

Death Of Patriotic Ned O'Brien, Of Galbally

BY the death of Mr. Edward O'Brien, Galbally, Co. Limerick—he was known far and wide as Ned—which took place recently, following a long illness, Ireland has lost one of the most fearless and patriotic soldiers of the War of Independence.

As an officer of the Galtee Battalion of the I.R.A., he saw much fighting, but the part he played in the rescue of a fellow volunteer—Sean Hogan—from a train in which he was held a prisoner, stands out from many other thrilling exploits. The rescue took place at Knocklong Station in 1919.

In that year, when the Tipperary Brigade called for volunteers for the rescue, Ned was one of the first to volunteer. With Dan Breen, Sean Treacy and Seamus Robinson, the officer in charge, he waited at Knocklong Station for the train. The other members of the rescue party had boarded it earlier to indicate to the waiting men in which coach Hogan was held.

Before the train stopped the signal was given and Sean Treacy and Ned O'Brien leaped aboard. They rushed along the corridor and found Hogan handcuffed between an R.I.C. sergeant and a constable. Opposite were two other constables. All were fully armed. A constable pointed his revolver at Hogan's neck, his finger tightening on the trigger. But before he could shoot he was dead himself from a bullet of one of the rescuers.

Hogan was dragged out and the battle went on, in which the R.I.C. Sergeant was killed and Treacy, O'Brien, Breen, and Scanlon were wounded.

From that day they were all wanted men. O'Brien was smuggled to the U.S. from Liverpool, where he continued the fight for freedom by assisting Liam Pedlar and Harry Boland collecting arms and ammunition for his comrades at home.

On his return home he opposed the Treaty and later fought on the Republican side in the Civil War. He joined Fianna Fail at its inception and for many years was a representative of that party on the Limerick Co. Council.

During the Emergency he joined the Defence Forces with the rank of Captain, resigning, at the same time, from the Co. Council. While in the Army he was stationed in the Sarsfield Barracks, having been entrusted with the task of building up the the L.D.F. in the Limerick area.

MOST UNASSUMING MAN,

Ned O'Brien, one of the most unassuming of men, had hosts of friends. Of him it can be said that he had no enemies. His comrades in arms, men who were ready to die for him, had nick-named him the "Quiet Man." Never was his voice heard in anger; never did he speak of those from whom he differed politically in a way that could give offence; never did he indulge in self-glorification. He was too great a man—spiritually and patriotically—to do any of those things. Born and reared at the foot of the Galtee Mountains he imbibed the story of Ireland, of her folklore, of her traditions and legends and culture. He was, indeed, unique in many respects, for despite his rustic exterior he was urbane in manner—always polite, always courteous, always nature's gentleman. No one who had met him—not to mention those whose pleasure it was to know him intimately—could fail to be impressed. Ned O'Brien was a man of singular qualities and his death, at a comparatively early age, is not only an irreparable loss to his

family, but to his native land.

Three of those who took part with him in the Knocklong rescue, including Sean Hogan himself, have paid deserved tributes to his memory.

Says Hogan: "Ned O'Brien was as quiet and silent as the Galtee Mountains under whose shadow he spent nearly all his life. He loved Ireland in a strong brave way."

And Seamus Robinson had this to say of his dead comrade: "Ned O'Brien was eager to do what he could to help Ireland. He was a competent, daring, and courageous soldier. His quiet, friendly manner won over everyone he came in contact with."

DAN BREEN'S TRIBUTE

Dan Breen, T.D., in a graveside oration, spoke of O'Brien as "a lion-hearted man."

"Ned O'Brien, his brothers and the rest of the family were always staunch nationalists." Mr. Breen said. "They were born into the Fenian tradition, and it was natural for them to love Ireland. Ned was one of the leaders of the Galtee Battalion, as was his late brother, Liam."

"He was also a member of the I.R.B. and was known to the late Paddy Ryan, of Doon, the Dalys of Limerick, Sean McDermott and the other great Irishmen of those days. In 1916 he rallied Limerick and Tipperary and was assisted in this work by the O'Briens and the Scanlons. When Michael O'Callaghan defended the honour of Tipperary, it was Ned O'Brien and his family who looked after him until he escaped to America."

"After 1916 it was Ned O'Brien who re-organised the I.R.A. and when we returned to Tipperary from Soloheadbeg, the O'Briens were waiting to receive us. It is to the great credit of men like Ned O'Brien that Sean Hogan was rescued."

Mr. Breen said that when Ned O'Brien went to America he did not forget his Fenian tradition, but continued to love Ireland and to work for her. He was like a page out of Knocknagow and one of the greatest men he ever met.

"His passing is deeply regretted. He was a lion-hearted man. On your behalf and on my own behalf I would like to extend sincere sympathy to his relatives. May the soil of Ireland rest lightly on him. He has gone to join the Treacy's, the Dalys and all those other great Irishmen."

THE FUNERAL

Hundreds travelled long distances to pay their last tribute of respect to the dead patriot.

The coffin, which was draped with the tricolour, was carried from Galbally Parish Church by old comrades, including Mr. Dan Breen, T.D., and Sean Hogan. It was flanked by veterans from Limerick and South Tipperary I.R.A. The Dead March was played by Killinane Brass Band.

A salute was fired over the grave by an Army firing party, and the Last Post sounded by an Army bugler. The Army escort and firing party were under Capt. Joe Keohane, Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick.

Many old comrades from Tipperary, Limerick, Kerry, Clare and other parts of the country were among the large crowd which attended the funeral.

The prayers at the graveside were recited by Very Rev. R. Quinn, P.P., Galbally, assisted by Very Rev. M. Lee, P.P., Ballin-garry; Rev. D. Keogh, C.C., Galbally; Rev. P. Purcell, C.C., do.; Rev. J. Bacon, C.C., Cappawhite; Rev. J. Finnan, Chaplain, Dun-drum, Co. Tipperary; Rev. J. Cahill, C.S.Sp., Rockwell College;

Rev. R. Walker, C.S.Sp., do., and Rev. D. Heelon, C.S.Sp., do.

The chief mourners were: Mrs. Margaret O'Brien (widow), Liam and Henry O'Brien (sons), Mrs. Bridle Fitzgerald (daughter), Mr. John J. O'Brien (brother), Mrs. John Noonan (sister), O'Farrell family, Modelligo; Nugent family, Galbally, and Kelly family, Hospital and Emly (relatives).

It would be virtually impossible to give a list of the general public at the obsequies. The Taois-each was represented by his aid de camp, Col. Sean Brennan. © INA

O'BRIEN (Galbally, Co. Limerick)—On March 29, 1957, at his residence, Galbally, Capt. Edmond. Deeply regretted by his sorrowing wife and family. R.I.P. Remains will be removed on this (Saturday) evening at 4 o'clock to Galbally Church. Funeral on to-morrow (Sunday) at 12.30 o'clock to local cemetery. Requiem Mass in Galbally Church on Monday at 10.30 a.m.