

AN T-ÓGLÁC

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ONWARDS

The Army of the Irish Republic has every reason to be proud of its many fine achievements and the remarkable advance and development in organisation and efficiency which it has shown during the past six months. We have now reached a stage in which we can claim that we have developed a type of trained and experienced soldier equal to the finest troops in the world. This developed efficiency must be maintained and increased and no effort must be spared to bring the backward areas up to the high standard set by our best troops. Upon the strength and effectiveness of the Irish Republican Army depends the safety of the Irish Nation and the maintenance of the Irish Republic, in the building up of which the fighting men of Ireland have played so large a part. The fate of Ireland to a considerable extent depends upon her power of resistance. No possible circumstances can arise at the present time under which the Army of Ireland can afford to relax its discipline or efficiency without danger to the nation. Not until the last member of the forces of the enemy has evacuated our country will there be rest for Ireland's fighting men; and even then the Republic will still require a trained and efficient Army to protect the freedom which has been achieved. For the soldiers of Ireland at the present time the duty is, as it has been, to pay no heed to rumours or political gossip, but to "get on with the work."

The organisation of divisions has strengthened the effectiveness and increased the efficiency of the Irish Republican Army, and is having a beneficial effect all round. It is satisfactory to note an improvement in the prompt sending of reports, but there still remains great room for improvement. Special attention should be paid to General Order No 23. Volunteer Officers sometimes fail to realise the enormous importance of placing G.H.Q. in a position to issue prompt contradictions of enemy lies. It is also absolutely necessary

to realise that reports should not contain such inaccuracies as "about eleven or twelve men," "on Saturday night" etc. Dates, times and numbers should be carefully verified and given exactly, or if it is not possible to do this, the reason why should be stated.

A steady advance in outlook is perceptible in all units of the Irish Republican Army and there is every sign that this advance will continue. Slack and easy-going methods of work are becoming more and more a thing of the past. The output of good officers is increasing to a surprising extent. Less than two years ago G.H.Q. was confronted with a grave problem in endeavouring to secure officers of the right standard. To-day that problem has largely solved itself. The supply of trained, efficient and capable officers of all ranks is surprisingly great. Casualties among them, which formerly hit us hard, no longer cause disorganisation. There are always others ready to take their places. This adds enormously to the effectiveness of the Army. We can face the future with confidence, strong in the knowledge that the Republic of Ireland has a body of fighting men upon whom she can rely as long as she has need of them. No effort must be spared to maintain the high standard set by our best troops and to go on with the work, cheerfully, courageously and unflinchingly until final victory with all the energy at our disposal.

A very successful ambush, resulting in heavy enemy casualties, was made by 12 men of the Dublin Brigade on an enemy troop train at Glasnevin on the morning of June 16th. The enemy troops had only just landed from England. Another ambush carried out in Brunswick Street on June 8th resulted in very heavy "Black and Tan" casualties; and an ambush in Capel Street on June 18th was also deadly to the enemy.

The May report of the Belfast Brigade records two successful raids for arms, an ambush of R.I.C. and several other activities, resulting in a loss to the enemy of one killed and one wounded.

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Óglagh
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IRISH VOLUNTEERS

GENERAL NOTES

The following are extracts from the statement made by Commandant Sean Mac Keon at his so-called "trial" before an enemy "court martial," which were altered or suppressed in the report in the public Press:—

"I am glad to feel that in carrying out my duty to my country I have always acted in proper accordance with the usages of war. The acts which were committed by me, and by officers and men under my command, can stand any test judged by an impartial tribunal. The prisoners were treated in a fair way. The wounded were treated to the best of our ability. Some of these very prisoners have been asked here to-day to prove this. They have been called, not in order that any punishment which you intend bestowing on me may be mitigated, but to show that my words are true. Contrast their treatment with the treatment I received at Mullingar when handcuffed and suffering from a wound which was thought to be fatal, I was beaten with rifle butts by English forces. The witnesses have been called for one other reason. It is sworn that at Clonfin 'I did not allow the wounded to be ill-treated.' The witnesses have made it clear that *there was no desire on the part of any of my men to ill-treat any prisoner, wounded or unwounded.*

"Let me make one remark on the present case. You are trying me for the murder of Mr. McGrath, a District Inspector of the R.I.C. What happened on that occasion (7th January 1921) was this:—

"I was in a cottage belonging to Miss. A. Martin, an aged lady. My account books were left in this house for safety. I was about an hour in the house when a Crown Force came down the Road (about ten—nine men and one officer.) I was in partial uniform, wearing Sam Browne belt and revolver with two Mills No. 4 bombs in my pocket. I was sitting at a table writing when I was informed of the advance of the above party. Owing to some females being in the house, I had to get out as I could not endanger them by putting up a defence in the house, and as this Officer and Police Force had already signified to my sister and mother their intention to shoot me at sight, I decided to give them a run for their money. I stepped out on the street about three paces directly in front of the oncoming force, and opened fire with my revolver. The leading file fell, and then the second file in the gateway brought their rifles to the ready. I then threw a bomb, and jumped back behind the porch to let it burst. When it had burst and the smoke had lifted, I saw the whole force had cleared away, save the officer who was dead or dying on the street. I then went away to the rear of the house, and in the field there I saw Sergeant Ryan running towards the upper fence, meaning to get into

this position to open fire on the house. I jumped into the field along with him, and made for the same position. He called me by my name to halt, and fired at me three times with his rifle, and missed. I fired once with my revolver, but as I found the distance too long, I ceased fire and challenged him to come nearer. He turned sharply to his left and lost his position, which I got. I then went away for reinforcements, and returned with them to find that they (the Police) *had taken my mother, two sisters and two Misses Martin hostages*, so that I could do nothing but withdraw until they went away. They then returned next morning in heavy force, and burned the cottage, releasing the hostages about an hour after the burning, which took place about 8 a.m. on the 8th January."

"I take the opportunity of paying a tribute to the gallantry and loyalty of the officers and men who fought by my side. Every time they stood up against superior numbers, and every time they beat the foe. From you, Gentlemen, I crave no favour. I am an officer of the Irish Army, and merely claim the right at your hands that you would have received at mine had the fortunes of war reversed the positions."

The statement which appeared in the London "Daily Mirror" and other English papers that Commandant Sadlier of the 3rd (Cashel) Battalion had "committed suicide by shooting himself" was a lie. Commandant Sadlier was accidentally shot by a member of his command at Cloneen, Co. Tipperary on June 13th.

The North Wexford Brigade reports that at Bunclody on June 5th. 5 Volunteers were about to attack an equal number of R.I.C. men when they were surprised from behind by a patrol of 12 enemies. One Volunteer fired two shots wounding one enemy. The remainder of the enemy sought shelter and opened fire on our men, fire being also opened by the 5 R.I.C. men on the road. The Volunteers got safely away without any casualties.

The report of the O.C. Mid-Clare Brigade of the engagement at Darragh between 14 members of our troops and four times that number of enemies contains the following:—

"The enemy force consisted of Auxiliaries and R.I.C. to the number of 50 to 60. Some twenty of them rode horses commandeered in the West and the balance cycled. They covered a little over an Irish mile of the road. They carried rifles and at least two machine guns. I believe the major portion of them belonged to the Auxiliary Coy. Killaloe. In dispatches between this force and Killaloe it was referred to as the "Column."

"At 6-40 p.m., at a given signal, all three sections of our men opened fire, but as the position occupied by the enemy afforded great cover, and protection from fire, not more than two were hit

these seriously. The enemy now took full advantage of the cover afforded him and replied with rifle and machine guns. He now tried to encircle us by moving forward both his flanks. His left flank which was in line with our original outpost men, was penned to its position by the fire of these three, but his right which was (as a result of his very extended formation) both out of range and sight got round a hill and partly in line with our left, but here he was compelled to take cover. We held him in this position for close on an hour firing a few occasional rounds when he showed himself anywhere. Fourteen men against 50 or 60 operating over a fairly wide front for an hour within four miles of Ennis the enemy strongholds, had nothing to look forward to now except waste of ammunition and a possibility of reinforcements arriving on the enemy side, therefore we decided on falling back. This we did quite leisurely and without interruption from the enemy. The enemy had two wounded; one seriously and ten of them had hairbreath escapes—having their caps and shoulder-straps pierced by bullets. The marksmanship of our men was splendid and even the enemy paid tribute to it when he remarked in the hearing of a civilian that he never experienced such accurate shooting at such range. Not one of our men received a single scratch even. Dublin Castle reports "One unknown man left dead on the field" This is false. The enemy shot a horse belonging to a local farmer when the engagement was over, and burned an out-house belonging to the same man. I believe this horse was wounded during the engagement and it is likely by our fire, as the field in which he was lay adjacent to the enemy position.

Dublin Castle reported the ambushing at "Ballycorrick" Co. Clare of a party of R.I.C. men by a large number of armed men and stated that "some of the attackers were seen to fall." The O.C. Mid-Clare's report shows that what happened was that a cycling patrol of 20 Black & Tans while returning from Ballynacally to Ennis was sniped by a single Volunteer. It is not known if the B's & T's suffered any casualties. They fired upwards of 200 rounds but the solitary attacker got away safely.

THE REVOLVER

It must be clearly understood that the revolver is a short range weapon, effective up to 75 yards. The steadying influences of the use of both hands and the shoulder rest, as with the rifle are lacking, and it is therefore absolutely necessary that the recruit becomes familiar with certain principles before he can shoot accurately with the revolver.

The cleaning and oiling of the weapon have an important bearing upon its accuracy. When an action is over, or as soon after as possible the 'piece' should

be thoroughly cleaned and oiled, this will reduce labour and eliminate the possibility of the weapon becoming "pitted" that is the formation of rust in the barrel, or tiny holes which will eventually mar its accuracy.

In **LOADING** the cartridges should be firmly pressed down in the chambers of the cylinders so that the rims or the cartridges will not strike the frame when the cylinder is in position. The hammer should then be partially cocked so as to enable the operator to spin the cylinder, thereby making sure that the cartridges will clear the frame.

"**DOUBLE ACTION**" should never be used. By double action is meant the cocking of the hammer by squeezing on the trigger until the hammer is mechanically cocked and fired. This entails a pressure of approximately 15 pounds as against 5 when the hammer is already cocked. The extra muscular effort used in double action deranges the aim, and when it is considered that a derangement of the barrel of $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch at a target 25 yards away will mean a miss of at least 8 inches much of the poor shooting and missing is accounted for.

In firing never pull or snap the trigger. The hammer should first be cocked with the thumb of the right hand, and then the trigger carefully squeezed with the forefinger of the firing hand. An even steady squeeze on the trigger, the operator at the same time endeavouring to better his aim will invariably lead to good results.

The revolver should be held firmly but never with too tight a grip. If grasped too tight a certain tension of the arm muscles will result, which will be transmitted in the form of vibration thus deranging the aim.

A good aim is the correct alignment of three things:—the rear sight, the fore sight, and the target. This alignment is commonly called the "line of sight."

The cocking of the hammer, the aiming and sighting, and the careful squeezing of the trigger, *without the use of ammunition should be practised as often as possible.* This will familiarise the operator with the proper manipulation of the weapon and also rapidly improve his aiming when in action. This practise is absolutely essential and can be successfully carried out in any room or place of concealment, a circular object *not larger than a sixpence* should be used as an aiming mark or target.

Remember that one man shooting accurately will cause more havoc and confusion among the enemy than forty men shooting and taking "pot" shots and uselessly expending ammunition.

Two of our men at 130 a.m. commenced blowing a Boy Scout whistle. The police in the barrack thought an attack was being made, they got wise, commenced firing, threw grenades, and kept up a rapid fire for about 4 hours. Our men were unarmed.

CARROWKENNEDY FIGHT

In the Press report of our recent victory at Carrow-kennedy, Co. Mayo, the following passage occurs: "Six of the constables took cover in a house, and carried on the fight, after the remainder had been either killed or wounded." We do not intend to criticise a brilliantly successful action, but that passage suggests a way in which—with a little extra forethought—the victory would have been made considerably easier.

It should have been possible to make the house a bait to lure the enemy party to destruction, instead of allowing them to use it as a defensive post. In a recent report from one of our officers the phrase occurred: "Men suddenly fired upon run for the nearest cover." In this case the nearest cover was of course the house in question, and it was advisable to make arrangements to forestall the enemy bolting for cover into it.

Broadly two cases arise (a) Where the ambush party has time to prepare the ground, (b) where there has not been such time. In the first case a wire entanglement, trip-wire, pit-fall or similar trap should be prepared to hold the enemy in a disabled state until he can be covered and disarmed speedily. In the second case—where there is no time to place an obstacle, the bolt for cover must be forestalled by the fire of one or two well-placed men. Very often a concealed man with two barrels of buck-shot or even with a revolver will fill the bill. At another time a sniper with a clear command of the possible approach to the cover will do the trick. It depends entirely on circumstances, and no hard and-fast rule can be laid down.

It is only by carefully reviewing an action bit by bit that we can form an idea of how to improve on it the next time. Every little point that makes the next victory easier is so much done towards winning the war. Hence even in the most outstanding success it is possible to see after the event how it might have been made a still neater and more finished job.

BETTER PISTOL SHOOTING

Most of our troops are not nearly as good shots as is necessary with the different types of small-arm—whether revolver or automatic pistol. This makes it necessary to completely overhaul the question of instruction with these arms.

First of all a broad distinction must be made between automatic pistols and revolvers. Automatic pistols must be issued only to men who have reached a certain reasonable standard of skill with small arms: for the less skilled man the revolver is better—it is less complicated in its mechanism, and he can learn how to use it quicker than he can learn the other.

It the second place it must be understood that pistol shooting is an art in which a very considerable amount may be learned without ever firing a shot. Position, aiming, cocking, trigger-squeeze, drawing etc, all these are branches in which a big advance can be made without any waste of ammunition. Every possible chance to practise these must be availed of.

With the revolver the first point to remember is that *before every shot the hammer must be cocked by drawing it back with the thumb*: Unless this is done there can be no such thing as steady shooting: the muzzle of the piece wobbles all over the place and the target is missed hopelessly. Every untrained man fires without cocking the hammer, just because the double-action of the revolver lets him do it.

This practice must be stopped: after every shot, then, thumbs on the hammer, to get it ready for a steady second shot. The article stops here to leave you thinking about that: try it both ways with an empty revolver and watch the difference.

ADVANTAGES OF SNIPING

It must be clearly understood that the present summer time of extended hours of daylight and high visibility can be used *most* advantageously by systematic, constant sniping tactics. Good shots (not necessarily snipers) should be posted nightly in commanding positions overlooking the enemy lines of communication or routes selected by enemy motor transport.

Small bodies of enemy infantry, Crossly tenders, and lorries of English, present magnificent targets at suitable ranges from 100 to 400 yards.

This particular form of tactics can be undertaken with little or no risk, by our men and will be found to have an enormous effect upon the morale of the already demoralised enemy.

Battalions should also endeavour to facilitate men without civil occupation by placing at their disposal, weapons to be used for sniping in daylight.

Battalions who adapt themselves to these tactics and show good results will be assisted in every respect with regard to weapons and munitions.

NOTES FROM REPORTS

The pursuit of our men was prevented by barricading the road Ennis—Sparcilhill after the captured motor had passed. The barricades consisted of trees which had been cut prior to the operation. There was no delay except to pull them down.

The enemy has established a raiding base at Dunree Fort and is very active here just now, searching the hills for Flying Columns.