

# WOLFE TONE

A - PICTURE - OF - HIS - TIMES

**T**HIS book does full justice to the picturesque rebel and uncompromising separatist. But it does more. It emphasises the relentlessly logical thinker who was also the man of action, revealing him as the virtual founder of modern Irish democracy.

AODH DE BLACAM

51-

S. M. Cinnéce.

---

Spued

ep

*The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*







### THEOBALD WOLFE TONE

*From a coloured miniature attributed to Catherine Samson Tone, now in the possession of Denis Rourke, Esq., Dublin, and reproduced by his permission.*

THE LIFE STORY  
*of* WOLFE TONE

SET IN A PICTURE  
OF HIS TIMES BY

AODH DE BLACAM

Dublin

The Talbot Press, Ltd.  
89 Talbot Street, C, 10

London

Rich & Cowan, Ltd.  
25 Soho Square, W. 1

*First Published 1935*

Made in Ireland at  
The Talbot Press  
Dublin

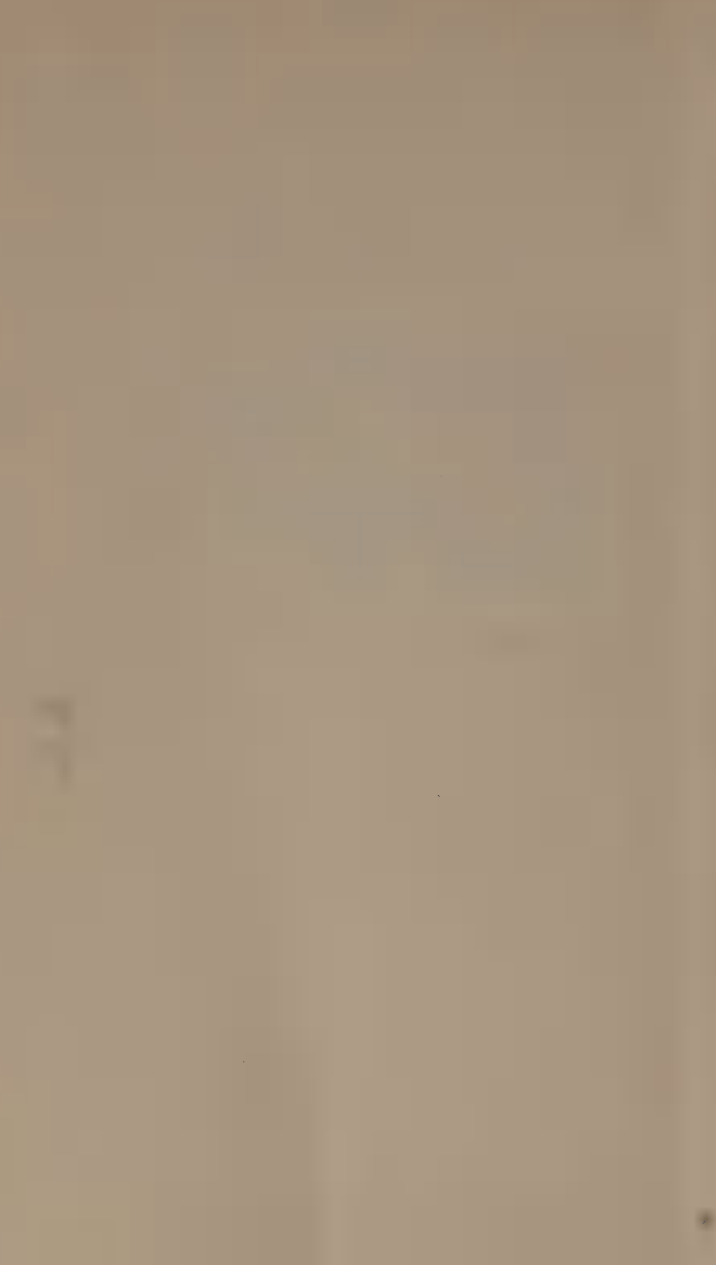
To  
JOHN HERON LEPPER

*Dear Cousin,—*

*With affection I inscribe to you—the author of “A Tory in Arms,” held by many to be the best of Ulster historical stories : one which stirs love in the bosom of Catholic and Protestant alike—this study of the patriot who strove to make all Ireland one and free ; for I recall, not without pride, that our common ancestor in County Antrim was honourably mentioned in the days of the United Irishmen.*

*—Beiv buaidh is beannacht,*  
A. de B.

*Ravensdale.*



## FOREWORD.

THE excuse for a new Life of Wolfe Tone is threefold. In the first place, new material has come to light in recent years, lacking which former Lives are defective in some important points. In the second place, former Lives have dealt with Tone chiefly as the founder of Irish republicanism, and have not dealt fully (the present writer thinks) with Tone's place in history as the effective breaker of ascendancy and chief agent of that Catholic Emancipation which was consummated by Daniel O'Connell. The author considers Tone one of the founders of modern Catholic Democracy. In the third place, a controversy has raged around Tone's name since this book was drafted, and the writer hopes that these pages will vindicate Tone's memory from some mean charges.

This book will show that Tone never formally denied Christian dogma; God was ever in his thoughts, and he was the trusted friend of the orthodox. He walked untainted through the moral chaos of the Revolution, abominated the Revolutionary morals, and proved, in his own beautiful home life, the sweetness of his soul. The muck-raking biographers of the present day, who delight to denigrate all that is noble, would have an easy task with Tone, since he has accused himself with

## Foreword

almost a saint's humility; and he has not been spared by ungenerous minds. In this book the just man is given the benefit, where there is doubt.

Tone's writings are of first-rate value in the study of Irish and Revolutionary history, and they abound in wise utterances which rank him as a patriotic teacher for all time. His influence has grown steadily since his death. He rediscovered for modern Ireland what the Earls knew, that friendship and peace between Ireland and England, and prosperity in Ireland, never could be established until the two lands were separated. He hated tyranny and privilege, and favoured democracy both as a form of government and a principle of social intercourse. Yet he was ever temperate, and hated the *doctrinaire*. Get what is best for your people under whatever form of government exists, but persevere towards your final aim: that was his rule. Above all, let there be unity, cordial unity, among all honest folk. The Republic cannot be achieved until that is won.

Finally, Tone's life and his utterances are a challenge to those who think that the natural virtues can be shut out of the moral life; that politics legitimately can be surrendered to irresponsible selfishness. As Cardinal Mercier taught, so Tone believed, that a dreadful responsibility lies on every soul to behave faithfully towards the nation, even unto death.

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
" THE FRIENDS ONCE BOUND TOGETHER "	13
CHAPTER II.	
" IT IS A REVOLUTION " ... ..	31
CHAPTER III.	
TONE THE EMANCIPATOR... ..	62
CHAPTER IV.	
INTO EXILE ... ..	89
CHAPTER V.	
" THE FRENCH ARE ON THE SEA " ...	108
CHAPTER VI.	
" WHO FEARS TO SPEAK OF 'NINETY-RIGHT ? " ...	139
CHAPTER VII.	
TRIAL AND DEATH ... ..	190
CHAPTER VIII.	
THOSE WHO CAME AFTER ... ..	217

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author has made large use of the following works, not available to former biographers of Tone: Miss Alice Milligan's fine *Life of Wolfe Tone*, Mr. Bulmer Hobson's valuable editions of the Autobiography (abbreviated) and Tone's Letters, Dr. Richard Hayes's *Ireland and Irishmen in the French Revolution*, Mr. P. Brendan Bradley's *Bantry Bay*, Mrs. Milligan Fox's *Annals of the Irish Harpers*, the Letters of Dr. Drennan, and books on the period by Mr. Denis Gwynn.

He thanks Dr. Hayes for invaluable advice, and for the original of the letter by General Hardy quoted in Chapter VI; also Dr. J. S. Crone for equally invaluable advice, and for some traditional anecdotes; but responsibility for all opinions and judgments is his own.

*The Irish Volunteers and Catholic Emancipation*, by Rev. Dr. Patrick Rogers, appeared while this work was going through the press; it is a work which should be consulted by all who wish to know more of the foremost part that Tone and other Protestants, especially in Ulster, took in the winning of Catholic liberties.

# WOLFE TONE.

## CHAPTER I.

### “ THE FRIENDS ONCE BOUND TOGETHER ”

#### § 1

“ ONE beautiful morning in the month of July we ran off together and were married.” Mark that sunny summer’s day, in the year 1785, when a lad of twenty-two ran away with a girl of sixteen. He was a student at Trinity College, Dublin, named Theobald Wolfe Tone. She was Miss Matilda Witherington, living with her grandfather, “ a rich old clergyman of the name of Fanning,” in Grafton street. Early in the year the student had fallen in love with her ; every morning he would walk under her windows ; she returned his admiration, and they were passionately devoted before they had exchanged a word of greeting. Young Tone made friends with her brother, who was a fellow lover of music, and so secured an introduction to his adored one. He declared his love, and, knowing that their elders never would consent to so improvident a match, they “ ran off together ” on that sunny day, were married, and went down to Maynooth for a brief honeymoon.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Maynooth then had no great clerical college. It was a simple country town, set in the shade of the Geraldines' ruined stronghold and amid great landlords' demesnes. A few miles to the south, between Clane and Naas, the Tone family had been farmers, holding their land by freehold leases, ever since the first of them had come over with William III's army and had settled on the captured soil. Kildare is naturally one of the most beautiful counties of Ireland, with its gentle contours, the vast green Curragh, "pasture-land of Brigid," the dome of Allen Hill where once the Fenians dwelt, the brown reaches of the bog, the sally-woods, cottages thatched with bog-rushes, Wicklow hills a coloured pageant in the distance. Then, moreover, it had well-tilled fields,

*Waving with wheat and with spelt  
And with broad-eared glistering barley ;*

and the little towns of a tillage county were stoutly built of stone, adorned with a simple, classic architecture. The young lovers must have been mightily happy there, in the season when the haycocks were being built, and the corn was reddening for the scythe.

In those days of sweetest intimacy, no doubt, young Tone told the story of his early life to her, who was to share the joys and hopes and piteous sorrows of his thirteen remaining years. She was plain, grave, straight-haired, true as steel, and as deeply in love with him as he with her. We can imagine the half-amused, half-reproving, but always

## “ *The Friends Once Bound Together* ”

affectionate attention with which she listened to this boisterous lover, her elder by six years, and yet but a child to her precocious wisdom. He was small, light of body, sallow of countenance, with a prominent nose and long, dark hair ; his eyes were bright, swift, ever dancing ; his speech rapid and somewhat unpleasantly guttural ; his bearing almost perky. He was no Adonis, but the spirit of him was so ardent, so vivacious, so good-humoured and gallant and brave that it burned through his indifferent body like a flame in a feeble lantern, and all men liked him. This ever-popular, vivid spirit was all hers, hers alone, in those golden summer days. What had he to tell her, as he unfolded, loverwise, all the commonplaces of youth as if they were of vital importance ?

He would tell, no doubt, of his earliest memories, when he was reared in Stafford Street, Dublin, in the house where his father carried on business as a coachmaker. He would speak of his mother, the daughter of a sea captain in the West India trade named Lamport, or Lambert, a Catholic. Theobald was born on June 20, 1763, the first child of his parents. He had three brothers and a sister, William, Matthew, Arthur and Mary. The Tones were a devoted family. All were of remarkable parts, and destined to remarkable fates ; but Theobald on his honeymoon, if he talked of his family, could not tell her then what was decreed. William was to enlist with the East India Company, to be a prisoner in St. Helena, to reach India at last, and to suffer

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

strange adventures in a Nizam's employ, to win distinction in the Mahratta service (concerning which he wrote a book), and to fall in battle in 1802. Matthew was to roam America and the Indies; to go to France and suffer imprisonment as a suspect, but at last to sail with Humbert to Killala in 1798, and to fall prisoner and be hanged in Dublin. Arthur was to be a voyager; was to travel with Theobald in his own great adventure; was to serve in the Dutch navy; narrowly then to escape the fate of his brothers, and at last to disappear in the East Indies in 1799. Mary, "Miss Mary" as Tone always called her, was to be his wife's companion in the troubled years; then, to marry a Swiss merchant in San Domingo, where she is said to have been killed with her husband by negroes. Justly did Theobald remark that all the clan possessed "a wild spirit of adventure."

The turbulence of his genius, his ever-restless energy, made him hard to teach; yet he won premiums at school in many subjects, failing only in "writing and the catechism, to which last I could never bring myself to apply." His tutor, Mr. Darling, marked his talents, particularly for mathematics, and urged his father to give him a liberal education; for it was a "moral certainty" that he would become a Fellow of Trinity College. The parson of the parish, Dr. Jameson, supported this argument, and the elder Tone spared no expense to give the lad his chance. Theobald was taught Latin and began Greek, which he found to his taste, and he

## “ *The Friends Once Bound Together* ”

entered Trinity in his eighteenth year. Meanwhile, however, his father had met with an accident; parental control was relaxed, and the young man's fancy wandered. With his fellows, Theobald roamed the country, swam in the sea, and attended parades and reviews of the garrison troops in Phoenix Park. The pomp and parade of military shows intoxicated his fancy, and he wanted to become a soldier. At this time he indulged his passion for the drama in private theatricals in the house of a titled lady, with whom for a time the lad lost his head; and so all the more the young fool craved for a red coat and cockade and gold epaulets. He was piqued by injustice at college, lost ambition as a scholar, and besought his father to equip him as a volunteer for the British army in America; but the old man was happily stubborn. The turbulent youth was subdued to his studies once more—and then, in 1785, came that love which was the making of him. In romance he found reality. Through all the storm of his later life that star shone clear; there never was a truer marriage of true minds.

The young bridegroom, then, must have told his bride the story of his past follies and have talked of his ambitions. There was no worldliness in her love for this gallant boy; she had shewn that by this improvident marriage, and she was to prove it by uncomplaining faithfulness to him through an Iliad of woes. Yet she believed, no doubt, that he would make a mark in the world. Little either of them guessed that he would arrive at a fame beyond all

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

his dreams, but a fame that would be bought by broken hearts and early death. Little, too, the world guessed that the boy who brought his bride down from Dublin on the mail coach, and laughed with her in the green lanes of Kildare, was destined to raise a war which would shake an Empire, and ultimately to shape the fate of a nation.

### § 2

NOR yet, however, had Theobald Wolfe Tone "found himself." He resolved to seek a career in law. To that end he returned to Trinity and took his Arts degree. At this time he was auditor of the Historical Society, mightily popular, and mightily happy. He always looked back to College with affection. A quarrel with his wife's family darkened the young man's fortunes, and he left town for Clane, where his father was living. There, in straitened days, a girl child was born to the young couple. One October night Theobald was seized in the yard by a robber, and bound. A gang with blackened faces broke into the house and plundered it; then made off. Tone worked himself free and struggled to a window of the house, called, and got no reply. "My heart died within me," he said, long afterwards. He gnawed his bonds in rage and agony. At last, his wife's voice sounded; she had escaped from the house with the rest, but had made her way back in the darkness to seek him. Thereafter, Tone slept with pistols at his pillow. Two of the robbers were taken and hanged.

## “ The Friends Once Bound Together ”

At length the twenty-four-year-old bridegroom found means to go to London to study at The Temple. He was nearly shipwrecked on the way. On the first floor in No. 4 Hare Court (the old building has gone now) he lived and studied, making up his scanty funds by articles for the *European Magazine*. At this time, with two fellows, he wrote a novel, *Belmont Castle*, which burlesqued “ the execrable trash of the circulating libraries ” (admirable phrase ! ) ; it was printed in Dublin, and was found in 1934. William Tone, back from voyages, joined him, and went sightseeing and jesting with him on his empty pockets. The brothers together drew up a plan for a colony in the newly-discovered South Sea islands. Theobald read Dampierre and Anson’s books of travel, glamorous old volumes of the great days of sail, and dreamed of adventures among the buccaneers—those English, French and Dutch privateers who assailed the Spanish monopoly of trade and empire. He laid the plan before Mr. Pitt in a memorial which he presented with his own hand to the porter in Downing street. Mr. Pitt ignored it, and dashed the young men’s dreams of El Dorado. The elder Tone, with whom Theobald’s wife and child were dwelling, now wrote a letter about his affairs, “ much exaggerated,” which drove the disappointed youth to desperation. Theobald resolved to throw his wife and child on the pity of her family, and to enlist as a soldier of the India Company. Off he went with William, who was resolved to perish with him, to the India House ;

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

but some *notched and cropt scrivener* told them that no more ships would go out till March, and recruits could not be accepted for six months. Thus were they baffled—"the single instance, since the beginning of the world, of two men absolutely bent on ruining themselves, who could not find the means." Back to chambers went the youths, laughing at the thought that India, the great gulf of all undone beings, should be shut against them alone. It was not decreed that Theobald should carry a brown musket on the coast of Coromandel, though something of that fate was, at last, to be William's.

In this desperate moment the wheel of Theobald's fortunes took another sudden spin. The "rich old clergyman" in Grafton street promised him £500; so Christmas day in that year of 1788 saw a family reunited in Kildare, and Theobald, anxious over a wife sadly failed in health, rejoiced in his charming little daughter, over two years old. Now did the young lawyer apply himself to his profession. He was called to the bar in Trinity term 1789, and went out on the Leinster circuit. Sir Jonah Barrington, then high in the circuit, took Tone round three times in his carriage, and got to know him well. "He was too light and visionary, and, as for law, was quite incapable of imbibing that species of science. . . . He was not worldly enough." Such is the verdict of the amiable old lawyer, who himself was removed from the bench later on for misappropriation of court fees. On those circuits with Barrington, Tone learnt much. He saw the Penal system in

## “ The Friends Once Bound Together ”

operation : benches laden with landlords, the oath of outlawed Catholics despised ; injustice and oppression everywhere, and the legal profession itself a parasite upon the corrupted body of society. He had “ neither the means nor the inclination ” to buy the favour of attorneys with drink, and “ made, as may well be supposed, no great exhibition at the Irish bar.” Instead, he contracted a strong “ contempt and dislike ” for the profession, and turned his attention to politics.

This was the next stage to his destiny. He began by writing a pamphlet which reviewed the last session of the Irish Parliament. It was a quiet but honest analysis of that futile legislature’s work, but contained one remarkable passage, a conspicuous statement of the principles of democracy, one of those *obiter dicta* which reveal Tone as a deep thinker.

The only true strength of Government is the confidence of the people, a confidence not lightly bestowed, nor lightly withdrawn. When that confidence is betrayed, and not only so, but when the people are laughed to scorn by their betrayers, Administration may be taught how vain the reliance is on their fancied *strength*. It is not wise to compel the people to look too closely into the theory of Government, and try facts by principles.

If the deputy perseveres with measures pernicious to his constituents, and laughs at their indignation, or bullies them with his *strength*, his constituents will show him *their power* in return. Government is not *physically* strong but rests on opinion. If this opinion be forfeited

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

by misconduct, or rejected with scorn as an useless instrument, the people may begin to examine by what authority three hundred men could pretend to govern and to defy four million; and they will find that authority resulting from their own delegation and the petulant abuse of that authority from their supine inattention; and they will show their servants that the power which elevated can abase.

When Government makes an ostentatious exhibition of their strength, it is time for the people to examine their own resources, and a thorough conviction of their relative powers is the best security for the peace of the land.

Those bodies of cautious reformers, the Whig Clubs, admired Tone's performance. Here was a pen that would advance their principles with persuasion. Henry Joy, junior, secretary of the Northern Whig Club, Belfast, conveyed to Tone the news that he had been elected to their membership. A political broker, a barrister, came to Tone, gave him a professional job for the Whigs which brought him eighty guineas, introduced him to George Ponsonby (then leader of the Whig opposition) and proposed a seat in parliament. Tone was a little dazzled, and let his name go forward for Dungarvan; but his private opinions "went infinitely farther" than the Whigs, and he never could dissemble well. Ponsonby seems to have decided that this brilliant youth could not be tamed to mere Whiggery, and the brief connection died. Tone, however, had tasted politics. All his fiery enthusiasm was roused. He

## “ The Friends Once Bound Together ”

studied the nation's affairs, and soon rejoiced that he had not become entangled. Hear his own words :

I made speedily what was to me a great discovery, though I might have found it in Swift and Molyneux, that the influence of England was the radical vice of our Government; and consequently that Ireland would never be either free, prosperous or happy, until she was independent, and that independence was unattainable whilst the connexion with England existed. . . . This theory (Tone wrote) . . . has ever since unvaryingly directed my political conduct, [to it] I have sacrificed everything, and am ready to sacrifice my life if necessary.

Possessed now by the grand notion of Irish independence, Tone “ began to look on the little politics of the Whig Club with great contempt: their peddling about petty grievances, instead of going to the root of the evil.” A quarrel rose between Britain and Spain over a monopoly of Chinese trade. Britain armed for war, and press warrants were issued for recruits in Ireland. It was assumed everywhere that, when England went to war, Ireland was at war, *ipso facto*. Tone wrote a pamphlet to oppose this notion, and to plead for an Irish neutrality. As to *right*, the issue lay “ in a nutshell.” Ireland's independence, under the Dual Crown, had been acknowledged by the Act of 1782, and her Parliament had full power to withhold supplies. As to *expediency*, Ireland had nothing to gain in the conflict,

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

any more than if a quarrel rose between the Emperor of Japan and the King of Corea.

Will she profit if England secure the trade? No. Will she lose if England cannot obtain one Otter skin? No. . . . Decidedly, then, the quarrel is *English*, the profit will be to England, and Ireland will be left to console herself for her treasure spent, and her gallant sons fallen, by the reflection that valour, like virtue, is its own reward, and that she has given Great Britain one more opportunity to be ungrateful.

Tone examined history. When had English arms supported Irish interests? Once, at the most, but Irish trade had been oppressed or deserted in its difficulties again and again. No moral obligation to come to England's aid, therefore, existed. Then, "if the Spaniards fall by our hands in an unjust war, their deaths are murder. If we seize their property, it is robbery." Let Ireland stand aloof! England would be resentful? Well, Ireland always must be her own best friend.

If we did, in 1782, extort our rights from England at the very muzzle of the cannon, whom have we to thank but *ourselves*? . . . It is the spirit of Ireland, not the generosity of England, to which we owe our rights and liberties. . . .

What can England do to us? With what countenance, what colour of justice, can she upbraid us for following her own process? What should Irish policy be, by British example? *First of all, take care of ourselves.*

## “ *The Friends Once Bound Together* ”

We invade none of her rights ; we but secure our own.

But the timid will say : she may withdraw the protection of her flag from us, and I answer : let her do so ; everything is beneficial to Ireland that throws us on our own strength. We should then look to our internal resources, and scorn to sue for protection to any state ; we should spurn the idea of moving, an humble satellite, round any power, however great, and claim at once, and enforce, our rank among the primary nations of the earth.

These were bold words, spoken to a sluggish public that ignored them. The doctrine which Tone spoke was latent in the declaration of independence of 1782 ; but the men of '82 were reposing now in their mansions, thinking of their oratorical flights and content to leave the revolution a revolution of words. Tone pleaded for “ the establishment of the welfare and glory and independence of Ireland, for ever and ever ” ; none heard him. His pamphlet—it was signed “ *Hibernicus* ”—was ignored. War was averted, and so the test of reality was lost for that time.

On the day after his pamphlet's appearance Tone stood hidden in a bookseller's shop. Enter Sir Henry Cavendish, of the House of Commons, who flings down the pamphlet on the counter and roars :

“ Mr. Byrne, if the author of that work is serious, he ought to be hanged ! ”

Next, a bishop appears, a prelate with upwards of £5,000 a year. He is equally indignant.

“ Sir ! ”—his lordship cries—“ If the principles

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

contained in that abominable work were to spread——”

What? Souls would suffer, my Lord?  
——“do you know that you would have to pay for your coals at the rate of five pounds a ton?”

Mr. Byrne, the publisher, took alarm, and withdrew the publication: “for which,” wrote Tone, “his own gods damn him!”

### § 3

ONE day Tone was in the gallery of the House of Commons and fell into talk with a tall, dour-seeming man from Cork, by name Thomas Russell. Before he was twenty-one Russell had broiled in the East Indies for five years, and now, aged 23, he was a half-pay ensign at his ease on £28 a year. This stranger seemed to have faith in the Whigs as genuine reformers, but Tone, knowing these gentlemen better, argued against them. The two men dined together next day, continued their argument, and became such fast friends as seldom this unhappy world beholds. They were a contrast in appearance and in manner: Russell was as pawky as Tone was vivacious, but they shared convivial tastes. Russell had humour, but was the butt of Tone's livelier wit. He was religious in a mystical fashion which was common among the idealistic patriots—believed that the second coming of Christ and the millennial age were at hand, and saw the affairs of Ireland in a preternatural light. Tone did not share

## *“ The Friends Once Bound Together ”*

Russell's mysticism, but in all else there was “identity of sentiment” between them, and a rare love. Tone revered this high-minded man and wrote: “I think the better of myself for being the object of the esteem of such a man as Russell,” and always reckoned as the two riches of his life: his wife's affection and Russell's friendship.

Matilda Tone still was delicate. She was ordered to the sea. Tone took a box of a house at the seaside at Irishtown for the summer of 1790. Russell went down, and then were spent the happiest days of Tone's life. All three would join in the preparation of “delicious dinners,” and then there would be walks and lazy hours on the grass. Russell's humorous brother John would call; so would Tone's brother William, and then there were flows of

the humour indigenous in the soil of Ireland. Every day produced a ballad or a squib. These were delicious days. The rich and great, who sit down every day to the monotony of a splendid entertainment, can form no idea of the happiness of our frugal meal, nor of the infinite pleasure we found in taking each his part in the preparation and attendance. My wife was the centre and the soul of all. I scarcely know which of us loved her best; her courteous manners, her goodness of heart, her incomparable humour, her never-failing cheerfulness, her affection for me and for our children, rendered her the object of our common admiration and delight. She loved Russell as well as I did. In short, a more interesting society of individuals, connected by purer

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

motives, and animated by a more ardent attachment and friendship for each other, cannot be imagined.

They talked politics, of course. Russell said that all countries were alike to a well-regulated mind. Tone disagreed; liberty was good, but love of country was good, too. Later, this theoretic discussion was to be settled, so to speak, by experiment. The friends talked of the scheme for a Utopian colony of soldier-farmers in the South Seas.

. . . In a word, the idea is to construct a settlement somewhat of feudal principles, to reward military attendance and exertion by donative lands, to train the rising generation to arms and danger, to create a small but impenetrable nation of soldiers, where every man should have a property, and arms and spirit to defend it, to temper the ferocity of the natives by the arts of European culture, and to call forth from the tomb, where for a century it has slept, the invincible daring of the old buccaneers, uncontaminated by their disgraceful debaucheries in peace, or their still more infamous barbarities in war.

Tone fished out his papers and sent his memorial, ignored by Pitt two years before, to the Duke of Richmond, who consulted with Lord Grenville; the British ministry looked into the proposal, but once again it failed to gain approval. A discouraging reply was sent to the young man at the seaside in Irishtown. His second attempt to go privateering in the Pacific thus failed. It was the last outburst of

## “ *The Friends Once Bound Together* ”

boyish romanticism. Fate once again saved Tone from the wasting of his talents in a wild enterprise—saved him from his own folly. He was reserved for other things.

Suddenly, the party at Irishtown, its speculations and fanciful plans, were dashed by the recall of Russell to the army. He was promoted to a full-pay ensigncy in the 64th regiment, which then was quartered in Belfast, and sat down to a farewell dinner, “all clinquant, all in gold.” They made him cook part of that dinner, and he in his laced regimentals.

Back in town, Tone was lonely for Russell, but now his first son, William, was born. He formed a political club, of which he expected much. It was composed of men of letters and learning in Dublin, with Russell as a corresponding member; but Dr. William Drennan and Joseph Pollock, the two chief literary members, took such a dislike to each other that the meetings were fruitless. The assembly became “a mere oyster club,” and died, teaching Tone that “men of genius, to be of use, must not be collected in numbers. They do not work well in the aggregate. . . . Too many wits spoil the discourse.”

Thus, once more, Tone’s hopeful enterprises had run into sand. That year 1790 saw him arrived nowhere—richer in friendship, indeed, and progressing in wisdom, with his last folly behind him, but still without clear purpose or achievement. The puny politics around him, and the corrupt society,

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

offered no apparent scope for his genius. His life-work still was unrevealed. It was in another country that great events already were shaping which soon would sweep him into action and immortal memory.

In a word, the French Revolution was now something more than a twelvemonth in progress. We must go back to July, 1789, for the mainspring of the great events of our story.

## CHAPTER II

### “ IT IS A REVOLUTION ”

#### § 1

ON Tuesday, July 14, 1789, the bells rang out from Nôtre Dame and all the church towers of Paris over a troubled city. An assembly of electors sat in the Hôtel de Ville, a body thrown up by the city's discontent. Through the cobbled streets, a mob in motley garb, barefoot, and shod in sabots, roughly armed, moved in aimless, threatening fashion. Toll barriers had been burned in the night. Gunsmiths' shops were raided. Cannon and ammunition of the royal forces were seized by citizen forces, such as the irregular contingent from the Faubourg St. Antoine which had called one James Bartholomew Blackwell, an Ennis man, out from the Irish College, to lead it. The common folk were arming. The noise of war was on the air. Yet none knew rightly what was sought by the inarticulate multitude. We read of an Irish student who harangued the populace in different open places, "pointing out to them their natural rights as men and animating them . . . to assert their well-founded claims to freedom and independence." Police sought to arrest this nameless Irish youth, but the crowd furiously attacked the

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

officers and carried their young hero "in great triumph" to the College.

Over poor streets the mighty Bastille frowned. Cannon were mounted on its six Titanic towers. Within its monstrous walls there lay the victims of autocratic rule. Revolutionary and reformer, bad and good, whosoever was displeasing to an arbitrary monarch, needed but to be named to be hurried within those walls, untried, there to pine in impotent despair. The Bastille, more massive than Dublin Castle, and almost as villainous, was the symbol of irresponsible royal power. While it stood, there could be no freedom.

No one knows who first spoke the words of fate—"To the Bastille!"—but, when that cry was raised, it went like flame through the city and set the throng moving with a single purpose. Had the defenders resisted with determination, the mob never could have broken into that tremendous fastness; but the terror of the risen people dismayed the King's men. The Governor's handkerchief was hoisted as a sign of surrender, and the Bastille was taken. Vainly the chief leader of the insurgents sought to restrain the rioters. They had been fired upon; they were not disciplined soldiers; they were wild with fury long restrained. They butchered the Governor and others, and went triumphing horribly through the streets with bloody heads lifted on their pikes. Two Irishmen who were to be famous later, the brothers Sheares, looked on at this first terrible breaking of the feudal chains.

## *“ It is a Revolution ”*

At Versailles the National Assembly—made up of the Commons and the lower clergy—was in session, wrestling with the King for recognition as the sovereign power. The King came home from hunting to receive news of the fall of his great prison house—the most awful weapon of monarchy, power of arbitrary imprisonment, stricken from his hand.

“ Why,” said he, “ this is a revolt ! ”

“ No, Sire,” came the answer, “ it is a revolution.”

Next morning, therefore, the King went before the National Assembly and announced his surrender. He would withdraw his troops, would recall the popular minister whom he had dismissed, would throw himself upon Parliament, “ since I and the nation are one.” He was too late. King and people had ceased to be one long, long ago. Rulers and people had been sundered long before weak, well-meaning Louis suffered the woes that his licentious and extortionate ancestors had earned but never paid.

Insurrection was not easily curbed. It ran through the kingdom. Country folk rose, poured into the proud houses of landlords, the bastilles of the countryside, destroyed the title deeds, and sometimes slew their tyrants. Three weeks later the Assembly—now a real national parliament—swept away the legal basis of feudalism, freed all serfs, gave the land to the tillers of it without compensation to its late monopolists. Thus was the reign of democracy begun, and a free people established on the only true basis of freedom, as owners of the soil, the giver of grain.

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

Poor Louis-the-Last had not poured out his Capet blood upon the scaffold ; the glutting of the guillotine had not begun. Yet there was end to royal autocracy and landlord extortion, two evils supported by those unbelieving French prelates who lived viciously on the tithes paid for the upkeep of their sacred offices. Misused authority, temporal and spiritual, had brought an ancient order to its irretrievable fall. It needed not the Terror, now at hand, to frighten authority everywhere. Subjects had challenged rulers : that was the knowledge which appalled the mighty, and gave to oppressed peoples exultation and wild hope.

The revolution of the world had begun, in a mixture of good and bad, an inevitable change, of which different lands would make different uses : France becoming secularist, Catholic Ireland winning religious freedom in most of the land.

### § 2

NOWHERE, outside France, were the effects of the Revolution seen more clearly than in Ireland. Here the whole atmosphere was changed, as when lightning looses storm. Here there was the same territorial extortion as in France, but done by an alien caste of landlords ; the same clerical support for tyranny, but by an alien church. If there were serfs in France, all Ireland was peopled by an outlawed race, forbidden to own the soil on which it laboured. If the Bastille had held the French King's critics, immured by *lettres-de-cachet*, the warships of England were

## “ It is a Revolution ”

floating bastilles for rebellious Irishmen seized by the press gangs. Common men in France had held no rights against blue blood. Common men in Ireland were defenceless against an ascendancy which was sprung from foreign sweepings. Thus, Ireland repeated, with a difference, the case of France, and now was excited like a captive lion by the spectacle of another's escape.

Tidings of the Revolution excited Liberal reformers, the Dissenters of the North, merchants who were jealous of landlords, as well as the common people. “At its commencement, as the first emotions are generally honest,” Tone writes, “every one was in its favour.” There was, however, a sharp reaction when the Revolution went on, and proved to be destructive of royalty and aristocracy. The Reformers began “to retrench considerably in their admiration.” Two publications made the issue clear.

In 1790 Edmund Burke printed his “Reflections on the Revolution in France.” This work raised the voice of alarm for all who were endangered by the revolutionary idea. It was the clarion of conservatism. *All that we are and cherish is in danger: let us resist infamy!*— that was the pith of Burke's argument, and to his call rushed every defender of things as they are, right and wrong, just privilege and unjust usurpation. Burke's part in this great crisis of the spirit is remarkable. To understand it we must consider what manner of man he was, and what was his training. In an age of vice he was a pure and generous spirit. He never lost

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

the moral refinement which came to him from his Irish stock and his early life among his Gaelic kindred. He was reared a Protestant and was educated in the tradition of Swift and Berkeley at the University of Dublin: that is to say, with no dogmatic or philosophic first principles. As a loyalist, he accepted the establishment in Church and State set up by the Whig usurpation of 1688. England became his adopted country, and the British Constitution the sovereign of his allegiance. Had he been reared a Catholic, his impulses would have agreed with reality. Instead, he became the champion of an order of things which really was alien to his own genius. How much he was out of touch with reality is seen by the fate of his utterances: he voted with the Whigs, and spoke his oratorical flights in their defence, but his words have become the very scriptures of Toryism. "I would not exclude change neither, but even when I changed it should be to conserve." He attained, by industry, to magnificent circumstances, and lived as a grandee, romantically happy. His generosity closed his eyes to the truth that his fellow-grandees were the third generation from the grabbers of the Revolution; that they maintained their vulgar glories on the cruelties of the Penal system, the devastation of the Highlands, the subjection of the English yeomen and the plunder of the Indies.

Behold, then, Edmund Burke, second only to Shakespeare in grandeur of language, hurling anathemas at the Revolution in France and at all

## “ It is a Revolution ”

manner of change, in the name of Conservatism! The Whig ascendancy was delighted with him; he made their establishment almost respectable. Hands off *what is*!—this doctrine is called Conservatism, although in truth it is the very doctrine of destruction so long as a primary wrong remains unrighted. To conserve the good, it is necessary often to go out against established tyranny. Burke did not see this truth. He shirked dangerous enquiries. “A sacred veil must be drawn over the beginnings of government,” he wrote, and he drew that sacred veil over the Whig usurpation, and over the horrors that had bred the French revolt. His “Reflections” never touch first principles. The most famous passage is that in which he tells how he saw the Queen of France, years earlier, a vision of beauty, and how now he was shocked that cavaliers were not brandishing glittering swords for her; touching eloquence, but no argument with which to satisfy the hunger of the cities or the indignation of the serfs.

To him replied, in 1791, Tom Paine the Deist, with a book named *The Rights of Man*. This work did for revolution what Burke did for reaction. Tom Paine, an Englishman of Quaker stock, had fought in the American Revolution. His fanatical courage upheld the cause of liberty in dark hours whenever Washington was near to despair. To him almost more than to any other man was due the ultimate triumph of the Republic. Paine had torn America from the Whig monarchy, through an

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

honest love of justice. He replied to Burke, making easy play with the sentimentalist's defence of the Whig order in England. The men of 1688 had thrown down one monarchy; what right then had Burke, as a defender of the Whig settlement, to dictate to the French people an unreasoning obedience to absolute monarchy?—aye, or to bind the English people to their present state? Paine's authority was not history, not tradition, not revelation; it was common-sense—his own favourite word. His book was banned, and he had to fly from England to France, where his admirers had elected him already as a deputy, and where he was destined to take a big part in the shaping of the French Republic. Against Burke, therefore, behold the figure of Paine: Sentiment *versus* Rationalism. Between these the age soon was to be divided. Alas, that a true orthodoxy nowhere appears in this ranging of the forces of the time! Catholicism in France was betrayed by its own leaders, unfaithful and scandal-giving bishops, who surrendered the social institutions to corruption without protest. In Ireland Catholicism had no social institutions; it was the creed of an outlawed people who had nothing left to defend, save their lives. Observe that, if Burke had been a Catholic, with a Catholic's philosophy, history would have been different. Instead of defending the corrupt Whig settlement against all change, he would have demanded a change, a revolution, but in a different direction—back to the age of faith, even as Paine demanded

## “ *It is a Revolution* ”

a revolution forward to the age of unassisted reason, common-sense. Against Burke's merely unhelpful defence of *What Is*, Paine's revolution was certain to prevail.

In Ireland the defence of *What Is* meant the defence of penal tyranny. Absentee landlords, planters, and alien church grown fat on tithes wrung from the outlawed majority: these all applauded Burke. The race from which he sprang, the outlawed Gael, was not so swift to repudiate Tom Paine. Why should a Catholic think worse of an honest Deist than of a follower of Bishop Berkeley, the pantheist? Their political actions must be judged impartially. Swiftly a cleavage ran through society. Two great parties appeared. “ In a little time,” Tone writes, “ the French Revolution became the test of every man's political creed, and the nation was fairly divided into two great parties: the aristocrats and the democrats.” The terms were borrowed from France; the real issue was between privilege and the people—between the Whig ascendancy and an outlawed race.

### § 3

TONE “ was a Democrat from the very commencement.” He watched the controversy between Burke and Paine with the liveliest attention. He was on Paine's side, although he did not like Paine, and once refused to accept some of Paine's writings because they assailed revealed religion. “ Mr.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Burke's famous invective" did not deceive his strongly realistic Irish mind. Tone's judgment of that work was that it captured the English Whigs because it "flattered so many of their prejudices." It praised their religion and played on their historic enmity to France; they saw that a regenerated France might hurt their trade, and therefore rejoiced in Burke's assurance that it would be virtuous, as well as profitable, to attack the Revolution. Ireland, however, "well knew, experimentally, what it was to be enslaved," and most of her people shared Tone's democratic sympathy in the conflict.

Here is Tone's analysis of the condition of the country. Ireland, he writes, was divided in three groups: the members of the established religion (to which he himself belonged), the Dissenters, and the Catholics. The first, whom he called (Irish fashion) the Protestants, were barely a tenth of the population, but they owned five-sixths of the landed property and the whole of the government, church, law, revenue, army, navy, magistracy, corporations—"in a word, the whole patronage of Ireland." Who were they? They were alien aristocrats (spare the word's original meaning!)—"a colony of foreign usurpers," "whose title was founded in massacre and plunder." They clung to England, who had planted them in the conquered country, that she might protect them from the expropriated natives. Invariably they were for England's interests against Ireland's—mere agents of the exploitation of the subject country. The

*“ It is a Revolution ”*

Dissenters were twice as numerous; they, too, were “ a colony of foreigners in their origin,” but, as they were chiefly traders and manufacturers, they did not feel so dependent on England as the landed proprietors. “ Strong in their numbers and their courage, they felt that they were able to defend themselves, and they soon ceased to consider themselves as any other than Irishmen.” These Dissenters were the flower of the Volunteer army of 1782, which won a paper recognition of Irish independence and freedom for Irish trade. They agitated for a parliamentary reform, which should make the paper liberty real—but they were baffled, Tone says, by “ the superior address and chicanery of the aristocracy.” The Dissenters hailed the French Revolution.

As for the Catholics, forming from two-thirds to three-quarters of the population, they owned not a fiftieth part of the land; all their ancient dignity and freedom had been wrung from them by the Penal code, “ that execrable and infamous code, framed with the art and the malice of demons, to plunder and degrade and brutalise.” These are the words of a Protestant. “ It is with difficulty that I restrain myself from entering into the abominable detail,” Tone writes. “ This horrible system, pursued for above a century with unrelenting acrimony and perseverance, had wrought its full effect, and had, in fact, reduced the great body of the Catholic peasantry of Ireland to a situation . . . below that of the beasts of the field.” Such was the state of

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

Ireland, "and certainly a much more gloomy prospect could not well present itself to the eyes of any friend to liberty and his country."

Emancipation sprang at last from the French Revolution: let that truth be learnt by all speakers and writers on this controversial matter. Before the Revolution every effort to advance the popular cause had failed miserably. A Catholic Association had been formed in 1759, chiefly by Dublin merchants; but the few Catholic aristocrats in the country (chiefly Palesmen, with the Palesman's inability to be thorough) refused to co-operate with the *bourgeoisie*, and the Association died. In 1773 this body was revived, under the leadership of Lord Kenmare, and servile addresses of loyalty were presented to successive Viceroy's at the Castle on behalf of the suffering people. In 1783 the Volunteers of Belfast (drawn from the Dissenters of that town) called for the equal admission of Catholics to the rights of freemen; the Government was alarmed. Lord Kenmare hurried to declare, on behalf of the Catholics, that they had no intention whatever to demand their long lost liberties, and he called on Catholics to give up their illegal membership of the Volunteer corps. The very demand for emancipation thus was withered. Dissenters could not strive for Catholic liberties that Catholics themselves refused to claim. "Such an effect," writes Tone, "had the operation of the penal laws on the minds of the Catholics of Ireland, as proud a race as any in all Europe."

## *“ It is a Revolution ”*

### § 4

THERE had risen in the Catholic Committee—a body made up of some bishops, country gentlemen and Dublin merchants—a man of strong character and political skill, John Keogh, a Dublin merchant. Keogh led the democratic group which had taken heart from the revolution in France. These men in 1790 drew up an appeal for the ending of the Penal Laws, and carried it by a strong majority, with the result that Lord Kenmare and Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin (who lived to receive a Castle pension), together with a number of other leaders, left the Committee and published a repudiation of the demand for freedom.

Keogh was undaunted. He persevered, but he saw that it would be wise to proceed under the aegis of a statesman who was above suspicion of revolutionary intent. He turned, therefore, to the anti-revolutionary giant, the great Irishman-in-England, Edmund Burke. Now, Burke was deeply sympathetic with the Catholics of Ireland, both because they were his own folk and also because he believed that his beloved British Constitution would profit by their appeasement. He sent his son Richard, the darling of his heart, to Ireland, to act as agent of the Committee, and poured forth advice with all the richness of his political sagacity and splendour of utterance. Richard Burke failed. He drew up high-sounding but impolitic addresses, and made enemies on all hands. Tone disliked him

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

immensely—found him vain, self-opinionated, intolerable, and alleged that the elder Burke wanted money and advancement for the son. “Edmund no fool in money matters. . . . Is that *sublime* or *beautiful*?” It is certain that Tone was unjust to both father and son. The Burkes meant well and strove hard for the Catholics; but young Burke, we may judge, was so much a stranger in his manner that he antagonised Irishmen in his own despite. He drew up another petition to Parliament. It was such, and his unpopularity was such, that none could be found even to present it. Keogh saw that his hopes from the Burke connection were vain. He secured a presentation of 2,000 guineas to Richard, and sent him home.

Here was the Catholic cause still at a deadlock. The deadlock was broken by Tone. A situation had been prepared which admirably suited his talents, and he had been preparing for it. When the timid Catholic aristocrats had deserted, and when the aegis of Burke’s known conservatism had proved vain for the protection of the Gael against the Whig tyranny, Wolfe Tone realised that Catholic Emancipation and natural freedom were identical causes. At this time (the year 1791) he had not one Catholic friend. Such was the isolation of the creeds under the penal system, and so completely did the Anglo-Irish, or Protestants, live their own life, with institutions that made up a complete society, that a Protestant might come to full maturity in Ireland in a purely Protestant environment. Tone

*“ It is a Revolution ”*

knew no Catholics, although he was 28 years of age. He had discovered, however, the purpose of his life :

To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connexion with England, the never-failing source of our political evils, and to assert the independence of our country.

Full of compassion for his mother's people, he had seen that the only way to attain his end was to get rid of the religious distinction which held them serfs. Hence, he wrote :

To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter—these were my means.

Timid aristocrats among the Catholic body had repudiated even the hope of such equality ; not so John Keogh. When Keogh discovered Tone and Tone met Keogh, the combination was formed which was to shatter the Penal system and to resurrect from the Middle Ages the present hope of our staggering civilisation—Catholic democracy.

§ 5

THE story turns to Belfast, where Thomas Russell has been dwelling, a mightily popular figure, although a British officer. Russell, with his mystical religion, his gorgeous conviviality, his readiness for a sportsmanlike hand in smuggling, and his wit, was welcomed

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

by the Republicans of the city of Dissent, and admitted to many of their clubs. To Tone he wrote for resolutions which might be put before the Belfast volunteers, with whom he was "well in"; and Tone sent, in substance, these :

1.—That English influence in Ireland was the great grievance of the country ;

2.—That the most effectual way to oppose it was by a reform in Parliament ; and

3.—That no reform could be just or efficacious which did not include the Catholics.

This was in July, 1791. Mark the date. A year later history would be advanced. In 1791, however, Belfast was not ripe for the full conception of liberty which was to be breathed into it. The third resolution was lost. The rebuff roused Tone. "My present impression is to become a red-hot Catholic," he wrote on July 17 ; and he denounced those Protestant champions of freedom who wanted "rather a monopoly than an extension of liberty"—their aims were "contrary to all justice." Hot with indignation, he sat down and wrote a pamphlet, entitled, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," which was the grandest utterance in the cause of Catholic liberties ever made by an Irishman. No praise is too high for the passionate sincerity, the powerful argument, and the strength of literary style (so different from an ornate, studied rhetoric), which caused this utterance of a Protestant writer to ring loud and clear above the mutterings of prejudice and bigotry.

## “ *It is a Revolution* ”

This historic pamphlet has been printed but seldom, and few Irishmen are familiar with the counsels of liberty which it contains—rich first-fruits of Tone’s political philosophy. Therefore, it will be well to quote from it extensively. “To the People,” it begins, and its author starts with the declaration that he is “a Protestant of the Church of Ireland, as by law established,” and has taken again and again all the customary oaths, “save one, to the utter exclusion of our Catholic Brethren.” He writes as “a mere lover of justice, and a steady detester of tyranny, whether exercised by one man or one million.”

He then reviews the state of Ireland :

The present state of Ireland is such as is not to be paralleled in history or fable. Inferior to no country in Europe in the gifts of nature ; blest with a temperate sky and a fruitful soil ; intersected by many great rivers ; indented round her whole coast with the noblest harbours ; abounding with all the necessary materials for unlimited commerce ; teeming with inexhaustible mines of the most useful metals ; filled by 4,000,000 of an ingenious and a gallant people, with bold hearts and ardent spirits ; posted right in the track between Europe and America . . . yet, with all these great advantages, unheard of and unknown, without pride, or power, or name ; without ambassadors, army, or navy ; nor of half the consequence . . . with the single county of York, or the loyal and well regulated town of Birmingham !

These are mortifying thoughts, and Irishmen must

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

consider how to restore, or to create, a rank for their country among the nations of the earth. They must be prepared for any pains to probe the source of the wrong: "Death is very terrible, but there are things more terrible than death." What, then, is the cause of Ireland's state?

The proximate cause . . . is our evil Government, the remote one is our own intestine division, which, if once removed, the former will be instantaneously reformed.

The misfortune of Ireland is that we have no *national* Government. . . .

What is our Government? It is a phenomenon in politics, contravening all received and established opinions: it is a Government derived from another country, whose interest, so far from being the same with that of the people, directly crosses it at right angles. . . . But how is this foreign Government maintained? Look to your court calendar, to your pension list . . . and you will find the answer written in *letters of gold*. . . .

Under such an Administration, if God Almighty could, in his wrath, suffer such an one long to exist, the virtue and the talents of the land would be blasted in the bud.

There is no *national* Government, Tone repeats; for the paper Revolution of 1782 was merely "a Revolution which enabled Irishmen to sell, at a much higher price, their honour, their integrity, and the interests of their country." It was a false revolution, because it "left three-fourths of our countrymen slaves as it found them." Honest and good men had brought it about, but their efforts

## “ *It is a Revolution* ”

had been fruitless because they did not secure representation for the Catholics, three-quarters of the nation. Even the quarter of the nation that was represented had only 60,000 electors, so unjustly restricted was the franchise. There could be no real reform save by a wide and impartial franchise ; there must be emancipation. This must be faced boldly, and attained by agreement. The liberation of the Catholics will be a work of compact. Both sides must yield something. Catholics, for example, must pledge themselves not to undo the forfeitures, but Protestants must consent to surrender privileges. “ But here,” says Tone, “ a good old Protestant lady will tell me, that compacts between us are in vain,” since Catholics do not respect an oath. Mark how splendidly Tone refutes this popular slander :

. . . If she be right, I marvel that the oath of an Irish Papist should ever be taken in a court of justice. . . . What becomes of the wisdom of the Legislature, that has been able to devise no better means for the exclusion of Catholics from the professions and Parliament, than oaths, which, as not being in their conscience binding, might be taken and broken without offence ? Yet, we find, and to our infinite loss, that these oaths are to Catholics so formidable, so serious, and so obligatory, that they are content to renounce profit, honour, freedom, and even their country, rather than take them.

Surely, if faith is not to be kept with heretics, there is not a Catholic in the kingdom but might be in Parliament to-morrow, had he no obstacle but oaths to encounter. If, therefore, three millions of people have, for near a century,

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

chosen to remain in *absolute slavery*, rather than take certain oaths which they thought militated with their consciences, I trust and believe there is an end of the argument that oaths to heretics are not binding, an assertion the most artful and wicked that ever was devised.

What of the present position of the Catholics, whose scrupulous consciences have reduced them to servitude for so long? Mark the compassion of Tone's words :

The old families, the original proprietors of the soil, who were dispossessed and ruined by forfeitures, have long since fallen into decay ; the representatives of a very great majority of them are, and have been, in penury and ignorance, at the spade and the plough, without deeds or muniments of their estate, for a century back.

Then Tone deals with the objection that Catholics are ignorant, and therefore unfit for liberty.

. . . What is the commonsense or justice of the argument? We plunge them by law, and continue them by statute, in gross ignorance, and then we make the incapacity we have created an argument for their exclusion from the common rights of man! We plead our crime in justification of itself.

If ignorance be their condemnation, what has made them ignorant? Not the hand of Nature. . . . It is the iniquitous and cruel injustice of Protestant bigotry, that has made them ignorant ; they are excluded by law from the possibility of education.

They cannot obtain degrees ; those are paled in from them by oaths, *those oaths of which they are so regardless.*

## “ It is a Revolution ”

Tone faces next the argument that Catholics have not been prepared for liberty ; and the very name of liberty uplifts his spirit to sublime utterance.

Had Mirabeau waited to prepare his countrymen, he and they would have been slaves to this hour, and the Bastille had still hung over the ill-fated city of Paris. Is liberty a disease, for which we are to be prepared as for inoculation ? If so, and if fasting and abstinence and long suffering be preparation, there are no men under Heaven better prepared than the Catholics of Ireland.

But can we believe that our wise and benevolent Creator would constitute us so, that it would require a long institution to *prepare* us for that blessing, without which existence is but a burthen ?

Do we prepare our sons to view the light of Heaven, to breathe the air, to tread the earth ?

Liberty is the vital principle of man : he that is prepared to live is prepared for freedom.

Whatever is essential to the happy existence of his creatures, God has not willed should be difficult, or complex, or doubtful in its preparation. Plant, then, with a righteous confidence in His goodness, the vigorous shoot of liberty in the land, and doubt not but it shall strike root, and flourish and spread, until the whole people shall repose beneath its shade in peace and happiness and glory.

That is the highest and most characteristic passage in the whole essay. Mark how the name of God rings in Tone's writings, whenever he is moved

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

profoundly; few secular writers hark back so constantly to the thought of the compassionate but just God, omnipotent and inescapable. Tone has more to say. He deals with the argument that the Catholics are Jacobites and may favour the Pretender—"the man is dead"; with the fear that a Catholic Parliament will come into being and will undo the settlement of the land—there are constitutional safeguards; with the charge that Catholics would be corrupt—when he thinks of the present Parliament, he reflects that "no change can easily be for the worse." So, point by point, his logic smashes every objection to Emancipation; let once the cry be "Reform and the Catholics," and "Ireland is free, independent and happy." Yet, behind his logic, his passion for righteousness is his driving force, and he puts into the mouth of the Catholics an utterance which makes him the very voice of his mother's people. It is prophetic:

Shall they not say to us: Are we not men, as ye are, stamped with the image of our Maker, walking erect, beholding the same light, breathing the same air as Protestants? Hath not a Catholic hands, hath not a Catholic eyes, dimensions, organs, passions? If ye prick us, do we not bleed? If ye poison us, do we not die? And if ye injure us, *shall we not revenge?* Hath a Catholic the mark of the beast in his forehead, that he should wander over his native soil, like the accursed Cain, with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against his? God Almighty, in His just anger, visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, not beyond

## “ It is a Revolution ”

the third or fourth generation, even of those that hate Him ; and will nothing short of our eternal slavery satisfy the unmitigable rage of Protestant oppression ?

How have *we* offended ? The offence of our ancestors was their property and their power ; we have neither ; they are long since sacrificed, and you are in undisputed possession of the spoil. Do not then grudge us existence, or that for which alone man should exist—liberty.

Say not that we are unprepared ; liberty prepares herself : Say not that we are ignorant, lest ye judge yourselves. Why are we so ? Enough has been done and suffered by us to satisfy not only justice, suffered by us, to satisfy not only justice and law, but cowardice, malice, and revenge ; it is time our persecution should cease.

The nations of Europe are vindicating themselves into freedom ; ye talk about it yourselves, and do ye think that we will be left behind ? If you join us, we are ready to embrace you ; if you will not, shame and discomfiture await you.

For us, we are prepared for either event. If freedom comes, we will clasp her to our hearts, and surrender her but with our last breath ; if slavery is still to be our portion, we have learned, by bitter experience, to endure ; and to that righteous and just God, who has created and preserves us, we commit our cause, nothing doubting, but in the fullness of His good time, that He will manifest His glorious mercies, even unto us ; though for wise purposes, He may think fit to continue us a little longer under the rod of our oppressors, the ministers of His wrath.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

### § 6

THE reception of Tone's pamphlet was astonishing. His earlier writings, which taught democracy and nationality, had attracted little notice ; but now he had touched the live nerves of the nation. The Catholics were so much delighted by this powerful statement of their case, volunteered by a Protestant writer, that they distributed it in all quarters.

It was now that John Keogh became Tone's friend and introduced him to all the leaders of the Catholic movement. Throughout the winter of 1791 dinners were given to friends of the Catholic cause, and Tone was always invited. His gaiety and lovability made him ever welcome, and so grew up a close and fateful connection. One of the dinners was a farewell dinner to young Burke, on his leaving Dublin. Tone was there, and it may have been on that night that Keogh decided that this brilliant young Protestant would be the man to put in Burke's place.

Suddenly and swiftly as Tone was knit to the Catholics, he was recognised hardly less swiftly as the natural leader of liberty by the better Dissenters of Belfast. He was not known there, yet a big edition of his pamphlet was printed and sent broadcast through the North at the cost of the patriotic leaders. The Volunteers of the first, or green, company in Belfast elected him an honorary member of their corps—an almost unique compliment. Finally, certain patriotic leaders in Belfast invited him to consult them, and so was formed a second fateful connection.

## *“ It is a Revolution ”*

Russell had left the army. He now was Tone's guide, and in October the two friends spent three weeks together in Belfast of such exuberant happiness that Tone remembered them to the end. Belfast afforded every means of enjoyment. At that time it was a seaport of recent growth to considerable size, and we find that already it was characterised, as it is to this day, by a greater warmth of Irish humour, of homeliness, hospitality, loveability, than any other city in Ireland. It had nearly 30,000 inhabitants, although fifty years earlier it had only 8,000, and had been inferior to Newry. Prosperous merchants had reared the White Linen Hall, a low, long, graceful building, where now the City Hall stands, and had buried in its foundation, in 1783, a record of the Renunciation Act, as :

. . . an authentic information to posterity that by the Firmness and Unanimity of the Irish Volunteers this Kingdom (long oppressed) was fully and completely emancipated. If in future times there should be an attempt made to encroach upon the Liberties of this Country, let our Posterity with admiration look up to the glorious example of their Forefathers.

The square in which this civic centre stood was approached by Donegall Place, now Royal Avenue, which was a stately thoroughfare of brown Georgian mansions, wherein dwelt such people as Dr. James MacDonnell, who had come up from the Glens of Antrim, bearing proud memories of his descent from Alasdair MacColla, the comrade of Montrose, to

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

practise medicine, found hospitals, cure folk by electricity, and patronise music and letters. Old Scoto-Irish Gaeldom hung about the town, ready to make it a Gaelic city. Back from Donegall Place lay Hercules street (now York street), a strong Protestant quarter, and High street, which was half a dock, with square-sailed merchant ships delivering cargoes from far lands. Sea captains had their homes in Bridge street. Narrow wynds, still called Entries, ran from street to street, and were lined with busy offices and warehouses, over which the merchants hung out signboards ; common signboards then were the heads of French Revolutionary figures. In one of those entries (Sugar-house) there was a tavern in which the Muddlers' Club met, with a list of convivial rules on the mantel for the benefit of strangers, although the real purpose of the "Muddlers" was to plot. There were card clubs, a ranting theatre, dances, music, and merchants' ladies going by in sedan chairs.

In Crooked lane (now Chapel lane) Father Hugh O'Donnell, first parish priest of Belfast, ministered to nearly a thousand Catholic citizens ; the chapel of St. Mary's had been opened there in 1784, with the Green Company of Volunteers in the chapel yard as guard of honour. In those days the Protestant Volunteers often attended Mass, in token of their friendship with the people of the penalised faith ; this they did in Belfast, Lisburn, and (we think) Newry.

Tone's business was with the politicians, but the

*“ It is a Revolution ”*

fate of nations was shaped amid a very revel of high-spirited happiness. Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, might be said truly of the three October weeks when Russell led Tone through such joyous experiences, and hearts beat high with hope. There were outings on the autumnal hills, and Tone delighted in the grandeur of the Northern scenery. They rode out to see William Sinclair's bleach green and learnt how Sinclair had introduced American potash on his land. Sinclair told, too, how the Royal Family in London would take no Irish linen until he sent it over made up in the German fashion and so disguised, whereupon it was praised for quality and cheapness. Orders for more Irish linen disguised as German were sent, which Sinclair refused to execute.

“ God save good George, our King ! ” cried Tone.

Belfast's progress in machinery was noted ; the beginning of the industrial revolution was admired, although the friends little guessed what perdition that same machinery would call down upon the world in days yet to come. At night there was the theatre, but Tone “ came home before the play was half over, the parties appearing all so miserable that I could foresee no end to their woes.” There was supper on lobster at the Donegall Arms, and there was arguments over the bottle, and late hours. Russell got himself into the blue devils and thought that he was losing his faculties ; well for him that he had any to lose, said Tone. One day Russell remarked that Belfast was a very cheap city ; he had not changed

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

a guinea. Tone said no wonder ; he had paid for all the drinks. After that the Corkman paid his shot and something over.

### § 7

TONE found Belfast reading and talking of Tom Paine ; his " Rights of Man " was Belfast's Koran. The Dissenters, *i.e.* Presbyterians, were predisposed to republican and sceptical ideas. Some of them were offended by Tone's refusal to make Paine's Koran his Bible. Mark, then, that in the movement for liberty in Belfast there was a powerful element of pure *rationalism*, which had little enough in common with *nationalism* ; this explains much later history.

Not all the city was of one mind, of course. Tone called on Henry Joy, of the *Belfast Newsletter*, and thanked him for his election to the Northern Whig Club two years earlier, but it was with another body that he had his chief dealings. This was the Secret Committee, as he calls it, which directed a Volunteer club, and through that body set the pace in the spread of Revolutionary doctrines. Russell was Tone's link with the club ; for Russell was a member, along with such men as Neilson, the Simmses, McTier, MacCabe, Sinclair, Haslett, Bryson. Now was the great step taken. Tone came before the Secret Committee. Declarations of secrecy were made and views were exchanged. Tone told what he knew of the will to liberty among Catholics

## *“ It is a Revolution ”*

and read a letter from Whitley Stokes, Fellow of Trinity, who shared Russell's mystical beliefs, and was himself a man of profound goodness. The letter embodied the idea now come to be born: a union of all Irishmen. The Belfastmen said that they agreed with the ideals of Tone, Russell and Stokes, but could not answer yet for their people. However, it was agreed that a Society, called the United Irishmen, should be formed. This was done.

So was founded the organisation which shook the oppression to its roots. Its purpose, however, was moderate enough at the outset; namely, a parliamentary reform, in which all the creeds should share. If it later became a militant and revolutionary body, that was because the ruling power made even reform a thing that could be reached only through fire and blood. It was agreed that Tone and Russell should establish the Society in Dublin, on their return. Plans having been laid thus, there were talks outside the Secret Committee. The ideas of the United Irishmen were debated with other groups. Tone found himself faced with the prejudice against Catholic freedom that had infuriated him earlier in the year. In debate with “Bruce, an intolerant high priest,” one of the Whig group, Tone got from him a categorical statement of the Protestant objections to Catholic rights. 1—Catholics, if freed, would set up an inquisition. 2—Catholics would try to recover their lost lands. 3—A Catholic majority would set up a government opposed to liberty. Most of the company (Whigs) agreed.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

“ Damned stuff ! ” said Tone.

Then Bruce declared that Protestants, however they might talk of liberty, would refuse in the extremity to extend freedom to Catholics. So sure was the company of this, that Tone was depressed.

“ It may be he was right,” he wrote, and then he added a saying that is characteristic of his great virtue of Hope—“ but God is above all.”

There was an argument, too, over the feud in the countryside between the Peep-o'-Day Boys, the terrorists who raided Catholic houses, and the Defenders, the Catholic agrarian organisation. Tone and Russell battled single-handed for the Defenders, but won.

“ My dearest Life and Soul,” wrote Tone to his wife, with the news of his progress. “ You cannot conceive how much this short absence has endeared you to me. You think it is better for us to be always together, but I am sure, from my own experience, you are wrong ; for I cannot leave you now, though but for one week, that I do not feel my heart cling to you and our dear little ones.”

Russell added a postscript, which he signed with Tone's pet-name for him, “ P.P.”—he bade Mrs. Tone ignore what her husband might tell of him. “ It is sufficient generally, ‘ I had a friend.’ ” To that Tone added his own postscript : “ P.P. calls me ‘ his friend Mr. John Hutton,’ but God knows the heart.” So came into use the playful names of these two friends, “ P.P.” and “ Mr. Hutton,” which always made them laugh, years after, in the

*“ It is a Revolution ”*

midst of exile and woe, as such silly little family jokes always will. It was with a full heart in Belfast, much loved and loving, and with his life's work begun in earnest, that Tone quoted Russell's favourite saying :

“ God bless everybody ! ”

## CHAPTER III

### TONE THE EMANCIPATOR

#### § 1

WE come now to a critical year. During 1792 tremendous events took place in France and in Ireland—events which established democracy for better or worse throughout the European world, and which brought about the emancipation of the Catholics of Ireland.

Tone and Russell on their return together from Belfast set about starting a Society of United Irishmen in Dublin. Tone got into touch with James Napper Tandy, a brilliant and erratic popular leader whom he called the Tribune, and this remarkable man was the first Secretary. Tandy was an enthusiastic Republican. Tone at that time had not given much thought to the Republican idea. "My object," he writes, "was to secure independence for my country under any form of Government." When Tandy demanded a Republican policy, Tone pointed out that it would be impossible to attain a Republic "by any means short of the united powers of the whole people." Tandy saw the force of Tone's argument and threw himself into the cause to which Tone

## *Tone the Emancipator*

was devoted—that is, the cause of Catholic emancipation, and the union of the people of Ireland, without which Tone's ideals never can be attained.

The United Irishmen progressed rapidly. The Catholics "flocked in crowds." A series of vigorous publications was written by Dr. William Drennan, who became Tone's colleague and antagonist. Drennan was a Belfast man, the soul of Northern Liberalism, a poet in the stiff eighteenth century manner, whose best pieces are the fine poem entitled "Remember Orr" and "The Emerald Isle." He was a doctor in Newry for some years, and then went up to Dublin, where he enjoyed a very successful career. Before he left the North he had laboured for the founding of a secret society, modelled on the Freemasons, and having for its object the spread of Liberal ideas as much as the attainment of political liberty. He was no friend of the Catholic religion. Tone was opposed to him by instinct and by principle. Tone would have no secrecy or Masonic methods, and he wanted liberty for the Catholics without, as Drennan would have it, making sceptics of them first.

In this matter we see Tone as a moderate and wise organiser. He drew several of the Catholic leaders into the United Irishmen; Keogh himself was either a member or a close friend of the society. Stokes, Russell, and Thomas Emmet were heart and soul with Tone and the Catholic party; Drennan wrote of them as being "entwined in Catholic trammels." Owing, perhaps, to his Masonic

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

methods, Drennan prevailed over Tone for a time. Tone found himself skilfully elbowed into a position of obscurity, while Drennan's party committed a number of "indiscretions which gave their enemies too great advantages over them." The use of revolutionary language brought the Society into premature difficulties, and frustrated that slow and quiet, but determined, progress which was Wolfe Tone's desire. Napper Tandy, that quaint-faced, brazen-fronted, gallant, unworldly demagogue, ranted for the cause and set Dublin alight. He was ordered into custody, but escaped; a proclamation was issued offering a reward for his capture. The Society was brought into the public eye, and many who had talked loud now were hard to find. Tone connected himself with the distinguished and high-minded Hamilton Rowan, and these two publicly took over the command of the Society, and showed themselves in their gaudy Whig club uniforms, challenging arrest. They won a moral victory; for the House of Commons quietly allowed the matter to drop. Tandy was arrested again and released, and resumed the secretaryship of the Society.

The upshot of this little incident in the Spring of the year was that Tone was marked publicly as the most determined figure in the United Irishmen. A fresh effort was made by the Whig leaders, as we say, to nobble him. A barrister, apparently the agent of George Ponsonby, came to Tone and said that he was sorry to see the new line that Tone

## *Tone the Emancipator*

was adopting, the more so as he might rely upon it that his new principles never would be generally adopted, so that he was devoting himself to the Catholics without advancing any beneficial purpose. He also suggested that Tone had not kept faith with the Whigs, seeing that they had offered him advancement, whereas he had gone far beyond what they could approve.

Tone was furiously angry at the charge of double-dealing. However, he answered quietly that he had examined the Catholic cause thoroughly, and that he had not advanced a syllable in its favour which he did not conscientiously believe. He neither repented nor retracted. He had written his pamphlet for the Catholics unsolicited, and what he had done he had done. The barrister said that he was sorry to see Tone so obstinate in what he must consider an indiscreet line of conduct, and thereupon took his leave. That ended Tone's connection with the Whigs. He sacrificed at a blow all hope of political advancement; his devotion to the Catholic cause was the reason.

"The fact is," he writes, "I was devoted most sincerely to their cause. I would have sacrificed everything to ensure their success. I would not have deserted my duty to the Catholics for the whole patronage of the Government if it were consolidated into one office, and offered me as the reward.

"In these sentiments," he writes, "I was encouraged and confirmed by the incomparable spirit

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

of my wife, to whose patient suffering under adversity—for we had often been reduced and were now well accustomed to difficulties—I know not how to render justice.”

Behold Tone and his brave wife, therefore, facing hardship cheerfully for the sake of justice and Catholic liberties. On every occasion Tone consulted his wife; they had no secrets one from the other, and he always found her to think and act with energy and courage, so that we justly may thank her counsel and example, even as he bids us, for all that he did and achieved.

### § 6

WOLFE Tone thus became a marked man by reason of his championship of the United Ireland cause; yet it was now that the Catholic leaders appointed him as their agent. It is well here to explain what body it was that appointed him; for this body achieved, through his skill and energy, what amounted to a revolution.

We have seen already how the Catholic Committee in Dublin had been deserted by many of the most influential persons, including the Archbishop of Dublin and Lord Kenmare, and how John Keogh had striven to organise it on a more popular basis. There was no personal communication between the Committee in Dublin and the Catholics of the countryside. Myles Keon of Keonbrook, in the County Leitrim, now laid before the General Com-

## *Tone the Emancipator*

mittee a well thought out scheme for the better organisation of the whole Catholic body. His plan was to associate to the Committee two members from every county and great city, resident in the place which they represented. These delegates would be summoned to Dublin on extraordinary occasions, leaving the common routine to the Dublin men. The country members would be elected by means of assemblies in the parishes, counties, and great towns. This scheme was adopted. What amounted to an unofficial parliament of the Catholics of Ireland thus was brought into being.

The ruling powers were alarmed. When petitions for the Catholics were brought before the House, the politicians there explained that public opinion would not allow them to lend a friendly ear to the appeal of three million citizens. In order to ensure that the thing they called "public opinion" should be as they said, these same men passed fiery resolutions in their capacity of Grand Jurymen. In effect, the Grand Juries were the local authorities of the Protestant ascendancy. They rivalled one another in fanaticism, and the resolutions which they passed were quoted in Parliament as evidence that Catholic emancipation could not possibly be granted. Petitions for Catholic relief were removed from the House of Commons contemptuously without even being read.

Wolfe Tone's first task as Agent for the Catholics was to reply to the Grand Jury resolutions. One particularly bitter resolution was passed by the

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Grand Jury of the City and County of Londonderry at the Summer Assizes. It denounced the Catholic Committee as a body foreign to the Constitution, and declared the resolve to maintain at all costs the Constitution of 1688 and the Protestant ascendancy "against every attempt made to lessen or interfere with it by any body of men, let their union or numbers be what they may." The resolution stated that the jurymen "loved and highly respected their Catholic brethren," and recommended them "if they mean to look forward to further favours," to have nothing to do with committees or publications.

Tone replied on his own authority. He made sport of the Grand Jury's bad grammar, and said that the Jurymen were as well versed in the laws of language as they were in the law of liberty. Never was there a finer delineation of the mind of bigotry than is found in his reply to the Jury's final paragraph :

I confess I am ashamed of the contemptible meanness of your last paragraph, where you say "you love and highly respect your Catholic brethren." Gentlemen, you know it is not true that you love them ; it cannot be ; you cannot deceive yourselves, you cannot deceive the Catholics. Men who framed such resolutions as yours, the offspring of puzzled heads and contracted hearts, are incapable of feeling a true or genuine affection for their countrymen. It were more for your honour to have been uniform and decided enemies to the Catholics,

## *Tone the Emancipator*

and to have openly confessed it, than to have attempted to throw over your animosity this pitiful, equivocated, profession of regard.

It was one thing to defeat the Grand Juries in argument, but quite another to achieve in the teeth of their hostility, what Tone and Keogh designed—namely, a Catholic Convention at which the whole Catholic body would be represented and would state its claims. The landlords' Parliament already had relaxed the Penal Laws. The ban upon the Holy Mass had been raised, and the banishment of Bishops and Regular clergy had been repealed; Catholics no longer could be robbed of their horses for five pounds, and they were allowed to open schools and to hold land if they could get it; also, to be Attorneys and to sell their souls on equal terms with Protestants and to have as many apprentices in trade as they wished. In a word, Catholics now were free to breathe the air—what more could they want? Their petition for a moderate share of the franchise had been removed from the House with taunts. That was what landlords never would give to Papists. If, however, an all-Ireland Catholic Convention met and stated the claim afresh in the name of three million people, how could it be denied?

An effort was made to prove that the proposed Convention was seditious. Several of the Bishops were induced to oppose it, and nothing but Keogh's strong faith and persistence saved the undertaking. Tone drew up a statement of the case, with a plan

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

for the organisation, and laid this before two lawyers of great eminence, King's Counsel, with an enquiry on behalf of the Committee whether the law of the land had been contravened in any respect, or whether the parties concerned would subject themselves to pain or penalty if they proceeded? The answers of both these eminent lawyers were completely in favour of the Catholic enterprise. They were printed immediately in the newspapers and dispersed in handbills. This silenced the cry of treason.

Meanwhile, however, those Bishops who had opposed the holding of the Convention, actuated by timidity which they mistook for prudence, remained to be converted before the Convention could be held. For this purpose several missions were undertaken by different members of the Acting Committee in the provinces, at their own expense, in order to hold conference with the Bishops and with prominent laymen. These conferences secured at least the co-operation of some of the reluctant Bishops, and the neutrality of the rest.

Tone travelled with John Keogh to the North, and with Thomas Braughall to the West. We get a very vivid account of the state of Ireland at that time in the Journal which he kept during his travels, "converting Bishops."

## *Tone the Emancipator*

### § 3

*But I'll go down to Belfast  
To see that seaport gay . . .*

THE next act of the story is in Belfast again. It is July, 1792, and the town is *en fête*: flags are flying, drums rolling, armed men marching. This is not in celebration of the Boyne Water or dark Aughrim's field. No, the men of Belfast are parading in honour of the French nation, on the second anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille. Not July 12, but July 14 is the day that Belfast keeps in 1792 with such glad zest. The light of liberty glances in the eyes of this young town.

Nor, while it rejoices in the dawn of democratic freedom, is Belfast forgetful of the past. When the drums are silent in the street, a sweeter, older music throbs within the walls. The last harpers of the ancient nation are gathered together to a festival—a *feis* or *oireachtas*, such as the princes of olden times would hold when they came into their kingdoms. Merchants of this half-Scottish, dour, Northern city are the hosts now. Throughout the kingdom of Ireland their advertisements went inviting "performers on the Irish Harp" to assembly and to compete for premiums; every performer would receive something. There was a stir in old hearts when that news went forth. Down in Kerry, one O'Shea, nearly eighty years old, "an enthusiast in everything connected with Irish feeling," fain would go to the North, but "extreme debility" defeated

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

him. Others were luckier. Ten arrived safely and performed in the ballroom of the Exchange Rooms—standing on the site of the present Belfast Bank—a lofty, classical chamber fit to be graced by the doomed King of Versailles. Rich merchants' wives were carried there in their sedan chairs, and the old music sounded in the ears of the new fashion.

Six of the ten harpers were blind: one was a woman; one was a boy; most of them were very old. The most notable was Denis O'Hempsey of Magilligan, "the man with two heads," he was called, because of his swollen neck. He was close on a hundred years old, and had married four years earlier; he was to live nearly another twenty. With long, crooked nails, he played, in the ancient manner, and there ran in his head many a proud old story of the days when his father was lord of a townland. He had rambled much with his harp, and had played before Prince Charlie at Holyrood in '45, chanting as he played:

*I hope to see the day  
When the Whigs shall run away,  
And the king shall enjoy his own again.*

Aye, fitting it was that Denis O'Hempsey should be in Belfast now when crowns were tumbling; for he had played before the last true King that ever Europe knew!

Arthur O'Neill was there, the particular guest of Dr. MacDonnell, in whose home in the Glens the old harper had been tutor long ago. A grand old

## *Tone the Emancipator*

man was he, with a hundred romantic anecdotes of "Milesian gatherings" in Kerry, of the rambling harper who drank away the bounty of the King of Spain, of encounters in taverns, balls, festivities in Bumper Hall, and of houses where the claret stood broached and a bowl floating in it for every thirsty soul. He hated to be evened with common folk. The squires who were his hosts he called his friends. A snob?—not so; for the heart of him was as Irish as his name. He was "electrified" every day by Dr. MacDonnell, to make his rheumatic fingers supple; yet he hardly could be brought to play the old Milesian airs, echoes of the life of the princes, now long dead. "The dear, dear old Irish tunes" he called them, with tears coursing down his furrowed face. The harps of O'Hempsey and O'Neill may be seen to this day in the Belfast Museum, emblems of a vanished world.

For three days the festival lasted. The proud old musicians, with big silver buttons on their coats, plucked from the strings the planxties of O'Carolan, dead this half-century, and older, wilder music. A young Armagh man, Edward Bunting, church organist at St. Anne's and lodger in the house of the McCrackens, was there, noting down the rarest airs, and saving many from oblivion. The "Red Fox," "Garryowen," "Ceann Dubh Dilis," "Morning Star," "Twisting the Rope," "Ulagan Dubh-O," "Lord Mayo"—these and other airs are played, with their inimitable twists and subtle notes, the very voice of Gaeldom, voice of a

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

racial spirit that is older than all the thrones of Europe and strange to them all. What echoes from ancestral depths are stirred in the souls of those dour Belfast folk !

Dr. James MacDonnell, descendant of Colkitto and of the gigantic, heroic Alasdair, who swung at Cnocnanoss a sword that it took three other men to lift when he had been foully slain—Dr. MacDonnell was the chief mover in the festival, and entertained all the rugged old musicians to dinner in his Georgian mansion. Many thought that he planned the affair and got his merchant friends to subsidise it, in order that he might have a convenient excuse for other activities in July than the celebration of French freedom. He knew well what was going forward. Was not Thomas Russell his friend, employed by him to collect fossils for the geological museum and to act as librarian at the White Linen House ? MacDonnell was Gaelic-hearted, not with mere pride of ancestry, but with a quivering answer to the memory-haunted music of the strings ; he loved his people mightily, and fain would fill this growing Northern town with the Gaelic speech and music and ideas among which he had been reared on Antrim's shore. He was the *genius loci* of a Gaelic Belfast. Of Catholic stock, although a Protestant, he was for Catholic liberties. Let his spirit triumph, and Belfast is Ireland's not less than Galway by the Claddagh side ! He was born, however, to a tragic, tragic fate. In vain did he toil in peaceful fashion in those years that were rushing Ireland on to hideous strife. The

## *Tone the Emancipator*

years broke him. His sculptured image in the Museum to-day shows the face of a man of mighty intellect, nervous, tortured, wistfully smiling out of pain.

Into the festival hall Wolfe Tone came, proud of his Volunteer uniform. He loved music, but he was not attentive to these harping airs. "Strum, strum, and be hanged!" was his account of the long-drawn performance. Seven of the harpers were "execrable"; there were no musical discoveries that day, and he thought that all the good Irish airs must be recorded already. Out, then, impatiently, by Belfast's wynds to see the Blue Company march out to exercise, very lonely for Russell. He dines at MacDonnell's, and dubs the good doctor "the Hypocrite," because behind the safe exterior of this medical patron of music he detects a fellow-rebel.

### § 4

TONE had come to Belfast on deep political business. He had travelled up with Whitley Stokes, Fellow of Trinity College. They played "coaching whist" on the road, scoring according as they saw cats, pigs and so forth from the sides of the coach. "Very pretty amusement for a statesman and a philosopher." Good Stokes was left to fag in Belfast, while Tone supped with the old set and danced on the green in regimentals; but Stokes was content, in his strange mystical way, meditating on the time prophecies and getting Bunting to copy down the words of a love song from Monaghan, "The Green

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Woods of Truagh." Stokes studied the Irish language and wrote an Irish vocabulary; his son, Whitley Stokes the second, would be one of the giants of Gaelic scholarship, exploring the old glosses; while his daughter, Margaret, would be the opener-up of knowledge of Celtic art. A great-grandson would save ten thousand and a hundred thousand lives by his researches in tropical medicine, and would perish in 1926, a martyr to benevolent science. Tone knew that there was greatness in Stokes, but wrote "what he would highly, that he would holily." This best man whom Tone ever knew was not built for revolutionary days; he shrank from the means that men must use in war. Nevertheless, in his strange, detached way, he was a big force. He it was, perhaps, more than any other, who taught Tone the ideal of brotherhood among Irishmen. What Stokes conceived in his mystic thought, Tone sought now to realise in action.

Behold Tone, therefore, labouring with redoubled intensity to capture the Dissenters for Catholic emancipation, and all Ireland for unity. Declarations to be adopted on the anniversary of the Bastille are drawn up, argued over, answered letter by letter, at meeting after meeting. Doggedly Tone works to get Emancipation embodied. Mark, that he is not for a republic yet. Some men are ahead of him; but all that he seeks is freedom and unity under any form of government, and this is revolutionary enough.

Early on the 14th Tone is roused. He gets into

## Tone the Emancipator

his gallant uniform, breakfasts with the Catholics, and goes off to parade, mounted on a borrowed mare. Brigade is formed, there is a march to the green slopes of the Falls (*Fál*, a ditch), and so with colours flying and martial music, after the manœuvres, home the companies come to the town's centre and fire off a reverberating *feux-de-joie* around the Linen Hall, and the echoes roll as if from the fall of the Bastille. Belfast quivers with the report, and there is a great dinner at the Donegall Arms, where the weavers talk of the timidity of corps elsewhere and the need for moderation, but the resolutions, including emancipation, are carried after five minutes. "We have it hollow . . . Could have carried anything . . . Huzza, huzza! . . . Broke my glass thumping the table . . . God bless everybody again, generally."

Belfast has declared for Catholic liberty, through Tone's zeal.

### § 5

So home to Dublin comes Tone, with the leading figures in Belfast committed to all that he desired. The fall of the Bastille has brought Belfast's bigotry to its fall also. With Keogh, he rode out to Grattan, the retired patriot statesman, who gave wine to his guests and elegantly lamented that the Patriot Parliament to which he had exclaimed *Esto perpetua!* had shown itself no Parliament. Small hopes there! Then Tone spent days in folding papers for the Munster Bishops, and blessed their Lordships; dined in Drogheda with their Lordships of the Northern

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

province, "all very pleasant, sensible men," and went to bed early for once; and fared yet once more to the North that he loved so well.

He was warned not to visit Rathfriland; there was nearly a battle with the Peep-of-day-boys, or Protestant terrorists. "Horrible thing, these religious discords," he wrote; "certainly fomented by the aristocrats of this country." Having dined with the Catholic Bishops in Drogheda, he was refused a meal at the inn. Rostrevor he visited, riding by the shore. At Belfast again, he went out to see MacCracken's new ship, the "Hibernia"; it had an English crown on its shield, and all roared at MacCracken. Eighteen dissenting ministers from all parts of Ulster were reported *all* well disposed to Catholic liberty. One of them was challenged by someone in his congregation for his part on July 14th and offered to argue the point after meeting, but all gave in: all well. There were bad reports from Lisburn way.

Lord Annesley, who is by all accounts a mere brute . . . has a trick of knocking down the Catholics on the roads or wherever he meets them for his amusement; scoundrel! Why do they not knock him down again and be hanged?

At Newry, Tone was persuaded to delay for a while, in order to reconcile bickering parties of Catholics. This he did with his usual delightful persuasion, and then *entre deux vins*, proposed a United Irish society. The proposal was relished. Next day he went to Mass in the old chapel at the

## Tone the Emancipator

place where Newry's Catholics are buried. News came that day that the King of France had been dethroned. "Very glad of it," wrote Tone, "for now the people have fair play." It was August 19, 1792—the first breath of Republicanism was in the air.

### § 6

LOUIS had but four months to live. Poor, innocent, well-meaning heir of scandalous tyrants, he had proved utterly unable to bridle the turmoil which his sires had provoked. He had tried to fly the country with his Queen, the high-minded but bewildered Marie Antoinette; but he had made the supreme blunder of flying towards that frontier where the *émigrés*, the ejected landlords, were in arms against their people. The King would side with the foreign enemy, and the exiled native traitors: that was what the people saw in the flight. The royal coach was captured, and the royal family was carried back, the little Dauphin plaintively asking: "Mama, why are the people so angry?" Aye, why so angry? The answer is deep in history's bosom.

Back in Paris, Louis blundered still. He would not sign the decree against the migrant landlords, nor would he sign that which bound the clergy to take the civic oath; one refusal was foolish, the other noble. An allied army was mustering on the frontier, bent on the destruction of the French constitution and on the re-establishment of absolute monarchy,

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

the quenching of the flame of freedom, lest it spread. Paris grew wild with fear and anger. A new revolutionary body seized the Hôtel de Ville, headquarters of revolt; rioters stormed the royal stronghold at the Tuileries. Now, Louis, be strong! Give the order to resist; shoot down your subjects; you may drown the new revolt in blood if you will! Louis is too noble, too kindly. He calls off the resistance; the mob swarms in and slays his Swiss Guard. King and Queen are taken prisoners on this fateful August 10th and the monarchy is effectively ended, although it is not till September that the abolition will be formally decreed, in days of mad panic and massacre.

In August, at any rate, Europe knows that an ancient monarchy has been subverted by common folk. There is fear in every tyrant's bosom, but satisfaction wheresoever men like Tone face frankly the truth of humanity in bonds. So Tone rejoices at the shock to arbitrary power, and begins now, perhaps, to think of an Irish Republic. Louis has fallen, the French King of the French; why should George fall, the German King of the Irish? The violence of Paris distressed him—a "strange mixture of cruelty and sentiment."

When the Germans were driven out of France, there was an illumination by Dublin's citizens, which the Lord Mayor forbade. Tone regretted the challenge to authority, lest it be put down by violence, lead to riots and give the Government excuse to use its troops. However, all went off quietly. The

## *Tone the Emancipator*

troops marched, but were not used. Thus did the revolution in France begin to be reflected in Ireland.

In August the Catholic movement was so far advanced that a manifesto was drawn up, with Grattan's secret aid. The bringing of the Convention together now seemed to be assured, and Tone was in such high spirits that he began to discuss the question: would Catholic emancipation so allay the discontent of the country that the cause of general reform would suffer? Several of Tone's Protestant friends were telling him that the Catholics, once they were emancipated, would go over to the side of privilege, and so prevent that general advance towards democracy and national freedom which had been his first purpose. Keogh told Tone that if the Catholics got the franchise, they would do wonders for the cause of reform. Tone had been driven to doubt this, but he wrote in his journal these manly words:

However, I will go on—*their cause is just, independent of reform.*

### § 7

SUCH rapid progress was made through Keogh's faith and Wolfe Tone's zeal that there was a high spirit in the land by the Autumn. In October we find Tone discussing a plan for an all-Ireland Catholic Seminary for the education of the clergy—the plan that was to be realised in a few years by the foundation of the College at Maynooth. It was at this time

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

that the news came to Ireland that General Dumouriez had defeated the invaders of France and that the Republic was saved. "Huzza," wrote Tone, "If the French had been beaten, it was all over with us."

Right or wrong, success to the French; they are fighting our battles, and, if they fail, adieu to liberty in Ireland for one century.

Such was the extraordinary prophecy that Tone made at this time.

Tone was gratified now by the rapid progress of the political organisation. Tandy told him that the Volunteers had refused to parade around King William's statue on that monarch's birthday, and had ceased to wear Orange cockades. Some of the Volunteers met at an ordinary parade and wore green. This was the first time that November 4th had passed uncommemorated since the institution of the Volunteers.

At this time, amid his activities and convivial gatherings, Tone was surprised to find himself like the sun in the centre of the system, fixed, but everything about him moving in rapid rotation; perfectly sober, while everyone else was getting very drunk. "Fine doings," he wrote in his Journal, laughing at himself. Almost every night he went to bed "as drunk as a lord," and blessing everybody. He spoke Latin to a vision in the street, and found it to be a policeman. On November 5th he inspected the pantry lest the Catholics might have left explosives there—and got a mighty laugh out of the

## *Tone the Emancipator*

bigots. Aye, there was plenty of laughter and hard drinking in those days of boisterous progress; but behind the exuberance there was hard work.

We turn now from the picture which Tone draws of himself as a hard-drinking and humorous adventurer to the story of what he actually achieved; the laughing mask falls, and we see the features of the most determined Irish statesman of former days.

### § 8

AWAY back in 1688, during that brief spell of Catholic liberty, when James II was in Ireland, a Parliament had sat in Dublin in which the Catholic population was fully represented. Ever since the suppression of that Parliament by the victory of William of Orange the Catholic population had been denied all representation. Now, after the flight of one hundred years, the Catholics of Ireland came together in a representative gathering once more.

In December, 1792, the General Committee designed by Myles Keon, and brought into being by Keogh and Tone, met in Taylor's Hall, Back Lane, Dublin. We are reminded inevitably of the meeting of Dáil Eireann in January, 1919. Tone's son describes, in terms which we can recognise, the intoxication of the moment when the people, long subdued, met and asserted their right to liberty.

On the first moment of their meeting, when they looked around and reviewed their numbers and their strength, they at once discarded the

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

unworthy habits of deference and submission which their unhappy situation had so long compelled to assume. They felt and acted with the decision of men who deserved to be free, and with the dignity becoming the representatives of three millions of people. The spirit of liberty ran like the electric fire through every link of their chains, and before they were an hour convened the question of their emancipation was, in fact, decided.

The first act of the assembly was, unanimously, to elect to the chair Mr. Edward Byrne. The Committee then resolved that the meeting there constituted of representatives of the whole Catholic body of Ireland, together with peers and prelates, was the only organ competent to speak with the consent of the Catholic population. This was a bold claim, which some timid members opposed, only to be overborne. It was a just claim. Thanks to the energy of Wolfe Tone and Keogh, the hierarchy had been reconciled, and the daring policy had been pursued. Even Dr. Troy, the Archbishop of Dublin, who had shown himself unfriendly to the democratic cause, and was to live to excommunicate the patriots of '98, and to receive a pension from Dublin Castle, was brought to concur in what was done. He and Dr. Moylan, the Bishop of Cork, who afterwards was a chief advocate of the Legislative Union, were present at the meeting, and took a leading part in the passing of the most patriotic of the resolutions. These two prelates, although most of their lives were spent in opposition to the popular cause, were churchmen of great holiness, and Tone writes of them reverently.

## *Tone the Emancipator*

Having affirmed, then, that it was the only body competent to speak for the Catholics of Ireland, this Parliament of the unfranchised masses considered a petition to the Crown, speaking the grievances of the Catholic people and praying relief. A spirited member of the assembly, Luke Teeling of Lisburn, who represented the Catholics of County Antrim, and was a leading United Irishman, rose and made a bold speech. He objected to a timid paragraph in the proposed petition. His instructions from his constituency, he said, were to demand nothing short of total emancipation. It would be undignified in that body to give countenance to any fragment of that unjust and abominable system, the Penal Code. He therefore moved that a new paragraph be inserted, praying that the Catholics might be restored to the equal enjoyment of the blessing of the constitution.

Storms of applause greeted this brave speech. A member of great respectability, noted for his prudent bearing, D. T. O'Brien of Cork, rose and declared his entire concurrence in the spirit of the motion.

Only one member was found to speak against it. This member pointed to the magnitude of the demand and the power of the enemies of the Catholic people. "Are you," he asked the assembly, "prepared to support your claim?"

The whole assembly rose as one man, and, raising their right hands, answered: "We are."

"Then," said the speaker, J. Keogh, "I honour and rejoice in the spirit which must render your success infallible." He went on to say that it would

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

be well to adjourn for the night in order to show that such a weighty resolution was not carried in a mere fit of enthusiasm. "Let the demand be made deliberately."

This wise proposal was adopted. The assembly adjourned, and the members talked privately together. Delegates from the North and delegates from the far South exchanged views, and found themselves wholly at one.

On the morrow Luke Teeling spoke again. He said that something had been hinted about danger. He saw none. Violence was not the interest nor the wish of the meeting. "But," continued he, "we have been asked what will we do in case of a refusal? I will not, when I look around me, suppose a refusal. But, if such an event should take place, our duty is obvious. We are to tell our constituents; and they, not we, are to determine it. We will take the sense of the whole people, and see what they will have done."

Amid scenes of glad enthusiasm, the gathering unanimously adopted the demand for complete restitution of Catholic rights. Furthermore, it was agreed unanimously that every delegate should pledge himself to support, with his hand and signature, the strength of the petition.

After this, the decision was taken to carry the petition directly to the King. The usual method of delivery of petitions was to carry them to the Lord Lieutenant; but now, for the first time, it was decided to go over the head of Parliament and the

## *Tone the Emancipator*

Viceroy, and to approach the Crown direct. This, in effect, was an act of defiance to the Protestant ascendancy. The petition was written on vellum, signed by the Chairman, Edward Byrne, and countersigned by the Secretary, who was Wolfe Tone himself. Five gentlemen were appointed to carry the petition to London—Edward Byrne, John Keogh, Christopher Dillon Bellew, James Edward Devereux, and Sir Thomas French.

When the General Committee had dissolved, the delegates, with Tone as their Secretary, started out. There was no packet boat ready in the harbour of Dublin, and the wind was contrary. They decided to go by Scotland; and therefore passed through Belfast. In the cordial Northern city, they were met by eminent Protestants, who took their horses from the coach and towed them amid loud acclamations of the people, who sent them on their way with three cheers.

The deputation arrived in London and informed Dundas, the Secretary for the Home Department, that they were deputed to present to the King the humble petition of the Catholics of Ireland. The Minister tried to keep them from access to His Majesty until they should agree to present the petition through his hands. Here an eminent Irish Protestant Peer came to their aid—Lord Rawdon, later the Earl of Moira. This noble friend of the Catholic cause came forward and told the delegates that, if it became necessary, he as a peer would demand an audience from the King and be their

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

introducer. This broke down all the obstacles, and Dundas relaxed. The delegates were introduced at St. James's and came into the presence of George III.

Here is a picture for the imagination. In the splendid court of St. James's, where Henry Stuart was the rightful King, the Hanoverian George receives five Catholic gentlemen of Ireland, while the small, sallow Secretary lingers in the background—the founder of Irish Republicanism. George was pleased to say a few words to every one of the delegates in turn, and the formalities were conducted with as much grace as could be desired. "Thus had the Catholics, at length, through innumerable difficulties, forced their way to the foot of the Throne."

After a few days the deputation sought a reply to its demands. The Minister was interviewed, and unusually strong language was used to him. He was given to understand that the peace of Ireland depended on the measures which Government might adopt. The delegates were told at last that His Majesty was sensible of their loyalty, and that reform would be recommended in the next speech from the Throne.

This signified virtual victory. Ascendancy, in principle, was surrendered. Emancipation now was certain. The lesson of the French had been learnt. Government in London and Dublin had learnt from the fate of the King of France a wholesome fear of the risen people.

## CHAPTER IV

### INTO EXILE

#### § 1

HAS it not been said of the Irish people that they win the war but lose the peace? This was true in the year 1793. By their determined action in the Catholic Convention they had arrived at a strong enough position to secure their liberties. The victories of the French Republic had terrified Pitt, the statesman who held England in the hollow of his hands. It is known now that he wished the Irish Government to do all that was necessary to secure the attachment of the Catholics to the established Constitution. One of the most eminent men in English politics said: "Let Mr. Pitt send an order that it *shall* be done, and it will be done." The deputation that had gone to see George III, therefore, had but to present a categorical demand to the Parliament in Dublin to win complete emancipation. Alas!—a dispute which we can recognise from our own experience was enacted.

The sub-committee met, in order to draft the demand which should be laid before the Dublin Parliament. Its instructions from the Convention

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

were to demand complete emancipation. Instead of going forward with this demand, the sub-committee split! Timidity asserted itself. Hobart, the Irish Chief Secretary, soon learnt that the sub-committee, the Cabinet of the Catholics, was divided.

Keogh fell out with Wolfe Tone and managed to set up a smaller committee, which Tone called the Septemvirate. These seven timid men wished only to petition for the elective franchise, the right to carry arms and to be admitted to the magistracy and corporation; but were willing to waive altogether the demand for admission to Parliament. In opposition to this timid modified demand Tone had on his side Captain Sweetman and Richard McCormick, the stalwarts of the Catholic party; but he was unable to carry his way, and Keogh edged him out of his former position of influence. Meanwhile, the Government voted more and more troops to the colours, and set about the disarmament of the Volunteer companies. A little reign of terror was begun in Dublin.

When the Catholic leaders were divided thus, and the city was full of the bustle of war, the Ministers sent for the spokesmen of the Catholics and asked them whether they would be satisfied with the measure of relief that was embodied in a Bill that had been introduced. They went back to the sub-committee to get their answer. The men who thought with Wolfe Tone that nothing ought to be surrendered to threats were asked: "Were they ready to take the tented field?" This amounted to a

## *Into Exile*

threat of immediate and terrible war; but Tone knew well that it was bluster. An ambiguous answer was returned to the Minister; it sufficed to show him that the Catholics would accept a measure short of complete relief.

Accordingly, the incomplete measure was carried into law in April. Catholics were granted large series of liberties which they had not enjoyed for over a hundred years, but they were refused the right to enter Parliament. What they lost they lost through their own weakness. However, the principle, although not yet the substance, of the Protestant Ascendancy was destroyed by the Bill of 1793. The Catholic Committee was delighted, voted thanks to Tone and homage to George, and dissolved itself, declaring, "the Catholics of Ireland are now enabled to speak individually the language of freemen."

Admission to Parliament was certain to follow, sooner or later. It came more than thirty years later; but, if it had been demanded and secured at that time, there would have been no insurrection of 1798, no Parliamentary union, and none of the woes of the nineteenth century, the Famine and the Exodus, that followed from that Union. Meanwhile, however, Tone and Keogh had done this tremendous thing: they had taught the power of an organised people, and so had laid the foundation of that Catholic democracy of which O'Connell, in the next generation, was the exemplar to the world. In our own days of Communists and Dictators freemen may

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

look to O'Connell and beyond him to Tone for guidance.

### § 2

MARK how the progress of the revolution in France was the mainspring of events in Ireland.

It was the fall of the Monarchy under the fury of the risen people of France which caused Pitt to direct the Irish Government to listen with a more friendly ear to the Catholic demand. While the Catholic sub-committee was quarrelling over the terms of its victory, news came that the King of France had been beheaded. "I am sorry it was necessary," wrote Wolfe Tone, but Drennan, the theoretic Republican, rejoiced. A few days later France declared war on Great Britain and Holland, and, within a few weeks, almost the whole of the Powers of Europe were ranged in arms against the Republic. A world war broke out. The very circumstances that made the ruling power in London willing to grant Catholics all that they could demand were used in Dublin as the excuse for the menaces that frightened Keogh and his party. The most gallant champion of the Catholic Cause in Parliament, Grattan himself, heartily supported the military measures and the suppression of the Volunteers.

"Grattan dreads the people," wrote Wolfe Tone.

An inferior measure of relief, therefore, was carried into law. Tone granted that the relief was "solid and substantial," but the failure of the Catholics—that is, the body of the Irish nation—to secure full

## *Into Exile*

liberty when it was within easy grasp, drove him almost to despair. It was now that he began to turn his thoughts seriously to Republicanism. He watched the disarmament of the Volunteers and the passing of the Convention Act, which was designed to prevent any further free assembly of the representatives of the Catholic people. Many cunning measures were used to nullify even the liberties that had been yielded. "The same influence," he wrote, "of which Catholics complain, has been, ever since the passing of the Bill, exerted to prevent their reaping any benefit even from the privileges to which, by law, they are now capable."

The world seemed to have gone mad. Dumouriez, who had won for democracy the great victory of Jemappes a few months earlier, now was defeated and went over to the Austrians. The Republic saw itself deserted in the face of an almost overwhelming force, and attacked at home by fierce revolts, the chief of which was that of La Vendée. Danton cried for desperate measures, and the Committee of Public Safety was set up with nine members to exert dictatorial power. The chiefs of the Republic turned on one another, and day by day the tumbrils rolled their loads of victims to the guillotine. Great France was in panic. The shoeless mob rioted for bread. Never in history before was such a festival of cruelty beheld as followed when the revolutionary tribunal sought to maintain authority by a ceaseless sacrifice of good and bad. At Nantes, prisoners were drowned in bulk. In Paris the widowed Queen was

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

beheaded, to be followed to the bloody scaffold by scores of those who had desired her death.

The very foundations of reason and morality seemed to be shaken. When France was maddest, its chief Cathedral was turned ironically into a Temple of Reason, and the altar profaned by horrible rites. The Christian Sunday was abolished, and the memory of the Incarnation was banished from the dating of the years. There were staggering reactions, in one of which Danton himself fell, to be beheaded like his victims before him. The ghastly fanatic, Robespierre, the giant of the terror, a man of Norman-Irish descent, pursued his way towards what he regarded as the rule of reason and virtue with the ruthless logic of a madman, only to fall himself in time to the fury of the mob, and to go to the guillotine in miserable humiliation.

Of these things the world heard and shuddered. By dint of sheer desperation the Republic hewed its way through all opposition. Carnot, called the Organiser of Victory, sent armies to the frontiers, and restored the military fortunes of the threatened French people.

In La Vendée there was war within France itself. The people of La Vendée, the Celtic-speaking race of Bretons, were devout Catholics and resented the irreligious policy of Paris. They rose in defence of their altars, and here was seen one of the dreadful ironies of history; that one Catholic people must save its liberties by revolt against a Government which indirectly had won liberty for the Catholics

## *Into Exile*

of another land. For months the dreadful struggle went on, and the Republic no sooner had asserted its power in one part of Brittany than a fresh revolt broke out.

At last the rebellion was quelled by General Lazare Hoche, the best soldier that the Republic yet had produced. Hoche fought in that wild high-land country with skill, determination and humanity. England poured in men and ships and arms in aid of the insurgents, not that the oppressor of the Catholics of Ireland bled at heart for the Catholics of Brittany, but that these insurgents were a weakness to France. The triumph of Hoche over the attacking English forces made him the most popular of the French Generals among those of the Irish people whose sympathies were with the Republic. His victory was disfigured by the slaughter of prisoners, including the Bishop of Dôl, who had landed, sword in hand, and other clergy; but this slaughter was carried out by the rulers of the Terror in Paris against the desire of Hoche himself. His own record is honourable, and he is venerated to the present day by French patriots. He was doomed to die within a few years, and thus the Revolution lost a mind that was greater than that of the rising Buonaparte. This survey, however, has carried us somewhat ahead of our story; for the victory of Hoche in Quiberon did not take place until the middle of the year 1795.

Throughout the year 1793, the year of Wolfe Tone's disappointment, and far into 1794, the

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Reign of Terror lasted. It was during the Terror that the Committee of Public Safety thrust the revolution into Ireland itself. Its agent was the Rev. William Jackson, an Irish Anglican clergyman, who appears in Ireland early in 1794. Now followed one of the most dramatic events of this terrible time.

### § 3

EARLY in 1794 the barrister Leonard McNally, the Judas of the United Irishmen, told Wolfe Tone that there was a gentleman in town who had arrived recently from France, and was, he thought, in the confidence of the revolutionary leaders. Tone was eager to meet this person in order to learn some account of the state of France at first hand. He met the stranger, and there was a remarkable talk. The gentleman said that, if the state of Ireland were known to the people of France, they would afford every help to enable the Irish to assert their independence.

I said that it would be a most severe and grievous remedy for our abuses, but that I saw no other (writes Tone); for that liberty was shackled in Ireland by such a variety of ways that the people had no way left to expose their sentiments but by open resistance. That, in the alternative between that and unconditional submission, many would differ; but that I was one of those who, seeing all the danger and horror of a contest, still thought the independence of the country an object worth risking all to obtain, satisfied, as I was, that,

## *Into Exile*

until that were secured, Ireland would never attain to her natural state of power and opulence and glory.

The stranger said: "If this were known in France, assistance might certainly be obtained."

Tone was suspicious of the stranger, doubting that he might be an English spy, but he grew so much absorbed in the conversation about the possibility of help from France, that he indiscreetly set down on paper his opinion of the possibility of an Irish rising on the side of a French invasion. He even went so far as to say that, but for his circumstances of poverty, he would be willing to go to France to lay the state of Ireland before authorities there.

This mysterious stranger was Mr. Jackson. He was a clergyman of Irish descent, fanatical and ill-balanced. When he was travelling from France to Ireland, in order to seek contact with the determined men of the United Irish leaders, he disclosed his mission to a friend, who, in turn, secretly conveyed the story to Pitt. By Pitt's directions, this friend went with Jackson to Ireland, and thus was able to inform his master of all secret conversations, such as that with Tone.

In April Jackson was arrested. Hamilton Rowan, Tone's friend, who had striven so gallantly for the Irish cause and for Catholic emancipation, also was arrested, but escaped from prison and got away to France, despite a reward of £1,000 upon his head, of which the fishermen who carried him over the sea were well aware. Wolfe Tone did not know

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

how far he himself stood in danger, but he decided to stand his ground in Ireland. An anxious time followed. Raids were made on the United Irishmen—raids that were brought on them, it may be said, by the injudicious violence of language used by the theoretical revolutionaries.

The natural result was that the United Irishmen now became a secret society. Drennan, who had advocated secrecy when secrecy was not necessary, now dissociated himself from the body. The Constitution of the society was changed. It was given a form suited for revolutionary action, and its statement of purpose was changed to suit those who were determined to pursue a Republic. By the middle of 1795, therefore, a secret, military and Republican revolutionary organisation was in full being throughout the land.

During this year, moreover, Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled to England. This Viceroy was known to be a friend of emancipation, and his recall signified the determination of London, encouraged by Irish divisions, to pursue a renewed policy of enmity to the popular claim. The Viceroy sent in his place was destined to preside over a very martyrdom of the Irish people. Towards that awful consummation all that was inflammable in the country was being prepared.

This passage in the preparation of the land for woe closed with the death of Jackson. He had been kept in prison for twelve months, and now was put on his trial for high treason. Curran defended

## *Into Exile*

him, and the friend who had come with him to Ireland by Pitt's instructions appeared as a witness for the Crown. The unfortunate envoy was found guilty, and, on April 30th, 1795, he was brought up for sentence.

"We have deceived the Senate," he whispered to one of his counsel as he entered the dock.

He was asked if he had anything to say why sentence should not be passed upon him, and it was while a legal argument was ensuing that he fell forward against the bar and was found to be dead. He had drunk arsenic in his tea at breakfast.

### § 4

THE conviction of Jackson for high treason finished Wolfe Tone's political career in Ireland. The spy who had come to Ireland with Jackson could give evidence, if required, that Tone had discussed the chance of a French invasion. Therefore, the Government was able instantly to silence Tone by a sentence of imprisonment, if not of death, if he should continue to embarrass it by such action as his part in the Catholic Convention. He was in instant danger, but was spared arrest, possibly because the Government thought it well not to seem to persecute the Protestant agent of the Catholic body, and possibly because of Tone's personal popularity with many men in high places such as Lord Kilwarden and Sir Jonah Barrington. He safeguarded himself to some extent by conveying to the administration his readiness to go into voluntary exile. On the day

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

of Jackson's trial he walked up and down the most public streets of Dublin, and went into well-frequented coffee houses and his bookseller's shop. He was not molested, and he prepared to sail to America.

During those weeks of intrigue his enemies endeavoured to persuade the Catholic leaders to disown Tone as a subversive revolutionary. The Catholics nobly refused. Never did Tone forget their splendid loyalty to him in the hour of his threatened disgrace. Again and again he recurred to it, and he spoke of it with gratitude years later in his very dying speech.

Love for his country and his countrymen had mounted so high that the last days in Ireland were anxious and bitter. He went over to Rathfarnham to see Thomas Addis Emmet, and talked there with Emmet and Russell in a little study at the foot of the lawn, where they pledged themselves to meet again if ever they lived to see their country free. He told these faithful friends that he regarded his compromise with the Government to extend no farther than the banks of the Delaware, and that the moment he landed he would count himself free to follow any plan which might suggest itself for the emancipation of Ireland. Both Russell and Emmet agreed with him in this principle, and he then explained that his purpose on arrival in Philadelphia was to wait on the French Minister and to speak of recommendation to the Government of the French Republic.

## *Into Exile*

Tone also visited John Keogh at Mount Jerome ; for under the terror and the disappointment these old colleagues were friends again. Keogh, though a man cautious even to timidity, wished for French aid. There in his garden at Mount Jerome he and MacCormick, the two principal Catholic leaders, laid positive injunctions upon Tone to leave nothing unattempted to force his way to France and to lay the situation of the Irish people before the Republican Government. They showed themselves strongly concerned for Tone's welfare, and secured for him a grant of £300, in addition to the arrears due from the Catholic body.

In May, with his wife and three children, with his books and with about seven hundred pounds, Tone set out for America by way of Belfast—ever cordial Belfast, which Matilda Tone now knew for the first time, and instantly loved.

The party spent nearly a month in the North. Their friends in Belfast spared no pains to make those summer days as agreeable as possible. Once they pitched a tent in the Deer Park, and a party of thirty patriots dined and spent a delicious day. On another day a number of them climbed Cave Hill to the superb summit, which is called MacArt's Fort. There, on the height which looks forth over the sublime Northern landscape, with a view of five vast loughs, and of the gleaming channel with the hills of Scotland rising against the distant sky, these men took the solemn obligation: "Never to desist in our efforts until we have subverted the

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

authority of England over our country and asserted our independence."

Of those who took that pledge three died for their country, and two were driven into exile ; neither the names nor the fates of the others are recorded.

The most agreeable day of all was spent in an excursion through bonny Ram's Island, a lovely spot in Lough Neagh ; those who were there pledged themselves in whatever quarter they might find themselves always to commemorate the anniversary of that eleventh of June.

In the evening the picnic party returned to Belfast, and there was a final gathering of farewell. Russell, Neilson, and the MacCrackens were there, and the MacCrackens' friend Bunting was asked to play music. Did some prophetic knowledge tell him that Russell, MacCracken and Tone were doomed men ? At any rate, the air that he chose to play was that entitled "*Sgaradh na g-Compánach*," or "The Parting of Companions." It was a famous air, which Bunting had recorded, perhaps, at the Harpers' Festival three years before, when Tone was in Belfast in so much happier circumstances. The lines of the song which ran to the air might be translated fairly closely as follows :

*Once in this town dwelt I, well respected by the  
neighbours ;*

*It lasted for a little while, and I was out of favour ;  
No two things are worse to tell in all the world—  
abandoned—*

*The dying out of faithful friends, the parting of  
companions.*

## *Into Exile*

As the plaintive air sounded through the chamber in Belfast, Tone's wife, that brave woman who bore untold hardships without complaint, suddenly burst into tears and ran from the room.

Two days later a ship floated down Belfast Lough bearing to exile and immortal fame Wolfe Tone and those he loved.

### § 5

PHILADELPHIA in those days was described as a mere country town in comparison with Cork, and its merchants had no such mansions as the merchants of Ireland. It was a very dear town in which to live—much dearer than London or Paris. Tone did not like it, but he met there Irish exiles cast on the American shore by the recent crisis. He sat down and wrote home to Tom Russell, describing the six weeks voyage upon the Atlantic, during which his vessel had been stopped by three British frigates; fifty hands had been seized and impressed, and Tone himself had escaped this common fate of Irishmen only after one of the lieutenants had ordered him into the boat.

Tone speedily made it his business to wait on the French Minister with his credentials, the chief of which were the two Votes of Thanks of the Catholics and his certificate of admission into the Belfast Volunteers. The Minister in bad English, and Tone in bad French, made a shift to understand each other, and Tone set forth the case of Ireland. The Minister did not encourage his hopes of French

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

assistance, but he sought the liberation of Matthew Tone, who was then a prisoner under suspicion in France.

Tone left the Minister, feeling gravely cast down. He now bent his mind to a permanent settlement in America.

Two miles from Princetown he bought a plantation of one hundred and eighty acres, half of it under timber. He fitted up his study and prepared to settle down as an American farmer. He found the Jersey men poor farmers. With his usual unquenchable zeal for action, he prepared to organise a farmer's club which would buy an agricultural library and import seeds from Europe for experiment; he purposed also to introduce fairs and markets on the Irish system. He wrote home to Russell for a supply of whin seed, and bade his friend gather the seed from the hedges around Belfast. It would be interesting to know whether the dull American landscape is brightened anywhere to-day by golden gorse bloom which descends from seeds that Thomas Russell gathered in Ireland for his friend! Tone, observe, knew that whins can be ground into an excellent fodder.

Tone resolved never to assume American rights of citizenship. "I am an inflexible Irishman," he wrote, "and I will never by any act of mine divest myself of that name." He recalled an argument that he had had with Russell long ago, when Russell had contended that all countries were alike to a well-regulated mind.

## *Into Exile*

I do not wish you so ill as to desire you to be convinced of the contrary by such an experiment as I am now making, but, if it ever should be your lot, I believe you will feel the irresistible affection by which a man is drawn to his native soil and how flat and uninteresting the politics and parties of other countries appear . . . out of Ireland I never shall be happy.

In like manner Tone's wife wrote home to Belfast. "Do you know," she wrote, "I dreamed the other night I was gone home and in North Street . . . when I woke myself crying in an ecstasy I'm in Ireland, I'm in Ireland, I'm in Belfast, and I cried in good earnest to find I was not."

### § 6

THUS half a year passed in sad resignation to exile in America for life. Then suddenly came letters from both the Catholic and the Republican parties in Ireland in which, says Tone :

They proceeded to acquaint me that the state of the public mind in Ireland was advancing to Republicanism faster than even I could believe ; and they pressed me in the strongest manner to fulfil the engagement I had made with them at my departure, and to move Heaven and earth to force my way to the French Government in order to supplicate their assistance.

On September 3rd, 1795, John Keogh wrote a remarkable letter to Tone. He reported the state of Catholic opinion. The people, he said, now

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

suspected the patriotism of their former leaders, and "would not go for half measures; their views are extended since your departure." Then he called to mind the conversation that he had with Tone in the garden at Mount Jerome, when, before his departure, Tone had spoken of his desire to go from America to France to seek the aid of the Republic. "Remember, then, dear Tone, the many hours we spent in the garden in your favourite walk. That these conversations impress your mind I can never doubt. How often have we anticipated *your return* to your friends—to your country? Those ideas can never be relinquished. *I am sanguine in my expectations to see you and your family live in the country we love . . .* do not wonder if I should wish ardently that you may arrange your affairs, so as to *return to us, and, if not soon, it may be too late for me,* perhaps even for yourself. . . . *Once more, Tone, remember and execute your garden conversation.*"

If the letter should fall into enemy hands, these words would convey no dangerous meaning; but to Tone they were an explicit call to revolutionary action. For us, they are the evidence that Tone's fate-laden decision was taken at the summons of the chief Catholic leader: that Catholic desperation caused the final appeal to the Republic.

Money was sent to enable Tone to carry out the momentous enterprise. He received the summons and the funds about the end of November, hurried to Philadelphia, consulted the Minister again, and now got letters to the Republican Government.

## *Into Exile*

Back to Princeton he went, in mixed exultation and anxiety, bearing a few presents for his wife and sister and "our dear little babies." The brave, true women supported him beyond his expectations, although Mrs. Tone had the greatest of reasons to desire that her husband should remain with her at that time.

In December Tone bade farewell. On the first of January, 1796, he sailed from Sandy Hook. He was a month at sea in heavy blowy weather, often under a close reefed mizen stay-sail. On St. Brigid's day the vessel landed at Havre de Grace. Tone took off his clothes for the first time in a month and slept in France in a superb crimson damask bed.

## CHAPTER V

### “THE FRENCH ARE ON THE SEA”

#### § 1

BEHOLD now in France one James Smith, an American merchant. Such is the disguise under which Wolfe Tone set about his tremendous task.

France, like Ireland, has a mysterious magnetism in the very soil that electrifies those who land upon its shores for the first time. This is heroic and romantic Gaul, the land of the wheatfields and the vineyards, but now also the land of the Revolution. Every common sight is curious. On the Sunday after his landing James Smith walked out to see what could be seen. Mass was being celebrated and many people were present—it is notable how he always enquired about the Mass, and often heard it, a practice that he had acquired during his work for the Catholic Committee. James Smith noted that the citizens of the Republic everywhere were extremely decorous and proper. “The servants at the hotel remarkably civil, attentive and humble, which I mention because I have been so often tormented with blockheads arguing against liberty

## “ *The French are on the Sea* ”

and equality as subversive of all subordination. I have nowhere met with more respectful attendance than here nor better entertainment—all for five shillings a day.”

He travelled to Paris in a choice carriage lined with blue velvet, with five horses, and a postillion in top-hat and jacket. Travel was much cheaper than in England. The country he found flat and amazingly populous; there were no enclosures; all the country open, an orchard to every cottage beside rows of apple trees along the roadside. “ *Why might it not be so in other countries whose climates differ so very little from that of Normandy?* ” The vast fields of wheat delighted him. “ It is impossible to conceive higher cultivation.” In 150 miles of travel he did not see as many acres left uncultivated; the very orchards were under grain, all the mills were at work. It was evident that John Bull’s hope to starve the Republic during the war was vain. The farmer in this traveller from America rejoiced, and resolved to work to make Ireland a thorough-going tillage country in the same manner.

From his first evening in France this traveller seldom missed an opportunity to attend the theatre. Always the theatre had been his chief of pleasures, and now he enjoyed feasts of opera night after night. The performances were the ancient Greek dramas transformed in the French fashion into splendid classical spectacles. Tone described many of these performances :

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

The ballet, *L'Offrande à la Liberté*, most superb. In the centre of the stage was the statue of Liberty, with an altar blazing before her. She was surrounded by the characters in the opera in their beautiful Grecian habits. The civic air, *Veillons au salut de l'Empire*, was sung by a powerful bass and received with transports by the audience. Whenever the word *esclavage* was uttered, it operated like an electric shock. The Marseillaise hymn was next sung, and produced still greater enthusiasm. At the words *Aux armes, citoyens!* all the performers drew their swords, and the females turned to them as encouraging them.

Before the last verse was a short pause, the time of the music was changed to a very slow movement, and supported only by the flutes and oboes; a beautiful procession entered; first, little children like cherubs with baskets of flowers; these were followed by boys a little more advanced, with white javelins in their hands. Then came two beautiful female figures, moving like the Graces themselves, with torches blazing; these were followed by four negroes, characteristically dressed and carrying two tripods between them, which they placed respectively on each side of the altar.

The little children approached the altar with their baskets of flowers, which they laid before the goddess; the rest in their turn succeeded and hung the altar and the base of the statue with garlands and wreaths of roses; the two females with the torches approached the tripods, and, just touching them with the fire, they kindled into a blaze. The whole then knelt down, and all this was executed in cadence to the music, and with a grace beyond description.

## “ The French are on the Sea ”

It was followed by an incident which crowned the whole, and rendered it indeed a spectacle worthy of a free Republic; at the words *Aux armes, citoyens!* the music changed to a martial style, the performers sprung on their feet, and in an instant the stage was filled with National Guards, who rushed in with bayonets fixed and sabres drawn and their tricolour flag flying. It would be impossible to describe the effect of this. I never knew what enthusiasm was beforehand, and what heightened it beyond all conception was that the men I saw before me were not hirelings acting a part; they were what they seemed, French citizens flying to arms to rescue their country from slavery.

It was a regular thing in the stage performances of the time for military operations to take the place of a dance. The house went wild when actors dressed as troops of the Republic formed and marched and counter-marched and saluted. Tone's martial spirit responded with the French audiences when he saw the opera "*Serment de la Liberté*," in which the maidens of the Republic armed the young men with swords and pointed to the altar of liberty, every youth kissing the hilt and saluting the maid who had armed him.

Tone was so much moved that he remarked: "I do not know what Mr. Burke may think, but I humbly conceive from the effect all this had on the audience that the age of chivalry is not gone in France." Again: "I am more and more satisfied

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

of the powerful effect of public spectacles," he wrote, "properly directed, in the course of a revolution."

One thing only was lacking to complete his enjoyment—the presence of his wife and Thomas Russell. Again and again he lamented that he had none of his dear ones present with whom to share his pleasures.

He saw the Grenadiers of the Republic marching through the capital. They closely resembled, he said, two companies of Irish Volunteers as he had seen them in his youth. They were the finest manhood of the nation, their uniforms blue, faced white, with red tape on cuffs and red shoulder knots, plumes on hats, white belts, vests and breeches, black socks and gaiters. As for the women of France, he wondered that they all chose to wear wigs over their notably fine hair. "Damn their wigs: I wish they were all burnt; but it is the fashion, and that is a solution for every absurdity."

Many of the young men whom Wolfe Tone saw lacked an arm or a leg, limbs sacrificed for the liberty of their country. "*I could worship them.*" France was a nation in arms, a splendid sight in his eyes, "and I think I know a country that, for its extent and population, could produce as many and as fine fellows as France."

Such were Wolfe Tone's first impressions of the great nation, newly purged by the horrors of war and revolution, and now struggling on its way towards freedom and peace. He dined in a tavern in a room walled with gilded mirrors. "There went

## “ *The French are on the Sea* ”

much misery of the people to the painting and ornamenting of that room, and now it is open to everyone to dine for three shillings.” He saw the almost incredible splendour of the palace at Versailles, and wondered that all this could be built for mortal man ; it chilled his homely spirit. He pitied the dead victims of the Terror and those survivors of the *noblesse* who were obliged to serve the nation in the ranks of equality ; but the stern realist in him knew that there was no way to peace for France save by persistence in its present course until the Republic was secure. Reaction would mean chaos and revenge. When horrors afflict a land in revolution, they condemn the fallen *régime* under which angry passions were pent up. The guilt of the Terror rested on the order that had so debased men that the Terror was possible.

The same was true of the morals of France under the new rulers. Very soon Tone discovered that many, if not most, of the chiefs of the new order were evil-living men. His Irish fastidiousness was revolted ; but he observed that these Republican profligates had taken over exactly what was left to them by those whom they had overthrown. He found Liége a city of infamy.

All this made him homesick for Ireland. “ I confess I am so much of an aristocrat,” he wrote, that he did not glory in the state of affairs which so many of the Republican deputies seemed to find acceptable. “ I have, perhaps, extravagant notions of delicacy and refinement,” he said, “ and their

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

manners here are horribly dissolute, by all I can learn. Give me my own country people." We find thus that what he saw in revolutionary France sobered his revolutionary enthusiasm.

### § 2

TONE flung himself with impetuous energy into the work that he had undertaken. He lost no time in waiting on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who turned him over to Nicholas Madgett, a Kinsale man who stood high in the service of the Republic and had been working for years to bring about French action in Ireland. Tone does not seem to have known that Madgett was then an who sent Jackson to Ireland on his ill-fated mission. At the very first conversation, Madgett showed that he was well informed about Tone's services to the Catholic body and his standing in Ireland. He spoke enthusiastically of what the French Executive would do. There would be ships, any quantity of arms that was wanted, and as much money as was needed. The French Government believed that until Ireland was separated from England, England was invulnerable. They were willing to conclude a treaty offensive and defensive with Ireland, and a treaty of Commerce on a footing of equality. Madgett himself was so full of hope that he wished to demand Jamaica for Ireland by way of indemnity.

To this last hope Tone drily replied: "I wish we had Ireland without Jamaica."

## *“ The French are on the Sea ”*

Every day Tone called on Madgett. After about a week, which was full of high promise and hope, he found Madgett one day “in the horrors.” The Republican Ministry had told him that a large fleet could not be risked, that only two thousand troops could be spared, and that neither of the generals who had been desired could go upon the expedition. This shocked Tone. He declared that he was prepared for himself to go with only a corporal’s guard, if needs be, but it would be disastrous to attempt a landing on a small scale. The people of Ireland never would move unless a large army was sent; a small rising would only result in the destruction of a few wretches, “and we have had already but too much of that in Ireland.”

Now began the long struggle in which the obscure James Smith laboured to move the great French Republic. He had thought out his plan perfectly. He wanted fifteen or twenty thousand men who could land in Ireland and seize the capital at the first blow. If the expedition could not be done on this bold scale, he must have at least five thousand men with arms for a vastly greater number who would be recruited from the people of Ireland. A general of the first rank must go. Pichegru and Jourdan were those in whom he had most faith, but if these two now occupied on their campaign on the frontiers of the Republic could not be spared, let Hoche go—he was well and favourably known in Ireland ever since his historic defeat of the French Royalists whom the English had landed at Quiberon.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

The landing, then, must be made in the North—as near Belfast as possible. The North was best organised and most populous; moreover, the force which rose in the cause of freedom would belong to both of the religions in Ireland, so that the revolution from the start would be truly national. The army would endeavour to seize all Ulster at a blow, and particularly to hold the Fewes mountains, north of Dundalk—those splendid and historic mountains which Tone had admired so often during his journeys to the North. Thus entrenched in almost impregnable positions, the army would maintain the Republic until fresh forces could be landed to complete the war of freedom.

During this month of February, 1796, Tone drew up two memorials on the state of Ireland which he laid before the French Government. He argued that the interest of the English nation and the French Republic were “diametrically opposite.” England had profited by the Continental war by the building up of an immense fleet and the attainment of a general command of the seas. It surely was to the interest of all Europe that the possession by one nation of the commerce of the whole world should be corrected. That could be done, however, by no means save the separation of Ireland from Great Britain. British dominion of the seas was vulnerable in Ireland, *and in Ireland only*. A free Republic in Ireland would attach to France a grateful ally, and would cut off from England that vast reservoir of recruits which gave her two-thirds

## *“ The French are on the Sea ”*

of her seamen in the ships of war, and upwards of two hundred thousand soldiers.

Tone then surveyed the condition of the people of Ireland, who numbered about 4,500,000 persons. Of these the Protestants (meaning the adherents of the State church) were almost entirely of English origin. They numbered only one-tenth of the people of Ireland and yet owned almost the whole of the landed property. “ This property had been acquired by the most unjust means, by plunder and confiscation during the repeated wars, and by the operation of laws framed to degrade and destroy the Catholics, the natives of the country.” The Dissenters were about twice as numerous; they occupied the province of Ulster, and were mostly engaged in trade and manufacture. A continual animosity had existed between them and the Catholic natives of the country, which was “ diligently cultivated and provoked by the Protestant aristocracy, the partisans of England, who saw in the feuds of the other two great sects their own protection and security.”

The French Revolution, Tone said, had produced a happy revulsion of opinion among the enlightened Dissenters. They had discovered that they never could prosper while their Catholic fellow countrymen were slaves, and they had sought out the leaders of the Catholics in order to arrive at a reconciliation. Their gesture of friendship had been hailed with eagerness by the Catholic people, and desperate efforts of the English Government and the Protestant

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

aristocracy to revive the ancient animosity between these two peoples and failed.

“I now come to the third party in Ireland: *the Catholics, who are the Irish, properly so called,*” Tone wrote, and he went on to describe the piteous state of the old nation, robbed of property and land, reduced to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, living in wretched hovels and wringing from continual toil a merciless tribute which the Protestant aristocracy exacted. Their food was potatoes, they tasted meat but once a year, and they drank water; if any attempted to cultivate a spot of ground as farmers, they were compelled to pay tithes to the clergy of the Protestant religion, “which they neither professed nor believed.”

Again he declared that the Catholics, numbering 3,000,000, were “the Irish properly so called.” They were bold and actively prepared for any change since no change could make their situation worse. For five years they had fixed their eyes most earnestly on France, “whom they look upon, with great justice, as fighting their battles, as well as those of all mankind who are oppressed.” Of this class Tone added: “I will stake my head there are 500,000 men who would fly to the standard of the Republic if they saw it once displayed in the cause of liberty and their country.”

## “ The French are on the Sea ”

### § 3

TIME and again thus Tone stated his case and sent forward his memorial, but time and again he received disappointing replies. He began to suspect that Madgett had no such power in the Republic as he pretended ; he found him slow and blundering, and guessed that he was ambitious to be regarded as the chief and only agent of the Irish cause.

Tone therefore determined to force his way to the Directory itself—to lay his cause before the governors of France without an intermediary. As he took this decision he wrote in his diary : “ *I here solemnly call God to witness the purity of my motive and the uprightness with which I shall endeavour to carry myself through this most arduous and difficult situation.* ” He pushed his way to the presence of Carnot himself, the Organiser of Victory.

Here was a momentous interview. Citizen Carnot was the most remarkable man in the Republic at that time. He was an engineer who had served in the army under the old *régime* : a convinced Republican, unlike many other brilliant figures of the revolution who were mere adventurers. Carnot came to the salvation of the Republic in '93, when the traitor Dumouriez had sold the cause. He restored discipline in the army, became a member of the Committee of Public Safety, and signed those desperate decrees by which, during the Reign of Terror, the Republic smashed its way to safety. He was no more than a captain in rank when he organised

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

victory in fourteen armies. Now, when Tone came into his presence, he was President of the Directory, a rank which Tone describes as the highest that any man could possess on earth. Behold then this remarkable citizen Carnot, in white satin and a crimson robe richly embroidered, to whom at the Luxembourg comes this stranger who tells him that he had been Secretary and agent to the Catholics of Ireland, and was in possession of the sentiments of the Dissenters; that he wished to communicate with him on the actual state of Ireland.

Carnot lent ear to this bold approach. Tone poured forth all that he had to say upon the case. The sentiments of all those Catholics and Dissenters, he said, were unanimous in favour of France, and eager to throw off the yoke of England.

The Organiser of Victory asked military questions. "Might it not be necessary to land at Cork?"

"By which," says Tone, "I perceived he had been organising a little already in his own mind."

Carnot spoke cautiously and drew out all that was in Tone's mind. At the end, and only then, he asked for the name of this strange Irish visitor; and Tone gave the name of James Smith, American citizen, with Theobald Wolfe Tone written below it.

Back then to work Tone went, writing out his military memoranda. He found that the Directory was playing with a plan for the invasion of England. Against this he argued strongly. It was just as impossible for France to conquer England as for England to conquer France. War could not be

## “ *The French are on the Sea* ”

carried on successfully in a country where every man's hand was against you. A French army, therefore, would fail in England as surely as it would succeed in Ireland, where the people would be on its side.

The French Minister, De la Croix, discussed plans with him. *How would the Revolutionary Ireland be governed?*

Tone said that the Catholic Committee and the United Irishmen of Belfast between them could frame a provisional government, although he was privately in favour of a military government at the outset. The Catholic Committee already was a complete representation of the mass of the nation, and the Dissenters were so disciplined that they could immediately choose delegates to be added to that Assembly. Together, these bodies would represent nine-tenths of the people.

Asked by another of the French agents what form of Government would be acceptable in Ireland, Tone answered that he had no doubt that a Republic in union with France would be set up. That was his own wish and the wish of all men with whom he co-operated, such as the Catholic leaders and the United Irishmen.

In these discussions Tone revealed a statesmanlike spirit. One of those who talked with him proposed a general abolition of property. Tone repudiated the proposal, which he regarded as utterly unjust and unwise. On the other hand, he admitted that the people of large property never would be on the

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

side of freedom. As funds could not be produced from this source, the army in Ireland would require to act by requisition of all things necessary. Might that not disgust the people of property? The answer was that the revolution was not to be made for the people of property; they would get their rights, and no more. The people who desired freedom would fight, as the patriots of America and France had fought, regarding it as a scandal to enjoy luxuries, and almost the conveniences of life, while the battle was being waged.

In his diary Tone wrote :

Seriously I would attempt it with one hundred men. My life is of little consequence, and I should hope not to lose it neither. . . . Our independence must be had at all hazards. If the men of property will not support us, they must fail; we can support ourselves by the aid of that numerous and respectable class of the community, the men of no property.

For three long months Tone laboured on in this way against opposition and stupidity. The advice of men who had not been in Ireland for many a long year was preferred to his, because he was a stranger. He bore humiliation, suffering all that he might attain his end. For recreation he visited the Museums. He liked the paintings of Guido Reni, but the Magdalen of Le Brun was, to his mind, worth the whole collection—he spent up to an hour in admiration. He visited the Botanic gardens when the snow was deep, and admired the exotic scenes

## “ The French are on the Sea ”

in the green-houses, calling to mind how he had spent happy days with his dearest love and their little baby in Kildare, gathering his vetches. He wrote his wonderful Journal, teeming with wit and wisdom, with poetical and dramatic quotation, recalling Homer and Shakespeare and Goldsmith, and studding every chapter with tributes to his wife.

*“ I am not without ambition and vanity, God knows ; I love fame, and I suppose I should like power ; but I declare here solemnly that I prefer my wife’s commendation to those of the whole world. Well, if I succeed here, I shall stand on high ground, and I must be allowed to say I deserve it, and then she will be proud of me as I am of her, and with that sentiment I conclude this day’s journal.”*

### § 4

WHEN midsummer came, Tone was beginning to grow desperate. His funds were running out. “ Here I am with exactly two louis in my exchequer, negotiating with the French Government and planning revolution. I must say it is truly original.” Here July 1st brought back to his memory the Battle of the Boyne.

We made no great show of it that day ; that is the God’s truth of it. Well, no matter ; what is past, is past. We must see and do better the next time ; besides, we pulled up a little the year after at Aughrim, and made a most gallant defence at Limerick.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Mark how Tone speaks of "we," when he writes of the Irish nation of former days, fighting its battles before his race and stock were on its soil! He had no separate consciousness from that of the historic Ireland. The anniversary of the Boyne saw him writing thus; the anniversary of Aughrim, July 12th, saw his hopes suddenly relieved.

He was sitting in his cabinet on that day, studying his tactics, when a person knocked at the door, who, on entering, proved to be a dragoon of the third regiment. He brought a message summoning Tone to the Luxembourg, the seat of the Republican Government. There Tone remained until three in the afternoon, when the door opened and a very handsome, well-made young fellow, in a brown coat and nankeen pantaloons, entered and said in French: "Are you the Citizen Smith?"

Tone noticed that the newcomer had the cut of a sabre down his forehead and eyebrow, and on one side of his nose—the scar which was the badge of valour in some fierce encounter. He took this stranger for a mere official, and answered: "Yes, citizen."

"You are also called, I think, Wolfe Tone."

"Yes, citizen, that is my own name."

"*Eh bien, je suis le Général Hoche*—well, then, I am General Hoche."

Here was Tone at last in the presence of the French General pledged to carry out an expedition in the cause of Irish freedom! It was that young General, brave as a soldier and high-minded as a

## “ *The French are on the Sea* ”

Republican, who had won the brilliant victory over the foreign aided rebels in Brittany, and who had wept tears of blood over the method with which the Terrorists had taken their revenge. Did Hoche ever tell Tone the story of that terrible day at Pannes, when three hundred and seventy-three prisoners perished, among them the Bishop of Dôl and the gallant Sombreux? These two stood together at the place of execution. A grenadier came forward to remove the Bishop's hat.

“ You are not worthy,” cried Sombreux, and himself, though his hands were tied, used his teeth to remove the hat before the Bishop prayed and was shot down.

“ I am accustomed to look my enemies in the face,” said Sombreux, when they made to bind his eyes. He knelt, saying “ I place one knee on the ground for God and the other for the King.”

Then came the volley that shot the life out of this hero of the Royal Guards, and grieved the heart of the heroic Republican victor.

Whether or not Tone and Hoche talked of those tragic things is not known. They did talk of Ireland, and on that anniversary of Aughrim they went over all the ground of Tone's memorandum and claims.

Tone then was taken into council with Carnot, and was gratified to learn that his energies had moved the Republican leaders at last to a bold decision. There were to be two landings: one from Holland, to be made near Belfast, and the other from Brittany, to be made in Cork, with about twelve thousand

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

men in each. "It will be, to be sure, a most brilliant operation," said Carnot. They went to the Luxembourg, and Tone sat by Hoche. Then Carnot and his generals retired to a cabinet and held a council on Ireland, which lasted three hours, while the Irishman walked in the garden and listened to a symphony of chamber music which poured from upper windows on the summer air.

Now was Tone exalted. It is true that he was down to a guinea, but he had been promised a commission as Chef de Brigade, or Colonel, in the Republican army. He wrote jubilantly to his "dearest life and love," telling her of his rank, and desiring her to sell off everything in America and embark for France.

Well might he be delighted as he reviewed his conduct. "I do not see an indiscretion with which to accuse myself," he wrote. Labouring in a regular rigorous solitude for six months, he, a poor and obscure young man of thirty-three years, had moved the mighty Republic of France to an invasion of Ireland. He wrote down the testimony of his gratitude to his friends. He owed all, he said, to his masters of the General Catholic Committee in Ireland, "who refused to sacrifice me," and "to the whole people of the whole town of Belfast." It was his moment of triumph, when the freedom of Ireland seemed within an arm's grasp, and he, as the agent of the friends of liberty in Ireland, had been privileged to set the mighty force of liberty in motion.

## “ *The French are on the Sea* ”

Edmund Burke was dead. On the 8th of July, 1797, that great man, broken-hearted by the loss of his son and appalled by the overthrow throughout Europe of all those old-world splendours which were the life of his imagination, breathed his last, and the voice of protest against the transformation of the earth was silent.

### § 5

Now followed five months of the most intense excitement and anxiety. Tone hoped that the expedition would take place immediately, and he had many conferences with Hoche. He described the country over which the French would be required to fight—the nature of an Irish ditch and hedge. Hoche asked whether it would be hard to find subsistence for the troops. Tone replied that Ireland victualled the navy, the West Indies, and the foreign garrisons of England, so abundant were its supplies of superfluous corn.

He liked Hoche immensely. The Frenchman said that great mischief had been done to the principles of liberty, and additional difficulties had been thrown in the way of the French Revolution by the quantity of blood that had been spilled, “for,” added he, “when you guillotine a man, you get rid of an individual, it is true, but then you make all his friends into enemies for ever to the government.” Tone was heartily glad to find Hoche of this humane temperament, and hoped that the revolution in

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Ireland would be carried through with as little violence as possible. He told Hoche that the glory was reserved for him "to amputate the right hand of England for ever."

Tone repeated in his Journal that he hated England; he did not see how France and England could make peace: one or the other must go down. "I do not speak of the nations, but merely of the governments." In this he closely foreran John Mitchel, who in *his* Journal, written in exile, likewise declared hatred of England, and explained that this was not a hatred of the English people, but of that Government and political system which had been set up by the revolution of 1688. Tone, like Mitchel, while he so bitterly hated the English government, actually liked English people, admired the English countryside, and was a great lover of Shakespeare, England's greatest gift to the world.

Days and weeks passed and departure was delayed. "Oh, that I were, this fine morning, at the head of my regiment on the Cave Hill," wrote Tone at the end of August. There were more delays in September. "Hell, hell, hell!"

There was a grand review of troops on the Champ de Mars. "Did you hear the cannonade?" asked Hoche.

"I did."

"Aye, you will soon hear enough of that."

"The sooner the better."

Towards the end of September we find Tone at Rennes, in the superb mansion which was formerly

## *“ The French are on the Sea ”*

the palace of the Bishop. The palace was “ not much the better of the revolution.” The Chapel had been turned into a stable. Tone lodged in what he took to be the bedchamber of the Bishop, who had perished in that dreadful fusillade at Quiberon. Days passed, and all that he could write in his diary was “ blank,” “ blank,” “ blank,” until October dawned. “ I ’gin to be weary of the sun.” He spent days writing out Irish airs for the band of his regiment. One wonders whether he set down there the music that he had heard leaping from the harp in Belfast at that great Festival four years earlier.

Now he heard disquieting news of a proposal of the French to land a French army in England. It was intended to land at different points on the English coast parties of two and three thousand of the greatest reprobates in the French army, who would be let loose to do as much mischief as possible in the manner of the Black and Tans.

“ It is a horrible mode of making war,” wrote Tone.

His conscience wrestled with the problem, whether it was right to pursue the cause of freedom in Ireland by alliance with this desperate measure of revenge in England. He then dwelt on the treachery by which England’s navy had sought to take Toulon, on her pouring of counterfeit money into the Republic, on her subsidy and assistance of the Chouan rebellion in Brittany, and on the continental blockade, “ her most atrocious and unheard of system of

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

starving the whole French people—a measure so abominable, and which produced such dreadful suffering and misery in France as justifies any measure of retaliation, however terrible”—measures of blockade against a nation never can be right. The conclusion that Tone reached was that this matter was an affair between England and France, and that England had brought the French revenge upon herself. Years before he had argued with the pious Whitley Stokes the problem of scruples in time of warfare and revolution, and now it was for him to abide by his own principle, which was to press on inflexibly in whatever course the conscience had decided to be good.

The naval and the military authorities in France were not of one mind. The Minister of the Marine had a scheme for a raid on India, that vast region full of plunder and glory. It was from this cause that obstacles were being put in the way of the expedition. Hoche, with Tone nagging at him, broke his way through obstacles, and so, towards the end of October, we find Tone at Brest, the great naval seaport, looking down upon the magnificent sight of the floating fleet, with its splendid Ships of the Line. Yet, hardly was he here, than tidings came from Ireland that caused him the most intense alarm. The outrages of the newly-formed Orange body were driving the people of the North to desperation. The government was belabouring the Republicans. Report had it that Thomas Russell, Neilson, Simms and John Keogh were prisoners.

## *“ The French are on the Sea ”*

Driven now to a frantic pitch of anxiety, Tone secured an envoy, Mac Sheehy, who, with the General's approval, set out for Ireland to communicate with Oliver Bond, the Republican leader, and Richard McCormick, the principal leader of the Catholics, now Secretary to their body, and Tone's confidant in the revolutionary enterprise. Still the days passed without action. Tone went by the General's orders among the prisoners of war, fifty of whom were Irish, and he secured these unhappy exiles as recruits. They had been pressed into the English navy, and now rejoiced to enter the French service. They did not know that their expedition would be for Ireland.

As November grew old, and still the order to sail was not given, Tone grew sleepless. All night he thought of his poor little family, as he called his dear ones.

God knows whether we shall ever meet again. If I reach Ireland in safety, and anything befalls me after, I have not the least doubt but my country will take care of them, and my boys will find a father in every good Irishman; but if I should happen to be killed at sea, and the expedition should not succeed, I dread to think on what will become of them. It is terrible: I rely on the goodness of Providence which has often interposed to save us, on the courage and prudence of my wife, and on the friendship of my brother to protect them.

My darling babies: I dote on them; I feel the tears gushing to my eyes whenever I think of them. I repeat to myself a thousand times

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

the last words I heard from their innocent little mouths. God Almighty bless and protect them !

The thought, too, came into Tone's mind that even now those dear ones might be upon the sea. He had instructed them to make for France, and now he was tortured with the memory of a ship that he had seen wrecked and the piteous story of the victims. He took a little boy, whom he had found among the prisoners of war, the son of an Irish quartermaster of the dragoons, into his service. He clothed the half-naked lad, who was too young to be of much use, but could brush his coat and look after his portmanteau. This little act of charity was typical of the man.

On December the first Tone received his order to embark aboard the *Indomptable*, a vessel of eighty guns. That day, as Adjutant-General, and the highest in rank, he commanded the troops, pending the arrival of his superior. The army went aboard, 13,500 strong, and now there was nothing to do but wait for a favourable wind.

For a fortnight Tone gnawed impatiently at his heart, and cursed the Spaniards, who had not sent their fleet to assist the French and so secure command of the Channel. " Well, they will lose their American colonies—that is some revenge ; and Mr. Pitt may profit now of my scheme for the Sandwich Islands." At evening there was dancing on the quarter deck, but all day long anxious scanning of the grey waters and the sky.

## “ *The French are on the Sea* ”

On December 14th there was festival in the great cabin, where all the officers' mess was gathered. The candlesticks were stuck in the table, and the guns that were to be used in the expedition formed the ceiling. At last, by moonlight, the band went off by boat across the still waters. Next morning the signal was made to heave short, and then to get on the way; the wind now was right aft, but it was not until December 17th that the ships stood out to sea, bearing 13,975 men. In all there were seventeen Ships of the Line, thirteen frigates, and sundry corvettes and transports, making in all forty-three sail.

### § 6

WITH a favourable wind, the voyage to Ireland could be made easily in twenty-four hours. Alas! the weather was treacherous, as Tone's fortunes always were. The wind went about, and sank to a stark calm, and then changed again; the fleet was divided, and who knew but the English navy would loom up upon the horizon and destroy the undertaking? Exactly fifty-one years before, Prince Charlie had sailed on those waters, and one of his two vessels had been surprised and destroyed. One wonders whether Wolfe Tone recalled that earlier expedition made from Brittany to carry succour to the Gael.

On the fourth day at sea, December 21st, at daybreak, Wolfe Tone came up on deck and saw

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

Cape Clear. "So I have at all events once more seen my country." Patches of snow lay on the Irish mountains. The fleet entered the mouth of Bantry Bay, and Irish eyes feasted on the sight of hills and mountains rising height upon height, and on the little white houses studding the countryside. Well Tone knew that eyes were gazing upon him from that Munster countryside, eyes of strong men who yearned to handle the pikes and muskets which would be put in their hands if only the vessels came to shore.

Alas! all was not well. The rendezvous had been reached by Tone's vessel, but the vessel that carried General Hoche was missing. Here was the designer of Irish freedom, so close to Ireland that he could toss a biscuit ashore, but there would be no landing unless the *Fraternité* came up with the fleet. There were thirty-five vessels now coasting along the Irish shore, but not the vessel that was needed.

"I much fear the game is up."

For another twenty-four hours the fleet tacked to and fro. Tone could see two old castles, built there in olden days to watch over the shore, but never did eyes look forth from those castles upon a stranger sight than this: The leader of the cause of Ireland, with forty-one thousand guns, twenty pieces of field artillery, and nine of siege, sixty-one thousand barrels of powder, seven million musket cartridges, and seven hundred thousand flints, as well as three regiments of hussars, and he yearning to come ashore, and yearning in vain. There was a head wind

## “ *The French are on the Sea* ”

blowing from the east, and threatening that the landing would become impossible if it was not made soon.

At night the wind strengthened to a heavy gale, bringing snow, so that on the morning of the 23rd Tone looked out upon white covered mountains, “ which will render our bivouacs extremely amusing.” What remained of the fleet now was divided again. The message of its presence off the Irish coast had been carried inland by the agent of the ruling power, and a visit from the English fleet grew urgently likely. Only sixteen sail remained, and about half the arms.

That day Tone pleaded to be allowed to go off with as many as would volunteer to land in Sligo bay and make a surprise raid into the heart of the country. The adventure might succeed and the Republic would gain infinitely in reputation ; whereas failure would be no more than now seemed certain. He offered to lead the adventure, but was willing to go as a simple Volunteer if any of the French generals would risk their reputation on such a desperate enterprise. The plan was considered, but no decision was taken until next day came.

On Christmas Eve the French decided to land, even in the absence of Hoche, and with their greatly reduced forces. There were now no more than six thousand five hundred, there was little artillery and no money ; “ the negative catalogue of our means is extremely copious,” but now the spirit of the revolutionary French was seen at its highest. When

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

all seemed hopeless, hope rushed up. On the morrow the landing would be made, and a dash from Bantry to Cork, forty-five miles, would be made. "To judge the French rightly, or at least to see the bright part of their characters, we must see them not in Paris, but in the camp. It is in the armies that the Republic exists." That Christmas Eve, Tone slept contentedly in his hammock. On Christmas Day the landing was to be made.

At two o'clock in the morning he was awakened by the wind. He rose immediately, and, wrapping himself in his great coat, walked for an hour, devoured by fresh anxiety. The wind, blowing from the East on that Christmas Day, made landing at last impossible, and at the same time doubled the likelihood of the arrival of British ships. By noon the wind had risen to a gale, and it was necessary to leave Bantry.

Even now, when all seemed hopeless, Tone proposed yet another desperate cast of the die. He wrote out a plan for a dash to the estuary of the Shannon—a landing there and a forced march to Limerick. He reckoned that Limerick would be unguarded, as the garrison would be on the march towards Bantry. If Limerick were seized, the river could be crossed, and forced marches could be made to the North. This scheme commended itself to the generals whom Tone consulted, but they were unwilling to attempt it without the permission of the Admiral, who was aboard the *Immortalité*, nearly two leagues ahead; but the sea was now so rough

## “ The French are on the Sea ”

that no boat could live in it, and communication with the Admiral was impossible.

On this circumstance, perhaps, the fate of the expedition and the liberty of Ireland depends. I see nothing before me unless a miracle be wrought in our favour, but the ruin of the expedition, the slavery of my country, and my own destruction. Well, if I am to fall, at least I will sell my life as dear as individual resistance can make it. So now I have made up my mind. I have a merry Christmas of it to-day.

### § 7

At half-past six o'clock on Christmas Day the Admiral's frigate ran under the quarter of the *Indomptable*, and hailed her with orders to cut the cable and put to sea at once.

This caused the utmost astonishment. Were the English sighted? At any rate, orders must be obeyed. Nothing was left now but to seek to get back to Brest in safety. “ I confess myself I now look on the expedition as impracticable,” Tone wrote. The enemy had had seven days to prepare: “ it is hard, after having forced my way thus far, to be obliged to turn back; but it is my fate, and I must submit.” Nothing but the wind had baffled the undertaking. “ Well, England has not had such an escape since the Spanish Armada, and that expedition, like ours, was defeated by the weather; the elements fight against us, and courage is here of no avail.”

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Tone resigned himself to the destruction of his hopes. The voyage back to France was made through stormy seas and many perils, in which Tone once prepared for death. If he escaped, and if the Directory dismissed him from the service of the army, he resigned himself to the life of a French peasant. "If God Almighty sends me my dearest love and darling babies in safety, I will buy or rent a little spot and be done with the world for ever. I shall neither be great or famous, nor powerful, but I may be happy." When he wrote these lines, he little knew that his dear ones had crossed those same waters in an American vessel bound for Hamburg, and almost had met the ships of France in the British channel. Tone's wife, with his sister and his children, had landed at the mouth of the frozen Elbe some days before he—on January 1st, 1797—landed on French soil once more.

## CHAPTER VI

“ WHO FEARS TO SPEAK OF 'NINETY-EIGHT ? ”

### § 1

THE expedition had taken the ruling powers entirely by surprise. State papers show that if the French had landed, an easy conquest of the South of Ireland would have been made ; for it appears that it was impossible to concentrate more than six thousand men even at Cork—a number that the French would have overwhelmed, even if no recruits had come to the Republican standard. There was not, however, any demonstration of sympathy with the undertaking made by the unarmed people of Ireland. It is remarked that only in Belfast was there any manifest expression. An attempt was made to call the people of Belfast to arms for the defence of the country against the French invader ; but they only came together to demand political reform. The truth is that terror now reigned throughout the country, and that none could stand up against it with any freedom of expression at all except the people of Belfast, where Republicanism was virtually the fashion. Two terrible forces stood over the land, the Orangemen over the North, and the Yeomanry over the whole country.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

The terror had been growing ever since that crisis in which Tone had been driven into exile in 1795. In September of that year the county of Armagh was torn by riots. That region was one in which the plantation still was raw, even as it is largely to the present day. The capital of the Church in Ireland, where Saint Patrick had set up his crozier, and the rich surrounding country of fruit farms that had belonged to the proudest historic families of the Gael, now were held by Planters, while the lovely highlands into which the country shades off, still were the home of people who could remember the hunting down with bloodhounds, and the selling of the heads for money, of the Tories, the last offspring of the expropriated race.

The Protestant planters of the lower class, inflamed in hatred of the old stock by the language of their leaders, were determined to exterminate the Gael. At the break of day, in disguise, they would descend upon Catholic homesteads and drive out their unfortunate victims. Against these Peep-o'-Day Boys the Catholics organised in societies called the Defenders. A smothered civil war was waged between the two groups.

One day in December this warfare issued in a battle at the Diamond, near the village of Loughgall. There had been many murders, many a Catholic holding had been cleared, and many a Catholic Chapel had been wrecked. Revenge had bred revenge, and the Catholics and Protestants of the county were as bitterly severed as if the plantation had happened

*“ Who Feared to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?' ”*

yesterday. A body of Defenders poured into Loughgall intending to disarm its people. The Protestants mustered from many districts as far afield as Portadown to resist them. A Protestant gentleman and the Parish Priest managed to bring about a truce before blood had been shed ; and the Protestants had retired when fresh bodies of Defenders marched in from the neighbouring counties. A raid was made upon the house of a Protestant at the cross roads called the Diamond ; the Protestant reserves were summoned back, and a fight at once blazed out. Lead was run into bullets there on the spot, and was served out rapidly to the Protestants, who were powerfully armed and had the advantage of position. Not one Protestant fell during the quarter of an hour which this truly critical battle lasted. Twenty or thirty Catholics were slain in the fusillade.

That evening the victors met in the house at the Diamond, which had been raided, and the first Orange Lodge was formed.

The organisation thus set afoot spread rapidly. The members were bound by an oath and used secret words of recognition ; at their meetings they observed a ritual which was copied from the Freemasons. By the middle of the year 1796 there was a Grand Master presiding over the various bodies with their membership of Orangemen and Orange Marksmen, the latter degree being that which is represented to-day by the Purple. In effect, the Orange order was the old secret Peep-o'-Day

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

organisation, taken over and regularised by the persons of wealth and rank. It enjoyed the patronage of Royal persons in later times, as when the Duke of York in 1821 became Grand Master, and the Prince of Wales in 1832 beat an Orange drum. In 1834 a drum beaten by the Duke of Gloucester on a royal visit to Hillsboro' was enshrined in the local Lodge. On July 12, 1835, King George V sent greetings to the Orangemen.

The stated purpose of the Orange order was to maintain the Protestant succession to the English Throne. In practice its work was to consolidate the plantation of Ulster and to drive the Catholic people out of their last foothold in the land that once was theirs. The bigots of the rank and file, bred in ignorance, went joyfully about the vile work for which their landlord masters could not take open responsibility.

While Orange outrages were multiplying through the land, and undoing all that good work of reconciliation which had been undertaken by the United Irishmen: while, too, the Volunteers were being disarmed by the landlord Parliament, another body was brought into being for the dragooning of the land. This was the Yeomanry. The great landlords in the North, and shortly afterwards their brethren throughout the rest of the country—the same men who as Grand Jurymen had resisted the progress of Catholic Emancipation so relentlessly—thus armed and drilled their Protestant tenantry. They declared that they did this in order to defend

## “ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?' ”

the country in the case of a French invasion ; and on this plea, they were granted military warrants by the ruling Government. An unofficial army, wholly Protestant and wholly under the control of the declared enemies of the mass of the nation, thus sprang into being with the connivance and authorisation of the State. These Yeomanry were largely identical with the Orange body in the North ; they threw themselves heartily into the persecution of the unfortunate Catholic minority in the Catholic regions. They are said to have numbered as many as 50,000 men, and were the largest armed body at the disposal of the Crown when, at last, the crisis of war came on the country.

The ruling powers made the utmost use of the bitterness that had risen in so terrible a form between the two creeds. The wearing of Orange and Green emblems as the badges of opposing parties now came into fashion. Green was the emblem of the United Irishmen, and their members often were put to cruel humiliation and even torture for “ the wearing of the green.” Belfast honourably resisted the wave of bigotry which was sweeping over those rural districts where the landlords and their yeomanry ran roughshod. General Lake, who commanded the forces of the Crown in the North, lamented that the patriots of Belfast were too orderly to give an excuse for a dragooning. He pleaded for permission to seize and burn the premises of the patriot newspaper, *The Northern Star*—the first paper in Ireland to publish selections of Gaelic literature. “ Belfast

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

ought to be proclaimed and punished most severely," he wrote, "as it is plain every act of sedition originates in this town."

General Knox, another of the Crown's armed defenders, encouraged the arming of the Orangemen, and said that what the State required "could be done only by terror." He recommended two months of violent castigation of the land—just what the landlords wanted. "The present is a contest," he said, "of the poor against the rich"; and he recommended that the rich should lash the poor.

One effect of the undisguised reign of terror was that the Catholic clergy threw in their lot with the people. When the ships of the Republic appeared off the shores of Ireland at the end of '96, Dr. Moylan, the Bishop of Cork, and Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin—the chief prelates who advocated the Union—published loyal exhortations to their people. At this time, however, it was reported that there were not twenty clergy left in the archdiocese of Dublin who were loyal. A few months later, when William James MacNevin went to the Continent as an envoy of the United Irishmen and the Catholics, he was able to state that the majority of the priests in Ireland had lost their fear of the revolutionary cause and were at one with the people, who now were all for an Irish Republic.

All through the country the national spirit was mounting. In every county pikes were being hammered at the forges; and the blacksmiths at this time became particular objects of suspicion to

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

the ruling powers. Under the guise of coming together for the setting or lifting of potatoes, there were great musters of the country's manhood, as many as a thousand men often coming together and singing Republican songs. It is clear, therefore, that a French landing would have had all those enthusiastic results for which Wolfe Tone hoped. The Government of the day realised that truth. A few sane statesmen favoured immediate emancipation and reform, the only measure by which contentment would be established in the land. The old black passion of hatred for the Catholic Faith and the Gaelic people, however, prevailed. Instead of Emancipation there was redoubled coercion. Lord Fitzwilliam, the Viceroy who had come to Ireland with the promise of a Catholic freedom, as we have seen already, was recalled; and the whole nation knew that ruthless measures were to be used against it.

The reign of terror was intensified throughout the North. The patriotic movement was pursued throughout its ramifications. In the Midlands, and away south into Cork, the two Welsh regiments known as the Ancient Britons, which were among the forces upon which the Government relied, distinguished themselves by their ferocity. When the raiding parties came back to barracks, they were asked “ Why take prisoners ? ” Old men, women and children were among the victims of these scoundrels and their allies, the Yeomen. Many people then thought, and most still believe, that it

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

was the purpose of the ruling powers to goad the country into a revolt which could be crushed in blood before the possibility of a second French expedition. Others thought then, and perhaps it is true, that a blend of horrid emotions of bigotry, hatred and fear drove the British and the Irish Governments headlong on the course that was bound to end in warfare.

The United Irishmen contemplated revolt. The only difference of opinion among them, now that they had become a purely revolutionary body, was whether a rising should be made then and there with what resources they mustered in Ireland, or whether the day should be postponed until help came from France. The Supreme Executive consisted of five men, two of whom were among the chief Catholic leaders; while, of the three Protestants, one was Thomas Addis Emmet—he who, with Wolfe Tone, had been described as “entwined in Catholic trammels.” It is remarkable that the Catholic group, if such a distinction may be made, was that which appeared to have been the most anxious to wait for the French help. Arthur O’Connor and Oliver Bond, the two other members of the Supreme Executive, were for a revolt at all costs. However, in April 1797, the executive sent Edward Lewins, a Dublin solicitor, to the Continent to plead with the French on Ireland’s behalf.

“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?' ”

§ 2

*'Tis all in vain  
For soldiers to complain.*

NEVER had Wolfe Tone known greater need of that cheerfulness which sustained him through so many trials and troubles. When the broken French fleet crawled home to France and he made his way home to Paris, he found a letter from his wife dated at Hamburg, which carried the good tidings that she was safely arrived, but dashed his transports of joy with the sad news that her health was dangerously feeble. A second letter brought him a postscript from his little daughter Maria, “the first line I have seen of her writing. It brought the tears fast to my eyes.” He wrote to Hamburg warning his wife not to risk the terrible journey through wild country in open wagons, but to settle in the Free State until he could come to her. He then applied to General Hoche for permission to retire from the Service, holding himself at the disposal of the Republic whenever the undertaking should be resumed.

Hoche now had been appointed to the command of the army of Sambre-et-Meuse, the very name of which is a slogan of liberty. He invited Tone to join him and to be near his person during the campaign that was about to be waged against the Emperor. Tone learnt with pride that he had been mentioned honourably in dispatches on account of the spirit with which he had borne himself during

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

the expedition to Bantry. He was glad to follow Hoche and to see service, pending the renewal of the attempt on Ireland; but this implied that he must cancel his visit to Hamburg. Night after night he started out of his sleep in a cold sweat, after horrible dreams, and again and again he read his wife's letters, fretting himself about her health. He lived in torment thus for the first four months of the year.

His mind was restlessly active. He was introduced in Paris to the famous Thomas Paine, and liked him very well, although finding him vain beyond all belief. "But he has reason to be vain, and for my part I forgive him. He has done wonders for the cause of liberty, both in America and Europe." He found Paine, however, prouder of his anti-Christian theology than of his political work, "in which I do not agree with him." They talked of Burke, and Paine was contemptuous of the great orator's public lamentations over his son's death. "Paine has no children," Tone observed in his Journal. "Oh, my little babies, if I were to lose my Will or my little Fantom! Poor little souls, I dote on them and on their darling mother, whom I love a thousand times more than my own existence." Tone thought of his own father, too, and how proud he would be if the cause should succeed in Ireland. He heard that Miss Mary was married, and trusted in God she would be happy. Again he opened his desk weeks later and read his wife's letters once more. "They are my constant

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

refuge.” Never was there a man of action, much tossed about by war, whose mind was more firmly rigid in his domestic affections.

Through France and Belgium Tone went upon his duties. The only pleasant evening that he had on his journey was one in which he chanced in with a Pole who had been Secretary to Kosciusko; the exiled patriots comforted each other by the likeness of their fates.

The countryside through which Tone passed gave him matter for many observations. He admired the corn crop. He never had seen such neat farming as in Holland, and he wondered why Irish people should not copy the Dutch and have twenty, thirty, or forty beehives to a cottage. If freedom came to Ireland, every farmer should have his beehives and his orchard, and the land should wave with corn. He found the Rhine very much like the Shannon at Athlone, and it was there that he looked forth and saw the enemies of the French Republic dressed in green jackets and red pantaloons, with caps and white belts. Here is irony: Those men on whom the Irish Republican laid his eyes are O'Donnell's free corps!

Tone spent three days in Cologne, and heard High Mass in the Cathedral on Easter Sunday. After Mass he went to another Church and heard a Capuchin preach.

Amsterdam was the city which most delighted him, and then he set off for the Hague, in order to see the Parliament of the Batavian Republic in

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

session. On the way thither he saw on the banks of the canal green and grey plover, red-shanks, snipes and hares; and he wondered if he would ever again have a day's partridge shooting in Ireland with Tom Russell.

He admired some "very plain and respectable looking men," who were members of the Dutch Convention, seated at the table of the hotel. They "put me exceedingly in mind of my old and ever respected masters of the General Committee. I feel the tears gush to my eyes and my heart beats fast as I write this sentence," said Tone, as he wrote in his Diary the comparison between these elders of the Dutch Republic and the Catholic leaders of Ireland. He was present at a debate in the Parliament as to whether the Dutch people should or should not be obliged by the Constitution to pay the clergy. He could not understand what was said, but a priest among the assembly spoke and made everybody there laugh heartily. A Dutch patriot who saw Tone's French uniform did him the honours of the Assembly and explained what was said. He spoke of the intention to exclude clergy from Parliament and said that he wished they would exclude the lawyers, too. That delighted Tone. "I find a lawyer is a lawyer all over the world. The most scandalously corrupt and unprincipled body, politically speaking, that I ever knew was the Irish Bar."

Tone now had seen seven Parliaments—that of Ireland, that of England, that of the United States

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

of America, that of France, that of the Dutch, as well as the Volunteer Convention of 1783 and the General Committee of the Catholics in 1792. He remarked that nowhere had he come upon a more shamelessly profligate and unprincipled body than the landlords' assembly on College Green. “The scoundrels, I lose my temper every time I think of them.”

That evening some travelling minstrels sang at his inn, and he thought of the ballad singers of Ormond Quay. He went to the coffee house and read the Paris newspapers. The indecent attacks, made with impunity on the Government of the day, disgusted him. Writers who were free to publish day after day the most scandalous libels cried out that they were enslaved, and called the Republican Directory tyrants and oppressors. The fact was that there was more than liberty—there was licence—in the French Press. All over Europe there was not a tyrant whose subjects dared outrage him, said Tone, with such impunity. Here he took occasion to set down his thoughts on Press liberty.

Would I destroy the liberty? No, but I would certainly restrain it within just and reasonable limits. All fair and cool discussion I would not only permit, but encourage; but infamous personalities . . . I would most severely punish. Liberty of the press, someone has very well said, is like the liberty to carry a stick, which no man should be hindered from doing; but if he chooses to apply it in breaking his neighbour's head or his windows, it is no breach

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

of his liberty to make him answer for the mischief he has committed. . . .

It is the security of the people themselves, and the truest and best support of their liberty, that the Government which they have chosen should not be insulted with impunity; it is the people themselves who are degraded and insulted in the persons of their Government. I would, therefore, have strong and severe laws against libel and calumny, and I do not apprehend the least danger to the just and reasonable liberty of the press from the execution of those laws, where the magistrate, the judges, and the jury, are freely named by the people.

Tone's Journal at this time is full of such observations, rich in wisdom and in wit; but always it comes back to the thought of his wife. "She is the delight of my eyes, the joy of my heart, the only object for which I wish to live . . . we are now nearly twelve years married, and I love her ten thousand times more than the first hour of our union."

At last, on the second day of May, he arrived at Groninguen, a neat little Dutch town, where he had appointed his wife to meet him. Four days passed, and still she did not come, and he declared that he never was so unhappy in all his life. At last on the evening of the 7th, as he was taking his usual walk along the canal, he saw at last his wife and children, his sister and her husband, all arrive safe and well. A fortnight's bliss, one of the rare spells of happiness in his life, followed.

## “ *Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?* ”

### § 3

At this time news came through of a startling mutiny in the English navy. A very big proportion of the seamen was Irish; some accounts say credibly that as many as two out of three of the sailors aboard those floating hulks were Irish captives. Discipline was enforced in those days by measures of the utmost cruelty. Every ship was a floating prison, and tortured men went about their work in fear. Discontent boiled over, and for weeks the floating forces of English power were paralysed. At the Nore, in the mouth of the Thames, a seamen's Admiral was elected. The mutiny in the German navy in 1918 did but repeat the scenes which were witnessed in 1797 in English waters. At that moment Tone's plans could have been carried triumphantly to success.

One day General Hoche called Wolfe Tone to him in the garden and said that he had good news for him. Did he know a man named Lewins? Tone said he did, and had a high opinion of the talents and patriotism of this Dublin solicitor.

“ Well,” said Hoche, “ he is at Neuwied, waiting to see you.”

Neuwied was the place where Hoche had overthrown the Austrian army and had won the first of those decisive battles which established the freedom of the French Republic and led on to the later triumph of the French arms. Tone rejoiced when he met Lewins, who had been sent by the United

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Irishmen, as we have seen, to make a desperate appeal for another French expedition. A plea was made to the French Government that they should make it an indispensable condition of peace that all the British troops be withdrawn from Ireland, and the people left at full liberty to declare whether they wished to continue connection with England or not.

Tone and Lewins threw themselves into the effort to bring about a fresh attempt while the English navy still was paralysed. The result was that preparations were hurried forward to launch an expedition of Dutch ships from the Texel, at the north of the Zuyder Zee. Hoche endeavoured to secure at least five thousand picked French troops under himself to sail in the Dutch vessels; but the Dutch Government was anxious that the whole glory of the expedition should fall to the Batavian Republic. With his usual magnanimity, Hoche resigned the military side of the adventure to the Dutch Governor-General, Daendels. The Dutch admiral de Winter took command of the fleet.

Wolfe Tone was to go with the expedition. He had many conferences with Hoche, who now was more than his general; was, rather, his close friend. He records several interesting talks with that great man. The Royalists, whose licence in the Press Tone has discussed, now were embarrassing the Government in Paris by most audacious measures. Hoche exclaimed: "If these rascals were to succeed and put down the Government, I would march my armies that instant against Paris, and, when I had

“ *Who Feels to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?'* ”

restored the Constitution, I would break my sword and never touch it afterwards.” Such was the sentiment of a Republican who detested the necessity of civil war.

One day the *Gazette* printed a proclamation which Buonaparte had addressed to the Government of Genoa. Tone read aloud to Hoche certain passages in which Buonaparte appeared to dictate to that Government, presuming on the liberties which France had secured for it. Tone described these passages as grossly improper and indecent, since they touched on the indispensable rights of the people. If Buonaparte were to command in Ireland, and were to publish there such a proclamation, it would have a ruinous effect. Such a proclamation might pass in other lands, but never in Ireland, “ where we understood our rights too well to submit to it.”

Hoche agreed. He was jealous, Tone thought, of Buonaparte, but his criticism was just. He said that the General had made no difficulty to win victories by the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of lives. The moderation which once had distinguished Buonaparte's conduct now was gone. With Tone, Hoche deplored the growth in Buonaparte of a relentless arrogance.

Weeks passed, while the expedition was prepared, and during this time the discipline of the English navy was restored. The opportunity, never to recur, to take England at a disadvantage on the seas, was lost. Once again, as in the days of the Armada and at Bantry Bay, the winds fought for

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

England. The Dutch fleet was held in port by unfavourable weather, and Tone, aboard Admiral de Winter's ship of seventy-four guns, the "Vryheid," raged as he had raged in Bantry Bay.

There never was, and never will be, such an expedition as ours, if it succeeds; it is not merely to determine which of two despots shall sit upon a throne, or whether an island shall belong to this or that State; it is to change the destiny of Europe, to emancipate one, and perhaps three, nations; to open the sea to the commerce of the world; to found a new Empire; to demolish an ancient one; to subvert a tyranny of six hundred years. And all this hangs to-day upon the wind.

News came early in August that the English fleet was at sea in strength. Tone read into this the assurance of defeat. "The destiny of Europe might have been changed for ever; but, as I have already said, that great occasion is lost, and we must now do as well as we can. *Le vin est tiré, il faut le boire.*"

The days wore on, the chance of a successful voyage diminished. Tone submitted a plan for a dash for the English coast, to land an army at Harwich, or even nearer to London, with bread and ammunition for six days; to make a desperate plunge by forced marches to the capital, and to seize the capital by sudden attack, supported by big reinforcements of the thousands of Irish exiles in that city. Another plan discussed was a raid on Scotland, with a surprise voyage of ships around the north of the country to approach Ireland by an

## *“ Who Feared to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

unexpected route ; but Hoche found fault with this plan on sound strategic principles.

August passed and September came, and the British fleet cruised in sight of the land-locked Dutch vessels. It became clear that this expedition never would sail to success.

Tone left Texel and rejoined Hoche. He was staggered to find the General's health broken. Hoche always had been a victim of consumption, but his dauntless spirit had carried his fragile body through his battles. Of late, the attacks made on him by the Royalists and by scurrilous journalists in their pay told on him more cruelly than a thousand dangers in the field. He failed fast, and died on September 18th.

Tone lost a friend, the Republic lost the most high-principled of its generals, and Ireland lost her one ally among the great men of the Republic who understood the importance of the Irish cause. At the same time Napoleon Buonaparte lost the one rival who was his equal in military and statesmanlike sagacity, the one man who might have saved the Republic from its fatal transformation into an empire.

Tone resigned his connection with the army of Sambre-et-Meuse immediately after the death of his hero, and left for Paris. He rejoiced to find his wife and children in health and good spirits. His good friend Lewins now was all but acknowledged as Minister from Ireland. With him, yet once again, still undaunted, he went to work afresh in Ireland's

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

cause. Within a few days, however, news came of the battle of Camperdown, and the destruction of the Dutch fleet under de Winter by the English under Admiral Duncan. It was one of the most desperate fights ever seen upon the waters. In troublous seas, the Dutch fleet sailed forth for a reason and with hopes that still remain a mystery. It was sighted by the English and the two great forces, sixteen Ships of the Line on each side, crowded on all sail, and made for each other. The English had the advantage of a closer formation. They drove down upon the centre of the Dutch line. The Dutch reserved fire until their enemies were close to them, and then poured their broadside through the wooden hulls.

Owing to the intrepidity of their attack, the British broke through the straggling Dutch line and threw it into confusion. The same intrepidity shown at the Dardenelles, or at Jutland, in the Great War, would have given decisive victory to the Allied arms. The battle closed in and raged most fearfully around the rival flagships. The *Vriheid*, on which Wolfe Tone so nearly had sailed, was attacked by five English Ships of the Line and fought at close quarters until her three masts were shot away and all her starboard guns put out of action. One wonders whether, in the course of the struggle, de Winter fired with heavy cannon from the lower deck in the fashion which Wolfe Tone himself had devised aboard that ship and had demonstrated with approval to the Admiral.

## “ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?' ”

At last the *Vriheid* struck her colours and the battle was ended, but only after enormous destruction had been done to both the fleets; de Winter went aboard the English flagship and surrendered his sword to Admiral Duncan.

Had Tone been aboard, he would have fallen captive a year before his time. He regarded this second escape from capture at sea as the work of destiny. Here we admire once more his unconquerable spirit. Twice all that he had built up had fallen to the ground. Twice the achievement of a prodigious *coup* had collapsed. Two fleets had been scattered and General Hoche was dead; but “ ’tis all in vain for soldiers to complain,” he said to himself as he threw himself afresh into his undertaking.

### § 4

If Hoche was dead, Buonaparte lived. On him now Wolfe Tone bent his persuasive energies.

Napoleon Buonaparte was born in Corsica in the year 1779. He was aged 24 in the year of the Terror, when the Royalists of Toulon called in the British and the Spanish to help them to defend that important port against the forces of the Republic. Young Buonaparte was put in charge of the artillery, and it was due to the astonishing skill, combined with reckless courage, which he revealed in the struggle, that the British and Spanish were driven out, General O'Hara, their commander, captured, and Toulon recovered for the nation. In the following year he commanded in Italy and won a series of

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

victories which first displayed the talent of the greatest military commander of all times. In 1795 his ruthless power of decision rescued the Republic from domestic difficulty. The Convention, which was the governing body of the Republic, was attacked by a vast multitude of the discontented section, largely Royalists. The government was staggered. Buonaparte was cool. With the whiff of grapeshot he dispersed the agitators, and the Revolution was saved.

There is no more perplexing figure on the stage of history than this remarkable man—the saviour of the Republic and of democracy, who yet was consumed by more overwhelming personal ambition, and attained to greater autocratic power, than ever was seen in any other ruler. Buonaparte brought to the art of warfare not merely conspicuous courage and determination, consummate tactical skill and exhaustive knowledge; he brought to it, what none other of the brilliant captains of his time possessed, genius. Again and again, in the critical moments of battle, he seemed like a man possessed, swept aside his plans, and achieved victory by some amazing improvisation. He brought the same quality to statesmanship. Something beyond reason seemed to tell him the precise moment at which to strike to save the Republic, and again to establish the Empire. He kept the whole world wondering while he went from one amazing achievement to another; he became virtually supreme ruler of the Western World, and completely transformed the

## “ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?' ”

history of the European race. As a ruler, he was tyrannous and unscrupulous, and yet was adored by his own people. By an unparalleled flight of genius he gave France the *Code Napoleon*, a simple and comprehensive system of law which centuries of evolution hardly could produce. From the start of his career he believed himself to be, what indeed he proved himself to be, a man of destiny. He defied death. In an age of intrigue he scorned intrigue. He went forward to his purpose as if he were inspired. His mastery of detail was prodigious. He seemed to know the whereabouts of every piece of cannon in the whole Continent, and often corrected reports in a manner that astonished their composers. He mapped out his campaigns for years ahead, and adhered to his plan. He picked men of talent even out of the ranks of his personal enemies, made them his perfect tools, and stamped on them something of his own greatness.

So colossal a figure left upon the world a mark that still is to be interpreted. Napoleon might have been the greatest benefactor to civilisation of all the rulers and soldiers of time. Unhappily, he was not a man of high personal character; he regarded religious belief merely as his tool. Above all, his governing motive was ambition, a quality hard to understand. Did he desire glory? If so, how could a man so much greater than his fellows find satisfaction in their admiration? Did he find joy in the mere exercise of power? Was it that the consciousness of enormous gifts created an appetite for their

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

exercise? At any rate, here was the most prodigiously powerful of all the world's great soldiers, and he held the fate of Ireland in his hands.

In 1797, Hoche and Napoleon were recognised as the great men of the armed Republic. When Hoche died, Napoleon was summoned by the Directory to take over the command of the army that had been prepared for the Irish invasion. Wolfe Tone's hopes rose once more, for the appointment of the one man whom he regarded as Hoche's peer, signified that the Republic, as we say, meant business. Tone resumed his rank as Adjutant-General in the *Armée d'Angleterre*, the army prepared for the attack on England, under the new commander. With Lewins, he was introduced to Buonaparte at his home in the Rue Chauteraine on December 18th, and it will be interesting to set down here the Irishman's impression of that mighty figure.

He lives in the greatest simplicity; his house is small, but neat, and all the furniture and ornaments in the most classical taste. He is about five feet six inches high, slender, and well made, but stoops considerably; he looks at least ten years older than he is, owing to the great fatigue he underwent in his immortal campaign of Italy. His face is that of a profound thinker; it bears no marks of that great enthusiasm and unceasing activity by which he has been so much distinguished. It is rather, to my mind, the countenance of a mathematician than of a general. He has a fine eye, and a great firmness about his mouth; he speaks low and hollow.

“ *Who Feels to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?'* ”

Buonaparte listened while the effort was made, as Tone says, to “insense” him on Irish affairs. He said very little. It is clear that Tone found the great man, as great men commonly are, inscrutable. Like an iceberg, most of Napoleon’s mind was beneath the surface ; little of it was manifest. There were several interviews, and Tone always found the great man taciturn, and even languid. “ We have now seen the greatest man in Europe three times, and I am astonished to think how little I have to record about him.”

As the matter progressed, Tone questioned Buonaparte about his own place in the undertaking. He said that he did not stand to be of the smallest use to the general while they were in France, but he hoped to be serviceable on the other side of the water. He did not claim any great knowledge or experience of war.

“ *Mais vous êtes brave,* ” said Napoleon, interrupting Tone.

“ That would appear,” said Tone, “ when the occasion presented itself.”

“ *Eh bien,* ” said Napoleon, “ *cela suffit.* ”

§ 5

THE first weeks of the fatal year of '98 glided by. The powers knew that a great army was being prepared in France, but its purpose was not known for certain. Tone was content, because he believed

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

that the undertaking was that for which he had laboured, and that an invasion of Ireland was about to be made under the world's greatest living soldier. "The third time is the charm," said he. Alas! Napoleon, while he deceived the powers leagued against France, was deceiving also the rulers of France and the Irishman who trusted in him. A secret purpose lay behind the mobilisation of the best fighting men of France and the preparation of her fleet at Toulon. The fate of Ireland was decided already, but only within that wonderful and ambitious and unscrupulous brain. Ireland was to be no more than a cat's paw.

On March 1st, Wolfe Tone got news of the dethronement of the Pope from the Sovereignty of the Papal States and his exile from Rome. He rejoiced and regarded this as a fortunate event, making for the cause of liberty. Here we come upon one of those strongly anti-clerical passages in his Journal which are the only blot upon his writings. In order to understand how the secretary of the great Catholic Committee of Ireland, the joint liberator with Daniel O'Connell of the Catholic people, was able to write with so much satisfaction of a reverse to the earthly Head of the Catholic Church, we have to make two allowances. First, there were the prejudices in which Wolfe Tone was reared; and, secondly, there were the political circumstances of that age.

Tone certainly was not an unbeliever. He was revolted by the atheism of many of the revolutionaries of the time, and throughout his life we find him

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

ceaselessly conscious of the providence of Almighty God. His attachment to his mother's Catholic people was with him to the end. Nevertheless, he never shook off the Protestant prejudice in matters of doctrine in which he was nurtured far into the years of manhood. Bishops, as he knew them in his own church, were the most materialistic and unbelieving persons who ever claimed the name. They were political agents, not churchmen, not divines. He knew little of the Catholic clergy and hierarchy save that the hierarchy was amongst the strongest defenders of those privileges which the democratic party among the Catholics found it necessary to attack. In the struggle for emancipation Keogh and other vigorous spirits who achieved the victory of 1793 were opposed at every step up to the last by the leading Catholic prelates themselves. How far those prelates were out of touch with their people was seen in later days than those in which Tone wrote, in days when the land was stirred into revolt from end to end and excommunication was the lot of the maddened pikemen ; and, again, when those same prelates preached from the altar itself the cause of the legislative Union. The lower clergy were, as a rule, at one with the people ; but the State was able to influence the selection of Bishops, and thus a calamitous cleavage existed between the rulers of the Church and the body of the Faithful. Such is the lot of a subject people ; and Wolfe Tone, a Protestant, is hardly to be blamed if he said, in a blunt way in his Journal, things which the faithful

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Catholics, such as Keogh and McCormick, certainly thought.

The issue now is one of merely historic interest. Long since, Bishops and priests and people have been fused together in a happy unity, the fruit of religious freedom. Maynooth's great College, which Tone laboured to have established for the education of the Irish clergy at home, is the most Irish spot on Irish soil to-day, and a main channel of Irish nationality and tradition. Of the cleavage between the hierarchy and the people in Tone's day, therefore, we need only say this: That if the Bishops were right in their political action at that time, the whole mass of the nation, clergy and people, both then and for a hundred years to follow, was wrong. At least Tone erred with the race.

If the Church at home, slowly struggling out of the difficulties of two hundred years of persecution, was disorganised, the Universal Church in like manner was passing through a crisis. Spirituality was at a low ebb, and a century and a half in history has shown that regeneration was to come only by the reduction of Temporal Power. For better or worse, the medieval order of things was passing away for ever. Monarchies and aristocracies that were too far corrupt ever to be restored in health were doomed. If the Papacy to-day wields such spiritual power as never before was known and has conquered the respect of the whole world as the only moral authority on earth, even when obedience is refused to it, we can see to-day that it was necessary to that sublime

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

consummation that all but the vital minimum of Temporal Power should be shed. We can make a distinction, therefore, between the satisfaction which an actor in the revolutionary years felt at a stage in the inevitable transformation on the one hand, and anti-clericalism which would lay impious hands upon the Church's just right. Nowhere in Tone's writings is there deliberate denial of Catholic truth. When he did associate with the Irish Bishops, he paid tribute to their holiness, good sense, and personal charm. It is true that he desired to see the liberated Catholics of Ireland curb the political power, which he believed to be exercised in too partisan a fashion, of the hierarchy ; but more than once he declared that he sought the emancipation of Catholics with a clear recognition that it was for them to use their political freedom according to their own ideals.

In April, Tone joined the headquarters of the army at Rouen, where he found the Cathedral the most beautiful that he had ever seen. It was here that he got disquieting news. Buonaparte was transferring the bulk of his army secretly to the South. General Kilmaine, a Dublin man of Mayo descent, who served in France throughout the Revolution and was the greatest Irish commander in the French service, was put in charge of what remained of the great armament on which Tone's hopes were built. Buonaparte's own whereabouts were unknown. A little later it was found that the man of destiny had embarked at Toulon and was about to sail for Egypt. The word of fate was spoken. Tone and Ireland were

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

betrayed, Buonaparte was pursuing the dream of a vast new Empire in the East, from which France would derive untold wealth and splendour, while he himself should enjoy a very apotheosis.

Either Buonaparte had favoured the Irish enterprise from the beginning merely as a feint to deceive England as to his true purpose, or else he had conceived the Egyptian project in one of those incalculable flashes which so often bewildered his friends and his foes. It was one of those moments in history in which a single decision transformed the fate of the earth. Years afterwards Buonaparte said of his decision: "If, instead of the expedition of Egypt, I had made that of Ireland, if slight derangements in circumstances had not thrown obstacles in the way of my Boulogne enterprise—what would England have been to-day, and the Continent, and the political world?"

To one man it was apparent that a disastrous decision had been taken—that was Wolfe Tone. Slowly and mournfully he realised that the almost invincible power to attain his end of his country's freedom had melted away. Ireland was deserted to its fate. There could be no waiting until Buonaparte should return; for the die was cast already. The ships of Napoleon hardly had set their great sails for the East than the rising burst out, and all Ireland was doomed.

Napoleon sailed on May 20th, and on May 23rd the first shots rang out in the counties of Dublin, Kildare and Meath.

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

§ 6

ONE evening about sunset, in a peaceful district in Kildare, Wolfe Tone's own county, a respectable old man was mending his gate, when he was arrested by a drunken officer, under the pretence that he was out of doors after the lawful hour. When the old man tried to escape, he was cut down and almost hacked to pieces. A coroner's inquest returned a verdict of “ wilful murder,” and the criminal at last was brought defiant into court. The Solicitor-General, who later was known as Lord Norbury, the hanging judge, directed the jury to acquit the prisoner on the grounds that “ he was a gallant officer who had only made a mistake.”

Another example of the measures by which the country was hurried on to revolt is seen in the fate of William Orr, a young Presbyterian farmer of high standing in the Ulster countryside. Orr was arrested in 1796, and was kept for a year in prison, to be brought up in September 1797. He was charged with administering the oath of the United Irishmen to two soldiers, an act which now had been made a capital offence. He was a man of peace, but he was just the victim that the law desired. It was proved, after a verdict had been given, that the jury had been made drunk with two bottles of very strong whiskey passed in to them through the window. Several jurymen afterwards testified that they had not given a free verdict. Nevertheless, Orr, after three respites, was hanged, solemnly declaring his

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

innocence. "Remember Orr" became the watchword of all humane men throughout the North.

The conservative historian Lecky, from whose impartial pages it is fitting to derive this account of what led up to the revolt of '98, recounts many such atrocities, and affirms "that the bulk of the peasantry in three provinces in Ireland were, in the beginning of 1798, enlisted in a conspiracy which daily extended, and were looking forward to an immediate rebellion in conjunction with the French invasion." In February 1797 it was computed that half a million persons had been sworn into the United Irishmen's Society, and that more than half of these could be counted on to appear in the field. There were over 100,000 men in Ulster, a similar number in Munster, 68,000 in Leinster; there were no returns from Connacht.

The expedition from Holland which had been attempted in October 1797, although it failed like the expedition to Bantry Bay, ten months earlier, made it clear that the French had not abandoned the hope to assist in an Irish revolution. The dragooning of the country was redoubled, and the leaders of the United Irishmen saw that they must strike soon or be destroyed. There was now a race between the two sides—the British striving to provoke a piecemeal rising which they could crush with the terror that General Knox advocated, and the United Irishmen seeking to produce a simultaneous insurrection throughout the land.

On March 12th the Leinster Committee of the

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

revolutionary party met, apparently to decide upon the date of action. An informer—who was no other than Thomas Reynolds, a brother-in-law of Wolfe Tone—passed word of the meeting to the Government. There was a sudden swoop, and all the members of the Committee there were seized. Thomas Addis Emmet, Sweetman, Jackson and MacNevin were captured elsewhere at the same time. Thus, at a single blow, the United Irishmen were robbed of all their chief leaders, save Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who fled into hiding.

Three weeks later martial law was declared and the horrible measure of free quarters was loosed on the countryside. Sir Ralph Abercromby, who now was Commander-in-Chief, was instructed to carry out a violent disarmament of the counties of Kildare, Tipperary, Limerick, Cork, King's County, Queen's County and Kilkenny. The people were called upon to give up all arms and ammunition within ten days. If there was reason to believe that this had not been done completely, “the troops would descend in large bodies to live at free quarters among them and other very severe measures would be used.” Lecky adds: “This proclamation opened a scene of horrors hardly surpassed in the modern history of Europe.”

It was at this time that the Crown forces devised and practised the use of the pitched cap on their prisoners, called Croppies, from the habit of persons of Republican sympathies to wear their hair cut short. Caps of linen would be fastened with burning

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

pitch to the head of persons suspected of patriotic opinions. Sometimes the head would be prepared by the previous burning on the scalp with moistened gun-powder.

A desperate effort to reconstruct the leadership of the United Irishmen was made by the brothers Sheares and some other patriots who were still at large. They appointed May 23rd as the day for a general rising. The stopping of the mail coaches from Dublin was to be the signal; and those going to Belfast, Athlone, Limerick and Cork actually were stopped at the appointed time. Before dawn on May 24th thousands of desperate men of the country were marching on the grey roads to the hosting places, armed with guns, fowling pieces and pikes.

*They rose in dark and evil days  
To right their native land.*

Treachery alas! had done its work a second time. Four days earlier, when he had come into Dublin from his hiding place in the countryside to be ready to lead the revolt, Lord Edward Fitzgerald had been discovered and captured in Thomas Street. He had fought like a lion against arrest and had slain one of his assailants and wounded another, but now he lay in prison, dying of his wounds. The rising thus had lost, even before it began, an able and distinguished leader, the only man still at large in Ireland to whom the insurgents of the whole island could look up as to a national figure. The news of his capture had spread far and wide before the stopping

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

of the mail coaches gave the signal to rise, and, as so often has happened in Ireland's age-long struggle for liberty, men went to action disheartened even at the start. The signal fires blazed out from hill to hill, but not all the country sprang to arms.

“ There is much reason,” writes Lecky, “ to believe that the outbreak was witnessed with gratification by many of the members and supporters of the Government.” A piecemeal rising, without foreign aid or arms, had been provoked. The counties of Kildare, Meath and Dublin were first to rise, and then the revolt flared out in Carlow. Tone's own county of Kildare gave a fierce account of itself; the pikemen threw back the heavy cavalry before they were defeated. There was heavy fighting also in Queen's County. Mark that it was the country folk of the old historic nation who took the field. Never let it be thought, as some would have it, that the rising of '98 was a mere manifestation of French ideas in Ireland. The pikemen who rose up were the descendants of men who had fought under Sarsfield and under Owen Roe and under the Earls. Four thousand men of the old stock gathered on the Hill of Tara with their green cockades, and with their pockets stuffed with grain, their only provisions. Hundreds of them shed their blood on the royal hill where St. Patrick had preached before Laoghaire, the High King; many were thrown into graves there, where their dust mingled with the dust of princes, and it is told that the grain that was buried with them sprang up in a crop of corn.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

The situation was, as Government proclamations would say, well in hand, when a startling extension took place.

*On Boulavogue when the sun was setting,  
On the bright May meadows of Shelmalier  
A rebel hand set the heather blazing  
And brought the neighbours from far and near.*

Father John Murphy, the patriot leader of County Wexford, following the burning of his house and chapel, and of the houses of many of his people, put himself at the head of a body of some four thousand men who mustered on the hill of Oulart. On Whitsun morn the pikemen were attacked; with Father John at their head, they overwhelmed their opponents. Next day, after three hours of bitter fighting, Enniscorthy was captured and the patriot forces swelled to more than six thousand men. Wexford town fell, and here a Protestant landlord, Bagenal Harvey, was put at the head of the insurgent forces of the whole county. Fifteen priests were with the Wexford men. Mass was said every day in camp, and several of the priests went headlong into the fighting line and did terrifying execution.

The story of Wexford's rising, and of the superb courage, tenacity and soldierly conduct of the manhood of that county rings in history. The record is marred by two calamitous events, of which, however, unjust use has been made. At Scullabogue a barn containing prisoners was burnt, and those prisoners who strove to escape were piked to

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

death. There was a massacre also on the bridge of Wexford town. Each of these desperate deeds was done by frantic bodies of desperate men, who were detached from the insurgent army itself and were not within the control of the leaders. Neither of the atrocities was comparable with the provocation that had preceded it, on so much larger a scale, at the hands of the ruling power itself.

The Wexford men made themselves complete masters of their own county and pressed forward into Wicklow. Had every county done as well, the whole of Ireland would have been liberated. Wexford, however, was left unsupported ; and overwhelmingly superior forces were brought against it.

§ 7

MEANWHILE, that part of Ireland on which the United Irishmen had set their chief hope was slow to act. Wexford had hardly any United Irishmen, and yet it took over the mastery of all towns and broad acres. Ulster, where the United Irish movement had begun, did not rise until June 7th, and then only in two places.

There were two specially determined men among the leaders in the North. One of these was Henry Joy McCracken, a young, splendid and heroic figure, whose gallant career and piteous end entitled him to rank with Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone in the nation's admiration. The other was James Hope, called Jemmie Hope the Weaver, a man of rugged

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

honesty and simple idealism, of admirable plainness of expression, author of a memoir which is a monument of democratic idealism. Hope's descendants, by the way, are Catholics living still in Belfast.

One day these two comrades attended a meeting of the supposed Republicans of Belfast, and Hope talked of the benefits that Ireland would enjoy when it would be free, a connecting link in the chain of commerce between two hemispheres. As they came away, McCracken blamed Hope's rashness, and said that many of Belfast Republicans would cease to be Republican if they were taught to believe that Irish freedom would destroy the monopoly of shipping interest which was enjoyed in the Northern corner.

"Well, Harry," said Hope, "these are the men who will put the rope on your neck and mine if ever they get us into their power."

"Are you afraid of being hanged, Jemmie?" said McCracken.

"It would ill become one who has pledged his life to his country to shirk one's death in any shape," Hope replied.

The summons of the rising in Ulster was answered only by a minority among the professed Republicans; but these noble ones were of the noblest. McCracken, in his gallant green uniform, led in County Antrim, and there was a fierce battle at Antrim town, in which some hundreds of the Presbyterian manhood were slain for Irish liberty. Larne, Randalstown and

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

Ballymena were occupied, but the rising fell to overwhelming forces brought against it.

In County Down as many as 7,000 men rose. They won the smart victory at Saintfield, and then encamped under Monro at Ballynahinch. Crown forces heavily armed were hurried against them, burning all the houses that they passed, until that gold and green expanse that is backed by the splendid heights of the mountains of Mourne, was full of smoke and sorrow. The Irish forces, under heavy cannon, were withdrawn to a high place outside the town. It is stated that Monro declined to attack the Crown forces in the night on the score of chivalry. A battle followed on the morrow, when the town was attacked, and the Crown forces were assailed with a charge to the very muzzles of their cannons. Once again superior arms won, and the patriots were dispersed with a loss of some hundreds ; not one prisoner was taken save to be slaughtered or hanged on the spot. The town was destroyed by fire. Perhaps the most piteous aspect of the tragic affair is that the Crown forces used were the Monaghan Militia, “ an almost exclusively Catholic regiment.” Thus was the work of the United Irishmen undone by the deliberate employment on the Crown side of Catholics to fight against Protestants and Protestants to fight against Catholics.

The long-threatened insurrection now was virtually over ; the fate of Ireland was sealed. The hangings began. In Wexford, Bagenal Harvey, the aged and honourable Protestant leader of the

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Catholic host, was put to death. In Antrim, McCracken, after lurking for some time in the region of Cave Hill, was captured, and was hanged at what now is the corner of Castle Street and Cornmarket in Belfast, on a site which had been given to the city by his own grandfather. In County Down Monro likewise escaped for a time. He found refuge in the house of a fellow-Irishman who sheltered him there, and then handed him over to those who hanged him at the door of his own house. Several Presbyterian ministers were amongst those who suffered on the gallows.

In Dublin the brothers Sheares were hanged, and McCann followed them to death. Two others of the chief leaders, Byrne and Bond, lay under sentence, when an effort to save them was made by their fellow-prisoners. An offer was made to the Government to disclose the secrets of the conspiracy in return for the cessation of execution. Byrne was hanged, but Bond was spared at the last moment.

Seventy-eight of the State prisoners signed a pact by which, without criminating persons, they informed the Government of the extent of their commitments with France. They agreed to go into voluntary banishment. The United rising had failed, and they desired to prevent what henceforth could be only a vain and piecemeal struggle. The Government, on the other hand, attained its end of virtual dissolution of the United Irishmen's movement.

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

§ 8

THIS was in July, and all was over. In vain during these fatal weeks had Tone raged and toiled. No French aid had gone when even a small landing might have roused the dormant parts of the country and changed the fortunes of war.

“ I cannot express the rage I feel at my own helplessness at this moment ; but what can I do ? Let me, if possible, think no more ; it sets me half mad ”—thus Tone wrote in June when the piteous news was reaching him of the fragmentary rising and the awful revenge wreaked upon the Irish race. “ From the blood of every one of the martyrs of the liberty of Ireland will spring, I hope, thousands to revenge their fall ”—so wrote he. He kept his birthday on June 20th. He was thirty-five years old, and accused himself of failure. Yet it had not been for the want of inclination or effort. “ I would rather be Fitzgerald as he is now, in his dungeon, than sit at the head of the British Empire ”—so he wrote before the news of Lord Edward’s death came ; and after it—“ he was a gallant fellow. For us, who remain as yet, and may perhaps soon follow him, the only way to lament his death is to endeavour to revenge it.”

Frantically he laboured to move the rulers of France, and he succeeded so far that the Ministers of the war and naval departments agreed to send small detachments from several ports to Ireland in the hope to keep up the insurrection and, should

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

the opportunity arise, to land a large army under General Kilmaine. General Humbert was quartered at Rochelle, General Hardy, with three thousand men, at Brest ; while Kilmaine, with nine thousand, remained in reserve, awaiting ships and a clear passage. Still there were those innumerable delays on which Tone's spirit had been wrecked for years. At last Humbert, fired by the dreadful stories of Irish refugees, determined to put all to the test. He called together the merchants and the magistrates of Rochelle, forced money from them on military requisition, and sailed on his own authority. With him went Wolfe Tone's brother Matthew, and two other Irishmen, Bartholomew Teeling of Lisburn, and Sullivan, nephew to Madgett.

On August 22nd three French frigates, carrying General Humbert and a thousand soldiers, sailed into Killala Bay, and green flags, with the legend "Érin-go-bragh," floated next day over the palace of the Protestant Bishop, which was made the headquarters of the long-awaited French in Ireland.

It was this gallant expedition which reached the coast of Connacht and seized Killala town. One of the finest chapters in the dreadful story of '98 now was written. The Western folk flocked to join the French and fraternised happily with them. The soldiers of the Revolution showed themselves dignified, courageous and orderly ; not a single atrocity disfigured the bearing of the soldiers of the Republic, French or Irish, and the Protestant Bishop paid high tribute in his records to the treat-

*“ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?’ ”*

ment that he received. There had been little bludgeoning of the people in the West, and to this may be attributed the perfect orderliness of what followed; but the high chivalric bearing of the French-Irish army forms a vivid contrast to the record of the Crown forces throughout those years. Castlebar was taken by the impetuous assault that is known traditionally as “the races of Castlebar.” Humbert, for some unknown reason, declined to march to the North, where junction with a big body of Republican opinion might be expected. He took Collooney, and struck across the Shannon into County Longford.

At Ballinamuck, on the 8th of September, a trial of strength came. The combined armies of General Lake and Lord Cornwallis took on two sides the little army of French soldiers and a few armed Western Irish, who had come into battle talking mystically of war for the Holy Faith. There was a short action, in which the vast Crown forces lost only nineteen men. The Franco-Irish allies were obliged to surrender, and the French were taken prisoners of war. No mercy was granted to the Irish, and five hundred were massacred. Matthew Tone and Teeling were carried off to Dublin.

On September 28th Matthew Tone wrote from his prison in Dublin to his lawyer as follows :

Dear Sir : As I know from experience that suspense is the worst of all states, I hasten to relieve my friends from it; the business is determined on: To-morrow is the day fixed.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

I request that no friend may come near me—sorrow is contagious—and I would not willingly betray any weakness on the occasion. . . .  
Farewell.

Next morning he was hanged.

### § 9

NAPPER Tandy now flits across the tragic scene—a grotesque figure—almost comic. This well-meaning adventurer, whom Tone had called the Tribune, had swaggered through Paris that year embarrassing Tone and Lewins. He represented himself to the Directory as the one man who could bring about a general Irish rising. Thirty thousand men would spring to arms the moment he appeared on Irish soil, so he said; and Tone had difficulty in persuading the rulers of France that this gallant fool was not the true voice of Irish opinion.

*Oh, I met with Napper Tandy,  
And he took me by the hand,  
And says he: "How is old Ireland  
And how does she stand?"  
"She's the most distressful country  
That ever yet was seen:  
They're hanging men and women  
For the wearing of the green."*

Without doubt, Napper Tandy was in earnest in his own strange fashion. He was pierced by the dreadful tidings that came over the sea. He mustered a couple of dozen of the Irish exiles in Paris and embarked with them in a fast sailing boat which

## “ Who Feared to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?' ”

sailed in September from Dunkirk. The vessel carried arms and ammunition enough to equip a formidable rising in whatever part of the country it should come ashore. At the time of sailing, Humbert's army had not yet come to its overthrow at Ballinamuck.

The *Anacreon*, as the vessel was named, struck the Irish coast at Arranmore, off the Donegal coast, about the middle of September. Here Tandy came ashore and hoisted an Irish flag, but he had come too late. The news of Ballinamuck was fresh. The people of the wild and lovely country of the Rosses knew that the latest campaign of that year of conflict had come to its disastrous end, and they had no use for arms. There was nothing for it but to hoist sail once more and to fare away from Ireland forever. The *Anacreon* made for the north of Scotland, and at last crossed the North Sea to Norway, whence Napper Tandy and some of his friends voyaged to Hamburg.

Here the Irishmen became the central figures of an international crisis. Under pressure from England and Russia, the Senate of Hamburg surrendered Tandy and three of his comrades to England, which claimed them as rebels. France, in protest, declared war on Hamburg, and laid an embargo on its shipping until the Senate had apologised for its shameful breach of honour and international law. Napper Tandy remained a prisoner for three years, when he was tried and sentenced to death, but was reprieved. He died in France.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

### § 10

NAPPER Tandy's adventure hardly had been scrawled across the map of the Western waters when Wolfe Tone himself sailed with the last of the expeditions that France sent to Ireland's aid.

We have none of the journals which he wrote during this final chapter of his struggle. News of Humbert's victory at Castlebar, but not of his overthrow at Ballinamuck, had been received, and the Directory hurried forward with the expedition which was designed to support that of Humbert. There were accidental delays once more, caused by the poor organisation of the French navy and its arsenals; but on September 14th a fleet of one Ship of the Line and eight frigates under Commodore Bompard, bearing three thousand men under General Hardy, put forth upon the sea from Brest.

Before the expedition sailed, Wolfe Tone talked with the three Irishmen who were with him in this last cast. It would seem that he himself had little hope. His plan for a general rising had been frustrated, and he was going to Ireland now in accordance with his oft-repeated saying that he would go if he had no more than a corporal's guard with him. He wished to share the final chances with his people and was prepared to mingle his own blood with that of the dying cause. What, asked one of the four United Irishmen, ought they to do if they fell into the enemies hands? Should they patiently endure the sentence of the law, or should they anticipate their fate by their own hand?

“ *Who Feels to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?*”

Wolfe Tone spoke with spirit. No doubt, he called to mind the example of Jackson, who had committed suicide in the dock, at the end of that tragic affair in 1794, when revolutionary France first had put its finger into Irish affairs. He said that he had considered the question of suicide, and never could hold it to be justifiable. Already, however, at dinner in his own house in Paris, in the presence of his beloved wife before they parted, Tone had said that he was resolved, in case he fell into the hands of the enemy, never to suffer the indignity of a public execution. By his own act he would disappoint the brutal ferocity of his foes, and would avoid the humiliation of their touch. This would not be, in his judgment, suicide, which is an act of weakness or frenzy; it would be merely to choose the mode of his inevitable death. We shall return to this matter.

They knew well, those Irishmen who talked in Brest on the evening before the ships set sail, that their chances were of the smallest. They had read in the *Bien Informé*, the newspaper of Paris, a report of the whole armament, wherein Wolfe Tone's name was given in full letters, and not merely his *nom de guerre*, Adjutant-General Smith. Paris knew, and London certainly would know within a few days, that Theobald Wolfe Tone was embarked aboard the *Hoche*, as the leading ship of the little flotilla was named.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

### § 11

LATE in the day on September 16th, therefore, Admiral Bompard set sail, taking advantage of the broken vigilance of the British cordon of ships which had been guarding Brest. The French flotilla got safely to sea, but was sighted next day by some fast sailing British ship. Despatches were hurried to England, while some of the British vessels watchfully pursued the French at a distance. Bompard made a vast cast over the Atlantic waters, partly in order to mislead the watching frigates as to his purpose, and partly in order to strike the Irish coast ultimately at some unexpected spot.

When the flotilla had been at sea ten days, the French sighted a British convoy of one hundred merchant vessels, but obeyed sailing orders and refrained from attack upon it. A few days later, far out in the Atlantic, an effort was made to shake off the watching frigates, and both sides cleared for action; but the *Hoche* shattered a top mast in the rising wind, shortened sail, and lost her prey. Meanwhile Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, Baronet, having received intelligence that the French were making for the North of Ireland, set sail for those waters with three Ships of the Line and six frigates, a force far superior to that of the French.

Bompard now was sailing in the direction of Donegal Bay, where Humbert had sighted for the first time the grey hills of Ireland in August. It was the second week in October, and already a

## “ Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?' ”

month had passed since Humbert's venture had perished at Ballinamuck; already Matthew Tone had been lying a fortnight in his grave. Of this Wolfe Tone knew nothing. He reasoned, no doubt, that the Republican forces after capturing Castlebar would march for the North of Ireland—as, indeed, they should have done. It is possibly, and even probably, Wolfe Tone's advice that caused the French flotilla to alter its course before it made Donegal Bay. At any rate, an attempt was made to reach Lough Swilly, that superb anchorage, the Bantry Bay of the North, on which Wolfe Tone's thoughts had been set since the beginning. Once again the ships of liberty were blown upon by unfriendly winds, and at two o'clock on October 10th, when the squadron arrived off North West Donegal, in waters that Napper Tandy had sailed a few days earlier, the *Hoche* met with a second accident; her main top mast fell, and her main-sail was torn to ribbons. The damage was not repaired when British sail was signalled. This was off Tory Island. Aboard the *Hoche*, Wolfe Tone saw the British sails and his fate approaching over the grey waters.

The fleets manœuvred at a range of about ten miles. Night fell, and when the day was brightening on the morrow the mighty ships came within the range of guns and a battle began.

Bompard signalled orders to his frigates, and the swift sailing *Biche*, a schooner, to seek escape by flight through shallow water, while he, in his great Ship of the Line, should defend the Republican flag

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

to the last. A boat came from the *Biche* for final orders. The French officers aboard the *Hoche* advised Wolfe Tone to go back with the boat to the *Biche* and to seek safety in flight.

“Our contest is hopeless,” they said; “we will be prisoners of war; but what will become of you?”

“Shall it be said,” asked Wolfe Tone, “that I fled when the French were fighting the battles of my country?”

He refused to fly, and awaited his fate aboard the *Hoche*, the only Irishman left aboard that vessel.

Three great English Ships of the Line and three frigates bore down upon the *Hoche*, where it floated off the Irish coast, with its main mast crippled. Tone commanded one of the batteries throughout the violent contest that followed, when for six long hours virtually the whole English fleet poured its fire upon that solitary and valiant vessel. It is reported that he fought with the utmost gallantry, and as if courting death; but, although twenty-eight of the eighty-four guns that the *Hoche* carried were reduced to scrap iron, Tone himself was not hit. Masts and rigging were swept away, the decks flowed with blood, and the cockpit was crowded with the wounded and dying defenders of the Flag of France; the rudder was gone and five feet of water were rising in the hold, yet Wolfe Tone worked amid the carnage as if he bore a charm. Only when every gun upon the *Hoche* was silent, and the vessel itself was almost sinking, was the Flag struck. What must have been Wolfe Tone's feelings as he saw the

“ *Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?*”

tricolour of the Republic fall to the deck of that blood-stained and shattered hulk !

All but three of Bompard's ships were captured, some only after a long flight and a stout resistance. Among the three that escaped was the *Biche*. It arrived home in France on the 23rd day of the month, but no Wolfe Tone was aboard. He, who might have come safely to shore aboard that vessel, at that moment was still aboard the *Hoche*. More than a fortnight passed after the battle of the 11th before that floating wreck was got safely into the waters of Lough Swilly. For two days the *Hoche* lay anchored and Tone could look out on the hills of Donegal on either hand ; then the prisoners were put ashore.

## CHAPTER VII

### TRIAL AND DEATH

#### § 1

AT last Wolfe Tone stood again upon the shores of his native land. With what distress must he have learnt the story of Humbert's failure and of the quenching of the last embers of the insurrection! There was now no chance of escape for himself unless he should contrive to pass among the French officers as a Frenchman. It was rumoured that he had been killed in the action, and it is thought that the British officers, respecting the valour of a fallen enemy, were not earnest to investigate the point. The prisoners were moved to Letterkenny without discovery of Tone's presence among them. There the captured officers were invited to breakfast with the Earl of Cavan, who commanded the British forces in that region. Wolfe Tone sat undistinguished among them. A betrayer, however, was present in that place.

Sir George Hill, who had been a fellow-student of Tone's at Trinity College, and now was a leader of the Orange party in the North, entered the room with police officers. He looked narrowly at the

## *Trial and Death*

company of prisoners, and singled out his old fellow of College days.

“Mr. Tone,” he said, stepping up to where the Irishman sat in his blue French uniform, “I am very happy to see you.”

Wolfe Tone rose, resigned to discovery, and replied :

“Sir George, I am happy to see you ; how are Lady Hill and your family ? ”

Another account, which we fain would believe for the honour of even an Orange Magistrate, tells that Tone nervously blurted out his identity before Hill addressed him. This account, however, does not agree with Hill's own report on the affair, which is to the effect that Tone addressed him “with as much sang-froid as you might expect of his character.” The cynicism of Hill's letter and the subsequent treatment of the prisoner agree most perfectly with the account of the discovery which we have given from the narrative by Wolfe Tone's own son.

As soon as his identity was discovered or confessed, the prisoner was beckoned into the next room by the police officers, and here he was put into irons. He was infuriated by this indignity, but recovered his calm, as all accounts of the affair affirm, and he said :

For the cause which I have embraced I feel prouder to wear these chains than if I were decorated with the Star and Garter of England.

The prisoner was hurried away. His feet were

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

bound under the horse's belly, so that he could not escape during the journey. He was taken first to Derry, where, on November 3rd, he protested to Lord Cavan against the use of irons. "I take it for granted," he wrote, "that those orders were issued in ignorance of the rank I have the honour to hold in the Armies of the French Republic." He claimed the rights and privileges of a prisoner of war. He was ignored. He sent a similar letter to Lord Castlereagh, asking that the Lord Lieutenant should give orders for his treatment as a prisoner of war and for his inclusion among the French prisoners who were awaiting exchange. This letter also was ignored.

Meanwhile, "*Des bords du lac Swilly*," General Hardy, wrote to Lord Cornwallis, the Commander-in-Chief, a letter that never before has been published :

*(Translation).*

The Adjutant-General Wolfe Tone, *dit* Smith, attached to the staff of the expeditionary Army which the French Government has confided to my command, and made with me prisoner of war aboard the ship *Hoche*, desires my intervention with you, since he has been imprisoned in a cell and laden with chains.

I do not enquire whether you have grievances against this officer ; but he is a French citizen, he is a unit of the French army, he was taken in war, and under this threefold account, he has the right to be treated with due respect. I cannot but believe, my Lord, that you will take a juster view in his regard, and that you will forbid the infringement of that code of

## *Trial and Death*

conduct which ought to characterise men whom merit or fortune has placed upon a great stage.

The Adjutant-General Wolfe Tone is an honest man; his courage and distinguished conduct earn him the confidence of the Government and the esteem of all soldiers who are governed by the principle of honour; I need not, therefore, conceal from you the surprise with which I learned that you have caused him to be treated ignominiously like a criminal.

If the fortune of arms favoured you in the conflict of the 21st Vendémiaire (October 11th), I cannot believe that you would avail yourself of this success to insult the French nation in the person of its Adjutant-General Wolfe Tone.

That, however, is what results from the infamous action which has been committed in his respect.

I venture to hope, my Lord, that you will take my letter into your immediate consideration, and that I shall be able to inform the Executive Directory that your conduct towards the Adjutant-General Wolfe Tone conforms most rigidly to the principles of justice.

Tone was carried away, still bound. As he went through the city of Derry, he passed the public gallows, and he looked up at it and smiled. He saw the wide savannahs of Tyrone, and the blue hills far distant, beyond which lay Lough Neagh, and beyond that again Belfast, where so many of his happiest days had been spent. He rode through Emyvale and Castleblayney, and so to Dundalk, and now he was on that Northern road which he had travelled so often in earlier days, the days of hope.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

On November 8th he came into Dublin, in the centre of a strong guard ; he passed the Four Courts just as the lawyers were coming out. " It is said he looked well and unembarrassed," wrote Drennan that day. There were old comrades of his at the Bar, no doubt, among those lawyers who looked with curious eyes upon a martyr going to his doom.

Two days later Wolfe Tone was brought to trial. It was Saturday, November 10th, 1798.

### § 2

VERY early on that Saturday morning crowds moved through Dublin's treeless and classic streets to the barrack, where Wolfe Tone lay in the Provost-Marshal's prison. As soon as the doors were open, they crowded in, those Dubliners, and thronged every corner of the hall which was to be the theatre of the courtmartial.

General Loftus presided, and the rest of the court was made up by officers who bore the names of Vandeleur, Daly, Wolfe, Armstrong and Curran. The descendant of a Williamite soldier was to be tried by men who bore much older names in Ireland than he, but his alone is remembered by posterity. Tone was brought in, wearing the uniform of a Chef de Brigade. His bearing was cool and collected. One of the United Irishmen who was present told Drennan that he behaved " like a gentleman and a brave man."

The Judge Advocate, Mr. Paterson, informed the

## Trial and Death

prisoner that the courtmartial had been appointed by the Lord Lieutenant to try whether he had or had not acted "traitorously and hostilely against his Majesty." Did he plead guilty or not guilty?

*Tone* : " I mean not to give the court any useless trouble, and wish to spare them the idle task of examining witnesses. I admit all the facts alleged, and only request leave to read an address that I have prepared for this occasion."

*Col. Daly* : " I must warn the prisoner that, in acknowledging those *facts*, he admits to his prejudice that he has acted *traitorously* against his Majesty. Is such his intention? "

*Tone* : " Stripping this charge of the technicality of its terms, it means, I presume, by the word 'traitorously,' that I have been found in arms against the soldiers of the king in my native country. I admit this accusation in its most extended sense, and request again to explain to the court the reasons and motives of my conduct."

The court then observed that they would hear his address, provided he confined himself within the bounds of moderation. He rose, and began in these words :

" Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Court-martial: I mean not to give you the trouble of bringing judicial proof to convict me, legally, of having acted in hostility to the government of his Britannic Majesty in Ireland. I admit the fact. From my earliest youth I have regarded the connection between Ireland and Great Britain as the curse

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

of the Irish nation ; and felt convinced that, whilst it lasted, this country could never be free nor happy. My mind has been confirmed in this opinion by the experience of every succeeding year, and the conclusions which I have drawn from every fact before my eyes. In consequence, I determined to apply all the power which my individual efforts could move, in order to separate the two countries.

“ That Ireland was not able of herself to throw off the yoke, I knew. I therefore sought for aid wherever it was to be found. In honourable poverty, I rejected offers, which to a man in my circumstances, might be considered advantageous. I remained faithful to what I thought the cause of my country, and sought in the French Republic an ally, to rescue three millions of my countrymen from —— ”

At this point General Loftus interrupted the prisoner, observing that this language was neither relevant to the charge, nor such as ought to be delivered in a public court. Published accounts of the trial never yet have given the passage of his address which Tone at this point was forbidden to deliver. His favourite phrase, “ three millions of my countrymen,” make it clear that he was about to affirm once more his devotion to the historic nation ; for that phrase was his name always for the Catholic people.

Happily, the suppressed passage was not lost completely. It came to light in later days in the letters of Lord Cornwallis, the Commander-in-Chief.

## Trial and Death

Here then are the words which the Court refused to be spoken lest, as one of the Bench said, it should "inflame the minds of a certain description of people (the United Irishmen), many of whom probably might be present."

*I have laboured to create a people in Ireland, by raising three million of my countrymen (the Catholics) to the rank of citizens. I have laboured to abolish the infernal spirit of religious persecution by uniting Catholics and Dissenters.*

*To the former I owe more than can ever be repaid; the services I was so fortunate as to render them they rewarded munificently; but they did more: when the public cry was raised against me, when the friends of my youth swarmed off and left me alone, the Catholics did not desert me.*

*They had the virtue even to sacrifice their own interests to a rigid principle of honour; they refused, though strongly urged to disgrace a man who, whatever his attitude towards the Government might have been, had faithfully and conscientiously discharged his duty towards them, and in so doing, though it was in my own case, I will say they showed an instance of public virtue and honour of which I know not whether there exists another example.*

After the interruption Tone bowed to the ruling of the court, and said that he merely meant "to express my feelings and gratitude towards the Catholic body, on whose cause I was engaged."

*Gen. Loftus:* "That seems to have nothing to say to the charge against you, to which only you are to speak. If you have anything to offer in defence or extenuation of that charge, the court

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

will hear you ; but they beg that you will confine yourself to that subject."

*Tone* : " I shall, then, confine myself to some points relative to my connection with the French army. Attached to no party in the French Republic, without interest, without money, without intrigue, the openness and integrity of my views raised me to a high and confidential rank in its armies. I obtained the confidence of the executive directory, the approbation of my generals, and, I venture to add, the esteem and affection of my brave comrades. When I review these circumstances, I feel a secret and internal consolation, which no reverse of fortune, no sentence in the power of this court to inflict, can ever deprive me of, or weaken in any degree. Under the flag of the French Republic I originally engaged, with a view to save and liberate my own country. For that purpose I have encountered the chances of war amongst strangers ; for that purpose I have repeatedly braved the terrors of the ocean, covered, as I knew it to be, with the triumphant fleets of that power which it was my glory and my duty to oppose. I have sacrificed all my views in life ; I have courted poverty ; I have left a beloved wife unprotected, and children whom I adored, fatherless. After such sacrifices in a cause which I have always conscientiously considered as the cause of justice and freedom, it is no great effort at this day, to add ' the sacrifice of my life.'

" But I hear it said, this unfortunate country has been a prey to all sorts of horrors. I sincerely lament

## *Trial and Death*

it. I beg, however, it may be remembered, that I have been absent four years from Ireland. To me, these sufferings can never be attributed. I designed, by fair and open war, to procure the separation of the two countries. For open war I was prepared ; but if, instead of that, a system of private assassination has taken place, I repeat, whilst I deplore it, that it is not chargeable on me. Atrocities, it seems, have been committed on both sides. I do not less deplore them ; I detest them from my heart ; and to those who know my character and sentiments, I may safely appeal for the truth of this assertion. With them, I need no justification.

“ In a cause like this, success is everything. Success, in the eyes of the vulgar, fixes its merits. Washington succeeded and Kosciusko failed.

“ After a combat nobly sustained, a combat which would have excited the respect and sympathy of a generous enemy, my fate was to become a prisoner. To the eternal disgrace of those who gave the order, I was brought hither in irons, like a felon. I mention this for the sake of others ; for me, I am indifferent to it ; I am aware of the fate which awaits me, and scorn equally the tone of complaint and that of supplication.

“ As to the connection between this country and Great Britain, I repeat it, all that has been imputed to me, words, writings, and actions, I here deliberately avow. I have spoken and acted with reflection, and on principle, and am ready to meet the consequences. Whatever be the sentence of this

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

court, I am prepared for it. Its members will surely discharge their duty; I shall take care not to be wanting to mine."

Thus Tone spoke from the dock, delivering one of the most moving utterances that ever have been made from that honourable place. Silence followed for a time. Even the judges were moved, it is said. It was Tone who broke the silence. He asked whether it was not usual to assign an interval between the sentence and execution. Paterson answered that the vote of the court would be taken immediately, and that, if the prisoner had anything else to say, now was the moment.

Here Tone (greatly agitated it is said) pleaded for the death of a soldier—that he should be shot by a detachment of Grenadiers. Such was the treatment that the rulers of France granted to Frenchmen found in arms against them. Tone claimed it himself in consideration of the uniform which he wore, and he handed in his commission and letters of service in the French army in order to show that he had been for long and *bona fide* an officer in the French service.

*Paterson*: "You must feel that the papers you allude to will serve as undeniable proof against you."

*Tone*: "Oh! I know it well. I have already admitted the fact, and I now admit the papers as full proof of conviction."

The papers were examined, and General Loftus observed that Tone was designated as serving in the *Armée d'Angleterre*—the army that the French

## *Trial and Death*

had designed for the invasion of Great Britain and Ireland.

*Tone*: "I did serve in that army when it was commanded by Buonaparte, by Desaix, and by Kilmaine, who is, as I am, an Irishman. But I have also served elsewhere."

Asked if he had anything further to say, he said that the sooner the Viceroy's approbation of sentence of the court was obtained the better. He would count it a favour if it could be obtained within an hour.

Cornwallis refused the last demand for a soldier's death, and *Tone* was sentenced to die the death of a traitor in forty-eight hours on November 12th.

### § 3

ON the next day an awful cloud hung over the city of Dublin. Everywhere the apparatus of military power was displayed, and the citizens went to and fro in fear and dismay. "No man dared to trust his next neighbour, nor one of the pale citizens to betray by word or look his feelings or sympathy. The terror which prevailed in Paris, under the rule of the Jacobins, or in Rome, during the reign of Marius, Sylla and the Triumviri, and under the reigns of Tiberius, Nero and Caligula was never deeper, or more universal, than that of Ireland at this fatal and shameful period. It was, in short, the feeling that made the people soon after passively acquiesce in the Union, and in the extinction of their name as a nation." So writes *Tone's* son

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

describing the state of shock under which the capital of Ireland laboured.

Many of Tone's friends already had perished on the scaffold, others were rotting in dungeons, and of those who were at large most of them dreaded, by the slightest sign of recognition, to be involved in his state. They did not know this man.

The sentence of the courtmartial was illegal. Martial law was not in being, and the Civil courts were superseded without authority. Two friends at least of the condemned man set about, with magnificent desperation, the effort to rescue him even at the eleventh hour. One of these was Peter Burrowes, an old political friend and member of the Irish Parliament, to whom Thomas Russell wrote piteously from prison pleading with him to go to Tone's aid. The other was John Philpot Curran, the most brilliant, witty and patriotic of all Irishmen who followed in that age the profession of the Bar. Once Curran had been employed as counsel in the same case with Wolfe Tone himself, and on that occasion he had confessed to him that he agreed concerning the need to break the connection with England.

This was that Curran whose daughter Sarah was beloved by Robert Emmet. He was of Cromwellian descent, a poor lad who won his way by sheer force of personality to an honourable eminence as the greatest of all Irish forensic orators. From 1794, when he defended Hamilton Rowan in what was called "the greatest speech of any advocate in

## *Trial and Death*

ancient or modern times," to 1803, he was engaged in almost all the great State trials—always in defence of the patriots.

Never did this patriotic lawyer show to greater advantage than on that fatal Sunday when Tone, refusing to see any friend or even his living relatives, sat writing his last letters in the Provost's prison. Throughout the city Curran ranged, seeking men of influence who would work with him to secure a stay of execution. It is sad to record that the Catholic leader, John Keogh, whose summons to Tone in America had been the starting point of that tragic adventure which now had come to its close, was amongst those fear-stricken ones who declined to come to the condemned man's aid; but Madame Tone afterwards forgave him—and shall not we?

At last, Curran mustered resources of his own, and went on the Monday morning early to the Court of King's Bench, where Lord Kilwarden was sitting. Here is another tragic figure of the time. Kilwarden was a judge of high character and temperate bearing. He had been one of those influential friends who secured for Tone immunity from arrest in 1794 on condition that he went into voluntary exile. Unhappy is the lot of a just man in a subject country. It fell to Kilwarden to assert the sentence of the law when William Orr, in 1797, was condemned to death. Fate had in store a piteous end for him, as we shall see.

As soon as the court opened therefore on that Monday morning on which Tone was appointed to

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

die, Curran entered, leading that old coachmaker and farmer who was Wolfe Tone's father, and father of the recently-executed Matthew. The advocate produced the old man's affidavit, which informed the court that Tone had been sentenced to death by a bench of officers calling itself a courtmartial.

"I do not pretend," said Curran, "that Mr. Tone is not guilty of the charges of which he is accused." Tone, however, had no commission under the English Crown, and therefore no courtmartial had right to try him while the Court of King's Bench was sitting. "Every law authority is with me," said Curran, "whilst I stand upon this sacred and immutable principle of the Constitution: that martial law and civil law are incompatible, and that the former must cease with the existence of the latter." He called, therefore, for a *habeas corpus*, directed to the Provost Marshal and to Major Sandys at the barracks at Dublin, in order that Tone should be removed from their custody to that of the civil law.

*Kilwarden*: Have a writ instantly prepared.

*Curran*: My client may die whilst the writ is preparing.

*Kilwarden*: Mr. Sheriff, proceed to the barracks and acquaint the Provost Marshal that a writ is preparing to suspend Mr. Tone's execution, and see that he be not executed.

The court awaited the return of the Sheriff, and all men wondered with anxiety whether the news brought back would be that the message of the court had come too late.

## Trial and Death

One man among the Irish judges heard of the writ of *habeas corpus* with peculiar dismay. This was Sir Jonah Barrington. He knew that, if the writ was obeyed and Tone was brought to a civil trial, it would fall to himself to preside over it. He knew that Tone's friends hoped that a delay would give the French Government time to intervene and perhaps to save Tone's life with a threat of reprisal on prisoners held in France. He himself "knew better." He was "convinced that his execution was determined on—it was unavoidable." It would fall to Sir Jonah, then, to witness Tone's conviction and to pronounce his sentence. As we remember, he had been kind to Tone in those distant days when the young patriot was an advocate, and he recorded that Tone "was not worldly enough"—an apt verdict on the patriot's character from a lawyer who, as a judge, lived to be removed from the Bench for misappropriation of court fees.

### § 4

WHILE this desperate effort was being made to save him, Wolfe Tone was making his last preparations for death. Brought back to his cell after sentence, he asked for writing materials, and penned a letter to the Directory of the French Republic in which he told the Citizen Directors how the English Government had refused recognition to his French citizenship and officer's commission, and how he had been sentenced to die. He offered thanks for the

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

confidence with which he had been honoured, "and which, in a moment like this, I venture to say I well deserved. I have served the Republic faithfully, and my death, as well as that of my brother, a victim like myself, and condemned in the same manner about a month ago, is sufficient to prove it." He then committed to the Republic the fate of his wife and three innocent children, pleading for support for those who were about to lose their bread-winner. "I have sacrificed for the Republic all that man holds dearest—my wife, my children, my liberty, my life."

With what emotion, conquered by the stoical firmness which had sustained him throughout an Iliad of woes, did he then write his farewell letter to his wife.

PROVOST'S PRISON—DUBLIN BARRACKS.

Le 20 Brumaire, An 7 (10th Nov., 1798).

Dearest Love: The hour is at last come when we must part. As no words can express what I feel for you and our children, I shall not attempt it; complaint, of any kind, would be beneath your courage and mine; be assured I will die as I have lived, and that you will have no cause to blush for me.

I have written on your behalf to the French government, to the minister of marine, to General Kilmaine, and to Mr. Shee; with the latter I wish you especially to advise. In Ireland I have written to your brother Harry, and to those of my friends who are about to go into exile, and who, I am sure, will not abandon you.

## *Trial and Death*

Adieu, dearest love : I find it impossible to finish this letter. Give my love to Mary ; and, above all things, remember that you are now the only parent of our dearest children, and that the best proof you can give of your affection to me will be to preserve yourself for their education.

Yours ever,

T. W. TONE.

P.S.—I think you have a friend in Wilson who will not desert you.

All the next day (Sunday) seems to have been taken up with the writing of letters to friends at home and abroad, to General Kilmaine, and to Harry Witherington, his wife's brother, beseeching of them all help and protection for his dear ones. He was immensely comforted when assurances reached him from several members of Mrs. Tone's family that they would do what he desired. Her sister expressed the wish to see him in prison, but he refused, "having determined to speak to no one of my friends, not even my father, from motives of humanity towards them and myself." He wrote letters of thanks and gratitude, and then penned a second, his very last, to his wife. Even while he wrote he could see and hear the scaffold being erected under the window of his prison.

Dearest Love : I write just one line to acquaint you that I have received assurances from your brother Edward of his determination to render every assistance and protection in his power, for which I have written to thank him most sincerely. Your sister has likewise sent

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

me assurances of the same nature, and expressed a desire to see me, which I have refused, having determined to speak to no one of my friends, not even my father, from motives of humanity to them and myself. It is a very great consolation to me, that your family are determined to support you; as to the manner of that assistance, I leave it to their affection for you, and your own excellent good sense, to settle what manner will be most respectable for all parties.

Adieu, dearest love. Keep your courage as I have kept mine; my mind is as tranquil this moment as at any period of my life. Cherish my memory; and, especially, preserve your health and spirits for the sake of our dearest children.

Your ever affectionate,

T. W. TONE.

11th November, 1798.

Probably it was late in the evening of Sunday when Tone wrote those last words. His resolution was taken, his mind, as he said, tranquil, and now, it is said, he did a deed by which he was to escape the shame of the scaffold and to frustrate the cruel design of his foes. More than once he had declared that his foes "never should have his bones to pick." He left France determined, in the event of defeat and capture, to cheat the gallows. He had proved by his life that he was not a man who shirked hardship, pain, or danger. He despised suicide, understanding by that term the shirking of life and its substantial shortening by a voluntary act. He never can be classified among those cowardly persons who have taken their own lives to avoid the responsi-

## *Trial and Death*

bilities of life. He simply chose the mode of his inevitable death. He had a penknife, that with which he had mended his quills during that day of sorrowful letter-writing. At night, when he had been left alone, he drew forth the knife and cut a deep wound across his neck. So the accepted story goes, and we see that day, the eleventh of the eleventh, closing with the leader of the Irish cause, lying on his pallet, wounded unto death.

His act, if he did it, was not morally lawful. Although he was not shirking life, like a common suicide, yet to anticipate the natural end, even by an hour, is forbidden. Let none save cads, however, despise the lion-hearted, but uninstructed, Tone, for his error in this case of conscience: more especially as there is strong reason to doubt that he did actually commit it. In those days, and ever since, it has been strongly believed that his enemies murdered Tone—made sure of his death with the knife, when, as we shall see, there was a chance that he would escape the gallows.

### § 5

ON the tragic Monday morning, when the court awaited the return of the Sheriff, none save his jailors knew that Tone lay wounded. He had been discovered by the sentry, lying in his blood, and a surgeon had been called at four o'clock in the morning to close the wound. The surgeon told the wounded man that, as he had missed the carotid artery, the injury might not prove fatal.

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

“ I am sorry,” murmured Tone, “ I have been so bad an anatomist.” So the usual account says.

The elder Tone arrived at the barracks, and served the writ of *habeas corpus* on the Provost-Marshal, General Craig. The Sheriff also came and warned Craig of the writ which was being prepared to suspend the execution. Craig refused to obey the *habeas corpus* and to surrender the living body of his prisoner. As for the Sheriff, he declared that he must obey Major Sandys, the military Governor ; Sandys, in turn, said that he must obey Lord Cornwallis.

With these tidings of refusal, but still in ignorance of the state of the prisoner within that Irish Bastille, the unhappy messengers returned to court.

Chief Justice Kilwarden, moved to indignation, cried out : “ Mr. Sheriff, take the body of Tone into custody, take the Provost Marshal and Major Sandys into custody, and show the order of the court to General Craig.”

Away went the Sheriff the second time. Kilwarden, on the Bench, was agitated by pity, fear and anger ; for all there present fully expected that those implacable military men would defy the court and carry out the execution.

At last the Sheriff returned. He had been refused admittance to the barracks, but had been informed that Tone was lying dangerously wounded by his own hand, and was not in a condition to be removed. The surgeon had declared that there was no saying for four days whether the wound was mortal. The

## *Trial and Death*

head was to be kept in one position, and a sentinel was set over the patient to prevent his speaking. Removal would kill him at once. It always has been believed that his jailors cut Tone's throat in the interval between the two visits of the Sheriff, in order to cheat the civil law. Friends were not allowed to visit the wounded man.

Kilwarden made a rule for suspending the execution, and there the dreadful crisis stood arrested for seven long days and nights.

### § 6

DURING the seven days and nights of his agony, Tone retained calmness of soul and possession of his faculties.

The wound in his neck slowly connected, but his strength ebbed away. One among his enemies proposed that he should be hanged in that condition. Let the rope be knotted about the wound, and let the rebel be hanged thus "for the sake of example," even though his head be torn from the body!

During those days of waiting for death, how did Tone pray? We never may know, although his lifelong consciousness of Divine Providence assures us that he sought, according as his faith had taught him, to be at peace with God. Perhaps, he wished that his long curiosity concerning the faith of his mother's people, the Catholic body, had brought him knowledge and the final consolation they knew. At any rate, he had given his years to the service of that Catholic body—to their interests, as he under-

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

stood them. Before this mystery of the conscience, we must rest silent, but hopeful.

During those days he had ample time to review his life's work. He must have remembered the adventurous ambitions of his youth, when he dreamed of glory and fortune in distant lands such as his brother William was enjoying at that time in the service of the Mahrattas of India. He would remember himself as a gallant young Scholar of the House away back in '85, when he fell in love with the old clergyman's granddaughter in Grafton Street, a girl not yet sixteen years of age, "beautiful as an angel," with whom he ran away on that sunny morning in the month of July to be married and to go honeymooning in green Kildare. For thirteen years of toil and strife and hope and misadventure "Matty" had remained his inspiration. Brave as Wolfe Tone was, braver and yet more patient must have been the girl-bride and young mother, who had encouraged him again and again in courses of danger and worldly sacrifice. He must have remembered how he used to write to his babies, bidding them "take care of poor Mamma, because we love her so much." He must have recalled those few and fugitive days that he was able to spend with his family at long intervals, when Daffy Bab would prattle to Fadoff, and would have got new words since the last meeting which Fadoff hastened to learn.

Be sure that his thoughts often dwelt in those last days on his beloved North, the days of hospitality

## *Trial and Death*

and wild carousing with Tom Russell in old Belfast, the strutting in Volunteer uniform, "proud as punch," the intoxicating joy of the spirit when his enthusiasm had overcome the prejudices of the bigots, and he had persuaded the blackest of the black to commit themselves to Catholic emancipation and to brotherhood with their fellow-countrymen. He would dwell with much pride on his work in the Catholic Convention, and would remember how he went about the country "converting Bishops." Perhaps he would remember his celebrated journey to the West, when he was "extremely sick of Ballinasloe in fair time," because a gentleman over his head in the hotel would not leave off the bag-pipes nor the gentleman in the next room leave off singing, nor yet the gentlemen in bed together in the little room nearby leave off snoring: "Sad, sad!" A guinea he paid for his crib that time, without a window or fireplace, for two nights. "Oh, Miss Culahaun, Miss Culahaun, where is your conscience?" He could not but remember how his toil, carried with so much merriment and yet so much earnestness, had resulted in the opening of the Constitution to the Catholic masses.

Then would follow his memory of Jackson's mission, and his flight to America, and his few months in that raw country where he so much disliked George Washington and the American aristocracy of money that was being reared in place of the aristocracy of privilege that had been overthrown. His voyage to France, the fascination that

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Paris had cast upon him even when he lived in it without a single friend and in almost solitary confinement, the splendour of the days when he became a soldier of the Republic and a fellow-comrade-in-arms of the great Hoche, untimely dead ; the long delays and frustrations, during which he wished " I could see once more the green sod of Ireland " ; the expedition at last to Bantry Bay, the anxious days upon the stormy waters with the snow-bound hills of Ireland on either hand, and the awful disappointment that was like the closing of the prison gates upon him, as it were a long age ago—all this he would recall.

There were happy moments with his dear ones in France, and then the two further expeditions, when, refusing defeat at one event, he strove again, and was defeated again, and yet a third time strove to carry out his purpose. The salt sea wind hardly was out of his lungs nor the smell of battle and blood and powder from his nostrils ; for only a month had passed since he had fallen in battle into the hands of his foes. Now he lay here, having lost all ; and yet, in all this review of a life of warlike enterprise and terrible decisions, he saw nothing in which to accuse himself of dishonesty or selfishness or base motives. He had been slow to embrace the extreme measures ; but, urged thereto by his people's need, he had gone through to the last, unfaltering. His first enthusiasm for the revolution in France had given place, in France, to his original pure Irish nationalism, which then rose to a clear, bright flame

## *Trial and Death*

of love. Ireland—unity—freedom: for these he died.

Throughout his life he had been accustomed to examine his conscience. Again and again he had confessed to ambition. If his cause had succeeded in his own day, he hoped to arrive at a position of rank in which his dear wife would be proud of him. Yet, though he was ambitious, he rejected again and again unscrupulous courses that would have brought him speedy and certain fortune. In the early days of his career he had been a heavy drinker, but in his later days he had conquered this weakness and had borne himself with a sobriety that caused even the Catholic leaders to prefer him to Keogh, and had earned him the confidence of the chiefs of the Republic. With his constant humility he set down that he had been buffeted oft in his lifetime by the foul fiend; the character of his friends and their affection for him proved how far his self-accusation exaggerated his faults.

Slowly dying, he yet was borne up in courage by the consciousness that he was dying for his country and in the cause of justice and liberty. "There is no situation," writes his son, "under which those feelings will not support the soul of a patriot."

On the morning of November 19th the end came. Tone was seized with the spasms of approaching death. The surgeon beside him whispered to a nurse that if the sick man should attempt to move or speak he must expire on the moment. Tone over-

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

heard these words, and, making a slight movement, he said :

“ I can yet find words to thank you, sir ; it is the most welcome news you could give me. What should I wish to live for ? ”

Therewith he fell back and expired.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THOSE WHO CAME AFTER

#### § 1

AS soon as news of Tone's trial and condemnation reached the Continent, the Government of the French Republic, and that of the Batavian Republic also, took steps to claim as one of their officers the prisoner who had held rank in their services. It was intended to hold English officers in French prisons as hostages for Tone's safety. If Curran's purpose of delay had succeeded, and if Tone had not died of his wound, it is possible that succour would have come in time. Madame Tone set out for Ireland, hoping to nurse her wounded husband and to share his imprisonment. She was on her way, when the fatal news came. Tone was dead.

Castlereagh allowed the body of the dead patriot to be surrendered to his friends, and his old father carried it home to County Kildare, where it was laid to rest in the churchyard at Bodenstown, ever since a place of pilgrimage to Irish patriots. A great soul described that spot in Bodenstown as the holiest spot in Ireland—an over-bold saying. Yet Tone, who lies there, was the greatest example

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

of the natural virtues in our history : brave, truthful, pure, he was a beloved husband, a faithful friend. He was consumed by charity for his fellows, and did more than any other man to break down those racial feuds which separated neighbours of Irish birth. He sacrificed talents, fortune, a sweet family life and life itself, for an unselfish end. Well may his memory inspire later generations, teaching men that the affairs of this world, if we are concerned with them at all, lay a mighty charge upon the conscience, to serve the right, whatever the cost may be. Well may the cause of the Republic—of the realisation of Tone's aims of brotherhood, the freedom, charity, social peace—be reckoned a noble cause, and he its martyr !

The Directory granted to Madame Tone a substantial, but insufficient, gift of money. From Ireland a sum of £787, the amount of a subscription raised by some of Tone's friends, was sent to the widow and family, and was lent out at interest until Tone's eldest son William was of age. Now followed some years of severe hardship, during which the only substantial relief came in a gift from Brother William, sent from India. A little later William was killed in battle, and his help was cut off.

For the hardships which the Tone family suffered Napoleon Buonaparte, whose ambition had destroyed the hope of Ireland's freedom, was personally to blame. In 1799 the great adventurer came home to France from Egypt in a haze of glory and glamour. The fumbling rulers of France, the Directory, which

## *Those Who Came After.*

had been too strong for him a year ago, when he sailed to the East, now had muddled itself into such a state of weakness that he was able to sweep it aside and make himself supreme master of the State. After that bold *coup d'état* in November, on the day called the 18th of Brumaire, the misty season, the First Consul was so busy with his tremendous ambitions that Madame Tone's claim on the French Government could get no attention. On went the great adventurer from the rank of First Consul to Emperor, piling one futile adventure upon another and burying his failure in Egypt under campaigns in Spain and Austria, Germany and Poland. All this while, frugally husbanding her little resources, Madame Tone managed to secure the education of her children, and particularly that of William at a military college.

One fine morning Madame Tone looked forth from her window in Paris and saw preparations for a hunt. She knew that the Emperor was going forth for a day's sport at St. Germain: that lovely suburb on the forest's edge, where James II once held his court in exile and is remembered in the parish church across the way. She was aware, too, that the Emperor used to get fresh horses to his carriage at that place which is beside the palaces of the kings of old, and would drive thence to his hunting lodge about a league distant, where he would breakfast and take a horse. That was the gathering place of the hunt, and Madame Tone determined to await Napoleon at that spot.

## The Life Story of Wolfe Tone

With difficulty and pain she made her way to St. Germain, bearing in her hand a petition. Very soon the Imperial carriage, with Napoleon and Josephine, drove up, and the horses were changed as quick as thought. Quickly, too, Madame Tone stepped up and presented her memorial to the Emperor.

Napoleon began to read. He saw the name Tone, and read it aloud, with an expressive accent.

*"Je m'en souviens bien,"* said he.

Well might Napoleon remember well the man whose cause, and whose country's cause, he had failed in that now distant day.

He made enquiry about Madame Tone's circumstances. Had she a pension? Did she need any special help? She said she needed nothing for herself, and that all her interests were centred in her child, whom she now gave up to His Majesty's service.

"Be tranquil about him, then," said Napoleon.

Soon afterwards William Theobald Wolfe Tone received his commission and entered on a creditable military career, which saw him wounded several times, and decorated with the Legion of Honour by Napoleon himself. He only resigned his commission a day before the white flag was hoisted at Bayonne, in 1815, and the Bourbons came back.

## *Those Who Came After.*

### § 2

MEANWHILE Tone's other children were dead. William and his mother decided to go to America. Their friend Wilson, to whom Wolfe Tone had recommended his wife in one of his dying letters, and who had managed the family's slender resources during the hard years, went to France, married Madame Tone and put his fortune at her disposal; then travelled with her and William to Georgetown, near Washington, where he bought an estate. William entered the American army.

Ireland had changed greatly. After the insurrection, and while the country was groaning, the legislative Union had been carried into law by men who sold their folk and their country, and wished that they had more to sell. Three years after the Union, Robert Emmet, young brother of Tone's admired friend, Thomas Addis Emmet, made his magnificently gallant effort to seize Dublin and achieve what Tone had failed to do. Tone's fate was repeated in this noble youth, as well as his ideals and his aims. Like Tone, Emmet expressly declared himself the friend of the Catholic people. He said to Tom Russell, his chief comrade in the enterprise, that he rejoiced to know that no leading Catholic was committed to the insurrection. In the event of failure "their cause will not be compromised."

Emmet's rising, like Tone's enterprise, was defeated, not by its leader's fault, but by fate. As a fatal wind drove back the ships from Bantry Bay, in '96, so a fatal series of misadventures dislocated

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

Emmet's plans at the last moment, and, for want of a few days' grace, the well-planned insurrection was defeated.

Lord Kilwarden, that chief justice who had striven to save Wolfe Tone, was driving through the streets of Dublin in his carriage at the moment when Emmet's plans were baffled, and a riot broke out. With pikes, the carriage was arrested. Kilwarden stepped out and declared his identity, confident that no man of the people would harm him. One wild fellow with a grievance piked the old man to death. Emmet saw his noble plan degenerate thus into riot and murder, and his heart was broken. He fled from the city, and was captured after a few weeks, was hanged, and followed Tone in his national apotheosis. His last words from the dock may stand for all patriots :

“ When my country takes her place among the nations of the world, then shall my character be vindicated : then may my epitaph be written.”

Tom Russell and Jemmy Hope had been sent by Emmet to the North. They failed to bring about a rising. Hope escaped, but Russell was taken prisoner, and was executed at Downpatrick. So perished Tone's dearest friend, uttering in his last speech words which throw a further light on the principles that animated all these brave men :

Perhaps, as my voice may now be considered as a voice crying from the grave, what I now say may have some weight. I see around me many who during the last years of my life

## *Those Who Came After.*

have defamated principles for which I am now to die. Those gentlemen, who have all the wealth and power of the country in their hand, I strongly advise and earnestly exhort to pay attention to the poor—by the poor I mean the labouring class of the community, their tenantry and dependants.

It may be they will not hold their power long, but at all events to attend to the wants and distresses of the poor is their truest interest. If they hold their power they will thus have friends around them; if they lose, their fall will be gentle.

He put the rope round his own neck, aiding the hangman, and died in a state of strange, religious exaltation.

One bitter thing must be told. In Belfast Dr. MacDonnell weakly had consented to sign a proclamation, offering reward for his friend Russell's capture. This he did when he thought that Russell was safely away, and he wished immediately that he had not done it. The deed shattered the whole society of patriotic Belfast, the Irish movement there collapsed, and MacDonnell, broken hearted, lived on to see Belfast turned against Ireland.

### § 3

LITTLE remains to tell. In America William Tone married a girl with whom he had long been in love, the only daughter, Kathleen, of his father's friend, Counsellor William Sampson of New York, a refugee from Belfast. He lived happily and honourably for

## *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*

some years ; edited his father's papers, and completed the patriot's life-story in a narrative of sublime, classical prose ; but succumbed in 1826 to consumption, which had carried off his brother and sister before him in their childhood. His daughter married a Martin, also from the North of Ireland, and the descendants of this union flourish in America to this day, proud of the blood of Wolfe Tone that flows in their veins, and corresponding still with their kindred in the Motherland.

Tone's widow outlived other actors in our story. She died in Georgetown in 1849. There is a letter extant which she wrote in 1842, in her old age, to vindicate the memory of Tone from some errors which had appeared in Dr. Madden's writings. She wrote of his services to the general committee of the Catholics :

I may say he was both trusted and beloved by them, and he loved and honoured them. His whole time and talents were devoted to them and to their cause. . . . On leaving Ireland, Tone again received the farewell thanks of the Catholics of Dublin for services rendered to the Catholic body, which no gratitude can over-rate, no remuneration over-pay.

Madame Tone repudiated the notion which had come into fashion that Tone was a man of reckless violence. On the contrary, she said, it had been his belief that from " a liberal emancipation of the Catholics—a full and fair representation of all the people of Ireland in an Irish Parliament—

## *Those Who Came After.*

when the immense resources of the country could be developed and honestly applied to the benefit of the country—a separation would, in a short time, be the certain consequence; but he did not think of separation until every other hope had failed, nor did he then think of it alone.” She affirms, too, that Tone certainly was among the most discreet of the United Irishmen in that critical year before his departure from Ireland. Fitzgerald, the brothers Sheares, and even Dr. Drennan, had published hot addresses. “Tone laboured in vain to check this folly, but there was no deceit in it; it was honest generous enthusiasm and young excitement.”

She says, also, that the critical letter which sent Tone from America to Paris, that which called upon him to “remember and execute your garden conversation,” was undoubtedly from John Keogh. She had the original document. Keogh was “cautious even to timidity, and yet he wished for French aid, and promised in a letter that his son Cornelius should join them on landing.”

Thus did Tone’s widow, when he lay forty-four years in the grave, vindicate his memory from the charge of violence, and prove that he acted with the approval of the leaders of the olden nation, by whom he was both trusted and beloved. These words the sorrowing and noble woman wrote from her retreat. “I live,” she said, “in complete retirement, and, to use Carolan’s words: ‘Lonely and desolate I mourn the dead.’”





6/5

=



*Read also*

# PORTRAIT OF A REBEL FATHER

By NORA CONNOLLY O'BRIEN

**J**AMES CONNOLLY, the Irish labour leader, was one of the seven men who signed the proclamation of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic on Easter Monday, 1916. As Commandant-General of the Dublin Division, he was in command at the General Post Office and was later executed. When the writer of these pages was still a child, she accompanied her father on many of his lecture tours in Great Britain and America, and attended his meetings. To him and his cause she gave her whole-hearted devotion, and she enjoyed in return his complete confidence. She has been able to give us what no one else could—the story of the Irish patriot's life as seen from within by one who shared both his home and his ideals.

Cr. 8vo

7/6 net

THE TALBOT PRESS, LIMITED  
DUBLIN AND CORK

RICH & COWAN, LIMITED  
LONDON