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**THE  
UNITED IRISHMEN  
THEIR  
LIVES AND TIMES**





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**The Whiteboy**

*The Arrest of a Whiteboy by the Yeomanry. From an  
Engraving by J. A. O'Neill, after a Painting  
by W. J. Scanlan in the National  
Gallery, Dublin*





THE  
UNITED IRISHMEN

THEIR LIVES AND TIMES

BY  
RICHARD ROBERT MADDEN

M. D., F. R. C. S., M. R. I. A.

NEWLY EDITED  
WITH NOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHY AND INDEX

BY  
VINCENT FLEMING O'REILLY

NEW YORK  
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## THE SHAMROCK EDITION

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

**M**ADDEN'S "The United Irishmen, Their Lives and Times," has been out of print for fifty years, although it is the acknowledged standard biographical work devoted to the noble characters who participated in the stirring events consequent to the rebellions of 1798 and 1803—events of glorious memory, though tinged with terrible sadness in their conclusion.

These biographical histories were begun in 1842, when the first of the four series was issued, but it was not until 1846 that the last volume was given to the public.

This mode of publication, at considerable intervals, necessitated many faults in the arrangement of materials, coming to the author's hands, as the data did, at various periods and from various countries during the intervening years.

This vast mine of evidence relative to Ireland's greatest attempt at freedom, remained unedited for fifteen years, when, frequent demands for its reprinting having reached Dr. Madden, he set about the task of recasting the entire work, and in 1857 published the first series of the new edition.

Again subject to a delay of years in its final and complete issuance it was not until the year 1860 that the fourth series was given to the public.

It has so remained for fifty years, no attempt having

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been made since to reprint this work of "patient research and loving enthusiasm." Its publication in both editions, spread as it was over several years, has rendered the collection of a set of either edition very irksome to students of Irish History.

Since 1860 many new monographs on that period of Ireland's history have appeared to throw new lights on many of the characters dealt with by Dr. Madden. Among these are W. J. Fitzpatrick's "Sham Squire and the Informers of 1798," with its revolting revelations of the career of Francis Higgins and lifting the cloak of mystery from the betrayal of Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Francis Mangan, the sequel to this work, "Curious Family History, or Ireland before the Union," and finally "Secret Service Under Pitt," by the same recondite author, with its exposition of the career of Samuel Turner, a member of the directory of the United Irishmen and betrayer of its inmost secrets; supplemental information on the lives of Napper Tandy, Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Pamela and the informers, Reynolds, McNally, etc., Michael MacDonogh's "The Viceroy's Post Bag," giving the hitherto unpublished correspondence of the Earl of Hardwicke; Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet's "History of the Emmet Family," and numerous others.

These circumstances have led to the publication of the present edition, carefully annotated, largely improved and in more elegant form.

VINCENT FLEMING O'REILLY.

# THE MEMORY OF THE DEAD

BY JOHN KELLS INGRAM

John Kells Ingram, the author of "The Memory of the Dead" or as it is more popularly known "Who Fears to speak of '98?" was born at Pettigo, County Donegal, Ireland, in 1822. At the time he wrote this immortal lyric Ireland was in a fervor of patriotism inspired by the genius of Davis and Mangan, Mitchell and Duffy and the other brilliant writers on the "Nation," in which paper it was first published. Ingram, who afterwards became a professor and librarian of Trinity College and President of the Royal Irish Academy, has been accused of regretting the writing of such patriotic sentiments, but the following letter properly explains his attitude. It was written to the editor of "Songs of Freedom" who requested permission to publish the poem. "I am quite willing," he wrote, "that you should print my stanzas in your volume. You will not suppose that the effusion of the youth exactly represents the convictions of the man. But I have never been ashamed of having written the verses. They were the fruit of genuine feeling." The words were set to music by William Elliott Hudson, which helped to render them more popular and in all probability this poem will be sung when all Ingram's other writings are forgotten.

Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?

Who blushes at the name?

When cowards mock the patriot's fate,

Who hangs his head for shame?

xiv    MEMORY OF THE DEAD

He's all a knave, or half a slave  
Who slights his country thus;  
But a true man, like you, man,  
Will fill your glass with us.

We drink the memory of the brave,  
The faithful and the few—  
Some lie far off beyond the wave—  
Some sleep in Ireland, too;  
All—all are gone—but still lives on  
The fame of those who died—  
All true men, like you, men,  
Remember them with pride.

Some on the shores of distant lands  
Their weary hearts have laid,  
And by the stranger's heedless hands  
Their lonely graves were made;  
But though their clay be far away  
Beyond the Atlantic foam—  
In true men, like you, men,  
Their spirit's still at home.

The dust of some is Irish earth;  
Among their own they rest;  
And the same land that gave them birth  
Has caught them to her breast;  
And we will pray that from their clay  
Full many a race may start  
Of true men, like you, men,  
To act as brave a part.

They rose in dark and evil days  
To right their native land;  
They kindled here a living blaze  
That nothing shall withstand.

MEMORY OF THE DEAD      xv

Alas! that Might can vanquish Right—  
    They fell and passed away;  
But true men, like you, men,  
    Are plenty here to-day.

Then here's their memory—may it be  
    For us a guiding light,  
To cheer our strife for liberty,  
    And teach us to unite.  
Through good and ill, be Ireland's still,  
    Though sad as theirs, your fate;  
And true men, be you, men,  
    Like those of Ninety-Eight.





## MEMOIR OF R. R. MADDEN

**R**ICHARD ROBERT MADDEN was born in Dublin on the 22nd of August, in the memorable year of 1798, the year during which most of the events transpired of which he became the faithful chronicler. He was the youngest son of Edward Madden, a silk merchant, by his second wife, Elizabeth, daughter of Thaddeus Forde, of Corry, County Leitrim. He was educated privately and subsequently studied medicine in Paris, Naples and at St. George's Hospital, London. While in Italy he acted as correspondent of the "Morning Herald." Between the years 1824 and 1827 he visited Smyrna, Constantinople, Crete, Egypt and Syria. Returning to England in 1828 he was elected a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in the following year. He was made a fellow of this college in 1855. In the year 1828 Dr. Madden married Harriet, youngest daughter of John Elmslie of Jamaica.

For a few years he practised as a surgeon in Curzon Street, Mayfair, but in 1833 was sent to Jamaica as one of the special magistrates appointed to administer the slavery statute. His abolitionary zeal embroiled him with the planters and he resigned his office in 1834.

After a tour on the American continent he returned to England in 1836 and was appointed Superintendent of Liberated Africans and Judge Arbitrator in the Mixed Court of Commissions at Havana. He remained there until 1840 when he accompanied Sir Moses Monte-

## xviii MEMOIR OF R. R. MADDEN

flore on his philanthropic mission to Egypt. In 1841 he was employed on the West Coast of Africa as Special Commissioner of Inquiry into the Administration of the British Settlements and exposed an infamous evasion of the law known as the pawn system, which he discovered was nothing but slavery under a miserable disguise.

From November, 1843, to August, 1846, Dr. Madden resided at Lisbon as special correspondent of the "Morning Chronicle." In 1847 he was appointed Colonial Secretary of Western Australia, where he exerted himself to protect such rights as still remained to the aborigines. Returning to Ireland on furlough in 1848 he interested himself in the cause of the starving peasantry and in 1856 resigned his Australian office to become Secretary of the Loan Board Fund at Dublin Castle.

Notwithstanding the absorbing nature of his public duties, Dr. Madden found time to cultivate his literary tastes and to acquire distinction as an author. In looking over his writings, besides admiring their quality and texture, one is amazed at their quantity, the more so considering his other avocations. He has written largely in the departments of politics, sociology, history, travel and *belles lettres*.

No one who reads Dr. Madden's books can fail to appreciate their research, eloquence and love of fatherland. He traces the accounts of his country's vicissitudes with power and beauty and leaves on record a wealth of historic lore.

Dr. Madden is best known as the author of "The United Irishmen, Their Lives and Times," 1843-46, 7 vols., 8vo; 2nd Ed., 1857-60, 4 vols., 8vo, an historical

## MEMOIR OF R. R. MADDEN xix

work of great importance; the "Life and Martyrdom of Savonarola," London, 1853, 2 vols., 8vo, considered by a few critics his best work, and the "Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of Blessington," London, 1855, 3 vols., 8vo.

Dr. Madden was a member of the Royal Irish Academy and a corresponding member of the Society of Medical Science. He was an ardent Roman Catholic, a patriotic Irishman and a delightful host and raconteur. He died at his residence in Vernon Terrace, Booterstown, on February 5, 1883, and was buried in Donnybrook graveyard. His wife survived him and died February 7, 1888. By her he had issue of three sons.

Besides the three works above mentioned, Dr. Madden was the author of the following:

Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine in 1824-7; London, 1829, 2 vols., 8vo.

The Mussulman, or Life in Turkey, a Tale; London, 1830, 3 vols., 8vo.

The Infirmities of Genius, Illustrated by Referring the Anomalies in the Literary Character to the Habits and Constitutional Peculiarities of Men of Genius; London, 1833, 2 vols., 8vo.

A Twelvemonths' Residence in the West Indies during the Transition from Slavery to Apprenticeship; London, 1835, 2 vols., 8vo.

A Letter to W. E. Channing, D. D., on the Subject of the Abuse of the United States Flag on the Island of Cuba and the Advantage Taken of its Protection in Promoting the Slave Trade; Boston, 1839, 12mo.

Poems by a Slave in the Island of Cuba Recently

## xx MEMOIR OF R. R. MADDEN

Liberated from the Spanish, with the History of the Early Life of the Negro Poet, written by Himself; to which are prefixed Two Pieces Descriptive of Cuban Slavery and the Slave Traffic; London, 1840, 8vo.

Address on Slavery in Cuba, presented to the General Anti-Slavery Convention; London, 1841, 12mo.

Egypt and Mohammed Ali, Illustrative of the Condition of His Slaves and Subjects; London, 1841, 12mo.

History of the Penal Laws Enacted Against Roman Catholics; London, 1847, 8vo.

The Island of Cuba and its Resources, Progress and Prospects; London, 1849, 12mo.

Shrines and Sepulchres of the Old and New World; London, 1851, 2 vols., 8vo.

Phantasmata; or, Illusions and Fanaticisms of Protean Forms Productive of Great Evils; London, 1857, 2 vols., 8vo.

The Turkish Empire in its Relation with Christianity and Civil Life; London, 1862, 2 vols., 8vo.

Galileo and the Inquisition; London, 1863, 8vo.

The History of Irish Periodical Literature; London, 1867, 2 vols., 8vo.

Connection between the Kingdom of Ireland and the Crown of England, with Privy Correspondence during 1811, 1812, 1816 and 1817; Dublin, 1845, 8vo.

Breathings of Prayer in Many Lands; Poems; Havana, privately printed, 1838, 8vo.

## MEMOIR OF R. R. MADDEN xxi

Dr. Madden's contributions to literature also include many treatises read before or published in the journals of scientific societies, as well as privately printed genealogical brochures on the Madden family. From materials collected by him were also compiled "Ireland in 1798: Sketches of the Principal Men of the Time, based upon the published volumes and some unpublished Mss. of the late R. R. Madden;" edited by J. Bowes Daly, LL.D.; London, 1888, 8vo.

Thus while discharging with distinguished ability and fidelity the varied and onerous duties of a long official life, at home and abroad, Dr. Madden found time to establish by his voluminous writings a deservedly high literary reputation.

VINCENT FLEMING O'REILLY.

Memoirs, chiefly autobiographical of R. R. Madden, edited by his son, Thomas More Madden, 1891; "London Times," Feb. 8, 1886; *Men of the Time*, 11th Edition; Royal Kal., 1848; *Med. Dir.*, 1886; *Madden's Literary Life of the Countess of Blessington*, 1.100 et seq.; Allibone's *Dict. Eng. Lit.*





THE  
UNITED IRISHMEN  
THEIR  
LIVES AND TIMES





### Seal of the United Irishmen

*Designed by Robert Emmet for the Use of his Brother,  
Thomas Addis Emmet, when Travelling, as a Token  
or Insignia of his Office as a Member of the Lein-  
ster Directory. The Original was Cut in an  
Emerald Brought from India and presented  
to Dr. Robert Emmet by Sir John Temple.  
Now in the possession of Lieutenant  
Robert Temple Emmet*



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# THE UNITED IRISHMEN

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

**T**HERE is no greater error," says Sismondi, "than to suppose that any great event, or epoch, can be profitably viewed apart from the causes by which it was produced and the consequences by which it was followed. The habit of viewing facts apart from the circumstances by which they are connected and explained, can have no other result than the fostering of prejudice, the strengthening of ignorance, and the propagation of delusion." To no portion of history is this truth more strikingly applicable than to the "Lives and Times of the United Irishmen." It is impossible to appreciate their motives, or form a right estimate of their conduct, without an accurate knowledge of the circumstances of their age and the condition of their country; and this knowledge can only be obtained by examining the causes that produced the very anomalous state of society in which they lived and acted. Ireland is a puzzle and perplexity to Englishmen and English statesmen, chiefly because they are unacquainted with its history; or, what is

worse, that they have received as its history, fictions so monstrous, that many of them amount to physical impossibilities. A brief outline of the history of the English connection with Ireland is therefore necessary, to show how it happened that, at the close of the eighteenth century, two distinct bodies were preparing to reject allegiance to England, what motives led them to unite, and how their formidable union was dissolved.

The four first centuries after Strongbow's invasion passed away without the conquest of Ireland being completed: the wars with France and Scotland, the insurrections of the Barons, and the murderous wars of the Roses, prevented the English monarchs from establishing even a nominal supremacy over the entire island: instead of the Irish princes becoming feudal vassals, the Anglo-Norman barons who obtained fiefs in Ireland, adopted the usages of the native chieftains. The attention of Henry VII. was forcibly directed to this state of things by the adherence of the Anglo-Norman barons and the Irish princes with whom they had formed an alliance or connection, to the cause of the Plantagenets. They supported Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck; when these adventurers were defeated, they showed the greatest reluctance to swear allegiance to the Tudors; and Henry could not but feel that his crown was insecure, so long as the



Irish lords had the power and will to support any adventurer who would dispute his title. From that time forward it became the fixed policy of the Tudors to break down the overgrown power of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, and to destroy the independence of the native chieftains. In England the Tudors were enabled to create a new nobility; the progress of the Reformation was accompanied by the elevation of several new families to the peerage, and the struggle between the Protestants and Catholics in that country, was for a considerable time identical with the contest between the old and new aristocracy. In Ireland it was impossible to adopt the same course of policy: there was not a gentry from which a new aristocracy could be formed, and the Tudors were forced to supply their place by grants of land to colonists and adventurers. The Irish and the Anglo-Norman barons looked upon these men as intruders, while the ruling powers regarded them with peculiar favour, as being the persons most likely to establish and promote an "English interest in Ireland." This political motive must not be confounded with the religious movement which took place about the same time; it was as much the object of Mary as it was of Elizabeth, to give Irish lands to English settlers, in order to obtain a hold over Ireland; it was under Mary that the lands of Leix and O'Fally were forfeited, and the lord-

deputy permitted to grant leases of them at such rents as he might deem expedient.

In the midst of this political convulsion, an attempt was made to bring Ireland to adopt the principles of the Reformation, which had been just established in England. There was a vast difference between the situation of the two countries, which deserves to be more attentively considered than it usually has been. It was on a papal grant that the English monarchs, from the very beginning, had rested their claims to the allegiance of Ireland, and there was consequently something like an abandonment of these claims, when they called upon the Irish to renounce the supremacy of the Pope. But not only had the English kings described the Pope as the source of their power; they had for centuries made it a principal object of their policy to maintain the power of the episcopacy and priesthood in Ireland, against the ambition or avarice of the Anglo-Norman Barons. They had themselves armed the Church with power and influence greater than they could overthrow.

After the long night of the Middle Ages, an intellectual revival had filled Christendom with discussions which weakened the strength of ancient institutions, and prepared men's minds for the reception of new opinions. Ireland had not shared in the general movement; whatever may have been the condition of the island before the

English invasion, the four centuries of political chaos and constant war subsequent to that event, had rendered it one of the most distracted countries in Christendom; there had been no precursors to make way for a religious change; the Irish had never heard of Huss, or Wickliffe, or Luther, or Calvin. The only intelligible reason proposed to them for a change of creed was the royal authority; and they were already engaged in a struggle against that authority, to prevent their lands being parceled out to strangers. Add to this, that the reformed religion was preached by foreigners, ignorant of the very language of the country, and there will be little difficulty in perceiving that the attempt under such circumstances to establish Protestantism in Ireland, by the conversion of the Irish, was utterly impossible. In fact, the project of converting the natives was soon abandoned for the more feasible plan of colonizing Ireland with Protestants from England.

The calamitous wars of Elizabeth's reign were waged by the Irish, and by the descendants of the Anglo-Normans settled in Ireland, equally in defence of their land and their creed; when the insurgents prevailed, they expelled the Protestant ministers and seized the goods of the English settlers; when the royalists triumphed, they established churches and confiscations. After ten years of almost incessant war, an ex-

penditure of money that drained the English exchequer, and of life that nearly depopulated Ireland, the entire island was subdued by the arms of Elizabeth; but the animosity of the hostile parties was not abated, they had merely dropped their weapons from sheer exhaustion. Colonies had been planted in the south of Ireland on the estates forfeited by the Earl of Desmond and his adherents, but the settlers were nothing more than garrisons in a hostile country; they continued "aliens in language, religion, and blood" to the people by whom they were surrounded. Under such circumstances it was not to be expected that many of the higher ranks of the English clergy or laity would seek a settlement in Ireland; most of those who emigrated were more or less attached to the principles of Puritanism, which Elizabeth hated at least as much as she did Popery, and this circumstance gave the Protestant Church in Ireland a stronger tendency to Calvinistic doctrine and discipline than would have been allowed in England. Geneva was a greater authority with the Irish Protestants than Lambeth, as any one may see who consults the canons of the Irish Church; and this unfortunately widened the difference between them and the natives of the country they came to colonize.

A new difficulty about the tenure of land arose, which afterwards produced very fatal con-

sequences. According to English law, the ultimate property of all estates is in the Crown, and land is held only by virtue of a royal grant: according to the Irish law, the property of land was vested in the sept, tribe, or community, who were co-partners with their chief rather than his tenants or vassals. Whenever a change was made from Irish to English tenure, an obvious injustice was done to the inferior occupants, for they were reduced from the rank of proprietors to that of tenants at will. This principle was never thoroughly understood by the English Lord Justices, and hence they unintentionally inflicted grievous wrongs when they tried to confer upon any portion of the country the benefits of English law. In fact, the change from Irish to English tenure involved a complete revolution of landed property, which would have required the most delicate and skilful management to be accomplished safely; but those to whom the process was entrusted were utterly destitute of any qualifications for such a task. The Commission of Grace issued by James I., for the purpose of securing the titles of Irish land, was viewed with just suspicion by the great and the small proprietors, and its results were an uncertainty of tenure and possession, which kept every person in a state of alarm.

The real or supposed plot of Tyrone, Tyrconnel, and O'Doherty, afforded a pretext for con-



fiscating the six northern counties over which the sovereignty of these chieftains extended; but whatever was the amount of their guilt, it is obvious that they could only forfeit that which they themselves possessed. They were not the proprietors of these counties; the actual occupants of the soil were not accused, much less convicted, of any participation in the plot; and therefore the sweeping seizure of half a million of acres, without any regard to the rights of those who were in actual possession, was a monstrous injustice, to which few histories can furnish a parallel. It must, however, be confessed, that this violent and odious measure was quite in accordance with the spirit of the age; confiscations and grants of land had become a regular part of the public administration under the Tudors, and was continued under the Stuarts; the old Norman aristocracy was thus broken down, and means provided for endowing a new nobility; the security of the reformed religion was insured, because its interests were identified with the tenure of the new estates. The Ulster confiscation differed from the forfeitures in England and the South of Ireland, chiefly by its vast extent; in order that the grants to the new settlers should be efficient, it was necessary either to remove or exterminate an entire population.

Setting aside the consideration of justice, the plans which James formed for the Plantation

of Ulster, were on the whole wise and prudent. It was resolved that the land should be divided into estates of moderate size; that the grantees should within a limited time erect *barrens*, that is, castles with fortified court-yards; that they should settle a number of English or Scotch tenants on the lands; that they should reside on their estates, and never alienate any portion of them to the mere Irish. Had the King combined with this scheme a plan for doing justice to the native occupants, and had the local government executed the royal instructions as they were originally framed, the Plantation of Ulster might have produced all the good which is ascribed to it, without the attendant evils by which it was, at least for a considerable time, more than over-balanced. At first everything seemed to promise a favourable result; the City of London took an active share in the scheme, and built on its grants the cities of Coleraine and Londonderry; the new order of Baronets was created, and the sums paid by those who purchased this new dignity were destined to the support of soldiers for the defence of the new Plantation.

The first difficulty which presented itself, arose from James's resolution to give a proportion of the forfeitures to his Scottish countrymen; a determination which gave great offence to the English, and which eventually exercised a fatal influence over the fortunes of the Stuarts, for the

Scotch who settled in Ireland were subsequently the staunchest of adherents to the Covenant. A more fatal error was the choice of settlers: surrounded by a set of hungry favourites and mendicant courtiers, James bestowed grants of lands with a reckless profusion surpassing that of Henry VIII. at the suppression of monasteries. Instead of a valuable body of settlers, he created a hungry horde of land-jobbers; English tenants were sparingly introduced, few *bawns* were built; proprietors remained at court and entrusted the management of their grants to agents, and the fatal system of sub-letting was established under the sanction of the City of London.

It is not necessary in the present day to dwell upon the notorious profligacy, corruption, and infamy of the court of James I., or to show that no iniquity was too monstrous, and no craft too mean, for the royal idiot when he sought the means of gratifying his rapacious favourites. Irish forfeitures had proved a most valuable supply, but the extravagance with which they were given away soon exhausted the stock, and it became necessary to seek out new sources of plunder. An inquisition into titles, based on the principle of English law, that the right of possession to estates must be ultimately derived from the King, was the expedient which presented itself; but as English law had not been introduced into the whole of Ireland until the close of



Elizabeth's reign, and as four hundred years of anarchy had produced countless usurpations and uncertainties, there was scarce a landed proprietor in Ireland whose estates were not placed at the mercy of the Crown. A new host of harpies was let loose on the devoted country; the lawyers and the judges were incited to use every device of legal chicanery, by promises of a share in the spoil; and to the half million of acres confiscated as we have before described, another half million was added under pretence of informality in the title. Even this amount of forfeitures was insufficient to gratify the rapacity which the King's lavish distribution had excited, but in the midst of the proceedings James died, and the task of completing his project devolved upon his unhappy successor.

The pecuniary distresses of Charles inspired the Irish proprietors with the hope of obtaining security; they presented to the King certain regulations for confirming the titles of estates, and establishing an indulgence of religion, called "Graces," and offered the King a very large subsidy provided he would permit them to become the law of the land. Charles took the money, and eluded the performance of his promise. He had adopted his father's principle of policy, to create at all hazards an "English interest in Ireland," and to effect this by pushing the principle of forfeiture to an extent which

James himself had not contemplated. Wentworth, afterwards Earl of Strafford, was the Lord Deputy chosen to execute this iniquitous project, and he commenced his proceedings on the largest possible scale, by attempting to obtain the forfeiture of the entire province of Connaught, under the pretence of defective titles. One jury in the county of Galway had the courage to find a verdict against the Crown; Wentworth arrested the jurors, brought them before the Court of Star Chamber in Dublin, sentenced each to a fine of four thousand pounds, and to imprisonment until the said juror had confessed on his knees that he was guilty of wilful and corrupt perjury. The sheriff was thrown into prison, and Wentworth pressed hard that he should be executed as a warning to other functionaries, adding, "My arrows are cruel that wound so mortally, but it is necessary that the King should establish his rights." The forfeiture of the lands of Connaught, and perhaps of all Ireland, would have been completed, had not the increasing troubles in England and the open revolt of Scotland induced Charles to recall his Deputy to scenes of more immediate interest and importance. It became the King's interest to conciliate his Irish subjects, and the Graces became the law of the land.

The Graces, it is true, were passed, but the King was no longer a sovereign; his power had

been transferred to the Puritan Parliament of England and the Covenanters of Scotland; both of these bodies formally declared that they would not consent to the toleration of Popery in Ireland, which was in fact to proclaim a war of extermination against the Irish Catholics. A conspiracy was organized against the supremacy of the British Parliament; the main object of those who joined in it being to obtain for Catholicism in Ireland the same freedom which the swords of the Covenanters had won for Presbyterianism in Scotland. An associate revealed the plot to the Puritan Lords Justices at the moment it was about to explode, and Dublin was saved from the insurgents. But the first signal of revolt spread desolation over the northern counties; the native Irish, who had been driven from their lands at the time of the Great Plantation, rose upon the settlers, and in spite of the exertions of their more merciful leaders, drove them from their settlements, and when they encountered any resistance, slaughtered them without mercy. This massacre has been absurdly exaggerated, and prejudice has often induced writers to involve all the Catholics of Ireland in its guilt; but in truth it was confined to the northern counties, and was directed exclusively against the English settlers on the confiscated lands. The Scotch Presbyterians were not only spared, but were allowed to retain possession of their prop-

erty until they took up arms to support the cause of the English Puritans; in fact, the Ulster revolt was rather a *Jacquerie* than a rebellion, and it was of course accompanied by all the outrages and cruelties which might be expected from an infuriated and starving peasantry, brutalized by long oppression and goaded by ostentatious insult. About twelve thousand persons were probably murdered in the first outbreak of popular rage before the Catholic lords and gentry could interfere and give the insurrection the dignity of a civil war. A sanguinary proclamation, issued by the Lords Justices, and a formal vote of the British Parliament that Popery should be exterminated in Ireland, rendered the civil war inevitable, and rendered it impossible for any person to devise a means of compromise and conciliation.

This dreadful war, in which both sides manifested an equal degree of exterminating fury, is one of the most perplexing recorded in the annals of any country, from the great variety of the parties engaged, and from their rancorous hostility towards each other. The English were divided into the friends of the Parliament and the friends of the King; the latter again were subdivided into a party disposed to grant reasonable terms to the Catholic lords, and a party which agreed with the Puritans that Popery should not be tolerated; all were, however,

united in a desire that advantage should be taken of the commotions to reap a new harvest of confiscations and grants. On the other side were the Lords of the Pale, Catholics, indeed, by religion, but English by descent, inclination, and prejudice, zealous Royalists, and the more so, as the King's enemies upbraided him with a secret inclination in favour of Popery; the Irish of the north, whose chief anxiety was to recover their ancient lands, and expel the intrusive settlers; the men of Connaught and Leinster, whose great objects were to attain security for their property and toleration for their religion; a large body, chiefly among the southern Irish, aiming at establishing the independence of their country under a Catholic Sovereign appointed by the Pope; there were other divisions of party, each obstinately bent on its own object, without any regard for the general interest of the country, or any very fixed principle of action. Had it been possible for the Catholic Royalists to trust the Protestant friends of the King, and the native Irish to coalesce with the Lords of the Pale, Ireland would have been tranquillized and secured for the King in a week, for the Puritans were a miserable minority; but during the whole duration of the civil war in England, the several divisions of the royal party in Ireland spent their time in despicable squabbles, which served no purpose but to increase their mutual animosities.



In the midst of the almost incredible blunders and follies of the Royalists and the Irish, Cromwell landed, and by the massacres of Drogheda and Wexford, diffused terror over the land. But even these fearful warnings failed to produce a union of parties; the friends of the Papal Nuncio thwarted the plans of the King's lieutenant; the Protestant Royalists openly expressed dislike of their allies; the native Irish could not be brought to coalesce with men of English descent. Whichever party prevailed in the council, the minority took vengeance for defeat by betraying the common cause to the common enemy; and it seemed as if Cromwell had only to look on tranquilly until his adversaries had torn each other to pieces. But he was too hurried to wait; he marched onward, marking his track by fire and desolation. Some places, particularly Clonmel, made a resistance which would have afforded an opportunity for changing the whole course of the war, but the Commissioners of Trust, appointed by the Council of Confederate Parties, countermanded the orders of the Lord Lieutenant, and he thwarted every one of their projects; the garrisons were abandoned to their fate, and a handful of Puritans became masters of Ireland. The confederates had nothing more to do than to dispute which party had the greatest share in producing such a calamity.

Cromwell's system of confiscation was on a still more magnificent scale than that of the Stuarts; he shared the lands of Leinster and Munster amongst his soldiers, and amongst the private individuals or public companies that had advanced money to defray the expenses of the war; he restored James's Plantation in the northern country, and extended it so as to include nearly the whole of Ulster. Finding it difficult to realize his first plan for the total extirpation of the Irish nation, he resolved to confine the Irish Catholics to the more remote of the Four Provinces into which the island is divided, and he issued the order of removal with Spartan brevity, "To Hell or Connaught." In Connaught itself, he ordered the Catholics to be expelled from all the walled towns, though they were of English descent, and scarcely less jealous than himself of the native Irish. The strictest orders were issued for the suppression of Popery, and priests found in the exercise of their religious duties were hanged without ceremony.

The soldiers who accompanied Cromwell to Ireland were the fiercest of the Republicans and the most bigoted of the Puritans; they had been selected on this very account, because they were the most likely to resist the usurpation which Cromwell meditated in England. But the possession of property has a very soothing influence on political and religious fury; the Cromwellians,

as the new settlers in Ireland were generally called, acquiesced in their general's assumption of royal power, and would not have opposed his taking the title of king. They soon foresaw that the death of Oliver would lead to the restoration of Charles II., and they made their bargain with Charles II. before Monk commenced his march from Scotland. They represented to him that the great object of the policy, both of the Tudors and Stuarts, was accomplished to his hand "an English interest was established in Ireland" and the future dependence of the island on the British Crown was insured. Charles was a Catholic in his heart, but he readily consented to become the patron of "the Protestant interest" in Ireland, because that interest was wholly English.

There was, however, such monstrous injustice in confirming the forfeitures of persons whose only crime was loyalty to his father and himself, that Charles found it necessary to establish a Court of Claims, in which those who had only taken up arms to support the King's cause might be permitted to prove that they had not shared in the insurrection against the supremacy of England. So many established their innocence, that their restoration would have involved a new and almost a complete revolution in the landed property of Ireland. The Cromwellians were alarmed, and threatened an appeal to arms; their



wiser leaders offered Charles a share in the confiscations; the Court of Claims was closed; a Parliament was assembled from which the Catholics were excluded; the Acts of Settlement and Explanation were passed, and were called, not without good reason, "The Magna Charta of the Protestants of Ireland," for they bestowed the property of nearly the entire country on "the Protestant and English interest."

No greater misfortune could fall upon any nation than to be delivered into the hands of a body of proprietors who felt that their title was defective, and that the tenure of their estates was constantly exposed to the hazards of revolution. They believed, and they believed justly, that if ever the Catholics and native Irish recovered political ascendancy, they would immediately demand the restoration of the forfeited estates; they lived therefore in a state of continual alarm and excitement, and they were forced to place themselves completely under the control of England, in order to have British aid in protecting the property which they had acquired. But this servile dependence on the British Government and British Parliament was a painful bondage to men who had not quite forgotten the stern republicanism of their ancestors; and, on more than one occasion, they evinced symptoms of parliamentary independence, which not a little annoyed their British protectors. But these

struggles were rare; they felt that they were a garrison in a conquered country, and that if they were abandoned to their own resources they would soon be compelled to capitulate.

The accession of James II. was not at first very alarming to the Cromwellians; they knew that this imbecile and obstinate man was blindly attached to his hereditary policy of maintaining an "English interest in Ireland" and they had proof of his determination when the Irish gentlemen deputed to remonstrate on the injustice of the Act of Settlement, were dismissed with ignominy by the King and Council.

The Revolution was an event wholly unexpected in Ireland; it took both parties by surprise, filling the Protestants with alarm, but inspiring the Catholics with little hope. At this time the destinies of Ireland were entrusted to the Earl of Tyrconnel, who had undertaken the hopeless task of preserving the English interest and at the same time destroying the Protestant ascendancy. His first impulse was to capitulate with the Prince of Orange, who was very willing to give Ireland most favourable terms; unfortunately, he was persuaded by Hamilton that James's party had every chance of recovering England, and he broke off the negotiations. James came to Ireland, distrusting his Irish subjects and distrusted by them. One of his earliest measures was to disband several regiments

of the Irish army, which was actually done at the very moment when he was preparing to resist an invasion from England. He might with ease have quelled the northern Protestants in Derry and Enniskillen, but he feared that the unpopularity of such an act would destroy his chances of restoration in England; for the same reason, he did all in his power to prevent the Irish from gaining the victory at the Boyne, and he secretly exerted every art in his power to defeat the repeal of the Act of Settlement.

The dread of the Cromwellians that they would be compelled to restore the forfeited estates to the original owners, or their representatives, whenever the Catholics regained the ascendancy, was now proved to be well founded. An act for the repeal of the Act of Settlement was hurried through both Houses, and had this cruel injustice, that no provision was made to remunerate the Protestant occupants for the improvements and outlay they had made. This was accompanied by an act of attainder against the partisans of William, which was scarcely less iniquitous than any of the preceding confiscations. It had the effect of uniting all the Protestants of Ireland against James, and though they were not a numerous body, they were trained to the use of arms and full of all the vigour arising from continued ascendancy.

The flight of James, the battle of Aughrim,

and the siege of Limerick, are sufficiently known. Ireland was finally subjected to English dominion by the Treaty of Limerick, and the title of the Cromwellians to their estates formally recognized by the Irish themselves. A fresh act of attainder took away most of the land which had been left in the hands of the Catholics by the act of attainder, and the "English interest in Ireland" virtually possessed nine-tenths of the property of the country.

The Anglo-Irish, or Cromwellian landlords, had been thoroughly frightened; there were moments in the contest when William's success had been very problematical, and at such times they must have felt that they stood on the brink of ruin. They resolved, therefore, to adopt a course which would prevent the Catholics from attaining such power, political, pecuniary, or intellectual, as would ever enable them to renew the consequences. The system which they adopted was a collection of Penal Laws: "it was," says Edmund Burke, "a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement, in them, of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man." These laws, in which fanaticism and intolerance seem to have been carried to their most savage excess, were not in

fact derived from either passion. They were designed for the protection of property which had been unjustly acquired, the tenure of which was derived from an act of Parliament passed by the possessors themselves, and which was therefore liable to be repealed when they ceased to command a majority in the legislature. The code, with terrible consistency, began its severities with infancy;—Catholic children could only be educated by Protestant teachers at home, and it was highly penal to send them abroad; Catholics were excluded from every profession except the medical, from all official stations, however trifling; from trade and commerce in corporate towns; from taking long leases of land; from purchasing land for a longer tenure than thirty-one years; from inheriting the lands of Protestant relatives, and from possessing horses of greater value than five pounds. On the other hand appropriate rewards were offered for conversion; a child turning Protestant could sue his parent for sufficient maintenance, the amount of which was determined by the Court of Chancery; an eldest son conforming to the Established Church at once reduced his father to the condition of a “tenant for life,” reversion in fee being secured to the convert, with a proviso that the amount allocated for the maintenance and portions of the other children should not exceed one-



third. There were rigorous laws against priests and the celebration of mass, while a small annual stipend was proffered to any priest who recanted.

We have said that these laws were dictated by self-interest and not by religious passion; the proof is easy and irrefutable. It is notorious that the laws prohibiting Catholic worship were executed far less strictly than those which excluded from public offices, civil professions, and lucrative industry; the latter were never relaxed until they were totally repealed, and even after their repeal it was attempted to defeat the efficacy of the concessions made to the Catholics by various legislative devices. Fanaticism, like every other passion which is real, has something respectable in its character; but spoliation and nothing else was the object of the Penal Laws; they were designed solely to maintain the monopoly of wealth and influence for a party. The sacred name of religion was a convenient cry to secure the prejudices of the English people in support of a system, the support of which would scarcely have been afforded if it had been known that the true meaning of the cabalistic phrase "Protestant Interest," was "pounds, shillings, and pence."

The original Cromwellians were Republicans and Puritans; they abandoned a large portion of their political feelings, but they retained much of their ancient hostility to Prelacy, and would

very gladly have got rid of the Established Church. Swift's works sufficiently prove that the Irish Whigs of his day were eager to get rid of the bishops and to establish the Presbyterian form of Church government. Though the sacramental test excluded conscientious Dissenters from the House of Commons, there were many who conquered their scruples to the form, and sat in Parliament ready to embrace every opportunity of weakening the episcopal establishment. They gave a remarkable proof of their feelings, and a very edifying example of their logic, by unanimously voting that "whoever levied tithe of agistment was an enemy to the Protestant interest!" It was an improvement on Lord Clarendon's witty proposal, "that the importation of Irish cattle into England should be deemed adultery." It was this dislike of prelacy which made the great body of the Irish Protestants hostile to a union with England. When such a measure was proposed at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a Protestant mob broke into the Irish House of Lords, placed an old woman on the throne, got up a mock debate on the introduction of pipes and tobacco, and compelled the Lord Chief Justice to swear the Attorney-General that he would oppose the measure. The hostility of these men to the supremacy of the English Church rendered them jealous of the supremacy claimed by the English

Parliament, and of the restrictions imposed upon their trade by the English people. It is impossible to read the pamphlets published by the party just before the accession of George III., without perceiving that their aspirations for legislative and trading independence, logically carried out, would have gone to the full length of making Ireland a Protestant republic. Dread of the Irish Catholics, however, kept them quiet, and it might almost be said that the Catholics at the time were really the "English interest in Ireland."

There was a marked difference between the Protestants of the north and those in the rest of the country. The Plantation of Ulster had been completed, the Protestants there were able of themselves to protect their lives and properties, and they were conscious of their own strength. In the rest of Ireland, the Protestants, thinly scattered over a wide surface, were obliged to rest their hopes of defence on the British Government, and were therefore led to cling to the Established Church as a bond of connection with England, and to make concessions which were odious to the sturdy northerners. This difference between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians, which was at once geographical, religious, and political, fostered the development of republican principles among the latter; "the spawn of the Old Covenant," of which the governing powers



frequently complained, was not, as some have represented, an unmeaning danger; up to the close of the century, it was an actual and increasing element of organized resistance to the existing system of government. Many now alive can remember to have heard from their fathers that the custom of eating a calf's head on the 20th of January was observed in most Presbyterian families, and the favourite toast, "The pious, glorious, and immortal memory of William III." was clearly as strong a pledge to revolutionary principles as to religious supremacy. It was for this reason that Lord Plunket called the insurrection of 1798 "a Protestant rebellion," because, so far as the revolt had aim or object, it derived both from the Protestants by whom it was originally devised.

It is necessary to bear in mind the nature of the Republican party which had been formed in Ireland previous to the American and French revolutions, in order to understand how it was influenced by both events. The party was exclusively Protestant, and more bitterly hostile to Popery than the adherents of episcopacy and monarchy; its views, at least its ultimate views, were speculative rather than practical, for it stood opposed, at the same time, to the population of Ireland and the power of England; its efforts for legislative and commercial independence were illogical, for they were made to

assert rights abroad, which rights the asserters ostentatiously denied at home.

“The south of Ireland,” says a writer of the time, “offers an almost unvarying picture of Protestant oppression and Popish insurgency;” and in his view, as well as in the view of many others, the oppression was excusable because it was “Protestant” and the insurgency criminal because it was “Popish.” The truth is, that the Whiteboy disturbances to which he refers had no more connection with religious controversy than with the disputes between the Scotists and Thomists. Whiteboyism was an association against high rents and tithes, a barbarous *Jacquerie*; and its causes were obvious to all who were not wilfully blind; in the words of Lord Charlemont, they were “misery! oppression! famine!” It was a war of the peasantry against the proprietors and occupiers of the land, undertaken, and still occasionally revived, to wring from them the means of subsistence. The barbarities inflicted by these rural revolvers, were such as have ever marked the career of similar insurrections in various ages and nations; the landlords employed executioners, and the serfs hired assassins; the gallows and the pike were military implements; the legal rights and power of property were set in opposition to the natural rights and physical power of existence. In all these contests the might of England enabled the

landlords of the south to obtain temporary triumph, but they purchased it at an enormous cost, and every new pressure of distress produced a fresh explosion of resistance. There was no connection whatever between the republican spirit of the north and the insurrectionary spirit of the south: the Whiteboys contended for no specific form of government, they contended for a more substantial and intelligible object—food. If they were permitted to cultivate their lands and live peacefully on the fruits of their industry, they would not have cared, indeed they would scarcely have known, whether they were governed by a king or by a directory.

The disturbances in the American colonies threatening to make large demands on the resources of England, it was deemed prudent to conciliate the Irish Catholics by some relaxation of the Penal Laws. Such wisdom had its reward: during the whole of that arduous contest the Catholic body remained faithful to the English Government, and evinced little or no sympathy for the revolted colonies. It was far different with the northern Presbyterians; on the alarm of an invasion Ireland was destitute of troops; the Volunteers suddenly sprung into existence, and took the defence of the country into their own hands. Self-officered, self-armed, and self-directed, an armed association stood in the presence of a feeble government, dictated what

terms it pleased, and established at once the legislative and commercial independence of their country. The Catholics had contributed a little to this successful result, and they were rewarded by an abolition of the laws which restricted their possession of property.

The Volunteers next demanded a reform of Parliament, which was an utter absurdity when disconnected from Catholic emancipation, while to this they were most vehemently opposed. The two questions were so intimately connected that they could not be dissevered, for it is impossible to conceive "a full, fair, and free representation of the people" when three-fourths of the nation were excluded from the class of electors and representatives. The Volunteers could not combine reform and Protestant ascendancy, but yet would abandon neither; as a necessary result their powerful confederacy was broken to pieces.

Ireland had hitherto been ruled by the supremacy of the English Parliament; it was now to be governed by the corruption of its own. The experiment was very expensive, but it so far succeeded that the annals of the world could not furnish a more servile, mercenary, and degraded legislative body than the Independent Parliament of Ireland. Votes were openly bought and sold; "infamous pensions were bestowed on infamous men;" the minister in direct terms threatened the country with the cost of "breaking down

an opposition" and the legislature was viewed with contempt wherever it was not regarded with hatred. Parliamentary reform began again to excite attention; it was supported by a very able though not numerous body in the legislature, and in the interval between 1782 and 1789, it made very rapid progress among the Protestant gentry and freeholders. Already measures had been proposed for organizing a new association to extend the franchise, when the French Revolution, which astounded all Europe, produced its most powerful effects on the miseries and passions of Ireland.

Previous to the year 1789, the idea of slavery was associated or rather identified with the names of Catholics and Frenchmen; the Revolution was toasted because it had delivered the country from "popery, slavery, brass money, and wooden shoes" and it was part of the British popular creed "to hate the French, because they are all slaves and wear wooden shoes." The assertion of freedom by Catholics and Frenchmen at once put to flight a whole host of honest prejudices, and removed the objections which many of the northern reformers entertained against the admission of Catholics within the pale of the constitution. The determined supporters of the Protestant ascendancy were therefore finally separated from the ranks of the reformers, and the latter professed their determination to extend



the blessings of constitutional freedom "to all classes of men whatever."

It is now necessary to cast a glance at the social changes in the south, which were nearly contemporaneous with the alteration in the state of the political parties of the north. We have already seen that every civil war, rebellion, insurrection, and disturbance in Ireland, from the reign of Elizabeth downwards, had arisen, more or less directly, from questions connected with the possession of land. The abolition of the tithe of agistment rendered pasturage so much more profitable than tillage, that the landlords throughout Ireland began to consolidate their farms and expel their tenantry, most of whom were Protestants, for few of the Catholics had risen above the rank of agricultural labourers. Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," which was written about the time that the clearing system commenced, is by no means an exaggerated picture of the recklessness with which landlords removed whole villages of Protestants, the descendants of those who had been induced to settle in Ireland by the exclusive privileges conceded to them by the policy of the government. Vast numbers of Protestant tenants emigrated from Ireland, and chiefly from Ulster, to America, just before the commencement of the revolutionary war; they supplied the United States with a body of brave, determined soldiers, animated by the bit-

terness of exiles, and a thorough detestation of the supremacy of England. Their place was chiefly supplied by Catholics, who appeared ready to work as labourers for lower wages, and to pay higher rents as tenants. The Protestants of Ulster felt themselves injured by these new competitors in the labour and land market, and they resolved to drive the Catholics back to Connaught. Armed bodies, under the name of "Peep-of-day Boys," attacked the houses of the Catholics, ill-treated their persons, burned their houses, and wrecked their property. On the other hand, the Catholics formed an association for self-protection, under the name of "Defenders," and the two parties engaged in a desultory and murderous warfare, in which it is obvious that the name of religion was a mere pretext, by which the parties disguised their real objects from others and even from themselves. This social war excited a rancorous animosity between the lower ranks of Protestants and Catholics, and stimulated their mutual bigotry, at the moment when liberality of sentiment was beginning to become fashionable among the higher and better educated ranks of both communities.

A further relaxation of the Penal Laws aggravated these evils; so calamitous had been the results of the perverse system so long pursued, that even the beneficence of government could not be displayed without injury. The traffick-



ing in seats for Parliament was so profitable, that every landholder became anxious to increase his interest in the counties by the manufacture of votes; but as the elective franchise was restricted to Protestants, who were limited in numbers, the demand for Protestant tenants was greater than the supply, and of course they were able to make their own terms in taking land. But, in 1794, the elective franchise was conceded to the Catholics, without admissibility to Parliament; there was no longer a reason for showing a preference to Protestant tenantry, and the question of religion was absorbed in that of rent. The Protestants of the middle and lower ranks throughout Ireland, felt that this new competition was a direct injury to their interests, and most of them vented their rage in renewed hatred of the Catholics, while an enlightened few more justly blamed the selfishness of their own landed aristocracy.

The Republicans and the Reformers had been united under the common name of Volunteers, without very distinctly perceiving that there was any difference in their designs and objects, until the progress of the French Revolution began to fill the Irish Whigs with alarm; they seceded from the Volunteers; many of them began to oppose the projects of reform which they had previously advocated, and once more the party to which the country had looked for redress of

legislative grievances was broken into hostile fragments.

The Republican party in Ulster felt that it must either be annihilated, or that it should lay aside the spirit of sect and the pride of race to form a frank conciliation with the Catholics of the south, on equal terms, for obtaining equal rights. The remnant of the once powerful Volunteers was a feeble, inefficient body; it could only regain numerical strength by transforming itself into the new association of United Irishmen.

Theobald Wolfe Tone was the most active agent in effecting this apparent union; apparent, we say, for Tone's own memoirs show that at no time was there a perfect harmony between the Presbyterians of the north and the Catholics of the south; even had they united in a successful rebellion, the exasperating passions called into action by civil war would have prevented them from uniting in forming a settled government.

This was the capital error of the United Irishmen; they did not see that no principle of union really existed. The peasantry of Munster and Connaught cared not a jot for their plans of an ideal republic; they might be induced to take arms, for they were almost constantly on the verge of insurrection against their landlords, but their revolt was sure to be nothing better than a *Jacquerie*, accompanied by all its horrors and all

its blunders. Their Presbyterian adherents would indeed have given to their insurrection more of the dignity of civil war; but the feuds between the "Peep-of-day Boys" and the "Defenders" still rankled in Ulster, and, if they once learned to look on the southern insurrection as "a Popish rebellion," and such a character, at least in appearance, it must necessarily have assumed, it was all but certain that they would aid the government in its suppression. The United Irishmen, or rather the leaders who acted for them, believed that all these difficulties would have been overcome by the presence of an auxiliary army from France, and they therefore adopted the perilous measure of inviting a foreign invasion.

The Parisian massacres of September, 1792, had an immense effect in Ireland; men who were moderate Republicans feared to accept freedom accompanied by such horrors; the Catholic aristocracy, always a timid and selfish body, offered to support the government in withholding their own privileges; the Catholic clergy separated in a body from the Reformers, and denounced the atheism of France from their altars; if the government had only united conciliation with coercion, the tranquillity of Ireland would have been insured. Such was the policy which the English minister first resolved to adopt. Earl Fitzwilliam was sent to Ireland! measures were intro-

duced which at that crisis would have been received with enthusiastic gratitude; but unfortunately the intrigues of party interfered, and to all the causes of discord which had been accumulating for centuries were added unexpected triumph in the party of the few, and unexpected disappointment in the party of the many.

There was never a body of men placed in so strange a position at this crisis as the Catholic priests; in their hatred of French infidelity and atheistic republicanism, they had become zealous Royalists, and had the mortification to hear themselves universally represented by the dominant party as the apostles of sedition. For more than two centuries it had been the fashion to represent every Irish rebellion as "Popish" and it would have been strange if so convenient an excuse as "Popery" for refusing justice and continuing oppression, should have been neglected, at the moment when the perpetuation of wrong was the avowed policy of government.

In order to compensate for the abandonment of measures of conciliation, the ministry urged forward their coercion laws with railway speed; the Volunteers were disarmed, the towns garrisoned, public discussions prohibited, the sale of arms and ammunition forbidden, and all conventions of delegates subjected to legal penalties. These energetic measures were promptly enforced; they encountered a momentary resistance

in Belfast alone, and then all opposition was speedily quelled at the point of the bayonet.

The United Irishmen was now changed into a secret society: on the one hand, its members being removed from popular control, were less tramelled in forming their plans for the regeneration of their country; on the other hand, they were secluded from gaining any knowledge of the state of public opinion, they had no means of discovering how far the nation was prepared to adopt and support their schemes. Under these circumstances, nothing but aid from France would have afforded the slightest chance of success: the failure of Hoche's expedition rendered their cause hopeless. In their increased danger of detection and dread of consequences, they fixed and adjourned the day for taking up arms, until the boldest became timid, and the prudent withdrew altogether. In one of these intervals the northern insurrection had been nearly precipitated by a daring exploit, which if attempted, would probably have succeeded. At a splendid ball, given in Belfast, the magistrates of the county and the military officers had met to enjoy the festivities, without the remotest suspicion of danger; the principal leaders of the United Irishmen stood in the crowd looking at the gay assembly; one of them proposed to seize so favorable an opportunity, to anticipate the day appointed for the signal of revolt, at once assemble



their men, arrest and detain the magistrates and officers as hostages, and establish a provisional government in Ulster. The bold counsel was rejected by the majority, but the wiser minority saw that the timidity which rejected such an opportunity was unworthy of reliance, and either made their peace with the government, or quitted the country.

France, at the close of the eighteenth century, adopted the same selfish and erroneous policy towards Irish insurrection, which the courts of Rome and Madrid had pursued in the end of the sixteenth. Its rulers encouraged civil war in Ireland, chiefly as a means of distracting the attention of the British government, and preventing its interference in the political changes which French ambition meditated on the Continent. Holland and the Netherlands were the real objects at which the French Directory aimed, when they promised to assist the Republicans of Ulster; and, singular enough, these countries were the prize for which the kings of Spain contended when they tendered their aid to John O'Neil and the Earl of Tyrone, two centuries before. A reasonable suspicion of the French alliance began to extend itself among the wisest of the United Irishmen. Tone himself, in his memoirs, reveals to us that there were moments when his enthusiasm was not able to conquer the lurking fear that France might either take the opportu-



nity of making Ireland a province tributary to herself, or restoring it to England in exchange for the frontier of the Rhine or the supremacy of Italy. Every delay in sending the promised auxiliary force increased the fears and suspicions of the United Irishmen; their best leaders were hopeless of success without foreign aid, and were at the same time alarmed at the prospect of foreign influence in their councils. Hence arose fresh sources of dismay and disunion, which soon afforded plausible excuses—for treachery to the base, and for desertion to the timid. The informer was amongst them, with the price of their blood in his pocket; their plans were made known to the government as soon as they were formed; the snares of death compassed them around; the hand that clasped them in simulated friendship had written their doom; the lips professing the warmest zeal in their cause had sworn to their destruction. They had, in fact, become mere tools in the hands of the very government which they had intended to overthrow; they were mere puppets, to be worked until they had produced so much of alarm as their rulers deemed necessary for ulterior objects, and then to be delivered over to the executioner, with the double odium upon their memory of having been at once dupes and conspirators.

When all their secrets were betrayed, all their measures known, and all their leaders seized, the

United Irishmen allowed the Rebellion to begin. It had been too long languishing and uncertain to inspire the people with confidence or enthusiasm; it was ill concerted, worse directed, received with coldness by some and terror by others; there was division between its leaders, there was disunion amongst its followers; it had neither guidance nor support. In fact, it might have been said to have been dead before its birth, had not the government forced it into premature existence by the stimulants of whipping and free quarters.

The terrible convulsion which ensued exhibited all the passions of the past history exploding in one burst of irrepressible violence. "Woe to the vanquished" was never so fearfully exhibited as the rule of war. But the history of this sickening period enters not into the purpose of this introduction: our duty has been simply to show the circumstances which produced that state of Ireland in which the United Irishmen moved and acted, and thus to explain how far the circumstances by which they were surrounded influenced their motives and their conduct.

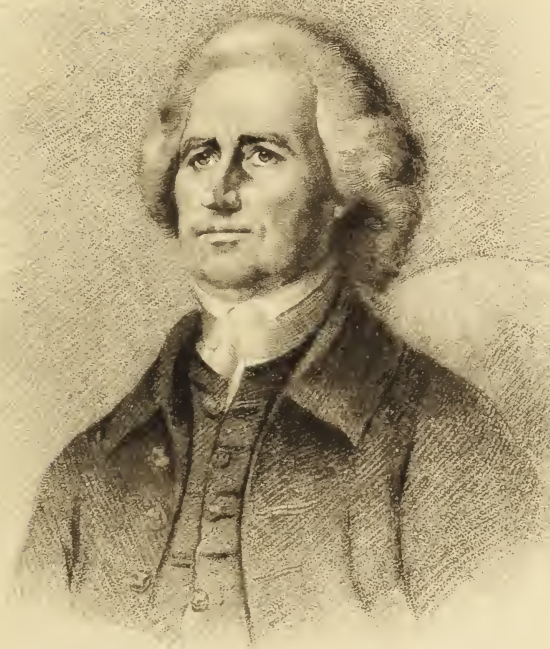
The preceding historical sketch, written for this work by the late Dr. W. C. Taylor, leaves it only necessary for the author to enter more fully than Dr. Taylor has done into the origin and progress of those agrarian

conspiracies-associations of the peasantry for various objects, having relation to tithes, rents, and inclosure of commons, which existed throughout the country for a period of about thirty years before the establishment of the first Society of United Irishmen.



Father Arthur O'Leary

*The Celebrated Franciscan Divine and Author of many  
pamphlets on the Whiteboys and Other Agrarian  
Movements. After a Drawing by T. Murphy.  
From the original in the possession of  
Canon O'Hanlon of Sandymount,  
Dublin, Ireland*







## CHAPTER II

FATHER SHEEHY

THE various outbreaks of popular discontent which took place between 1760 and 1790, and got the names of insurrections and Popish rebellions, can only be regarded as agrarian outrages, the result of oppressive measures taken for the collection of exorbitant rents, the exaction of tithes, and the conversion of the small holdings of the peasantry into pastures. The destitution attendant on these measures, and especially the latter practice, in a country where the unfortunate people turned adrift had no manufacturing districts to fly to for the means of support, drove the persons thus beggared and deprived of house and home, to those acts of violence and desperation which usually follow in the footsteps of distress and ignorance. The same interests which reduced the people to misery were exerted in representing their condition as the result of their own turbulent and lawless proceedings, and the conduct of any of the gentry of their own persuasion who sympathized with their sufferings, or dared to attempt to redress their wrongs, as influenced by seditious and disaffected motives.

Wherever agrarian outrages were committed, and their causes were inquired into by such persons, the landlords and the tithe-owners never failed to raise a clamour against their character for loyalty; and even the writers of the day, who ventured to espouse the cause of the parties who had the courage and humanity to interfere in behalf of the unfortunate people, represented their advocates as well-meaning "but giddy and officious men."

Mr. Arthur Young, an Englishman, and an eye-witness of the Munster tumults, plainly attributes these disturbances to the inhuman conduct of landlords. "The landlord of an Irish estate," he says, "inhabited by Roman Catholics, is a sort of despot, who yields obedience in whatever concerns the poor to no law but that of his will."

The flame of resistance to their oppression, he states, was kindled by "severe treatment in respect of tithes, united with a great speculative rise of rents about the same time. The atrocious acts they (the Whiteboys) were guilty of made them the objects of general indignation. Acts were passed for their punishment which seemed calculated for the meridian of Barbary. This arose to such a height, that by one (law) they were to be hanged, under certain circumstances, without the common formality of a trial, which, though repealed the following session, marks the

spirit of punishment; while others remain yet the law of the land, that would, if executed, tend more to raise than quell an insurrection."

The best, and by far the most clear and explicit account of the cause of those agrarian disturbances, is to be found in a pamphlet rarely to be met with, printed in Dublin in 1762, under the title of "An Enquiry into the Causes of the Outrages committed by the Levellers or Whiteboys of Munster, by M—— S——, Esq."

Some landlords in Munster have set their lands to cottiers far above their value; and, to lighten their burden, allowed commonage to their tenants by way of recompense: afterwards, in despite of all equity, contrary to all compacts, the landlords enclosed these commons, and precluded their unhappy tenants from the only means of making their bargains tolerable. The law, indeed, is open to redress them; but they do not know the laws, or how to proceed; or if they did know them, they are not equal to the expense of a suit against a rich tyrant. Besides, the greatest part of these tenures are by verbal agreement, not by written compact. Here is another difficulty: if these wretches should apply to law, what could they do in this case? They were too ignorant of the principles of equity to seek a reasonable redress: they had too deep a sense of their sufferings to feel the less pungent call of virtue; nay, they thought equity was on their side, and iniquity on the part of their landlords, and thence flew with eagerness to what is ever the resource of low and uncultivated minds—violence. . . .

It is not uncommon in Munster to charge from four to five guineas per acre for potato ground; but we shall suppose the price but four guineas, that is, ninety-one shillings: the daily wages for labourers is four pence per day: there are three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, of which fifty-two are Sundays, and suppose but thirteen holidays, the remainder is three hundred working days, the wages for which is a hundred shillings, that is, nine shillings above the price of their land, of which five shillings are paid for the tithe, and two for hearth money; and the remainder goes towards the rent of their cabin. What is left? Nothing. And out of this nothing, they are to buy seed for their garden, salt for their potatoes, and rags for themselves, their wives, and children. It must be observed that in this calculation I have mentioned three hundred working days, though it is known, from the greater number of holidays observed in that part of the kingdom than in any other, from the number of wet and broken days, joined with the natural laziness of the people, there are not above two hundred days for which they are paid. What an aggravation does this make in the account. And will the best crop enable them to maintain a family, often of six or eight persons, under the difficulties we have mentioned? It is this exorbitant rent which produces the complaint of tithes. Ready money they have not; the reward of their labour goes in payment of their rent; they can seldom amass the mighty sum of two shillings to pay their hearth money; how then shall they collect five shillings for tithes? The clergymen in that country possess livings which have a thousand acres under black cattle. Here the

incumbent gets nothing, and the cottier's garden becomes his principal support. A gentleman of birth, perhaps piety and learning, is brought to the disagreeable necessity of chaffering with a set of poor wretches for two pence, or six pence, in a bargain, or forego the support of his own family. This business grows irksome to him, and he seeks some one person who will take the whole trouble upon him. The distress of the parishioner is heightened by this agreement; and the tithe-monger, who is generally more rapacious than humane, squeezing out the very vitals of the people, and by process, citation, and sequestration, drags from them the little which the landlord and king had left them.

If the landlords of Ireland had been in alliance with France, and bent upon promoting its views in the former country, by rendering the people more discontented, they could not have done more for French policy than they thus effected by driving the people to desperation.

These were the real rebels to the British Crown and the worst enemies of all to the connection that ought to have subsisted with mutual good will between the two countries.

In 1760, a variety of causes had conspired to reduce the people to the lowest degree of misery. The revenue, the unerring barometer of their condition, plainly indicated in this year the distress that universally prevailed; a fatal disease swept off vast quantities of their cattle, and pro-



visions became unusually dear. The distress was not sudden or partial; it had gone on increasing for the preceding five years. The House of Commons, in their address to his Excellency, on referring to this subject, and to the want of corn to which the distress of the country was largely to be attributed, declared "they would most cheerfully embrace every practicable method to promote tillage."

The members of that House kept the word of promise to the Viceroy's ears, and broke it to the people's hope. They scandalously embraced the opportunity of promoting their own temporary interests by turning the tilled lands of vast districts into pasturage, and even enclosing the commons where their impoverished tenants had hitherto been permitted to graze their cattle, and by such means had been enabled to meet the landlords' and the tithe owners' exorbitant demands.

The outcome was the lawless acts of the Whiteboys, wanton in cruelty, wild in their schemes, and heedless of the consequences arising from the destruction of property; and so it always will be with the turbulence of a people who have been trampled upon by the proprietors of the soil, as those of Ireland had been. The proprietors cared, in fact, no more for their miserable tenants than the bashaws of Turkey are wont to do for the Christian rajahs of the distant provinces, which are delivered into their hands,

to be ruled over with a rod of iron, to have the last para wrung from their labour, for the benefit of strangers to the soil, and of *ulemas* in Stamboul, from whose functions they derive no earthly or spiritual advantages.

Lord Northumberland, addressing the Parliament in 1763, in speaking of the disorders in the south, intimated that the means of industry would be the remedy; from whence it followed, the want of those means must have been the cause. The Commons, in accordance with the Viceroy's suggestion, promised to give their best attention to the Protestant Charter Schools and linen manufacture. The people, it was well known, would not send their children to the former, and were totally ignorant of the latter. In fact, when the Catholic people were crying out for bread, the Commons were proposing Protestant schools for the starving children of a Roman Catholic population, and shuttles and looms for an agricultural peasantry.

The landlords in the House of Commons carried out the views on which they acted in their several districts; they declared the riots which had taken place in 1762 and 1763, to be "Popish rebellions." They appointed a committee "to inquire into the causes and progress of the Popish insurrection in the province of Munster."

In 1764, the Lords and Commons, in their address to the Viceroy, the Earl of Northumber-

land, characterized the acts of the rioters as "Treason against the State." In their "pretended grievances no traces of oppression can be seen; we can only impute their disorders to the artful contrivances of designing men, who, from selfish and interested views, have spread this licentious spirit among the people."

The Government, on the other hand, sent down a commission into the disturbed districts in 1762, consisting of men of eminence in the law, and of known ability, loyalty, and impartiality to report upon the character of those tumultuous risings, and the result of their inquiry may be gathered from a paragraph in the "London Gazette" of May, 1762, wherein it is stated, "that the authors of those riots consisted indiscriminately of persons of different persuasions, and that no marks of disaffection to his Majesty's person or government appeared in any of those people."

In 1804, a work was published in London, called "Strictures upon a Historical Review of the State of Ireland, by Francis Plowden."

The author of the "Strictures" labours hard to prove the Munster riots to have been Popish plots, produced by the machinations of Popish priests and bishops; one of the former, the unfortunate Father Sheehy, and the latter the titular Archbishop of Cashel, Dr. Butler. Alluding to the passage quoted (originally by Curry, in

a pamphlet entitled "A Candid Inquiry," etc.) from the "London Gazette" of May, 1762, this author of the "Strictures" on Plowden's work, with an appearance of exactitude and closeness of research calculated to impose on his readers, deliberately affirms that he has searched the "Gazette," but the passage referred to is not to be found; but he states, "I have found this paragraph verbatim in the 'Whitehall Evening Post' of the 4th of May, 1762, which paragraph was, no doubt, written in Ireland, and sent over here for insertion by some abettor of this insurrection, in order to deceive the people of England, a practice very systematically pursued of late years."

The preceding paragraph is an admirable specimen of the manner in which history is falsified to suit the unworthy purposes of bigotry. On referring to "The London Gazette, published by authority," of May 4th, 1762, I find the following passage: "The riots and disturbances lately raised in the southern part of Ireland, by a set of people called levellers, are entirely put a stop to by the vigour and activity of the Earl of Halifax. It appears that the authors of those disturbances consisted indiscriminately of persons of different persuasions, and that no marks of disaffection to his Majesty's person or government appeared in any of these people."

In 1766, the unfortunate people having paid the penalty of "their crimes and their pretended grievances," having been dealt with according to law, the country was restored to that kind of quiet which usually follows terror, and in Ireland passes for tranquillity. The landlords then had leisure, and a colourable pretext in their own exaggerated representations of the treasonable designs of the quelled rioters, to bring all those Roman Catholic gentry to an account who were known to have afforded any pecuniary assistance to the miserable wretches who had been thrown into gaol or brought to trial, and were without the means of making any defence, except what they obtained from the charity of those of their own communion who were thus far able to assist them. An expression of sympathy with their unfortunate condition, a single act of interference in their behalf before a justice of the peace, or the appearance at the trial of one of them as a witness, it will be seen, even as a legal adviser of the party accused, was sufficient to bring the loyalty of every such person into question, to compromise his character, and to put his life in peril.

The turpitude of involving men in the crimes of those they succoured in a goal, or enabled to procure the means of defence on the trial, which the law allowed, but which they were unable to provide, did not originate with the persecutors



of the Sheehys, the Farrells, the Buxtons, and the Keatings of 1766; nor did the baseness of the practice terminate with the troubled time they lived in. In 1798 the same principle was not only acted on by magistrates, but the Lord Chancellor of Ireland gave the sanction of his authority to the execrable doctrine, that the act of contribution towards the defraying the expense incurred for the defence of persons accused of treason involved a participation in the crime.

This was one of the charges in the report of the Secret Committee of 1793, drawn up by the Lord Chancellor, which was hung, *in terrorem*, over the heads of some members of the Catholic Committee. One of these gentlemen, Mr. John Sweetman, was especially pointed out as a person in criminal communication with the Defendants, and the only proof of his criminality was a letter, in which mention was made of some steps that had been taken towards assisting the brother of a Roman Catholic gentleman of the name of Nugent, who had been committed to gaol on a charge of defenderism. The report of the Committee stated, that although the body of the Roman Catholics were not privy to this application of the money levied on them, the conduct, however, was suspicious, "of ill-disposed individuals of their persuasion resident in Dublin."<sup>1</sup>

The government had previously sent to Sweet-

<sup>1</sup> Report of Lords' Secret Committee, 1793, see Appendix.



man, as Secretary of the Catholics, to inform him, the publication of the report of the Secret Committee would endanger his life, and offered, if he avowed his indiscretion, the report would be quashed. And we are informed by Emmet, in his "Essay towards the History of Ireland," that Sweetman refused to do so.

The same accusation of contributing towards the defence of prisoners charged with treasonable practices, who were his own tenants, was brought against the unfortunate Sir Edward Crosbie, and this *prima facie* evidence of disaffection weighed down every proof of innocence, for every other charge carried with it its own self-evident refutation, and an act of Christian charity was made mainly instrumental to his ignominious death.

If these were solitary instances of a practice founded on a condemnation of the common dictates of humanity, it would have been needless to advert to them; but unfortunately there are too many of them on record in the criminal proceedings of those times to allow them to be passed over, or to render it unnecessary to make the remembrance of them a bar to their recurrence. We surely need no stronger argument to convince us that if the unfortunate country which is delivered up to civil war, were not forsaken by the spirit of Christianity, such infamous doctrines could not have been put forth.

General descriptions of popular tumults and of calamitous occurrences often convey a less accurate idea of the events in question, than the particular details of the fate or sufferings of one of those actors or victims in the strife, whose history is bound up with the events that excite our interest.

The account of the persecution and judicial murder of Father Nicholas Sheehy, of Clogheen, is an epitome in itself of the history of Ireland at that period, of its persecuted people, of the character of their oppressors, of the divisions secretly encouraged and sedulously fostered by the rulers of the country between one class of the community and another, and, finally, of the use made of the weakness consequent on the general disunion.

In 1762 the Earl (subsequently Marquis) of Drogheda, was sent to the disturbed districts in the province of Munster, in command of a considerable military force, and fixed his headquarters at Clogheen, in the county of Tipperary. The Whiteboys were at that period in the habit of assembling in large bodies, generally by night, and committing depredations on the properties of those obnoxious to them. On the night of the day on which the Marquis arrived at Clogheen, one of those assemblages took place in the neighbourhood, with the intention, it was believed, of assaulting the town. A clergyman

of the name of Doyle, parish priest of Ardfinnan, on learning their intention, one of the informers states in his depositions, went among them, and succeeded in preventing them carrying their project into effect. His purpose, however, in so doing, as usual, was represented as insidious.

From that time the Earl of Drogheda made several incursions into the adjacent country, "and great numbers of the insurgents were," we are informed by Sir Richard Musgrave, "killed by his lordship's regiment, and French money was found in the pockets of some of them." This assertion is strenuously opposed by Curry and O'Connor; and in one of the letters of Lord Charlemont, published in Hardy's memoirs of his lordship, mention is made of the attention of the Custom-House officers of Dublin being directed to the circumstances of "a very considerable number of French crowns having been received at the Custom-House, which could not have been the result of trade, since little or no specie is imported from France in exchange for our commodities."

Sir Richard Musgrave<sup>1</sup> states that a Mr. Conway, an Irish resident at Paris, was in the

<sup>1</sup> "Sir Richard was literally insane on all political subjects, his imagination being occupied night and day with nothing but Papists, Jesuits, and rebels. Once in the dead of the night his lady was awakened by a sense of suffocation, and, rousing herself found Sir Richard was in the very act of strangling her!

habit of remitting money to the insurgents on the part of the French government. This statement rests on his authority, *valeat quod valeat*. Lord Charlemont, however, is far from ascribing the real causes of those disturbances to French gold or intrigue. "Misery, oppression, and famine—these were undoubtedly the first and original causes." And he adds, "I will not pretend to attest that French intrigue may not sometimes have interfered to aggravate and inflame the fever already existing."

Mr. Matthew O'Connor speaks of the "circulation of French coin as the natural result of a smuggling intercourse with France, and in particular of the clandestine export of wool to that country."

While the Earl of Drogheda continued at Clogheen, the troops were constantly employed in the old mode of pacifying the country, and some of the gentlemen in the neighbouring districts were in the habit of scouring the coun-

He had grasped her by the throat with all his might, and muttering heavy imprecations, had nearly succeeded in his diabolical attempt. She struggled, and at length extricated herself from his grasp, upon which he roared out, making a fresh effort: 'You infernal Papist rebel! You United Irishman! I'll never part with you alive if you don't come quietly!' In fact, this crazy Orangeman had in his dream fancied that he was contesting with a rebel whom he had better choke than suffer to escape, and poor Lady Musgrave was nearly sacrificed to his excess of loyalty. In her *robe de chambre* and slippers she contrived to get out of the house and never ventured to return."—*Barrington: "Personal Recollections of his Own Times."*

try at the head of armed parties. The gentlemen who chiefly distinguished themselves in these military exploits were, William Bagnell, Esq., Sir Thomas Maude, and John Bagwell, Esq. The exertions of these gentlemen in their military and magisterial pursuits were actively seconded in the arrangement of the panel at the assizes by Daniel Toler, Esq., High Sheriff of the county, an ancestor of the judge<sup>2</sup> celebrated for his judicial energy at another calamitous period of Irish history, and in the getting up of the prosecutions by a minister of the gospel, the Rev. John Hewetson.

While the headquarters of the Earl of Drogheda were fixed at Clogheen, the services of the usual auxiliaries to the Irish magistracy were called into requisition. No Roman Catholic leader of any respectability had been yet fixed on to give a plausible character to the rumour of a Popish insurrection; the parish priest of the town was accordingly suspected of disaffection. He had collected money for the defence of some of the rioters who were his parishioners, and the acquittal of any of them was attributed to his interference.

Father Nicholas Sheehy was born at Fethard, about six miles from Clonmel. He was sent to France at an early age to receive that education

<sup>2</sup> John Toler, Lord Norbury, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas and Presiding Judge at the trial of Robert Emmet.



which it was a capital offense to communicate to one of his creed at home. He was well descended, and related to some of the most respectable Catholic gentlemen of the county. A man of the name of John Bridge, having been arrested on a charge of Whiteboyism, examined by torture, and "severely punished by court martial," was induced to come forward with charges against several respectable persons of having been amongst the rioters who had assembled in the neighbourhood of the town, the night of the day on which Lord Drogheda arrived at Clogheen. A woman of abandoned character, who had been excommunicated by the priest Sheehy, was likewise procured, at a later period, to swear to an information of a similar tendency to Bridge's. Sheehy was arrested, but the evidence against him could not have been very conclusive, for after his examination he was suffered to go at large on the understanding that he was to appear if further evidence was brought against him in corroboration of the informers. The proceedings against Mr. Sheehy remained thus suspended, when, in the latter end of 1763, Bridge disappeared, and a report was circulated that he had been murdered by the Whiteboys. In March, 1764, the high sheriff and grand jury of the county of Tipperary published an advertisement, setting forth, "That whereas the said John Bridge was missing since



October preceding, and was supposed to be murdered, they did hereby promise a reward of £50 to any person or persons who should discover, within twelve calendar months, any person or persons concerned in said act," etc.

The advertisement soon produced the desired effect. The only persons concerned in the appearance or non-appearance of the informer were those who had been informed against. Father Sheehy was not named in the advertisement, but it was impossible that any doubt could be entertained as to the party interested in the disappearance of the informer, and therefore to be suspected of being privy to his murder.

The magistrates and gentry of Tipperary had been incensed against the judge who presided at the preceding trials of the rioters. One of the few impartial and humane judges who then graced the Irish bench, Sir Richard Acton, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, had been sent upon a special commission to try a great number of these rioters two years previously. The trials were conducted with a show of justice that was extremely offensive to the local authorities, and the magistrates and grand jury raised such a clamor against the excellent judge, that he was driven from the Irish bench, and went to England, where he accepted the inferior appointment of puisne judge. The name of Sir Richard Acton deserves to be remembered in

Ireland with respect and honour; and if no other eulogy on his character were recorded, it might be sufficient to say, that this Fletcher of his day was reviled by Sir Richard Musgrave, and that on the occasion of his return from Clonmel at the conclusion of the business of the special commission, the road along which he passed was lined on both sides with men, women, and children, thanking him for the justice and the fairness of his conduct in the discharge of his duty, and pouring blessings on him as a just and impartial judge.<sup>1</sup>

This was a novel spectacle in Ireland: it was a touching exhibition, and one, it might be considered, that might have moved the pity and softened the rancour of the enemies of these poor people. But justice and humanity were hateful to their oppressors, and the administration of the law under the influence of either was a course they could not comprehend or tolerate. In the clamour that was raised against this upright judge, it is painful to find the great champion of popular rights (as the celebrated Dr. Lucas was deemed) taking an active part in his place in Parliament against the administration of justice and the judicial authorities, on account of the leniency exhibited on the trials of the Popish rioters. On the 13th of October, 1763, in moving an instruction to the committee to

<sup>1</sup> Plowden's "History of Ireland," vol. ii, page 139.

inquire into the causes of the insurrections of the south, he expressed his amazement "that the indictments in the south were only laid for a riot and a breach of the peace, while those in the north were all laid for high treason, and animadverted severely on the conduct of the judges who sat in the south."

The brawling patriot, who was wont to make the walls of parliament reverberate with the thunder of his indignation when one of its privileges was endangered, could stand up in that house, and raise his voice in condemnation of measures of humanity, when the unfortunate people stood in the utmost need of pity and protection.

He was replied to by the Solicitor-General, who said, he was surprised at the speech of the honourable gentleman. Several of the indictments had been laid for high treason in the south, as well as the north, and several had been executed upon the statute; but wherever lenity had been shown, it was only where reason and humanity required it.<sup>1</sup>

Before entering upon the further proceedings against the Rev. Mr. Sheehy, it was necessary to show the state of public feeling, not only in the disturbed district in which he resided, but even in the House of Commons, on the subject of those agrarian disturbances.

<sup>1</sup> "Irish Debates," in the years 1763 and 1764, vol. i, p. 48.

Between the period of Bridge's disappearance and the Spring of 1764, Mr. Sheehy was constantly menaced with prosecution; witnesses were frequently examined and indictments framed, but no criminal proceedings followed.

At length, in the early part of 1764, he found his persecutors so bent on his destruction, that it became necessary for him to secrete himself. The government had been prevailed upon to issue a proclamation against him, in which he was described as a fugitive from justice, charged with high treason, and offering a reward of £300 for his apprehension. Sheehy no sooner was informed of the proclamation than he wrote to Mr. Secretary Waite, acquainting him that he would save the government the reward offered for taking him, by surrendering himself out of hand to be tried for any crime he was accused of, not at Clonmel (where he feared the power and malice of his enemies were too prevalent for injustice), but in the Court of King's Bench in Dublin and accordingly he delivered himself up to Cornelius O'Callaghan, Esq., of whom the present Lord Lismore is the grand-nephew.

Several of the preceding details are to be found in a pamphlet called, "A Candid Inquiry into the Causes and Motives of the late Riots in the Province of Munster," which, as appears by a subsequent pamphlet by the same author, Dr. Curry (a parallel between the pretended

plot of 1762, and the forgery of Titus Oates in 1679), was written in the month of May, 1766.

Speaking of this pamphlet, Charles O'Connor states that no notes of the trials were taken at the time, and that it is only to this account of the proceedings, and the declarations solemnly made of the victims, that we can refer for information that can give an insight into the proceedings against them. Such, however, is not the fact; notes of some of those trials do exist, and from them and the records of the Crown Office of Clonmel, and the original informations sworn against the parties, which I discovered there, the following details are given.

The "Dublin Gazette," of March 15th, 1765, announces that, "About eight o'clock on Wednesday night, Nicholas Sheehy, a Popish priest, charged with being concerned in several treasonable practices to raise a rebellion in this kingdom, for the apprehending of whom government offered a reward of £300, was brought to town guarded by a party of light horse, and lodged by the Provost in the Lower Castle Yard." It was not till the 10th of February, in the following year, that he was brought to trial in the Court of King's Bench. The Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench then was the Right Honourable John Gore; Second Justice, Mr. Christopher Robinson; Third Justice, William



Scott, Esq. The indictment charged the prisoner with acting as a leader in a treasonable conspiracy, exercising men under arms, swearing them to allegiance to the French King, and inciting them to rebellion. The witnesses produced were, a man of the name of John Toohy, who had been committed to Kilkenny gaol on a charge of horse-stealing, a month previously to his examination having been given in against the prisoner; a woman of the name of Mary Butler; and a vagrant boy of the name of Lonnergan.

It would be difficult to comprehend the nature or extent of the wickedness exhibited in these proceedings, without referring to the circumstances which rendered Sheehy and others more obnoxious to the magisterial conspirators than the persons of his persuasion in the neighbourhood who had the good fortune to escape being similarly implicated. The enclosing of commonage in the neighbourhood of Clogheen in the winter of 1761-2, had inflicted much injury on the parishioners of Father Sheehy.

About that time the tithes of two Protestant clergymen, Messrs. Foulkes and Sutton, in the vicinity of Ballyporeen, were rented to a tithe proctor of the name of Dobbyn. The tithe farmer instituted in 1762 a new claim on the Roman Catholic people in his district of five shillings for every marriage celebrated by a



priest. On what grounds this claim was put forward I have not been able to ascertain, but the fact of its having been preferred and levied admits of no doubt.<sup>1</sup> This new impost was resisted by the people, and, as it fell heavily on the poor parishioners of Father Sheehy, he denounced it publicly.

The first "risings" in his neighbourhood were connected with their resistance to this odious tax. The collection of church cess in a parish adjoining his, where there was no congregation, was likewise resisted by the people, and there is no doubt but their resistance to it was encouraged by Father Sheehy. On some occasions, when the parishioners assembled for the purpose of devising some means of protection against the extortions of tithe proctors, Father Sheehy was present and took part in their discussions. These discussions, it is needless to say, they dared not hold in public; but, private as they were, they were well known to the real conspirators in Clonmel. Father Sheehy was a bold and fearless advocate of justice and humanity, a man whose misfortune it was, in times like those, to be gifted with a generous disposition, and to be

<sup>1</sup> The above-named fact and many others connected with the private history of the persons referred to in this Memoir, were communicated to me by one of the oldest inhabitants of Clogheen, one most thoroughly acquainted with those times and their events, Mr. Jeremiah M'Grath, a land surveyor, a relative of one of the persons persecuted and repeatedly prosecuted, Roger Sheehy.

animated with a hatred of oppression. But the very qualities which rendered him obnoxious to the enemies of the poor persecuted people, left him naked and open to their enmity. He was courageous and confiding, chivalrous in defence of the poor and the oppressed, but incautiously prominent in the struggle, and heedless of the power and the wickedness of his enemies.

The various informations and indictments show plainly enough, differing, as they do, in the most material particulars, yet concurring in one point, the influence of Sheehy over his parishioners, that his prosecutors were casting about them at random for evidence of any kind or character that might rid them of the annoyance of a man of an independent mind, and by his implication give additional colour to the pretended Popish plot.

For several months previously to Mr. Sheehy's surrender, he had been in concealment, flying from house to house, of such of his parishioners as he could confide in. He had been frequently obliged to change his abode to avoid the rigorous searches that were almost daily made for him. At length, terror and corruption had exerted such an influence over his own flock that he hardly knew whom to trust, or in whose house to seek an asylum. Indeed it is impossible to wade through the mass of informations sworn to against him by persons of his own persuasion,

without wondering at the extent and the successfulness of the villainy that was practised against him. His last place of refuge at Clogheen was in the house of a small farmer, a Protestant, of the name of Griffiths, adjoining the churchyard of Shandrahan, where his remains now lie.<sup>1</sup> The windows of this house open into the churchyard, and there Father Sheehy was concealed for three days, hid during the day in a vault in the latter place, and during the night in the house, when it was necessary to keep up a large fire, so benumbed with cold he used to be when brought at nightfall from the place that was indeed his living tomb. The house is still standing, and inhabited by the grandson of his faithful friend, and one not of his own creed it is to be remembered. The last service rendered to him at Clogheen was likewise by a Protestant, a gentleman in the commission of the peace, Mr. Cornelius O'Callaghan, to whom he surrendered himself. This gentleman gave him one of his horses to convey him to Dublin, and the sum of ten guineas to bear his expenses.

Mr. O'Callaghan's high rank, his character for loyalty, his position in society, were not sufficient to secure him from the malignity of the magisterial conspirators. Mrs. O'Callaghan was denounced by Bagwell as a suspected person. Lord James Cahir, the ancestor of Lord

<sup>1</sup> His grave is still an object of reverent pilgrimage.

Glengall, was likewise declared to be on the black list of this gentleman, and of his associate, the Rev. James Hewetson; both these gentlemen had to fly the country to save their lives.

One of the earliest charges of Whiteboyism brought against him stands thus recorded in the indictment and information book in the Crown Office:<sup>1</sup>

Nicholas Sheehy, bailed in £2,000; Denis Keane, £1,000; Nicholas Dogherty, £1,000. A true bill. Clonmel General Assizes, May 23, 1763, before Right Hon. Warden Flood and Hon. William Scott. Nicholas Sheehy, a Popish priest, bound over in court last assizes, trial then put off by the Court, indicted for that he, with divers others ill-disposed persons and disturbers of the peace, on the second day of March, in the second year of the reign of George III., at Scarlap, did unlawfully assemble and assault William Ross, and did wickedly compel him to swear that he would never discover anything to the prejudice of the Whiteboys, etc. William Ross, bound over in £100, estreated; James Ross, £100, estreated.

The Rosses of Garrymore were Roman Catholics of the middle rank, and had rendered themselves obnoxious to the people at the commencement of these agrarian disturbances by enclosing

<sup>1</sup> Once for all I have to state that the above document, and all the others of a similar kind, which are here given, were collected by myself, and copied from the original official documents in the Crown office of Clonmel. R. R. M.

commonage adjoining their lands at Dromlemmon.

A party of levellers had broken down the fences with which they had enclosed these commons, but whether the persons engaged in this act were parishioners of Father Sheehy, or had received any encouragement from him, or whether the charge was brought forward from private resentment, or at the instigation of Sheehy's persecutors, we have no means of knowing. It is clear, however, from the forfeiture of their recognizances, that they had taken a step they repented of, or were not able to follow up.<sup>1</sup> Sheehy was evidently ignorant of this proceeding of theirs, for on his trial he called on one of the Rosses to prove that he had slept at their house the night that Bridge was said to have been murdered, and on his examination the fact was denied by him. Every step in this nefarious persecution is marked with perfidy of more than ordinary baseness.

The custom of first "presenting" a Popish priest in those times, and then trumping up charges of sedition, and encouragement of agra-

<sup>1</sup> At a little distance from the grave of Father Sheehy, the Rosses lie buried in the churchyard of Shandrahan. The inscription on their tombstone states that James Ross (the father) died in 1765. William died in 1787. The nephew of the latter treated the successor of Father Sheehy in Clogheen with great violence, not long after which he was thrown from his horse and killed on the spot.



rian outrages, was in full force at this period. Sheehy had been thus "presented" before any other charge was brought against him.

At the same assizes at which the first bill was found against him, a true bill was likewise found against Michael Quinlan, a Popish priest, for having, at Aghnacarty and other places, exercised the office and functions of a Popish priest against the peace and statute, etc.

To make the surety of conviction doubly sure, as in Sheehy's case, a second indictment was sent up on the same occasion, charging him with "riotously assembling at Aghnacarty against the peace," on the same day as named in the former indictment.

At the General Assizes at Clonmel, on May 23d, 1763, a number of persons were indicted, charged with Whiteboy offences, and amongst them we find the names of the witnesses who were made the main supporters of the Bagnell, Maude, and Bagwell conspiracy, or, as they termed it, the Popish plot. The following persons were then tried and acquitted: Tim Guinan; John, Michael, Daniel, and James Lonnergan. Two of the Lonnergans were the nephews of Guinan, a hackler, lads between the ages of fifteen and seventeen; one of them, John Lonnergan, was the witness on whose evidence the managers mainly relied for convictions in the subsequent trials. This boy was an idle vagrant,



noted in his neighbourhood for his vicious habits. He was produced on the trials dressed out for the occasion in a long outside coat, for the purpose of causing him to look taller and older than he was.

At the Clonmel Summer Assizes of 1764, Nicholas Sheehy was again indicted, and seven other persons out on bail were included in the same indictment, wherein it set forth, "that they on the 6th of January, in the fourth year of the king's reign, at Shanbally, did assault John Bridge, against the peace."

At the same Assizes, a true bill was found against Edward Meehan, Nicholas Sheehan, Nicholas Lee, John Magan, John Butler, and Edmund Burke, charging them with "compassing rebellion at Clogheen, on the 7th March and 6th October, second year of the King, and unlawfully assembling in white shirts, in arms, when they did traitorously prepare, ordain, and levy war against the King;" and bound to appear as witnesses, Michael Guynan, Thomas Lonnergan, and Mary Butler.

On November 19th, 1764, Denis Brien, of Ballyporeen, was bound over before Mr. Cornelius O'Callaghan, to appear at the following assizes, "to answer all things brought against him by Michael Guynan, John Bridge, or any other person, concerning the late disturbances."

The number of informations sworn to against

all the leading Catholic gentry of the country by the Lonnergans, Guinan, Toohy, a horse-stealer, and two abandoned women of the names of Butler and Dunlea, between the years 1763 and 1767, would fill a good-sized volume. The names of the magistrates before whom these informations, in almost every instance, were sworn, were John Bagwell, Thomas Maude, and the Rev. J. Hewetson.

At the General Assizes held at Clonmel, March 16th, 1765, before Chief Baron Willes and Mr. Justice Tennison, the following bills found at the former assizes were brought before the Grand Jury. Some of the trials were put off, all the parties were admitted to bail, or allowed to stand out on heavy recognizances, and the names of the persons who bailed the prisoners are deserving of notice; for it will be found, that to enter into sureties for a man marked out for ruin by the Clonmel conspirators, was to draw down the vengeance of these conspirators on those who dared to come forward as witnesses, and stand between the victims and their persecutors.

I doubt if anything more terribly iniquitous than the proceedings which I have traced in these official records is to be met with in the history of any similar conspiracy.

The High Sheriff in 1765 was Sir Thomas Maude, the foreman of the grand jury, Richard

Pennefather, Esq. The following are the persons named as having been formerly indicted and held to bail:—

Edmund Burke, of Tullow, bail £500; his sureties, John Hogan and Thomas Hickey, of Frehans.

John Butler, innkeeper, Clogheen, bail £500; his sureties, George Everard, of Lisheenanol, and James Butler, of Gurrane, County Cork.

Edward Meehan, Clogheen, £500; his sureties, Pierce Nagle, of Flemingstown; John Butler, of Mitchelstown; James Hickey, of Frehans; John Bourk, of Rouska.

Nicholas Sheehy, surrendered; James Buxton, Patrick Condon, and Patrick Boar, out.

After the names of these persons, against whom true bills had been found, the proceedings are thus recorded:—

Trial put off last Assizes on an affidavit of the prosecutor, bound over then in Court to appear. Record since removed by *certiorari*.

Indicted, Spring Assizes, 1764, for that they, not having the fear of God before their eyes, nor the duty of their allegiance, but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil, and departing from the true affection and natural obedience of our Lord the King, and intending, contriving, and conspiring to disquiet and disturb the peace of our said Lord the King, and all his liege subjects, on the 10th day of February, in the second year of the King, and at divers other times before and after, at Clogheen, falsely, unlawfully, devil-

ishly, and traitorously did compass, imagine, and intend to raise and levy open war, insurrection, and rebellion; and in order to fulfil and bring to effect the treasons and intentions aforesaid, afterwards, to wit same day, year, and place, did traitorously and seditiously assemble together, with two hundred other unknown persons, armed with guns, pistols, and other weapons, as well offensive as defensive, dressed in white apparel, did falsely, unlawfully, and traitorously prepare, begin, and levy public war against our said Lord the King, against the peace and statute.

MICHAEL GUYNAN, £50,

Bailed in Court.

The preceding details sufficiently explain the views and objects of the prosecutors, and their temporary defeat by the terms entered into by Father Sheehy with the Government, by which a trial in Dublin was secured to him.

The trial, which took place on the 10th of February, 1766, in the Court of King's Bench, was impartially conducted; the conduct of the "managers" who got up the evidence, at every turn of the testimony, bore on its face the evident marks of subornation of perjury. The vile witnesses broke down, and after a trial of fourteen hours' duration, the persecuted priest was honourably acquitted. He had redeemed his pledge to the Government, he had given himself up, stood his trial, and proved his innocence. But no sooner was the verdict pronounced, than the faith of the

Government was broken with him. The unfortunate man was informed by the Chief Justice that a charge of murder was brought against him, and on this charge he must be committed to Newgate. He was accordingly taken from the dock, removed to the prison, and after two or three days' imprisonment, was put into the hands of his merciless persecutors, to be forthwith conveyed to Clonmel.

The first intimation of the new charge against him was given to him in Dublin, a few days previously to his trial, by a person named O'Brien, who had accompanied him from Clogheen. Martin O'Brien, on account of his intelligence and prudence, had been chosen by the friends of the priest to accompany him to Dublin, and he gave some proof of his fitness for his appointment by strongly urging him, a few days previously to his trial, to quit the kingdom. Father Sheehy was then at large; he had been confined for a few days after his surrender in the Provost in the Castle Yard. He was placed under the charge of Major Joseph Sirr, then town-major, and father to the person of less enviable notoriety in the same office at a later period. His innocence was so manifest to Mr. Secretary Waite and to Major Sirr, that he was relieved from all restraint, and the latter held himself responsible for his appearance at the time appointed for his trial.



While he was at large he was informed by O'Brien that a person had brought him an account from Clonmel that no sooner had the news of Father Sheehy's surrender been received than a rumour got abroad that a charge of murder was to be brought against him. He recommended Father Sheehy not to lose a moment in getting out of the kingdom, and urgently pressed him to put himself the same day on board a packet for England.

O'Brien several years afterwards stated to my informant that Sheehy smiled at the proposal. He said they wanted to frighten him out of the country, but he would not gratify his enemies, and if they brought such a monstrous charge against him, he could easily disprove it. Sheehy's arrival in Dublin, it is to be borne in mind, was only five months after the alleged murder, and at the time of his departure from Clogheen, it is positively affirmed by Magrath, on the authority of O'Brien, that Father Sheehy had then no knowledge of the murder, and the probability is, that it was in Dublin a fugitive named Mahony, when about quitting the kingdom, had made the revelation to him.

Sheehy was conveyed on horseback, under a strong military escort, to Clonmel, his arms pinioned, and his feet tied under the horse's belly. While in confinement in the gaol of Clonmel he was double bolted, and treated in every re-



spect with the utmost rigour. In this condition he was seen by one of his old friends, and while this gentleman was condoling with him on his unfortunate condition, he pointed to his legs, which were ulcerated by the cords he had been bound with on his way from Dublin. He said, laughing, "Never mind, we will defeat these fellows;" and he struck up a verse of the old song of *Shaun na guira*.

On the 12th of March, 1766, Sheehy was put on his trial at Clonmel, for the murder of John Bridge. Most of the witnesses who gave evidence on the former trial were produced on this occasion.

Among the new witnesses was a woman of abandoned character, commonly known by the name of "Moll Dunlea," but introduced on the trial as Mrs. Mary Brady, the latter being the name of a soldier of the light horse, with whom she then cohabited.

Nicholas Sheehy was indicted on the charge of having been present at, and aiding and abetting Edmund Meighan in the murder of John Bridge. Mr. Sheehy had a sister, Mrs. Green, who resided at Shanbally, in the vicinity of Clogheen; and at this place, according to the evidence, the murder of Bridge, Lord Carrick, Mr. John Bagwell, Mr. William Bagnell, and other persons obnoxious to them, was first proposed by Mr. Sheehy to a numerous assemblage

of Whiteboys; and by him all those present were sworn to secrecy, fidelity to the French King, and the commission of the proposed murders, and subsequently the murder was committed by one of the party, named Edmund Meighan, of Grange, in the month of October, 1764.

Sheehy and Meighan were tried separately. The same evidence for the prosecution was produced on both trials.

Meighan, on the evidence, being convicted, the same testimony was produced against Father Sheehy. Several of his parishioners offered to come forward as witnesses, to confute the witnesses who had so grossly perjured themselves on the former trial; but Father Sheehy, well knowing they would incur the vengeance of his prosecutors, and relying mainly on the testimony of two witnesses, Messrs. Keating and Herbert, whose characters he thought would secure them from any injury on his account, generously, but unfortunately for him, declined to have several of them called.

One person, indeed, of his own persuasion, his spiritual superior, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Egan, he did call on, to speak to his character as a man of loyalty, and this gentleman refused. The cold, dull shade of the Catholic aristocracy, the influence of the friendship of Lord Kenmare, the fear of the consequences attendant on the perjured informations, which went to implicate Dr.

Butler, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cashel, in the crime of treason, it is to be feared, prevented Dr. Egan from coming forward on behalf of a person who had the character of an agitating priest, one who was inimical to tithe proctors and the oppressors of the poor, and most obnoxious to the latter, and their powerful protectors in the commission of the peace.<sup>1</sup>

The innocence of Father Sheehy was clearly established by one of the witnesses he produced, Mr. Keating, a Catholic gentleman of respectability and fortune, the excellence of whose character, in the words of Mr. O'Connor, formed a striking contrast with that of his prosecutors. But the most astounding act of wickedness that had been yet practised against the life of this doomed man was had recourse to to deprive him of the advantage which the testimony of Mr. Keating must have been to him, had that testimony been allowed to go unimpeached.

The following account of the extraordinary proceeding of his persecutors to effect their object is taken from the "Candid Inquiry" of Dr. Curry:—

During his trial, Mr. Keating, a person of known property and credit in that country, giving the clearest and fullest evidence that, on the whole of the night of

<sup>1</sup> After Sheehy's execution, the refusal of Dr. Egan was remembered and marked: as the corpse was borne past the house of Dr. E., the blood of the innocent man was sprinkled on his door.

the supposed murder of Bridge, the prisoner, Nicholas Sheehy, had lain in his house; that he could not have left it in the night-time without his knowledge, and, consequently, that he could not be present at the murder, the Rev. Mr. — (Hewetson) stood up, and after looking at a paper that he held in his hand, informed the Court that he had Mr. Keating's name on his list as one of those who were concerned in the murder of a sergeant and corporal at New Market, upon which Mr. Keating was immediately hurried away to Kilkenny gaol where he lay for some time loaded with irons, in a dark and loathsome dungeon. By this proceeding not only his evidence was rendered useless to Sheehy, but also that of many others similarly dealt with, who came to testify to the same thing, but who instantly withdrew themselves, for fear of meeting with the same treatment.

As the crime laid to the charge of Mr. Keating was committed in another county, fortunately for him he was not tried at Clonmel. He was brought to trial in Kilkenny. The principal witnesses against him were those who had given evidence on Sheehy's trial, but the jury gave no credit to their testimony, and the prisoner was accordingly acquitted. The purpose, however, of Father Sheehy's prosecutors was effected. The obnoxious priest was deprived of the evidence of a witness which must have established his innocence, if the Rev. Mr. Hewetson had not remembered that "his name was on the list."

“Herbert,” we are told by Curry, “who was a farmer, had come to the assizes of Clonmel, in order to give evidence in favour of the priest Sheehy (but it was pretended bills of high treason had been found against him): they sent the witness Toohy (accompanied by Mr. Bagnell), attended by some of the Light Horse, to take him prisoner. Herbert, when taken, immediately became an evidence for the Crown, but upon what motive, whether for the sake of justice, the fear of hanging, or the hopes of a reward,” is left by Curry to the reader to determine.

“On the day of his (Sheehy’s) trial,” we are told by the same author, “a party of horse surrounded the court, admitting and excluding whom they thought proper; while others of them, with a certain —— (Baronet, Sir Thomas Maude) at their head, scampered the streets in a formidable manner, forcing their way into inns and private lodgings in the town; challenging and questioning all new comers; menacing his friends, and encouraging his enemies. Even after sentence of death was pronounced against him, which one would think might have fully satisfied his enemies, Mr. S——w (Sparrow), his attorney, declares, that he found it necessary for his safety to steal out of the town by night, and with all possible speed to escape to Dublin.”

The prisoner, Father Nicholas Sheehy, was found guilty of the murder of John Bridge,



and sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered; and on the 15th the sentence was carried into execution at Clonmel. The head of the murdered priest was stuck on a spike, and placed over the porch of the old gaol, and there it was allowed to remain for upwards of twenty years, till at length his sister was allowed to take it away and bury it with his remains at Shandraghan.

Beside the ruins of the old church of Shandraghan the grave of Father Sheehy is distinguished by the beaten path, which reminds us of the hold which his memory has to this day on the affections of the people. The inscriptions on the adjoining tombs are effaced by the footsteps of the pilgrims who stand over his grave, not rarely, or at stated festivals, but day after day, as I was informed on the spot, while the neglected tomb of the ancestors of the proud persecutor, Wm. Bagnell, lies at a little distance, unhonoured and unnoticed. The inscription on the tomb of Father Sheehy is in the following terms: "Here lieth the remains of the Rev. Nicholas Sheehy, parish priest of Shandraghan, Ballysheehan, and Templeheney. He died March 15th, 1766, aged thirty-eight years. Erected by his sister, Catherine Burke, *alias* Sheehy."

When it is remembered that it was not the lives of two men, but those of almost all the leading Roman Catholic gentry of the county, sev-



eral of the priesthood, and even some of the hierarchy, which were dependent on the credit given to the testimony and sworn informations of these witnesses, it may not be impertinent to the subject, or even unprofitable in our own times, to inquire into their characters, and the means taken by the terrorists of the day, or the suborners of those perjured witnesses, to goad or gain them over to their nefarious purposes.

John Toohey, a horse-stealer, was lying in Kilkenny gaol, under a charge of felony, about a month before the trial of Father Sheehy in Dublin. The large promises held out to persons who would swear home against the suspected and accused parties, and insure convictions, came to the knowledge of this felon, and he contrived to get into communication with Lord Carrick and other managers of the prosecution, by whom he was visited, and in due time transmitted to Dublin. Having done his work there, he was sent back to Clonmel, at first confined in the gaol, and then suffered to go abroad with a fetter-lock on one of his legs. The lock was soon removed, and he was dressed out for the witness table (the customary preparation then of an Irish Crown witness). Amyas Griffith, Surveyor of Excise, in his letter to Mr. Toler, speaks of seeing him at this period, "in an elegant suit of new fine clothes, a superfine blue-cloth coat,

the waistcoat and breeches of black silk," purchased for him in Clonmel, at Mr. Lloyd's, by the managers of the prosecution. On the 29th of May, 1767, on the sworn information of John Toohy, made before John Bagwell, Esq., John Hogan, of Clonmel, cabinet-maker, was held to bail, "for and on account of his being charged with assaulting John Toohy;" David Cunningham Skinner, and Hill Thompson, pewterer, entering into recognizances for his appearance at the next assizes. On the 27th of June, same year, an indictment against John Cody, and eight others, for assaulting John Toohy, was quashed.

On the 20th of August, 1767, on the sworn information of John Toohy, before John Bagwell, Esq., John and Edmund Cody (father and son), of Orchardstown, were held to bail, "for having with several other persons, in a riotous and unlawful manner, assembled on the lands of Rathronan, in the said county, on the 15th of August, having then and there, in a violent and outrageous manner, insulted, assaulted, beat, struck, bloodshed, battered, and abused the said John Toohy, giving him several wounds in his head and other parts of the body, through means of which he lies in eminent danger of life; and for having then and there expressed and declared, that if they had Sir Thomas Maude, John Bagwell, Esq., and the Rev. Mr. Hewetson, they

would serve them in the same manner." Thomas Duning, of Kilmore, and Patrick Kennedy, entering into recognizance for their appearance at the next assizes.

At the prosecution of Roger Sheehy, in the year following, 1768, Toohy was again brought forward as a witness. The prime sergeant pronounced him perjured, and the judge desired the jury to acquit the prisoner. Griffith states Toohy survived a few years, and died of leprosy. Mary Dunlea, lived at Rehill, and by her own mother was admitted to be a woman of the worst character. She cohabited with Michael Kearney, the person mentioned in her evidence; and the notoriety of her ill conduct, when residing in the parish of Shandraghan, caused Father Sheehy to denounce her from the altar. It was subsequently to this denunciation she lodged informations against Nicholas, Edmund, and Roger Sheehy, the two Burkes of Ruske, and several others. During the trials, she was kept at the barracks, her table being furnished from one of the principal hotels in Clonmel, the "Spread Eagle."

At the general assizes in Clonmel, August, 1766, true bills were found, on the information of Mary Dunlea, *alias* Brady, against James Kearney and Terence Begley, for "tampering with the said M. Brady, and dissuading her from giving evidence."

Another true bill was found against a woman of her own name, for "unlawfully reviling said M. Brady, for giving evidence against Nicholas Sheehy."

Jeremiah Magrath, of Clogheen, the surviving relative of one of her victims, saw her in Clogheen in 1798. She was then married, or said to be so, to a soldier in a militia regiment, a miserable object, blind of one eye, and was on her way to Cork with her reputed husband, where she met with an untimely end by falling down a cellar. Griffith states that she died in a ditch in the county of Kilkenny; but the former account of her end is entitled to most credit.

The boy, Lonnergan, nephew of another informer, was notorious in the country for his depravity. During the trials, he was likewise lodged in the barracks. When his services were dispensed with, he changed his name to Ryan, enlisted, and went to Dublin. There, it is said, he eventually, by a loathsome disease, terminated his career in Barrack Street. A respectable apothecary, of the name of M'Mahon, of Aungier Street, was employed to attend him by a person of authority, and was liberally paid for his attendance.

"Bridge's body," we are informed by Curry, "was never found, though it was carefully sought for in the two different places in which the witnesses had sworn it was deposited; and

though the particular circumstances of his cleft skull, which the same witnesses swore was the cause of his death, would have guided the search, and distinguished his from every other body in the place. Besides, two of Bridge's known intimates, whose veracity was not questioned, positively deposed, at the trials of the late convicts, that but a few days before he disappeared, he told them in confidence that he was then going to quit the kingdom, and took a formal leave of them, desiring them to keep his departure secret, and promising that, if he should ever see them again, he would reward their kindness."

Many years subsequently to his disappearance, Bridge was said to be living in Newfoundland; and in Arthur O'Leary's defence of his conduct during the Munster riots, published in 1787, he alludes to the fact of his existence in these words: "Bridge, a man of no good character, whose dead body could not be found, but whose living body, if report be true, was afterwards seen in Newfoundland. The dead bodies of rogues, who had been murdered in our kingdom, had been afterwards seen living bodies in another, as so many enchanted dragons, watching the Hesperian garden of the temple of Venus, *alias* bullies to a brothel. That this was Bridge's case I cannot affirm; but for the rest, the history of the kingdom is my voucher."



Seven years after Bridge quitted the country, it is also stated that he was seen by a native of Clogheen in the United States of America. Amyas Griffith speaks, in his letter to Mr. Toler, of Bridge's existence in Newfoundland in 1787.

In one of the depositions sworn to by Landregan, one of the Clonmel informers, March 15, 1767, before the Rev. Dr. Hewetson, the deponent swears to his being present at the meeting of the Whiteboys, on the race-course of Clogheen, on the night of the Earl of Drogheda coming there, at which Father Sheehy proposed to burn the town and massacre the magistrates. That said meeting was held in the spring of 1762, some time before the French took Newfoundland.<sup>1</sup>

The allusion to Newfoundland is rather singular. The arrival of the troops under the Earl of Drogheda was an event much more likely to recall the date than the capture of Newfoundland; nor is it likely that a man in the humble rank of the deponent would have an event of no local interest fresh in his mind five years after its occurrence.

The rumour of Bridge's departure from France, and being then settled in Newfoundland, was much more likely to have reached

<sup>1</sup> Musgrave's "Rebellion;" Appendix.



Ireland, and to have brought the name of that place to the memory of the deponent.<sup>2</sup>

The reader, I believe, is now in possession of all the data on which the assertion generally received is founded—that John Bridge was living in Newfoundland many years subsequently to the execution of the prisoners convicted of his alleged murder. It now remains to examine what evidence, documentary or traditionary, there may be in support of the opinion that he met in his own country with an untimely end.

The testimony of Toohy, Dunlea, and Lonnergan, is not only evidently at variance with truth in the most material matters, but obviously contradictory with that of each other, and is altogether utterly unworthy of credit. But, even without the broad marks of perjury blazoned on its face, there is enough to render it suspected in the character of the witnesses—one charged with felony; another excommunicated by the minister of her religion; the last, whose vicious habits had rendered him notorious as ill-reputed in his neighbourhood, transformed by the magic influence of a crown prosecutor's liberal expenditure, from a vagrant in rags and tatters, to a witness in fine clothes, a long-tailed coat, and in high-heeled shoes, duly trained and drilled to go before a jury. Dr. Curry, in his pamphlet, the

<sup>2</sup> St. John's, in Newfoundland, was taken by the French, 24th May, 1762, and re-taken by the English 18th September following.

“Candid Inquiry,” alludes to a letter which Sheehy wrote to Major Sirr the day before his execution, wherein he admitted that the murder of Bridge had been revealed to him in a manner he could not avail himself of for his own preservation; and that the murder had been committed by two persons, not by those sworn to by the witnesses, and in a different manner to that described by them. Curry admits this letter was written by Sheehy, but he does not insert it; and in his subsequent work, the “Review of the Civil Wars,” there is no mention at all made of it in his account of these proceedings. Having obtained a copy of this letter, the first point to ascertain was, if the letter was written by Sheehy, or fabricated by his enemies. The result of my inquiries was to convince me that the letter was genuine. It was declared to be so by the successor of Father Sheehy in the parish of Clogheen (Mr. Keating), to Mr. Flannery, another ecclesiastic, in the same place, at a later period. Dr. Egan, who then administered the diocese, had likewise declared it to be genuine. The present parish priest of Clogheen, a relative of Edmund Sheehy, believes it to be genuine. One of the Roman Catholic clergymen of Clonmel, who takes the deepest interest in the fate of Father Sheehy, has no doubt of its authenticity. Every surviving relative of either of the Sheehys with whom I have communicated enter-

tains the same opinion; and, lastly, I may observe, the document bears the internal evidence of authenticity in its style and tone.

The following is a literal copy of this document:

CLONMEL, Friday Morning, March 14, 1766.

To JOSEPH SIRR, Esq.,

DEAR SIR:

To-morrow I am to be executed, thanks be to the Almighty God, with whom I hope to be for evermore: I would not change my lot with the highest now in the kingdom. I die innocent of the facts for which I am sentenced. The Lord have mercy on my soul. I beseech the great Creator that for your benevolence to me he will grant you grace to make such use of your time here that you may see and enjoy him hereafter. Remember me to Mr. Waite, the Lord Chancellor, Speaker, and the Judges of the King's Bench; may God bless them! Recommend to them all under the same charge with me; they are innocent of the murder; the prosecutors swore wrongfully and falsely; God forgive them. The accusers and the accused are equally ignorant of the fact, as I have been informed, but after such a manner I received the information that I cannot make use of it for my own preservation; the fact is, that John Bridge was destroyed by two alone, who strangled him on Wednesday night, the 24th October, 1764. I was then from home, and only returned home the 28th, and heard that he had disappeared. Various were the reports, which to believe I could not pretend to, until in the discharge of my duty one accused

himself of the said fact. May God grant the guilty true repentance, and preserve the innocent. I recommend them to your care. I have relied very much on Mr. Waite's promise. I hope no more priests will be distressed for their religion, and that the Roman Catholics of this kingdom will be countenanced by the Government, as I was promised by Mr. Waite would be the case if I proved my innocence. I am now to appear before the Divine tribunal, and declare that I was unacquainted with Mary Butler, *alias* Casey, and John Toohy, never having spoken to or seen either of them, to the best of my memory, before I saw them in the King's Bench last February. May God forgive them and bless them, you, and all mankind, are the earnest and fervent prayers of

Dear Sir,

Your most obliged, humble servant,

NICHOLAS SHEEHY.

The witnesses stated that the murder was committed the 28th of October, 1764. Father Sheehy says it was on the 24th. The number of persons implicated in it by the former was considerable; by the latter two only were concerned in it. In the mode of committing it the discrepancy of the accounts is no less obvious.

The question arises, when was this confession made to Father Sheehy, and with what object? Amyas Griffith speaks of the disclosure thus made under the veil of confession as "no new method of entrapping credulous priests" and

that it was adopted in this instance after the trial; of the latter statement no proof is adduced. The shortness of the time between his conviction and execution, and the inability expressed of availing himself of the knowledge given him "for his own preservation," militate against the probability of this disclosure being made subsequently to the trial.

Curry treats the disclosure as a snare laid by the enemies of Sheehy, for their own purposes. The purposes to be served by having recourse to the infamous proceeding of deceiving the unwary priest, and of making the functions of his sacred office subservient to the designs of his enemies, could only be the following: if resorted to previously to trial, by the disclosure of the alleged murder to deter Sheehy from adducing evidence of the man's existence; or, if subsequently to it, to leave it out of his power to make any declaration of his ignorance of the fact of Bridge's alleged death.

The attempt for the accomplishment of either object was not too unimportant for the character of the prosecutors; nor can it be deemed too infamous to be beyond the compass of their wickedness, when we find them holding out offers of pardon to their three next victims on condition of their making a declaration that "the priest," in his last solemn protestation of innocence, "had died with a lie in his mouth."



Curry expresses an opinion that Father Sheehy mistrusted the statement made to him in confession, and grounds that opinion on the evidence produced on his trial in proof of Bridge's proposed departure out of the kingdom at the period of his disappearance. There is no appearance of mistrust, however, in the statement made to him in his reference to it, in his letter to Major Sirr. The fact of Bridge's intention to go abroad, and of having gone to certain persons to take leave of them on the last day he was seen living, is unquestionable. That fact is within the knowledge of persons yet in existence. The same obligations which prevented Father Sheehy from availing himself on his trial of the knowledge communicated to him, may have precluded his giving any specific information to those witnesses whose testimony went to the establishment of the fact of Bridge's intended departure, and of their belief in his existence.

The information he (Sheehy) gave Major Sirr was no less vague than the rumour of Bridge's death consequent on his disappearance, on which superstructure of suspicion the whole story of the mode and manner of his death was built by the witnesses for the prosecution. In fact, neither the accusers nor the accused, of their own knowledge, knew anything of that event.

The whole frightful catalogue of crimes and



calamities attendant on these proceedings at Clonmel, are to be traced to the barbarous custom of inflicting torture for the purpose of extorting confessions of guilt and disclosures, on which criminal proceedings were to be grounded against obnoxious parties.

The managers of the Tipperary prosecutions in 1766 furnished the editors of the "Gentleman's and London Magazine" with "A narrative collected from authentic materials, of the proceedings at Clonmel, on the trials of Edmund Sheehy, James Buxton, and James Farrell." They begin with an account of the conduct of the prosecutions, as characterized by the deepest impartiality. The statement, therefore, it is hardly needful to add, may be depended on as that of a person by no means likely to fabricate or exaggerate any account of the cruelties committed on the people by order of the authorities, or under the sanction of the courts-martial of that day. The narrative informs us: "It was in resentment of a whipping which was inflicted on John Bridge with remarkable severity, to which he was sentenced by one of their courts-martial, that led him to give evidence against them, by which he lost his life." The object of singling out a poor, simple creature who was in the habit of roaming about that part of the country, and well acquainted with the names and residences of the Catholic gentry and farmers of

the locality, of putting him "to the question," through the instrumentality of the cat-o'-nine-tails, and of making the triangles subservient to the interests of law and order, is plain enough. The simplicity of the creature tortured, bordering, as it did, on weakness of intellect; his familiarity with the persons suspected, or sought to be criminated, rendered him a fit object to be worked upon by the influence of terror and the infliction of corporal punishment.

Bridge made whatever disclosures were suggested to him or required of him, and he was bound over to appear as a witness when called on. He made no secret of his punishment or his disclosures, and some of the people implicated by him were desirous to get him out of the country; others, in his own rank in life, there is reason to believe, distrusted his intention to leave the country, and contrived a nefarious plot to get rid of his testimony, by implicating him in felony.

The church plate, chalice, etc., of a small Roman Catholic place of worship at Carrigvistail, near Ballyporeen, usually kept, for better security, at the house of an innkeeper of the name of Sherlock,<sup>1</sup> adjoining the chapel, were stolen, or said to be so, and concealed on the premises, with the knowledge, it is alleged, of the owner of the

<sup>1</sup> The name of Sherlock occurs in some of the informations against the Whiteboys, sworn to by Toohy and Bier.

house. The facts now mentioned have not been published heretofore, and the importance of their bearing on the character of these proceedings, rendered it necessary to be well assured of the grounds there were, for attaching credit to them before coming to a determination to give them publicity. The authority on which they are given by the author is known to a Roman Catholic clergyman of Clonmel, who had opportunities of knowing the parties best qualified to give information on this subject, and of forming an opinion of the inquiries which were made on this occasion in his presence. The result of these inquiries as to the truth of the statement of one main fact respecting the fate of Bridge, coincides with the opinion of every surviving friend and relative of the Sheehys, and the other innocent men who suffered in this business, with whom I have communicated on the subject.

The rumour of the stolen church plate having been circulated in the country, Bridge being in the habit of frequenting Sherlock's house, was pointed out as the person suspected of having stolen it. The double infamy now attached to Bridge's character of being an informer and a sacrilegious person. He was advised to leave the country, and at length he made preparations to do so. On their completion, he took leave of his acquaintances; and the last time he was seen

by them was on his way to the house of an old friend of his, named Francis Bier, for the purpose of taking leave of him. It was known that he intended calling on another of his acquaintances, named Timothy Sullivan, a slater. Sullivan and a man of the name of Michael Mahoney, better known in his neighbourhood by the name, in Irish, for "wicked Michael," lived at Knockaughrim bridge; he fell into their hands, and he was murdered by them. No other human being had act or part in this foul deed. Mahoney's flight, and his reasons for it, were known for a long time only to his friends. The body of the murdered man was thrown into a pond at Shanbally.

Mahony fled the country; Sullivan remained, and lived and died, unsuspected by the authorities, though not unknown as the murderer to one individual at Clogheen—an innkeeper of the name of Magrath, who had been one of the innocent persons sworn against by Mary Dunlea, and had undergone a long imprisonment in Clonmel gaol.

The persons by whom this account was given to the author appeared to be ignorant of any communication respecting the murder made by Father Sheehy to Major Sirr. The circumstance of the coincidence of both accounts, with respect to two persons only having been engaged in the commission of the crime, deserves atten-

tion. By one of those guilty persons, Sheehy says the statement was made to him.

Sullivan was a Protestant; Mahony a Catholic. If the crime was perpetrated and revealed by either, the disclosure must have been made by Mahony.

From the time of Bridge's disappearance till this disclosure in the confessional, Father Sheehy states that various rumours were afloat, but which of them to believe he knew not. In concluding this part of the subject, I have only to observe, that if any doubt remains respecting the fate of Bridge, none whatever can be entertained of the innocence of those who were the victims of one of the foulest conspiracies on record. If these legal proceedings were instituted with a view rather to retaliation of an indiscriminate character, than to the vindication of the law by the punishment of guilt in the person of the actual culprit;—if they were adopted, as such proceedings have too often been, in cases of agrarian crime where no clue was obtained to the perpetrators of it; and it was deemed sufficient, not for the ends of justice, but for the purpose of striking terror into a portion of a community or a class to which the guilty party was suspected to belong, to take life for life; on whatever plea of expediency or policy—under whatever legal forms such prosecutions were carried on—the parties to them were the worst of criminals, and



their practices were outrages on justice, and violations of the laws of their country, and of the laws of God.

An attempt on a large scale was made to implicate the Roman Catholic gentry of Tipperary in the alleged Papist plot of 1766, after the necessary arrangements were made for the conviction of Father Sheehy.

The rescue of some prisoners in the county of Kilkenny, and the murder of a soldier (as in Keating's case, at a previous period), were the principal charges on which Edmund Sheehy, James Farrell, and James Buxton were first arrested. They were sent to Kilkenny, to be tried at the assizes, but after they had been arraigned, the nature of the evidence affording no grounds for expecting a conviction, the proceedings were stopped, and they were sent back to Clonmel gaol, on the 4th of April, where new charges were to be preferred against them at the special assizes, which opened on the 8th of May, 1766.

Edmund Sheehy,<sup>1</sup> a second or third cousin of Father Sheehy, and grandfather of the late Countess of Blessington, was a gentleman of

<sup>1</sup> It has long been the custom in Ireland to represent the character of those men who have been basely sacrificed to the Moloch of Orange ascendancy (under any of its names or forms) as persons of desperate fortunes, men of no rank in society, or repute, or property in the country. Edmund Sheehy is only heard of in the various accounts I have referred to, as an associate

moderate independence, connected with several of the most respectable Catholic families in the county, of a generous disposition, of social habits, and had lived on good terms with the Protestant gentry of his neighbourhood. His personal appearance was remarkably prepossessing. Persons still living have a vivid recollection of his frank, expressive features, his fine athletic form, of his intrepid demeanour on his trial, and on his way to execution: they speak of his personal appearance as that of a man in the prime of life and the maturity of manly vigour. He was a married man, and had four children, the youngest under two years of age. He was well known in the country as "Buck Sheehy," a term which at that time was commonly applied to young men of figure, whose means were good, and who were looked on in the country as sporting characters.

Buxton was a man in good circumstances, the poor man's friend in his neighbourhood, popular with the lower orders, and, as a matter of course, disliked by their oppressors.

Farrell was a young gentleman in affluent circumstances, who moved in the best society,

of low and lawless wretches banded together for the purpose of marauding and murdering their opponents. As a matter of fact he was of an illustrious lineage, and related to many noble families, among them the Earl of Ormond, the Earl of Thomond, the McCarthy More, the Earl of Cork, etc. (From a document given by the Countess of Blessington to R. R. Madden.)

and on his mother's side was connected with Lord Cahir. He was about thirty years of age, had but recently married, and, like his friend Sheehy, his taste for field sports had procured for him the appellation of one of the Bucks of Tipperary.

The friends and relatives of the unfortunate priest, Sheehy, appear to have been especially marked out for ruin. The design of corroborating the guilt of Father Sheehy, by involving his immediate friends and relatives in the crime they laid to his charge, is evident, not only in these proceedings, but in others, which were adopted at a later period.

True bills having been found against Edmund Sheehy, James Farrell, and James Buxton, they were put on their trials before the Right Honourable Chief Justice Clayton and two assistant judges. They were tried separately, and juries were empanelled of sixty in each case. The prisoners challenged about twenty peremptorily, but the court decided that they could not go further, on the ground of their inability to show any valid objection.

Edmund Sheehy was tried on the 11th of April, on a similar indictment to that on which Buxton and Farrell were tried on the two following days.

The substance of the indictment, which I have taken from the Crown Book, contains six counts.

The first sets forth that Edmund Sheehy, James Buxton, and James Farrell were present at, and aided and abetted in, the murder of John Bridge; and that Pierce Byrne, Darby Tierney, Dan Coleman, John Walsh, Peter Magrath, Thomas Magrath, John Butler, Thomas Sherlock, Roger Sheehy, John Coughlan, John Cruttie, Hugh Kean, John Byrne, John Springhill, William Flynn, J. Dwyer, John Bier, S. Howard, Michael Landregan, John and Edward Burke, Edward Prendergast, Philip Magrath, Michael Quinlan, William O'Connor, and James Highland, being also present, aided and abetted likewise in the murder. The second count sets forth their swearing in John Toohy to be true to "Shaune Meskill" and her children, meaning the Whiteboys. The third count charges them with tumultuously assembling at Dromlemman, levelling fences, waging rebellion, etc. The fourth and fifth counts, with the same offence, at Cashel and Ballyporeen. The sixth, with taking arms from soldiers.

The same wretches who were produced on the former trial, John Toohy, Mary Brady, *alias* Dunlea, and John Lonnergan, were brought forward on their trials; and two new approvers, Thomas Bier and James Herbert, to support the sinking credit of the old witnesses.<sup>1</sup> Her-

<sup>1</sup> August 13th, 1768, at the Clonmel Assizes, Bier, up to that time retained in the service of the Tipperary persecutors, was

bert was the man who had come to the former assize, to give evidence for the priest, and who (to prevent his appearance as a witness) had been arrested on a charge of high treason, lodged in gaol, and by the dexterous management of the prosecutors, was now transformed into a Crown witness.

Bier was included in the indictment of the prisoners, but had saved his life by turning approver. Previously to the arrests of Edmund Sheehy, Buxton, and Farrell, he sent notice to them that their lives were in danger, and he recommended their making their escape. They had the temerity, however, to rely on their innocence, and they paid with their lives the penalty of their folly. The evidence for the prosecution in no material respect differs from that brought forward on the trials of Meehan and Nicholas Sheehy. A detailed narrative of it will be found in the "Gentleman's and London Magazine" for April, 1766. It is needless to weary the reader with its fabrications. It is sufficient to say, the evidence of these witnesses was all of a piece, a tissue of perjuries clumsily interwoven, without a particle of truth, or a pretext for re-

called to plead to the indictment preferred against him several years before, for the murder of Bridge, when he pleaded the King's pardon, and, being used up as a witness, he was paid off. This unfortunate man, driven by terror into the commission of so many crimes against innocent men, died a natural death at Bruges.



garding the reception of it as the result of an imposition on the understanding.

The principal witness, whose testimony Mr. Sheehy relied on for his defence, was a Protestant gentleman, Mr. James Prendergast, "perfectly unexceptionable," says Curry, "in point of character, fortune, and religion." This gentleman deposed, "that on the day and hour on which the murder was sworn to have been committed—about or between the hours of ten or eleven o'clock on the night of the 28th of October, 1764—Edmund Sheehy, the prisoner, was with him and others in a distant part of the country. That they and their wives had on the aforesaid 28th of October, dined at the house of Mr. Joseph Tennison, where they continued till after supper, which was about eleven o'clock, when he and the prisoner left the house of Mr. Tennison, and rode a considerable way together, on their return to their respective homes. That the prisoner had his wife behind him, and when they parted, he (Mr. Prendergast) rode direct home, where, on his arrival, he had looked at the clock, and found it was twelve exactly. That as to the day of their dining with Mr. Tennison (Sunday, the 28th) he was positive, from this circumstance, that the day following was to be the fair of Clogheen, where he requested that Mr. Sheehy would dispose of some bullocks for him, he (Mr. Prendergast) not being able to attend the fair."

This was the evidence of Mr. Prendergast. Another witness for the prisoner, Paul Webber, of Cork, butcher, swore that he saw Mr. Sheehy at the fair of Clogheen, on the 29th of October, 1764, and conversed with him respecting Mr. Prendergast's bullocks, which he subsequently bought of Mr. Prendergast, in consequence of this conversation with Mr. Edmund Sheehy. Another witness, Thomas Mason, shepherd to the prisoner, confirmed the particulars sworn to by Mr. Prendergast, as to the night and the hour of Mr. Sheehy's return home from Mr. Tennyson's house.

Bartholomew Griffith swore that John Toohy, his nephew, had falsely sworn on the trial, that the clothes he wore on the trial had been given to him by him (Griffith). That Toohy, on the 28th and 29th of October, 1764, was at his house at Cullen.

One of the grand jury, Chadwick, volunteered his evidence to blunt the testimony of Griffith. He swore that Griffith, "on that occasion, was not to be believed on his oath." The next witness swore that Toohy lived with his master, Brooke Brazier, Esq., six weeks, where he behaved very ill. Mr. Brazier, another of the grand jury, was then called, and he declared that Toohy was not known to him, but that a person was in his family for that time, and was of a very bad character. The managers of the

prosecution had Mr. Tennison then examined by a Crown lawyer. This gentleman swore, "that Sheehy had dined in his house in October, 1764;" but "he was inclined to think it was earlier in the month than the 28th." This evidence was received as a triumphant contradiction of Prendergast's testimony.

Now, as far as character was concerned, that of Sheehy's witness stood fully as high as that of Mr. Tennison. But with respect to the statement of the particular fact of the prisoner having dined on that particular day specified by Sheehy's witness with Tennison, the evidence of Prendergast went positively to the affirmative, while that of Tennison amounted only to a supposition that it was on an earlier day in the month than that specified that the prisoner dined at his house. "He was" only "inclined to think" that it was earlier in the month; but Prendergast "was positive," from a particular circumstance, that it was on the Sunday, the day before the fair at Clogheen, he dined there. There was no other witness produced to corroborate the supposition of Mr. Tennison. There were two witnesses called to confirm the positive statement of Prendergast with regard to the particular night and hour of Sheehy's return from Tennison's house. So much for the evidence. It is now necessary to show that it was not relied on alone for the conviction of the prisoners.

The managers who had on the previous trial surrounded the court with a military force, on this occasion crammed it with their adherents, whose minds had been inflamed by public advertisements previously to the trial, in which the leniency of the former measures of Government was reprobated.

The baronet (Sir Thomas Maude) before mentioned, published an advertisement, wherein he presumed to censure the wise and vigilant administration of our last chief governors, and even to charge them with the destruction of many of his Majesty's subjects, for not having countenanced such measures with respect to these rioters, as were manifestly repugnant to all the rules of prudence, justice, and humanity. Nor did his boldness stop here; for, naming a certain day in said advertisement, when the following persons of credit and substance, namely, Sheehy, Buxton, and Farrell, and others were to be tried by commission at Clonmel for the aforesaid murder—as if he meant to intimidate their judges into lawless rigour and severity, he sent forth an authoritative kind of summons, “to every gentleman of the county to attend that commission.”<sup>1</sup>

With such arrangements for inflaming the public mind, for influencing the jury, for intimidating the judges, the doom of the prisoners was sealed before they were put into the dock.

The unfortunate Edmund Sheehy was convicted, and sentence of death, with its usual bar-

<sup>1</sup> “A Candid Inquiry.”

barous concomitants in these cases, drawing and quartering, was pronounced upon him. His wife was in the court when that dreadful sentence was pronounced, and was carried from it in a swoon. The two other acts of the judicial drama were duly performed; the packed juries discharged the duties required and expected of them by the managers of the prosecutions. Buxton and Farrell were found guilty, and were sentenced, with Sheehy, to be executed on the 3rd of May.

Eight other persons were placed at the bar, who were charged with the same crime as the prisoners who had been convicted. Another Sheehy was on the list of the managers, but the jury was instructed to acquit the prisoners, Roger Sheehy, Edmund Burke, John Burke, John Butler, B. Kennelly, William Flynn, and Thomas Magrath; but no sooner were they acquitted than several of them were called on to give bail to appear at the ensuing assizes, to answer to other charges of high treason.

It is not undeserving of notice to see how the intelligence of proceedings of this kind was received in England. In the "Gentleman's and London Magazine" for June, 1766, page 289, we find the following notice of those trials:

At the Clonmel assizes, Father Sheehy, James Buxton, Edmund Sheehy, James Farrell, otherwise called



Buck Farrell, a young fellow of good family—all tried for the murder of John Bridge, who had given information, and being a Whiteboy, had been arrested and severely punished by a court-martial, had informed against them in revenge.

This was all the information respecting these frightful proceedings that it was deemed necessary to give the people of England.

A memorial was drawn up by Edmund Sheehy, and addressed to the judges who presided at the trial; and the following copy is taken from the original draft:

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE  
CLAYTON, THE HONOURABLE EDMUND MALONE,  
AND GEOFFREY HILL, ESQ.

The humble petition of Edmund Sheehy, an unhappy prisoner under sentence of death in his Majesty's gaol at Clonmel,

Most humbly sheweth,

That at the last commission of oyer and terminer and gaol delivery, held at Clonmel the 11th of April inst., your petitioner was convicted of the murder of John Bridge, and accordingly received sentence to be executed the 3rd of May next.

That your petitioner was transmitted from the city of Kilkenny to Clonmel on Friday, the 4th of April inst., four days only before the said commission of gaol delivery was opened.

That from the short time your petitioner had to

prepare for his trial, which he apprehended was by order postponed until the next summer assizes, and the confusion he was in, he was not able to procure all his material witnesses to attend on said trial, or to make that just defence that he would have been able to make, if he had more time to prepare for it, which is manifest from the want of recollection in Travers, the butcher, produced on behalf of your petitioner, who, on the very next day after the trial, perfectly recollected, and is now ready to swear, he saw your petitioner and the bullocks at the fair of Clogheen. Nor had Mr. Tennison sufficient time to recollect himself, supposing him quite free from the influence of those who managed the prosecution, who were the said Tennison's allies; circumstances that did not appear to your lordship and honours, of whose mercy, humanity, and justice, your petitioner has a due sense, which he shall retain unto death, whatever his fate may be.

That your petitioner has a wife and five small children,<sup>1</sup> the eldest about nine years old, who, together with an aged father and three sisters, principally depend upon the petitioner's industry as a farmer for support.

That your petitioner forbears stating the nature and circumstances of the evidence which appeared upon your petitioner's trial, but refers to your lordship and honours' recollection thereof. However, from the nature of your petitioner's defence, in part supported by the

<sup>1</sup> One of these children, Ellen Sheehy, became the wife of Edmund Power, Esq., of Curragheen, county of Waterford, and by that marriage became the mother of the late Countess of Blessington, Lady Canterbury, and the Countess of St. Marsault.

positive evidence of James Prendergast, Esq., who is a gentleman of unexceptionable good character and of a considerable fortune, notwithstanding the prejudices that were entertained by some against the persons who were to be tried, your petitioner, from the evidence and a consciousness of his own innocence, entertained hopes that he would have been acquitted. But in regard that he was found guilty,

Your petitioner most humbly implores your lordship and honours to take his unhappy case and the character of the several witnesses into consideration, and to make such favourable report of your petitioner and his family's case to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant as to your lordship and honours shall seem meet.

And he will pray,

EDMUND SHEEHY.

“Notwithstanding,” Curry states, “that frequent and earnest solicitations were made by several persons of quality in the favour of the prisoners, who, being persuaded of their innocence, hoped to obtain for them, if not a pardon, at least some mitigation of their punishment, by transportation or reprieve—the chief and most active of these worthy personages was the Right Honourable Lord Taaffe, whose great goodness of heart and unwearied endeavours on all occasions to save his poor countrymen, add new lustre to his nobility, and will be for ever remembered by them with the warmest and most respectful gratitude—it is no wonder that their

solicitations were vain, for the knight (baronet) so often mentioned (Sir Thomas Maude), Mr. —, etc., had been before with the Lord Lieutenant, and declared that, if any favour were shown to these people, they would follow the example of a noble peer, and quit the kingdom in a body. The behaviour of the prisoners at the place of execution was cheerful, but devout, and modest, though resolute.”

In the “Gentleman’s and London Magazine” of May, 1766, there is “an authentic narration of the death and execution of Messrs. Sheehy, Buxton, and Farrell, with their declarations attested and carefully compared with those in the hands of Mr. Butler, sub-sheriff of the county Tipperary, who received them from these unfortunate people at the place of execution.”

These documents I have likewise compared with copies of the same declarations, furnished me by some of the surviving friends of the unfortunate gentlemen, and, except in the omission of some names, I find no material difference.

The sheriff, who proceeded with decency, called upon the prisoners early in the morning of the 3rd instant, so as to leave the gaol of Clonmel for Clogheen about six o’clock, to which place he was attended by the regiment of light dragoons, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Harcourt, and two companies of Armiger’s foot: these the commander had previously made ready

for the purpose, by an order from government. Edmund Sheehy and James Buxton were put on the same car, James Farrell on the next, and the executioner on another, with his apparatus, and the gallows so contrived as to be immediately put together; they thus proceeded in awful procession to Clogheen, where they arrived about twelve o'clock, the distance being about eleven miles.

In the most open part of the village the gallows was erected, and that in a very short time, while the prisoners remained at a small distance, in devotion with their priest, for about two hours, when it was thought necessary to execute the sentence the law of their country had doomed them to suffer. They were then all three put upon one car, and drawn under the gallows, where, after remaining some time, they were tied up, and in that situation each read his declaration, and afterwards handed it to the sheriff.

Sheehy met his fate with the most undaunted courage, and delivered his declaration with as much composure of mind as if he had been repeating a prayer. When this awful scene was finished, they were turned off, upon a signal given by Sheehy, who seemed in a sort of exaltation, and sprung from the car; he was dead immediately; and after the criminals had hung some time, they were cut down, and the executioner severed their heads from their bodies, which were delivered to their respective friends.<sup>1</sup>

Sheehy's intrepid behaviour, set off by an engaging person, attracted much pity and compassion from all

<sup>1</sup> The statement is incorrect with respect to the heads of Buxton and Farrell.—R. R. M.



present; but the most oppressive part of this tragic scene yet remains to be told, when I say that Sheehy has left a widow with five children to bemoan his unhappy fate; Buxton, three; and Farrell, who had not been married more than three months, has left his wife pregnant. They were all buried in the evening of that day, as particularly requested by themselves, where, we hope, they rest, having made atonement for their crimes; and let not the imputation of the fathers' misfortunes be remembered to the prejudice of their families.

Your constant reader, etc.

CASHEL, May 28, 1766."

#### THE DYING DECLARATION OF MR. EDMUND SHEEHY.

'As I am shortly to appear before the great tribunal of God, where I expect, through the passion and sufferings of my Redeemer, to be forgiven the many crimes and offences which I have committed against so great and merciful a God, I sincerely forgive the world, I forgive my judges, jury, prosecutors, and every other who had a hand in spilling my innocent blood; may the great God forgive them, bless them, and may they never leave this world without sincerely repenting, and meriting that felicity which I hope, through the wounds of Christ, soon to enjoy.

I think it incumbent, as well for the satisfaction of the public, as the ease of my own mind, to declare the truth of every crime with which I was impeached, from the beginning to the day of my conviction.

*First.* The meeting at Kilcoran, sworn by James

Herbert, and the murder of John Bridge, sworn to by him and the rest of the informers.

*Second.* The meeting at Ardfinan, sworn by Guinan, in October, 1763, and several other meetings and treasonable practices, at all which I was sworn to be present as the principal acting person.

*Third.* That I had a hand in burning John Fearise's turf, and extirpating his orchard, taking arms from soldiers, burning Joseph Tennison's corn, levelling walls, and many other atrocious crimes against the peace and tranquillity of the present happy constitution.

1st. I now solemnly declare that I did not see a Whiteboy since the year 1762, and then but once or twice; and that I never was present at the levelling at the Rock of Cashel, or any other wall or commons in my life, nor even gave counsel or advice to have it done, or ever had any previous knowledge of such intentions; nor do I know to this minute any one man that was at the levelling of the said wall.

2ndly. I declare that I never saw Herbert until the day of my trial, and that I never was at a meeting at Kilcoran; never heard an oath of allegiance proposed nor administered in my life to any sovereign, king, or prince; never knew anything of the murder of Bridge, until I heard it publicly mentioned; nor did I know there was any such design on foot, and if I had, I would have hindered it, if in my power.

3rdly. The battle of Newmarket, for which I was tried—I declare I never was at Newmarket, nor do I know there was a rescue intended, nor do I believe did any man in the county of Tipperary.

4thly. I declare that I never meant or intended re-

bellion, high treason, or massacre, or ever heard any such wicked scheme mentioned or proposed, nor do I believe there was any such matters in view, and if there was, that I am wholly ignorant of them.

5thly. I declare that I never knew of either French or Spanish officers, commissions, or money paid to those poor, ignorant fools called Whiteboys, or a man held in the light of a gentleman connected with them.

I was often attacked, during my confinement in Kil-kenny by the Rev. Lawrence Broderick and the Rev. John Hewson, to make useful discoveries, by bringing in men of weight and fortune, that there was an intended rebellion and massacre, French officers, commissions and money paid, and by so doing, that would procure my pardon, difficult as it was.

The day after my trial, Edmund Bagwell came to me from the grand jury, and told me if I would put those matters in a clear light, that I would get my pardon. I made answer that I would declare the truth, which would not be heard. Sir William Barker's son and Mr. Matthew Bunbury came to me the same evening, with words to the same purpose, to which I replied as before. Nothing on this occasion would give sufficient content, without my proving the above, and that the priest died with a lie in his mouth, which was the phrase Mr. Hewson (Hewetson) made use of. I sent for Sir Thomas Maude the day of my sentence and declared to him the meeting at Drumlemmon, where I saw nothing remarkable, but two or three fellows, who stole hay from Mr. John Keating, were whipped, and sworn never to steal to the value of a shilling during life. I saw Thomas Bier there, which I told Sir Thomas

and Mr. Bunbury, and begged of them never to give credit to Herbert, who knew nothing of the matter except what Bier knew.

I do declare I saw Bier take a voluntary oath more than once, in the gaol of Clonmel, that he knew nothing of the murder; nor do I believe he did. May God forgive him, and the rest of those unhappy informers, and all those who had a hand in encouraging them to swear away innocent lives.

I further declare that I have endeavoured, as much as was in my power, to suppress this spirit of the White-boys, where I thought or suspected the least spark of it to remain.

The above is a sincere and honest declaration, as I expect to see God; nor would I make any other for the universe, which must be clear to the gentlemen who offered me my life if I would comply. May the great God forgive them, and incline their hearts to truth, and suffer them not to be biassed nor hurried on by party or particular prejudices, to persevere any longer in falsely representing those matters to the best of kings and to the humanest and best of governments, which I pray God may long continue.

I die, in the thirty-third year of my age, an unworthy member of the Church of Rome: the Lord have mercy on my soul!—Amen! Amen!

I was informed that Mr. Tennison's corn was burnt by one of his own servants, but accidentally, and that since my confinement; I thought so always.

Signed by me this 2nd of May, 1766.

EDMUND SHEEHY.

Present—James Buxton, James Farrell.

A COPY OF THE DYING DECLARATION OF JAMES BUXTON, OF CENTRAL KILCORAN, IN THE COUNTY OF TIPPERARY, CHARGED WITH THE MURDER OF ONE JOHN BRIDGE: JOHN TOOHY AND THOMAS BIER, PROSECUTORS; GOD FORGIVE THEM.

Whereas I, the said James Buxton, was arraigned at my trial, for having aided and assisted, and committed many flagrant crimes against his Majesty's law and government, since the rise of the Whiteboys, upon the information of Michael Guinan and John Toohy, I thought it proper to disabuse the public by this declaration, which I make to God and the world, concerning my knowledge of these matters.

First. As to the murder of John Bridge, I solemnly declare in the presence of God, before whose holy tribunal I shortly expect to appear, that I neither consulted nor advised, aided nor abetted, nor had I the least notion of any one that did, to the killing of John Bridge; nor did my prosecutor, John Toohy, ever serve me an hour since I was born; neither did I ever, to the best of my knowledge, lay my eyes on him but one night, on the 18th September last, when he lay at my house, and went by the name of Lucius O'Brien. He was pursued next morning by one William O'Brien, of Clonmel, whom he robbed of some clothes two days before, and was taken in Clogheen for the same robbery, and said O'Brien's clothes and other things were found upon him, for which he was committed to gaol, and then turned approver.

As to every other thing that Michael Guinan and said Toohy swore against me, I further solemnly de-



clare, in the presence of my great God, that I neither did any such thing, nor was at any such meeting or levelling as they swore against me, except Drumlemmon, and upon the word of a dying man, neither of them was there. Nor was any man, upon the same word of a dying man, that was yet apprehended or suffered, in my belief, concerned in the murder of Bridge: and that I verily believe and am persuaded that no prosecutor that yet appeared was present or any way concerned in that murder, though Thomas Bier, God forgive him, swore that he and I were within two yards of John Bridge when he was murdered by Edmund Meehan with a stroke of a bill-hook.

Secondly. I solemnly declare and protest in the presence of my great God, that I never heard, nor ever learned of a rebellion intended in this kingdom; nor never heard of, nor ever saw any French officers or French money coming into this country; nor ever heard that any merchants supplied, or intended to supply any money for the Whiteboys, or for any other purpose; nor ever saw, heard, or could discover, that any allegiance was sworn to any prince or potentate in the world, but to his present majesty King George the Third; and I further declare, on my dying words, that I never knew nor discovered, nor even imagined, that any massacre whatsoever was intended against any person or persons in this kingdom. And I declare in the presence of Almighty God, that I positively believe and am persuaded that, if any of the foregoing treacherous or treasonable combinations were to be carried on, I would have learned or heard something of them.

Thirdly. That last Lent assizes, in Kilkenny, where

I stood indicted, and was arraigned for the battle of Newmarket, that the Rev. John Hewetson and Rev. Lawrence Broderick tampered with me for six hours and more, setting forth the little chance I had for my life there at Kilkenny; and though I should, that I would have none at all in Clonmel; but that they would write Lord Carrick immediately to procure my freedom, if I would turn approver, and swear to an intended rebellion, treasonable conspiracies, and a massacre against the principal Popish clergy and gentlemen of my county, whose names they had set down in a long piece of paper; but wanted me particularly to swear against Squire Wyse, Philip Long, Dominick Farrell, Martin Murphy, Doctor Creagh, and Michael Lee; that I should also swear the Priest Sheehy died with a lie in his mouth. Likewise that I was at the battle of Newmarket, and received a letter from one Edmund Tobin, to be at said battle, and this in order to corroborate the informer Toohy's oath, and the oaths of three of the light horse, who swore they saw me there. One in particular swore he broke his firelock on my head. Now, as I expect salvation from the hands of God, I neither received a message or letter, nor heard or discovered that this battle of Newmarket was to occur, nor any circumstance regarding it, until it was advertised. And I further declare in the presence of my great God, that I never was nearer this place they call Newmarket than the turnpike road that leads from Dublin to Cork, for I never was two yards eastwards of that road. As to the schemes of the Whiteboys, as far as I could find out in the parish of Tubrid, where I lived, I most solemnly declare before Almighty God,

nothing more was meant than the detection of thieves and rogues, which the said parish was of late remarkable for; an agreement to deal for tithes with none but the dean or minister whose tithe was of his or their immediate living; as to levelling, that I never found out any such thing to have been committed in said parish of any consequence, but one ditch belonging to John Griffin, of Kilcoran; nor was I ever privy to any wall or ditch that ever was levelled by Whiteboys in the county of Tipperary, or any other county.

I also declare, that I never approved of the proceedings of levellers, and that my constant admonition to every person whom I thought concerned in such vile practices, was to desist, for that the innocent would suffer for the guilty.

Given under my hand this 2nd day of May, and the year 1766.

JAMES BUXTON.

Present—Edmund Sheehy, James Farrell.

#### THE DECLARATION OF JAMES FARRELL.

As I am shortly to appear before the great God, where I expect, through the passion of our dear Redeemer, to be forgiven the many crimes and offences which I have committed against so great and just a God, I now sincerely forgive the world in general, and in particular them that have been the cause of wrongfully spilling my blood.

1st—The crime for which I am to die is the murder of John Bridge, and swearing at Kilcoran.

2ndly—The burning of Joseph Tennison's corn,

John Fearise's turf, and all other things that belonged to the Whiteboys.

3rdly—The battle of Newmarket, which I stood trial for in Kilkenny. I now declare to the great tribunal, that I am as innocent of all the aforesaid facts which I have been impeached with, as the child unborn, in either counsel, aiding, assisting, or knowledge of said facts. I therefore think it conscionable to declare what the following gentlemen wanted me to do, in order to spill innocent blood, which was not in the power of any man in the world to perform.

These are the gentlemen as follows:—The Rev. John Hewetson, John Bagwell, Matthew Bunbury, Mr. Toler, William Bagnell, Edmund Bagnell, and some of the light horse officers. The day I was condemned, they came along with me from the courthouse to the gaol, where they carried me into a room, and told me it was in my power to save my life. I asked them how? If I swore against the following persons, they told me they could get my pardon.

The people are as follows:—Martin Murphy and Philip Long, both of Waterford, and some other merchants of Cork; likewise Bishop Creagh and Lord Dunboyne's brother, and a good many other clergymen; likewise James Nagle, Robert Keating, John Purcell, Thomas Dogherty, Thomas Long, John Baldwin, Thomas Butler, of Grange, and Nicholas Lee, with a great many others of the gentlemen of the county, and responsible farmers, to be encouraging French officers, enlisting men for the French service, to raise a rebellion in this kingdom, and to distribute French money.

4thly—If in case they should get a person to do all these things, it would not do without swearing to the murder of John Bridge, to corroborate with the rest of the informers, and strengthen their evidence.

5thly—I solemnly declare to his Divine Majesty, I was never present at the levelling of a ditch or wall in my life, nor never was at a meeting of Whiteboys in my life.

6thly—I likewise declare, that I had neither hand, act, nor part in bringing James Herbert from the county of Limerick, and also declare, to the best of my knowledge, he swore not one word of truth, and, in particular, what he swore against me was undoubtedly false.

The great God bless all my prosecutors, and all other persons that had hand, act, or part in spilling my blood innocently, which the Divine tribunal knows to be so.

Given under my hand, this 30th day of April, 1766.

JAMES FARRELL.

They also wanted me to swear against Thomas Butler, of Ballyknock, Edmund Dogherty, and Philip Hacket.

In the presence of us: Edmund Sheehy, James Buxton, Catherine Farrell.

The wretched wife of Edmund Sheehy, immediately after his conviction, proceeded to Dublin, with the hope of procuring a pardon for her husband. His enemies were, however, beforehand with her. Their pernicious influence was exerted in every department at the Castle to



frustrate her efforts. They prevailed, as they had hitherto done there, whenever the favour or the anger of the Molock of their faction was to be propitiated or appeased, by handing over to them their defenceless persecuted victims. Some idea may be formed of the promptitude with which the foul proceedings against these gentlemen were followed up, when it is borne in mind that their separate trials commenced on the 11th of April, and the following official notice is to be found in the record of these proceedings: "Crown warrant for Edmund Sheehy, James Farrell, and James Buxton, given to F. Butler, Sub-Sheriff, 15th April, 1766."

Mrs. Sheehy, on her return to Clonmel, after her fruitless journey, had not even the melancholy satisfaction of finding her husband in prison. On her arrival there in the morning she learned that he and his companions had been taken from the gaol a short time before, and were then on their way to Clogheen, the place of execution. This wretched woman, worn down with affliction, with the previous conflict between hope and fear, with the shock she had received on her return, at finding her last hope of beholding her beloved husband, and of bidding him farewell, had yet sufficient strength, or the kind of energy which arises from despair, to hurry after that mournful cortege. About half-way between Clonmel and Clogheen she overtook it, and rush-

ing forward passed through the soldiers, and threw herself into the arms of her husband.

The scene was one which the few surviving friends of this unhappy couple speak of as causing the very soldiers who surrounded them to weep and sob aloud. This scene took place about two hours before the execution. Before they separated, Sheehy resumed his former apparently unmoved demeanour, and addressed a few words, expressive of his last wishes, with extraordinary firmness of tone and manner, to his distracted wife. He told her to remember she had duties to perform to her God, to herself, to their children, and to his memory; and then praying that Heaven might pour down all its blessings on her head, he tore himself from her embrace, and the procession moved on. The officers, soldiers, sub-sheriff, all around them were in tears during this melancholy interview; and at their separation, Sheehy himself, evidently struggling with his feelings, endeavoured to suppress any appearance of emotion, recovered his self-possession, and from that time seemed to be unmoved.

The day before the execution, Mrs. Kearney, an aunt of Edmund Sheehy, applied to one of the officers who was to be on duty the next day, to save his unfortunate family the pain of seeing his head placed on a spike, over the entrance to the gaol, in the High Street, in which it was situ-

ated. Her interference was not ineffectual: he told her he had no power to interfere with the civil authorities; but when the head was separated from the body, if any person were in readiness to bear it off, the soldiers, probably, would not be over zealous to prevent its removal.

For this act it was wisely thought that the resolution and promptitude of a woman would be likely to prove most successful. Ann Mary Butler, a person devoted to the family, and in her attachment to it incapable of fear and insensible to danger, was selected for this purpose. The head of Edmund Sheehy was no sooner struck from the body, than this woman suddenly forced her way through the soldiers, threw her apron over the head, and fled with it, the soldiers as she approached opening a free passage for her, and again forming in line when the executioner and his attendants made an effort to pursue her, and thus the military prevented their so doing.

The woman, at the place appointed at the cross-roads near Clogheen, met the funeral (for the mutilated body had been delivered over to the friends for interment), the head was put into the coffin, and was buried at a country churchyard, about three or four miles from Clonmel, attended by a vast concourse of people. The executions took place on a temporary scaffold in an open space called the Cock-pit. The heads of Farrell and Buxton were brought to Clonmel,

and, together with those of Father Sheehy and Meehan, were spiked and placed over the entrance to the gaol, where, for upwards of twenty years, these wretched trophies of the triumphant villainy of Messrs. Maude, Bagwell, Bagnell and Hewetson continued to outrage the feelings of humanity and justice, and to shock the sight of the surviving relatives of the judicially murdered men, every time those relatives entered the town or departed from it.

The thirst for Catholic blood was not yet appeased. Another batch of Catholic gentlemen, charged with treason, with acting as leaders in the Munster plot, were brought to trial at Clonmel, in the month of March, the following year (1767). Mr. James Nagle, of Garnavilla, a relative by marriage of the celebrated Edmund Burke, Mr. Robert Keating, of Knocka, Mr. Thomas Dogherty, of Ballynamona, Mr. Edmund Burke, of Tubrid, and Messrs. Meighan, Lee, and Coghlan, all charged with high treason, and aiding and abetting Whiteboyism.<sup>1</sup> For some of these gentlemen, when first arrested, bail to the amount of several thousand pounds had been offered and refused. They had lain in gaol for several months previously to trial, and the charge that eventually was attempted to be supported against them by the same miscreant

<sup>1</sup> "Dublin Gazette," April, 1767; and "Saunders's Newsletter," July, 1767.

who had sworn against Father Sheehy, was completely disproved. The "managers" of the prosecution had omitted no means to procure evidence of the right sort. In the middle of July, the preceding year (1766), ample encouragement for new perjury was held out in the public papers. It was therein stated that, "the reward promised for prosecuting and convicting the other rioters, the sum of three hundred pounds, had been paid"

Several of these gentlemen were of the most respectable families in the county. Messrs. Keating and Dogherty were persons who moved in the best of circles of society, and whose descendants still hold a prominent station in it. The two latter owed their safety to a circumstance which came to the knowledge of one of the friends of Keating while he was in gaol. One of the dismounted dragoon soldiers, then doing duty in the gaol, saw the well-known Mary Dunlea privately introduced into the prison by one of the active magistrates in these proceedings, and taken to a window, where she had an opportunity of seeing Messrs. Keating and Dogherty, without being noticed by them. This was for the purpose of enabling her to swear to persons whom she had never before seen.

On the morning of the trials, the friends of the prisoners, keeping a watchful eye on the movements of the same woman, saw her standing in



a doorway in front of the dock, and Mr. John Bagwell in the act of pointing out the prisoners. The friend of Keating lost no time in hurrying to the dock, and telling them to change their coats. They did so, and the coats were identified but not the men. The witness, on being asked to point out Keating, singled out Dogherty: and the manifest ignorance of the witness of the persons of those two prisoners was mainly instrumental in causing all to be acquitted.

The trial of these gentlemen, on account of the great number of witnesses examined, lasted from ten o'clock on Wednesday morning until four o'clock on Thursday morning. The jury, after much deliberation, brought in their verdict, "Not guilty," upon which the prisoners were enlarged. "Not, however, without the factious, bold, and open censures, and secret threats against the humane and upright judge who presided at the trial (Baron Mountney),—so enraged were they to find the last effort to realize this plot entirely frustrated."<sup>1</sup>

Curry is mistaken in terming it the last effort. Two other attempts were subsequently made before Judge Edmund Malone and Prime Sergeant Hutchinson. John Sheehy, John Burke, E. Prendergast, and several others, were tried and acquitted on the same charge and evidence.

<sup>1</sup> "A Parallel between the Plots of 1679 and 1762," p. 39; "Saunders's Newsletter," July, 1767.

On the 5th of September, 1767, once more, "Mr. Roger Sheehy, and six others, were tried on an indictment of high treason, for being concerned with the Whiteboys, on the testimony of Toohy, who, prevaricating, as we are told by Curry, in his testimony from what he had sworn nearly two years before, Mr. Prime Sergeant desired the jury to give no credit thereto, upon which Sheehy was acquitted."<sup>2</sup>

Thus terminated a most foul conspiracy against the lives of innocent men. The name of Sheehy's jury became a term of reproach in the south of Ireland, that was applied to any inquiry that was conducted on principles at variance with truth and justice, and which made an indictment tantamount to a conviction.

A passage in Sir Richard Musgrave's history throws some light on the implication of Mr. James Nagle, whose name is mentioned on the list of prisoners at the former trial, in March, 1767. "When the enormities," says Sir Richard; "committed by the Whiteboys were about to draw on them the vengeance of the law, and some time before Sir Richard Aston proceeded on his commission to try them, Mr. Edmund Burke sent his brother Richard (who died recorder of Bristol) and Mr. Nagle, a relation, on a mission to Munster, to levy money on the Popish body, for the use of the Whiteboys, who were exclusively Papists." The obvious drift of this passage can

<sup>2</sup> "Freeman's Journal," September 8, 1767.

hardly be mistaken; but as Sir Richard Musgrave appears to have had some misgivings as to the success of the attempt to cast suspicion on the loyalty of Edmund Burke, he added the following passage in a note, in type sufficiently small to afford a chance of its escaping observation: "I have no other proof that these gentlemen were employed by Mr. Burke, than that they declared it without reserve to the persons from whom they obtained money. In doing so he might have been actuated by motives of charity and humanity." But in the next edition of his work, in 8vo, 2 vols., Musgrave struck out the concluding words of the paragraph—"In so doing he might have been actuated by motives of charity and humanity." But utterly unreliable, as all statements of Musgrave are, in relation to persons who did not participate in his ferocious sentiments, the biographers of Burke, I am persuaded, have much to learn respecting his early career, the cause of his permanent establishment in England, after being called to the bar, and the relations in which he stood towards several of those Catholic gentlemen of Tipperary who were marked out for persecution by the Bagwells, Maudes, and Bagnells, from 1765 to 1768.

The extraordinary judgments which fell on the persons who were instrumental to the death of Father Sheehy, are still fresh in the memory

of the inhabitants of Clonmel and Clogheen. Several of the jury met with violent deaths; some dragged out a miserable existence, stricken with loathsome and excruciating maladies; madness was the fate of one, beggary the lot of another, recklessness of life and remorse, I believe it may be said with truth, of the majority of them.

This is no overcharged account. On the contrary, it falls short of the reality. One of the jury, named Tuthill, cut his throat; another, named Shaw, was choked; another, named Alexander Hoops, was drowned; the last survivor of them was said to have been accidentally shot by Mr. Sheehy Keating, in Rehill-wood, on a sporting excursion. Ferris died mad. One of them dropped dead at his own door. Another, at a gentleman's house, where he spent the night in company with Mr. Pierce Meagher, the brother-in-law of Edmund Sheehy, was found dead in a privy. Dumville, by a fall from his horse, was frightfully disfigured. Minchin was reduced to beggary; and of all, I have heard only of one, named Dunmead, who died a natural death, that was not signally visited with calamities of some kind or other.

Sir Thomas Maude, the ancestor of a noble lord, died in a state of frenzy, terribly afflicted both in mind and body. In his last moments his ravings were continually about Sheehy, and the repetition of that name became painful to his

attendants. Few death-bed scenes perhaps, ever presented a more appalling spectacle than that of Sir Thomas Maude is described to have been.

Bagwell, of Kilmore, was reduced to a state of fatuity for some time before his death. His eldest son shot himself in a packet going over to England, his property became involved, and a miserable remnant of the wreck of it is all that is now left to one of his descendants living in a foreign land.

The catastrophes which we have spoken of may be the results of natural causes, the consequences of violent courses, of unbridled passions, leading from one species of excitement to another, and to excesses destructive to reason, and ultimately of life itself. The deaths of the persecutors recorded by Lactantius, were not the less evident manifestations of the divine displeasure, though the earth did not swallow them up, or the thunder-bolt did not fall upon them, and the food and fuel of the disorders which consumed them, were their own violent and head-strong passions, "*Urrentur lentis ignibus*," says Lactantius; and on the same authority, by the operation of nature's specific laws, "*dati legibus*," the ends of retributive justice were accomplished.

The success at Clonmel of the prosecutors in the management of the trials of 1766, which terminated in the conviction and execution of the



Sheehys, Farrell, and Buxton, one might have thought would have been sufficient for the satisfaction of Tipperary justice. It would seem, however, that it was not sufficient for the character of the prosecutors. These convictions took place in the spring of 1766, long after which, and in some instances upwards of a year after which period, they got the old discredited witnesses to come forward and swear to new depositions, reiterating the former statements; and for the purpose of sustaining their damaged testimony, other miscreants were procured, who made similar informations upon oaths, the copies of which are triumphantly paraded in Sir Richard Musgrave's history. All of these, with one exception, are sworn before the Rev. Mr. Hewetson. The date of one is the 24th of January, 1768; of another, the 15th of March, 1767; of another, the 7th of March, 1767. Three other depositions are dated 1766, and were all sworn to subsequent to the execution of Nicholas Sheehy. The one which is inserted first in Sir Richard Musgrave's work, paraded as the most important corroboration of the former testimony on the trials is that of an unfortunate reprobate Roman Catholic priest, the Rev. Matthias O'Brien, of the city of Kilkenny.<sup>1</sup> The new feature in this important

<sup>1</sup> The renunciation of the errors of the Church of Rome, on the part of the Popish priest, the Rev. Matthias O'Brien, was announced in the papers of the day subsequently to the date of his deposition.

deposition is, that "the disorders in the south were originally fomented by foreign agents, in conjunction with some Popish bishops, particularly Dr. James Butler, titular Archbishop of Cashel. . . . That he (Matthias O'Brien) was the coadjutor to the said Archbishop of Cashel; that more than once in his chair of confession, he had saved the life of the Rev. John Hewetson, by dissuading the assassins from their bloody purposes; and that the rebellion would have broken out long since, were it not for the zealous, vigilant, and indefatigable labours of the said John Hewetson and William Bagnell, Esqrs., who, by the activity and spirit they exerted in detecting, apprehending, and bringing to justice some of the chief leaders of these insurrections, checked and suspended for a time their bad designs. . . . That he was cognizant of their schemes, because he had been sworn by the archbishop (Butler) 'to be true and faithful to the Church of Rome, and to promote its interests, and to be faithful to him, Dr. Butler, for the advancement of the Roman Catholic faith' . . . That the said archbishop supplied Father Sheehy with sums of money for rebellious purposes," etc., etc., etc.

This reverend gentleman deposes that he was sworn by his archbishop to be faithful to him, etc. He makes no scruple, however, about breaking that oath: in a previous part of his evi-

dence, however, he accounts for his knowledge of the intention to assassinate Mr. Hewetson by the revelations made to him in the confessional, but he declines to enter into any particulars, and "thinks he cannot, consistently with his obligation as a priest, divulge them."

The certificate of character from the reprobate priest, as to the zeal and activity of the Rev. Mr. Hewetson and his worthy compeers, does not appear to have set their minds at rest as to the opinion, when the frenzy of the time should pass away, that was likely to be formed of their conduct. They had recourse to the old expedient of complimenting one another with addresses and resolutions on the rigour and unceasing vigilance displayed in their proceedings. To one of those addresses we find the names of those grand jurors appended who had found the bills of indictment in the preceding cases. In the Dublin "Freeman's Journal" of April 2, 1766, we find a resolution of the high sheriff and grand jury of the county Tipperary, expressive of their gratitude "to William Bagnell, Esq., one of his Majesty's justices of the peace, for the spirit and good conduct which he has so eminently shown in bringing to justice numbers of the persons who have so lately disturbed the peace of this county."

(Signed), "Daniel Toler, sheriff; Samuel Alleyn, John L. Judkin, Richard Perry, Wil-

liam Perry, Geoffrey Walshe, John Lloyd, Brook Brazier, Godfrey Taylor, John Toler, Edward Cooke, Thomas Hacket, William Chadwick, Thomas Maude, Richard Moore, John Bagwell, William Barker, Matthew Jacob, Matthew Bunbury, Nathaniel Taylor, Cornelius O'Callaghan, jun., John Carleton, John Power, William Barton."

## CHAPTER III

### ILLEGAL ASSOCIATIONS

**F**ROM 1762 to 1770, the northern counties were the scenes of new risings of the peasantry, under the name of "Oak Boys" and "Hearts of Steel." The Oak Boys' combination sprang up in opposition to the impositions that were practised on them by the gentry, under the sanction of an oppressive law, which had thrown on the unpaid labours of the poor, to a large extent, the charge of repairing the public roads, and not only those roads, but, according to Plowden, the law was perverted to the employment of their labour on private job roads.

From combining for the purpose of redressing those grievances, they eventually proceeded to the attempt of regulating tithes and prescribing terms to the proctors and their employers. A military force was sent to the disturbed districts, some lives were lost, the obnoxious road bill was repealed, and quiet partially restored.

The Hearts of Steel combination arose in the county Down about 1762, out of the proceedings of an absentee nobleman (Lord Downshire) possessing one of the largest estates in the king-





**The Peep o' Day Boy**

*From an Engraving by E. W. Sharpe, after a Painting  
by Sir David Wilkie, now in the Vernon  
Gallery*





dom, who had adopted a new mode of letting his land when out of lease, by requiring large fines, and reducing the rents in proportion to the latter. The poor occupiers of the land were unable to compete with the wealthy speculators, who had the means of making the required advance of rent in the way of fines, the lands were taken by middlemen, and rack-rents, beggary, and wholesale eviction were the results. The causes of the northern disturbances at this period will be found clearly and succinctly detailed in the following statement, which will bring this introductory notice to a close.<sup>1</sup>

My first recollection of public affairs commenced about 1770, when the country was agitated by the arrest of a farmer in Belfast, on the charge of being

<sup>1</sup> It would have been an easy matter to have referred to historians of literary eminence for an account of the northern disturbances, but it seemed to me desirable to learn the views and objects of the people engaged in those disturbances from a man of their own rank, and brought up amongst the actors in those combinations. The statement above referred to respecting the Hearts of Steel, etc., was communicated to me by James Hope, of Belfast, a man whose recollections carries him back to the events in question, and on whose vigorous mind their causes and results had left a deep impression. This extraordinary man, at the time the statement was made to me, I believe, was verging on his eightieth year, yet in the full possession of all his mental faculties, owing no advantage to birth, fortune, or education, and yet endowed with a more singular combination of excellent qualities and of natural endowments than is often to be met with in one similarly circumstanced. This self-educated man has lived for more than half a century by the labor of his own hands, and chiefly at the loom.—R. R. M.



a captain of the Hearts of Steel, and, from the neighbours whom I heard in conversation with my father, I remember the following facts, which time and mature age have confirmed in my mind, especially from conversing with many who were then at age.

The linen trade had flourished in Ulster, and enabled the families who worked at it to live comfortably by renting a house and garden, with grass for a cow, and sometimes for two, from the farmers; and many such families who were industrious became enabled to rent a small farm when a lease fell, or to purchase from others, who were emigrating to America, or who, owing to their indolence or profligacy, or both, had fallen into poverty.

The high rents which the farmers charged to those weavers, and which they considered fair profits, taught the landlords the rising value of their land, and in some degree justified the cottager in yielding to the temptation of offering a higher rent to the landlord than a farmer could pay, but which he was enabled to do by the profits arising from his trade. He then divided his farm amongst his children as they grew up, and few men of that period seemed to consider any provision necessary for their descendants, except placing them on a level with, or, if practicable, above their neighbours, in point of property.

Education was, of course, in a great measure, neglected, and the richer a man grew, the less he cared about any other knowledge than that which enabled him to extend his worldly possessions.

Blindly pursuing gain, and overlooking the main point, social security, men bred in the country settled

in Belfast, and became wealthy by means of commerce, chiefly in the provision and linen trades. Having intercourse with people from all parts of the country, and being ever on the look-out where a pound, or even a penny might be made by a bargain, they began to purchase whole townlands from the head landlords, and to turn large farms into stock-farms, to answer the export provision trade, while the people confined to the surface paid more attention to cultivation.

The unthinking country squire, deceived by his sycophantic agent, who was paid by the pound for collecting his rents, imagined that high rents enhanced the intrinsic value of his land; and finding from the face of his books that his nominal rental was increased, and forgetting that the law of nature will be obeyed, and that the ocean itself has its bounds, yet, feeling that the entail of his estates gave them only to one heir, he lent to the Crown his surplus income, and thus created, on usury, estates for the younger branches of his family.

Things went on in this way; but some persons had different views from this, which were deeply impressed on their minds. Finding their necessities increased beyond the power of productive labour, they discussed in the field and at the loom questions respecting their social condition, the privileges of some, and the privations of others.

A man will think what he will not always venture to express, and will say to some what he would not say to all; and thus an under-current of opinion began to run through society, which no act of Parliament could reach.

That class from whose ill-paid labour these means of enjoying the luxuries of life were drawn, brooding over their want and wretchedness, became reckless or vindictive; many, for the sake of better food and clothing, and comparative idleness, engaged in the trade of war. But the mass preferred a short life, as they expressed it, and a merry one at home, and thus originated the Hearts of Steel.

In 1775 the linen trade had received its death-blow, by the consequences of the American war, and the introduction of cotton manufacture.<sup>1</sup> The independent spirit of Ulster was now on the decline, and in the towns sordid, selfish speculators began to replace the respectable linen merchants. In the meantime, gaudy calicoes and paper money supplanted the precious metals and fine linen. Factories came into vogue. The people had to leave their own firesides; and children of a tender age, girls in the bloom of youth and innocence, were transplanted from the cheerful spinning-wheel, under the roof of their parents, to loathsome workhouses or manufactories, in which they breathed an air that was mixed with the fumes of heated oil and cotton dust, and were consigned to the tuition of an overbearing, and

<sup>1</sup> Previous to 1775, "the exportation of Irish linen to America had been very considerable; but now this great source of national wealth was totally shut up by an extraordinary stretch of prerogative, under the pretext of preventing the Americans from being supplied with provisions from Ireland, which, in prejudicing that kingdom served only to favour the adventures of British contractors. This embargo, combined with other causes, produced the most melancholy effects. Wool and black cattle fell considerably in value, as did also land. The tenants in many places were unable to pay the rents, and public credit was almost extinct."—Plowden's "History of Ireland," vol. ii., p. 171.

often vicious manager. At that time a cotton weaver could earn from a pound to thirty shillings a week, working only four days, with less labour than a linen weaver could now earn five shillings, working six days, late and early. The various circumstances in operation produced a change of mind and manners before unknown in the country. But the variety of man's inventions produces effects in every age, which, being unforeseen, leave the mass unprepared to accommodate itself to new circumstances, and turn them to advantage, which to some extent accounts for the slow progress of social improvement.

Observing these evils early in life, I set my mind to contemplate the causes of social derangement, and by thinking rather than reading, to get at some knowledge of the matter. I am still an imperfect reader, and have learned more by the ear than the eye, and by thinking than talking on any subject. That all human invention has bounds which it cannot pass, is as evident as that empires have limits to their duration. Their fate is inherent in the principles upon which they rise, and their durability depends on the energy or inactivity displayed in their operation, or the carrying of them into practical effect. I could never view a system admitting one class to political privileges, and excluding another from them on account of class or creed, in any other light than an organization at war with the community, and those exclusive privileges but as so many altars on which human sacrifice was daily offered up, perhaps to a greater extent and variety than in any former age on record.

To return to the Hearts of Steel. A farmer who

resided near Belfast, and who was a ruling elder in the Presbyterian congregation of Carnmoney, persuaded the majority of his neighbours to allow him to take a lease of the townland in which he lived from the head landlord, with a promise that they should have every one his farm at the rate it should be obtained by wholesale. They all consented but two or three, who, nevertheless, shared the fate of the rest; for as soon as the elder got the lease, he raised all their rents, so as to have a considerable profit, besides requiring duty-work, a custom then claimed by the head landlords on their demesnes. One of those who had not consented, having refused duty-work, a custom then claimed by the head landlord, the elder's son set fire to a hedge of furze, on which some linen clothes of the non-conforming farmer had been put to dry, and this was the first incitement to retaliation. The elder's corn-kiln was set on fire by his own nephew, and a shot fired into his house (but not by the nephew), from which the aforesaid son narrowly escaped. This gave rise to the collection of bands in the districts where the raising of the rents had taken place, and each of these bands conferred the name of "captain" on a resolute leader. If they went to burn a house, their captain's name was "firebrand;" if to cut the corn on a farm that had been taken over another's head, as was their expression, before it was ripe, his name was "long-scythe." He also used to toss out hay to the rain, when the weather was likely to insure its destruction—his name was "pitchfork:" and this was the work of the brooding class mentioned above, few of whom were settled inhabitants, and none at all of either principle or character. This was mani-



fest from their taxing the country by threatening letters for money to support their nightly revels. From their deliberate destruction of food, and their cruelty to animals, they were evidently such a class as were afterwards collected into Orange lodges by the landlords, whom they will eventually undermine, as those landlords, in former parliaments, have undermined the true interests of the Crown, by involving the country in a debt so overwhelming, that the productive industry of the country is overloaded, and the united interest of King and people sacrificed to sustain their own.

About this period several merchants of Belfast had purchased large farms, and turned them into pasture, and these were the men, chiefly, who lost cattle, although the rage ran against every man who held land which he did not labour.

A Belfast merchant, named Gregg, having taken some townlands in the neighbourhood of Ballyclare, employed an old woollen weaver, called Gordon, from the county Down, as bailiff and caretaker, who laboured some farms which the occupiers or tenants had left on account of the high rents demanded by Mr. Gregg. When the crops were ripe, no person would help to reap them, and Mr. Gregg prevailed on the officers of a detachment of a Highland regiment, then quartered in Belfast, to send the soldiers out to reap the oats, and cut the hay, which they did; but the country people, during the night, scattered all to the weather. On a further application, the soldiers were sent to gather it again, but the populace appeared in such numbers that the officer did not think it prudent to commence the work; and one David Douglas being seen among them, was

identified by Gordon and others of Gregg's people. David Douglas being a man respectable in his rank, was accused of being one of the captains of the Hearts of Steel. He then lived in the Templepatrick (Lord Templeton's) estate, and his lease having expired, and the Douglasses being stout, active men, had made some spirited remonstrances with Mr. Hercules Hyland, his lordship's agent, with respect to the extremely heavy rents he was demanding for the land. His harshness was the more felt, when placed in contrast with the late agent, Mr. John Birnie, then lately deceased, and who had been a feeling, conscientious man between landlord and tenant. The Douglasses were accordingly pointed out to Waddell, Cunningham, William Wallace, the Greggs, and Stewart Banks, then sovereign of Belfast, as meriting punishment.

These were some of the merchants before alluded to. David Douglas was arrested in Belfast on a Friday, and on the following Sunday the country people assembled and marched in a body into Belfast, where they attacked the military barracks where Douglas was confined. The attempt proving unavailing, with the loss of three men killed, viz., William Russell, Andrew Christy, and Robert Walker, and a number of others wounded, they set fire to Waddell Cunningham's house, and threatened the same fate to every house in Belfast belonging to any of the merchant-middlemen. Doctor Haliday, an amiable man, who was respected by all classes of society, interposed, and Douglas was released. He gave bail to abide his trial at the assizes, and was acquitted; but others who were tried were not so fortunate, several having been convicted, and one

man, named James M'Neill, whose innocence was afterwards fully established, was executed.<sup>1</sup>

Men of loose, dissolute character were the chief perpetrators of the depredations of houghing, stabbing, and burning, and, as before mentioned, extorted money by threatening letters, and the people were obliged to submit, until military, both horse and foot, were stationed throughout the country. About this time Hyland was dismissed from the agency, and was succeeded by a Mr. Henry Langford Burleigh, who, by his prudence, firmness, and conciliating manner, joined with his equitable conduct, soon discontinued the dragooning system, and established confidence and good neighbourhood, and the country became perfectly quiet. When I say quiet, I do not mean contented, for the rise in the price of land, from the necessity of supporting immense armies, both by sea and land, for the aggrandizement of the few and the oppression of the many, has totally reversed the Christian rule on which all good government should be founded. Manners and customs underwent a revolution.

People no longer thought of living by the proper exercise of their industry and the prudent direction of their means, and of labouring by their example and their efforts to enlighten and to better the condition of the mass of the people and enlarge the circle of social comfort. The evils, on the contrary, under which the people laboured were heightened by the rapacity of the landlords, the habits of settled opposition to improvements of all kinds on the part of the farmers, and the general dissipation of every class who could procure money by any means, stopping at none, however

<sup>1</sup> Fact.

ruinous, or even criminal, to obtain it. The depredations of the Oak Boys, Hearts of Steel, and White-boys, and their punishment, and the provocation given them by the rapacity of landlords and tithe-mongers, formed the topics of conversation for winter nights, until the American troubles began to be noticed in the "Belfast Newsletter." That paper was not opposed to the ministry, yet it did not suppress the opinions delivered on that subject by the Earl of Chatham in Parliament. I did not comprehend the subjects then under discussion, but I saw there was a difference of opinion, and began to ponder on the arguments of the old men on the topics which have agitated Europe ever since that period. I fell into the habit of observing the difference between what people said and what they did; for some of the greatest declaimers against the oppression of the landlords and the clergy, and who considered them as the advocates and abettors of the system which caused so much bloodshed in America, were the least willing themselves to abate one penny in the price of a stone of meal or a bushel of potatoes, or anything else, in a time of scarcity, that a poor man wanted to buy, at the same time the most careful to pay the least possible rate of wages to their servants. Yet these men would keep up the laudable practice of worship in their families, and read the very texts of Scripture condemning the acts which they would do as soon as they rose from their knees, scarcely allowing their servants any time for rest after their meals, and keeping them to work late and early. The religious and moral instruction to which I had recourse was so much at variance with what I saw in daily practice, that

I began to doubt the sincerity of the religious professions in some cases, and at length to question it in very many. Finding my own thoughts vary often on those subjects, I had no human guide on whom I could depend; and my thoughts then, as now, surpassing my powers of expression, I kept them to myself, and I am only surprised how I have been directed through the labyrinth of a long life, like a weakling on a journey, who keeps his feet only by the staggering of his fellow-travellers.

When peace was made with America, our intercourse with that country began to prepare the Irish mind for a struggle for its own independence, and in my thoughts the subject had its portion of attention. I observed the pride of property, which is inherent in the aristocratic spirit of our country, was pretty much the same, whether in the man of a million or in the forty shilling freeholder. Looking out for its origin, I found it in those arrangements into which men enter for procuring money which they do not earn, or did not inherit, by means of credit. Government set individuals the example of incurring expenses it could not meet without accommodation.

Force, fraud, and stratagem are essential to the existence of a state of society which is founded on fictitious credit.

We have seen that the disturbed state of the country gave the land-agents opportunities of widening the breach between the landlords and tenantry, and at the same time put good bargains into the hands of the merchants, by the facility given to the landlords of drawing on them in foreign countries, where they might



travel and reside. This increased the system of middlemen and rack-rents, and thus laid the foundation of future suffering for the people. To this system there appeared no bounds, and no prospect of setting limits to them, until the American revolution gave the public mind a fresh spring for exertion.

The naval and military force of England being reduced by that unnatural war, and rendered unable to protect the trade or even the soil of Ireland, from the then powerful fleets and armies of France, the Irish people were under the necessity of arming for their own defence. They committed the direction of their force to such gentlemen as were resident in the country and considered men of public spirit. Many of these gentlemen went farther in professions than in subsequent times they would have wished, when political rights became more largely discussed and better defined.

In other words, they overstepped the limited compass of their early prejudices and views of interest, as appeared afterwards in their conduct; for, although they attended public meetings where some of the soundest principles of political economy were developed and disseminated among the people, who heartily approved of the sentiments, yet those leaders secretly wished for an opportunity of abandoning the connection, and this pretext they soon found in the crimes committed in the name of liberty, which succeeded the outburst of the revolution in France in 1789, which shook every throne in Europe. Such was the condition of the people, the nature of the disturbances in the north of Ireland, the origin of the Volunteers, the views of a large portion of its leaders, the seeds of disunion that

were sown in its organization, and the results that were in embryo about the close of the year 1791.

Thus far my notes were copied by Robert Montgomery, attorney-at-law, who founded the market that now bears his name.<sup>1</sup>

JAMES HOPE.

BELFAST, March 8th, 1843.

The preceding notices of the condition of the people, the cruelty of their oppressors, and the various agrarian disturbances resulting from them during a period of thirty years, from the beginning of the reign of George the Third to the origin of the Society of the United Irishmen in 1791, though apparently unconnected with the particular epoch which this work is intended to illustrate, are by no means irrelevant to the subject of it.

<sup>1</sup>The vigour of a mind teeming with original thoughts (the matured production of strong sound sense), displayed in all the writings of this singular man, amply compensates for any defects of style or occasional abruptness in taking up or dismissing a subject. As to his orthography, nothing can be much worse; in fact, a richer mine of deep thought it would be difficult to find buried in such a mass of ill-spelled words. I claim some merit for the disinterment of the sense, but none beyond the discerning of it and the correction of the orthography.

Having frequently to recur to those writings of his which he has placed in my hands, the preceding observation will render any further reference to his peculiarity of style and diction unnecessary. R. R. M.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ORANGEMEN

**T**HE Peep-of-day Boys sprung up in the year 1784, in the county Armagh. The members of this secret association were also known by the name of "Protestant Boys," and "Wreckers," and, finally, by that of "Orangemen." The character of their proceedings must have been particularly atrocious, when Sir Richard Musgrave felt the impossibility of palliating the exuberancy of their zeal in the cause of ascendancy. He says: "They visited the houses of their antagonists (victims, he ought to have said) at a very early hour in the morning, to search for arms; and it is most certain that in doing so, they often committed the most wanton outrages—insulting their persons and breaking their furniture."<sup>1</sup>

The late Charles Teeling has given a graphic account of the proceedings of the Wreckers and Defenders in the county of Armagh,<sup>2</sup> and another remarkable writer, George Ensor, who had a personal knowledge of these factions, has treated of them.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Richard Musgrave's History, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> "The History and Consequences of the Battle of the Diamond," by C. Teeling.



Lord Castlereagh

*Chief Secretary for Ireland during the Rebellion of  
1798 and the Period of the Act of Union. From  
an Engraving by J. Bull, after the Original  
Painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence, in  
the National Portrait Gallery,  
London*







The evils originating in Armagh had already extended to some of the adjacent counties, and conflicts had taken place between the Wreckers and large bodies of armed peasantry—the Defenders. In places where the contending parties were pretty nearly balanced, a salutary dread of each other often produced a restraint on the movements of both; but where the Catholic population was thinly scattered, the latter were compelled for personal safety to establish nightly guards or patrols in the townlands or parishes, in proportion to the numbers of men, or extent of surface, furnishing its quota in arms. This served the double purpose, either of immediate defence or more distant alarm; similar posts being extended at times of increased apprehension for some miles over the face of the country. This system of nocturnal police—wearisome to the inhabitants and wasteful of their slender means—continued in some of the more exposed districts, with little or no intermission, for whole seasons, and finally merged into the United Irish system.

Tone entertained opinions of an extravagant nature in regard to the political weight of the Defenders. He considered their conspiracy a well-organized long-established confederation, which had been in secret communication with France for a great length of time. Teeling, however, positively asserts that Tone was mistaken, and that no such connection existed.

In and prior to the year 1795, a considerable portion of the population of the county of Armagh, we are told by Teeling, was divided into two hostile parties. The Peep-of-Day Boys party was composed of Protestants and Presbyterians; the Defender party originally consisted of Roman Catholics; the Peep-of-Day Boys were so-called on account of the nature of their untimely visits—between dark and dawn—to the houses of their Roman Catholic neighbours for the purpose of despoiling them of their arms; the other, that of Defenders, from their resistance to those aggressions.

From the spoliation of arms the “privileged” party proceeded to more general acts of plunder and outrage, which were perpetrated on most occasions with the most scandalous impunity.

The Catholic population of Ulster had acquired, in 1794 and 1795, a moral weight in the political scale of the province, which was rendered more manifest by the manly energy with which numbers of their Protestant and Presbyterian brethren came forward and protested against the longer continuance of those disabilities under which their great community had laboured throughout ages of injustice and unexampled oppression. Matters had thus far progressed, when the old policy of Irish rule was again had recourse to, efforts were made to infuse into the mind of the Protestant, feelings of

distrust in his Catholic fellow-countrymen. "Popish plots and conspiracies" were fabricated with a practical facility, which some influential authorities conceived it no degradation to stoop to, and alarming reports of these dark confederations were circulated with a restless assiduity.

At this juncture Lord Carhampton was employed to tranquillize the west. The commander of his Majesty's forces in Ireland engaged with signal energy in the new campaign against the peasantry. Hundreds of persons without form or trial were sent to serve on board the British fleet, or transported to the British colonies.

The subjoined "Declaration and Resolutions," from a wealthy and populous parish, bordering immediately on the district to which they advert, will serve, without the introduction of others, to inform the reader how far public opinion corresponded with Lord Gosford's representations of that persecution, which he so feelingly described and so forcibly denounced:

DECLARATION AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE INHABITANTS  
OF THE PARISH OF TULLYLISH (COUNTY OF DOWN),  
GEORGE LAW, ESQ., IN THE CHAIR.

Resolved—That we hold in just contempt and abhorrence the criminal advisers and wicked perpetrators of that inhuman, murderous, and savage persecution which has of late disgraced the county of Armagh.

That if these barbarities are not immediately opposed,



and some wise, firm and effectual steps taken by men in authority to arrest their progress, they will instantly involve this kingdom in all the horrors of a civil war, and deluge our land with blood.

That, in our opinion, the present existing laws are fully adequate to the detection and punishment of every species of offence, in case the civil magistrate do his duty, etc.

The public journals of that period afford extensive information on the subject of those outrages. The following extract is taken from a provincial paper of the day:

ARMAGH, January 23, 1796.

General Craddock arrived here to-day, in order to take upon him the command of the troops in this town and neighbourhood. We sincerely hope that he may be successful in rooting from amongst us that vile spirit of persecution and lawless depredation which has too long disgraced us.

It could not have been credited that those ruthless depopulators of Armagh would have carried their daring to the extent of marching on the town of Belfast, had not General Nugent, then district-commandant of his Majesty's forces in Ulster, conceived it his duty to make such arrangements for the protection of the town and the security of its inhabitants as his military foresight suggested. Extra guards were mounted.

Lord Gosford observes, the “picture of those horrid scenes was sufficient to awaken sentiments of indignation and compassion in the coldest bosoms.”

Denouncing the crimes of those oppressors, in his place in the Irish House of Commons, on the 20th of February, 1796, Mr. Grattan observed, “that of these outrages he had received the most dreadful accounts. Their object was, the extermination of all the Catholics of that county.” He pronounces it “a persecution conceived in the bitterness of bigotry—carried on with the most ferocious barbarity by a banditti, who, being of the religion of the state, had committed, with greater audacity and confidence, the most horrid murders, and had proceeded from robbery and massacre to extermination! They had repealed by their own authority all the laws lately passed in favour of the Catholics—had established in the place of those laws the inquisition of a mob, resembling Lord George Gordon’s fanatics—equalling them in outrage, and surpassing them far in perseverance and success. These insurgents,” continues Mr. Grattan, “call themselves Orange Boys, or Protestant Boys, that is, a banditti of murderers, committing massacre in the name of God, and exercising despotic power in the name of liberty.”

I turn now to the battle of the Diamond, which was fought on the 21st of September, 1795. It is

asserted by a writer on this subject in the "Dublin University Magazine," that about the middle of the month (September) it was discovered, suddenly, that the Defenders were encamped—that they had congregated some thousands in number—and that, undiscovered until their work was complete, they had drawn a trench, constituting a species of rude fortification around them. In this writer's word: "The incorrect report of a spy, it is said, occasioned the first engagement at the Diamond." He qualifies his statement by, "it is said," and then proceeds as follows: "On a Saturday night in August, some young people acting as a watch having posted their sentinels, agreed to pass away the heavy hours in dancing or other amusements. In one of the games, a young man having appeared enveloped in a sheet, tidings of the circumstances were conveyed to a party of Defenders, accompanied by an explanation that it was designed to burlesque the Mass."

That a challenge was sent out by the Defenders, is asserted by Mr. Plowden, and admitted by the more modern historian. On that point both are agreed.

The ever memorable engagement, we are told by this writer, commenced with "a species of rifle warfare, followed up during two successive nights and days by an intermitting fire of musketry."

He states that "during a period of more than a week, within a range of six miles of the Diamond, every house had some of its inmates who kept a constant watch throughout the day as well as the night; and within that distance they could hear the report of musketry by night, in frequent, but not general discharges, as if the videttes of the opposite party fired to keep their enemies at a distance; but as soon as the morning light appeared it was saluted by a loud volley, quickly returned and repeated from both armies, with little intermission, until the evening had faded away.

"Whenever," he continues, "after a short pause, or at the commencement or conclusion of the day's battle, the combat was renewed or concluded on each side by a general discharge, it was possible, at the distance of six miles, to distinguish the party who gave fire, and the hearts of Protestants, according to their characters, died or burned within them, when they compared the faint report from their friends with the heavy and artillery-like thunders of the far outnumbering enemy." The historian, on this point, seems to be somewhat doubtful of the faith of his reader; and, in an explanatory note, thus accounts for the acute sense of hearing, which, at a distance of six Irish miles, could distinguish between Popish and Protestant fire: "The great superiority," he tells us, in "point of numbers,

on the side of the Defenders, is universally admitted: Emmet, and even Plowden, confess it." This may be so, though one might be disposed to conclude, that "the heavy and artillery-like thunder" was more likely to proceed from the better armed and better disciplined body of the combatants. I shall give the reader, however, the advantage of Mr. Emmet's testimony touching "the great superiority in point of numbers," from "Pieces of Irish History," p. 137: "The Defenders were most numerous, but the Orangemen had an immense advantage in point of preparation and skill, many of them having been members of old Volunteer corps, whose arms and discipline they still retained, and perverted to very different purposes from those that have immortalized that body.

"The Defenders were speedily defeated, with the loss of some few killed and left on the field of battle, besides the wounded, whom they carried away. After this, in consequence of the interference of a Catholic priest and a country gentleman, a truce between both parties was agreed upon, which was unfortunately violated in less than twenty-four hours. The two bodies that had consented to it for the most part dispersed; the district, however, in which the battle was fought, being entirely filled with Orangemen, some of them still remained embodied; but the Catholics returned home. In the course of



next day about seven hundred Defenders from Keady, in a remote part of the county, came to the succour of their friends, and, ignorant of the armistice, attacked the Orangemen, who were still assembled. The associates of the latter, being on the spot, quickly collected again, and the Defenders were once more routed."

But Mr. Emmet adds:—"Perhaps this mistake might have been cleared, and the treaty renewed, if the resentment of the Orangemen had not been fomented and cherished by persons to whom reconciliation of any kind was hateful. The Catholics, after this transaction, never attempted to make a stand, but the Orangemen commenced a persecution of the blackest dye. They would no longer permit a Catholic to exist in the country. They posted up on the cabins of these unfortunate victims this pithy notice: 'To Hell or Connaught;' and appointed a limited time in which the necessary removal of persons and property was to be made. If, after the expiration of that period, the notice had not been complied with, the Orangemen assembled, destroyed the furniture, burned the habitations, and forced the ruined families to fly elsewhere for shelter." Mr. Emmet also states:—"While these outrages were going on the resident magistrates were not found to resist them, and, in some instances were even more than inactive spectators.

“The county of Armagh and its neighbourhood,” he asserts, “were not destitute of military force, able and willing to repress these outrages. The Queen’s County militia, consisting mostly of Catholics, was there, and exceedingly incensed at the unresisted, unrestrained, and even unnoticed persecution against their religion which it was forced to witness.” Mr. Emmet concludes his fearful, but too faithful description of this persecution, with these memorable words: “Neither the protecting hand of the government nor of the magistracy was held forth to the oppressed.”

The Orange institution grew up and found favour in the sight of both, and in all human probability is destined one day to bring the British empire to the brink of ruin.

Orangeism, in its present phase of being (1857) is not above sixty-five years of age. But this Buddha of bigotry and knavery combined began its incarnation in Ireland centuries ago.

The Lord Deputy Strafford, in a letter to the Lord Treasurer, dated 19th of July, 1634, renders an account of the happy results of the policy of his government in fomenting emulations, *alias* discords, between Catholics and Protestants:—

This letter is only to give your lordship a short account of our proceedings in parliament. The parties

are in a manner equal. Some few odds on the Protestant party; and one watching the other, lest their fellow should rob them, and apply the whole of his Majesty's thanks to themselves from the other. An emulation so well fomented underhand, that when the motion was made for the King's supply yesterday in the House of Commons (the fifth of their session), they did with one voice assent to the giving of six subsidies to be paid in four years.<sup>1</sup>

The great art politic in the government of Ireland of fomenting emulations, in another letter of the Lord Deputy, dated 18th of August, in the same year, addressed to Mr. Secretary Coke, we find thus set forth, the parliament being now the object of the Lord Deputy's governmental care, and the strife not to be sown between sects, but between Lords and Commons.

There fell a breach betwixt the two houses, which kept them asunder all this session; the Commons would not confer with the Lords, unless they might sit and be covered as well as their lordships, which the other would by no means admit. For my part I did not lay it very near my heart to agree them, as having heretofore seen the effects which follow when they are in strict understanding, or at difference amongst themselves; besides, I saw plainly that keeping them at distance, I did avoid their joining in a petition for the Graces, which infallibly they would have done, which now come

<sup>1</sup> Letters of Thomas Earl of Strafford.

only singly from the Commons. I conceive it would be very easy the next session either to agree or keep them still asunder. I desire there may be a thought bestowed upon it, and let me have my directions, which I shall readily conform myself either way.

So the policy of governing a people by keeping alive discords among them was in being over two hundred years ago. A century nearer our own times, the demon policy, which it might be supposed none but a profligate courtier and statesman like Strafford could be found to practise, and to boast of, we find a Christian prelate, the Lord Primate Boulter, exercising high state authority in Ireland, proclaim the benefits of with a loud voice. The divine doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount, breathing peace and concord, contrasts strongly and strangely with that of the state policy of Primate Boulter. Lamenting the union of Catholic and Protestant subjects of the same state as likely to follow from certain circumstances, he writes to his good masters:—

The worst of this affair is, that it unites Protestants and Papists, and if that reconciliation takes place, farewell to English influence in Ireland.

The Orange system is perhaps the most unchristian institution that has sprung up in any European country in modern times. From its

origin it was eminently hypocritical, its votaries professing a strong zeal for the interests of true religion, and burning with a fierce lust of lands and tenements in the possession of their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects.

In the beginning of 1796, "it was generally believed" (says Plowden), "that 7,000 Catholics had been forced or burned out of the county of Armagh; and that the ferocious banditti who had expelled them had been encouraged, connived at, and protected by the government." In the analysis of the report of the committee on Orange institutions, in the "Edinburgh Review" of January, 1836, the following account is given of the proceedings of the Peep-of-Day Boys, and of their more systematic atrocities in 1795, under the newly-adopted name of Orangemen:

The first Orange lodge was formed on the 21st of September, 1795, at the house of a man named Sloan, in the obscure village of Loughgall. The immediate cause of those disturbances in the north that gave birth to Orangeism, was an attempt to plant colonies of Protestants on the farms or tenements of Catholics who had been forcibly ejected. Numbers of them were seen wandering about the country, hungry, half-naked, and infuriated. Mr. Christie, a member of the Society of Friends, who appears to have passed sixty or seventy years on his property as quietly as a man may in the neighbourhood of such violent neighbours, gives a painful account of the outrages then committed. He says



(5,573) "he heard sometimes of twelve or fourteen Catholic houses wrecked in a night, and some destroyed" (5,570) "that this commenced in the neighbourhood of Churchill, between Portadown and Dungannon, and then it extended over nearly all the northern counties. In the course of time, after the Catholics were many of them driven from the county, and had taken refuge in different parts of Ireland, I understood they went to Connaught. Some years after, when peace and quietness was in a measure restored, some returned again, probably five or six years afterwards. The property which they left was transferred in most instances to Protestants: where they had houses and gardens and small farms of land, it was generally handed over by the landlords to Protestant tenants. That occurred within my knowledge." He further says: "It continued for two or three years, but was not quite so bad in 1796 and 1797 as it was earlier. After this wrecking, and the Catholics were driven out, what was called 'The Break-of-Day' party merged into Orangeism; they passed from the one to the other, and the gentlemen in the county procured what they termed their Orange warrants, to enable them to assemble legally, as they termed it. The name dropped, and Orangeism succeeded to Break-of-Day Men" (5,575).

At first the association was entirely confined to the lower orders; but it soon worked its way upwards, and, so early as November, 1798, there appears a corrected report of the rules and regulations officially drawn up, and submitted to the Grand Lodge of Ireland, under the presidency of Thomas Verner, Esq., Grand Master; J. C. Beresford, Esq., Grand Secretary, and others.

The state of the country soon after the formation of these societies is faithfully described in an address which the late Lord Gosford, as governor of Armagh, submitted to all the leading magistrates of the county. His lordship stated that he had called them together to submit a plan to their consideration for checking the enormities which disgraced the county. He then proceeds: "It is no secret that a persecution, accompanied with all the circumstances of ferocious cruelty which have in all ages distinguished that dreadful calamity, is now raging in this country. Neither age, nor even acknowledged innocence as to the late disturbances, is sufficient to excite mercy, much less afford protection. The only crime which the wretched objects of this merciless persecution are charged with, is a crime of easy proof—it is simply a profession of the Roman Catholic faith. A lawless banditti have constituted themselves judges of this species of delinquency, and the sentence they pronounce is equally concise and terrible: it is nothing less than a confiscation of all property and immediate banishment. It would be extremely painful and surely unnecessary, to detail the horrors that attended the execution of so wide and tremendous a proscription, which certainly exceeds, in the comparative number of those it consigns to ruin and misery, every example that ancient and modern history can afford; for where have we heard, or in what history of human cruelties have we read, of more than half the inhabitants of a populous country deprived at one blow of the means as well as the fruits of their industry, and driven, in the midst of an inclement winter, to seek a shelter for themselves and their hapless

families where chance may guide them? This is no exaggerated picture of the horrid scenes now acting in this country; yet surely it is sufficient to awaken sentiments of indignation and compassion in the coldest heart. Those horrors are now acting, and acting with impunity. The spirit of impartial justice (without which law is nothing better than tyranny) has for a time disappeared in this country; and the supineness of the magistracy is a topic of conversation in every corner of this kingdom.”—*Evidence*, 3,251.

The resolutions moved by Lord Gosford were adopted and signed by all the leading magistrates, who thus bore undeniable testimony to the persecution the Catholics were then suffering in that county, which was the cradle, and has ever been the hotbed, of Orangeism.

We have carefully examined the documents submitted by the Orange society to the committee, respecting the objects of their institution, the motives of its members, and the qualifications necessary for candidates; and nothing apparently can be more humane, tolerant, and praiseworthy. Certain doubtful features occasionally, however, do peep through this coating of amiable professions. For instance, this society enforced on its members an oath of qualified allegiance:—“I, A. B., do solemnly swear,” etc., “that I will, to the utmost of my power, support and defend” the King and his heirs, “so long as he or they support the Protestant ascendancy.” Another suspicious article (No. 5) declares—“We are not to carry away money, goods, or any thing, from any person whatever, except arms and ammunition, and those only from an enemy”—enemy no doubt meaning Catholic.

So much for the report, with regard to the objects of this society, and the obligations of its oaths, etc.

Now the oath above referred to is sufficiently objectionable on the score of the conditional allegiance it embodies; but the original oath or purple test of this society was not produced by the officers of this society on the inquiry entered into by the committee in 1835; but the existence of this diabolical test was given in evidence before the secret committee of 1798, by Mr. Arthur O'Connor, and the knowledge of it admitted by the committee on that occasion, when O'Connor's statement was answered by one of the members belonging to the administration, in these words: "Government had nothing to do with the Orange Society, nor with their oath of extermination."

In the memoir of the examination of Messrs. O'Connor, Emmet, and M'Neven, drawn up by themselves, O'Connor's answer is given to this observation:

You, my Lord Castlereagh, from the station you fill, must be sensible that the executive of any country has it in its power to collect a vast mass of information, and you must know, from the secret nature of the Union, that the executive must have the most minute information of every act of the Irish government. As one of the executives (of the United Irishmen), it came to my knowledge that considerable sums of money were expended throughout the country in endeavouring to

extend the Orange system, and that the Orange oath of extermination was administered; when these facts are coupled, not only with the general impunity which has been uniformly extended to all the acts of this diabolical association, but the marked encouragement its members have received from government, I find it impossible to exculpate the government from being the parent and protector of these societies.<sup>1</sup>

The fact of the protection of the "Peep-of-Day Boys," or the Orangemen, on the part of the government of those times, admits of no doubt. When the Insurrection Act and the Convention Bill were introduced, the excesses of the peasantry, whom they had goaded into resistance, were denounced by the Viceroy and the legal officers of the government; but not the slightest allusion was made to the outrages of the exterminators of Armagh; nay, bills of indemnity were passed to protect their leaders and magisterial accomplices from all legal proceedings on the part of their victims. As to the effect of these societies in promoting the views of the United Irishmen, it is clearly admitted by the members of the executive of the society of the United Irishmen, that the persecution of the people in Armagh, the protection of the exterminators, and the enactment of sanguinary laws, and especially the insurrection and indemnity

<sup>1</sup> Vide Memoir of the Examination of Messrs. O'Connor, Emmet, M'Neven, etc.—(Published by the State Prisoners.)



acts, had not only filled the ranks of their society, but led the executive to the conclusion that the government had forfeited all claims to obedience, and was to be resisted. "No alliance whatever was previously formed," says O'Connor, "between the Union and France"—namely, before the middle of 1796. The same answer is given by Emmet. So much for the power given to the United Irishmen, by the persecution of the people on the part of the Orangemen permitted by government; and as for the immediate causes of the outbreak of the subsequent and consequent rebellion, we can only refer to the question put by the Lord Chancellor, "Pray, Mr. Emmet, what caused the late rebellion?" and the reply to it, of Emmet—"The free quarters, the house-burnings, the tortures, and the military executions, in the counties of Kildare, Carlow, and Wicklow." In fact, persecution and disaffection followed in the order of cause and effect; the turbulence of the Defenders can only be looked on as the consequence of the Orange depredations, and the excesses of both parties the plea for the attempt of uniting the people of all religious denominations in one great national society.

Sir Jonah Barrington considers the idea of Orange Societies arose from the association of the Aldermen of Skinners' Alley. The latter owed its origin to the restoration of the old corporate body to their former power and privileges

at the departure of James the Second. Their meetings were chiefly for the indulgence of that kind of Cherokee festivity which is indicative of sanguinary struggles or successful onslaughts, past or expected. Their grand festival was on the 1st of July, the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne, on which occasion the charter-toast was drunk by every member on his bare knees. At the time of Sir Jonah's initiation, his friend Dr. Patrick Duigenan<sup>1</sup> was the Grand Master. The standing dish, at the Skinners' Alley dinners, was sheep's trotters, in delicate allusion to King James's last use of his lower extremities in Ireland; and the cloth being removed, the charter-toast, the antiquity of which was of so ancient a date as the year 1689, was pronounced by the Grand Master on his bare joints to the kneeling assemblage, in the following words:—"The glorious, pious, and immortal memory of the great and good King William, not forgetting Oliver Cromwell, who assisted in redeeming us from Popery, slavery, arbitrary power, brass money, and wooden shoes," etc., etc., etc. The concluding part of this loyal toast is a tissue of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Patrick Duigenan, originally a catholic of low degree, having "conformed," and continued year after year to oppose the catholic claims, with a virulence and violence now most incredible, was appointed by the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin to preside as their judge in the Ecclesiastical Courts. He died in 1816.—(W. J. Fitzpatrick's "The Sham Squire," 3d Ed., Dublin, 1866, p. 62.)

vulgar indecencies and impious imprecations on "priests, bishops, deacons," or any other of the fraternity of the clergy who refuse this toast, consigning their members to the operation of red-hot harrows, and their mangled carcasses to the lower regions. In detailing the particulars of these brutal and bacchanalian proceedings, Sir Jonah says, "It may be amusing to describe them"—and then he denominates the association as "a very curious, but most loyal society;" and that their favourite toast was afterwards adopted by the Orange societies, and was still considered the charter toast of them all.<sup>1</sup> Sir Jonah's notions of mirth and loyalty were, no doubt, in accordance with those of the circle in which he moved. Indeed he prefaces this account of the exuberance of zeal of the Skinners' Alley aldermen, with a declaration of his own political sentiments, as being, though not an ultra, one in whom loyalty absorbed almost every other consideration.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vide "Barrington's Irish Sketches," vol. i. p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Barrington sat in the Irish House of Commons, and in his book, "The Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation," he poses as an unpurchasable patriot. "Refused all terms" he proudly writes. However, when it became known that he opposed the Union, he was requested by Lord Westmoreland to resign, that way might be made for a more tractable member of a government borough, and Barrington resigned. He writes, that "no office in His Majesty's gift, no power, no *deprivation*, would have induced me to support the Union." Yet in September, 1801, we find him calling on Lord Hardwicke with a letter from Lord Westmoreland. Hardwicke writing on the subject to Westmoreland says: "Mr. Barrington seemed desirous of explaining the

Few of the Orangemen in the north were probably actuated by the motives to which their proceedings are commonly attributed. It is generally supposed that they were animated by a blind, indiscriminate fury against the people, solely on account of their religion. This is not a fair statement, and whoever inquires into the history of these times will find it is not true. These men were impelled, as their descendants are, by a simple desire to get possession of property or privileges belonging to people who had not the power to protect either, and to give their rapacity the colour of a zeal for the interests of their own religion.

The Defenders had their origin in the year 1785, but they were hardly known as a distinct and formidable body till the year 1792. Their first object, as their name imports, was self-protection, when the exterminating system was carried into effect by the Ascendency party in the north. But as their strength increased, their

situation in which he has stood in regard to Government before the question of Union, and though he was aware that he could not be considered as entitled to early favour, yet he wished not to be looked on as hostile, and claimed some merit for having given up his seat in Parliament after the first session in which the Union was discussed. He does not appear to have any particular object, though I presume he some time or other will look to the Bench." He was ultimately appointed judge of the Admiralty Court and knighted. In 1830, he fled to France, and by resolution of both Houses of Parliament was removed from his office for embezzlement of the fees of the court. He died at Versailles in 1834.—(Viceroy's Post Bag, MacDonagh.)

views became more political, and resistance to aggression led them to offensive measures against their enemies and the government which protected the latter.

After the battle of "the Diamond" had terminated in their defeat, the success of their conquerors was followed up by the rigorous measures of the military and magisterial authorities; the gaols were filled with these unfortunate people, and about thirteen hundred of them were taken from the prisons by Lord Carhampton, without any legal process or form of trial, and sent on board the ships of war or transport vessels.

This was the first display of "the vigour beyond the law" which had been openly announced in parliament, and when carried into effect was protected there by an act of indemnity.

Analogous bills to the "Treacherous Correspondence Bill" were passed in Ireland in 1793, but one was of a nature which would not have been tolerated in England, namely, to prevent persons meeting under pretence of preparing or presenting petitions, etc. This act was reprobated in England no less than in Ireland.

A system of agrarian outrage had been dragging on a protracted existence in Munster, from the period of the suppression of the "Whiteboy" disturbances, and had even spread into the northern counties, under the name of "Oak Boys,"



and "Hearts of Steel Boys," but they had been subdued by the military long before the exterminating proceedings of the "Peep-of-Day Boys" had come into operation. Their system, however, had been revived in Munster by a new set of disturbers called "Right Boys," after the supposed leader, Captain Right.

Mr. Fitzgibbon's bill for preventing these tumultuous assemblages, contained a clause directing the magistrates to demolish the Roman Catholic chapels in which any of these associations should have been formed or countenanced, which Mr. Grattan stigmatized as a legal sanction to sacrilege, and Mr. Secretary Orde declined to concur in such an enactment, and prevailed on his friend to withdraw it. Fitzgibbon was only desirous, whether in the extermination of the people or the demolition of their chapels, of carrying into effect the doctrine which had been laid down by the judicial authorities in 1759, on the trial of Mr. Saul, a Catholic merchant in Dublin, namely, "that the laws did not presume a Papist to exist in the kingdom, nor could they exist in it without the connivance of government."<sup>1</sup>

The Right Boys, however, had been likewise put down before the wrecking system began in Armagh. The former society was a feeble remnant of the Whiteboy Association, which had its

<sup>1</sup> See "Plowden's History."

origin in 1759 in the south of Ireland. The Whiteboys took their names from the frocks or shirts which they were in the habit of wearing when they assembled, and, armed with scythes, clubs, and swords, they sallied forth at night, and committed many acts of agrarian outrage. The wrongs they professed to redress were those connected with the holding of lands on exorbitant terms, the enclosing of waste lands, the extortion of tithe proctors, etc. Various laws were enacted to repress their excesses, all of which were of an agrarian character, wild, daring, ill-concerted, sometimes cruel, seldom premeditated, and, eventually, were easily put down. The cause of these excesses is justly ascribed, by Plowden, to the agricultural distress which prevailed in the whole of the south of Ireland, consequent upon the practice generally adopted at that time, of converting the large farms into grazing lands, which were set to wealthy monopolists, who turned the wretched peasantry adrift. At the close of 1762, Lord Halifax congratulated Parliament on the suppression of the insurrection of the Whiteboys.

In all these confederacies of the people, arising from agricultural distress, no matter how grinding the oppression of the authorities, how cruel the exactions of their landlords, how galling the exorbitant demands and proceedings of the tithe proctors, there was no availing sympa-

thy for them amongst the aristocracy or the squirearchy of the land.

The Association of the Defenders, about 1792, had changed its character, from that of a society engaged in religious feuds, to one actuated by political motives, and the change was effected by the endeavours of the United Irishmen to reconcile the ultra-Protestants and Catholics. Their views, however, continued so indistinct that Messrs. Emmet and M'Neven could form no other opinion of their objects, except that a general notion prevailed amongst them, "that something ought to be done for Ireland." They had no persons in their body of the upper or even middling class in life. The only man known among them above the condition of a labourer was a schoolmaster in Naas, of the name of Laurence O'Connor, who was executed in 1796. This man met his fate with a fortitude which has endeared his memory to the lower orders of his countrymen; his defence of the people, rather than himself, from the slanderous charges of his prosecutors, proves him to have been a person of no less intrepidity than superior talents.

In the same year it was discovered that an agent of the Society of United Irishmen had interviews with the Defenders at Castlebellingham, in the county Louth, and had taken their oath of secrecy.

The object of Tandy's mission was to ascer-

tain the real objects of the Defenders, with a view to the advantage of the Society of United Irishmen. The fact has not been avowed, but it cannot be denied. The aim of it was to turn the strength of that association of the peasantry into the channels of the United Irish system. One of the Defenders, who was present when Tandy was sworn, lodged informations against him, and he was fortunate enough to effect his escape out of the kingdom. The Defenders gradually merged into the United Irishmen, and in a short time there was no distinction between them.

The atrocities committed by the Orangemen on the people, not only in the north, but generally throughout the country, previously to the rebellion, especially during the latter part of 1796 and down to the autumn of 1797, when there was a temporary cessation of those enormities, have never been fully revealed. In fact, little more is known of them than is to be gathered from general descriptions of house-wreckings and cabin-burnings—of wholesale extermination—of such events as six hundred families, at one fell swoop, having been swept off from a single county. But the particulars no historian of the time, no journalist, no writer living in the country, dared to publish, and, accordingly, in Ireland we find no such record of them. Such a record, however, in the latter part of 1797, was published in London, by an Irish gen-

tleman, a justice of the peace in one of the northern counties, under the signature of "An Observer." This pamphlet, now rarely to be met with, is called, "A View of the Present State of Ireland, etc., Addressed to the People of England." It is written with great ability, and bears throughout its pages the internal marks of authentic statements, wholly divested of exaggeration. The opinion entertained of its accuracy by James Hope, of Belfast, one well qualified to pronounce an opinion on that point, and whose opinion is entitled to respect, was conveyed to me in these words: "This pamphlet contains more truth than all the volumes I have seen written on the events of 1797 and 1798."

Shortly after peace was concluded with America, ministers perceived they had been playing a losing game in Ireland; the Volunteer associations had materially altered the face of the country: in many places the Catholics had embodied themselves into Volunteer corps: a friendly intercourse with their Protestant brethren naturally followed; they felt that as Irishmen their interests were coëqual, hatred on account of religion was banished, harmony prevailed, and, if not an union of affection, at least an union of political sentiment appeared to exist amongst the people: of this, administration was well informed, and ministers trembled for what might be the result. To avert reformation they felt it their duty to create division. Various were the means employed to effect this immoral



object; among others, they reverted to the old diabolical one of fomenting those religious feuds, which had so often consumed the vitals and palsied the native energy of the land. . . .

They taught the weak and credulous Protestant and Presbyterian to believe, that, if the Catholics who had obtained arms during the war, were suffered to retain them, they would seize on the first opportunity to overturn the government, and erect Popery on the ruins of the Protestant religion. This, and other acts equally insidious, had the desired effect on the minds of many persons, particularly in the county of Armagh, where the metropolitan resided.

Here fanaticism reared her standard, and a number of deluded people entered into a combination for the purpose of depriving the Catholics of their arms by force. . . .

For some time the Catholics remained patient and tranquil under their sufferings; at length they declared that all their efforts to obtain legal redress had been unavailing, and that the necessity of the case would oblige them to enter into counter-combinations to defend their lives and properties against a banditti of plundering ruffians, who appeared to be countenanced by authority, inasmuch as they were not punished by the criminal law of the land. These two parties had several encounters, in which victory was various; but many of the Catholic party, wearied out by continual persecution, fled from Armagh to different parts of the kingdom, particularly to the counties of Louth and Meath. . . .

Led by passion and goaded by persecution, they

proceeded (like the Peep-of-Day Boys, who first set the example, and who never were punished), to acts of felony, by taking arms by force; but they soon fell victims to their folly and imprudence. This, then, whatever interesting and designing men assert to the contrary, this was the true origin and progress of Defenderism in Ireland. . . .

The tumultuous spirit, which manifested itself in several counties, could have been crushed on its first appearance with much ease; but administration looked on with an apathy, which many enlightened men declared criminal.

Had administration, then, proclaimed an amnesty to all who might be willing to take the oath of allegiance, many lives would have been preserved, and those shocking massacres which have outraged humanity and tarnished the character of the government, would not have taken place. . . .

In the county of Meath a number of Defenders had assembled, and a part of the army was sent in pursuit of them. On the first appearance of the soldiers they dispersed; but a few, who were closely pursued, took refuge in a gentleman's house, where, after securing the doors, they defended themselves for some time; at length a capitulation was proposed; and it was agreed to by all parties that the Defenders should deliver themselves up, to be conveyed to the county gaol, for trial at the ensuing assizes.

The doors were opened, the military entered; but, instead of observing the terms of agreement, they put every Defender to death. The body of each man, "killed off," was cast from a window into the street,

and for this brutal ferocity the soldiers were not even reprimanded. In the county of Louth, there was a party of these unhappy men attacked by a squadron of dragoons, who could have easily made the whole of them prisoners, but no mercy whatever was extended to them: those who escaped the sword were driven into a river and drowned.

And at the head of this military corps was a magistrate of the county, a gentleman who holds an eminent seat in the Irish Parliament.

A party of the army was ordered out to attack a body of Defenders, assembled near the village of Ballanagh, in the county of Cavan. On the approach of the military they dispersed; many of them sought shelter in the village, hiding themselves under beds, etc., which evinces that their resistance (if they made any) must have been feeble, and that it would be an easy matter to make them prisoners; but that would not satiate the vengeance of those monsters, who are stained with the blood of the Irish peasantry. The magistrates and officers commanding the party ordered the soldiers to surround the village and set it on fire, which order was readily obeyed. Every house, with the exception of one, was burned, and many innocent people perished in the flames with the guilty. No investigation, no legal process, took place; nor has the gentleman been indemnified, to whom the village belonged, for the loss of his property. In the counties of Westmeath, Longford, and Monaghan, similar excesses were committed. To mention the barbarities and scenes of horror which took place in the province of Connaught is unnecessary. The last parliament, by an act which disgraced

it and betrayed the rights of its constituents, gave them more strongly to the world than any detailed account can possibly do. So flagitious, illegal, and unconstitutional was the conduct of the magistracy, that the administration (yes, even the administration of Ireland) was afraid to let the atrocities which had been committed meet the public eye; and ministers procured a bill of indemnity to be passed in Parliament, to screen from punishment those officers of the peace who, at the hour of midnight, tore men from the arms of their families, merely on the suspicion of their being seditious, and dragged them on board loathsome prison-ships, transporting them to destructive climates, without examination, without trial, unheard, unpleaded! And for these services and gallant exploits, the man who figured foremost in the scene has been promoted to situations of the first importance in the nation.<sup>1</sup> . . .

In January, 1796, a party of Orangemen, the Peep-of-Day Boys having adopted this new designation, headed by William Trimble, came to the house of Mr. Daniel Corrigan, a very reputable citizen, in the county of Armagh, parish of Kilmore, and, having before robbed him of his arms, which, being registered, he was by law entitled to retain, they demanded a pistol he had subsequently purchased to protect him as he travelled round the country (he being a dealer in cattle), which having obtained, they retired, promising his family protection; but returned in about twenty minutes, and, forcing the door, Trimble murdered Mr. Corrigan, by lodging seven balls in his body from a blunderbuss, and then destroyed the house and furniture. Trimble was afterwards apprehended, tried, found guilty, and

<sup>1</sup> Lord Carhampton.

ordered by the judge for execution in forty-eight hours; but through a certain interference he was respited. He continued in gaol till the ensuing assizes, when he was again arraigned for having murdered Mr. Arthur M'Cann, as also for several robberies; but his trial was put off, and in a few days he was ordered for transportation, when he was only sent to Cork, from whence he was suffered to go on board the fleet, like a good and loyal subject.

The house of Mr. Bernard Crosson, of the parish of Mullanabrack, was attacked by Orangemen, in consequence of being a reputed Catholic. His son prevented them from entering by the front door, upon which they broke in at the back part of the house, and, firing on the inhabitants, killed Mr. Crosson, his son, and daughter. Mr. Hugh M'Fay, of the parish of Seagoe, had his house likewise attacked on the same pretence, himself wounded, his furniture destroyed, and his wife barbarously used.

Information having been lodged against a few individuals living in the village of Kilrea, in the county of Derry, for being United Irishmen, a party of the military were ordered to apprehend them; the men avoided the caption, and about three o'clock in the morning, a reverend magistrate, accompanied by a clergyman of the same description, and the commanding officer of the party, ordered the soldiers to set fire to the houses of the accused: the men obeyed, and all was consumed. There were four houses which could not be burned without endangering the whole village; they therefore gutted them, and, having carried out the movables, burned them in the street.



One circumstance peculiarly savage took place on this occasion:—The wife of one of the accused had been delivered of a child only the day preceding; she was carried out of her house, and, with the infant, thrown into the snow, while her blankets and wearing apparel were consigned to the flames. None of these savage violators of law and humanity were brought to justice; on the contrary, the reverend magistrate has since been promoted to a more enlarged benefice. It is a well known fact that, in the county of Armagh alone, seven hundred Catholic families were driven to poverty and desolation, their houses burned, and property destroyed by Orangemen. It may be said that administration was not the secret mover in these horrid scenes; but the following facts will, I think, enable the reader to form a tolerable opinion on the subject:—Three Orangemen voluntarily made oath before a magistrate of the county of Down and Armagh, that they met in committees; amongst whom were some members of parliament, known to be the tools of state, who gave these people money, and promised they should not suffer for any act they might commit, and pledged themselves that they should hereafter be provided for under the auspices of government. Furthermore, the said magistrate addressed a letter to the Secretary of State, inquiring of him how he should act in these critical times; that hitherto he had preserved peace on his large estate, but wished to know how he should act in future; and that if it was necessary for the preservation of the present system for him to connive at or encourage the Orangemen in their depredations, he said, as a man, he knew his duty; if it was not necessary,

he hoped the magistrates of the county at large would be made responsible, and be compelled to act against these depredators. This letter was written in consequence of a large meeting which was advertised to be held by the Orangemen about ten days after. Though he could have had an answer in four days, he did not receive one for two months; and when it did make its appearance, it was couched in such evasive and equivocal language, that it was impossible to comprehend its meaning. It is also worthy of remark that these unprincipled hirelings were never once mentioned in the answer. . . .

In the month of May last, a party of Essex Fencibles, accompanied by the Enniskillen Yeomen Infantry, commanded by their first lieutenant, marched to the house of a Mr. Potter, a very respectable farmer, who lived within five miles of Enniskillen, in the county of Fermanagh. On their arrival they demanded Mr. Potter, saying they were ordered to arrest him, as he was charged with being an United Irishman. His wife, with much firmness, replied, "that to be an United Irishman was an honour, not a disgrace; that her husband had gone from home the preceding day on business, and had not yet returned." They assured her that if he did not surrender himself in three hours they would burn his house. Mrs. Potter answered, "that she did not know exactly where he was, but, if she did know, she believed it would be impossible to have him home in so short a time." In less than three hours they set fire to the house, which was a very neat one, only about five years built; the servants brought out some beds and other valuable articles, in the hope of preserv-

ing them, but the military dashed all back into the flames. The house and property, to the amount of six or seven hundred pounds, were consumed, and Mrs. Potter, with seven children, one of them not a month old, were turned out, at the hour of midnight, into the fields. . . .

In June, 1797, a party of the Ancient Britons (a fencible regiment, commanded by Sir Watkins William Wynne) were ordered to examine the house of Mr. Rice, an inn-keeper in the town of Coolavil, county of 'Armagh, for arms; but on making very diligent search, none could be found. There were some country people drinking in the house, and discoursing in their native language, the soldiers damned their eternal Irish souls, said they were speaking treason, and instantly fell on them with their swords and maimed several desperately. Miss Rice was so badly wounded that her life was 'despaired of, and her father escaped with much difficulty, after having received many cuts from the sabres of these assassins. . . .

In June, some persons had been refreshing themselves at an inn in Newtownards, county of Down, kept by a Mr. M'Cormick, and it was alleged that they were overheard uttering words termed seditious. M'Cormick was afterwards called on to give information who they were; he denied having any knowledge of them, observing that many people might come into his house whom he did not know, and for whom he could not be accountable. He was taken into custody, and next day his house and extensive property were reduced to ashes. The house of Dr. Jackson was torn down on suspicion of his being an United Irishman; and many

other houses in that town and barony were destroyed, or otherwise demolished, by English Fencibles, on similar pretexts.

On the 22nd of June, Mr. Joseph Clotney, of Ballinahinch, was committed to the Military Barracks, Belfast, and his house, furniture, and books worth three thousand pounds, destroyed; also the valuable house of Mr. Armstrong, of that place, was totally demolished.

In the month of April last, a detachment of the Essex Fencibles, then quartered in Enniskillen, were ordered, under the command of a captain and adjutant, accompanied by the First Fermanagh Yeomanry, into an adjoining county to search for arms. About two o'clock in the morning they arrived at the house of one Durnian, a farmer, which, without any previous intimation whatever, they broke open, and on entering it, one of the fencibles fired his musket through the roof of the house: an officer instantly discharged his pistol into a bed where two young men were lying, and wounded them both. One of them, the only child of Durian, rose with great difficulty, and on making this effort, faint with the loss of blood, a fencible stabbed him through the bowels. His distracted mother ran to support him, but in a few moments she sank upon the floor, covered with the blood, which issued from the side of her unfortunate son; by this time the other young man had got on his knees to implore mercy, declaring most solemnly that they had not been guilty of any crime, when another fencible deliberately knelt down, levelled his musket at him, and was just going to fire, when a sergeant of yeomanry rushed in, seized, and prevented his committing the horrid deed. There

were persons present who smiled at the humanity of the sergeant. . . .

Information had been lodged that a house near Newry contained concealed arms. A party of the Ancient Britons repaired to the house, but not finding the object of their search, they set it on fire. The peasantry of the neighbourhood came running from all sides to extinguish the flames, believing the fire to have been accidental—it was the first military one in that part of the country. As they came up they were attacked in all directions, and cut down by the fencibles; thirty were killed, among whom were a woman and two children. An old man (above seventy years), seeing the dreadful slaughter of his neighbours and friends, fled for safety to some adjacent rocks; he was pursued, and, though on his knees imploring mercy, a brutal Welshman cut off his head at a blow. . . .

I have stated incontrovertible truths. Months would be insufficient to enumerate all the acts of wanton cruelty which were inflicted on the inhabitants of Ireland from the 1st of April to the 24th of July, 1797.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "A view of the Present State of Ireland," etc. By an Observer. London, 1797.





**James, Earl of Charlemont**

*Commander-in-Chief of the Volunteers of Ireland,  
1782. After an Engraving by L. Schiavonetti,  
from the Original Picture by H. Hare in  
the National Gallery, Dublin*





## CHAPTER V

### THE VOLUNTEERS

**T**HE period between the successful issue of the struggle for the independence of the Irish Parliament, and the outbreak of the rebellion in 1798, was one of the most stirring and memorable epochs in the history of Ireland. The momentous events which were then taking place in other countries exerted a powerful influence on the political sentiments of the upper and middle classes.

This period abounded with events of greater importance than any that preceded it for many centuries. The evil genius of George the Third, which strongly disposed him to take the side most adverse to the people on any popular question, and invariably opposed his inclinations to the extension of freedom, civil or religious, succumbed to the spirit of liberty in another hemisphere, and the independence of a New World was the consequence.

In France, the royal adherence to despotic principles, rather than the King's abuse of despotic power, prepared the way for the accomplishment of the end of those political philosophers who, in the words of Condorcet, "without



foreseeing all that they have done, have yet done all that we have lived to see accomplished." The arrogance of a nobility enervated by luxury, and emboldened in its vices by the servility which had been long regarded as the allegiance of the vulgar to its pomp, had brought the court into contempt, and militated at last against the monarchy itself. In Ireland, the two great examples I have quoted, of the power of the people, and the success of its united efforts for the attainment of objects nationally desired, were not overlooked; on the contrary, they were regarded with feelings of wonder and admiration. No country in the world at that period stood in a position more likely to be affected by such examples: everything was anomalous in her condition. She belonged to England, and was said to be an independent nation; she had a parliament, and, it might be presumed, therefore, legislative power; she owed allegiance to a king who owed his crown to a revolution which was risked in defence of civil and religious liberty. It might, therefore, be expected that the creed of his Irish subjects could not prejudice their civil rights; nevertheless, Ireland at this period was regarded by England, not as a sister, but as a rival whose clashing interests were constantly to be repressed. Her parliament was a theatre of automaton performers, with an English minister behind the scenes: he pulled the wires, and as he

willed the puppets moved; and while the spectators wondered at the nimble members that were set in motion, and listened to the words that seemed to issue from their mouths, they almost forgot the British mechanist who stirred or stayed the *fantoccini* of the Irish Parliament. Her judges were dependent on the Crown. Her military establishment was independent of her parliament. Her trade was impeded by prohibitory statutes which utterly sacrificed her interests to the aggrandizement of England. The result of three general confiscations of the property of the natives of the country in the course of two hundred years had left five-sixths of the landed property of the nation in the hands of the Protestant inhabitants, who hardly amounted to one-tenth of the whole population. It unfortunately was considered, at the time of King William's settlement, that the Reformation was not sufficiently cemented to bear the weight of toleration on the same pedestal on which religion was placed by Henry the Eighth. The old plea for spoliation—the civilization of the subdued by means of compulsory conversion—had never been abandoned; but the effort was not successful, and the church gained only a few indifferent members, whilst the sovereign lost the affections of some millions of subjects by the attempt.

In the early part of the reign of George the Third, Roman Catholics were debarred from

holding any office in the state, civil or military, above that of constable, parish overseer, or any like inferior appointment. They could not endow any school or college; they could not contract marriage with Protestants, without subjecting the priest who solemnized such marriage to the penalty of death, if unfortunately discovered; any justice of the peace, even without information, might enter their houses by day or night to search for arms; they could obtain no degrees in the University of Dublin; they, with all the inhabitants of this realm, were charged to attend divine service, according to the established religion, upon Sundays and holidays, on pain of ecclesiastical censure, and forfeiture of twelve pence for every time of absence; their clergy dared not officiate at any funeral, or any other public ceremony, outside their own place of worship. A child of a Catholic (by the 8th of Queen Anne), at any age, on conforming to the Protestant faith, might file a bill against his father, and compel him on oath to give an account of his property: whereupon the Chancellor was empowered to allot, for the child's immediate maintenance, one-third of the father's goods and personal chattels, and, on the death of the father, the statute assigned no limits to the power of the Chancellor over the property in favour of the Protestant child. Neither the concessions of 1778, nor those of 1782, secured the

Catholics in property acquired in that interval against the provisions of the 8th of Anne. Every Catholic (male or female), of every grade, was compellable, on pain, not only of fine and imprisonment, but of the pillory and whipping, to appear, when summoned before any justice of the peace, to give information against any Papist he or she might know to keep arms in his house; and not the least offensive of these disabilities was their exclusion from the exercise of the elective franchise, a right enjoyed by the Catholics from the first adoption of the English constitution, secured to them by the treaty of Limerick in 1691, guaranteed by King William and Queen Mary, and even ratified by Parliament, and which was taken from them in the first year of the reign of George the Second. Even by the Act of Concession of 1778, "no Popish university or college" could "be erected or endowed." The chief concessions of the act of 1778 were the following: Papists were empowered to take leases for any term, not exceeding nine hundred and ninety-nine years, or any number of lives, not exceeding five; to purchase or take by grant, descent, or devise, any species of property; to educate youths of their own persuasion; to be guardians of their own children; to intermarry with Protestants, provided the marriage was solemnized by a Protestant clergyman and a Popish clergyman duly licensed to

officiate in any church or chapel, without a bell, or any symbol of ecclesiastical dignity or authority; and, by subscribing the oaths of allegiance, Papists might qualify to be called to the bar and to become attorneys. Such was the state of Ireland, when "a voice from the New World shouted to liberty," in the words of Flood, and the example of America found a plea, in the apprehension of invasion, for calling forth the Volunteers of Ireland. Their first demands were made somewhat in the spirit of the Spanish beggar's supplication. Their artillery corps appeared on parade in Dublin, with labels on the mouths of their cannon, bearing the words: "Free trade or speedy revolution." Their importunity increased with their strength, and at length they demanded from England the independence of their country, and England was not then in a condition to refuse it.

This extraordinary association of armed citizens owed its origin to a letter of Sir Richard Heron, in reply to an application from the inhabitants of the town of Belfast to government, for the protection of a military force, on the alleged ground of the danger of invasion, the apprehension of which was then loudly talked of over the country. To this demand, the answer of the secretary, Sir Richard Heron, was, that Government could afford none.

In fact, in 1777 the Government had no means



of national defence, and "the people," says Hardy, "were left to take care of themselves." An English army at that time was captive in America—the war had drained both countries of their forces. Previously to the secretary's admission of the weakness of the Government, or the negligence that had left the country without defence, a few straggling corps of armed citizens were formed for the protection of the coasts; but the Volunteer institution soon spread over the country, and in one year its members amounted, we are told by Hardy, to 42,000 men. The number in a short time had nearly doubled.

An army of volunteers of 80,000 men, self-raised, self-supported, self-commissioned, in a country hitherto treated as a conquered one, which was only to be governed by the weakness of a divided people, was a strange phenomenon. Grattan and other enlightened chiefs of the new army declared the essential strength of the Volunteer Association was the union of Catholic, Protestant, and Presbyterian—"of Irishmen," in short, "of every denomination." The reader need not look further for the origin of the "United Irishmen;" the latter association naturally sprung out of the former institution, when it departed from its original principles and dwindled away and died rather ingloriously.

The immediate cause of the formation of the Belfast Volunteer Association is said to have

been the receipt of the letter that has been referred to from the Chief Secretary of State, Sir Richard Heron, in reply to a communication from the principal inhabitants of Belfast, through the sovereign of that town, Mr. Stewart Banks. The reply was to the following effect:

DUBLIN CASTLE, August 14, 1778.

SIR—My Lord Lieutenant having received information that there is reason to apprehend three or four privateers, in company,<sup>1</sup> may in a few days make attempts on the northern coasts of this kingdom; by his Excellency's command, I give you the earliest account thereof, in order that there may be a careful watch, and immediate intelligence given to the inhabitants of Belfast, in case any party from such ships should attempt to land.

The greatest part of the troops being encamped near Clonmel and Kinsale, his Excellency cannot, at present, send no further military force to Belfast than a troop or two of horse, or part of a company of invalids; and his Excellency desires you will acquaint me, by express, where a troop or two of horse may be properly accommodated in Belfast, so long as it may be proper to continue them in that town, in addition to the other two troops now there.

I have the honour to be, etc., etc., etc.,

RICHARD HERON.

<sup>1</sup> In the month of April, 1778, the "Ranger" privateer, Captain Paul Jones, mounting eighteen guns, had sailed round H. M.'s sloop of war "Drake," lying in the harbour of Belfast.

The Volunteers appear to have first determined on uniting, and then asking, in a dutiful manner, for the consent of the guardians of the public peace. The above letter is dated the 14th of August, 1778, when the first Volunteer Association had been already nearly five months in existence in Belfast, having been formed the 26th of March. Paul Jones's appearance off the harbour, and sailing round the "Drake," did not take place till the 13th of April; so that the sound of the loud voice that was shouting across the Atlantic appears to have reached the shores of our modern Athens before the fear of foreign invasion or piratical attempts had inspired much alarm, or stimulated the military ardour of the sturdy spirit of the northern Presbyterians.

It is the fashion to assert that nothing but loyalty animated the Volunteers, and treason only, and the influence of French politics, the United Irishmen. It may be asserted, without fear of contradiction, it was something less than loyalty alone, and something more than the fear of invasion at all, that animated Ireland, and arrayed its spirit in the Volunteer Association, when the voice from America was shouting "Liberty!" across the Atlantic, and a little later, when the first dawn of the revolution in France was beginning to dazzle the eyes of our long-benighted country. It was the wrongs of

Ireland which armed "its fears of French invasion;" it was the undue influence exercised over its legislative rights that caused its people to demonstrate their loyalty at the head of an army over which his Majesty's government had no control; and it was to make a signal demonstration of the strength of their effective force, and the martial vigour of their collective wisdom, that they called together a national convention, first in Dungannon, and afterwards in Dublin. In the former place, two hundred delegates of the Volunteers, in their military uniforms and accoutrements, marched two by two to the Protestant church of Dungannon, and there, after many days deliberation, they agreed upon that celebrated declaration of their rights, which procured for Ireland the transitory, the illusory independence of her parliament. The views of the British minister, in reference to that measure, were rightly appreciated and characterized by Flood, when the declaration was made in parliament, purporting to be a message from the King, through the secretary, "that mistrusts and jealousies had arisen in Ireland, and that it was highly necessary to take the same into immediate consideration, in order to a final adjustment." On that occasion, to put the Duke of Portland's sincerity beyond a doubt, his friend, Mr. Ponsonby, took upon him to answer for his Grace, that "he would use his utmost influence

in obtaining the rights of Ireland, an object on which he had fixed his heart."

It appears there was one man at least in that house who doubted the sincerity of the minister—and that man was Flood, to whose public character Lord Charlemont's biographer has done great injustice, and to whose views as a statesman, those of his great rival, Grattan, can bear no comparison, whatever superiority the fidelity of his attachment to his country may give him over his rival.

That Flood was right in his scepticism, and Grattan wrong in his credulity, the event fully proved. In 1799, the same Duke of Portland openly avowed, that "he never considered the independence of the Irish Parliament a final adjustment."

It is perfectly evident that Pitt, from the moment he came into power, never ceased to regard that independence as a measure which had been unconstitutionally extorted, and at any hazard, cost, or sacrifice, was "to be re-captured." The course of the Irish Parliament on the regency question still more strongly fixed his determination. The incaution of that great and noble Irishman, our illustrious Grattan, enabled Pitt to place his finger on a flaw in the title to our parliamentary independence, while an oversight in the Place Bill—the favourite bantling, as it has been called, of Grattan's patriotism—en-



abled the minister to pack that suicidal Parliament.

The illusory phantom of national independence pointed out the way to parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation, and these objects haunted the minds of the Irish people long after the expiring efforts of the Volunteers had ceased to be a mockery to the pride or hopes of Ireland. All the energy of the nation concentrated in that volunteer association, had been expended in obtaining this nominal independence, and had precluded its successful employment in the struggle for reform. The people, on the disbanding of the Volunteers, discovered that they had been deceived, that the nominal independence of an unreformed parliament was worse than illusory, that the evils which sprung from it had become irremediable by ordinary means. Grattan himself found out, but when it was too late, that all his labours for the independence of Ireland had only served to make the influence of the Irish Parliament a monopoly for an unprincipled faction, and its power and patronage the private property of a family hostile to the interests of the nation.

There can be no doubt that the inadequate measures taken by Grattan for the security of the independence of the Parliament was the cause of the rebellion of 1798; and little did he imagine, when he reviled the actors in it in his

place in Parliament, that all the blood that was shed in that struggle was spilt either in defence of the principles on which he advocated national independence, or in the re-conquest of that independence on the part of England, which he had imperfectly achieved.

In the first stage of the proceedings of the convention at Dungannon, the constitutional legality of the proceedings of deliberating soldiers was defended on the principle of the English revolution, namely, "on the people's right of preparatory resistance to unconstitutional oppression." Its members asserted, by their first resolution, "that a citizen by learning the use of arms does not abandon any of his civil rights." Their other resolutions were expressive of their wrongs, and resolutely indicative of their disposition to redress them. The patriotism that dictated them was evident enough, but the manifestation of loyalty was by no means conspicuous. The invasion panic had afforded a pretext for putting arms into the hands of the advocates, first of national independence, and then of parliamentary reform; the Dungannon convention effected the former by its declaration of the 15th of February, 1782.

On the 1st of July, at the Ulster meeting of the Volunteer delegates at Lisburn, an address to the army on the subject of parliamentary reform was issued, signed by Lieutenant-Colonel

Sharman, Colonel Rowley, and others, calling on that loyal army to assemble with the same spirit of loyalty, patriotism, and firmness, which actuated them on the memorable 15th of February, 1782, "to deliberate on the most constitutional means of procuring a more equal representation of the people in the Parliament of Ireland." And not the least singular circumstance in this requisition to the Irish soldiery to deliberate, sword in hand, on the most constitutional means of obtaining parliamentary reform, is to find that, in advocating the necessity for it, it is stated in the requisition, that "it was warmly supported by that consummate statesman, the Earl of Chatham, and revived by the heir to his abilities and name, the present William Pitt."

At the meeting of the celebrated Dungannon convention, on the 8th of September, 1783 (Colonel Robert Stewart having been called to the chair, vacated by Colonel J. Stewart), a communication was read from the 1st regiment of the Irish Brigade, dated February 15, 1782, which concluded in these terms: "At this great crisis, when the western world, while laying the foundation of a rising empire, temptingly holds out a system of equal liberty to mankind, and waits with open arms to receive the emigrants from surrounding nations, we think it a duty we owe to our country, to promote, as far as our example can reach, an affectionate coalition of

the inhabitants of Ireland. Animated by this sentiment, and convinced that national unanimity is the basis of national strength, this regiment affords a striking instance how far the divine spirit of toleration can unite men of all religious descriptions in one great object—the support of a free constitution.”<sup>1</sup>

The next most remarkable meeting of the Volunteers was that of the delegates from the “Volunteer Army of Leinster,” which sat on the 9th of October, 1783, at the Royal Exchange, Dublin, Lord Charlemont in the chair. It is a striking feature in the proceedings of the Volunteers, that, almost invariably, the first resolution at every meeting was, “that the present state of the representation of the people of this kingdom requires to be reformed.” On this occasion Colonel Hatton opposed the resolution, and moved one to the effect: “That it is only through the medium of the legislature that we do hope for constitutional redress.” “This brought on,” says the history I have already quoted, “a debate, in the course of which it was urged, ‘that the sacred majesty of the people was, in all times, fully competent to correct the abuses which might arise in the constitution, and to control and direct that branch of the legislature to which they had only delegated a power,

<sup>1</sup> “History of the Proceedings and Debates of the Volunteer Delegates.”

but which interposition on the part of the people, it was allowed to be impolitic to exercise, save only on the most important occasions’;” and, in support of this doctrine, the secretary urged the authority of the celebrated Dr. Jebb, etc. The resolution, however, of Colonel Hatton, materially amended by Counsellor Michael Smith, was eventually carried.

On the 10th of November, 1783, the grand National Convention met at the Royal Exchange, Dublin, and subsequently adjourned to the Rotundo, Lord Charlemont in the chair, and continued to meet till the 2d of December, 1783. The sub-committee of the convention, consisting of one delegate for each city and county, by whom the business of the convention was regulated, chose Colonel the Right Honourable Robert Stewart for their chairman.

On the 21st of November, the chairman of the sub-committee reported to the convention a series of resolutions of that committee, on the subject of reform, to the following effect:

That it was the unanimous opinion of the committee, that no non-resident elector should be permitted to vote for any representative in Parliament, unless his right of voting arose from landed property of £20 per annum.

That no elector be deemed resident, who had not resided for six months in the year previous to the day



of issuing the writ for the election, and unless that borough, town, or city, had been his usual place of residence during the period of his registry.

That the sheriff of each county do appoint a deputy, to take the poll in each barony on the same day.

That all depopulated places, or decayed boroughs, which had hitherto returned representatives, by an extension of the franchise to the neighbouring barony, be enabled to return representatives to Parliament.

That every borough, town, or city, which hitherto had returned representatives, be deemed decayed, which did not contain two hundred electors, over and above potwallopers, according to the plan for the province of Leinster, and should cease to return representatives till the aforesaid number of electors be supplied.

That every Protestant, possessed of a freehold, shall have a right to vote for members to serve in Parliament for such city, town, or borough.

That any bye-law made by a corporation to contract the franchise, shall be declared illegal.

That every Protestant possessed of a leasehold of the yearly value of £10, in any city, town, or borough, not decayed, for thirty-one years or upwards, and of which ten years are unexpired, be entitled to vote; and every Protestant in any decayed city, town, or borough, having a leasehold of £5 yearly value, for thirty-one years, ten of which are unexpired, be permitted to vote.

That every freeholder of 40s. per annum, in any decayed city, town, or borough, be entitled to vote.

That the duration of Parliament ought not to exceed the term of three years.

That all suffrages be given *vivâ voce*, and not by ballot.

That any person holding a pension, except for life, or under the term of twenty-one years, be incapable of sitting in parliament; and if for life or twenty-one years, should vacate his seat, but be capable of reëlection.

That any member accepting office under the crown, do vacate his seat, but be capable of reëlection.

That every member, before he took his seat, should take an oath that he has not, nor any other person for him, with his knowledge or consent, given meat, drink, money, place or employment, or any consideration for any expenses whatsoever voters may have been at for procuring votes at his election; and do further swear, that he will not suffer any person to hold any place or pension in trust for him while he serves in Parliament.

And, lastly, that any person convicted of perjury by a jury, relative to the above oath, be incapable of ever sitting in Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the plan of reform submitted to the convention by the chairman of its sub-committee,

<sup>1</sup> "History of the Volunteer Convention," p. 49.

the Right Honourable Robert Stewart; and, though not "the first whig," one might suppose there was something prophetic in the definition of the term that had reference to Irish politics, when it turns out that Lord Castlereagh was the first reformer in 1783. This plan of reform, with the exception of two sittings, in which the claims of the Catholics to the elective franchise were discussed and scouted by the assembly, occupied the attention of the Convention during the whole time it sat, till the 2d of December, the day of its dissolution, and, it may be added, the date of the downfall of the Volunteer Association. The National Convention, which assembled in Dublin, the 10th of November, 1783, consisted of three hundred delegates, who represented one hundred and fifty thousand Volunteers. The Volunteer Grenadiers attended as a guard on the Convention during its sittings; the delegates were escorted into town by troops of armed citizens; the firing of twenty-one cannon announced the commencement of their proceedings. The various battalions proceeded from the Exchange to the Rotundo, the seat of the convention, in grand military array, displaying amongst their banners the national standard of Ireland, and devices and mottoes on their flags which were not to be mistaken. Broad green ribbons were worn across the shoulders of the delegates, and, according to Barrington, the

lawyers even acknowledged the supreme power of the will of the people—the motto on their buttons was, “*Vox populi suprema lex est.*”

This national convention of armed citizens was assembled within sight of the Irish House of Parliament, and both these parliaments were sitting at the same time, and the leading popular gentlemen who were members of both, went from one assembly to the other, as the affairs under deliberation required their presence in either house. Lord Charlemont, the chairman of the convention, we are told by Hardy, spoke of the majority of the members as “men of rank and fortune, and many of them members of Parliament, lords and commoners.” No sooner had the chairman taken his seat, than innumerable plans of reform were presented, which to Lord Charlemont and his biographer appeared all utterly impracticable; “so rugged and so wild in their attire” were they, “as to look” not like the “inhabitants of the Earth, and yet were on it:” and yet “this motley band of incongruous fancies,” as the latter terms them, “of misshapen theories, valuable only if efficient, or execrable if efficacious,” contained a vast number of proposals for parliamentary reformation, which, in the course of half a century, have been found not only plausible but practicable suggestions, and have been of late years carried into execution.

Mr. Flood's plan of reform was at length adopted by the convention. The Bishop of Derry then brought forward his resolution in favour of the immediate and complete emancipation of the Roman Catholics, and the good and virtuous Lord Charlemont strenuously and successfully resisted the resolution! To this same bishop the noble earl replied, in defending himself from the charge of being a lukewarm reformer, "that in the struggle for an independent parliament, he had been willing to risk his life, and, what was far more important—the peace of his country, but for reform he was willing to do everything not inconsistent with the public peace." There were many in that assembly who did not participate in the sentiments of Lord Charlemont, and his lordship well knew it, for he trembled for the result of their determinations, and at last had recourse to a subterfuge for obtaining a final adjournment of the Convention. The House of Commons, during the sitting of the Convention, had refused Flood's motion for leave to bring in a bill for a reform of Parliament, on the ground of its emanating from a body illegally constituted. Mr. Fitzgibbon openly and violently denounced the Volunteers, and his denunciations were compared by Curran "to the ravings of a maniac and an incendiary." The language of Fitzgibbon was of a very different description, when, carried



away by the stream of patriotism at the close of the struggle for parliamentary independence, he addressed the House of Commons, to the astonishment of its members, in terms that might have been expected from a Lucas or a Molyneux: "No man," said he, "can say that the Duke of Portland has power to grant us that redress which the nation unanimously demands; but as Ireland is committed, no man, I trust, will shrink from her support, but go through hand and heart in the establishment of our liberties: and as I was cautious in committing myself, so am I now firm in asserting the rights of my country. My declaration therefore is, that as the nation has determined to obtain the restoration of her liberty, it behoves every man in Ireland to stand firm!!!"<sup>1</sup>

The language of abuse a few years later was new to the Volunteers. Hitherto they had been accustomed to constant commendation: every year they received the unanimous thanks of Parliament, the king applauded their loyalty, the whole country rang with their praises; but the government looked on their proceedings with the most serious apprehensions; as they had re-

<sup>1</sup> A singular commentary on these opinions is to be found in the speech of this gentleman on the Union, in which he declares that he had never ceased urging the necessity on the British Minister of the impracticability of the measure of Irish parliamentary independence, "for the last seven years."—*Vide* "Earl of Clare's speech on the Union." By Authority, 1800.

garded their origin as an evil that was only to be tolerated because it could not for the time being be conveniently resisted or violently opposed. It was determined to make their own leaders their executioners, and for this purpose they contrived, in the first instance, to disarm the opposition of Lord Charlemont to their designs, by artful representations of apprehensions from the intemperance of his rival brethren in the convention, especially of the Bishop of Derry and Flood, and by insidious assurances of confidence in his loyalty and enlightened patriotism. Lord Charlemont was the best and most honest of men, but in public matters he carried the refinement of a man of elegant manners to the extreme verge of plastic courtesy; as a man of honour, no earthly bribe could have caused him to swerve from his principles; as a courtier, the smiles of a viceroy or the blandishments of a minister might have caused him to listen far too attentively to the suggestions of those in power. The proceedings in the House of Commons on the rejection of the Reform Bill brought the question of the loyalty of the Volunteer Convention to an issue. It was now a crisis, which left no alternative but resistance or dissolution. The chairman dared not propose a dissolution; he proposed an adjournment till the Monday following, when they were to meet at the usual hour. On the Monday, accordingly, he repaired

to the Rotundo at an earlier hour than usual; after passing some resolutions, he and a few of the partizans who accompanied him, dissolved the Convention. On the arrival of the great body of the delegates they found the doors closed, they learned with astonishment that the Convention was dissolved, and when it was too late, they discovered they had been deceived by their general. From this time the power of the Volunteers was broken. The Government resolved to let the institution die a natural death—at least to aim no blow at it in public; but when it was known that the Hon. Colonel Robert Stewart, afterwards Lord Castlereagh, was not only a member of the Convention (a delegate for the county Down), but a chairman of the sub-committee, and that he was the intimate friend of Lord Charlemont, the nature of the hostility that the government put in practice against the institution will be easily understood. While the Volunteers were parading before Lord Charlemont, or manifesting their patriotism in declarations of resistance to the Parliament, perfidy was stalking in their camp, and it rested not till it had trampled on the ashes of their institution.

Of the esteem in which Lord Charlemont held Colonel Robert Stewart we may judge by his letters: in one he says—"I have seen Robert, and have given him but little comfort with re-

gard to his friend's administration. I cannot but love him; yet why is he so be-Pitted?"

The first proclamation against the Volunteers of the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Westmoreland, was issued the 11th of March, 1790, denouncing lawless and seditious proceedings which had taken place in the town of Belfast, on the plea that the object of the said armed bodies was redress of alleged grievances, but that the obvious intention of most of them appeared to be to overawe the Parliament and the government, and to dictate to both.

And whereas these dangerous and seditious proceedings tend to the disturbance of the public peace, the obstruction of good order and government, to the great injury of public credit, and the subversion of the constitution, and have raised great alarms in the minds of his Majesty's loyal subjects.

And we do charge and command the magistrates, sheriffs, bailiffs, and other peace-officers, having jurisdiction within the said town of Belfast, and the several districts adjacent thereto, to be careful in preserving the peace within the same, and to disperse all seditious and unlawful assemblies; and if they shall be resisted, to apprehend the offenders, that they may be dealt with according to law.

(Signed) FITZGIBBON, etc., etc., etc.

In compliance with the proclamation, the Volunteers ceased to parade or any longer to appear in military array.

The Catholics, who had flocked to the standard of the Volunteers on the first cry of French invasion, were groaning under the tyranny of the penal laws, and, at the prospect of a deliverance, one cannot wonder at "their patriotism catching fire at the Presbyterian altar of parliamentary reform." But when they discovered the bigoted opposition of the leader to their claims—when the Earl of Charlemont publicly resisted the restoration of the elective franchise to the Catholics, and the national convention had the folly to let their prejudices defeat their interests, by withholding from the Catholics (the great bulk of the people) their just rights, the hopes of the latter were destroyed; their attachment to the cause of the Volunteers declined, and when the last blow was struck at the existence of this force, the Catholic population of Ireland looked on with unconcern; and never did an institution, so big with the highest political importance, dwindle away into such insignificance, and fall so little regretted by the majority of the people.

The services of the Volunteers are, on the whole, greatly exaggerated by our historians; the great wonder is, how little substantial good to Ireland was effected by a body which was capable of effecting so much. As a military national spectacle, the exhibition was, indeed, imposing, of a noble army of united citizens roused



by the menace of danger to the state, and, once mustered, standing forth in defence of the independence of their country. But it is not merely the spectacle of their array, but the admirable order, conduct, and discipline of their various corps—not for a short season of political excitement, but for a period of nearly ten years—that, even at this distance of time, are with many a subject of admiration. Their admirers certainly did not exaggerate their utility as preservers of the public peace, when they asserted, in one of the last resolutions passed at the dissolution of the Convention, that, through “their means, the laws and police of this kingdom had been better executed and maintained, than at any former period within the memory of man.” But what use did the friends and advocates of popular rights make of this powerful association of armed citizens, which paralyzed the Irish government, and brought the British ministry to a frame of mind very different to that which it hitherto exhibited towards Ireland? Why, they wielded this great weapon of a nation’s collected strength to obtain an illusory independence, which never could rescue the Irish Parliament from the influence of the British minister without reform, and which left the Parliament as completely in the power of the minister, through the medium of his hirelings in that House, as it had been before that shadow of parliamentary independ-

ence had been gained. The only change was in the mode of using that influence in the Parliament; the material difference was but between an open and a secret interference in its concerns. The other adjuncts to this acquisition were a Place Bill and a Pension Bill, which had been the stock in trade of the reforming principle of the opposition for many years. No great measure of parliamentary reform, or Catholic emancipation, was seriously entertained, or wrung from a reluctant but then feeble government. The error of the leaders was in imagining that they could retain the confidence of the Catholics, or the coöperation of that body, which constituted the great bulk of the population, while their convention publicly decided against their admission to the exercise of the elective franchise. At the great Leinster meeting of the Volunteer delegates, in October, 1783, the first serious attempt to force the claims of the Catholics on the delegates was made by Mr. Burrowes. He said he was instructed to move the extension of the elective franchise to the Roman Catholics, whose behaviour had manifested their attachment to the constitution. He was surprised to find some gentlemen averse to entering upon the subject; he was afraid an idea would go abroad that they were not to receive the power of voting for representatives in Parliament. It would be an idea of the most fatal

nature, and gentlemen should consider that their resolution on this important question would, in all probability, affect that assembly more even than it would the Roman Catholics themselves.

Another delegate, Mr. Fitzgerald, asked, "Did the Convention, when seeking freedom, mean to make freemen of one million of subjects, and to keep two millions slaves?" Mr. Burrowes was compelled to withdraw his resolution; another was substituted, of a more general nature, by Major M'Cartney, namely, "That the extension of the elective franchise to the Catholics is a measure of the highest importance, and worthy the attention of the National Convention." But even this resolution had also to be withdrawn.

In the grand National Convention that sat in Dublin, the claims of the Catholics to the exercise of the elective franchise were refused to be entertained. An honourable delegate undertook, on the part of the Catholics, to object to that boon for them; that "they were so grateful for the great concessions already made to their body, that they could not think of asking for the elective franchise." This assertion was solemnly made by Mr. George Ogle, as he stated, on the part of Lord Kenmare and others of his particular friends of the Catholic persuasion; and it was gravely listened to by the enlightened legislating Volunteers: its moderation was highly

commended, and it was in vain that a delegate, who appeared to have some common sense and some liberality, which was by no means common in that assembly, replied, that he could not think "the Roman Catholics were like the Cappadocians, who prayed for slavery." The Bishop of Derry, on the part of the recognized agents of the Catholic body, submitted to the convention the following document, in disavowal of the sentiments imputed to them:

At a meeting of the general committee of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, Sir P. Bellew, Bart., in the chair, it was unanimously resolved that the message relating to us, delivered this morning to the National Convention, was totally unknown to and unauthorized by us.

That we do not so widely differ from the rest of mankind, as by our own act to prevent the removal of our shackles.

That we will receive with gratitude every indulgence that may be extended to us by the Legislature, and are thankful to our benevolent countrymen for their efforts on our behalf.

This was tolerably explicit; but the medium of communication between Lord Kenmare and Mr. Ogle—Sir Boyle Roche—was one which must have reminded the Convention of the mental fallibility of that great bottle conjuror, who contended that every quart bottle should be made to hold a quart. The delegates said they

did not know which of the declarations of the Catholics to believe; and, as the Catholics disagreed among themselves on the subject, they deemed it best not to decide upon it. Accordingly, in the plan of reform drawn up by their sub-committee, the chairman of which was Sir Robert Stewart, good care was taken to exclude the Catholics from the elective franchise, by the heading of the different resolutions, viz.: "That it is the opinion of this committee, that every Protestant possessed of," etc., etc., etc. The sentiments of Lord Charlemont, no doubt, had considerable influence over the assembly; his character gave a factitious importance to his bigotry. His hostility to the claims of the Catholics had all the consistency of Lord Clare's, without the savageness of its spirit. Even ten years subsequent to this period, his lordship voted in Parliament against the extension of the elective franchise to the Catholics, thus contradicting, most absurdly, his own principles and those of the National Convention, which prompted their appeal for "a full and adequate representation of the people in Parliament," while, by excluding the Catholics, they virtually deprived the great majority of the people of that privilege.

Lord Charlemont probably was influenced by the opinions, or rather prejudices, of the celebrated Doctor Lucas, whose political views he



adopted, and did not presume to deviate from them in the smallest degree. Lucas, like all his brother patriots of that time, was an uncompromising bigot. At a period when the unfortunate Catholics were crushed by oppression, this popular brawler about the independence of Parliament was reviling his Catholic countrymen with the bitterest invective in his "Barber's Letters," and assisting, by his illiberal abuse, to forge new chains for the great body of the Irish people. All the patriotism of Lucas and his followers was expended on the Parliament—they had none to devote to men who were not Protestants.

I am not writing a history of the Volunteers, or of the rebellion which succeeded the disbanding of that body; but it is necessary for me, in attempting to trace the motives of those who took a part in that rebellion, to inquire into the causes of the failure and ultimate fall of the Volunteer Association; of the errors which deprived them of the confidence of the people; and lastly, to discover the origin of that rebellion, to find what objects it had in view at its commencement, and how far such objects differed from those of the Volunteers.

Without these inquiries, to consider the rebellion of 1798 as a mere isolated movement of the people at that period—as simply one of those periodical outbreaks of sedition, which mark an era of famine or oppression every forty or fifty

years in the annals of Irish history—as a secret conspiracy suddenly concocted, on the spur of the pressure of some particular grievance, unconnected with preceding events, and uninfluenced by them—would be to form a very erroneous opinion of the nature and causes of that rebellion, and consequently a very erroneous opinion of those engaged in it.

The principles advocated by the leading members of the Volunteer Association, the doctrines boldly promulgated by the political clubs in Ireland, and the language of the early champions of reform in Parliament, from the period of 1782 to the dissolution of the Volunteer Association, had roused the minds of the Irish people to the highest pitch of political excitement. It was only when the Volunteers had been disbanded, and the real worthlessness of the nominal independence of the Irish Parliament began to be known; when the principal members of the Whig Club had seceded, and the patriotism of other similar societies had ceased to inspire confidence; when the avowed reformers of 1782 had become the declared opponents of reform, and when those who still lingered on the opposition benches of both parliaments, frightened at their own principles, and deterred from the maintenance of them by the excesses of the French Revolution, made but a feeble show of adherence to them, or waited in silence for happier times

for their support—that people began to despair of obtaining or defending their rights by constitutional means: it was then only that the deserted principles of the Volunteers—the unsupported doctrines of the Whig Club—the relinquished or discomfited plans of the political societies, and the abandoned cause of parliamentary reform, were taken up by a new political society, and that the United Irishmen acted on the speeches, writings, and the stirring sentiments of the early reformers of both countries—of Pitt, Stewart, the Duke of Richmond, Colonel Sharman, Flood, Grattan, and their liberal cotemporaries.

The Society of United Irishmen was called into existence to adopt the principles of parliamentary reform, which had been abandoned at that period—by some in disgust, by others in despair, and by many who had been prominent, but never honest, in the cause. Those principles did not originate with the United Irishmen, but were advocated, to the extreme of democratic doctrines, by Pitt himself, and even by the moderate and good Lord Charlemont, whose loyalty has never been impugned, and by Flood and Grattan, whose prudence at least would have preserved themselves from the consequences of actual sedition. A few extracts, a little farther on, from the speeches and writings of the first reformers will bear out the remark.

The Irish Volunteers, which, as an organized national military association, may be dated from 1777, ceased to exist as such in 1793. Its last effort was in Belfast, in defending the town from the earliest revival, at least in that century, of the dragooning system, by four troops of the 17th regiment, on the 15th of March, 1793.<sup>1</sup>

It is not inconsistent with truth, though it may be with the military glory of this institution of the Volunteers, to say that it combined in one great national phalanx the talent, the intolerance, the chivalry, the extravagance, the prodigality, the embarrassment, the republicanism, and patriotism, for one brief epoch, of all ranks and classes. Here we find the ill-assorted names of the Earl of Charlemont and the Right Hon. Robert Stewart—of John Claudius Beresford and Henry Grattan—of Toler and Ponsonby—of Saurin and Flood—of Colonel Rowley and Major Sandys—of Ireland's only Duke and Sir Capel Molyneux—of the rabid zealot, Dr. Patrick Duigenan, and the right reverend ultra-liberal the Bishop of Derry—of Archibald Hamilton Rowan and Jack Giffard—of the red-hot patriot, James Napper Tandy, and the facetious knight and slippery politician, Sir Jonah Barrington—and last, not least in celebrity, of George Robert Fitzgerald, of fighting

<sup>1</sup> MacNeven, "Pieces of Irish History."

notoriety, and Mr. Joseph Pollock, the great advocate of peace and order. These incongruous names are found jumbled together in the pages of the history of the Volunteer Association. The world never saw an army of such heterogeneous materials collected from all conflicting parties for a patriotic purpose.

On the 1st of July, 1783, at the Ulster meeting of the Volunteer delegates at Lisburn, an address to the army, on the subject of parliamentary reform, was issued, signed by Lieutenant-Colonel Sharman, Colonel Rowley, and others, calling on that loyal army to assemble with the same spirit of loyalty, patriotism, and firmness which actuated them on the memorable 15th of February, 1782, "to deliberate on the most constitutional means of procuring a more equal representation of the people in the Parliament of Ireland." And not the least singular circumstance in this requisition to the Irish soldiery, to deliberate sword in hand on the most constitutional means of obtaining parliamentary reform, is to find that, in advocating the necessity for it, it is stated in the requisition that "it was warmly supported by that consummate statesman, the Earl of Chatham, and revived by the heir to his abilities and name, the present William Pitt."

The first grand object of the United Irishmen



—of that body, whose principles it is accounted treasonable to the loyal Volunteers to confound with theirs—was “to promote union amongst Irishmen of all religious denominations;” and the very principle, and even the words in which it is couched, the United Irishmen borrowed from the Volunteers. At the meeting of the celebrated Dungannon Convention, September 8, 1783 (Colonel Robert Stewart having been called to the chair, vacated by Colonel J. Stewart), a communication was read from the first regiment of the Irish Brigade, dated February 15, 1782, which concluded in these terms:

At this great crisis, when the western world, while laying the foundation of a rising empire, temptingly holds out a system of equal liberty to mankind, and waits with open arms to receive the emigrants from surrounding nations, we think it a duty we owe to our country, to promote, as far as our example can reach, an affectionate coalition of the inhabitants of Ireland. Animated by this sentiment, and convinced that national unanimity is the basis of national strength, this regiment affords a striking instance how far the divine spirit of toleration can unite men of all religious descriptions in one great object, the support of a free constitution.<sup>1</sup>

This idea of general union is said to have origi-

<sup>1</sup> “History of the Proceedings and Debates of the Volunteer Delegates.”

inated with Theobald Wolfe Tone; but the merit or the demerit of its origin evidently belonged to the Volunteers, whom the King himself, and Parliament, session after session, thanked for their devoted loyalty. When the meeting took place in Dungannon, in which the Irish people were told the western world was temptingly holding out a system of equal liberty to mankind, to profit by which these Volunteers declared it was necessary to unite men in Ireland, of all religious persuasions, for one common object,—when this meeting took place, Tone was a loyal subject, and Colonel Robert Stewart was the chairman of a meeting at which sedition was pretty plainly inculcated, in the example held forth of the successful struggle for American independence.

But, in the course of the extraordinary events of this world, Tone was sentenced to be hanged for attempting to carry into effect the project implied in the example so temptingly held forth, by “uniting men of all religious descriptions;” and Colonel Robert Stewart (subsequently Lord Castlereagh), who sanctioned with his presence the sedition of the sword-in-hand deliberators on reform, became a foremost man in those councils which consigned the United Irishmen to the gallows. The meeting I speak of was not an obscure county meeting, it was not what could be well called “a farce:” the aggregate number of

Volunteers represented at the meeting exceeded the regular military force of the whole country.<sup>1</sup>

The fears of Lord Charlemont, and the mistaken views of Grattan, in holding himself aloof from the proceedings of the convention of November, 1783, and depriving the question of reform of his powerful support, mainly contributed to accomplish the ruin of the Volunteer Association. In thus declining to advance the cause of reform, the only chance was abandoned of maintaining the advantages which had already been acquired. It would seem at this period as if his great mind reposed under the shadow of the laurels that had been planted around a partial victory, and had become unconscious of the danger of leaving the security of the independence of Ireland in an unreformed Parliament, under the secret supremacy of British influence. The Volunteer Association, in fact, became a gorgeous pageant of national chivalry, to be remembered in after times with wonder at the power and the pomp it exhibited, and surprise at the insignificance of its results.

But Grattan, from the time he imagined he had gained his great object, turned away his face from the ladder by which "he upward climbed," and bid the Volunteers farewell—"the plumed troop and the big wars, that made ambition vir-

<sup>1</sup> "History of the Proceedings and Debates of the Volunteer Delegates."

tue;" "his occupation was gone." The wooden horse of national independence was received into Ireland, and the hands of the opposition were held forth for the *dona ferentes* of the British ministry. On the 5th of March, 1782, Grattan stated in the House of Commons he was far from saying that, under the present administration, independent gentlemen might not accept of places. He thought that places were now honourable, and in taking one he should be the friend of the people and of his Majesty's government. He had no personal knowledge of the Lord Lieutenant; he was not acquainted with those about him; nay, if he had sent for him, he was persuaded he should have declined the honour of seeing him. But, as he believed him to be virtuous, so far he should have his free support.

In 1785 Grattan discovered that the independence of the Irish Parliament was but in name—that he had been deceived. The acknowledgment is made in plain and affecting terms, in his speech on the 12th of August, 1785, on the question of the final adjustment of the commercial intercourse between the two countries. To effect this adjustment, commissioners had been appointed in Ireland to arrange the basis with the British Government: eleven resolutions were proposed and agreed upon. But when these propositions were brought forward by Mr. Pitt, ten new ones were found appended to them—nom-

inally supplemental, but virtually striking at the very root of the independence of the Irish Parliament.

Mr. Grattan endeavoured to stimulate the House to one great effort, to retrieve the error which left the independence of his country at the mercy of an administration adverse to its existence. There is a thrilling eloquence in the alternate appeals, on this occasion to the pride and fears of his auditory, and he can have little sympathy with the sufferings of a noble mind, struggling ineffectually against predominant injustice, who can read this speech unmoved: one can trace the workings of the mind of the deceived patriot, in the stirring outbreaks of his indignation, and the mournful presentment of impending evils breaking through the hopes he affected to feel, in order (vain effort!) to infuse a new spirit of liberty into the breasts of his auditors. One is reminded, even by the change of circumstances which had taken place, of the triumph of the father of his country in 1782,—the idol of a nation's gratitude, the object of a senate's homage: proud of his success, yet ashamed of a suspicion of a jealous nation's sincerity in her acquiescence in it: ardent in his expectations, strong in his security, and, with generous confidence, disdaining to render that measure "humiliating to England," by calling for the renunciation of a power



which had been usurped. And, within the short period of three years, we find his parliamentary influence gone, his popularity diminished; conscious, at last, of having been overreached—deceived—by one party, and well aware that he is soon to be deserted, with a few honorable exceptions, by his own.

It is impossible, without sentiments of mournful interest in the feelings of Grattan on that occasion, and of more than public sympathy for the adversity of public life, to read the following passages from the speech in question:

Sir,—I can excuse the Right Honourable Member who moves you for leave to bring in the bill. He is an Englishman and contends for the power of his own country, while I am contending for the liberty of mine. His comment on the bill is of little moment; a Lord Lieutenant's secretary is an unsafe commentator on an Irish constitution. The Irish Parliament is now called on to determine, that it is most expedient for Ireland to have no trade at all in these parts. This is not a surrender of the political rights of the constitution, but of the natural rights of man; not of the privileges of Parliament, but of the rights of nations. Not to sail beyond the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Magellan; an extensive interdict! Not only neutral countries excluded, and God's providence shut out in the most opulent boundaries of creation! Other interdicts go to a determinate period of time, but here is an eternity of restraint. This resembles rather an

act of God than an act of the legislature, whether you measure it by immensity of space or infinity of duration, and has nothing human about it but its presumption. To proposals, therefore, so little warranted by the great body of the people of England, so little expected by the people of Ireland, so heedlessly suggested by the minister, and so dangerous to whatever is dear to your interest, honour, and freedom, I answer, No!—I plead past settlements, and I insist on the faith of nations. If, three years after the recovery of your freedom, you bend, your children, corrupted by your example, will surrender; but if you stand firm and inexorable, you make a seasonable impression on the people of England, you give a wholesome example to your children, you afford instruction to his Majesty's ministers, and make (as the old English did in the case of their charter) the attempt on Irish liberty its confirmation and establishment. This bill goes to the extinction of the most invaluable part of your parliamentary capacity: it is an union, an incipient and a creeping union; a virtual union, establishing one will in the general concerns of commerce and navigation, and reposing that will in the Parliament of Great Britain; an union, where our Parliament preserves its existence after it has lost its authority, and our people are to pay for a parliamentary establishment, without any proportion of parliamentary representation. If any body of men can still think that the Irish Constitution is incompatible with the British Empire—a doctrine which I abjure, as sedition against the connection—but, if any body of men are justified in thinking that the Irish Constitution is incompatible with the British

Empire, perish the Empire! live the Constitution! Reduced by this false dilemma to take a stand, my second wish is the British Empire; my first wish and bounden duty is the liberty of Ireland. Whence the American war? whence the Irish restrictions? whence the misconstruction, of suffering one country to regulate the trade and navigation of another, and of instituting, under the name of general protectress, a proud domination, which sacrifices the interests of the whole to the ambition of a part, and arms the little passions of the monopolist with the sovereign potency of an imperial parliament? For great nations, when cursed with unnatural sway, follow but their nature when they invade, and human wisdom has not better provided for human safety, than by limiting the principles of human power. We, the limited trustees of the delegated power, born for a particular purpose, limited to a particular time, and bearing an inviolable relationship to the people, who sent us to Parliament, cannot break that relationship, counteract that purpose, surrender, diminish, or derogate from those privileges we breathe but to preserve. I rest on authority as well as principles—the authority on which the Revolution rests. Mr. Locke, in his chapter on the abolition of government, says, that the transfer of legislative power is the abolition of the state, not a transfer. If I am asked how we shall use the powers of the constitution?—I say, for Ireland, with due regard to the British nation: let us be governed by the spirit of concord, and with fidelity to the connection. But when the mover of this bill asks me to surrender those powers, I am astonished at him; I have neither ears, nor eyes, nor functions to

make such a sacrifice. What! that free trade for which we strained every nerve in 1779! that free constitution for which we pledged life and fortune in 1782! Our lives at the service of the empire; but our liberties! No: we received them from our "Father which is in Heaven," and we will hand them down to our children. In the mean time, we will guard our free trade and free constitution as our only real resources; they were the struggles of great virtue, the result of much perseverance, and our broad base of public action.

It is pretty evident that the Union, "the incipient, creeping Union," was, in Grattan's opinion, a project to be resisted to the last extremity: that the British Government, in 1785, was inimical to the independence of Ireland, and that the Irish Parliament was not to be relied on for its defence.

The Volunteers were no longer able or inclined to maintain what they had gained. They found they had wasted their strength on an object valueless without reform, and England was now in a condition to resist that measure.

They lingered on in military array, occasionally exhibiting, on a parade day, their diminished strength to their enemies—all that was left of their martial character, the trappings of their corps, at an annual review. In 1793, an order from government to disperse every assemblage of that body by military force, gave the death-

blow to the Volunteers: they made one faint effort in Antrim for their last review; the army was marched out of Belfast to prevent its taking place, and, in prudently giving up the review, the great body of the citizen-soldiers of Ireland gave up the ghost. But their principles were not then doomed to perish; they rose from the ashes of the Volunteers, and the course of reproduction was but a short transition from languor and hopelessness to activity and enthusiasm, and, with a perilous excess of energy in both, their principles became those of the United Irishmen in 1791.

The dissolution of the Volunteers was supposed to be atoned for by the appointment of a liberal Lord Lieutenant. Lord Fitzwilliam came over, but neither reform nor Catholic emancipation followed. In 1795 the Irish opposition began to retrieve some of its errors, and to regain a little of its former popularity; its hostility, however, to "the incipient creeping Union" had determined Mr. Pitt to direct its attention to other objects, and he accordingly amused the nation's hopes with a popular viceroy.

The coalition with the Duke of Portland made it necessary to concede to that nobleman the management of Irish affairs. His Grace knew Ireland, and was an enemy to her wrongs; he obtained Pitt's consent to the appointment of Lord Fitzwilliam, and, what was more difficult, he ob-



tained that noble Lord's. During these arrangements, the Duke was in communication with the leading members of the Irish opposition; many of them were his private friends.

Mr. Grattan, Mr. William Ponsonby, Mr. Denis Bowes Daly, and other members of that party, were therefore invited to London; they held frequent consultations with the Duke of Portland and Lord Fitzwilliam, at which Mr. Edmund Burke also occasionally assisted.

The terms of the Irish members were, support of ministers, approbation of the war, and assent to the strong measures of government,—in consideration of Catholic emancipation, the dismissal of the Beresford faction (and for all reform), the prevention of embezzlement, and improvement in the mode of collecting and administering the revenues of the country. Burke alone had the boldness to demand, not only emancipation, but the immediate promotion of Catholics, in some ascertained proportion, to places of trust in the state. This, however, was asked from the liberality of government, not demanded from its justice; and the preceding arrangements were communicated to the British government, as the terms on which they were willing to take a share in the Irish government.<sup>1</sup>

Office was not the object of the patriotism of a Grattan, but it became the consequence of it; and ministerial patriots in Ireland seldom have long preserved or deserved the people's confi-

<sup>1</sup> MacNeven, "Pieces of Irish History."

dence. The breath of administration is not the atmosphere for their sturdy principles. That ominous annunciation, in 1782, at the close of the battle for parliamentary independence, "I think that places are now honourable, and, in taking one, I should be the friend of the people and of his Majesty's government," was now acted on under an administration whose leader had become hostile to reform.

A man in the secrets of the opposition party of that time—the head-piece of that system which grew out of the insecurity of Irish independence and the failure of the measures which terminated in the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, a man whose word was never doubted by friend or foe—Thomas Addis Emmet—thus speaks of the proposals of the Irish leaders made to the Duke of Portland, and acquiesced in by Mr. Pitt:

Mr. Pitt wished, and indeed tried to obtain that some of these measures should be at least delayed in the execution for the season; but Mr. Grattan and his friends insisted that they should be brought forward in the very first session, in order to give *eclât* to their administration. In the propriety of this demand the Duke of Portland uniformly concurred; and even Mr. Pitt himself, who had previously kept in the background, and avoided personal communication with Lord Fitzwilliam's friends, was present at some of the later interviews, and certainly did not prevent its being believed that he acquiesced in those demands,

with which it was impossible to doubt his being unacquainted. The members of opposition had no great experience of cabinets; they conceived that they were entering into honourable engagements, in which everything that was allowed to be understood, was equally binding with whatever was absolutely expressed. They rested satisfied that their stipulations were known and acceded to; they neglected to get them formally signed and ratified, or reduced to the shape of instructions from the British cabinet to the viceroy; they put them unsuspectingly in their pockets, and set off to become ministers in Ireland.

The power of Lord Fitzwilliam was first tried on the dismissal of the Beresford faction from the various offices which that grasping family had so long contrived to monopolize.

Pitt expostulated with the viceroy on the dismissal of the Beresfords, notwithstanding the institution of a parliamentary inquiry at this period, respecting a public fraud, in which a subordinate clerk of the revenue was put forward as a sort of vicarious victim for the great national jobbers, and in this single instance the public had been defrauded of £60,000. "Circumstances," on the same authority, "raised a suspicion that the transaction was the result of fraud and collusion, accomplished through the influence of one of this faction, who was generally believed to be a partner in the profits."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MacNeven, "Pieces of Irish History."

The family of the person referred to overran every department in the state; but in the revenue, they monopolized the Custom-house itself. That splendid palace for the collection of customs in a city without trade, remains a lasting monument of the venality of parliament, and of the power of faction, which a British minister dared not to oppose, and a representative of royalty was not permitted to offend. "To aggrandize this faction, a Commissioner of Excise was protected by Parliament with all the jealous care of royalty itself; nay, so sacred was the person of the meanest officer under this family department, that a bill was introduced into the house by Mr. Secretary Orde, August 12th, 1785, which declared it felony to strike an excise-man; but, even before that bill, the Chief Baron Burgh had asked the house were they prepared to give to the dipping-rule what they should refuse to the sceptre?"

Such was the power of a faction which Mr. Pitt thought fit to uphold in Ireland. It is impossible to give any explanation of his conduct creditable to his character as a statesman. The faction was not essential to his policy with regard to the Union, for the best of reasons—some of its leaders were hostile to it; they knew their reign must terminate with the existence of an Irish Parliament.

The following extracts from the two celebrated

letters of Lord Fitzwilliam to the Earl of Carlisle, published in 1795, set the conduct of Mr. Pitt on this question in the plainest light:

I made proposals to the British minister for the removal of the attorney and solicitor-generals (Messrs. Wolfe and Toler); Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Portland knew perfectly well that the men whom I found possessed of these ministerial offices, were not the men in whom I meant to confide in the arduous measures I had to undertake. Was I, then, to have two sets of men—one possessing confidence without office; the other, office without confidence?

And now for the grand question about Mr. Beresford:—In a letter of mine to Mr. Pitt on this subject, I reminded him of a conversation in which I had expressed to him (in answer to the question put to him by me) my apprehension that it would be necessary to remove that gentleman, and that he did not offer the slightest objection, or say a single word in favour of Mr. Beresford. This alone would have made me suppose that I should be exempt from every imputation of breach of agreement, if I determined to remove him; but when, on my arrival here, I found all those apprehensions of his dangerous power which Mr. Pitt admits had often been represented to him, were fully justified, when he was filling a situation greater than that of Lord Lieutenant, and when I clearly saw that if I had connected myself with him, it would have been connecting myself with a person under universal heavy suspicions, and subjecting my government to all the opprobrium and unpopularity attendant upon his mal-



administration, I determined, while I meant to curtail him of his power, and to show to the nation that he did not belong to my administration, to let him remain, in point of income, as well to the full as he had ever been. I did not touch, and he knew I had determined not to touch, a hair of the head of any of his family or friends and they are still left in the enjoyment of more emolument than was ever accumulated in any country upon any one family.

You will recollect that the measure of emancipation to the Catholics was originally the measure of Mr. Pitt and the Westmoreland administration. The (previous) declarations, both of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas, on this subject, are well known in this country and often quoted: "They would not risk a rebellion in Ireland on such a question." But what they would not risk under Lord Westmoreland's administration, they are not afraid to risk under mine.

But after all, why did not Mr. Pitt warn me of those horrid consequences (of emancipation) previous to my departure for Ireland, if he really felt them? Why was the subject left open for my judgment and discretion? I trust that the evil genius of England will not so far infatuate its ministers, as to induce them to wait for more decisive corroboration of the faithfulness and honesty with which I have warned them of the danger of persisting in their fatal change of opinion on this momentous question.

The measure of arranging the treasury bench, the bare outline, or rather the principle, of which has been stated in the house preparatory to its introduction, was fully agreed on between Sir John Parnell and Mr. Pitt.

Are those the measures on which I am to be accused, when the House of Commons of Ireland had unanimously granted me the largest supplies that have ever been demanded, when I laid a foundation for increasing the established force of the country, and procured a vote of £200,000 towards the general defence of the empire?

The Catholic question entered for nothing into the cause of my recall. From the very beginning, as well as in the whole proceedings of that fatal business, for such I fear I must call it, I acted in perfect conformity with the original outline settled between me and his Majesty's ministers previous to my departure from London. From a full consideration of the real merits of the case, as well as from every information I had been able to collect of the state and temper of Ireland, from the year 1793, I was decidedly of opinion that not only sound policy, but justice, required on the part of Great Britain, that the work which was left imperfect at that period ought to be completed, and the Catholics relieved from every remaining disqualification. In this opinion, the Duke of Portland uniformly concurred with me, and when the question came under discussion, previous to my departure from Ireland, I found the Cabinet with Mr. Pitt at their head, strongly impressed with the same opinion. Had I found it otherwise, I never would have undertaken the government.

As early as the 8th January last, I wrote to the Secretary of State on this subject; I told him that I trembled about the Catholics.

On February 9th, that gentleman (Mr. Pitt) wrote

to me to expostulate on the dismissal of Mr. Beresford, and on the negotiations with Mr. Wolfe and Dr. Toler. By the same mail, and in a letter dated the 8th instant, the very day before Mr. Pitt had written to me, came a letter from the Secretary of State, touching at length on the important subject (Catholic emancipation), and bringing it for the first time into play as a question of any doubt or difficulty with the British Cabinet.

Then for the first time, it appears to have been discovered that the deferring it (the question of emancipation) would not be merely an act of expediency, or "a thing to be desired for the present," but "the means of doing a greater service to the British Empire than it has been capable of receiving since the Revolution, or at least since the Union" (with Scotland).

In my answer to Mr. Pitt, a copy of which I send you, and which I wrote the very night I received his letter, I entered fully into the subject of my dismissals; I stated, as you will see, my reasons for having determined on them, as well as for adhering to them when once resolved on. I then put it to himself to determine for me and the efficacy of my government; I left him to make choice between Mr. Beresford and me.

The same night I wrote to the Duke of Portland. I testified my surprise, after such an interval of time, and after the various details which I had transmitted to him, advising him of the hourly increasing necessity of bringing forward the Catholic question, and the impolicy and danger of even hesitating about it, I should now be pressed for the first time to defer the question till some future occasion. I refused to be the person to run the risk of such a determination. I refused to be the person to raise a flame in the country

that nothing short of arms would be able to keep down.

Had Mr. Beresford never been dismissed, we should never have heard of them (Mr. Pitt's objections to emancipation at that time), and I should have remained. But it will be said, in proving this point so strongly, I still leave myself open to other accusations which affect my character, when I avow the earnestness which I had determined to pull down the Beresfords. Charged with the government of a distracted and discontented country, am I alone to be fettered and restrained in the choice of the persons by whom I am to be assisted?—and rather than indulge me in that single point,—even considering it in the light of indulgence,—must the people of England boldly face, I had almost said, the certainty of driving this kingdom into a rebellion, and open another breach for ruin and destruction to break in upon us?<sup>1</sup>

Volumes have been written on the events that grew out of the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, but here is the germ of them all. Few of those who are now aware of the existence of these letters, have leisure to consult them; and those who are desirous to know the true cause of the rebellion of 1798, will not find fault with the length of these quotations. These facts are to be gathered from them:—that the Union had been determined on at this period; that the peace of Ireland was to be sacrificed for its attainment, and that attainment promoted by the loss of influ-

<sup>1</sup> "Letters of a Venerated Nobleman, recently retired from this country, to the Earl of Carlisle, explaining the cause of that event." Dublin, 1795.

ence on the part of the Irish opposition, and the confirmed power of the Beresford oligarchy, in order to exasperate the country—in one word, to goad the people into a rebellion.

Whether that attainment of a union was cheaply effected, or whether the beneficial effects expected from it have compensated for the terrible consequences of a civil war, the progress of events will tell, and not opinions founded on theories, or formed to support them.

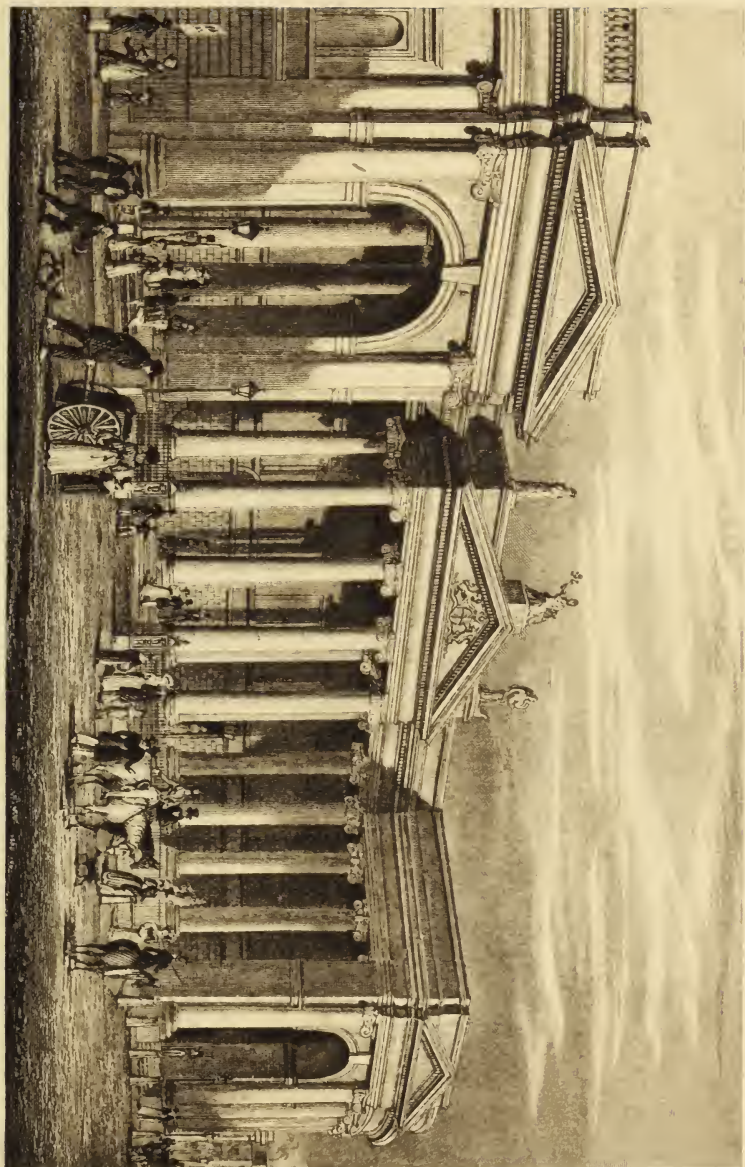


The Foundation of the World

The world is a vast and mysterious place, and its foundation is a subject of great interest to all who seek to understand its secrets. The foundation of the world is a subject of great interest to all who seek to understand its secrets. The foundation of the world is a subject of great interest to all who seek to understand its secrets.

**The Parliament House, Dublin**

*This Famous Building is now Used as the Bank of  
Ireland. After an Engraving by W. H.  
Bartlett from a Drawing by  
George Petrie*





## CHAPTER VI

### THE BOROUGH PARLIAMENT

THE preceding pages were intended to show the vast influence over the mind of the nation and its rulers, which the Volunteer Association at one period exerted; the failure of the only measure effected by it, namely, the independence of the Irish Parliament, and the necessity for reform, more than ever felt at the time of its suppression. The Society of the United Irishmen was formed with a view of accomplishing those objects which it had failed to carry into effect. The written and spoken sentiments of the leaders of the opposition of that period, and the proceedings of the various popular clubs from 1778 to 1795, had a powerful influence on the public mind. To this influence, fanned by the breath of Pitt, and kindled into flame by the eloquence of the reformers of that day, the leaders of the United Irishmen owed the early impressions they received of the rotten state of the representation, and the hopelessness of every attempt in Parliament for its restoration.

Independently of the example of France, which, at revolutionary periods, has always ex-



erted a great influence over the popular mind in Great Britain, the question of reform began deeply to engage public attention in that country; and the hostility of Mr. Pitt, who now hated that question and its advocates with all the rancour of an apostate, tended to exasperate the public, and call forth the various clubs, which gave vent to the public discontent. In Ireland the importance of the question of reform was enhanced by the great dangers apprehended for the national independence, and the slow and stealthy, but steady, progress of "the creeping and incipient Union," in every measure of the British minister in reference to Ireland.

The question that especially disclosed the views of the British minister with respect to the final nature of the settlement of the subject of Irish independence, was that which goes under the name of the Irish propositions, and which, only three years after the period of the supposed settlement of that question, left no doubt on the minds of the people of Ireland, that the British government meant not to maintain the compact into which they had entered.

The eleven propositions were introduced into the Irish Parliament by Mr. Orde, on February 7th, 1785, and on February 22d, by Mr. Pitt in England. He concluded his speech with bringing forward a general resolution, declaring "that it was highly important to the general interests

of the empire, that the commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland should be finally adjusted, and engaging that Ireland should be admitted to a permanent and irrevocable participation of the commercial advantages of this country, when her Parliament should permanently and irrevocably secure an aid out of the surplus of the hereditary revenue of that kingdom towards defraying the expense of protecting the empire in time of peace."

In a subsequent debate, Mr. Pitt declared that among all the objects of his political life, this was, in his opinion, the most important in which he had ever engaged, nor did he imagine he should ever meet another that could call forth all his public feelings and rouse every exertion of his heart, in so forcible a manner as the present had done. In the progress of this measure the House was astonished with an addition of sixteen new propositions to the original eleven: they were pretended by Mr. Pitt to be explanatory, but were wholly distinct, irrelevant, and contradictory to the first. It was evident to the whole of the House, that the measure was an insidious plan to regain the dependence of the Irish Parliament. Mr. Sheridan said, that Ireland, newly escaped from harsh trammels and severe discipline, was treated like a high-mettled horse, hard to catch; and the Irish Secretary was sent back to the field to soothe and coax him, with a

sieve of provender in one hand, and a bridle in the other. Fox was so astonished at the conduct of Mr. Pitt on this occasion, that he declared in the personal and political character of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, there were many qualities and habits which had often surprised him, and which he believed confounded the speculation of every man who had much considered or analyzed his disposition. But his conduct on that night had reduced all that was unaccountable, incoherent, and contradictory in his character in times past, to a mere nothing. He shone out in a new light, surpassing even himself, and leaving his hearers wrapt in amazement, uncertain whether most to wonder at the extraordinary speech they had heard, or the frontless confidence with which that speech had been delivered.

He accused him, from the first moment the system had been proposed, of one continued course of "tricks," subterfuges, and tergiversations, uniform alone in contradiction and inconsistencies, that he had played a double game with England, and a double game with Ireland, and sought to juggle both nations, by a train of unparalleled subtlety. He concluded by saying, "I would not barter English commerce for Irish slavery."

The propositions were sent up to the House of Lords; here it was curious to see the question treated, not as a question of commerce, but as a

proposal for a future union. The lords saw through the insidious project, and it was openly canvassed. Lord Lansdowne treated the idea of an union as a thing that was impracticable. "High-minded and jealous as are the people of Ireland, we must first learn whether they will consent to give up their distinct empire, their parliament, and all the honours which belong to them." In the Irish Parliament, the measures were no less freely canvassed, and the debate terminated in the rejection of the propositions,—an offence which Pitt never forgot or forgave to Ireland.

The conduct of the Irish Parliament in reference to the regency question tended a good deal to precipitate events, and to render the course on which the English minister had already determined, one to be pursued more speedily and recklessly than it might otherwise have been attempted. On this subject two motions were made in the Irish Commons; one by Grattan, the other by Mr. Conolly. By the first, the royal incapacity was declared; and by the second, it was proposed to present an address to the Prince of Wales, requesting him to take upon himself the government, with its various powers, jurisdictions, and prerogatives. This motion was opposed by Mr. Fitzgibbon: he said, "The fact is, that the government of Ireland, under its present constitution, can never go on, unless it follows

Great Britain implicitly in all regulations of imperial policy." And he would predict, that such unadvised rashness must ultimately lead to a legislative union with England, a measure which he deprecated, but which was "more surely prepared by such violence than if all the sluices of corruption are opened together, and poured in one overwhelming torrent upon the country's representatives." Both motions, however, were carried in the Commons, and likewise in the House of Lords. The viceroy refused to transmit their address. Lord Clare must have forgotten his deprecation of the Union, when, five years subsequently, he declared in his speech in favour of the Union, that for the last six or seven years he had been pressing this measure on the attention of the British minister.

There can be no question that Pitt's defeat in Ireland, on the great question of the commercial propositions, and the opposition to his views on the regency question, had exasperated the British minister against Ireland: in the words of the editor of the "Annual Register" for 1790, "the defeat of his commercial propositions, in the year 1785, had left an impression of resentment against the nation upon the mind of the minister." In 1787, De Lolme, the author of the work on the Constitution of England, published an essay, containing a few strictures on the union of Scotland with England, and on the situation



of Ireland. The object of the work was to recommend an incorporating union between Great Britain and Ireland.

In the same year, a Mr. Williams published a pamphlet, entitled, "An Union of England and Ireland proved to be practicable, and equally beneficial to both kingdoms."

The question of the Union was cautiously mooted in 1793, as will be seen by the debate on the bill for "prevention of traitorous correspondence with the enemy." Mr. Fox said that this bill necessarily included the people of Ireland, who were certainly the subjects of the King; and consequently, it went to legislate for Ireland, by making that treason in an Irishman, by an English act of parliament, which was not treason by an Irish act. Mr. Pitt said, he felt this subject to be delicate, but he thought he might venture to go so far as to say, that if England made an act treason in all his Majesty's subjects, which act was not such by any law of Ireland, if such act was done in Ireland by an Irishman, who should afterwards come into England, he might be tried and executed for it; and *vice versa* with an Englishman in Ireland.

Mr. Fox called this the most extravagant doctrine he had ever heard.

Several members spoke upon the case when applied to Ireland, and lamented that so delicate a subject should have been discussed.

The "Annual Register," in 1790, plainly stated the views entertained in England of the independence of the Irish Parliament. "To whatever independence," says the editor, "Ireland may advance her claim, she is, in reality, nothing more than the province and servant of England. She is not the ally of the British government, but, on the contrary, acknowledges our King for her sovereign; that is, if we take into account the nature of the English constitution, acknowledges her dignities, her trusts, and her revenues to be in the gift of an administration that depends on the Parliament of Great Britain: she may, in a few cases, or in some emphatical and singular instance, assert her prerogative, and pursue her own interests in preference to ours; but the daily routine of her affairs, and the ordinary course of her administration, will be modelled in conformity to the interests, the prejudices, and the jealousies of the country that is the seat of empire. She will not afford a theatre that will appear wide enough for the ardour of patriotism or the excursiveness of ambition."

In England the democratic clubs began to be formed in 1780, and the greater number of them were suffered to subside without any prosecution. They again revived in 1794, and it was determined to put down democracy and the advocacy of parliamentary reform, by bringing the reformers to trial as traitors. In 1792, Pitt

pledged himself that a traitorous "conspiracy actually exists;" and a most insidious attempt to involve the opposition members in it was made, but quashed by the spirited conduct of some of them on that occasion.

In 1794, Pitt took up his pledge of the conspiracy of 1792. One of the reports on those societies states that the number of conspirators amounted to 20,000 persons. The arms found for them consisted of eighteen muskets, ten battle-axes, and twenty rough blades, and the general fund for the insurrection amounted to £9 sterling. Mr. Pitt, on bringing the conduct of these clubs before parliament, depicted this horrible conspiracy in the most alarming colours—"arms have not only been actually procured, but distributed by these societies," as the report states; and "a conspiracy so formidable has never yet existed." The twelve honest men on their oaths, at the trials of these conspirators a short time subsequently, virtually decided that no such conspiracy existed. In the beginning of 1793, the ministerial prints, and even ministers themselves, made allusions on various occasions to plots and conspiracies, "the obvious intent of which is indirectly to implicate the Whig members in the obnoxious charge" (see "Annual Register," 1793). Under the auspices of government, a society had been formed, generally known under the name of Mr. Reeve's associa-

tion, to procure information against seditious societies, and secret intelligence which might serve to bring persons of suspected loyalty before the proper tribunal. In Plowden's "History of the Last Twenty Months," he remarks:

The spirit of espionage and information first engendered by the proclamation and since openly fostered by Mr. Reeve's association, and certainly not discountenanced by government, had now grown into such strength as to produce consequences of the most alarming nature. The agitated minds of the public were daily more and more inflamed by the most terrifying accounts of domestic insurrections and deep-laid plans to destroy the constitution. The dwindled phalanx of opposition was so openly, so grossly, and so confidently abused and calumniated, that to many their very names were synonymous with the term of traitor and enemy, even in the very Houses of Parliament: prejudices, alarms, and fears had operated upon many; a conviction that to disapprove of the war against France was treason to England; that to inquire into the grounds of public measures had almost ceased to be the duty of a senator; and to divide with opposition was little short of rallying under the standard of rebellion.

The 7th of May, 1782, Pitt made his first motion in furtherance of reform, for a committee of inquiry, which was lost by twenty votes. He renewed the motion in 1783, and it was lost by forty-four votes. In 1785 he brought forward a

specific plan of reform for adoption, and it was lost by thirty-four votes. A part of his first plan was, the application of a million of money to the purchase of the rotten boroughs. In 1794 he had thrown off the domino of a reformer; he declared on oath, at the trial of John Horne Tooke, that he recollected no particulars of the proceedings at a meeting of the reformers of signal interest, which he attended May 16th, 1782. He could not tell if Tooke was present; he could not say if delegates from cities and counties attended, but he believed not; but, on cross-examination, he admitted some of them might be deputies. One of the charges, be it remembered, against Tooke, was that of attending meetings where the members were delegated by other bodies. Major Cartwright, in his "Constitutional Defence of England," speaking of Pitt's speech on the 7th of May, 1782, says:

These very words were made the subject of a well-known resolution of the leading friends to a reform, assembled at the Thatched House very soon after the speech was delivered; the original draft of that resolution, in 1791 or 1792, was in the possession of the author of this book, and shown by him to the gentlemen present at a meeting of "the Friends of the People," with corrections in Mr. Pitt's own handwriting.

At the meeting of reformers on the 16th of May, 1782, a copy of the resolutions was ordered



to be printed and circulated by the society. It is in the following terms:—

THATCHED HOUSE TAVERN, 16th May, 1782.

At a numerous and respectable meeting of members of parliament, friendly to a constitutional reformation, and the members of several committees of counties and cities:

Present—The Duke of Richmond, Lord Surrey, Lord Mahon, the Lord Mayor, Sir Watkin Lewes, Mr. Duncombe, Sir C. Wray, Mr. B. Holles, Mr. Withers, the Hon. William Pitt, Rev. Mr. Wyvill, Major Cartwright, Mr. John Horne Tooke, Alderman Wilkes, Doctor Jebb, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Frost, etc., etc., etc.

Resolved unanimously—That the motion of the Hon. William Pitt, for the appointment of a committee of the House of Commons, to inquire into the state of the representation of the people of Great Britain, and to report the same to the House, and also what steps it might be necessary to take, having been deferred by a motion for the order of the day, it has become indispensably necessary that application should be made to Parliament, by petitions from the collective body of the people, in all their respective districts, requesting a substantial reformation of the Commons' House of Parliament.

Resolved unanimously—That the meeting, considering that a general application to the collective body of the House of Commons cannot be made before the close of the present session, is of opinion that the sense of the people should be taken at such times as

may be convenient during the summer, in order to lay their several petitions before Parliament early in the next session, when these proposals for a parliamentary reformation (without which neither the liberty of the nation can be preserved, nor the permanence of any virtuous administration be secure) may receive that ample and mature discussion which so momentous a question demands.

Now the document, corrected by Pitt himself, collated with the evidence given by him at the trial of John Horne Tooke, on the matters referred to in it, shows the most extraordinary forgetfulness of important facts it is possible to conceive. On his examination by Tooke, he stated he was present at the meeting, in May, 1782, at the Thatched House Tavern. He could not recollect with certainty, but rather thought the prisoner was present. That it was recommended to obtain the sense of the people on the question of parliamentary reform.

*Quest.*—"Was it recommended to obtain that sense by parishes and districts?"

*Ans.*—"I have no particular recollection as to that point. I remember that it was agreed by the meeting to recommend to the people during the summer to petition Parliament."

*Ques. by the Attorney-General.*—"Was it, or was it not, a convention of delegates from different bodies?"

*Ans.*—"I do not, at this distance of time, remember how it was composed. I did not conceive that the members were authorized to act for any particular body, but that each was acting for himself, and in his own individual capacity."

*On cross-examination by Mr. Erskine. Ans.*—"I always understood that the members who composed that meeting were acting for themselves; I don't know, however, but that some of them might be deputed. I must again repeat that, at this distance of time, I cannot exactly ascertain how the meeting was composed."

Mr. Pitt's memory seldom failed him as it did on this occasion when he could not remember how that meeting was constituted, described in the very resolution corrected by himself, as "consisting of members of parliament, and of members of several committees of counties and cities," and could not recollect John Horne Tooke having been present at that meeting, and having taken a part in its proceedings.

Mr. Pitt, in 1794, May 11th, brought forward his motion for leave to bring in a bill "to empower his Majesty to secure and detain such persons as his Majesty shall suspect are conspiring against his person and government,"—chiefly levelled against the London Corresponding Society and the Constitutional Society.

Fox, in opposition to this bill, said: "If I were asked without doors what was to be done, I would

say, this was not now a question of morality or of duty, but of prudence. Acquiesce in the bill only as long as you are compelled to do so. It is a bill to destroy the constitution, and part of the system of an administration aiming at that end. No attempt of the Stuarts calls for more opposition than the present bill, and extraordinary times demand extraordinary declarations.”—“Annual Register,” 1806.

The number of political clubs which sprung up at the end of Mr. Pitt’s abandonment of the cause of reform, was considerable. The origin and object of some of the most important of these are deserving of notice.

The objects of these societies were similar to those of the “Society for Constitutional Information,” whose origin was of an earlier date, and is attributed to a proposal of Major Cartwright, in 1778, to establish a “Society of Political Inquiry.” This object was not accomplished; but its proposal laid the foundation of the “Society of Constitutional Information,” which was formed in 1780.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jebb, Major Cartwright, and Capel Lofft, were the founders of it. Among its distinguished members we find the Earl of Derby, the late Duke of Norfolk, then Lord Surrey, the Duke of Richmond, Duke of Roxburgh, Earl of Selkirk, Lord Dacre, Lord Sempill, Lord Kinnaird, Sir John Sinclair, R. B. Sheri-

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* “Life and Correspondence of Major Cartwright.”

dan, the Earl of Effingham, Dr. Price, Dr. Towers, Granville Sharp, etc. Its well-known "Declaration of Rights" was drawn up by Major Cartwright. Sir William Jones said this document "ought to be written in letters of gold."

On Tooke's trial, Major Cartwright deposed he had the honour to be called the father of The "Society for Constitutional Information;" that the original declaration of the Society for Constitutional Information was signed by Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, etc. The Chief Justice asked Mr. Tooke if his signature was to the declaration; to which Mr. Tooke answered, "God forbid! my lord, that I should have ever signed anything so criminal."

The society called the "Friends of the People," was established in 1792. The principal members were Charles Grey, the Earl of Lauderdale, Philip Francis, James Macintosh, Lord Kinnaid, the Hon. Thomas Erskine, G. Tierney, Esq., R. B. Sheridan, W. H. Lambton, John Cartwright, S. Whitbread, jun., Lord J. Russell, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, etc., etc. At the first meeting, W. H. Lambton in the chair, 26th April, 1792, it was resolved unanimously:—

That a motion be made in the House of Commons, at an early period in the next session of Parliament, introducing a parliamentary reform.

Resolved unanimously—That Charles Grey, Esq.,



be requested to make, and the Hon. Thomas Erskine to second, the above motion.

Signed, W. H. LAMBTON, Chairman.

The next meeting was held May 12, 1792, and the chairman of it was the Right Hon. Lord John Russell.

In 1795, this society suspended all proceedings on the subject of parliamentary reform by public advertisement. Its grand object, however, was not lost sight of by Charles Grey. For forty years his life was devoted to its accomplishment; and the forty years' war with corruption he lived to bring to a successful issue.

The "Revolution Society of London," in commemoration of the Revolution of 1688, sprang up in 1789, Dr. Price and Earl Stanhope being its leading members. They conducted a correspondence with the National Assembly of France. Towers and Cooper were the president and secretary. Cooper was a man of great abilities, bold, upright, and energetic; he fled to America, to avoid the fate of Muir and Palmer; he rose to distinction there, and died universally honoured and beloved, in the seventieth year of his age, the 22nd of October, 1829. Cooper and Watt were likewise members of the "Manchester Constitutional Society," and in its name having presented an address in France to the Jacobin Society, were attacked for so doing by Burke,

in the House of Commons; and Cooper defended himself and his brother delegate in one of the best written pamphlets of that time, "A reply to Mr. Burke's invective." Watt was subsequently executed in Scotland on a charge of treason.

The language and writings of the members of these different clubs were sufficiently strong to be taken, or mistaken, by many for sedition.

The "Society of United Englishmen," according to the account given of its ramifications in the "secret report" of January 23rd, 1799, had forty divisions formed in London, extended to Wales, Lancashire, and communicated with Ireland; had made great progress in Manchester, till checked by the arrest of its members in 1798; had eighty divisions there, and each consisted of not less than fifteen members. In the report, it is stated to have been very active in its attempts to seduce the soldiery, and that it had tests, signs, and symbolic devices. The whole of the divisions were governed by a committee, styled the National Committee of England, whose members were unknown to the rest of the society, and was said to have corresponded with the executive of the United Irishmen.

The "London Corresponding Society," originated about 1792, its grand object, parliamentary reform, on the Duke of Richmond's plan. Chief Justice Eyre, in his charge on the trial of Tooke said, "It is so composed, as by dividing

and subdividing, each division, as soon as it amounted to a certain number, sending off a new division so as to spread over the country, every other society, no matter how remote, it incorporates or affiliates, till it embraces an extent incalculable. It is undoubtedly a political monster," etc.

John Edwards, on Hardy's trial, deposed that this society was reading the address of Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Richmond, when it was assailed by the police.

"A National Convention" was first suggested in a letter from Stockport, December 7th, 1792.

The Convention in Scotland was set on foot in 1793. Watt's plan for seizing the castle of Edinburgh was formed at this period. He had previously been employed as a secret informer by government, and dismissed; had subsequently joined Cooper in Paris, and presented an address to the Jacobins from the Manchester society. In laying traps for treason in the Scotch conspiracy, he got entangled in his own snares, and was executed.

Mr. Muir, one of the faculty of advocates of Edinburgh, and the Rev. Fyshe Palmer, a dissenting clergyman of Dundee, a member of the University of Cambridge, were the two first reformers brought before the tribunal of justice on charges of sedition, trumped up on evidence of taking a part in the public proceedings of the

associations at that time formed for the purpose of obtaining a reform. Both these gentlemen, men eminent for their talents, highly respected in their several professions, and amiable in private life, were convicted and sentenced to transportation, sent to the hulks chained, and worked in chains, previous to their departure for Botany Bay, with the common gang of convicts.

In Ireland, Lord Castlereagh imitated the example of Mr. Pitt. He entered on political life in the domino of a reformer, and aped the character, if not with all the tact, at least, with all the effrontery of his master. Of his early ardour for reform we have an account in Sampson's *Memoirs*. He informs us:

“Robert Stewart (afterwards Lord Castlereagh), at the general election in 1790, set himself up for representative of the county of Down, against what was called the lordly interest; and in order to ingratiate himself with the popular party, took the following oath or test upon the hustings, as a solemn compact between him and his constituents, namely: That he would, in and out of the House, with all his ability and influence, promote the success of a bill for amending the representation of the people; a bill for preventing pensioners from sitting in Parliament, or such placemen as cannot sit in the British House of Commons; a bill for limiting the number of placemen and pensioners, and the amount of pension; a bill for preventing revenue officers from voting at elections; a bill

for rendering the servants of the crown in Ireland responsible for the expenditure of the public money; a bill to protect the personal safety of the subject against arbitrary and excessive bail, and against the power of attachment beyond the limits of the constitution.

In Ireland, at the same period, the formation of political clubs and societies kept pace with those in England. The Northern Whig Club, at a meeting held in Belfast, the 16th of April, 1790, Gowan Hamilton in the chair, passed a series of resolutions, the first of which was to the following effect: "Resolved unanimously, that when an unmasked and shameless system of ministerial corruption manifests an intention to sap the spirit, virtue, and independence of parliament, it is time for the people to look to themselves."

Among the original members of this society were Lords Charlemont, De Clifford, Moria, O'Neill, the Hon. Robert Stewart, Archibald H. Rowan, William Todd Jones, Colonel Sharman, Hon. E. Ward, Hon. H. Rowley, etc., etc. The toasts of the honourable members at their festive meetings comprised, "Our Sovereign Lord the People," etc.

The "Whig Club" was established in 1790, in Ireland, in imitation of that in England. "The frequent theme," says Plowden, "of panegyric to Mr. Grattan, and of invective to Mr. Fitzgib-



bon, the heads of most of the great families were members of it, and it contributed not lightly to give popularity to the leading objects of their institution, which it was the universal object of Mr. Pitt's system to counteract."

Against Fitzgibbon's abuse of this club, Theobald Wolfe Tone was the first to publish a defence, which recommended him strongly to the Whigs; but they found him too warm an advocate, and he appears to have found them too little to his mind for their acquaintance to be of long duration.

The most memorable act of this club was its petition to the King, adopted at a meeting of the society, April 5th, 1798, Mr. Grattan in the chair, in order to lay before his Majesty the state of the country, and "a vindication of his people against the traduction of his ministers." The Catholic question was not permitted to be discussed in the club.

It may be here permitted to state that Grattan entered Parliament, and set out in public life, an opponent of the Catholic claims. He told the late Dr. Hussey, his most intimate friend, that he owed his change of opinion to the accidental perusal of Currie's "Civil Wars."

The club called the "Friends of the Constitution, Liberty, and Peace," is described by Pollock in 1793 as a moderate club, and its members

as "most respectable and independent gentlemen."

The "Friends of Parliamentary Reform" in Belfast, in 1793, made a declaration of their principles, stating that "the enemies of reform will be answerable to God and their country for the consequences that will ensue, for all the crimes and calamities that would follow."

## CHAPTER VII

### EARLY IRISH REFORMERS

**T**HE Revolution in France had a great influence on the public mind in Ireland; but, in all probability, the rebellion of 1798 would have taken place, had that revolution never been effected.

The necessity of reform, for the security of parliamentary independence, was strongly felt by the popular party so early as 1790, and that opinion was first acted upon by the northern Presbyterians. Various political clubs, emanating from the Volunteer Associations, had been formed in Belfast, advocating reform and Catholic emancipation, before either of these questions had gained any ground in the metropolis. The Belfast leaders were so far in advance of those of Dublin on both subjects, that long before the change in the organization of the United Irish Societies, ulterior views to those they set out with advocating, were entertained by a great many of the former.

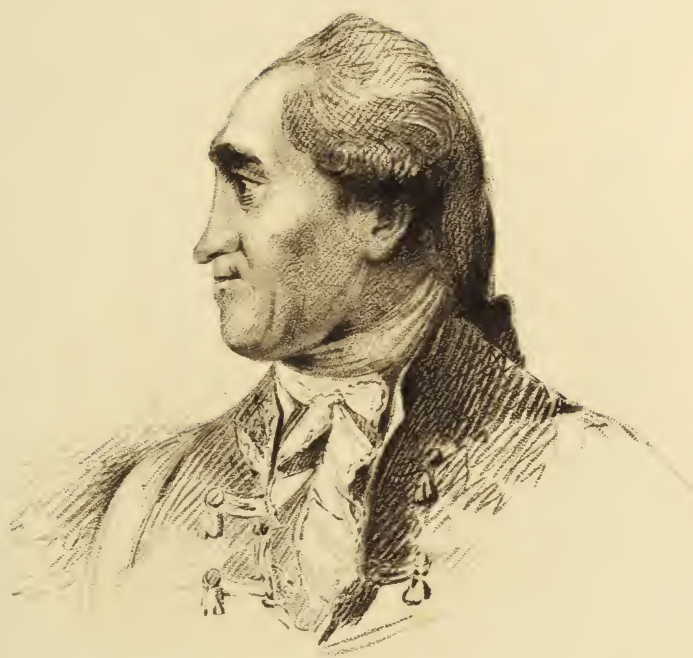
The Dublin leaders were chiefly of the Protestant religion, and till the year 1794, reform was not only the ostensible, but the real object they had in view. The Belfast politicians were



Henry Flood

*Patriotic Irish Orator, Member of the Irish Parliament. After an Engraving by Scriven. From the original painting by T. Comeford, in the National Gallery, Dublin*







Presbyterians, and the old leaven of republicanism unquestionably worked more or less in all their hostile feelings to parliamentary corruption. Both parties founded their hopes of success for the struggle they had engaged in, on the discontent of the people, who groaned under the burden of the penal laws.

Belfast stood foremost in the early struggle with intolerance and corruption, in the bold discussion of political subjects, and in the dissemination of reform principles. The latter were embodied, in 1793, in a series of papers written by several persons called "Thoughts on the British Constitution." This collection of pieces is one of the earliest and the ablest expositions of arguments in detail in favour of reform that is to be met with. Another admirable series of letters on the same subject, under the signature of "Orellana," was written at this time by Dr. Drennan. The subversion of the government was disclaimed by the leaders of the people, and there can be little doubt in the mind of any one who reads the discussions of the Belfast politicians, that, although many of them entertained views that went much farther than reform, it was long before they acted on them, or extended their projects beyond the attempt to strengthen the democratic principle, and to combine the monarchical form of government with republican institutions. They were content to see the con-

stitution restored and perpetuated, though, in the abstract, the predilections of such men as Tone, Neilson, Russell, Emerson, Kelburn, Joy, Simms, M'Cracken, etc., might be in favour of republicanism; but they could not overlook difficulties that lay in the way of any efforts for obtaining that object, and the probability of so far assimilating existing institutions to the latter, by means of reform, as to prevent the evils which had arisen from the monarchical form of government having become (in Ireland at least) an oligarchical one.

To have taken the government out of the more than regal power of Clare and the Beresfords, and restored its usurped authority to the constitutional sovereign of these realms, with the guarantees for protection against the future inroads of this detested oligarchy, which they looked for in reform, would, at any period previous to 1794, have satisfied the expectations of the popular leaders in the north, and cut the ground for ulterior agitation from under the feet of the more violent and uncompromising adherents to republicanism. In Dublin, the popular leaders, at any period previous to 1797, would have gladly accepted the boon, and relinquished the idea of separation. Few of their leading men were, in ordinary circumstances, more than strenuous advocates of constitutional liberty, while those of the north had certainly a consid-

erable portion of their old attachment for republican principles remaining in their politics. But even the most uncompromising of them (and, amongst others, the Rev. Sinclair Kelburne), at a very critical period of their struggle, declared that rather than have recourse to violence, though they might esteem another form of government more perfect, their views went not beyond a government of King, Lords, and Commons, were that government to be the true and real representative of the people. The precise nature of their views, and the extent of them, can only be rightly appreciated by examining their proceedings in 1792 and 1793, and referring to their discussions and avowed writings. The following extracts, with the exception of the comments on them, are taken from a highly interesting, and now rare collection of these documents, published in Belfast by their body, and edited by one of them (Henry Joy) in 1794.

The first important movement in Belfast in the cause of reform was the presentation of a petition to the House of Commons, praying for the immediate and unconditional emancipation of Roman Catholics. And this petition is worthy of notice, as being the first that ever emanated in Ireland from a Protestant body in favour of emancipation. The avowed object of its advocates was the promotion of the cause of reform, arising from the conviction that every effort in



that cause which did not embrace the interests and enlist the support of the Roman Catholics on its side, must prove abortive. Acting on this opinion, the Society of United Irishmen in Belfast set out with the following declaration of their principles:—

We have agreed to form an association, to be called “The Society of United Irishmen;” and we do pledge ourselves to our country, and mutually to each other, that we will steadily support and endeavour by all due means to carry into effect the following resolutions:—

I. Resolved—That the weight of English influence in the government of this country is so great as to require a cordial union among all the people of Ireland, to maintain that balance which is essential to the preservation of our liberties and the extension of our commerce.

II. That the sole constitutional mode by which this influence can be opposed, is by a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament.

III. That no reform is practicable, efficacious, or just, which shall not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion.

In the beginning of January, 1792, the following requisition was addressed to the inhabitants of Belfast:

GENTLEMEN—As men, and as Irishmen, we have long lamented the degrading state of slavery and oppres-

sion in which the great majority of our countrymen, the Roman Catholics, are held—nor have we lamented it in silence. We wish to see all distinctions on account of religion abolished—all narrow, partial maxims of policy done away. We anxiously wish to see the day when every Irishman shall be a citizen—when Catholics and Protestants, equally interested in their country's welfare, possessing equal freedom and equal privileges, shall be cordially united, and shall learn to look upon each other as brethren, the children of the same God, the natives of the same land—and when the only strife amongst them shall be, who shall serve their country best. These, gentlemen, are our sentiments, and these we are convinced are yours.

We therefore request a general meeting of the principal inhabitants at the Townhouse, on Saturday next, at noon, to consider of the propriety of a petition to Parliament in favour of our Roman Catholic brethren.

We are, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servants,

ROBERT THOMPSON,  
THOMAS SINCLAIR,  
ROBERT SIMMS,  
GIL. M'ILVEEN, JUN.,  
THOMAS MILLIKEN,  
SAMUEL NEILSON,  
SAMUEL M'TIER,  
HU. M'ILWAIN,  
WM. M'CLEERY,  
WM. TENNENT,  
WM. MAGEE,

HU. JOHNSON,  
CHRIST. STRONG,  
GEORGE WELLS,  
JAMES STEPHENSON,  
SAM. M'CLEAN,  
JOHN GRAHAM,  
WM. BRYSON,  
JOHN TISDALL,  
HUGH CRAWFORD,  
ROBERT GETTY,  
JAMES HYNDMAN,

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WM. SIMMS,	ROBERT MAJOR,
ROBERT CALWELL,	WALTER CRAWFORD,
HU. MONTGOMERY,	SAMUEL M'MURRAY,
JOHN M'DONNELL,	THOS. BROWN,
HENRY HASLETT,	JOHN BANKHEAD,
DAVID BIGGER,	ISAAC PATTON,
JOHN HASLETT,	J. CAMPBELL WHITE,
THOS. NEILSON,	J. S. FERGUSON,
THOS. M'DONNELL,	JOHN TODD,
ROBERT HUNTER,	RICHARD M'CLELLAND,
THOS. M'CABE,	JOHN M'CONNELL,
WM. MARTIN,	JOHN M'CLEAN,
JAMES M'CORMICK,	AND. M'CLEAN,
JAMES LUKE,	THOS. ASH,
JAMES M'KAIN,	JOHN CALDWELL.
HAM. THOMPSON,	

Names will be found in the above list which may afford ample food for reflection to the descendants of some of those who bore them, and show abundant reason for being tolerant to others whose opinions may differ from those they now profess. Some names in that list can suggest no other feeling than one of deep concern that the bearers of them—men of high intelligence, and then, at least, of pure and noble principles—should have fallen, or be driven, into desperate courses, and have been reserved for all their evil consequences; and not a few of these gentlemen have been forced to quit their country, and their friends and homes, for ever.

In the year 1816, when Lord Castlereagh came on a pilgrimage (of repentance for his early opinions, perhaps) to the scene of his first exertions in the cause of reform, and honoured with his presence the town of Belfast—the cradle, and then the grave, of public spirit—his lordship was publicly entertained by the *ci-devant* patriots and ultra-liberals of our Irish Athens. At that dinner the waters of Lethe must have been largely mingled with the wine of the masters of the feast.

The following names recall associations not quite in union with his lordship's repute "in those days of governmental abandonment," which it was not the fashion then in Belfast to mark with a white stone.

GILBERT M'ILVAINE,	A. CRAWFORD,
REV. DR. BRUCE,	CUNNINGHAM GREGG,
NARCISSUS BATT,	HUGH WILSON,
ALEXANDER STEWART,	JOHN SINCLAIR,
HENRY JOY,	DR. THOMPSON,
SIR JAMES ISAAC BRISTOW,	JOHN VANCE,
JOHN M'CRACKEN,	ETC., ETC., ETC.

14TH JULY, 1792.—BELFAST REVIEW AND CELEBRATION  
OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

On Friday evening, the several country corps marched into town, and were billeted on the inhabitants, who were happy in renewing expressions of affection for their neighbours and friends in the fourteenth year

since the commencement of reviews, and in the sixteenth of the volunteer era. The number of corps having been considerably reduced, it was not thought proper to call on the Venerable General of the Volunteer Army of Ulster, the Earl of Charlemont, to attend on this occasion. The gentleman appointed in his place was Colonel Sharman, of Moira Castle, who presided with such dignity last year in the civil assembly of the inhabitants of Belfast and its neighbourhood, at the celebration of the French Revolution. An unexpected illness having prevented that justly admired character from filling an office for which he was so eminently qualified, Major Crawford, of Crawford's-burn, was unanimously nominated to act as Reviewing-General, in testimony of the respect due to decided virtue in public and private life.

On Saturday morning a brigade was formed in High Street, extending from the Bank to the Quay, and the whole were marched off to the old review-ground in the Falls, at about eleven o'clock, by the exercising officer, Major M'Manus.

On their return to town, at three o'clock, there was a grand procession, the order of which is mentioned underneath, and *feu-de-joies* were fired in Linenhall Street, by the whole body, in honour of that day, which presented the sublime spectacle of near one-sixth of the whole inhabitants of Europe bursting their chains, and throwing off, almost in an instant, the degrading yoke of slavery.

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#### ORDER OF THE MILITARY AND CIVIL PROCESSION.

MAJOR CRAWFORD, GENERAL AND PRESIDENT FOR THE DAY



Belfast Troop of Light Dragoons,  
Captain Thomas Brown.—17.

MAJOR M'MANUS, EXERCISING OFFICER,  
And his Aides-de-Camp.

Artillery of the Belfast First Company  
(their number included in that of the corps  
under-mentioned).

THE COLOURS OF FIVE FREE NATIONS, *viz.*:

Flag of IRELAND—motto, “Unite and be free.”

Flag of AMERICA—motto, “The Asylum of Liberty.”

Flag of FRANCE—motto,

“The Nation, the Law, and the King.”

Flag of POLAND—motto, “We will support it.”

Flag of GREAT BRITAIN—motto,

“Wisdom, Spirit, and Liberality to the People.”

A flag was prepared for the Dutch (but no one could be found to bear it), who were to be represented by a piece of common woollen stuff, half hoisted on a pole, and to be hooted by the populace, on account of the States having joined the wicked conspiracy of tyrants against the liberties of man.

Motto, “Heav’ns! how unlike their Belgian Sires  
of old!”

Portrait of DR. FRANKLIN—motto,

“Where Liberty is, there is my Country.”

First Brigade of Volunteers—532 men.

Artillery of Belfast Blues.

THE GREAT STANDARD

elevated on a triumphal car, drawn by four horses,  
with two Volunteers as supporters, containing on one  
side of the canvas a representation of

“The Releasement of the Prisoners from the Bastile,”  
motto, “Sacred to Liberty.”

The reverse contained a figure of Hibernia, one hand and foot in shackles; a Volunteer presenting to her a figure of Liberty—motto, “For a People to be Free, it is Sufficient That they will it.”

Second Brigade of Volunteers—258 men.

Portrait of MONS. MIRABEAU.

“Can the African Slave Trade be morally wrong  
and politically right?”

Motto, “Our Gallic Brother was born in 1789: alas!  
we are still in embryo.”

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#### REJOICINGS FOR THE RECENT VICTORIES OF THE FRENCH.

The town of Belfast was almost universally illuminated. Everything demonstrated sincere pleasure in the disgrace of two tyrannical courts, that attempted to dragoon an united nation into that deplorable state of spiritual as well as political bondage, from which it was just recovering, and that dared to tell twenty-five millions of men—“Ye shall not be free!”

In the windows of six or seven houses a number of transparencies presented themselves:—A few of the mottoes are subjoined, as trifling circumstances sometimes mark the disposition of the times.

Perfect union and equal liberty to the men of Ireland.—Vive la Republique: Vive la Nation.—Church and State divorced.—Liberty triumphant.—The Rights of man established.—Despotism prostrate.—The Tyrants are fled; let the People rejoice.—Heaven beheld their glorious efforts and crowned their deeds with suc-

cess.—France is free; so may we: let us will it.—Awake, O ye that sleep.—A gallows suspending an inverted Crown, with these words: “May the fate of every tyrant be that of Capet.”—A check to Despots.—The cause of Mankind triumphant.—Irishmen! rejoice.—Union among Irishmen.—Rights of Man.—Irishmen! look at France. Liberty and Equality.

IRELAND.

Sept. 8th, 1783.—Armed Citizens spoke.

Dec. 2nd, 1783.—Their Delegates ran away.

Oct. 30th, 1792.—We are taxed, tithed, and enslaved, but we have only to unite and be free.

FRANCE.

July 14th, 1789.—Sacred to Liberty.

August 10th, 1792.—The people triumphant.

October 22nd, 1792.—Exit of Tyranny.

The night closed in the most orderly manner, without either bonfire, or any kind of irregularity whatever.

The festival concluded with an entertainment at the Donegal Arms, where 104 persons sat down at dinner, when the General, who was also president of the day, announced the toasts prepared by a committee, of which the following is a copy.

The First Toast—“THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY, 1789.”

The King of Ireland.—The Constitution of France; may it be permanent.—The Constitutional Assembly of France.—The National Assembly of France: may wisdom, spirit, and decision, direct its counsels.—The French army; may an ardent love of their country be held paramount to every other duty in the character of a soldier.—Confusion to the enemies of French lib-

erty. May the Glorious Revolution of France teach the Governments of the Earth wisdom.—May the example of one Revolution prevent the necessity of others.—Lasting freedom and prosperity to the United States of America.—The people of Poland, and success to their arms.—The Rights of Man: may all nations have wisdom to understand, and spirit to assert them.—The Union of Irishmen, without which we can never be free: The Sovereignty of the People, acting by a just and equal representation.—The Liberty of the Press.—The Volunteers of Ireland, and their revered General, Earl of Charlemont.—The Constitutional Societies of Great Britain and Ireland.—The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.—President Washington.—Stanislaus Augustus: may his example be imitated.—Mr. Paine: may perverted eloquence ever find so able an opposer.—Mr. Fox, and the rights of juries, in substance as well as form.—Mr. Grattan, and the minority of the Irish House of Commons.—The Literary Characters who have vindicated the Rights of Man, and may genius ever be employed in them.—May all governments be those of the Laws, and all Laws those of the People.—May the free nations of the world vie with each other in promoting liberty, peace, virtue, and happiness, among men.—The increased, increasing, and sacred flame of Liberty.—Ireland.—The cause of freedom.—The memory of John Locke.—The memory of William Molyneaux.—The memory of Dr. Franklin.—The memory of Mirabeau.—The memory of Dr. Price.—The memory of Mr. Howard.

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COPY OF THE ADDRESS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF  
FRANCE.

It is not from vanity or ostentation that we, the citizens of Belfast, and citizen-soldiers of that town and neighbourhood, take the liberty of addressing the representative majesty of the French people. We address you with the rational respect due to a title elevated far above all servile and idolatrous adulation, and with that affectionate fraternity of heart which ought to unite man to man in a mutual and inseparable union of interests, of duties, and of rights, which ought to unite nation with nation into one great republic of the world.

On a day sanctified as this has been by a declaration of human rights, the germ of so much good to mankind, we meet with joy together, and wish well to France, to her National Assembly, to her people, to her armies, and to her king.

May you, legislators, maintain, by the indefatigable spirit of liberty, that constitution which has been planned by the wisdom of your predecessors, and never may you weary in the work you have undertaken, until you can proclaim with triumphant security, it is finished! Manifest to an attentive and progressive world, that it is not the frenzy of philosophy, nor the fever of wild and precarious liberty, which could produce such continued agitation; but that imperishable spirit of freedom alone, which always exists in the heart of man, which now animates the heart of Europe, and which, in the event, will communicate its energy throughout the world, inevitable and immortal!

We rejoice, in the sincerity of our souls, that this



creative spirit animates the whole mass of mind in France. We auspicate happiness and glory to the human race from every great event which calls into activity the whole vigour of the whole community, amplifies the field of enterprise and improvement, and gives free scope to the universal soul of the empire. We trust that you will never submit the liberties of France to any other guarantees than God and the right hands of the people.

The power that presumes to modify or to arbitrate with respect to a constitution adopted by the people, is an usurper and a despot, whether it be the meanest of the mob, or the ruler of empires; and if you condescend to negotiate the alteration of a comma in your constitutional code, France from that moment is a slave. Impudent despots of Europe! is it not enough to crush human nature beneath your feet at home, that you thus come abroad to disturb the domestic settlement of the nations around you, and put in motion your armies, those enormous masses of human machinery, to beat down every attempt that man makes for his own happiness?—It is high time to turn these dreadful engines against their inventors, and organized as they have hitherto been for the misery of mankind, to make them now the instruments of its glory and its renovation.

Success, therefore, attend the armies of France!

May your soldiers, with whom war is not a trade, but a duty, remember that they do not fight merely for themselves, but that they are the advanced guard of the world: nor let them imagine that the event of the war is uncertain. A single battle may be precarious, not so a few campaigns. There is an omnipotence in

a righteous cause, which masters the pretended mutability of human affairs, and fixes the supposed inconsistency of fortune. If you will be free, you must; there is not a chance that one million of resolute men can be enslaved: no power on Earth is able to do it; and will the God of justice and of mercy? Soldiers! there is something that fights for you even in the hearts of your enemies. The native energies of humanity rise up in voluntary array against tyrannical and preposterous prejudice, and all the little cabals of the heart give way to the feelings of nature, of country, and of kind!

Freedom and prosperity to the people of France! We think that such revolutions as they have accomplished are so far from being out of the order of society, that they spring inevitably from the nature of man and the progression of reason; what is imperfect, he has the power to improve; what he has created, he has a right to destroy. It is a rash opposition to the irresistible will of the public that in some instances has maddened a disposition otherwise mild and magnanimous, turned energy into ferocity, and the generous and gallant spirit of the French into fury and vengeance. We trust that every effort they now make, every hardship they undergo, every drop of blood they shed, will render their constitution more dear to them.

Long life and happiness to the King of the French! Not the lord of the soil and its servile appendages, but the king of men who can reserve their rights while they entrust their powers. In this crisis of his fate may he withstand every attempt to estrange him from the nation, to make him an exile in the midst of France,

and to prevent him from identifying himself as a magistrate with the constitution, and as a Frenchman with the people.

We beseech you all, as men, as legislators, as citizens, and as soldiers, in this your great conflict for liberty for France, and for the world, to despise all Earthly danger, to look up to God, and to connect your councils, your arms, and your empire to his throne with a chain of union, fortitude, perseverance, morality, and religion.

We conclude with this fervent prayer: That as the Almighty is dispersing the political clouds which have hitherto darkened our hemisphere, all nations may use the light of Heaven: that, as in this latter age, the Creator is unfolding in His creatures powers which had long lain latent, they may exert them in the establishment of universal freedom, harmony, and peace: may those who are free never be slaves: may those who are slaves be speedily free.

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REPLY TO THE PRECEDING ADDRESS, AND THAT OF THE  
SHEFFIELD SOCIETIES, FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF FRANCE, CITIZEN GREGOIRE.

Your addresses to the representation of the French nation have filled them with pleasing emotions. In imposing on me the honourable duty of a reply, they make me regret that I can but imperfectly express what all with so much energy feel. To have the honour to be a Frenchman or an Englishman, carries with it a title to every degree of mutual affection that can subsist among men.

The curious in your country are pleased to traverse

the globe in order to explore nature; henceforth they can visit Mont Blanc (Savoy) without quitting France; in other words, without leaving their friends. The day on which free Savoy unites itself with us, and that on which children of high-minded England appear among us, are, in the eye of reason, days of triumph. Nothing is wanting in these affecting scenes but the presence of all Great Britain, to bear testimony to the enthusiasm with which we are inspired by the name of liberty, and that of the people with whom we are about to form eternal alliance.

The National Convention has wished to testify its satisfaction to the English, in decreeing that they would conduct in the presence of some of them the trial of the last of their kings. Sixty ages have elapsed since kings first made war on liberty: the most miserable pretexts have been sufficient for them to spread trouble over the Earth. Let us recollect with horror that under the reign of Anne, the falling of a pair of gloves, and that under Louis XIV., a window opening from one apartment into another, were sufficient causes for deluging Europe in blood.

Alas! short is the duration prescribed by eternal power to our weak existence; and shall then the ferocious ambition of some individuals embitter or abridge our days with impunity? Yet a little moment, and despots and their cannons shall be silenced: philosophy denounces them at the bar of the universe, and history, sullied with their crimes, has drawn their characters. Shortly the annals of mankind will be those of virtue; and in the records of France, a place will be reserved for our testimonies of fraternity with the British and

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Irish societies, but especially for the Constitutional Society of London.

Doubtless the new year which is now approaching will see all your rights restored. The meeting of your Parliament attracts our attention. We hope that then philosophy will thunder by the mouth of eloquence, and that the English will substitute the great charter of Nature in place of the great charter of King John.

The principles upon which our own republic has been founded, have been discovered by the celebrated writers of your nation; we have taken possession of their discoveries in the social art, because truths revealed to the world are the property of all mankind. A people which has brought reason to maturity will not be content with liberty by halves; it will doubtless refuse to capitulate with despotism.

Generous Britons! let us associate for the happiness of the human race; let us destroy every prejudice; let us cause useful knowledge to filter through every branch of the social tree; let us inspire our equals with a sense of their dignity; let us teach them, above all, that vices are the inseparable companions of slavery; and let us depend upon it, that our efforts will be favoured by the God of liberty, who weighs the destiny of empires, and holds in His hands the fate of nations.

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AT A MEETING OF THE THIRD SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN, IN THE TOWN OF BELFAST, 3RD OCTOBER, 1792.

Mr. Clotworthy Birnie in the Chair.

The declaration was agreed to, from which the following extracts are taken.



Associated, as we are, for the purpose of producing an union of interest and affection among all the inhabitants of Ireland, we abhor the idea of withholding from our Roman Catholic brethren their civil and religious rights, at the time that we would wish to enjoy those rights ourselves.

We are persuaded that the religion of any man, and his politics, are not necessarily connected: on the contrary, that the former ought not to have any connection with the latter. In a civil view there undoubtedly is a communion of interests and rights, and every individual who contributes to the support of the state, ought to have a voice in framing the laws which regulate that state. But religion is personal; the individual alone accountable; we, therefore, deem it impious to intrude between his conscience and that Almighty Being who alone knoweth his heart.

We assert that the right of petitioning in the subject, of whatever denomination, is not only natural, but perfectly agreeable to the spirit of our constitution; and we confess ourselves ignorant of any mode by which our Catholic brethren could have so peaceably collected and expressed their sentiments as by delegation.

If the reader be struck with surprise at the influence of French politics on the minds of the Belfast leaders in some of the preceding documents—at the extravagant hopes founded on the revolution in that country—at the extraordinary excitement displayed by its admirers, in their fantastic celebration of its victories, or the anniversary of its outbreak—he cannot fail likewise

to have been struck, even in despite of the extravagance manifested on some occasions, at the exhibition of talent and enthusiasm in the cause of reform on the part of its first advocates; and especially when he examines the discussions and proceedings of those men of the movement party of 1793 and 1794, at their enlightened views on the subject of civil and religious liberty, which were then so much in advance of the opinions of their countrymen. The policy was worthier of the Grand Vizier of Constantinople than of the British minister, which made rebels of many of those men who then advocated the questions of reform and emancipation.

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ACCOUNT FROM THE "BELFAST NEWSLETTER" OF A MILITARY RIOT IN BELFAST, ON SATURDAY,  
MARCH 9TH, 1793.

About three quarters of an hour after six o'clock in the evening, a body of the 17th Dragoons, intermixed with a few others of the military, rushed out from their quarters, and drove furiously through most of the principal streets, with their sabres drawn, cutting at any one that came in their way, and attacking houses. This lasted near an hour, when, through the interference of magistrates and some military officers, the party were dispersed. In the course of this business, the windows of a number of the inhabitants were broken, and some signs torn down. A great number of persons were slightly wounded, who had taken no part in the

affray. Charles Ranken, Esq., a justice of peace for the county of Antrim, in endeavoring to take an artilleryman, and after commanding his Majesty's peace by virtue of his office, was repeatedly stabbed at, and in a slight degree wounded. Mr. Campbell, surgeon, happening to be in a street through which the party were driving, one of them ran across it, and made several cuts at him, some of which penetrated through his clothes and slightly wounded him. The windows of a milliner's shop were broken, in which cockades were hung up for sale. A man had his ear and his hand cut with a sword. Happily no lives were lost, and to the prudence and quiet demeanour of the towns-people it was owing.

The houses which suffered most were those of Mr. M'Cabe, watchmaker; Mr. Orr, chandler; Mr. Watson, on the Quay; Mr. Johnson and Mr. Sinclair, public-house keepers in North Street; and the shop of Miss Wills, a milliner, in High Street. Their malice seemed principally levelled at the Volunteers. Two of the dragoons received ample punishment from the swords of their officers. The consternation of the town may be easily supposed.

Two causes have been assigned for this unprovoked disturbance: viz., that there was a sign of Dumurier at a small public-house in North Street; and that a blind fiddler who plays through the streets at night, happened to be playing *Ca Ira*, a French air. With respect to the sign, it was erected before there was any prospect of a war with France, and the circumstance of its being there could not be countenanced by the people, for few had ever heard of it till the riot brought

it into notice. As to the tune played by a blind mendicant, it is too trifling a cause to be seriously mentioned, though he deposed on oath that he never knew the tune in question.

As soon as intelligence of the riot reached the officers of the troops at the barrack mess, they used much activity in suppressing it. Great praise is due to the exertions of the magistrates; but the rapidity with which the party forced their way through the town, made it impracticable to suppress it till the injury was done. The gentleman who commands the regiment now in barracks, Captain M'Donnel, signalized himself by the most active exertions; and his regiment, the 55th, behaved extremely well. The circumstance of General Whyte's absence on other necessary duty, was much regretted; but he returned to town instantly on hearing of the matter. A guard of four hundred and fifty Volunteers sat up during the night, and no farther harm ensued.

On Sunday, the Sovereign, by request, called a meeting of the town at three o'clock, to consider of the best means of preserving the peace, and bringing the offenders to punishment. In the mean time, Major-General Whyte had arrived from Carrickfergus, and gave assurances of his earnest desire to coöperate with the civil power in bringing the offenders to punishment, and promoting the security and peace of the town. A committee was appointed by the town meeting to inquire into the cause of the disturbances, and report to a future one, to be convened by them as soon as their report was ready. This committee consisted of twenty-two, amongst whom were the Sovereign, High Con-

stable, and all the magistrates resident in town. This committee, according to instruction, sat at a quarter past six on Sunday evening. General Whyte was invited to attend as a member, which he seemed rather to decline, but desired an interview with the committee, to whom he repeated his good wishes for the peace of the town, and expressed his wish and his reasons for desiring that the Volunteers who were assembled, to the number of four hundred and fifty, would disperse, as he had ordered a patrol of officers, and a strong guard of the 55th regiment, who have always behaved with great order and regularity, and at the same time pledged himself to call upon the inhabitants, and join them himself, if any necessity required it. A deputation was immediately sent from the committee to the Volunteers, with a paper stating these facts, and requesting them to separate, which they instantly complied with.

Saturday night, May 25, 1793, exhibited another of those military affrays to which this town has been subjected for some time past. We do not wish to enter into a detail of the violences committed; suffice it to say, that some of the inhabitants were dangerously wounded, none mortally. Mr. Birnie, who received a stab in his back, and was otherwise much hurt, is in a fair way to recovery.

It is generally believed Mr. Birnie would have been killed, had it not been for the spirited exertions of Captain Barber and Lieutenant George, in aid of the Sovereign.

On Monday evening, the 15th of April, about eight o'clock, a party of the artillery and 38th regiment, who



had arrived in this town on Friday last, attacked a sign of the late Doctor Franklin, which, being made of copper and hung with iron, had withstood the sabres of the 17th dragoons, but on this occasion was laid prostrate by the assistance of a rope. They then attacked, and pulled down the sign over the newspaper office of the "Northern Star." What their next enterprise would have been we know not; but at this period the arrival of the Sovereign and a number of their officers, put a stop to the evening's amusement. The signs, which had been removed to some distance, were abandoned to their proper owners, and immediately replaced. None of the inhabitants were hurt on the occasion.

The letting loose of the military on the inhabitants of Belfast was tantamount to a declaration of war, with their political societies and their volunteer members and promoters.

The "Volunteers" in 1793 intimated plainly the objects they had in view would be accomplished by force if necessary. The lawyers' corps adopted the motto, "*Inter arma leges*;" another corps took the name of "National Guard," and placed on their banners the significant device of a harp without a crown. The Maghera corps, in 1792, had made a declaration of their political sentiments, in which they stated that "we will not be deterred from our duty until the country shall taste the sweets of freedom, and we pluck the fruit from the tree of liberty." One of the last memorable acts of the Irish Whig Club was

the presentation to the crown of a petition (known to be drawn up by Mr. Grattan) to the King, setting forth the various acts of oppression and injustice on the part of several administrations in Ireland, from 1792 to 1798. In this admirable document the recent rebellion is clearly and irrefragably shown to be the result of their measures: the dishonour brought on both houses so early as 1792, by the scandalously open and shamefully avowed sale of the peerage to procure seats in the Commons; the people's confidence in Parliament destroyed; the unconstitutional nature of the act of 33 George III., to prevent what was called unlawful assemblies of the people under pretence of preparing petitions or other addresses to the Crown or the Parliament; the rigour of the Gunpowder and Convention Bills in 1793; the persecutions of the people on the part of the Orangemen in the north, sanctioned and protected in 1790 by a bill of indemnity; the partiality exhibited in the resolutions brought forward in the House of Commons by the Attorney-General in that year as a kind of supplement to his Insurrection Act, wherein all the disturbances of the four preceding years are ascribed to the Defenders, and not a syllable is mentioned of the atrocities of the Peep-of-Day Boys, committed on the people, who, having no protection to look to from the law, were compelled, in self-defence to resist

their exterminators; the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Bill, in 1797; the extreme severity of military government; Lord Carhampton's wholesale transportation of the people, without trial or legal proof of guilt; General Lake's death-denouncing proclamation; the free quarters in the country; the proscription of the Catholics; the burning of their dwellings and their chapels; and lastly, in a country where female chastity was held in the highest respect, the licentiousness of the military rabble, who, in the words of their commander-in-chief, at a later period, were "formidable to all except the enemy."

These are the topics which are treated of in this able document; and it is impossible to bestow our attention on them, without coming to the conclusion that the people were deliberately exasperated and driven into rebellion, with a view of breaking down the energies of the country, and thus enabling the British minister to accomplish the long-projected measure of the Union.

It would betray a disposition to mislead, or a state of mind apt and indolently willing to be misled, to consider the origin of the confederacy of the United Irishmen, and the nature of their designs, without reference to the constitution of the Irish Parliament, and the actual condition of the country in regard to representation, and

the enjoyment, or reasonable prospect of enjoyment, of political, civil, and religious privileges, by the great mass of the people, or the middle class, which comprised in its several ranks the active energies, industrial, commercial, and professional intellectuality of the communities in towns and cities, at the period of the formation of the first Society of United Irishmen.

In the numerous works devoted to the subject of Irish parliamentary independence, it is very strange how this subject has been allowed to pass unnoticed, or rather how sedulously it has been avoided.

A very remarkable, authentic, and most complete document, entitled, "Table of Parliamentary Patronage for Ireland, 1793," is to be found in a periodical of great merit in its day, "*The Anthologia Hibernica*," for October, 1793. This valuable document, lost sight of as it now is in an obsolete publication, it is well to reproduce, for the important facts which are concealed beneath it are of marvellous significance; they speak more than many volumes that have been written, of a state of parliamentary corruption and degradation unparalleled in parliamentary history.

We find by this document that the number of members returned to the Irish Parliament by peers was one hundred and thirty-four!! and the number of members who owed their seats to the

patronage and influence of commoners was fifty-four!!! so that in the Irish House of Commons, which in the year 1793 consisted of three hundred members (one hundred and ninety-six of whom were returned for ninety-eight boroughs), no less than two hundred and twenty-eight members were returned either by peers, nominated by them, or obtained their seats by the influence of patrons; and the remaining independent seventy-two members, as well as the others, represented Protestant constituencies exclusively, the great mass of the population, who were Catholics, being wholly unrepresented in the Irish House of Commons, when that Parliament assembled on the 10th of January, 1793.

The "Table of Parliamentary Patronage for Ireland, 1793," is the more reliable on account of the politics of the writer who communicates it. He declares himself strenuously opposed to reform, and deprecates any extension of the franchise or change in the existing system of representation, as an innovation sure to lead to anarchy and confusion. This remarkable document will be found in the Appendix.

Such another witness as the person who prepared the "Table of Parliamentary Patronage of Ireland in 1793," is Lord Chancellor Clare, a few years later in his place in Parliament.

Lord Clare, in his celebrated speech on the Irish Union, said:



Cromwell's first act was to collect all the native Irish who had survived the general desolation and remained in the country, and to transplant them into the province of Connaught, which had been completely depopulated and laid waste in the progress of the rebellion. They were ordered to retire there by a certain day, and forbidden to repass the river Shannon on pain of death; and this sentence of deportation was vigorously enforced until the Restoration. Their ancient possessions were seized and given up to the conquerors, as were the possessions of every man who had taken part in the rebellion, or followed the fortunes of the king after the murder of Charles I. And this whole fund was distributed amongst the officers and soldiers of Cromwell's army, in satisfaction of the arrears of their pay, and adventurers who had advanced money to defray the expenses of the war. And thus a new colony of new settlers, composed of the various sects which then infested England,—Independents, Anabaptists, Seceders, Brownists, Socinians, Millinarians and dissenters of every description, many of them infected with the leaven of democracy, poured into Ireland, and were put in possession of the ancient inheritance of its inhabitants. And I speak with great personal respect of the men, when I state that a very considerable portion of the opulence and power of the kingdom of Ireland centres at this day in the descendants of this motley collection of English adventurers.

It seems evident from the whole tenor of the declaration made by Charles II. at his restoration, that a private stipulation had been made by Monck, in favour of Cromwell's soldiers and adventurers, who had been

put into possession of the confiscated lands in Ireland; and it would have been an act of gross injustice on the part of the king to have overlooked their interests. The civil war of 1641 was a rebellion against the Crown of England, and the complete reduction of the Irish rebels by Cromwell redounded essentially to the advantage of the British Empire. But admitting the principle in its fullest extent, it is impossible to defend the Acts of Settlement and Explanation, by which it was carried into effect; and I could wish that the modern asserters of Irish dignity and independence would take the trouble to read and understand them.

I will not detain the house with a minute detail of the provisions of this act, thus passed for the settlement of Ireland; but I wish gentlemen who call themselves the dignified and independent Irish nation, to know that seven million eight hundred thousand acres of land were set out, under the authority of this act, to a motley crew of English adventurers, civil and military, nearly to the total exclusion of the old inhabitants of the island; many of whom were innocent of the rebellion, lost their inheritance, as well for the difficulties imposed upon them by the Court of Claims in the proofs required of their innocence, as from a deficiency in the fund for reprisal to English adventurers, arising principally from a profuse grant made by the Crown to the Duke of York; and the Parliament of Ireland having made this settlement of the island in effect on themselves, granted an hereditary revenue to the Crown. It is a subject of curious and important speculation to look back to the forfeitures of Ireland, incurred in the last century. The superficial contents

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of the island are calculated at 11,420,682 acres. Let us now examine the state of forfeitures:—

Confiscated in the reign of James I. the whole of the province of Ulster, containing, acres .....	2,836,837
Set out by the Court of Claims at the Restoration, acres .....	7,800,000
Forfeitures of 1688, acres .....	1,060,792
	<hr/>
Total .....	11,697,629

So that the whole of your island has been confiscated, with the exception of the estates of five or six old families of English blood, some of whom had been attainted in the reign of Henry VIII., but recovered their possessions before Tyrone's rebellion, and had the good fortune to escape the pillage of the English republic inflicted by Cromwell; and no inconsiderable portion of the island has been confiscated twice, or perhaps thrice, in the course of a century. The situation, therefore, of the Irish nation at the Revolution, stands unparalleled in the history of the inhabited world.

What, then, was the situation of Ireland at the Revolution? and what is it at this day? The whole power and property of the country has been conferred by successive monarchs of England upon an English colony, composed of three sets of adventurers, who poured into this country at the termination of three successive rebellions. Confiscation is their common title; and from the first settlement, they have been hemmed in on every side by the old inhabitants of the island, brooding over their discontents in sullen indignation.

This state of things in Ireland has to be taken into account before we pronounce a sweeping judgment on the desperate course adopted by the United Irishmen, or wonder at the conduct of certain Catholic prelates in Ireland in 1799 and 1800, who were not prepared to take their stand by the side of the advocates of parliamentary independence. We may also read in the "Memoirs of Lord Castlereagh," and in those of Grattan, with feelings, perhaps, of more pain than surprise, "that in the hopes of obtaining from a British Parliament, that which the Irish Parliament had, so much to its cost, refused, four metropolitan and six diocesan Catholic bishops, who had been led to give their countenance to the Union, were induced, through the intrigues of Lord Castlereagh, to sign resolutions in favour of a royal veto in the appointment of those prelates."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Grattan's Memoirs," vol. v., 375.











