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BILLPOSTING DURING THE IRISH REBELLION

It is something of a unique experience to carry on billposting while a rebellion is raging and bullets whizzing around. It has been the good or ill fortune of Mr. David Turner, manager of David Allen and Sons, Printers and Billposters, Dublin, to have had this experience during the recent out-break in that City and for the information of our readers we give a short outline of the sensation of carrying on billposting under fire, written by himself.

The outbreak started on Easter Monday about noon, and being a holiday I was not at the office, but had some friends staying with me for week-end whose intention it was to return to Belfast on train leaving Dublin at 3 p.m. on that day, but as these friends were unable to travel, as no trains left for several days, they returned to my house. Being anxious to get away I went out on the hunt for a motor for them, but after a hard try this idea had to be abandoned as no one would send out cars. A walk round some of the public buildings where members of the Irish Volunteers etc., were on guard, armed with rifles and fixed bayonets, and a look at some of the looting which had already started made us come to the decision that there was "no place like home." Everyone was excited and nothing discussed but the rebellion and the number of soldiers, policemen and civilians that had been shot—streets were crowded and shots of snipers were to be heard in all directions. This continued throughout Monday night.

On Tuesday morning I got down to office much as usual. No police or military to be seen anywhere. Tried to get on 'phone on arrival at office and got reply that nothing but military calls could have connection. All offices and places of business closed.

Shortly afterwards messenger from chief commissioner of police called to see if we could or would post some bills proclaiming martial law in Dublin city and county. I replied that these bills were going to be posted and this I caused to be done during the comparative quiet of Tuesday. I had a general run round several parts of city on bike, and saw public buildings, corner pubs., and other prominent positions being held by rebels. Sniping very general and this continuing through Tuesday and Wednesday, and same nights, looting spreading.

Got to office on Thursday morning, little later than usual—about 10 o'clock—shortly after arrival got 'phone message asking if we could do some more posting, replied yes. Got together some of our billposters who lived in immediate neighbourhood of office and gave instructions for them to stay in billroom till posters came in. I then discovered that all the men I had got into the place with the exception of two, had got "cold feet." One or two said they wanted to go home for breakfast; another's wife was sick etc., so I decided to tackle the job myself, so started my eldest son, Mr. William T. Turner, with a man on bikes to north side of city, while I did the south side with the other man. We had been provided with military passes, to enable us to get through where the military had by this time taken up positions. Firing was going on very heavily all over the place from machine guns, snipers mounted on roofs of houses, etc., etc. We got on very well for some time, nothing serious taking place worse than an occasional grumble from the crowd that always gathered where we stopped to get up a poster as to why we had none of the republican government's proclamations to which I invariably replied that we had not secured their orders. Dublin is a city of a great many bridges having a river through centre with canals running round north and south sides. These bridges were the important places for our posting and when we were on the top of one of these bridges, some shots came which caused the crowd to clear to shelter and in the rush my man carrying can of paste got knocked down. He scrambled up and

left his can where it lay with the paste spilled. I had then to consider whether to return to yard for can and more paste or to take the risk of venturing on to the bridge and gather up the paste lying on the bridge, and the latter course I decided on and after getting can and what I could of the paste, got under way again and finished what we had to do on that day. My son, who set out for the other side of city got into such a warm corner that he and the man with him were forced to shelter at one spot for nearly two hours before they could get on. He finished his work and got home all right, but one incident which occurred when within a short distance of my house must be told. My son and I were coming along a canal bank making to get over one of the bridges, when we saw some soldiers rushing a corner public house beside the bridge with fixed bayonets. We heard shouts from military to go back, and not stopping instantly, we saw soldiers' rifles go up to their shoulders and the muzzles pointed towards us. So lost no time in turning and getting home by another route. I can assure your readers there is not the slightest inclination to argue the question under such circumstances. Heavy firing in all directions all through night.

Friday morning started for office on bike about 10 o'clock. Got along considerable part of way which was usually fairly quiet, to discover a number of people at a street end, a few of whom were venturing an occasional peep round the corner to see what was going on down the street. At this corner I did an exceedingly foolish and risky thing in this way. I intended dismounting from my bike while in shelter but without thinking ran on and dismounted and then when it occurred to me where I was and seeing lying full length across the entire roadway about 150 yards to my right with their guns pointed at a number of rebels concealed about some houses to my left, I thought of remounting, which after some time, in my excited state which appeared quite a long time, I succeeded in doing and so soon got into shelter of the houses on the other side. I got very close to Trinity College on this day, after great difficulty, but at this time things were very hot so my son, who was with me, persuaded me to turn and make my way home, while he went on to the police office, but no orders were to be had, so our canvassing mission on this journey drew a blank.

On Saturday I decided that the most urgent and vital matter was providing something to exist on and after very hard work some provisions to get us over Sunday were procured. My son got into police office again but no orders.

On Sunday morning my son went into town and got to police office and was then informed that proclamations of martial law over all Ireland, and the regulations under martial law had to be posted on that day, and if we could get a taxi a military pass would be provided to get it through. We got a hasty lunch and started out on our bikes. We made for nearest garage, but "nothing doing." We then made to get into Dublin Castle and when we managed to get within a short distance of the back entrance the military held us up and nothing would persuade them to allow us past. We showed our passes and explained our business to the officer but could not get past. We were then told we could get up towards the Castle by street alongside Patricks Park, and mounting our bikes made tracks that way. We had not gone far when we came into view of the rebels who were in large numbers on the roof of Jacob's biscuit factory, where a very large republican flag was flying from flag staff and, as bullets went round us in all directions we went at top speed and when we got into shelter it was to find that military were in possession here again on the sheltered side and nothing we could say or do would get us to Dublin Castle by this route. We had to go back by route we

came and run the gauntlet through the shower again from Jacob's. Fortunately we had a slight fall in ground and a good asphalt roadway, and could start our bikes while in shelter so I can tell you we lost no time in doing the 100 yards or so where we were under fire. We made into the city by another route and on passing through Stephen's Green the white flag of the rebels was still hanging from arm of one of the figures on top of College of Surgeons where rebels had surrendered a few minutes before. We got to police office, got a promise of a taxi close at hand but with the barricades and obstructions could not get it out of the immediate neighbourhood of the garage. My son went to another garage and got a taxi and succeeded in getting it to police office where we had paste cans, brushes and the posters. It was on this day I first saw Sackville Street in ruins, after the bombardment and fires. Nothing could properly describe the scene of desolation. Place beyond description, buildings burnt out, walls fallen, tram overhead wires and telephone wires all broken down, dead horses, wreckage of every sort. It was at the beginning of this day's posting that I saw Liberty Hall, and adjoining houses after being shelled. No necessity to attempt to describe the place. Some of the pictorial papers have given pictures.

We got ahead with our work very well but were held up frequently by military and not only carefully questioned, provost marshal's passes for taxi and 'selves examined, but our Taxi searched on more than one occasion. We had also frequently to change our route because of the heavy firing going on or the barriers thrown across the roads. After about a couple of hours' work we got to one position where Royal Dublin Fusiliers were on duty and I was told by a friend that another of my sons was on duty in the district with his regiment. I went to the house which had been made their headquarters, and enquired of officer in charge if Lieut. Turner was about. He looked me up and down very suspiciously—I was all splashed with paste and, I believe, had a paste brush in my hand—and in rather a rough tone asked what I wanted to know about him. I replied that I happened to be his father and I can safely say I never saw such a change come over anyone as with this officer who began complimenting me on having such a son, whom, he told me, had been very useful and much in evidence since their arrival in Dublin early on Easter Tuesday morning. I was taken in and my son was brought down out of bed where he had been asleep, fully dressed, boots and all having been on duty all night previously and not long off duty. After a few words I had to get on with my work and I have since thought it must be certainly a unique experience for father and son to meet under such circumstances, certainly in these countries. During our few minutes' chat my son mentioned that when he was in Sulva Bay fight and afterwards when fighting over the frontier at Bulgaria—where he was wounded—mentioned in dispatches and has since been decorated by the King with the military cross for conspicuous gallantry in action—he then thought he was fighting for Ireland as part of the British Empire and never expected to have to fight Irishmen to help keep Ireland from being put under a rebel flag. I may here say that another son, Lieut. A. Turner, 17, Durham Light Infantry, who was wounded near Ypres, has since written regretting he could not be with his brother to help keep the Union Jack aloft in Ireland.

We continued our work and at nearly every corner we stopped we were asked about other districts of the city as to how they fared, in some cases only a few hundred yards apart. One district being as much isolated from another as if hundreds of miles away. No letters, no papers, no 'phones. No visiting, but getting into house by 7.30 p.m. at latest. No open windows, no lights showing. One very exciting time we had for a few minutes was when we got to James's Street, near Guinness', when we saw a big crowd ahead so got taxi to side and jumped out and we stood on footpath while about 50 of the rebels fully armed, rifles with fixed bayonets, etc., came marching along, being cheered by hundreds of women and children. We got into taxi quick and left that street as hurriedly as possible. After making a complete circuit of City and in and out many streets and roads we got back to police station, where we were entertained to tea and had the great luxury of butter on this occasion, something we had not had for some days. My son saw taxi and driver to garage as we had the pass and Taxi would not be allowed about street without it. During all this time the only vehicles we saw were ambulances, doctors cars flying big red cross flags or armoured cars. We had now to get home.

Mounting our bikes again we started and for some time did not see a living soul, but heavy firing was going on apparently in every direction. The sensation of hearing such a fusillade and not seeing anyone is something I don't want again. We turned out of one street where everything was like a city of the dead into another where we were immediately met with yells from military who were sheltering in doorways on each side "Get back," "Get back." We did not wait to argue but got back and attempted another way. We had only got a few hundred yards when just over our heads from the back windows of a house commanding one of the canal bridges came a shot from the rifle of a rebel which at once turned us without another shot or word of argument. We went along that very rough canal bank at a very high speed in case the chap whose bullet we were so near stopping when he sent it from the back of the house tried to get us with another from the front, but so far as I know no shot came after us. As we approached the next canal bridge the firing of two machine guns, mounted behind a barricade on top of the bridge by military, and the firing from the rebels who had taken possession of houses overlooking this bridge was very heavy. A sentry was posted on canal bank in shelter of houses and I was afraid that if he turned suddenly and saw us coming towards him at high speed he might open fire so I started ringing my bell and on sentry looking round halted and showed pass, which I need hardly say was a very poor shield against a bullet. We had then to get on to the canal bridge through a small gate, cross the bridge mentioned above, get past the barrier by getting in through another small gate on to tow-path on other side of canal and get out on to road by another small gate about five yards further down at which another examination of our pass had to be made, but fortunately here again the sentry had cover. We had then about 200 yards in the open to get to nearest opening off main road which was done in shortest possible time and as we were then very nearly home we were not at all sorry, especially as it was within a few minutes of the Martial Law hour 7.30. This incident ended what I feel sure was the most exciting six hours ever spent by anyone posting bills.

Tuesday and Wednesday of the following week we had some more billposting to do but as things were rapidly quieting down, nothing of a very exciting character took place.

I enclose copy of one of the posters we had to post which tells the tale of the rebellion rather gruesomely perhaps, but nevertheless this may be necessary to convince some reader of the state of affairs in Dublin. Oh, that so many valuable lives should have been taken, military and civilians, property destroyed and misery caused which might have been avoided under proper government. But perhaps all may not go for nothing as it may help open the eyes of Britons to threatened dangers.

Should any member of Billposters' Association require a temporary manager for a posting campaign under fire I offer myself for the job, claiming experience qualifying me for such a position. But either the salary must be very tempting or the object such as to put it to me as on this occasion—It is the duty of every loyalist to do all in his power to keep Union Jack flying—and I can claim that although if only by posting the King's proclamations, my son and myself have done "our bit," equally as much as the men fighting of which I have two sons making up the number.

If you see your way to put this in "BILLPOSTER" I trust it will be of interest to some of the members.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID TURNER.

Reduced Facsimile Reproduction of Poster exhibited recently in Dublin, above referred to.

PREVENTION OF EPIDEMIC.

Persons discovering dead bodies should inform the Police or the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Municipal Buildings, Castle Street, immediately.

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