

The Chronicles of a Gay Gordon

INTRODUCTION BY TOM TOOMEY

Joseph M. Gordon, whose experiences in Limerick are recorded in the following article, was most unusual in that he was born in Jerez in Spain in 1856. He was descended from a long line of Scots-Catholic lairds, some of whom chose to go into exile in Spain rather than renounce Catholicism. The Gordons had been lairds of Kildrummy Castle in Aberdeenshire and, to hold their title to the castle and lands, the main branch had conformed. When the laws against Catholic ownership were revoked, the Lairds of Kildrummy reverted to Catholicism.

Joseph Gordon's father succeeded to the Lairdship of Kildrummy upon the death of a cousin who had no offspring. The family moved from Jerez back to Kildrummy in 1869, where the younger members of the family had to learn to speak English for the first time. When his mastery of English was adequate, Joseph Gordon was sent to Edgbaston College, where Cardinal Henry Newman was the head. One of his colleagues at

Edgbaston was Viscount Fitzalan, who was destined to become the last Viceroy in Ireland.

In 1873 Gordon entered Woolwich Academy to be trained as an artillery officer. Woolwich Academy was a preparatory college for Woolwich Arsenal, where officers entering the various branches of the British Artillery Service are trained. Gordon chose to enter the Garrison Artillery branch and upon his commissioning in 1876 he was sent to Limerick for his first posting.

In November 1879, Gordon was forced to resign his commission at Limerick on health grounds, when he suffered from rheumatic fever. To recover his health he was advised to undertake a long sea trip to New Zealand. Following five years spent in New Zealand and Australia, Gordon rejoined the British Army in Australia. He was eventually to rise to the rank of Chief of the General Staff of the Australian Armed Forces by the time he retired in May, 1914.

Gordon begins his chronicle of Limerick in 1876.



he end of six months' training at Woolwich being completed, I was appointed to a Garrison company, with its headquarters at Limerick - good old Limerick - which was then known as the paradise of hard-up subalterns. Limerick is a quaint town. There is Old Limerick and Modern Limerick. The old town is situated round the castle, which is on the banks of the Shannon, and where - across the river - stands the old Treaty Stone. It is difficult to describe Old Limerick. One must really see it and live in it to appreciate its dirty houses, poor tenements, its smells and other unhealthy attributes. Yet it is a characteristic little piece of old Ireland. This part of the old town reached down to the cathedral, past which the main street - George Street - runs through the modern town, practically parallel with the River Shannon. With the exception of the old castle, Limerick does not possess any buildings of very particular interest. The best residential part was across the river, Circular Row. Limerick itself has nothing to recommend it as regards picturesqueness, but there is much beauty in the country surrounding it. From just below the castle the River Shannon has some beautiful reaches, right away up to Castle Connell; while Tervoe on the river, Adare Abbey, and many other places are well known.

When I reported myself to my commanding officer at the castle I found that our company, which then consisted of about eighty all told, was doing duty from the very North to the South of Ireland. There was a detachment of some twenty-

by Joseph M. Gordon

five men at a place called Green Castle, which was an old fort at the entrance of Lough Swilly, not far off the Giant's Causeway. Another detachment of some thirty-five men was on duty at Carlisle Fort, one of the forts guarding the entrance into Cork Harbour at Queens-town. This left us about twenty men at our headquarters at Limerick Castle. Our captain was not with the company. He was A.D.C. to a Colonial Governor, and, of course, was seconded. The two senior subalterns were in command of the detachments at Green Castle and Carlisle Fort, so that the commanding officer, our good major and myself, were left at our headquarters with the twenty men. By the time that we found the guard for the day, the major's two orderlies, my own orderly, the cook and cook's mate, the district gunner (who was busy keeping our three very old guns, mounted in the tower, polished up), the office clerk and the barrack sweeper, the morning parade consisted usually of the sergeant-major.

At nine o'clock every morning, after first joining, I appeared on parade, when the sergeant-major reported "All present, sir," and I said, "Carry on, sergeant-major," and went inside to breakfast. After a time I'm afraid I got into the bad habit of letting the sergeant-major come to make his report at the window of my quarters, which faced the barrack-square. At ten o'clock the major, whose quarters were above mine, and who was the happy possessor of some eight children,

appeared at the company office, and I duly reported to him, "All correct, sir, this morning." For it was only very occasionally that we had a prisoner. The major would answer, "Very good." I would then ask him, "Do you want me any more today, sir?" He would then answer, without a smile, for he was a serious-minded major, "No, thanks." And then the joys of my day would begin for me.

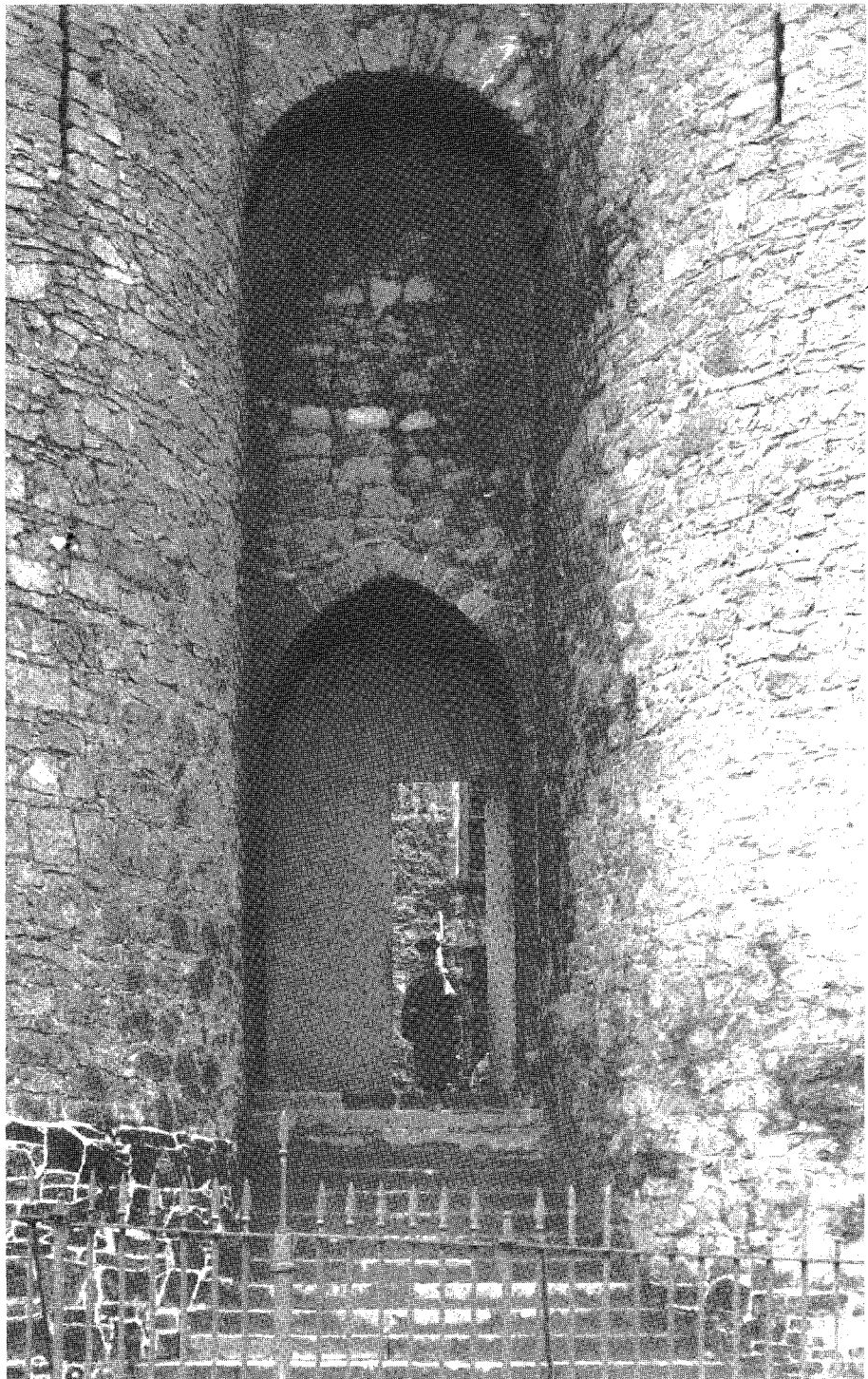
The way in which my major came to be quartered in Limerick was this. He was the eldest brother of a very well-known family in Tipperary. He had many brothers, all of whom were also well known and much liked throughout the surrounding districts. They were all first-class horsemen, and, needless to say, good sportsmen all round. One of these brothers was at the time Sub-Sheriff of Limerick. It was indeed a difficult post to fill in those days. The country was exceedingly disturbed. Evictions were all too frequent, with the accompanying result of riots and murders, and it required much pluck and tact to carry out the Sub-Sheriff's duties. My major had been, some time previous to my joining, ordered to Singapore, while another major, a bachelor, was in command of the company at Limerick. In those days officers were allowed to exchange on the payment of fees agreed upon. My major did not relish the idea of proceeding to Singapore with his young family of eight, so he approached the bachelor major at Limerick with a view to an exchange, and offered a very handsome sum. The bachelor major very promptly accepted, and the exchange took place. Just before leaving Limerick the members of the club

gave the bachelor major a farewell dinner, and, in proposing his health, the chairman remarked that he didn't understand why anybody should wish to leave Limerick for such an awful place as Singapore. When answering the toast the bachelor major said he would tell them in confidence the real reason. He went on to say that a short time before he accepted the exchange he had been to dinner with friends, some nine miles away, across the Shannon, in County Clare. He was returning home with the old jarvey on an outside car, and as it was a fairly fine night, moonlight, and he had had a very good dinner, he was enjoying his pipe and now and again having a little doze. They were passing a piece of road which was bounded on one side by a somewhat thick hedge. Suddenly there was a flash and the loud report of a gun, which very promptly woke him and made the old jarvey sit up too, and pull his horse up. Immediately two heads popped up over the hedge, had a good look at the major, and then one of the men said, "Begorra, Pat, we've shot at the wrong man again," and promptly disappeared. "Now, don't you think, my friends, that it's time I went to Singapore?"

But he never told them of the cheque he got to go to Singapore.

At that time the garrison of Limerick was fairly strong. There was a Field Artillery Battery at the William Street Barracks, and there were a regiment of infantry and a squadron of cavalry at the New Barracks, so that our turn for any garrison duty didn't come very often, and we had plenty of time to enjoy ourselves. Anyone who wished and who had sufficient horses could put in four or five days' hunting a week during the season. The Master of the Limerick Hounds at the time lived at Croome. He was a typical Irish gentleman, noted for his genial character and the forcefulness of his language in the hunting field. Limerick is a fine hunting country, and gives excellent sport. There were many good riders in those days. Our friend the Sub-Sheriff was one, but perhaps the best man there was the owner of Ballynegarde, at whose hospitable house we spent many happy days. He must have ridden quite over sixteen stone, and I well remember seeing him, on a chestnut horse, clear the wall which surrounded the park, the chestnut changing his feet on the top, just like a cat. Good horses were just as expensive in those days as they were before the war, but we subalterns did not buy expensive horses; we picked up good jumpers that had gone cronk, and trusted to the vet, occasional firing, plenty of bandages, and not too hard work to keep them going.

Riding out one morning towards Mount Shannon, the then lovely home of the Fitzgibbons, on the banks of the river, and just on leaving the old town of Limerick, I arrived at a rather long and steep hill, at the foot of which a jarvey was trying to induce his horse, a long, rakish, Irish-built bay, to go up. The horse absolutely refused to do so, and each time the old jarvey flogged him he exhibited



Postcard showing a sentry in the gateway of King John's Castle, c.1910

(Limerick Museum)

very considerable agility in every direction except up the hill. I rode up to the jarvey and asked him what was the matter. "Shure, sir," he said, "I bought this horse to go up this hill, for I am the mail contractor on this road. I've got him here these last three mornings, and I've never got farther than this. Now I'll have to go back again and get another horse, and all the people will get their mails late and they'll report me, and they'll fine me, and the devil do I know what my ould missus'll have to say about it. And, shure, yer honour, 'tis all the fault of this donkey-headed old quadruped."

I asked him whether the old quadruped could jump.

"Shure, yer honour," he said, "he'd

jump out of his harness, traces an' all, if I hadn't got him by the bit."

"Will you sell him?" says I.

"Will I sell him?" says he. "Will I find the fool that'll buy him, yer honour?"

"Bring him up to the old castle in the morning," says I, "and I may find the fool that'll buy him."

"Begorra, sir," says he, "yer a gintleman. I'll be there with him at nine o'clock, with a halter round his old ewe neck."

Next morning, at nine o'clock, just as the sergeant-major was reporting as usual, "All correct," I saw my old friend leading his quadruped into the barrack square. He was a quaint looking horse. He was particularly full of corners, for he wasn't furnished up above at all. But he had



The Lawn Meet, Co. Limerick, print after a painting by Patrick Hennessy (1915-1980)

(Limerick Museum)

good-boned legs. His coat was by way of being a miracle to look at. He had no particular colour to speak of. In some places he was a bit of a roan – Taffy-like; round some other corners he was a dirty bay. In some places, especially where for the last three days he had attempted to get out of his harness at the bottom of the hill, there was no hair at all. But he had a good-looking eye; he had good sound feet; good bone, though his tail was hardly up to Cocker. Most of it, no doubt, was now part and parcel of the car.

I can well remember the look of the correct and austere sergeant-major - who himself was a bit of a sport, but who still considered himself "on parade" - as he cast his eye over that noble quadruped, and wondered what his lieutenant was about. I could see that he was asking himself, "Is he going to run a circus, and is this going to be the freak horse?"

"Mick," says I, "if I get a saddle on the horse, will you ride him; come out with me and put him over a couple of jumps?"

"Shure, yer honour," says he, "an' so I will."

"Sergeant-major," says I, "tell my groom to put a saddle and bridle on this Rosinante" (at the mention of which name the sergeant-major looked perplexed) "and get one of the other horses ready for me."

In a few minutes Mick and I were riding down the old street, making for a

bit of open country. We soon came to a high road, bounded on each side by fairly stiff stone walls. Having come to a gate on one side I pulled up.

"Now," says I, "Mick, are you game to go into that field and take the double across the road?"

"Shure, I am," says he; "but 'tis a long day, yer honour, since I had a jump. Would you lend me your whip? The old horse'll want it, it may be."

I gave him the whip, jumped off my nag, opened the gate, and away went Mick into the field. It was a sight to do one good. There was Mick, what he called his hat stuck on the back of his head, and what was left of his coat-tails flying in the air behind him, heading for the first stone wall, and, before you could say "knife," he was over it like a bird, across the road, over the wall the other side, with a "whoop-la" that you could have heard in the cathedral in Limerick.

Just as well to mention that Rosinante's age was what is known amongst horse-copers as "uncertain," that is, anywhere between nine years old and twenty-four.

After that (it was not long before we were again at the Castle) I asked Mick Molloy how much he wanted for the horse. He said, "Shure, I'll just take what I gave for it, he's no good to me."

I asked him how much that was, and he said, "Five pounds."

I was so surprised, that he became

quite apologetic, I thinking he was asking too much, and quickly began to sing the praises of his mount. I at once disabused him of the idea by telling him that I couldn't give him less than £7 10s., which might help him a little towards his getting an animal that would pull his car up the hill. The horse became mine, and the late owner left the barracks wishing me all the blessings that our good God and auld Oireland could bestow on my humble head. The end of Mick Molloy came later on.

Unruly Times in Ireland

Affairs in Ireland have always been a source of wonderment to me. Ever since the days I spent there, right through to the present time, the doings - at one time or another - of some of the inhabitants of Ireland have puzzled most people. All the talent of all the Prime Ministers and Members of Parliament, within these forty years, has been unable to ensure for Ireland such political and economic conditions as would have made it the happy country which it ought to be.

When I was there in 1877-1878, the times were full of trouble, and I recall several episodes which show the temper of the people at that day. Some four miles from Limerick is a place called "Woodcock Hill," where the rifle ranges, for the instruction in musketry of the troops



Ballynagarde. Photo by Stan Stewart, 1950s

(Limerick Museum)

quartered there, were situated. Close to the range was a small Catholic chapel, standing practically by itself. An infantry regiment was quartered in Limerick at the time. It was an English regiment; its depot, from which the recruits fed it, was somewhere in the North of England, and the number of Catholic soldiers in its ranks was very small in proportion. One Sunday morning, the priest attending the little chapel at "Woodcock Hill" found that somebody had broken into the church and stolen some of the altar fittings and - worse from the Catholic point of view - had taken the chalice used at Mass. This, of course, was nothing less than sacrilege in the eyes of the devout Catholic Irishmen.

Rumours soon began to circulate that, on the previous Saturday evening, after some rifle-shooting had taken place, two red-coats had been seen in the vicinity of the chapel. These rumours were not long in being spread throughout the city, and as the regiment was looked upon as being anti-Catholic, reports went about to the effect that the sacrilege had been carried out not so much for the sake of the value of the stolen articles, but purely out of hatred for the Catholics and for the purpose of desecrating the holy place. The consequences of these rumours soon became apparent. Soldiers, returning home late at night, were set upon and hammered in the by-streets. As a result, instead of going about in ones and twos, they would congregate in bigger groups and took every opportunity of retaliating on the civilians.

On a quiet Sunday morning, a glorious day, at about eleven o'clock, red-coats in small groups rapidly began to arrive at the old Castle. I had been out riding and was returning to my quarters about twelve o'clock, and I found that there were not less than somewhere between 150 and 200 soldiers within the barrack gates. It had been the custom for members of other corps to come into the canteen at the "Castle" for a glass of beer or two, after

their dismissal from church parade. But for such a number to get together was more than unusual.

In the absence of the major, my commanding officer, the responsibility of dealing with the case fell on me. I determined to send my groom with a message to the officer commanding the regiment at their barracks, which were at the other end of the main street in the town, to inform him of what was going on, and then to order the men off in small groups from the "Castle." But there was no time, for hardly had I finished writing my message than the whole lot of red-coats left the barracks together and proceeded towards George Street. They had their waistbelts on but fortunately did not carry any side-arms. Still, the good old infantry belts, with their heavy brass buckles, were quite a formidable weapon to use about in a crowd which was unarmed. I jumped on my horse and, riding by side streets, reached the police station, which was in the middle of the town, close to the main street, to inform the police of what was taking place. However, when I got there, it had become evident to the police that trouble was coming, for large numbers of civilians were congregating and showing considerable excitement in the main street and moving down towards the cathedral from which direction the red-coats were coming.

Before any steps could be taken by the police the crowd of civilians and the red-coats met. For some little time the red-coats made their way through the crowd, slashing with their belts. Some stones began to fly, heavy sticks were being used, and gradually the red-coats were separated and were getting quite the worst of the bargain.

The news of the disturbance had reached the barracks shortly after the two factions had met, and such of the soldiers as were at that time within the barrack walls were ordered to parade under arms,

with a view of marching down the street to restore order. However, by the time they were ready to march out there were but few red-coats left in the streets. They had been dispersed by the crowd and had sought safety wherever they could. They were collected later on and marched up to their barracks by police and military escorts, quiet was once again restored that Sunday afternoon, and the remains of the fight collected in the shape of lost belts, broken shillelaghs, road metal and smashed glass, while a good many broken heads and bruised limbs received attention.

The sequel was this. The regiment was confined to barracks until further orders. Two nights afterwards, in the early hours of the morning, it marched quietly along to the railway station. A troop train awaited its arrival, while at another platform more troop trains landed another regiment which, in equal silence, marched off to its new quarters. So ended this episode, for as soon as, on the next day, the townspeople became aware that the offenders, as they considered them, had gone, they lost all resentment and were quite ready to make friends and to welcome their successors, who soon were enjoying quite a time of popularity. We soldiers always looked forward to election time with considerable anxiety. We were generally ordered to be ready, in case our assistance was wanted in aid of the police, and we knew that long before we should be called on to use our rifles or even our swords brick-bats and other missiles would be flying about, quite indifferent as to whom they would hit. The opposing political sides had one great end in view, and that was to break each other's heads, and they deeply resented anybody else attempting to interfere with that playful form of amusement, so that oftentimes both sides would turn their attention on the police and soldiers, causing us quite considerable inconvenience. However, I must say this, that on no occasion when I

was on duty at such so-called political meetings and elections did the situation become so aggravated as to necessitate the use of their arms by the soldiers.

Still, we did go home sometimes with a sore head, and I received my first wound from a piece of road metal hurled at me from quite a short distance by a great, strapping, fine Irishwoman. This occurred at Belfast some time after the affair at Limerick. As far as I remember there was to be a Catholic procession from somewhere near the Customs House through the principal streets to the Catholic cathedral. The city authorities and the police were notified and fully expected quite high old times as regarded street fighting. They had been advised by those who were carrying out the procession that the Catholics fully intended to reach the cathedral, even if it took them a week and they had to walk over the bodies of whoever tried to stop them. They knew whom they meant all right. The Orangemen had also informed the authorities that they had very rooted objections to this procession and that they were determined that that procession was not to get to the cathedral without some efforts of resistance on their part. Consequently the authorities requested military assistance, and further stated that they thought it would be necessary to have on hand, or close to, a sufficient number of soldiers to preserve the peace. So the scene was set for a pretty disputation. Many police were in attendance, and the soldiers were principally utilized out of view, as far as possible, in the side streets debouching on the route of the procession. It was hoped by these means to prevent sudden rushes by these side streets taking the procession at a disadvantage on the flank.

I was detailed to take charge of a dozen cavalymen and was allotted my own little side street. We waited for some three or four hours before the procession as such, or what was left of it, seemed to be approaching our way. It is difficult to describe the noises that filled the air up to that time. We could not see down the main street, but we could hear the smashing of glass windows and the rattling of stones could be easily made out. And then came our surprise. Suddenly our little side street became full of men and women, rushing towards the main street, no doubt to obtain further points of advantage. I can see the women now, holding their petticoats up with both hands, in which the munitions of war in the shape of road metal were being carried, and from which the men helped themselves as they wanted. They came straight at us. What could twelve men do on horseback against such a rush? They were on us, round us, through us, before we could get our breath. I suddenly felt one of my feet had been taken out of the stirrup-iron, and the next thing was that I was pulled out of my saddle and fell, to my surprise, on something comparatively soft. It happened to be a lady who was paying me this delicate attention, and I fell on her, she sat down on the ground, dropped her



Gold medal of Limerick Skating Rink,
1910 (Limerick Museum)

petticoat out of her hand, and out fell her stock of munitions. It was some little time before she found breath sufficient for her to let me know just what she thought of me for coming there to "interfere with their business." I must have hurt her and annoyed her, for as I got up and was just mounting my horse, which one of the troopers was holding, the lady, a big strapping, fine Irishwoman, picked herself up off the ground, seized the handiest piece of road metal, and threw it, from about three yards away, at the back of my head.

I saw nothing more of the procession that day. I heard no more sounds of revelry. I woke up, late in the afternoon, not in my little side-street but in a very comfortable bed with my head duly bandaged and a nurse sitting alongside of me. I didn't ask why or wherefore I was there. I felt it. All I said to her was, "One whisky and soda, please, quick!" which she brought and which I drank, and then she told me that it had been reported that the tail end of the procession had reached the cathedral at last. So all was well. I bear that honourable scar to this day.

Sport in Ireland

Roller-skating had become the fashion in England, and three or four of us became anxious to introduce it into Ireland. We formed a small company and appointed our directors, whose business knowledge was about equal to their knowledge of the art of roller-skating at that moment. However, all went well. The rink was opened at Dublin. A club of the nicest of the nice was formed. The members practised very hard, day after day, and evening after evening, with closed doors, until we became quite artists. Then came the time to inform the public at large that the rink would be open to them every afternoon and evening, reserving Tuesday and Thursday nights for the members of the club.

From the very jump the rink was a success. The members of both sexes gave exhibitions. We played tennis on roller-

skates; we danced on roller-skates; we held athletic sports on roller-skates, including steeple-chases and obstacle races. In a very short time the public at large became quite as good skaters as those who taught them, if not better. Then came the usual development that has attended similar enterprises ever since. Fancy dress balls, gymkhanas, carnivals and such like, and - what was more satisfactory to the company - money rolling in all the time. The expenses were not heavy but the dividends *were*, and, to our surprise, we members of our company, very few in number, found ourselves absolutely drawing a regular monthly dividend. As we were mostly poor soldiers, this was highly gratifying. I remember investing my first dividend in buying a mate to "Mick Molloy." He was much more expensive, you can guess, and I named him, following upon the naming of Mick Molloy, Larry O'Keefe.

The success of our venture in Dublin led us to thirst for further triumphs, and, at an especial meeting of the company in Dublin, it was decided to repeat the success at Limerick. So it came about that the rink at Limerick was started. We followed the same methods that had been carried out in Dublin, only we had not to undergo the probationary stage of learning to roller skate. A large party arrived from Dublin, and after one week of real joy and fun soon made the rink a success. This made us bold, so we exploited Cork and Waterford and our pecuniary successes increased daily, and some of us began to think that it would be worth while to throw up our military careers and become professional roller-skating rink promoters. That was really my first business venture. Others followed later on, as you will hear by and by, but not with the same result.

Let me tell you now what happened to Mick Molloy. He was certainly a good horse and a splendid jumper, but he had one bad fault and that was that, every now and again, apparently for no reason whatever, except the same cussedness that held him when he wouldn't go up the hill, he would hit a bank or a wall full hard and turn head over heels into the next field. As the weather, as a rule, was moist, and there was plenty of mud about when Mick Molloy performed his athletic feat and I picked myself up from the soft ground, I generally succeeded in attaching to my person a fairly considerable amount of Irish soil. At this particular time one of the great demands by Irishmen was for what they then called "fixity of tenure." Can you wonder that, after my repeated attempts to annex as much of Irish soil as Mick Molloy could help me to, the members of the hunt christened me "Fixity of Tenure"?

I had a visit from one of the best riders in Ireland at that time who was quartered at the Curragh, whose riding at Punchestown Races was always good to watch and who had come down for a few days' stay with us. There was a meet of the hounds; he wanted a ride. I offered him Mick

Molloy, who was in good form just then, and he accepted the offer. I warned him of his one peculiarity. The morning of the hunt we rode out together. It was in the direction of Ballynegarde. There was often a trap to be met in the way of a sunken ditch over-grown with gorse, and unless one knew the lay of it a horse was apt to rush through instead of jumping and find himself and the rider at the bottom of the sunken ditch. I had forgotten to warn the rider of Mick Molloy of this fact. We had a fine seven-mile run in the morning and killed one fox. My friend was delighted with Mick, for he had carried him to the kill without a fall. He was full of praises of old Mick.

The hounds had a spell and, once more, they were thrown into covert. In a short time "Gone away" was heard and the hounds streamed out, following good scent, across a beautiful piece of country. I got into difficulties very early. Old Larry and I had a difference of opinion about a stone wall. He wouldn't have it at any price. I had got out of the line and, unless I could get over that particular wall, I was going to be out of the run. So I made up my mind that over the wall Old Larry must go, with the result that I got over the wall all right but Old Larry didn't. Not only that, but, after giving what I thought at the time was a very impertinent sniff, he put his head and his tail up in the air and trotted off across the field, leaving me in full possession of the wall. That run was over for me. Another belated huntsman caught Old Larry and, as it was late in the afternoon and the hounds were well out of sight, we turned our horses' heads towards home. The hour for dinner came. It was dark. It was raining, but neither my friend nor Mick Molloy had turned up. We dined heartily and well, and it was not till about ten o'clock, when the port wine was going round merrily, that my brother officer came in. Yes, he was wet and weary. He carried a saddle and a bridle in his arms, but - alas! also there was no Mick Molloy. In the second run he had come across one of these sunken ditches. Mick Molloy rushed it, fell into it, and the weight of his rider had broken his back. Such was the end of good old Mick.

The last meet of the Limerick Hounds which was held that season gave the opportunity to some bright members of the club to play off a practical joke on the members of the Hunt. If the weather was suitable after the close of the season, and the Master so wished, a few extra meets were arranged for by him. No regular notice was given for such meets; the secretary of the Hunt generally informed the members by post-card that a meet would be held at such a place next day. This particular year April Fools' Day was on a Tuesday. The members duly received a post-card on the Monday that an extra meet of the hounds would take place at a place called Tervoe, about five miles from Limerick, on the Wednesday. Later on in the afternoon on the same day members received telegrams to say that the meet would take place on the Tuesday instead

of Wednesday. On Tuesday morning members turned up and wound their ways towards Tervoe. At the barracks we had to rearrange our plans as to who could get away for this, perhaps the last meet of the year. It was finally settled, and those of us who could be spared rode off.

On the way to Tervoe we overtook a couple of other members, and after riding a little distance they said, "You fellows had better go back. This is a sell. Don't you know it's April Fools' Day? Go back." Well, we believed them and turned back, for they told us they were only going out to see the fun at Tervoe.

We were going back when we met some other members going out, so we told them, "Don't you go. This is all a sell. Don't you know it's April Fools' Day?" They looked at us in surprise and said, "Well! How can you fellows have been made fools of like this? Those two chaps are just making April fools of you. Come along, let's hurry on or we'll be late." It was in no pleasant mood that we trotted again towards Tervoe. We were anxious to interview our two kind friends. Then we arrived at the Meet to find that it was a sell all right, and that the whole of the members of the Hunt had been sold. We only had one satisfaction left, and that was that *we* had been sold twice that morning instead of once.

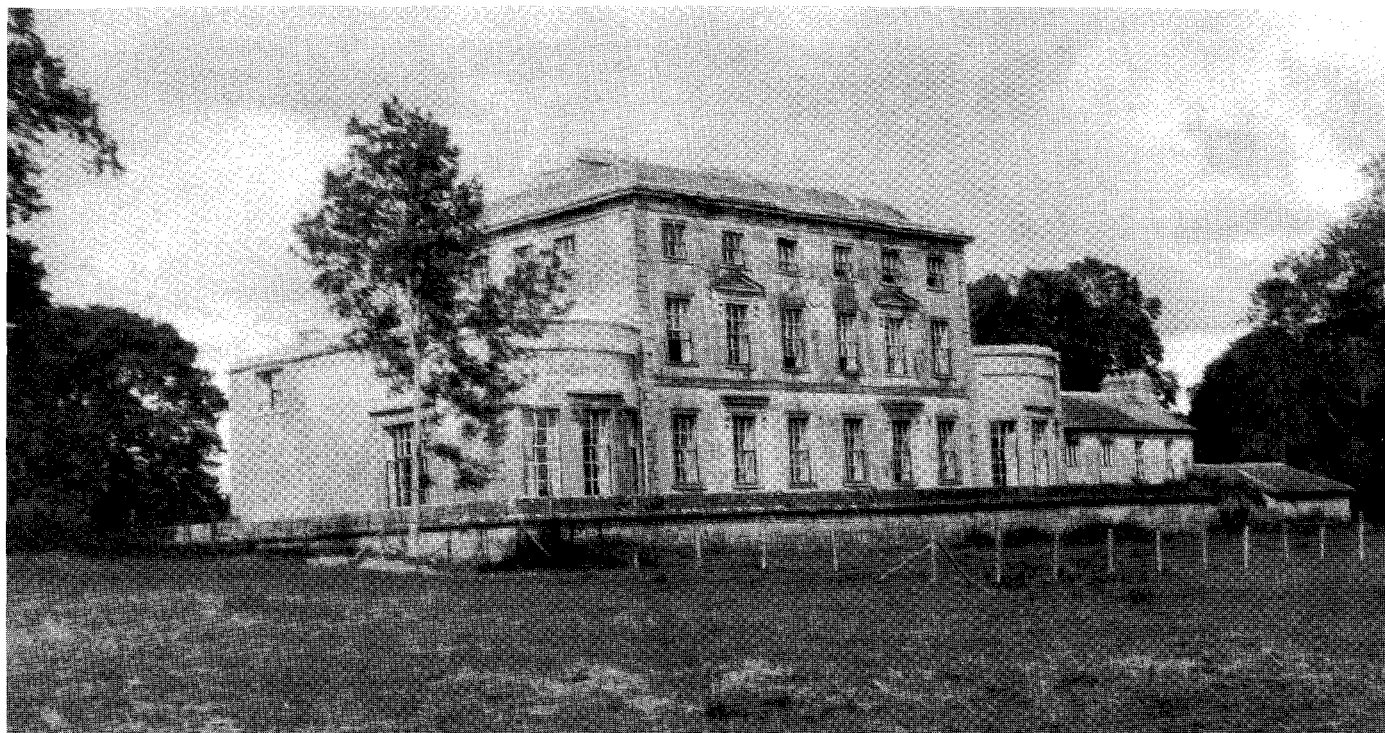
I must leave dear old Ireland, pass over my stay in Cork; the glorious days in Queenstown Harbour; how we dropped two fourteen-ton guns, the first of their kind, which we were to mount at Carlisle Fort, into the bottom of the sea and how we picked them out again; the late nights and the early mornings at the Cork and Queenstown clubs; the beautiful girls for whom Old Ireland is so much noted; the meetings of the South United Hunt Club at Middleton, where the Murphys, Coppingers and other splendid riders lived. And I must also pass over the six weeks of what in those days appeared to me as the term of solitary confinement right away at Greencastle Fort at the entrance to Lough Swilly. I went up there in the winter. Greencastle village was a small summer resort for the people of Londonderry. There was an hotel, which was open in the summer, and was managed by a man and his sisters. In the winter it was shut up. A few small cottages were also closed up. The population consisted of the policeman and three or four fishermen.

There was nothing to do for the men at the fort, except a little gun-drill. The nearest village was Merville, some four miles off. It was too rough as a rule to go fishing with any degree of comfort, so it was that I learnt how to play marbles. The policeman, a couple of the fishermen and the hotel-keeper, when he was sober - which was not often - were quite experts, and taught me the game. They called it Three-Hole. The idea was this: you had to make nine holes, and the one who was last in doing so had to stand drinks, and, in addition, to put his hand down on the ground, with the knuckles facing the

others, each one of whom had three shots at him with a good hard marble. This may be of little interest, indeed, as far as the game is concerned, but it shows one how different were the lives of us young officers then from what they are nowadays.

After my stay at Greencastle I proceeded to take charge of our detachment at Carlisle Fort, Queenstown Harbour. Have you ever been there? If not, go when you get the opportunity. Certainly Carlisle Fort itself - it lies on the left-hand side of the exit from the harbour - is difficult to get to. Either you had to cross by sailing-boat from Queenstown - there were no motor launches - or else drive right round the long arm of the harbour, at the end of which is Rostellon Castle. In the summer either trip was, as a rule, quite enjoyable. If one wished to go to Queenstown or Cork, an hour or so with a fair wind would land you at Queenstown. If, on the other hand, time was no particular object, the drive to Middleton, the headquarters of the hunt, was a most pleasant one. You passed Aghada Hall, then Rostellon, farther on. You could rest at the Sadleir Jacksons' hospitable home. But in the winter it was not so pleasant. The hunting country was all on the inland side of the harbour. One's mounts had to be sent round by Rostellon the day before the meet. And then, if those of us quartered at Carlisle wished to get to the meet in time, we had to make a very early start in our garrison boat, so as to reach Queenstown for an early breakfast at the club, and then a long drive to the meet. Sitting in an open boat at 4 a.m. on a dark winter's morning, with perhaps a head wind and four miles of a choppy sea to battle against, required a considerable amount of endurance and keenness, but we did it all right. It used to strike me as an odd circumstance in those days that the Tommies who manned the boat were so pleasant over the job. They were *not* going to hunt. They were *not* out to enjoy themselves. We were. Yet there were always volunteers, who apparently found pleasure in helping their young officers, though at very considerable inconvenience to themselves. But then the right Tommy is, and always has been, a good chap.

It was out with the Cork South United Pack of foxhounds that I first met with a serious accident. I was riding a ripping mare, which I had named Kate Dwyer, and which, up to the day of this accident, had not given me a fall. The hounds were running up a long gully. The fox did not seem to have made up his mind as to which side of the gully he would break. Some of us thought it would be to the right, and we were following the crest of the gully on that side. We came to a stone wall on the slope of the hill. It was a thin wall - daylight through it. One had only to give the stones a push to make a very easy gap. I walked the mare up to it quietly and was leaning forward to push the stones down with my whip, when, I presume, the mare thought I wanted her to move on. So she tried to make a standing jump of it. It



Rear of Tevoe. Photo by Ernest Bennis, 1950s

(Limerick Museum)

was a failure. She struck it and we fell together, my right leg being crushed by her weight falling on it on some of the displaced stones. The leg was not broken, but the flesh and tissues were all torn below the knee, and the bone pretty well lacerated. I was taken to Middleton, the then home of the Murphys and the Coppingers and many other good sportsmen, and, after having my injuries patched up, went to hospital. The mare, I am happy to say, had hardly even a scratch on her. She was the best bit of horseflesh I ever threw my legs across. I sold her afterwards to a friend from Northumberland, who, having married an Irish girl, used to come every year to put in a couple of months' hard riding in Limerick. He bought her from me at the end of the season and took her home to Northumberland. She did well in the summer, but, on the opening day of their season, she fell down dead in the middle of their first run. Poor old Kate.

My accident proved more severe than I anticipated, and I was sent home to Scotland on sick leave. After two months my leg mended up and I returned to Old Ireland in the early summer. Our company's annual training and the landing and mounting of the two first "Woolwich infants" - fat, six-inch muzzle loaders - at Carlisle Fort filled up the time till the autumn months. As I was very keen on shooting and was given three weeks' leave, I returned to Limerick, in the neighbourhood of which sport was of the best. I never had anywhere in the world a better day's woodcock shooting than the O'Grady family gave me in County Clare. Long narrow belts of wood in an undulating country were full of the so-called best sporting bird in the world. Hard to down; best to eat. Equally good with the woodcock shooting in Clare was

the wild-duck shooting in the quaking bogs of County Limerick, and away in the loughs, westwards, towards the mouth of the Shannon.

Before proceeding further, I have to make all admission. My readers will have no doubt have discovered by this time that I am faithfully recording what comes to my mind of the old days. If the incident I record tells against me I am quite content to accept the blame. Why not? No one really knows where the hand of fate is leading one. Thank God we know not what to-morrow is going to bring forth. All pleasure and zest in life would be gone if we only knew what to-morrow was going to do for us. Yet we have to behave to-day - or should behave to-day - so as to secure a pleasurable and profitable to-morrow, in case we are permitted to be alive on the morrow. It seems to me how wonderful it is that any act on one's part - quite unpremeditated, or only if done just by chance - can have so great an influence on all our to-morrows. It may ruin all our prospects or may make us the happiest of mortals. It may bring the saddest of morrows to those dearest to us, or it may shower blessing - unintentionally, of course - on our worst enemies.

Well, no more sermons. What is the admission I was going to make? Well, I will now tell you, right off. I fell in love. Quite hopelessly, desperately in love. It was very annoying and distressing, for had I not, up to then, loved so many that I loved no one in particular, at any rate, except for short periods of time. What was coming over me, I wondered? Oh, but, whatever it was, it was indeed sweet, and, if love is freely, wholly given, and is returned, then is it not heavenly bliss on earth? Yes, no doubt. But, what about to-morrow?

There was, unfortunately, no chance of a happy tomorrow for us. Except our love,

all else was against us. She was young, sweet as only a real colleen can be, her Irish blue-violet eyes set in her lovely forehead, fringing which her glorious gold chestnut hair sparkled in the sun with the richest tints. To watch her on horseback was a dream. But - and now your sympathies will, I hope, be given to me - she was married. She cared not for her husband; her husband evidently did not particularly love her. It was the old story. Two young people marrying young and then discovering that they had been too hasty and that they could not live together happily. There was nothing new in this situation. It seems to be always happening. I have come across such happenings more than several times since the days I am now writing of. The Divorce Court appears to be useful in such cases and relieves the sufferings of those affected, at times. But the Divorce Court cannot reach everyone, can it? There is not enough time nor are there enough Divorce Courts to get round.

But let me get on with my affairs before I start a discussion as to what love is. Let it suffice that I was suffering from a violent attack of it. However, something else was to claim me and set me on to fresh fields.

Just then, as the result of the evenings and moonlight nights spent wildfowl shooting in the bogs in the cold, I got rheumatic fever, and once more returned to hospital. My illness, which became very serious, led to my being ordered the longest sea voyage I could take, in the hopes of regaining my strength. This necessitated my resigning my commission and taking my passage for a trip to New Zealand, though the doctors did not seem to think I should reach that far-off land. Thus ended my second romance. And now for fresh worlds to conquer, if Providence only gave me health.