The Last of the Cutters – The Years Ashore

by Lieutenant W B Hunkin

This is the second part of Walter Hunkin's diaries, complementing the Years at Sea. He picks up the story in 1907 following his appointment to a land-based post covering County Clare in Ireland.

Fuller notes are available at https://www.maritimeviews.co.uk

My New Appointment

In connection with my new appointment, information had reached me that in this case – not always so – free quarters were provided at Spanish Point. With all my knowledge of the Coastguard Division of the West of Ireland I was unable to visualise Spanish Point. It was a rocky stretch of coastline where a landing was never attempted. Before removing my home I decided to go and see the conditions for myself. Setting out on my journey with mixed feelings in leaving the service afloat, at the new conditions of living on which I was about to enter, and duties with which I was unfamiliar and arriving the following day at the little West of Ireland town of Milltown Malbay, County Clare. Outside of the railway station stood two or three jaunting cars with the drivers plying for hire. Enquiring from one of the drivers the distance to Spanish Point, with his native politeness and the prospect of a fare, he replied: "Its two miles yer honour, will ye be after taking the car sir?"
"What is the charge?"
"Shure, I'll be leaving that to yer honour".

After assuring me that the horse was the best in County Clare and settling the cushions to make one "aisy", he politely invited me to be taking my seat. Not having had much experience of a jaunting car, like many others not familiar with the swinging motion of this class of vehicle and a feeling that one might be thrown off at any minute, I was doing my best to retain my seat and appear at ease. After a few minutes and the horse having got into this stride, the jarvey remarked on the scarcity of visitors, little work for the cars, and no money in it at all. "Begging yer honour's pardon, are ye the new captain sorr?" I countered this question by asking "is the captain still at Spanish Point?"
"No sir, there hasna been a captain in it for two years sorr."
"Where has the captain been living?"
"At Kilkee sorr."
"How far is that?"
"Twenty miles sorr."
"I thought the captain lived here."
The jarvey by this time having concluded that I was the new captain – a title by which the divisional officer was usually known – replied: "The other captains, yer honour, were after living in the big house".
"Where is the big house?"

"At Spanish Point, sorr. Indeed it's a fine house internally they have for yer honour."
"Very good, take me to the big house."

Arriving at the Point, I fully expected to find a coastguard station and the refreshing sight of a few men in blue-jackets uniform. On enquiring of the driver the whereabouts of the coastguard station, he replied: "The station is beyond, sorr, at Seafield Point, sorr" pointing to the station buildings, visible across the bay three miles distant.
"And this is the captain's house?"
"Yes sorr."
"I wonder who has the key?"
A bystander: "Mike O'Connor, that is after planting the 'haggart' (garden) with he having the key, yer honour".

Mike is found and produced the key, greeting me with a remark with a similarity to that of the jarvey.
"Shure, and you'll be the new captain, yer honour, you are welcome sorr."
"Are you the caretaker?"
"Yes sorr."
"I would like to look through the house please."
He answers me that it is a great house indeed and a 'foine' place for a 'gintelman' like yourself to be living. "God bless yer honour."

The house, a rambling old property belonging to the Admiralty that had been enlarged from time to time, did not impress me very favourably. The church, the day school – under the supervision of the priest – and the post office, were at Milltown, two miles distant. This was a typical West of Ireland town with the usual muddy roads and numerous small provision shops with a licence for the sale of the favourite beverage, Guinness porter, the stale smell from which they were highly impregnated. At Spanish Point there were a few houses, closed in the winter and opened up for the use of visitors during the summer. A few modest cabins or cottages occupied by longshoremen eking out a living by a little fishing, kelp burning in the season, and raising a supply of potatoes from the 'haggart' (garden).

The outlook certainly did not appear to be very flowery. I felt the impossibility of settling in such a spot under such conditions. For the moment the question arose, whether I had made a mistake in coming here and I think that if I could have taken the next train back to re-join the *Fanny*, that I would have done so.

The senior of the station officers who was acting Divisional Officer for the time being, was at Kilrush. It was therefore decided to go on to that station and consult with the Chief Officer. He informed me that my predecessor, not wishing to occupy the house provided at Spanish Point, was allowed to reside at Kilkee by paying his own rent. This information was very welcome and cheered me quite a bit. Staying in the town of Kilrush over the weekend, on Monday I visited the station at Kilkee. This quaint little town with over a thousand population, the terminus of the West Clare railway, had the church, post office and not the least important, a Protestant day school under the supervision of the rector. Here I may say that my children received an excellent grounding in all elementary subjects that prepared them for a higher education.

Assuming the duties of Divisional Officer and making oneself acquainted with the mode of procedure, naturally one's first wish would be a perusal of the officer records in order to become acquainted with the standing orders and memos from the various official departments represented by the Coastguard. Making enquiry for the records from the Station Officer, he pointed to a packing case that had been dumped in the watch room by the retiring Divisional Officer and said: "They are all there sir". This struck me as being anything but business-like and contrary to the traditions of an exacting service. After looking through the contents of the packing case and absorbing the meagre information contained therein, my supervision of the Kilkee Division of the Coastguard had actually commenced.

At this time the stations comprising the division were four in number – one having been recently closed – and one war signal station not manned in peacetime. My first duty was to visit these stations and make myself acquainted with the station officers and men.

Concluding that a residence at Spanish Point was unthinkable, it was decided to secure accommodation, stay on at Kilkee and wait for the development of events. After due consideration steps were taken to make representation to the proper authority, placing before them the advantages and reasons for my wishing to reside at Kilkee, consenting to the same conditions as my predecessor, paying my own house rent. Several weeks elapsed, the question having to be submitted to the Board of Works and the Admiralty. When my patience was almost exhausted, to my great satisfaction a reply was received to the effect that my submission had been approved.

Having succeeded in renting a house, arrangements were made for the removal of my family and effects and by October we were settled in our new home in Kilkee. This little town, a resort for visitors during the summer months, had quite a charm of its own. There were half a dozen hotels and a number of good roomy houses like those at Spanish Point, closed during the winter and opened during the visiting season. There was a most delightful and charming bay in the form of a horseshoe, the silvery sands being lapped by the waters of the Atlantic, affording safe and enjoyable bathing for the hundreds of visitors indulging in this most pleasant pastime. There was a fine broad road around the bay about a mile in extent. Bordering on this road were the best houses overlooking the bay, picturesque in their various colours of blue, grey, white, red and stone. It was the marketing centre for a wide country area and was therefore well served with all household requisites.

A true Irish welcome awaited my family and we soon settled down in our new surroundings. Our house was very pleasantly situated, overlooking fields of an ever delightful and refreshing green about two minutes from the beach, my children very soon availing themselves of this delightful playground, together with the half-tide natural pools in the rocks, ideal for children bathing, the favourite being the Lady Pool, about four feet deep in the centre, where all the children delighted to bathe and acquired their first strokes in swimming.

Having had a life of change and variety my new duties – much of it a clerical nature – did not at first appeal to me. I was rather restless; the call of the ship and the sea was frequently

present with me. I am afraid that I was rather slow in adapting myself to the life of a longshore man.

As the winter came on and the gales whistled around our 'stone frigate' (house) I consoled myself with the thought that there were no reefs to be taken, sails to shorten, or second anchors to let go and that I could sleep without keeping an eye and an ear open, as one is apt to do on ship board.

1908

With the passing of the winter on shore the coming of the spring and summer I had settled down to the new order of things and had to acknowledge that home life was after all, preferable to the discomfort of the sea.

My children with their school mates were never tired of the beach and bathing pools; a pleasure that will live with them to the end and give to them pleasing thoughts of their happy school days in Ireland. Daily, throughout the bathing season, they were taken down for a morning dip, very soon becoming good swimmers.

Attached to my house there was fortunately a large garden, the cultivation of which in order to fill in my leisure hours was taken up as a hobby, soon becoming familiar with the cultivation of vegetables and flowers, commodities to which the cottage gardeners gave little or no attention.

The District Captain, when making his annual inspection of the Division, enquired of me how I liked my new job. I replied that being responsible for the lime washing of buildings, with the ease of men's quarters, and the comfort of their wives and children did not really appeal to me. I was a sailor first, and all that belonged to the sea appealed to me far more. He said that was just as he felt himself, exactly his own sentiments but adaptability to any and every duty was the privilege of the Navy.

My duties

It was the duty of a divisional officer to visit all stations - as laid down in the regulations – both by night, as well as by day, and where the train was not convenient, it was necessary to make use of a horse-drawn conveyance. An agreement was therefore entered into with a jaunting car proprietor 'Old Ine'. He was sturdily built and tough, his face like the figurehead of an old frigate – weather worn and tanned like hide, after years of exposure in the driver's seat to sun, wind and rain. Having a cheerful and genial disposition, always ready and willing to undertake any small service, a faithful and loyal driver, under all conditions, never failing to answer a call when required, even during the rebellion in 1916 when feelings against the action of the British Government were rather pronounced. He was uneducated, neither able to read or write – not even to sign his name – but was possessed of sound common-sense and proficient in the management of his business. He was a gifted storyteller of leprechauns, fairies, little people and local folk lore. Often, of a night, as we travelled the lonely roads, he would entertain me with a story well preserved in his memory.

"Do yer mind the cabin sorr," said Ine, "back to the Whish, beyond the big bog, its cutting the turf, in the bog, they do be sorr, to make the reek for the winter."

"That one, just at the corner, where we turn down to Kilbaha?" I asked.
"Yes sorr, shure that was the house of Tim Cardy, sorr, a decent bhoy entoirely. Wheniver he was after bringing the pigs to the fair, it's the divil for the fun and the laughing he was. Iverybody would be after traiting him to a sup. Whin himself was after drawing back from the fair with the oss and butt (*cart*), it's stopped at Flaherty's he did, sorr, for something to wharm him up, it's the cold was in him. 'God bless all here' said Tim as he entered, 'and yourself too' says Flaherty. 'The frohst is in it' says Tim. 'It is' sezs Flaherty,' come to the fire, man.' As soon as Tim was afther wharming himself slowly, the turf all burning sorr, Mr Flaherty looking agin him.' What ails ye' says he? 'Faise but there's nithing ails me' says Tim.' I'll be after having a half one' says he. Mr Flaherty could see the fear in him, and it's after giving him the whiskey, 'is it feeling better ye are Tim?' says he. Two or three of the bhoys jist come in, and not a word or bit of divilment was with Tim. 'What's wrang wid ye', says one of the bhoys? 'Nothing' says Tim. More of the bhoys coming hither, and jist spakin to Mr Flaherty loike, and Tim with e'er a word, or a bit of devilment at all, at all. 'What's wrong wid ye?' says they. 'The divil a thing is wrong wid one', says he. 'Then why the divil are ye not spakin' says they?' Spakin', says Tim, 'God bless us. Shure and it's a papher I have, that I am after writing me name'. 'The blessed virgin protect us', says Flaherty! 'In the name of God who would be axing ye to sign a papher in the Dunlicky ward tonight?' 'Indeed.' says Tim, 'begging your pardon Mr Flaherty. The ass, the innocent creature, just passing the fairy fort in O'Gorman's haggart (small field), meself sitting on the butt, (*cart*) when all of a siddint a blackguard from the boreen (*lane*) beyond, stopped the ass. 'Who are ye', says I? 'I want ye to be signing a papher' says he. 'What for', says I? 'For the good of your soul' says he! 'And meself to the confession with Father O'Flannigan last week' says I. 'Be after takin the pen' says he. 'Faith I will not says I'. Showing a little light, 'be after putting your name there' says he. 'Begorra, God save us', says I, 'this is a fairy, and I writ me name'. 'Is it the fear was on ye' says Flaherty?

'No' says Tim.

'Thin why the divil were ye after signing?'

'Shure', says Tim, 'the Lord bless us and save us. Wasn't it a fairy and meself after signing to please him'? 'God save us' says the bhoys, reverently making the sign of the cross.

'Be after showing the papher', says Flaherty. Mr Flaherty reading by the candle. 'The Lord save us', says he, making the sign of the cross. 'Indeed it's a fairy that stopped ye. And its consigned your soul to the divil ye have'. 'Consigned me soul to the divil', says Tim? 'Yes' says Flaherty, 'there it is before me two eyes'. Wid the fear in him, Tim was shaking, sorr. 'The Lord have mercy on your soul' says the bhoys. 'Shure, it was a mane thing for a blackguard of a fairy to be after doing on ye. Now bhoys, the toime', says Flaherty. 'A small sup if ye please, Mr Flaherty', says Tim. 'Is it all right ye are?' says Mr Flaherty. 'Yes' says Tim. Mr Flaherty could see the fear on him sorr. 'Now bhoys' says he, 'be after taking Tim back to the Whist and good night to ye'. In at the fair, sorr, there was e'er a bit of devilment or fun in him, but spaking about the fairy and the papher he would be sorr.

The change in my mode of life from the routine of a ship, with brief periods at home, to that of the multiplicity of duties connected with the Coastguard Service and carried out, to a great

extent, from an office desk took me quite a year to become accustomed to. I missed the frequent change of scene, the company of shipmates and a friendly chat now and again with any officer acquaintance. For the first year I was restless and unsettled, gradually becoming reconciled to my new duties and to appreciate the comforts of life at home with my wife and children.

Liscannor

It was my duty to pay periodical visits to each station to see that the regular duties of watch and guard were properly observed and routine and discipline maintained. One of the stations, "Liscannor", was about thirty miles distant. This was reached by rail within a distance of three miles, which was usually covered by jaunting car. Alighting at Lahinch railway station and taking a side-car, one drove around Liscannor Bay, past Lahinch golf course, a long stretch of sand hills said to be the best golf course in the country, passing the ruins of an old chapel which probably fell into disuse during the penal days. The ancient burial ground surrounding those old walls was still used after hundreds of years for the internment of the dead. There was quite a common aversion to opening new cemeteries and it was customary to bury the dead near the old chapel ruins, where their fathers had found a last resting place. Exploring these old ruins, it was observed that with the repeated opening up of these family graves, piles of bones had been thrown up and allowed to remain there, bleaching for all time. This was common to many of the burial places surrounding the chapel ruins, so frequently met with.

Within the grounds of Liscannor station there stood the ruins of a very fine commodious old castle, evidently once the stronghold of a powerful and influential chieftain whose story is lost in antiquity. The walls were seven to eight feet in thickness, a winding stone stairs leading to the upper apartment. Although the wall on one side had been very much undermined, after a thousand years there was no sign of a crack above.

As one climbed the rough stairs, one pictured the rude and primitive conditions of life in those far off days. Not only of the labourers and builders of the castle, but also of the chieftain and those of his connections who resided within those castle walls. The openings in the walls, admitting light and air, had no such thing as windows, they were unknown. Nor were there any indications whatever that there had ever been any fitting to protect the occupants from the blast of the elements. There were indications of an aperture where fire may have been kindled but no sign of a chimney. The smoke from the turf or wood fire must have found an outlet through the openings in the wall, providing for light and air.

The ruins of such old castles, the homes of ancient Irish chieftains, prior to the invasion of their country by their nearest neighbours, the English, were to be found dotted here and there in various stages of decay and were always a source of great interest to me. In almost every case where the walls were still standing there was evidence that the architect had made special provision to resist attack by loop holes through which the bowmen could discharge their arrows and overhanging buttresses from which deadly missiles could be dropped on the besiegers, indicating that in those days peace and goodwill did not always prevail but, rather the opposite, showing that if one chieftain of a grasping and avaricious turn of mind desired to possess the more abundant flocks and herds and fruitful lands of his neighbour, would

gather around him his retainers and set forth with that object in view, the last stand of the besieged often being made from within his castle walls.

St Bridget's Well

About a mile from the village of Liscannor, situated near the main road leading to the cliffs of Moher, there was a holy or blessed well dedicated to Saint Bridget and known as St Bridget's well. The partaking of its waters, together with certain religious rites and observations, were said to possess curative properties from various afflictions and infirmities common to mankind. Its exact position was in a huge cleft in the high rock at the side of the road running in about one hundred feet. The sight of the sparkling waters trickling down the face of the rock into the well with its sombre light through the overhanging vegetation, the mosses, lichens and rare ferns, together with the numerous and varied trinkets left by the pilgrims on their annual visitation to the well on St Bridget's Day had a charm of its own, long to be remembered by any casual visitor.

On the anniversary of St Bridget's Day the sick, the halt, and the maimed, accompanied by their friends and guardians from near and far, would be found wending their way towards the well with the object of finding a cure for their bodily ailments by invoking the intercession of the saint and partaking of the waters. In many instances the more devout remaining in prayer throughout the night. Even with the doctor's bottle, with which we are all familiar, there is little hope of relief without faith. And there is little doubt that the faith of those afflicted, if somewhat superstitious people, coupled with their invocation at the shrine of the saint and imbibing of the waters brought to them a satisfaction and peace of mind – as they wended their way back to their humble cabins and turf fires – unknown to the less credulous. Had not their fathers found relief from a visit to St Bridget's well and tradition handed down to them the knowledge of the curative properties of the waters of the blessed well of St Bridget?

On the first occasion of my meeting with the pilgrims, they were wending their way towards the well on St Bridget's Day, some on foot, others with an "oss and butt" *(cart),* the more prosperous by a horse-drawn vehicle, some with crutches or sticks, evidently using up their last ounce of energy in covering the journey assisted by their friends.

Making enquiry of the car driver as to the reason for so many people being on the road and where they were going, he replied: "Up to the well, your honour".
"Up to what well?"
"St Bridget's well, sorr."
"What are they going there for?" I asked.
"Shure the poor divils are afther going to get the cure, sorr. St Bridget's Day sorr, the people are afther going up to the well every year to get the cure that's in it. It's cripples they are and all manner of dizases they have sorr".

Thinking that he was rather sceptical, I suggested that with people coming every year on the anniversary of St Bridget's Day, surely some of them must benefit.
"Indeed sorr, the ever a one of thim got the cure out of it" he replied.
"There must be something in it" I said "for sick people to visit the well from such a distance".
"Ah shure, it's the ould people, yer honour, that are afther saying the cure in in it and that in

ould toimes they would be afther leaving their crutches up at the well but the divil a one did he see getting the cure and leaving the crutches afther thim now".

And so year by year the pilgrims wended their way to the blessed well offering their supplication to heaven in simple faith that some relief would be obtained from their bodily afflictions and ailments. And who is bold enough to say that the visits to the well, combined with their prayers, brought no comfort to the minds of these unquestioning and credulous people?

The Cliffs of Moher

The stretch of coastline for which Liscannor Coastguard Station was responsible embraced the famous cliffs of Moher, about three miles from Liscannor village, the approach to which was over a very rough road with a steep and uphill climb to the top of the cliffs 700 to 800 feet above the sea level. These remarkable cliffs, well-known to all tourist of the County of Clare, are unsurpassable in their majestic grandeur, their wild and natural beauty. From one overhanging position there was a perpendicular drop into the sea. From two points of vantage certain portions of the face of the cliffs could be seen with the teeming seabird life resting and nesting in the inaccessible rugged ledges and crannies. And the sight of seagulls on the wing hundreds of feet below appearing as mere specks was an unusual and most interesting sight. These awe-inspiring cliffs lapped at the water-line and forever battered by the wild and restless Atlantic Ocean formed a picture reminding me of the words of Elihu: 'hearken unto this oh Job, stand still and consider the wondrous works of God'.

The question of seabird life around the coast of Britain, their estimated consumption of young fish and the extent of its effect on local fisheries was receiving the attention of the United Fisheries Committee. A friend, Mr Matthias Dunn, Chairman of the Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee, spending a short holiday with us, took the opportunity of visiting these cliffs, although he had travelled much, was well-acquainted with the Cornish cliffs and an authority on British seabirds and fishes, when reaching the top of the cliff, stood for several minutes in silent admiration and amazement. This was a sight that for a long time he had desired to behold. He moved to every vantage point that gave any view of the seabirds. He lay flat to look over the edge of the cliff – where the drop was into the sea – charmed by the sight and the echo from the call of the seagulls ascending from the depths below and was so fascinated by the scene that he was reluctant to leave a spot with so much interest and charm. He, a student of nature, confessed that the delight afforded by the opportunity of seeing these cliffs and the myriads of birds surpassed anything of the kind that he had ever witnessed.

It gave him new ideas of the futility of local fishery committees attempting - in the interest of fishermen - to reduce seabirds' life by the shooting of a few shags and guillemots. A few weeks later, when attending a fisheries committee meeting in London, in reference to seabirds and their estimated consumption of fish, he was in a position to enlarge on the question from knowledge acquired from his visit to the cliffs of Moher.

The land in this region being bleak, open, exposed and windswept by the winter gales, was not to any extent brought under cultivation but kept as grazing for cattle and sheep. In the immediate vicinity of the cliff top, although so much exposed, during the season was carpeted with a wild dwarf pansy which when sun kissed gave forth the most radiant variety of colour.

1909

By the end of my second year on shore I had settled down to the office and routine duties of the Coastguard Service. Everyone in the place, with their natural hospitality to strangers was polite, respectful and kindness itself, thus adding to the pleasantries of life. After my long experience on the coast of Ireland I was not altogether unfamiliar with the Irish character and formed my own ideas as to the best attitude to adopt in order to gain and retain the goodwill of those with whom it was my good fortune to rub shoulders day by day. Take a leaf from Paddy's own book: be civil, be tolerant, do a good turn if you can, take life comfortably, sail along in a free and easy manner, don't fuss over trifles, there is always tomorrow. In brief, let it be priest or peasant, meet them, as it were, on their own level. This attitude was found to stand good during the troublesome days yet to come.

The social life of my wife as well as myself was rather dull, consequently we had to concentrate on home hobbies and family amusements. There were compensations: living was cheap with beef – best cuts – at 8d per lb, a chicken at a shilling, a young duck at 1/4d and milk 2d per quart. My children were making satisfactory progress at the day school. The anxieties of life at sea were a thing of the past and almost forgotten and the days passed pleasantly and quietly with no cause for unrest.

Seafield Coastguard Station, sixteen miles from Kilkee, was situated two miles from Quilty railway station, bordering on a road leading along the shore. The buildings erected at the time of the Fenian movement were very well and strongly built with a view to resisting attack during any possible raid on the station. At one end of the buildings there was a strongly built tower protected with heavy iron shutters at the windows and loopholes – very like the castles of old – for rifle sniping of any persons leading an assault on the station. In each house there were iron communication doors leading from house to house, by which means the crews, with their wives and children could, if necessary, reach the strong room in the tower, close the communication doors and await events.

The coastline was of a very dangerous nature skirted by low lying reefs and sunken rocks. During the winter months, with onshore gales, large quantities of seaweed, loosened from the rocks became piled up on the foreshore. Stretching for a quarter of a mile or so along the foreshore road leading from the railway station toward the coastguard station – which was level and about twenty feet above the high water mark – stood a number of fishermen's cottages, exposed to the full blast of the winter gales; low one storey dwellings as poor and comfortless as one can well imagine.

These men, bred from generations of those that had lived and fared hard, were lean, bony, hardy, strong and tough. They lived and provided for their families by kelp burning and fishing in the summer using their frail canvas canoes or currachs. These currachs could only be handled by those accustomed to that class of boat and it was surprising with what skill the currachs were sometimes taken over a very rough sea. The structure was a light wooden framework bent to the shape of a half hoop, narrowing and rising at the bow, various lengths and sizes. Over the framework was stretched stout canvas made to the shape of the frame, this being coated with a mixture of pitch and tar, which made them watertight. They floated on the water as light as a bladder and were propelled by two, three or four pairs of paddlers

according to the length of the currachs, the rowers being very careful to maintain their balance evenly on their seat, in order to maintain the safety of the canoe, for any movement to one side or the other might quickly throw them into the water.

Burning kelp

A friend from England, staying with us for a time, accompanied me on a visit to Seafield Station. Quite near to the station were men collecting seaweed, one of them being of outstanding proportions. My friend, in conversation with the station officer, remarking on the fine physique of the man, led to the question of food; the officer solemnly declaring that the man's staple diet consisted of "potatoes and limpets". That may not have been literally true but there is little doubt that limpets were frequently an accompaniment to the national dish, the potato. For certain, the diet did not contain very much animal food. It was sour milk and bread baked on a griddle over the turf fire on the hearth. The bread, with buttermilk, potatoes and fish with an occasional slice of 'Amerikay' pork or a pig's head and cabbage as a special event, with a liberal quantity of tea, formed the principal daily diet.

Any money passing through the hands of these cottagers was derived principally from the kelp burning industry. After a strong breeze and the ripened seaweed torn from the rocks and cast up on the foreshore, the kelp burners harvest would have begun. They would all immediately set to work in collecting the harvest of the sea which had been cast up at their very door. The foreshore, mostly jagged rocks, was not accessible by a horse and cart; even so, the kelp burning cottager could not rise to the expense of a horse and therefore tackled the problem of collecting and removing the seaweed to the open spaces near the cabins where it was laid out to dry, in some cases by the use of donkeys and panniers. Those not rising to the help of the humble ass would carry the heavy wet seaweed up in baskets on their backs.

Co-partners working together were assisted by the women, the girls and the boys. It was indeed hard labour, struggling under the weight of the heavy baskets. And women as well as men were often – when collecting the weed – up to their waists in water. After the drying process – which depended on the weather – the dry seaweed was gathered together and piled into ricks, ready for burning at the close of the harvest. The seaweed having been claimed from the sea – after much hard labour – carefully dried and placed in ricks, now awaited the process of burning in the kelp pits. These pits were approximately 20 to 30 feet in length, four feet wide and eighteen inches deep. Watching for a suitable day in August or September, with a good breeze, the burning would commence – not necessarily on the same day. In the first place a sod of burning turf from the cabin hearth was placed in the pit and a creel of turf added to start the fire. The fire, once started, there was no difficulty in keeping it going. The seaweed being dry and crisp burnt freely, dissolving into a thick treacle-like liquid. After cooling and hardening, it was broken into pieces and removed in a caked and cinder-like condition in readiness for dispatch to the manufacturer. Twenty-five tons of seaweed was required to produce one ton of kelp.

In the process of burning, if the wind should be blowing in from the sea, and this was usually the case as the ricks would then be to windward of the pit, the whole district for miles was enveloped in a dense volume of smoke of a most pungent, disagreeable (to those not accustomed to it) and sickly smell. There is nothing to which it can be compared. Passing

along the road at a distance of twenty-five to thirty feet from the kelp pits on a day that many of the cottagers were busy and the smoke arising in dense clouds, together with the choking fumes, one became almost suffocated and one's clothes so impregnated that it was many a day before they were free from, what to me, was a vile smell.

The burning of the seaweed was on a par with the farmer thrashing out his corn; the most important and crowning day throughout the year, when everyone taking part made of it a day of merriment.

Feeding the fires was a very hot, disagreeable and dry job and in order to keep on with the work and moisten their parched throats it was usual to indulge in a liberal supply of the national drink, Guinness stout, in all probability supplied from the village general store, to be paid for on receipt of the proceeds arising out of the seaweed harvest.

Although this industry brought many thousands of pounds annually into the district and was shared between a comparatively few families, yet the poverty and meagre type of living of the cottagers continued at the same level.

1911

Fairy Forts

With reference to the circular mounds of earth so frequently met with which were thrown up in the dim and distant unwritten past, the history of which is understood to be very uncertain. They are generally accepted to have been stockades for the collection of the livestock and a fortress from whence a stand could be made in self-defence against an aggressor. These mounds, known as fairy forts, are regarded by the inhabitants generally with a kind of awe, and treated by them as being of a supernatural character.

Any person on whose land a fairy fort should be situated is always very careful not to plough or cultivate very near to it for fear of disturbing some unexplainable spiritual power that would bring to the person so offending bad luck in one form or another. By some people they are looked on as the hiding places of leprechauns, little people, or fairies and spoken of with bated breath and reverent awe.

Driving along the road on one occasion Mc drew my attention to an unusually large circular earth mound.

"Dy'ye see the fairy fort hither your honour?"
"Yes, what about it?"
"Indade sorr there was a farmer. He was afther tellin the bhoys that he'd be afther digging it doon to the livil. It's from the Galway side he came hither. Shure he didn't loike the fairy fort in the haggart. Father Foley so, the curate tould himself not to be afther touchin it, and the prayst, captain, tould him, it would be afther bringing the bad luck to himself. Shure sorr, the bhoys tould him, it was a wrang thing to be afther dooin".
"But" said I "what harm could it do? He could plough the whole field then".
"Begorra captain, it was a wrong ting fur him, its harm to himself he'd be axin. Sorra a wan

ivir distorted thim rhings. Bedad sorr, nivir a spade would ainy of the bhoys be afther putting into hither ground".

Continuing, he told me the story of the man that came there and made an attempt to level this particular fairy ring.

"Upon my soul captain, ivirybody was afther sayen, that he was wrang in the hidd. He braught the harse an butt, then he was afther digging at the airth an fillen the butt, an whin the butt was full he got hould of the baste by the hidd to pull it away and the divil an inch could the baste be afther movin. Begorra sorr, there was the whels and nivir a move out of thim. Then he got the madness on him, cussen and batin the dumb baste, sorr. An the sorra move could the baste be afther making. Shure, an thin all suddint loike, the baste, the poor creature was afther falling and begorra sorr his leg was there and it broakin. Thus the harse had to be killed. It was the bad luck from digging the fairy fort.

The prayst was afther talkin to the bhoys that the madness was on him an bringen the bad luck to ivirybody. Afther a while, captain, he commed wid the harse an butt agin, and the divil a bit did he care wut ivirybody was sayen. The fear was on the bhoys, an they tould him it was a wrang thing an the divil a bit of luck would be ivir have. The butt, sorr, was nearly fillid an he diggen down the airth. 'The Lord save us!' whin the harse an the butt dhropped down inter a big pit. Indade, turns the prayst himself, said it was a mane thing to be distarbin the fairy fort and bringin haram to iviryone. The man, captain, was afther thrying agin an that toime there he was and his own two legs afther breaking. The curse was on himself sorr and finished wid him. An ivirybody was afther sayen, the fairies gave him the bad luck and that he dasarved it afther distirbin them".

Whether this was an old traditional story or one of Mc's own, was not revealed. It certainly is typical of the feelings that prevailed along the countryside concerning any interference with these old circular mounds of earth thrown up hundreds of years ago and now surrounded by an air of mystery, suspicion, superstition and fear.

Kilkee

My wife and children were delighted that I had been allowed to live at Kilkee. It was by far the most desirable spot for us. With the hundreds of visitors during the holiday season, many of them coming from Limerick year after year, we made many friends and the summer months were bright and cheerful with no cause for regret at having taken up an appointment in Ireland.

Kilkee Coastguard Station, about a mile from my residence on the opposite side of the horseshoe bay stood on rising ground in a very pleasant position overlooking the bay and the houses and district known as the east end, accommodating five men and an officer.

The delightful little bay with its fine sandy foreshore protected by a reef of rocks at its mouth afforded perfect safety for bathers and the various coloured houses reflected in the ruby rays of the setting sun added a most charming effect to the scene.

To the east was George's Head, a bold headland against which the sea, disturbed by a succession of winter gales, expended its strength, enveloping the face of the mighty headland

in its fury. To watch the mountainous waves tearing at these ironbound rocks always held a charm for me.

Intrinsic Bay

The western extremity of the bay known as Lookout Hill had a sheer drop into the sea of about three hundred feet. The inlet of the sea at this spot formed a small cove known as Intrinsic Bay. The story, as recorded in an account of the village of Kilkee written many years ago, described the ship *Intrinsic* being driven out of her course by foul weather. The captain, finding himself on a lee shore and driven into this cove, as his only remaining hope of saving the ship from dashing against the rocks with sure and certain death for every man on board, let go his both anchors. The anchors held and brought the ship head on to the wind and sea where she continued to ride for many hours, rising and falling as the giant Atlantic combers dashed and battered against her trembling hull. The people from the village who had collected on Lookout Hill and gazed over at the helpless sailors below were powerless to render any assistance. Those were days before the life-saving apparatus and cliff ladders had been brought into use. After a long time the ship, straining at her cables - in an ever increasing weight of sea - first one cable parted, hoping against hope that the remaining anchor would hold, the second cable parted and the ship with her gallant crew was hurled against that inaccessible cliff, beaten to pieces and the men drowned within sight of those standing and watching from above, ready and willing to help, but no means by which the least help could be rendered - hence the name of the cove "Intrinsic Bay".

The Fair

Kilkee boasted a monthly cattle fair where dealers assembled in goodly numbers and where horses, cattle, pigs and poultry – after much time spent in bargaining – exchanged hands. The sale of a horse, bullock or pig, carried out by private treaty, entailed a great deal of ceremony in the way of bargaining over the price. For a vendor to state his price and a dealer to close with the same was never done. Before a final agreement on the price of an animal there were many words used, both by the dealer and the vendor, and much time occupied. A dealer having fixed his eyes on an animal and examined it in a casual manner enquires the price:

Dealer: "Phivah are ye's wanting fur the heifer?"
Farmer: "Tin punds."
Dealer: "Tin punds indade! Is it wanting to be robbing me ye are?" With an air of disgust turns and walks away. After a time the dealer returns.
Dealer: "Is it tin punds ye's are wanting fur the heifer?"
Farmer: "Tin punds I am wanting".
Dealer: "It's six punds I'll be giving ye". The farmer with an attitude of one having been insulted pretends to be very angry.
Dealer (passing his hands over the animal with a pretence of weighing up its value}: "Tin punds! Shure it's falling the prices are, there is no money in it at all, at all. Will ye be taking sivin punds?"
Farmer: "Not a pinny less thin tin".
Dealer: "It's sivin tin, I'll be afther giving ye". Not waiting for a reply, walks away to repeat the bargaining with another seller. The farmer is now satisfied that he has a purchaser but he

must not be in any hurry.
Dealer (now back again): "Och mun, it's loosing me money on ye I'll be".
Farmer (rather excitedly): "Is it giving ye's the heifer I'll be and meself afther feeding her, begorra, fur the last two years? Indade there is not a foiner heifer in County Clare".
Dealer: "Eight punds is a great price entoirely and the divil a pinny more will I be afther giving ye".
Farmer (climbing down and polite): "Och sorr would ye's be afther givin noine punds tin?"
Dealer: "Soira a pinny more will I be giving ye".

After further discussion there is a difference of ten shillings between them. Eight pounds fifteen shillings offered, nine pounds five shillings the price demanded. The dealer is pressing a shilling into the hand of the seller, as earnest money to clinch the bargain, at eight fifteen, the seller stubbornly refusing to accept the shilling. A bystander, noting the deadlock, steps forward as mediator: "Arrah, wid ye not be afther splitting the difference?" After a little further haggling the shilling is accepted, the bargain clinched. They shake hands and arrange to settle the deal at O'Gorman's over a friendly glass later in the day.

And so the business of the fair is carried on. At O'Gorman's the dealer hands over the cash, the farmer handing back a trifling sum for luck. A glass of 'the creature' closes the business and the farmer wends his way back to the homestead, well-pleased that the dealer did not get the best of the bargain that day.

The Priest's magic

At certain seasons of the year there was a little fishing carried on but it was on a very small scale, that primitive class of boat, the currach, being the only boat in use. The equipment in line-fishing consisted of a small basket of lines and, with nets, a couple of baskets that could easily be carried on a man's shoulder.

The canoes, having put to sea one fine evening about the hour of sunset, after reaching the usual fishing ground and casting overboard their nets in the expectation of securing a catch of herrings, their position being about a mile from George's Head. A rather close fog descended, enveloping the canoes, obscuring the land and the lights from the town. The entrance to the bay was rather narrow and encumbered with dangerous rocks, rather much of a risk for the canoes to make the attempt without being sure of their position.

The canoes were not in any immediate danger but, as the hours passed, midnight arrived, and the fishermen not having returned, although the sea was perfectly calm and smooth, the wives of the men and others became very anxious for the men's safety. The women, in their distress, most naturally made an appeal to the parish priest, seeking his advice and help. Lights were exhibited on George's Head and the priest ordered the chapel bells to be rung, rightly concluding that the sound might possibly be heard by the men in the canoes and the direction located.

The hour of midnight passed, the time wore on, and still no sight of the canoes. A dense fog casting an impenetrable gloom over the bay and the town only added to the anxiety of the wives. It was something unusual, something uncanny. Could not the priest help in some way? At last an appeal was made to the young priest – the curate. He arose from his bed and for the

consolation of the anxious and distracted women offered prayers for the preservation of the men at sea and for their safe return.

By early morning the women folk, now frantic, accompanied by their friends, again called on the young priest – whose house was the second from mine – seeking his help and guidance. The holy father, sorry to see those of his flock in such distress of mind, and feeling that he could do nothing more, assured them that he had said all his prayers and there was no doubt that the canoes would soon return. With this they were not quite satisfied, and with their continual pleading, he was prevailed on to proceed to George's Head and there repeat his prayers, at the same time casting a few tiny sacred emblems into the sea.

Very soon after this the sun arose and, rapidly increasing its altitude, eventually scoffed up the fog leaving the harbour entrance all clear and open for the return of the overdue canoes. The men were welcomed with great rejoicing and the reverend father acclaimed as their saviour. His never to be forgotten deed of that morning was sounded in thanks and blessings for many succeeding days.

The little town of Kilkee, although rather dull and sleepy, harked by the unadulterated gales sweeping in from the North Atlantic and moistened by the incessant rain and sea spray which destroyed every item of vegetation during the winter, with the coming of the spring and summer and the numerous visitors arriving daily, became all alive and most attractive.

We had now quite settled down to our surroundings, were well-known and well received by our neighbours, and with an occasional outing with Mc, in his Victoria carriage – used on special occasions – bathing from the sandy beach and roaming over the rocky foreshore with its never ending charms, our existence during the summer season became most enjoyable. Life for me, most certainly, was far and away preferable to the discomforts of the west of Ireland as I had known it when serving afloat.

Stations

At this time the personnel of the coastguard service were being reduced, some stations closed and the divisions rearranged, with more stations to each division. In the case of Kilkee Division, two stations were added on the Kerry side of the River Shannon, namely Tarbert, a station with accommodation for fourteen men, now reduced to six men and a chief officer, the next station, Cashen River, with six men and an officer.

In order to visit these stations it was necessary to cross the Shannon. A steamer service between Limerick and Kilrush calling at Tarbert twice a week (weather permitting) – not by any means dependable – was the route I was expected to take. It was found most convenient to drive to Kilrush – making use of Mc and the jaunting car – a distance of eleven miles, board the steamer and disembark at Tarbert. Then take another jaunting car and drive to Cashen River, a distance of eighteen miles, inspect the station and, if possible, return to Tarbert the same day. The time had to be arranged in order to catch the steamer on her return trip, or otherwise, having to return by way of Limerick, a distance by road and rail of one hundred and twenty miles. In carrying out the visits to these stations one could never be

certain that the steamer would run according to the timetable, or even make a call at Tarbert. It depended so much on the weather and during the winter months did not always take the form of a pleasure outing.

Crossing over to Tarbert one afternoon with the intention of driving to Cashen River the following day and return again to Tarbert, during the night torrents of rain had fallen and in the morning when I was setting out on a jaunting car, with no shelter or protection whatever the rain was still descending as it is apt to do in the west of Ireland during the winter without any sign of abatement. After covering a few miles it was evident that every stream was swollen to an unusual flood. About one third of the journey having been covered it was apparent that the floods descending from the hills were converging in the low ground and crossing the road in a swiftly moving torrent. The driver, no doubt thinking that the horse and car might be swept away by the flood, hesitated. Being anxious to carry out the visit, if possible, after a time the attempt was made and the stream crossed, only to find two miles further on that the roads were so flooded that to proceed would be attended with unnecessary risk. It was decided to return on our tracks and postpone the visit to Cashen for another day. The swiftly moving torrent was re-crossed and the return journey to Tarbert completed without mishap. Viewed from this distance of time, one can visualise the folly of attempting to cross such a flood that might well have swept the horse, the car, the driver and me off our feet with dire consequences.

Whenever I left home to visit these stations I could never be certain of where or how I would get back. It required a very good horse, sound in mind and limb, to do the thirty-six miles journey from Tarbert to Cashen and back in one day. Such an animal was not always forthcoming. From one car owner a very good horse was available but oh! the side-car with its rolling swinging motion in this case so pronounced that, by the time the journey was completed, one's thoughts were apt to run in the direction of "never again".

One horse engaged for the journey did very well on the outward run but, when returning through being overtired, started striking its hind legs one against the other, just above the hoof, very soon opening up a wound. The driver tried bandaging the legs in sacking which only made the animal kick and knock up generally rough. The only remedy was to proceed at a walking pace, dragging out the journey by an extra couple of hours.

Another horse, when saddled up in the morning for the return journey, positively refused to move. It was apparently having its own back on the driver for attempting such a long trip. The driver tried every dodge that he could think of, even to placing a sack over the horse's head, without the desired effect. The animal plainly refused duty. There was no alternative but to hire another horse and car, reaching Tarbert just in time to board the steamer and cross the Shannon on my way home.

In a small town such as Kilkee one very soon became known to all and sundry and was usually given the courtesy title of 'Captain', to which one was in no way entitled. 'The Captain' would frequently be referred to for advice or council on one and a thousand subjects. It was my practice to lend a sympathetic ear and give such help as lay within my power. Having taken up my residence here with the knowledge that it might continue for a

few years, from previous experience I was well aware that a civil word, a cheery good morning and 'God bless you' would find a response in the kindly Irish nature, more especially from anyone holding any position of authority. This was my attitude from the beginning and there is no doubt that it stood, to me, and helped to carry me though the troublesome times ahead. In connection with my travelling duties by road and train, it was found that an affable demeanour toward those so frequently met created a friendly and respectful feeling.

It was my pleasure to pull up and have a word with any of the farming community that one might meet on the road. They were mostly interesting conversationalists and one found how well-informed they were on all matters concerning Ireland's best interest, the merits of their leaders and the ultimate chances of Home Rule. A friend of ours – a university lecturer from Toronto – spending a holiday with us, found himself highly amused and entertained at my easy manner of conversation with those met on the roadside. He was oft times pleasantly surprised at the general knowledge displayed by the occupants of a humble cabin and charmed with the perfection of their grammar and speech, never missing the opportunity of noting a witty remark or an unfamiliar word.

1912

Lahinch Sports Day

The District Captain, having started on his round of visits, had arranged that I should meet him at Lahinch railway station with a jaunting car in readiness to convey him to Liscannor Coastguard Station. It so happened that on this day it was the date of the annual sports and merrymaking at Lahinch when almost everyone allowed themselves a little more scope than usual and all good friends toasted one another in something stronger than water alone. Lahinch was a small town , with a very broad road forming its main thoroughfare, in which were assembled a circus with its clowns, conjurers, the roulette man – not interfered with by the police – vendors great and small, tricksters and suchlike persons usually met with at a country fair.

Alighting from my train it was observed that Michael, the car driver, all groomed in his holiday attire, was there waiting with the car in readiness for his passengers.

"Good morning Michael".
"Good morning to yesself yer honour".
"Holiday-making today, Michael?"
"Yes, yer honour. The bhoys and the girls will be afther traiting thimsilves today sorr".

It was quite evident that Michael had already been 'traiting' himself or drinking to a glass of good luck with the "bhoys".

On the arrival of the inspecting captain Michael, pulling himself together, mounted the driver's seat. Our road, leading through the main street, now pretty well crowded by the "bhoys and girls" from far and near. Seeing that he had the honour of driving two uniformed officers, presumably Michael was feeling important and wishing to impress the crowd in the street with an attitude of 'clear a gangway for the quality'. He very soon had the horse racing

along at full speed, the 'bhoys and girls' scattering to the right and left for safety, Michael thoroughly enjoying the fun. I could see that the captain was thinking that the driver was rather reckless so I remarked to him that he had better slow down or he would knock someone over. He replied, much to the amusement of the captain, "begorra sorr, it would be no haram, to be afther givin' one o thim a little poke", at the same time giving the horse a slash with the whip causing the crowd to move swiftly or be laid low. On returning, Michael repeating his tactics; when spoken to replied "shure it will taich thim sorr, to be afther moving fur a gintliman".

On being paid his fare and complimented by the captain on his good driving, Michael was doubly paid, expressing his appreciation in "thank you sorr and God bless yir honour. Good luck and God speed sorr".

The work

In connection with my duties much had to be done by way of correspondence with various government departments. For instance, all the work in connection with the Board of Trade, Board of Customs and Board of Fisheries came under the Coastguard and statistics had to be collected and rendered monthly. The daily correspondence brought questions and queries from all sorts of unthought-of of people. So much so, that the Coastguard appeared to be at the beck and call of every conceivable society in the kingdom; if a whale or any other strange fish landed on the shore the zoo man must be informed; if a strange bird made its appearance, the society for the protection of wild birds desired to be informed and so on without end.

Possibly someone may have written direct to the Secretary of the Admiralty with a petty request. The protestant clergyman may have written noting that a protestant man with children be sent to a station to keep up the numbers in the day school. Another, with a grievance against a coastguard maybe for selling a few cabbages or a bag of potatoes; then an anonymous letter possibly with a general complaint against a station's crew, would have been sent direct to the District Captain. All and sundry found a place in the Divisional Officer's mailbag for enquiry and reporting. A rule, that I always observed, was to see and speak to everyone that called at my door for a word with "the Captain", no matter who, whether high or low, rich or poor, they would be sure of a patient hearing. There is a saying "when in Rome do as Rome does". Although I may not have gone quite as far as that, having to live among a people governed against their will by a power stronger than their own, with a feeling of distrust and suspicion of those in authority representing such a power, and with a different social and religious outlook to that of one's own, it behoved one, as far as possible, to become one of themselves. That is to say, for peace-sake to try in all things to see their point of view, and like themselves, try to make use of the pleasant word.

To show how this method worked, when plodding along a country road, I was accosted by a countryman, desiring a favour at my hand.

"Beg ye'r pardon ye'r honour. May I spake to ye alone?"
"Yes certainly"
"No-one is afraid to spake to yourself sorr", said he, "for ye are the same to a child as to a man".

I put him at his ease with a cheery remark so he was able to state his case freely and naturally, thus creating a friendly and trustful feeling as between man and man.

Getting around

Setting out on one of my duty visits to Tarbert and Cashen River, it was arranged that my wife and a lady friend – spending a few weeks with us – should accompany me. Arriving at Tarbert, having crossed the Shannon in the steam from Kilrush, the horse and side-car was awaiting us for the eighteen mile drive to Cashen and back, a journey that always tried the metal of the horse. In this case it was the good horse and the rolling side-car. The usual driver, apparently not available for the journey, had been substituted by another man. It was a fine day and the horse jogged along at a comfortable pace. The country folk, some busy haymaking, others busy cutting out the turf in the bog pits, were placing it to dry in readiness to be carted to the homestead and stacked in ricks for use during the long winter months.

The countryside was in its most cheerful mood and my wife and her friend from London were thoroughly enjoying their day in the open. Arriving at Cashen River, if the tide was not too high, in order to save a detour of three miles, the driver usually took his car along by the water's edge, thus reaching the coastguard station by the nearest approach. This time I was not quite certain whether the tide would permit of using the half mile of beach by the river's edge. The driver was very assuring that it would be all right and away we started. After covering about half the distance, it being spring tides, the water flowing, the river was rising rapidly and the horse getting into deeper water every minute. The water was soon up to the axle of the wheels and, through keeping so close to the embankment, the car was leaning over at an alarming angle, threatening to slip the ladies from their seat into the water, a rather awkward predicament, causing my wife and her friend a little distress. It was certainly looking risky and threatening an involuntary bath.

Arriving at a spot where the embankment happened to be a bit low, I bade the driver pull in close to the bank in order that we might alight. In so doing it was near enough that he did not upset the car. After a little manoeuvring, to my great relief, we were enabled to alight onto the solid ground, the driver pushing his way along to the coastguard station just in time with the water quite deep enough.

After inspecting the station and giving the horse a few hours rest the day being now far spent, we set out on the return journey taking the high road. The temporary driver was to all appearances unaccustomed to horses. The horse was quite a good animal with excellent staying powers and easily handled. After covering a few miles the horse commenced to kick furiously to the embarrassment of the driver and – knowing the horse – to my surprise. It was something unusual and I wondered at the cause. Resuming the journey, all went well for a couple of miles or so when the kicking was repeated. This, I thought, is a nice game and still many miles from Tarbert. Continuing our journey, I discovered that this inexperienced driver was allowing the reins to hang down over the horse's hind legs. This most naturally was resented by the horse in the manner described above.

As the night advanced and darkness came on, the driver, being unfamiliar with the road, did not appear to be very sure of himself judging from his remarks: "shure and the night is black

ye're honour". A pause, "begorra sorr and this is a bad road. There is not a soul on the road. God save us". All this indicating that his nerves were a little shaky.

The journey was certainly long and dreary with here and there a lonely cottage and now and again an unprotected bog pit skirting the roadside, in some cases cut down to the last sods of turf and now full of water. These bog pits of a dark night were blackness itself and small wonder that the unfamiliar driver did not sit easily in his seat. Our return journey was indeed proving quite the reverse of the pleasant outward journey. One part of the road led through a dense plantation of trees under which we had to pass and stretching for a considerable distance.

"Would you not fix the lamps?" I enquired.
"The sorra a lamp is there in it" he replied.
"You mean to say that Mr Clancy sent you out without lamps or candle?"
"The divil a lamp was himself afther giving me sorr".
"All right drive on, the horse will find the road".

The car proprietor had neglected to place the lamps and candles in the car with the consequence that under these trees we were without any means of lighting the gloom. It was something more than gloom, rather pitch black darkness, and the driver certainly did not appear to be at all at his ease. His remarks indicated that his mind was obsessed with the thought of fairies and pixies making their appearance. "Bedad sorr, this is a dark sphot entoirely. The trees are afther making it very black sorr. The divil a thing can we see now sorr".

I did my best to keep him cheerful by assuring him that the road was straight and there were no dangerous spots under the trees, that the horse if left to himself would follow the road alright and it was not likely there would be anything threatening about on such a night as this. I am afraid that did not help him very much as his superstitious fears had overcome his common sense.

For certain, my wife and her friend were not in the least enjoying this part of their outing. Having got clear of the trees the darkness was somewhat less pronounced and the driver relieved of his anxiety of being accosted by fairies appeared to be rather more cheerful. "Thank God we are afther passing the trees sorr", he said, "that is a queer sort of a sphot entoirely sorr".

About midnight the dreary journey completed, we arrived back at the hotel in which we had arranged to put up for the night. After partaking of a little refreshment and the hour for retirement come around, the ladies were shown to their rooms. They were first taken to the apartment set apart for myself and my wife – a spacious room with a heavy brass frame bedstead, a feather mattress, the bedding clean and inviting, so far so good. Then followed the inspection of the room set apart for our lady friend - a small room with a single bed, not by any means as inviting as the large room. She noticed a second door in this room and questioned the chambermaid as to what was on the other side. The girl quite innocently replied "another room mam, a bedroom mam".

"Is it occupied?"
"Yes mam, a gintleman sleeps there mam".
"How does he enter?"
"Through this room mam".
"Will he be there tonight?"
"Yes mam".

This arrangement, presumably the best that the proprietor could offer, appeared to the ladies to be somewhat incongruous and amusing. The proposal being quite impossible and there being no other vacant room, I am called on as to what can be done. There was only one solution to the difficulty. The ladies must occupy the large room. I must occupy the room through which the gentleman must pass to the inner chamber. This amusing suggestion of the innocent Irish country girl gave our friend a little laughable story to relate to her friends of her visit to Ireland and was the cause for a little mirth for a long time after.

Salvage

The station officer at Kilkee, being the deputy receiver of wreck, under the customs officer in Limerick, received a report from the salver of a large marine mark buoy that had been cast up on the shore eight miles from Kilkee. Instead of proceeding by road to take particulars of this flotsam he decided to launch the station boat and make the journey by sea. There was living near the station an elderly gentleman of independent means who professed to know every creek and landing place within a distance of twenty miles and persuaded the officer that it would be quite all right, that he would go with them in the boat, and that when returning if it was found necessary, they could secure the boat in either of the two little boat coves that were available.

After the necessary preparations and launching of the boat, away they started, in all probability without making any calculation whatever of the set of the tide along the shore but feeling quite confident with this experienced gentleman as the pilot.

Thinking of it as a little pleasure trip combined with duty he took his wife with him. It was a fine afternoon and all went well sailing pleasantly along the shore.

The distance proved greater and occupied more time that that anticipated. Some further delay was experienced in locating the landing place where the mark buoy was reported to be. Eventually the cove was located, the salver interviewed, and particulars noted. It was a navigation mark buoy of an American pattern which had broken from its moorings and drifted across the Atlantic. The day was now far spent and it was quite time to start on the return journey; the officer's mind quite at ease and the gentleman pilot confident that he knew the boat coves where they could put in if benighted.

After the men had been rowing a long time and still several miles from home, the sun having dipped below the western horizon, the officer realising that darkness would overtake them before reaching Kilkee Bay, decided that if he could secure the boat in one of the coves he would do so. They could then leave the boat until the next day and walk back to the station that had been left with the women only.

The cliffs along this stretch of coast were very high, rugged and of a forbidding character and after the sun had set, without a perfect knowledge of the contour of the land, the openings to these boat coves were not easily distinguishable and the professed knowledge of the gentleman pilot was found wanting. Not being able to find the entrance to either of the coves there was no alternative but to keep paddling along in hope of reaching Kilkee. This was not easy to locate after the lights in the houses were extinguished.

There they were, benighted, in an open boat on the broad Atlantic without a light of any description to guide them through the hours of darkness and without food or water to help pass the dreary hours. Consequently there was nothing to be done but to dodge about and wait for daylight, the officer no doubt in an agony of mind at leaving his station unguarded without my permission and expecting a reprimand for his folly. Fortunately the wind continued moderate throughout the night and, with the rising of the sun, they were enabled to find their way back to the station. Had I been consulted, most certainly permission would not have been given to launch the boat for this purpose.

The officer, very dejected, came to report on his night out, and it was quite evident it had not proved to be the picnic that he had anticipated. Seeing that the boat, the officer, his wife, the crew and the gentleman pilot had returned without mishap and, thinking that they had gone through enough, without scolding I allowed it to pass with a smile and a jesting remark.

Of course there is nothing in being out in a boat overnight. At the same time, under such circumstances, the officer, when he realised that the was benighted on that rock bound coast to which he was a stranger, I feel sure, was very sorry for himself, that he had trusted the word of the pilot that had failed.

Wetting a baby's head

In different countries we meet with different customs and often a town or village will follow a custom handed down from the dim and distant days that have long since passed

I set out one winter evening for a night visit to Seafield Station, a distance of sixteen miles by road, employing me and using the jaunting car for the long distance, this car being much easier for the horse than the Victoria carriage which was more comfortable and protected and used as mentioned earlier for shorter journeys and on special occasions. With the side car one has no protection whatever but is fully exposed to the best of wind or rain. For this I was always fully prepared with protective waterproof clothing.

After being about an hour or so on the journey the wind commenced to freshen from our rear. As it was a following wind and several miles had been covered, it was decided to go on in hope that it would not become too boisterous for us to complete the journey out and back. The horse, with a following breeze, completed the outward journey easily and in good time.

The watch at the station being found correct, the journal examined and signed, I then settled down for a couple of hours in the watch room in order to give the horse a rest before starting on the road back.

At midnight it was now blowing a gale. Mc – who, with constant exposure to wind and rain, protected only by a frieze coat, frequently soaked through and as wet as a swab, and himself

as hard as mahogany with a face tanned like a piece of hide, was consulted as to the advisability of starting for home.

"Arrah, phwat is there to be stopping us sorr?" he replied.
"The wind will be right in our face now and put a strain on the horse".
"Indade sorr. There is nothing that will be afther stopping that horse" he said.

So, after Mc giving the last word that it would be all right, away we started. We had not gone many miles when the wind burst on us – right in our teeth – with storm force, increasing by my estimation to a hurricane with over fifty-two pounds pressure to the square foot.

Mc, perched up in the driver's seat, was urging on the horse. How he was able to look ahead or direct the horse was a puzzle to me seeing that I had to double myself – as near as possible – into a ball, for fear of being blown off the car. It was simply impossible to face the violence of the wind which was slowing down the pace of the horse considerably. Passing along an open stretch of road, skirting a bog, with no hedges to break the wind, the exposure was trying enough for anyone, expecting every minute that the horse, car and all, would be blown over into the bog.

Struggling on against the storm, we eventually arrived at the village of Doonbeg, when I bade Mc to pull up under the shelter of a house for a breather both for ourselves and the horse. Noticing several people on the move, I wondered what could be the reason at such an unusual hour. After a short time Mc discovered that a few doors below there was a house open, and a licenced house at that, with a great number of people hovering about. Mc secured the horse, covering it and making it comfortable, then we moved along to the house toward which a great number of villagers had already wended their way, on my part attracted by curiosity to see what it was all about.

It being as it was the early hours of the morning; of course the bar was closed so we joined the happy throng in the kitchen. The master of the house with his native hospitality and politeness, spotting a stranger, saluted me with the usual greeting: "Ye are welcome sorr". "A thousand thanks" said I "and God bless all here". That naturally bridged any distance there might be between strangers and set everyone at ease. All the villagers that had assembled in the kitchen appeared to be in a genial mood and quite a free and easy general conversation was going on. I was at a loss to know the reason for this midnight assembly. At first I thought that it might possibly be a wake but soon discovered that there was no evidence of such being the case.

Both Mc and myself were glad of the shelter and warmth from the blazing turf on the hearth. Thinking that Mc would appreciate a glass of something warm, I remarked to him that if the master would oblige, he had better partake of a freshener and, to be sociable, I would have something not quite so strong. The master, naturally willing to oblige, produced the glasses and Mc, rising to the occasion, raised this glass "in good luck to yerself sorr, God bless us, and good luck to the mistress". Mc's "good luck to the mistress" set me wondering. I whispered to him to tell me what it was all about. "The mistress is afther having a baby sorr" he replied. That was the last thing one would expect to hear under such circumstances.

Apparently, many of the villagers – both men and women – according to custom – assembled around the house, whenever an addition to the family was expected, presumably in order to give it a real Irish welcome and with the idea of drinking in a 'glass of the nature' to the good health and good luck of the new arrival.

Outside it was still blowing 'great guns' and neither Mc nor myself was anxious to resume the last few miles of the journey, so we hung on for a while like the other visitors waiting for the development of events.

At last the Kilkee doctor in attendance appeared and announced that a fine baby boy had arrived and mother doing well. The master, who must have had a bottle or two ready, passed around the glasses and "good health to the baby, good luck and God bless the master and mistress" was toasted by all present who were most devout and sincere in their utterances:
"Thanks be to God"
"God protect and save the child"
"May the blessed virgin protect the mistress" and so on.

Mc and I, having heard the result as announced to the visitors, and having toasted the baby's health, took our departure in a pleasant frame of mind with many blessings and wishes of good luck and a safe journey.

This, certainly, was a strange and unusual proceeding and the doctor, reminding me of the incident sometime after, could only say that it was an old and foolish custom in that village and was sometimes most embarrassing, both for the mother and those in attendance.

1913

A Kindly People

My appointment as D.O. had extended over four years so I was known to the officers and men of my division. This with the good natured, good tempered and comfort loving people, with whom it was our good fortune to meet every day, added to the joy and satisfaction of living. Those around us appeared to use the kindly and pleasing word, always desirous of putting others at their ease, and in a pleasant and hopeful frame of mind.

Presuming you, as a stranger, desired to do a little trout fishing and that you made enquiry of your car driver, or any other person that you thought might be able to inform you, where you would be likely to find a good trout stream. In all probability, those from whom you sought information would assure you that trout could be caught in hundreds, no better stream in the country than the small river just at the back of the hill beyond. Your informant would have no intention of deceiving you, or to mean that trout could be caught as rapidly as the bait could be cast, but rather that his information should set your mind at ease and fill you with hope and expectation of a good day's sport with your rod and line, knowing there would be some trout there and by sending you out in an expectant and happy mood, you would be more likely to make a success of your day's fishing.

The early months of the year had been very stormy with continuous rain and with the sea spray from the everlasting lashing of the waves against the cliffs coming over the town. Everything was unusually wet and consequently more than the average amount of sickness.

Our young son, a perfectly healthy boy of twelve years, unfortunately contracted pneumonia and within barely four hours passed away. Naturally this was a great blow and as I happened to be sick and in my bed the shock prostrated me for many weeks. I mention this merely to show that at this time we discovered the good feeling and kindliness of heart of all our neighbours in this little west of Ireland town. No greater respect, kindness, consideration and sympathy could possibly be shown to anyone, even by one's nearest and dearest friends, that was shown to us on this occasion by these kind-hearted and sympathetic people.

Home Rule

At this time Mr Asquith, being the Prime Minister of the Liberal Government, had introduced the Home Rule Bill for Ireland. Soon after the introduction of the Bill, with every possibility of it receiving adequate support and finally becoming law, a reaction became apparent in the North of Ireland. Sir Edward Carson, as the leader, fearing that Home Rule would, for them, become Rome Rule, and as a minority fearing that theirs would be crushing taxation, declared that Ulster would never submit to rule from a parliament in Dublin and would resist any such proposal, if necessary, by force of arms and, to this end, set up a provisional government with the nucleus of an army for defence or attack, by the enrolment and equipment of thousands of volunteers, with the provision of attendant services such as an army medical corps with nurses, equipment and supplies. The enrolment of volunteers and importing of arms from Germany was carried on in a feverish ferment, the Protestant clergy blessing the colours of the various battalions to the accompaniment of prayers, hymns and sermons.

This determined attitude of opposition by the Ulstermen gave all those in the South that were pressing for a measure of self-government food for thought and consideration as to the steps that should be taken in face of the threatening attitude of the men of Ulster. The reply from the leaders of the Sinn Fein movement eventually being made known was to this effect: We too must enrol our volunteers, carry on our drill, import arms and ammunition, and, in like manner, be in all aspects ready for any emergency and should the necessity arrive, defend ourselves.

The whole of Ireland from the Giant's Causeway to Cape Clare was seething with excitement. Home Rule and the attitude of Carson was the one topic. In the bar, house, the train, the street, in town and village, the whole atmosphere was charged, as it were, with an electric current that might at no distant date ignite the whole country.

As the Home Rule bill passed through its various stages, discussions and amendments, and the prospects of its final approval by a majority of the House of Commons became apparent, and the preparations by the Northerners for an eventual struggle became intensified, the recruiting of volunteer bands in the South was rapidly extending and preparations made for any eventuality that might arise. The challenge by the North had been accepted by the South.

In town and village, almost every able-bodied young man had enlisted as a local volunteer and, following their leaders, were to be seen carrying out all military and field movements

using dummy wooden rifles for the occasion, in many instances the real weapons being held in readiness for action. With such warlike preparations going on, one could not but ask oneself where one stood in this matter and to what it might lead in the end.

Amidst all this feverish preparation, as a naval officer representing The Admiralty and other government departments, one felt that it was more necessary than ever to maintain a free and friendly attitude – apart from any political bias - as I had done hitherto, and to be most careful not to give the slightest offence by word or deed.

Frequently, those mostly interested in the burning question were only too pleased to hear my views with a free and frank discussion as to the wisdom of all the preparations that were going on. I always held that a government that granted Home Rule was in duty bound to stand by its provisions and that all the drilling was a mistake. The argument on their part was to this effect: That when self-government came and an Irish Parliament had been set up in Dublin, if there should be any monkey tricks with the Ulstermen they must be ready to meet them on equal terms.

Personally, I was on the best of terms with everyone, but I must admit that at this time the general outlook did not appear to be very reassuring, never knowing when there might be an attempt to land arms and that in the execution of duty one might be brought into opposition to one's neighbours.

No-one in the country was allowed to be in possession of fire-arms of any description. In spite of this law the local branch of Sinn Fein were collecting and receiving subscriptions for the purchase of arms. Collecting from door to door they called on me asking for a subscription. Even had my sympathy been with the Sinn Fein movement, it was unthinkable that I should subscribe to their fund in any way. Receiving them in a free and easy manner and reminding them that, although I was usually numbered among the subscribers to any local fund, I was sure they would quite understand where I stood in this case. That brought a reply – possibly with a little blarney: "Shure and that's right Captain. Thank you Captain. It's yerself sorr that would be afther helping us". And so they departed on the same good terms as before.

Thus the drilling and exercises were proceeding week by week. Cruisers were patrolling the coast to prevent the landing of arms and ammunition and every government department was on the alert. Conditions had now arrived at the stage where we could only 'wait and see' what the future held in store for us.

A Neighbouring Farmer

Farming in West Clare took on varying degrees. In some instances the farm might be a few acres of poor bog land, exposed to the beat from the Atlantic gales from which the tenant was just about able to scratch out a bare existence. From other larger farms and better land the tenant was able to rear good cattle, pigs and poultry and to show a bank balance at the close of the year. And if the farmer should be fortunate enough to have purchased his farm under the conditions laid down in the various land acts, there was every encouragement for him to improve his land and get the very best out of it.

Amongst the latter was Farmer Burk whose farmhouse, land, and buildings was in sight of my house. He was past middle age, a lean raw-boned man, upright and well-preserved, of a genial and good-natured disposition and a friendly neighbour. His outdoor life, plain living, no excesses, with very little in the way of luxury, had given to him robust health. His wife, a hard worker, well able to take care of his money and making the last penny from the dairy produce, which was her responsibility, placed him among the men of substance.

His attention was given chiefly to dairy produce, the quarter part of which was disposed of locally during the holiday season. Some hay and a little corn was grown for cattle food but not a great deal as the dairy cows were allowed to go dry during the winter.

Here I saw the farmer and his son beating out the corn with a flail after the manner of the ancients. They were a quaint pair – with sons and daughters of marriageable age – and often afforded me a little innocent amusement. There had been different attempts at making a match for the daughters. These had failed to mature. Possibly the fortune offered by Farmer Burk not being sufficient to satisfy the demands of the fond father seeking a partner for his favourite son. In this case the girls resented the idea of match-making by their parents and much rather would have been free to make their own choice but there was no alternative. The usual custom must be followed and a match arranged between the parents in the usual manner.

During the summer evenings visitors wended their way to the farm for milk, cream and butter. After the process of milking the cows had been completed, the milk separated and filled into tubs, the calves were allowed into the farmyard for their evening meal, rapidly emptying the tubs to the amusement and interest of the holiday-makers from the city.

It so happened that one summer the farmer's wife, who apparently took on the responsibility of looking after the calves, was very much troubled as most of them were the subjects of ringworm and none of the remedies tried did any good or effected a cure. One of the visitors, hearing the story of the scourge of ringworm among the calves, speaking as one with a knowledge of this trouble to which calves are sometimes subject, gave his opinion and advice that a treatment of spirits of turpentine given to the calves in their milk would prove a positive cure. He failed to mention a word as to quantity but seeing that it was a gentleman from Limerick that had told "herself" of the cure, his advice was accepted without question.

The spirits of turpentine was procured and at the evening hour the milk from the cows having been drawn off and separated, and the tubs filled in readiness for the calves to drink, following the advice received, a liberal quantity of the medicine that was to eradicate the ringworm was added. The calves, without any trouble, drank the milk as usual, but very soon after they had partaken of the milk and turpentine they appeared to become unusually playful and frisky. After a little while, as the turpentine took effect, they became rather more than playful and frisky, rushing around the farmyard quite out of control, bumping against any obstacle and knocking one another over.

Clearly the calves were intoxicated, wild and uncontrollable. The farmer, in great consternation, declaring that "herself" had poisoned and killed the whole lot. Herself, in a frenzy, calling down all the bad luck in her vocabulary on the gentleman from Limerick. And

so the calves continued their wild antics until, through exhaustion, one by one they fell and fortunately slept off the ill-effects of the turpentine that was to work the magic cure.

Taking a stroll down to the farm with my wife, who had to pay a small account for provisions received, after a few pleasant remarks and handing over the money, from an odd shilling there was sixpence change to come back. This to all appearance "herself" was in no hurry to do. Reminding her of the sixpence change 'herself' addressing the husband: "Have ye e'n a sixpence ould man?" Himself: "Where the divil would I be getting a sixpence?"
Herself: "It's yerself that have a sixpence. It's wanting the sixpence I am".
Himself: "Arrah, give the lady back the shilling. Give the lady the sixpence".
"Herself: "Indade I will not be afther giving the lady the sixpence. Give me your sixpence ould man".
Himself: "It's no sixpence I have shure. The divil a pinny am I afther having. It's yerself that have the pinnys. Give the lady the sixpence for luck".
The word from himself to allow the sixpence for luck fell on deaf ears, and after a while the sixpence change was produced by 'herself'.

While crossing one of Farmer Burk's grass fields reserved for hay, seeing him approaching and thinking that he might possibly object, as I drew near I remarked that I hoped that I was doing no harm in trespassing on his grassland. In quite a nice mild manner he replied: "Shure and what haram could ye be doing," adding in slow and measured tones: "My land? Shure it is not my land. It's God's land. I have it only for a little while. Lent to me it is, for my cattle and pigs. Arrah, but ye can walk over it as oft as ye please". It struck me that the remarks of Farmer Burk as to the personal possession of land were worthy of a note in one's book of remembrance.

Knowing the good lady to be a bit close and being near the farm buildings, seeing 'herself' in the dairy butter-making, I crept near the open window unobserved and remarked aloud so that she might hear: "This would be a good place to visit at night. A good purse full of gold would be found here. Begorra, I think I'll try it!"

Herself: "Who is that out there? Who is it? Who is it? Who is that spaking? Is it going to rob meself yer are?"

Laughingly I appeared in sight.

"Ach now, that's yerself is it? You wicked divil of a captain, spaking of robbing a poor woman? If yu did that yu'd have no luck. It's afther telling the polis I'll be".

And so the neighbourly understanding between ourselves, the farmer and his wife, continued.

A Village Character

St. Patrick's Day, the date observed to commemorate the coming of St Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is at all times an outstanding day in the church calendar. The usual custom of attending divine worship being duly observed, it then takes on the holiday spirit, including sports, outings, merry-making, treating and general jollification with an extra glass of the 'Crature' or a bottle of Guinness best.

There is an old song with the refrain: "Holy St. Patrick, send down the black bottle, we'll all have a drink on St. Patrick's Day".

Dolly, quite a noted character, with a leaning toward the black bottle and never missing an opportunity if, by any chance, the price of a bottle could be wheedled out of anyone, meeting me on the strand line on St Patrick's Day, accosted me with a curtsey and a "happy St. Patrick to yer honour", no doubt expecting to be rewarded with the price of a bottle. In a jocular manner I added "and may he send down the black bottle!" Dolly, being equal to the occasion, with a smile and a twinkle in her sparkling brown eyes, exclaimed – with an air of injured innocence – "it's the divil of a captain, ye are spaking to meself of e'n a black bottle," passing on to try a 'happy St. Patrick' with the next likely person that she might meet.

Carson's Army

After the assembly of parliament early in the New Year, the Home Rule Bill was now becoming of paramount importance to everyone in Ireland and the Ulster leaders and volunteers were becoming more determined than ever to resist any such measure. The leaders of the Sinn Fein movement in the South, convinced that if the Home Rule Bill for Ireland passed and that if a parliament was set up in Dublin probably bringing with it civil strife between the North and South, they must lose no time in completing their preparations by the enlistment and equipment, as far as possible, of ever increasing numbers of trained men. Under these conditions the prime minister and his government were not over-confident as to the future state of affairs in Ireland.

There came about a move on the part of the military officers stationed at the Curragh, who gave the government clearly to understand that if there was any attempt to force the rule of a parliament in Dublin on the Ulster men against their will, and that if called on to take any action against Carson's army, they would refuse so to do. To mark this unusual and unpleasant state of affairs on the part of the military it was understood that the War Office, taking what they considered to be the line of least resistance, suggested a compromise by granting to any such officers a period of unlimited leave. These facts becoming known through the columns of the press, there became still increased activities and enthusiasm among the ranks of the Sinn Feiners.

The weeks passed, and in May the Bill received the assent of parliament and everyone was now waiting and wondering what it would bring in its train. Drilling and preparation for the expected tussle still went on; both in the North and South, and more cruisers were patrolling in order to prevent the landing of arms.

By July, the war clouds that were now arising had the effect of forcing the Home Rule question into the background. The cruisers patrolling on the coast of Ireland had been withdrawn. Troops in Ireland were on the move across channel. The atmosphere charged with a threat of civil war between the North and South was now becoming somewhat clearer. Then came the message to all naval units with the magic word 'mobilise'. It was my duty to see that every coastguard in the Kilkee Division was on the move as soon as possible to take up his war duties in accordance with the standing orders.

It was about four p.m. and the crew of Kilkee Coastguard Station, whose war duties were to man the war signal station at Loop Head, distant sixteen miles, were immediately ordered to pack all necessary stores and equipment and proceed in compliance with previous arrangements to take up their war signal duties.

Mc was ordered to attend at the coastguard station with horses and carts. At that very hour the local company of Sinn Feiners were carrying out their field exercises and drill in a field close to the coastguard station. Seeing that the crew of the coastguard station were on the move, and that Mc had arrived with his horses and carts and was loading up the gear, they suspected that a craft – of which we had been appraised – was about to attempt the landing of arms and that the movement of the coastguard was for the purpose of frustrating such a landing, they became a little excited, threatening and intimidating in their attitude with the consequence that a crowd soon collected.

From my house with the aid of my telescope, seeing that something unusual was taking place, I immediately hastened around the bay and found that the crowd which had gathered were inclined to prevent our men from leaving their station. Realising the gravity of the situation, and being desirous of avoiding any unpleasant scenes, I approached a young man with whom I was on most familiar terms, one of the leading citizens and an organising spirit in the local volunteer movement. Explaining to him our position and requesting him to tell his men that the country was on the verge of war and that our men were moving to Loop Head in preparation; that the order had been given to mobilise and the Royal Naval Reserve men would be ordered to join their depot tomorrow. Having explained our position, he hastened to inform his men, myself moving among the crowd with him. I could call many of them by name and with a few opportune remarks and a light jest such as "what a pity we can't have the Home Rule now! The fun with Carson is all spoiled for us in the South. Carson can have his turn after we have settled with the Germans". This attitude on my part together with the appeasing words from their leader had a quieting and steadying effect.

By this time the evening was far spent and seeing there were a good many of the toughs hanging about the foot of the hill, and not being quite sure whether they would molest our men or not, it was decided to delay departure until early morning. Mc was ordered to take away his horses and come back at four a.m. At that hour Mc appeared and, before the 'bhoys' were astir, our men left the station and got away quietly. It was afterwards discovered that a wise course had been taken as the boys intended to capsize the carts and give us a rough time. That might have led to resistance on the part of our men followed by serious trouble.

Mobilisation

The men from all other coastguard stations in the division were ordered to proceed on the following day to Devonport depot taking their small arms with them.

All Naval Reserve men were ordered to report at the Customs House, Limerick the next day. There were quite a number to go from Kilkee, all well-known to me. At the appointed hour they were all assembled at the railway station accompanied by their friends and their families to give them a send-off with the blessing of God and good luck. Some of them had partaken of an extra glass or two which, under the unusual circumstances, was quite pardonable. Two or three of them were a little troublesome and refusing to board the train. They were all

anxious to know if I was coming. I had to tell them that I would be with them after a day or two. "Shure Captain and will yerself be afther coming wid us? Will there be a real war Captain? We'll be looking out for yerself sorr" and so on. Moving among them with cheerful and encouraging words, by starting time they were all on board the train, going out to do their duty in the great struggle that lay ahead, some not to return until the end of the war and others not again. Under the conditions prevailing in Ireland at the time be it said to the credit of every Royal Naval Reserve man in the Limerick district, there was not one who failed to answer his name.

Collecting Arms & Ammunition.

Accompanying the unrest in the country at this time there was a great desire on the part of the volunteers to possess fire-arms which according to the orders in force was prohibited. Although the station officers had been ordered when leaving to take all their small arms with them, the day following mobilisation it was discovered that at Liscannor and Kilrush the arms were left behind at the coastguard stations. At Cashen River Station the revolvers only were left behind. Prompt action had to be taken for fear this might become known, the stations raided and the arms stolen. The constabulary at Liscannor and Cashen were immediately informed and requested to take charge of arms and ammunition and despatch the same to the depot at Queenstown which they promptly did.

The arms left at Kilrush Coastguard Station I decided to deal with myself. Ordering Mc to have the horse and Victoria carriage ready – there was always the choice of a side-car or the four wheeler Victoria – by nine p.m. for the journey to Kilrush Coastguard Station, not giving Mc any inkling as to my mission and as an excuse for extra rugs I took my wife with me.

On my arrival at the coastguard station all the doors were locked and the women and children gone to bed. In all cases, for safe custody, every man kept his arms in his house instead of in the watch-room. The women were aroused and gladly handed over the arms to my charge. No time was lost in placing them in the carriage and covering them up with the rugs. Late hour as it was, there was one spectator of the scene, which neither Mc nor myself appreciated in the least. It was apparent that Mc did not relish the idea of carrying these weapons in the carriage and small blame to hm. In all probability he was a little nervous and afraid that we might be set on.

The coastguard station was situated about a mile from the town of Kilrush and in order to get back onto the main road leading to Kilkee we had first to pass through Kilrush. All being ready away we started and Mc with no idea of dawdling whipped up the horse - which was a good one - and drove for all he was worth until we were clear of the town and well on the road towards Kilkee. Then, no doubt feeling that a danger spot had been passed, he eased down and we made our way back to my house at an easy pace. Arriving home after midnight the arms were deposited in my house. Then I dismissed Mc who "with a good night sorr, and thanks be to God sorr" took his departure, no doubt wondering what job 'the Captain' had for him next.

The following day, with no desire to retain these arms longer than necessary, a carpenter was ordered to make an arms chest and no time was lost in packing and placing the same on the rail consigned to the depot at Queenstown.

The ammunition still remained at the stations. It would never do to leave it there and, for its safe custody, it was decided to collect it and hand it over in charge of the officers at the war signal station, Loop Head. In order to do this a motor car with a trusty but reckless driver was hired, the stations visited and ammunition collected. Then, making my way to Loop Head, confessedly not feeling particularly comfortable on the journey but it was the only thing to do, and having deposited the ammunition at the Loop Head Station knowing it to be in safe keeping, my mind on that score was at ease.

Declaration of War

On the night of the fourth of August I was aroused in the middle watch by a telegraph boy bearing the decisive message arrived at in the House of Commons a few hours earlier: 'Commence hostilities against Germany'. All the men from the division had been sent away and for the time being I was left alone. At the twilight hour on the first day after the declaration of war I noticed, what appeared to me, a suspicious looking person pushing his bike through the town toward the coast road leading to Loop Head. I wondered what game the fellow was up to, possibly cutting the telephone wires?

Meeting the young man, a leader of the Sinn Feiners mentioned earlier. Mentioning to him my suspicion of this person, he replied: "We'll soon find out Captain". Searching up a friend of his – who had been in the police force in New York – and getting out his motor car, away they started, very soon overtaking the man in the act of fixing up a tent or shelter where he intended to spend the night. After a few questions, and cross-questions from our New York friend, he proved to be a tourist from England doing the west of Ireland at what happened to be an unfortunate time. The following day the constabulary became suspicious of his movements and took him to task and eventually it became known that, in Dublin he was arrested and taken before the military authorities as a suspicious person but, giving a satisfactory account of himself, was released and advised to get back to England.

Coast watchers

The coastguard now mobilised and the coast line unwatched, it was decided to appoint civilian coast watchers. For the purpose of organising the men in the Southern District, a Commander from the retired list, the Hon Francis Spring-Rice R.N. afterwards Lord Monteagle, was called up and appointed for this duty. With the appointment of coast watchers, my duties were carried on from Kilkee, the headquarters of the division, much the same as before. The organising Commander made periodical visits sometimes accompanied by the Rear Admiral doing the duty of the District Captain.

The Commander, of noble birth and a gentleman by nature, proved himself to be one of the finest officers under whom I had ever served; a strict disciplinarian, but fair and considerate to all, a gentleman for whom one had the highest respect and admiration.

The fact of war having commenced between England and Germany, and the measure of home government for Ireland dropped, had a most wholesome effect in the country both on the Carsonites in the North and the Sinn Feiners in the South. The training of men with dummy rifles was – for the time – dropped and the general feeling, as far as one could judge, appeared to be sympathetic toward England, France and Belgium which had joined in the

common cause against German aggression. In a most practical manner this was demonstrated both in the South as well as the North by many thousands of men who had been drilling with the dummy rifles joined His Majesty's forces and donned the King's uniform.

It has always been my opinion that had there been a measure of conscription put into operation in the first year of the war including all Ireland, it would have been fairly well accepted by all but the extremists, and the rebellion of Easter 1916, with all the trouble which followed, in all probability have been averted.

In order to create a more efficient system of coast watching by the coastguard in 1913 the Board of Trade had a number of lookout huts erected in the most advantageous positions commanding unobserved views of long stretches of the coastline. In these huts the coastguards were to keep their night watches during bad weather.

At Kilkee one of these huts was erected on Lookout Hill (mentioned earlier). The approach from the cliff road leading to this hut, for about three hundred yards, was by a narrow footpath not far from the cliff with a sheer drop into the sea and, it must be admitted, that any man called on to make his way to this hut and lock himself in for a long and dreary watch on a dark and stormy winter night should be possessed of a good nerve and be free from any superstitious fears of fairies or leprechauns.

Under war conditions there were no coastguards to keep the bad weather lookout and the civilian coast watchers being purely a wartime unit were not available for a bad weather lookout. It was therefore decided to engage men for this duty at night as and when required at a wage of 2/6d per hour. After making this known, and asking various persons likely to take up such employment, there was not one person found willing to undertake this duty, where on the Board of Trade raised the sum to 4/- per hour without any response, eventually consenting to pay two men to keep the night watch in the hut together for company. This tempting offer also failed to bring forward the men required. There was certainly a score of men that could very well have done with the money but held back by superstitious fears and the lack of the ordinary courage required. Strange as this may appear, the hut on Lookout Hill remained without a night watch throughout the period of the war.

The neighbouring town of Kilrush on the banks of the Shannon, said to have been the birth place of the Fenian movement in Ireland, was typical of other towns in the west with every evidence of more prosperous days in the past being once an important port with large warehouses and corn stores now empty and falling into decay.

St Senan and Inis Cathaigh

Situated just off the town was the island of Scattery – originally Inis Cathaigh – about one mile in length by half a mile in breadth. There is much of interest on this island as it was there that Saint Senan, one of the early evangelists after Saint Patrick, founded a monastery. His name, to this day, is locally revered as one of the fathers of the early Christian church in Ireland. It abounds in local tradition and legend. It is said that a wild beast once occupied the island making it impossible for men to live there. That, on the arrival of Saint Senan, he being directed from heaven, subdued the beast by making the sign of the cross over it and in the name of God implored it to leave the island and never again molest any man. He was assured

by an angel that he had need of no fear in setting up a monastery on the island; that no monk would ever be drowned in crossing from the mainland and that no-one numbered among his converts would ever go to hell if buried there. With advancing age the saint, knowing the time of his departure to be not far distant, it is said that he left the island for a time of quiet prayer and preparation and that shortly before his death he directed his disciples to carry his body back to the monastery for interment. And according to local tradition his earthly remains were laid to rest in the presence of heavenly bodies and he was mourned by many of his converts and monks.

Visitors to the island will be shown by the residents the burial place of the saint which is still said to work miracles; also the spot where, by striking the rock in a dry season, he brought forth a spring of water, saving the lives of the monks. Sailors were said to visit the burial place on the island of a certain saint at whose shrine they offered prayers for safety on their voyage.

From the evidence afforded by the old ruins of a monastery and other buildings of a religious nature, the island continued to be occupied by a religious community, in all probability, from the sixth century down to the date of the penal days. To this day are standing the walls of the Bishop's House or palace, the monastery and other buildings connected with the brotherhood, said to be seven in number. There is no doubt that the abandonment of this island as a monastic settlement followed by neglect and decay of the sacred buildings similar to hundreds of chapels throughout the land was due to the foolish and oppressive laws of the misguided persons ruling the destinies of the Irish people, forbidding them to worship God in a manner according to their conscience and the custom of their fathers.

In reference to the penal laws under which no priest was allowed to say mass or practice the Roman Catholic form of religion. Having frequently noted, over a period of years, the numerous ruins of the places of worship without making enquiry as to the reason, but drawing my own conclusions that on account of the reduction in the population through emigration, these chapels being no longer required, had been closed and allowed to fall into decay.

Walking along the road at Quilty I used to meet a priest with whom I was on speaking terms and being near to the crumbling ivy-covered walls of what must have been a very fine well-built chapel, I ventured to ask the reason for so many chapel ruins so frequently met with. Those old walls, he replied "are reminiscent of the penal days". For once in my life I was ashamed of my ignorance. Ashamed too of the folly, indiscretion and lack of free thought on the part of the one-time governors of that country called England of which we are all so proud.

The burial ground on the island near to the old monastic settlement was still used as the last resting place of the departed taken across from the mainland for burial.

Within sight of my house there was a blessed or holy well known as Saint Senan's Well. Having read that Christian missionaries from Ireland were the first to introduce the Christian religion to the people of West Cornwall, the question arose in my mind as to whether there was any connection between Saint Senan of Scattery Island and Sennen near the Land's End. Mentioning this to a Catholic friend who had read the life of Saint Senan – a very old book

written long ago – he kindly consented to lend it to me. In this life story of the saint, the writer had recorded – probably culled from tradition – that on a missionary journey to France he landed in Cornwall and there introduced and instructed the people in the Christian religion. This was a point of much interest to me at the time.

The Irish people being freed from servitude with liberty to hold public worship in accordance with the practice of the Roman Catholic Church, the old chapels were seldom if ever used again. In most cases a new chapel was built and very often not very far from the old ruins. In all probability there was some superstitious belief, or fear of bad luck, following any interference with the old consecrated ruins hallowed by centuries. These old ruins always commanded an undefinable reverence combined with awe on the part of the peasantry. Mc, for instance, when passing the ruins of an old chapel and burial ground never failed reverently – night or day – to raise his hat and utter a little prayer. And there these old walls remain, crumbling with time, but undisturbed by the hand of man. Lasting monuments reminding generation after generation of the cruel and intolerable yoke placed on their forefathers by aggressors from another land, people and tongue.

Saint Senan's well – within sight of my house – previous mentioned, was counted among the blessed wells so frequently met with in Ireland. Writing of such wells in general, it was quite a common thing to see people going through their prayers and devotions near these holy wells. Sometimes a person would be seen in a most sincere, reverent and devout manner walking around and around a well, in all probability repeating a certain number of prayers suggested by the priest at the time of confession, or for the repose of the soul of a departed parent, brother or friend.

Frequently the waters were said to possess certain curative properties. The well of Saint Senan, a spot of interest and attraction to visitors, the waters from which were said to cure afflictions of the eyes and other bodily ailments, arose from a plentiful and ever-flowing spring of cool and crystal clear water. It supplied the inhabitants with drinking water delivered by water carriers. It had a walled enclosure with an iron gate – locked by the caretaker – and an outer wall three feet in height. The overflow – from which the drinking water was taken – was trapped in three enclosures: first the drinking well, then the eye well and the foot well.

With the passing out of the old parish priest a new father in God appeared on the scene and, being of a progressive turn of mind, decided that some of the old customs carried out at the well, not being strictly hygienic, must cease. He disliked the idea of sore eyes etc. being cleansed in these waters and proposed that it should be enclosed by a six foot wall and the waters piped into a tank from which every water carrier could draw. This progressive order was much resented but the father of the flock – in their best interest – had spoken and there was no appeal. The walls were erected and the three enclosures, through which the water passed and in which sore eyes, sore feet and other ailments were cleansed, together with the artistic beauty and attraction of the old well and its enclosure, disappeared.

Remarking on prayers offered at holy wells, the sister of a very devout and religious man passed away without the last rites of the church at which he was much distressed and for

several days he visited the well and walked around and around, presumably making intercession on behalf of and for the repose of the soul of the departed.

At one corner of the low wall enclosing the well at this time, there was a saucer-like cavity on which the devotee, to ensure the correctness of the number of orisons said, placed a number of small pebbles corresponding to the number of prayers he desired to offer. The devotions carried out in this manner, coupled with faith and hope, without any doubt brought much comfort to the sincere in heart when making supplication at a holy well or the shrine of a saint.

1915

Sighting submarines

The enemy submarines now making their presence felt in the English and Irish Channels soon appeared off the south west coast of Ireland sinking a collier off Loop Head which was bound for Scapa. The captain of the collier, although ordered by the submarine, refused to stop, whereon the submarine opened fire, killing the man at the wheel and injuring the captain, finally sinking her with bombs. The boat with survivors landed at Kilrush with the body of the captain who had died of his wounds. The officer commanding the submarine – a humanitarian – seeing the captain was badly injured, supplied the necessary bandages for his comfort.

Early in 1915 the Admiralty, with the object of enlisting help from anyone near the coast in tracking movements of submarines, caused a number of posters to be displayed offering the sum of £100 to any person giving such information as would lead to the capture or destruction of a submarine. From the west coast of Ireland there was no lack of informants coming forward with reports of having sighted a submarine. And daily, dozens of telegrams reached the Commander-in-Chief's office direct.

These two interesting letters were sent direct to the Secretary of the Admiralty by a man deciding to ignore any local official and get in at the top. He was living in an old Martello Tower on Ballard Head six miles from Kilkee. The letters eventually reached me for enquiry and report.

> 30th March 1915
>
> "Dear Sir
>
> A submarine came down from the north from Arin Islands, about eight o'clock in the morning and could see quite plain over the water a position of her and she putting fog out of her. Me and four or five children have seen her for three quarters of an hour.
>
> Came in to Ballard Tower in under it and then went north west towards Lupe Head under water and over water fishermen have seen her but not before me. I would say that she came out from Galway. Have a look out for her.
>
> I remain your obedient servant

Martin Keane
Doonbeg Upper Ballard
Co Clare, Ireland"

9th April 1915

"Dear Sir

I received your letter on the 9th April and to my report that I have made to you my report is staunched and true and can get all my family to prove to that see her as well as me and see all of her quite clear with a man standing in her middle and could half of him covered with brown cloase on him and would be sure it was a waterproof suit. No other body from West Clare have seen her as good as me self and my family nor could identified what she was. I have seen her coming down from Arin Islands until she come where I live on Ballard Tower. Several other people see her steaming and throwing the gas smoke out of her but coudent tell what was as good as me and kept watching her until she went to Lupe Head. As far as I can hear there is people to look after the coast that know nothing about as good as me nor cannot see. Please let me know by return if there is as far as I have done I have seen nothing gained by it. I should think and be sure of it if there was a turn to be giving that I should be the most trusted to give it to me as I have a big interest in this since the outbreak of war. And to all my reports that I made you I have day and date for them. Please you will let me know by return what may be done. Police came to me to give all information about it but I gave them none I gave it all to you. If there is any other person employed you will let me know by return where I live on around the coast.

I remain your obedient servant

Martin Keane
Upper Ballard
Doonbeg, Co Clare"

Mc and the lights

The men at Loop Head were eight miles from the nearest small store where provisions were obtainable. Arrangements were therefore made with Mc to run a horse car once a week for the convenience of the men obtaining provisions from Kilkee. This arrangement was not always convenient to Mc, when he used to send his son with a donkey and cart - in local phraseology "ass and bull". The thirty-two mile journey, out and back, would take the donkey about twenty-four hours and, in my opinion, was sailing very near to cruelty to animals but that was not always taken notice of in such backward surroundings.

Whenever I wished to visit Loop Head, Mc was always ready with the horse and car. The journey for a night visit travelling over the darkened and exposed roads was always a dreary outing.

On one occasion, very soon after leaving the war signal station for the return journey (after a visit) a little distant lightening appeared. Nothing whatever to be alarmed about, but Mc very soon commenced to show signs of uneasiness and nerves by expressing his fear that the lights

of the car would attract the lightening. After a time – the lightening now a little nearer – he said "I'll be afther putting out the lights sorr".
"Why do you wish to put out the lights?" I asked, "It's black enough. You can scarcely find the road with the lights".
"The lightening sorr" said Mc.
"Never mind the lightening. It's a long way off and will do us no harm".
"Indade sorr it's afther putting thim out I should be".
"Don't mind the lightening, we are quite all right. It's too dark anyway to put the lights out. You won't see the road and we shall find ourselves in one of the bog pits".
"Shure sorr, wasn't it the lightening afther killing the man at the station?" (A man was killed by lightening at Kilkee Station).
"Oh yes, I heard all about that".
"Begorra sorr and wasn't the light afther gettin, the lightening that killed himself?"
"Oh1 Cheer up Mc" said I, "We shan't be killed tonight. I'll let you know if there is any danger".

As we journeyed along with a flick of lightening now and then it was quite evident that any remarks of mine had not in the least allayed Mc's fear. He was still uneasy about the lights. Then it came on to rain and on some pretext of adjusting the lamps, much to my annoyance he extinguished the lights. If the lightening did not bother me, I certainly did not like travelling the road – in some places unprotected by hedges – in such darkness and suggested that he had better leave it to the horse to find its own way over the road.

Mc, whatever was wrong with him, agitated by superstitious fear or what not, after the lights were extinguished, to all appearance, was in a much happier frame of mind. The horse plodding along, at its own pace, prolonged the journey, making it slow and tiresome all on account of a few flashes of lightening and a faint-hearted driver. So much for Mc's theory of the lights attracting the lightening.

1916

The Easter Rebellion

As the war dragged on, and England straining every nerve, using up men and material, the Sinn Feiners and the Irish Republican Army which, in reality, were closely allied, living up to the old motto "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity" set about re-organising their forces; this time, not with the idea of fighting Carson's army, but taking control of the country and setting up a Republican Government in Dublin. Activities were again noticeable among the local sections but not on the same scale as that early in 1914. This was quite a different proposal and there was not the same enthusiasm to face the soldiers of the regular army as that of the Ulster Volunteers. Still there were some prepared to help in a general uprising and preparations went ahead accordingly.

In Dublin, the headquarters of the movement, careful and detailed preparations were made with men armed, supplied with ammunition and food and allotted their appointed stations with instructions on which they were to act and play their part on the day appointed, Easter 1916. On that day the revolutionists in Dublin set their long thought out scheme into motion with dire results to themselves and the city. The city, being brought under shell-fire resulting

in the destruction of many fine buildings in the business centre. The leaders were very soon placed under arrest and brought before a military tribunal. Some of them were sentenced to death and executed.

It was intended that the rising and seizing of control should be general in the country, but the provinces, not being fully organised and prepared, failed at the first brush with regular troops.

At first there was a tense feeling all around as it was uncertain as to what extent the rising would spread. There were quite a number of those in sympathy with and ready to take their part in the movement, had they been well-organised and capably led.

The Naval authorities, uncertain of the fate of the war signal stations in case of an uprising, in order to safeguard the stations on Sybil Head in Kerry and Loop Head in Clare, had sent a sloop into the River Shannon with a contingent of marines on board in readiness to land, in case their help should be required in protecting these stations.

In the meantime on the Clare side, in accordance with orders, I had arranged with a certain 'squireen' owning a fine commodious house near Loop Head, to hand it over for the use of the marines if required to land. On the Kerry side the marines were landed, but happily for me on the Clare side, all continued quiet and the protection of the marines was not required.

After the uprising – among a certain section – there was a considerable anti-British feeling, while others were daily joining the King's forces to do battle against the common enemy.

The military force in the country was considerably increased and, to a certain extent, the country was under military control. Soldiers were to be seen stationed here and there where their presence was considered necessary. In West Clare we had a strong military contingent, one section being billeted in the coastguard station at Seafield.

The possession of firearms and holding of Sinn Fein meetings was rigidly proscribed. Notwithstanding this, midway between Kilkee and Loop Head at the village of Cross there was a very active young priest with a strong following who continued the recruiting and drilling, each new recruit being sworn in by kissing the gun on enrolment. They were in possession of firearms and ammunition, one of them being injured by a ball cartridge when carrying out firing practice.

The military authorities, having received information that the Sinn Feiners were to hold a meeting at Carrigaholt, a small town six miles from Kilkee, placed a ban on the meeting and sent a number of soldiers in charge of a young and inexperienced officer – as far as dealing with such was concerned – with orders to prevent the holding of the meeting.

When they arrived, those taking a part had already collected in a certain building and the meeting and speaking was well underway. The young officer, asserting his authority, ordered the leaders to desist and close the meeting. This order they declined to obey. Seeing that peaceful persuasion was of no avail, he ordered a number of his men to enter and clear the room. In carrying out this order, most unfortunately, one of the soldiers pricked one of the civilians in the back with his bayonet, inflicting a serious wound causing the necessity of the removal of the man to the hospital in the county town of Ennis where the injury was found to be of a serious nature, the bayonet having penetrated the kidney. Complications arose and

within a few days the man died. Naturally the rebels made capital out of this incident by enlisting general sympathy, particularly in this part of the county.

His remains were brought home for burial, first having been paraded through the town of Kilkee where much sympathy was displayed and resentment shown against the action taken by the military.

I was very sorry indeed that this should have happened, seeing that up to that time I had no apprehension when visiting Loop Head Station, day or night. I was now painfully aware of a bitter and resentful feeling against anyone representing the services and seeing that my visits to Loop Head took me along the road skirting Carrigaholt and through the village of Cross, the conditions arising out of this incident were by no means improved for me. Still, I carried on as usual with a free and easy attitude and a cheery demeanour toward all with whom I was brought into contact.

The unrest and the atmosphere of resentment created by the foregoing incident, Mc not always regarded with favour in doing so much work for the English government, did not altogether relish the idea of taking me to Loop Head after it became dark. I was a good customer and he would not like to refuse but I knew how he was feeling about it and took steps to relieve him of any further anxiety.

There were three motor cars in the place for hire and these well-worn old traps, not to be depended on to complete the journey out and back. However, I engaged one of these with a dare-devil driver for the night visits reserving Mc for the daylight.

For some reason the authorities gave an order that any officer or man leaving the immediate vicinity of his station was to carry his revolver. Personally, I decided to place mine in the safe and keep it there, concluding that it would be better for me to move about as usual and not let it be thought that those whom I met on the road were regarded as enemies of whom I need be afraid.

The wreck of the *Kelp*

Soon after the outbreak of the war the three mast schooner *Kelp*, of three hundred tons, was captured by one of our cruisers in the South Atlantic and taken to Stanley Harbour in the Falkland Islands. Every ship and cargo being valuable, it was eventually decided to send out a captain and mate, first to Buenos Aires, there to pick up a crew, proceed to Falkland and bring the vessel home to London. The captain was quite elderly, being over seventy, and his mate sixty-four – two hard weather, fearless old English sea dogs.

After leaving Falkland with their mixed crew of foreigners, they encountered fair weather until reaching the higher northern latitudes when winter gales were prevalent and, keeping a somewhat northerly course, wishing to make Cape Clare, he first sighted the South Arran Island light at the mouth of Galway Bay on a wild winter morning – the 16th of January – blowing a gale with a high sea. The old captain mistook this light for the Fastnet and, with the opening out of the daylight, being unfamiliar with the coast and failing to recognise the landmarks, soon found himself hopelessly on a lee shore in a shallow draught deeply laden craft with little or no chance of clawing offshore and reaching an offing.

Up ran the signal of distress and a word immediately came through of a ship in distress and likely to drive ashore. Orders were given to call out the rocket brigade and proceed by the coast road not knowing where she might come in.

The word having gone around that a ship was in distress a great number of people were attracted to the coast, in particular at Spanish Point where she eventually grounded, and being of a light draught was thrown high up on the rocks enabling the crew to get a line ashore by which means all excepting one man succeeded in getting out of the ship before the arrival of the rocket apparatus. By the time that I arrived on the scene the men were being cared for in a cottage and the old captain comfortable in a warm bed. In landing, the mate overtaken and knocked down by a sea was rather severely injured about the head requiring medical attention.

As the tide receded, the vessel being left high and dry, was very soon boarded by the crowd but as the cargo consisted of hides, horns and tallow, there was no inducement to loot the same, but some of the ship's stores and private property of the captain and crew soon disappeared, some of the culprits being traced and severely punished.

As the local representative of the Shipwrecked Mariners Society, arrangements were made by me for a supply of clothing and care of the men who were very soon despatched to London, there to seek another ship. As soon as fit to travel the old captain made his way home declaring that Neptune had been very unkind to him on this his last and finishing voyage. The mate, who had to be carefully nursed for three weeks before being fit to travel, was most emphatic in his declaration that, war or no war, for the future his feet would remain on the solid ground.

The clothes that the seamen were wearing when landed together with other clothing recovered from the stranded wreck were hung out to dry and left out overnight. Lo and behold, when the morning light appeared, the clothing was not to be seen. It had disappeared during the hours of darkness and some of those responsible for its disappearance very soon found themselves answering a charge in the local court.

All this only indicated that there still remained a trace of the same blood in the people of Spanish Point and neighbourhood as in that of their forefathers who were said to have dealt so drastically with the shipwrecked seamen of the Spanish Armada that were so unfortunate as to be stranded on their shores and from which, it is said, the name of Spanish Point was derived.

It is quite common among some of the people to make use of expressions containing blessing or cursing, sometimes quite meaningless. At other times expressing the frame of mind of the person pronouncing either the blessing or the cursing.

Visiting the hotel at Milltown Malbay to arrange for the temporary housing of the men, the doctor – a young man – who after the excitement of the day, his attention to the men and the free passing of the bottle, now rather animated, was present with his friend, a young priest.

In conversing with me about the wreck, the care of the men and the payment of the expenses in a rather garrulous manner, made use of the expression: 'God blast yer soul captain'.

Although it was said in a meaningless and thoughtless manner and did not disturb me in the least, the priest, no doubt, disturbed and horrified that the doctor should be so rude and forgetting himself by speaking to me in such language and cursing my soul, immediately pulled him up as only a priest could do. "Why are ye afther cursing the captain in that manner, doctor?" said he, "it's ashamed ye should be". In order to pass over an awkward moment: "No offence meant I am sure" said I, being pleasant.

The doctor, thinking that he had overstepped the mark, and being corrected by the priest, said "Begging yer pardon father and begging the captain's pardon, it's only afther talkin' I am. Will ye be afther a glass with meself?"
"Thank you kindly doctor", said I, "we'll get to that after business".

And so the conversation continued, with the priest, the doctor and myself in rather more guarded language.

Finally there were numerous claims for payments for services rendered in rescuing and caring for the men in one way or another. It was my duty to weed out the genuine claimants from those attempting to get something for nothing. The doctor headed the list with £25 for professional services for extracting the spines from the men's feet after they had crossed the rocks and stepped on the sea-urchins. Next came the cottager that took in the men and gave them hot drinks immediately after they got ashore with a claim for £10. Then the local publican, £2 for whiskey supplied. And a whole list of those claiming remuneration on various pretexts.

Being conversant with the bargaining methods usually adopted in those parts, every claim was considered accordingly. Settling with the doctor for £15, the cottager £5, the purveyor of whiskey £1 and several other claimants from £1 to 10/- each. The whole cost to the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society amounted to £70. This will give some idea of the daily claims on the funds of the Society throughout the Great War.

Reckless Patsy

The reckless car driver, who had killed a child on a country road, was henceforth called into frequent requisition and one evening in broad daylight when taking me to Loop Head it happened that the driver was confronted with a number of pigs crossing the road exactly in front of the farmhouse to which the pigs belonged. This was not uncommon as animals were frequently met with grazing by the roadside. Patsy, in his reckless manner, without taking any heed or easing his speed and giving them a chance of getting out of the way kept straight on with the consequence that the wheel passed over one, laying it out. With an innocent and non-committal expression on his face he drove on. On my remarking: "I think we bumped that one Patsy".
"Begorra sorr", said he, "I was not afther feeling anyting. Indade, it's not afther bumping the pig we are".

Returning a couple of hours later – now twilight – the owner was waiting for us with the pig laid out in front of the cabin door but Patsy, with no intention of having any palaver with the cottager, switched on a little more juice and shot past, allowing no chance of his name being taken and leaving the forlorn cottager to mourn his loss.

On another occasion, overtaking a number of people returning from market plodding along slowly and quietly with the donkeys and carts, the driver, to show his cleverness in handling a motor car, kept up the speed, passing them either to the right or left, with total disregard of any rule of the road. At last, in making a sudden swerve to clear one of the donkey carts, mounted the hedge and was near enough to turning the car wheels uppermost. Not wishing to have such manoeuvring operated, I had to give him a sharp warning to be a little more careful and not take unnecessary risks. With all his faults I found him very useful and, although his brother was a 'Shinner', Patsy was always ready to render me a service.

Up to this time the explosives belonging to the rocket apparatus were still at Kilrush coastguard station, unguarded. On account of the unsettled state of the country, orders were received to have these explosives removed to Loop Head war signal station. Carting explosives from place to place unguarded was not altogether desirable and required forethought and caution. There was no alternative but to fall back on Patsy to help me. Engaging him for a run to Kilrush, away we started. Arriving at the coastguard station, I had to tell him that I wished to remove a few boxes and would he mind getting them out and placing them in the car. Whether he was aware of the contents of the boxes, I didn't know. In any case he did not show himself in the least curious. He got out the cases and placed them in the car. Jumping in myself I said: "Now Patsy, the next stop Loop Head".

We had to return over the same road and pass through Kilrush and Kilkee and, as we bumped along over the rough roads, I was praying that the old bus would keep running until I had got rid of our stuff. He certainly would not wish it to be known that he was removing explosives for the English government so, at his best speed, he made his way through the towns of Kilrush, Kilkee and the village of Cross without a stop and, to my great relief, deposited the stuff, placing it under the charge of the officer of the signal station.

The Soupers

The county of Clare was said to have the lowest percentage of Protestants of any county in Ireland. Consequently Protestant churches were few and widely scattered. In passing a very nicely built small church at the village of Kilbaha, three miles from Loop Head, Mc drew my attention to this church by remarking: "That church beyond sorr, the ass and he feeding in the haggart agin the church door is Mr Stane's church. There is no religion in it now sorr".
"Why is that Mc? What is there about it?"
"We call that the soupers' church sorr".
"Soupers' church! What is the meaning of that?"
"In the days of the hunger sorr *(the famine of 1845)* the poor people out to the whest, 'the Lord save us', wid nothing to ate, no potatoes for the pigs and their dying of the hunger and some people ating the limpets off the rocks sorr, no flour for the wife to be making a griddle cake, no spuds and no mate. And afther dying of the hunger and dazase they were, sorr. 'God save us,'" Mc reverently making the sign of the cross.
"Those must have been terrible days Mc" said I.
"Yes sorr. Dying of the hunger they were sorr, all the poor people in this part, in the village and in the cabins beyond. The hunger wid sorra a spud, very bad entirely.

Mr Slane, a gintleman that lived in the big house on the point beyond sorr, it wuz himself that would be afther having the soup made for the poor cratures that were dying of the hunger. It's a baste he'd be afther killing sorr and boiling the soup wid stirabout male *(ground maize)* and anyting to keep away the hunger. Mr Slane wuz a Protestant sorr. And wid the hunger and he trying to keep it away. All the poor cratures it's saying a prayer they'd be, fur the gintleman. Thin sorr it's Protestants he'd be making thim! Wid the hunger on thim, and the gintlemen afther giving the soup, shure they would have the other religion, the same as Mr Slane. And the others called thim the soupers and that wuz the soupers' church. Afther the hunger wuz gone and the soupers all dead 'the Lord rest their souls' there wuz no religion in the church afther. And we call it the soupers' church".

This story, probably told to Mc by his father or mother and told in his crude style, is without doubt a true account of a fully Protestant 'squireen' proselytising during the great famine when people died by the roadside in hundreds due to the failure of the potato crop in 1845.

The optimistic woman

The west of Ireland, open and exposed to the heavy rain clouds driven along by the Atlantic gales is noted for its abundant rainfall. The winter months were exceedingly wet, the county of Clare being no exception.

Our daily supply of milk came from a smallholding a mile or so from the town. It was the custom of the farmer's wife to drive into the town of a morning with the 'ass and butt' *(donkey and cart)* and so deliver the milk to her customers from door to door. Her only protection from the torrential rain was that of a woollen shawl thrown loosely over the head and shoulders. Sometimes the shawl would be as wet as a swab. Should one remark on the discomfort caused by so much rain, she would usually reply "Arrah wishee, plase God it will be foine tomorrow"; always optimistic, always hopeful, and never complaining. On many a dark, cloudy and depressing morning with the rain descending in torrents and remembering the milk vendor's helpful comment: 'please God it will be foine tomorrow', one concluded that here was a lesson worthy of remembrance by all grumblers about the weather conditions over which happily we have no control.

She had several children and those of an age had to give their morning help in feeding the pigs and poultry before setting out for school. One morning, being very late with the delivery of the milk, apologising, she explained the reason for this: 'that the little divileen of a Micky couldna find the ass, and that the gypsies who had passed that way were afther getting it'.

Travelling gypsies

During the summer months it was customary of certain tribes of gypsies to set out with their usual paraphernalia for a town through the country disposing of certain wares and, not the least important item of business, that of buying and selling asses. It was usual for them to be found driving a large pack before them.

It was quite a common practice of the cottagers, when the ass was not in use, to allow it after being tethered to wander and feed by the roadside and, when the word came along that the gypsies were on the move in the neighbourhood, the ass was not allowed to wander far, but

was secured by a long piece of rope near the cottager's cabin for the simple reason that, as the gypsies passed with a pack of asses wandering along at leisure, it frequently happened that the ass feeding by the roadside, attracted by so many of its kind, would join up and wander away with the goodly company, adding one more to the number at the disposal of the nomad. And leaving the cottager inconvenienced by the loss of his most useful animal.

Driving along the road and encountering the gypsies driving before them a large pack of asses, I made the attempt to count them. Counting over one hundred I became mixed with the numbers; there were probably thirty to forty more on the road that day. There were donkeys great and donkeys small, old and lame, young and frisky, strong and healthy, weak and puny, black donkeys, grey, brown and drab donkeys to suit every taste and requirement and, out of the vast selection, anyone could make a choice. The method of business was by barter, or cash, the price ranging from 2/6d to 25/-.

It was quite excusable of 'the little divileen of a Mick' when failing to find the ass feeding by the roadside as usual, in concluding that the gypsies had got it.

1917

A Squireen's House

For some months past, preparations had been going ahead for the erection of a direction finding station on Loop Head for the purpose of tracking the movements of enemy submarines around the coast. This was done by cross bearings from two or more stations detecting the direction from which the sound from the enemy submarines wireless signals came.

In due course, the station with its tall mast and all its necessary equipment was completed, the crew arriving from Devonport depot. In the meantime housing accommodation had to be found, and it so happened that about a quarter of a mile from the station there stood a fine twelve room, one storey vacant house. It was once the residence of a squireen having jurisdiction over the land in this neighbourhood under the auspices of the landlord.

The woodwork of most beautiful mahogany was, no doubt, made from flotsam cast up by the sea not far from this lonely spot, far away from the eagle eye of the receiver of wreck.

At the same time it was decided, on account of the unrest, to furnish a military guard for the protection of both the war signal station and the wireless station, so that housing accommodation had to be found for the military also.

This house was commandeered and no less a person that that of a rear admiral from the retired list - performing the duties of district captain - accompanied by an official from the Board of Works office, appeared on the scene in performance of a most important duty, requiring experience and mature judgments, that could, by no means, be left to a subordinate officer. That of arranging separate rooms in the house for occupation by the military as well as the naval men. After this had been decided on, then arose the question of cooking. Thinking that naval and military would not mix very well, I ventured to suggest that each should have a cooking range in their own quarters. This was opposed by the gallant one who gave orders that a large range should be provided in the naval quarters to be used by the

military also. I had my doubts if that would work satisfactorily. For a few weeks this arrangement was tried out until the cook who came with the naval men resented the stoking of fires and boiling of pots for the use of the military. This led to unpleasantness on both sides and ultimately the soldiers withdrew, keeping to their own quarters, and doing their own cooking without the convenience of a cooking range.

At the end of three months a bill for six tons of coal was forwarded to the district office. This raised the question of expense and the gallant rear admiral – who was a stickler for economy – referred the question back, ordering me to report the reason for such excessive expenditure of fuel. There was only one reason: the large range and correspondingly large fireplace which had been selected by himself. Notwithstanding this, I had to stand a rub for allowing the use of so much coal and ordered to reduce the expenditure in the future. Not always very pleasant to be reprimanded for a lack of practical knowledge on the part of a senior officer.

The military immediately set to work digging trenches right across the headland setting up barbed wire fencing, posting sentries and so cutting off the access to the war signal station and wireless station, which continued to the close of the war.

Countess Markievicz

Although the Republican uprising, during Easter 1916, had been scotched and some of the leaders executed, the movement was by no means dead. Not the least active of the original leaders now at large was one Countess Markieviez who was arrested at the time but, escaping the firing squad, was now on tour moving from place to place addressing public meetings in order to keep the movement alive. This female fiery dragon of the party during an itinerancy of the south west paid a visit to Kilkee.

It may be said that, in this town, her name and the extreme methods advocated by her did not altogether appeal to the leaders connected with the local movement. The parish priest, as one setting an example, was anything other than one of her supporters. Consequently, on her arrival, her reception was of a very flat nature. No band, no beating of drums, no flag waving, no singing of patriotic songs, no acclamation at the presence of one of the champions of liberty; a few very juvenile members of the community only being present to form the guard of honour.

Although this was somewhat disappointing for the countess, the public meeting as arranged was held the same evening in the public hall which was well-filled. Having heard and read so much of this most notorious person, out of sheer curiosity, I decided to attend and hear for myself her own account of the previous Easter event and her policy for the future.

The address included a full account of the preparations leading up to the date fixed for the attempt of seizing the capital and setting up a Republican government by armed force. This was followed by a volume of vitriolic abuse of everything English, in particular against the English government in their suppression of the Republicans and their treatment of the political offenders.

She gave a further account of the training of their men, in readiness for ‘the day’; the concealment of arms and ammunition; the disposition of the men for attack. Providing each

man with food and drink sufficient for two days and, how these men, to the great disgust of their leaders, promptly devoured the lot at the first meal. And as there were no arrangements for further supplies, after the first day becoming hungry, and being in no mood to continue the fight on an empty stomach, they laid down their arms and surrendered.

A graphic account was given of her leadership of the brigade for which she was responsible and how, wishing to join forces with another party, a tunnel was cut underground leading into the Royal College of Surgeons, which they succeeded in reaching. And as – in the darkness – they groped their way through the basement, how she laid her hand on a body reclining on a table and, on feeling the hair on the face, knew they were in the dissecting room of the college and this, most assuredly, must be the body of a man laid out for dissection. Reaching the upper rooms, they held a position of advantage for popping at any objectionable person such as a soldier or policeman.

This blood-thirsty woman in relating her experience gave an account – rolling out her utterances with apparently great pleasure bordering on fiendish delight – of her, on being accosted and questioned by a constable, whipping out her revolver and shooting him dead on the spot – a pause – "and…I…heard…his scull…crack on the pavement!" Absence of applause. Using the most bitter and biting language in order to arouse the most hateful instincts of her audience, she went on to enlarge on the villainy of the English, the enemies of their country, the very worst race that ever walked the earth and of the barbarous treatment of Irish prisoners in the dirty English prisons. Having done her best to arouse the spirit of hate in the audience – which sadly failed to respond – she called on them to renew the fight until victory was attained.

Some of my kind-hearted acquaintances, sitting near to me, I felt sure were sorry for me to have to listen to such venom and almost felt that they should apologise. It struck me as being very much overdone and altogether foreign to the real kindly Irish nature. Naturally Paddy desired the privilege of ruling his own country and who could blame him? But he – speaking generally – had no desire for an Englishman's blood, such as that advocated by the noted countess.

I did not think that the audience altogether approved of the wild utterances of this most irresponsible advocate of bloodlust. And some of those that I talked with after, like myself, concluded that when she heard the policeman's skull crack on the pavement, someone else heard the wail of the widow and orphan.

Prisoners of the RIC

It frequently happened that when documents of a confidential nature were to be sent out from the headquarters at Queenstown, instead of passing them through the post, an officer had to make the journey and receive the documents in person. On one of these journeys, as usual, I had to change at Charleville and wait for an hour and half for the connection.

It was now getting dusk and nearing the time for the Cork train to arrive when I noticed that people were congregating in great numbers in and around the railway station. While I was wondering what lay behind the gathering together of such a medley crowd, a contingent of Royal Irish Constabulary under arms – about twenty in number – arrived and took up a

position on the departure platform. Observing the tense and excitable feeling prevailing among the assembly, being in uniform and fully aware of the strong feeling among the Sinn Feiners against the King's men, I thought it best – in case the mob got out of hand – to get close to the constabulary. This I succeeded in doing by working my way through the crowd.

In a short time a further number of constabulary arrived, with two prisoners under arrest. They had appeared before the magistrates that day and the case being adjourned, the prisoners were remanded in custody and were on their way to Cork gaol. With the arrival of the prisoners on the platform, the crowd – who no doubt would have liked to rescue them – commenced shouting and jostling the police and generally getting out of hand. I must confess that I was not enjoying this little show in the very least.

These stalwart peelers did not appear to mind but held their ground like a granite ring with the prisoners in the centre. Their concern was to see that the prisoners did not get away and immediately the train drew up at the platform they were quietly bundled into a reserved compartment followed by the escort. I jumped into an empty carriage. The inspector of constabulary, seeing me, entered the same compartment and immediately lowered the blinds, that he might not be seen from the railway embankment. At the same time remarking we had better have the blinds down, it may prevent a shower of stones or some other more effective missile coming through the window. A cheery remark, thought I, as we pulled clear of the station with a feeling of relief to be again speeding on my journey.

The Sergeant helps me

The enemy submarines were now very busy in the North Atlantic. One of them, when cruising about one hundred and fifty miles to the westward, fell in with a ten thousand ton ship homeward bound with a general cargo. On being ordered by signal from the submarine to stop the ship, the captain disregarding the order, decided to try and get away by altering course and zigzagging. After carrying out these tactics and eluding the submarine for several hours, as night came on, he concluded that he had succeeded in getting away. But, alas, when the moon arose, shedding forth her brilliant light on friend and foe alike, the submarine once again sighted its prey. And this time, without giving the crew a chance to get away in their boats, fired a torpedo into her, causing such damage that she very soon listed over, disappearing into Davey Jones' locker. But not before the captain, officers and crew had got into the boats.

The captain, two officers and twelve men in one boat eventually landed at a small village six miles from Kilkee. On behalf of the Shipwrecked Mariners Society, their physical comforts received attention, providing them with temporary accommodation and sending them onto Liverpool for a fit-out of clothing in readiness for another ship.

The ship's lifeboat, in which the men landed, was left on the beach and, as there were no coastguards or other representatives of the Receiver of Wreck men to take charge of the boat, a woman owning a considerable stretch of land, whose house and grounds were quite close to the spot where the men landed, had set covetous eyes on this boat and, when visiting this place on the following day, it was found that this person had practically taken possession of the boat, claiming it as flotsam for the simple reason that it came in on the foreshore of which she was the owner.

As a representative of the Receiver of Wreck, I could see that if the boat was allowed to remain, there would, in all probability, be some difficulty in finding a sufficient number of men to get the boat out again against the wishes of this influential person. It was felt that the boat must be removed from her private enclosure but I scarcely knew how it could be done without incurring expense. Eventually I visited the police barracks for the advice of the sergeant. A very decent fellow he proved to be.

After listening to my representation of the case, he said: "And shure Captain, ye can be afther laving it to meself. We'll be getting the boat out for ye. Its spaking to the bhoys I'll be. And I'll be afther telling thim that Mrs Maloney is stealing the boat from the sailors and to get it back to the strand. Thin it will be sold, and the money will buy clothes for the poor fellows". Trust an Irishman to find a way out!

"Very well put sergeant," said I – with many thanks – "It's leaving it to yourself, I'll be".

True to his word, the next day the boat was removed back to the strand and eventually when sold, I saw to it that Mrs Maloney was not the purchaser.

A case of arms

Orders had been given by the proper authority that the rifles at Loop Head War Signal Station were to be exchanged for another pattern. After a few days information was received that a patrol trawler would land a case of arms giving the date and hour of her expected arrival and instructing me to make arrangements for the immediate conveyance of the case to the signal station for which it was destined. Falling back on my friend Patsy once again, I instructed him to have the car down by the landing place at a stated hour, that a boat was expected with a couple of packages. As the trawler drew near and the boat was seen to be making its way toward the landing slip, it being something unusual, a crowd very soon collected. Patsy was there with the car – an open one with a moveable hood.

As the boat drew alongside, in order to blind the bystanders as to the contents of the arms chest, a strongly built case, and with the rifles heavy to handle, I ordered the men to be careful in handling the case not to damage the delicate wireless machine. And before the onlookers realised what we were handling, Patsy, the driver, had found a resting place for the chest in the back of the car. Saying to him: "Loop Head", I jumped into the car and we were off. Once on the road, providing that Patsy could keep the old bus moving, I had no fear. Such were the precautions required in the handling of small arms during this troublesome time.

The following day, meeting the resident magistrate – a personality in any small town in Ireland – who was curious to know what the big box contained that was landed yesterday. Not being inclined to satisfy his curiosity I replied: "Only a mummy, for use in connection with the station on Loop Head". "A mummy", he said, passing on, no doubt wondering if it was a genuine Egyptian or a mummy made in Birmingham.

Missing ammunition

Several weeks had passed without hearing a word in reference to the ammunition for the new pattern rifles supplied to the war signal station when instructions were received to the effect

that, on account of the uncertainty of things in the County of Clare, it had been decided to provide the stations on Loop Head with a supply of provisions such as beef, biscuits, etc. to be stored as a reserve in case of their being cut off at any time.

At the same time I was ordered to proceed as far as Mallow, there to meet an officer arriving from Queenstown by a certain train who would hand over the provisions to my care. Thinking it rather unusual that a few cases of provisions should require an officer to be personally responsible, on arrival at Mallow and meeting Lieutenant Pincher with whom I was acquainted, I asked: "Why all this fuss and precaution over a few cases of provisions?" Whereon he informed me that there was something of more importance than the provisions; that there were two cases of rifle ammunition and the rear admiral, who was quite fidgety about its transport, had decided that it was a good opportunity to pass it on with the cases of provisions, an officer to be held responsible. The lieutenant, counting the packages as they were being transferred to my train, pointing to a mail bag, said: "The stuff is in that mail bag". Having satisfied myself that the number of packages was correct and leaving them in charge of the guard in the guard's van, I took my seat as usual.

Arriving at Limerick there was a further transfer to another train. It so happened that the usual sacks of mail were also in the guard's van and the post office van waiting on the platform to receive them. The mail bags having been handed out, my consignment of goods came next and, as I counted them, there was one short. Of course the guard said there were no more – that was all that were placed in the van. Running my eye over them, I detected that the mail bag containing the ammunition was missing. For the moment I had strange visions of a severe jacketing and a reprimand for failing in the performance of my duty.

Mentioning to the guard that it was a mail bag that was missing, "Begorra sorr", said he, "The postman must be afther taking it wid him in the mail van". Without delay I shot out of the station in pursuit of the van, overtaking it just as it reached the post office. As they commenced to unload, I made it known to an official that I was in quest of a package enclosed in a mail bag that had possibly been taken by the post office man in mistake. Could I check the sacks as they were unloaded? No doubt he thought this strange, that I should be in quest of a mail sack, but raised no objection and, as the sacks were handed out of the van, to my great relief I spotted the missing sack. Claiming the same and pointing out that it was not sealed as were the mails he, without raising any objection, allowed me to take it away.

This was the ammunition for the new rifles at Loop Head and, although somewhat undignified and contrary to all naval usage, I threw the sack over my shoulder, joyfully making my way back to the railway station and taking good care not to leave it out of my sight until it was safely deposited at the war signal station.

The purchase of a donkey

After the outbreak of war, and the war signal station at Loop Head had been fully manned for the duration, it was very soon discovered that the one small rainwater tank was not at all sufficient for the use of the men. It was therefore necessary to employ a man to bring a barrel of water daily from a distance of nearly two miles. This was costing four shillings per day. As the war dragged on into the third year and with a wireless station added, the excessive daily cost for water being brought to the notice of the rear admiral – a strict economist – he

proposed that a donkey, cart and barrel should be purchased in order that the men could fetch their own water, both for the wireless station and the war signal station. After reporting that there was suitable accommodation for housing the donkey in the buildings recently taken over and that there was no reason why the men should not fetch their own water, in due course I was ordered to make the purchase as suggested.

After making enquiry for a person with a donkey for sale and, making it known that I wished to become a purchaser, I had considered certain offers of old and weary looking animals with their horny shoeless hoofs pointing toward the nose. On a Sunday morning a country man, after attending mass, came along to my house offering an ass for sale. I was busy and could not give the time to bargaining and arguing over the price such as the peasant is always accustomed to do. This was, however, a possible looking animal and I decided that I had better try and strike a bargain.

To draw the water, the donkey would have a long uphill pull and we required a sound animal. We commenced business.
"What is the age of the donkey?"
"Five years sorr."
"How long have you had it?"
"Two years sorr."
"Where did you buy it?"
"From the gypsies sorr."
"How do you know its age, seeing you are after getting it from the gypsies?"
"By the truth sorr. Look at the ass's mouth yer honour. If he was more thin five years ould sorr, his teeth would not be as clane as that yer honour".
"Can he pull a large barrel of water up the hill to Loop Head?"
Assuming an air as much as to say 'don't insult the beast', he replied, "Ara wishe yer honour. That ass is a strong as a horse, it's two barrels he would be afther pulling up that hill aisy".
"Does he kick or bite?"
"No sorr."
"Why are you selling it?"
"It's two others we have sorr and herself said I should be afther giving this one away".

Accepting the country man's assurance of all the good qualities and virtues of the ass, the business proceeds.

"What price are you asking?"
"Two poonds tin sorr".
In his own vernacular I replied "It's thirty shillings I'll be after givin you".

With an attitude of mild contempt at my offer, and its ruined intiraly he would be, he declared 'the ass wuz worther more thin three poonds and its cheap he wuz giving it to yer honour.'
"The ass is worth twenty shillings and I am offering you a good price, thirty shillings".

Playing up an old trick, he took the animal by the head and led it away - possibly thinking that by assuming this attitude he would get his price. Without any remark I allowed him to depart. After a time back he came. "It's two poond tin I'll be afther giving it to yer honour fur", said he. Seeing that prices were very high I thought that I ought not to drive a hard

bargain and after a little further argument a compromise was reached. I was to be 'given' the ass for two pounds and to be given two shillings and sixpence luck money. Foolishly I handed him one pound seventeen and six which did not please at all, seeing he was deprived of the pleasure of handing back the luck money. I should have followed the usual custom of handing him the two pounds and allowing him to hand me back the money for luck, thus satisfying himself that he had received his price and at the same time giving me the pleasure of receiving the gift of two shillings and sixpence for luck.

Neddy, after being duly installed in his new quarters, soon became quite a favourite and pet of the bluejackets who, in their kindness with no intention of his being left at any time short of food or going hungry, were so lavish in filling the rack with sweet hay, even going to the extent of purchasing oats – very little hay and certainly oats had never figured in his menu before – that, the expense incurred in this way and the loss – after closing the stations – on the sale of the donkey and cart, it is very doubtful if the economy, or money saved by the purchase of a donkey was really worthwhile. But the economical rear admiral was well satisfied and that was all that mattered.

Martial law

In the early part of the year the Sinn Feiners were still very much alive and making their presence felt in various ways. About this time an announcement by the government appeared in the press calling on the agricultural community to put as much land as possible under cultivation in order to help the food question, now becoming of vital importance.

In the eastern part of the County of Clare there was a very active company of 'Shinners' who took this liberally, concluding that anyone was at liberty to work up any uncultivated land. With horses and ploughs they set to work, ploughing land on which they had no right of entry. This movement was of such an extensive character that the magistrates and police were not equal to dealing with the situation and had to fall back on the military who very soon made their presence felt by checking those lawless proceedings. This brought about so much unrest that the authorities considered it necessary to place the county under martial law and not to allow anyone to pass in or out of the county without a permit. Such was the state of affairs at this time, making it – to say the least – most inconvenient for everyone.

Very soon after this outbreak of lawlessness a word came along warning coast watching and other stations that a possible attempt might be made to land arms and that a sharp lookout should be kept. It was quite evident that the trawlers on patrol had also been warned as they were more than usually active.

At Liscannor Station the station officer had been sent back for coast watching duties and was there alone. In the uncertain light of fading day one of the trawlers on patrol stood into Liscannor Bay hovering about until lost to sight in the darkness. He, with visions of the landing of arms, got into communication with the military headquarters, reporting the sighting of a suspicious craft, in all probability the vessel for which they were on the lookout. The general in command, taking no risks of a consignment of arms getting through, gave orders for his men to stand to arms, march out, and take up their positions, spreading for miles across the country, cutting off all approach to the shore. The night watch passed and, nothing unusual having happened, with the coming of the dawn, the disgruntled troops

plodded their weary way back to camp, cursing the fool of a coast-watcher for giving them a night out.

The general, with certain of his staff who, immediately on the alarm being given, had made his way to Liscannor in order to obtain first-hand particulars from the coast-watcher reporting the suspicious craft, and spreading accordingly in a soldier-like fashion, was quite sporty about it, even to giving the coast-watcher credit for his sharp lookout and prompt action in passing on the information of a suspicious craft which in reality was a patrolling trawler whose dim outline in the fading light had given rise to this mild bit of excitement.

The Priest's displeasure

During my long sojourn in Ireland and, living among a people whose lives to a very great extent were adjusted to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church as administered by the priesthood in that country, by the following incident that came under my notice, I was most profoundly impressed with the influence and control of the parish priest over his flock.

In a certain town there was a fine strong young fellow living with his widowed mother who together carried on a very good business. Such a thing as a young man making his own choice of a wife was very rare. And, according to custom, a young man of his social standing – whose mother would in all probability arrange a match for her son – would marry a young woman whose parents would be in a position to give their daughter a substantial fortune of several hundreds of pounds.

A certain dignitary, with his wife and family taking up his residence in this town, brought with them a rather attractive young woman. With the arrival of a fresh and charming young person in a small town, although contrary to custom, this young fellow became infatuated. On the mother becoming acquainted with the fact that her son was paying attention to the fair one, thus jeopardising her privilege of arranging a match with a suitable young woman bringing a good fortune, her opposition and incense knew no bounds. Notwithstanding the opposition of the fond mother, her son's attention to the new arrival continued.

'Company keeping', as customary in England, is firmly discouraged by the church and almost unknown. Be it said to the honour of the boys and girls, their moral behaviour under the chaste influence of the clergy is irreproachable.

After a time, something of a very rare occurrence happened. The youth being responsible, in that the girl found herself in a certain condition. On the mother becoming aware of this and the question arising of playing the man, redeeming the girl's character and giving her expected child an honourable name by marriage, her incense and opposition was increased tenfold. This girl was penniless, whereas her son should be matched with a girl bringing a substantial fortune. It was impossible for her to give her consent and blessing on any such marriage. The youth was torn between his moral duty, the opposition of his mother, and the strongly expressed wish, or rather command, of his priest to do the right and marry the girl.

For some weeks he was undecided and hovering between the influence of his church and the adamant attitude of the mother who held the purse strings and refused for one moment to consider the sanctioning of such a marriage for her son. The priest was equally adamant and

determined that the girl should not be left in the lurch to bring disgrace on his church and his flock. He, disregarding the priest and, still refusing to lead the young woman to the altar, at last the time arrived when she must go home and await the arrival of the baby.

The priest, a very determined man with a strong personality, to be thus thwarted by one of his flock and, considering his duty in the matter, was not in the most charitable frame of mind. The day eventually arrived when the Holy Father performed a duty that, for him, must have been a most painful ordeal. Standing before the altar in the presence of a full congregation, in plain and unmistakable language he denounced the conduct of the youth, expressing the greatest displeasure of the church and his excommunication from the flock.

As a blight felleth on a green plant, causing it to wither, so the displeasure of the Holy Father fell on this sturdy growth. Being under the shadow of mother church and the frown of the priest, he withered away, becoming the shadow of his former self. The villagers declared that: 'he would be afther having no luck. How could he be having any luck shure and he afther doing such a mane thing wid the girl? Indade and Father ** wuz mad wid him interaly, and fain, didn't he spake him off the altar'. And so the village gossips wagged their tongues until the youth could stand it no longer and he decided to leave the country until the matter should die down and be forgotten.

After an elapse of about two years, during which time the mother had missed the help of her son and, knowing that with no church, no religion, no priest to hear a confession or give him absolution, his soul was in dire peril, and her own mind not at ease. When he returned pressure was again brought to bear by the priest to play the man, but the mother still thinking of a fortune for her son by marriage was still unbending. At last she could no longer bear to see her son an outcast from his church and found herself compelled to yield, in order that he might be restored to the safety of the fold. This could only happen on one condition, on which the Holy Father was unbending. Play the man, make confession, lead the girl to the altar and receive the absolution and blessing of the priest and restoration to the flock.

Having had a stern lesson and the mother now somewhat softened, the youth took the necessary course as proposed by his priest and, to all appearance, settled down to a happily married future.

A foolish curate

Those persons wearing the garb of the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church are usually the objects of much saluting and salaaming by the peasants but changed into any other dress they become plain Mr Citizen.

Quite near to one of my stations there had been recently built a Roman Catholic chapel in charge of which an energetic young priest had been appointed. He was a 'hail fellow, well met' jovial kind of young man and very much appreciated by the peasants and fishermen to have such a jolly priest in the new chapel all their own and close to their doors.

His bishop, having approved of his taking a short holiday, he arranged to cross over and spend it in England. After completing the first part of his journey, he crossed the country and arrived at Kingstown from which port all passengers between England and Ireland were now

embarked and disembarked, there to find a crowd consisting of naval and military men, wives of the naval and military and civilians in general, all pushing and jostling at the barrier, anxious to get on board the mail boat. The ship's officer checked the numbers as they passed on board in order that the specified compliment should not be exceeded.

All civilians were plied with certain questions including nationality. When the jovial young priest reached the barrier and was questioned as to his nationality, his wit and humour no doubt overcoming his discretion, he replied "German". "Stand on one side" said the officer curtly at the same time summoning the military police. "This gentleman has declared himself a German", said he. "Place him under detention".

Much to the chagrin of the priest, there was no possibility of explaining away the joke and reluctantly he was marched away to explain himself before a higher authority. Even then, his explanation was not readily accepted. His identity as a priest of the Holy Roman Church had to be verified. This entailed certain correspondence with his bishop, swallowing up a few days of his holiday. Eventually his credentials having been vouched for and the military authorities having satisfied themselves that he was not a dangerous enemy alien at large, he was liberated and allowed to proceed. No doubt a sad but wiser man having paid to learn that jesting in wartime with the wrong people is not always a wise or safe procedure.

An excited Priest

With the ever-growing demand for recruits and more recruits for our fighting forces and Ireland where, according to the late John Redmond, two hundred thousand volunteers had been raised, had hundreds of thousands still untouched by conscription. The government, still being reluctant to apply conscription to the youth of Ireland, decided on making a special effort in order to induce the enlistment of more volunteers, making a personal appeal by sending a circular letter to every man of military age in the country calling on them to come forward and so help to win the war.

The morning that these letters were delivered in West Clare, Mc came along to take me to Loop Head. He appeared to be unusually excited, informing me that his two sons had each received a letter to join the soldiers. He certainly did not quite understand the purpose of these circular letters. I was therefore unable to make much head or tail out of his story.

When we got as far as the village of Cross the postman was delivering the mails. As we pulled up to give the horse a breather, seeing a young man whom I knew well enough to speak to coming along with a circular letter in his hand, and being curious to know what it was all about, I asked him if he would allow me to read it. This he readily consented to do. I found there was no pressure but just an appeal to young men to come along and help to win the war.

At that instant the young priest, leader of the local Sinn Fein organisation (mentioned earlier), came toward me, where I was standing, with a circular letter in his hand. Thinking it strange that a priest should receive one of these letters I casually remarked: "Surely they have not sent you one of these letters Father?"

Quite the wrong thing for me to have said, knowing his feelings in respect to the English government of Ireland and seeing that by a mistake on the part of the government department sending out the circular letters, copies had been addressed to quite a number of the young clergy. He had received one of the letters which he held in his hand and was consequently very angry." It's ** impudence of the government to send these letters to the bhoys. Shure and what have we to do with the war?" He then slipped into a house close by. I was rather taken aback and feeling sorry that I had spoken. Mc standing by heard this and was quite upset to think that one of the clergy should have been so rude to me. (Be it said rudeness by priest or peasant was seldom or never met with). He was sure that Father Nolan, my neighbour, would not like to hear of that – smoothing Mc over – I did not enlarge on the incident, allowing Mc to express himself in his own fashion.

By a remark later from the priest, my neighbour, I think that Mc must have told him that the priest at Cross was 'after being rude to the Captain'. On this remark I failed to enlarge. Needless to say, under the influence of the young priest, there were no volunteers from that district. He was only following the example of his bishop who, when asked to use his influence in recruiting, declared that the war was not worth a row of pins to Ireland.

Such was the influence of this young priest. On one occasion in conversation with him, he told me that a neighbouring farmer – a Protestant with who I was on good terms – with an extensive holding employing a great number of men and highly respected by the peasants, could easily be squeezed out of his farm, if he became in any way objectionable, by withholding the necessary labour. Certainly not an enviable – and by no means uncommon – position. And pity the poor farmer just allowed to keep going by the good will of a priest holding, as it were, the countryside in the hollow of his hand.

Matchmaking

As mentioned earlier, matrimony is very rarely the outcome of young people being drawn together by love at first sight, or even by mutual attraction leading onto affection and mutual consent. Among the peasant class, marriages are usually arranged between the parents of eligible young men and young women; very often a proposed match failing to mature on the question of the fortune which the young woman's father would be prepared to give with his daughter.

Take the case of Mr A – a farmer with a daughter now of marriageable age to whom he must be prepared to give a fortune on marrying. At the fair he may meet – possibly by intent – Mr B, who has a son for whom he is desirous of finding a wife with a suitable fortune. They converse and eventually the conversation will lead to the question of making a match between Pat and Mary.

According to his social standing and banking account Mr B has a sum fixed in his own mind as the amount of the fortune that Mary must bring in order to arrange a match with his son Patrick. The business is conducted very much the same as bargaining with a dealer over the sale of a heifer. And so the preliminaries are discussed with a view to a match being made for the son and daughter. Presuming the preliminaries to have been promising, the next step is Mr B will bring along his son for an introduction to Mary whom he has possibly never met before.

While the parents are discussing the more important question of the fortune, the young people, shy and awkward, are allowed time to take each other's measure and decide in their own minds if there is any reasonable objection to a match. In any case, if there is no objection on the part of Pat, it is usually useless for Mary to object to any arrangements made by her parents. Presuming the amount of the fortune that is to be given with Mary is arranged to the satisfaction of both parties, the match is notified. It will sometimes happen, even then, that the youth will object. There may be something about the fair one that does not please, or some other cause, that he will not agree to proceed to the altar in which case his father must try elsewhere.

In the matter of the fortune that Mary may bring, it is not in every case that Pat is benefited, but rather that the fortune is handed over to Mr B who will make use of the money as a fortune for his own daughter.

I think that it is generally agreed that marriages arranged in this manner are, as a general rule, quite successful and that the system has its merits.

Mr Mc was the proud father of three daughters for whom a fortune must be provided, let the sum be little or much. One of the girls, young, vivacious and attractive, had caught the eye of young Shamus O'Sullivan, the son of Farmer O'Sullivan. Having two separate holdings and selling his produce at war time prices, he was rapidly adding to his banking account.

Although contrary to custom, and discouraged by the priesthood, young Shamus became so infatuated that it was noticed that a mild flirtation was going on between himself and Bridget; that they were walking out together or, in other words, company keeping. Mc, who viewed the prospects of his daughter as being rosy, raised no objection. It would save him the bother of making a match and possibly that of providing a fortune for her.

After this had been going on for a while, and had become common knowledge, Farmer O'Sullivan becoming aware of the admiration of his son for Mr Mc's daughter, providing the usual fortune was forthcoming, placed no obstruction in the way. After the elapse of a reasonable time he decided that he must now seek an interview with Mc in order – if possible – to arrange the match and the fortune. Farmer O'Sullivan living only a few miles in the country, himself and Mc were well-known to each other.

The day eventually arrived when Mr O'Sullivan set out for an interview with Mr Mc. After conversing for a time on the usual subjects of cattle, horses and the soaring prices, the question of making the match between Shamus and Bridget was mentioned. Mr O'Sullivan, sounding the praises of his son, and adding that he would be after giving one of the farms to himself as soon as he was married.

Mc, a wily old fox, listened to all the flattery from Mr O'Sullivan, knowing that the next item would be that of the fortune. Mr O'Sullivan, politely leading Mc up to this question, enquired of him: "What would ye be afther giving Mr Mc?" Mc on his guard replied: "That he must be afther spaking to herself" (his wife).

"Would ye be afther giving two hundred poonds?" enquired Mr O'Sullivan. Mc, not easily drawn, replied: "Where the divil would I be gittin the big money?" Shure, the Lord save us.

Ye's know I haven't two hundred poonds".
"Would ye be afther giving the colleen a hundred and fifty?" asked Mr O'Sullivan.
Mc, declaring that he did not possess such an amount, and Mr O'Sullivan finding him rather tight and difficult over the fortune, took his departure, feeling rather disappointed that the match could not be arranged between his son and the maiden fair of his choice. He would be after giving the son a farm and its his wife that must be having a good fortune! He could not give his consent on any other terms.

O'Sullivan junior, hearing from his father that in his interview with Mc, he had failed to arrange the match and the amount of the fortune was not to be so easily daunted or deprived of the girl of his choice by the trifling question of a fortune. Thinking the matter over, he decided on a method of his own in order to get over this little obstacle that now stood in his way. He devised a plan to find fifty pounds, hand it over to Mr Mc, then speak to his father and persuade him that fifty pounds would be a good fortune if Mr Mc would be after giving that same?

With the next cattle fair at Kilrush, his father would be after sending him to sell two fat bullocks. He would keep fifty pounds and place the balance in the bank.

On the day of the monthly fair, away he started with the fat bullocks, his father telling him that after selling the cattle to place the money in the bank as usual. The cattle realised a good price – sixty seven pounds ten shillings. Placing seventeen pounds ten shillings in the bank, he kept back fifty pounds for his own purpose. Returning that evening and informing his father of the good price received for the cattle Mr O'Sullivan was more than satisfied and well-pleased with the thought of the swelling of his banking account by this substantial sum.

The following day Shamus decided to pay a visit to Mr Mc to pay his respects and reveal his plan to satisfy his father in the matter of a fortune for Bridget. It was one of those days with the rain sheeting down as it is apt to do in West Clare. Arriving at the cottage and greeting Mc with the familiar salutation: "Good morrow sorr. It's a fine soft morning. Glory be to God'".
"Good morrow to yerself. It's welcome ye are", replied Mc. After entering the cottage and the exchange of a few casual remarks Mc enquired "And was it a great fair ye were having yesterday?"
"Faise, it was the divil's own fair and great money interaly" replied Shamus.
"And were ye afther selling any yerself?" asked Mc.
"It was meself that was sent to sell two foine fat bullocks".
"The Lord bless us" said Mc. "It's the big money with the war, Begorra. It's fifty poonds I was afther laving fur the grey mare that's beyond in the haggard" *(small field).*
"Is it the same big money ye were afther laving", asked Shamus?
"In troth it's the same I was afther giving to Paddy O'Flynn. The divil's own schemer that he is".
"It was yesterday the dalers wur talking, they wur. Ye must be afther havin' great money fur the bullocks" remarked Mc.
"Yes" said Shamus. "Mike Conner from Limerick took thim off me. Bedad and it's a decant man he is. And its sixty sivin poonds tin shillings I was afther having!"

Having prepared the way, the young lover is now about to speak of the fortune for Bridget.

"Himsilf" (his father) "is afther asking ye fur a fortune fur Bridget" said he "and phwat is yer father afther saying?" enquired Mc.
"He tould me that ye couldna give the fortune and that he couldna make the match wid ye".
"One hunderd a fifty poonds" exclaimed Mc! "Indade I hav'na the money".
"Ara wisha Mr Mc, I'll be tillin me father that fifty poonds is a good fortune sorr. When me father comes to ye, be telling him that fifty poonds is the fortune ye can be giving".
Putting his hand into his pocket he drew forth a bundle of notes. Handing them to Mc he said "Here is the fifty poonds fur ye".
"Glory be to God" exclaimed Mc, taken by surprise. "Phwats the meaning of this?"
"It's me own money I am afther getting at the fair. And ye can be giving it to me father whin he comes to ye. And I'll be afther felling him that fifty poonds is a good fortune".

Mc after hearing the story of raising the fifty pounds although unprepared for such an unusual proposal was not slow in closing with the offer. Knowing that this banking account would remain intact he accepted it as the good luck brought to him by the good fairies.

After a couple of days Mr O'Sullivan set out for a further interview with Mr Mc.
"Good morrow Mr Mc".
"Good morrow to yersilf sorr" replied Mc. "It's a foine soft morning. Glory to be to God".
"It is thank God" replied Mr O'Sullivan.
"It's meself, is afther spaking to herself about the two farms we are having this long toime", said he, "and herself is afther saying that the won pharm is enough fur meself".
"Indade Mr Mc. It's herself was saying that Bridget is a foine ghirl, God bless her. And, if we could make the match, we would be giving him the big pharm fur himself. Have ye been thinking of the fortune ye should be giving?"
"God save us" replied Mc. "It's no hundred and fifty poonds I have".
"Will ye be afther giving her a hundred Mr Mc?"
"It's robbing meself interaly ye are and laving me without a pinny in the bank".
"Faise Mr Mc, the Lord save us, its meself would not be robbing ye, at all, at all. Phwat would ye be afther giving?"
"Mesilf and herself have been spaking of the fortune. And herself is afther saying it's fifty poonds we can be giving".
"Arrah wisha Mr Mc" said Farmer O'Sullivan, "it's the hundred poonds ye should be laving wid Bridget".
"And it's ruined I'll be, wid niver a pinny fur mesilf" replied Mc.

Following the usual custom of splitting the difference Mr O'Sullivan suggests "Let it be seventy five poonds"
"Sorra a pinny hae I more thin fifty" said Mc.

After a little further argument on the part of Farmer O'Sullivan in pressing his claim for seventy five and hesitation on the part of Mc to raise on the figure now offered, Mr O'Sullivan is reluctantly heard to say "Thin, let it be the fifty". They shake hands, the match is made and the good news conveyed to Bridget and O'Sullivan junior.

The boy has manoeuvred the match to his own satisfaction. The holy father is informed, giving his approval and blessing on the match. An early date is fixed and the wedding arranged, the priest's fee being fixed in proportion to the amount of the fortune.

On the wedding day the McGinties and the O'Sullivans with their friends all meeting together made up a jovial wedding party with an extra glass of 'mountain dew' (potheen) to keep the 'bhoys lively and in good heart' and thus starting the young couple in their married life with greater good luck than many others, they having a farm to themselves.

Mc, when relating this story, appeared to be in great form and more than pleased with the good luck that Shamus had brought with him and the unique method of raising the fortune without disturbing his own banking account.

A pettifogging officer

In passing through the service and having had the opportunity of noting the varied type of officers met with, the following are my impressions of the last of my superiors to whom I was immediately responsible. In no sense could it be said that he was a harsh type of man, but on the other hand, through his petty humbug, was sometimes most irritating. Possibly he may have suffered from indigestion or some other malady which had the effect of producing petty fault finding, mean decisions and meaner actions.

In making his periodical visits a word would reach the Divisional Officer giving the day and date that he might be expected. Now, the Divisional Officer was expected – although there was no direct order – to keep this strictly to himself and on no account let it be known to the Station Officer or others. The object of this secrecy was in order that his visit should be in the nature of a surprise, with the possibility of finding someone off their guard, or something not exactly in accordance with his standard, thus affording the opportunity for administering an irritating snub to the Divisional Officer.

It had been known for him to ask a station officer or even a seaman: "Did you know that I was coming?" but not one was ever known to answer in the affirmative. In this manner, probing about for a reason to get one across at the Divisional Officer, the question having being put to me: "Did the Station Officer know that I was coming?" I had to reply that I did not think so. He, emphatically: "There are two answers: yes or no".

From this same mean spirit came the question to one of my station officers: "Does the Divisional Officer ever visit these cliffs?" – a stiff climb that would take two or three hours. That question had been anticipated and one day I said to the station officer: "I will visit the cliffs" and out we set to make the attempt. It must be confessed that I did not get to the top but it furnished the station officer with his reply: "Yes sir, and the last time he was winded before reaching the top". All this making me feel like my neighbour, the curate, who said of his bishop: "A very nice man but thank God when he is gone".

Those men who were engaged for hostilities only, when given a few days, were allowed a free railway pass to reach their homes and back. This officer was mean enough to give a verbal order that any of the permanent ratings were not to have a pass but were to pay their

own fare. It was my duty to sign the passes and this order was not in every case strictly complied with.

In connection with the coast watching: information had reached the commander-in-chief that suspicious lights had been observed in West Clare, presumably coming from 'Atlantic House' near Spanish Point. It so happened there was also an 'Atlantic House' at Kilkee overlooking the bay. Although these suspicious lights were supposed to be showing in my division, yet quite unknown to me, a patrol vessel was sent to look out for these suspicious lights and to report accordingly. When the officer in command of this craft arrived off West Clare, in consulting the chart, noted more than one Atlantic House, so he fixed on the one at Kilkee instead of the suspected house near Spanish Point. Quite near to Atlantic House, Kilkee – which had no windows facing seaward – there stood a house with a large window facing seaward. On the principle of one seeing that for which one is looking, the commander of the patrol vessel saw the suspicious lights from Atlantic House, Kilkee and reported accordingly.

The gallant officer, under whom I had the honour of serving, who was responsible for the coast watching and had been called on for a report, instead of following the usual custom of calling on the Divisional Officer for an enquiry and a report, without giving me any chance whatever came himself, taking me unawares and demanding an explanation. Although I was certain there were no unusual lights showing, I was at a loss to suggest as to what lights had been seen by the patrol vessel and, not being ready with a suggestion, in a most unreasonable manner he said suspicious lights had been sighted and that I should know that I was neglectful in my duty and had failed in keeping a vigilant coast watch. At this time we had two coast watchers only, a coastguard and a man retired from the coastguard Service; insufficient for the purpose of keeping a constant night and day watch.

This imaginary neglect of duty on my part did not appear to be sufficient, something more must be found. After the Sergeant of the Royal Irish Constabulary had been sent for and questioned and who, like myself, could furnish no information, this pettifogging officer said that he would visit the coast guard station after lunch.

There was one coastguard living at the station who, having kept the morning watch, was off duty that afternoon. The second man was out on the western cliffs. Meeting the gallant one and his coast watching commander – a fine type of officer mentioned earlier – we set out for the coastguard station on the opposite side of the bay. On reaching the path leading to the station - which stood on rising ground – without comment he passed on, making a detour, wheeling around to the back of the station, climbing over the boundary wall, followed by the Commander and myself. Clearly this was done for the purpose of a surprise on the coast watcher.

This coastguard not being one of the regular crew was living in the watch room. On entering the watch room the man was found in his hammock resting.
"Why are you in your hammock?"
"My watch off sir".
"You have no business in your hammock".
Commander ventures a word of explanation.

To me: "Why is this man in his hammock?"
"The man kept the morning watch sir".
"Where is the second coast watcher?"
"Out on the Western Cliffs, sir".

This could not be said to be quite out of order; further questions to the man on the orders given by me. I had taken the precaution to give the orders in writing with the commander's signature in approval closing any loophole in that direction. To finish this little visit he decided, contrary to all naval usage, that I was in the wrong and the statement of the man perfectly correct.

I can safely say, from a point of manners on the part of an officer, I had never met with anything approaching this during my long service career. The general run of officers, if not in every case 'gentle' men, is usually in the broad sense men without meanness. In due course I received a reprimand in writing, my words being said to be disproved on the word of a seaman. Two more coast watchers were ordered to be taken on and a constant watch established.

I eventually discovered that the light sighted by the patrol vessel was from the house with the large window facing seaward. They had a lamp with a red shade and people in the room moving between the light and the window gave it the appearance of being intermittent.

In my garden at the back of my house I kept a few bee hives; the bees in which on being disturbed were not always partial to strangers. The gallant one, sauntering through the garden, remarked that he would like to see the bees. Anticipating the consequence I replied: "come this way sir; you can see them at work". Standing by the hive, I lifted off the cover and gently drew back the quilt. There were the bees at work but, resenting this disturbance, a certain number took to their wings. A couple – he having no cap on – promptly settled on his bald patch, at the same moment making use of their bayonets. Of course it would be undignified of a naval officer to make any comment on such a trifling matter but some weeks after he informed me that on his last visit the bees caused a little tickling sensation on his head. Hearing this I could not help but smile inwardly.

After the close of the war and the day drew near for retirement, it became necessary to look out for a house in which to settle down. Hearing of a house for sale that I thought I might purchase, I made the request for seven days leave, giving my reasons. This unreasonable officer replied that, as I would be placed on the retired list very soon, giving me ample time to find a house, my application was not approved. I concluded that of all the meanness this capped the lot.

A dispute

As mentioned earlier, the Coastguard was frequently called on to represent various public departments other than that of the Admiralty and Customs. Now and again disputes were apt to arise in connection with the foreshore where the Board of Trade would be referred to as to the rights or wrongs of the contending parties. The Divisional Officer, representing the Board of Trade, would then be called on to visit the spot, make an enquiry as to the cause of such dispute and to report accordingly.

On the occasion of a farmer removing rocks from the foreshore, thus reducing the natural barrier of his neighbour's land, a dispute arose on which I was called on for a report. Proceeding to the scene of the dispute with the object of interviewing the contending parties, it was found that heated feelings prevailed on both sides, requiring a little diplomacy on my part if I was to arrive at anything like a fair judgment to lay before the Board of Trade officials, who would then give a ruling obviating the necessity of one of the contending parties 'having the law' on the other, as they are so apt to do, over quite trivial disputes.

After interviewing the one and then the other, the two of them were invited to accompany me to the spot from whence the rocks were removed. After asking a few questions, and taking a few notes, the warm Celtic blood of the contestants very soon reached boiling point. By this time, another neighbour appeared on the scene and endeavoured to bring them to reason and give the officer a fair hearing. His words did not appear to make any impression and there was every likelihood of a free fight. This placed me in a rather awkward predicament. Not wishing to see the fellows come to blows I stepped between them, saying in a firm tone 'stop this'. This sudden and unexpected move on my part – although I had no right to intervene – had the desired and instant effect. Probably it was the King's uniform that did it. Now with a few reasonable remarks on the folly of making enemies of each other they soon cooled down giving me such information as I required. The Board of Trade cautioned the aggressor against removing any more rocks from the foreshore which came under its jurisdiction thus disposing of this one case. (This little incident is related just to show the varied duties which one was called on to perform).

A trawler patrol

No matter under what conditions a man may be called on to serve, or however disagreeable his job may be, he can always think of the other person with whom he could not be induced to exchange on any consideration. Such were the men manning the trawler patrol of the western shores of Kerry and the turbulent waters at the mouth of the Shannon, facing its discomforts week in and week out all though the Great War.

Our men at the War Signal Station at Loop Head, two hundred and eighty feet above the sea level, after collecting a few magazines and papers would sometimes signal for the patrol vessel to send a boat to the landing place – approachable only in a smooth sea – to get the papers. The men in the boat were sometimes apt to remark on the discomfort of our men: 'yours is a lonely monotonous job stuck in that hut all the time, miles from the nearest town, we don't know how you can stick it'; 'you have a rotten job up on that headland, half the time covered in cloud and drizzly rain. We feel sorry for you chaps anyway. Our job is bad enough but yours is a thundering sight worse'. And that from men rolling and pitching about in the Atlantic swell with seldom an hour on an even keel. Sorry for the men with the solid rock under their feet and miles of country over which they could stretch their legs. Truly said, after all, man is a creature of circumstances.

Killing a Peeler

In every town, and in many villages, there was found a police barracks with a sergeant and four to six men of the Royal Irish Constabulary who were not always regarded with favour by the general community, in particular the lawless and those favouring banned societies and

such like. They were always looked on with suspicion and regarded more or less as spies acting in the interest of the detested English government and anyone thwarting the Constabulary in any way was regarded as a person to be admired and supported.

This is borne out by the following incident. In a small village through which I frequently passed there was a family brawl in one of the cottages. A young man, a son of the house, assuming such a threatening attitude, that a messenger was sent to the barracks asking that a constable might be sent to the house. Before the arrival of the constable, the young man had left the house. When he did arrive on the scene he entered the house to make enquiry and obtain the particulars. In the meantime, this young fellow obtained a fork, such as that used in agricultural work, and lying in wait outside of the house, as soon as the constable appeared, he thrust the fork into him causing such injuries that he very soon died. Consequently he was arrested and charged with the crime of murder. The first jury disagreed and the second were to all appearance more or less difficult and in sympathy with the accused. He therefore got away with a term of penal servitude.

After the war had been on for a couple of years, and every man wanted, like many others doing time, he was liberated on condition that he served in the armed forces. I happened to be in the village on the day of his first return home on short leave and saw him step out of the train. The whole village, regarding him as somewhat of a hero, turned out in full numbers to give him a real welcome such as only the Irish could give and such as might have been extended to anyone bringing honour and credit to their native town, thus showing their approval of this action in dealing with one of the detested peelers.

Victims of a submarine

Our shipping, now crossing the Atlantic under convoy, was attended with general success but, now and then, a ship was apt to be unsuccessful in reaching her destination. One such ship proceeding under convoy and bound for Limerick, when about forty miles to the westwards of Cape Clare, was detached and ordered to proceed on her voyage alone. Having reached the vicinity of the river Shannon, the day far spent and daylight fading, she unfortunately was sighted by an enemy submarine who, without warning, fired a torpedo scoring a hit and causing such damage that the ship very soon commenced to settle down; the chief mate, the chief engineer and several of the crew getting away in one of the boats landed the following day on the coast of Kerry.

The captain, second mate, boatswain and carpenter with five others got away on a raft drifting helplessly with the tide through the night and the next day. In the afternoon they were close enough to Kerry Head to see a man moving about but failed to attract his attention. The second night on the raft the weather became boisterous and one man, a Spaniard, finished by leaping into the sea. The younger men – those under thirty – were the first to succumb to the hunger, cold and exposure, four of them dying during the night. The boatswain and carpenter, men over fifty years of age, a seaman about forty-five and the captain, age twenty-seven – the latter not able to stand when the raft was sighted in the mouth of the Shannon by one of the patrol vessels after forty hours exposure and constantly washed by the sea, were still alive but too feeble to throw the bodies of their dead shipmates into the sea. They were put to bed and cared for on board of the patrol vessel and eventually landed at Kilrush. The captain, needing

careful nursing for a few days, was taken to the local hospital to be cared for by the nursing nuns. I took him up on the side-car, carried him up the stairs on my back and placed him on the bed, the nuns expressing their thanks for my help.

Now came the arrangements for the funerals of the men who had died from the exposure. The undertaker, no doubt taking advantage of wartime prices, although I had done my best to keep expenditure low, when the account was tendered, the economical cheese-paring rear admiral considered the cost excessive and I had to go and plead with the undertaker to reduce his charges – a duty not very much appreciated by myself.

While the bodies were resting in the coastguard watch-house, the inspector of police placed a constable on guard and, when I complained that my waterproof coat had been stolen from under the constable's eyes, he had the effrontery to tell me that was no part of the constable's duty, which struck me as a bit of Irishism.

The West Clare railway

During the Chief Secretary-ship of Mr Balfour, a scheme for opening up the backward and congested districts in the west of Ireland by the construction of light railways was conceived and carried into effect, thereby bringing such districts into touch with the county and market towns enabling the smallholder to market his produce at much better advantage than hitherto. These railways were of a miniature pattern with first and third class accommodation, the first class fare corresponding to the usual second class. The first were provided with cushions and the third plain wood benches. In some instances, in order to avoid expensive cuttings, the rails ran along on the side of the common highway, then branching off traversing the foot of a mountain – opening up most picturesque scenery – and thus avoiding bridging the deep valley.

The system was worked in a very leisurely fashion and with the frequent stopping places, the journeys were covered at an average speed of twelve to fifteen miles an hour. West Clare was opened up in this way with a line running from the county town of Ennis to the port of Kilrush and the holiday resort of Kilkee. The total distance of forty miles was covered – all things being favourable – in three hours. With the constant wear and tear on the rolling stock and not the best attention given to repairs, care and maintenance, the engine was apt to squeak and grind its way along, not infrequently coming to a standstill on the journey. The term applied, that of 'light railways', was certainly correct as there was not much weight in the carriages and on the West Clare, where the train was much exposed, in order to prevent the carriages blowing off the rails – which actually happened on one occasion – it was customary to place a number of fifty-six pound weights on board, thus giving stability and steadiness during strong westerly gales.

The person appointed as manager of this line was a man without any previous experience in railway work and his unsuitability for the job was summed up in very plan and forceful language by a priest sharing a compartment with me one evening when the train came to a standstill, causing a delay of several hours leading us far into the night. It was a day service only.

In the comparatively short distance from Kilkee to Ennis there were quite a number of level crossings and gate-keepers. These gate-keepers demanding a rise of pay which was refused decided on a strike refusing to open and close the gates. The manager, not to be flouted in this manner, and in order to keep the train service running, caused all the gates to be removed with the consequence that wayside donkeys and cattle wandered on the line. The timetable was disregarded and the train crawled forth and back at the best speed obtainable under the circumstances, occasionally stopping while the guard drove the cattle off the line.

The train at the best of times was never very punctual and once I heard a woman at Ennis ask the guard: 'What time the train would start?' when he politely replied: 'Shure and this train will start when it is ready mam'. Another time there was undue delay at a station when a commercial who wanted to go on remonstrated with an official. He got his reply: 'How devilish fast ye want to be afther travelling'.

The late noted humourist, Percy French, the writer of a humorous song on the West Clare Railway has a stanza somewhat thus:
'Are you right there Michael, are you right?
Do you think that we'll be there before the night?
It all depends on whether the old engine holds together
Shure we might then Michael, shure we might'.

The missionary visit

It is no uncommon thing among Christian communities, when a little falling off in numbers may occur, for the cleric leading such a community to hold a rally stimulated by the presence of a missioner. The parish priest, in all probability, having come to the conclusion that some of his flock were becoming a little slack and indifferent in the matter of attention to their religious duties, decided on holding a mission at his chapel under the guidance of two Franciscan friars from one of the monasteries.

The missioners, as customary, brought with them a quantity of religious emblems that had been blessed by a dignitary of the church. These emblems were laid out on a stall for sale and, in some instances, were said to bestow on the possessor of such, immunity from certain dangers such, for instance, as when a man got into difficulties when bathing and when rescued by another man taking risks, a bystander remarking that it was the blessed emblem that the man had hung around his neck that saved him.

The object of the mission was quite commendable – an endeavour to awaken the people to a more religious and sober life and, it must be admitted that in many an instance after such a mission, much good influence was seen to have been wrought, changing the lives of men and women to a permanently higher religious standard. For instance: under the persuasive influence of the friars, many of those who had become too fond of the glass gave it up, signing the pledge, some for six months, some for a year and others without time limit. Certainly, after the mission, there was a much better attendance at the Sunday mass.

After this particular mission there was a most remarkable change brought about in one man in particular - a tailor by trade, who had sunk rather low through drink, neglecting his home, his wife and his children. One day, his boy came to my door and, seeing his clothing so ragged, I

was moved to compassion, brought him inside and passed a tape measure over him, telling him to come back again in a day or two. Taking a cast-off suit, I cut it down, my wife re-stitched it, thus re-clothing the youth and affording him protection from the elements for a time. As soon as he was of age he became a volunteer soldier, developing into a fine young man, and in France played the part of a runner, often under a shower of bullets and shrapnel.

The father, under the influence of the missioners, decided to turn over a new leaf, signed the pledge and from that time forth became a sober, industrious and religious man, attending to his religious duties with great regularity. If only this one man was influenced for good, the mission was well worthwhile.

The method adopted by the missioners to influence the people was this: while one of them was conducting a service in the chapel, the other would go into the street and persuade the absentees to attend. After this manner, the chapel was filled to capacity every evening.

Feeling somewhat interested in the mission, I decided to attend one of the lectures and hear the discourse as presented by the friar speaking on that particular evening. He was a tall well-developed man, a powerful and fluent speaker with an irresistible personality and influence of his own. His address came under three headings: the sin of non-attendance at mass; the evils of strong drink and thirdly company keeping.

He enlarged at great length on the enormity of the sin of absenting themselves from the mass on Sundays. And that this almost unpardonable neglect of their religious duties would very soon sink them to a most deplorable state of degradation fit only to become outcasts from the church. His sentences were couched in strong and forceful language piercing to the bone and marrow, conveying the most severe rebuke, condemnation and displeasure of the church at these shortcomings and lack of loyalty to their priest.

Secondly, he went on to speak on the evils following over-indulgence in strong drink. It may be mentioned that in Ireland the Sunday closing act was in force – four cities excepted – consequently the surreptitious sale of liquor on a Sunday was by no means unusual. On this question he addressed his listeners; in particular those keepers of licenced premises who had, no doubt, been guilty of this illicit traffic. Leading on to publicans in general, he worked himself up to a pitch of fiery eloquence continuing the onslaught on publicans, likening them to anything and everything except that of decent and respectable citizens. The choice of his numerous comparisons was amazing and his utterances partook of a vitriolic character. It is difficult to conceive of any person denouncing the actions of one section of the community in such stern language as that used by the holy father. It is further very questionable if it could have been done – without comment – in any other place than that of a Roman Catholic chapel in Ireland.

His third point was company keeping; a custom firmly discouraged by the priesthood. Rather were they in favour of bringing the young people together, arranging a match, and marrying them while young, with the prospect of a large family. It was evident that company keeping had become more apparent than was pleasing to the priest and this afforded an opportunity of having it denounced from the pulpit.

After enlarging on this evil with the dangers and possible consequences that might arise from such a practice he ridiculed the idea of young people meeting in the byways and indulging in familiarities permissible only after marriage. It was a departure from the customs and traditions of the Irish youth which had been handed down to them through many generations. He demanded that the nefarious practice should be discontinued from this time forward, finally remarking that in England every boy had his girl and while you copy the evil example of your enemies you avoid the copying of their virtues.

During the time in which the evening mission service was taking place at the chapel, the friar, who was out rounding up those who were neglectful and indifferent to these matters, met with a man, Paddy by name, a small wiry built man with a pleasant and commendable manner and a good worker; but, like many others, over-fond of a glass of Guinness. No matter to what extent he had imbibed, no-one would ever be so unkind as to say that Paddy was drunk. Only in a kindly manner, one might be heard to say 'arrah wisha, the poor fellow. He has a dhrop taken'.

Many years before the commencement of the Great War, he had been committed to prison for a few days for assaulting the members of a German band. On the declaration of war he decided that now was his chance to have his own back and, without hesitation, enlisted, making one of Kitchener's first hundred thousand. After completing his training and now an efficient soldier he was sent to France where he took part in severe fighting in the front-line trenches, eventually being severely injured by the caving in of a trench, killing many of his fellows.

At the time of this mission he was at home on sick leave. The friar, out looking up the neglectful ones, meeting with Paddy, questioned him as to his absence from the chapel and his reason for not attending the mission, first trying persuasively to induce him to put in an appearance. But Paddy was obstinate; nothing would induce him to comply with the wishes of the missioner or to respond to his persuasions or threats.

It is a well-known fact that there is a good deal of superstition among the Irish (we have it more or less everywhere) and sometimes an acceptance of the impossible. I have heard a sceptic say of a co-religionist 'arrah that fellow, he'd believe that the priest could turn him into a goat'. The friar, failing to move Paddy, half in jest and half in earnest launched his final thrust: "If you refuse to attend the mission we will turn you into a goat". Paddy, equal to the occasion, replied: "Begorra Father, ye'r riverince will soon be glad to turn me back agin for I'll go up and eat all Father O'Connor's cabbages".

Notwithstanding the attitude of Paddy toward the mission, after the close of the war and he had returned once again to his civilian occupation, it was evident that he was now of a more religious turn of mind and might be seen of a Sunday, brushed up with his prayer book in his hand, wending his way to the chapel to join in the worship of the Sunday mass.

A last word from Mc

On my return journey, after a night visit to Kilrush station, Mc remarked: "That bog is a queer sphot interaly". Knowing Mc's method of introducing a story, I questioned "Why is that so Mc?" He then proceeded: "Whin me mother was alive sorr (the Lord rest her soul) and

meself jist afther marrying me wife, a gintleman, it's down from Dublin he was sorr, and it's out on the Diamond Rocks he'd be with a table and he sitting here with his little brushes and it's pictures of George's Head and the Dugenna Rocks he'd be afther making, and the bhoys all there and thimsilves afther watching him. Indade and it's a foine gintleman he was sorr, a great gintleman interaly, God bless him.

"It's afther wanting the car he was sorr and meself to dhrive him to Kilrush. It's the grey mare he would be having, wid the side-car and whin we got to Mayashe, he tould meself to be afther making a stop at Murphy's, jist to give the mare a rest sorr, and be afther coming inside yerself, sez he. Bedad sorr. He was afther ordering a sup of whiskey for himself and Mc, sez he, will ye be afther taking a sup? Plaze ye'r honour, sez I.' This is a foine dhrop of whiskey' sez the gintleman. Where would ye be afther getting that same Murphy? It is, yer honour, sez Murphy, the same as one Father himsilf was afther keeping (the Lord rest his soul), it's a dhrop for a gintleman loike yer honour, we have. 'Do ye be afther having any poteen *(illicit whiskey)* here?' sez he. Murphy, the schemer – giving me the wink – indade, sez he, the divil a dhrop have I set me two eyes on since the peelers were afther coming on the bhoys in the cabin out in the bog beyond, and it's the fear they have in thim iver since. It's the divil he was, the same Murphy, and only afther giving the right word would he be giving ye a dhrop of poteen. (How did the goat lose his horns Murphy?)

"And now to be afther driving on, sez the gintleman. It's to Madigan's in the square I must be leading him. A dacent gintleman he was sorr, jist the same as yer honour. 'Mc', sez he, 'be afther coming in and leave the mare to eat her mait.' And who was there sorr before me own two eyes but Paddy Rafferty and Mike O'Brien? Its back from Ameriky they were and thimsilves having a sup wid the bhoys. 'Are ye Rusty McGusty?' sez they. 'I am' sez I, 'God bless us'. Its spaking all about Ameriky they were afther and phwat a foine country it is sorr. Sez Mike O'Brien, 'Mc' sez he, 'it's bin years since I was afther seeing yer. It's a sup ye must be taking. It was a dhrop of whiskey sorr, and good luck to the ould country, sez Mike, and good luck to yourself, sez I. It was a great toime interaly we were afther having wid the bhoys, coming in for a sup.

"It was dark soon and me wife would be afther having one half ready for me. I'll be afther laving ye now bhoys, sez I. Dark it is, sez Rafferty, and the little people *(fairies)* – God bless us – may be peeping out at ye at the Magasta bog. 'Arrah wisha don't be afther spaking about thim Rafferty,' sez I. Meself afther getting into the safe on the car sorr. Paddy Rafferty, sez he: 'It's all right ye are now Mc and God speed ye' and 'God bless yourself,' sez I. Indade sorr, it's through the town we were afther and out on the Mayasha Road. The Lord save us, afther that it's lost I was. It must have been the same fairies that took the mare into the bog sorr and the baste couldna find the road again. When looking out agin I was, sorr, it was daylight. The car and meself sitting on the sale was in the bog. Shure the night was dark interaly and it's the little people (God bless us) that were afther taking me into the bog.

"Bedad sorr, herself *(his wife)* and me mother (the Lord rest her soul) out in the night looking afther me, they were, and whin I was afther coming back to the cabin, 'phwats wrang wid ye?' sez they. 'Wrang wid me?' sez I. And thin I toild thim. Upon my soul, it's in the bog I was, and that the fairies (God bless us) was afther taking me there. Indede, sez they. Shure it's the little people, God help, us that took ye into the bog and it's the way out ye couldna

find agin. Ye must be afther going to the praysh. I was afther telling his riverence and Mc, sez he, ye should niver go out of a morning without a sup of holy water and a little prayer to protect ye. And now sorr, I am niver afther going out without a sup of holy water and meself saying a little prayer".

From Mc's concluding remark there is certainly a lesson worthy of emulation, although one is not fully satisfied that the little people were wholly responsible for his night in the bog.

Peace

As the war continued month by month and year by year, with the wartime round of visits keeping the coast watchers on the alert, periodical visits from the officer responsible for the coast watching in Southern Ireland and the restlessness of the Republican element by which one was surrounded, all had a tendency to keep one wide awake to the various happenings from day to day.

As the food in England became scarce, with a lack of potatoes, meat, butter and other necessary articles of diet, it was not altogether a disadvantage to be living in Ireland where beef, potatoes, milk, eggs and poultry were on sale as usual, although, when nearing the end of the war, dealers were scouring the countryside buying up all the poultry and butter and paying five shillings per dozen for eggs, sugar was scarce and tea not too plentiful, but taking it on the whole, there was very little to complain about where the necessaries of life were concerned.

All those with anything to sell were obtaining wartime prices, growing rich, and increasing their banking account day by day. With the great number of men who had volunteered for service in the navy and army, with the family allowance, separation allowance and half pay coming into the country, money was freely circulated as never experienced before. Speaking to a priest on this subject, he said there are many among the agricultural community who had amassed such riches (comparative) that the families would never be poor again.

There was evidence all though the war - although there was no love for John Bull – of a desire that the allies would be victorious in the end. Even the irreconcilables had no desire to see English rule in Ireland changed for that of German, knowing full well that such might possibly be the case if Germany succeeded in winning the war. There were exceptions, and I heard one man say 'shure and phwat will be the difference? It will only be a change of masters for us.'

When the news came that the enemy had asked for an armistice, there was a feeling of general satisfaction and pleasure that the allies were on top, that the Germans were not the victors and therefore no possibility of German rule being imposed on Ireland, which rule had been visualized had Germany won the war.

Within a very few weeks the coastguards were returning to their stations one by one, the coast watchers were disbanded, the Royal Naval reserve men returning to their homes, the wartime wireless and signal stations closed and, finally, one became acquainted with the date of being placed on the retired list. Seeing that the troubles in Ireland were by no means

finished, the day for retirement one could contemplate with pleasure and satisfaction to know that there would then be no further question of a brush with the Irish Republican Army.

Envoi

Looking back over my sojourn in Ireland, one has many pleasant recollections of a kind-hearted people, always hospitable to strangers and ready to render a service without counting the reward and usually satisfied with any little remuneration.

It has been said that the Irish have a greater influence in absorbing any stranger dwelling in their midst than any other people in the world and, during the latter part of my time there, I felt that influence at work and that I too was being gradually absorbed, taking on the outlook of the people with whom one came into contact day by day and, when returning to England, one felt that the Irish character was rather better understood than that of one's own nationality.

On the first of June 1919 I was ordered to report myself at the office in Queenstown for a final settlement, being placed on the retired list from that date with the rank of lieutenant. Failing to meet the gallant one in his office, he being desirous of a parting word with his officer, made his way to the railway station to bid me a final farewell. Remarking, in jest, I hoped in the next war I would have the pleasure of serving under him again, he forced a smile, no doubt like myself never for a moment thinking that we should see another European conflict. My retirement was a most welcome respite from naval discipline after a service of forty years and seven months and thus I draw to a close my feeble efforts to leave on record the experience of a cutters man.