

# THE CAPTURE OF CLIFDEN

GRAPHIC NARRATIVE OF JOURNEY BY SEA AND LAND.

## THE IMPROVISED "FLEET."

### HOW THE NATIONAL TROOPS WERE RECEIVED.

#### LANDING IN OPEN BOATS.

#### WIRELESS COMMUNICATION TO BE RESTORED.

#### INCIDENTS AT ARAN AND CLIFDEN.

#### Irregulars Escape to the Twelve Pins.

Clifden is free from the Irregulars. The Marconi station, a few miles from the town, is again working. Strong National guards have been placed in the barracks and at the station. Mr. Matthias, the chief engineer, declared that the wireless might be working again yesterday (Thursday), and communication through Ireland with the outside world restored.

The expedition which freed Clifden was under complete control of Col.-Comdt. Brennan, Galway, and after many adventures owing to troubles with motor engines, it landed in two columns on Clifden at dawn on Tuesday; and after a running fight of thirty-five minutes, during which rifles and machine-guns were used, the Irregulars fled to the twelve pins, leaving four of their men as prisoners in the hands of the National troops, and carrying with them John Gavin, who is reported to have been seriously wounded and to have since died.

The Irregulars fled so hurriedly from the barracks at Clifden that they left behind them all their stores, and an ammunition dump, and did not wait to explode the mines which had been laid there. The bridges approaching the town were also mined, but none of the mines were exploded, the outposts apparently being taken by complete surprise, notwithstanding the fact that it had been known for some days that an attack on "some part of Connemara" was projected, and that the Irregulars at Clifden had actually gone down to the quay on the Corrib on Saturday night to repel a supposed advance of National troops from that quarter.

The people of Clifden were first apprised of the relief of the town when the shooting began shortly after six o'clock on Tuesday morning. For twenty minutes there were fierce and sustained outbreaks of rifle and machine-gun fire, and then it trailed off into sniping from the hills. Before seven o'clock the main body of the National troops had arrived in the centre of the streets; the barracks was in their hands, and the townsfolk started out to make them breakfast and bid them welcome.

A little later at Mass, which the troops attended, the Right Rev. Monsignor McAlpine publicly bade them good-bye and said that the part of a long-suffering people. The scene that day, he said, recalled to his mind, but in a very different and a much happier connection, another holiday, St. Patrick's Day, when the Black-and-Tans came to murder and burn and loot. On this occasion, however, they were not in terror of the Black-and-Tans, but their hearts were glad, for the National Army—the army of the Irish people—had come to liberate the town from a reign of plunder and arson. He thanked the Irish troops on behalf of the people for what they had done, and on their behalf and on his own he bade them hearty welcome to the spirit of Connemara.

The Monsignor expressed the hope that all houses would close for the day out of respect to the memory of the Irish President, who had brought the country to freedom, and he asked for their prayers for peace.

Command-General Brennan afterwards proceeded to the Marconi station, where Mr. Matthias, the chief engineer, and the staff were interviewed and a strong guard placed.

The National troops did not suffer any casualties.

## THE OFFICIAL REPORT.

The following official bulletin was issued from the Publicity Department, Field G.H.Q., South-Western Command, at 10.15 last (Thursday) night: "Clifden was captured by the troops on August 15. The Irregulars fled to the Connemara hills on the approach of the troops, leaving the barracks intact. Five of the Irregulars were captured with arms and ammunition and one was killed. An ammunition dump was also discovered. There were no casualties amongst the troops. The Marconi station is again working."

## THE FULL STORY.

The movement from Galway for the relief of Clifden and the restoration of the Marconi station was initiated last Friday, when motor launches, pedal and motor cycles were procured, and got into readiness at Galway docks. It was determined that the troops should, in the first instance, land at Kiltonan, Aran Islands, and after a short rest proceed to the Clifden coast line under cover of darkness, and surround the town at dawn.

was gathering fast on the shore, stores were being shipped for the final stage of the fateful journey. The troops were to steer north-west, round Slyne Head, and to land in two columns at two points north and south of Clifden, on which they were to converge by dawn on the following morning.

But a hitch occurred. The boat which had broken down on the previous evening once more failed. Col.-Commandant Brennan got a crew of doughty islanders to undertake the strenuous task of accompanying the improvised "troopships" around the dangerous Slyne Head. A day that had been bright with sunshine and rippling waves developed into a night of rain and fog, and accompanying the Atlantic swell was the occasional growl that portended a stormy passage.

The flares and lanterns by which the stores were put aboard cast an eerie spell over the strange scene. Yet the men went about their work cheerily—these men who had seen almost constant service by hill and wood and lonely moorland during the Irish war, who had but recently returned from the fighting at Limerick. Iron shutters were hung out to provide an armour for the open boats in which the landing was to be effected. A captain of the National troops was to land some distance from Clifden with fifty men, whilst shortly before dawn Col.-Commandant Brennan was to make a dash for the quay, and effect a landing before the Irregulars could rally to repulse him.

Meanwhile, back at Galway precautions were being taken. An armoured lancher, manned with a Lewis gun, and sheltered by a fleet of transport cars, patrolled the streets, and sentries guarded all roads of exit, whilst others kept watch at the docks. The news had got abroad that something was afoot, and wild rumours spread. But the sentries remained impassive, and held up all who sought to leave the town without giving some adequate reason for their mission outwards. At the docks a craft landed from Carraroe with a mysterious object in a sack. The sentries took the skipper in tow, and carried him to the Railway Hotel, with his bag—which upon examination was found to contain a keg full to the brim of poteen. On the coast road sentries challenged all outgoing vehicles to halt, and when they did not halt, exploded a shot cartridge from a large bore Winchester in the air. All these sentries have cultivated a falsetto voice, which rings above the storm and rain of the wildest night, and it was only in rare and necessary occasions that a loud explosion told sleeping citizens that the vigil was close. Thus watch was kept night and day until it was learned that all was well with the expedition.

As was inevitable, the news had drifted out to Oughterard, though at the post the Irregular leaders appear to have been under the misapprehension that it was intended to make the landing in Connemara by the lake, for the New Quay, Oughterard, is reported to have been guarded on Saturday night against attack by men armed with Mausers and bombs.

The while the National troops were at Aran preparing for the descent upon Connemara at a point 35 miles further north. And it was midnight before the little "troopships" got away from Kiltonan.

As they set out the moon showed wanly amidst scudding clouds, it was bitterly cold, and the sea was choppy. The little fleet set their prows gamely north-west, and presently the Irish National soldiers were succumbing one by one to mal de mere. It was a gruelling experience, but the men remained cheerful and confident withal. "We will make the Charles' pay for this when we get ashore," they said.

Round by Slyne Head it was dark and foggy, water was coming in over the side of the Aran boat, and a little life-boat which the crew carried was swept away. The experienced seamen from Aran voted against pursuing the journey in the circumstances, and reluctantly, within little more than fifteen miles from Clifden quay, the fleet turned back.

Kiltonan was touched again at 6 a.m., and the men, most of whom had been violently sick, retired to the local hotels. Recognising that a rest was essential for his men, and that it would be practically impossible to round Slyne Head in the craft at his disposal in the darkness, the Colonel-Commandant determined that the troops should have a day's rest. They spent a quiet Sunday at Aran, where they attended Mass.

At two o'clock on Monday morning, they set sail once more, and by nightfall they were within sight of their landing points. A column of fifty men, under Captain Dundan, landed at Mannin Bay, about three miles to the south of the town, without incident. The main body, one hundred strong, landed at Kingstown Bay, about five miles north-west of Clifden, at 11.15 p.m. The landing was effected in boats supplied by the fishermen from Inishlack, to whom Colonel-Commandant Brennan pays a high tribute of praise for their unrepudiated skill.

Intelligence was brought in that the Irregulars held a dominating position on a hill overlooking the town, and that they occupied the police barracks, which had been fortified and mined. The country which the troops had to operate over was hilly and dangerous, and admirably adapted for guerilla fighting.

The plan was that Captain Dundan's party was to hold some bridges which were known to have been mined, with a guard, to protect the road at the Marconi station at Ballinaboy, cover the line of possible retreat with a Lewis gun, and enter the town simultaneously with the advance screen from the north, the main body meanwhile to capture the dominating hill, and engage the Irregulars.

The advance was made in the darkness of Monday night and Tuesday morning by men who had been without proper rest for nights, and who had been seasick most of the time. Their imperturbability and cheerfulness in the circumstances were marvellous, and they certainly earned the tribute of their Col.-Commandant.

Captain Fallon was in charge of the advance guard approaching from the North, and his men entered Clifden in extended formation at dawn. But meanwhile the Irregulars must have got wind of what was afoot, for they proceeded to retreat in an easterly and north-easterly direction towards the all-enveloping cover of the Twelve Pins. The first shots were fired when Captain Dundan's party encountered some of them crossing the fields. They were called upon to halt, and fire was opened over their heads. They replied fitfully, and fled. Two of them were captured with Mauser rifles and ammunition.

On the north side the hill was quickly occupied by Col.-Commandant Brennan and his men, on whom fire was opened at a range of a thousand yards. Col. Brennan moved around coolly amongst his men whilst the bullets from a sniper on the hill opposite—a sheer wall of rock running for a mile and affording ample cover—zipped over the heads of the troops and occasionally cut the turf at his feet. This sniper was a plucky soldier, for his rifle continued to bark long after the firing elsewhere had ceased, and he kept his lonely position until the last of the Irregulars had vanished from the scene.

A single Irregular was found upon the hill. He had been on outpost duty all through the night in the soaking rain without an overcoat. He was armed with a Mauser and a bandolier half filled with ammunition, and in his pocket he carried a .45 Colt, without any breach for the ammunition. When asked what use this was to him, he declared he retained it as a keepsake. He was "fed up," he added succinctly, and he surrendered without firing a shot.

The fusillade in Clifden by Captain Fallon's advance guard began a few minutes

# MODERN PHARISEES

NOT A TIME FOR MUTUAL RECRIMINATION OR ABUSE.

Rector of St. Ignatius and Bishop's Prayer for Peace.

Very Rev. John MacSheehan, the new Rector at St. Ignatius, preaching on Sunday last on the gospel of the day, referred to the modern Pharisee. Our Lord, he said, lashed the Pharisees on every conceivable occasion as blind guides and leaders of the blind full of corruption and iniquity. How could they explain the apparent inconsistency of Christ in manifesting such tender compassion for the sinners, and such contempt for the Scribes and Pharisees? Was it because the latter were wealthy and rich and the upper class in Israel, and was it that Christ only came to have compassion and pity on the poor?

Such was not the case. Among his most intimate acquaintances Christ numbered some of the wealthiest and most powerful men in Israel. It was Joseph and Nicodemus, two wealthy Jews, who came and took his lifeless body from the Cross. The Scribes and Pharisees denounced the houses of widows with long prayers, were continually in the synagogues praying all night, fasted twice the week, and gave tithes of all they possessed. This could not be the reason. Why then did Christ denounce them? It was because they did their good works to be seen by men. They trusted to themselves as just, and they despised others. "Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees; make clean the inside of the cup . . . the weighty things of the law, judgment and mercy and justice, you have not done." They saw the mote, but the beam they did not see.

There is in the world to-day (continued Fr. MacSheehan) as there was in the time of Christ the modern Pharisee, the modern hypocrite, who thanks God that he is not as the rest of men, who trusts to himself as just and despises others, who can see the faults and imperfections of his neighbour, but fails to see the wickedness and the corruption that are inside in his own heart. And these Pharisees strap their shoulders in unctuous hypocrisy. They go to the temple to pray; they, perhaps, give tithes of all they possess; but they do these things to be seen of men, and they think a while in their hearts how they are justified in God's sight, how they are not sinners.

Not merely individuals, but nations, have become hypocritical, and nations say in regard to other nations, "We can give thanks that we are not as other nations are." "We can thank God that we are just, not unjust nor adulterous." And there are classes who say in regard to other classes, "We give God thanks that we are just and not as other classes." Perhaps, among ourselves may we not be guilty at the present time of trusting ourselves as just, and despising others? May we not particularly give God thanks that we are not as other men, give God thanks that we are not unjust, extortioners, and adulterers?

Do we think that by mutual recrimination and abuse, by despising others and thinking highly of ourselves we are going to bring down God's blessing upon our country in this moment in which above all others she stands in need of divine protection? Let us follow the advice which has been given to us only this week by our revered bishop. Let us cease from mutual recrimination and abuse, and let us rather join in this novena which has been ordered by him to be made on the Feast of the Assumption. Let us join in prayer that God may send upon our country that peace that we all desire, and let us above all things approach the Sacraments between this and the octave. This is the desire and the express wish of our bishop. This is the wise counsel he gave to us, that we would wish to see the end of the unhappy miseries which are witnessed at the present moment—not to give thanks that we are not as the rest of men, not to trust ourselves as just and despise others, but to go to the church, stand at the tribunal of penance, and lift up our hearts to God, and say, "Oh, God, I have sinned before heaven and before Thee. Oh, God, be merciful to me a sinner."

## County Council Meeting.

An important quarterly meeting of the Galway County Council will be held on Saturday, the proposals committee meeting at 11.30. The business to be conducted includes the election of vice-chairman, state of the rate collection, resignation of Mr. P. J. Rattery, assistant county surveyor, a lengthy report on county expenditure, being report of a conference between the Farmers' Association and the County Council, notice of motion by Mr. J. P. Martin regarding the handing over of Portlanna courthouse to a committee, national health insurance, estimate of expenditure in regard to the Tuberculosis Act, disposal of workhouses, Connemara distress, resolution from Galway motor car and cycle owners against imposition of motor tax, criminal injuries, etc. Owing to transit difficulties the council was unable to meet sooner, and, as a result, many matters had to be left in abeyance.

## "Mian a Croiche."

With the kind permission of the author, Fadrac Og O'Conaire, we give this week in our Gaelic column an extract from the new publication, entitled "Mian a Croiche," to which our Gaelic contributor referred in our last issue.

after six a.m., and continued for twenty minutes in short rapid bursts. Then the captain burst in the barrack door, and it was found that the Irregulars had vanished. The place was mined; stores and an ammunition dump which they apparently had not time to remove were captured. The fighting trailed away into sniping from a distance, and all was over by seven o'clock. It was learned that John Gavin, one of the Irregulars, was seriously wounded, and that he had since succumbed to his wounds. Four of the Irregulars were captured with arms and equipment.

The Clifden people peered curiously through their windows at seven o'clock. Then they realised that the National troops were in their midst. Soon they came forth to welcome them and to make them breakfast. Later the weary and travel-stained men went to Mass, where Monsignor McAlpine, the venerable pastor, once more bid them welcome in a sermon which is given above.

Col.-Commandant Brennan and his staff subsequently visited the Marconi station at Ballinaboy, and had a consultation with the chief engineer (Mr. Matthias), who had expected to be able to restore communications this (Thursday) evening. The station was garrisoned, as was also Clifden, Commandant O'Malley, a Connemara man, Captain Fallon, and Lieutenant MacNamara being left in charge.

Not a few of the troops who took part in the expedition were Connemara men, and Col.-Commandant Brennan pays all a high tribute for the fine spirit and endurance displayed during a period of considerable hardship. The Col.-Commandant returned to Galway on Wednesday evening, and arrived at the docks at 12.30 on Thursday morning.

On Tuesday night the posts of the National troops in Clifden were sniped, about fifty shots being exchanged. Whilst the troops were in Aran an Irregular named Padraig Nee arrived there on Sunday looking for petrol, and was taken into custody.

## THE PRISONERS.

The following prisoners were taken to the Galway jail on Thursday from Clifden under strong military escort:—Dan Vaughan, Clifden; John Burke, Carna; James Kyne, Goutane, Clifden; Michael King, Goutane; Patrick O'Connell, Derryginna, Clifden; John Conroy, Roundstone.



Col.-Comdt. Brennan (right) and Comdt. O'Malley (left) embarking at Galway docks for the advance on Clifden.

Owing to the necessity for a thorough overhaul of the marine engines, the first contingent of one hundred troops did not start until Saturday morning. They proceeded from Galway docks in two large motor trawlers, and were followed shortly after noon by a third containing another fifty men, with Colonel-Comdt. Austin Brennan, who was in charge of the expedition. He was accompanied by Comdt. O'Malley.

The National troops arrived at Kiltonan pier shortly after seven p.m. on Saturday, after a stormy passage across the thirty miles of Galway Bay. The islanders, over one hundred of whom have joined the National army, received them with great cordiality.

During the excitement of the landing a little lad named Gabriel Glynn, a visitor on the island, fell over the quay wall into the water. Michael O'Donohoe, an islander, promptly dived after him, and brought him safely to shore.

After a brief rest and refreshments, the troops, numbering one hundred and fifty, moved to the quayside. Darkness

(Continued at end of next column).