

## **Trauma In Time (An Irish Itinerary)**

**By George G. Lennon 1990 –1991**

Manuscript Dedicated To Noel Browne

Born in the South of Ireland of old Northern ancestry. He was the leader of an Active Service Unit (Flying Column) during the War of Independence (1916–1921). As a pacifist he was, in part, instrumental with the late Chester Carlson (inventor of Xerography) in founding a large Buddhist community in the United States. He later played a prominent part in the American anti-war movement that sprung up in opposition to the Viet Nam war. His home was in Rochester, N.Y.

Vice C/O West Waterford IRA (C/O Pax Whelan)

Leader – West Waterford Flying Column

Business Manager – Irish Review (New York City 1932)

Secretary – National Association Of The Old I.R.A. 1956 to 1988

Inspector – Irish Tourist Board 1940 to 1943

Secretary – Executive Committee Of The National Planning Conference

Returned To USA 1946

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There is a muting of the sound from the ship's propellers. The motion of the ark is slowing down. The three of them are sitting motionless in the main lounge long after all the other passengers have retired to bed: Mrs. Worthington, he and Vivian. Mrs. Mowthington has a house in Mayfair and she wants them to come and stay with her sometime but they know they will never see each other again. He is on his way to give aid to the Spanish Republicans-and where is she going to now? The kind lady administers words of practical English wisdom and leaves them atone. They, are both of course, mature people, but this does not seem to help very much. Is this the end of their enchantment... They go up on deck to face a most unfriendly looking dawn...In no time at all he is off on the tender, the ship gives a most mournful sounding hoot ('Outward Bound') and quickly, disappears over the watery horizon. Some fellow on the tender is playing 'Come Back to Erin' on a battered instrument. It sounds like Taps. He steps ashore and gazes about in dismay. What on earth ever brought him back to this place?

May 15, 1971. New York;

Soon we will be at the airport and there is but little time to look around my old home town. How did I exist through those seven Depression years? Being fairly capable and having a genius for survival I clung to the job. Twelve hours a day, sometimes seven days a week. I was being ground in the white satanic mills of America. In the rare moments of blessed relief from office slavery I lay in Central Park, read Marx, and became an ardent Communist.

Now we are ensconced in the belly of the great bird and with a steadily mounting roar the huge plane starts trusting back power and pollution and we are projected into the blue-white yonder.

Pleasantly virginal looking Irish hostesses wait upon our needs.

May is looking exultant. She knows there are other countries in the world but May is quite cool to them. She is going back to Ireland: in fact, she never left it.

May 17, 1971. Dublin.

The man steps back from the grave, the sleeper awakes, and a ghost walks down O'Connell Street ("The Moon Shone Down O'Connell Street"). I pass the Rotunda Hospital where my son was born. Almost at a run through Parnell Square I have come looking for Vaughan's Hotel. But Vaughan's Hotel has gone.

September 19, 1920. Dublin.

Pat and I are in quite a gay mood as we hand out valise full of bombs to Christy who looks at us with dismay.

"You know you should not bring that stuff in here."

Taking the valise to hide he goes off crying "Mr. Collins would kill me if he knew I was doing this." Collins is in one of his boyish moods but listens intently, as he always does, while I explain my latest invention, the mud bomb. Then with a yell he declaims, "Out from many a mud-bombed barracks Peelers were fleeing through the night" I feel deflated.

November 7, 1921. Dublin. [? 27 Jan 1922]

Liam Lynch, Charlie Daly, Fitz and I have come to Vaughan's Hotel from the Mansion House where a majority has just voted to accept the Treaty. We are greeted by a drizzly rain and a solitary kilted piper who is marching back and forth in the street dreeding his weird. We go upstairs to the familiar room. In the dining room below some prominent Free State supporters are happily playing a game called "Put and Take". The four of us are silent and depressed.

Belated Explanation.

In this journal tenses will be found to be mixed and the dates, seemingly, out of their proper order; but not out of context. The motive is deliberate-the illusion of continuity is the personification of our ignorance. The whole of time has already happened.

May 23, 1971. Dublin.

Today, Sunday, I went to Quaker Meeting. The atmosphere is always the same; the quietness, the silence and the happiness of being amongst Friends: above all, the motivation of Peace. As I sat I should not have allowed my mind to stray but it has a seemingly incurable habit of wandering off:

Buffalo. Four hundred of us are come to the peace Bridge to bring hospital supplies and money for the suffering people of Viet Nam. The night before we all met together for a subsistence meal of rice at the Universalist Church and for a briefing as to what we should do if arrested. Afterwards we went to the motel and following on the moment of silence we sang, "No Man is an Island/No Man Stands Alone." We brought our compassionate gift across the bridge and handed them over to the Canadian Friends for shipment to Indochina. We were not arrested. In fact, the police and the different customs officials were most courteous.

Rochester. Seven hundred or more people - Friends, Hippies, Catholic nuns - we all walk peacefully along the pavements of the city holding lighted candles. The hundreds of lights are stars in the darkness. The flower children lift up their young voices and plaintively sing "All We Are Saying Is Give Peace A Chance."

We also protest and make our plea in the public press:

October 21<sup>st</sup> 1967.

Letter to the Editor. Democrat and Chronicle.

Dear Sir:

Heated appeals to partisan emotionalism do little to resolve the present appalling situation in Viet Nam but a careful study of past and recent historical trends might lead to a more san appraisal, agonizing or otherwise.

Since the end of World War I and the breaking up of old regimes, the predominant historical motivating force has been the upsurge of new emerging nationalisms and freedom movements, many of them not only seeking national independence but striving for a socialist form of economy.

Ireland and Algeria may be taken as classic examples of the military factors involved and useful analogies may be drawn from the popular uprisings in those countries, both of them directed towards the expulsion of an alien army of occupation. A system of guerrilla warfare supported by the great majority of the population, proved to be the deciding factor in determining the future of

those two small nations. In the historical cases mentioned comparisons may appear odious but they can also be fruitful and informative.

Someone more closely informed can deal with the case of Algeria, but I feel competent to give information about the Irish struggle and to note similarities to the present war in Viet Nam.

When, in the early months of 1920, it was decided to resort to guerrilla warfare in Ireland, the active service units, or commandos, in the field amounted to not more than 150 men in opposition to an occupation army of 50,000 troops, plus an armed police force (native and auxiliary) of 10,000. At the termination of hostilities, the Irish armed commandos did not exceed 1,000 trained guerillas and the British troops were holding only the towns and cities where they were under considerable attack. In July 1921, Mr. Winston Churchill told the British Cabinet:

"One hundred thousand new special troops must be raised, thousands of motor cars must be armored and equipped; the three Southern Provinces of Ireland must be closely laced with cordons of blockhouses and barbed wire; a systematic rummaging and questioning of every individual must be put in force."

Alas, does not this have a familiar ring to us today as we open our morning newspaper-more and more troops, more and more blockhouses. Luckily, in the case of Ireland, the British Government in it's wisdom - not being concerned with prestige and saving face - withdrew it's troops and peace eventually descended on the beleaguered countryside.

During the last year of the Irish war, the alien military force found itself frustrated in dealing with a native population sullenly hostile and an elusive army it could not catch up with. Terror was resorted to: towns were burned, prisoners were mistreated, and thousands put in prisons or internment camps. The only result of this mistaken policy was to stiffen the resistance of the people who became determined not to surrender.

I think the few comparisons between the past war in Ireland the present war in Viet Nam should be obvious. The only sure way to win such a war is by a policy of genocide. Surely such a policy will not have the assent of conscientious and genuinely patriotic citizens of this great nation. A country has the right to protect itself from outside interferenc6 and the right of self-determination be it Red, White, or Blue. Decency and magnanimity never harmed any great nation and it cannot harm ours- we will have to withdraw from Viet Nam sooner or later, so why not now?

Yours sincerely,

The most impressive Friends Meeting I ever attended was in Toronto. The silence and the depth of feeling was quite extraordinary. Just towards the closure of the meeting a woman said quietly "Knock and it shall be opened to you, seek and you shall find."

May 24, 1971.

First impressions: The country seems quite foreign to me and all the people look remarkably "Irish." The courtesy and the kindness of everybody is disarming. Good manners and politeness ease the way of the pilgrim in his passage through this painful world.

The police are not police at all, they are bobbies, that is, they are the Garda Siochana, or Guards of the Peace. Compared to the storm troopers in the United States the Irish guards look positively angelic. Police usually make me nervous. When the F.B.I. came on their investigations they informed me that my dossier went back to 1927 and when I go on peach marches they take my picture. But this does not seem to apply here, to me at any rate.

Irish journalism is of a high standard. There are three Dublin daily papers, all good. A very large amount of space is devoted to politics, sport and the heroic dead - the three great national preoccupations.

May 26, 1971. Dublin.

We have secured quite a tiny flat in Sandymount. Sandymount Strand is almost at our door, where the broody Joyce ambled beside the "the snotgreen sea." Mr. Smith said he was the happy man to have acquired such nice tenants. He has a prosperous butcher business at the other side of the city and he is bursting with kindly affluence. As to the services to the little flat, he wrote them right off. All the services are electric but Mr. Smith said they would go on his personal bill-"Sure, isn't it the least I might do." He informed us "herself" was providing a vase, or vases, and that we were to help ourselves to the flowers in his garden. He charged us an enormous rent and the first month's rent, in advance, made quite a hole in my bank account.

May 27, 1971. Dublin.

We are not settled in our new quarters and we had a long and delightful visit from the Smiths' charming daughter Cara who looked quite stunning in her riding togs. Cara's accent is most beautiful and her perfect English is enlivened with the salty words and expressions now used by the kids to overcome the semantic difficulty. We expressed our awe at Cara's lovely accent but the good Mrs. Smith laughed off our admiration. She said it was all put "that horsey set she goes around with." We did not believe this. Mother and daughter do not agree politically. Cara is outraged by the explosions being set off in the North but mother is quite belligerent. Mrs. Smith explained that the Irish word "Cara" meant "loving friend" but that it did not sound like that at all when you got a demanding note from some government department.

May 28, 1971. Dublin.

A visit from a neat young man who was representing the Jehovah's Witnesses and who told me that "the Creator was going to strike very soon." I told him I was all too well aware of that and I thanked him for his timely reminder.

Finished reading Margery Forester's admirable book Michael Collins - The Lost Leader. It brings to mind Joyce's "Ivy Day In The Committee Room"

Back again to the noble house of Hodges, Figgis, after a full quarter of a century. Disciples of the great Gurdjieff have described me as a bookworm. How right they are. I got hot on the scent and grabbed a splendid edition of Pacata Hibernia. My mouth was watering for the Journal of the Royal Society of the Antiquaries of Ireland (formerly The Kilkenny Archaeological Journal.) According to the catalogue "There is no need to mention to the librarian or to the scholar that this most important and profusely illustrated journal is unrivalled as a source for the study of Irish Antiquities. The likelihood of again acquiring a set of such beauty is indeed remote." Price: £1,250.

I make a rapid calculation into dollars and regretfully decide that this treasure is quite beyond my means.

June 1, 1971. Armagh.

A long deferred visit to the home of my ancestors, the Crollys, who were at one time closely associated with the O'Neills. In an ecclesiastical history of the diocese of Down and Connor there is mention of a George Crolly, Baron of Ulster, who must have been an Anglo Norman. Abbot Patrick Crolly acted for Owen Roe O'Neill in negotiations with London on behalf of the Ulster Catholics. On the death of Owen Rode he acted as an intermediary between Lord Antrim and Cromwell with the object of affecting an agreement between the native Irish and the Parliament on the basis of a toleration of the Catholic religion but the scheme came to nothing.

A Crolly fought with Sir Niall O'Neill and the O'Neill cavalry at the battle of the Boyne, the only one I know of a military caste. There is, or was, a long family tradition of association with the church regarding all the others who became prelates or theologians. Reverend George Crolly (1780—1860) was a famous preacher and a poet; he had a son and a daughter who were poets of some merit. My great grand uncle, Dr. William Crolly, was Catholic Archbishop for Armagh during the Famine years. It is said he was twice reported to Rome for his liberal ideas. He never received a cardinal's hat. Dr. William Crolly founded St. Patrick's College, Armagh, in 1838 with only twelve students. Today there are almost 400 students and funds are being sought to provide for much needed extra buildings. The President of the College, Dr. Dunning, took me around, after which he had a most pleasant conversation in his study. Father Dunning has an imposing number of letters after his name, but this intelligent and unassuming priest would blush to have me mention them. He brought me across to the imposing Cathedral to show me where William Crolly lies buried under the sanctuary. Here we meditated for some moments. Jorge Luis Borges says somewhere that the soul of an ancestor or that of a master might enter the soul of an unfortunate to comfort or instruct him.

When I told Father Dunning I was seeking the grave of Sir Niall O'Neill he got on the telephone and introduced me to Senator Lennon who in turn went to great lengths to secure me the information I was seeking. Regarding Sir Niall I may be permitted to quote from 'The Highland Clans' by Moncrieff of that 11K and David Hicks (published by Bramhall House):

"A great Irish chieftain...Sir Niall O'Neill, 2nd Baronet Killeleagh, Lord Lieutenant of Armagh (who) was mortally wounded as the colonel of O'Neill's Dragoons, fighting for the Jacobite Cause at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. His portrait by J.M. Wright in 1680 (now in the Tate, version in Dunrobin Castle) is unique in that it depicts a great Irish noble in Gaelic costume of that period; with his "wild Irish" fringed cloak, curious but beautifully adorned Gaelic apron, long red hose, pointed brogues, Celtic dirk, great oval shield of studded red leather, gold-tipped black javelin and elaborately-tooled red leather conical cap with the flowing plumes of an Irish chieftain. Sir Niall descended in the direct line from King Domnall "the Young Ox" O'Niell, elder son of Aodh "Athlone", King of the North of Ireland (1030-1033), whose younger son Anrothan was ancestor of the Highland chiefs of Lamont, Maclachlan, Macneil, MacEwan and other clans of Cowall and Knapdale in Scotland."

(How strange that I should be seeking the last resting place of Niall O'Neill in the North, not knowing at that time that he lies buried in Waterford.)

The most attractive secular building in Armagh are a row of beautiful old Georgian houses and,

strangely enough, the Gaol. This is the only attractive looking Gaol I have ever viewed, and I have inhabited a few.

We had time to pay a visit to the Armagh planetarium and were wafted aloft into the stars. A minor interruption was caused by some small boys whistles and giggles. Our lecturer mildly remarked that some birds must have got into the building and he was turning up the lights. The whistles stopped abruptly and we returned to the Milky Way. A visit to a planetarium is a chastening experience and you get cut down to proper size. Across from the planetarium is the place where the Duke of Wellington is said to have received his early education. It has an iron look.

June 7, 1971. Dublin.

A most interesting letter from Alan Watts, part of which it may be appropriate to quote:

"In dealing with ancient spiritual traditions, we have much the same problems the world over. When a tradition gets settled and acquires lay followers, people send their children to be brought up in it, with the thought that it will be good for them. Having no vocation to the religious life, said children are not amused. They must therefore be kept at their studies and out of mischief by stern discipline, such as one would find in any ecclesiastical boarding school anywhere in the world. When the regimen has the superficial strangeness of coming from an external culture. Easterners naively imagine that they are being given the most esoteric methods for attaining higher consciousness. Actually, they are undergoing the process whereby children and adolescents are moulded into passable imitation of holy monks. There are, of course, exceptions which prove the rule.

Undated. Dublin.

We have got mixed up about the passage of time and the correct dates so we cannot make out if we have overpaid a week's rent or not - "you figure it out, by, you are much cleverer at these things than I am." This is not so as I have never progressed beyond an indifferent long division. Mrs. Smith has had a young man in from Trinity ("he is a mathematical expert") to disentangle her finances but he left in despair. We finally decided to donate the rent of the lost week to a secular cause which was a great relief to everybody. The barman made a most useful contribution - "now, just look at the head of the paper every day and you will know what day of the week it is."

A very heavy downpour of rain and I sought refuge in the nearest hostelry.

"A grand soft day," said I.

"Ah" said the barman, "I see that you have been talking to the leprechauns'.

A pleasant conversation was in progress to which I was invited to join. The barman was telling of a beggarman who called to a farmhouse for food, as is the accepted custom. The woman of the house placed before him a substantial dinner of bacon, potatoes and cabbage. The beggarman asked for mustard and his hostess said she did not have any. "What, my good woman" exploded the beggarman "you mean to say that have no mustard in the house."

Old friend G came to see me and urged my re-entry into the field of politics. I told him quite

truthfully that I admired people who undertook this great responsibility but that I now felt unequal to such a task.

An ancient Taoist sage was approached by the Chinese Emperor to be advisor to his government. He declined the offer with extreme courtesy, but when the messenger had departed he washed out his ears-and also those of the donkey on which he rode.

July 1, 1971. Dublin.

I was saddened to read about the death of a dear friend:  
"Libby Holman, 65, torch singer of the 1920s and '30s, in Stamford, Conn., June 18. She sang and lived the blues."

On the train.

Who will not feel sad at the passing of the railroads?-and the romance that will disappear with them? Trains hooting through the night as they cross the great American Plains. The famous train in Dr. Zhivago puffing and screeching it's way as it goes tearing across the vast Russian Steppes. My memory of coming into Savannah with the sun just coming up, dew sparkling on the grass and the dogwood twinkling out from the forest.

From my corner I keep my face pressed to the glass in case I miss anything. It is years since I have seen the Irish countryside.

The farmsteads in the midlands look quite prosperous to-day. Not much more than a century ago the great masses of the rural population were said to have lived worse than kaffirs - their only food the potato, their only beverage water. Driven from their native lands they were compelled to become rack-rented serfs to a propertied class of landlords. Property is original sin and it's hand agent is power. The New Testament is quite emphatic on the sinfulness of property. Proudhon said property is theft and Marx declared that money is the alienated ability of mankind.

What awesome future in a continued existence must have awaited those tyrants of ownership and possession, those self appointed lords of the common lands-

Fallen fiends of Heav'nly birth  
That had forgot your Ancient love  
And drive away my trembling Dove  
You shall bow before her feet  
You shall lick the dust for Meat;  
And tho' you cannot Love but Hate,  
Shall be beggars at Loves Gate.

You come to Cork suddenly, out of a tunnel, and into the brightness of the lively little city. Many of my memories of Cork are bright ones. What remains in my memory most is of a warm October day in 1926: I am passing through Cork on my way from the American consulate in Cobh with a visa to enter the United States in my pocket. Like many thousand others I am forced to emigrate to seek a living abroad.

1603. Cork.  
Fynes Moryson:

"At Cork I have seen with these eyes young maids stark naked grinding of corn with certain stones to make cakes thereof, and striking off into the tub of meal such reliques thereof as stick upon their belly, thighs, and more unseemly parts...The Irish aqua vitae, vulgarly called usquebaugh is held the best in the world of that kind; which is made also in England, but nothing so good as that as which is brought out of Ireland. And the usquebaugh is preferred before our aqua vitae because the mingling of raisins, fennel-seed, and other things mitigating the heat and making the taste pleasant, makes it less inflame, and ret refresh the weak stomach with moderate heat and good relish."

1842. Cork.  
W.M. Thackeray:

"And so it is throughout the south and west of Ireland; the traveler is haunted by the face of the popular starvation. It is not the exception; it is the condition of the people. In this fairest and richest of countries, men are suffering and starving by millions. There are thousands of them at this minute stretched in the sunshine at their cabin doors with no work, scarcely any food, not hope seemingly. Strong countrymen are lying in bed "for the hunger'-because a man lying on his back does not need so much food as a person afoot. Many of them have torn up the unripe potatoes from their little gardens, to exist now, and must look to winter, when they will have to suffer starvation and cold too. The epicurean, and traveler for pleasure, had better travel anywhere but here: where there are miseries and one does not dare to think of; where one is always feeling how helpless pity is, and how hopeless relief, and is perpetually made ashamed of being happy."

1919. Cork. [April, May, June 1919]

When we arrived at the gaol our handcuffs were removed and we were taken to the part of the prison where the regular prisoners were incarcerated. Some of the political prisoners had been discriminated against and almost all the other politicals had gone on strike in sympathy with them. All had been bodily removed to a disused part of the old gaol known as Wing No. 10. We soon made our intentions known and the police were brought in to deal with us. On being asked if we would walk peacefully to No. 10; or if we wanted to be dragged, we quite sensibly decided to walk.

My cell in No. 10 was anything but luxurious. After they had taken my shoes away and locked me in, I had ample time to survey my new home for the next three months to come.

The bed was something that looked like the lid of a coffin, covered by a hard mattress and pillow, a sheet and two army blankets. Nothing else but a sanitary utensil and a wooden salt cellar. We had to eat our meals on the floor. My predecessor had vented his wrath on the window, bursting out every last vestige of glass, he had also gouged out some minor holes in the wall. Needless to say, there was not heat of any kind, and the weather was cold.

A strange silence reigned. The policy, as I was soon to discover, was to break every prison regulation, non-cooperation in short, so we all stayed in bed most of the day and stayed up most of the night yelling out through the cell windows.

It could hardly be described as "solitary" confinement as all the cell windows were on one side of the building and quite close together. Sitting on the window ledges and pushing our faces against the bars we carried on a garrulous and active communication. It was confinement in as much as I

never saw the outside of my cell door for three months to come.

Activities began about 9 p.m. when our master of ceremonies introduced us new arrivals (by voice) to the rest of our comrades, about fifty in all. Then the nightly concert began and it was, and I mean it, really entertaining. It was mostly songs, ballads and recitations; speeches were definitely out.

After a number of the contributions our M.C. would sadly complain that the applause was not as appreciative as he would have wished and threatened to stop the concert whereupon the yelling would be redoubled and distracted parents living in the vicinity would start calling up the prison governor complaining that they could not get their children to sleep.

A favorite song was:

See who comes over the red-blossomed heather  
Their green banners kissing the clear mountain air  
Heads erect, eyes to front, stepping proudly together  
Freedom sits bright on each proud spirit there

Then we would all join in:  
Down the hills climbing, their blessed steel shining  
The fire that illumines dark Aherlow's glen  
And all who love English law, native or Sassenach,  
Out and make way for the bold Fanian men.

Many of the ballads were the most beautiful and moving I had ever listened to.

The recitations were usually quite funny and to annoy the British Tommies on guard outside on the walls we sang the Watch on the Rhine but this dreary anthem passed over the poor fellows heads - they had never heard it before.

We also sang satirical songs of the revolution such as:

When Adam and Eve were courting down in Eden  
And Eve she ate an apple just for fun  
The serpent said to himself when homeward speeding  
"The constitutional movement's just begun"

The last line was intended as a sneer at the contemptible constitutional activities of the Irish parliamentary party which was belittling our physical force movement.

There were times during our incarceration when we grew deathly serious and then we sang our Battle Hymn:

Armed for the battle  
Kneel we before Thee,  
Bless thou our banners  
God of the brave.  
Who dies for Ireland  
God give him peace.

Knowing our cause just  
March we victorious  
Giving our heart's blood  
Ireland to free...

The Irish prison warders were an admirable lot of men and they handled our underground mail. They delivered our letters from home at breakfast and took away our replies, to be posted outside. The governor of the prison, Captain King, made his regular inspections. The warder would fling open the cell door announcing "the Governor" and you were supposed to stand to attention. We just lay in bed and grinned at him. On one occasion he told me I was a foolish boy not to take my exercise and that I would make myself sick, he then slipped me a pack of Capstan cigarettes and a box of matches.

Reference must be made to poor old Dr. Foley, the prison doctor. We played endless tricks on him. He had a different colored pill for every disease so we thought up a new ailment every day to add to our collection. I kept my collection of pills in a hole in the window ledge.

There is a nostalgic feeling for all this for it was about fifty years ago, when the world was comparatively civilized. In those days they just locked you away and left you along with your integrity. Now the cell door opens and the secret police come in. They have come to "question" you.

There were, of course, many unpleasant things such as the food. The meat was of a most suspicious color and was said to be once part of a horse. "Plumduff" was a kind of suet pudding that felt like grape shot in your stomach. The stew, known as "tyres in paraffin oil" consisted of stripes of stringy mutton floating in a horrible liquid. The bread is not even worthy of mention.

After some months Dr. Foley began to sound me all over and to shake his head. Five of us, including two other beardless infants, young Barlow and young Phillips from Tipperary, were removed to the prison hospital. After being administered Parish's syrup and other nourishments to build us up were released. Our friends drove us to a nice lady's house on the Grand Parade from where we were taken to tea with Sean and Mrs. Hegarty on the Western Road.

I came home and I lay on a sunny strand. Or I took my bike and with keen anticipation went to visit my dearest friends the Whelans whose comfortable farm was within easy riding distance. Ballyduff, my home from home. Here lived Mr. and Mrs. Whelan, Elanna, Mollie, Ned and Aunt B. Aunt B. would feel me all over exclaiming the while your poor anishore, when are you going to get some flesh on your poor bones." At the back of the house was a lovely old world garden, nestling by the orchard, with such flowers as mignonette, flox, boy's love and girl's fancy. The girls made a delicious apple cake for me and we all sat happily down to tea with the perfumes from the garden drifting in the open window. (Dear, kind people when I think of you I know there must be such a place as Heaven.)

My poor mother fed me numerous egg flips to speed my recovery.

1971. Cork.

The train arrived in earlier than I had expected and there was ample time to wander through the principal streets. Something directed my steps towards the Grand parade and I went looking for the house where we held that fatal secret meeting during the Treaty negotiations - Collins seemed

resigned and his manner was almost gentle.

The following morning for some unknown reason the words "eternal recurrence" came suddenly into my mind. I checked right out of the hotel. It is just the same as 35 years ago--now I am coming out of the same hotel, I am walking up the same hill and I am going to the same railway station. my itinerary calls for a journey west but I cross over the same platform as before and take a train going in an opposite direction. There seems to be no choice in the matter....

And here is Mallow where Canon Sheehan, the Irish Balzac, grew up and had his being. Unlike Tolstoy, he was close to the peasants and could communicate with them. There is a deep knot of sadness in his novels as those not so simple people at times frustrated and disturbed him with their combination of viciousness and goodness. The graves at Kilmorna were his last and his greatest work. When I was a Fianna boy the book was awarded to me as a prize for an essay I wrote for the "mosquito" press ("Daring Deeds of Irishmen" - Sarsfield at Ballyneety, of course). There is an unforgettable chapter in the book where a typical politician is haranguing a crowd in vile Irish rhetoric. (Applause, loud cheers and laughter, loud and prolonged applause). Nearby a young Fenian listens in despair. This passage caused me to shed tears as a boy. Glenanaar, his most popular work, begins with the truly inspired idea of an infant (Nodlaig) being found in the bales with the cattle on Christmas night, the impact of the book's beginning is not maintained and the end of the novel is puerile. Lisheen has an idea worthy of Tolstoy; for a bet a landlord in disguise goes to live amongst a crude and ignorant peasantry. My New Curate - I may sometime read again. When we were boys our most popular authors were G.A. Henty, R.M. Ballantyne and Robert Louis Stevenson. Another book we read and which caused much apprehension was Dean Farrar's, or Little by Little. Poor Eric was addicted to the bad habits boys are prone to and as a result he came to a sad and an early end. This dreadful production really scared us. Our most admired paper, or magazine, was The Union Jack Library exclusively devoted to the doings of a 'cool' and brilliant detective called Sexton Blake. Blake had a boy assistant, Tinker, who looked after the noble bloodhound Pedro. As we were intended to, we all identified with Tinker. Fancy, you did not go to school and you were apprenticed to a detective. Tinker always addressed his boss in the familiar 'guv'nor' but when the great man was called abroad, as his genius was in much demand, Indian princes respectfully addressed him as 'sahib' and Zulu impi chieftains called him 'baas'. Sexton Blake's most doughty opponent was a beautiful young French criminal lady named Yvonne (obviously in love with Blake) but whom he could never bring to book. Our patriotism arose with our puberty and we were enchanted by The 'Forge of Clohogue' and Hugh Roche, 'The Ribbonman', two novels dealing with the '98 Rebellion. A reading of A.M. Sullivan's The Story of Ireland clinched the matter and there and then was formed the secret, oathbound society of the Secret Snipers to which I was honored with the position of Head Centre. Barney Dalton wrote out the oath-binding codument in his beautiful script and we compromised by signing our names in red ink instead of with our blood. Our organization was formed for the purpose of sniping Redcoats when the longed for Rising took place. For practice in military tactics we manufactured a large home-made bomb which for some strange reason we planted in the front garden of a harmless old lady, a Miss Veale, who lived alone on the sea front. The resultant explosion terrified the town. Sad to relate there was an informer in our society (one of those brainy, owlsh, bespectacled kids) and there were a number of very serious conferences with the police constables, our teachers and our parents. Let me draw a veil over the unfortunate sequel.

1776. Killarney.  
Arthur Young:

"upon the whole Killarney, among the lakes that I have seen, can scarcely be said to have a rival.

The extend of the water in Loch Earne is much greater; the islands more numerous, and some scenes near Castle Caldwell, of perhaps greater magnificence. The rocks of Keswick are more sublime, and other lakes may have circumstances in which they are superior; but when we consider the prodigious woods of Killarney; the immensity of the mountains; the uncommon beauty of the promontory of Mucross, and the Isle of Innisfallen; the character of the islands; the singular circumstances of the arbutus, and the uncommon echoes, it will appear, upon the whole; to be in reality superior to all comparison."

"I have one other observation to make which is relative to the want of accommodations and extravagant expense of strangers residing at Killarney: the inns are miserable and the lodgings little better. I am surprised somebody with a good capital does not procure a large well built inn, to be erected on the immediate shore of the lake; in an agreeable situation, at a distance from the town; there are very few places where such a one would answer better; there ought to be numerous and good apartments. A large rendezvous-room for billiards, cards, dancing, music & c. to which the company might resort when they chose it; an ordinary for those who like dining in public; boats of all sorts, nets for fishing, and as great a variety of amusements as could be collected, especially within doors; for the climate being very rainy, travelers wait with great impatience in a dirty common inn which they should not do if they were in the midst of such accommodations as they meet with at an English spa. But, above all, the prices of everything, from a room and a dinner, to a barge and a band of music, to be reasonable, and hung up in every part of the house: the resort of strangers to Killarney would then be much increased, and their stay would be greatly prolonged; they would not view post-haste, and fly away the first moment to avoid dirt and imposition."

1943. Killarney.

Your letter interested me immensely and I was right glad to receive it for it has been saddening to witness the lack of interest and knowledge shown in the country on the subject of the tourist industry.....

Your only possible hope is in building up a home market through the medium of a great tourist industry. Your letter was the first indication that any body in this country sufficiently studied the subject to realize its importance. During the late election, I never heard of the Tourist Trade being mentioned, an odd state of affairs considering that the Tourist Trade was France's greatest industry and one of the few businesses suitable to this country.

With regard to Killarney, what I am going to do is as follows. At this moment, I am just finishing a golf course and it will certainly be the equal to any in the world. It comprises two novel features, namely, I am having an extremely long and difficult course for champions, but it was not sufficient to have alternative tees for the long handicap golfers and accordingly I have a number of alternative greens as well. This golfing revolution fits in admirably and the course can be made to vary from under 6,000 to 8,000 yards....

My second feature is to make the golf course in colour and to this end I invited Mr. Campbell, the Curator of Kew, down here to help me. For instance, in one place we have an acre-and-a-quarter of fuchsia, in another 7,000 hydrangeas etc. etc. i.e. great masses of high colour through the medium of shrubs, heather, loose strife etc. As soon as the war is over this will create a unique attraction and every sporting journalist in the world will be forced to write about it. This, I can tell you, is indisputably so....

Locally, the strength of this golf course is not - appreciated because there is nobody accustomed to dealing with or selling to the great public....

Nothing, however, has been done about accommodation. We have no proper Club House, swimming pool, tennis courts, roller-skating etc. etc. nor any organized amusements in the evening. The Great Southern Railway have an hotel - admirable for funerals but for naught else....

Our enemy is the weather and...we could defeat this bogey by having every form of indoor amusement...namely swimming pool, billiards, squash racquets, indoor tennis, dancing, roller skating etc. etc. The criterion would be a visitor would come for a week during which it would rain the whole time and the visitor would go away have had a first class holiday.

If you or your Committee come down here I would be only too glad to show you what I am doing. As to that institution known as the Board, I am too old and too experienced to spend my time teaching cows to play the violin.

Yours faithfully,

KENMARE

1971. Killarney

Twenty-seven years is quite a lapse in time. There are now a number of comfortable hotels and guesthouses in the Killarney district. Our main concern was about accommodation when I corresponded with Lord Kenmare. The question of indoor entertainment was also a concern of Arthur young when he visited Killarney but as the sun shone brightly during my stay the problem of seeking indoor amusement, out of the rain, did not arise.

My initial desire was to visit Ross Castle, as it was once a project of mine to have it restored and converted into a museum as a resort of local interest for visitors. When I suggested the matter to H.G. Leask he concurred and he indicated that he would find it a fascinating job to undertake but no funds were available for this work at that time. It still may be a feasible project.

My driver, when he finally arrived, was most rude and surly. I told the man to drive me to Ross Castle but he took off in a quite opposite direction as he said - there was too much traffic that way due to the people coming from the races. He drove like a maniac and refused to answer any of my questions about the locality. Dropping me off at Muckcross house, 'a place I had no desire to go' he informed me that he would give me fifteen minutes to look around. After fourteen minutes he approached and said he had phoned his boss and had to return straight away. A wild ride back, I was dropped outside the town and had to make the rest of the way back to the hotel on foot.

Killarney is described in song and in story as "a little bit of heaven" which is not altogether an exaggeration as it contains a scene in incomparable and breathtaking beauty. The area is best seen by taking the popular tour through the Gap of Dunloe on pony back and returning by boat to disembark near Ross Castle. The distance covered is thirty miles and takes the greater part of a day, and a day well spent.

It was in 1922 that I drove P.C. [O'Mahony] up the Gap of Dunloe in a large Dodge touring car. Strange as it may seem, P.C. and I captured a post office on Easter Monday night in 1916. It was an easy capture. P.C. was the postal night clerk and he immediately answered my excited knock on the door. A telegraph instrument was clack-clacking and P.C. translated the messages. One telegraph message indicated that a train of munitions for the British troops was passing through our

town at 2 a.m. P.C. said it should be wrecked. But how? He could not leave his post and we were the only two Volunteers in the county. He let me out the back door of the post office. Grasping my .32 revolver I rushed off into the night to seek assistance. The rain was coming down in torrents.

Please pardon this digression and let us return to Killarney.

The Gap of Dunloe is described by geologists as a product of the Ice Age but I prefer to think of it as a gift from heaven. We all milled around Kate Kearney's Cottage for an hour until we got sorted out and started off on our trek; eleven mounted riders and three pony carts. It takes about four hours to go clop-clopping along through the great mountain pass. When you finally arrive at the top of the great defile the view is quite awe-inspiring. The boatmen meet you with your lunch and help you into the boats for the long scenic journey through the lakes.

When passing beneath a high mountain our ferrymen rested on their cars and told us that was where the leprechauns lived. We looked incredulous. The leading boatman said he would count three and would then altogether shout a welcoming "Hello" We did so and lo and behold an answering "Hello" came faintly but distinctly back from the top of the mountain. Our ferrymen regaled us with strange and interesting tales of the district. One story was particularly intriguing: A great local matriarch had a set too with the Evil One whom she worsted and from him she exacted a price that no Irish person would ever be taken into his domain. Wishing to test this bargain two Irishmen called at the outer door of Hell but were told that no Irish need apply. Chasing the two away his satanic majesty presented his visitors with a box of matches and a lump of coal and told them to go and establish a private hell of their own.

Putting us ashore the bold boatmen warned us against paying any attention to the tall stories the jarveys might tell us.

May 28, 1920. Kilmallock

The West Limerick men picked me up at Newcastle West where we went to confession to Father Hayes. I was already well acquainted with the others but the boy sitting next to me in the car, with a Lee Metford rifle between his knees was new to me. He was whistling quite cheerfully to himself. His nickname was Frost and we took an instant liking to each other.

It was midnight by the time we were in our positions in some houses directly facing Kilmallock police barracks. The barracks was a long, low building and appeared to be only one story high from my place of vantage looking down on it. The house adjoining the barracks was about two stories higher and it was from here that the main attack was directed.

There was a most eerie silence before the attack began as if all the people in the town were lying awake waiting for something awful to begin.

The moment the signal light flashed we put our rifle butts through the window glass, knelt down behind the ledge and opened fire. There was an immediate response from our opponents. After the first volley there was a moment of silence and a frightened wail went up from all the houses around. What a strangely satisfying, almost wild, sensation it was to push forward the bolt, feeling the round slide smoothly out of the magazine and into the breach. You snuggled the butt voluptuously into your shoulder, took careful aim and pulled the trigger. The crash of the rifle was orgiastic.

The top and unbroken pane of glass was soon peppered with bullet holes. Owing to the angle of fire, bullets were passing through the windows below and were coming up through the floor behind

me. Pieces of plaster came tinkling down from the ceiling. When you fired there was a double and instantaneous bang caused by the shot striking against the steel shutters from which answering fire kept spitting.

The barracks had been unsuccessfully attacked during the Rising of 1867 and at least one Fenian was found lying dead in the street. Now we were going to get our own back with a vengeance.

Resting for a while you could direct your gaze towards the house that adjoined the beleaguered police building. From here heavy weights had been dropped to smash the roof below and kerosene, by the bucket, was being showered down into the aperture made by the weights. Soon that end of the barracks was ablaze.

In the confined space of the street the noise was terrific.

At about 2 o'clock in the morning our leader ordered a cease fire and called upon the police garrison to surrender. The answer was a shout of defiance and a renewed outbreak of firing from the building, now quite half consumed by the flames.

So it went on all night until all but a small part of the barracks was enveloped in fire. It seemed impossible that any body could remain alive there.

Near daybreak I descended into the street and with a young man named Scully [Liam Scully – Captain East limerick Brigade], stood watching the now almost consumed building. Suddenly my companion dropped to the ground, shot through the throat.

When day began to break we had to withdraw. Frost and I had been running around looking everywhere for each other. We climbed into the back seat of one of the cars happy to be together again. The dead man was on a stretcher in the other car. Black clouds of smoke were going up over the town as we drove off.

1920. Kilmallock Vicinity.

The place he liked most of all was Johnnie Lynch's in Tankardstown. John had two spinster sisters whose names may have been Minnie and Maggie and who made the most tasty sweet scones. An integral part of the Lynch household was Billy Boy. Billy Boy, who was about sixteen, was one of those harmless simpletons farmed out by the poorhouses to the farmers, free gratis and for nothing. Billy most industriously performed all his farm chores and had time left over to gape about at a world full of delight and wonder. Everybody loved Billy Boy. One day when he was sitting in the kitchen with the others coddling with Billy Boy, a man rushed in and announced that a cycle patrol of the enemy was coming down the nearby Bruree road. All rushed to arms and dashed across three intervening fields and there was a sudden and headlong collision. His personal contact was with a tall frightened looking constabulary man; by mutual consent they drew off in opposite directions

This was one of the rare occasions on which he distinguished himself as he captured two military bicycles under fire. Coming back he twice passed a young tin-hatted soldier lying face downwards on the road an ominous stain was streaming down over the soldiers khaki clad buttocks.

After this event it was necessary to move a long ways off. The tramped very many miles climbing the many ditches in their path. Nurse Sullivan came with them and they helped her over ditches and the barbed wire fences. Skirting the Ballyhoura hills they passed Kilclooney Wood ("where brave Crowley stood") and they eventually came into the vicinity of Kildorrery. Outside Kildorrery

they ambushed a patrol of Tans and nurse Sullivan attended to the wounded. He supported very youthful Tan while the nurse slashed off the youth's pants with her surgical scissors and applied a tourniquet. But the boy had lost too much blood and he began to sink. Between sips of water the young Tan told him that he came from Liverpool, where he had a wife and kid - he had been unemployed a long time and then he saw this advertisement for policemen in the newspaper. Noticing his distress and seemingly wishing to console him the young Tan said "it's all in the game, chum". They held clammy hands, the boy gave him a wan smile, and in a moment he was gone.

1971. Kilmallock.

Once called the 'Balbec' of Ireland, the early history of Kilmallock is little known. The place derived its name from an abbey founded by St. Molach in the early 7th century. Later on in history the town was fortified by walls of great strength.

In 1291 a Dominican monastery was founded by Gilbert, Lord of Offaly, and amply endowed. During the wars of Elizabeth, the town was the chief military establishment of the English. The place was captured by James Fitzmaurice in 1568 and burned to the ground to prevent it being occupied by the forces of the Lord Deputy. Its strategic position caused it to change hands a number of times in the wars between the Desmonds and the English. In 1642 during the confused civil wars the Irish army under the command of Lord Mountgarret took possession of the town which was afterwards besieged but without success by Lord Inchiquin but it eventually fell into the hands of the Parliamentarians. Cromwell ordered the town's fortifications to be pulled down; they were subsequently restored by the corporation but were again destroyed in 1690.

The town once contained several castellated mansions and a Street of post-medieval houses of which now only one, used as a store, remains.

Kilmallock had all the appearance of a ruined village at the beginning of the 19th century. The rebuilding into the present shops and residences began about 1830.

For a person with a feeling for such places, the well-preserved ruins of the Dominican abbey can be breathtaking. Leask in his *Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings* gives a highly technical account of the structure but supplies an excellent photo illustration of the magnificent East Window of the Choir. Lewis, in his *Topographical Dictionary*, written in 1846, gives a description applicable to our own day: "The remains of the Dominican monastery, situated on the banks of the Lubach, are extensive and beautifully picturesque; they consist chiefly of the lofty square central tower and the choir of the church, the former in a state of great dilapidation and the latter tolerably perfect. The east window is of the lancet form, combining an arrangement of five lights, and the windows on the south side are enriched with delicate tracery; the choir is unrivalled for symmetry and elegance of design, and contains the broken tomb of the last of the White Knights."

Almost as imposing in its own way is a nearby structure, said to be of the 13th century, known as the Church of SS. Peter and Paul. It is most solidly built and at the end of the north aisle has a very peculiar looking tower, evidently an ancient Irish round tower considerably altered.

Other interesting items, to the antiquarian, are the Kings Castle, used at various times for different military purposes, and Blossom's Gate the only survivor of the town's original five gates.

Getting to view the Dominican abbey turned out to be a problem and ended as an adventure. The people whom I approached for directions hinted that an ogre possessed the property around the abbey, if he did not lay ownership to the building itself. I had to make my approach from the south part of the town. After climbing over two gates and crawling under an electrified wire I came to

place of my search. It proved impossible to gain entry into the building as all the gates were locked so I could only wander around the outside. But not for long. A most belligerent looking youth came rushing towards me shouting "Get out of here you are trespassing, get off this property". He continued to shout at me as I retreated with little dignity, crawling under the wire and reclimbing the two gates. Passing back the street a wild looking boy pushed his head over a wall and demanded, "What time is it". On being timidly informed as to the correct time he glared at me and withdrew his towhead back over the wall.

That evening when I was relating my adventure to a sympathetic audience at the Golden Spur hotel, an English lady who was present said she was determined to view the abbey and that she could provide a guide in the person of a teenage Kilmallock native. And so the three of us sallied forth at about 10:30 p.m. with the last light fading out of the western sky. Mary, our guide, was as full of charm and intelligence as she was of agility. After climbing over the two gates and crawling under the electric wire we came to a formidable obstacle in the shape of a barbed wire fence immediately under what appeared to be a broken window or a large hole in the wall. Climbing up on the fence and assisted by our young and agile guide we crawled through the hole and let ourselves down inside. Finally access had been gained to the interior of the ruins.

Irish ruins, whether religious buildings or castles, have quite an extraordinary aura about them and they give a feeling of timelessness that no modern building can convey. We were quite enchanted as we walked about the extensive interior and we stood in awed silence for some moments before the great window through which the last glimmers of fading day came filtering in. We felt very close to each other at that moment and happy to be in each others company.

Feeling quite elated and pleased with ourselves we crawled back through the hole and returned across the fields now enshrouded by night. Not being able to pick our steps in the darkness our lower extremities got a most generous coating of cow-flop.

My gratitude to the kind taxi man who drove me all about Killmallock and who refused to accept any payment and to the good hotelkeeper who arose early in the morning to drive me to the railway station and to wish me godspeed on my journey.

1691. Limerick.

After the capitulation of the city the Irish army of fourteen thousand men was drawn up in review order in the great meadow on the Clare side of the Shannon. The appearance of the poor defeated soldiers brought wry remarks from the French officers who were looking on as "there could scarcely be seen a shirt or a pair of pantaloons, a shoe or a stocking' amongst the Irish troops." Of the total army, one thousand agreed to enter the Williamite camp, two thousand received passes from Ginkell to return to their homes and eleven thousand opted to follow Sarsfield into exile in France.

Some months previous, St. Ruth had decided to make a stand at Kilconnell, near the ruined castle of Aughrim. His dispositions and defences left little to be desired. The army was drawn up on a hill surrounded by bog and swampland and a breastwork was thrown up in front. There he confidently awaited the advance of the English army under General Ginkell.

Late on the afternoon of the 12th of July 1691, the first lines of the Williamite foot made a frontal attack on the Jacobite position. Sinking knee-deep in the swamp they made little headway and were driven back. For two hours they continued to assail the breastwork but they were everywhere repulsed with considerable loss, yet they continued to assault with a dogged persistence. Behind them hurdles were laid across the bog, the cavalry crossed over after some initial difficulty and swept around the Irish flank. At this critical moment, St. Ruth was killed and his body was secretly

carried to the rear. The Irish continued a brave resistance but what followed was to be repeated at Culloden. The result was a massacre and no quarter was given to the living or to the wounded. Six thousand naked corpses were left unburied for weeks on a deserted landscape and packs of wild dogs feasted on the human flesh.

At the onset of the battle Sarsfield, probably from motives of jealousy, had been ordered to the rear. It was his sad task to cover a wild retreat and to lead the remnants of the beaten army to Limerick.

By agreement with Ginkell, part of the Jacobite army, with its officers, was embarked at Limerick but the main body had to be marched through a desolated countryside to the port of Cork, where transports were waiting to convey them away. Some of the soldiers families were transported with their men folk but most were left behind never to be seen again.

From this date, 1691, until the battle of Fontenoy, 1745, according to the army estimates of the Bureau de la Guerre, 440,000 emigrant Irishmen served in the armies of France. The great exodus had begun. [Wild Geese]

Now the conquest of Ireland appeared to be absolute. The great native part of the country was prostrate and in despair. Hewers of wood and drawers of water, the inert masses of the peasantry, without their chiefs, were to be mere aborigines under a master race. It would be a hundred years before they could again revolt, and more than a hundred more before they could achieve their determination.

1971. Limerick.

It was about the year 1905 that my mother and her lady companion, Miss Condon, took me to Limerick to see the Exhibition. Exhibitions were all the rage at that time. In a glass case were Sarsfield's sword and his bloodstained greatcoat. Mama told us Sarsfield was killed at the battle of Landen and she declaimed his supposedly last sentimental words. This was not quite exact, the great Irish soldier was gravely wounded at Landen and he died from fever in a French town some distance away. My poor dear mother was of an emotional nature and she worried a lot about the tribulations of Royalty. Her special concern was for the Russian Czarina and "the poor dear little Czarevitch" - who was always being threatened by anarchists. She was outraged when "that brute Edward" was alleged to have pushed his stately queen down the stairs in some palace or another. Miss Condon was demure and could have been by Galsworth or out of Henry James - I saw her again recently on television. She always wore quite an enormous hat, which I mistook for an inverted flowerpot. Her uncle was a Member of Parliament, something very important in those days.

My school book was informative about the famous siege and told how the citizens rushed to repel the Williamite invaders when the walls of the city were breached, led by the brave blacksmith of Limerick:-

He raised his ponderous hammer  
He could not stand it more  
To hear the bombshells bursting  
And the thundering battle's roar.

My last visit, but one, to this city was to take what must have been the first plane out at the termination of World War II. As the plane took off from Shannon I wanted to shout "Higher, higher. Faster, faster" The plane had a minor accident half way across the Atlantic and had to come down in the outer reaches of Newfoundland. It was midwinter but I could not help feeling jubilant.

On this, my final visit, I sought some human companionship but the hotel was exclusively occupied by tourists of the American variety known as Yanks. Communication being quite impossible I wandered down the long Georgian street poking my nose into various pubs seeking a kindred soul. In one near to the railway station was a picture of Ezra Pound and this led to an introduction of two imbibing poets who took me under wing with offers of intellectual nourishment and convivial entertainment. The entertainment was satisfactory but fearfully expensive. I arrived back at the hotel at 2 a.m. and had to have a consultation the day following with a bank manager so as to have sufficient funds to continue on my Journey. When I was checking out of the hotel I drew the attention of the lady cashier to my room charge of £3.62 1/2. The official Guide to hotels, Guesthouses, Holiday Camps and Hostels was explicit the high season charge for this particular hotel room was £2.87. How come this difference? The cashier drew my attention to the figure 64 in the column marked 'with bath'. She explained this did not indicate the number of rooms with baths but meant 64 new pennies were to be added to my room rate. All this was very confusing and still left 11 1/2 pence to be accounted for but as I have an inferiority complex about figures I gave up and paid over.

Limerick is a very beautiful city but some people find it hard to establish rapport with it.

And I saw it was filled with graves  
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;  
And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,  
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

1920. Clare

It was from Pallaskenry that we crossed the Shannon to lend our aid to the Clare and Galway men. The night was brightly moonlit and fishermen pushed our boats over the mudflats and rowed us to the Clare side of the river. Our stay was with Mr. Corbett of Bunratty House who was a sympathiser. The house, or rather mansion, was quite large and he catered for the lot of us in a most princely manner. What happened on this particular hosting was not without humor (if working with explosives can be called humorous). I remember we had to thaw out a large quantity of frozen gelignite that we intended to use to demolish a police barracks. The thawing operation took place in a fisherman's hut on the banks of the river. A huge pot full of water simmered on the fire and into this we dipped sweet cans full of the frozen explosives. Under such conditions gelignite gives off sickening fumes and the proposed military operation had to be called off at the last moment.

The tide was in and it was a bright sunny day when we recrossed the Shannon to the Limerick shore. Frost and I rowed together in the leading boat and all lifted up their voices in song. We were always singing in those days of happy unquestioning youth.

1971. Glare.

Here in Bunratty a castle was erected in 1277 by the de Clares and it was afterwards the residence of the Earls of Thomond. The castle was enlarged, or, more likely, rebuilt by Thomas de Clare at the end of the 16th century. In more recent years it was used as a constabulary barracks. The castle has now been completely restored and reflects great credit on the dedicated people who took the work in hands. A young vivacious and well-informed guide took me around and pointed out the different furnishings. She explained that all the furnishings were replicas or antiques imported from Germany and she related that Irish artifacts were not available as our ancestors in their numerous wars burned each other's furniture with everything else.

I was hoping to be a guest at one of the widely advertised and popular medieval banquets provided for visitors. Mead, sack and other ancient beverages of the Middle Ages are provided and you dip your fingers into a communal bowl and fish for meaty tit bits. My knowledge of ancient Irish banquets is confined to the picture in *Pacta Hibernia* where a cow is being stewed in its own hide and happy kerns relieve themselves on the castle floor - not that I anticipated anything as exciting as this. The banquet was booked out so I wended my way to Durty Nelly's famous pub hoping for some excitement. Alas, the once dear place was full of tourists sitting glumly about hoping to imbibe some of its bygone atmosphere.

Corbett's house is now a hotel, and a very pleasant one indeed. One of the family showed me around and I tried to pick out the rooms where we once retired to bed with splitting gelignite headaches. It was booked out so I had to stay in the luxury motel run on American style. The inhabitants were grimly intent on their steaks, salmon and 'Irish' coffee. Public eating is not an uplifting spectacle and sometimes it can be quite revolting so I left quite soon and like my forebears of old, I recrossed the Shannon.

1971. Comeragh Mountains.

I wore my best tweed jacket as I was going to meet Maire and I wanted to make a favorable impression.

As we drove in the direction of the mountains Maire pointed out the place at a turn in the road where she saw the apparition one menacing All Soul's Eve night. The man was wearing the peasant costume of one hundred year's back - caubeen hat, knee breeches and tailcoat. A murder had been committed on or near that particular spot during the Land War.

Our intention was to ride ponies up the Nire Valley but as there were ordinations that day all work had stopped at the pony livery so we drove on to where the winding mountain road ended at a lay-by where there were some rough seats to rest on facing directly towards the Comeragh range.

What a scene. I am quite unable to describe it and what the guidebook has to say is quite inadequate. Many years ago we had crossed those mountains from the south side and descended into this most lovely valley of the Nire. Coming over the tops a hare started up and Kirkby fired his rifle at it and I had to reprimand him most severely for wasting valuable ammunition.

After we had been sitting for a short while enjoying the view an elderly man approached us and asked if we had brought the bottle of whiskey. We expressed our regrets and he started a lively and mainly one-sided conversation. Could we guess his age? We undershot the mark and he told us that he was eighty-six. For our edification he recited some long poems he had composed in the days of his dashing youth. The poems were mostly about dances and made flattering references to the athletic achievements of the young men he grew up with. He must have been most athletic himself as he said he once walked 62 miles in a day and we believed him. He proffered the information that he owned all the side of the mountains facing us - containing two lakes - and on which he grazed eleven hundred sheep. A German man who wanted to build a modern hotel in that place sought to buy his holdings.

"An do you know how much he offered me?"

We didn't.

"Seventeen thousand pounds, now what do you think of that?"

We were glad he did not sell to the hotel man but a hotel will yet be built there and it is to be hoped the architect will make the building conform to the beautiful landscape.

On our way back from the hills, we stopped at Ballymacarbery and I went into Melody's cheerful hostelry to buy sandwiches. While was waiting for the sandwiches the man who was standing next to me let out a cry of joy and gripped me by the shoulders. Taking a pace to the rear he came nobly to attention.

"My commander," cried he, "don't you know your old column man, Seamus Phelan?"

I lied most manfully as I have an awfully bad memory for names and faces.

"Ah, why did you do it, why did you do it? I'm telling it to 'our face, Jarge, and I'll never forget for you, ever." Ah, why did you do it?"

What on earth was the man talking about?

"There they were with their field kitchens, and their horses, - had you given us the order to advance we could have bet them into the ground with stones - it would have been the greatest battle of the war. Why did you retreat from the battle of Ballinamult?"

While he was furiously berating me with all this he kept slapping me on the back and pumping my arm up and down.

Now my memory was coming back -

"What happened to Kathleen?" I asked coldly.

"Ah, the poor girl."

"Why was she buried in unconsecrated ground?" said I, growing white.

"Ah now, such things are best forgotten, best forgotten" and he most deftly turned the conversation back to the battle that never took place.

Maire had been waiting patiently in the car wondering what had been delaying me when she saw the two of us coming towards her arm in arm. My old comrade held me in an iron grip and he refused to let me go until he had exacted a solemn promise from me that I would stay with him the next time I came to that part of the country. (When, oh when, could that be?)

In about twenty minutes we were at Sleady Castle.

The castle, now in ruins, had been one of a number of such structures owned by the MacGraths who were princes of the Decies. They also founded an abbey the tower of which is in use to this day. Sleady, or Curagh-na-Sledy, was not built until 1628 and it had a curse on it from the first day of its construction. The site was selected by the chieftain's wife in the teeth of his opposition and his vassals were fleeced to pay the wherewithal for the building without one penny of outlay on the part of its owner. During its short history the castle caused unhappiness and misery to a number of people who were unfortunate enough to come under the shadow of its baneful influence. During the involved and complicated wars of the period 1641 to 1652, the MacGraths played both sides of the fence and this did not help them at all in the end. English officers rode to the castle to be entertained and to court the chief's beautiful daughters. They rode out once too often. A servant let in the rapparees through a secret door and the Englishmen were dragged out and put to death down by the Lickey stream. It is said that on some summer nights the ghost of one of the girls had

been seen in the castle garden frantically seeking for her vanished lover.

We had to force our way through waist high nettles and weeds to get to the crumbling ruin. A new farm building had been erected in that ominous place that was once the garden. A stab of remorse came back and I turned away. What had led me back here?

This had been quite a day of remembrance. We stopped the car on an elevation and sat silently eating our sandwiches. Gusts of rain hit the windshield, clouds drifted over, then the sun came out and it glistened on the sea far away in the distance. We sat motionless surveying the distant scene. Maire and I went to school together, after which we went steady for a while. That was a long time ago. Maire is seventy, and I am seventy-one.

1921. Comeragh Mountains.

Glenanean, the glen of the birds, is a little coum or vale sleeping in the heart .of the Comeragh Mountains. A wee burn, or stream, wanders and sings it's way down the glen's central depression. It was all too peaceful there and the lads were getting restless from inactivity. Our column consisted of thirty men, some quite hard chaws, the others innocent country lads. Some time back we had pulled off a completely successful affair with a detachment of the Hampshires, all of them taken prisoners, and sometime afterwards we had an almost disastrous affray with a large convoy of the Devons. Since then nothing of any great consequence had happened.

Our armament was by no means negligible. We had: 20 captured Lee Enfields, 5 Lee Metfords, 2 Krag Jagersons, 1 service Mauser, 1 Marlin repeater and 1 Winchester. In reserve were a Martini Enfield, a Snider carbine somebody had brought back from the Crimea. Total supply of ammunition was 1,600 rounds which could only be replenished by capture. We had a number of side weapons but they were ineffective in a field action.

Kirkby, Sullivan and Big Patto were passing around sarcastic remarks amongst the others about our inactivity. Kirkby was our local poacher and he looked like a brigand. Sean Sullivan was an old British army regular who had served from Mons right up to the end of the World War, a very independent man he had never received a promotion. Big Patto was a sailor who had left ship to take to the hills, a usually gentle man he had occasional wild moments. About a month previous the three of them had taken off without permission and shot up a nearby town: the results were most unpleasant for everybody concerned.

Pat [Pat Keating died Burgery 19 March 1921 – buried Kilrossanty] took me off for a walk in the hills as he wanted to unburden himself of his latest plan. He was always enthusiastic about some plan or another and most of his plans sounded crazy. His present plan seemed to make some kind of sense but he wanted to recruit all the inhabitants of the countryside into it. Military raids were a bane to us and we were often caught napping. At the very first sight of the military, he suggested, all the sounds of day-to-day farming activities should be noisily exaggerated. Women would beat on feed pans to call the hens, ploughmen would bellow at their horses and gossoons would wallop the donkeys to make them bray. This general hullabaloo would put us immediately on our guard and save us from surprise. To me it was reminiscent of the famous fairy tale "the ass brayed, the bog barked, the cat meowed, the cock crowed and the robbers ran away."

On our return we at once sensed the discontent so we decided to come out of the hills and move into the Lickey position right away before the men got out of hand. We would have to devise some clever subterfuge to draw the military out. Clearly something had to be done quickly.

Then Stackpoole arrived. [George Noble Plunkett, Count Plunkett]

We were all quite overawed as he had some most impressive qualifications. He had fought with distinction during Easter Week, had a public school education and his father was a nobleman. He was also a member of the Third Order of St. Francis.

The Irish equivalent of the bush telegraph got gossipy at once and quite soon the whole countryside knew that "the Count" had arrived amongst us. We are a people of a kindly and concerned curiosity and everybody was bursting to see him.

The new arrival carefully explained first of all that his true identity was not to be revealed and that he was to be known as "Captain Murphy". On this point he was explicit.

He was, in fact, a G.H.Q. staff officer sent out on a tour of inspection and he proved to be, if ever I met one, a thoroughly conscientious man.

From the beginning there was a wearing tension between the two of us and there were times when we circled politely around each other while seething inwardly. Some modern expert on interpersonal psychology will, no doubt, be able to explain this. At the time it greatly bothered us both and proved quite a strain on our relations.

After the first of many conferences he got down to business straight off and he decided that our brigade was in a really poor state of organization and our column in it's present condition was not fit to go into action for a long time to come. This decision got everybody sulky.

Some days later.

A great cleaning and refurbishing of our arms. Stackpoole proved to be the personification of military efficiency. Sloppy habits he most disliked. We had a habit of letting our small arms lie about any place; with an almost courtly bow he would confront you with your gun saying urbanely "I believe you must have mislaid this." It was one of his most exasperating habits.

The local company captain had his legs run off putting out scouts day and night. The staff captain informed us that we were no longer a flying column but a commando and that we were not to use the words "on active service" but the words "on commando". So now we were a commando on commando.

Our man was almost constantly pouring over a military text book by one Captain Kinsman called The Training of the Infantry Officer. The book, which he loaned me, was all about sire steps, slit trenches and directions for moving large bodies of men across oceans of mud against coils of barbed wire. It was hard to relate its contents to our little guerrilla war.

A week later.

Stackpoole got a cracked idea - some of his ideas seemed quite dottie. We had dinner with Father Power and our captain decided right away that Father Tom must be appointed official chaplain to the column. (We had already dropped the name commando). He said he was going to communicate with the bishop about it. Anyway, there was a priest in every parish we moved into and we had such fine friends on call as Father Gleason of Aglish, and Father Sheehy of Kilrossanty. Father Tom fed us, gave us cigarettes, played his Victrola for us and held himself in readiness to perform the last offices for the dying and he considered his religious functions ended right there. He was a holy little man and he did not like receiving religious instruction. The idea was dropped.

A week following.

The captain got quite distressed about the lads singing what he called "music hall ditties". Their favorite song was "I m for Every Blowing Bubbles" and when on the march they sang a song about where the flies went in wintertime. His voice was not one of his many good qualities but he tried us out with such moving native folk songs as –

One fine morning in spring  
As the birds they did sing  
And the fields were all covered with noneens

The response was negative. Pat did much better, occasionally he would quite suddenly burst out with –

Then rally round the banner boys  
That now above us flies  
The die is cast, the night is past  
The dawn is in the skies

The words, at any rate, were inspiring.

Then there was the row about the cigarettes. The lads, as their only compensation for their national service, got a packet of ten Players cigarettes each day. English manufacture. The brigade Q.M. was instructed to supply an Irish brand. It was not the fault of the Irish manufacturer that the cigarettes were too long in stock, and consequently mouldy, but it was sufficient to have the native product rejected with scorn.

A day later.

We are now ready to move off to a more central point in the brigade area for the purpose of better communication. Stackpoole has been studying O.S. map Sheet 22 and making frequent reference to Captain Kinsman regarding a correct order of march. The order of the march was to be as follows:

Advance guard: myself and three others  
Connecting file: Kirkby and Sullivan  
Main body under Stackpoole and Pat  
Rear guard  
(Total body of troops to be moved, thirty-one men)

We got off to a poor start. Pegeen's pub at Kilbrien was early on the line of march. Although usually well behaved the two men in the connecting file were sour on the new dispensation and they were acting up. Both emerged from Pegeen's with bottles of beer just in time to be caught by the main body. Disgraceful business. After we were all got together by whistle the two bottles were immolated against the stones of the ditch and we got a temperance lecture and the march was resumed. When we had progressed another mile I was whistled and yelled at for losing distance. The correct procedure was to be rigidly adhered to and was to be as follows: When coming to a road, advance guard to take up a protective or covering a position, then the main body would advance at the double to make the crossing, after which the column would reform and continue the advance.

While we of the advance guard were covering the first road crossing the main body came charging up. Passing me at full gallop Stackpoole had just time for an apologetic "Sorry for yelling at you".

He got a stony response.

We finished crossing the valley in a series of mad rushes and finally arrived at the foot of the Drum Hills with everybody in a very bad state of humor.

March 1921. Drum Hills.

On our arrival at Ballymulalla Mrs. Welch and Napoleon were waiting to receive us. Mrs. Welch was a lady in every sense of the word. She acted as quartermaster to the local company but she really commanded it. Napoleon (his real name, I think, was Foley) was first lieutenant of the company. He did credit to his great namesake as he seemed to be indefatigable. Now he had to quarter thirty-one men on the local farmers as well as providing scouts and having messages properly dispatched.

Mrs. Welch and Stackpoole took an instant dislike to each other. Behind her back he called her the Duchess quite unaware of the fact that she called him the Count.

The following morning.

Mrs. Welch whose silvery hair is in a pompadour is sitting behind her massive silver teapot (a relic of better days) and I am sitting happily beside the dear lady. The "orderly officer for the day" has been marched off by Stackpoole for what he calls "inspecting the men's billets." Mrs. Welch is telling me about when she lived in Priory House, Aglish. The great pre-World War manoeuvres are being held in the Drum Hills. General French and his staff are (paid) guests at Priory House. The good lady explains to me that as she was quite at her ease when she presided at the table of General French and his staff she is not going to be overawed by any Count.

Here we were interrupted in our pleasant conversation by a loud yell outside on the road.

"Are ye there; Jarge?"

It was Father Gleason whose voice, it was said, could be heard in the next parish. We both went out to see what he wanted.

"A great day thanks be to God."

"Yes indeed Father."

"Jarge would you send around a couple of the lads to plough a bit of land for me?"

"Yes Father."

"I hear ye have the Count with ye." he roared.

We made frantic signs to him to lower his voice but he just whipped up his pony and went spanking gaily down the boreen.

The inspection did not go off very well and our captain arrived back more sad than angry. He was beginning to become aware of his lack of knowledge of the simple ways of our country people. His first stop had been at Dees. The lads were lounging around the kitchen coddling Maggie Dee who was using Elizabethan words the meaning of which she was quite innocent. When he suddenly appeared in Tobins yard, Mrs. Tobin dropped the feed pan and ran into the house crying, "Mother of God, it's the Count and the family started madly cleaning up for his reception. Luckily at this point,

our usually most happy go lucky Q.M. arrived with the typewriter, several reams of paper and an adequate supply of carbon paper. Stackpoole dictated and we all had a go at two finger typing in carbon triplicate. Now we could get down to work. Instructions to battalion adjutants, instructions to quartermasters (how to care for their few miserable shotguns). It went on for some days and it made only one person happy. (Note: A battalion area covered the area of a barony, the baronies were old tribal lands taken over by the early Anglo Norman conquerors. A brigade area usually comprised four battalion areas and generally fell within the confines of an ancient Irish petty kingdom. The method of living off the rural community (we were welcome quests) was the old Gaelic system of "coign and livery". (The reversion to old native ways was remarkable).

After office hours.

The staff captain genially suggested a walk up the road. He was in affable mood; said how nice it would be if all farm houses were like Mrs. Welch's "with some decent pictures on the wall". We talked about soldiers of fortune and agreed that they were undesirable. Byron, we both agreed, was of course an exception. For the first time we seemed to be in total agreement about something. Then he hummed and hawed and said the brigade staff was next to impossible ("What are you going to do about it, Seoirse?"). I said cautiously that this might be true but what was it to be replaced with. We turned around abruptly and he refused to speak to me all the way back to the house.

Next day.

At any rate this promised to be one happy day. Napoleon and I were off to select an ambush position on the Ballyduff road. Even the sun was shining. Outside Aileen, Mrs. Welch's daughter, was holding her cob by the head waiting to ride cross country with his lordship's dispatches. She was a splendid horsewoman. Some of the lads were standing around admiring the horse but paying no attention to the girl. The girls were very useful for carrying dispatches and for scouting purposes.

We were taking our time as we intended to make a day of it. After a leisurely crossing of the old Mount Odell demesne we came out on the Ballyduff road but we were quite unable to find a suitable position until we got to Kilbane some miles to the west. Here there was a beetling quarry cliff and lots of natural cover. Napoleon earned his name by picking out an excellent post for the shotgun men. The local company, or companies, usually supplied about eight or ten shotgun men for an ambush. Buckshot set in candle wax was used in the cartridges. Most of the shotguns had choke barrels with the result that the impacted charge blew off about an inch or more of the barrel at the first shot. We always tried to give the shotgun men as wide a berth as possible.

After selecting the position we directed our gaze to Big Maigne Landy's pub which was close by - altogether too close. We were both thinking the same thing. My companion remarked, in a quite practical tone, that it was too bad the pub had been built in that particular place but the ambush position we had been forced to select was the only suitable one to be found for miles around. He added that we could not pass by without calling to see our old friend.

Big Maigne was a very fine person but she had an awful tongue and she never spared anybody. She weighed thirteen stone, if she weighed an ounce, and she never had a cigarette out of her mouth.

"Well if it isn't the lads", said she as we came in, "having a nice country walk for themselves."

We let her think that. In the event of a nearby ambush her house was most likely to be burned to the ground as a minimum reprisal.

She filled out two half whiskies for us - we dared not ask for lemonade or even sherry.

"I suppose 'ye been over to Cappagh House having tay with Percy Ussher?"

We let this sally pass.

"I hear the Count is with ye?"

"There is a Captain Murphy staying with us."

"G'wan with you, sure everybody knows who he is".

We sipped gingerly at the whiskies.

"I suppose ye don't know that two lorries of Tans passed this way this morning?"

This made us prick up our ears.

"Sure 'tis ye have the fine times hiding in the hills, sitin the poor people out of house and home and letting them divils drive all over our roads."

Napoleon got very nettled at this caustic remark and said she was soon going to find out all about that and I had to nudge him to keep his mouth shut.

"And when will you be getting married, Napoleon?" she next queried.

Napoleon looked vague. Big Maigue was always teasing us about girls whenever we went to see her, in fact, it was her favorite subject. She now got on to this vein and the more embarrassed we got the more vulgar she became.

"What ye lads need is a good holt" she said quite coolly. We were getting uneasy and ready to go when she started off "The night Landy and I was married - " We had heard this before as it was a local legend so we said we had to leave. "Be careful of yourselves" was her parting sally.

It was quite late when we got back and I was handed an urgent message from Lynch to the effect that I was to contact him immediately. His headquarters was something over a mile outside the village of Ballyhooly in County Cork and about thirty miles, as the crow flies, from our present location. This posed quite a problem as it might take days to travel such a long distance cross country, the roads being out of the question owing to their continuous patrol by the police and the military. Lynch, which was typical of him, did not mention such a minor detail but merely gave the address of a contact in the village. After mulling over the matter with the others it was agreed that I might take the risk of going by train after adopting a suitable disguise.

Aileen Welch harnessed up the pony and drove me to Cappagh station the following morning. As my mind was on serious matters I paid little attention to the conversation she tried to involve me in.

My dress was an expensive tweed overcoat, a deerstalker hat and my boots were nicely polished. In addition, I carried a copy of the Irish Field in my hand and had a faked letter to the faculty of Cork University in my pocket that would explain my identity in case I was picked up.

There was only one 1st class carriage in which I took my seat. A number of the other carriages were occupied by Tommies in full field equipment coming from England as replacements.. They did not bother me, or anybody else, but spent their time in cursing, sleeping, smoking and wondering what strange part of the world they were in.

Leaving the train at Ballyhooly I had to bluff my way through a convoy of four Crossley tenders full of Tans on the prowl, so I was still more than a bit rattled when I met Liam. The last time we had been together was five months past when I had helped to train a column for him at Glenville in the Nagles Mountains.

Now, on this occasion, he pushed me very hard to remain with him and I was quite unable to convince him that I was more needed elsewhere. In any case, I said my underwear was lousey and I had to go home for a change. He offered me half of his if I would stay. This one of my most pleasant memories of Liam, I mean his offering to give me his underwear.

Lynch was one of the few men I ever met whose authority while under command I accepted without question. He was also my friend, or I liked to think so. How can he be like a military man but have the appearance of a responsible superior of a great religious order. He was by nature most abstemious and he never raised his voice, which was gentle. If he ever smiled I have no recollection of the occasion. Like many people of settled conviction he had his blind spots.

At the moment of my arrival he came quietly into the farm parlor smelling strongly of a disinfectant ointment we used for scabies, an unpleasant itch we all suffered from due probably to infrequent changes of underclothing. He had a characteristic habit of fiddling with his eyeglasses when he was tense, which he was now. After gently reproving me for the lack of activities in our area he laid out a map and asked me to study it. Drawing a circle with his pen around Fermoy (a military town) he explained it was the headquarters and the main barracks of the British 18th Infantry Brigade which was causing him constant trouble by raiding all the country isolated, as far as it was possible to do so, by bridge demolitions and road obstructions. Where his area adjoined ours we picked a place for a suitable demolition as well as some road obstructions by tree felling. Not being the kind of person to waste time in idle conversation, he then dismissed me and became immediately immersed in his notebooks. A young lad of about sixteen scouted the road ahead and saw me back to the train for my return journey.

On the train.

When the train drew up at Fermoy station he thought that he was taking leave of his senses. A tremendous commotion was going on along the platform. An officer smartly opened the door of his compartment (1st class) and came briskly to attention. A number of English looking ladies were waving regimental colors the three buglers to their front blew a tattoo salute. Then the Brigadier General and his two staff officers stepped most importantly in and took their seats.

In a flash his mind cleared and he realized what was afoot The Brigadiers predecessor, one General Lucas, had been taken prisoner and carried off to an unknown destination. Generals are not expendable and they were taking no chances with this one. The train pulled filled with soldiers and a plane was flying around overhead. At the tail end of the platform officers let go a salvo of Verey pistols as a final noisy salute.

"Quite a send off sir" said one of the staff officers most respectfully.

Some of our offensive system going west," growled the General.

The General looked like a character out of Punch. He had a walrus moustache, a beefy look and he glared at everything in his immediate vicinity

Telephone poles flashed by and the fields with their green ditches seemed to go round in circles. Now what was he to do? When the train got to Tallow Road station Constable Neery, who knew him [George Lennon] from childhood, and two other R.I.C. men got into the next compartment. All the other stations appeared to be heavily guarded by R.I.C. men and Tans. He cursed Liam for bringing him all that distance for a fifteen-minute consultation; the whole business could have been dealt with in a dispatch. His one chance was to get off at Cappagh and make a dash for it. The next station beyond that was his own town where every constable knew him and he would be dragged off. At any rate he was unarmed and he would not be tortured. He could imagine the angry complaints of the General, "Damnably inefficient, putting me into a carriage with a dangerous Shinner, - fellow might have shot me, might have murdered the three of us."

Then he realized that that he had made a vow not to be taken alive. Nurse Kent [Kilmacthomas] had given him a slim tube of morphine tablets as the idea of wounds and torture filled him with terror - but he was not going to have recourse to them this time. He had meant to ask nurse Kent if it was sufficient to swallow the things as she carried around some kind of a syringe and needle. Still, he could not allow himself to be taken; he would have to make a dash for it.

Coming to Cappagh station he pulled all his mental and physical resources together. One of the officers most politely helped him with the door and quaking inwardly he stepped out. By some miracle the platform appeared to be deserted. Constable Neery in the next carriage appeared astounded for a bare instant and quickly averted his eyes. Oh good and darling man, thought he, may the heavens bless you. The train pulled out of the station carrying the Brigadier General to future triumphs. Perhaps to Singapore.

So I was back safely in Ballymulalla the same day. Stackpoole, who was a stickler for protocol, did not think it proper to ask me about my recent interview, although he must have been most curious, but sought my views on another matter he had been stewing over during my absence. The local battalion commandant had been complaining for quite a long time about a bridge in his area much used by the military and which he was anxious to have destroyed. Having agreed to the necessity for destroying this particular bridge we all retired to bed.

Rendezvous.

We moved off after dark the following evening with the intention of making a wide circuit that would bring us out two miles east of the town. The local company would provide twelve pick and crowbar men and eight shot gun men for it's protecting party.

In case of unforeseen trouble the curate's house, two miles back was to be a rendezvous.

Coming off the hills we passed the Brickey canal and crossed several fields until we came to the Mount Odell demesne, now in the possession of a French community of nuns. After passing through the extensive demesne we made a wide sweep to the east arriving two hours afterwards at the pre-arranged meeting place on time and without incident.

The bridge proved to be a tougher proposition than we had bargained for and we had no explosives. The working party quite failed to make any appreciable dent in the solid structure which must have been over a hundred years old and very solidly built. The headlights of a night raiding party were now observed coming towards us from the direction of the town and it may have been out of

frustration with the bridge and we decided to attack the troops on their return from their marauding expedition.

Impromptu night engagements are likely to have unforeseen results and this one proved to be no exception. In the general melee that followed most of our lads panicked and scattered. The main body of the military lost contact with their officers and retreated in the opposite direction. We destroyed the two enemy vehicles and took some prisoners whom we released. All but one.

I and Thou

A Play In One Act [The Burgery Ambush 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> March 1921]

Persons

A Partisan Officer [George Lennon]

A Constabulary Sergeant [R.I.C. Officer Hickey, seized at Green's pub at the Burgery]

A Priest [Fr. Power?]

A Firing Squad

A grey cold morning in Holy Week

Wednesday

Spy Wednesday

The night action has been indecisive on all sides. Both the partisans and the enemy soldiers have got mixed up in the night's darkness and have scattered in all directions.

The partisan officer is walking back and forth outside the priest's house - the agreed re-assembly point. His patience has almost given out when a squad of his men come tiredly up the country road: They surround a prisoner. He restrains his curiosity until they come up.

Subordinate Officer: We ran a bunch of them to ground, we hunted them down and they surrendered. We released the regular soldiers but we had to take him (he inclines his head towards the prisoner, a constabulary sergeant.)

Partisan Officer: (he exchanges a glance of recognition with the police sergeant) Ah, it is him.

Subordinate Officer: He is very windy. He knows he is for it.

Partisan Officer (doubtfully): It would be hard for us to release him?

Subordinate Officer (heatedly): Release him. Of course not, it would be the end of us all and our homes.

The police sergeant [Constable Hickey] is a powerfully built man but he seems to have shrunk into his bottle-green uniform. He looks by no means ill natured but his face now as a sallow, yellow tinge and his lips are white. He has the look of the deepest sadness, if not despair.

Partisan Officer: Call the priest.

One of the men knocks loudly on the door of the priest's house. The priest opens the door with a frightened look and goes back to dress. They all wait in silence. A cold morning mist seeps around and drips from the bare hawthorn branches. The priest comes out into the forbidding morning wearing a stole and carrying a prayer book.

Partisan Officer: Father, get this man a full glass of whiskey and then hear his confession.

The pale young priest reenters his house and returns after a moment with a tumbler full of whiskey. One of the partisans takes the glass from him and partisans takes it up to the prisoner.

Partisan (not unkindly): Drink this.

The police sergeant takes the glass unsteadily and gets the liquid down in a number of gulps. Then the priest takes him gently by the arm and leads him to his doorstep where they both sit down. The priest places his hand affectionately on the sergeant's arm and hears his confession. When they have finished the others wait uneasily for the moments are pregnant. The officer makes a signal and the priest takes the prisoner's arm to assist him up. As they pass the officer the prisoner looks appealingly at him but the officer averts his eyes. They all force themselves into motion. The clergyman is holding the prisoner's arm and he is speaking words of consolation into his ear. They walk back the breen with the partisan officer bringing up the rear. He is very disturbed but he conceals his unhappiness.

A sharp turn in the by-road. A gateway leading into a field. The partisan officer goes ahead, opens the rusty gate and the all file in. The officer leads the prisoner out in the field and affixes a label on front of his tunic. Written on the label are the words 'Police Spy'. Then the partisan leader whips a handkerchief from his pocket. The file of men slam the bolts of their rifles with an uneven clatter. The partisan officer moves close to the sergeant with the bandage in his hand -

Police Sergeant (pleadingly): George, I knew you as a child, you used to play with the head constables children in the barracks.

Partisan Officer (almost inaudibly): yes

Police Sergeant (intimately): You are the one person in the world that can save me.

Partisan Officer (pity is choking him): I would give anything... anything in the world to save you...but I cannot -

They are alone, quite alone, and helpless. In that instant the policeman their awful situation. A glance of understanding and deep affection passes between them. The sergeant squares his shoulders and stands straight to attention. The officer quickly ties the bandage over the mans eyes, steps back, drops his arm and calls "fire".

The morning silence of the glen is shattered.

The dead man sways on his feet an instant, slowly inclines and falls rigidly on his left side, his head amongst the ferns. The officer draws his Luger, bends down and fires into the man's temple. The priest clasps his hands before his face and runs back towards his house, his shoulders shaken with sobs.

The partisan officer looks down at the erstwhile enemy who is now an enemy no more. His turmoil is calmed. He makes a sign to his men and they go quickly off.

The police sergeant lies peacefully amongst the withered ferns.

It was not really a mistake to go back as we badly needed what munitions that might have been

left behind by the military when they fled. It was a grave mistake not to have reconnoitered the place in the first instance and the fatal mistake could only have been mine. We walked straight into an ambush.

I must confess that I did not conduct myself with any great show of bravery. Stackpoole behaved with amazing coolness and courage. He took over.

The remainder of us retreated sadly across the grey fields. I seemed unable to face the fact that Pat was dead [Pat Keating buried at Kilrossanty Republican plot]. I was weary, unspeakably unhappy and quite dispirited and had fallen a long way behind. The staff captain came back and slipped his arm into mine. "Come along" said he, "there is something you must do for me.

Soon afterwards Stackpoole left us to return to G.H.Q. with his report. As he was fixing his bicycle clips he said coldly that he was recommending that I take responsibility for all activities in the county. As we were still a bit stiff with each other we did not offer to shake hands. He rode away and soon disappeared around a bend in the road.

One summer's night. Sleady Castle.

Solitary journeys took him from time to time across the valley. He would leave in the evening and walk most of the night. On this particular evening he was almost overcome by the beauty of the country through which he traveled. What he remembered most was the cattle contentedly munching the luxurious grass and the corncrakes calling to each other across the fields. Some strange state of intoxication came over him and he became most anxious to get to the castle. Why the castle, and why the castle garden? He had heard the story, no mere legend, of young love, cruel death, and confiscation.

Beneath the castle was a small cottage where it was his custom to stop. A girl would lay out food for him and wait on him. Then taking her accordion she would for his pleasure play sad and beautiful Jacobite melodies. Nodding to her he would go off into the night.

Now on this night her young sister was there. As the music was played he kept gazing into the heartfire. The young girl's figure was well developed and her eyes seemed slight to protrude. She never took her eyes off him. (All this he remembered afterwards). He nodded his thanks and left.

It happened as he passed through the castle garden. The girl appeared as if from nowhere, flung her arms about him and clung to him frantically. Quite overcome by surprise and a brutal ignorance he pulled her arms away and flung her from him...but he had not progressed very far down the road when he was overtaken by such a feeling of disgust for himself that he had to lean weakly against the ditch. Why had he been so cruel, and why inflict such hurt on another person? An inner instinct told him that he lacked something true and something natural. The memory would remain with him forever. And he would never be permitted to make amends. He continued on his solitary journey but the beauty all around had quite disappeared.

July 12, 1921. Sleady.

The column has been disbanded, the arms dumped and the lads have all returned home. Kirkby took off with alacrity and our best Webley revolver disappeared with him.

I am waiting for a car to pick me up. Sitting very much alone on a ditch I am overcome with sadness and I cannot shake off a dread premonition.

Everything had seemed to be going exceptionally well recently. Twelve additional riflemen had some time before coming over the Gap from the east part of the county to join us and I was moving about with a well-disciplined force of forty-two men. Our enemies had retreated into the towns and they were now only venturing out in large mobile columns complete with mounted officers and a field kitchen. We had been on the tail of one such column for three days. We just missed them coming through the Lickey position where we would have had a decided advantage. I dared not bring such a large body of troops to action in open country as they were more than twice our strength and we would have to make a capture to replenish our expended and limited supply of ammunition- to say that we were like Indians on the trail of covered wagons is not a bad illustration.

As we had had no sleep for two days running we let our enemies go and moved for rest to a place called Collagortuide (the place of the yellow fields) at the foot of the Knockmealdown Mountains.

Then a dispatch carrier came running across the fields waving a paper. Quite unexpectedly a Truce had been declared.

This action on the part of our leaders caused me considerable doubt and I was wondering if accepting a premature truce was not a grave error. At no other time in our unhappy history had things seemed to be going so well. The people were all with us as we were with our people and we had the enemy apparently on the run. We were holding two trump cards, Unity and Secrecy. Secrecy was our secret weapon as the inefficient British intelligence system was convinced that all the hills were crawling with insurgents. Now we would be coming into losing the other card our leaders would rend the country from top to bottom. True, the arms situation was by no means good but there were some signs that at last this was going to be rectified. Was it by deliberation or through incompetence that our G.H.Q. had failed to arm the Volunteers?

The question of unity was vital. For a guerilla war to succeed the army must have the active support of the civil Population. With a hostile, or part hostile, population the game was up.

I had some sad premonition regarding all this as I waited for the car. What a luxury to sit in a car after the years of footslogging. Soon we would be all riding around in cars, little heroes, and a softening up process would begin. We would, naturally, be reluctant to go back to all that other business again.

With no let up in hostilities our political leaders could have negotiated from a position of strength. Bargaining from a position of weakness they would have to accept the best terms they could get.

In fact, and in effect, the war was over.

How good it was that the sun shone (it had been a wonderful summer) that peace reigned and that the people were working happily in the fields, - yet, something indefinable had gone away forever.

Something else, more personal, was detaining me. I kept looking down at the cottage beneath the castle hoping to see my little friend. I wanted to meet her again but a foolish shyness overcame me. This meeting I must postpone for a later date. So I did come back not very much later but we did not meet and they would not tell me the circumstances of her lonesome death.

1171. Waterford.

"There came into Ireland Henry (son of the Empress) most puissant King of England and also Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine and Count of Anjou and Lord of many other lands, with 240 ships (so

that was the first advent of the Saxons into Ireland.) And he came to land at Port-lairge and received the pledges of Munster." (The Annals of Ulster.)

"All the Archbishops, Bishops, and Abbots of Ireland waited on his Majesty and swore fealty to him, and he received from them Charters with their seals pendant, confirming the Kingdom of Ireland to him and his heirs for ever." (Smith: State of the City and Co. of Waterford.)

1652. Comeragh Mountains  
Commonwealth State Documents:

"These fastnesses are of better use to them in point of strength than walled towns; because they cannot be besieged, and because they can draw all their strength out of them to exact their designs, without hazarding the loss of the place. In addition they have exact and constant intelligence from the natives of the motions of any of our forces and of the opportunities to act their designs on us; whereas our forces seldom or never have any intelligence of their motions from the natives, who are possessed with an opinion that the Parliament intends them no terms of mercy, and therefore endeavor to preserve them, as standing between them and danger."

1922. Waterford.

Early in 1922, after the elapse of 750 years it was our proud privilege to enter the city with native troops and take it back for the Irish nation.

We did not come to the city with any ceremony but drove into the back of the town in lorries and took possession of the Infantry Barracks just vacated by the Devon Regiment of the British army.

The main building of the barracks was the officer's quarters, two long wings connected from here enclosing a very large barrack square. Other buildings comprised the married quarters, the hospital, the transport shed, the magazine and some other buildings for stores. Just inside the barrack gate was a small building marked Early Treatment Station". This, we speculated was for the precautionary treatment of Venusian diseases; needless to say, we had no use for this exotic place.

Our maintenance party, as we were modestly first described, was a company of 82 men. The right half company was composed of men with column service (the Old Guard.). The left half of picked men from the brigade. I had four junior officers, one who acted as barrack quartermaster and another who looked after our paper work.

And I had a prince of a Sergeant Major who ran the whole internal show for me. Sergeant Major Jim Power had been a non-commissioned officer in the Royal Scots and had waded through half the mud in Flanders. On being de-mobbed at the end of the war he had immediately joined the Volunteers. He was most competent and quite indispensable and never liked to be far away from my right elbow.

Next I rate in importance the famous Nipper. The Nipper was just a nipper as he was quite young and small in stature - that is, physically. His column service was from the very beginning.

The "Nip" was my driver and he followed me around like a shadow.

We acquired a most admirable chef, John Phelan, who had been a ship's cook; he always referred to his kitchen, which he was quite proud of, as "the galley". John usually wore spotless ducks and he had only one failing, if it could be called that, he had a strong addiction to grand opera. Sometimes on returning to the barracks at night, in a gay mood, he would start his arias at the

guardhouse and would continue his high notes all through the barrack square and far into the night. We remonstrated and he quit in a huff and only returned after we had humiliated ourselves. Afterwards he sang to his heart's content.

In addition we had four bugler boys as well as four stray dogs that the men adopted. The boys received lessons from an old ex-service man and in time became quite proficient in the various bugle calls.

For transport we possessed three Crossley tenders, a battered Lancia armored car (a death trap) and a Buick touring car.

There was quite a lot of cleaning up to be done after the Devons and then we got the men into uniform. The sergeant Major gave them all the basic drill, and plenty of it, and after that slow-motion guards drill. Soon we had a company of crack troops.

Next to the officers quarters was a room I used as an office and which was at times the Orderly Room. Here minor breaches of discipline would be punished with confinement to barracks and extra fatigue duties. I also read the men a lecture on the moral dangers involved in speaking to girls they might meet in the street. The poor fellows took it all in good part.

My position was an anomalous one. The country was as yet without a government, or had five different governments, and bitter dissension was going on all over. I almost forgot to add that across Barrack Street was the Cavalry Barracks, which we occupied with thirty temporary police. So I became, under the circumstances, a kind of military governor on my own without the benefit of any civil advice or instruction.

When the Nipper drove me outside the town we changed places and he gave me driving lessons. When I wanted to create an impression on the populace I sat in the back of the car, with my driver and my batman in front. I must have looked like a twenty-one year old brass-hat and if at this tender age I had a mild case of swelled head who would blame me.

There were, of course, a number of trying incidents and I will confine myself to just two as both had happy endings.

It became necessary for me to place a section sergeant's guard in the central post office. For one thing, all telephone calls between the headquarters of the Free State army in Beggars Bush barracks and their forces in Kilkenny had to pass through our post office telephone exchange where I had agents to tap the messages and keep me informed as to what was in the wind. (The Kilkenny troops were always threatening to move in on us.) As soon as the guard was posted the postmaster called the staff together and led them out of the building. Now the city was left without a postal service, a telegraph service and a telephone service. After the lapse of three days the citizens got very irate indeed. And there was another disruption; Waterford had a large number of British ex-service men whose war pensions were processed through the post office. A deputation of the ex-soldiers waited on me and in very impolite terms demanded to know what I intended to do about it. This was the last straw and I was very annoyed, in fact, I was quite mad. My driver drove me over to Newtown, the residential section of the city where the postmaster lived, and we had a brief interview. The postmaster said hastily that he would go back and I returned my Luger to its holster. Everybody was happy again.

One Sunday when I was communing with myself, having no one else to consult with, the telephone rang. The man on the line said there was a strike of farm laborers and that they had taken over possession of his town. I said so what and he said quite a lot what. To this he added that I was now

"the competent military authority" responsible for law and order and that I had better do something about it quick. I told Power to fall in the right half company, ready the three tenders and have the men bring their bayonets with them.

It was one of those country towns consisting mainly of one long street running up the side of a hill. More than half way up this hill a dark mass of men was gathered. Dismounting the forty men from the trucks we fell them in, fixed bayonets and advanced up the street.

Two lines of twenty men each, bayonets to the front, not a hair out of place, boots crashing on the street. So we advanced steadily up the town. Halt. A dark glaring man, seemingly the leader, was standing in front of the farm laborers, his eyes staring me.

"What is going on here, my man." said I, in my best officer manner.

"----- you" said he.

The Sergeant Major moved from my side and felled him with a blow. Some of the men broke ranks and knocked down a few of the strikers with their rifle butts. A pause and a boy rushed forward to confront me. Calling me by name he said bitterly "What is the matter with you I thought you would be the last person in the world to do this to us." We pushed the strikers back to the end of the street and held them there at the bayonet point. Then a truck came up with the labor organizer who was to preside at their meeting. He glared also. I told him if everything was going to be orderly they could hold the meeting, otherwise no meeting. He angrily assented and we marched off quite a ways to the old Union buildings nearby so as to be in call. From here we heard cheers but no other sounds of trouble.

I sat on a stone wondering what the boy meant. You and Us... Then it began to dawn on me. No wonder they were mad. In the past, lancers had ridden them down, redcoats had marched against the, bluecoats had marched against them, now men in green jackets were putting them back in their place. Poor landless men, people of no property, betaghs.

"Sergeant.

"Fall in the men, we are going back to barracks".

About this time a prisoner was reported being held in the guardhouse. On going to investigate I discovered it was Kirkby. He said he had been arrested after leaving Beggars Bush barracks where he had been spending some time giving the new regime a look over. He was anxious to get back to the river and we parted most warmly.

Towards the end of our occupation we suffered some marauding visits from our own side. On one occasion they presented the manager of the Bank of Ireland with a demand that nearly gave the poor man a heart attack; on another they stripped the ships in the port of their wireless sets.

It was almost a relief when the pro-Treaty forces attacked us.

1922. Mount Congreve.

On the last day of our occupancy of the city we had a spirited exchange of fire with the Free State troops across the river who were trying to get a gun into position to start shelling us again. Their troops were already well into the town and getting uncomfortably close to our position in the Prison. Just as we sat down to get a bite to eat a shell landed in with a terrific bang, quickly followed by

another.

Power poked his head in the door.

"Yes Sergeant"?

"The Staters are quite close outside".

"Alright, call in the two outposts, we're leaving, have a look outside first

Power came back shortly to say that we could get away if we left quickly. As we crossed the road outside we were peppered with rifle fire but we soon got to the comparative safety of Barrack Street. Some irresponsible person or persons had set fire to the fine barracks during our absence. John, the chef, was waiting outside the main gate weepily surveying the remains of our former home. He called out to us plaintively "The galley is burned, the galley is burned."

The men from the outposts had already arrived so we fell them in and marched away, almost casually, followed happily by the barrack dogs who were delighted to be with the company again.

Everybody felt disgusted.

When we got to Mount Congreve the sergeant major begged me to try and get some rest and the quartermaster went off to see the housekeeper about provisions; she assured him there was enough food in the larders to feed eight men for three days, but no longer.

The four junior officers, the Doctor and the local commandant retired with me to the library and somebody went off to inspect the wine cellar. The cellar was well stocked, mostly with vintage brandy and in a session that lasted three days and three nights we drank it out completely. The library apart from the books was equipped with a gramophone and just one record, Humoresque by Dvorak; we kept playing it until the needle or the record wore out. The Doctor was something of a demoralizing influence as he kept pacing the floor cursing the Civil War and whoever was responsible for it. From time to time runners would come in with reports from "the front" but we immediately chased them out.

The poor Nipper brought me food from the kitchen and begged me to eat or he would help me upstairs, cover me with blankets and try and get me to sleep. One night of our stay I was shaken awake to consult with a pale delicate looking man who said his name was Erskine Childers, in charge of publicity; he wanted an interesting account of "the siege" for a Republican paper he was printing in the field.

The Doctor [Joe Walsh] suggested a game of golf and one of the buglers offered to caddy for us but we were interrupted in our play by two stately looking ladies advancing up the avenue.

"My God" said Joe "It's the Cumann na mBan."

"What, again.

Half of the men were at the moment searching through the strawberry beds and the other half were parading before the front of the mansion dressed in a most extraordinary variety of uniforms and costumes borrowed from the big house's many wardrobes. The house had a tradition of military service going back beyond Waterloo. Some of the men were dressed as admirals, others generals, and one lad was arrayed in a blazer from Eton or Harrow.

The ladies were very disapproving of all this and informed us they were looking after the welfare of the troops. They said the men should have clean socks every day and should have porridge every morning for breakfast. This caused great hilarity and we returned to our play as the two women stalked off looking very angry. It was a scene of tragic comedy. The hilarity was mostly forced and there was a ground swell of disgust, at times almost despairing.

After all the clothing had been returned to the wardrobes and everything put back in place we said goodbye to the household staff and left. We were not at all sure where we were going to next. One thing we agreed on, we were not going to live off the good country people again.

Waterford. 1971.

The first name of Waterford was Cuan-na-Grioth, i.e. the Harbour of the Sun. The name that followed was Gleann-na-Gleodh, i.e. The Valley of Lamentation; this sad title was conferred on the place after the native Irish were defeated in a most sanguinary battle by the Norsemen, who took over. For some reason it got back an Irish name from the Horse and was known as Port-lairge. The English called it Waterford and conferred upon it the title of Urbs Intacta as a reward for its continuous loyalty to the English crown. Different English monarchs lavished fulsome charters on the city in return for this unswerving loyalty, for it was indeed to the English "the one bright spot."

King James II 'lay in Dublin' after the defeat of the Jacobites at the Boyne and then rode to Waterford on his flight to France. In spite of his lay in or rest period he covered the distance from the Boyne to Waterford in the space of twenty-four hours. In his great hurry he lost his hat and one of his officers presented his as a replacement. James remarked cynically that if he had lost a kingdom he had gained a hat by it. He also gained the contempt of the Irish people who were foolish enough to support him and who now crowned him with an unprintable title (merde in French).

My descriptive powers are by no means good so I must again seek the assistance of Arthur Young. This most admirable and practical man was more interested in rapeseed and turnips than in scenery but when he turned his pen to the subject he was quite good indeed. After the passing of almost two hundred years his description of our city still holds:

' But the finest object in this city is the quay, which is unrivaled by any that I have seen; it is an English mile long; the buildings on it are only common houses, but the river is over a mile over, flows up to the town in one noble reach, and the opposite shore a bold hill, which rises immediately from the water to a height that renders the whole magnificent. This is scattered with some wood, and divided into pasture of a beautiful verdure, by hedges...in one place over against Bilberry quarry, you look immediately down on the river, which flows in noble reaches from Granny Castle on the right past Cromwell's rock, the shores on both sides quite steep, especially the rock of Bilberry. You look over the whole town, which here appears in a triangular form; besides the city, the Comeragh Mountains, Slievnamon etc. come into view. Kilmacow river falls into the Sure (Suir), after flowing through a large extent of well planted country; this is the finest view about the

Waterford prison (or gaol), which I first looked for, is now no more and the landscape is much improved by its absence. On the first night of my incarceration there the kindly night warden let himself into my cell with the excellent intention of trying to cheer me up. The good man explained that I did not have to wear prison clothes, that I could procure books from the library, that I could

have meals sent in, that I would exercise in the yard for an hour every day, and so forth. The poor man finally ran out of goodies and with a deep sigh he said "But this place was not built for anyone's pleasure. With this wise Buddhist remark he left me for the night.

My next visit was to the Infantry barracks which has been rebuilt and looks almost exactly the same as when I left it. I wanted to see the office again where I used to worry on my lonesome about my responsibilities. The caretaker said the office sergeant had the key, the sergeant said it was in the possession of the transport man and he in turn sent me to see the captain in the officer's quarters. The captain's wife said he might be around somewhere but, perhaps, he had gone into town for the day. So I did not get to see.

Crossing Barrack Street I entered a pub seeking information about the former inhabitants of the locality. An elder was raking out the ashes in a grate but although he had lived all his life in the district he was quite dumb about its history. He was, however, very bright about St. Columcille and his prophesies. The rainy day provided him with an opening gambit – "St. Columcille foretold that the day was coming when you would not know the summer from the winter, only for the colour of the bushes and you would not be able to tell the men from the women; the saint foretold that the fish would fly out of the boiling sea and the rocks would melt - t'was the atom bomb he was talking about." This sounded altogether too prophetic and I left in a hurry.

And now I wend my lonely way to Greyfriars Abbey, sometimes called the French Church, to pay my respects to Niall O'Neill (1658—1690).

"At the battle of the Boyne he was placed with his dragoons at the ford of Rosnaree, a little below the bridge of Alane, which had been previously broken down, the object was to prevent Schomberg crossing and attacking the flank of James II's army. For some time O'Neill defended the ford with conspicuous bravery, more than once charging through the river and beating back Schomberg's troops. At length he was wounded and his troops gave way. He was carried from the battlefield to Budlin and thence to Waterford where, owing to the 8th of July he died. He was buried in the church of the Franciscan abbey at Waterford, where his tomb is still extant."

The inscription on the grave slab has been almost obliterated by time. The slab is now propped against the wall on the left side of the chancel. Restored it would read:

Here lyes the body of Sir Neal O'Neill, Baronet of Killeleagh in the county of Antrim, who dyed the 8th of July, in the year 1690, at the age of 32 years and six months. He married the second daughter of Lord Viscount Molyneux, of Sefton, in Lancashire, in England.

July 21, 1971.

Dear Susan

The news of the birth of my grandchild, Tadhg Colum Oisin, was joy received. I was going to suggest that the boy be called Niall O'Neill, but got a jump ahead of me. The picture of the baby is treasured. All babies are beautiful but, of course, your baby is the most beautiful of all.

Your suggestion that I become the apostle of Buddhism in Ireland fills me with apprehension.

With love.

Dear Countess of Sutherland,

Your see I have moved to Ireland. It was good of you to go to such trouble, especially phoning Mr. Hutchinson. He has had me provided with an excellent photo of the portrait of Sir Niall O 'Niall.

I went to Armagh seeking Sir Niall O'Neill's grave but I afterwards discovered that he is buried in the old Franciscan abbey in Waterford. I will try and secure a picture of his last resting place for you.

Thank you for your good wishes.

Dear Bonnie,

Forgive my tardiness in writing to you but I have been in travel motion since my arrival. You asked me what I was going to do for spiritual nourishment in Ireland? I have found none but the fault, perhaps, lies within me. The good St. Patrick failed to banish two snakes from this otherwise lovely Eden; they are, religious intolerance and tribal insularity or nationalism.

Soon I go to England, to meet Krishnamurti. I draw back from visiting Montsegur and that part of Southern France where lived and died the noble Albegensians. If I did go there it might exorcise my fear.

My fond regards to Colorado, to you, and to yours.

1690-1971. The Boyne Valley.

The morning of the battle of the Boyne dawned bright and fair on the hostile camps. The Protestant army of William of Orange numbered at least 45,000 men, many of them veteran troops, while the Irish and French Catholic army of James came to at most 23,000 many armed only with pikes. The white uniforms of the regular French regiments were in striking contrast to the irregular dress of the native Irish soldiers. King James from the beginning of the action, appeared more concerned for his personal safety than for anything else and he had little inclination to take the offensive. This craven attitude on the part of their king doomed the Irish cause from the beginning. It was with great difficulty that he was finally convinced that he should take some serious precautions to protect the river passages. Only on the eve of the battle was he most reluctantly to send Sir Niall O'Neill with his regiment of horse to defend the ford of Rosnaree about four miles from the Irish camp at Slane. When the inevitable and overwhelming attack came in this quarter the Williamite cavalry forced the passage of the river which was most gallantly defended by O'Neill who was mortally wounded and who lost seventy of his men. Schomberg's troops now crossed the river not only at this vital point but also at Slane further up; this was about ten o'clock in the morning. The Irish and French at bay showed a grim and determined front fighting a continuous rear guard action until ten o'clock in the evening when the Williamite foe drew off and allowed the defeated Jacobite army to continue its retreat, a retreat that was to be maintained until the army took up its last defensive positions on the Shannon.

No atavistic longing (an assumption) had brought me to the Boyne valley this sparkling summer's day in 1971. In fact, I had come for a reunion with Brian. Some considerable years gone by i had been employed by a government Board to direct a topographical survey of the twenty-six counties of our land and Brian was most capable and enthusiastic assistant, John Betjeman took me to lunch at the University Club and gave me most useful advice. And the different learned societies offered all their facilities which we were most happy to avail of. Brian, who is an architect as well as an archeologist, did the drawings and plans for a conjectural scheme of restoration of Cashel and we planned a dig and model recreation of the once great monastic settlement of Holy Island on the

Shannon. We had many other ambitious schemes such as further excavations at the sight of the great "Stone Age" mound at Newgrange.

Dating from about 2,700 B.C. Newgrange is a leading example of a Stone Age passage grave or tomb. No mortar is used in the construction which is built of large stone slabs fitted together with extraordinary finesse. It was more than likely at one time a royal cemetery of paramount importance. Claire in her excellent illustrated guide, which she kindly presented me with, goes on to say: "The word 'presumed' is used because it is unlikely that proof similar to that which Schilemann, for instance, sought and found in the case of the Homeric tales will ever be found in respect of the Boyne cemetery."

The great burial mound was searched for plunder by the Norsemen during their depredations but they must have come away disappointed as no golden loot was available. The entrance to this remarkable place was rediscovered in 1699 by a local planter or landlord and from his description the interior was then much the same as it appears today. Brian, who has been excavating the place for the past ten years, took me through on an individual guided tour while a long line of visitors had to wait outside. Standing in the central chamber we held happy discourse on time, place and history. What, to me, was of greatest interest was the calculated orientation of the builders. Claire will not object to my quoting from her book regarding this most remarkable circumstance: "A matter frequently raised in connection with prehistoric monuments and one that is increasingly studied at the present time is to what extent they were aligned so as to coincide with the rising and setting of the sun, moon, etc. The orientation of Stonehenge in the direction of the midsummer sunrise is one of the best known instances and probably accounts for the frequency with which visitors and probably accounts for the frequency with which visitors to Newgrange enquire if a similar phenomenon is to be witnessed there. Its orientation precluded this since it faces southeast but it was felt that observation of midwinter rather than midsummer sunrise might be rewarding.

It was found that four minutes after local sunrise on December 21 the sun's rays shone in along the passage and reached across the chamber floor as far as the basin stone in the end-chamber. More surprising still was the fact that the light penetrated, not through the entrance proper, but through the slit or gap in the roof-box...

On-the-spot observations made by Professor O'Kelly on December 21, 1969 and again in 1970 were recorded by him as follows: "At exactly 9:54 a.m. (BST) the top edge of the ball of the sun appeared above the local horizon and at 9:58 a.m. the first pencil of direct sunlight shone through the roof-box and right along the passage to reach across the tomb chamber floor as far as the front edge of the band and swing across the chamber floor, the tomb was dramatically illuminated and various details of the side-and-end-chambers as well as the corbelled roof could be clearly seen in the light reflected from the floor. At 10:04 a.m. the 17 cm band of light began to narrow again and at exactly 10:15 a.m. minutes, therefore, at sunrise on the shortest day of the year, direct sunlight can enter Newgrange, not through the doorway, but the specially-contrived narrow slit which lies under the roof-box at the outer end of the passage roof." The angular relationships involved are such that it seems unlikely that this is due to chance. Further observation has shown that direct sunlight penetrates to the chamber for about a week before and a week after the solstice but not as fully as on the few days centering on the 21st.

Witnessing this phenomenon for myself has caused me to remember that I dismissed as an 'old wives' tale' a tradition current many years ago to the effect that at a certain time of the year the sun lit up the 3-spiral figure in the end-chamber."

I would have dearly like to spend a night alone sealed in the great tomb but I was afraid that such a suggestion might cause apprehension on the part of my dear friends. Brian drove me along by the Boyne to Drogheda. We passed close by the Ford of Rosscaree but we made no delay as I had to catch a train to Dublin.

Liverpool - Brockwood Park - Winchester - Waterloo.

London is one of the few places I feel safe in. Growing more and more timid with the years I never feel really secure unless there is a bobby within call. My bobby said the Tate Gallery was in Millbank, quite a distance from Tottenham Court Road. He suggested a bus, but I chose to walk. Niall O'Neill was awaiting my inspection almost just inside the front door. The original portrait came up to my expectations.

Paddington - Fishguard - Rosslare - Comeragh Mts.

The moment I arrived back Maire told me Bernie was dying. We drove to the next county to share his last moments. We had not met for forty-nine years but he seemed to be expecting me. When we were alone together he spoke of the sad results of our youthful activities.

Mt. Melleray Abbey

As we waited in the monastery garden for the guest brother to call us to Vespers my companion sought to enlighten me on "the troubles" in the North. The solution was really quite simple he explained. Fifty thousand of the leading Protestant families should be provided with compensation or quit rent" and moved to England or preferably Scotland, where they originally came from, then all the rest of the protestants would be glad to come in with the Catholic South. Catholicism had a special position in Ireland and Protestants would have to learn the fact. But suppose, I asked, the over a million Catholic emigrants in England were returned to Ireland, what then? He said this would be just fine as the Republic could create new industries to employ them all. Religious wars are particularly horrible and they all tend to end in a blood bath. I think it was that wise man Leonard Woolf who said that the whole of history shows that the savage xenophobia of human beings is so great that the introduction into any populated country of a large racial, economic, religious or cultural minority always leads to hatred, violence, and political and social disaster and therefore until the human race becomes more civilized everything should be done to prevent the creation of new centers of conflict between minorities and majorities.

Up to the suppression of the monasteries in the early sixteenth century there appears to have been no less than forty Cistercian abbeys in Ireland of which Mellifont was the motherhouse. It was not until 1832 that the Cistercians again became established in the country here at Melleray, at that time called Scrahan. "Scrahan" means coarse or mountain land covered with a thin surface of peat or "scraws." Due to the dedicated labours of the monks over the years, this desert has been made to bloom. Here I would like to quote from the excellent little history I purchased at the monastery:

"On the next day the Prior again interviewed Sir Richard Keane at Cappoquin, and, on the suggestion of the baronet, both of them rode out together to Scrahan where they dismounted and strolled leisurely over the property. Arriving at the place where the present porter's Lodge of Mount Melleray Abbey stands, Sir Richard abruptly halted and addressing his companion, said: 'Here now is Scrahan; take it or leave it. I seek no pecuniary advantage from you or your community, yet I believe my property will be improved by your establishment, because my waste land, and the morals of the people will be improved, if a place of worship is erected here.' Fr. Vincent, feeling, as

he later related, an extraordinary and unaccountable conviction that this was the place the Lord had chosen, unhesitatingly replied: "I am satisfied; that the Abbey should be built on the spot where the agreement had been made, and having duly marked the place with a stone, the landlord and his tenant went back to Cappelouin."

The success of the Trappist monasteries may be due mainly to the fact that the monks are contemplative, non-interference and their activities not soiled by the impertinence of "saving" others. They are quite withdrawn from that field of religious power politics which has brought Western religion into such bad odor in the past.

In the 13th century Cistercian legislation forbade monks to mix in exterior affairs and the statutes of 1134 warned against hearing secular confessions and even considered detrimental to silence and peace.

At the end of the 13th century the Order was in a religious decline. The huge monasteries had become immensely productive in their worldly labors and they drew on the wealth of many benefices. In the religious life nothing fails like success. The great monasteries became an economic power and as a consequence the contemplative spirit suffered.

By about 1650 the Order had become a powerful organization throughout Europe and seemingly, sadly in need of the reformation of the Strict Observance. Most of the houses had become "comfortable" places to live in. An exception was LaGrande Trappe. La Trappe consisted of a group of half dilapidated, mouldy buildings situated in an out of the way marshy wilderness and inhabited by seven monks described as tramps

To this wild place came a new abbot, Armand-Jean de Rance; a man who was to breathe new life into the Cistercian Order. De Rance was a man of many extraordinary qualities. He was, or had been, a brilliant and ambitious nobleman as well as being a most dedicated man of God. It was said of him that he had a "dramatic and insatiable appetite for the extreme." He appears to have been no mystic but he was a truly terrific organizer with boundless dedication and energy. No penance, no work, no mortification was too much for him. Like all truly great religious leaders Armand-Jean was a man of no compromise and he threw a scare into the conservative monks of Citeaux by such statements as; "The cloister is a prison in which everybody is held as guilty (before God) whether he has lost his innocence or not."

It is a well known fact that when a really significant religious center is founded, or comes into being, in any part of the world, some of the wildest men often gravitate towards it and these men become in time it's most devoted supporters. La Trappe was no exception and De Rance had a number of such helpers.

De Ranch's reforms proved successful. To his other works he added a practical text book *De La Saintete et des Devoirs de la Vie Monastique*. The fruits of his dedicated labors are to found today in many countries, particularly in North America.

Thomas Merton says that the monastic vocation tends to present itself to the modern world as a problem and a scandal but in a basically religious culture like that of India or Japan the monk is more or less taken for granted. In this quest for a true reality, Eastern and Western monks seek the same thing. There would appear to be an essential difference in as much as in the Christian case the approach is dualistic, whereas the Buddhist acceptance is quite the opposite. One says God is above, the other, God resides everywhere and in everything. One prays "Show me Thy fact", the

other asks "Where is my Original face." Both agree, "Be still, and know that I am God."

In comparing the Trappist monk with the Zen monastic we find both similarities and differences in living, in method and in technique. Both are generally silent ("Be still.") Both are abstemious and vegetarian in diet. Both chant. Both are completely immersed in and dedicated in their work. Both are detached enclaves in a turbulent world. Both are cenobites. Trappist monks pray, Zen monastics meditate. The Trappist monk is pietistic; the Zen monk is (but seemingly) sacrilegious. The Trappist is mentally quiet, the Zen applicant is engaged in a "ferocious" and continuous struggle for mental mastery. Trappists are celibate, Zen monastics (men and women) generally are, but not always so as they are not obsessively hung up on the life instinct.

In a Zen center both sexes meditate and work together: children may be found in such a place; perhaps an unmarried mother and her child arrives and they are enfolded into the community; such a situation would, of course, cause consternation in a Christian monastery.

Christianity is a religion.

Zen is a religion only in the sense that it is the religion of no religion.

Christianity can be put into words-theology.

Theology is anathema to Zen –

He who knows does not speak  
He who speaks does not know.

Zen is not of words or of explanation but is direct experience and this is to be arrived at by Awareness, Awareness, and again Awareness.

The equivalent of the Christian retreat is the Zen sesshin. The former is, comparatively speaking, painless, while the latter is most fearfully exacting and involves long hours of almost continuous sitting in intense concentration. Zen sitting in an immovable position can be most physically painful and the concentration demanded of the student can be a form of mental torture, at any rate, for the beginner. It has been said that it may take fifteen years for a Zen student to learn to sit properly and twenty years to attain enlightenment.

People in ordinary life, that is in the outside world, find it hard to understand why other mortals should submit themselves to such exacting and demanding disciplines. What they do not understand, having never experienced it, is that monastics are upheld by a feeling of supernatural gladness and at times joy. Ordinary folk have but little comprehension of the Very close bond of affection that sustains an advanced community where the worst suffering of all, alienation, can be quite absent. Perhaps it should not be referred to; or even hinted at, but-if one spends a really dedicated period in such a community one has an experience - vulgarly described as a heightening of consciousness - perhaps a very minor one, but after which there is little desire to become ever again completely absorbed in a world of just three dimensions.

September 27, 1971.

The sun has again come out today, as of yesterday, and may continue to shine on our departure tomorrow (it has been a wonderful summer.) I find some changes after the passing of the years.

Innovations have come to the monastery and they may be all to the good. Amenities have been installed in the guest house and I have been glad to avail of such comforts as I am coming near the end of my journey and I am beginning to feel tired. This itinerary was undertaken to rid myself of an image but, alas, that egotistical mirage has not as yet been altogether quite dispelled.

Then old age and experience, hand in hand,  
Lead him to Death and make him understand  
After a search so painful and so long  
That all his life he had been in the wrong:  
Hud'd in dirt the Reasoning engine lies,  
That was so proud, so witty, and so wise.

In Time.

As day began to break they became closer together on the great rock or their Gethsemane. Two hundred and fourteen human souls, men and women. As tokens of their love and esteem they pressed pathetic little gifts on each other and exchanged the last kiss of peace. Calling aside the seventeen perfecti the bishop spoke to them of their long years of renunciation and gladly accepted suffering. He spoke also of the evils of the flesh that dragged down the spiritual yearning of the soul. They were the pure ones, the undefiled, and as such they would step into the flames. As he turned to succor the credentes seven stepped forward to receive the consolamentum at his hands. After this had been most solemnly administered he spoke to all the others of the man temptations and defilements of their past life now coming to a close. In the life to come they would be incarnated in a body better suited to their future spiritual welfare but they would yet have man temptations to test them before coming to that state of pure being sought for by true Gnostics.

Families now embraced each other for the last time and all moved out through the sun gate to be manacled. Men-at-arms immediately seized on the heretics and dragged them falling and stumbling down the west side of the mountain.

Meanwhile other men-at-arms from the camp below had been erecting a huge pyre at the base of the mountain to consume the people. Trees and large branches had been cut down to provide a foundation and over this was piled a great mass of straw and faggots with pitch to provide ready combustion. A palisade of stakes and gales was built all around as there was not time to provide individual stakes.

First the wounded and the sick were thrown on the faggots, then the others were forced in and the palisade and the palisade was secured and fired at the four quarters. Before being thrust in they were called on for the last time to recant; a score did so and one hundred and ninety four were given to the flames. As the fire took a fierce hold the air was rent with screams of pain and agony which gradually died down and the ghastly odour of burnt flesh spread down the valley.

He watched as a novice came out and one by one put out the candles on the side altar and the church sank into darkness.

Darkening clouds now shrouded him about. He was walking amongst a great multitude of people across a vast plain. Gloomy mountains were afar off and far behind. They were all moving from Nowhere to Nowhere across the plain and a dark cloud hung above them. As they marched the people sang a dolorous song to the measure of which they dragged their tired feet.

Now his course was deflected from the others and he entered a most gloomy defile through which he forced his weary limbs. Forbidding cliffs reared their threatening heads on either side of his path which was strewn with rough unhewn boulders and craggy flinty stones. He continued on and on, on a pilgrimage that seemed to have no end when at last there appeared a faint light looming afar off.

Suddenly he awoke to find himself back in the Glen and his dog was coming towards him, barking and making wild ecstatic jumps. Kathleen and the constabulary sergeant were some way off beckoning him on. Leaving her companion she came to meet him and this time he did not repulse her. Kathleen no longer looked sad and they smiled happily at each other. The three of them walked hand in hand towards the source of the mountain stream. As they walked along the little stream gurgled and sang. The mountain was a mass of yellow gorse that gave off a faint and pleasant perfume.

Slán

The taxi left me off in the middle of the village [Kilmacthomas] as I wanted to say goodbye to Mother Kent. Mother Kent has brought a golden brood of children into the world and she is now counselor and general helpmate and advisor to all the country around. When we first met (half a century ago) she was a young nurse just back from England. It was many years since we had last seen each other.

"You just missed Lena [Keating]" she remarked as I came in the door.

"Oh, I'm sorry about that, I'm very fond of Lena," said I.

"And she of you too, there was always a thing between you." We sat down and looked each other over.

"So we lost the poor doctor," said she.

"Poor Joe [Walsh]," said I.

"The poor doctor's last wish was to be buried with the lads in the Republican plot."

"I know."

"Pat [Keating] was the first to go into the plot and the poor doctor was almost the last - almost." Here she gave me a most meaningful look.

"I don't intend to be buried in any plot, I'm going to the crematorium." Nothing ever startled her but this did.

"Cremated. What would you be doing a thing like that for and all the lads waiting for you up in Kilrossanty graveyard?"

Great dark wings seemed to be rustling about us.

"Listen Kate, I can't stay to lunch today but I will be back as soon as I can."

"Tomorrow evening then, Father Jack, Ned's son will be here."

"Poor Ned." We both nodded over this memory.

"When Ned was dying he begged the poor doctor to come back to the church but the doctor said he would have to think twice about that - well, they have both gone to their eternal reward now."

One of the consoling things about Ireland is that everybody apparently goes to Heaven, including atheists.

"I'll have the lads take a fish from the river for you and Lena will come with the car for you tomorrow."

"It will be great to see Lena again."

"Of course it will, why do you think I am sending her?"

We parted most amiably and after walking along for over a mile I rested on a ditch to survey the beautiful country, a place I was now reluctant to leave. Both Kate and I knew that time could not be far off. All the people we most loved were gone away and were now most anxiously awaiting us to join them. Life, Death, - why swellest thou?

One short sleepe past we wake eternally  
And death shall be no more--

A car drew up.

"Why, Lena."

"Kate thought you might get tired from the long walk back." I sat in and we drove off together.

The night shades are falling and it is time for me to make my exit. My friends across the sea await me and I must be walking on. "Drive your horse and your plough over the bones of the dead."

A wise man has said

But now the time has come  
and we must go away - I to die  
and you to live. Which is better  
is known to the gods alone.