

KILMALLOCK

ATTACK

FEATURES

Further inquiries regarding the attack on Kilmallock barrack on Friday morning go to show that it was by far the most determined battle for the possession of a police barrack that has taken place in any part of Ireland. The barrack was attacked from all sides. One gable end adjoins Carroll's house, which is a much higher building, and from the roof of Carroll's slates at the back were removed, and half-hundredweights thrown from the opening on to the roof of the barrack. When a large hole had been made by these weights the attackers applied a line of hose, which it is suspected was the one taken from Limerick Junction some few weeks ago, and pouzed into the barrack paraffin from the Anglo-American Company's oil tank, which was commandeered from the local agent, Mr. Hassett. Bottles of petrol and sulphur balls were also thrown through the breach in the roof, bottles for the purpose being procured from a dump heap behind the Courthouse.

Whilst the party occupying Carroll's house were thus engaged, those near the other gable end, from behind the shelter of the Courthouse, used shot-guns and bombs. It is believed that it was at the far side of the Courthouse the greater part of the ammunition used by the attackers was dumped, and a military man, who knows something of bombs, said on Saturday that one must have exploded there. There are several marks on the Courthouse wall, and fragments of a bomb, including a pin, which had been an ordinary nail, were lying close by. Parts of a man's coat were also found, and the police are of opinion that casualties occurred here; but the popular belief is that no accidental explosion occurred throughout the siege.

The frontal attack was made mainly from the Post Office and the Provincial Bank, and from the rear a fourth party, who made loopholes through a hedge, kept up an incessant fire on the back windows.

The battle opened at 1.45 a.m., but throughout the early part of the night the attackers must have been busily engaged in making preparations, for the roads were blocked and wires were cut at places so far distant as Limerick Junction and Buttevant. These precautions delayed by several hours the police and military who were summoned from Limerick, Ballyvonaire, Buttevant, Bruff, and other places. No road was so unimportant as to be overlooked, and when the military, their progress barred in one direction, tried another route, they found themselves confronted as before by fallen trees and large boulders. These it took some time to remove, and when the military reached the town there was no trace of the attackers. But that they had not gone to rest after the night's battle was later discovered, for when scouting parties were sent out from Kilmallock they found that the roads which they had cleared in the early morning were again made impassable by boulders and trees.

The firing had not long opened when the police were called upon to surrender. They refused, and from the strength of the barrack and the manner in which it was fortified, they were confident that it could not be taken. All the windows had steel shutters three-eighths of an inch thick, and at the rear there was a steel door. Sandbags formed an additional protection, and the police, who had been expecting an attack for the past few months, had every reason to believe that they could hold out longer than it would be prudent for their assailants to continue the battle. The result, in a sense, justified this view. The police never contemplated the use by the attackers of inflammable liquids, and it was these rather than bombs and rifle fire that reduced the barrack to a heap of ruins.

The fight was not long in progress when

the R.I.C. men learned the value of inflammatory substances on such occasions, and, so far as it was possible, adopted the methods of the besiegers. They shot Verey lights into the Post Office and the Provincial Bank in the hope that they would do with these buildings as the others had done with the barracks, and so burn out the party that had taken possession of them. The attempt failed, and both buildings escaped destruction. They were, however, much damaged by rifle-fire.

The bombs used by the attackers were of a large size, twice the size of an ordinary Mills' bomb, but of similar design. "They are of a design," said a military man, "with which the police have of late become too familiar. We found several in a wooden box near the Courthouse. All had been fired but they didn't explode. They were made in this country, and one need not go a hundred miles away to find a 'factory.' They can be turned out in a well-equipped garage."

Near the Courthouse also was found a quantity of ammunition of the latest pattern. Armour-piercing bullets were freely used in the attack, and in this connection it may be of interest to mention that the four sets of steel shutters that withstood the Fenian attack also held out against the fire of Friday morning, whilst the newer "bullet-proof" shutters were pierced in several places.

The struggle for possession of the barrack was for the most part carried on in daylight, and this helped the attackers, who fired with deadly accuracy. Within half-an-hour Sergeant Keane was shot through a loophole of one of the shutters, and around each loophole are several bullet-marks.

The police were not so easily able to locate the positions of their numerous assailants, and when they did so their bullets, directed at one or two occupied points, embedded themselves in cement bags which had been commandeered from a local store.

When the fire broke out, Sergeant Keane was lying wounded upstairs, and Constable Morton, who had been defending the rear of the building from his bedroom window, also fell early in the fight. His room was over the lock-up, into which he fell when the floor gave way. The bodies of both were practically burnt away. It was impossible to recognize them as human remains; but the other police, knowing the positions the sergeant and constable occupied when they fell, were able to say which body was that of the sergeant and which the constable.

It was when the police left the barrack, about 7 a.m., that Constable Hoey was wounded. Only the four walls of the barrack then remained, and the surviving policemen rushed on to the street. The attacking party had just withdrawn, and were assembling on the square near the Central Hotel, preparing to depart. Not expecting the police to appear, they were taken by surprise when fire was opened on them, and one of their number fell, mortally wounded. The fire was returned, and Constable Hoey was shot. His condition is critical, but hopes of his recovery are entertained. He is at present in the Workhouse Hospital.

When the remains of the two dead policemen were discovered amidst the burning ruins on Friday, they were taken to the garden behind the barrack, and Rev. P. O'Sullivan, Army Chaplain, who is spending his holidays in the town, was called in and recited the Rosary over them. When coffined, they were removed to the Courthouse to await inquests.

It is stated that while the police were occupied in removing the remains, Constable McCahery's bicycle was stolen from near the barrack wall, where he had left it on his arrival from Bruff.

Sergeant Keane, who came from the Depot only a few days before, was through the Boer war, and he was the last R.I.C. trooper to be dismounted.

Constable Morton was stationed at Kilmallock for a considerable time. He was the posthumous child of Sergeant Morton, who was shot dead during riots at Carrickslock. His son, who is in the Air Force, was twice decorated during the war. Another son of his died recently, and he was yesterday buried in the same grave at Kilmallock, police and military following the cortege.