

looked like a humorous picture card. It showed a drunken man the preceding Christmas trying to fit a key to the lock of his domicile, under the heading, 'I can't get in,' and another picture of the following Christmas showing a man trying to fit a key to a prison door with the heading, 'I can't get out.' From this tip a master key was fabricated in Ireland and smuggled into the gaol baked in a cake. De Valera, Sean Milroy, and Sean MacGarry with this key opened a rear door of the prison and escaped into fields where Collins and Boland were waiting with an automobile.

PLANNED DISGUISES.

"It was Collins who planned to get them out of gaol, through England and across Ireland. He arranged about the places to stop and planned the disguises.

"It was one of his strongest points, his cleverness in intelligence work, which finally led to his specialising in this activity. He became the army director of intelligence.

"It was frequently said in Ireland that the Republican Army's success was largely due to the superiority of its intelligence work over that of the British. The credit belongs to Collins. The operations we carried out would not have been possible save for the information which Collins's department was constantly able to furnish about the enemy's plans and movements.

"When Robert Barton escaped from Mountjoy on St. Patrick's Night, 1919; when 19 other prisoners and myself escaped from Mountjoy in broad daylight a month later; when Austin Stack, four others, and myself escaped from Manchester prison, in broad daylight in October, 1919, Michael Collins was the leader in devising the relief.

"When the question of resort to guerilla warfare came up for discussion, a large number of the members of Dail Eireann, and even of the Cabinet were not prepared to take the responsibility.

"Michael Collins then accepted full responsibility, went ahead and speedily earned the attention and hatred of the British forces in Ireland.

"I, myself, talked with a hotel-keeper (not a Sinn Feiner), whose hotel Collins frequented, and he told me that Captain —, of the British Secret Service, put down £4,000 on the table in front of him and offered him more if he would ring up a certain number the next time Collins visited his premises.

"It indicates how loyally the people were behind us that of the hundreds of people in the humblest circumstances, errand boys, hotel waiters, cab drivers, chamber-maids, who knew Collins, and saw him daily in Dublin, not one of them was tempted by rewards or frightened by threats into betraying him.

"In plans for the smuggling of our men from Ireland to England and from Ireland to America, Michael Collins always played the principal part. I, myself, was smuggled between Ireland and England a dozen times. I did not have to do anything. I put myself in the hands of Collins and he made all arrangements. Anything he arranged always worked perfectly. He was in touch with policemen, sailors, postmen, all sorts of vital services, and he knew how to use them all for the benefit of the cause.

TWO NOTABLE ESCAPES.

"All through the most intense part of the war I was in daily contact with Collins.

"On the night preceding bloody Sunday, November 21, 1920, Dick McKee, Michael Collins, and other officers, including myself, attended a meeting in the — hotel. The meeting ended about 10 o'clock. I was standing in the hall talking with two men, one of whom was Conor Clune, who had come up from Co. Clare on private business. Clune was not connected in any way with the Volunteers. Suddenly there was a commotion in the hall, and some one cried out: 'Here are the "Black-and-Tans," we're done for, Pierce!' A body of Auxiliaries rushed the entrance and ran upstairs to the room where we had been meeting. There were commands of 'Hands up!' In the confusion, I succeeded in slipping down the passage covered by a man who was holding his hands up, and escaped into the garden in the rear of the hotel. There was no way out. I climbed into the yard of the next house and ran through the stable to a back lane. There was an armored car in the lane and Auxiliaries were on guard outside the back door. I saw the searchlights playing on the gardens.

"I got under the shelter of a wall and remained there,

unable to move hand or foot for an hour and a half. Auxiliaries in their search came within a few yards of where I was but did not discover me. It was nearly 3 a.m. long after the British curfew hour, when the raid was over, so I had to remain where I was until morning. I learned next day that Collins, with his usual luck had also escaped.

"Poor Clune, however, was arrested, taken to the Castle, tortured and shot, along with Dick McKee. McKee had escaped from the meeting, but was captured later. It was the beginning of the full flood of the reign of terror in Dublin."

After describing some of the reign of terror, Commandant-General Beaslai adds:

"Arthur Griffith, acting President of the Irish Republic, was arrested. He appointed Michael Collins acting President in his place. This fact has never been revealed to the public.

"On Collins' shoulders devolved the task of keeping the army and the Irish people firm against the terror, and he discharged the task so well that by the middle of December, 1920, Mr. Lloyd George began to feel that a campaign of terrorism would not succeed, and opened, through the medium of Archbishop Clune, negotiations for a truce on the same terms as those on which a truce was eventually concluded in July, 1921.

"Mr. Lloyd George's terms in December, 1920, had been accepted by Mr. Collins, when suddenly a telegram from Father Michael O'Flanagan, calling upon Lloyd George for peace queered the pitch.

Waving Father O'Flanagan's telegram in Archbishop Clune's face, Lloyd George said: 'This is the white flag; they are breaking.'

ACTION OF FATHER O'FLANAGAN.

"By his telegram Father O'Flanagan almost stamped the Nationalist movement into an abject surrender.

"Michael Collins steadied the country by a few lines calling upon the people to stand firm, and published in the *Irish Independent*, whose staff were threatened with death by the 'Black-and-Tans' for daring to print the statement.

"Father O'Flanagan subsequently visited Mr. Lloyd George and held private conversations with him. He (Commandant-General Beaslai) had nothing to say in criticism of Austin Stack or Mr. O'Kelly, but he challenged the right of Father O'Flanagan to attack them in the spirit in which he had attacked them."

LONDON CONFERENCE.

According to Commandant-General Beaslai, when the Irish plenipotentiaries were about to depart for the negotiations with Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. de Valera stated at a private Session of Dail Eireann:—

"You must give these men the most whole-hearted confidence. Remember what you are asking them to do. You are asking them to win from the British Government in negotiations, what the entire might of our army is absolutely unable to accomplish."

He would not swear that was a verbatim quotation of Mr. de Valera's remarks, but it was very nearly verbatim. Mr. Collins protested strongly against being sent to London, but Mr. de Valera had insisted that Mr. Collins was the man who knew how to talk to Mr. Lloyd George.

"The Cabinet member who insisted that the powers of the Irish plenipotentiaries must not be limited by the Dail was Eamon de Valera."

Commandant-General Beaslai stated that after Mr. de Valera returned from America in January, 1921, Mr. de Valera, at a special meeting of Dail Eireann advised "easing off" with the policy of physical force. Mr. de Valera was entirely sincere in his advice. But Collins firmly defended the policy of war, and Dail Eireann backed him by a large majority.

The secret of the successful operations of the I.R.A. was due in large measure to the "flying columns," who, numbering less than 3,000 in all, bore the brunt of the active fighting.

Two of the four men whom Mr. Lloyd George "black-listed" after the negotiations of Archbishop Clune in 1920, were Mr. Collins and Mr. Mulcahy. These he refused to give a safe conduct to. Who the third and fourth were was not stated, but they were all quite certain that the third must be Cathal Brugha.