

Lecture on

The Tones

in a

Decade of Irish History



Delivered at The Curragh Concentration Camp
on Sunday, 27th April, and Sunday 4th May, 1958

By Republican Prisoner
SEOSAMH O CUINNEAGAIN

Seachain claon is cluanairi!
Fad-shaoghal do bhéimeanna beodha!
Marbhfhásc ar lucht ne feille!
Poblacht Wolfe Tone go deo!

- S. O. C.

The total proceeds from the sale of this booklet will be
donated to the Wolfe Tone Memorial Reconstruction
Fund.

Foreword

The suggestion that I should deliver a lecture on Tone was made to me early in April, 1958. As no books of reference were available to me, I had perforce to have a message conveyed to my wife to have my copy of Tone's Journal sent to the Camp. This reached me in due course and was the only literary source from which the lecture was composed.

I had great satisfaction in writing and delivering the lecture and greater still in the overwhelming acclamation that greeted its conclusion. The lecturer and members of his audience — a tough core of radical Republicans of the stamp of Tone — shed physical tears when the link was traced between Tone's death and Edentubber.

It might be timely here to reiterate:

1. That Tone's experience had taught him to abandon constitutional methods for the establishment of the Irish Republic and that he, accordingly, declared for war.
2. That breaking the connection with England meant for Tone
 - (a) the breaking of the language connection and the propagation of the national language in both Church and State and not in State only;
 - (b) the breaking of the monetary connection; and
 - (c) the breaking of the political connection.
3. That Tone, if alive to-day, would not have had himself nominated for election to a partitionist parliament in Ireland no more than to the British Parliament in Westminster.
4. That Tone would not have concentrated Irish Republicans, at the behest of the British Government, behind the barbed wire entanglements of the Curragh Camp with Sentries on mounted outposts ordered to shoot any prisoner who touched the wire.
5. That Tone would not have sent Irish troops to protect British naval installations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the same week that their fellow countrymen were exposed to massacre in Derry and Belfast, or at all.
6. That Tone would have made it a capital offence for an Irish national to join the British armed services while a foothold of Irish soil remained in British occupation.
7. That Tone's idea of a Republic was not that Ireland should be a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations — past, present or to come. Tone's idea of a Republic was not that of a satellite Soviet Socialist Republic with its emphasis on anti-Christ as opposed to Christ. Tone's Republic was to be an Irish Republic and everything truly Irish is radically Christian.

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Dedicated to:

*Bridie and our "little ones"—Conall, Careen,
Bernadette and Jeannemarie.*

By Republican Prisoner
SEOSAMH O CUINNEAGAIN

Beireann Buan Buadh.

THE FAMILY OF TONE

I

Theobald Wolfe Tone was a Dublin man. He was born on the 20th June, 1763, in the street off Mary Street, which now bears his name, but which in that year was known as Stafford Street after England's Earl and Ireland's enemy. His father was well established in business as a coachmaker, a fact which was evident in 1766 when he inherited on his father's intestacy (he having been killed in an accident on his farm) all his parent's freehold property, including a substantial holding near Naas of some one hundred acres of rich land. He let this holding from year to year to his youngest brother who appears to have acquired a title to it by virtue of his long possession (which would imply that he had defaulted for more than 12 years in the paying of his rent) for in 1787 legal proceedings by Tone's father to recover the holding from this brother not only failed but a substantial decree was given against him resulting in his eventual bankruptcy and the sale of his Dublin properties at Stafford Street and Summerhill. That Tone Senior was a man of high principle and family pride is shown in his determination to settle fully with all his creditors and to afford his eldest son an education befitting one who on the paternal side had his lineage deeply rooted in the soil of subjected Ireland and on the maternal side had an ancestry redolent of all that generations of the closest ties with the English Merchant Navy and the English Naval Services generally can

mean. His mother's maiden name was 'Lamport', no doubt of the same genus as 'Lambert' so common in County Wexford, both being probable derivatives from the French 'Lambord'. Little else is known of her except that she was of this seafaring stock (a fact that may account for the wanderlust so marked in each of her children); that her father had the reputation among the hardened old sea-rovers engaged on the trade with the West Indies of being game ball for anything; and that her brother had distinguished himself for his seamanship with the English Fleet.

I mention these details of Tone's antecedents to provide you with the open sesame to the source of the metallic qualities of mind and body that went to make up the man who was destined to be the Apostle of the doctrine of Irish Republicanism as we know it. His relentless determination to overcome all obstacles between him and what he conceived to be the accomplishment of his duty, he owed to his father; his buoyant enthusiasm and light-hearted concern for the dangers that confronted him as head of the conspiracy to rupture England's Empire, he derived from his mother.

Tone had three brothers, William, Matthew and Art, and a sister whose name was Mary. William, the eldest, was intended for a business career but he would have none of it, electing for the life of a soldier and joining the East India Company. At the outbreak of war between England and France he was in charge of a division in the army of the Nizam, an Indian Prince subject to a French protectorate and situate six hundred miles from Calcutta. Anticipating that his chances of promotion in the Service would now be small with a preponderance of French officers seeking preference, he gave up his command to make the journey back to Calcutta on horseback accompanied by a single servant. About two hundred miles from his destination, they were ambushed by five bandits one of whom was shot by William, he in turn being wounded in the foot and his horse and that of his servant being included in the booty with which their assailants made off. Despite this, William was successful in covering the two hundred miles on foot in his weakened condition in the middle of the rainy season in a tropical climate. I recount this incident as illustrating the tenacity and will to endure which was characteristic of all the Tones. Theobald had an especial affection for William who, he records, was "as brave as Caesar and loved the army". This regard was not misplaced for when William heard of Theobald's death he wrote Mrs. Tone a letter of deepest sympathy enclosing a Money Order value for £233 and undertaking to act as father and protector of her family for the future. He died in action fighting against the establishment of England's interests in India, while storming a fort in the Indian Wars.

Matthew is the best known of the Tones after Theobald. While he did not display the fiery nature of William, he was more solid, says Tone. "He spoke little but thought a good deal". In August, 1794, with Theobald's good will, he crossed to Dun-kirk to join the French Army and was promptly cast into prison on suspicion of espionage from which he was only released in October, 1795, after Wolfe Tone had made representations to the French Minister to the American Republic at Philadelphia. As member of the token but gallant expedition under Humbert which reached Killala Bay on the 22nd August, 1798, he was captured at Ballinamuck on the 8th of September, brought to Dublin in irons, given a trial in open Court with all the tinsel formulae of the English legal procedure and duly hanged, dying, as his eldest brother was also soon to do, in the uniform of a French officer in the cause of the Irish Republic.

The youngest brother, Art, who was only sixteen years of age in 1798 was selected by his father for a legal career, Tone Senior being most concerned that at least one of his sons followed the law. In most cases it so happened that the law followed his sons. Art's ambition was for a career at sea. Theobald supported him in his choice and in due course used his influence to have him accepted in the Dutch Navy in 1797 as a midshipman under Admiral De Winter, under whose command he later distinguished himself in many encounters against the English. After the destruction of the Dutch Fleet at Camperdown by the English under Admiral Duncan on the 11th October, 1797, he is known to have sailed for the East Indies where the presumption is that he died on active service at sea as nothing further has been heard of him. Tone himself does not appear to have met Art in person from the time he put him on board the good ship *Susannah* at Philadelphia in December, 1795, with special instructions for the United Irishmen at Belfast and Dublin. Art, who had begged his brother to allow him to share his fortunes in America, was then only thirteen years of age.

As for Tone's only sister, Mary, her name recalls that of a patriotic Cork woman of a later age. She resolved to stand by her illustrious brother in exile and arrived with him in America in 1795. When he left on the 1st January, 1796, to carry out his mission for Ireland in France, she endured many hardships attending to his affairs in America and caring for his wife and delicate children, eventually following him with them to France in December, 1796. She later married a Swiss gentleman (who appears to have held a commission in the American Army taking part in the siege of Cape Francais) to whom she had become engaged on the voyage to France and not many years later died of the yellow fever in San Domingo where her husband had business interests.

To proceed to deal with the historical pre-eminence of the years 1790-1798 without bringing before your minds pictures of William, Matthew, Art and Mary Tone, that staunch Republican quadpartite alliance within the one family, would be to do the memory of these neglected and well-nigh forgotten freedom fighters, as they were in every sense of the modern term, a disservice as shameful as the silent tribute in our current school texts to the patriotic dead of Republican Ireland between the death of Wolfe Tone in '98 and the present day. It should be noted that of Theobald, William, Matthew, Art and Mary Tone, the four brothers fought against England and Mary shortened her life through the rigours she endured for Wolfe Tone, his wife, his infant children and his cause of the Irish Republic. None of them lived beyond the age of 36 years. Requiescant in Pace.

EDUCATION AND THE LAW

II

Tone was sent to a good old English school at the age of 9 years. He showed puerile brilliance leading his class in seven subjects but failing in writing and catechism, two subjects to which he could not apply himself. At 13 years he was changed to a school in Stafford Street which was noted for its teaching of the Classics. Tone's father hoped that he would here be prepared for the entrance test to Trinity College of which he hoped he would become a fellow. Tone frequently mitched from this school to ramble in the country or plunge in the sea but most often to go to Phoenix Park to watch the "parades, field days, and reviews of the Dublin Garrison". He naturally fell behind in his studies as a result, but managed to qualify for Trinity in February 1781, when not yet 18.

He had his eye on a military career but reckoned without his father who was determined that he would go for law. Young Tone being a youth of fixed ideas thereupon refused to go to Trinity and furthermore, to get the old man's rag out properly, insisted upon reading only military books. Fortunately, the war between England and America was drawing to a close and Tone, believing that England would no longer require volunteers, capitulated to his parent after losing a year and entered Trinity as a law student.

It was while a scholar in the University that in 1785 he met Miss Witherington who resided in Grafton Street with her grandfather, a wealthy old clergyman named Fanning. She, who was soon to be his wife, was then only sixteen and, to quote Tone,

“as beautiful as an angel”. He contrived to be introduced to her family by striking up a friendship with her older brother, who was also at Trinity, and so being invited to the house for musical evenings, Tone being an accomplished violinist. Believing, no doubt correctly, that their parents would never agree to their marriage, they went off to Maynooth one day in July, 1785 and got married, remaining there for a few days until they were satisfied that resentment had died down at home and that it would be all right to return to town. They then took up lodgings near Mr. Fanning.

Tone took out his Bachelor of Arts degree in February, 1786. In his four years' course he took three **firsts**, a scholarship and three medals for oratory from the Historical Society of which he became Auditor. Many prominent patriots have been members of this Society in the '98 period, including Robert Emmet. Many who have not at all been patriotic have also been members. Among the less patriotic was Thomas Moore, the poet, soon to dedicate his poems to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

Tone, leaving his wife and baby daughter with her father in Dublin in January, 1787 entered as a Law Student at the Middle Temple, London. There is little to be said of his sojourn there except that the necessity to live constrained him to neglect his studies and earn a subsistence pittance writing critiques of new publications. He was glad to avail of Mr. Fanning's request to return to Dublin where he would receive from him £500 for his wife's marriage portion. Tone arrived back in Dublin on 23rd December, 1788, collected his £500 and took lodgings with his wife and child in Clarendon Street. In February, 1789 he took out his degree of Bachelor of Laws and elected to follow the Leinster Circuit. Tone loathed the practice and in all went only three times on Circuit. His was not the slavish nature that would fawn on “messieurs, the attorneys” to beg for briefs and it is little wonder that, as happens, one might say, in the natural course of things with many almost briefless barristers, he turned to politics.

REPUBLICANISM IN EMBRYO

III

Whiggery, the antidote to Toryism, had first been introduced to Ireland in the Whig Club. It was immediately assailed by its opponents in the Press and Tone, whose aims went infinitely further than those of the Whigs in matters of reform was tempted to write in their defence believing that in doing so he would not

be surrendering his own political principles. The result was the publication of a pamphlet entitled "A Review of the Last Session of Parliament", the outspoken nature of which electrified the nation, Tone being immediately approached by the Whigs to join their Party with promises of legal work and eventually a seat in Parliament in return. Henry Joy, the Belfast Secretary of the Whig Club, wrote him a strong letter of congratulation little thinking that in less than two years time Tone would be the most talked of political figure in Belfast town but in a connection far in advance of the conservatism of Whiggery in 1791. One of the several ancient alley-ways joining the busy thoroughfares of High Street and Ann Street in the City of Belfast as it is to-day still bears the name "Joy's Entry". It may not be too much to hope that our generation may live to see the High Street of that City renamed "Ascal Teoin" for conventions of the United Irishman at some of which Tone was present were held in premises in others of these alleyways adjoining the High Street, notably Sugarhouse Entry, Crown Entry and Winecellar Entry.

The reception his pamphlet received set Tone thinking seriously of the Irish political situation and led to what was to him "a great discovery", namely, "that the influence of England was the radical vice of the Irish Government, and consequently Ireland would never be free, prosperous, or happy, until she was independent, and that independence was unattainable while the connection with England lasted." He thereupon looked with the utmost contempt on the politics of the Whigs with "their peddling about petty grievances instead of going to the root of the Evil".

War between England and Spain about this time seemed imminent and Tone now afire with the ideal of an Irish Republic, availed of the opportunity to further advance his new convictions in writing and issued a pamphlet in which he argued that Ireland should not be bound by any declaration of war by England, but might and ought, as an independent nation, to stipulate for a neutrality and play a role independent of that of England. Tone's advocacy in this pamphlet brings to mind a similar but scarcely known writing of the English father of Patrick Pearse scourging his own country for her abuses in Ireland. How few Irishmen living to-day have even heard of, much less read, the scathing arguments of Pearse's father against the nurturing of Britain's ruthless rule in Ireland.

The English people, who had at first acclaimed the French Revolution which commenced in 1789, on reflection hastily changed their sympathies as they contemplated the probable effects upon their own monarchial institutions, their aristocracy and their monopolies in commerce which could easily follow from the planting of the principles of revolutionary France in their

hearts of oak. Controversy was whetted by the publishing of Edmund Burke's brilliant invective against the Revolutionary gospel, to be followed by Tom Paine's "Rights of Man" echoing Rousseau's radical teaching that "All men are born free but everywhere they are in chains". Public opinion in Ireland surged with the progress of the Revolution until it could be said that the country was divided between two new groupings — the Aristocrats and the Democrats. Tone was at once a Democrat and as this factor was against his succeeding at the Bar, he may be said to have now, as Pearse in his time was also pressed by principles to do, abandoned the profession that he had unwillingly, and only in deference to his father's wishes, agreed to pursue.

TONE—FATHER OF ECUMENISM

IV

The religious denominations at this time in Ireland may be enumerated as follows:- (1) The Established Church, known today as the Church of Ireland or the Protestants, who were about one-tenth of the entire population, owned five-sixths of the landed property and possessed every position of significance in the Church, the judiciary, the revenue, the army and the corporation. Being land grabbers, or the descendants of such, they felt utterly beholding to England to secure their persons and their properties and to whom they sacrificed the commerce of the nation. They were largely an aristocracy in the vilest sense of the term and dreaded the spreading of the revolutionary principles of France as they would the plague.

(2) The Dissenters, who were twice as numerous as the members of the Established Church, were also settlers from England and Scotland or the descendants thereof. They differed, however, in that they owned very little landed property, being mainly engaged in trade and manufacture. Accordingly, they felt strong enough in numbers and courageous enough at heart not to exist in slavish adulation of everything English and came to regard themselves as Irish as the Irish. They had formed the flower of the Irish Volunteers in 1782; they advocated and continued to petition for a Parliamentary reform and the admission of Catholics to equal rights as freemen: they were the first to profess and stand four square behind the principles of Revolutionary France.

(3) The Catholics who comprised two-thirds of the population including therein the whole peasantry of Munster, Leinster and Connaught. Their numerical strength afforded them a considerable portion of the merchantile interest but generally as a rural community they sweated on uneconomic holdings to eke

out a miserable existence after satisfying the demands of absentee rack-renting landlords. Of landed property, they owned less than one-fiftieth of the whole available acreage, and under the penal code were, as Tone tells us, "reduced to a situation, morally and physically spaking, below that of the beasts of the fields". "There was no disgrace, no injustice, no disqualification, moral, political or religious, civil or military that was not heaped on the hapless Catholics". "The spirit of their few remaining gentry was broken and their minds degraded". It was only among a few of their traders and merchants and some members of the medical profession "who had smuggled an education in spite of the Penal Code that anything like political sensation existed". Listen to the magniloquent language of Tone:- "But as the luminary of truth and freedom in France rapidly advances towards its meridian splendour, the public mind in Ireland was proportionately illuminated."

The General Committee of the Catholics formed in 1770 was composed of the Bishops, the country gentlemen and certain merchants and traders who, living in Dublin, were nominated by the corporate towns to represent them. Their original purpose was to seek the repeal of a tax called quarterage which was levied on Catholics only. So slavish had the executives of this Committee become that for 20 years their efforts on behalf of the general body of the Catholic community were limited to presenting addresses at Dublin Castle to successive Viceroys pleading in a slavish and abject manner that their Excellencies might consider granting them some relief.

The French Revolution awakened all parties from the abyss into which they had been plunged and, as Tone tells us, the citizens of Belfast were the first to raise their heads from the abyss and look the situation of their country steadily in the face. "They saw at a glance their true object and the only means to obtain it — that it would require the united efforts of their people to subvert the existing Government. Their guiding principle was that to be free it was necessary to be just and casting their eyes once more on the long-neglected Catholics, they determined to begin on a new system and to raise the structure of the liberty and independence of their country on the broad basis of equal rights to the whole people".

Thomas Russell, "the man from God knows where", was at this time (1790) an officer in a British regiment stationed at Belfast and, peculiar as it may seem, was admitted to several of the Clubs of the Belfast Volunteers. A close friend of Tone's, he was entirely in agreement with Tone's political ideas and asked Tone, whom he had been keeping well briefed on Dissenter sentiments, to prepare a special address for the Belfast Clubs. It was this request which set Tone thinking along the lines which led

to the formulation of the teaching whose active pursuit finds you, 168 years after its first pronouncement, listening to its exposition in the Curragh Concentration Camp close to the encesstral home of Tone. Tone's teaching was — Tone's teaching is:- To break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils and to assert the independence of our country . . . To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter. Tone decided, in deference to Russell's request, to address a pamphlet to the Dissenters to convince them that they and the Catholics had but one common interest and one common enemy; that the depression and slavery of Ireland was produced and perpetuated by the divisions existing between them and that consequently to assert the independence of their country it was necessary to forget all former feuds and to consolidate the entire strength of the whole nation to form for the future but one people. This was done in a pamphlet entitled "An Agreement on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland". Published in September 1791, its success was immediate. The people of Belfast, to whom until then Wolfe Tone was virtually unknown, had a large edition of it printed and dispersed throughout the North of Ireland. It was signed "A Northern Whig". It was as a result of this pamphlet that Tone made his first direct contact with the Catholics, his first Catholic friend being John Keogh who introduced him to several of the active members of the Catholic Committee. In October Tone accepted an invitation to visit Belfast for the formation of the first Club of the organisation to be known as "The United Irishman". There he met the foremost Dissenters of the North. Samuel Neilson, Robert and William Simms, William Sinclair, Thomas McCabe, Jemmy Hope of Templepatrick and Henry Joy McCracken. The meeting to form the Club was convened, if my earliest recollections of reading of this event do not fail me, in a room in North Street (off the Royal Avenue — Belfast's Sackville Street). It is interesting to note, too, that William Sinclair's descendents still carry on business on an extensive scale as drapers at the corner of North Street and Royal Avenue.

To effectively propagate the new doctrine of the United Irishmen throughout Ulster, twelve of the Belfast members subscribed £250 each in order to set on foot a paper whose object should be to give fair account of all that passed in France, to inculcate the necessity of union between all Irishmen of no matter what shade of religious opinion, to support the emancipation of the Catholics, and to erect Ireland into a Republic Independent of England. This newspaper called the "Northern Star" was conducted by Samuel Neilson, who was chosen as its first Editor. It was a great

means of effectually accomplishing the union of the two great sects, by the simple process of making their mutual sentiments known to one another.

The formation in Belfast of the first Club of the United Irishmen heralded a new era in the politics of Ireland. Tone returned to Dublin with Russell, who had now left the army, with instructions to form a Club in Dublin. He contrived to be introduced to the Protestant leaders in Dublin and, in particular, Napper Tandy, the principal of them, through whom a Club was formed of which the Honourable Simon Butler was first Chairman and Napper Tandy, the first Secretary. Napper Tandy, who for 20 years had wielded unbounded influence in the civic and commercial life of Dublin, sacrificed this influence, which he could have exercised for his own personal advantage, for the furtherance of the Republican ideal to which he had now committed himself.

In the meantime a split had occurred in the Catholic Committee the active members of which had decided on an immediate application to Parliament for the repeal of the Penal Laws only to be vigorously opposed by sixty-eight of their members comprising their country gentlemen, their peers and their Bishops, on the ground that they did not want to embarrass the Government at this stage by advancing their claims for Catholic emancipation. Those who advocated the making of this application were maligned as a rabble of obscure porter-drinking prattlers without property, pretensions or influence who fancied they represented the Catholic community who in fact despised them. The 68 renegades who had subscribed their names to a document denouncing the proposed application were lauded to the skies. Suffice it say that the infamous 68 provided a nucleus for the formation of the Ancient Order of Hibernians with their present day political satellites moving inertly in the outer space of Stormont and Westminster. Such was the spirit of unanimity and concord in the national aspirations of Catholic Ireland in 1790-'91.

No doubt sensing that this drift was but the signal of more serious trouble to come, Richard Burke, son of Edmund Burke, the paid secretary of the Committee, returned to England and Tone, who was not a Catholic, was offered the position of secretary and agent in his place. Tone being a Protestant, this was a wonderful tribute to his talents and integrity. He readily accepted the post and immediately set about the organising of new elections throughout the country for representation on the Committee in such a way that the newly elected body must without a shadow of doubt be accepted as representing the whole Catholic community and concentrating thereby in one voice "the grievances and opinions of three million people". The new Assembly first met in December, 1792, and the very fact of their meeting with all the

appearance of a legislative Assembly in the Capital of Ireland at once confounded the Government. The principal business before the Assembly was to draw up a statement of the Catholic grievances and to address them directly to the King, not through the channel of the Irish Administration, and to petition him for the total repeal of the Penal Laws under which nine-tenths of the population were deprived of the rights of citizenship in their own country. Tone drew up the petition and attended at the presenting of it to the King in person. The progress of the Catholic interest had been so rapid within the short period that Tone had acted as agent of the Committee that the Monarch and his Ministry in London, seeing that the claims of the Catholics had the full support of the Dissenters and of the Whigs in the Dublin Parliament, approved of them and promised the relief that they sought. When they returned from London to present their claims to His Majesty's Ministers in Dublin, many of the delegation got weak-kneed and subservient again in the presence of their dihard adversaries who profitted by this timidity to offer the repeal of only such of the Penal Enactments as had fallen into disuse and the granting of the elective franchise, which being exercisable on the basis of ownership of land conferred no real power on the Catholic people. It was made a condition precedent to the conceding of these negligible reliefs that the Catholics cease their agitation and revert once more to their role of loyal and law-abiding subjects of the King.

In this way having secured the silence of the expecting Catholics the Government bent all their efforts against the reformers and Republicans of the North who had so powerfully assailed them. They availed of the alarm excited by the horrors of the French Revolution to arouse the fear of all men of property. They secured, by sacrificing the interests of their own country, the co-operation of the mercantile and manufacturing classes in England and thereby overawed and intimidated the British Ministry itself. They rallied all their forces and, on the pretence of some trifling trouble in the North between the Defenders and the Peep-of-day Boys, they augmented the Army, raised the militia and yeomanry and disarmed the people. They went further still and, with the consent of both Whig and Tory, established a secret committee whose operations soon equalled in cruelty and illegal violence those of the Inquisition in Spain, the Star Chamber in England, and the Comite of Public Safety in France. The mutilated Bill, granted with such reluctance, was eventually passed in 1793 and received by the Catholics with the contempt it deserved. The British Ministry, aiming ahead at the incorporation of Ireland with England, saw that the more unpopular the Irish Government rendered itself the better it would serve their ends. Lord Castlereagh, long the remorseless agent of its cruelties, now

changed face and denounced this inhuman administration. The British Government calculated that the Irish Government and the masses of the Irish people must exhaust themselves in the struggle that must inevitably ensue between them and that they would each be obliged to forfeit their independence for England's protection. Their calculation proved correct.

BELFAST-AMERICA-FRANCE

V

The next session of the General Committee which opened a few days after the passing of this Act of partial relief was stormy in the extreme. The leaders were discredited, Tone and the more active members realising that the crisis for freeing the country had passed. The Government also realised this and feeling its strength began to act on the infernal system of goading the people to acts of desperation and open insurrection in order to colour and justify their own measures. The cruelty of the administration fired the hearts of the multitude with indignation and spread the affiliation of the United Irishmen more rapidly than could have been done by all the efforts of the patriotic leaders. Their aims were no longer bound to Catholic emancipation and the reform of Parliament, they aimed at separation, liberty and even revenge. Their Society took a fiercer character and then for the first time began those secret oaths and associations by which the members bound themselves to one another; while the Orange Lodgers with forms as illegal as the United Irishmen and purposes as diabolical as those of the others were pure and liberal, were encouraged by the Government all over the country. To unite all sects and parties for the liberation of Ireland was the professed object of the first; to support the exclusive privileges of the Members of the Established Church and keep the rest of the nation in slavery forever, the object of the other.

During the year that followed the passing of the Act of April, 1793, informers began to appear like vermin under the fostering patronage of the Castle, State prosecutions were multiplied beyond example. Juries were packed and iniquitous judgments rendered; the soldiery were quartered on the disaffected districts and allowed to indulge in every licence. Tone's friends, Archibold Hamilton Rowan, Simon Butler and Oliver Bond were arrested, tried and imprisoned. At length in April, 1794, William Jackson, an emissary of the French Government to sound the willingness of the Irish people to join the French was arrested, charged with High Treason and hanged in April, 1795. The patriotic party and

the Catholics were anxious to open a communication with the French Government. Tone undertook to run this risk and to deliver a statement of the wants and situation of Ireland.

During all this time, against the advice of his friends, Tone refused to conceal himself but remained, generally, at his home in the country which he had inherited from his uncle Jonathan making occasional visits to Dublin where he continued to act as Secretary of the Catholic Sub-Committee. He was also engaged writing a history of Ireland the manuscript of which has unfortunately never been found. When it appeared that his arrest was imminent, several of his friends, including Lord Kilwarden, who as Lord Chief Justice was later to show much concern on Tone's behalf, asked the Government to allow him to leave the country, if he would. As this left his future course clear, and did not involve a breach of principle, Tone agreed to leave Ireland as soon as he had settled his private affairs. He thereupon received an address of thanks from the Catholics of Dublin and later further honours were paid him in Belfast. Before leaving Dublin on May 25th, 1795 for Belfast en route to America, Tone conferred with Russell and Emmet at the latter's residence at Rathfarnham and explained to them that as soon as he reached America he would call on the French Minister at Philadelphia, detail for him the state of affairs in Ireland and endeavour to obtain a recommendation to the French Government, and that if he succeeded so far, he would leave his family in America and set off for Paris to apply in the name of his country for the assistance of France to enable Ireland to assert her independence. This met with the full approval of Emmet and Russell.

Tone was accompanied by his wife and family and his sister, Mary, to Belfast. His property consisted of their clothes, his books, and about £700 in cash and bills on Philadelphia whither they were bound. They remained in beautiful Belfast, then with a population of little over 20,000, until June 15th, a period of just over three weeks. They were warmly entertained by the Simms, Neilson and McCracken enjoying outings in the fine Summer weather to various places of interest, including Lough Neagh and in particular the picturesque setting adjoining Belfast Castle below the rugged beauty of Cave Hill with Belfast Lough and the Hills of Down beyond its wide expanse. On the first of these excursions, Tone, Simms, Neilson, McCracken, Russell and several others mounted the summit of McArt's Fort on Cave Hill and took a solemn declaration never to desist in their efforts until they had subverted the authority of England over their country and asserted her independence. On the 15th June the Tones, who had been now joined by Art, recently returned from a voyage to Portugal, boarded the *Cincinnatus* of Wilmington, U.S.A., a

vessel of 230 tons conveying 300 passengers, sailed down the placid waters of Belfast Lough, Cave Hill to their left and Bangor of St. Brendan to their right, in exile now westward bound to the new American Republic, the refuge of the free. Tone tells us that their Belfast friends loaded them with presents, filling their cabin with sea stores, fresh provisions, sweetmeats and everything they could devise for the comfort of Mrs. Tone and her 3 infant children. Among the gifts was a small medical chest and Tone took upon himself the office of ship's physician throughout the voyage and performed his duties well.

On the 1st August they reached Wilmington where they stayed for a few days recovering their strength at a tavern owned by an Irishman named Captain O'Brien. They reached Philadelphia about the 7th August to find Dr. Reynolds of the Catholic Committee and Hamilton Rowan, who had just arrived upon his release from prison, there before them. Determined to waste no time prosecuting his case for Irish freedom, Tone called upon the French Minister, Adet, the very next day armed with his only credentials, two votes of thanks from the Catholics of Ireland and his certificate of admission to the Belfast Volunteers. In compliance with Adet's request, Tone within the course of the next few days completed in the form of a Memorial to the French Government all he had to say on the subject of Ireland (the temperature in Philadelphia while Tone wrote was 90 degrees) and this was forwarded by Adet to France with his strongest recommendations. He also undertook to have poor Matthew Tone immediately released from prison at Guise and to recommend him for a commission in the French Army.

Tone was far from being optimistic about the response of the French Government to his memorial and set about purchasing a holding of 180 acres near Princeton, New Jersey, for £1,180. He was reconciled to his belief that his lot was now cast to be an American farmer. Before the purchase was completed, however, he received letters from Keogh in Dublin and Russell and the Simms in Belfast informing him that the public mind in Ireland was now advancing rapidly towards Republicanism and, reminding him of the obligation he had entered into before leaving Ireland, urged him to force his way to the French Government and beg their assistance. William Simms backed his concern with a subscription of £200 towards Tone's expenses. Mrs. Tone and his sister encouraged him to do his duty to his country to have no anxiety on their behalf nor for the children. Tone thereupon set off from Princeton to Philadelphia, showed the correspondence to Adet, received from him letters of recommendation to the French Government, sent for his brother Art to come from Princeton and giving him letters for Neilson, Simms and Russell in Belfast and Keogh and Robinson in Dublin on December 10th

put him on board the Susannah bound from Philadelphia to Belfast. Except for these, Art was warned to tell everyone else, including his father and mother, that Tone was settled on a farm at Princeton. Tone spent one more day in Philadelphia with Rowan, Reynolds and Napper Tandy who had just arrived from Hamburg, and then left for Princeton which he reached on the 18th accompanied by Rowan. Tone, who, as can be gleaned from the numerous terms of endearment for his wife and little ones appearing in his Journal, was the perfect family man, sat up to the "wee small hours" the night of the 13th December considering with his wife and Mary what the future might hold for them. He tells us that they filled him with the most ardent hope and steady resolution and the next day he left for New York reaching it on the 16th and booking his passage on the Jersey which sailed on January 1st, 1796, with 9 passengers (all French) for La Harve which they reached on February 1st.

Tone presented his passport to Munroe, the American Ambassador, at Paris on the 15th February and was referred by him to Charles de la Croix, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, with his letters from Adet, which were in code. Tone saw de la Croix that day and again on the 17th but the Minister's poor English and Tone's atrocious French made discussion difficult and he was referred by him to Madgett, an Irishman long resident in France and who held a position of importance in the Foreign Affairs Department. Madgett informed him that the French Government had already its attention fixed on Ireland feeling that until they could separate Ireland from England, the latter was invulnerable. He wanted to know could Ireland not do something on her own without a direct landing by the French. Tone made it quite clear to him that nothing could be done by the Irish unless and until there was a substantial landing by the French. He reasoned that if 20,000 French troops were landed under a distinguished French soldier 300,000 Irishmen would immediately rally to their support. Madgett who had already far from impressed Tone, looking magnanimously ahead, promised that in the event of victory Jamaica would be ceded to Ireland. Tone commented that he wished he had Ireland free without Jamaica.

Tone records that Madgett was always poring over maps and imagining that he was planning revolutions. Madgett was seemingly one of those men who, if he were watching a game of chess, would always be seeing checkmates which did not in fact exist. On the 22nd February Tone handed Madgett a special memorial he had been asked to prepare for the French Executive. Madgett informed him that the Minister was of the opinion that not more than 2,000 troops could be spared for an Irish expedition. Tone

retorted that he might as well send 20 as 2,000; that with 5,000 a landing might be made at Belfast with some prospect of success; with 20,000 a landing could be made with success at Dublin; but with 2,000 the operation would only be a snare for his brave and unfortunate countrymen. Tone's judgment was proved to be sound by the disasters that befell the unfortunate Irish soldiers and peasantry when Humbert's token force was shattered at Ballinamuck in '98.

Disgusted with Madgett, on February 24th Tone without any prior arrangement forced his way to an interview with Carnot, the Minister for War, hailed throughout France as the "Organiser of Victory". Carnot listened to all Tone had to say, showed him every consideration, and arranged for further meetings. On the 26th De La Croix studied a map of Ireland with Tone and discussed the quantity of men and artillery pieces necessary for the expedition. These discussions were continued on March 11th when De La Croix quibbled about the difficulties of conveying a force to Ireland. He contended that to convey 20,000 the French would have to be masters of the Channels and that number was therefore out of the question. As for 5,000, 20 ships would be required to convey them; and it would be difficult to equip 20 sail in a French port without the English having notice of it, in which case they would immediately block up the port with a force double of any that could be sent against them. Tone replied that all great enterprises were attended with great difficulties and pleaded that a landing of a mere 5,000 would not win the support of the people of property, whose assistance would be necessary for the forming of a Government in Ireland, unless they felt sure that the rising would succeed. De la Croix suggested that a provisional Government could be formed from the members of the Catholic Committee and the United Irishmen of Belfast until a national convention could be called. He added that in the last resort a military government could be formed. This appealed to Tone who was in favour of a military government at the outset provided care was taken that its powers were not abused or allowed to fall into the hands of demagogues, if they had any such among them. As a result of these discussions, Tone was satisfied that De la Croix was not capable of tackling the Irish problem without making a mess of it. He was too obviously pursuing the old short-sighted policy of merely using the Irish to embarrass the English and in the end allowing Ireland to fend for herself. It was ineffective political play-acting such as this which may be said to have taught the Irish people that their best interests lay in depending upon themselves alone.

On March 14th Tone had been referred by Carnot to General Clarke, head of the Department of War whose father was

Irish and who had himself visited Ireland, but found him grossly lacking in an understanding of the Irish question. For instance, until disillusioned by Tone, he had believed that the Irish aristocracy would stand boldly behind any attempt to establish the Independence of the country. It rankled Tone in later discussions with General Hoche that he had shared Clarke's views on this matter. Clarke also raised the question of subsistence for the French army after landing in Ireland, alive to the fact, so tersely expressed by Napoleon Bonaparte, that an army marches not upon its feet but on its stomach. Clarke hinted that France would be entitled to guarantees that the Irish people would maintain their alliance with her after independence had been won and that a monarchy would not be established in place of the Republic. As to subsistence for the French troops, Tone assured him that the Irish people would see to it that their allies would not want for food. As to Ireland's future form of Government, Tone refused to be accessory to subjecting his country to the control of France, only to get rid of England. In the meantime, a Paris physician, named Aherne, was to be sent to Ireland with special instructions from the French Executive. Keogh and other prominent Catholic leaders had meanwhile been arrested and detained and the Gunpowder Convention and Insurrection Acts were in full force at home.

BANTRY BAY

VI

On that ominous date in the Irish Calendar, the 12th July, Tone was introduced to Hoche at the French War Office. Hoche bore a sabre-cut across his forehead, over an eyebrow, and down one side of his nose. Tone was impressed by these marks of gallantry and remarked to himself that Hoche must certainly have been fairly near the enemy when he collected these decorations. On that afternoon a Council of War on Irish affairs was held attended by Carnet, the Minister for Marine, the French Secretary General, Hoche and several other high-ranking officers, at which an expedition to Ireland was plotted. It should be noted that Hoche, who had been Bonaparte's teacher in the Military Academy, was only 32, Bonaparte was 29, Moreau 30 and Pichegru, the oldest of all the French Generals, only 35. On July 16th Tone was commissioned Chef de Brigade in the infantry, his rank corresponding to that of Colonel in the English Army. He immediately wrote to his wife to sell out everything and come at once with the family to France.

On July 23rd Tone, keeping up the pressure on the French Command, called on Hoche, his O.C., at 7 a.m. to find him in

bed. They discussed the details of the Irish venture. In the matter of the Irish aristocracy Hoche was confident of their co-operation for, he asked, was not Lord Edward Fitzgerald sympathetic and how about Lord Fitzgibbon, the British Lord High Chancellor of Ireland, would he not help? Shortly after this, Lord Fitzgibbon, possibly through some form of telepathy having overheard Hoche's enquiry, denounced him as "a monster". When Tone expressed fear that the just indignation of the people might result in the massacre of the Aristocrats, Hoche commented that much mischief had been done to the principles of the Revolution in France by the spilling of so much blood, "for", he added "when you guillotine a man, you get rid of an individual, it is true, but you make all his friends and connections enemies of the Government forever".

Hoche left Paris on the 12th August, exactly one month after first meeting Tone, for Rennes, near Brest, the port of embarkation. Tone was not ordered to follow him until September 17th when he left Paris where he had now been for 7 months tearing to shreds the red tape of protocol in pleading with the French Government for his Country. He was satisfied that he had succeeded beyond his expectations. As to pleasure or amusement he had had little; nor had he formed or endeavoured to form social connections. He visited and was visited by no one, French or foreigner, and left Paris without being acquainted with a single family. Outside of close Government circles he was known as "Mr. Smith".

On October 17th Hoche, who stayed at Brest speeding up the Naval preparations, was fortunate to escape assassination by two hirelings of the English Government. Tone was occupied in the intervening weeks preparing an analysis of the distribution of the English troops in Ireland and translating orders and instructions for an American Officer, Colonel Tate, who had offered his services and was to command a buccaneering party of 1,050 men of the Black Legion into England with a view to sacking Bristol, her third largest city. Tone about this time writes: "The truth is, I hate the very name of England, I hated her before my exile, I hate her since, and I will hate her always". As a further diversionary tactic, 2,000 of the greatest reprobates in the French Army were dispatched from Flushing to land in England to do as much damage as possible and 3,000 more were to leave with the Irish expedition to be, as Tone puts it, "disgorged on the English coast".

It was not until December 15th that all was finally ready and the signal given to get under way. Tone was aboard the Indomptable of 80 guns, the expedition consisting of some 43

ships in all with 15,100 troops and 50,000 stand for the United Irishmen, full artillery support, and plentiful supplies of powder and ammunition. The British Fleet was known to be lying off Ushant to block their passage to the ocean.

Sailing through the darkness on the night of the 16th their lights blacked out to avoid detection, one vessel, the *Sequisant* of 74 guns was lost with 550 men on board when she struck a rock negotiating a dangerous passage called the Raz between Brest and the ocean. On the morning of the 17th only 17 ships were with the *Indomptable* and these did not include the *Fraternitie* on board of which were Generals Hoche and Debelle, the commanding officers, and Admiral Morard de Gales, the naval commander. On the 18th, a fog so dense had fallen that you could not see a ship's length ahead. The early morning of the 19th was marked by a stark calm and the vessels would not move any way. Later 16 sail of the remainder of the Fleet joined them but still no appearance of the *Fraternitie* with Hoche.

On the morning of the 21st Tone's heart was lifted as they sailed under Cape Clear and he saw his country once more. They were within easy reach of the coast but their instructions were to cruise at Bantry for at least five days in the event of the fleet becoming scattered until General Hoche should arrive. On the 22nd they were close to Bantry but still no sign of the *Fraternitie*. Tone was now convinced that if a landing were not made at once the expedition must fail. He therefore suggested that General Grouchy, who was in the *Immortalite* with Rear-Admiral Bonnet, and was the senior officer with the ships at Bantry, should make the decision to land and trust to success for justification but got no support.

On the night of the 23rd a heavy gale blew from the East with snow and the following morning the mountains of Cork and Kerry were covered with it. Overnight the fleet had been scattered for the fourth time since leaving Brest, 20 vessels being blown out to sea. Tone thereupon urged General Charen who was in command on the *Indomptable* to land him with whatever men were available in Sligo Bay together with 20,000 muskets, 3,000,000 cartridges, 1,000 lbs. of powder and the light artillery, arguing that, if they succeeded, the French Republic would gain greatly in reputation and interest but that, if they failed, considering the kind of desperadoes who comprised the bulk of their troops the Republic would be well rid of them. On Christmas Eve, however, a Council of War having been held, General Grouchy made the decision to land at Bantry and preparations were put under way to disembark. On Christmas Day another gale arose and a landing could not be attempted. That night the *Indomptable* was hailed and ordered to put to sea at once. The stormy weather and the easterly winds — the unsubsidised allies of England — which

had been blowing furiously and without intermission since they first made Bantry Bay, had, in Tone's view, ruined the expedition, England having her greatest escape since the Spanish Armada had been scattered by the same tempestuous elements.

On the 27th December, the strength of what remained of the fleet was only 4,168 men, 2 four pounders for artillery, 1,500,000 cartridges, 500 rounds for the artillery and 500 lbs. powder. A Council of War decided to make for the Shannon in the hope of picking up other ships. The elements excelled themselves on December 28th when the quarter galley of the Indomptable was stove in, and one of the deadlights in the great cabin, which was filled with water to the depth of 3 feet. The cots of the officers were all torn down and their trunks floated about the cabin. Tone, who had been asleep, when awakened by the shock, was sure that the ship had hit a rock and hearing the water in the cabin below concluded that he could not save his life in such a raging sea and lay down in his hammock again reconciled to his fate only to be relieved by an officer entering to inform him of what had happened. What remained of the armada had been scattered and at 4 a.m. on the 29th the signal was given to steer for France and on the 1st January, 1797, the Indomptable reached Brest. Of the 43 sail which left on the expedition only 7 returned together. Tone was amazed that they had not seen a single English ship of war between leaving and returning to Brest. Hoche arrived back on the 15th January and so dispelled all speculation as to his having landed in Ireland with portion of the scattered Fleet. He was immediately given command of the Army of Sambre and Meuse to which he had Tone posted as "officer charged with the General's foreign correspondence", meaning Hoche's plans for further action in Ireland.

THE TEXEL

VII

In the meantime, Tone had word from his wife of their safe arrival at Hamburg where he told her to remain on account of her poor health until such time as he could go there for them. Word also reached him that Art O'Connor and Robert and William Simms had been arrested in Belfast with other United Irishmen and that, as a result of a communication between the United Irishmen and France having fallen into the Government's hands, 50 persons including a dissenting clergyman had been arrested and that a Report of a Secret Committee of the House of Commons had been published showing that there were 100,000 United Irishmen in the North with a large quantity of arms, including 8 pieces of canon and 1 mortar. Skirmishes had already taken place

between the army and the people but Tone did not think that they had as yet the spirit to embark on a serious and general insurrection. It was not fear of the army but fear of the law and long habits of slavery that kept them down. As Tone put it: "It is not fear of the General but fear of the Judge". In the meantime, Lord O'Neill, Mr. Connolly, a landed proprietor, and the Duke of Leinster had resigned from their regiments as well as all the officers of the Kildare militia. This augured well.

Meanwhile Tone got General Hoche to send him to Hamburg presumably on military business but in fact to provide him with the opportunity of meeting his wife, family and sister with all of whom he travelled for several weeks through Holland and Belgium leaving them at Brussels to return to Army Headquarters at Cologne. They proceeded to Paris.

On June 14th Tone met Lewines, an emissary from the Executive of the United Irishmen to seek assistance in troops, men and money to enable the Irish people to take the field, with word that the organisation of the people was now complete, and that all they awaited was the cry to revolt. His instructions were to apply to France, Spain and Holland. The matter was at once taken up with Hoche who showed them a letter he had just received from General Daendels, Commander in Chief of the Dutch Republic requesting an immediate conference with Hoche in relation to an invasion of Ireland. Hoche explained to Tone that Daendels, the Dutch Governor, and Admiral Dewinter were anxiously concerned to do something spectacular to rescue Holland from the state of oblivion into which they as one of the World's leading seapowers had fallen. It was obvious, therefore, that it was not love of the Irish (shades of William of Orange, Derry's Walls and No Surrender) but concern for the Dutch that prompted the magnanimous gesture of the Government of Holland. They had their Fleet of 16 sail of the line and 10 frigates with 15,000 men all set out for the venture. At the ensuing conference between the Dutch and French Commanders the French feeling no doubt that this expedition, all ready for sailing at the Texel, might accomplish what their own had failed to do, insisted that 5,000 French troops be included in the expedition in lieu of 5,000 Dutch. Tone tells us that he cursed and swore like a dragoon as the French held up the finalising of the arrangements to press this stipulation home. Eventually Hoche, who understood the Irish situation well, accepted personal responsibility for the withdrawing of the French demand in order to get the expedition away at once and no doubt also as a gesture of great personal regard for Tone to whom he gave leave to join the venture. The final instructions of the Dutch Government to Daendels were to do all in his power to help the Irish people to establish their liberty and independence to exact no condition in return except that

the Irish throw off the English yoke and that, when all was settled on that score, the Irish should then arrange their commerce with the Dutch Republic on the basis of reciprocal advantage and accommodation. This largely implied the exchange of Dutch Orange Lily bulbs for Irish potato tubers. The sarcasm is intentional in view of the fiasco that the Dutch expedition proved to be.

Throughout July and the first week of August, 1797, the Dutch Fleet lay at anchor in the Texel owing partly to unfavourable winds and partly to the excuse that Admiral Duncan's Fleet was awaiting their emergence in the Channel. In actual fact, there had been several mutinies in the British Navy about this time arising from the spreading of French Revolutionary doctrine among the ratings and only two ships of Duncan's Fleet were posted to watch the Dutch. On the 12th August Dewinter told Tone that he had advised his Government that their plans were unworkable owing to the strength of the British Fleet in the Channel and that the expedition must be postponed pending a slackening of the English vigilance and more favourable weather conditions.

Imagine Tone's disgust. Two expeditions gone with the wind. Picture the scene when he blurted out to the Dutch Command: "Send but a corporal's guard to Ireland and I shall make one of them". Could you blame him, if he again cursed and swore like a dragoon before returning to Paris, where Hoche was now Minister for War. In a few weeks time this great soldier of France, Bonaparte's teacher, Tone's and Ireland's greatest protagonist in the Council's of the French Directorate, passed to his reward and Tone's connection with the Army of Sambre and Meuse ended.

On October 11th the Dutch Fleet for some unaccountable reason was ordered to engage Duncan's now strengthened forces in the English Channel. The Dutch Navy in this action, recorded boldly on British memorial tablets as the Victory of Camperdown, was destroyed for all time as an effective fighting force. It need only be added that the Dutch Ambassador to Paris confided in Tone that the Fleet had been sold to England, members of the Dutch Government having their hands well greased with money from Mr. Pitt, England's wily Premier.

I am not susceptible to the cut-throat Tone "impartial" approach to the study of this period and, consequently, while I am quite unable to confirm absolutely, I am personally satisfied, that Arthur Tone, who had in this year joined the Dutch Fleet, had done so before the debacle, not the battle, of Camperdown and that he most likely participated in the action.

The sale of their Fleet for a handful of English silver deservedly damned the Dutch as a Sea Power forever. The betrayal

of his country, inherent in the infamy of Holland, would have broken the spirit of a smaller man than Tone who had counted upon the ambitions of the military and naval commands of that country as a certain guarantee of almost immediate succour for his persecuted and expectant compatriots.

TONE AND BONAPARTE

VIII

The Austrians having made peace with France at Campo Formio early in October, almost simultaneously with the disaster of Camperdown, England alone remained to be dealt with by France. Hoche, gone to his reward, Tone turned to his pupil and on December 21st called on Bonaparte, now the most distinguished of the French Generals, at his private residence in the company of Lewines and John Tennant of Belfast, the latter of whom with Lowry of County Down had previously joined Tone at the Texel before the Admiral temporarily postponed the expedition. Tone was impressed by the very modest house in which Bonaparte cared to live in an atmosphere of great simplicity. He was 5' 6'' high, slender and well-made (the paunch developed later) but stooped considerably. His face was that of a profound thinker bearing no marks of that great enthusiasm and unceasing activity by which he had been so much distinguished. He had the countenance of a mathematician rather than that of a General. He had a fine eye and a great firmness about the mouth; he spoke low and hollow.

From this and two further interviews with France's Little Corporal, later First Consul, and ultimately Emperor, Tone was disappointed to find him so wanting in accurate information about Ireland which until then he believed had a population of less than 2,000,000 — his ignorance on this detail no doubt reflecting the effects of British anti-Irish propaganda whose aim was to represent Ireland as an Island whose population being so small could be of no particular significance to a rival Power. Tone found Bonaparte cold in manner, if at the same time courteous; an excellent listener, but of little conversation himself. The Army of France was now being organised under his Command, Tone being also attached thereto. Tone's early misgivings about Bonaparte's interest in the Irish question echoed true when on May 20th, 1798, the cream of the troops forming the Army of France, and who had been systematically changed from the Channel coast to the Mediterranean, sailed from Toulon for Egypt. Manoeuvring for control of the military destiny of France was now evident when Bonaparte, with his gaze fixed on the Middle East and the road to India, had abandoned the cause of Ireland, which, after

all, was his old master Hoche's baby, to found a new Empire. The vanity-ridden Bonaparte, whose victories in the field were, jealously or otherwise, attributed by Hoche to his reckless regard for the lives of his troops, might have spared himself the ignominy of Elba and St. Helena by adopting and fostering Hoche's baby with a view to seeing Ireland first and then the Pyramids and Moscow.

REBELLION

IX

The early months of 1798 found Paris fairly humming with a medley of Irish accents. Besides Lewines, Tennant and Lowry, there were Teeling of Lisburn, Orr of Derry, McMahan of County Down, McCann and Burgess of Louth, Napper Tandy (back from America), Matthew Tone and numerous others. Tandy, for some inexplicable reason, about this time did not see eye to eye with Tone and began to act independently of him which could suggest that he was holding Tone responsible for the ill-winds that blew at Bantry Bay and the Texel. Thomas Moore, the poet, was also in Paris doing literary hack for Tandy, and had several articles on the Irish question published in French newspapers which Tone and other leaders of the United Irishmen felt would have been better left unwritten. They paid Moore a courtesy call in regard to the matter and after listening to a battery of abuse from the Irish Minstrel, they warned him to be a better boy for the future.

On February 19th Lord Moira introduced a motion in the Irish House of Lords purporting to condemn the vigorous measures of the British Government in Ireland but prefaced his remarks with "a fulsome eulogium on the magnanimity of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales". Tone comments: "In times like ours, half friends are no friends. A man in his situation, who can tell the truth with safety, or even with danger, and does not, is a feeble character and his support is not worth receiving. He must speak out all boldly or be silent". And the persecution went on apace.

William Orr had already been charged before a packed Jury with administering an illegal oath—the oath of the United Irishmen binding their loyalty to their own country—the Judge weeping Judas tears after sentencing him to death by hanging from the neck. The sentence was duly put into effect on Oct. 14th, 1797, at Carrickfergus the people leaving the town en masse before the execution as a mark of respect for the supreme sacrifice of this Dissenter Patriot, "Remember Orr" was the battle cry of Henry Joy McCracken's force at Antrim in '98 to reverberate through

the hills of Down for Betsy Grey, the heroine of the North, and her fighting pikemen. Art O'Connor was arrested for the second time at Maidstone in England en route to France with Fr. Quigley, a close worker with Napper Tandy, and three others. The Priest was convicted of Treason and executed. Tone who had reason to object to Fr. Quigley in his life-time paid a glowing and sincere tribute to him in death. News of Lord Edward's arrest on the 19th May after a desperate resistance in a house in Thomas Street, Dublin, impelled Tone to write: "I would rather be Fitzgerald, as he is now, wounded in his dungeon than Pitt at the head of the British Empire". And when Fitzgerald had died: "The only way for us to lament his death is to endeavour to revenge it". There was now open insurrection in several of the Leinster counties, notably Kildare and Wexford. At Naas, Clane and Prosperous — Tone's old neighbourhood — skirmishes had been generally to the advantage of the better equipped enemy, but at Prosperous the Kildare men gave the Cork Militia a dose of what was coming to them at Oulart Hill in Wexford. Tone, apoplectic with indignation at the Cork Militia, scribbles in his Journal: "The villains — to bear arms against their country". Kilcullen was burned and 400 killed at Graiguecullen and Carlow. Their common grave at Graiguecullen, the border village in County Laoighis, known as The Croppies' Grave, commemorates this heroic offering for Republican Ireland. Fifty Irish perished in the little village of Castledermot but at Enniscorthy a Rebel victory splashed the streets with British blood beneath the ominous eminence of Vinegar Hill. And to preserve the link between 1798 and 1956-'57-'58 the following lines were written:

"The moon rides high o'er Enniscorthy sleeping,
The narrow streets climb shadowed up and down,
The river glints and gleams in endless dreaming,
The Hill broods palely o'er the croppy town.
In memories clear she sees the pikemen marching,
From Duffry Gate across towards Shannon Hill,
The Bridge resounds with tramp of footsteps falling,
Their echoes haunt the Slaney Valley still.
Arise my boys from valiant Enniscorthy,
And don't forget your father's ancient strife,
Be true unto the faith that was St. Patrick's,
Defend it and your country with your life.
The town re-echoes with the young men's answer:
"Why hesitate your father's lead and see?
We're always ready, up in arms and doing;
We'll never rest till Ireland shall be free".

As the military actions that took place in resurgent Wexford shall be dealt with in detail in a special lecture to follow this it

will suffice for me to quote Tone's tribute on hearing of the defeat of the English at Wexford town. "This victory", he wrote, "will give the people courage and show them that a redcoat is no more invincible than a grey one".

Lord Edward's arrest had precipitated the rising on May 23rd and Tone's anxiety was that the Irish might not be able to hold out until the Winter when there was every hope that the French might be able to assist them effectively. It was not until well into June that news of these epic happenings at home reached Tone. He immediately pleaded with the French Government and the French Generals individually to assist the gallant and desperate struggle of his country urging them with all the power at his command to act at once. Poor disconsolate Tone. *Indiaidh an ama'tchitcar an leas do'n Eireannach*. It was not until the beginning of July that he was recalled from Rouen, where he had been attached to the Army of France for consultations with the Ministers for War and Marine on the organisation of a new expedition. The plan was to dispatch small detachments from different ports in the hope of keeping up the insurrection and distracting the attention of the enemy until a favourable opportunity arose for the landing of the main body under General Kilmaine, an Irishman in the service of France. General Humbert with 1,000 men was stationed at La Rochelle; General Hardy with 3,000 at Brest and Kilmaine with 9,000 remained in reserve. But before the first of these expeditions was ready, the insurrection had been completely crushed and the people were "subdued, disarmed, disheartened and disgusted" with their allies. The Irish Government had marshalled all their resources and were ready for the encounter. General Humbert who had been at Bantry, impatient at the delay of his Government and misled by tales told him by Irish refugees (Tandy, for instance, had made it known that 30,000 Irish would rise on his appearance) determined to undertake the enterprise on his own responsibility and so compel the Directory to either support or desert him. He requisitioned all he wanted from the merchants and magistrates of La Rochelle and embarking on board a few frigates and transports with 1,000 men, 1,000 spare muskets, 1,000 guineas and a few pieces of artillery, he compelled the captains to sail on one of the most desperate attempts ever recorded in history. Matthew Tone, Bartholomew Teeling and Sullivan, a nephew of Madgett's, were the only three Irishmen who accompanied him. They reached the coast of Connaught on August the 22nd and entering Killala Bay stormed and occupied the town. Humbert, however, showed less genius than courage. He rallied the peasantry to his colours but wasted valuable weeks training them instead of moving into the province of Ulster, where the insurrection, scarcely appeared, might easily have flared up once more. While

at Killala he was given the hospitality of the Bishop there and Tone's son writing of the episode suggests that the Catholic Pre-late also rendered a significant service to the Irish Government by detaining the French General At Castibar he defeated a numerous English army under General Lake. It is said that, having fired their muskets, the poorly trained peasantry throw away these weapons as useless and rushed upon the enemy with their pikes. Speculation and panic reigned throughout the country for a few days until the Viceroy Cornwallis, marching in person, rallied all the forces available to him, turning Humbert behind the line of the Shannon from which he, when too late, tried to escape into the mountains of the North. On the 8th September after a brave resistance he was encircled at Ballinamuck and surrendered. The French troops were treated as prisoners of war but the unfortunate Irish were slaughtered without mercy and such abominable cruelties were exercised on the unresisting peasantry by Lake's Redcoats that the name of Lake is still loathed in many rural parts of Connaught. Sullivan escaped as a Frenchman but Matthew Tone and Teeling were both taken to Dublin in irons, tried, sentenced and executed.

LOUGH SWILLY

X

The Directory, hearing of Humbert's attempt but not of his ultimate failure, decided to send General Hardy with the second detachment and this sailed on September 20th from the Bay de Camarat, Wolfe Tone being appropriately enough with the General on the Hoche. Only three other Irishmen sailed with Hardy namely Corbett and Maguire, who later died in the French service, and a gentleman whose name I have been unable to obtain but who was related by marriage to Thomas Russell. On the 11th September, to their immortal credit be it known, a huge number of Irish emigrants, eager for action, had left France under the command of Napper Tandy for Ireland. Reaching an island on the North-west of Ireland (Raghlín), hearing of Humbert's defeat, they re-embarked and sailed for Norway, Napper Tandy eventually arriving in Hamburg where he was treacherously handed over to the British by the City Fathers, his life being only later spared, after Tone had died, by the dramatic intervention of Napoleon Bonaparte, returned from Egypt, who claimed him as an Officer in the French service and held a leading English citizen as a hostage for his immediate release.

Admiral Bompard commanded the Fleet conveying Hardy's army. It consisted of ten ships, (1) The Hoche of 74 guns equivalent to a modern battleship; (2) The Loire, (3) Rcsolve, (4)

Bellone, (5) Coquille, (6) Embuscade, (7) Immortalitee of Bantry Bay renown, (8) Romaine and (9) Semillante — all frigates or modern cruisers and (10) The Biche, a schooner or destroyer. Bompert took a sweeping course to the westward and then north-east towards Donegal but meeting with adverse winds the fleet was scattered and, after a cruise of 20 days, on the 10th October it entered Lough Swilly with only four vessels, the Hoche, the Loire, the Resolve and the Biche. No doubt, despite the splitting of the Fleet by England's old and faithful "unsubsidised allies" (at Bantry the snow bearing East Winds; at Swilly the cold North-westers) Tone's patriotic heart was elated to see once again (and in this was God being good to him) the smooth towered cliffs of Tory, Bloody Foreland Point made crimson with the blood of the last of the Norsemen still fleeing from Clontarf, volcano-cradled Errigal and "Mucais Mór uaigneach taobh thiar de" with Gartan Colmchille a precious gem of the saintly and historic past nestled before him in honeyed heather beneath the Hills of Donegal.

The arrival of the Fleet was immediately signalled to the British off Malin Head and the following day before the troops could be landed the British Admiral, Sir John Borlase Warren, bore down on it with a squadron of six sail of the line (say six battleships), 2 frigates and a razel or light destroyer of 6 guns. As there was no escape for the Hoche, Bompert signalled to the other vessels to retreat through the shallow water and prepared alone to honour the flag of his country by a desperate but hopeless defence. At that moment a boat came from the Biche, the officers on board begging Tone to enter it. He rejected the offer asking, "Shall it be said that I fled, whilst the French were fighting the battles of my country". Tone was the only Irishman aboard the Hoche. It was soon surrounded by four sail of the line and frigates and began one of the most gallant and desperate engagements in naval history. Those of you who are old enough to remember the admiration of the whole world, friend and foe alike, evoked by the Graf Spea off Monte Video against the overwhelming strength of combined British units in the sea-fight known as the Battle of the Plate, can well picture the scene at Swilly. Throughout six hours, the Hoche sustained the whole fire of the English Fleet until her masts and rigging were swept away, her scuppers flowed with blood, her wounded filled the cockpit, her spattered ribs yawned at each new stroke and let in five feet of water in the hold; her rudder was carried off and she floated a dismantled wreck on the waters. Finally, her sails and cordage hanging in shreds, she was unable to reply with a single gun from her dismantled batteries to the unabating canonade of the enemy. Then she struck. The Loire and Resolve were soon overtaken by the English Fleet after honourable flights. The Romaine

and Semillante alone reached French Ports. During the action, according to reports of the officers, Wolfe Tone commanded one of the batteries and fought with desperation as if courting death.

Both Fleets had been scattered in every direction and it was some days after she had struck that the Hoche was brought to Lough Swilly and the prisoners landed and marched to Letterkenny. The French officers were next day invited to breakfast with Lord Cavan who commanded in the area. Wolfe Tone sat undistinguished among them until Sir George Hill who had been his fellow student at Trinity College entered the room followed by police officers. Hill went over to where Tone sat and addressing him said in the unctuous accents of the traitor: "Mr. Tone I am very happy to see you". Tone realising he had been recognised, preserved his composure and, as ever alive to the decorum demanded of him both as a gentleman and a Chef de Brigade of La Belle France, enquired for Lady Hill and their family. He was beckoned into another room which was filled with military under emigre General Lavau who told him that as he had never renounced his oath of allegiance on going to France, he was still a subject of Britain and a traitor. When ordered to be ironed, Wolfe Tone, in a fury of indignation at this proposed treatment of a prisoner of war, flung off his French tunic crying: "These fetters shall never degrade the revered insignia of the free nation which I have served". Then recovering his composure, he added: "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". Tone, chained on horseback, was brought all the way from Letterkenny to Dublin escorted by dragoons under the awestruck gaze of his countrymen in whom he excited universal admiration. He was brought to the Provost's Prison in the Barracks of Dublin under the notorious Major Sandys. He was brought to trial with the least delay possible on the 10th November, 1798, before a Courtmartial composed of General Loftus as President; Colonels Vandeleur (no doubt a French emigre Officer in the British Forces), Daly and Wolfe; Major Armstrong and Captain Curran. A Mr. Patterson performed the function of Judge Advocate. As soon as the Barrack doors opened to the public, the hall that served as Courtroom was filled with eager and excited spectators. Tone appeared in the uniform of a Chef-de-Brigade. We have only such of his address to the Court as was permitted to be published (sections construed as being seditious being obliterated). The essence of it, however, is summed up in this sentence which I quote from it: "From my earliest youth I have regarded the connection between Ireland and Great Britain as the curse of the Irish nation". He had but one request to make — that he be adjudged the death of a soldier and shot by a platoon of grenadiers. This request being referred to the

Viceroy, Cornwallis, was refused and he was sentenced to die the death of a traitor within forty-eight hours, that was to say, before the expiration of the 12th November. John Philpot Curran, an eminent member of the Irish Bar, was one of the few of Tone's friends who did not now fear to be associated with him. Some of these had already won the patriot's crown on England's scaffold such as the brothers Sheares, whose lifeless bodies can still be viewed in the vaults of St. Michan's, Church Street, Dublin, and Henry Joy McCracken hanged in the High Street, Belfast, and whose remains now rest with his sister Mary's in Clifton Street Churchyard, skirting Britain's Victoria Barracks, under a simple but eloquent tombstone which reads: "Dílis go héag".

Curran knew that as Tone had never served in the British Army he should have been tried in the Civil Courts as in the case of any criminal offence and not by Courtmartial. The sentence was, therefore, illegal. He did not for a moment, however, think that, if the case did come before the Civil Courts, the verdict would have been any different. He decided to play for time in the hope that the French Government would learn of the course of events and intervene, as Bonaparte was later so effectively to do for Tandy, to save Tone. He accordingly instituted Habeas Corpus proceedings on the 11th November, the day following the verdict and his application was granted by Lord Kilwarden, the Lord Chief Justice, who had befriended Tone prior to his being exiled. The Court Order was hastily made out and served on the Provost Marshal and also on Major Sandys. The Provost Marshal said that he would obey Major Sandys; and Sandys said that he would obey the Viceroy. Both refusing to produce the body, Lord Kilwarden ordered their arrest for contempt of Court and directed that the Order of Habas Corpus be handed to General Craig, who commanded the troops, for execution. The Sheriff to whom the Order was entrusted returned to report that Wolfe Tone was suffering from a self-inflicted wound and was in no condition to be removed, that a French emigre Surgeon had closed the wound but could not say as yet whether it would be fatal. You will note the vile suggestion contained in the fiction of the self-inflicted wound. Suicides were never heroes of the Irish people. You will ask why not an Irish Surgeon to attend the dying in an Irish prison or at least in consultation with his French colleague, if there was ever any such? A French emigre Surgeon, despicable as he must have been to serve Britain's interests against those of his own country, was a veritable devil's disciple in his relation as physician to Wolfe Tone — a doomed but distinguished Irish soldier in the service of Republican France, Tone, the prison authorities were later to announce, expired on the 19th November. No reason has ever been adduced to explain: (1) The absence

of an Irish physician at his bedside, if he had a bed; (2) the refusal to allow anyone except prison officials to see him during his alleged illness; (3) the failure of the authorities to follow the usual course of the law in such cases and hold an Inquest into his death; (4) the refusal to allow any of his relatives or friends to view the body after his death and before burial when the site and nature of the alleged could have been inspected. It goes without further argument on my part that England in her treatment of the captive Tone was returning hate for hate. Her failure to comply with the dictates of Christian courtesy and unwarped human nature, not to mention the letter of her own legal code in relation to Coroner's Inquests, was certainly not to spare the feelings of Wolfe Tone's countrymen in '98. I am satisfied that England refused Tone an Irish physician, if he ever needed one, refused even his Counsel leave to see him in his alleged illness, declined to let his friends and relatives view his dead body, because she knew murder most foul had visited him in his prison cell as soon as word of the granting of the Habeas Corpus application had reached the Provost Prison.

The connection with England has still to be broken but the teaching of Tone shall remain green as the grave in Bodenstown Churchyard, hallowed as it has been with his mortal remains for more than one hundred and fifty-nine years and a place of pilgrimage for his Republican countrymen. We recall with joyful and at the same time grief-stricken hearts the heroic offerings of Sean Sabhat and Fergal O hAnnuain on the 161st anniversary of Tone's leaving America for France (1st January, 1796) and the 159th anniversary of Tone's death on the 11th November, 1798, commemorated with similar supreme offerings of life itself by Michael Waters, Oliver Craven, Paul Smith, Paddy Parle and George Keegan at Edentubber in pursuance of the political gospel of the Irish Republic as believed in and died for by them and Tone.

As for Mrs. Tone and her family, after enduring many hardships, she received through the good offices of Lucien Bonaparte fair annual allowances to support herself and her children until they would have attained the age of twenty. Her daughter and one son died of consumption well before their twentieth birthdays and William, the elder son and editor of his Father's memoirs, was adopted, one might say, by the French Government and entered upon a military career. Tone's son William, in due course married Kathleen, the only daughter of William Sampson, a Belfast United Irishman, who was forced to leave his country and settled in New York. They had a daughter who married a Martin of good Ulster nationalist stock, Kathleen Tone posthumously painting a portrait of Tone, replicas of which the disciples

of the dead Apostle in the Curragh Concentration Camp diligently and dutifully emboss on their leathercraft. The descendants of William and Kathleen are now settled in the U.S.A. Mrs. Tone in 1816 married her late husband's very good friend, Mr. Wilson, a man of considerable means and to whom Wolfe Tone had earnestly recommended her in perhaps the last letter he wrote before his death. Mrs. Tone died at Georgetown, U.S.A. in 1849.

One of the most noted topographical features of North-East Ulster is that known to Belfast people — Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter alike — as Napoleon's Face, the contour of which has been wrought by the elements out of the rugged cliffs high above the caverns of Cave Hill and looms sphinx-like over the smaller craggy eminence of McArt's Fort immediately beneath it and freshened daily by the breeze from Belfast Lough. How indestructible has the Almighty in His especial way thus made the link between McArt's Fort and Tone and Tone and the French Republic. Glimpses of the Tones in a decade of Irish history may be sketched by scribes like me but the cliffs of Belfast's Cave Hill have alone the fundamentals of their epic story engraved until the end of time in stone.

To conclude, what greater tribute can we pay to the memory of Tone than by making his solemn declaration to each other and keeping it, that is to say: "I solemnly and sincerely declare never to desist in my efforts until I have subverted the authority of England over my country and asserted her independence". Finally, the entry in his journal on the death of Lord Edward should be Tone's own epitaph too. I repeat it; "The only way for us to lament his death is to endeavour to revenge it".

Price 3/- or 15 new pence