiped his forehead, and prayed that he might never see O'Hara in this world again, and went home feeling ten years younger, but determined not to be at home when the mourners got busy and came for an explanation.

On the morning O'Hara left Ballyfrack in the coffin, Blake had motored to the town of Dunallen to see his County Inspector. On his way back, about fourteen miles from Ballybor, the road leads over a narrow bridge and up a steep hill with a sharp blind turn at the top.

As Blake swung his car, all out, round this corner, he saw about fifty yards in front two Ford cars standing in the road, the leading

car with a huge coffin tied across the body of the car, and round the other car a group of young men. Pulling up his car, he sounded his horn, as he had not room to pass, but with no effect.

Blake, who was in mufti, had with him an orderly in plain clothes, and being in a hurry told him to go and tell the driver to go on. As the orderly returned, both cars started up and went on. Once started, they went as fast as Blake could wish, and for some miles the three cars kept close together until they reached a village about ten miles from Ballybor.

Here the main road to Ballybor appears to carry straight on through the village, but this only leads into a cul-de-sac—what looks like a side road on the left of the main street being the Ballybor turning. The two strange cars passed the turning, while Blake, once round the corner, made for home at full speed.

He thought no more of the cars, but after they had gone about a mile the orderly asked him if he had ever seen such a big coffin before. Blake replied that he had not noticed the size of the coffin, and they both relapsed into silence again, Blake concentrating his attention on getting back to Ballybor before dark.

Meanwhile the orderly was thinking the matter out, and came to the conclusion that the coffin party was not above suspicion. At this time, when the railway strike was on in the west, it was not unusual to see a coffin on a car; but, unless the coffin party belonged to the village, they must be strangers

to the district, or they would not have run into the cul-de-sac.

When about three miles from Ballybor they had a puncture, and just as Blake finished changing wheels, the cars of the coffin party drew up about fifty yards behind, and three men advanced towards them. Blake, who was still quite unsuspecting, thought that the men were going to ask him to let them pass, and at once started up his car and got in.

The orderly, whose suspicions were now turned to certainties, drew his revolver, covered the advancing men, and called on them to halt; whereupon the three men opened fire, and the orderly replied.

Blake yelled to him to jump in, and as the man swung himself into the seat beside him, he let the car go, while the men on the road continued to fire. Luckily the light was by now nearly gone, and beyond a broken wind-screen they got away with a good start.

It now developed into a race, Blake striving to reach the barracks for reinforcements to stop the funeral party before they could get clear of Ballybor, and the others to reach the first turning they came to off the main road.

Blake switched on his lights and drove for his life, down hill as fast as the car would go and round corners on two wheels, with the result that in rounding one blind corner they nearly ran into a party of Auxiliary Cadets, whose Crossley had broken down. The Cadets naturally opened fire without asking any questions—a car going that pace in the dusk on

a country road in the west of Ireland nowadays is asking for it—and again Blake and his orderly narrowly escaped being shot.

Blake clapped on his brakes, yelled out "R.I.C."; the orderly held his hands high above his head, and the Auxiliaries gave them the benefit of the doubt. Luckily the leader of the Cadets recognised Blake, the situation was quickly explained, and they took cover on both sides of the road at the corner.

Hardly were they in position when the coffin-car rounded the corner, and the Cadets opened fire; but so great was the impetus of the car, and so bad the brakes, that it crashed into the rear of Blake's car, the coffin pitched on to the road, burst open, and out rolled a huge wild-looking man.

The second car must have closed up with the leading one as the darkness came on, for no sooner had the first car crashed than the second one ran into it, overturned, and pinned the big man to the road; whereupon Blake shouted hands up, but the men started to run back, and the Cadets at once opened fire.

Three of them fell, but the fourth managed to get round the corner, and Blake sent two Cadets after him. The driver of the coffin-car had fallen clear, and, to avoid the Cadets' bullets, ran round the Crossley, straight into the driver's arms.

As soon as the firing ceased, Blake made for the big man; the Cadets lifted the car, and flashed a torch on his face.

Only that morning Blake had been reading

a full account of O'Hara, and had studied an excellent photograph of him, and as the electric light shone on the man's face, he realised the importance of the capture—the most-wanted man in the west.

The Cadets rendered first aid to the three wounded men, while Blake handcuffed O'Hara and placed him in the back of his own car, telling his orderly to watch him closely, and to keep him covered with his revolver. In the meantime the two Cadets had returned, having failed to capture the fourth man.

Blake was now most anxious to get O'Hara safely in the Ballybor Barracks, but nothing would induce the Crossley to start. At last, after an hour's delay, they got the engine going, and the whole party got under way, the Cadets taking the three wounded prisoners in the tender, and Blake, in his own car with his orderly, guarding O'Hara.

The distance to Ballybor was short, but the delay had made Blake very uneasy, knowing that the local Volunteers would surely try and rescue O'Hara if they got word of his capture. Ahead of them was a thick wood on both sides of the road, and once past this the betting was in their favour.

They started without lights, but when they reached the outskirts of the wood the darkness was so intense that the Crossley driver switched on his lights and tried to rush the place. Blake was forced to follow his example, or get left hopelessly behind.

Faster and faster went the tender, bumping

and skidding over the wet bog road, the lamps throwing a brilliant ring of white light in front of the car, the rest inky dark. When they had passed more than half-way through the wood, and Blake was beginning to think that they were safe, the Crossley suddenly began to pull up with a screech of brakes, drowned by a volley of shots from both sides of the wood.

The driver kept his head, switched off his lights, and the dreadful fight started in the black darkness of the wood. Blake turned his lights off and started to back his car, but in the darkness and excitement ran her into the ditch at the side of the road, where she overturned.

He shot clear of the car, and on regaining the road realised that at present it was useless to try and get away with his prisoner, so he shouted to his orderly to guard O'Hara until the fight was over, and went forward to help the Auxiliaries.

Blake found them lying down on each side of the road, firing at the flashes of the ambushers' guns, while the leader and driver were struggling to remove the barricade of timber and big stones across the road under a hail of bullets and shot. By this time a Cadet had got a Lewis gun into action, and at once sprayed the edge of the wood on each side of the road with a magazine. Promptly the ambushers' fire died down, and after two more heavy bursts of fire from the Lewis gun their fire ceased. The Cadets quickly switched on

the lights of the Crossley, and started to clear away the barricade.

Blake suddenly thought of O'Hara, and ran back to his car to find that he had completely vanished, the orderly lying pinned to the ground by the overturned car, unconscious.

The only chance now of recapturing O'Hara was to push on to Ballybor as fast as possible, collect all the police available, and search the country round the scene of the ambush. Without a motor it would be impossible for the fugitive to get far during the next few hours.

But again the Crossley jibbed, and again a priceless hour or more was wasted before the barricade could be removed and the car induced to start. Nearly another hour was spent in reaching the barracks, getting out the men, and starting on the hunt.

Until long after dawn they beat the country within a large radius of the fatal wood, using powerful acetylene lamps, but to no avail: neither in the open country nor in any village could they find any sign or get any tidings of the missing prisoner.

As soon as the light was good, Blake climbed a tree on some high ground which overlooked the country, and searched in vain with a powerful pair of Zeiss glasses. At last, thoroughly exhausted, the police returned to Ballybor, beaten.

When Blake's car upset in the wood, O'Hara had the good luck to fall clear, and to roll into the ditch at the side of the road. Here

he lay still for several minutes until he saw what move the orderly would make. When the shooting slackened for a few seconds he could distinctly hear the groans of the orderly pinned under the car, and at once realised that if he could only crawl into the wood he might be free again.

With great difficulty he managed to drag himself out of the ditch and over the bank, only to find another and deeper ditch on the far side. Along this ditch he made his way until he judged that he must be close to the attackers; then he wriggled into the wood, and lay down to await further developments.

O'Hara was now afraid to go nearer to the ambushers, lest they should mistake him for a Cadet; but before he could make up his mind what to do the firing died down, and he could hear the attackers retiring through the wood. Realising that his only hope lay with these men, he got up and rushed after them, being mistaken in the darkness and confusion for one of themselves.

Once clear of the wood, O'Hara found himself close to one of the attackers, and while they ran explained to him who he was, and learnt that the ambush had been organised in a village close to by the man who had escaped from the two Cadets.

On reaching this village the handcuffs were soon filed off O'Hara's wrists, two bicycles provided, and in a few minutes he was on his way to Ballybor with a guide who took him along a byroad. It was essential if he was to

catch the steamer the next day that he should hide that night in Ballybor, and the chances were that the police would never think of O'Hara hiding in the town, practically within the shadow of the police barracks.

Owing to the delay in starting the Crossley, O'Hara and his guide were actually in Ballybor before the police: as they neared the turning to the barracks they could see the lights of the Crossley behind them. Passing through the town they made their way to the quay, where it was arranged that O'Hara should spend the night with a Volunteer called Devine, from whose house it was hoped that he would be able to pass on to the steamer next day in the company of the stoker.

At this time the police, except in strong force, did not leave the barracks at night, and it was thought quite safe for O'Hara to remain in Devine's house. After a change of clothes and some food, he retired to bed, hoping that his troubles were nearly over.

Early the next morning Devine woke O'Hara up with the bad news that a picket of Cadets guarded the approach to the steamer, and that the game was up. On looking out of the window O'Hara could see a sentry with fixed bayonet on each side of the gangway, while others were resting in the small weighing-house on the quay-side.

O'Hara, who a second before had been confident of escape, was in despair, and collapsed on the bed. After a few minutes he pulled himself together, and on looking at Devine

was at once struck by the sinister expression on the man's face.

Remembering that there was a price of £1000 on his head, and from Devine's expression there was no doubt that he also was thinking of this reward, without a second's hesitation O'Hara covered him with a big Colt automatic, and told him that if a way was not found to get him on to the steamer he would shoot him. Devine, knowing O'Hara's reputation, and preferring his life to £1000, at once suggested a plan.

The town of Ballybor lies about five miles up a river, and all outward-bound steamers drop the pilot in the bay at the mouth of the river, where he is rowed to the little fishing village of Dooncarra. The steamer was due to sail at high tide that afternoon, and Devine suggested that they should bicycle to Dooncarra, where there ought to be no difficulty in getting O'Hara aboard by the pilot-boat, as both the police barracks and coastguard station there had been burnt some time ago.

After some breakfast they started off, bicycled boldly past the picket on the quay, and reached Dooncarra without any mishap, where Devine arranged for O'Hara to stay in a fisherman's house until the pilot-boat left at dusk.

O'Hara had never been to sea before, and was ill before he ever reached the steamer. As soon as he got aboard, a stoker, who had been warned by Devine to expect O'Hara on the pilot's boat, took charge of him, and at once put him into a bunk.

That night the steamer ran into an Atlantic storm, and by the time they had made the north coast of Ireland, O'Hara was beyond caring whether he lived or died.

Blake reported O'Hara's escape to the authorities in Dublin, who were most anxious to secure the man, knowing he had been the ring-leader in the worst atrocities committed in the south recently. They at once came to the conclusion that O'Hara was trying to get away by boat from Ballybor to Liverpool and then on to America, hence the picket of Cadets on the quay; but to make doubly sure they ordered an ocean-going destroyer to search the steamer from Ballybor at sea.

After rounding the north of Ireland the steamer ran into smooth water, and O'Hara came on deck for a breath of fresh air. After a time he became interested in a queer-looking long grey steamer which was approaching them from the south, and very soon the queer boat came within hailing distance, and orders were megaphoned for the steamer to heave to.

O'Hara was greatly interested in watching the progress of the destroyer boat, and it was not until a sergeant of the R.I.C. in plain clothes, who had known O'Hara in the south, covered him with a Webly and commanded him to put up his hands, that he realised that this interesting show was all for his benefit.

III.

THE LANDING OF ARMS.

It was the busy hour of the evening in Stephen Foy's public-house in the small western town of Ballybor, and Larry O'Halloran, the barman, never ceased drawing corks and measuring out "half ones" of whisky for the endless flow of customers.

Larry was a good example of a new type of Irishman which the Sinn Fein movement has produced—a type regarded with sorrow and amazement by the older generation, and at present unknown in England. Whatever faults an Irishman possessed, he always had the saving virtues of wit and cheerfulness.

Probably the British have been the last nation in the world to recognise the great value of clever propaganda, but there is no doubt that the originators of the Sinn Fein movement knew the great influence of judicious propaganda—they had efficient instructors in the Boches—and wisely started at the beginning, that is, with the children at school, and the result is sadly apparent in the south and west of Ireland to-day in the hatred of the

British Empire among the young people ; and so obsessed are they with this hatred that they have neglected to learn the good manners of their elders.

While Larry's hands never ceased serving out drink, his brain—trained from childhood to one end only—never ceased running on one subject, how and when to obtain arms to defeat the British. Only the previous evening Larry had achieved the ambition of his young life, when he was elected captain by a large majority of the Volunteers in place of Patsey Mulligan, who had been tried by court-martial and executed for treachery to the Irish Republican Army.

Larry, in spite of his long hair and dreamy Celtic eyes, was no fool, and knew quite well that a battalion of Volunteers without arms was about as much use for fighting as a mob of old women with umbrellas, and that if ever they were to fight the British with any chance of success, they must have arms, and not only rifles, but machine-guns.

Previous to this, by a system of raids at night, every known shot-gun in the district had been collected by the Volunteers ; but Larry realised that to send a Volunteer, armed with a single-barrel shot-gun, to fight a British infantryman armed with a magazine rifle, was only a good example of the old saying of sending a boy on a man's errand.

While Larry was racking his brains how to obtain arms, a youth, obviously an American, walked in, accompanied by a strange country-

man, and proceeded to a small private room at the back of the house. But though Larry's thoughts were far away, trying to get Mausers in Germany, his eyes were busy in the public-house, and as the couple disappeared into the room, he saw at once that the countryman's walk was the walk of a soldier.

Larry knew the boy, Micky Fee, well. His father was a wealthy Irish-American, who, amongst other business, owned an arms factory in the States, and had refused the request of the Inner Brotherhood repeatedly to send arms to Ireland for the Volunteers.

It was possible both to oversee and to overhear what went on in the inner room. Larry saw the couple sitting there in close conversation, and in a few minutes realised that the strange countryman was in reality a British Secret Service agent, and that Micky, who had drink taken, was giving the man all the information of the local Volunteers he could.

It did not take Larry long to determine what course to take with the Secret Service agent, and he had decided on the same fate for Micky Fee, when he suddenly realised that his prayers had been answered. His quick brain began to work out how many rifles, machine-guns, automatics, and bombs Fee's father would value the life of his only child at; the more he thought of it, the higher he made the figures.

Micky had been on a visit to his grandparents in Ballybor for some months past, and had taken an active interest in the Volunteers. About 2 A.M. the next morning there came a

loud knock at the grandparents' house. When the old man opened the door he found himself looking into the muzzles of a ring of guns, and in a few minutes Master Micky left for an unknown destination.

About a fortnight later Michael Fee and his wife received the shock of their lives when they opened their letters at breakfast one morning. Among Fee's was one bearing the Ballybor postmark, which stated briefly that his son had been tried by a court-martial of the I.R.A. on a charge of giving information to the enemy and condemned to death, and that the sentence would be duly carried out unless Michael Fee presented so many rifles, pistols, machine-guns, bombs, and ammunition to the I.R.A.

The letter also stated that Mr Fee's answer was to be sent to a named Sinn Fein agent in New York within seven days of the receipt of the letter, who would give him a time-limit for handing over the arms, and would also tell him where the arms were to be landed. A P.S. was added suggesting that Fee should bring the arms to Ireland in a yacht, and that he would be able to take his son back to the States in her.

For many months the Irish papers had been full of accounts of men taken from their beds in the dead of night and executed outside their homes by armed and masked men; also of the bodies of missing men being found in a field, days after they had disappeared, riddled with bullets. Some of the Irish newspapers

tried to throw the blame for these murders on the forces of the Crown by saying that the men wore "trench coats," but never adding that practically every young man in Ireland nowadays wears a so-called trench-coat.

Fee knew that many of these murders were "executions" of men who had given information to the police, and the thought that one morning at breakfast he or his wife might open an Irish paper to read an account of the finding of their son's body riddled with bullets, caused him to break out into a cold sweat. Being a good business man, Fee made up his mind at once, and that evening found him in New York making arrangements with the Sinn Fein agent for the immediate shipment of the arms to Ireland.

It's one thing to talk of smuggling arms into Ireland, but quite another story to accomplish it. To the Irish peasant, who has never been outside his own country, it looks as easy as falling off a log; but then he has no idea of the power of the British Navy, and the British Government does not take the trouble to inform an Irish peasant that it has the finest navy in the world—he is supposed to know this, or to find it out for himself.

When Fee asked the agent for his suggestions, the agent trotted out the usual stock dodges—packing rifles in piano-frames, S.A.A. in bags of flour, and more equally futile plans, and he quickly realised that the man was a fool, so left him and retired to his room in the hotel to think out a plan for himself.

For a long time he could think of nothing but the picture of his son's body lying in a vivid green field in his native land: he could even see the clothes Micky was wearing, and the dirty white handkerchief (he was quite sure it would be dirty) over his eyes. For hours his mind dwelt on this picture, but in the end he gained control over himself, and before he turned in his brain had evolved a sound plan of action, and with an Irishman's sanguine temperament he fell asleep, thinking that his boy was as good as at home already.

The following morning Fee went to a big yacht agent, but found that he had only a steam yacht for charter. He explained that he wanted a motor yacht big enough to cross the Atlantic, and the man referred him to a firm of builders who had a yacht of this description, which he believed was on the verge of completion.

Fee next made his way to the yard of these builders, where he found the yacht he was looking for, which had been built for a rich American who had recently died. He soon came to terms, and arranged with the builders for the addition of large extra oil-tanks, in order that the yacht would be able to make the double journey to Ireland and back without having to take in oil there.

As soon as the yacht was ready for sea, Fee had large man-holes fitted to the extra oil-tanks, packed the arms inside them, and then filled up with oil. Within four weeks of the receipt of Larry O'Halloran's letter, Mr

and Mrs Fee sailed on their new motor yacht, the *Colleen*, for a pleasure trip to their native land of Ireland.

The place chosen for the landing of the arms is one of the most beautiful places in the British Isles, and one of the least known. If you picture the wildest Norwegian fjord, and add square miles of mountain, cliffs, moors, bogs, lakes, and rivers, you may get some idea of the scenery.

Before leaving America Fee cabled to his parents in Ballybor that he expected to be in Ireland on a certain date, knowing that the information would reach Larry through friends in the Post Office, and that he would take the necessary steps to meet the yacht at Errinane on that date, with the result that Larry passed the information on to the Volunteers in the Errinane district, and in a short time every coastguard station and police barracks within a twelve-mile radius of the landing-place was burnt.

On a fine September day the M.Y. *Colleen* sighted the west coast of Ireland, and shortly afterwards made her way up the wonderful natural harbour which leads to the little fishing village of Errinane, where she dropped anchor and came to rest after her long voyage across the Atlantic. In a few minutes a boat left the quay, and Larry stepped aboard the yacht, and after explaining to the Fees that he had arrived in the district two days previously with their son Micky, insisted that the arms

should be landed that night ; but Fee refused, on the grounds that the British Navy was bound to know of the yacht's arrival, and that if they attempted to land the arms that night they might be caught by a destroyer.

A hot argument ensued—Larry, now that at last the arms were almost within his grasp, being mad keen to get them ashore at once. However, the argument was cut short by a shout from the deck that a destroyer was coming up the harbour, and Fee had great difficulty to induce Larry to leave the yacht.

The destroyer came to an anchor within fifty yards of the *Colleen*, and Fee could see two machine-guns on the bridge trained to sweep the yacht's deck. Before the rattle of the anchor-chain had died away a boat was lowered, and in a few minutes a party of blue-jackets, headed by a lieutenant, came aboard the yacht.

Fee explained to this officer that he was an Irishman living in America, and that he had come over on a visit to his parents. The officer examined the yacht's papers, and then gave orders to his men, who proceeded to search the yacht thoroughly : mattresses were opened, all panelling taken down by ship-carpenters, floors lifted, luggage searched, and even the oil-tanks sounded, while the taps were turned on to see if they contained oil.

After three hours' searching the sailors left the yacht, and within half an hour the destroyer put to sea. Hardly had she disappeared when Larry came aboard again, and as it was nearly

dark by now, he tried to insist on starting to land the arms, and again Fee refused.

The yacht settled down for the night, but soon after midnight a powerful searchlight was flashed on to her, and again the bluejackets came aboard and searched the yacht from top to bottom. Eventually they left, the searchlight was turned off, and the destroyer could be heard putting out to sea.

Larry's original plan had been to land the arms on the north side of the bay, and to hide them in some caves in the mountains, where French arms had been hidden during the rebellion of 1798, then to await a favourable opportunity to remove them to Ballybor. However, the night the destroyer left the local fishermen filled their boats with herrings, which Larry found had all been bought by the big shopkeeper in Errinane, who intended sending them to Ballybor Station the next morning in his three Ford trucks. Not daring to land the arms during the day, Larry commandeered the lorries, and as soon as it was dark landed the arms openly at Errinane quay, packed them in the largest fish-boxes he could find, and loaded the boxes on to the lorries, putting boxes of herrings on top. The arms once landed, he restored Micky to his parents on the yacht, and within half an hour the reunited Fee family were on their way back to America.

Not long after the yacht had started, the lorries left Errinane on the long run through the mountains to Ballybor. When about fifteen

miles from Errinane, Larry halted his convoy in a mountain pass, in order to let one of the drivers repair a tyre.

Hardly had they stopped when the lights of two cars were seen behind them, descending the road into the pass from the direction of Errinane. Larry knew at once that they could only be police cars, and must have been sent to Errinane on the suspicion that arms had been landed from the yacht.

He at once got his lorries on the move, going in the last one himself, and in a few minutes could hear the hoot of the oncoming cars close behind. Ahead of them lay miles of narrow bog road, and as long as he kept the rear lorry in the middle of the road, the police cars would not be able to stop them.

Soon he could hear shouts of halt, followed shortly afterwards by a volley of rifle bullets, but Larry and the driver were well protected by the boxes on the lorry. So they continued for about two miles, the police firing volley after volley at the lorry.

So far so good ; but though Larry knew he could keep the police from overhauling them for several miles, yet he knew that in the end the police must defeat him, unless he could find some means of stopping them, and the only way to do this was by sacrificing the rear lorry. This he made up his mind to do, as the lorry only carried the bombs ; but the difficulty was to stop the police altogether.

The idea which saved them came from the

driver, who knew every yard of the road, and reminded Larry that half a mile ahead of them there was an arched bridge over a mountain river, the very place to block the road.

Larry climbed out on the boxes, and with great difficulty extracted a bomb; returning to the driving seat, they waited until the lorry was on the bridge, when they stopped the engine and started to run for the lorry in front. When they had gone about twenty yards, Larry stopped, flung the bomb at the lorry on the bridge, and ran like a hare.

Luckily there was a steep rise beyond the bridge, and just as they reached the slow-moving lorry a flame of fire shot up from the bridge followed by a deafening explosion. They learnt afterwards that the bridge was completely wrecked, the leading police car badly damaged, and that the police took three hours to return to Errinane, having to back their cars for several miles before they could turn.

The original plan was to hide the arms in a saw-mill in Ballybor, owned by a notorious loyalist, which fact would divert all suspicion from the mill; but Larry knew that after the encounter with the police the hue-and-cry would be up, and that the Auxiliaries would search every rat-hole in Ballybor before many hours were past.

On reaching Ballybor in the early hours they proceeded to the mill, which was situated on the bank of the river, and at once unloaded; but instead of hiding the arms there Larry ordered the men to carry them straight to the

water's edge, and then sent them to collect boats and also fishing tackle.

Within an hour six boats containing the arms went down the river, and half an hour afterwards the town was surrounded and searched through and through by Auxiliary Cadets who had concentrated on the place from three different points—their only bag being the unfortunate lorry drivers.

Some three miles below Ballybor there stand on the bank of the river the ruins of a fine old Franciscan Abbey, in the vaults of which the arms were safely hidden. Afterwards Larry and his men spent the morning fishing for sea-trout towards the estuary, returning to Ballybor in the afternoon, hungry and worn-out, to fall into the hands of the Auxiliaries, who commandeered their fish and then let them go home.

After the murder of Patsey Mulligan the district of Ballybor was comparatively free from outrages for several months, and Blake, the D.I., began to think that his troubles were over; but very shortly after Larry had successfully run his cargo of American arms Blake was undeceived, and in a short time the district became one of the worst in the west.

Success made Larry bolder, and further success made him rash. Being miles from a road, the old abbey was a most inconvenient place to keep the arms, and he determined to bring them to the mill in Ballybor.

Bennett, the owner, had a house alongside the mill, and another house some miles out in the country, where he was in the habit of going from Saturday until Monday morning, when the mill house used to be locked up.

Larry arranged another fishing expedition on a Saturday afternoon, and when it was dark they transferred the arms from the abbey to the mill, hiding them under piles of sawdust in the cellars below the saw-benches. It was then decided to make an assault on the Ballybor police barracks the following night, and to wipe out the police for good and all.

But this time his luck was out. On Sunday afternoon Bennett suddenly made up his mind to return to Ballybor, and motored there in the afternoon with his eldest son. After tea his son took a walk over the mill, and to his surprise found a brand-new American repeating-rifle in the clerk's office: his father went at once to the police barracks to inform Blake of the discovery, who arranged to make a raid on the mill as soon as it was dark.

Blake had settled to take the arms, if found in the mill, straight off to the nearest military barracks, and to this end left the barracks with a strong force in two Crossleys. They went for some distance towards Grouse Lodge Barracks, turned off at a cross-roads, and made their way back to Ballybor, arriving at the mill by the time it was dark.

Leaving the cars about a hundred yards from the mill, Blake walked on to the entrance with a sergeant and a constable, and as they

drew near, to their surprise they saw that the mill was lit up. Telling his men to wait, Blake advanced to the door, which led into the machinery buildings, and on peeping in saw that the place was full of masked men in a queue, being served out with rifles from the clerk's office.

Blake saw that he must act quickly, but that by the time he could bring up his men all the masked men would be armed, so he determined on a ruse. In a loud voice he shouted out, "God save us, here are the Black and Tans; run, boys, for your lives," and at the same time opened fire.

The magic words "Black and Tan" have the same effect on an Irish crowd as the name of Cromwell had during a previous period of Irish history, and a wild stampede ensued in the mill, the final touch being added by some one switching off the electric lights. As soon as Blake saw the effects of his words he dashed in to try and secure a prisoner, and managed to seize a man near the entrance, and hold him until his men, alarmed by the shots, arrived hurriedly on the scene.

By the aid of electric torches the police quickly collected the arms which the Volunteers had thrown away in their panic, and a constable having gone to fetch the cars, they were stowed in, and in a short time were on their long journey to the military barracks.

Larry stampeded with the rest of the men in the mill, but once outside he pulled himself together, and determined to make an effort to

regain his beloved arms. Guessing that the police would be fully occupied removing the arms, he made his way back along the dark streets to the mill, and saw the cars drive off.

Part of the preparations for assaulting the barracks had been to block all roads along which help could come to the barracks; and, as Larry expected, after some time the cars returned to the barracks, being unable to proceed in any direction owing to deep trenches cut across the roads.

As soon as Larry had seen the cars return, he collected three of his best men, commandeered a car in the name of the I.R.A.—at this time in many parts of Ireland a harmless citizen stood an excellent chance of having his car taken by the military on a Monday, by the police on Tuesday, by the Auxiliaries on Wednesday, and by the I.R.A. for the rest of the week—and drove straight to the Cloonalla district, through which he knew that Blake would have to pass the next day on his way to the nearest military barracks. They took shovels with them, and soon had the trench across the road filled in, and made their way to the house of a local Volunteer.

That night Larry worked like a man possessed, and by daybreak had an ambushade prepared for Blake at a point where the road, following the shore of a large lake, runs under an overhanging rock, and then turns sharp to the west. Beyond the bend they cut the usual trench, and above on the rock erected loop-holed walls of stone and sods, and here they

waited, armed with every shot-gun, pistol, and home-made bomb which the district could produce.

That night Blake spent an anxious time in his small barrack-room, his ears straining for the sound of the first shot of the expected attack, and his brain striving to work out the problem of how to get the arms into safe keeping. After a time he tried to attend to some routine work, but soon gave it up as hopeless.

Leaning back in his chair he lit a cigarette. At that moment his eye was arrested by a large photograph of the notorious John O'Hara over the fireplace, and he began to think of how the man had tricked him by getting away by sea, while the police were hunting the countryside for him. From O'Hara's photograph his eye wandered to a brightly-printed card hanging on the wall, with a drawing of a steamer on the top.

For some time he read the letterpress of the card without having any idea of what it meant; then in a flash he realised that the problem was solved. At high tide the next morning the s.s. *Cockatoo* would sail from the port of Ballybor for Liverpool, and if O'Hara had tricked him by the sea, then he could trick Larry O'Halloran by the same means.

The following morning, a quarter of an hour before the *Cockatoo* was due to sail, two Crossleys dashed on to the quay, and before the usual crowd of quay loafers knew what was happening, they were outside the yard gate,

and a strong guard of police with rifles at the ready had surrounded the gangway to the steamer. In a few minutes more the arms were all aboard the boat, stacked in an empty passenger saloon, guarded by police, and two minutes after Blake had given the captain his instructions, the *Cockatoo* was on her way down the river for England.

IV.

THE RED CROSS.

AN Englishman who has lived in Ireland for any length of time, knows that rivalry in religion and politics not only divides parts of Ireland, but even causes divisions in families. At one time recently things had reached such a state of passion that an Irish soldier or policeman who visited his home in the south or west was liable to find the door of his home shut in his face, and even to lose his life.

In a small town in the west of Ireland—in England you would call the place a village—there lived some years ago a shopkeeper named John Dempsey, a steady hard-working man, who left politics alone and attended to his own business. In due course Dempsey married and had three children—two boys, Patrick and William, and a daughter, Sheila.

The children were educated at the national school, and as soon as their minds were capable of understanding anything, the wicked and stupid policy of hatred of and revenge on England was drummed into their ears week by week, month by month, and year by year,

until the English appeared to their childish imaginations to be the greatest monsters of brutality in the world.

After the late war started, not before, the British newspapers and magazines impressed upon us the thoroughness of the German preparations for this war, and amongst other things, of how the present generation had had instilled into their minds from early childhood a hatred of the British by every schoolmaster and learned professor in Germany. For years past this German method has been carried on in Ireland, Irish national school teachers preparing the present generation of young men and women for the present Sinn Fein movement.

You have in England a saying that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, which applies very well to many national school teachers in the west and south of Ireland, who, though they can tell you of every wrong which England has inflicted on Ireland during the last three hundred years, yet know nothing of the greatness and power for good of the British Empire; nor do they realise the vast benefits which Ireland reaps as a partner of the Empire.

As time went on John Dempsey made and saved much money on porter, eggs, and other things, and as the boys appeared to be clever and anxious to get on in the world, he decided that they should complete their education in Dublin, Patrick eventually to become a doctor, and William to enter the priesthood; but as soon as the father announced his intentions,

Sheila, who had never been separated from her brothers, implored that she might go with them and become a hospital nurse.

In the end the old man gave way and the three children went to Dublin, where Patrick duly qualified as a doctor, Sheila became a nurse in one of the hospitals there, but William did not become a priest.

When the brothers and sister first went to Dublin, Sinn Fein was rapidly becoming the great party of the Celts in Ireland, and every young man and woman was pressed hard to join. Patrick and Sheila joined eagerly, but William refused, and the idea of becoming a priest being now distasteful to him, he joined the R.I.C., to the bitter resentment of his brother and sister, who refused even to see him.

During the summer of 1919 the two brothers and sister met again at home, Sheila on her summer holidays, Patrick waiting for an appointment, and William, who was now stationed at the neighbouring town of Ballybor, on leave. At first the other two resented the presence of William, and there were bitter and passionate political arguments at every meal; but after a time their natural kindness prevailed, and the three became nearly as great pals as formerly, but the shadow of William's uniform seemed always to come between them.

Sheila was the first to go back. A letter from her matron came one morning asking if she would care to go abroad, to take entire charge of a patient who had been ordered to live in Switzerland by the doctors. She did

not wait to answer, but returned to Dublin that day, lest she should be too late.

Patrick and William were at this time typical of the two parties into which the people of the greater part of Ireland were divided—in plain language, Patrick was a rebel and William a loyalist! And though the loyalist party was very small in comparison to the other, yet it would never have been so small if proper support from the Government had been forthcoming at the right time, but would have grown larger and larger as the outrages increased, and the decent elements of the population ranged themselves on the side of law and order.

During his time in Dublin, Patrick, young and enthusiastic, had become deeply involved in the Sinn Fein movement, and when one day he found himself bound hand and foot to a policy of outrage and murder, he made strong efforts to regain his freedom, but was quickly made to realise that he now belonged, body and soul, to Sinn Fein.

No sooner had Sheila gone than the two brothers began to quarrel—to end in hot and bitter words at supper one night, when William left the table and returned at once to Ballybor. A few days afterwards Patrick received an order from Dublin to report at once to the Sinn Fein H.Q.'s there, and though he would have liked to refuse, he dared not.

On arrival in Dublin, Patrick duly reported at H.Q.'s, and there learnt that he had been chosen for a most unpleasant job. About this time, after their signal initial successes, the

I.R.A. were endeavouring to organise a force which would entirely wipe out the police, or at any rate reduce them to complete impotence.

To this end the General Staff of the I.R.A. were determined to leave no stone unturned to achieve success in the ambushades of patrols and attacks on barracks. During the preliminary attacks the rebels had lost heavily through lack of medical care, and it was now determined that a doctor should attend all ambushades and attacks.

Funds were plentiful, and in a few days Patrick found himself set up as a practising doctor in a large house in Dublin, and it was arranged that, when an attack was to take place in a certain district, he should receive a wire calling him to hold a consultation in a district close by. They supplied him with a good car, there were no restrictions on the movements of doctors, so that the busy young Dublin doctor, hurrying to the sick-bed of a country patient, excited no suspicion.

The plan was quite simple, and worked smoothly. An ambushade would be arranged at H.Q.'s in Dublin to take place at a certain point where it was known that a police patrol passed. The day before Patrick would receive his wire, and early the next morning would leave Dublin for the scene of operations. When within a short distance of the attack he would stop his car, and remain there until the fight was over, attend to the wounded, and afterwards return to Dublin.

On two occasions he was surprised by relief

parties of military, but each time he was able to explain his presence—that it was a mere chance that he happened to be passing, and that his professional instincts were at once aroused by the sight of the wounded men.

In the case of an attack on police barracks the procedure was somewhat different. Some days before Patrick would receive his usual wire—never from the place where the attack was to take place, but from a neighbouring town—and at the same time would receive instructions in Dublin of the time and place of the attack.

On arriving at the place of attack he would put up at the best hotel, giving out that he had come to attend a consultation in the town, from which the wire had been sent. After a talk with the local Volunteer captain, a house would be decided on as a temporary hospital, to which the wounded would be taken, and after the attack Patrick would simply disappear.

At first the danger and excitement appealed to his high-strung temperament, but soon the novelty wore off, and he saw that there could only be one end for him—exposure and professional ruin, if not a long term of imprisonment. In vain he asked to be allowed to resume his profession, but he might as well have begged for mercy from the Inquisition of old.

One evening, on his return from an ambuscade, Patrick found a wire from Sheila, saying that her patient had suddenly died in Switzer-

land, and that she was crossing to Dublin that night. The next morning she arrived, radiant with health, and eager for news.

Under her patient's will Sheila received a legacy of about £2000 and a car, which was stored in a Dublin garage, and now she was free to devote herself to the cause of Ireland's freedom. On hearing of Patrick's occupation, she at once determined to join him.

Patrick was devoted to his sister, and tried hard to put the idea out of her head, but in the end had to give way. That very day she made him take her to H.Q.'s, where she offered the services of herself and car to the I.R.A.

Owing to an insufficient number of rifles for ambuscades and attacks on a large scale all over the country, the General Staff had decided to collect rifles in Dublin and send them down to the scenes of attacks in cars. Sheila's offer coincided with this decision, and to Patrick's horror he and Sheila received orders to attend attacks, and also to carry the rifles and ammunition.

The car was found to be a large touring car, to which a false bottom was fitted to take rifles, whilst further false bottoms under the seats gave sufficient room to hide revolvers, and a dummy space which was packed with S.A.A. Sheila had large red crosses painted on the lamps and wind-screen, and the camouflage was complete.

For months the brother and sister—Patrick looking a typical young doctor, and Sheila dressed as a hospital nurse—carried arms and

first aid to ambuscades throughout the south and west, and not the slightest suspicion appears to have been aroused in the minds of the authorities. Sheila thoroughly enjoyed the excitement, and soon became known as the Florence Nightingale of the I.R.A.

One day there came a wire from home that their mother was dangerously ill, and begging them to go to her at once. Patrick knew that if they asked leave to go, their taskmasters would refuse, and so decided to take "French leave."

William had also been sent for, and again the two brothers and sister met. After a few days their mother took a turn for the better, but Patrick, who dreaded returning to Dublin, insisted on staying, in spite of Sheila's urgings to get back to their work.

Soon after their mother was out of danger Sheila received an invitation to a dance at a large farmhouse about two miles away, and drove there in the car, resplendent in a Paris evening dress. Patrick and William refused to go, the former making the excuse that he did not like to leave his mother, the latter because he knew that the presence of a policeman would break up the dance.

That evening, after it was dark, William walked across the fields to see an old school friend, one of the few men in the district who would speak to him at all, and then only at night in his own house. When William left, this man warned him that Knockbrack Wood would not be a healthy place for the next few

days, but when pressed for an explanation would say no more.

When William reached home he learnt from his father that during his absence a stranger had called for Patrick, and that soon afterwards the two had left hurriedly to fetch Sheila, Patrick saying that he would have to return to Dublin that night by car.

Old Dempsey seemed much upset, and after the warning received that night William's suspicions were aroused. As soon as supper was over he retired to bed, or rather to wait in his room until the house was quiet, when he meant to bicycle back to Ballybor.

William had not been in his room more than ten minutes when he heard Sheila's car drive up, and the front door open and shut. Then he heard Sheila come upstairs to her bedroom, followed by Patrick and strange footsteps, and then the closing of Patrick's door.

The bedrooms of the two brothers were separated by a thin partition, and William managed to overhear enough of their conversation to make out that there was to be an ambuscade in Knockbrack Wood on Wednesday night (this being Monday), and that Patrick was returning at once to Dublin.

William lay as still as a mouse, hoping that Patrick and Sheila would not realise that he was in the house, and in their hurry forget about him. He could tell from the tone of his brother's voice that he was not for it, but further conversation was cut short by Sheila calling out that she was ready to start.

Shortly afterwards William heard the three leaving the house and the car go off in the direction of Dublin. He waited for a few minutes to give the stranger time to get well away, then got out his bicycle, and with his revolver ready in his right hand, started off for Ballybor.

While William was riding for dear life to Ballybor, Sheila and Patrick were tearing across Ireland to fetch the arms for the ambushade. They reached Dublin without any trouble, had a short rest and a meal, collected the arms from the secret hiding-place, and then started off on the return journey by a different route.

By previous arrangement they were met outside the town after dark by the local Volunteer captain and a party of men, who took over the arms from them, when they drove on home. Owing to the fact that they had left and returned at night, no one in the town had any idea that they had been away.

For some weeks past the police had been bringing tremendous pressure to bear on the rebels throughout the south and west, which pressure corresponded with the appointment of a new Inspector-General of the R.I.C. So strong was the pressure growing that the rebel staff were afraid of a collapse, and when their secret service learnt that the I.G. would be motoring to Ballybor on this particular Wednesday night, they determined to ambush him in Knockbrack Wood, and to kill him at all costs.

 Knockbrack Wood lies along both sides of

a main road for a distance of about a mile and a half, and in the middle the road makes a sharp bend to avoid a huge granite rock which towers above the trees and makes this corner quite blind. On the far side of this bend from the direction of Ballybor the road rises suddenly, so that a car going towards that place would be likely to approach the bend at a good pace, and be unable to avoid an obstacle or trench just round the corner.

Here it was settled to make the attempt on the I.G.'s life, and on the Wednesday the local Volunteers, under the direction of staff officers from Dublin, started to make the preparations. By dark all was complete, except to cut a trench across the road, and a large party of Volunteers had taken up positions on each side of the road at the bend.

It was expected that the I.G.'s car would be wrecked, or at any rate brought to a standstill, just beneath the big rock, on the top of which there was a bombing post, with orders to drop a flare as soon as the car was below, to enable the riflemen to aim in the dark, and to follow up the flare with a shower of bombs.

Patrick and Sheila waited until it was nearly dark, when they motored to Knockbrack Wood, leaving the car up a narrow lane in the wood, about a hundred yards from the big rock on the Ballybor side. They then retired to a safe distance to await events.

After several hours of waiting they left the wood and walked up and down the road to Ballybor, as by this time they were half frozen

with cold. Shortly afterwards they were joined by the Volunteer captain, and as it would soon be daylight, Patrick suggested to him that the men should be sent home.

The Volunteer captain was a stupid fellow, and further, he resented any suggestion as to what he should do from Patrick; and the three of them—Sheila, Patrick, and the captain—began a heated argument in the middle of the road: the captain argued that an order was an order, and that he would keep his men there until the next night if necessary, or even longer.

Patrick saw the mistake he had made, shrugged his shoulders, and started to return to the car with Sheila.

Now their whole attention had been centred on the direction from which the I.G.'s car was expected to come, and the last thing they expected was a counter-attack from the direction of Ballybor; but as Patrick and Sheila turned to leave the Volunteer captain, they found themselves covered by a party of R.I.C., with Blake at their head, and at the same time heavy firing burst out in the wood on both sides of the road.

Patrick and Sheila had no alternative but to put up their hands, but the Volunteer captain tried to escape, and was promptly shot by a constable. Blake asked what they were doing at such an hour on the highroad, and Patrick was starting his usual story of how he and his sister were on their way from Dublin to attend an urgent case in the country, but

when he caught sight of his brother William standing behind Blake, he faltered and remained dumb.

Before Blake could ask any more questions they had to jump to one side to avoid a Crossley full of Auxiliaries, which dashed past, and stopped a few yards beyond them, the Cadets at once jumping out and taking up positions on each side of the car with Lewis guns trained to sweep the road as far as the big rock. Blake, after ordering William and a constable to take Patrick and Sheila down the Ballybor road out of the line of fire until he could deal with them, took command of the Auxiliaries, and waited for the action to develop.

By this time it was daylight, and the police, who had worked round the flanks of the ambushers, began to make it pretty hot for the men in the trenches. Now it is one thing to shoot an unfortunate policeman perched up in a stationary lorry in the middle of the road, and quite a different story when the policeman starts to shoot you in the back from behind a tree, and very soon the Volunteers broke from their trenches and started to stream down the Ballybor road.

There was a momentary lull in the firing, broken by two hurricane bursts of fire from the Cadets' Lewis guns, and the Volunteers fell in little heaps on the grey limestone road; the remainder hesitated, and then ran for their trenches, to be met by a hail of bullets from the police, who had taken up positions commanding the trenches while the Volunteers

were trying to escape by the road. Again they tried to escape along the road, and again the Lewis guns spat out a magazine of bullets whilst a man could count five, the noise of the guns being intensified by the dead wall of trees.

The few Volunteers now left threw down their arms, put up their hands, and the fight was over.

In the meantime William had taken his brother and sister down the Ballybor road until they came to the lane where the car was, and here he told them to wait. After a few minutes Sheila asked him to send the constable out of hearing, as she wished to talk to him.

After the constable had retired up the lane there was a terrible silence for several minutes. Patrick and Sheila both realised too late that William must have been in the house when they started on their journey to Dublin for the arms, and that he must have gone straight to Ballybor to warn the police of the impending ambushade. They knew that, even if they were not sentenced to death, they could not escape a long term of imprisonment, and that they had been betrayed by their own brother, but would not—or could not—realise that William had only done his duty.

Suddenly Sheila burst into a passionate denouncement of William's treachery to his country and his own flesh and blood, to be stopped by Patrick with great difficulty, who, controlling his rising passion and terror by a

great effort, implored William for their mother's sake to let them escape while there was yet time. At any rate to let Sheila go—surely the British Government did not wage war on women.

Poor William was torn between love for his brother and sister and his duty to his King. In those short moments he went through the agony of hell, knowing well that if he refused to let them escape he would carry for the rest of his life the brand of Cain; on the other hand, if he let them go he would not only be betraying his King, but also he would ruin his own career, and probably Blake's as well.

To William's great credit be it said, his sense of duty prevailed, and he refused to let them go; and to his great relief the unhappy scene was cut short by the sudden appearance of Blake.

Shortly afterwards the constable returned, and reported to Blake that he had found a Red Cross car up the lane. Blake gave orders for the car to be brought on to the highroad, and after collecting his men, started for Ballybor with Patrick and Sheila prisoners in their own car.

V.

THE R.M.

SINCE the period of Charles Lever, no book of Irish life has equalled 'Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.' in successfully portraying the character or "chat" of the true western peasant; but, at the same time, this book only shows the social side of a Resident Magistrate's life, and hardly does justice to his work in the wild parts of the south and west.

And of recent years the life led by Resident Magistrates has become more and more dangerous as the country became more and more unsettled. A D.I. can always take an escort with him, also he can go where and when he pleases; but an R.M. has to drive alone about the country, and, moreover, every one knows that at a certain hour on a certain day the R.M. will drive to a certain Petty Sessions Court, and after the Court is over he must drive home, though possibly by a different road. It is one thing to face death with half a score of rifles at your back, and quite a different tale unarmed and alone.

Soon after Blake came to Ballybor, the

R.M. stationed there retired on pension, and in his place there came a young man, Anthony Mayne, who had served with distinction in an Irish regiment during the war. Being unmarried, Mayne took up his quarters in a small hotel close to the police barracks, and in a short time struck up a friendship with Blake.

In addition to attending at Ballybor Petty Sessions once a week, Mayne had to go to several other small towns twice a month. The district was very large, chiefly wild mountainous country, and some of the places were many miles from Ballybor, one place in particular, Ballyrick, being over thirty miles away on the shores of the Atlantic.

The first Court which Mayne attended happened to be at Ballyrick, probably one of the wildest and most thinly populated districts in Ireland. Soon after leaving Ballybor the road crossed a railway line by a level crossing close to the sea, and then ran for many miles between the sea and a chain of mountains to the small seaside town of Ballyrick.

Mayne found that the people of this district were a race of small men; they looked as though the terrific Atlantic gales had stunted them in the same way as the trees are stunted on this coast, and, moreover, their faces were not pleasing. During his first Court here the nature of the cases showed plainly that the chief amusement of the peasants was to beat and batter each other on all opportunities, especially on dark nights after a fair, and the distillation of illicit whisky their chief occupation.

In Ireland the penalty for harbouring, keeping, or concealing a still or illicit spirits is £100, which can be mitigated to £6, luckily no lower; and from time immemorial the custom of the shopkeeper class of magistrate has always been to reduce every fine to the minimum, with the natural result that the peasants have come to regard the £6 fine as the legal penalty for the bad luck of being caught by the police. £6 is a mere fraction of the profits of a successful brew of poteen, and is looked upon in the light of a tax paid to the Government.

In one case a man was caught red-handed by the police with fourteen barrels of treacle, 200 gallons of wash, a complete still, and enough poteen to stock a fair-sized public-house. The man brought the £6 into Court with him, being certain he would be convicted and fined the usual amount.

But Mayne, the only magistrate on the bench, took a very serious view of the case, knowing the amount of crime and misery caused by this abominable drink, and fined the man £50.

Such a sentence had never been heard in Ballyrick Court-house within the memory of man; even the police received a shock, and a noise resembling a swarm of angry bees arose to defy the shouts of the police for silence and order. That evening, when Mayne returned to Ballybor, he was followed by a police car for many miles, but the peasants had not had time to organise their revenge.

About this time the magistrates of the dis-

district received letters from the I.R.A. calling upon them to resign their Commissions of the Peace, and giving them a time limit. The shopkeeper and farmer class, being threatened with that savage scourge in Ireland, a boycott, had no alternative but to resign, which they did at once with great promptness and unanimity. In most cases the gentry hung on to their commissions, but refrained from appearing on the Bench at a time when their presence might have made all the difference.

Very soon the Sinn Fein Courts in the Ballybor district were in full swing; the country people received orders not to appear at a Petty Sessions Court, and in a very short time every Petty Sessions clerk found himself completely idle. However, as a matter of form, Mayne attended every Court regularly, though the only people present were the police, the clerk, and himself, and their only work to say good-day to each other.

By now all the magistrates in the district had either resigned or feared to attend, and if only the R.M. could be frightened out of the country or removed, all Petty Sessions Courts would be closed, and the King's Writ would cease to run in the country both figuratively and in reality. With this end in view, the Volunteers began to send threatening letters to Mayne, and on two occasions he was fired at when motoring back from holding Courts in outlying towns.

However, Mayne was made of the right stuff, and determined that as long as he was alive

the usual Courts should be held throughout his district, no matter whether the people brought their cases to the King's Courts or to the Sinn Fein Courts, which were generally held the day before a Petty Sessions Court was due in a town; and in order to provide cases he arranged with Blake to carry out a poteen raid on a large scale in the Ballyrick district, and that the cases should be tried at the next Court there. Blake duly carried out the raid, which was most successful, and the defendants were summoned to appear in Court, with the threat of arrest held over their heads if they did not turn up.

On the day of the Ballyrick Court Mayne set out, alone as usual, on his long drive about 9.45 A.M., and on reaching the level crossing found the gates closed, though no train was due to pass for several hours. After sounding his horn in vain, he went to open them himself, only to find that both gates were heavily padlocked.

He then made his way to the crossing-keeper's house, which was about fifty yards up the line. The man's wife, who was the only occupant of the house, told him that the gates had been locked that morning by the Volunteers, after the police cars had passed through, and the keys taken away. Determined not to be beaten, Mayne now got a heavy stone, and had actually succeeded in smashing the padlock on the near gate, when he was shot in the head from behind, and at once collapsed on the road.

During the late war extraordinary cases were known of men shot through the head, even through the brain, living for hours afterwards, though generally unable to speak ; and Mayne, though paralysed, was quite conscious when his murderers came up to where he was lying.

For some time the murderers argued whether they should finish him off, or remove him as he was. In the end they put him into his own car, unlocked the far gate, and drove off in the direction of Ballyrick.

After proceeding about a mile they came to a lane, which led up to a lonely farm close to the sea. After driving up to the farm they threw Mayne—still alive and conscious—on to a manure heap at the back of the farmhouse, and then drove off. It was afterwards found that they then took the car to a high cliff and ran it over the edge, to be broken up on the rocks below in the sea.

Mayne spent the rest of that day lying on the manure heap, and so terrorised were the inhabitants of the farm that not one of them dared go near him. To give poor Mayne even a cup of cold water would have meant certain death to the giver.

Late that evening the murderers returned, expecting to find Mayne dead by now ; but he was still alive, though in a pitiable state. Again they argued among themselves whether they would finish him off or not, and again for some unknown reason they decided not to. And these are the men who, according to an

English paper (thank God ! not an Irish one), are "entitled to the treatment which, in *civilised* countries, is given to prisoners of war."

After some time an ass was harnessed to a cart, into which they threw Mayne's body, and then proceeded to the seashore below the farm. Here, after another discussion, they buried him—still alive, though quite paralysed—up to his neck in the sand, at a place where they thought the incoming tide would just reach him and slowly drown him during the night-time. It was now several hours since Mayne had been shot, and one can only hope that, though he was still alive, his senses had become numbed.

The following morning these fiends returned again to find that they had miscalculated the height of the tide, which had only reached the level of poor Mayne's chin, and that he was *still alive*, though probably by now quite mad. They then dug him up, and this time made no mistake, but buried him where the tide was bound to drown him. And the next flood tide put an end to a torture the like of which Lenin and Trotsky could hardly exceed for sheer malignant devilry.

Blake and a strong escort of police had motored out to Ballyrick ahead of Mayne, in case there might be an ambush on the road. The Court was due to begin at twelve, and when by two there was no sign of the R.M., Blake left for Ballybor, making inquiries on the way, but could get no tidings of him anywhere.

On arriving in Ballybor, Blake wired for a force of Auxiliaries, who arrived that night, and at once started with Blake and a strong force of R.I.C. to hunt the countryside for Mayne; but nowadays in Ireland, so dangerous is it for any civilian to be seen speaking to a policeman, that it is always quite impossible to obtain any direct information. People who had seen Mayne set out on his last ill-fated drive denied that they even knew him by sight.

For three days and three nights they scoured the countryside from Ballybor to Ballyrick, and from Ballyrick back again to Ballybor, but no clue or tidings of Mayne could they get. From the time Mayne left Ballybor, R.M. and car seemed to have disappeared as though the earth had opened and swallowed them.

As there was no evidence of foul play, the police hoped that the R.M. had been kidnapped and hidden away in the mountains to the east of Ballyrick. So they posted notices throughout the district to the effect that, if the R.M. was returned in two days all would be well, but if not——

At the end of the two days' grace a man, who said he kept the railway crossing on the road to Ballyrick, arrived on a bicycle at the barracks ashen with fear, and asked to see Blake. On hearing the man's story, Blake went out to the level crossing and there found poor Mayne's body in a rough wooden box, lying on the side of the line. The cause of

death appeared obvious ; but they were greatly puzzled to find the clothes soaked with seawater and full of sand, and to hear from the doctor who examined the body that death was due to—drowning.

The level-crossing man was detained at the barracks, and every means was taken to extract information from him ; but he denied all knowledge of the murder, and proved an alibi to Blake's satisfaction.

The police spent the next fortnight searching in vain for Mayne's murderers, and it is probable that, but for a curious trait in the peasant's character, they would never have solved the mystery.

Late one evening, about three weeks after the murder, a typical Ballyrick peasant arrived at the barracks in Ballybor and asked to see the D.I., and refused to state his business except to the D.I. Luckily the police decided to admit the man, and he was led off to Blake's office.

When he was brought in Blake was up to his eyes in official correspondence, with the prospect of an all-night sitting before him ; but hoping that the man might have news of Mayne, he ordered the police to leave the man alone with him, and then waited for him to tell his news.

If a western peasant has a favour to ask or a confession to make, he will talk of everything and everybody except the object of his visit, possibly for an hour and probably for two, and will generally not come to the point

until he is preparing to leave. The length of time required to extract the necessary information depends entirely on the skill of the interviewer.

Blake's visitor was no exception to this rule, and many an Englishman, cleverer than Blake, would have made the mistake of hurrying his man, which is always fatal; and even Blake's patience was nearly exhausted before he made his confession.

Whether the man's confession was genuine, or whether he hoped to save his skin by turning informer is not quite clear; but at any rate he confessed to Blake that he and five other men had murdered Mayne at the level crossing, gave the full details of one of the worst atrocities which has ever been committed in Ireland, and stated as his only reason for confessing that he had not been able to sleep since the murder.

VI.

AN OUTLAW.

PROBABLY the great majority of the British public had no idea of the extraordinary situation in the south and west of Ireland during 1920, and most likely never will have. In the summer of that sinister year, when the Sinn Fein tyranny was at its height, an English newspaper sent a lady journalist over to this unfortunate country to find out what really was the matter with us, and, if possible, to give the world yet another solution of the Irish Question.

In her first letter, this lady, quite unnecessarily, told her millions of readers that she had never been in Ireland before, proceeded to relate the peculiarities of the people of Dublin and Belfast, and finished with a vivid description of the peaceful and happy condition of the country, in spite of the interested rumours put about to the contrary.

At the time when this lady journalist was discovering peaceful and happy Ireland, the power of Sinn Fein was rapidly passing from the hands of the hot-air merchants to the

direct-action ruffians ; in other words, Arthur Griffiths became a mere cipher, and Michael Collins the dictator of the south and west. And very soon Collins had several imitators.

Born in 1889 in the highlands of Ballyrick, Denis Joyce, after working for a few years as gillie and general boy at a shooting-lodge near Errinane, drifted to Dublin as a labourer, and at once came under the influence of Connolly, the prince of Irish Bolsheviks. Taken prisoner during the Easter rebellion of 1916, he was eventually released with other small fry, and in return devoted himself to the extermination of the British Empire in general, and Irish policemen in particular.

During the spring and summer of 1920, Joyce and his numerous bodyguard, like an Irish chieftain of old, lived like fighting-cocks. Hailed as the conquerors of the British Army (they had shot several unarmed soldiers) wherever they went, not only did they live free, gratis, and for nothing, but the country people literally fought for the honour of entertaining these heroes. A great pity that the lady journalist could not have been present at one of these banquets. What "copy" she could have sent to her editor, and the certified net sale would have soared to the skies.

But though Joyce and his merry men had a great time, they did not neglect their duty ; and on every occasion, when conditions were all in their favour, they shot down police patrols from behind walls, and murdered un-

fortunate policemen when visiting their wives and families.

However, every dog has his day, and in the autumn of 1920, when the British Army and the Auxiliary Cadets started to take a hand in the game, Joyce found himself changed from a popular hero into a hunted outlaw, with the usual result that, where formerly he had found an open door and a smiling welcome, he now was met by a closed door and a scowl; and when seeking board and lodging, it became necessary to persuade the unwilling hosts with a six-shooter.

The police and military now commenced paying calls at night; and a farmer, living in the depth of the country, hearing a knock at his door during the long winter's nights, had always the pleasing excitement of not knowing if he was to have the honour of entertaining some badly-wanted gunmen, a patrol of the R.I.C., a party of Auxiliary Cadets, a military search-party, or merely a posse of local robbers, any of whom might take a sudden dislike to the unfortunate farmer, with unpleasant results.

In the winter of 1920, Joyce, who would have made an excellent soldier, made the bad mistake of mixing up love with war; in other words, he became greatly enamoured of a girl living in the south, and in order to be within reach of her, confined his attentions to that district for a considerable time, instead of moving about the country with his usual rapidity; and the Auxiliaries, getting an ink-

ling of the situation from a former lover of the girl, made a great effort to surround and capture him.

Though he received repeated warnings of the activity of the Cadets, Joyce put off his departure, until a day came when word was brought that the place was surrounded by forces of the Crown, who would close in on the little town that evening.

Joyce at once went to tell Molly, whose father kept a small hotel in the town, and the girl's quick wit soon thought out a plan of escape for her lover. Five commercial travellers staying in the hotel, and at the time out touring neighbouring villages, had left their heavy cases of samples at the hotel, and their railway passes in the safe keeping of the hotel proprietor.

That afternoon the train to the west carried Joyce and four of his bodyguard disguised as bagmen; the remainder were left to shift for themselves, and that evening, when the Cadets searched the town from attic to cellar, they found that the principal bird had flown.

Joyce knew that it would not be safe to travel by train as far as Ballybor, and as soon as he thought that they had cleared the Auxiliary cordon, determined to alight at the next stop and continue the journey by car. Just as they were on the point of leaving the train, however, they noticed several Cadets waiting by the station exit, so did not get out.

Two stations farther on they left the train, and being now outside the net, quickly com-

mandeered a Ford from the local garage and set out for the Ballyrick country, where Joyce had decided to hide and rest for a while. Keeping to byroads, they made their way westwards at a good rate until it was nearly daylight, when, after hiding the car in a wood, they proceeded to search for board and lodging.

Shortly they came across a good farmhouse, and, after the usual display of pistols, were admitted reluctantly, made a hearty meal, and retired to bed after ordering their host to have five good bicycles and another meal ready for them as soon as it was dark.

It has been mentioned that Joyce had worked as a boy at a shooting-lodge near Errinane, and he now conceived the brilliant idea of taking a rest-cure there until such time as the police took less interest in him. This lodge, Drumcar by name, belonged to a Connaught squire who had married an Englishwoman, and except for a short time in the summer was only occupied by a caretaker. Situated in one of the wildest parts of the west, a mile from the road, hidden by woods of oak and birch, and overlooking the bay on which Errinane stands, it was probably the last place in Ireland where the police would think of looking for an active gunman, and the chances were that not a single Auxiliary even knew that such a place existed.

The gunmen arrived at Drumcar soon after dawn, and after rousing the terrified caretaker, who lived with his son and daughter in a cottage in the grounds, they settled down

to a life of peace and comfort. The girl attended on them, while the old man brought food from Errinane in a donkey cart, and a good supply of poteen from a mountain farm near the mouth of the bay.

The lodge was well supplied with turf, contained an excellent library of novels, and Joyce and his men waxed fat with good living and soft lying; but it is a case of once on the run, always on the run, until the inevitable end comes, or the gunman is lucky enough to escape to the States.

Now, it is a well-known truth in the west that a "mountainy" man will always, when sick unto death, home-sick, or in dire distress, make for his beloved mountains, no matter what far end of the world he may have drifted to; and when in due course Blake learnt through official channels that Joyce had escaped from the southern town, he at once began to keep a sharp look-out for him in the Ballyrick country.

But when a fortnight passed and there was no sign of Joyce, nor yet any report of his presence in that part of the country, Blake turned up the man's official record, from which he learnt two interesting facts: first, that Joyce had worked at Drumcar; and, secondly, that he had a married sister in Bunrattey, a district on the southern border of Blake's country.

Blake now turned his attention to the sister's house, and when this proved a blank, he determined to try Drumcar Lodge as a last resource;

but at the time of the landing of arms at Errinane, every police barrack and coastguard station within a radius of many miles had been burnt, so that it was impossible to get any news of the place without going there, the nearest barrack in Blake's district being fifty miles away.

A "travelling circus" of Auxiliaries happened to be passing through Ballybor, and the leader undertook to investigate the lodge and let Blake know if they found any trace of Joyce. Blake advised them to surround the lodge in the daytime, as, owing to the wild and mountainous nature of the country, a night attack would be impossible.

On the whole, the gunmen treated old Faherty, the caretaker, and his children well, especially the son, Patsy, in the hope that he would join them; but, luckily for himself, the lad had a wholesome dread of firearms. After he had been at the lodge some days, in spite of feeling quite secure, Joyce, with the instinct of the hunted, began to look about for a bolt-hole in case of need; though in the midst of the wilds the lodge had serious drawbacks, being situated on the side of a slope, so that any one leaving the lodge would at once come under observation from several points, and, moreover, an arm of the sea cut off all escape to the north.

In fact, escape seemed very doubtful, until by chance Patsy mentioned that in a boat-house, hidden by trees, on the shore of the bay, there was a large motor-launch, which

he had learnt to drive the previous summer. The next time the old man went to Errinane for provisions, he brought back with him twenty gallons of petrol (duly entered up in his absent master's account), and Joyce felt easier in his mind.

On a pouring wet afternoon the five gunmen were playing nap in front of a comfortable turf fire in the drawing-room, while old Faherty's daughter brewed poteen punch for them, and Patsy was reading a novel in an arm-chair, when a long-haired boy dashed in with the news that a large party of Auxiliary Cadets had rushed through Errinane, taken two countrymen they had met on the road as guides, and were surrounding the lodge from all sides except the sea. Joyce had launched the motor-boat only the previous day, and within a few minutes they were under way, heading for the mouth of the bay with the throttle full open. Seeing the launch in the bay below them as they reached the front of the lodge, the Cadets opened fire, but before they could get on to their target the launch vanished in the thick mist of rain.

As pursuit was out of the question, the Auxiliaries drove straight to Errinane Post Office, only to find the wires cut. They then went on to the nearest town, and wired to the naval authorities at Queenstown, hoping that they might be able to get in touch with a destroyer off the west coast by wireless, and so capture Joyce at sea.

Joyce knew that the hue-and-cry would be

up, and that it would be fatal to land anywhere on the coast near Errinane; and as the sea was calm, he made up his mind to cut across a big bay to the north and make for Buntarriv, a narrow passage between an island and the mainland, which would lead them to Trabawn Bay, on the shores of which lay his own country.

The launch left the slip at Drumcar at 1 P.M., and Joyce made out that at eight miles an hour they ought to reach Buntarriv Sound at four o'clock and Trabawn Bay in another hour, which should give them plenty of time to land before darkness set in. Unfortunately, when out in the open Atlantic, the engine stopped, and Patsy, who was thoroughly frightened by now, would only sit down and cry. Two of the gunmen knew something of motors, and after nearly two hours discovered that the carburetter was choked with dirt, and it was nearly six o'clock before the Sound was within sight: another quarter of an hour and they would have been too late. As it was, a destroyer opened fire on them just as they were entering the Sound, and they were only saved by the failing light.

Knowing that the destroyer could not follow them, and afraid of wrecking the launch in the dark, they anchored and waited for the moon to rise, and eventually landed on the shore of Trabawn Bay. Joyce was at last in his own country, and before day broke the gunmen were safely lodged in different mountain farms close to Joyce's home, and the next

day Patsy was handed over to the local Volunteers to be returned to Drumcar. The following day they took the launch to a bay surrounded by high cliffs, where no human being except an odd herd ever went, and beached her at the height of the tide on the sandy shore, where they left her for future use.

After a few days at home Joyce began to get restless, and resolved to visit his married sister in the Bunrattey district; but the local Volunteers could only supply them with two bicycles, and the distance was too far to walk—forty-two miles as the crow flies. However, he learnt from a postman that a police patrol visited Ballyscaddan, a small village about sixteen miles east of Ballyrick, daily, and were in the habit of leaving their bicycles outside a public-house which they frequented.

The gunmen spent the night in Ballyscaddan, and about eleven o'clock a patrol of six R.I.C. arrived in the village, left their bicycles outside the public-house, and went inside to refresh themselves. The gunmen, who were waiting in the next house, quickly cut the tyres of one bicycle to ribbons, and rode off on the remaining five, leaving the unfortunate villagers to bear the brunt of the infuriated policemen's wrath. That night Joyce and his four men slept in his sister's house in Bunrattey.

Besides his courage, the only redeeming feature about Joyce appears to have been his love for this sister. As usual, she was delighted to see him, but by now the other

inhabitants would have as soon welcomed the devil himself as Joyce, knowing that his progress through the country was blazed by reprisals.

Gone were the days when he used to hold audience daily in his sister's house like a king, and men came many miles simply to see the famous Denis Joyce. Now the country people would avoid him on the road, and not a single person came to see him.

His sister warned him repeatedly that it was dangerous to stay any length of time with her; but Joyce seems to have lost heart, or perhaps his Celtic soul had a premonition of coming disaster. At any rate he refused to go, and spent most of this time sitting by the kitchen fire brooding.

Blake soon learnt of Joyce's escape by sea from Drumcar, and feeling sure that sooner or later he would visit his sister before starting operations in the south again, concentrated his attention on that district. To this end, he kept his men well away, and at the same time asked for the help of the Auxiliary "travelling circus," among whom were three Cadets who knew Joyce well by sight.

One of these Cadets, whose personal appearance favoured the disguise, was dressed up as a priest, and sent out on a bicycle to spy out the land. After two days he returned with the good news that he had passed the famous gunman on the road in Bunrattey, and at once Blake made preparations to surround the place that night.

He knew that success entirely depended on maintaining complete secrecy until the house was surrounded, and that if even a whisper of what was in the air got abroad all chances of capturing Joyce were gone. Tired of seeing operations ruined by well-advertised Crossleys, bristling with rifles, tearing along the main roads, he determined to try and catch his man by cunning.

Directly he received the news that Joyce was at Bunrattey, he left Ballybor Barracks with four Crossleys, two of R.I.C., and two of Auxiliaries, in the opposite direction to which Bunrattey lay, until they came to a small village about ten miles to the north, where there was a large flour-mill. Surrounding the mill, the police carried out a perfunctory search and left just before dark, taking with them two of the miller's lorries, one empty, and the other loaded with flour sacks and two large tarpaulins, cutting the wires as soon as they were clear of the village.

Making their way eastwards until they reached a long stretch of desolate bog-road, they halted with one tender about a quarter of a mile behind and another the same distance ahead. They then proceeded to transfer half the flour sacks to the empty lorry, built them up with a hollow in the middle so that both lorries appeared to be fully loaded, filled the hollows with police, and then threw a tarpaulin over each.

The two lorries then set off to make a large detour in order to approach Bunrattey from

the south (the opposite direction to Ballybor), and Blake made out that they ought to arrive there about midnight. The four Crossleys waited and followed at a time which should bring them to Bunrattey a quarter of an hour after the arrival of the lorries.

Joyce's sister's house stood back from the main road about eighty yards, was one-storied, very strongly built, and had a tremendous thatch of straw; to the front there were four small windows, heavily shuttered, and a stout oak door, and at the back only a door of the same kind. At a distance of about thirty yards from the house a low stone wall ran round the sides and back, enclosing a small cabbage garden and the haggard, which gave excellent cover for the police.

The lorries stopped within 400 yards of the house, and the police quickly and silently surrounded it without raising the alarm. They then waited for the arrival of the Crossleys, when the Auxiliaries and the remainder of the police formed a second cordon outside the first one.

The leading lorry was now brought into the lane which led up to the house, and left there with the acetylene lamps shining full on the front door and windows, and at the same time the lamps of the second lorry were taken to the back of the house and mounted on the wall, so that any one attempting to leave the house by the doors or windows would be in the full glare of the powerful lamps.

Approaching the house from a gable-end,

Blake crawled along the front until he reached the door, on which he hammered with the butt of his revolver, and called on the inmates to surrender, telling them that they were surrounded and that resistance only meant death. Receiving no answer, he called out that if they did not come out at once with their hands up, he would open fire on the house, and for reply there came a volley of bullets through the lower part of the door. He then crawled back to cover, and ordered his men to open fire on the front door with a machine-gun.

The concentrated fire of a machine-gun will cut a hole through a nine-inch brick wall in a very short time, and in a few minutes the oak door was in splinters. While the machine-gun kept up a continuous fire at the height of a man's chest, four policemen endeavoured to get into the house by crawling up to the door, but when a few feet away two were shot, and the remaining two only escaped by rolling to one side.

All that the police had to do now, provided that Joyce was in the house—and the resistance offered made this a certainty—was to wait until daylight, when the certain capture of the gunmen would only be a question of time. But by now Blake was excited, and remembering how O'Hara had slipped through his hands, he determined to burn the rats out and finish the show. After getting a tin of petrol from one of the cars, he again crawled up to the gable-end, set a light to the tin, and

flung it on to the thatch, which at once took fire, burning fiercely.

Only a few days previously this part of the thatch had been renewed, and as the weather had been fine it was bone-dry. But after a few minutes the fire reached the old and wet thatch, and as there was a gentle breeze blowing from the front, very soon the back of the house was completely hidden by a cloud of smoke.

Realising the mistake he had made, Blake ordered his men to keep up a continuous fire on the back door, and at the same time rushed the machine-gun round to that side; but so blinding was the smoke by now that it was impossible to know where the back door was.

Hearing shouts from the front, on going there he found a young woman standing in the doorway with her hands up, who told him that all the men in the house were wounded and unable to move. On entering they found three of Joyce's bodyguard and his brother-in-law lying in pools of blood on the kitchen floor, but not a sign of Joyce or the fourth man.

There was still a chance that the missing two might be found wounded outside the back door, which was ajar, but the smoke was still so dense that no one could approach. After a time the smoke abated, and they found the fourth man dead a few yards from the house, but not a sign of Joyce.

Again working on the theory that the gunman would make for his home in the Ballyrick

mountains, which lay to the westward at the back of the house, Blake divided his forces into two, sending each out on a flank in order to get well ahead of the fugitive, and then form a fan-shaped net and beat backwards towards the house. Four miles away to the west was the Owenmore river, which ran northwards through Ballybor, and across the river were two bridges, each about four miles from where they were.

The two forces crossed by different bridges, each dropping three men at the bridges, then went on about three miles, and at daybreak started to beat the country back to the bridges. Here they arrived, worn out, at 10 A.M., and not a sign had any one seen or heard of Joyce.

Sure that Joyce had crossed the river, the police started to beat back again over the ground they had just covered; but by 4 P.M. the men were done in, and Blake had to call them off and return to Ballybor.

That night he got out a large-scale Ordnance map of the Bunrattey district, put himself in Joyce's place, and tried to think out his line of escape, presuming that the fugitive had avoided the bridges and swum the river at the nearest point from his sister's house. On crossing the river he would soon come to a thick wood on the slope of a hill, through which the railway line to Ballybor ran, and here he decided that Joyce must be hiding.

Early the next morning Blake set out with a strong force, and approaching Derryallen

Wood from all four sides at once, spent the rest of the day beating the wood through and through, but without any result, and they came to the conclusion that by now Joyce must have got clear.

A week afterwards, when Blake was returning in the dusk from Grouse Lodge Barracks, a man stopped the car on an open stretch of road about a mile outside Ballybor. The man turned out to be the loyal guard of the goods train, and he told Blake that for several days past he had seen the engine-driver drop a parcel as the train passed through Derryallen Wood, and always at the same place, into a patch of briers on the side of the line.

Blake's interest in Joyce awoke afresh, but he felt sure that no living being had escaped them on the day when they searched the wood, and they had not been able to find any trace of a hiding-place. However, it would be interesting to know what the engine-driver dropped when passing through the wood, and by whom it was picked up.

The main road from Ballybor to Castleport ran parallel with the railway, skirting the east side of Derryallen; and here, on a pitch-dark winter's night, in torrents of rain, two Crossleys stopped for a couple of minutes while Blake and a party of R.I.C. and Cadets dropped out, and then drove on again.

With great difficulty the party found their way in the dark to the railway line, where they remained hidden in some laurels until it began to grow light, when they were able to

conceal themselves within easy reach of the patch of briers.

After hours of weary waiting the goods train passed down, and the engine-driver dropped the parcel into the briers. At once the police forgot hunger and cold in their eagerness to see who would pick up the parcel, but again they were doomed to hours of weary waiting.

At last, when the men had nearly reached the limit of their endurance and light was almost gone, they saw a most miserable-looking wild-eyed man crawling painfully towards the patch of briers. When he was within five yards of the parcel Blake called on him to surrender, and every man covered him with his rifle.

Game to the end, though unable to stand on account of a bullet-wound in one leg, Joyce drew his pistol and glared defiance at the police; but as he raised himself to fire, a fifteen-stone Cadet, who had crept up silently behind him, flung himself on the famous gunman's back, and the long chase was over.

Joyce refused to show Blake his hiding-place, but afterwards they learnt from the owner of the wood that there was a cave in the middle of the wood which had been used by robbers over a hundred years ago, the entrance of which was completely covered by thick heather.

VII.

THE STRANGER WITHIN THE GATES.

AFTER the loss of the American arms the district of Ballybor remained quiet for some considerable time, so that the hard-working farmers in the country and respectable shopkeepers in the town began to hope at last that the trouble was over, and that they might be free to carry on their work in peace. Unfortunately, a quiet and peaceful district is anathema to the Sinn Fein G.H.Q., and before long a Volunteer flying column received orders to operate in the Ballybor district, with a view to stirring up trouble and bringing the county into line with the south.

By this time the large moderate element of Sinn Fein, in other words, practically every man who had a stake in the country—substantial farmers with haggards to burn, and prosperous shopkeepers with shops to burn—realised that they had backed a losing horse, and were prepared to do any mortal thing for peace, except help the police. Unfortunately, the farmers' sons and shop-boys, who, in the usual course of events, but for the war, would

have been in the States by now, took quite a different view. £20 in the £ rates, burnt haggards, and ruined businesses meant nothing to boys who paid no rates nor owned shops or farms.

Up to the winter of 1919 the rebels moved about the country in motors, how, when, and where they liked. Even during the time when every gallon of petrol was being kept for the armies in France, and the Loyalists were only allowed six gallons a month (on paper), De Valera and his staff burnt petrol as freely as a Connaught peasant will drink poteen. In connection with this, it would be interesting to know into whose petrol tanks the many thousands of gallons of petrol which was washed up on the western shores of Ireland from torpedoed vessels passed, and the system of collection and distribution.

After this winter, when the use of cars for illegal purposes became more and more restricted as the car-permit regulations became stricter and more rigidly enforced, the Volunteers began to make great use of bicycles, and their flying columns consisted of cyclists only. Orders were issued from G.H.Q. that every Volunteer must be able to ride a bicycle, and local commandants were instructed to see that every man in their command had one.

During the Mons retreat the cyclists were invaluable, both for fighting small rearguard actions and also for keeping in contact with the enemy. During the present war in Ireland, the explanation of the mysteries of how men

can shoot policemen from behind a wall and then disappear into thin air, and of how a column of gunmen can shoot up a train in Kerry on Monday and ambush a police lorry in Clare on Tuesday, is to be found in the intelligent use of the humble push-bike. And until the authorities round up every push-bike in Ireland, these mysteries will continue.

As soon as G.H.Q. determined that the Ballybor district must be brought into line with the south, a small party of gunmen, operating at the time many miles to the south, received their orders, and late that night a silent and ghostly party of cyclists rode into the Ballybor district. At a certain cross-roads they were met by guides, and long before day-break the gunmen were billeted in ones and twos throughout the townland of Cloonalla.

The following night a meeting of the local Volunteers was held in the National School, and the leader of the gunmen insisted that a police ambush or an attack on the Grouse Lodge Barracks should take place within the next few nights. The general opinion being against an attack on the barracks—the field of fire was too good, and the Black and Tans too handy with their rifles—it was settled (by the gunmen) that the police should be ambushed at a favourable spot where the main road from Ballybor to Castleport passed through a wooded demesne.

The next morning Father Tom, the parish priest, was besieged by the young Volunteers' fathers, men who had homes and haggards to

burn, one and all imploring his reverence to prevent an ambush in the parish, and to save them from the wrath of the Auxiliaries. Some of them, when asked, confessed that the gunmen were staying in their houses, but that their sons had brought them there without leave, and that they were powerless to get rid of them.

From the beginning of the movement Father Tom, who was young for a parish priest and an ardent Sinn Feiner in theory, had been one of the leaders in the district, and even when burning houses and haggards began to follow murderous ambushes in far-away Co. Cork as surely as day follows night, he still felt a thrill of pride for his countrymen who were giving their all for freedom, and became a fiercer Sinn Feiner than ever; but an ambush (and the sequel) in his own beloved parish was a very different thing, and a calamity to be avoided at all costs (his house stood high, and would give a splendid view at night of burning houses and haggards), and there was obviously no time to lose.

The next day was Sunday, and at mass Father Tom, who was a fine preacher, thundered forth from the altar. A vivid imagination stimulated his eloquence to such a pitch that he reduced most of the older members of his flock to tears.

He told them that it had come to his ears that certain men in the parish were harbouring strangers within their gates, and that these strangers had been trying to incite young and

innocent boys to murder policemen. He then described the result of an ambush—how houses were burnt to the ground and women and little children were turned out on the road on a winter's night (he did not mention the men, knowing that by then they would be up in the mountains), and how innocent men were shot in their beds before the eyes of their wives ; but he said nothing about the widows and orphans of the murdered policemen. Finally, he warned his flock against the strangers, who would fade away before the wrath of the soldiers and Auxiliaries fell on the parish, and commanded that they should be instantly turned out under the direst penalties. And with a last curse on the strangers he left the chapel.

If Father Tom had thundered from the altar against ambushes many, many months before, instead of openly encouraging the Volunteers, the result might have been very different ; but a leader of men who gives an order to-day and a counter-order to-morrow is rarely obeyed. That night it was learnt that a party of military would proceed from Castleport to Ballybor on Wednesday night, and it was settled to ambush them at the spot chosen in the demesne, the gunmen promising that a car-load of arms and bombs would arrive in time for the ambush, and also a doctor.

In the Cloonalla district there lived, nowadays a *rara avis* in the west of Ireland, a Protestant farmer of the old yeoman type so well known in England, and a staunch Loyalist.

To his house there came on that Sunday night two of the leading farmers, who told him the whole story of the proposed ambush, and begged him to warn the police.

The chapel of Cloonalla stands in the centre of the parish, close to a cross-roads, and on that Wednesday morning the inhabitants woke up to find a kilted sentry on guard at the cross-roads, and before most of them could get out of bed, two companies of Highlanders, guided by Blake, were hard at work searching every house for strangers.

Blake had brought with him two old regular R.I.C. sergeants, men who had been stationed in the district for years, and who knew every man, young and old; but the gunmen had been in trouble before, and were not to be caught so easily.

They were all young men and clean shaved, and before the police and Highlanders entered any of their billets, one and all were dressed as women with shawls over their heads; and in one house, where two of them had been billeted, the Highlanders found a young woman sitting on a stool by the fire, nursing a baby under her shawl, while another pretty shawled girl was preparing breakfast for the young mother. A big Highlander could not resist giving her a glad eye, little knowing that "she" was a notorious gunman, and wanted to the tune of a thousand pounds for the brutal murder of a D.I. as he was leaving church.

The only result of the raid was the finding

of an old shot-gun in the bed of the local blacksmith, a man who had always defied the local Volunteers, and kept a gun for poaching only, and who was taken off to Ballybor Barracks amidst the jeers of everybody. However, in a few days they realised how useful and necessary a person a smith is in a country district, and before the week was out the whole townland was clamouring for the smith's release.

However, the raid had good results; the Volunteers refused point-blank to carry out the ambush on Wednesday night, though the gunmen stayed until that day, making every endeavour to bring it off. Finding it was useless, they disappeared that night as silently as they had come, promising to return shortly in greater numbers.

The whole district heaved a sigh of relief when it was known that there were no longer any strangers within the gates, and settled down to farm and lead the life God meant them to live, and hoped against hope that they might never see a cursed stranger again, be he gunman or Auxiliary. Blake let it be known that it was a case of no ambush, no Auxiliaries, and every farmer in the district was quite content to keep his side of the bargain.

But peace was not yet to be the portion of Cloonalla. Within three weeks of the first gunman leaving, a party of twenty arrived on a wild winter's night, and, as on the former occasion, as silently dispersed to their allotted

billets. This time the leader of the gunmen did not ask the local Volunteers to help, but ordered them to carry out the ambush in the wooded demesne on the main road from Castleport to Ballybor, as previously arranged.

The gunmen did not appear during the day-time at all, and had been nearly a week in the district before Father Tom heard of their arrival. Unfortunately, the priest was very ill with influenza at the time, and before he could take any action the damage was done.

As usual, the scene of the ambush was laid with great cleverness. Between the two entrance-gates of the demesne on the main road there was a sharp rise in the form of an S bend, with a thick thorn hedge on each side of the middle of this bend. Where the rise was steepest, there was a lane leading to the keeper's house, about fifty yards from the road, and at the entrance of this lane the gunmen laid a mine in the main road to be fired by an electric wire running towards the keeper's house. After laying the mine they forced the road contractor of that part of the road to cart broken stones and lay them right across the road over the mine, so that all traces of the mine were hidden.

The day after the mine had been laid word came to Cloonalla that the police had arrested three men in Ballybor during the previous night, and that it was thought that the prisoners would be sent to Castleport that night in a Crossley under a strong police escort. As soon as it was dark, the gunmen, after

parking their bicycles in a wood of the demesne, collected all the Volunteers they could induce or force to accompany them, and made their way across country to the scene of the ambush.

The night was unusually fine with a full moon, and two hours after the Volunteers and gunmen had taken up their positions, the peculiar note of a Crossley engine could be distinctly heard approaching at a great pace from the Ballybor direction. The gunman who had laid the mine was a first-class electrician, and as the car tore past the lane there was a blinding flash, followed by a terrific roar, and the car seemed to jump clean off the road and then collapse in a burning heap on the road.

With the roar of the mine the ambushers opened a heavy fire on the car, but receiving no reply they quickly ceased fire, waiting to see what would happen next. But the mine had done its work only too well, and the only sounds which could be heard were the groans of dying men amid the burning ruins of the car. After some minutes two policemen rolled out of the end of the car and lay on the high-road, one man with both his legs paralysed, crying piteously for water, and the second with part of his head blown away by a flat-nosed bullet, crying for a priest.

Up to this point the leader of the gunmen had taken charge of all the proceedings, and when the Volunteers were collected on the road like a flock of sheep they still waited for orders. However, after five minutes, as no

order was given, they began to look for their leader, suddenly to realise that every gunman had faded away.

At once every Volunteer started to make his way home as fast as he could, and within two minutes the only occupants of the road were the two dying policemen, lying like two black logs in the white moonlight. Presently a terror-stricken keeper crept out of his house, and as soon as his scattered wits could take in the situation, he got out his bicycle and rode into Ballybor for help.

Long before day broke columns of soldiers, R.I.C., and Auxiliaries concentrated on and met at that horrible scene on the road between the two demesne gates, and shortly afterwards broke like a tornado on the townland of Cloonalla, and Father Tom, from his bedroom window, saw his worst fears realised. When daylight came the parish was at last clear of all strangers and avengers, but at a terrible price.

A quick-witted policeman remembered that the only limestone road in Cloonalla was the road from Ballybor to Castleport, so that it was easy to tell in a house by an inspection of boots if any man of that household had been present at the ambush, and that night the fathers suffered for the sins of their sons, and the sons paid the full price of the gunmen's crime.

Like good soldiers, the gunmen carefully thought out their line of retreat before the ambush took place. They found that a broad river ran through the demesne parallel to and

about 400 yards from the main road, that the nearest bridges above and below were five miles away, and that across the river ran a range of wild and desolate country. In a wood on the bank of the river they found fishing-boats, used for netting salmon during the summer-time, and before the ambush the leader sent two of his men to collect all these boats at a certain part of the river, and to remain there in readiness to take the remainder and their bicycles across. As soon as the ambush was over they collected their bicycles, crossed the river, and were soon riding through a little-known pass in the mountains on their way to carry on their devil's work in a part of the country many miles removed from the scene of the Cloonalla ambush.

VIII.

MR BRIGGS' ISLAND.

SEVERAL years before the late war there lived in the suburbs of London a prosperous stock-broker, by name Benjamin Briggs, a lonely bachelor, an ardent fisherman, and a man of simple and kindly nature. Every year Mr Briggs spent his entire summer holidays fishing in Scotland or Wales, and it was not until after hearing a friend at his club recounting the wonderful fishing that he had had in Ireland that he turned his attention to that country.

One afternoon, when passing through Euston Station, a famous poster of Connemara caught Mr Briggs' eye, and the following summer he made a complete tour of that delightful country of mountains, moors, and rivers. So charmed was he with the scenery and the perfect manners of the peasants that he determined to see more of the country, and on a fine summer's afternoon found himself in the little town of Ballybor, reputed to be one of the best fishing centres in Ireland.

During a walk through the town before

dinner, he happened to see a large notice in an auctioneer's window, offering for sale, at what seemed to Mr Briggs a very low figure, a fishing-lodge on an island in the middle of a large lake, famous for its salmon, trout, and pike-fishing, and distant about six miles from the town of Ballybor. The notice also stated that the auctioneer would be glad to give full particulars, and that the lucky buyer could obtain immediate possession.

Now many of us have cherished a secret longing to possess an island, no doubt an aftermath from reading 'Robinson Crusoe' when very young, possibly in the sea if one has a weakness for that element, or, if not, in the middle of some large lake full of salmon and trout. From childhood Mr Briggs had had two great longings—first, to be a successful fisherman, and secondly, to possess an island, to which he could eventually retire and fish all day and every day.

The following morning, after an interview with the auctioneer, he drove out to the lake on an outside car, was duly met by the caretaker, Pat Lyden, with a boat, fell in love at sight with a comfortable little six-roomed lodge built on the shore of a small green island far out in the lake and commanding glorious views of mountains and water, and on his return to Ballybor he wasted no time in completing the purchase. The following day he moved to the island, and spent a happy fortnight fishing with Pat Lyden before returning to England.

From the outbreak of war until 1920 Mr

Briggs was unable to visit Ireland, but during the summer of that year he decided to retire, and after disposing of his business and suburban home, set out for Ballybor, meaning to spend the rest of the year fishing on Lake Moyra. On a dull morning he landed at Kingstown, as enthusiastic as a schoolboy on his first sporting trip, and longing to see his beloved island once more.

Mr Briggs only read one newspaper,—a paper once famous throughout the world for its impartial and patriotic news and complete freedom from party taint,—and he had not the remotest idea that the Ireland of 1914 and the Ireland of 1920 were two very different countries. But so simple was the little man's nature that he did not realise the state of the country until he reached a small junction about sixteen miles from Ballybor, and where he had to change.

Here he had some time to wait, and while walking up and down the platform a long-haired wild-eyed stranger sidled up to him and asked if he was Mr Briggs; and on learning that he was, the stranger advised him to return to England at once, as the air on Lough Moyra was very unhealthy at present. This greatly disturbed Mr Briggs, but he determined to take no notice of the mysterious warning, and, taking his seat in the train, began to read his papers again.

Shortly before the train was due to start a small party of British soldiers, under a N.C.O., marched on to the platform, and pro-

ceeded to take their seats in a third-class carriage. At once the engine-driver, fireman, and guard packed up their kits and prepared to leave the station. The stationmaster did his best to induce them to take the train on to Ballybor, but not one yard would they go as long as a British soldier remained in the train; and in the end they marched out of the station, amid the laughter of the soldiers, who continued to keep their seats. The civilian passengers now left the train, and Mr Briggs found himself dumped with all his kit on the platform.

For some time he sat there, feeling sure that in the end the train would start, but after two hours he gave it up, and wired to a garage in Ballybor for a car to be sent to the junction. After a further wait of three hours a car turned up, and late that evening Mr Briggs arrived at the hotel at Ballybor, weary and quite bewildered. He seemed to have wandered into a South American republic instead of into the old and pleasant Ireland.

After breakfast the next morning he determined to call on his old friend the D.I. before leaving for the lake, but he hardly recognised the police barracks, which had been transformed from a homely whitewashed house into a sandbagged and steel-shuttered fort. Here he found that his old friend had retired on pension, and in his stead reigned a young and soldier-like D.I., with a row of orders and war ribbons on his breast. Mr Briggs introduced himself, but found that neither the D.I. nor

the Head Constable had ever heard of either Mr Briggs or his island, but they told him that only the previous day a police lorry had been ambushed on the road to the lake, and advised him to return to England.

However, having got so far, Mr Briggs determined to see his island, come what might; and after a lot of difficulty, and at a very high price, a driver was at last found with sufficient courage to drive him out to the place where Lyden was to meet him.

Lyden was a typical western peasant, and on former visits Mr Briggs had asked no better amusement than to listen to his quaint remarks and stories for hours on end whilst fishing; but, like the rest of the people, he now seemed a different being. During the row out to the island he did not utter a dozen words, and long before they landed on the little stone quay Mr Briggs had ceased to ask the man any questions. After his long absence the island appeared more enchanting than ever, and from the kitchen chimney he could see the blue turf smoke rising in the still summer's air, reminding him of Mrs Lyden's good cooking.

On approaching the house he was startled to hear loud talking and laughter in the dining-room, and on entering found the room full of strangers, eating a hearty meal. At the head of the table sat a soldierly-looking man, who wished Mr Briggs good-day, and asked who the devil he might be.

On first hearing the voices, Mr Briggs had

jumped to the natural conclusion that a fishing party had landed and asked Mrs Lyden to give them something to eat, and he was prepared to welcome them as became a host ; but to be asked who the devil he might be, in his own house, was the last straw of the nightmare, and transformed him from a mild English gentleman into a foaming fury. However, the only effect on the strangers of Mr Briggs' rage was to move them to greater mirth, and as he rushed out of the room he heard one man saying that they must have sent them a lunatic this time.

In the kitchen he found Mrs Lyden in tears, and explanations soon followed. For some time past the island had been used as a Sinn Fein internment camp, and his unbidden guests consisted of a British colonel, two subalterns, a D.I., and a magistrate from a neighbouring county, who had given trouble to the Volunteers by insisting on holding Petty Sessions Courts in opposition to the newly-established Sinn Fein Courts.

Realising that he was a prisoner in his own house, he returned to the dining-room, explained this extraordinary situation to his fellow-prisoners, and then joined them at their meal. When he had finished he went for a stroll with the colonel, who explained matters more fully to him. Most of the prisoners had been on the island for some time, and so far had found no chance of attempting to escape. The colonel himself had been captured whilst salmon-fishing on a river in the south, and

then brought blindfolded at night in a car to Lough Moyra.

On inspecting the boat-house, Mr Briggs found that all his boats had gone, even the one Lyden had rowed him out in, which the colonel told him had been brought over from another island, where their guards lived, and that the guards must have returned in her; further, that they were visited every second day by these guards, who brought them food, for which they had to pay a stiff price.

The colonel had unearthed two packs of patience cards, and the three soldiers, with the D.I. for a fourth, played bridge from after breakfast until they went to bed. In the sitting-room there was a small library of Mr Briggs' favourite books, and these kept the rest of the party from drowning themselves in the lake.

Two days after his arrival, and just as he was thinking about retiring for the night, Lyden came in to say that an officer wished to speak to Mr Briggs outside, and on following Lyden he found a man dressed in a wonderful green uniform waiting at the front door. The officer informed Mr Briggs that he had come to take him to a republican court, which was to be held that night on the mainland, and where the case of the Republic *v.* Briggs would be heard. Mr Briggs had never heard of such a thing as a republican court, but could get no further information from the gentleman in green, and shortly afterwards the party set out in a boat for the mainland.

By the time they landed it was quite dark, and after a walk of about twenty minutes they arrived at a large building, which Mr Briggs recognised as Cloonalla chapel, and here the officer handed him over to a local publican, who told him to follow him into the chapel. Inside there was a large crowd of country people, while at one end was a raised table, at which were seated the three judges—two in civilian attire, and the third in the clothes of a priest.

After his eyes had got accustomed to the poor light of the few oil-lamps, Mr Briggs recognised in the presiding judge the parish priest of a neighbouring parish, and in the other two judges a butcher and a good-for-nothing painter from Ballybor. At the time of his entry a river fishing-rights case was before the court, with a Ballybor solicitor acting for the defendant, while another well-known solicitor from the same town acted as “Republican Prosecutor.”

After a time the case of the Republic *v.* Briggs came on for hearing, and Mr Briggs learnt, to his great astonishment, that they proposed to take his island and fishing rights on Lough Moyra from him compulsorily for the sum of £200, to be paid in Dail Eireann Bonds, whatever they might be, and that he was to be deported to England as soon as convenient. At the end of the case the presiding judge asked Mr Briggs if he had any objection, but he wisely refused to say anything, and shortly afterwards was handed over

to the green officer, who took him back to the island.

A few days after, as Mr Briggs was sitting disconsolately on a rock at the north end of the island, gazing across the lake and wondering if he would ever fish there again, he heard the distant hum of a motor-engine, and in a short time saw a 'plane approaching the island from the south-east. Wild with excitement, he dashed into the house, calling the colonel to come out at once. The colonel got up from the card-table, and on seeing the 'plane quickly collected all the sheets and blankets he could find, and hurriedly spread them out in the form of rough letters, spelling the word "HELP" on the grass in front of the house, and then ran down to the end of the quay, where he waved a sheet frantically over his head.

For what seemed an age to the prisoners, the 'plane took no notice of the colonel's signals; then, to their great joy, the pilot cut off his engine, dropped to about 800 feet, and flew low over the island, turned, flew over the island again, and then made off at full speed in a southerly direction. That night none of the prisoners slept a wink, expecting every minute to hear the sounds of their deliverers' approach.

On the return of the 'plane to the aerodrome a cipher message was at once despatched to Blake, with instructions to investigate the trouble on the island; but, as usual, the message was delayed in the post office, and

received too late to take any action that evening. On inquiry, Blake found that, though formerly two police boats were kept on the lake for the purpose of raiding poteen-makers on the islands, some time ago these boats had been burnt, and there was no means of getting out to the islands.

Early the next morning the police borrowed a motor-launch lying in the river at Ballybor, and with difficulty mounted it on a commandeered lorry. Taking a strong police force with them, Blake and Jones then set out for the lake, deciding to launch the boat at a bay close to Cloonalla chapel. Here the road ran about fifty yards from the lake, but by the aid of rollers they soon got the launch off the lorry and afloat.

Leaving a guard over the cars and lorry, the police then set out for the islands, and all went well until they reached the neck of the bay, which was only about 200 yards wide. Here they came under heavy rifle-fire from the north shore, the attackers being hidden amongst bushes and the ruins of an old cottage.

Unfortunately one of the first shots cut the magneto wire, and the launch at once started to drift helplessly in the wind towards the attackers. While Blake repaired the wire, Jones swept the attackers with a Lewis gun, which quickly smothered their fire, and the wire being soon repaired, the launch got under way again, and made for the open lake at full speed.

Blake had never been on Lough Moyra

before, but had brought with him a sergeant who had often taken part in poteen raids on the islands in former days. On looking at an Ordnance map he found that there were two large islands—one with only a fishing-lodge marked on it, and the other with seven houses shown—and on the sergeant's advice they made for the latter, on the assumption that something must have gone wrong with their boats, and that the people might be short of food.

When within about 400 yards of the island they again came under rifle-fire, and realising that they had called at the wrong house, and that it would be impossible to effect a landing except at a heavy loss, they changed their course and made for the second island; but before they got half-way a boat put out from the first island, and made off in the direction of the far shore.

The launch was fairly fast, and in a very short time they were within 600 yards of the boat, when Blake fired a single shot as a signal to it to stop. In reply the boat opened fire on the launch, but one short burst of Lewis-gun fire quickly brought them to their senses, and the occupants put up their hands.

After disarming these men Blake took their boat in tow, and this time succeeded in reaching Mr Briggs' island safely, where he was astonished to meet the prisoners on the quay, and more especially the D.I., who had been missing for some time, and of whom all hope had been given up. The whole party then set

off for the mainland, found that the guard had successfully beaten off an attack on the cars, and eventually all returned safely to Ballybor with only two constables slightly wounded.

Two days afterwards Mr Briggs embarked on the s.s. *Cockatoo*, bound for England, where he will probably remain until the war in Ireland is over.

IX.

THE REWARD OF LOYALTY.

FOR some time after the death of Anthony Mayne, the murdered R.M., Petty Sessions Courts ceased to be held in Ballybor, and the Sinn Fein Courts reigned supreme. At length Mayne's successor arrived, and endeavoured to start the Courts in his district again, but found that not only were the country people too terrorised to bring any cases before a British Court, but that most of the magistrates had resigned, and none of the few remaining ones would face the bench.

However, Fitzmaurice, the new R.M., stuck to it, and in the end a retired officer, living just outside Ballybor, became a magistrate for the county; and suddenly, to the intense excitement of the whole town, it was given out that some countryman had had the audacity to defy the edict of Dail Eireann, and to summon a neighbour to appear before the British magistrates.

The court-house at Ballybor is a most curious-looking edifice of an unknown style of architecture, shabby and dismal outside

and like a vault inside. On the day that the Court reopened the place was packed to the doors, and when the clerk stood up to announce the Court open, and ending with the words, "God save the King!" the silence could be felt.

It was what is known in the west of Ireland as a "saft day"—a day of heavy drizzling rain and a mild west wind off the Atlantic, and after a time the crowded court-house of countrymen in soaked home-spuns and women with reeking shawls over their heads literally began to steam, and the strong acrid smell of turf smoke from the drying clothes became overpowering. At first all eyes were fixed on the two magistrates sitting on the raised dais at one end of the court-house, and many, remembering poor Mayne's end, wondered how long the two had to live. The R.M., they knew, was well paid by the British Government, but the second magistrate's unpaid loyalty must surely be a form of madness, or most likely he received secret pay from the Government.

After the disposal of cases brought by the police for various offences, the only civil case on the list—in reality the beginning of a trial of strength between Sinn Fein and the British Government—came on for hearing, and in due course the magistrates gave a decision in favour of the complainant, a herd by name Mickey Coleman.

Taking advantage of the suspension of the law, a neighbour, Ned Foley, had thought to

get free grazing, and day after day had deliberately driven his cattle on to Coleman's land. Coleman, having remonstrated repeatedly with Foley in vain, consulted a Ballybor solicitor, who advised him to bring Foley into a Sinn Fein Court, where, he assured him, he would get full justice. This Coleman refused to do, and after consulting a second solicitor, brought the case before the Ballybor Petty Sessions Court.

Coleman appears to have been a man of great determination and courage, as he had been repeatedly warned by the Volunteers that if he persisted in taking Foley into a British Court they would make his life a hell on earth ; and as he left the court after winning his case, a note was slipped into his hand to the effect that the I.R.A. neither forgets nor forgives.

Coleman had started life as a farm labourer, eventually becoming herd to a Loyalist called Vyvian Carew, whose ancestors came over to Ireland in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and who lived alone in a large house about eight miles from Ballybor, where he farmed his own demesne of four hundred Irish acres.

Carew belonged to a class of Irishman fast dying out in the west, and considering that it has always been the policy of every Liberal Government to throw them to the wolves, it is almost beyond belief that any are left in the country. A type of man any country can ill afford to lose, and all countries ought to be proud and glad to gain. After serving throughout the late war in the British Army, Carew

had returned home, hoping to live in peace and quiet for the rest of his days, but had soon been undeceived. Though working himself as hard as any small farmer, and farming his land far better than any other man in the district, it was decided by men who coveted his acres that he possessed too many, and the usual steps in the west were taken to make him give up three of his four hundred acres, and if possible force him to sell out all.

Coleman started with a heavy heart for his cottage in Rossbane, Carew's demesne, and from the moment he left the court-house until he lifted the latch of his door found himself treated as a leper by townsfolk and country people alike. Probably some of the people would have been willing to speak to him, and most likely many admired his pluck, but a man who comes under the curse of the I.R.A. is to be avoided at any costs. No man can tell when that sinister curse, which is often a matter of life and death to a peasant, may be extended to an unwary sympathiser.

In the evening, when going round the cattle, he met his master, who, on being shown the threatening note, at once wanted Coleman to bring his family up to the big house; but he refused, knowing that if he did his cottage would probably be burnt and his own few cattle either stolen or maimed.

Soon after eleven that night there came a loud knock at the door, and Coleman, who had been sitting by the fire expecting a visit, rose up to meet his fate, but was caught by

his terrified wife, who clung to him with the strength of despair. At last Coleman succeeded in opening the door, and to their utter astonishment in walked a British officer, dressed in khaki topcoat, steel helmet, and with a belt and holster. The officer explained that he came from Castleport, that he had a large party of soldiers on the road outside, and that he was going to scour the countryside for rebels that night. Lastly, he said that he had been told Coleman was well disposed, and would he help him by giving information ?

Coleman, who at the sight of a British officer in a steel helmet, when he expected a Volunteer with a black mask, had been overcome with joy, at the mention of that sinister word "information" regained his senses, and answered that he had none to give ; that he was only a poor herd striving to do his work and keep a wife and a long weak family, and that he had nothing to do with politics.

The officer said nothing, but sat down by the fire on a stool and started to play with the children ; presently he returned to the charge again, and asked the herd where the Foleys lived, and if they were Volunteers. The mention of the name of Foley confirmed Coleman in his growing suspicion, and he replied that he knew the Foleys for quiet decent boys, and he believed that they had nothing at all to do with politics.

Shortly afterwards the officer wished them good-night, leaving Coleman and his wife a prey to conflicting emotions. If he really was

a British officer, then at any rate they were safe for that night, but if not, then probably some terrible outrage was brewing. Only a week before the Volunteers had set fire, while the inmates were in bed, to the house of a farmer, who had bought the farm a few days previously at a public auction, contrary to the orders of the I.R.A.; and though the inmates just managed to escape in their night attire, their two horses and a cow were burnt to death, and their charred bodies could still be seen lying amid the ruins from the main road—a warning to all who thought of disobeying the I.R.A.

After the time it would take to walk to the Foleys' house and back there came a second knock, and the officer entered again, pushing one of the young Foleys in front of him with his hands up. "Here's the young blighter," said the officer to Coleman, "and if you will give the necessary information about him, I'll have him shot by my men outside at once."

But Coleman, whose suspicion by now was a certainty, refused to be drawn, and replied that he knew nothing against the Foleys, and that they were quiet respectable neighbours.

For some time the officer tried his best to get Coleman to give evidence against Foley, but at last, finding it was useless, left, taking his prisoner with him.

By now the Colemans were too unhappy to go to bed, and sat round the fire in silence. After an hour there came a third knock, and again the officer appeared; but this time

Coleman could see quite a different expression on his face, and in a brutal voice, not taking the trouble to hide his brogue, he bade the unfortunate herd "get up out of that and come outside."

Coleman followed his tormentor outside, and there found a mob of young men and boys waiting for him, who proceeded to kick him along the road for a mile, when he could go no farther, and fell on the road. They then tied his hands and ankles, and left him in the middle of the road for a police car to run over him. And here he lay all night in the rain.

The next day was market-day in Ballybor, and many of the country people started early in their carts for the town, and though none drove over the herd, yet one and all passed by on the other side.

Luckily, when the herd was nearly gone from cold and exposure, the good Samaritan appeared in the shape of Carew driving to Ballybor, and in a short time he had Coleman back at Rossbane in front of a big turf fire; and after placing him in charge of the cook, brought the herd's family to a cottage in the yard, and then drove into Ballybor to see Blake. But the D.I. had his hands too full to be able to give protection to individuals.

At this time, next to Sinn Fein, the Transport Union was the strongest party in the west, and being composed of landless men, its main object was to gain land for its members by all and every means in its power, with the result that their attention was concentrated

on outing all men with four hundred acres or more in their possession, and next would come the men with three hundred acres, and so on down the scale.

The farmer with forty acres or thereabouts—the best class of small farmer in the west, and if let alone the most law-abiding, as they are numerous and possess something worth holding on to—soon realised where this would lead to, and tried to apply the brakes. They would have succeeded but for their younger sons, who, in the ordinary course of events, would have found good employment in the States, but under present circumstances have to remain at home helping to make small fortunes for their parents. It is this class of young men who, with the shop boys, form the rank and file of the I.R.A., and in the case of the farmers' sons it is the western peasants' usual characteristic of "land hunger" which forms the chief driving power.

At one period it looked as though Sinn Fein and the Transport Union would come to loggerheads; but Sinn Fein proved too strong, and the two became partners to all intents and purposes.

A few days after he had returned from his fruitless visit to Blake, Carew received a letter from the secretary of the local branch of the Transport Union calling upon him to dismiss Coleman, and that if he did not comply at once the Union would call out all his men. Carew ignored the letter and the threat.

The Owenmore river runs through Rossbane,

roughly dividing it into two equal parts, and after a fortnight Carew received a letter from the I.R.A. calling upon him to attend a Sinn Fein Court the following Sunday night at Cloonalla Chapel, and saying that the part of his demesne separated from the house by the river was to be taken from him, and if he wished to claim "compensation" he must attend the "Court." And again Carew ignored the letter.

A week afterwards all his farm hands and servants, with the exception of the cook, Katey Brogan, simply vanished, and Carew found himself with only Katey and Coleman to keep going a large house and a four-hundred-acre farm. Nothing daunted, he took the Colemans into the house, made Mrs Coleman cook and Katey housemaid, whilst Coleman and he determined to carry on with the farming as best they could.

A few days after a little girl brought a message that Katey's father was very ill, and that her mother wished her to go home at once; so Katey left immediately, and the following day Carew rode over to see if he could help the Brogans, knowing that they were miserably poor.

The Brogans lived in a two-roomed hovel on the verge of a bog, and on entering a terrible sight met Carew's eyes. The old man lay dead in one bed, Katey dead in the second bed with a large bullet-hole through her forehead, and the old mother crooning over the fire ashes, stark mad.

He then tried to find out what had happened

from two neighbouring cottages, but in each case the door was slammed in his face with a curse of fear. After wandering about for over an hour he met a small boy, who told him the details of the worst murder the country had yet seen.

It appeared that Katey must have written to the police in Ballybor with reference to the treatment of the Colemans, and that the letter had fallen into the hands of Sinn Fein agents in the post office.

Using old Brogan's illness to decoy Katey home, the murderers waited until midnight, when they knocked at the door. At the time Katey was sitting by the fire making broth for her father, and at once opened the door, to be confronted by eight armed men wearing white masks and black hats, one of whom said, "Come with us." Apparently Katey refused, whereupon they seized her, bound her wrists, and dragged her screaming and struggling to a field some hundred yards from her home.

Here they tried her by court-martial, convicted her, and no time was lost by the assassins in carrying out the death sentence. They then flung her body outside the cottage, where it was found by her mother, whose cries brought old Brogan out of his bed, and between them they managed to carry their murdered daughter in. The shock was too much for the old man, and he died shortly after he returned to bed, which finally turned the old woman's brain.

Then followed weeks of misery. Every night Carew's cattle were driven, his gates taken off

their hinges and flung into the river, trees were cut down, fences smashed, and the showing of a light at any window was the signal for a volley of shots. Life in the trenches on the Western Front was often fearful enough, but to realise the life Carew and his herd led at this time one must remember that they had to carry on week in week out, with no rest billets ever to retire to, apart from the fact that at any moment sudden death in some horrible mutilating form might be their lot.

The first fair at which Carew tried to sell cattle warned him of the futility of attending any more. Sinn Fein "policemen," with green, white, and yellow brassards on their arms, took care that no buyers came near him, while all the corner boys in Ballybor amused themselves by driving his cattle backwards and forwards through the fair until they could hardly move. Directly Carew would make for one set of tormentors, a fresh lot would appear behind his back and take up the chase.

After starting Coleman on his way home with the weary cattle, he went to the grocer he had dealt with for years, meaning to lay in a good stock of provisions. On entering the shop the owner took Carew into a private room, and explained that if he sold one pennyworth of food to him his shop would be burnt over his head that night, and that all the shopkeepers had received the same orders from the I.R.A. Carew then went straight to the police barracks, where the police soon bought all that he required.

It was nearly dark when Carew drew near to his entrance gate, and as his horse started to walk four men darted out from the shadow of the demesne wall, two seizing the horse, while the rest, covering him with shot-guns, ordered him to get out.

Carew had no alternative but to comply, whereupon his captors led him down a lane towards the river, where they were joined by a crowd of men and boys. On reaching the river a violent argument started, one section being for drowning him out of face, while another wished to give him a chance of his life if he would swear to give up his land. In the end they compromised, and two tall men took Carew by the arms and waded out into the river with him until they were over their waists.

The leader then called out to Carew that if he would not agree to surrender all his lands and promise to leave the country they would drown him there and then. In order to gain time Carew pretended to be greatly frightened, and started a whining altercation with the leader on the bank. As he expected, his would-be executioners soon joined in heatedly, so much so that shortly one let go of his arm, and throwing the other off his balance with a quick wrench, Carew dived, and swimming down and across the river under water was soon in safety on the far bank. As soon as the crowd realised that their prisoner had escaped, they opened fire on the river at once, hitting one of the men in the water, where-

upon the wounded man's friends turned on another faction and a free fight ensued.

Once across the river, Carew ran as hard as he could for the house of a friendly farmer living on the main road on the east side of the river, borrowed a bicycle from the man, and set off for Ballybor.

By great good luck, as Carew reached the barracks in Ballybor, he found Blake on the point of setting out on a night expedition with a Crossley load of police. On hearing his story Blake at once agreed to return with him, in the hope that they might be in time to save Rossbane.

In order to surprise the Volunteers, Blake went by the road on the east side of the river, and on reaching Carew's demesne hid the car inside in the shadow of some trees. Carew then swam the river, brought back a boat, and ferried the police across in three parties.

The farm buildings and main yard of Rossbane lie between the house and the river, and on entering the yard the police found Coleman lying insensible and surrounded by his weeping wife and children. Learning from the woman that the Volunteers were on the point of setting fire to the house, the police, led by Blake and Carew, who was armed with rifle and revolver, and by now in a white heat of fury, made for the house in two parties, one under Carew for the front entrance, and the other under Blake for the back.

The last thing the Volunteers expected was a brutal assault by the police, and after eating

and drinking all they could find and looting what happened to take their fancy, they had just sprayed petrol over the hall and set it on fire when the police entered.

It is not often that the R.I.C. have the pleasure of coming to grips with the elusive I.R.A., but when they do they put paid in capital letters to the accounts of their murdered comrades, men shot in cold blood in their homes, or dragged unarmed out of trains and butchered like cattle.

The R.I.C. are probably one of the finest fighting forces to be found in a continent where, at the present day, practically every man is trained to arms, and most people have seen the fight cornered rats will put up.

The main hall of Rossbane was in the centre of the house, and after setting fire to it the Volunteers had started to leave, some by the front door and others through the kitchen, with the result that they ran into the arms of the police, who did not waste time with futile shouts of "hands up," but proceeded at once to business.

At first they fought in darkness; but soon the flames gathered strength, and their glow silhouetted the forms of the Volunteers, giving the police as good targets as man could wish for.

In a short time the Volunteers broke; some rushed upstairs never to be seen alive again, while others fled into the drawing-room which opened off the hall, only to find escape cut off by heavy barred shutters. By now the centre of the house was burning fiercely, and all the

police had to do to complete the rout was to wait outside the two exits and let the flames act the part of ferrets. Ten minutes more saw the end, and with it the few Volunteers who escaped with their lives, handcuffed together in a miserable group in the big yard, covered by two Black and Tans. And when the captain of the Rossbane Company of the I.R.A. revised his company roll, his pen must have been busy with "gone to America" after many names.

Dawn broke on a sight worthy of modern Russia, on the smouldering ruins of the fine old house, on the wretched groups of singed and blackened Volunteers, and on the group of still weeping Colemans huddled in a corner of the yard as far from the fire of the Volunteers as they could get.

Carew, still undaunted, though wounded in a leg and shoulder and soaked to the skin for hours, wished to stay on in the cottage in the yard; but as soon as the fight was over, Blake had sent half his force back to Ballybor in the Crossley to bring out more transport, and the argument was settled by the arrival of two Crossleys and three Fords, in which Blake returned to barracks, taking Carew and the Colemans with him as well as the prisoners. It was impossible to leave any police at Rossbane; the wounded had to be attended to, and Blake rightly guessed that the Volunteers had had a dose that night which would keep them quiet for some time to come.

Carew's wounds were only slight, and the

following day he was determined to return to Rossbane. Poor Coleman had no option but to go with his master, having no money, a family to provide for, and knowing full well that he might as well ask for the crown of England as seek employment elsewhere in the west, while emigration to the States was out of the question.

Blake was now in an awkward dilemma. Unable to give Carew protection, he feared that if he returned the chances were that both he and the herd would be murdered. However, Carew was determined to go, so Blake gave out on the quiet that if anything happened to either of them the Auxiliaries would be called in, and let him go.

For some time Carew lived in peace. The fight at the burning of Rossbane had put the fear of God into the local Volunteers, and most of them would as soon have faced a Lewis gun as face Carew in a fighting mad temper, while the threat of the Auxiliaries stayed the hands of the "shoot him from behind a wall brigade."

At length Carew went up to Dublin to find out about the payment of his malicious injury claim for the burning of Rossbane, and on his return was met at Ballybor Station by Blake with the news that some I.R.A. flying column had beaten Coleman to death and burnt all the outbuildings at Rossbane, not leaving a wall standing.

Carew wished now to put up a wooden hut at Rossbane and endeavour to carry on alone ;

but Blake refused to let him go, and in the end he was persuaded, greatly against his will, to sell his lands by public auction.

The auction took place in Ballybor, the lands being divided into lots of a suitable size to suit small farmers; but the auctioneers did not receive a single bid—the I.R.A. saw to that.

Carew now determined to leave his lands waste, his home in ruins, and as soon as he received the money for his malicious injury claim, to go to British East Africa, there to await the return of better days in Ireland, when he intends to return and rebuild the home of his fathers. Will they ever come?

X.

POTEEN.

THERE are very few industries in the west of Ireland, and of these by far the most lucrative is the distillation of illicit whisky, or, as it is generally called by the peasants, poteen.

The average countryman would far rather make a fiver by sticking a stranger with a horse than £100 by hard honest work. Add an element of danger, and he is quite content. The making of poteen combines much profit with little labour and a good element of danger, in that the distiller may be caught by the police and heavily fined.

The beginning of poteen is lost in the mist of past ages, and the end will probably synchronise with the end of Ireland; the amount made varies with the demand, and the demand fluctuates with the price and supply of whisky.

During 1919, when whisky became weak, dear, and scarce, and the police for a time practically ceased to function, the call for poteen became so great that the demand far exceeded the supply, and for many months the whisky sold in the majority of public-

houses throughout the west was made up of a mixture of three-quarters poteen and a quarter whisky.

At the beginning of the last century all poteen was made from malt in the same way as whisky is made, until some thoughtful man argued that if they could make beer from sugar in England, we could surely make poteen from the same material in Ireland; and as any one buying malt or growing barley was liable to attract the eye of the R.I.C., all poteen ceased to be made from malt, and the far simpler method of distilling from "treacle" continues to this day. Treacle is largely imported in barrels to Ireland, ostensibly for the purpose of fattening cattle and pigs.

In the early part of 1919 a young Welshman, David Evans, was demobilised with a good gratuity, and being a keen fisherman, determined he would have one good summer's salmon-fishing in Scotland before settling down to work. But Evans was not the only man looking out for salmon-fishing in Scotland, and he soon realised that that country was out of the question.

During the war Evans had served at one time in the same division with Blake, and thinking that the latter might know of some good salmon-fishing at a moderate rent, he wrote to him. By return of post came an answer from Blake, saying that, owing to the bad state of the country, very few Englishmen had taken fishings in Ireland that season, and that there was a very good stretch of the

Owenmore river, about ten miles above Ballybor, to let at a moderate rent.

Evans at once wired asking Blake to take the fishing for him, and ten days afterwards took up his quarters at Carra Lodge, a small fishing lodge on the bank of the river.

Ireland has probably benefited more than any other country in Europe by the war, and not least by the submarine scourge, which not only raised the prices of cattle and pigs beyond the dreams of avarice, but also increased the number of salmon in Irish rivers to an extent unknown within the memory of man. Before the war salmon and sea-trout in many western rivers were rapidly becoming exterminated through the great increase of drift-nets at sea ; but directly the first German submarine was reported to have been seen off the west coast not a fisherman would leave land, with the result that the fish had free ingress to their native rivers, and the numbers of spawning fish were greatly increased.

Evans had great sport, thoroughly enjoyed himself, and found the peasants quite the most charming and amusing people he had ever met. No matter what sort of house he entered, he was received like a prince and bid ten thousand welcomes ; a carefully dusted chair would be placed by the fireside for " his honour," and a large jar of poteen produced from under the bed.

Towards the end of his time at Carra Lodge, Evans came to the conclusion that, if he could only discover some way of making a decent

income, he would settle down in the west of Ireland; but the question of how to make money puzzled him greatly. Farming did not appeal to him, and beyond that there did not appear to be any other industry open to an enterprising young man, and any profession was ruled out owing to the long period of training required.

Before the war Evans had worked for a short time in a distillery, and had a good idea of how to make whisky and of malting; but to start a distillery in the Ballybor district was out of the question, owing to the smallness of his capital. But if he could not make whisky, he could make poteen with a very small outlay.

On making inquiries, he found that the possibilities of the idea were enormous; the outlay was small, the returns great, but the risks were also great. Yet if detection could be avoided, the returns would only be limited by the amount of treacle and malt available.

At this period the country people were full of money, and as whisky was almost unattainable, they were prepared to pay a very high price for poteen, and the distilleries were rapidly making fortunes. Still there was considerable danger attached to the trade. The police, though hardly ever seen outside their barracks except in large numbers, occasionally carried out extensive poteen raids, and as it was nearly an impossibility to find a house without poteen in it, they never returned empty-handed.

Having decided to go into the poteen trade, the next question was where to make it. To start distilling in a small way in a small house merely meant certain discovery after making small profits, and Evans knew that once he was caught red-handed by the police the game would be up.

During bad times in any country, when the honest but timid men go to the wall, the unscrupulous but bold men come into their own, and often make a fortune by means which in quieter times would be out of the question. Evans belonged to the latter class.

Towards the end of 1919 the peasants started to burn unoccupied country-houses throughout the south and west. Doubtless they were often burnt by wild young men without rhyme or reason, but also probably with the idea of making it impossible for the owners to return to their homes, and so force them to sell their demesne lands to the very people who had burnt their houses.

A few miles from Carra Lodge, at the foot of the mountains, stood one of the largest houses in Connaught, Ardcumber House, the family seat of one of the oldest Elizabethan families in Ireland, and probably the finest sporting demesne in the west. The great house, full of Sheraton and Chippendale furniture, commanded wonderful views of mountains and moors; while in front runs the Owenmore river, famous for its salmon fishing, through a valley which in winter time can show more snipe, duck, geese, and wild game

of all sorts than any other valley of its size in the British Isles.

One would have thought that the above sporting attractions would have satisfied any man; but the owner was one of those queer Irishmen who preferred any country to his own, and divided his time between London and Continental watering-places, leaving the management of his estates to an agent, who lived in Ballybor.

When reading the 'Field' one evening, Evans came across an advertisement of Ardcumber House to let to a careful tenant at a nominal rent. Realising that the agent feared the house would be burnt if left empty, he drove into Ballybor the following day, took Blake with him to interview the agent, and drove home with a lease of Ardcumber House in his pocket, at a rent which the sale of game and salmon would cover twice over.

The best of the fishing being now over, Evans crossed to England, nominally to collect his kit, in reality to have a large still made, which he had packed in large cases, labelled furniture, and brought over by long sea to Ballybor. At the same time he arranged with a sugar agent in England to ship treacle in paraffin barrels to Ballyrick and Ballybor as he required it.

When at home in Wales he induced a cousin, John Evans, to join him, and the two set out for Ireland. In Dublin they purchased a Ford truck, which they had fitted up as a shooting waggonette with a hood like a box-

car, and in this, after obtaining the necessary police permit through Blake, they drove straight down to the west, and took up their quarters at Ardculmer.

They found the house in charge of an old woman, who lived in one of the gate lodges, and arranged with her to cook for them and look after the few rooms they used, allowing her to go home every evening at six o'clock.

At the top of the house they found six large rooms shut off from the rest of the house by a heavy door at the head of the stairs. Here they erected the still, using a fireplace as a flue; in a second room they erected wooden fomenting vessels, and in a third stored the treacle and poteen. In order to obtain a supply of water they fitted a pipe to the main water-supply tank, which was in the roof above the attics.

They now settled down to a regular routine of shooting by day and distilling for a greater part of the night, living entirely to themselves. Once a week they drove into Ballybor in the Ford to obtain provisions.

Whenever they learnt that a consignment of treacle had reached Ballybor or Ballyrick, they at once removed it in the Ford, stored it in the stables, which they kept carefully locked, and carried the treacle in large pails at night-time to the fermenting vessels in the attics.

At this time, so occupied were the police with looking after themselves, and the country people with keeping clear of the R.I.C. and the

Volunteers, that nobody gave a thought to the "two queer foreigners above in the big house" who were mad on shooting.

As soon as they had accumulated a good supply of poteen (the Irish peasant has no fancy ideas about allowing poteen to mature, and will as soon drink it hot from the still as not), they began to think of how to dispose of it without calling unnecessary attention to themselves. In the end they decided not to try distributing the poteen themselves, but to find a reliable agent who had a good knowledge of the locality.

Even when he was very poor indeed the western peasant always insisted on having the best of tea, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that he insisted on paying a high price. At one time, so great were the profits on tea, that merchants used to send carts through the country districts selling nothing but tea, called by the country people "tay carts."

David Evans found out that the principal tea merchant for the Ballybor district—in fact, for many miles round—was a grocer called Terence O'Dowd, who kept a large shop in Ballybor, and had a branch in Ballyrick. Hearing that O'Dowd was fond of coursing, Evans called at his shop, and after buying a quantity of provisions, invited the man to bring his hounds out to Ardcumber the following Sunday for some coursing.

After the coursing they took O'Dowd into their confidence, showed him the distillery

and arranged that he should act as their agent. This part was simple, but the difficulty was how, when, and where to deliver the goods to O'Dowd. If the "tay carts" came to Ard-cumber, or the distillery Ford went to O'Dowd's continually, suspicion would be aroused. After a long discussion they decided on a plan of action.

Once a week, when Evans drove into Ballybor for provisions, he was to fill up the Ford with poteen and leave the car in a shed in O'Dowd's yard, where the poteen could be transferred to O'Dowd's cellars and the car loaded up with empties. O'Dowd wanted to use earthenware jars, but Evans decided on two-gallon petrol tins as being less likely to excite suspicion.

For a considerable time the plan worked well. Evans took a full load weekly to O'Dowd's, whose tea carts distributed the poteen far and wide throughout the district.

One morning Blake, who had spent a busy night raiding in the district for arms and poteen stills, called in at Ard-cumber on his way home and had breakfast with the Evans. During the conversation he mentioned casually that the country was flooded with poteen, and that they had failed to find out where it was being made, but that they suspected it was being delivered in tea carts from Ballybor.

As soon as Blake had gone David drove off into Ballybor, settled up his accounts with O'Dowd, who was only too thankful to be rid

of the job in time, and before he left for home had arranged with an egg merchant called Michael Flanagan, who sent lorries out to all the villages for miles around collecting eggs, to take over the agency, the petrol tins to be hidden in the straw of the empty egg-crates.

The police appear to have had no suspicion of Evans, and the probabilities are that the Ardcumber distillery would have worked on indefinitely but for interference from a quite unsuspected quarter. The Sinn Fein leaders of the district began to grow uneasy at the effects of the apparently unlimited supply of poteen on the discipline of the Volunteers, and determined to put down the industry.

Any men who were now found with stills in their possession by the Sinn Fein police were paraded before the congregation outside the chapels after Mass on Sunday morning, the stills broken up with hammers, the owners heavily fined, and then let go with a warning of much severer penalties if they were found guilty of the same offence again.

Afterwards Evans and Flanagan received summonses to appear on a named date before a Sinn Fein Court. Flanagan went and was heavily fined, but Evans took no notice of the summons.

Flanagan was now, of course, afraid to act as agent, and the question again arose of how they were to get the poteen to the different buyers. While matters were in this state Flanagan sent a warning to Evans that the Volunteers would raid Ardcumber on a certain

night, and that the results would be very unpleasant for them.

The situation was now serious. It was impossible for two men to defend such a large house, and once inside, the Volunteers, apart from the fact that they would probably shoot them, would certainly break up the distillery, and the rapid increase of their bank balances would cease.

That evening they received a letter stating that they had been banished from Ireland by an order of the Sinn Fein Court, and giving them two days in which to leave the country. The same night, after dark, a volley of shots was fired through the window of every room showing a light, and the following morning they had to cook their own breakfast, as the old woman did not turn up.

But David Evans was not beaten yet. After breakfast he motored into Ballybor, where he waited until it was dark. He then went to the barracks, and told Blake that the Volunteers had threatened to raid Ardcumber the following night for arms, and suggested that the police should ambush the Volunteers in the grounds.

Blake, only too glad to help a friend, and eager to get the Volunteers together in the open, consented, and before Evans left the two had thought out a very pretty trap.

It has been mentioned that Ardcumber stood at the foot of a range of mountains, which isolated the Ballybor country on the east, and across them for many miles there was only

one track, which led down to the back of the demesne, and which was never used except by country people bringing turf in creels on donkeys from the mountain bogs during the day-time.

Blake proposed to start out the following afternoon with a good force, cross the mountains by the main road, which ran through a pass due east of Ballybor, and return by the mountain track, reaching Ardcumber demesne soon after dark. Here David Evans was to meet them and guide them to the scene of the ambush. The district between the demesne and the mountains was thinly populated, and at that hour no one would be abroad for fear of the Black and Tans. The attackers would be certain to come from the opposite direction, and would not be likely to arrive before the moon rose at 11 P.M.

The police, with a party of Cadets and two Lewis guns, were in position by 9 P.M. in a shrubbery on each side of the avenue, about a hundred yards from the house. At 11.30 P.M. the Volunteers, sure of their prey, marched up the avenue in column of route, singing the "Soldiers' Song." When they were within forty yards Blake called on them to halt, lay down their arms, and put up their hands.

The column halted at once, and for a second appeared to waver, but an officer gave the order to deploy. Before the column could break up both Lewis guns opened fire.

Unfortunately at this moment a dark cloud obscured the moon and heavy rain began to

fall, with the result that, after the first short burst of fire, the Volunteers were invisible; and though the police started in pursuit, they failed to overtake the flying rebels, and had to concentrate on the house.

After collecting and rendering first-aid to the wounded—there were none killed—the police brought their cars up to the house, and shortly afterwards returned to Ballybor.

The Evanses were now fairly safe from the Volunteers, but again the question of distributing the poteen arose, and this time it looked as though they would have to do it themselves. They tried to induce Flanagan to come on again; but the egg merchant was by now thoroughly frightened, and thankful to get off with a heavy fine. O'Dowd, being a police suspect, was out of the question, but there still remained His Majesty's mails.

The story of how the Evanses had played the police off against the Volunteers was soon the talk of the countryside for many a mile, and so queer and uncertain is the Irish peasant's mentality that, where one would have expected them to be furious and determined to be avenged, on the contrary their great sense of humour was immensely tickled at the idea of the police defending the Ardcumber distillery, and the Evanses became popular heroes.

After the Volunteer attack, Blake, being afraid that they might make another attempt to capture the arms in Ardcumber House, offered David a party of Black and Tans for protection, but this offer was refused.

For some time His Majesty's mail cars carried the Ardcumber poteen punctually and efficiently — in fact, far better than either O'Dowd or Flanagan had done. Petrol tins were still used to put the poteen in, and Evans would leave the full tins at a garage twice a week, where the mail cars got their petrol from, and if a mail car carried a few extra tins of petrol, who thought anything about it?

Unfortunately the mail contract for that district ran out a few months afterwards, and this time was given to a man from the north, an Orangeman, and once again Evans had to find a fresh way of sending round the country his now famous poteen.

But so popular had the Evanses become that, instead of having to seek agents, they received offers to deliver the poteen from the manager of a creamery in the Cloonalla district, and also from the manager of a Co-operative Society in a village distant about four miles from Ardcumber. Evans closed with both offers, and the cousins redoubled their efforts to turn out all the poteen they possibly could, knowing that an end must come sooner or later.

Two months afterwards the Auxiliaries discovered that the creamery was being used as a Sinn Fein prison, and, as a result, raided the place one night and burnt it to the ground. Incidentally, they found several full petrol tins in the manager's office, filled up their petrol tanks with them, and could not make out why the cars would not start.

It is both possible and probable that, except for some unforeseen accident, the Evanses might have gone on making and selling poteen for an indefinite time—in fact, as long as the country remained in the present state of chaos. The distillation of poteen always has and always will appeal to the western peasant, and the story of how the Evanses called in the police to defend their still against the attack of the Volunteers will be told over the firesides of many a cottage for generations to come—long after Sinn Fein is dead and buried.

But at last their good luck deserted them. One night while working at the still, John carelessly knocked over an oil-lamp, and in a moment the old dry woodwork of the attic was in flames. Before morning the grand old house, with its great collection of priceless furniture, was a smouldering ruin, nothing but the bare blackened walls standing, and so it is likely to remain for all time.

The Evanses, having made a considerable sum of money by now, said good-bye to Blake, and returned to their native land.

XI.

THE MAYOR'S CONSCIENCE.

IN the spring of 1920 Blake suddenly received orders to proceed to a town in the south of Ireland on special duty, and on applying for leave was granted a fortnight, which he determined to spend in Dublin. In due course his relief arrived, and after handing over he found himself free from all responsibility for the first time for many months.

At this period the Government and the Irish railwaymen were enacting a comic opera worthy of Gilbert and Sullivan at their best, the Government paying the railway companies a huge subsidy, the greater part of which found its way into the railwaymen's pockets in the form of enormous wages, while the men refused to carry any armed forces of the Crown; and the public, who, of course, indirectly paid the subsidy, looked on helplessly.

In order to get a passenger train Blake had to motor thirty-two miles to a station in the next county, where, as yet, no armed forces had tried to travel. While waiting here a green country boy asked him some trivial question,

and with little difficulty Blake led him on to tell his whole history.

In spite of a Sinn Fein edict to the contrary, many young men, who could find no work in Ireland, or who wished to avoid service in the I.R.A., were at this time contriving to emigrate to the States by crossing to England and sailing from Southampton. In order to defeat this, Sinn Fein agents were in the habit of frequenting the termini in Dublin for the purpose of getting in touch with these would-be emigrants and forcing them to return home.

This youth, who came from the Ballyrick district, and had never been in a train in his life, told Blake that a brother in the States had sent him his passage, and that he was due to sail from Southampton in a few days' time, but had to go to the American Consul in Dublin in order that his passport might be viséd, and asked Blake where the consul's office was.

Blake warned him not to tell any one he met on his journey that he was going to America, or he would surely fall into the hands of the Sinn Fein police, and thought no more about the matter.

When the train reached a junction after about an hour and a half's run, there was considerable delay while a large party of Auxiliary Cadets searched the train, and eventually arrested a police sergeant, whom they removed after a desperate struggle to a waiting motor. Blake was reading at the time, and did not think anything was wrong until he saw the

sergeant being dragged out of the station. It then occurred to him that, though he thought he knew every Cadet in the west by sight, yet he failed to recognise any of the search-party. However, it was useless to interfere, as he was alone and unarmed.

Blake stayed at a hotel near Stephen's Green, and for the first part of the night, so silent and empty were the streets, that Dublin might have been a city of the dead. However, about 2 A.M., a miniature battle broke out in some near quarter, and for hours rifle-fire and the explosions of bombs continued, varied at times by bursts of machine-gun fire.

The following morning after breakfast he set out to see a high official in the Castle, a friend of his father's, and also to report at the R.I.C. Headquarters there. While walking along Grafton Street shots suddenly rang out at each end, and at once the crowd tried to escape down several by-streets, only to be held up by the Cadets at every point; and it was not until two hours afterwards, when the Cadets had satisfied themselves that the men they wanted were not there, that Blake was free to proceed to the Castle.

The streets appeared much the same as usual, but the Castle was greatly changed from peace times. The entrance gates were heavily barred; barbed wire, steel shutters, and sand-bags in evidence everywhere. Outside, a strong party of Dublin Metropolitan Police and Military Foot Police. Inside, a strong guard of infantry in steel helmets, while a tank and

two armoured cars were standing by ready to go into action.

As nobody was allowed to enter the Castle without a pass, Blake had to get a friend from the headquarters of the R.I.C. to identify him before he could gain admission, and he learnt from his friend that the party of Auxiliaries he had seen the previous day arresting the police sergeant at the junction were in reality a flying column of Volunteers, who had managed to smuggle the Cadets' uniforms into the country from England.

Blake found that most of the officials in the Castle were virtually prisoners there, and in order to keep their figures down had improvised a gravel tennis-court and also a squash racket-court.

When training at the depot in Dublin, Blake had made the acquaintance of a Colonel Mahoney, who had retired and lived near Kingstown with his only daughter, and his chief object in going to Dublin was to see Miss Mahoney again. After leaving the Castle he met her by appointment, and after they had lunched and been to a picture-house, they left by tram to be back in time for tea with the Colonel. After the tram started Blake found that he had an hour to spare, and got out at Ballsbridge to see a friend, while Miss Mahoney went on alone.

On reaching the Mahoneys' house Blake learnt that, when Miss Mahoney got out at Kingstown, she had been followed by four young men, who had demanded the name of

the man she had travelled in the tram with, and on her refusing to disclose Blake's name, they had knocked her down with the butts of their revolvers, and left her there partially stunned.

The following day, when on her way to meet Blake again in Dublin, her tram was held up by Auxiliaries, and all the men on it carefully searched for arms; but before the Cadets boarded the tram, Miss Mahoney saw several young men pass their revolvers to girls sitting next to them, with the result that the Auxiliaries found no arms. On leaving the tram at the end of Kildare Street, the pockets of her coat feeling unusually heavy, she put her hands into them and found a revolver in each. At the same moment two men overtook her and demanded their arms.

When he had been in Dublin four days Blake had to go to Broadstone Station to inquire about a kit-bag which had been lost on the journey to Dublin. He reached the station about a quarter of an hour before the departure of the train for the west, and passing a group of young men on the platform, recognised amongst them the youth who had asked him where to find the American consul.

There were no police within sight, and it was useless to interfere single-handed, but without doubt the talkative youth had fallen into the hands of the Sinn Féin Police, who were returning him to his home minus his passage-money: the group consisted of four dejected-looking youths and three rough-looking men, obviously in charge of the others.

When his leave was up Blake left for the south by an express train, changing at a junction after about two hours' run. Here, just as the train was on the point of starting, an armed party of the Royal Fencibles under a subaltern marched on to the platform and took their seats in several different third-class carriages, the officer getting into Blake's carriage. There was a considerable delay, and Blake expected that, as usual, the guard and driver would refuse to carry armed soldiers, but to his surprise the train started without any incident.

After an hour's run, the train pulled up with a sudden jerk in a cutting just outside a station, and as the subaltern put his head out of the window to ascertain the cause, the train was raked from end to end by heavy rifle-fire, and the young subaltern collapsed on top of Blake, his head shattered by a dum-dum bullet.

Blake threw himself flat on the floor of the carriage until the fire from the top of the cutting slackened owing to a Lewis gun opening fire from one of the carriages near the engine. Taking the dead boy's revolver, he then jumped on to the line, and made his way towards the forward carriages, where the soldiers had opened fire with their rifles.

Here he found a gallant Lewis gunner, badly wounded in an arm and leg, firing his gun as fast as he could mount the magazines, and so preventing the Volunteers from leaving their cover at the top of the bank and attacking at close quarters.

So hot was the Lewis gunner's fire that after five minutes the Volunteers broke off the action and simply vanished. Blake then turned his attention to the wounded civilians, and though he had grown indifferent to dreadful sights through years of war, the awful condition of the dead and wounded in that train made him physically sick.

The majority of the wounds were from flat-nosed bullets, with the most terrible results. In one carriage lay a young woman in a pool of blood, her chest literally blown away by one of these devilish bullets. In another, a middle-aged man was screaming like a mad wild animal, his arm and shoulder shattered, and at his feet lay an old countrywoman, the top of her head blown off.

Very few of the soldiers had been wounded, and under Blake's command they at once started off in pursuit, only to catch a glimpse of the Volunteers disappearing down a road on bicycles.

After a long delay the train went on, and in order to try and forget the awful scenes he had just witnessed, Blake endeavoured to read two English papers. The first paper, in a long leading article, called for a policy of conciliation in Ireland, while the second (a threepenny edition of the first) recounted at great length a speech made the previous day by a famous legal politician calling loudly upon the Government to withdraw all troops from Ireland, and demanding that the R.I.C. and Auxiliary Cadets should be severely dealt with for their brutal

reprisals on innocent people, but never a word about the savage attacks on these same R.I.C. and Cadets by these "innocent people," or a single thought for the widows and orphans of the murdered policemen. In disgust he threw both papers out of the carriage windows, and consigned all politicians to the bottomless pit.

On arriving at Esker, Blake found that his chief duty was to act as liaison officer between the military and police, and that he would be attached to the staff of the G.O.C. of the district.

He quickly realised that the bad reports of the state of the south had not been exaggerated, and that it was in a far worse state than the west. Ambushes of police and military, attacks on trains, shootings of unarmed soldiers and police in the streets at all hours of the day and night, the finding of dead men riddled with bullets in every kind of place, from an open field to an empty house, and the robbery of mails occurred daily with monotonous regularity; and so accustomed had people of all classes become to this saturnalia of crime, that they thought no more about the murder of a human being than the usual man thinks of killing a rat.

Blake's principal work consisted of investigating these crimes in company with police and soldiers, and afterwards in making out a report for the General. In addition, he accompanied the General when making tours through the district.

One morning they received news of a terrible

ambush of Cadets, and on arriving at the scene of the ambush Blake found the dead bodies of the Cadets still lying on the road. All their equipment and personal effects had been stolen, and their faces smashed in with an axe. Probably in several cases this barbarous mutilation had been committed before the unfortunate Cadets were dead.

Two days afterwards the bodies of the murdered Cadets passed through Esker *en route* for England. All shops were closed, and great crowds collected in the streets. Blake was greatly struck by the different attitudes of sections of the crowd, some taking their hats off with every mark of reverence and sympathy when the coffins passed, while others kept their hats on until ordered by the officers to uncover, and many showed plainly by their faces that they were in full sympathy with the murderers.

Conditions in the south were now rapidly drifting into a war of extermination, and every morning brought fresh reports of men shot the previous night, either in bed before the eyes of their relations, or else against a wall outside their homes.

One evening word came to headquarters through the secret service that a baker in an outlying village was to be shot that night. It appeared that the baker, a moderate Sinn Feiner, had been chosen by the Inner Circle to take part in one of their nightly "executions," and had refused. So the edict had gone forth that if the baker would not commit murder, he should be murdered himself.

The General at once sent Blake with a party of soldiers to try and save the baker's life, but, missing their way in the dark, they arrived a few minutes too late. They found the unfortunate man lying on his bed shot through the head, while the only occupant of the house, the murdered man's sister, sat white-faced by the bedside moaning and wringing her hands.

They could get nothing out of the sister, except that a party of armed and masked men, in "trench coats" as ever, had suddenly burst into the house and insisted that her brother should accompany them for some unknown purpose, and that he had refused. For a time they argued with him, until another man rushed into the house, calling out to them to be quick as the soldiers were near. Whereupon they shot the baker as he lay in bed, with the sister looking on, and then left the house hurriedly.

There seemed nothing to be done, and Blake was on the point of leaving when his eye caught a piece of white paper under the bed, which turned out to be the baker's death-warrant for treason, signed by the C.M.A. of the I.R.A.

On his return Blake handed the death-warrant to the Intelligence people, who returned it shortly, saying that they could make nothing of it. After showing it to the General, Blake put the warrant away, and thought no more about it.

Some weeks afterwards, owing to the shooting of soldiers and police in the streets after

dark, the curfew was advanced an hour. As a result, the number of curfew prisoners greatly increased—so much so on the first night that there was no room in the usual detention quarters, and the officer of the guard was obliged to use an empty office for the overflow.

While the General was working in his office after dinner, the officer of the guard brought a note from the Mayor of the town, who, he explained, had been found on the streets after curfew hour by a patrol, and was now a prisoner in the office below. The note requested a personal interview with the G.O.C., and stated that the matter was of the highest importance. The General passed the note to Blake, who was puzzled by the familiarity of the writing, but unable to remember where he had seen it before.

After some hesitation the General decided to see the Mayor, who was brought in by the officer of the guard, and left alone with the General and Blake. After beating about the bush for some time, the Mayor asked that he might be kept under arrest and, if possible, deported by sea to England, as he was in great danger of assassination, but would give no reason for the danger, only stating that he had received threatening letters.

The General explained that under no circumstances would he allow the Mayor to be detained under arrest or deported, unless he could show sufficient reasons. The Mayor replied that he considered the threatening

letters an ample justification for his request ; he had not brought the letters with him, but that if allowed to go home with a guard he would fetch them. But the General, being determined to get all the information he could out of the man, and knowing that once he had granted his request it would be impossible to get anything out of him, refused.

By now Blake had identified the Mayor's handwriting with the writing on the baker's death-warrant, and getting out the latter, placed the two papers in front of the General, who at once taxed the Mayor with being the head of the Inner Circle in Esker. This he denied, but on being confronted with the two papers, broke down and made a complete confession.

It appeared that for a long time past he had been the leader of Sinn Fein in that district, and though himself a moderate man, he had been unable to control the wild men, who had forced him, as head of the Inner Circle, to sign the death-warrants of the men condemned to be "executed," or, in other words, the men they wished out of the way. After a time, being a very religious man, his conscience had rebelled against wholesale murder, and he had refused to sign any more death-warrants.

Whereupon the wild men, being afraid that the Mayor might give them away, had signed his death-warrant themselves, and that very morning he had received by post a warning to prepare for death.

The General was now quite satisfied to order

his arrest and deportation forthwith ; but the Mayor asked that he should be allowed to go home to say good-bye to his family, and that he might be arrested in his own house at some early hour in the morning. It was now nearly midnight, and the General, after granting his request, arranged that a patrol should arrest him at 4 A.M.

At 4 A.M. to the minute Blake drove up to the Mayor's house in a lorry with an officer and fifteen men, but at once saw that something was wrong. Instead of the house being in complete darkness, most of the windows were lit up, and the loud wails of women could be heard in an upstairs room.

Leaving the officer to post sentries at the front and back of the house, Blake knocked at the door, which was opened after some delay by a woman, who, on seeing a police officer, tried to slam the door in his face. Blake, however, managed to slip into the hall, and asked the woman what was wrong, but she ran upstairs, calling out to some one above that the police had returned.

On the first landing the woman was joined by another woman and a man, and after a lot of trouble Blake at last got out of them that an hour previously a party of tall men in black mackintoshes, with soft hats pulled over their eyes, had gained admittance to the house, and made their way straight to the Mayor's bedroom, where they found him kneeling down by his bed praying. After pushing the Mayor's wife out of the room they shot

him, threw his body on the bed, and rushed out of the house.

Blake asked to be shown the Mayor's body, and the man led him to a bedroom at the back and opened the door. After making certain that the dead man was the Mayor, Blake left and drove straight back to the General.

That day the town was seething with excitement, and it was openly stated by many men that the Mayor had been murdered by the police.

Shortly afterwards a public inquiry was held, and it was clearly proved that every policeman in the town could be satisfactorily accounted for during the night of the murder, and, moreover, that every round of rifle and revolver ammunition could also be accounted for. However, this did not suit the Sinn Feiners, and a verdict of "guilty" was brought in against the authorities, though there can be no possible doubt in any unbiassed mind that the Mayor of Esker was murdered either by, or by the orders of, the Inner Circle.

When he went home, after his interview with the G.O.C., the natural assumption was that he had been giving information, and the Inner Circle determined that he should give no more. Whether they knew that he was to be arrested and deported at 4 A.M., and deliberately forestalled the arrest, or whether they merely knew that he was at headquarters, and were waiting to murder him on the first favourable opportunity, is not clear, and does not affect the question of the guilt of the murder.

XII.

A BRUTAL MURDER.

THE childlike trust which so many Englishmen have in their institutions is a source of never-ending wonder to Irishmen, more especially the Englishman's blind faith in the integrity of the Post Office in both countries. Long after Sinn Fein had made the Irish Post Office its chief source of information, the Government and public continued happily and blindly to confide their confidential correspondence to the tender mercies of the King's enemies, and at the same time expressed their bewildered astonishment at the uncanny amount of information that the Sinn Fein Secret Service was able to obtain.

It is highly doubtful if Blake would ever have even thought of obtaining information from the mail bags, if a young subaltern, who commanded a platoon of the Blankshires temporarily stationed in the Ballybor Police Barracks, had not made the suggestion one night at dinner, and had even offered to carry out the operation himself if Blake had any official qualms. At first Blake refused, knowing that

the authorities did not approve of tampering with the public's private letters; but being desperately hard up for certain information he gave in, and it was arranged that Jones, the subaltern, should carry out the search.

A cross-country letter in the west of Ireland will often take nowadays any time from three to five days to arrive at a town only twenty miles away, and of the chief reasons of this delay one is that the mails often lie for twelve to twenty-four hours in a head post office before being sent out to rural sub-offices for distribution, or in a railway van at some junction awaiting a connection. This was well known to Blake, who had often to complain of delay in delivery of official letters, and also of letters from the "Castle" being frequently opened in the post.

Examining the mails in the Ballybor Post Office was out of the question, owing to the almost unbelievable fact that the staff, from the postmaster to the charwoman who washed out the tiled floors of the post office every morning, were Sinn Feiners, one and all, so that there only remained to search the mails in the train.

At this period the western railways were slowly dying from a creeping paralysis caused by the engine-drivers and guards refusing to carry the armed forces of the Crown, quite oblivious of the fact that it was only possible to pay the railwaymen's enormous wages through the Government subsidy. For a time some lines shut down, but a goods train man-

aged to reach Ballybor six days a week with mails and the bare necessities of life for the inhabitants—chiefly porter barrels. By good luck the guard on this train chanced to be a Loyalist—probably the only one on the line—and it was arranged with him that the mails should be searched by Jones while the mail van waited in a siding for several hours at a junction about sixteen miles from Ballybor.

Disguised as harvestmen, Jones and his servant were dropped at night from a Crossley close to the junction and admitted to the mail van by the guard; they at once set to work with electric torches, the batman opening the letters, whilst Jones read and made a note of any useful information, and when they had finished returned in the car to Ballybor Barracks.

On returning to the barracks, Blake and Jones went carefully through the information, and found that one letter addressed to a noted Sinn Feiner, Mr Pat Hegarty, who lived near a village called Lissamore, about eight miles away, gave sufficient evidence on which to hang Mr Hegarty. The writer stated that on the 3rd inst. Hegarty was to expect the arrival of an officer of the I.R.A. in uniform, who would come from the direction of Castleport on a bicycle about 10 P.M. Hegarty was to keep this officer in his house, place the new supply of American arms at his disposal for ambushes, and the officer would not leave the district until Blake had been either killed or kidnapped.

Some months previous to this Blake had

been in the south on special duty, and during his absence, MacNot, the D.I. who relieved him temporarily, had called a truce with the Volunteers as long as all appeared well on paper, with the result that the Volunteers had been able to make full preparations for a second effort to wipe out the police in the district. Soon after his return to Ballybor Blake heard strong rumours of a second landing of American arms during his absence—this time, at night at Ballybor quay—and the letter confirmed the rumours.

On the night mentioned in the letter, Blake and Jones, accompanied by a police sergeant and two constables, left Ballybor Barracks in a car after dark in the opposite direction to that in which the village of Lissamore lay, and after going about three miles turned off at a byroad and proceeded by unfrequented roads, until they reached a small wood about half a mile from Hegarty's house on the Castleport road; here they blocked the road with the car, and waited for their victim.

There was bright starlight, and punctually at 9.45 they saw a cyclist approaching from the direction of Castleport; but so dark was it in the wood that the cyclist only avoided running into the car by throwing himself off, to be quickly seized by two stalwart policemen before he could let go of his handle-bars, gagged and well tied up. They then took him into the wood, removed his uniform, dressed him in an old police uniform, and finally deposited him at the bottom of the car.

Jones then put on the Volunteer officer's uniform, took his bicycle, and rode on to Hegarty's house, while the police backed the car up a bohereen and waited there. Before starting out they had arranged that Jones should camouflage his English voice by a Yankee twang, as a brogue was quite beyond his powers.

On arriving at Hegarty's house, Jones leant his bicycle against the wall, and gave three mysterious knocks at the door. For quite two minutes there was no answer, and just as he was preparing to knock again, the door opened about three inches, and a girl's voice asked in a whisper who was there, and what he wanted at that time of night.

Now, unfortunately, the letter had not given the name of the I.R.A. officer, so Jones, being afraid to give a name lest the Hegartys might know the officer's real name, muttered that he was a republican officer, and had come to see Pat Hegarty. The door at once closed, and he could hear the girl open and close a door at the back of the house, and for fully ten minutes nothing further occurred.

This was not part of the play which Jones and Blake had carefully rehearsed in the barracks that afternoon, and Jones was quite nonplussed what to do next. Being young and impetuous, he was just on the point of ruining the whole show by breaking in the door, when it opened and the girl's voice told him to come in.

The room was pitch dark, and for a second

Jones hesitated; but the girl laid her hand on his sleeve, and led him through to a lighted room at the back, where he found Hegarty with his wife and son about to sit down to supper. Hegarty bade him welcome, and the meal started.

After they had eaten for some time in silence, Hegarty asked him several questions about where he had been recently, and of prominent Volunteers in other parts of the country. Jones made the best answers he could, not forgetting to keep up his American accent, and mentioned casually that he had only recently come over from the States, where his parents had been living for some years.

For a time there was silence again, but Jones could feel that the eyes of Maria Hegarty were on him all the time; and presently she began to ask most awkward questions about places and people in the States, and Jones was hard put to it to avoid suspicion. Luckily Maria mentioned that her friends lived in the Eastern States, so that it was easy for Jones's people to live far away in the west, and the situation was saved.

Supper over, the women cleared the table and retired, while Hegarty produced a large jar of poteen and tumblers, and the three men settled themselves round the fire to drink and talk. For the next two hours Jones extracted all the information he could out of the Hegartys, who, though shy at first, warmed up after several glasses of poteen, and Jones learnt from young Hegarty that the arms were kept

under the floors of a disused Protestant school-house in the rectory grounds at Cloonalla, the rector of which was a notorious Loyalist, and would have died sooner than conceal arms knowingly for the rebels.

At this point Jones, who had never tasted poteen before, suddenly realised that he was nearly drunk, and that before he became quite drunk it would be wiser to lie down on a bed. On inquiry, he found that he was to sleep with young Hegarty, the idea of which so staggered him that he felt soberer at once, and determined to try and hold out.

Suddenly there came a violent knocking at the front door, followed by what sounded like the bang of a rifle-butt on the back door. At once the Hegartys put out the light, and started to hustle Jones up a ladder to a loft above the kitchen.

But by now the poteen had quite got to Jones's head; and when the police went into the kitchen, they found old Hegarty and his son still struggling to get an I.R.A. officer up the ladder. The Hegartys now let go of Jones, who promptly closed with Blake, and a tremendous struggle started in the kitchen.

In a few minutes Jones was overcome, and lay on the floor with a heavy constable sitting on his chest. Blake then ordered the Hegartys to light the lamp, and afterwards to stand against the wall with their hands over their heads, and the constables to take Jones outside and shoot him. But he had not reckoned on Maria, who burst into the kitchen and with

piercing screams endeavoured to throw her arms round Jones's neck. Maria was a strong girl and desperate, and it took Jones and the two constables all they knew to shake her off and struggle out of the house.

Luckily Maria did not attempt to leave the house, and ten seconds after the back door had closed, six revolver shots rang out in quick succession, followed by the sound of a heavy body falling on wet ground. After telling Maria and her mother to go to their bedroom, Blake took Hegarty and his son into the back-yard, and showed them the body of the unfortunate Volunteer officer thrown by the police on the manure-heap. During the next half-hour he had little difficulty in getting all the information he required about local Volunteers (he made no mention of the arms), and after warning them not to move the corpse, the police left the house.

Maria appears to have been greatly taken with Jones's youthful beauty, and nearly ruined the whole show again by insisting on her father and brother going out to bring in the corpse and lay it out in the kitchen. Luckily the Hegartys were too much afraid, and Jones told Blake afterwards that the agony of lying with his face buried in liquid manure was nothing to the agony he suffered listening to the Hegartys arguing whether his corpse should be left lying on the manure-heap to be eaten by dogs, or brought into the kitchen and laid out as a "dacent son of ould Ireland" should be.

While this argument was still raging a car stopped at the front door, and again the police rushed into the house, out at the back door, dragged the corpse off the manure-heap, through the house, and flung it on top of the real Volunteer officer in the back of the car. After telling the Hegartys that they would throw the body into the lake, the police drove off at a furious rate in the direction of Ballybor.

On returning to barracks, Jones at once rushed off to have a hot bath, while Blake went to his office to find his two clerks snowed up with paper, correspondence which had arrived by the goods mail while they had been out. After they had some food, Jones was all for raiding the rector of Cloonalla at once; but Blake made the fatal mistake of attending to the correspondence then, and putting off the raid to the following night.

The next night they set out with a strong force of police for the Cloonalla Rectory, but found, though there were evident signs that their information had been correct, that the arms had been removed; the rector was most indignant, and they returned defeated.

A few nights afterwards, when at dinner, Blake showed Jones the following paragraph in an Irish paper.

“ A BRUTAL MURDER.

“ On the night of the 3rd inst., about midnight, armed men in uniform, some of them wearing trench-coats, raided the house of Mr Patrick Hegarty, a

respectable farmer, who has never been known to take any active part in politics. Inside these men found a young man alleged to have been wearing the uniform of an officer in the I.R.A.

“This unfortunate young man, without trial of any kind, was at once dragged outside the house, riddled with bullets, and his body thrown on a manure-heap in a most callous and brutal manner.

“After brutally ill-treating Mr Hegarty and his family, the murderers left, to return again, saying that they would take the body away and throw it into the lake. Though the lake has been carefully dragged, no sign of this unhappy youth’s body has yet been found.”

XIII.

SEAL ISLAND.

SERGEANT O'BRYAN was as fine a type of the R.I.C. as you would meet in half a dozen baronies : of magnificent physique, great courage, full of tact, and with the perfect manners of a true Irishman.

At the end of 1918 O'Bryan found himself sergeant in charge of Cloghleagh Barracks, a comfortable thatched house close to the shores of Lough Moyra, and distant about four miles from Ballybor.

While at Cloghleagh his principal work consisted of trying to put down the making of poteen, which was carried on extensively by the inhabitants of two small islands at the south end of the lake ; otherwise the sergeant was on the best of terms with all the people of the district, who often appealed to him for advice and help. And as O'Bryan was a keen fisherman, he often managed to combine business with sport while out in the police boat.

Soon after Blake became D.I. at Ballybor, orders were received from the County Inspector to evacuate Cloghleagh Barracks, and

for O'Bryan and his men to proceed to Ballybor Barracks. As the country round Clogh-leagh had as yet shown no hostility towards the police, and as it was hard to get a house in any town, O'Bryan asked and obtained leave for his young wife and family to remain on at Cloghleagh Barracks; and here, not long after the sergeant had gone, the youngest O'Bryan was born.

Two days afterwards, on a wet winter's evening, there came a knock at the barracks door, and when Mrs O'Bryan asked who was there, a man's voice bade her open in the name of the I.R.A. Obeying, she found two masked men, who covered her with revolvers, and told her they would give her five minutes to clear out of the barracks before they set it on fire.

Mrs O'Bryan had seven children, the eldest about ten years and the youngest two days old, most of whom were in bed by this time. As fast as she could she roused and dressed the children; but the five minutes soon passed, and the men entered and bundled the whole family, some of the children only half clothed, out into the wet and cold of a winter's night.

Outside Mrs O'Bryan found a large party of Ballybor shop-boys, some of them wearing black masks, led by four strange gunmen. This party had arrived in Cloghleagh about an hour before, and had at once proceeded to picket all roads leading to and from the barracks, and every unfortunate countryman or woman they met making their way along the

roads was at once seized by the pickets, taken to the barrack-yard, and there placed face inwards against the wall with their hands on top of their heads.

As soon as the O'Bryan family had been hustled into the road, the gunmen threw paraffin and petrol on the thatch of the barracks, set it alight, and in a very short time the building was a charred ruin. They then mounted their bicycles and rode off into the night, leaving the unfortunate O'Bryans to shift for themselves.

Leaving her family huddled under a hedge, the mother tried to get into two neighbouring houses; but the blighting curse of the I.R.A. was on her and hers, and not a house would even open its door, let alone take them in. In the end she saw that it was hopeless, and returning to her children, did her best to keep them warm with her own body and the few blankets she had managed to bring out of the barracks. And here they spent the night like the beasts of the fields.

Next morning some countryman, braver than the rest, brought word to the Ballybor Barracks of the burning at Cloghleagh, and Sergeant O'Bryan arrived on the scene to find his wife and family perished and starving. Such is the mercy of the I.R.A. for the little children of the R.I.C.

O'Bryan took his family back to Ballybor Barracks, where they were fed and warmed; but in Ireland nowadays a police barracks is no place for little children and women, and

before night they must leave. In vain the sergeant tried to find lodgings; he might as well have tried to swim the Atlantic. Every door was slammed in his face directly he made his appeal. But the good Samaritan is not yet extinct in Ireland, and at last the sergeant found a refuge for his family in the empty gardener's lodge of Ballybor House.

While being turned out of Cloghleigh Barracks, Mrs O'Bryan had recognised two of the incendiaries, who had taken their masks off, as two prominent Sinn Fein shop-boys of Ballybor, afterwards telling her husband their names—Martin Walsh and Peter Lynch—and the sergeant never forgot them.

On a glorious June day Blake was leaning over the parapet of the lower bridge crossing the Owenmore river in Ballybor, watching the fishermen hauling in a net full of silvery grilse, and wishing that he could accept an invitation to fish at Ardcumber. After a time his eye wandered to a fleet of boats below the bridge, some anchored, while others were attached to mooring buoys. From force of habit he started to count them, and on finding that there were no less than thirty-seven, he began to make out their total carrying capacity, which roughly came to the high figure of three hundred.

On the following Sunday he happened to be crossing the same bridge at about ten in the morning, and stopped to look at three boats, packed with young men, a few carrying fishing-rods, starting off down the river. The fishing-rods were there right enough, but something

seemed wrong ; the men looked too purposeful, and, moreover, eight or nine young men in a boat with a couple of rods is an unusual sight.

Blake watched the boats disappearing fast down the river, and wondered what would be the right word to substitute for fishing. After a while he realised that there was not a boat left on the river, and, further, that if all the boats had carried as many passengers as the three he had just seen start, over three hundred young men from Ballybor had gone a-fishing that Sunday morning, the majority of whom, if not all of them, were shop-boys, the most dangerous element in the town.

The barracks commanded a good view of the reach of the river where the boats were usually moored, and next Sunday at an early hour Blake told off Sergeant O'Bryan with a pair of field-glasses to report how many boats and how many men went out a-fishing. At eleven o'clock the sergeant reported that, as usual, all the thirty-seven boats had started, carrying two hundred and fifty young men, and that among them he had recognised most of the prominent Sinn Fein shop-boys of the town. But he did not add that he had seen Walsh and Lynch.

Five miles below Ballybor the Owenmore river, from being roughly two hundred yards wide, suddenly becomes an inland sea, with a width of over three miles and a length of a mile. Between this inland water and the open sea runs a long narrow range of sand-hills,

commonly known as Seal Island, nearly three miles long and with an average width of four hundred yards.

Blake came to the conclusion that the fishing expeditions every Sunday must be connected with this lonely island; but except for drilling—and sand-dunes did not seem a suitable place for a parade—he could think of nothing to which this island would lend itself. Moreover, he knew that if he tried to find out what was going on by observing from the mainland, he would be spotted and the alarm given, and that if he tried to approach the island in a boat from the seaside the fishermen from Dooncarra would give him away.

In the end it was settled to wait until the following Sunday, when Sergeant O'Bryan made his way across country before daylight and hid himself in the tower of an old abbey on the shore of the inland sea, from which the greater part of Seal Island was visible. On the Sunday night he returned to barracks, and reported that the "fishermen" had all landed at the little pier on the south side of the island, left a small guard over the boats, and made their way into the sand-hills, where they were hidden from his view. Some time afterwards, muffled intermittent rifle-fire started, and continued at intervals for several hours, after which the "fishermen" returned to their boats, and rowed back leisurely to Ballybor on the flood tide.

But before Blake could tackle the mystery of Seal Island, he had to turn his attention

to a flying column of the I.R.A. which was reported to be making its way towards Ballybor. On the Sunday evening when O'Bryan returned from the old abbey, word was brought in by a Loyalist that the flying column had been seen that day in the Ballyrick mountains, and had taken up its quarters in the empty house of Mr Padraig O'Faherty, member of Dail Eireann for the Ballybor country, who had been for some time past an unwilling guest of the British Government somewhere in England.

Padraig O'Faherty's house was (advisably was) situated in the middle of a desolate valley in the mountains twenty miles from Ballyrick and the same distance from Ballybor, and could only be approached by a bog road, which winds through mountains and moors without passing a single human habitation for the last eight miles. Moreover, there was not a tree within fifteen miles of the house, so that any attempt at surprise, or even attack, during the daytime was out of the question. At the first sight of a Crossley—and they had a three-mile view of the road both ways from the house—the flying column would simply dissolve into the mountains, probably to reappear the next day attacking a police barrack fifty miles the other side of Ballybor. A good example of the kind of problem the R.I.C. has to solve daily in the wild parts of the west.

That night Blake left Ballybor with an advance-guard of police on bicycles, and making a detour of the town, timed himself to

arrive at O'Faherty's house just before daylight, having arranged that Jones should follow in the Crossleys with his platoon of Blankshires and as many police as could be spared.

Arriving too soon, they hid their bicycles in some high heather near the road, and as soon as it was light enough took up positions at different points round the house, so that every avenue of escape would be swept by their rifle-fire, and waited for the main body to arrive.

As the sky became light, smoke could be seen rising from some of the chimneys, a suspicious sign at that hour of the morning, and shortly afterwards four young men appeared at the door, yawning and stretching themselves. After examining the valley in every direction with field-glasses, they proceeded to bring about forty bicycles out of a stable and park them in military formation outside, after which they re-entered the house.

During the next hour nothing happened, and just as Blake had given up all hope of the main body arriving and was thinking of trying to rush the house with his small force, a large party of men started to leave the house and make for the bicycles, and Blake was forced to give the order to open fire.

Several men were seen to drop at once, while the rest rushed back into the house, carrying their wounded with them, and in a minute heavy fire was opened from every window in the house on the police positions, the firing of a single shot by a policeman

being the signal for a hail of bullets in that direction.

Blake was now getting very anxious at the non-arrival of Jones's party, fearing that instead of capturing the flying column, the Volunteers might capture the police; and in order to deceive them, ordered his men to withhold their fire unless the Volunteers tried to rush them. At last Jones turned up, having been delayed repeatedly by punctures, and completed a strong cordon round the house.

Blake now attempted to draw the cordon closer, but every time the police and soldiers tried to advance by short rushes under heavy covering fire, the Volunteers opened such accurate fire from every window, including machine-gun fire from one of the upper rooms, that he had to desist. Eventually the soldiers silenced the machine-gun with their Lewis guns.

After getting to within three hundred yards of the house, Blake found that, owing to the formation of the ground, it would be impossible to advance any nearer without very heavy losses, and refused to allow Jones to make an assault with his men until all other means of reducing the place had failed.

The day was now wearing on, and for several hours the situation had remained a complete deadlock. The Volunteers were obviously marking time until darkness set in, when they would stand a good chance of slipping through the cordon; and Blake fully realised that if he did not win during daylight, he would surely lose in the dark.

Blake and Jones lay in the heather close together, arguing as to whether they should try to assault the house or not. Jones was keen to try, while Blake feared a failure with heavy losses. The day was by now blazing hot, with a steady south wind, and Jones, after lighting a cigarette, carelessly threw the match away alight, and in a second the dry heather took fire, and was only extinguished with great difficulty. But the fire had given Blake the idea he had been hunting for so long.

Collecting all the matches that the men possessed, Jones made his way round to the south side of the house, and distributed them amongst all the men there, who, at a given signal, set fire to the heather in front of them, and as soon as the house was enveloped in a cloud of smoke, the whole force charged for the house. As soon as they got within range, the police hurled Mills' bombs through every window, and the soldiers then dashed in with fixed bayonets, but the bombs had done the work.

They found that the Volunteers had suffered heavily, hardly a man escaping a bomb splinter or a Lewis-gun bullet, and the question was how to remove so many wounded. In the house they found bed and bedding for fully forty men, and a great supply of fresh and tinned food ; also rifles (chiefly Mauser), American shot-guns, automatics, revolvers, a quantity of ammunition, and a good stock of home-made bombs in a kind of cellar.

Not having enough transport, Blake sent

off a fast car to ask for help from the County Inspector. Before leaving, Blake blew up Mr Padraig O'Faherty's house with the Volunteers' bombs, and the party returned to Ballybor before dark, victorious, but worn out.

As soon as they had had some sleep, Blake and Jones started to work out their plans for a surprise attack on Seal Island the following Sunday, and found that they had a difficult task before them.

Except at the east and west ends of the island, where the two channels of the river cut through the ridge of sand-hills, all approaches were visible for a long distance, and any idea of surprise out of the question. On the other hand, if an attempt was made to cross the channels, the Volunteers would have ample time to reach their boats at the pier in the middle of the south shore and so escape, while at a low tide it was possible to walk across at one point to the mainland.

In the end they gave it up, and went to consult the C.I., who decided to call in the assistance of the Navy.

On Sunday morning Sergeant O'Bryan duly reported that the boats had gone down the river, as usual with full crews. The previous night a destroyer had crept into the bay with all lights covered, and after landing a large party of bluejackets on Seal Island, had left again.

After allowing sufficient time for the Volunteers to land and get to work, Blake followed in a commandeered motor-launch, and at the

same time Jones left the barracks with his platoon in two Crossleys, each with a Lewis gun, one party making for the western mouth of the river, and the other for the eastern, where they proceeded to take up positions covering all escape across the channels.

About three hundred yards from the pier on Seal Island, Blake and his men landed on a small round green island called Gannet Island, and took up positions covering the boats lying alongside the pier. Directly they landed, a small group of men were seen to leave the pier and disappear into the sand-dunes. Meanwhile the launch, with a machine-gun mounted in the bows, proceeded to patrol along the south shore of the island over the shallow water.

After a short time heavy firing broke out in the sand-hills and then died down, to break out again as a large body of Volunteers streamed towards the pier; but before they could reach their boats, Blake's men on Gannet Island opened fire on them, and the launch sprayed them well with its machine-gun. The Volunteers seemed nonplussed and at a loss what to do; but the bluejackets, advancing in open order with fixed bayonets from the sand-hills, quickly decided them, and they made for the east end of the island, disappearing into a hollow followed by the bluejackets.

Again heavy firing broke out from the direction of the hollow, and continued at intervals for over an hour. Fearing that something was wrong, Blake then embarked

his men on the launch, and after landing at the pier, proceeded in the direction of the firing, to find the Volunteers holding a large house which so far the sailors had failed to take.

The house came as a surprise to the police, none of whom had ever set foot on the island before, and there seemed every prospect of another deadlock. The house was old, well built, and commanded a fine field of fire in every direction.

But sailors are handy men, and after a consultation with Blake, the lieutenant in command decided to signal to his destroyer, which had anchored in the bay again, to open fire with her guns on the house. After trying in vain to get a direct view of the house, the destroyer opened indirect fire, a sailor on a high sand-hill signalling the result of each shot. Unfortunately the house was so sheltered by the sides of the hollow that nothing short of a howitzer could have reached it.

But the sailors were not beaten. After putting farther out to sea, the destroyer tried again, and this time at the third shot got home with a direct hit, and in a few minutes it was seen that the house was on fire.

Sailors and police now held their fire, and waited for the exciting moment when the Volunteers would be forced by the flames to bolt. A quarter of an hour, half an hour passed, but not a Volunteer bolted from the now fiercely burning house. At last the roof fell in with a crash and shower of sparks, and

every man gripped his rifle, thinking that at last the rebels would be smoked out; but nothing happened. They had either vanished into thin air or were roasted alive. Still the sailors and police waited on, thinking that in the end somebody must come out. Without any warning one gable-end of the house suddenly fell outwards, and simultaneously firing broke out from the east channel of the river, about five hundred yards away.

The spell was now broken, and every man dashed in the direction of the firing. When they reached high ground they could see many of the Volunteers swimming across the channel, while those who could not swim were running towards the north side of the island.

The half-platoon of the Blankshires, with Sergeant O'Bryan as a guide, had taken up their position in the sand-hills on the mainland commanding the passage across the east channel, and had only been interested spectators of parts of the battle up to the time the gable fell, when, to their astonishment, they suddenly saw the Volunteers streaming out of the sand-hills and dashing into the river in front of them.

Foremost among the swimmers Sergeant O'Bryan saw, to his great joy, the heads of Walsh and Lynch, their foot-long hair floating like manes behind them, and knew that his enemies had been delivered into his hands. By the time the swimmers reached the mainland, and found themselves covered by the rifles and Lewis gun of the soldiers, they had

had enough, and put up their hands of their own accord.

The sailors and police now beat the island towards the west end, and after a hard scramble over the sand-hills captured the remaining Volunteers.

A careful search of the place where the Volunteers had suddenly appeared out of the ground showed that there was an underground passage running from the house to within a short distance of the shore, probably used in former days for smuggling purposes.

A further search explained the reason of the Volunteers' Sunday visits to the island. In a valley of the sand-hills they found an up-to-date rifle-range, and afterwards learnt that it had been built during the early part of the war, and frequently used for firing musketry courses by units of the New Armies training in Ireland.

XIV.

A FAMILY AFFAIR.

THE mac Nessa, Prince of Murrisk, claimed descent from one of the Nine Hostages ; and though proud of his lineage, he was still prouder of the boast that, up to comparatively recent times, not one of his ancestors had died in his bed. A violent death in some form or other, chiefly the "middoge," accounting for one and all.

Murrisk Abbey is a modern house, as old places go in Ireland, but in the grounds there are the ruins of a very old castle, built in the days when the O'Fogartys ruled a countryside as far as a horse could gallop in any direction during the hours of daylight. Here the mac Nessa had spent most of his life, hunting, shooting, fishing, and farming, and incidentally bringing up a family of two sons and four daughters.

Both the sons, Cormac and Dominic, had served during the war in the British Army. Dominic willingly and eagerly, and Cormac, the elder, only because he feared his father, who was a staunch Loyalist.

The spring of 1919 found the two brothers

at home. Cormac for good and all as he believed, and Dominic until he could decide how and where to make a living.

In England there is nowadays a large class whose one and only object in life appears to be to take sides with any and every enemy of their country, be he Boer, Boche, Bolshevik, or Sinn Feiner. This party never ceases to aid and abet these enemies by every means in their power, short of endangering their own skins, and at the same time never let an opportunity pass of accusing our soldiers and police (in Ireland) of every abominable crime which man has been known to commit. During the war this class of Englishmen greatly puzzled and irritated the French, as they have every nation that has ever admired the British as a race. A French interpreter once said to a British officer, "Many of your race are noble, the rest are swine."

In Ireland, by some lucky chance, we have escaped this detestable and despicable breed of man, to whom a sincere rebel is infinitely preferable, but at the same time we have a class of men and women who are first cousins to them. In many good Irish families, noted for generations past for their unswerving loyalty, there is often one member who is an out-and-out rebel. Luckily he or she has generally less brains than the rest of the family, and is looked upon as a harmless lunatic, and one of the crosses which have to be borne in the world.

A plausible reason often advanced for this

sporadic appearance of a rebel in a loyal family is the complete lack of conversation at the dinner-table, once sport has been exhausted, when all members of a family see eye to eye in politics; and as a "mutual admiration society" quickly palls on many young men and women, one member expresses contrary political opinions to the others out of pure cussedness, and the anger and recriminations of the rest quickly turn the bored jibber into a red-hot rebel.

Not many weeks after the brothers had returned home from the war, Cormac, who had spent many hours of his youth reading books and pamphlets on the wrongs England had inflicted on Ireland instead of hunting and shooting, and had even appeared at breakfast once in a weird ginger-coloured kilt, raised the red flag of Sinn Féin one evening at the dinner-table. Probably he did it from sheer boredom, hoping to draw his father into a wordy argument and so pass the time. The result, however, had a far-reaching effect on the lives of both Cormac and Dominic.

The mac Nessa was a big man and Cormac was not, and but for the intervention of Dominic, the elder son would probably have had an unpleasant and painful eviction from the dinner-table. However, the old chieftain controlled himself with a great effort, but as soon as the servants had withdrawn he ordered Cormac to leave the house the following morning for good and all, and in a sullen rage Cormac stalked out of the room.

Leaving word with the butler to pack his kit, Cormac made his way to the house of the parish priest, about two and a half miles from the abbey, where, being a Roman Catholic, he hoped to receive sympathy.

If there is one Church in the world which might be expected to range itself wholeheartedly on the side of law and order it is the Church of Rome, whose very existence depends on obedience, and it must have been a source of wonder to many English people why, at the very beginning of the Sinn Fein movement, this Church did not at once come into the open and denounce Sinn Fein from the altar in plain and unmistakable terms. Any thinking priest must know that under a semi-Bolshevik republic the power of the Roman Catholic Church would be gone, and gone for ever.

Cormac found the old priest kind and gentle as ever, but firm in his refusal to listen to any Sinn Fein views, and in a fresh rage he left to make his way to the curate's lodging in a neighbouring farmhouse, and here he was received with open arms.

The curate quickly perceived what a valuable recruit Cormac might make, and before he left to spend his last night at the abbey, took advantage of the boy's excited mood to make him swear to join the I.R.A.

After a very early breakfast, Cormac left his home on the fifteen-mile drive to Ballybor, where he caught the mail train for Dublin, his heart full of hatred of his family, and his mind set on revenge.

A week of dirty Dublin lodgings convinced Cormac that he had made a fool of himself, and putting his pride in his pocket, he wrote to his father asking to be allowed to return home. By return of post came a typewritten post-card from the mac Nessa to the effect that while he lived no rebel should ever darken his door.

That evening two strangers called at his rooms, and after making certain of his identity, explained that a message had been received at the Sinn Fein headquarters in Dublin from Father Michael of Murrisk that Cormac was prepared to join in the Sinn Fein movement, and offering him a high-sounding position. Cormac's vanity was flattered, and he accepted at once.

Knowing that Cormac's name would carry great weight with many half-hearted supporters and waverers, the Sinn Fein leaders employed him solely on propaganda work, sending him to every part of the country, not excepting the north, to speak at meetings, and always taking good care that his name appeared in large letters on the posters, and kind friends were not wanting to send the mac Nessa cuttings of his son's speeches from every Irish and English paper in which they appeared.

During his travels Cormac at different times met in trains and hotels many friends of his own class, who one and all, to their great credit, refused to speak to him, and this treatment embittered him still more against all Loyalists, more especially against his father and brother.

After one trip to a town in the south, where he had tried to enter a club, and had been ejected by the hall porter, he offered himself on his return to Dublin for "active service," and was at once sent to the Ballybor district to organise outrages, the Sinn Fein leaders knowing that the name of O'Fogarty was one to conjure with in that country even in these days.

In the meantime Dominic had been asked by the authorities to join the newly-formed Auxiliary Division of the R.I.C., in order that his knowledge of the Ballybor country might be utilised, and after a short training in Dublin found himself quartered in Ballybor with a platoon of Cadets.

By a coincidence the two brothers arrived in Ballybor within a week of each other, Cormac an avowed Sinn Feiner, and Dominic an officer in the Auxiliaries, who were about to take on the rebels at their own breed of warfare.

Every kind of news travels fast in country districts in Ireland, and within twelve hours of the brothers' arrival it is doubtful if you could have found, even in the mountains of Ballyrick, a child who did not know of the O'Fogartys' return. Moreover, there is nothing an Irishman loves more than a fight, and one between two brothers of the best-known family in three counties, with armed men at their back, was something worth looking forward to, even in these days of murder and outrage. And at local race-meetings in the

west bets were freely taken on the issue of the fight between Cormac and Dominic O'Fogarty.

All thought of King or Republic was now completely forgotten in Ballybor, and for many miles around the countryside was divided into two camps. Most of the Volunteers, all nominally, were for Cormac, whilst all Loyalists and a good many Volunteers secretly supported Dominic, with the result that, so keen were both sides to outmanœuvre each other, the police obtained far more information than they had for a long time past.

Dominic made up his mind to take the offensive straight away, and learning from one of his Volunteer sympathisers that his brother, when in Ballybor, always slept in the house of a man called Ryan, made arrangements to raid the place, and at any rate to put Cormac out of action for some time to come.

However, Cormac learning of his brother's kindly intention, thought that it would be an excellent opportunity to raid Murrisk for arms on that particular night, and incidentally to get some of his own back from his father. Leaving Ballybor as soon as it was dark with a dozen men, they bicycled to Murrisk, and after parking their machines in a wood near the main road, proceeded to knock up the house. The butler opened the door, but did not recognise Cormac in a mask, though his walk seemed vaguely familiar to him.

The mac Nessa was no coward, and on entering the inner hall, the raiders found them-

selves covered by the old man with a double-barrelled shot-gun. Cormac had expected that his father would show fight, and knowing where the electric light switch was in the hall, had arranged with his men that when he turned the light off they should throw themselves flat on the floor.

As the light went out the mac Nessa fired both barrels, which went harmlessly over the raiders' heads, and before he could reload they had him down and tied up. Cormac then turned on the light, and by now, half-mad with rage and excitement, would have gone for his father; but his men kept him back, and when they had secured all the arms in the house under Cormac's directions, they hustled him away.

In the meantime Dominic with a party of Cadets had raided Ryan's house, but, of course, drew blank.

Early the next morning a mounted messenger brought word to the barracks in Ballybor that Cormac and a party of armed and masked men had raided Murrisk during the night and removed all arms and ammunition. That afternoon Dominic put up large notices all over Ballybor to the effect that if he caught Cormac in the town he would horsewhip him in the market-place.

Both the town and countryside were in a wild state of excitement after the Murrisk raid, Cormac's supporters acclaiming his victory, while Dominic's could only reply, "Wait and see." And so keen were Dominic's party

to help their man, that information of every possible kind and description literally poured into the barracks by every post.

Like children, as ever, the people quickly forgot that they were either Loyalists or rebels, the blood-feud between the two brothers being far more interesting and exciting; and it is probable that, if only sufficient arms had been forthcoming on both sides, the brothers' feud would have developed into a pitched battle, and if the police had interfered both parties would then have joined forces and turned on the common enemy.

After leaving Murrisk, Cormac, knowing that Ballybor would now be too hot for him, made for some caves in the Slievenamoe Mountains to the east of the town, and here he remained. Some time before these caves had been fitted up like dug-outs in France, while the food supply gave no difficulty, every house at the foot of the mountains having to supply rations on requisition for any gunmen using these caves. Here Cormac had plenty of time on his hands, and thought out a clever plan to put Dominic out of action.

Shortly before Cormac raided Murrisk, a new and simple manager had arrived at one of the Ballybor banks. The arrival of a new bank manager in an Irish provincial town is always the signal for all in financial difficulties to get busy and try their luck with the fresh arrival, and amongst the new manager's first visitors came the Urban Council, who by sheer bluff managed to get their already big over-

draft increased by some thousand pounds. A fresh election being within sight, they then proceeded to borrow a derelict steam-roller from the County Council, who had practically ceased to function, and to spend the money steam-rolling the streets of Ballybor. In this way they hoped to catch the votes of the labourers by the payment of high wages, and of the shopkeepers and owners of cars by improved streets.

Being in a great hurry to get on with the good work, they forgot that the streets had never been steam-rolled before, and that the gas- and water-pipes were very near the surface, with the result that for every yard of street the roller passed over one or more gas- or water-pipes burst, and the town soon smelt like the inside of a gas-works.

The consequent proceedings give a very fair idea of the Celtic capacity for public affairs, and of how the country would be run under "Home Rule," or any other kind of rule except the "Union."

Instead of stopping the steam-rolling until all mains and pipes had been relaid at a sufficient depth to resist the rolling, they solemnly proceeded to roll, burst, and mend from one end of the main street to the other, to the huge delight of all the local plumbers, who also had votes.

Luckily the money was exhausted by the time the main street was finished, and though the greater part of the surface was excellent, the ridges made by digging up the pipes at

intervals would break the axle of an unsuspecting stranger's car, to the great benefit of the local garages.

The police barracks at Ballybor are situated in a "cul-de-sac" off the main street, at the corners of which stand the principal hotel and a bank, and all cars going to or from the barracks must pass this corner.

Word was brought to Cormac in his mountain dug-out that his brother left Ballybor Barracks early every morning with a Crossley full of Cadets, and that they spent the whole day and often most of the night searching the surrounding country for him. Before leaving Ballybor he had witnessed the steam-rolling comic opera, and bicycling by night to Ballybor, he lay up during the day, got in touch with a plumber, borrowed his tools and barrow, and late that afternoon (in the plumber's clothes, and slouch hat pulled well over his face) started to dig up the road between the bank and the hotel.

Human nature always seems to regard the digging up of a street in the light of a huge joke, and during his work Cormac was not only chaffed by the bank manager and the hotel loafers, but by the police themselves. When it was dusk he was joined by a Volunteer with a charge of gelignite, which had been raided from a Government ship off the south-east coast and brought to the west by car, and the two proceeded to lay a contact-mine in the centre of the road. They then filled in the earth, returned the tools and

barrow to the plumber, and bicycled back to the mountains.

While Cormac was busy laying his mine, Dominic and Blake were poring over an Ordnance-map in the barracks not sixty yards away. Having come to the conclusion that it was quite useless to search the countryside piecemeal, and hearing a rumour of what was going on in the mountains through one of the forced food contractors having made a bitter complaint to a passing police patrol, they were now planning to surround the southern half of the Slievenamoe Mountains, and organising a great drive, and the next two days were spent working out the details.

About 9 A.M. a mineral-water lorry, in order to turn, backed up the cul-de-sac, and the mine being well and truly laid, disappeared in a sheet of flame, wrecking the bank and hotel. Hardly had the sound of the explosion died away, and before the police left the barracks to investigate, every young man in Ballybor of the shopkeeper class had his bicycle out and was off as hard as he could pedal. A Volunteer greatly resembles a mountain hare: directly the hunt is up he makes at top speed for high ground, and the harder you press both the faster they leg it up the mountains. Blake and Dominic managed to control their men, and no reprisals followed, the only arrest being the unfortunate plumber who had lent his outfit to Cormac, and whose bicycle had been "borrowed" by an agitated shop-boy.

At the present time a big drive in the west

presents great difficulties. Very few, often none, of the R.I.C. or Auxiliaries know anything of the many wild and mountainous parts in their districts, and the soldiers are invariably complete strangers.

To reconnoitre the ground beforehand is out of the question, and it is difficult to induce reliable guides to act.

The part of the mountains Blake and Dominic had selected to drive lay about nine miles due east of Ballybor, divided by a deep pass from the remainder of the range to the north, and ending in a wild rocky valley intersected by the Owenmore river to the south, and the total area to be covered was about eighteen square miles of mountains, glens, cliffs, and bogs. It was not possible to start operations before 3 A.M. (the month being August), and they would have to stop soon after 11 P.M. (summer time), which gave them roughly twenty hours to beat the eighteen square miles.

Taking the total number of troops at their disposal, Blake divided them into groups of six, giving them nearly a hundred groups. Then Dominic picked out from a contoured Ordnance-map the same number of points surrounding the mountains, from all of which there was a good view and field of fire, and it was arranged that as many groups as possible should have either a Vickers machine-gun or a Lewis gun.

The actual drive was to be carried out by the police. The Cadets under Dominic were to start from the north end in a crescent forma-

tion and advance towards the highest point, which lay nearly in the centre of the area, while the R.I.C. under Blake were to advance from the south.

Dominic knew every yard of the mountains, having shot grouse there with his brother since boyhood, but the difficulty was to procure a guide for Blake's party, none of whom had ever set foot on the mountains. With much persuasion, however, Dominic at last induced a man, who had been one of the mac Nessa's game-watchers on the mountains for years, to act as guide. This man had to be promised a large sum of money, and to save him from the revenge of Sinn Fein, it was arranged that directly after the drive he should be safely got away to enlist in the British Army under an assumed name, and, if he wished, be sent straight off to India.

All officers and N.C.O.'s were given maps showing the position of every group marked, and it was arranged that the police should be in position at 3 A.M. and the troops half an hour later. A few days before the date fixed for the drive Dominic and his Auxiliaries disappeared from Ballybor, and it was given out that they had gone to Co. Cork.

Sharp at 3 A.M., on a perfect August day, the drive began. Dominic and the Cadets had to start from the shores of a large lake lying in a cup at the top of the pass, and climb a thousand feet before reaching the first valley in the mountains. At the top they halted for a breather and to admire the wonderful view.

To the east the summer sun was fast rising, all around them stretched miles of heather-clad hills, and away to the north-west lay the sea, a pearly grey-blue in the fast growing light.

After a rest Dominic got his men into formation, spreading them out as far as possible without losing touch, while he kept a small party in the rear to go to any threatened point where the gunmen might try to break through the cordon. The Cadets had brought their signallers with them, equipped with a heliograph and flags, who remained with the reserve party.

On reaching higher ground Dominic could see with his glasses the small groups of soldiers taking up their positions, while far away in the plain to the eastward the Owenmore river wound like a blue thread through the dark bogland. A Cadet on his left nearly walked on a pack of grouse, which swung right-handed, passing within twenty yards of Dominic, and reminding him vividly of other days.

Very soon the Cadets began to feel the heat of the sun, and the hard going began to tell on several of them. Sitting in a Crossley is bad training for walking a grouse mountain.

After going about a mile and a half a party of men were seen in front making eastward at full speed down a valley, the end of which Dominic knew was held by a group of soldiers with a machine-gun. Halting his men, he then brought his right wing well round so as to cut off the gunmen's retreat to the west should they attempt to break back.

The fleeing gunmen were soon lost sight of in dead ground, but presently the sound of firing was heard from the far end of the valley, and after a time the gunmen were seen retreating across the Cadets' front, and making as hard as they could for the west side of the mountains.

At this point Blake's men came in sight from the south, and quickly getting in touch with the Cadets' right wing, completed the cordon. The gunmen, seeing that they were surrounded and all retreat cut off, split up into two parties, took up positions on two kopjes, and waited for the attack.

As a frontal attack would have entailed heavy loss, and seeing that there was another kopje on Blake's side which would command and enfilade the gunmen's positions, Dominic ordered the Cadets to pin the gunmen down by their fire, and at the same time sent a signaller to Blake telling him to occupy the commanding kopje. This Blake did, and also sent to the nearest group of soldiers for a machine-gun.

The fight lasted for two hours, and though the gunmen were always subject to a hot fire, and several times a man was seen to spring into the air and collapse in the heather, yet they stuck it gamely until the machine-gun was brought up and opened a heavy fire on both kopjes; the remaining gunmen then stood up and put up their hands.

On the two kopjes the police found twelve dead gunmen and twenty-eight prisoners, eighteen of whom were wounded. And amongst

the dead Dominic found Cormac, shot through the heart.

After arranging for the burial of the dead (with the exception of Cormac, who was carried down the mountain-side on a stretcher) and the removal of the prisoners, Dominic took a party of Cadets to search some caves which he knew of about half a mile to the south-west. Here, as he expected, he found that the gunmen had been living in comparative comfort. One cave had been used as a living-room and contained chairs and tables, while two smaller inner ones were fitted up with bunks in tiers like a Boche dug-out, and had heather for bedding.

Towards evening the worn-out Cadets got back to their Crossleys on the pass road which ran along the north shore of the lake; and after leaving a party with a searchlight mounted on a tender to stop any stray gunmen escaping during the night on bicycles by the road to the east, Dominic started for Murrisk in a Crossley with his brother's body.

Many an evening the two brothers had driven home together over the same road after a happy day's grouse-shooting, never dreaming that their last journey together would be to bring Cormac's body to the home of their ancestors.

The mac Nessa met the party in the great hall of Murrisk, and his ancestors looking down from the walls must surely have thought that they were back again in their own times of everlasting war and sudden death.

XV.

THE AMERICAN NURSE.

IN the early 'eighties there lived in the Cloonalla district a small farmer named Peter Walsh, who was what is generally called in the west a bad farmer, which is simply the Irish way of saying that he was lazy and good-for-nothing, and for several years Walsh had been in the clutches of the Cloonalla gombeen man, the local big shopkeeper.

The ways of the gombeen man are quite simple and usually most successful, the success largely depending on a run of bad potato crops, as generally after two successive failures the majority of the farmers in a poor mountainous district have no money at all. They are thus forced to go to the gombeen wallah, who advances them so much money, according to the size of their farm and their capacity for drink, as a mortgage on the farm at a high rate of interest. But instead of paying them money he gives credit for goods, and there is a verbal agreement that he will not foreclose as long as the farmer deals solely with him and makes no bones about the prices he is charged. Formerly this was the terrible mill-

stone which used to hang for life round the necks of many western peasants.

However, Walsh's millstone troubled him not one bit, and he "staggered" along for several years until there came a sequence of three bad and indifferent crops, which finished him completely. Seeing that Walsh was not going to make any effort, the gombeen man closed on the farm, and Peter, the wife, and their one child, Bridget, aged three years, left Ireland for America, illogically cursing the British Government for their own sins and those of the gombeen devil.

Now the gombeen man had no use for Peter's farm himself, so he proceeded to make Peter's brother, Michael, drunk one Saturday night in his shop, and made the farm over to him with the former conditions, not forgetting to double the mortgage.

In due course Michael died without kith or kin saving Bridget, now a hospital nurse in New York, who one day received a letter from a Ballybor solicitor informing her of her uncle's death, and that she was the sole heiress to his two farms in Cloonalla, and asking for instructions.

From her youth upwards Nurse Bridget had heard nothing but abuse of the so-called English tyranny in Ireland—in fact, up to the time when she went to be trained as a hospital nurse, her only knowledge of England and Ireland was the thousand and one supposed wrongs which Ireland had suffered at the hands of England since the days of Cromwell, and

her one ambition in life was to see the downfall of the British Empire, and with that the freedom of her fatherland. In America, the Irish children find plenty of mentors of hate of England, both among their own people and the Germans.

In time, when Bridget began to earn some money as a nurse, she joined every Irish anti-British society, secret and otherwise, she could, and at the time of her leaving the States to take over her uncle's farms possessed more wonderful and weird badges and medallions than she could conveniently wear at once: incidentally the societies relieved her of most of her earnings "to provide powder and shot for ould Ireland."

On the liner, Bridget met many of her race, mostly men and women who had worked hard for some years in the States and saved enough money to return to Ireland, where they hoped to buy a small farm or shop and never to wander any more. One and all were longing to be in Ireland once again, and not one ever mentioned a word of the "brutal English tyranny" until Bridget started the subject.

Bridget landed at Queenstown, made her way to Cork, and set out on the long and tedious cross-country railway journey to the west. At the best of times the journey is a slow one, but during 1920 it became much worse owing to the great uncertainty of any train reaching its destination. Trains were even known to stand in a station for days on end while the driver, the stoker, the guard,

and the station employees argued and re-argued what they would do and what they would not do.

Twice during the journey Bridget had glimpses of the brutal British soldiery when two military parties wished to travel on the train, and the driver and guard refused to start until the armed assassins of the British Government left. At first Bridget was slightly confused; no doubt the soldiers were terrible blackguards, but at the time they seemed to be quiet and inoffensive, and she remembered frequently having seen American soldiers in the trains in the States, and the drivers and guards there made no objection.

However, a fellow-passenger explained to her that the soldiers used the Irish railways to go from one part of the country to another in order to murder the unfortunate soldiers of the Republican Army, and that the guard and driver, as became good citizens and soldiers of the Irish Republic, were quite right to refuse to aid and abet the British by carrying them on the train.

At a junction some thirty miles from Ballybor she changed into a composite train carrying passengers and goods, and soon after leaving the junction the train pulled up suddenly in a cutting, and there was loud shouting and firing. Bridget was greatly alarmed and excited, thinking that she would now see the British troops commit some of the terrible crimes she had heard so much about in the States—she had heard nothing of the crimes of the I.R.A.

It takes a long time in the west of Ireland to do anything, and it was quite twenty minutes before Bridget realised that this was a hold-up by the I.R.A., and that all the passengers were to get out and line up at the top of the cutting. The confusion then became terrific, half the passengers going up one side of the cutting, and the remainder up the other.

Wild-looking masked bandits then started shouting to the people to come down and go to the other side, whereupon a general post ensued.

Finally, the whole lot was collected together, searched, and at last allowed to take their seats in the train again; but the performance was not by any means over yet. Next, the waggons were all broken open, the contents thrown on the line, and then returned except Belfast merchandise, which was made into a heap—coffins, cases of jam and tea, boxes of linen, &c.—sprinkled with petrol, and then set on fire.

Bridget arrived at Ballybor on a summer's evening, and at once set out for Cloonalla. Ballybor appeared a mean and dirty little town to her American eyes, and she hoped for better things at Cloonalla—a good hotel and decent stores. After an hour and a half's drive the carman pulled up outside Cloonalla Chapel, and asked his fare where she wanted to go to. Not realising where she was, Bridget replied, to Cloonalla, the best hotel in Cloonalla, only to learn to her astonishment that the place boasted only one shop and no hotel

of any kind. And in the end she was thankful to accept the hospitality of a farmer's wife, and share a stuffy bed with the woman's daughter.

Bridget received a shock when she saw her uncle's house—she said that they wouldn't put a pig in it in America—and the idea she had had of settling down there quickly vanished. However, she determined to stay on awhile in Ireland, and help to the best of her ability the famous soldiers of the I.R.A. (she had not realised yet that the bandits who had held up the train were the famous soldiers) of whom she had heard so much in America.

On visiting the solicitor in Ballybor, she found that her uncle had left her a few hundred pounds, and this she gave to the man Hanley, with whom she lodged, to buy cattle with to stock her farm.

As soon as Bridget had settled down she found ample scope for her political ambitions both in Cloonalla and Ballybor, where most of the young people of her own age found talking sedition far easier and more amusing than hard work; and as everybody seemed to have money to burn, she had a great time—political meetings, drilling, picnics, and dances. And after joining the Cumann na Ban she volunteered for active service with the local company of the I.R.A., little knowing what was before her.

At first the game was amusing enough, teaching the young men the rudiments of first aid, and lecturing to the girls and youths of

Cloonalla in the school-house in the evening, followed by dancing until the early hours of the morning; and probably Bridget would have gone no further than this but for the unfortunate arrival of two professional gunmen in Cloonalla, who had been sent from Dublin to carry out the usual series of outrages and then to vanish before the storm burst.

The gunmen came with a list of local undesirables (from the I.R.A. point of view) to be removed—many of the names had probably been given out of private spite through the means of anonymous letters, a very favourite practice in Ireland—and at once proceeded to work, or rather to see that the Cloonalla Volunteers did the dirty work.

The following week seemed to Bridget like a horrible nightmare, starting with the murder of ex-soldiers, who paid the full penalty of being so stupid as to believe that the British Government would protect its friends and supporters in Ireland, and culminating in the revolting crime of the murder of a Protestant clergyman, who was seventy-nine years of age.

Early in the morning, before the household was up, the old man heard a loud knocking at the hall door, and on coming downstairs found the usual party of armed and masked men, who ordered him to follow them. He did so, and had no sooner reached the road than they shot him dead,—to be found by his old wife—the servants dared not leave the house—lying in the middle of the road in a pool of blood.

That night the gunmen vanished, and with them the orgy of crime ceased for a time at any rate. There is no doubt that these revolting and apparently purposeless murders are instigated by the I.R.A., but nevertheless they are carried out by the peasants in most cases, and they will have to bear the stigma now and always. Under a determined leader they appear to take kindly to "political murder."

Bridget was physically and mentally sick with horror, and made up her mind to return to the States as soon as she could dispose of her farms, and to this end bicycled into Ballybor to arrange with an auctioneer to sell the farms for her by public auction at the earliest possible date. The following day the auctioneer inspected the farms, and declared that she ought to get at least a thousand pounds for her interest in each farm, and fixed a near date for the auction, though he was very doubtful if the I.R.A. would permit it, and advised her to try and obtain their consent. But the last thing in the world Bridget wanted was to have any further dealings with the I.R.A., and the auctioneer left promising to do his best.

That night after the Hanleys and Bridget had gone to bed they received a visit from the captain of the Cloonalla Volunteers, who wanted to know if it was true that Bridget was going to try and sell her farms by public auction. Bridget told him that it was quite true, and that she was going to return to America. Whereupon he told her that the

I.R.A. would not allow this, and that if she wanted to dispose of her land a Sinn Fein Court would value it, and the Republican Government would then take it over and pay her in Dail Eireann Bonds (to be redeemed at their face value when Ireland is free and the Republic established), and after telling her to stop the auction he left.

In a few days Bridget received an order to attend a Sinn Fein Arbitration Court in Cloonalla Chapel at night, where the judges valued her farms at one hundred pounds each (loud applause in Court by the men who hoped to get the farms), and ordered her to hand over the land the following day to the Cloonalla Volunteer captain, who had every intention of keeping the farms himself.

Bridget protested loudly that she was a citizen of the United States, that the farms were hers, and that if this was a free country like America she was entitled to get the full market value for them, which she had been told was quite two thousand pounds; and lastly, that she had proved herself a good patriot, and burst into tears.

All of no avail—the judges gave her three days to get rid of her cattle and hand over the land, at the end of which time if she had not complied she was to be deported, and her farms and cattle confiscated.

Bridget returned to the Hanleys' house to find her boxes packed and dumped in the road, together with her bicycle, and the door of the house locked, and this in the middle of

the night. After trying in vain to gain admittance she sat down on one of her boxes and started to cry.

Towards dawn she again made a piteous appeal to the Hanleys to be allowed to stay in their house for the rest of the night, and that she would leave the following day; and for answer Mrs Hanley cursed her, and warned her that if she was not gone before daylight her hair would be cut off, and "God only knew what else would happen to her." In a blind terror she mounted her bicycle and rode madly into Ballybor, where she had to wait some hours in the streets before she could gain admittance to a lodging-house.

Bridget was made of the right stuff, and with the daylight and the contact with friendly human beings her courage returned, and she went to see the auctioneer once more, but received cold comfort. The man had been warned not to hold the auction, but was willing to, provided he had police protection (he saw his trade slipping away if he did not), and suggested that she should go and see the D.I.

Blake listened patiently to her tale of woe—he already knew the part she had played with the Cloonalla Volunteers, but liked the girl's looks and her pluck, and at the end promised her protection for the auction, but warned her that he could not protect her afterwards, and advised her to get out of the country as soon as she could.

Bridget then hired a car and drove out to

Cloonalla to try and collect her belongings. The boxes were still there by the roadside, but empty. And on going on to her farms she found that the fences and gates were smashed and her cattle gone. She tried in vain to get information of them, but found that not a man, woman, or child would tell her anything.

Returning to Ballybor, she again saw Blake, who promised to send out police to try and find her cattle. The following day the police went out to Cloonalla, rounded up the first score of men they met, made them build up the fences, mend the gates, and lastly, gave them two hours to return Bridget's cattle.

The I.R.A. now turned the full blast of that potent weapon, the boycott, on to the unfortunate Bridget. Not a soul would or rather dare speak to her—at any rate in public. Little children meeting her in the streets or country roads ran away, fearing lest she might cast an evil eye on them. Shopkeepers were forbidden to supply any goods to her, and the lodging-house people would have put her out on the streets but for the interference of the D.I. By this time Blake was determined to see her through, and when the auctioneer attempted to rat, made him think better of it and stick to his agreement with Bridget.

The day of the auction arrived, and with it the biggest crowd Cloonalla had ever seen. In fact, so dense was the throng that when Blake drew up with the auctioneer and Bridget, he was afraid to let his men near the

crowd lest they might be rushed. Standing up in a Crossley, he ordered the people through a megaphone to form three sides of a square facing the road, and, as soon as they had complied with his order, he told the auctioneer to get out and carry on with his work on the fourth side of the square. This he did, and, after describing the value and virtues of the farms in the usual flowery language of his kind, asked for a bid.

There followed a deadly silence of fully two minutes. Again the auctioneer called for a bid, and yet a third time—not a man in the huge crowd dared open his mouth. Land-hunger is the predominant trait in a western peasant's character, and many men in that crowd would have risked their souls for Bridget's farms; but so great was the power, or rather the fear of the I.R.A., that not a single man dared speak.

Seeing that it was useless to go on with the farce, Blake ordered the auctioneer to return to the car. At once the crowd broke with an angry roar, and made an ugly rush towards the road, but a volley of blank in the air quickly stopped them, and they turned to scatter in the opposite direction, while the police party returned to Ballybor.

That night, when she went to bed in the lodging-house, Bridget locked her door and piled all the furniture she could against it. About 2 A.M. some one knocked loudly at her door and bade her open, but she lay still and gave no answer. She could then hear the

raiders entering the other rooms of the house, and the screams of inmates, followed by the curses of the raiders.

The girl lay shaking in bed, knowing that it was only a question of time before they came again, and when they did it gave her almost a sense of relief. This time they did not knock, and she could hear whispering, followed by a man wearing rubber soles running down the passage, and then a crash as he hurled himself against her door.

The door was rotten and gave, but the furniture still held it up, and the other men then put their shoulders against it, and finally it gave way altogether, and the whole lot pitched into her room in a heap on the floor.

As Bridget screamed, the men flashed their electric torches on to her, and by the light she could see that they all wore painted white masks, which completely covered their faces except the eyes and mouth. One great brute then seized her by the hair, and dragged her screaming down the stairs and into the street, where the others held her while the big man shaved her hair off with a razor. They then lashed her wrists and ankles, gagged her, and flung her in her nightdress into a waiting Ford, which disappeared into the night.

A police patrol, guided by the screams, arrived on the scene just as the Ford was disappearing in the direction of Castleport. Sending a constable back to the barracks for a car and more men, the sergeant in charge searched the lodging-house, only to raise a

fresh alarm among the terrified inmates, most of whom were under their beds.

In a few minutes the car arrived, and the police raced off after the Ford as fast as the Crossley would travel.

For some time the police had had a strong suspicion that a creamery about half-way between Ballybor and Castleport had been frequently used by the I.R.A. as a detention prison, and as they drew near the place they saw lights disappear from the windows.

After surrounding the building, the sergeant knocked at the door and received no answer. Being afraid to delay lest they might be attacked, he told his men to take one of the two thick iron-bound planks carried under the body of the Crossley, and used for crossing trenches on the roads, and to use it as a battering-ram on the door. At the second blow the door splintered, and a third made a hole large enough for the police to pass in.

The sergeant now advanced into the building, revolver in one hand and torch in the other, and had nearly reached the back when shots and shouts were heard, and at the same time he saw a man disappearing through a door ahead of him and fired.

On reaching the door he was met by his own men, who said that three men had tried to escape that way, and that they had shot two, the third escaping.

They then searched the building, and found Bridget lying in a kind of coal-cellar, half-dead from fright and exposure, and, wrapping

her in a policeman's greatcoat, took her back to the lodging-house, leaving a guard there for the rest of the night.

The next day Bridget fled to England, to return to America from Southampton. Nothing in this world would have induced her to spend another night in Ireland.

She left the sale of her farms in the hands of the auctioneer, who, to his great surprise, some time afterwards found a buyer at a low figure in a man who came from the north.

The police saw the northerner into his new home, and left him there. The following morning the man staggered into the Ballybor Barracks, and when he had sufficiently recovered, he told Blake that soon after he had gone to sleep he was awakened by volumes of smoke, and on getting out of bed found that the house was on fire. Seizing his clothes, he just managed to get out before the blazing roof fell in.

Outside he was met by a roaring crowd, who beat him nearly to death with sticks, and while he lay on the ground he could hear the screams of his horses and cattle being burnt to death in the blazing outbuildings. The crowd then left him for dead, well pleased with their night's work. After some hours he recovered and managed to crawl into Ballybor.

XVI.

FATHER JOHN.

THE tiny village of Annagh lies on the eastern slope of the Slievenamoe Mountains, about fifteen miles due east of Ballybor, and consists of one dirty street with, roughly, forty-nine miserable tumble-down hovels and one grand slated two-storied house, as usual the shop and abode of the village gombeen man, who also kept the Post Office—not because he was the most honest man in the village, but because there was nobody else able to do so.

A good many years ago, on a bitter winter's night, a tinker, answering to the name of Bernie M'Andrew, drove his ass-cart into the village of Annagh, and called at the only shop to know if there were any kettles or cans to be mended. The night was so cold and wet that the old shopkeeper, in the kindness of his heart, bade the shivering tinker put up his ass and spend the night. The tinker stayed and never left.

M'Andrew's stock-in-trade, when he arrived at Annagh on that winter's night, consisted of half a barrel of salt herrings, a kettle, the usual tinker's soldering outfit, a policeman's

discarded tunic, and the rags he stood up in. Within a year M'Andrew had buried the old shopkeeper, who had lived alone for years and was beloved by all, and reigned in his place.

Being an ambitious tinker, M'Andrew started a gombeen business with the old man's savings, which he found by chance in the secret drawer of an old desk, and in a very short time became the best hated and most feared man in the district.

At first M'Andrew supported Sinn Fein enthusiastically, but when he saw law and order beginning to disappear, being now a man of property, he became alarmed, and tried to run with the hare and the hounds.

M'Andrew's great opponent was the young parish priest, Father John, who, after serving as a chaplain with the British Army in France with great distinction—he had been decorated for bravery in the field by both the British and the French—returned to Ireland, having seen enough bloodshed for his lifetime.

Father John was a grand man both physically and morally and in the right sense of the words, and if only the majority of young Irish priests were up to the standard of Father John there would be little trouble in Ireland to-day.

When he became the parish priest of Annagh, Father John saw at once that M'Andrew was fast reducing the great majority of his parishioners, who were poor men with poorer mountain land, to a state of slavery, and realised that it only wanted two bad years in succession to put the whole parish under the gombeen man's thumb.

At first he tried to keep the farmers away from M'Andrew's shop ; but this they resented, as it entailed a journey of many miles to the nearest town, and then they had to pay nearly as much as to M'Andrew. Next he denounced M'Andrew and his evil practices from the altar, warning the people of the consequences ; but in spite of all the priest could do or say the gombeen man flourished.

From the very first Father John opposed the Sinn Fein movement both by word and deed, and when the first Sinn Fein organisers appeared in his parish he quickly hunted them away ; but before he knew what was happening practically every young man in the parish had been enrolled, whether he liked it or not, as a soldier in the I.R.A. M'Andrew was quick to seize his chance of revenge, telling the people that the priest was a secret agent of the British Government—hadn't he served in the British Army and taken the pay of the British Government, an enemy of the people ? —and that he was doing his best to stand between them and liberty. In a week Father John was practically an outlaw in his own parish, and M'Andrew became the popular hero.

Though he still officiated in the chapel, Sinn Fein saw to it that he was paid no dues. For nearly two years this state of affairs continued, and it would have been impossible for the priest to live if the older and more sober members of his flock had not come to his house secretly in the dead of night and paid him their dues.

One day, when feeling ran very high, Father

John opened his daily paper to see his own death reported, and a long obituary notice, probably the handiwork of M'Andrew.

It was a situation common in Ireland—the peasants blind to the virtues of their truest friend, and making a popular idol of their worst enemy: it is a sad thing that many Irishmen will always insist in believing what they wish to believe.

Father John was by nature a kindly and genial man, a lover of sport, of a good horse, and of the society of men, and those two years must have been a perfect hell on earth for him. Not that any one was ever openly rude to him; they just sent him to Coventry and kept him there, hoping to break his heart, and that by refusing to pay him any dues they would gradually freeze him out, and in his place would come one of those fire-eating young priests who would lead them to victory and freedom.

The summer of 1920 was wet and cold, with frosty nights during every month except July. Now, if your potatoes grow in boggy land, and there comes heavy rain followed by a night's frost, not once but several times, you will have no potatoes, and probably very little crop of any kind. And if your living depends on the potato crop, you stand a good chance of starving, unless the gombeen man will come to your assistance.

By November the whole parish of Annagh practically belonged to M'Andrew, who held a mortgage on nearly every acre of tenanted land, and proceeded to bully the people to his heart's content.

On a Sunday morning in December, at about 10 o'clock, the hour when the village usually began to come to life, the inhabitants were startled by the screams of a woman, and when they rushed to their doors saw M'Andrew's servant running out of the village towards Father John's house. M'Andrew had been murdered during the night without a sound, and the servant had no idea of what had happened until she went to his room to see why he had not got up. All M'Andrew's books had been burnt, and afterwards the murderers must have cursed the day they did not set a light to the house as well.

On the next day the village woke up to find a company of Auxiliaries billeted in M'Andrew's house and the yard full of their cars—a case of out of the frying-pan into the fire.

For some time past the police had known that men on the run were hiding in the mountains near Annagh; but though the area came within Blake's district, it was impossible to keep any control over it, owing to the fact that the Owenmore river and the Slievenamoe Mountains lay between it and Ballybor.

The Auxiliaries spent the day fortifying M'Andrew's house, and that night started operations, and the inhabitants soon realised that the British Empire was not yet an “also ran.”

Just as it was getting dark the Auxiliaries in Crossleys would suddenly burst out of M'Andrew's yard, travel perhaps five or ten miles at racing speed, and then surround and round up a village or district, so that the

numerous gunmen who had come from the south for a rest cure found it impossible to get any sleep at all.

The local Volunteers at once sent an S.O.S. to Dublin, and received the comforting answer that a flying column would arrive shortly in the district and deal effectively with the Auxiliaries. In the meanwhile they were to harass the enemy by every means in their power and carry on a warfare of attrition—in other words, if they found one or two Cadets alone—if unarmed so much the better—they were to murder them.

At first the local Volunteers were very much afraid of the Auxiliaries, Sinn Fein propaganda having taught them to expect nothing but murder, rape, and looting from the “scum of English prisons and asylums”; but after a few days had passed and nothing dreadful happened to man or woman, they took heart once more and started their usual warfare.

The Auxiliaries were commanded by a Major Jones, and on the Sunday following their arrival in Annagh Jones left alone in a Ford at an early hour to see Blake in Ballybor. The road crosses the mountains through a narrow pass, and near the top of the pass there is a small chapel, a school, a pub, and a few scattered cottages.

On his return Jones passed this chapel as the people were coming out from Mass, blew his horn, and slowed up. After passing through the crowd he noticed a group of youths standing on the right side of the road, and opened his throttle wide, thereby probably saving his life.

When the car was within ten yards of the group every man drew a pistol, and it seemed to Jones as though he was flying through a shower of bullets. However, though the car was riddled, and had any one been sitting in the other three seats they would all have been killed, Jones found himself uninjured, and the old "tin Lizzie," responding well to the throttle, flew down the hill at twice the pace Henry Ford ever meant her to travel at.

That evening Father John called on Jones and apologised for the outrage, and Jones at once fell under the charm of the priest. Probably his astonishment at Father John's visit had something to do with it, but in the days to come, when Father John supported his words by deeds, Jones learnt that his first impression had been a correct one.

Returning in the early hours of the morning from a raiding expedition to the south of Annagh, the Auxiliaries were surprised to see a tall priest standing in the middle of the road and holding up his hand. Fearing a trap—there was a blind corner just behind where the priest was standing—they stopped about two hundred yards off and beckoned to the priest to advance.

They were still more surprised to find that the tall priest was Father John, who, having received information after they had started that the Volunteers were going to lay trees across the road at this corner in the hope of smashing up the Auxiliary cars, had spent the whole night walking up and down the road in order that he might warn them of their danger.

Father John drove back to Annagh with the Cadets, and by the time they reached the village every Cadet swore that the priest was the finest man they had yet met in Ireland, and they didn't believe there was a finer one.

From that on Father John accompanied the Auxiliaries on many a stunt, and there is no doubt that he gave them every help in his power and all information which reached him ; but though he would travel anywhere with them, he would never accept hospitality from them, nor would he enter M'Andrew's house.

About six miles from Annagh, in a hollow of the mountains, is the tiny village of Glenmuck, completely isolated from the rest of the world, and so situated that its presence was quite hidden until you literally walked on top of it. None of the inhabitants, who lived chiefly by making poteen in the winter time and going to England as harvesters in the summer, possessed a cart, for the very good reason that the nearest so-called third-class road was five miles away, and only a goat track passed within a mile of the place.

Here in due course arrived the flying column of the I.R.A., seventy strong, every man mounted on a bicycle and armed with a British service rifle and as many pistols as he could find room for. They were also the proud possessors of a Lewis gun.

As usual, the gunmen were billeted so many in each farm, and after being badly harassed for some time in the south, Glenmuck seemed like Paradise to them. The nights were spent in dancing, card-playing, and drinking poteen.

Somewhere about noon the gunmen got up, and after breakfast visited each other in their different billets after the fashion of our troops in France, walking about openly with their rifles slung over their shoulders. The Lewis gun team passed their days teaching the boys and girls of the village the mechanism of the Lewis gun.

The leader's idea was to give his men much-needed rest and amusement for a few days, and then to try and ambush the Auxiliaries; and probably they could have spent quite a long time resting here without the Auxiliaries having the slightest suspicion of their near presence. But war seems to be made up so largely of "ifs," and the "if" in this case proved to be Father John.

When out riding on his rounds one morning, the priest noticed that most of the young people of his parish appeared to be gravitating in their best clothes towards Glenmuck, and suspecting a poteen orgy, he sternly commanded a young damsel to tell him why she was going to Glenmuck, and the girl told him. Father John rode straight back to Annagh, to be just in time to stop Jones from starting off on a raid in the opposite direction.

Jones first sent off a Cadet on a motor bicycle to Blake at Ballybor, sending him a verbal outline of his plan of attack on Glenmuck, and asking him to co-operate with the Auxiliaries from the other side of the mountains. He then turned out every Cadet in the place, left M'Andrew's house empty to take care of itself, and made off at full speed in

the direction of Glenmuck with the priest acting as guide.

They reached the nearest point to Glenmuck on the road at noon, and after leaving a small guard over the Crossleys, the rest of the company set out in open order across the mountain for the flying column's lair.

The gunmen had had great luck in the south for a long time, and their luck still held. A youth, making his way across country to get a sight of the wonderful gunmen, happened to look behind him when on top of a rise, and saw about a mile away the oncoming Auxiliaries. Being a sharp youth he realised who they were, and ran for the village as fast as his young legs would carry him, and by chance ran straight into the leader when he entered the outskirts of the place.

Reaching the hill above the village the Auxiliaries made a last desperate rush down the slope, in the hope of catching the gunmen scattered in the different cottages, and so mopping them up before they could get together; but by this time the flying column had taken up positions on the top of the far slope above the village, and as the Cadets reached the cottages they came under heavy machine-gun fire.

Quickly realising what had happened, Jones ordered one platoon to make a frontal attack on the gunmen's position, while he sent a second and third platoon to try to work round their flanks; the fourth platoon he kept with him under cover in the village.

Then followed a very pretty fight for an

hour, by which time the gunmen, like the Boers of old, thought it was time to move on and take up a position on the next ridge.

Jones knew that if he could only keep in close touch with the flying column it was only a question of time before Blake, who would be guided by the heavy firing, would attack them in the rear, and that they would then stand a good chance of bagging the whole lot. The fight gradually worked across the mountains, the gunmen retreating from ridge to ridge, while the Cadets stuck to them like grim death, always striving to pin them down, and when they retreated to drive them in the direction from which Blake ought to appear.

Late in the afternoon heavy shooting suddenly broke out behind the gunmen, and the Cadets redoubled their efforts to close with them.

By this time the opposing forces had worked their way down the western slopes of the mountains almost as far as the high upland bogs, and directly the gunmen realised that they were likely to be surrounded, they broke and fled down a valley, closely pursued by police and Cadets. Unfortunately the light was getting bad, and the gunmen's luck still held good. When they had gone about a mile, they came across a big party of country people with whom they mixed, and when the police came up with them it was impossible to tell gunmen from peasants—probably the former were busily engaged cutting turf while the latter looked on. Their arms were passed to the women, who hid the rifles in the heather and secreted the pistols and ammunition on their persons.

During the whole long fight Father John attended to wounded Cadet and gunman alike, always to be seen where the fight was hottest; and though his calling was conspicuous from his clothes and white collar, yet on several occasions the gunmen deliberately fired on him when attending to a wounded Cadet.

After the battle of Glenmuck the flying column was seen no more in that district, and for weeks the local Volunteers gave Jones no trouble.

Time after time Jones had received information that certain young men in and about Annagh carried arms, but whenever they were surprised in a shop or pub no arms could be found on them, and it was noticed that they always moved about in the company of certain girls.

Soon after the battle of Glenmuck the belles of the district received the shock of their lives when shopping in a town some miles away with these young men. About noon four Crossley loads of Cadets suddenly dashed into the town with two women searchers dressed in dark-blue uniforms, and that day the first real haul of revolvers and automatics was made. As usual, the men passed their arms to the girls directly they saw the Auxiliaries arrive, but this time no notice was taken of the men, while the girls, who on former occasions had stood looking on and jeering at the Cadets, found themselves quickly rounded up, and the women searchers soon did the rest.

After this the moral effect of the women searchers was so great that not a girl in the district dare carry arms or even despatches.

The girls were not sure whether the searchers were women or young Cadets dressed up as women, and this uncertainty greatly increased their alarm.

About six weeks later Jones found out that a much-wanted Dublin gunman, called Foy, who had murdered at least two British officers in cold blood, was hidden in the district, and was being fed by his mother and sister, who lived about two miles from Annagh. Time after time the Cadets tried to surprise Mrs Foy or her daughter carrying food to Foy's hiding-place, but always in vain.

Foy's presence soon began to be felt in the district. Two Cadets, returning off leave in mufti and unarmed, were taken out of the train and murdered just outside the station, their bodies being left there for all who passed to see, and no man dared to touch the bodies until the police arrived. Next the Cadets were ambushed twice in one week, both times unsuccessfully.

Father John, who had hoped that at last his parish had returned to the paths of peace, was furious, and denounced from the altar all men and women who shielded murderers. Finally, after the murder of the two Cadets, he refused Holy Communion to Mrs Foy and her daughter, which is a very serious step for a priest to take.

And when remonstrated with, he replied that, sooner than not denounce and punish murderers and those who aided and abetted them, he would throw off his coat and become an Auxiliary. More power to you, Father John !

XVII.

THE BOG CEMETERY.

AFTER many months of the Sinn Fein Terror, the town of Ballybor became a place of shadows and whispers. At night-time men saw shadows, real and unreal, moving and stationary, at every corner of the streets and in every lane; and during the day-time, when men met in the streets, they would only speak in low whispers to each other, and always keeping one eye over their shoulder.

Public opinion withered and died. Sinn Fein had no use for it—men became completely detached, mere spectators of the unchecked and uncondemned orgy of crime; like the younger generation in England, who waste a large part of their lives in picture-houses, gazing at films of vice and crime. And if a man had been murdered in the main street at Ballybor in the middle of the day, not a hand would have been raised to save the victim—the inhabitants would simply have regarded the incident in the light of a film, and then gone home to their dinners.

The oft-heard remark when a policeman has

been murdered, "that it served him right for joining the R.I.C.," epitomises the attitude of the majority of the Irish public towards so-called "political murder." As a rule, an Irishman, on being asked if there was any news in the paper, would reply, "No, only the usual columns of murders and outrages."

Walter Drake, as his name implies, was descended from an Elizabethan soldier who had settled in the west of Ireland and built a large house about two miles from Ballybor, and here for many generations the Drakes had lived, hunted, and farmed.

Walter Drake had at an early age entered the army through Sandhurst, but retired after six years' service on the death of his father, and since then had lived at the Manor, spending a large part of his time helping his poorer neighbours in every way in his power: a quiet man of a retiring nature, a popular magistrate, and a good neighbour, but a determined Loyalist. Called up again in August 1914, he had served throughout the war with distinction in his old regiment, to return once more to his home.

Had Drake lived in any civilised country in the world, he would most assuredly have died in his bed when his time came, esteemed by all as a just, kindly, and honourable man; but, as in war, the best seem to be always taken, so it has been in Ireland. His only crimes appear to have been that he continued to act as a magistrate after receiving an order from the I.R.A. to resign his commission of

the peace, and devoting himself to helping ex-soldiers in the town to get their pensions and trying to get grants of land for such as were worthy. The granting of land to ex-soldiers was bitterly opposed by the Transport Union, who wanted every acre for their own landless members. And probably being a personal friend of Blake's and beloved by the police force, would constitute another crime in the eyes of the I.R.A.

On a certain Monday night the constable on duty at Ballybor Barracks reported that a great light could be seen in the sky, and thought there must be a big fire not far from the town. Going to the top of the barracks, Blake at once saw that a large house must be on fire, and judging from the direction the chances were that it was the Manor. Taking a dozen men in a Crossley, he at once went off there, to find the grand old house burning fiercely, and by the light of the fire he could make out a pathetic group of figures on the tennis-ground in front of the house.

The first person whom Blake met was the old butler, who told a tale now familiar in many parts of Ireland to-day. The household had retired at their usual hour of eleven, after which the butler had carefully closed up the house and gone to the servants' hall to smoke a pipe before turning in. Soon afterwards he heard a loud knocking at the front door, followed by a volley of shots, some of which must have been fired through the windows, as he could hear the sound of falling glass.

The old man went and opened the front door, to be met by a ring of rifles, shot-guns, pistols, and electric torches, behind which he could make out the usual mob of masked ruffians. A strange voice then demanded Major Drake; and when the butler told them that the Major had gone to Dublin by the mail that day, a man handed him a letter telling him that in ten minutes' time they were going to burn the house to the ground, and that he had better warn the inmates if he didn't want them roasted alive.

The butler at once took the letter to Miss Drake, who read the following pleasant communication addressed to her brother:—

“Major Drake,—Owing to your aggressively anti-Irish attitude, we have received orders to burn your house to the ground. You will be given ten minutes to collect your clothes. By order.—I.R.A.”

The girl hurriedly slipped on a dressing-gown, and went down to the hall to find it full of the brutes sprawling in chairs and smoking. The leader came forward to speak to her, and she begged him to have mercy on her mother, who was old and in feeble health, and who would surely be killed by the shock of having her house burnt and being turned out into the night; and implored the man to take anything he wanted, offering him all the money she had and her mother's jewellery. For answer the man pulled out his watch, and said that she had exactly ten minutes to get

her old English mother out of the house, no more and no less.

Seeing that it was useless to argue with the brute, Miss Drake called the butler and her mother's maid, woke up the old lady, dressed her the best way they could, and as the household passed out through the central hall, they saw men sprinkling the furniture and carpets with petrol. Hardly had they reached the lawn when the men rushed out past them. There was a violent explosion (petrol-tins bursting), and the house seemed to burst into flames in an instant. And here they remained on the tennis-ground, helpless and hopeless, their only crime Loyalty, until Blake found them there, silently crying.

Seeing that the house was gone, that, in fact, it was impossible to save anything, Blake put the Drakes into the Crossley, with the old butler and the servants, and drove them to a hotel in the town.

Drake had been seen motoring through Ballybor to the station on the Monday, and by that evening there was a whisper in the town that something had happened to him, but what the something was the whisper did not mention. During Tuesday rumour lay dormant. On Wednesday, however, rumour awoke and rapidly made up for lost time, and by that evening it was freely whispered throughout the town that Drake had joined the I.R.A. ; that he had bolted to Canada to escape from the I.R.A., only to be taken out of the train on his way to Dublin by a flying column of

gunmen, tried by a court-martial, condemned, and executed; that he had gone to Dublin to join the Auxiliaries; and lastly, that he had gone to London to get married.

On Wednesday morning Miss Drake, whose poor old mother lay in a state of collapse at the hotel, came to Blake in great distress, and implored him to find her brother. She was sure something must have happened to him, as she had wired twice, and then, getting no reply, had wired to the secretary of his club, where he had intended staying, and from whom an answer had just come to say Major Drake had not arrived.

Blake promised to do all he could, and started off at once to the station to make inquiries. Having found out that Drake actually did leave Ballybor by the mail train on Monday, he next sent an urgent cipher message to the authorities in Dublin, hoping they would be able to trace him there. Blake then set out for Knockshinnagh, the next station on the line to Dublin, about a mile from the small town of the same name, and situated in the midst of a vast bog, which stretches towards the foot of the mountains to the east and west, and runs nearly as far as Ballybor. Here, acting on the assumption that the rumour of Drake having left the mail train at this station was correct, Blake carefully interrogated the station-master and the three porters. One and all denied having seen Drake on the day in question—one porter, who had been there years, adding inconsequently that

he did not even know him by sight, and thereby making Blake sure that he was on the right track at last.

That night Blake again visited the station-master at his house in the station after midnight; and pretending that he knew for certain that Drake had left the train at Knockshinnagh, warned the man of the serious consequences of refusing to give information. 1 A.M. is an unpleasant hour to interview armed men, and thinking that the police were uncomfortably near and the I.R.A. in the dim distance, the station-master made a full confession.

A few minutes before the limited mail arrived at Knockshinnagh on Monday, three armed and masked men had driven up in a Ford car, and directly the train pulled up had made straight for the carriage in which Drake was travelling. At once they seized him, and dragged him, struggling, out of the carriage to the car, and then drove off rapidly in the direction of Ballybor. Before the train pulled out, a stranger in a third-class carriage warned the station-master, in the name of the I.R.A., to give no information to any one. As no further information could be got from the station-master, Blake returned to the barracks, and set out again for Knockshinnagh after breakfast, to endeavour to trace the Ford from there.

The road from Knockshinnagh to Ballybor runs practically the whole way through a vast bog, which is drained by the Owenmore river,

with a deep fringe of water-meadows on each bank. At intervals side roads connect up the villages on the higher ground near the mountains with the main road.

The police had covered nearly three miles of the road without getting any news of Drake or the Ford, when a sharp-eyed sergeant noticed the narrow tracks of a Ford turning up one of these side roads to the east. The car had turned the corner sharply, leaving a deep track of two wheels in the soft ground on the edge of the road.

Turning down this side road, they proceeded slowly without seeing any further car-tracks until they came to a long low cottage, standing back about fifteen yards from the road. Here they found tracks which showed that the car had pulled up at the door of the cottage, turned, and returned towards the main road.

Leaving his men outside, Blake entered with a sergeant, in time to see the owner bolting out of the back door, only to be caught by the sergeant and brought back. The man said his name was Moran, and protested his loyalty loudly before Blake could ask him a question.

In Ireland if you want information badly, often the best way to obtain it is to bluff your opponent into believing that you already know part of it, leaving him to guess as to how much you know. Blake took this line of attack with Moran, and asked him the names of the four men who had called at his cottage on the previous Monday in a car. But Moran knew the game as well as Blake, and denied

that any car had been to his house lately, or indeed at any time, whereby Blake knew that the man lied, and had something to conceal.

He then threatened Moran that if he did not tell all he knew he would arrest him and keep him until he did, and at the same time took him outside and pointed out the old tracks of a car in front of the cottage. This had the desired effect, and at long last Blake thought their search was at an end.

Moran, it appeared, was the caretaker of an I.R.A. cemetery, or rather an old disused cemetery, where formerly unbaptised children were buried, and which now was used to bury Volunteers who had "gone to America." On the Monday in question three armed and masked men had driven up to his house with a prisoner, and after trying him by "court-martial" in the cottage, had taken him to the cemetery, and made Moran help them to dig a grave, while the unfortunate prisoner looked on. They blindfolded and shot him, and finally forced Moran to put the body in the grave and fill it in. They then left.

Though hard pressed, Moran denied any knowledge of the identity of the masked men or their victim; and when told to describe the murdered man, gave a description which might have applied to hundreds of men.

Blake then ordered Moran to show him the cemetery, but when thus driven into a corner he took on the courage of a cornered rat, and though they tried for an hour not one inch would he go. Seeing that the man was desper-

ate and would have died sooner than show them the cemetery, Blake returned to the barracks.

That night, as soon as it was dark, a strong police force rounded up the six leading Volunteers in Ballybor, and took them out to Moran's house in two Crossleys, arriving as the full moon was showing over the top of the mountains.

At the first knock on the door Moran came out, his face contracted with fear, which turned to relief on seeing the uniforms of the police; but when he saw the six Volunteers he nearly collapsed. Blake now ordered Moran to lead them to the cemetery, and so great was the man's terror that he started off across the bog without a word.

After walking over a mile in the moonlight, they came to a low ridge of limestone mounds running through the bog and parallel to the mountains. Here in a hollow was the old graveyard, which looked like a disused sheep-pen, such as the country people use for the rounding-up of mountain sheep when the different owners pick out their own sheep and lambs to brand them. The cemetery was surrounded by a stone wall, broken down in many places, and inside was a tangled mass of elder and thorn bushes.

After posting sentries round the graveyard, Blake made Moran point out the latest grave, and after the trembling man had shown them a mound between two bushes, he ordered two of the Volunteers to start opening the grave with spades brought by the police. Presently

one of the spades met something in a sack, and on opening the sack they found the body of a short dark man—obviously a peasant—whereas Drake had been a tall fair man. On examination they found wounds in the body and left leg.

For a moment Blake was quite nonplussed—he had been so sure that the body would be Drake's. He was certain that the station-master had spoken the truth, and there seemed no reason to doubt Moran's evidence, though why he should be in such a state of terror was not plain. Further, it was now five days since Drake was supposed to have been murdered, and the body they had just dug up had obviously been in the ground two days at the most, probably only one.

A careful examination of the cemetery showed that there was no other recent grave.

Blake's thoughts were interrupted by one of the Volunteers, a man called Brogan, asking with his tongue in his cheek and an impudent sneer: "Is yer honour satisfied now, and will we be after burying this poor fellow decently agin?"

Taking no notice of Brogan's question, Blake told a sergeant to make the Volunteers carry the dead man to the Crossleys, and to wait for him there. After they had gone he made Moran go down on his knees and swear on his oath that the body they had dug up was the man who had been executed on the previous Monday; but Moran could only swear that he had been so frightened at the time that he had not taken any notice of the prisoner,

but that to the best of his belief the body was the one he had buried. Moran then broke down, and had to be half-carried, half-led to his cottage, where they left him, and returned to Ballybor with the Volunteers and the corpse for a military investigation.

The failure to find Drake's body in the bog cemetery forced Blake to follow up the other rumours regarding his sudden disappearance, but every rumour and clue failed them, and it looked as though Drake's fate was to be added to the long list of unsolved Irish crimes.

Two days after the police had visited the cemetery, Blake received information that arms for a police ambush had been brought into Murrisk townland, and also that poteen was being freely made and drunk there.

Having arranged with a company of Auxiliaries stationed in Annagh to co-operate with him, Blake left the barracks with two Crossley loads of police and a Ford an hour before dawn one morning, and as the day broke the Auxiliaries and police started to close in a cordon on the village and outlying farms where they suspected the arms were hidden.

The first signs of life were two women running across a bog, and when followed one of them was seen by Blake with his glasses to throw a still into a bog-hole, while the other one took two large jars from under her shawl and smashed them together into pieces. The women were quickly rounded up, and on being taken to the nearest house, the police found six fully-dressed men well tucked up in two beds, and the remains of a huge fire in the

kitchen, while the whole house reeked of poteen—good circumstantial evidence that the party of eight had spent the night running a still.

After a long and fruitless search for arms, Blake found himself close to Murrisk Abbey; so, after sending the Auxiliaries back to Anagh, he went to pay the mac Nessa a visit.

The old man was delighted to see him, and insisted that he should stay to dinner, and the police should have drink and food.

Blake and the mac Nessa dined alone, and over the port the old man started to tell Blake tales of his youth. After his second glass and the long day in the cold, Blake began to feel drowsy, and his thoughts wandered to Drake and the grave in the bog cemetery, only to wake up with a start, hearing the old man say something about a grave, followed by, "Is yer honour satisfied now?"

Apologising for his deafness, he asked the mac Nessa to begin again, and the old man told a rambling story of a butler of his young days called Faherty, whose chief recreation was shooting rabbits in the park during the summer evenings. Close to the park lived a pompous retired shopkeeper called Malone, who had a very fine red setter, which was always wandering in the park, like Faherty, after rabbits.

On several occasions Faherty and Malone had had words over the setter, and the climax was reached when Malone arrived at the Abbey one evening, purple with rage, and insisting on seeing the mac Nessa, burst into his study,

accused Faherty of having shot his setter, and added that he knew that the dog was buried in a shrubbery at the back of the house. The mac Nessa at once called for Faherty; the three proceeded straight to the shrubbery with a spade, and Faherty was made to open the grave which they found there. After digging down a short way he came on the body of a cur dog, to Malone's great astonishment and disappointment, and Faherty asked in a voice of triumph, "Is yer honour satisfied now?"

After Malone had gone home, the mac Nessa asked Faherty for an explanation, and the butler told his master how he had shot Malone's setter by mistake in the dusk, and then buried him in the shrubbery. The following day he heard that Malone suspected him, and had heard of the funeral in the shrubbery, so the next night he shot a cur dog, and buried him on top of the setter.

On the way back to the barracks Blake could not help thinking of the similarity of the remarks of Faherty and Brogan when the bodies of the cur dog and the dark peasant were dug up, and that night he dreamt that he was opening an endless row of graves, and never knew whether he would dig up a cur dog or a dark peasant, and all the time he was hoping to find Drake's body. At last he came to a grave where he was positive he would find Drake, and started to dig like mad, only to wake up and find his own red setter on his bed.

Blake now determined to renew his efforts to find Drake. He ordered the Head Constable to round up the same six Volunteers,

and as soon as this was done set off once more for the bog cemetery. Making their way to Moran's house, they learnt from his wife that the previous evening her husband had been removed by masked men with shovel hats and wearing black mackintoshes. The wife, noticing the black mackintoshes, accused the police.

Borrowing a couple of spades, the police then went to the graveyard, and as soon as the dark man's grave could be found, Blake ordered the Volunteers to open it again, and at the same time watched Brogan's face carefully. On the way out to the cemetery, Brogan had been laughing and sneering as on the former occasion, but directly he heard Blake's order he went as white as a sheet, and began to tremble, and a look of terror leapt into his eyes.

Blake knew that at last he was on the right track.

None of the Volunteers moved, waiting for Brogan to give a lead, and Blake had to repeat his order, calling on Brogan by name to start digging. Pulling himself together with a great effort, the Volunteer commenced slowly to throw the earth out of the grave, the sweat, though it was a cold day, pouring down his face.

The lower Brogan dug the slower he dug, until at last, when he had excavated about two feet of soil, he suddenly fainted and collapsed into the shallow grave.

The police were by now strung up to the highest pitch of excitement, and a huge ser-

geant, who had been a great favourite with Drake, suddenly gave a hoarse shout, and, jumping into the grave threw Brogan out, and started digging like a madman, while the rest began to fidget with the triggers of their rifles and look ominously at the uneasy Volunteers.

Suddenly the sergeant's spade met a soft resistance, and in a few seconds he had uncovered and opened a sack, to find, as Blake expected, the body of poor Drake with a huge expanding bullet hole through his forehead.

The next five minutes will always be to Blake a nightmare: the police went stark mad,—when highly-disciplined troops break they are far worse to handle than any undisciplined crowd,—and with a howl of rage made for the cowering Volunteers, ignoring Blake's shouts; and to this day Blake has no idea of how he kept his men from taking revenge on the Volunteers.

Probably he would have failed but for the lucky chance of noticing that Brogan, who had come to, was trying to escape. The diversion of chasing Brogan brought the police back to their senses, and by the time he had been captured and brought back, discipline was completely restored.

Before they left the cemetery, Brogan made a complete confession of all he knew about the tragedy. He told Blake that information had been given to the G.H.Q. of the I.R.A. in Dublin that Drake was on the point of taking command of a company of Auxiliaries

who were to be stationed in his own house, the idea being to use Drake's local knowledge, which Blake knew to be quite untrue. On the Sunday two gunmen arrived from Dublin with orders to shoot Drake and burn his house. Finding out that Drake intended to go to Dublin the following day by the mail train, they commandeered a Ford in Ballybor, taking Brogan with them as a guide, and took him out of the train at Knockshinnagh; and after the murder they returned to Ballybor, superintended the burning of Drake's house, and then disappeared into the night on stolen bicycles.

Shortly afterwards Brogan heard a rumour that Drake had been murdered and buried in the bog cemetery, and he became very uneasy. That night he and three of the Volunteers received orders to take part in a police ambush on the far side of the Slievenamoe Mountains, which order they obeyed, going in a Ford.

In the ambush a strange gunman—none of the local Volunteers knew who he was or where he came from—was killed, and when some argument arose as to how to dispose of his body, Brogan at once volunteered to take the body back with him and bury it in the bog cemetery, his intention being to bury the gunman on top of Drake, so that if by chance the police opened the grave they would find the body of the gunman and be put off the scent. After the first visit of the police the Volunteers had removed Moran to a Sinn Fein detention prison, fearing that he might break down and give information.

XVIII.

A JEW IN GAELIC CLOTHING.

“BEWARE of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”—St Matt. vii. 15.

Probably very few people in England have the remotest idea to what extent anarchy was rife throughout the south and west of Ireland, even in parts of loyal Ulster, during the year 1920.

Most of the Irish members of Parliament, seventy-three to be exact, swore allegiance to Dail Eireann. Of these, seven lived abroad, and the remainder spent most of their time in prison.

At the beginning of the year Sinn Fein captured practically every County Council, Rural Council, and Poor Law Guardian’s Board in twenty-seven counties; nearly all these Boards defied the Local Government Board, and took their orders from Dail Eireann direct.

Next came the burning of County and Civil Courts, police barracks and Petty Sessions Courts, followed by murderous attacks on police and Loyalists throughout the south and west, though chiefly in the south at first.

In many parts Loyalists were forced under the jurisdiction of Sinn Fein Land, Arbitration, and Civil Courts. Solicitors had their choice of practising in these Courts or not practising at all, and a solicitor must live as well as another man.

The police had no power outside their barracks, and in many districts a policeman was never seen for weeks on end, whole districts being policed by civilian Volunteers.

A large national loan was raised openly in defiance of the British Government, its avowed purpose being to carry on war against England and to break up the British Army. Sinn Fein banks and insurance societies were floated, the money obtained being used for the same purposes. Sinn Fein laws were passed and enforced, and a large army organised and built up, drilled and armed.

At this time the British Prime Minister repeatedly assured the country that there never could and never would be an Irish Republic; while Lloyd George talked De Valera acted, and the Republic came into being while Lloyd George was still talking.

During the summer of 1919 a very ordinary and at first uninteresting strike of shop assistants took place in Ballybor for higher wages and shorter hours, and the shopkeepers managed to carry on with the aid of their families, and few of the public suffered any inconvenience from the strike.

Good relations still existed between master and employee in nearly every shop in the

town, and the shopkeepers were just on the point of an amicable settlement with their assistants when a Transport Union agitator, or, as he called himself, a Gaelic organiser, appeared on the scene, and in a few hours the whole situation was changed. The local secretary of the Transport Union, to which the shop assistants belonged, at once broke off all negotiations with the shopkeepers, and before night several acts of sabotage had been committed in the town.

The next morning saw the strike begin afresh in deadly earnest. Every street was picketed by strikers, who refused to allow any one, townspeople or country people, to purchase any foodstuffs until the shopkeepers had given in to their impossible demands. Doubtless the idea was that the starving people would bring such pressure to bear on the shopkeepers that they would be forced to give in and grant practically any terms to the shop assistants. In a word, the old game of blackmail.

Several unfortunate old country-women, who had managed to evade the pickets and to purchase provisions, were caught on their way home by the strikers and their purchases trodden into the mud of the streets. One old clergyman, who lived several miles from Ballybor in an isolated district, managed not only to dodge the pickets and buy much-needed food, but to get two miles on his way home. However, a picket of shop-boys, mounted on bicycles, overtook him, threw all his provisions into a bog-hole, beat him severely, turned his

pony loose in the bog, and left him by the roadside.

At first the shopkeepers were bewildered and at a complete loss to understand the sudden change in the attitude of their assistants, but on hearing Paidraig O'Kelly, the so-called Gaelic organiser, make his first public speech, they knew at once what they were up against.

In 1914, before the war broke out, all thinking Irishmen knew that the coming and growing danger in Ireland was the Transport Union, formed originally for the perfectly legitimate object of raising the status and wages of the working classes (quite apart from the small farmer class) by combined action. But in a very short time this Union became the instrument of Bolshevism in Ireland under the able command of James Connelly, a disciple of Lenin's long before the latter had risen to power.

And so thoroughly and well had Connelly made out his plans for the future that in every town and village the complete machinery of Soviet Government had been prepared, ready to start working the instant the revolution should break out. Men had been appointed to every public office, and the houses of the well-to-do allotted to the different Commissioners and officers of each local Soviet.

Luckily for Ireland, the rebellion of 1916 saw the end of James Connelly, probably the most dangerous and one of the cleverest men of modern times in Ireland.

With the death of Connelly and the disappearance of Larkin to America, the Trans-

port Union fell into the hands of less able men, but still carried on successfully with agrarian agitation, though marking time as regards revolution.

After the war the Union found itself up against Sinn Fein, and for a time it looked as though the two parties would come to blows and so nullify each other's efforts. Unfortunately both parties saw that their only chance of success was to co-operate; doubtless the Transport Union thought that if the rebellion was successful their chance would come in the general confusion, and that they would be able to get their Soviet Government working before the Sinn Feiners could get going.

During 1919 and 1920 Sinn Fein and the Transport Union nearly came to blows on several occasions in the west over agrarian trouble. The Transport Union wanted to take advantage of the absence of law and order to hunt every landlord and big farmer out of the country and divide their lands amongst the landless members of the Union, while Sinn Fein policy was to wait until the Republic had been set up, when, so they declared, there would be an equitable division made.

The Ballybor strike collapsed as suddenly as it had started with the disappearance of Paid-raig O'Kelly. The previous day a public meeting on the town fair green had been held by the Transport Union, and all the young men and girls of the town and countryside had attended. At first the local firebrands addressed the meeting with their usual grievance,

and then O'Kelly spoke for a full hour. At first he confined himself to the strike, and carried his audience with him when he painted a vivid picture of the different lives led by the shopkeepers and their "slaves," how the former and their families lived on the fat of the land, the latter in the gutter.

The crowd had now had all they wanted and were prepared to go home to tea, but O'Kelly had a good deal more to tell them. Suddenly and without any warning he began to unfold the doctrine of Lenin, to show them how the world and all the good things in it ought really to belong to them, and that these good things would never be theirs until the ruling classes were forced to disgorge them, and that the only way to make the swine disgorge was to kill them one and all—gentry, business men, and shopkeepers.

The man could really speak, and held his audience spellbound while he unfolded the Irish Eldorado of the future; but through all his speech ran the one idea to kill, always to kill those in a higher station of life than his listeners. To finish with he called upon them to start with the police, to shoot them like the dogs they were, and when they were gone the rest would be easy.

Sergeant M'Grath had been detailed to attend the meeting to take down in shorthand any speeches which might require explaining afterwards, but until O'Kelly started to preach the doctrine of Lenin he had not opened his notebook.

The sergeant had served in most parts of Ireland, but O'Kelly's speech and brogue puzzled him: the man spoke like an Englishman trying to imitate the Irish brogue, but with a thickness of speech which the sergeant could not place. Nor could he place the shape of O'Kelly's head, a round bullet-shaped one with a high narrow forehead and coarse black hair.

He duly reported O'Kelly's speech to the D.I., who endeavoured to find out where the man came from, but failed to get any definite information. One rumour said that O'Kelly came from Cork, another from America, and yet a third that he was a native of Castleport. So the only thing to do was to arrest the man and then try to identify him; but O'Kelly had completely disappeared.

Nothing further appears to have been heard of O'Kelly in Ireland during 1919, but the following year an itinerant lecturer on bee-keeping turned up in Co. Donegal, who bore a strong resemblance to Lenin's disciple. This man's practice was to give a short lecture on bees in school-houses, and then to launch forth into pure Bolshevism—a complete waste of time on the average Donegal peasant. Next he was heard of in Belfast, where he was lucky to escape a violent death at the hands of some infuriated shipyard workers.

In May 1920 the Transport Union in Ballybor began suddenly to give Blake a lot of trouble—cases of men being dragged out of their beds at night and forced with a loaded

gun at their heads to join the Union steadily increased.

Several landlords who employed a good many men were threatened that, if they did not pay a higher wage than the maximum laid down by law, all their men would be called out and that they would in addition be boycotted. And any who refused at once had their hayricks burnt and their cattle injured.

Rumours came to Blake's ears of a man making extraordinary speeches at night in the different country school-houses throughout the district to audiences of young men and girls, speeches which apparently combined Sinn Fein aims with red revolution.

During 1920 Sergeant M'Grath had been sent to Grouse Lodge as sergeant-in-charge, and thinking that he recognised O'Kelly in the revolutionary lecturer who was touring the district, he kept a careful watch on the Cloonalla school-house, and within a week had surprised and captured the man, who turned out to be O'Kelly.

O'Kelly was brought up before the R.M. in Ballybor Barracks, charged with inciting the people to murder the police during the strike of 1919, and pleaded not guilty.

The R.M., who looked upon the man as a harmless lunatic (he had not heard him haranguing a crowd), offered to let him go provided he entered into a recognisance to be of good behaviour and could find two sureties in fairly substantial sums. O'Kelly replied that he

dared not enter into a recognisance to be of good behaviour, and further, that if he was released he would continue to preach revolution. Whereupon the R.M. gave him three months and left the barracks.

Blake then saw O'Kelly alone, and endeavoured to find out who and what he was. It was obvious that the man was not an Irishman, nor did he appear to be English. O'Kelly refused to give him any information regarding himself.

While this interview was going on an Auxiliary, whose home was in Scotland, and who commanded a section of Cadets on temporary duty in Ballybor, looked in to see Blake and found him with O'Kelly.

After O'Kelly had left the room the Auxiliary told Blake that he knew the man well, and had often seen him in Glasgow, where, previous to 1919, the man had lived for two years working as a Jewish Bolshevik agent, and that he had suddenly disappeared from Glasgow when the police began to get unpleasantly attentive.

XIX.

MOUNTAIN WARFARE.

THE movements of the flying columns of the I.R.A.—gangs of armed ruffians, usually numbering about forty, but sometimes more, sometimes less, and led by men with military experience (ex-soldiers and even ex-officers, to their everlasting shame)—have always corresponded accurately to the amount of police and military pressure brought to bear on them, which pressure has continually fluctuated in agreement to the whims and brain-waves of the politicians in power.

Figuratively speaking, these same politicians have kept the police and military with one hand tied behind their back, and sometimes when the screams of the mob politicians in the House have been loudest, have very nearly tied up both their hands. If a chart had been kept during the Irish war showing the relative intensity of the politicians' screams and the activities of the I.R.A., the reading of it would be highly interesting and instructive.

Extra pressure, more rigid enforcement of existing restrictions on movement, and in-

creased military activity have always resulted in a general stampede of flying columns to the mountains of the west, where the gunmen could rest in comparative safety, and swagger about among the simple and ignorant mountain-folk to their hearts' content.

Here they would stay until the politicians, frightened by inspired questions in the House, would practically confine the military and police to barracks. The gunmen would then, with great reluctance, leave the safety of the mountains, and return to the southern front, to carry on once more the good work of political murder.

And so the game of seesaw went on. Every time that the Crown forces saw victory in sight the politicians would drag them back again to start all afresh. The wonder is that the Crown forces stuck it so long with every hand against them, and their worst abuse coming from a cowardly section of their own countrymen in England.

Early in 1921 the Crown forces in the south of Ireland suddenly gave forth signs that a determined effort was to be made to deal effectively, once and for all, with the gangs of armed murderers and robbers roaming the country, masquerading as soldiers of the Irish Republic; and again the flying columns fled in haste to their mountain retreats in the west, a part of the country where the majority of the inhabitants have always done their best to keep out of the trouble, with a few isolated exceptions.

This time they stayed longer ; in fact, each time it became harder to induce the gunmen to forsake the peace of the mountains for the war in the south. After a time they started to vary the monotony by carrying out punitive expeditions against the police and the unfortunate Loyalists in the surrounding lowlands, but always to fly back to the mountains at the first sight of a force of police or soldiers.

Ex-soldiers were the chief game at this period. A district would be chosen where there were no troops and few police. A list of all ex-soldiers living in this district would be made out, and guides provided by the local I.R.A. commandant. Each ex-soldier would be visited in turn during a night, given his choice of active service with the I.R.A. or a sudden death. Those who remained loyal to the King would be led out and butchered like sheep, though possibly the murderers would not take the trouble to remove their victims, but would fire a volley into them as they lay in bed, and leave them there. Truly a brave army !

Transport presented no difficulty to the gunmen. The British Government took practically no steps to control the movements of motors, motor bicycles, or push-bicycles, except the motor-permit farce, which greatly inconvenienced Loyalists only. All they had to do was to commandeer as many cars or bicycles as they wanted, where, when, and how they liked.

However, this was not all the work which the Sinn Fein leaders intended their flying

columns to carry out, and in order to induce the gunmen to return to duty the usual noisy peace squeal was started in England, so that conditions might be made pleasanter for the gunmen in the south. The murdering of ex-soldiers and helpless Loyalists could be easily carried out by local Volunteers under a well-seasoned murderer—an excellent method of initiating raw recruits into the methods of the Sinn Fein idea of warfare. The British Government, always great judges of Irish character, thought that the Sinn Fein leaders were coming to their senses at last, took off the pressure, and the gunmen duly returned to duty.

At length there came a time when these columns really got the wind up, stampeded to the western mountains, and this time refused point-blank to return to duty.

In the late spring of 1921 Blake was suddenly called over to England on private business in London, and afterwards went down to the country to spend a few days with the parents of a man with whom he had served in France.

The day after his arrival Blake's host told him that a Black and Tan, a native of the place, had been murdered in Ireland a few days previously, and was to be buried that day in the parish graveyard, and asked Blake if he would accompany him to the funeral.

When passing through Dublin on his way to England, Blake had seen in the Castle the account of how this unfortunate Black and Tan had met his death—shot in the back when

walking in the streets of a small western town with a girl; and not content with that, the murderers had fired a volley at him as he lay wounded on the ground, and even fired several shots after the girl as she fled shrieking up the street. So terrified were the townspeople that, though there were many in the streets at the time, not one dared to even approach the dying constable, and it was not until a full hour afterwards that a passing police patrol found him lying dead in a great pool of blood. Incidentally, the murderers had by then put sixteen miles behind them by means of stolen bicycles.

Blake accepted, expecting to see a large funeral to do honour to the murdered policeman, but to his great surprise and indignation found that only the near relations of the murdered man were present. 

Returning from the funeral, Blake happened to see the local police inspector in the main street of the little town, and at once tackled him about the funeral, wanting to know why the local police had not been present as a last mark of respect to a man who had died for his country.

The inspector seemed greatly surprised and rather taken aback, and replied that he could hardly be expected to turn his men out to attend the funeral of a murderer.

For a moment Blake saw red, and but for a natural horror of making a scene in a public place, would probably have knocked the inspector down. Then, thinking that there must

be a bad blunder somewhere, he asked whom the Black and Tan had murdered, and how he had met his death. The inspector admitted that the Black and Tan had been murdered, he believed, and then opened out on the crimes and atrocities which the Black and Tans had committed in Ireland—murder, rape, and highway robbery,—in fact, the usual list of atrocities which is generally to be read in the Sinn Fein propaganda pamphlets.

Blake waited patiently until the inspector had given him a harrowing picture of the condition of the south and west of Ireland: heart-rending accounts of homeless and starving women and children, old and young men and boys hunted like wild beasts in the mountains and living on berries and roots; shops burnt to the ground and looted by Black and Tans in mufti; and of men and boys shot by Auxiliaries in the dead of night before the eyes of their relations.

He then asked the inspector who had given him this information, adding that he would like to see the proof of it, and at the same time telling him that he was a D.I. in the R.I.C.

The inspector invited Blake to go to the police station with him, and here, as Blake had expected, he was shown the usual lying propaganda and pamphlets of Sinn Fein, which have been distributed by the million throughout England, Scotland, Wales, and the U.S.A. An extract from one pamphlet is worth repeating:—

“Famine is about to add thousands of inno-

cent victims to the hundreds of thousands already in need of the bare necessities that keep body and soul together. In every Irish village and town sickness, pestilence, and death invade the humble homes, striking swiftly and surely the mothers and children incapable of resistance through months of struggle against cold and hunger. . . . Children of tender years, ragged and wretched, trudge daily through the cold to a school now used for a relief station to obtain the one meal a day on which they live—a piece of bread and a warm drink.”

Seeing from his ribbons that the man had served in the war, Blake asked him if he would take the word of a brother officer against that of a Sinn Fein rebel. The inspector seemed to think this a good joke, and replied: “A brother officer every time.” “Well, then,” said Blake, “as an ex-British officer, I give you my word of honour that all those pamphlets you have just shown me are a pack of lies circulated by Irish rebels to ruin your country.”

Still the inspector was only half convinced, and in spite of all Blake could say he saw when he at last left that the man’s belief in the printed pamphlets of Sinn Fein was still unshaken. Such is the tremendous effect of print, whether newspapers or pamphlets, on the modern mind, and the firm belief in the old saying that there can be no smoke without a fire.

That afternoon Blake was carried off by his hostess to a drawing-room lecture at a big country-house. His hostess was not quite sure

what the lecture was about, but believed it had something to do with Russia. After tea the lecturer arose, and before he uttered a word, Blake had a premonition of what was coming. A tall thin man, with pronounced Celtic peculiarities and a mane of long, lank, black hair, Blake had seen his prototype thousands of times in the west of Ireland.

Throwing back his great mane with a jerk of his head, the lecturer started on an impassioned recital of the atrocities committed in Ireland by the British Army of Occupation, practically the same collection of lies and wicked quarter truths which Blake had heard from the police inspector that morning.

Blake watched the faces of the audience closely, mostly women of the upper and middle classes, and could see that the lecturer's ready tongue was making a deep impression on them. There was no yawning or fidgeting, and the audience, many of them with the parted lips of rapt attention, kept their eyes riveted on the quite interesting face of the wild man of the west, camouflaged by a London tailor to harmonise with an English drawing-room.

Blake let the man have a fair innings, and then while he was drinking a glass of water (Blake felt like asking him if he would not prefer poteen) stood up and said quietly, "Ladies and gentlemen, so far this lecture has been nothing but a pack of lies from beginning to end. The lecturer is a Sinn Fein rebel camouflaged as an Irish gentleman, and I am a D.I. of the Royal Irish Constabulary. Dur-

ing the war I fought for your country, and the lecturer probably assisted the Boches in every underhand and mean way he could. You can judge for yourselves which of us is most probably telling the truth, and nothing but the truth."

The wild man turned with a wicked snarl, all signs of the veneer gone, and his face reminded Blake of a cornered gunman he had had to deal with once during a raid on a Dublin lodging-house; and there would probably have been an ugly and unseemly scene, but the owner of the house intervened, and gently but firmly led the wild man out of the room, while Blake and his friends left the house at once.

On his return Blake found a cipher wire from his County Inspector recalling him at once, and going by car to London managed to catch the Irish mail from Euston. All the sleepers were engaged, but by good luck he found himself in possession of a first-class compartment.

While idly smoking a cigarette and meditating on the extraordinary amount of Sinn Fein propaganda he had met with in the course of one short day in England, he noticed a well-dressed slight girl pass and repass the glass door of his compartment several times. As the mail pulled out of the station this girl pulled open the sliding-door from the corridor and sat down opposite Blake, remarking that it was a grand evening, and thereby unconsciously informing him that she was Irish.

Suddenly realising that he was smoking, he asked the girl, who he could see was unusually pretty and quite young, if she had any objection, and, as he had expected, she readily entered into conversation.

After a time she remarked, with a pretty engaging smile, that she saw he had nothing to read, and getting down her suit-case, handed Blake a handful of the identical pamphlets he had already seen that morning in the English country police station. In addition, there was one fresh one on "The Irish Issue," by William J. M. A. Maloney, M.D., captain in the British Army, August 1914–August 1916.

Blake then saw that his original suspicion was correct, and that he had to deal with that most dangerous of all spies, Sinn Fein or any other breed—a pretty girl.

By the time Rugby was passed he had heard the simple life-history in a rural part of England of the girl, ending with the information that she was going to Dublin for three months, and that she was very much in dread after all the dreadful happenings there she had read of in the papers, and she had never been in Ireland before (all this in a very fine rich Dublin brogue). And Blake began to think that he must really possess that most priceless of assets, to look a much bigger fool than you are.

After the stop at Crewe the girl again attacked him about Dublin, asking if he lived in lodgings there, and, if so, was there a room to let in the same house. A few days previ-

ously Michael Collins's flat in a certain Dublin street had been raided with satisfactory results to the raiders, and Blake gave her this address, assuring her that she would here find quarters entirely suitable to her requirements. The girl took the hint, and the rest of the journey to Holyhead was spent in silence.

On the mail-boat Blake saw the girl once more, sitting with a youthful officer of the Dublin garrison, and carrying on an animated conversation with their heads touching.

On arriving at Ballybor Barracks Blake found further orders awaiting him from the County Inspector to proceed at once to Castleport with all the men and cars he could spare.

The wildest rumours were afloat amongst his men: that the I.R.A. were going to take the field openly (this notable achievement was reserved for the Truce); that a large force of Americans had landed from a yacht at Errinane with stacks of arms, and that they were raising and arming the mountain men of that district greatly against their wish and inclination, and that De Valera had been landed on the west coast from a submarine, was hiding in the mountains of Ballyrick, and was at long last going to take the field himself.

Collecting every man he could spare and taking all the transport except one Crossley, Blake set off with a strong convoy of police for Castleport. The men were in great heart, and eagerly looking forward to a good square fight in the open with the hitherto elusive soldiers of the I.R.A.

At Castleport they found the barracks packed with police, drawn in from all the outlying districts; even two large houses adjacent to the barracks had had to be commandeered to hold all the men.

The County Inspector explained the situation, which was quite simple. A large force of I.R.A. flying columns, estimated at over a thousand strong, were reported to have refused to return to the south, and had taken up permanent quarters in the Maryburgh Peninsula, north-west of Errinane, and were playing old puck generally throughout that part of the west. At first these flying columns had been distributed all through the mountains, some in the Ballyrick country, more in the Slievenamoe Mountains, and a large party to the south of Castleport; but owing to the unpleasant attentions of Auxiliary flying columns they had gradually retired towards the Maryburgh Peninsula, where so far they had been left unmolested.

The gunmen on the Slievenamoe Mountains had had a bad fright from the very efficient company of Auxiliaries quartered at Annagh. Father John had done all in his power to get rid of these unwelcome guests in his parish, but showing a fine turn of speed they just managed to escape, actually dashing through Ballybor in the middle of the night in a convoy of commandeered Fords a few days before Blake's return.

For some time the gunmen had been in the habit of commandeering their rations at night from Castleport, and during these nights the

town would be completely isolated. The first intimation of anything being wrong which the townspeople had was the return one night of several white-faced crying girls, who told their parents that they had just by chance met Pat So-and-So, and that he had asked them to go for a stroll, and hardly had they got outside the town when armed men had seized poor Pateen and ordered the girls to go home at once. Incidentally the poor Pateens were kept as a labour platoon by the gunmen, and made to do all the dirty work of digging trenches, breaking down bridges, &c., which occurred during the operations to follow. A different butcher, baker, and grocer would be visited each time, just to show that there was no question of favouritism with the I.R.A.

While this requisitioning was proceeding every road leading into Castleport was held by strong pickets of gunmen, who, as soon as the ration party returned, would make for the Maryburgh Mountains on bicycles, the ration party travelling on a commandeered lorry.

Directly the County Inspector got wind of this proceeding, he made an attempt to surprise the gunmen one night, but their local information was too good, and he failed. Then, hearing that this big muster of gunmen was hiding in the Maryburgh Peninsula, he collected all the forces he could, and prepared to kill, capture, or drive them into the Atlantic.

Soon after Blake's arrival at Castleport, apparently reliable information came in that a landing of arms had been carried out early

that morning at Errinane, and that these arms were to be taken as soon as it was dark to the Maryburgh Peninsula. The County Inspector at once detailed Blake and Black, the Castleport D.I., to take a large force of police and attempt to seize the arms before they could be taken out of Errinane.

Errinane lies about twenty-one miles to the south of Castleport, on a narrow inland bay. The road runs the whole way through wild mountainous country, though at no point does the road run very close to the mountains.

On the way out Blake carefully looked out for any points where an ambush might be carried out, and noticed that there were two bad spots: one where the road skirted the edge of a wood with a rocky hill close on the other side; the second, about eight miles from Castleport, where the road twisted through a ravine with steep rocky sides dotted with bushes, and at one place crossed a narrow high bridge—an ideal place for an ambush. Blake was so much impressed with this place that he stopped the cars and made his men search carefully the sides of the ravine, but not a sign of any preparations for an ambush could they find. Nor were there any trenches on the road.

After picketing Errinane, Blake searched every house, shop, store, and barn in the village, but not a sign of arms could be found, nor was any yacht to be seen in the harbour.

It was late when they started back for Castleport, and Blake, who was suspicious of an ambush at the bridge in the ravine, which

was the nearest point on the road to the Maryburgh country, ordered Black to go ahead with two Crossleys, and to search the ravine thoroughly, and then to wait until the rest of the force caught him up.

Blake's party was delayed by two punctures, and when they got near to the ravine heavy firing suddenly broke out ahead of them. When within half a mile of the bridge, they saw a party of men running away from a culvert in a dip of the road ahead of them.

Luckily, Blake was in the leading car, and ordered the driver to pull up about a hundred yards short of the culvert, which, sure enough, went up before they had been waiting two minutes.

The firing ahead had now grown heavier, and every now and then the dull thud of a bursting Mills bomb could be heard above the racket of musketry. Realising that Black must be hard pressed, Blake divided his force into two, ordered each party to deploy on one side of the road and attempt to outflank the ravines.

When within three hundred yards of the bridge both parties came under heavy enfilade machine-gun fire—machine-guns which made a noise none had ever heard before, and were probably American Thompson guns,—and they were forced to take the best cover they could find in the open bog.

The machine-gun fire at once died down, only to break out again every time the police attempted to advance by short rushes. By painful degrees they managed to get within

eighty yards of the bridge, where the formation of the ground protected them from that horrible enfilade hail of bullets, and gathering themselves together they charged at the reverse slope of the ravine.

At once the firing ceased, and when at last they had torn their way through briars and gorse to reach the top, all that they found was small piles of empty cartridges and two ordinary tweed caps—not a sign of a gunman whichever way they looked.

They then turned their attention to their comrades on the road, and here a heartrending sight met their eyes. At first it appeared as though all the occupants of the two cars were either dead or wounded, but as they descended towards the bridge a small party of police crawled from underneath it, soaked to the skin. They found Black lying against the front wheel of the leading car with four bullet wounds in his body and his head smashed in by a dum-dum bullet—stone-dead.

Blake found out from the survivors that Black had disregarded his orders, and had not pulled up until the cars had passed the bridge, when a hail of bullets swept the cars from the top of both banks of the ravine. Black was wounded by the first volley, was hit twice while getting out of the car to lead his men to the attack, and in the head as his foot touched the ground.

The sun had by now gone down, and collecting all his wounded and dead, Blake pushed off for Castleport as fast as he could.

Beyond a blown-up culvert half a mile from the ravine, which the cars crossed without difficulty on their own planks, they met with no further trouble.

Then followed three feverish days of planning and preparing for the great drive, which it was hoped would put a thousand gunmen out of action for good and all; unless indeed a new Chief Secretary should come to Ireland, perhaps this time from Australia or possibly from India, or even a Jew, who would celebrate his arrival in this unfortunate country by opening wide the gates of the internment camps.

The area to be driven was roughly three hundred and sixty square miles, which will give some idea of the magnitude of the task which a handful of police had to tackle with the aid of a battalion of infantry and a company of Auxiliaries. And when it is added that the entire peninsula consisted of mountains (five of them well over two thousand feet, and unclimbable in many places), bogs, lakes, and rivers, with only one decent road which ran *round the coast and at the base*, it will be granted that the task was nearly an impossible one.

Also the few scattered inhabitants would be certain to be found to act as unwilling scouts for the gunmen. Moreover, once the weather turned wet, which may happen in the course of a few hours on the west coast, a thick mist would cover the mountains, and all the gunmen had to do then was to walk out of the trap and make their way inland.

The plan of attack was as follows. The Castleport-Errinane road crossed the twenty-mile neck of the peninsula, and before dawn one day ten columns, each of eighty men, formed up a mile apart.

As soon as it was light enough to see, these columns started, marching in columns of route for the first two miles; they then deployed into open order, got in touch with each other, and then started to drive the country out of face for the remaining eighteen miles. Frequently the line had to halt while a column would hunt a mountain in its line of advance, or a detour round a lake had to be made.

For the first four miles there was no sign of the gunmen—the column only met flocks of mountain sheep, and no sign of a human being; but, when ten miles from the west end of the peninsula, the troops on both flanks came under fire—evidently an attempt to stop them working round behind the gunmen.

The troops in the centre now tried to advance, but were also held up by heavy fire before they had gone half a mile; but at their third attempt the flanks met with no opposition, and the whole line was able to continue the advance. From now on the gunmen offered a determined resistance at every ridge, but always retired before their positions could be turned.

At last, close on nightfall, the Crown forces came to the strongest position of all—a long ridge in the centre with small hills at each end, extending to the north and south coasts of the peninsula.

As there was no time left for a turning movement, a direct assault was tried, only to fail twice. It was then decided to wait until the full moon had risen, when it would be possible to make a turning movement along the coast.

Unfortunately the sky became cloudy, and during the whole night the Crown forces were unable to move; but as soon as the daylight came another assault met with no opposition.

Once on top of the ridge they could see the remainder of the peninsula to the west coast, and not a sign of a gunman anywhere; nor when they searched every valley and even some sandhills on the coast could they find so much as a single gunman.

The following day word was brought into the barracks at Castleport that a column of gunmen, thousands strong, had been seen marching in column of route into the Ballyrick Mountains from the coast; but how they could have got there from the Maryburgh Peninsula did not transpire for some time.

Later it was learnt that when the Crown forces gave up the attack on the final ridge to wait for the moon, the gunmen waited until it was dark, when they made their way to the coast. Here they had collected every fishing-boat to be found. The sea being calm, the whole force managed during the night to cross the bay to the north, a distance of fifteen miles, landed on the Ballyrick coast soon after dawn, and at once set off for the Ballyrick Mountains.

XX.

THE GREAT ROUND UP.

At the beginning of the Irish war, when the I.R.A., to use its own words, "took the field against the British Army," its activities were purely local and sporadic. Some unfortunate police patrols of half a dozen men, often less, walking along the King's highway, interfering with none except evil-doers, would be suddenly fired at with shot-guns, sometimes loaded with jagged slugs and pieces of metal, from a safe cover behind a stone wall with carefully-prepared loopholes.

These police patrols never had a dog's chance, and should have been discontinued long before they actually were.

At first the murderers did not trouble to make sure that they had a perfectly safe line of retreat behind them when the location of these cowardly ambushes was chosen, but after a few failures they made no mistake in future, the line of retreat, either through a thick wood or down the reverse slope of a hill, being always the first consideration.

Married police living in houses or rooms in the town of their station afforded an easy and safe target for the venom of these hooligan shop-boys and farmers' sons. At first the police

used to go home unarmed, and used to be shot down in the back while passing along an ill-lighted street or lane, or the assassins would knock at the door of the policeman's home, and if he came to the door would fire at him and then run away.

Occasionally, in districts where the standard of bravery was very high, all the Volunteers would collect in a small town after dark—always after dark—and carry out an attack on the local police barracks. They knew perfectly well that it was impossible for the police to leave their barracks owing to the smallness of their numbers, and that as long as they kept well under cover (which they did) they were just as safe as they would be in their own beds at home.

These so-called attacks on police barracks simply consisted in gangs of hooligans first taking careful cover in houses adjacent to the barracks, and then firing off as many rounds as they possessed. They always ceased fire long before daybreak, in order that they might be home in good time before it was possible for the police to leave barracks or a relief party to arrive on the scene.

At this period of the war, raiding the houses of the Loyalists for arms, and incidentally for money and valuables, not forgetting drink, was a much safer and more remunerative night's amusement than shooting policemen or attacking barracks, though the price then was £60 for every policeman murdered.

A party of twenty to thirty Volunteers, usually boys from fifteen to twenty years of

age, would meet at a fixed rendezvous some time after dark with all the arms they could raise. They would then don black cloth masks, turn up their coat collars, pull their hats down, and sally forth to spend the night robbing, murdering, and terrorising the unfortunate Loyalists of the district.

Imagine the feelings of a respectable old man living in a lonely house, who had probably never harmed any one during his lifetime, and whose only crime consisted in being loyal or refusing to subscribe to the funds of the I.R.A., in many cases a form of common robbery.

Night after night he lies in bed expecting to hear a loud knock at the door, and at last it comes. He opens the door to find a dozen shot-guns, old rifles, and pistols pointed at him. Some brute then demands his arms; the old man says he has none. They push him aside and force their way in. The old man is made to sit down while two young hounds keep prodding him in the back of the neck with the muzzles of their pistols, to remind him what they could do if they liked. The remainder ransack the house from top to bottom, take away any money or valuables they can find, and consume any drink there may be. If they cannot find any money or valuables, they threaten him with death until he disgorges. And lonely women suffered in like fashion.

The demand for arms used to be merely a blind for committing robbery. The location of every firearm in a district was well known from the beginning of the war.

If the reader happens to be an English country gentleman, let him think what it would be like never to know the night or hour when he would be raided by a gang of farm labourers or village loafers, armed and masked, from the nearest village. He might retire to bed to be waked up by loud knocking on his front door. If he did not open quickly a rifle shot would be fired through the lock, and if the door did not open then, it quickly would to the blows of hatchets which would follow. A wild gang of drunken brutes would burst into his nice house, smash desks, sideboards, and cupboards, searching for loot. Lucky man if he escaped with the loss of arms, money, and valuables, and not of home and life as well.

If the reader is an ex-soldier, let him imagine what his feelings would be like if in the middle of the night he was pulled out of his bed by these same ruffians, and given his choice between joining Trotsky's Own Light Infantry, or whatever the local Red force may call itself, or being shot out of face. Being true to his country, he refuses to have anything to do with Bolshevism, and is shot before the eyes of his agonised wife.

Remember that the loyal country gentlemen and ex-soldiers of Ireland have sacrificed their blood and treasure on the altar of Empire as well as their English cousins, and hence are entitled to as much protection.

But no, when it comes to a matter of politics and votes they are thrown to the wolves, to the eternal shame of England. The sacrifice of the southern Loyalists will form one of the

most disgraceful chapters in the history of England.

Robberies on a more extensive scale followed: bank managers taking large sums of money to out-of-the-way villages on the occasion of a fair, in order to facilitate payments by buyers to farmers, were held up and robbed. Mail-cars carrying pension money for the old and poor were held up and robbed; likewise post offices, banks, railway stations, and large shops—and most of this money used to forward the cause of armed rebellion. In fact, the Government were largely being fought with their own money, or, rather, that of the helpless British taxpayer.

But this form of warfare, though most unpleasant for the unfortunate Irish Loyalist, and probably disturbing to the few people in England who knew anything about what was happening in Ireland, would never have led to anything provided the British Government had taken the necessary steps quickly to preserve law and order and punish evil-doers. But no, as ever in Ireland, they would do nothing, except procrastinate, until it was too late.

Instead of strengthening the R.I.C. and sending more troops into the country, they merely evacuated outlying police barracks, which were promptly burnt amidst scenes of triumph by the local Volunteers, and hailed by all rebels as the first outward sign of the retreat of the English from Ireland.

If the police released by the evacuation of these barracks had been used to form flying

columns to quiet the worst districts, there might have been some sense in this manœuvre ; unfortunately, the men were all wanted to make up the wastage in the occupied barracks caused by the large number of resignations of young constables in the R.I.C. at this time.

Looking back, these constables who resigned appear to have been mean deserters of their comrades, but after-events have to a certain degree justified their action. They were certain that, no matter how often the British Government swore to see its loyal servants through, in the end it would let them down, and the pity is that they were right. True, there was a day when an Englishman's word was as good as his bond, but that day appears to be quite out of date. Or perhaps it does not apply to politicians !

Doubtless greatly surprised at their initial success, the chiefs of the I.R.A. now determined on a much more ambitious form of warfare—namely, the formation of flying columns to harry and murder the Crown forces throughout Ireland, not excepting Ulster ; at the same time they started a tremendous campaign of propaganda in England and the States.

The idea of breaking up the British Empire by means of a number of small flying columns of corner-boys in Ireland, and green pamphlets at John Bull's breakfast-table, appears laughable ; but Sinn Fein has shown itself a wonderfully astute judge of the mentality of the present-day politician in England.

The summer of 1920 saw the greater part of the south and west in the hands of the Republic,

who not only boasted an army in the field, but ran their own police, law-courts, and Local Government Board. It was not an uncommon occurrence for a man to be first arrested by the R.I.C. for some offence, and then by the I.R.A.; sometimes there used to be quite an exciting race between these two forces to see who could catch the culprit first.

The first flying columns were made up of determined and hard-up corner-boys collected from every district in the south and west, and were sent out under specially qualified leaders to murder as many police and soldiers as they could, no matter whether they were armed or unarmed, asleep or awake. The price for the murder of a policeman rose gradually to £60, and eventually to £100.

With a terrorised population and a Government which refused to function, these columns had everything in their favour, and carried on their campaign of murder and assassination practically unhindered at first.

Their chief channels of information were the post-office and young girls. The larger proportion of post-office officials were openly disloyal, postmasters even being caught red-handed decoding important police and military wires for the information of the I.R.A. And young girls not only obtained information by walking out with policemen and soldiers, but also carried the gunmen's arms to and from a murder or ambush.

It used to be no uncommon sight in Dublin to see a tram-car held up by Auxiliaries and searched with no result. Before the Auxiliaries

had boarded the tram, the gunmen would openly pass their pistols to girls sitting beside them. Any one giving information would never have left that tram alive, nor would it have done any good, as the Auxiliaries were powerless (until near the end of the war) to search women.

As regards transport, they had only to take it where, when, and how they liked—motors, motor bicycles, lorries, and push-bicycles by the thousand in every part of the country. Think how different the result might have been if the Government had taken up all this transport and reduced the I.R.A. to their flat feet. And, of course, they used the trains freely, and without payment, both to carry arms and men.

Young girls, especially if pretty, make far the most dangerous spies in the world; and though they have always been used during a war on a small scale by every country, yet this is probably the first occasion on which a nation has conscripted girls of from twelve to twenty-five years wholesale for this vicious and contaminating work.

Even little children were taught the art of eavesdropping, and, of course, if they did not hear every word, readily filled in the blanks from their imagination. Many a man in Ireland during the last two years has lost his life through the medium of a little child. The Markievicz woman ought to appear on the Day of Judgment with the record millstone round her neck.

Despatches were carried in dozens of ways

—boys on bicycles, men on motor bicycles, who also acted as scouts for ambushes, in the sample cases of bagmen (a common method also at one time of sending arms and ammunition about the country), by the post, and by railway guards—in fact, by every method which came to hand.

The I.R.A. obtained much valuable information through opening letters in the post, but their really important and often vital information came to them through a bad leakage in the Castle.

Any shortage of recruits was quickly made good by a drastic form of the old pressgang. An unwilling recruit would be dragged out of bed in the middle of the night, placed against a wall, and given a minute to decide for King George or the Irish Republic. King George meant a bullet in the brain, probably a dum-dum of the worst description; the Irish Republic meant active service with a flying column at some near future date.

Money was obtained in just as simple a way. A levy of, say, a pound a cow or a pound a beast would be laid on a district. A farmer had six cows or one horse, two asses, and three head of cattle. In either case he would pay £6 to the funds of the I.R.A. Any arguing there was would be solely on the side of the collector, who would have the butt-end of a large pistol protruding from his pocket. Such a simple and effective method of collecting a tax! No troublesome forms of beastly red tape, and no large staff of fat and lazy clerks to pay! Just a truculent-looking blackguard

with a very large pistol, not necessarily loaded, and the money pours in. Cases of non-payment of this form of taxation have never been heard of, nor is there any means of dodging it. Cattle are not easy to hide.

Rations were obtained by the simple process of requisition. In some cases they used to go through the farce of giving a receipt for the stolen goods in the name of the I.R.A. !

With the police unable to function, banks and post-offices offered an easy prey to these ruffians. The meanest form of robbery was the taking of money to pay old-age pensions from mail-cars on their way to outlying districts.

A special murder gang was formed, which went about the country to murder any man—policeman, R.M., or civilian—who was particularly active in trying or helping to restore law and order in the country—that is, any man who was too tough a nut for the locals to crack. And, of course, in many cases private feuds and spites came under this heading. As has been mentioned, the price for a policeman was £100. People would be heard discussing this openly, and wondering if the price would go up or down, in the same way as they might discuss Dunlop's or Guinness's shares.

But the most effective weapon of Sinn Fein has been their propaganda campaign in America and England, coupled with the treasonable and treacherous aid from certain politicians and the effective silence of the daily press, with one great and notable exception.

The following letter, which fell into the hands of the Crown forces in Ireland, speaks for itself :—

Dail Eireann (Department of Finance),
Mansion House, Dublin, 21st March 1921.

To Director of Propaganda.

A CHARA,—The enclosed copy of notes from Ireland will probably be of some interest to you. I have previously sent some copies of these and other things from the Unionist Alliance people.

Many figures have been given in the papers recently with regard to R.I.C. resignations, dismissals, recruitment. All these *questions* have been asked on instructions from me, and I think you might be able to make very good use of some of them. For instance, in the 10th March 'Hansard' (pages 688 and 689) are given the figures which appeared in the 'Independent' some days ago. In a few days' time we shall get total strength and total numbers recruited over certain periods.

I have got an arrangement made in London whereby the 'Independent' correspondents will always quote the figures pretty fully for our benefit.

Do Chara,

MICHAEL COLLINS.

Sinn Fein first learnt the art of propaganda from those pastmasters the Boches; but if ever the latter think of trying their luck with another "Der Tag," they will find that Sinn Fein can teach them now more than ever they taught Sinn Fein. The Celtic mind seems to be peculiarly adapted and susceptible to propaganda consisting largely of half and three-quarter lies.

But nothing surprised and dismayed Irish

Loyalists more than the suppression of reports of murders and outrages in Ireland in the great majority of English papers, though later on these same papers filled columns with any murder or atrocity alleged to have been committed by police or Auxiliaries. Moreover, from their tone, it soon became obvious that some papers were strongly pro-Sinn Fein.

To an Irishman the English Radical has always been one of the greatest wonders and mysteries of this world; and often he cannot help asking why God has sent him into this world. Of course, there is no doubt that all are here for some purpose, good or bad, but of what use is the Radical to England?

Is he the wee drop of poison in the whole which is to bring about the downfall of the Empire as a punishment for the sins of its leaders? At any rate, he has always been a puzzle and enigma to Irish and French alike, and they have no use for a man whose chief idea of patriotism appears to be to take any and every side against his own country.

There is no possible doubt that the Government were forced or frightened, by the howls of the Radicals, incited by Sinn Fein propaganda, to order that reprisals by the Crown forces in Ireland should cease, whereby the Crown forces' most effective weapon was taken from them, though it was still left in the hands of the murder gang.

Fierce were the denouncements by the Radicals in the House of the unfortunate Irish police; but one waited in vain for a like denouncement of the murder gang (men who

have committed as bad atrocities as the world has seen) by these same unctuous gentlemen. Ye hypocrites !

Much has been said and written (chiefly propaganda) about the wickedness of reprisals, but it is better first to examine the situation before condemning them.

It must be clearly understood that the whole power of the murder gang lay in reprisals : they took reprisals against every one who was against them by murder, arson, and intimidation. The Crown forces had only the law, which was paralysed. No one dared give evidence ; it was death to do so.

Under these circumstances the Crown forces, principally the R.I.C., took counter-reprisals ; this was the only possible method by which they could save their own lives and the lives and property of the Loyalists, who looked to them for protection.

For many weary months unhappy Ireland was rent and torn by this form of warfare, and it became obvious to most that if one side did not win pretty soon the country would be ruined. Twice the Crown forces wriggled their hands free, and on both occasions had the I.R.A. on the verge of collapse : one stout blow would have finished the show. And each time the I.R.A. were saved by the screams of their English allies. Each time the Government quickly took fright, quickly tied the Crown forces' right hands, and even threatened to tie up their legs if they set the English Radicals on the howl again. And once more the I.R.A. plucked up courage, and the old

weary game of ambush and murder started afresh.

At long last the Government took a sudden notion to make a desperate effort to finish off the gunmen before the gunmen finished them.

After the failure to round up the big force of gunmen in the Maryburgh Peninsula, Blake returned at once to Ballybor with all his men, arriving to find a cipher wire from the County Inspector to tell him that the gunmen had turned up in the Ballyrick Mountains, and that as soon as the Crown forces could be regrouped another effort would be made to come to grips with these slippery customers.

No sooner had Blake started to deal with a fearful accumulation of official correspondence than the head constable told him that Constable John M'Hugh, who came from the east centre of Ireland and had not been long in the force, wished to see him—adding that M'Hugh's father had been murdered, and that the constable was most anxious to go home, but that the police at his home had wired that it was not safe for the man to go.

Blake saw M'Hugh at once, and found him in a pitiable state of grief, the first great sorrow of his young life—but had to refuse his request, though the boy pleaded hard, with the tears running down his cheeks. M'Hugh's case is a good example of the murder gang's reprisals on those who will not fall in with their views.

Old M'Hugh was a widower living with his two sons near a large town on the east coast. Unfortunately John was an unwilling witness

of the first murders of British officers in Ireland during the present rebellion, and in order to save the lives of his sons old M'Hugh got them into the R.I.C. as soon as he could.

On several occasions old M'Hugh was threatened by the I.R.A. that if he did not make his sons resign they would do for him: every time he refused, and told his sons nothing about being threatened. Finally, the usual pack of masked fiends went to the old man's cottage in the dead of night, and murdered him by the refined process of dragging him out of bed and kicking him on the head until they smashed his skull in—a deed hard to beat for pure brutal savagery.

The following day Blake received a long visit from the County Inspector, who gave him the outline of the new plan of campaign, and instructions for the part Blake and his men were to take.

The country of the Ballyrick Mountains is a square-shaped peninsula of, roughly, fourteen hundred square miles, consisting of vast flats of bogs on the north, west, and east, intercepted by hills, while the south part consists of nothing but mountains. One main road runs through the centre, east and west, and another skirts the coast for three-quarters of the north coast, then turns inland, crosses the other road at about the centre of the peninsula at the village of Ballyscadden, then continues due south until it reaches the coast. In the whole peninsula there are only half a dozen small villages, all not less than sixteen miles apart.

To drive this huge country would require at

least twenty times as many troops as were available, and A.S.C. train to keep them supplied with rations; there remained the possibility of starving the gunmen into surrender.

All the villages were to be occupied by military, and every road picketed and blocked with barbed wire; at the same time the military were to endeavour to form a cordon across the neck of the peninsula, a distance of thirty-five miles.

The police, who were to do the actual hunting, were divided into flying columns, with all available transport. The Navy was to be responsible for the numerous islands on the west and south coasts, and were to open fire on any parties of gunmen who came within the range of their vision and guns.

Aeroplanes were to work continuously over the country during daylight, and on locating the enemy, were to drop their messages at the police headquarters at Ballyscadden.

It was expected that at the first sign of danger the gunmen would make for the mountains in the south, when the area of operations would be greatly restricted.

When all preparations were completed a start was to be made as soon as there seemed a reasonable prospect of fine weather. Finally, at Blake's suggestion, they tried to collect every flock of mountain sheep and confine them to the flat country to the north, but after the first day many of the sheep returned to their own mountains in spite of the efforts of the shepherds.

Blake's part was to keep all his available

men at headquarters, ready to dash off at a moment's notice on receipt of information of the location of any party of gunmen.

Owing to a bad westerly storm operations had to be postponed for a few days, during which time the gunmen were left undisturbed.

As had been expected, they drew a blank in the flat country, though it was reported by the first 'plane up that a large party of cyclists had been spotted making their way south from Ballyscadden some time before the police occupied that village.

The weather then turned very fine, and as there was a full moon, it was decided to sit tight for a few days in order to see whether starvation would force the gunmen to attempt a break through.

For two days the aeroplanes had nothing to report except the movements of small parties of not more than six men, and always in the mountains to the south. On the third a 'plane dropped the exciting news that a big column, estimated at several hundred men, was marching south-west with an advance of scouts to a depth of two miles.

Blake at once turned out his men, and made off south at full speed. At the same time a column left Castleport to make its way up the coast road and intercept the gunmen before they could debouch from the mountains—their orders being to advance up a valley from the coast to a shooting-lodge, which was situated at the junction of three valleys, two of which lead north-east and south-west round the foot of Falcon Mountain. Here they were

to wait while Blake endeavoured to drive the gunmen down the north-east valley towards them.

For twenty-four hours Blake kept up a running fight with the gunmen in the mountains, always trying to head them towards the valley which leads to the foot of Falcon Mountain, and at last, when his men could hardly move, had the satisfaction of seeing the gunmen making for the valley.

The police followed slowly and painfully, to find not a sign of a human being at the shooting-lodge. The men flung themselves down in the heather, beat to the world, and some of them even burst into tears of rage.

The explanation came afterwards. The Castleport party received orders to proceed up the valley from the sea, and intercept the gunmen at a shooting-lodge. Unfortunately there were two lodges—one on the shore of a lake about half-way up the valley from the sea, and the second and right one at the junction of the three valleys. Naturally the Castleport party, none of whom had been in these mountains before, stopped at the first lodge they came to on the shore of the lake.

A thick mist came up off the sea that night, and the gunmen, who had taken refuge on the upper rocky slopes of Falcon Mountain, slipped through the cordon in the mist in twos and threes, commandeered bicycles, and so made good their escape.

Some time afterwards, being again very hard pressed, large parties of gunmen took up their quarters in the Ballyrick Mountains, and lay low. Gradually their numbers increased, until

it was reported that the mountains carried as many gunmen as sheep.

At this time the Government appeared to have at last realised that the only way to restore order in Ireland was to oppose force by superior force. Many people could have given them this information months previously.

A report went through Ireland that the Government was massing artillery at Holyhead to mow down the I.R.A. with their brutal high explosives and shrapnel. In reality what happened was that all batteries in England were turned into mounted infantry, only about twenty-five men being left with a battery, and concentrated at Holyhead, preparatory to crossing to Ireland.

To Blake's joy, the Ballyrick country was chosen as the first scene of what was fondly supposed would be the end of the rebellion.

Quickly 20,000 troops were massed across the neck of the Ballyrick Peninsula with every available Auxiliary and a large force of R.I.C., while a naval force was standing by off the coast ready to land sailors and marines. All that was wanted was a good weather forecast to start in, and put an end to this great mob of gunmen—the curse of modern Ireland.

The good weather forecast came along all right, and on the morrow they were to get a move on and put an end to this miserable breed of cowardly warfare.

But on the morrow, instead of the Advance, they heard the Stand Fast sounded, and to their dismay learnt that a truce had been proclaimed—a truce with murderers, forsooth!

XXI.

THE TRUCE.

BLAKE had been educated at a big English public school, where he had learnt that the keynote to an Englishman's life is straightness. Further, in the British Army he had found that all good Britishers try their level best to run straight.

Early in 1921 there had been a strong rumour in the R.I.C. that the British Government had come to secret terms with Sinn Fein, and that after a period of window-dressing a truce would be declared; then would follow a lot of talk, and the terms of settlement would emerge. It was even reported that a conference had been held in Norway of representatives of the British Government and Sinn Fein, and also a representative from each of the Dominions, and a settlement arrived at.

At the time the Prime Minister fired off one of his loudest and most daring defiances at Sinn Fein: that he would never give in nor would he ever treat with the murder gang in Ireland, that the Crown forces in that country

would be supported by all the resources of the Empire, and so on *ad nauseam*. And this, as Blake heard a cynic remark, was a sign that the sinister rumour was most likely true.

Blake had dismissed the idea with a laugh, but when the truce bomb burst his mind at once flew back to the secret settlement rumour, now months old, and he began to suspect with a horrible fear that they had been sold, and badly sold.

Naturally the first effects on the police were bad. The older men who had been let down before laughed and cried to each other, "Sold again!" but the younger ones, who had yet to learn the ways of politicians, took the matter to heart, and started to brood over it.

There were several questions to which they badly wanted an answer; the chief being, if there was to be this complete surrender, why had it not been made long ago, when the lives of many of their relations and pals in the Army and R.I.C. might have been saved, not to mention the lives of many Loyalists? These valuable lives had been freely given in order that Ireland should be freed from the murderous plague of gunmen, in the same way as during the late war the lives of the Empire's best were sacrificed in order that we should be freed from the murderous plague of the Boches.

Further, they wanted to know what terms had been made with regard to their comrades who had fallen into the hands of the I.R.A.

The Loyalists were staggered, knowing that

their worst fears would now be realised ; to be handed over to the murder gang, which was the reward the cynics in the Dublin clubs had always prophesied, would be England's return for the efforts of the Loyalists during the war. However, they could say nothing and do nothing, but simply make the best of their fate.

The neutrals, most of whom had changed their flag as often as the British Government had changed its mind, now, of course, openly threw in their lot with Sinn Fein.

The townspeople and farmers openly rejoiced at the prospect of even a temporary peace, though in their hearts many of them knew that there could be no real peace in Ireland until the gunmen had been wiped out or reduced to a state of impotence by disarming them. However, the future could take care of itself as far as they were concerned.

For the first few days of the Truce the Sinn Feiners appeared to be doubtful whether their wonderful good luck could be really true, and consequently lay low. Then men and boys who had been on the run for many moons returned to Ballybor, and gave an exhibition of "See the Conquering Hero Comes" in the streets daily ; among them men wanted badly for atrocious murders, who now snapped their fingers openly in the faces of the police. A policeman could not walk the streets of Ballybor without meeting these swaggering fellows, who openly laughed and jeered at them when they passed.

However, a considerable number did not

return, and on their relations inquiring about their whereabouts from the I.R.A. liaison officer, they were told they never would come back.

Gradually, being sure they were indeed safe, and that in truth they had the British Government on the run instead of being on the run themselves, they grew bolder and more insolent.

One brute went up to the sentry outside the police barracks and deliberately spat on him, hoping no doubt that the constable would lose his temper and break the truce. The constable stepped into the barracks and returned at once with the Sinn Fein flag, with which he carefully wiped the offending stains off his face and tunic under the nose of the astonished gunman. He then proceeded to stand on the flag in the mud, and asked the gunman, "What about it?" For some seconds the gunman stood irresolute, then turned and walked off, looking a complete ass, followed by the loud laughter of the police.

From now the Republicans proceeded to take over the government of the district, the police standing by helpless, bound hand and foot by the strict order that on no account were they to disturb the peace atmosphere. How the Boches must be laughing at us!

In every parish Republican Courts were advertised to be held in the local papers, and were held without let or hindrance, the advertisements stating that "Summons, &c., can be had on application to —, Clerk of the Court." And why not? Had not the I.R.A. beaten

Lloyd George to his knees, and was not the British Government on the run ?

To give the comical touch necessary in Ireland, the R.M. continued to receive instructions from the Castle to attend the various Petty Sessions Courts in every district and deal out the British version of the law. Probably the first time (and please God the last) that any part of Great Britain and Ireland has been governed by two sets of laws at the same time.

With regard to this disgraceful state of affairs one particular case will give a good illustration of how low British law has fallen in the west of Ireland.

A very decent man called O'Brien, who had been a herd to the Congested Districts Board, bought a farm from the Board with three other men, the farm being divided into four.

This did not suit the landless members of the Transport Union in the district, whose idea was that they should have the land without paying for it. They told O'Brien to get out, but he refused ; they then proceeded to smash the fences and drive and injure his cattle. O'Brien built up the fences and put his cattle back.

They next proceeded to beat O'Brien, who afterwards went into Ballybor but returned without taking any action, as they told him there that there was now no law in the country. That night they beat him again ; the process consisted of first holding him while a powerful man closed his eyes with repeated

blows of his fists, and then they hammered him to their heart's content and left him in the road for dead.

Hours afterwards O'Brien crawled home on his hands and knees—he was practically blinded, and appears to have found his way home by instinct,—and some days afterwards, when he had recovered a little, he went to the police in Ballybor.

A magistrate happened to be at the barracks at the time, and insisted that steps should be taken to protect O'Brien and punish the savages who had beaten him, though the police told him that they were afraid that it was quite useless to try.

However, the magistrate took O'Brien's information, the case came on week after week at the Ballybor Petty Sessions, always to be adjourned at the request of the police, waiting instruction from the Castle. At last O'Brien, in despair, took his case to the local Sinn Fein Court; and here the chief offender was fined £27 and the others large sums, and they were warned that if they interfered with O'Brien again they would be dealt with very severely.

And this is a good example of how British law protects a decent citizen in Ireland at the present time; but one forgets that the peace atmosphere must not be disturbed at all costs! But is there any wonder that the people are fast leaving the King's Courts for those of Sinn Fein, and of their own free will now?

Republican Local Government inspectors appeared in every district, and quickly ousted

the King's inspectors; held courts of inquiry on unfortunate road surveyors who had refused to take the oath of allegiance to Dail Eireann, and tried to sack loyal dispensary doctors.

The chief amusement of the local gunmen on leave, and of their friends, male and female, was now to spend their time joy-riding through the countryside, flying Sinn Fein flags on their commandeered lorries and singing the "Soldier's Song" whenever they passed any police or a barracks.

One expedition of this kind went out to Ballyrick on a Sunday and returned to Ballybor about midnight. Blake happened to be passing down the main street at the time, and encountered a party of drunken bank clerks trying to see how much row they could make.

Blake remonstrated with them, and told them that if they did not go home quietly he would have them arrested. One clerk at once started to sing the "Soldier's Song" at the top of his voice, and another shouted at Blake in an insolent voice, "What about the truce, Mr B——, D.I.?" Blake saw red—he had borne and suffered much for many days,—and he gave the bank clerk a full drive on the chin which sent him flying. The whole party then swiftly retreated in silence.

The following day Blake paid a visit to the bank, and said to the clerk he had ousted the previous night, "Look here, Mr Bank Clerk, don't think I hit you last night because you

were drunk. There's a fine open yard at the back of the barracks, and if you will come round now, we can fight it out." Abject apologies from Mr Bank Clerk, and Blake left the bank.

One morning a woman arrived at the barracks in a state of great distress and asked to see the D.I. She told Blake that she lived in a small house in Cloonalla, which she rented from another woman in the village. Twice her landlady had tried in a British court to evict her, and had failed. The landlady then applied to the local I.R.A., who promptly turned the unfortunate woman with all her furniture and belongings into the street, and there she remained. When she remonstrated with them they showed her a warrant signed by the village Sinn Fein magistrate and left her.

Blake at once applied to the County Inspector for instructions, who applied to the higher authorities. Back came the answer, "See circular so-and-so," which on being turned up stated that all breaches of the Truce should be at once reported. Meanwhile the woman remained homeless: neighbours in an Irish village nowadays fight shy of an I.R.A. victim, and circulars are not substitutes for roofs.

Again Blake tried to get leave to take action, and this time the answer was to forward four copies of the case to the police adviser in Scotland. In despair he put his pride in his pocket and applied to the I.R.A. liaison officer of the district for help.

And the next day the liaison officer arrived in Ballybor—an ex-soldier and a well-known murderer. Blake felt that he could hardly stand this final insult to an honourable uniform; but duty is duty, and a truce must be kept.

The liaison officer went out in a car to Cloonalla, and ordered the local braves to put the woman and her furniture back in her house, which they flatly refused to do. And that was the end of the matter.

After some weeks' rest the chiefs of the I.R.A. issued an order calling all men to the colours, whether they liked it or not.

It has been mentioned that the country round Ballybor was famous for its excellent shooting, grouse, snipe, woodcock, duck, and geese chiefly; and in the days before the rebellion many Englishmen must have spent happy times shooting and fishing in the many shooting-lodges dotted about on the mountains and moors to the east and west of Ballybor.

Now all these lodges are occupied by instructors of the I.R.A., who take so many of the young men and boys of the district in relays for an eight days' intensive training course—drilling, musketry, instruction in the use of Lewis and Thompson machine-guns, bombing, and twenty-five-mile route-marches in full fighting order, the latter most unpopular.

Not only have all old members of the I.R.A.

to attend these courses, but every young man and boy, who had previously refused to join up, have to go; and there is no refusing to go now.

You may miss your garden-boy or shop-assistant, to meet him in the course of the week taking part in a route-march; or if you are foolishly inquisitive, you may see him at dawn advancing across your demesne in company with other boys, or firing his musketry course.

Blake watched two lorry-loads of these recruits setting off on a Monday morning from the main street of Ballybor under his very nose, Sinn Fein flags flying; and they sang the "Soldier's Song" for his special benefit.

About two miles from Ballybor there lives a retired officer in a nice house with a good demesne, a man who served the Empire well and truly for many years. When the war was over he retired, fondly hoping to spend the remainder of his days in peace and comfort in his old family home.

But not so: he happened to be the owner of a demesne which the Transport Union had promised to its members. So they tried repeatedly to stampede him out of the country, but that failed. Now his place is occupied by what the I.R.A. call a week-end camp for the drilling and instruction of the Ballybor shop-boys. They use his cooking utensils, burn his turf, and make the night hideous with their yells and oaths, so that the officer and his family find it impossible to get any rest. Moreover, they, the I.R.A., do not appear to be

strong in sanitary sections. And they told him that if he took any action they would burn his place to the ground.

What action could he take? There is no law in the country except the law of the pistol. The police are now bound hand and foot. They report these outrages to the Castle, and what happens? Nothing. The Government are far too busy hunting for that elusive formula which is to turn this Irish hell into a paradise, to worry about a stupid old retired officer. He has no vote in England, nor can he ever affect their political careers.

And why all these feverish military preparations? Either to invade Ulster when the time of a settlement and peace comes, or, if the Truce is broken, to massacre the R.I.C. and the Loyalists.

About this time a constable, transferred from the south-west to Ballybor, brought with him a story—he swore it was true—which will take a queer lot of formulæ to explain away. Not long ago the I.R.A. ran a cargo of arms on the coast where he was stationed, openly, with the police looking on. The police at once reported the affair, and were told that it did not matter as the arms would never be used.

Presumably the authorities meant that these arms would not be used against the Crown forces; but what about loyal Ulster, and those most unfortunate of people to-day in Europe, outside of Russia, the southern Irish Loyalists?

Apparently the I.R.A. chiefs are believers in games for their men, as witness the follow-

ing advertisement which appeared in the Ballybor shop windows :—

GREAT FOOTBALL MATCH.

NORTH BALLYRICK FLYING
COLUMN, I.R.A.

v.

BALLYBOR PATRICKITES.

PAY YOUR SHILLING AND SEE
HOW WE ENJOY THE TRUCE.

The Transport Union unwittingly supplied the comical element of the situation when they started a great row with the I.R.A. people in Ballybor. It appeared that the I.R.A. had been in the habit of not paying the Union rate of wages to the stalwarts of the Transport Union for digging trenches across roads and breaking down bridges during the war, and now they were furious because the I.R.A. refused to pay up the difference, and threatened them with all sorts of horrible things. And the I.R.A. laughed at them.

People in England have not the remotest conception of the terrible Frankenstein monster which De Valera & Co. have reared up and armed in Ireland, a hideous monster of murderous and armed gunmen, fearing neither

God nor man, which in the summer of 1921 was on the point of being exterminated by British bayonets to make this beautiful island of Ireland once more a clean and wholesome land, where men might dwell in peace.

That chance has gone. Will it ever occur again? And if it does will the British Government seize their opportunity like men and rid Ireland of this terrible menace? Or will they again be found wanting, groping after some wretched formula?

Do people realise why De Valera acts the part of the coy fly in hesitating to enter Mr Lloyd George's talking parlour? The sinister reason is that if he once gives up his claim to an Irish Republic he seals his own doom. The day he enters into a conference with the British Government on these conditions, the Irish Republican Brotherhood signs his death warrant, and well he knows it.

But if, for argument's sake, a so-called settlement is arrived at, what becomes of De Valera's Frankenstein monster?

Will it beat its automatics into reaping-hooks and convert its machine-guns into potato-sprayers? Possibly in the minds of English Radicals, but nowhere else.

And when the Welshman and the Mexican have fooled the English and the southern Irish with a formula, do they think that any formula ever phrased would fool Ulster?

On the day that an Irish Republic is set up (Dominion Home Rule is only another name for it), Sinn Fein, its *raison d'être* accomplished,

dies ; but out of its corpse will arise two parties, or rather armies (for all men in Ireland are armed to-day except the Loyalists), one consisting of the farmer shopkeeper class, while the other will be the Citizen Army of the Bolshevik Labour Party.

The rank and file of the I.R.A. consists of farmers' sons, young townsmen, shop assistants, and the like ; they expect either a fat pension for life or twenty acres of land. Both have been freely promised to them, and both are equally impossible.

And these disgruntled gunmen, all armed, will take sides according to their sympathies, and before many months are past these forces will be at each other's throats. And the national air of Ireland will be the "Red Flag."

Like Kerensky in Russia, De Valera will disappear in the welter of revolution.

The R.I.C. will have vanished—they have already been told that when the "Cease fire" sounds, they will be given a month to clear out of Ireland, lock, stock, and barrel.

The surrender to Sinn Fein by the British Government is a good example of the evil which can be brought about by that modern plague, skilful and unscrupulous propaganda.

The sooner the good elements in England wake up and combine to insist that the necessary action is taken in Ireland to enforce law and order, the better it will be for both countries and the Empire.

The English people have been fooled by a press which carefully suppressed all news of

the true state of affairs in Ireland, and then gave lying and distorted accounts.

It is futile to say that the remedy for false reports lies with the law. All honest men know that a clever lawyer in a court of law can make a half or three-quarter black lie appear a whole truth white as driven snow, as easily as a smart and up-to-date accountant can juggle with a balance-sheet to show + or - half a million as the necessity arises.

The day will come in Ireland when men will pray to God for a sight of the good old green uniform of the R.I.C. And it will be too late.

BOSTON COLLEGE



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