

THE first serious job I got in the Active Service Unit was as secretary, bodyguard, and messenger boy to Peter Daly, the Brigade Commandant. It was a terrific thrill for me. I was only just turned eighteen. The two of us lived in one room of a big deserted house outside the city, and I came home only

once a week to change my underclothes. The family asked no questions and the neighbors treated me as something like a national hero.

# Baptismal

A STORY

BY FRANK O'CONNOR

Not that Daly was anyone's idea of a Big Shot. He was a handsome, tall, broadly-built, easy-going fellow who wore big specs over his blue eyes, and he had the most disarming manners. Whenever he got into one of his famous scrapes he always tried to get out of it by charm. When charm failed he fell back upon the other thing, but only when it did fail. He was always most apologetic about these adventures of his, and when he talked of them it was only to

blame his own foolishness and sympathize with whatever poor unfortunate might have got hurt on the enemy side. Even about spies he always managed somehow to say the good word. He would describe how one of them behaved when he found himself trapped and then add reflectively, "Cripes, Mick,

'twas a blooming shame to bump him off. Sure, he didn't know what he was doing half the time. I blame Jack Kenefick a lot for that, blackening him to Headquarters." To a romantic young fellow of eighteen his conversation was a series of anti-climaxes. Why he picked me out at all I don't know, but I think it must have been my studiousness. He rather regarded himself as a spoiled scholar.

"Ah, I shouldn't be in this thing at all, Mick," he confided in me with a smile. "I ought to have been a teacher like my old fellow, but the bad drop came out in me. Too bloody wild — that was the trouble with me. Sure, I broke the old man's heart."

"You might go back to it after," I suggested.

"Ah, I'm too old, man," he said regretfully. "I'm too old. But I'll tell you what I'd like to do if I ever got the chance. I'd like to take up the fiddle properly. Cripes, man, I'm very fond of the fiddle! Do you know, I think if I had the training I might make a bloody good fiddler. Would you believe that?"

I was ready to believe anything about him then; a fellow who had got away half a dozen times from military and police, how could he fail to be a champion fiddler? Now, I'm not so

very sure.

We had been knocking round together for a couple of weeks when one day, just before lunch, as we were on the way to one of our meeting places, Daly decided to go up the quays for the sake of quietness. It was a spring day; one of those late March days which are like mid-summer except for the faint cloud of green on the trees. There was hardly a ripple to break the painted hillside reflected in the river. There was hardly a soul except for three little girls playing hop-scotch. Suddenly his lower lip came up like a shutter. "Look out now!" he said, almost without moving his lips. There was no need for me to look out. We were half-way up, too far to do anything but continue on our way while an armored car cruised slowly down at our side of the street. There was an officer in a steel helmet watching from the turret, and he had a revolver strapped to his wrist. The officer looked closely at us and Daly looked coolly back at him.

For one moment it seemed as if we might get past, but then the officer bent his head and said something to the driver. Almost at the same moment Daly's gun came from under his coat and he fired twice. I fired too for the sake of effect, but

the whole thing was over before my finger found the trigger. The armored car swung suddenly out of control and mounted the pavement within a few feet of us.

"Run for it now!" shouted Daly, doubling up, and as we reached the shelter of a side street the machine gun on the armored car started to tear the bricks off the corner.

Daly didn't halt until we had traversed two or three back streets and were approaching the main east to west thoroughfare. He was grinning broadly and his eyes had a sparkle in them. I wasn't in the least sparkling. I was an exceedingly harassed young man. Everything had gone too fast for me.

"Think we got that officer?" I panted, trying to make my voice sound matter-of-fact.

"If we didn't we gave him a good fright," said Daly, stopping to straighten his tie in a shop window.

"What'll we do now?" I asked, panic suddenly catching up with me.

"We'll look at the ducks," he replied with a chuckle, and, taking me by the arm, he led me up the long, tree-shaded avenue towards the park. It was pretty full; we had to share a bench with a couple of old bobbies discussing horses and

jockeys, and I had the mortification of listening to Daly talking about ducks to a couple of barefooted kids.

I'll give you a penny now if you'll point out the drake to me," he said.

"That wan, mister," said one.

"'Tis not," said the other.

"There he is mister!"

"Ye're both wrong," said Daly. "How old are ye?"

"Nine, mister."

"And where do ye go to school?"

"Sullivan's Quay, mister."

"And you mean to tell me in Sullivan's Quay school they don't teach fellows of nine to know a drake from a duck? What sort of old school is that?"

Then he gave them both pennies. He seemed to like kids. Later in the afternoon, when we felt the holds-up would have eased off a bit, we went back down the way we had come to an ice-cream shop where we had tea. Having missed my lunch, I was *ravenous*. As we came out a newsboy was skeltering past and I bought a paper. There it was, in the *Late News*, a few insignificant lines.

Shortly after one o'clock today an armored car was ambushed close to the North Gate Bridge by a party of men armed with revolvers, sub-machine guns

and bombs. In the subsequent engagement, Martha Darcy (8) 42 Coleman's Lane was injured, and, on admission to the hospital was found to be dead. Several of the attackers are believed to have been wounded.

I laughed with mortification at the last sentence, but Daly's face clouded.

"I didn't see any kids, did you, Mick?" he asked anxiously.

"As a matter of fact, I did," I said. "There were three of them, playing pickie."

"I wish to God I'd seen them," he said gloomily.

"Why?" I said. "It wouldn't have made any difference."

"Maybe not," he said, "but I might have taken some precaution."

WE WENT ON down a side street. It was all very well for him, but it seemed rather uncalled-for to spoil sport over my baptism of fire. Of course, I was sorry for the kid too, but there was nothing we could do about that now.

"Like a drink?" I asked, seeing him so low.

"Do you know, I think I would," he replied thoughtfully, and we went into the first pub we came to and sat in the snug, which was empty.

"Stout?" I asked.

"No, whiskey," he replied. "I need it."

"Oh, it's a bit of a shock all right," I agreed, "but you can't let things like that prey on you. You need all the nerve you have."

"I know that, Mick," he said in a depressed tone, "but I was always very fond of kids."

"Oh, so was I," I agreed, "but still, accidents happen."

"That doesn't make it any easier for the fellows that cause them though," he said with a half smile.

"I don't honestly see how you can say we caused it," I argued. "After all, it isn't as if we used the machine gun."

"Ah, I know all that," he said with a trace of impatience, "but, merciful God, Mick, death isn't a matter of argument. A kid of eight, playing pickie on the pavement — what does it matter who fired the shot? A lot you'd care if she was yours! The kid is dead, and that's all about it."

"I grant you that," I expostulated, "but after all, kids get killed every day. They get killed because a commercial traveler with a thirst wants to get in before closing time, or because some slum landlord wants to squeeze the last ha'penny out of their fathers and mothers, and it doesn't matter

to anybody. Our job does matter. It matters to the kids themselves more than it does to us."

"Oh, that's the right way to look at it," he agreed with a nod. "I know you're right. It's only that I'm a bit of a fool about kids."

For a few moments his face changed again; the lower jaw hardened as though he were trying to speak without moving his lips and a hard look came in his eyes. "But I'm telling you, Mick Mahoney, if the kid was mine, I'd never stop till I got some of the fellows that were responsible, and I wouldn't mind much which side they were on."

I felt rather like an offended David singing before Saul. I thought Daly really let his taste for anti-climax go a bit too far. He seemed to read what was in my mind for he suddenly gave an attractive grin and went to the counter.

"I suppose you think I'm a bit dotty?" he said over his shoulder, half in amusement, half in mockery.

"I didn't think you were so very dotty this morning."

"You'll go back and tell the Squad that Peter Daly is nothing but an old softy?" he went on.

"I'll say he's a very lucky man."

"Cripes, do you know, 'tis true for you, Mick," he exclaimed with sudden boyish ingenuousness. "If they managed to get us today 'tisn't other people's troubles we'd be fretting about now. We ought to be down on our bended knees. We'll have another drink and then we'll knock off for the day. Do you know what I feel like doing? Going to the blooming Opera House! 'Tis years since I saw a show."

We finished our drinks and set off down the same side streets towards the river. Daly was in better fettle; he was even laughing at himself.

"Pon my soul, Mick," he said, "but we're a comical mob. A lot of blooming amateurs that'll never be anything else. And it all comes of not having a little garden of your own. It does, I declare to my God!"

Then as we passed the corner of a street leading to the river a group of old women at the opposite wall bawled at us.

"Don't go in there, boys! There's English soldiers in there."

Daly paused and then crossed the road to them.

"What's that you said, ma'am?" he asked with his head cocked.

"Soldiers, sir," gabbled one. "They're mad drunk. They

smashed the head of one poor man up the road."

"How many of them are there?" asked Daly, and again his jaw was set.

"Four of them, sir."

"Have they guns?"

"No, sir, only bottles and belts."

"That's all right so," he said and his face cleared. "We'll see have they any empties. Come on, Mick," he said to me, "and give that gun of yours a rest. We did enough of harm today."

"Oh, just as you like," I said, well-pleased that it wasn't going to mean anything more serious.

He went ahead of me, pushed in the swing door, and stood with his back to it, erect and resolute.

"What's going on here?" he shouted.

There was a lot going on. It was an old-fashioned pub with a pedimented mahogany display stand and an arcade of mirrors. The mirrors were in smithereens and the display bottles were smashed or overturned and dripping on to the floor. They were obviously being used as cockshots. Four Tommies in solitary grandeur were sitting at a table in the middle of the glass-covered floor with a couple of bottles of whiskey before them.

"Here's the bloody I.R.A.

boys!" yelled one, a little runt of a man, and with extraordinary swiftness and accuracy he sent a bottle flying at Daly's head. Daly ducked; the bottle smashed against the wall, and then in three or four great strides he was across the room and throttling the little man at the other side of the table. Two of the Tommies bolted; no doubt they thought the whole I.R.A. was after them. The fourth was pluckier; he flung himself on Daly and I flung myself on him. He was pretty beefy, and I haven't the build for all-in wrestling, but, on the other hand, he was half-canned and I wasn't. We wrestled while I waited for a chance to trip him and I noticed Daly and the smaller Tommy rolling across the floor. Daly was the more powerful, but the Tommy fought with tremendous agility. Suddenly there was a loud bang, and the smaller Tommy sprang up and bolted. I started to pull my own gun, but the big fellow wouldn't oblige me by waiting. I followed him to the door and saw the two of them disappearing down the street. I raised my gun but I hadn't the heart to fire. With a certain feeling of complacency I returned, sticking my gun back in my holster, and then I noticed Daly still prostrate on the floor.

"What is it, Peter?" I asked.

"I'm shot," he replied in a dull voice, his lower jaw stiff.

"Shot?" I echoed incredulously. "Where are you shot?"

"In the chest. He had a gun all the time. I'm done for."

I saw the tiny hole the bullet had made in his vest and tried to repress the panic that rose in me.

"You're not done for as long as you can still talk about it," I said with assumed cheerfulness. "The hospital is only at the end of the street. Can you make it?"

"I'll try," he said between his teeth.

I put my arm under his shoulders and he raised himself firmly enough.

"It can't be very bad when you can do that," I said, but he didn't reply.

"What is it all, sir?" one of the old women asked as I helped him out.

"Ye were wrong about the guns," I said bitterly. "One of ye run ahead to the hospital and tell them there's a wounded man down the road."

When we reached the side door of the hospital two of the women were already there, talking in the hall to a young doctor in a white coat.

"Ye can't stop here, lads," he said. "The place is full of

soldiers."

"This man is badly wounded," I informed him. "You'll have to do something for him. He can't go any further."

"Where is he hit?" he asked, helping Daly to a bench.

"The left side."

"All right. Leave him here and I'll do what I can for him. But for Christ's sake clear out you, and take whatever stuff ye have with you. Those fellows upstairs are mad."

"What ails them?"

"One of their fellows was killed by the bridge this morning and they're out for blood. Come back when they're gone and ask for me. MacCarthy is my name."

"So long, Peter," I said to Daly who was lying back on the bench with somebody's coat under his head. "I'll see you later on." But his eyes were closed and he didn't answer me.

I WENT out again into the warm summer-like evening. Before the hospital I saw four or five armored lorries with sentries posted. I dumped the guns in a little paper shop nearby and went back again to the park. It had turned cold; the park had emptied and I had the bench all to myself. Suddenly I found myself shaking all over. I wasn't really afraid for Daly. A man

with a bullet in his heart doesn't walk a couple of hundred yards as he had done. And still I was scared. I was as bad about him as he had been about the kid. Those weeks of constant association had brought him closer to me than people I had lived with all my life, and death had become real to me through him. I almost wished I had never met him.

I returned when the park was closing. The avenue was quiet, and the young trees made an early dusk. The lorries had gone so I went to the main hall and asked for MacCarthy. He came down the stairs three at a time with his white coat flying. He didn't know me.

"How's the patient?" I asked lightly.

"Oh, your pal! I'm sorry but he's dead."

"Dead?" and I must have gone white for he steadied me with his hand.

"Come up to my room and have a drink. Who was he, by the way?"

"Peter Daly, the Brigade Commandant."

"Good God!" he exclaimed from the nationalist half of his mind. "The poor devil was dead before you were out the door," he added professionally. "Would you like a look at him?"

"I suppose I might as well," I said hopelessly. Between weariness and strain I was on the point of tears.

Rattling on about the way the English soldiers had gone on in the hospital, he led the way across a yard to a shed like a garage with a big door that opened on a side street and a small window high up which let in little light. He switched on a solitary light with an office shade. Under it three figures were laid out, and the nearest was Daly's. He looked very peaceful and somehow different, as if only the fighter had died in him and left the fiddler he had wanted to be.

But what really froze the blood in me was the grouping of those figures on the slab, for one was a little girl of eight with a high bumpy brow and brown, bobbed hair and the other was the fair-haired officer whose face I had last seen looking down at me from the turret of the armored car. In spite of the bandages you could see that the back of his head was gone. It all came intolerably close to me; I was walking up the quay beside Daly, and the officer was watching us from the armored car and the little girl was playing hopscotch a hundred yards away under the trees in their first leaf. Everything was living and shin-



ing at one moment and at the next it was black out. It was like being in at the end of the world. I said nothing to the doctor; I didn't think he'd understand.

Later in his room while we were drinking, looking down on the dark river and the slumland streets beginning to light up in the dusk I tried to explain to

him. It was like a weight on my chest, but as I expected, he didn't really know what I was talking about. He thought I was tight. You have to be through a thing like that to understand it, and even then what you feel isn't understanding. I suppose there really isn't anything to understand.

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We were sitting in the lobby of the Hotel Excelsior in Naples. The old man said, There is something that I do not understand. Why do Americans drink so much?

— So that they can enjoy life, I said.

— Do you mean they do not enjoy life unless they have had a lot to drink?

— They begin to enjoy life when they drink, I said.

— That is very strange, the old man said. It is such a young country and the people all look so healthy. Yes. That is very strange.

— C. B.



# FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE

## APPRENTICE WITH A PAST

BY ERNEST LEISER

### *Frankfort-am-Main*

THEO KOCH, a young German I got to know this winter, is only twenty-two years old but he is a veteran of the last war. When he was fifteen, still in a Berlin high school, he was called up for military service and sent into combat just in time to face the full impact of the German defeat and to take a soldier's consequences. In the last days of the fighting he was captured by Red Army troops and sent east to a prisoner-of-war camp in Poland, where he nearly died from the treatment he got. Released because he was too sick and weak to be of any use as a slave laborer in Russia, Theo painfully made his way back to what was left of his home and family; he returned to school for a while and tried to patch together something of a life for

himself but he found there was nothing for him in post-war Berlin. One night, following the example of thousands of others, Theo slipped across the frontier, without a Soviet interzonal pass, and struck out for the west. He ended up in Frankfurt, where he has been ever since.

Sometime after he arrived, his mother and sister, Wally, with her two children, also escaped Berlin and came to Frankfurt, where Wally had the promise of a job with the American military government; Wally rented a bomb-damaged apartment and fixed it up. It was a happy day for Theo when he moved in with them.

Today Theo is working as an apprentice salesman in a textile supply house and feels he is on the way to a career. A two-year