



THE COLLECTED
WRITINGS AND
SPEECHES OF
ROBERT EMMET

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By An Chartlann



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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

The following is a collection of poetry, correspondence, speeches and writings by the Irish revolutionary and United Irishman Robert Emmet. Much of the material has been taken from several works on the life of Robert Emmet, including *The Life And Times of Robert Emmet* by R.R. Madden, *Robert Emmet* by Louise Imogen Guiney, and the *Life of Robert Emmet* by David James O'Donoghue.

The introduction of this PDF is taken from two famous speeches about Emmet by Pádraig Pearse featured in Pearse's collected writings titled "Robert Emmet and the Ireland of Today".

ROBERT EMMET AND THE IRELAND OF TODAY

By Pádraig Pearse

I.

You ask me to speak of the Ireland of today. What can I tell you of it that is worthy of commemoration where we commemorate heroic faith and the splendour of death? In that Ireland whose spokesmen have, in return for the promise of a poor simulacrum of liberty, pledged to our ancient enemy our loyalty and the loyalty of our children, is there, even though that pledge has been spoken, any group of true men, any right striving, any hope still cherished in virtue of which, lifting up our hearts, we can cry across the years to him whom we remember tonight, 'Brother, we have kept faith; comrade, we, too, stand ready to serve'?

For patriotism is at once a faith and a service. A faith which in some of us has been in our flesh and bone since we were moulded in our mothers' wombs, and which in others of us has at some definite moment of our later lives been kindled flaming as if by the miraculous word of God; a faith which is of the same nature as religious faith and is one of the eternal witnesses in the heart of man to the truth that we are of divine kindred; a faith which, like religious faith, when true and vital, is wonder-working, but, like religious faith, is dead without good works even as the body without the spirit. So that patriotism needs service as the condition of its authenticity, and it is not sufficient to say 'I believe' unless one can say also 'I serve'.

And our patriotism is measured, not by the formula in which we declare it, but by the service which we render. We owe to our country all fealty and she asks always for our service; and there are times when she asks of us not ordinary but some

supreme service. There are in every generation those who shrink from the ultimate sacrifice, but there are in every generation those who make it with joy and laughter, and these are the salt of the generations, the heroes who stand midway between God and men. Patriotism is in large part a memory of heroic dead men and a striving to accomplish some task left unfinished by them. Had they not gone before, made their attempts and suffered the sorrow of their failures, we should long ago have lost the tradition of faith and service, having no memory in the heart nor any unaccomplished dream.

The generation that is now growing old in Ireland had almost forgotten our heroes. We had learned the great art of parleying with our enemy and achieving nationhood by negotiation. The heroes had trodden hard and bloody ways: we should tread soft and flowering ways. The heroes had given up all things: we had learned a way of gaining all things, land and good living and the friendship of our foe. But the soil of Ireland, yea, the very stones of our cities have cried out against an infidelity that would barter an old tradition of nationhood even for a thing so precious as peace. This the heroes have done for us; for their spirits indwell in the place where they lived, and the hills of Ireland must be rent and her cities levelled with the ground and all her children driven out upon the seas of the world before those voices are silenced that bid us be faithful still and to make no peace with England until Ireland is ours.

I live in a place that is very full of heroic memories. In the room in which I work at St Enda's College, Robert Emmet is said often to have sat; in our garden is a vine which they call Emmet's Vine and from which he is said to have plucked grapes; through our wood runs a path which is called Emmet's Walk — they say that he and Sarah Curran walked there; at an angle of our boundary wall there is a little fortified lodge called Emmet's fort. Across the road from us is a thatched cottage whose tenant in 1803 was in Green Street Courthouse all the long day that Emmet stood on trial, with a horse saddled without that he might bring

news of the end to Sarah Curran. Half a mile from us across the fields is Butterfield House, where Emmet lived during the days preceding the rising. It is easy to imagine his figure coming out along the Harold's Cross Road to Rathfarnham, tapping the ground with his cane, as they say was his habit; a young, slight figure, with how noble a head bent a little upon the breast, with how high a heroism sleeping underneath that quietness and gravity! One thinks of his anxious nights in Butterfield House; of his busy days in Marshalsea Lane or Patrick Street; of his careful plans – the best plans that have yet been made for the capture of Dublin; his inventions and devices, the jointed pikes, the rockets and explosives upon which he counted so much; his ceaseless conferences, his troubles with his associates, his disappointments, his disillusionments, borne with such sweetness and serenity of temper, such a trust in human nature, such a trust in Ireland! Then the hurried rising, the sally into the streets, the failure at the Castle gates, the catastrophe in Thomas Street, the retreat along the familiar Harold's Cross Road to Rathfarnham. At Butterfield House, Anne Devlin, the faithful, keeps watch. You remember her greeting to Emmet in the first pain of her disappointment: 'Musha, bad welcome to you! Is Ireland lost by you, cowards that you are, to lead the people to destruction and then to leave them?' And poor Emmet's reply – no word of blame for the traitors that had sold him, for the cravens that had abandoned him, for the fools that had bungled; just a halting, heartbroken exculpation, the only one he was to make for himself – 'Don't blame me, Anne; the fault is not mine.' And her woman's heart went out to him and she took him in and cherished him; but the soldiery were on his track, and that was his last night in Butterfield House. The bracken was his bed thenceforth, or a precarious pillow in his old quarters at Harold's Cross, until he lay down in Kilmainham to await the summons of the executioner.

No failure, judged as the world judges these things, was ever more complete, more pathetic than Emmet's. And yet he

has left us a prouder memory than the memory of Brian victorious at Clontarf or of Owen Roe victorious at Benburb. It is the memory of a sacrifice Christ-like in its perfection. Dowered with all things splendid and sweet, he left all things and elected to die. Face to face with England in the dock at Green Street he uttered the most memorable words ever uttered by an Irish man: words which, ringing clear above a century's tumults, forbid us ever to waver or grow weary until our country takes her place among the nations of the earth. And his death was august. In the great space of Thomas Street an immense silent crowd; in front of Saint Catherine's Church a gallows upon a platform; a young man climbs to it, quiet, serene, almost smiling, they say – ah, he was very brave; there is no cheer from the crowd, no groan; this man is to die for them, but no man dares to say aloud 'God bless you, Robert Emmet.' Dublin must one day wash out in blood the shameful memory of that quiescence. Would Michael Dwyer come from the Wicklow Hills? Up to the last moment Emmet seems to have expected him. He was saying 'Not yet' when the hangman kicked aside the plank and his body was launched into the air. They say it swung for half-an-hour, with terrible contortions, before he died. When he was dead the comely head was severed from the body. A friend of mine knew an old woman who told him how the blood flowed down upon the pavement, and how she sickened with horror as she saw the dogs of the street lap up that noble blood. Then the hangman showed the pale head to the people and announced: 'This is the head of a traitor, Robert Emmet.' A traitor? No, but a true man. O my brothers, this was one of the truest men that ever lived. This was one of the bravest spirits that Ireland has ever nurtured. This man was faithful even unto the ignominy of the gallows, dying that his people might live, even as Christ died. Be assured that such a death always means a redemption. Emmet redeemed Ireland from acquiescence in the Union. His attempt was not a failure, but a triumph for that deathless thing we call Irish Nationality. It was by Emmet that men remembered Ireland

until Davis and Mitchel took up his work again, and '48 handed on the tradition to '67, and from '67 we receive the tradition unbroken.

You ask me to speak of the Ireland of today. What need I say but that today Ireland is turning her face once more to the old path? Nothing seems more definitely to emerge when one looks at the movements that are stirring both above the surface and beneath the surface in men's minds at home than the fact that the new generation is reaffirming the Fenian faith, the faith of Emmet. It is because we know that this is so that we can suffer in patience the things that are said and done in the name of Irish Nationality by some of our leaders. What one may call the Westminster phase is passing: the National movement is swinging back again into its proper channel. A new junction has been made with the past: into the movement that has never wholly died since '67 have come the young men of the Gaelic League. Having renewed communion with its origins, Irish Nationalism is today a more virile thing than ever before in our time. Of that be sure.

I have said again and again that when the Gaelic League was founded in 1893 the Irish Revolution began. The Gaelic League brought it a certain distance upon its way; but the Gaelic League could not accomplish the Revolution. For five or six years a new phase has been due, and lo! it is with us now. Today Ireland is once more organising, once more learning the noble trade of arms. In our towns and country places Volunteer companies are springing up. Dublin pointed the way, Galway has followed Dublin, Cork has followed Galway, Wexford has followed Cork, Limerick has followed Wexford, Monaghan has followed Limerick, Sligo has followed Monaghan, Donegal has followed Sligo. There is again in Ireland the murmur of a marching, and talk of guns and tactics. What this movement may mean for our country no man can say. But it is plain to all that the existence on Irish soil of an Irish army is the most portentous fact that has appeared in Ireland for over a hundred years: a fact

which marks definitely the beginning of the second stage of the Revolution which was commenced when the Gaelic League was founded. The inner significance of the movement lies in this, that men of every rank and class, of every section of Nationalist opinion, of every shade of religious belief, have discovered that they share a common patriotism, that their faith is one and there is one service in which they can come together at last: the service of their country in arms. We are realising now how proud a thing it is to serve, and in the comradeship and joy of the new service we are forgetting many ancient misunderstandings. In the light of a rediscovered citizenship things are plain to us that were before obscure:

Lo, a clearness of vision has followed, lo, a purification of sight;
Lo, the friend is discerned from the foeman, the wrong recognised
from the right.

After all, there are in Ireland but two parties: those who stand for the English connection and those who stand against it. On what side, think you, stand the Irish Volunteers? I cannot speak for the Volunteers; I am not authorised to say when they will use their arms or where or how. I can speak only for myself; and it is strictly a personal perception that I am recording, but a perception that to me is very clear, when I say that before this generation has passed the Volunteers will draw the sword of Ireland. There is no truth but the old truth and no way but the old way. Home Rule may come or may not come, but under Home Rule or in its absence there remains for the Volunteers and for Ireland the substantial business of achieving Irish nationhood. And I do not know how nationhood is achieved except by armed men; I do not know how nationhood is guarded except by armed men.

I ask you, then, to salute with me the Irish Volunteers. I ask you to mark their advent as an augury that, no matter what pledges may be given by men who do not know Ireland — the stubborn soul of Ireland — that nation of ancient faith will never

sell her birthright of freedom for a mess of pottage; a mess of dubious pottage, at that. Ireland has been guilty of many meanness, of many shrinkings back when she should have marched forward; but she will never be guilty of that immense infidelity.

II.

We who speak here tonight are the voice of one of the ancient indestructible things of the world. We are the voice of an idea which is older than any empire and will outlast every empire. We and ours, the inheritors of that idea, have been at age-long war with one of the most powerful empires that have ever been built upon the earth; and that empire will pass before we pass. We are older than England and we are stronger than England. In every generation we have renewed the struggle, and so it shall be unto the end. When England thinks she has tramped out our battle in blood, some brave man rises and rallies us again; when England thinks she has purchased us with a bribe, some good man redeems us by a sacrifice. Wherever England goes on her mission of empire we meet her and we strike at her; yesterday it was on the South African veldt, today it is in the Senate House at Washington, tomorrow it may be in the streets of Dublin. We pursue her like a sleuth-hound; we lie in wait for her and come upon her like a thief in the night; and some day we will overwhelm her with the wrath of God.

It is not that we are apostles of hate. Who like us has carried Christ's word of charity about the earth? But the Christ that said, 'My peace I leave you, My peace I give you', is the same Christ that said, 'I bring not peace, but a sword.' There can be no peace between right and wrong, between truth and falsehood, between justice and oppression, between freedom and tyranny. Between them it is eternal war until the wrong is righted, until the true thing is established, until justice is accomplished, until freedom is won.

So when England talks of peace we know our answer: 'Peace with you? Peace while your one hand is at our throat and your other hand is in our pocket? Peace with a footpad? Peace with a pickpocket? Peace with the leech that is sucking our whole body dry of blood? Peace with the many-armed monster whose tentacles envelop us while its system emits an inky fluid that shrouds its work of murder from the eyes of men? The time has not yet come to talk of peace.'

But England, we are told, offers us terms. She holds out to us the hand of friendship. She gives us a Parliament with an Executive responsible to it. Within two years the Home Rule Senate meets in College Green and King George comes to Dublin to declare its sessions open. In anticipation of that happy event our leaders have proffered England our loyalty. Mr Redmond accepts Home Rule as a 'final settlement between the two nations'; Mr O'Brien in the fulness of his heart cries: 'God Save the King'; Colonel Lynch offers England his sword in case she is attacked by a foreign power.

And so this settlement is to be a final settlement. Would Wolfe Tone have accepted it as a final settlement? Would Robert Emmet have accepted it as a final settlement? Either we are heirs to their principles or we are not. If we are, we can accept no settlement as final which does not '*break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils*'; if we are not, how dare we go in annual pilgrimage to Bodenstown, how dare we gather here or anywhere to commemorate the faith and sacrifice of Emmet? Did, then, these dead heroic men live in vain? Has Ireland learned a truer philosophy than the philosophy of '98, and a nobler way of salvation than the way of 1803? Is Wolfe Tone's definition superseded, and do we discharge our duty to Emmet's memory by according him annually our pity?

To do the English justice, I do not think they are satisfied that Ireland will accept Home Rule as a final settlement. I think they are a little anxious today. If their minds were tranquil on

the subject of Irish loyalty they would hardly have proclaimed the importation of arms into Ireland the moment the Irish Volunteers had begun to organise themselves. They had given the Ulster faction, which is used as a catspaw by one of the English parties, two years to organise and arm against that Home Rule Bill which they profess themselves so anxious to pass: to the Nationalists of Ireland they did not give two weeks. Of course, we can arm in spite of them: today we are organising and training the men and we have ways and means of getting arms when the men are ready for the arms. The contention I make now, and I ask you to note it well, is that England does not trust Ireland with guns; that under Home Rule or in the absence of Home Rule England declares that we Irish must remain an unarmed people; and England is right.

England is right in suspecting Irish loyalty, and those Irishmen who promise Irish loyalty to England are wrong. I believe them honest; but they have spent so much of their lives parleying with the English, they have sat so often and so long at English feasts, that they have lost communion with the ancient unpurchaseable faith of Ireland, the ancient stubborn thing that forbids, as if with the voice of fate, any loyalty from Ireland to England, any union between us and them, any surrender of one jot or shred of our claim to freedom even in return for all the blessings of the British peace.

I have called that old faith an indestructible thing. I have said that it is more powerful than empires. If you would understand its might you must consider how it has made all the generations of Ireland heroic. Having its root in all gentleness, in a man's love for the place where his mother bore him, for the breast that gave him suck, for the voices of the children that sounded in a house now silent, for the faces that glowered around a fireside now cold, for the story told by lips that will not speak again, having its root, I say, in all gentleness, it is a yet terrible thing urging the generations to perilous bloody attempts, nerving men to give up life for the death-in-life of

dungeons, teaching little boys to die with laughing lips, giving courage to young girls to bare their backs to the lashes of a soldiery.

It is easy to imagine how the spirit of Irish patriotism called to the gallant and adventurous spirit of Tone or moved the wrathful spirit of Mitchel. In them deep called unto deep: heroic effort claimed the heroic man. But consider how the call was made to a spirit of different, yet not less noble mould; and how it was answered. In Emmet it called to a dreamer and he awoke a man of action; it called to a student and a recluse and he stood forth a leader of men; it called to one who loved the ways of peace and he became a revolutionary. I wish I could help you to realise, I wish I could myself adequately realise, the humanity, the gentle and grave humanity, of Emmet. We are so dominated by the memory of that splendid death of his, by the memory of that young figure, serene and smiling, climbing to the gallows above that sea of silent men in Thomas Street, that we forget the life of which that death was only the necessary completion; and the life has a nearer meaning for us than the death. For Emmet, finely gifted though he was, was just a young man with the same limitations, the same self-questionings, the same falterings, the same kindly human emotions surging up sometimes in such strength as almost to drown a heroic purpose, as many a young man we have known. And his task was just such a task as many of us have undertaken: he had to go through the same repellent routine of work, to deal with the hard, uncongenial details of correspondence and committee meetings; he had the same sordid difficulties that we have, yea, even the vulgar difficulty of want of funds. And he had the same poor human material to work with, men who misunderstood, men who bungled, men who talked too much, men who failed at the last moment ...

Yes, the task we take up again is just Emmet's task of silent unattractive work, the routine of correspondence and committees and organising. We must face it as bravely and as quietly as he faced it, working on in patience as he worked on,

hoping as he hoped; cherishing in our secret hearts the mighty hope that to us, though so unworthy, it may be given to bring to accomplishment the thing he left unaccomplished, but working on even when that hope dies within us.

I would ask you to consider now how the call I have spoken of was made to the spirit of a woman, and how, equally, it was responded to. Wherever Emmet is commemorated let Anne Devlin not be forgotten. Bryan Devlin had a dairy farm in Butterfield Lane; his fields are still green there. Five sons of his fought in '98. Anne was his daughter, and she went to keep house for Emmet when he moved into Butterfield House. You know how she kept vigil there on the night of the rising. When all was lost and Emmet came out in his hurried retreat through Rathfarnham to the mountains, her greeting was – according to tradition it was spoken in Irish, and Emmet must have replied in Irish – ‘Musha, bad welcome to you! Is Ireland lost by you, cowards that you are, to lead the people to destruction and then to leave them?’

‘Don’t blame me, Anne; the fault is not mine,’ said Emmet. And she was sorry for the pain her words had inflicted, spoken in the pain of her own disappointment. She would have tended him like a mother could he have tarried there, but his path lay to Kilmashogue, and hers was to be a harder duty. When Sirr came out with his soldiery she was still keeping her vigil.

‘Where is Emmet?’

‘I have nothing to tell you.’

To all their questions she had but one answer: ‘I have nothing to say; I have nothing to tell you.’

They swung her up to a cart and half-hanged her several times; after each half-hanging she was revived and questioned: still the same answer. They pricked her breast with bayonets until the blood spurted out in their faces. They dragged her to prison and tortured her for days. Not one word did they extract from that steadfast woman. And when Emmet was sold, he was sold, not by a woman, but by a man – by the friend that he had

trusted – by the counsel who, having sold him, was to go through the ghastly mockery of defending him at the bar.

The fathers and mothers of Ireland should often tell their children that story of Robert Emmet and that story of Anne Devlin. To the Irish mothers who hear me I would say that when at night you kiss your children and in your hearts call down a benediction, you could wish for your boys no higher thing than that, should the need come, they may be given the strength to make Emmet's sacrifice, and for your girls no greater gift from God than such fidelity as Anne Devlin's.

It is more than a hundred years since these things were suffered; and they were suffered in vain if nothing of the spirit of Emmet and Anne Devlin survives in the young men and young women of Ireland. Does anything of that spirit survive? I think I can speak for my own generation. I think I can speak for my contemporaries in the Gaelic League, an organisation which has not yet concerned itself with politics, but whose younger spirits are accepting the full national idea and are bringing into the national struggle the passion and the practicalness which marked the early stages of the language movement. I think I can speak for the young men of the Volunteers. So far, they have no programme beyond learning the trade of arms: a trade which no man of Ireland could learn for over a hundred years past unless he took the English shilling. It is a good programme; and we may almost commit the future of Ireland to the keeping of the Volunteers. I think I can speak for a younger generation still: for some of the young men that are entering the National University, for my own pupils at St Enda's College, for the boys of Fianna Éireann. To the grey-haired men whom I see on this platform, to John Devoy and Richard Burke, I bring, then, this message from Ireland: that their seed-sowing of forty years ago has not been without its harvest, that there are young men and little boys in Ireland today who remember what they taught and who, with God's blessing, will one day take – or make – an opportunity of putting their teaching into practice.

THE POETRY OF ROBERT EMMET

ERIN'S CALL

Brothers arise! Our country calls –
Let us gain her rights or die;
In her cause who nobly falls,
Decked with brightest wreaths shall lie;
And freedom's genius o'er his bier
Shall place the wreath and drop a tear.

Long by England's power opprest,
Groaning long beneath her chain,
England's ill-used power detest;
Burst her yoke; your rights regain;
The standard raise to liberty –
Ireland, you shall be free!

Brothers, march, march on to glory –
In your country's cause unite;
Freedom's blessing see before you –
Erin's sons, for freedom fight:
England's legions we defy
We swear to conquer or to die.

THE LONDON PRIDE AND THE SHAMROCK

A FABLE

Full many a year, close side by side,
A shamrock grew and London pride:
Together how they came to grow
I do not care, nor do I know;
But this I know, that overhead
A laurel cast a wholesome shade.
The shamrock was of lovely green
In early days as e'er was seen;
And she had many a hardy son
In days of old, but they are gone —
For soon the other's creeping shoots
Did steal themselves around Shamrock's roots.
Then, thief-like, fastened in her soil,
And sucked the sap of poor Trefoil;
Until in time pert London pride
Got up so high as quite to hide
Poor shamrock, who could seldom see
The sun's bright face, nor seen was she,
Save when an adverse blast did blow,
And laid her neighbour's honours low.
Then, in the angry lady's spite,
She drank the show'r, she saw the light,
She bath'd her sicklied charms in dew,
And gathered health and strength anew.
She saw those joys had come from heaven
And ne'er were by her neighbour given;
Yet, her good nature aye to prove,
She paid her jealous hate with love.

But when once more kind zephyrs came,
 And raised the o'ergrown, storm-bent dame,
 The ingrate strove her all to take,
 And forced poor shamrock thus to speak:
 'Neighbour, we're born with equal right
 To feel yon sun and see his light,
 T' enjoy the blessings of this earth
 Or if right follows prior birth,
 In this still stronger is my claim –
 Long was I known and great my fame,
 Before the world e'er heard thy name.
 But letting all these strong claims lie,
 Pray tell me, is it policy,
 To thwart my offspring as they rise,
 To break my heart, to blind their eyes?
 Sure if they spread the earth along,
 Grow handsome, healthy, stout and strong,
 They will as usual happy be
 To lend that useful strength to thee:
 Thus would we keep each other warm,
 And guard us from all coming harm;
 We'd steady stand when wild winds blow,
 And laugh in spite of frost and snow,
 And guard the roots of our loved laurel,
 Grown sick and pale to see us quarrel.'
 'No more!' the vex'd virago cries,
 Wild fury flashing from her eyes,
 'I'll hear no more – your bounds I'll mark,
 And keep you ever in the dark;
 Here is a circle – look you here –
 One step beyond it if you dare!
 And if I hear you more complain
 I'll tear thy rising heart in twain;
 I've made thy sons kill one another,
 And soon they shall destroy their mother.

I'll thus' – a flash of heavenly fire,
Full fraught with Jove's most deadly ire,
Scatter'd the London pride around;
The black clouds roar'd with horrid sound;
The vivid lightning flashed again,
And laid the laurel on the plain.
But soon succeeds a heavenly calm –
Soft dews descend and show'rs of balm –
The sun shoots forth its kindest ray,
And shamrock strengthens every day,
And, raise'd by heaven's assistance bland,
Bids fair to spread o'er all the land;
She guards the blasted laurel's roots,
The nurtur'd laurel upward shoots,
And grateful wreaths its dark green boughs
To grace great shamrock's aged brows.

MORAL

Take heed, learn wisdom hence, weak man,
And keep a good friend while you can;
If to your friend you are unkind,
E'en love will be against you join'd;
Reflect that every act you do
To strengthen him doth strengthen you;
To serve you he is willing – able –
Two twists will make the strongest cable,
To bind a friend and keep him steady,
To have him e'er in reach and ready.

THE TWO SHIPS

A FABLE

Et ergo malim audire tales fabulas

Quam experiri — Naufrag. Eras.

A ship that weathered many a gale,
With oft-fished mast and tattered sail,
And many a shot, and many a scar,
That she received in deadly war;
Afraid of ev'ry angry cloud
Of breeze that whistled thro' a shroud;
O'erburdened, lab'ring, heaving, creaking,
In danger every wave of wrecking.
Thus to a vessel stout and tight
That constant had kept close in sight;
And ev'ry gale had lent assistance,
Or when the foe kept not his distance.
'Your crew, good ship, you can't deny,
Is tainted strong with mutiny;
Now mine is loyal, if you mix 'em
We'll make to honest crews betwixt 'em.
And that we may keep close together,
And stoutly face all sorts of weather,
We'll tow you by the strongest cable
That to devise my crew is able.
And if you leave it to my master,
We both shall sail more safe and faster.
As to our burden, though you'll share it
His skill will give you strength to bear it.
My solemn faith shall plighted be,
Your share I'll just apportioned see —

And to your strength your load I'll square,
 Nor stow a pound you cannot bear.
 A common fate we then shall have,
 Together mount the boisterous wave;
 Or down the wat'ry vale so low
 Together we shall cheerful go.
 The storm, dear ship, that injures you
 Shall sink thy constant comrade too.'

The trim-built vessel thus replied,
 As proud she wrote upon the tide:
 'I know I have on board some men,
 That seem rebellious now and then,
 But what's the cause? You know full well —
 Allowance short — makes men rebel;
 And you have many a hand of mine
 That on my crew's provision dine;
 Each day on biscuit we must work,
 Forsooth to send you beef and pork.
 Send me my men, their pay and stores,
 Cease to rip up our healing sores,
 In honour and in wisdom's name,
 Help me, some prudent plan to frame,
 To gain a happy crew's affection; —
 Blow it, 'twill be thy own protection,
 Our ship we'll work, its deck we'll clear,
 Nor wind, nor wave, nor both we'll fear.
 As to the tow-rope I am loath
 To try it, for 'twill hurt us both;
 A course for you's no course for me,
 Our trims are diff'rent as can be;
 But I shall, as I'm wont to do,
 Keep constant company with you,

And overboard the traitor-hearted
Shall go – that wish to see us parted;
But I perceive 'tis my crew's mind
By ropes we never should be joined.'
'Twas all in vain – a scoundrel few
About the helm, betrayed the crew;
And for a bounty, basely gotten,
Lash'd the sound vessel to the rotten.
No sooner was this fouled deed done
Then slap on board comes ton on ton
Of cargo – a most grievous burden,
Ten times as much as she'd her name on;
A storm comes on – a dreadful blast,
Now goes a sail! now groans a mast!
The silvery waves in mountains curled
Now wrap them in the wat'ry world!
Shot on the billow, now they rise,
And seem to penetrate the skies.
Their heaving sides with frightful crash
The rolling ships together dash;
The tight-built ship now 'gan to think
That thus united both must sink;
And better 'twas that they should part
For ever, than a plank should start.
To save herself, nought else was left,
She cut the rope, and sent adrift
The crazy ship, to live at sea
Well as she could and bore away.

HELP FROM HEAVEN

“The right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass – the Lord has chastened and corrected me; but he hath not given me over to death.” – 118th Psalm

‘Twas as the solemn midnight hour,
When minds at ease are sunk in sleep,
But sorrow’s sons their wailings pour,
Teaching the woods and wilds to weep;

Beside a lake whose waters black
The pale-eyed moon doth dimly spy,
Scarce peeping o’er a mountain back,
That rudely lifts its head on high;

Where the wild willows green and dank
Their weeping heads wave to and fro;
And bending reeds upon its bank
Oft kiss the stream that runs below –

There, on a long-fall’n mould’ring mass
An ancient castle’s crumbling wall,
That, now grown o’er with weeds and grass,
Was once gay mirth’s and beauty’s hall,

Ierne, lonely, pale, and sad,
All hapless sighing, sat her down,
And sorrowing mused, till almost mad,
She snatched her harp her cares to drown.

Now wildly waved her auburn hair
In the unheeded blast that blew;
Fixed were her eyes in deep despair,
Whilst o’er the strings her fingers flew.

The sounds, at first so loud and wild,
Now slowly softened on the ear;
And e'en the savage blast grew mild,
Such soothing sounds well pleased to hear.

Her druids' ghosts around her throng —
For ling'ring still, tho' seldom seen,
They fondly flit the oaks among,
And haunt the grove for ever green;

And list'ning fairies troop around,
Whilst high upon the ivied tow'r,
The long-haired banshees catch the sound,
And rapt, forget their crying hour.

For, in the saddest, softest strain,
She wail'd the woes of Erin's land —
Ah! wretched Erin, rent in twain
By some curs'd demon's hellish hand,

That eye inflames with deadly rage
Sons against sons in foulest fight
And youth to murder hoary age,
In nature's and in reason's spite.

The cottage now she sings in flames,
Now the injur'd maiden dying,
And now the burning baby's screams
To its mother's bosom flying;

Ah! luckless mother, vain you shed
Thy tears or blood thy babe to save,
For lo! poor soul, thy baby's dead,
And now thy breast must be its grave!

Thy breast of life, where, as it slept,
Thy song-sooth'd cherub oft would start;

Then heav'd its little sighs, and wept —
Sad sighs that rack'd thy boding heart.

The thought too deep Ierne stung —
She started frantic from her seat,
Her silver harp deep thrilling rung,
Neglected, falling at her feet.

Nor silver harp Ierne cheers,
Nor the bright starry-studded skies;
The light of heaven's unseen through tears —
The sweetest sound's unheard through sighs.

The withered shamrock from her breast,
Scorch'd with her burning sighs, she threw,
And the dark, deadly dew she pressed,
Cold dripping with unhallowed dew.

'Here, here,' she cries, 'unseen I'll dwell,
Here hopeless lay my tearful head,
And fairies nightly in this cell
Shall strew me dew-cold leafy bed.'

Then down she sinks with grief oppress'd
Her saffron sleeve thrown o'er her face,
And soft-winged sleep lights on her breast,
And soothes its heavings into peace.

But ah! too soon, fell Discord's cries,
Borne on an eastern breeze's wings,
Rude sweep her harp, that downward lies,
And moan amongst its trembling strings.

Scared with a sound he did not know,
Peace-loving sleep dared not to stay,
But, sighing for Ierne's woe,
He bent his noiseless flight away.

Ierne, starting, paused a while:
'Too true,' she cries, 'ye powers above!
Dread Discord comes from that fair isle
Where still I looked for peace and love.'

Thought-rapt she stood in dumb amaze,
When on the western mountain's height,
To sounds seraphic, rose a blaze
Of mildly-beaming heavenly light.

There in the midst, loose rob'd was seen
Sweet Hope, that soothes our ev'ry ill,
Beck'ning with calm and smiling mien
Poor, sad Ierne up the hill.

The woe-begone thus Hope address'd:
'Lift up thy looks, Ierne, cheer!
For know we come at heaven's behest
To soothe thy sorrow, check thy fear.

'Thy cares, thy dangers soon shall cease,
Thy days of tears and sighs are gone,
Thou foulest feuds shall turn to peace —
Thus shall the will of heav'n be done.

'Pluck from thy breast that yew away —
Be steady, cool, collected, calm;
So shalt thou soon a wreath display
Of shamrock woven with the palm.'

Words so bland, as dew descending
Lifts the drooping lily's head,
Rais'd the fair Ierne bending,
Fairest flow'r in nature's bed.

'My fervent thanks, high heav'n,' she cries,
'Be ever, ever given to thee;

Thou'st chas'd my sorrow, tears and sigh —
Thou'st sent me Hope and Liberty.'

GENIUS OF ERIN

Genius of Erin, tune thy harp
To freedom, let its sound awake
Thy prostrate sons, and nerve their hearts
Oppression's iron bonds to break.

Long and strong then strike the lyre –
Strike it with prophetic lays,
Bid it rouse the slumbering fire,
Bid the fire of freedom blaze.

Tell them glory waits their efforts –
Strongly wooed, she will be won;
Freedom, show, by peace attended,
Waits to crown each gallant son.

Greatly daring, bid them gain her;
Conquerors, bid them live or die;
Erin in her children triumphs,
Even where her martyrs lie.

But if her sons, too long opprest,
No spark of freedom's fire retain,
And with sad and servile breast,
Basely wear the galling chain;

Vainly then you'd call to glory,
Vainly freedom's blessing praise –
Man debased to willing thraldom
Freedom's blessing cannot raise.

Check thy hand, and change thy strain,
Check it to a sound of woe, –
Ireland's blasted hopes proclaim,
Ireland's endless sufferings show.

Show her fields with blood ensanguined,
With her children's blood bedewed —
Show her desolated plains,
With their murdered bodies strewed.

Mark that hamlet — how it blazes!
Hear the shrieks of horror rise —
See! the fiends prepare their tortures —
See! a tortured victim dies.

Ruin stalks his haggard round,
O'er the plains his banner waves,
Sweeping from her wasted land
All but tyrants and their slaves.

All but tyrants and their slaves!
Shall they live in Erin's isle?
O'er her martyred patriot's graves
Shall oppression's minions smile?

Erin's sons, awake! — awake!
Oh! too long, too long, you sleep;
Awake! arise! your fetters break,
Nor let your country bleed and weep.

ARBOUR HILL

No rising column marks this spot
Where many a victim lies,
But oh! the blood which here has streamed
To heaven for justice cries.

It claims it on the oppressor's head
Who joys in human woe,
Who drinks the tears by misery shed,
And mocks them as they flow.

It claims it on the callous judge
Whose hands in blood are dyed,
Who arms injustice with the sword,
The balance thrown aside.

It claims it for this ruined isle —
Her wretched children's grave —
Where withered Freedom droops her head,
And man exists — a slave.

O sacred Justice! free this land
From tyranny abhorred;
Resume thy balance and thy seat,
Resume, but sheath thy sword.

No retribution should we seek —
Too long has horror reigned;
By mercy marked may freedom rise,
By cruelty unstained.

Nor shall a tyrant's ashes mix
With those our martyred dead;
This is the place where Erin's sons
In Erin's cause have bled.

And those who here are laid at rest,
Oh! hallowed be each name;
Their memories are for ever blest –
Consigned to endless fame.

Unconsecrated is this ground,
Unblessed by holy hands –
No bell here tolls its solemn sound –
No monument here stands.

But here the patriot's tears are shed,
The poor man's blessing given –
These consecrate the virtuous dead,
These waft their way to heaven.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC

Issued by the Provisional Government of Ireland, July 23rd, 1803.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

You are now called on to show to the world that you are competent to take your place among nations, that you have a right to claim their recognizance of you, as an independent country, by the only satisfactory proof you can furnish of your capability of maintaining your independence, your wresting it from England with your own hands.

In the development of this system, which has been organized within the last eight months, at the close of internal defeat and without the hope of foreign assistance; which has been conducted with a tranquillity, mistaken for obedience; which neither the failure of a similar attempt in England has retarded, nor the renewal of hostilities has accelerated; in the development of this system you will show to the people of England, that there is a spirit of perseverance in this country, beyond their power to calculate or to repress; you will show to them that as long as they think to hold unjust dominion over Ireland, under no change of circumstances can they count on its obedience; under no aspect of affairs can they judge of its intentions; you will show to them that the question which it now behoves them to take into serious and instant consideration, is not, whether they will resist a separation, which it is our fixed determination to effect, but whether or not, they will drive us beyond separation; whether they will by a sanguinary resistance create a deadly national antipathy between the two countries, or whether they will take the only means still left, of driving such a

sentiment from our minds, a prompt, manly, and sagacious acquiescence, in our just and unalterable determination.

If the secrecy with which the present effort has been conducted, shall have led our enemies to suppose that its extent must have been partial, a few days will undeceive them. That confidence, which was once lost, by trusting to external support, and suffering our own means to be gradually undermined, has been again restored. We have been mutually pledged to each other, to look only to our own strength, and that the first introduction of a system of terror, the first attempt to execute an individual in one county, should be the signal of insurrection in all. We have now, without the loss of a man, with our means of communication untouched, brought our plans to the moment when they are ripe for execution, and in the promptitude with which nineteen counties will come forward at once to execute them, it will be found that neither confidence nor communication are wanting to the people of Ireland.

In calling on our countrymen to come forward, we feel ourselves bound, at the same time, to justify our claim to their confidence by a precise declaration of our views. We therefore solemnly declare, that our object is to establish a free and independent republic in Ireland: that the pursuit of this object we will relinquish only with our lives: that we will never, unless at the express call of our country, abandon our post, until the acknowledgement of its independence is obtained from England; and that we will enter into no negotiation (but for exchange of prisoners) with the government of that country while a British army remains in Ireland. Such is the declaration which we call on the people of Ireland to support – And we call first on that part of Ireland which was once paralysed by the want of intelligence, to show that to that cause only was its inaction to be attributed; on that part of Ireland which was once foremost, by its fortitude in suffering; on that part of Ireland which once offered to take the salvation of the country on itself; on that part of Ireland where the flame of liberty first glowed;

we call upon the NORTH to stand up and shake off their Slumber and their oppression.

MEN OF LEINSTER, STAND TO YOUR ARMS.

To the courage which you have already displayed, is your country indebted for the confidence which it now feels in its own strength, and for the dismay with which our enemies will be overwhelmed when they shall find this effort to be universal. But men of Leinster, you owe more to your country than the having animated it by your past example; you owe more to your own courage, than the having obtained, by it a protection. If six years ago, when you rose without arms, without plan, without co-operation, with more troops against you alone, than are now in the country at large; you were able to remain for six weeks in open defiance of the government, and within a few miles of the capital what will you not now effect, with that capital, and every other part of Ireland ready to support you? But it is not on this head that we have need to address you. No we now speak to you, and through you, to the rest of Ireland, on a subject, dear to us even as the success of our country, - its honour. You are accused by your enemies of having violated that honour; excesses which they themselves had in their fullest extent provoked, but which they have grossly exaggerated, have been attributed to you. The opportunity of vindicating yourselves by actions, is now for the first time before you; and we call upon you to give the lie to such assertions, by carefully avoiding every appearance of plunder, intoxication, or revenge; recollecting that you lost Ireland before, not from want of courage, but from not having that courage rightly directed by discipline. But we trust that your past sufferings, have taught you experience, and that you will respect the declaration which we now make and which we are determined by every means in our power to enforce.

The nation alone possesses the right of punishing individuals, and whosoever shall put another person to death,

except in battle, without a fair trial by his country, is guilty of murder. The intention of the provisional government of Ireland, is to claim from the English government, such Irishmen as have been sold or transported, by it for their attachment to freedom; and for this purpose, it will retain as hostages for their safe return, such adherents of that government as shall fall into its hands. It therefore calls upon the people to respect those hostages, and to recollect that in spilling their blood, they would leave their own countrymen in the hands of their enemies.

The intention of the provisional government, is to resign its functions, as soon as the nation shall have chosen its delegates, but in the mean time, it is determined to enforce the regulations hereunto subjoined; - It in consequence takes the property of the country under its protection, and will punish with the utmost rigour any person who shall violate that property, and thereby injure the present resources and the future prosperity of Ireland.

Whoever refuses to march to whatever part of the country he is ordered, is guilty of disobedience to the government, which alone is competent to decide in what place his services are necessary, and which desires him to recollect, that in whatever part of Ireland he is fighting, he is still fighting for its freedom.

Whoever presumes by acts or otherwise to give countenance to the calumny propagated by our enemies, that this is a religious contest, is guilty of the grievous crime of belying the motives of his country. Religious disqualification is but one of the many grievances of which Ireland has to complain. Our intention is to remove not that only, but every other oppression under which we labour. We fight, that all of us may have our country, and that done - each of us shall have his religion.

We are aware of the apprehensions which you have expressed, that in quitting your own counties, you leave your wives and children, in the hands of your enemies; but on this head have no uneasiness. If there are still men base enough to persecute those, who are unable to resist, show them by your

victories that we have the power to punish, and by your obedience, that we have the power to protect, and we pledge ourselves to you, that these men shall be made to feel, that the safety of every thing they hold dear, depends on the conduct they observe to you. Go forth then with confidence, conquer the foreign enemies of your country, and leave to us the care of preserving its internal tranquillity; recollect that not only the victory, but also the honour of your country, is placed in your hands; give up your private resentments, and show to the world, that the Irish, are not only a brave, but also a generous and forgiving people.

MEN OF MUNSTER AND CONNAUGHT

You have your instructions, we trust that you will execute them. The example of the rest of your countrymen is now before you; your own strength is unbroken;-five months ago you were eager to act without any other assistance. We now call upon you to show, what you then declared you only wanted the opportunity of proving, that you possess the same love of liberty and the same courage with which the rest of your countrymen are animated.

We now turn to that portion of our countrymen whose prejudices we had rather overcome by a frank declaration of our intentions, than conquer their persons in the field; and in making this declaration, we do not wish to dwell on events, which, however, they may bring tenfold odium on their authors, must still tend to keep alive in the minds both of the instruments and victims of them, a spirit of animosity which it is our wish to destroy. We will therefore enter into no detail of the atrocities and oppression which Ireland has laboured under during its connexion with England; but we justify our determination to separate from that country on the broad historical statement, that during six hundred years she has been unable to conciliate the affections of the people of Ireland; that during that time, five

rebellions were entered into, to shake off the yoke; that she has been obliged to resort to a system of unprecedented torture in her defence; that she has broken every tie of voluntary connexion by taking even the name of independence from Ireland, through the intervention of a parliament notoriously bribed, and not representing the will of the people; that in her vindication of this measure she has herself given the justification of the views of the United Irishmen, by declaring in the words of her ministers,

“That Ireland never had, and never could enjoy under the then circumstances the benefit of British connexion; that it necessarily must happen when one country is connected with another, that the interests of the lesser will be borne down by those of the greater. That England has supported and encouraged the English colonists in their oppression towards the natives of Ireland; that Ireland had been left in a state of ignorance, rudeness and barbarism, worse in its effects, and more degrading in its nature, than that in which it was found six centuries before.”

Now to what cause are these things to be attributed? Did the cause of the almighty keep alive a spirit of obstinacy in the minds of the Irish people for six hundred years?

Did the doctrines of the French revolution produce five rebellions? Could the misrepresentations of ambitious and designing men drive from the mind of a whole people, the recollection of defeat, and raise the infant from the cradle, with the same feelings with which his father sunk into the grave? Will this gross avowal which our enemies have made of their own views, remove none of the calumny that has been thrown upon ours? Will none of the credit [which] has been lavished on them, be transferred to the solemn declaration which we now make in the face of god and our country. We war not against property – We war against no religious sect – We war not against past opinions or prejudices – We war against English dominion. We will not however deny, that there are some men, who, not because they have supported the government of our oppressors,

but because they have violated the common laws of morality, which exist alike under all or under no government; have put it beyond our power to give to them the protection of a government. We will not hazard the influence we may have with the people, and the power it may give us of preventing the excesses of revolution, by undertaking to place in tranquillity the man who has been guilty of torture, free quarters, rape and murder, by the side of the sufferer or their relations; but in the frankness with which we warn these men of their danger, let those who do not feel that they have passed this boundary of mediation, count on their safety.

We had hoped for the sake of our enemies to have taken them by surprise, and to have committed the cause of our country before they could have time to commit themselves against it, but though we have not altogether been able to succeed, we are yet rejoiced to find that they have not come forward with promptitude on the side of those who have deceived them, and we now call on them before it is yet too late, not to commit themselves further against a people they are unable to resist, and in support of a government, which, by their own declaration has forfeited its claim to their allegiance.

To that government in whose hands, though not the issue, at least the features with which the present contest is to be marked, and placed, we now turn. How is it to be decided? is open and honourable force alone to be resorted to, or is it your intention to employ those laws which custom has placed in your hands, and to force us to employ the law of retaliation in our defence?

Of the inefficacy of a system of terror, in preventing the people of Ireland from coming forward to assert their freedom, you have already had experience. Of the effect which such a system will have on our minds in case of success, we have already forewarned you - We now address to you another consideration - If in the question which is now to receive a solemn and we trust final decision, if we have been deceived

reflection would point out that conduct should be resorted to, which was the best calculated to produce conviction on our minds. What would that conduct be? It would be to show to us that the difference of strength between the two countries [is such], as to render it unnecessary for you to bring out all your force; to show to us that you have something in reserve wherewith to crush hereafter, not only a greater exertion on the part of the people, but a greater exertion, rendered still greater by foreign assistance: It would be to show to us that what we have vainly supported to be a prosperity growing beyond your grasp, is only a partial exuberance requiring but the pressure of your hand to reduce it into form. But for your own sake do not resort to a system, which while it increased the acrimony of our minds would leave us under the melancholy delusion that we had been forced to yield, not to the sound and temperate exertions of superior strength, but to the frantic struggles of weakness, concealing itself under desperation. Consider also that the distinction of rebel and enemy is of a very fluctuating nature; that during the course of your own experience you have already been obliged to lay it aside; that should you be forced to abandon it towards Ireland you cannot hope to do so as tranquilly as you have done towards America, for in the exasperated state to which you have raised the minds of the Irish people; a people whom you profess to have left in a state of barbarism and ignorance, with what confidence can you say to that people " while the advantage of cruelty lay upon our side, we slaughtered you without mercy, but the measure of our own blood is beginning to preponderate, it is no longer our interest that this bloody system should continue, shew us then, that forbearance which we never taught you by precept or example, lay aside your resentments, give quarter to us, and let us mutually forget, that we never gave quarter to you." Cease then we entreat you uselessly to violate humanity by resorting to a system inefficacious as an instrument of terror, inefficacious as a mode of defence, inefficacious as a mode of conviction, ruinous

to the future relations of the two countries in case of our success, and destructive of those instruments of defence which you will then find it doubly necessary to have preserved unimpaired. But if your determination be otherwise, hear ours. We will not imitate you in cruelty; we will put no man to death in cold blood, the prisoners which first fall into our hands shall be treated with the respect due to the unfortunate; but if the life of a single Irish soldier is taken after the battle is over, the orders thence forth to be issued to the Irish army are neither to give or take quarter. Countrymen if a cruel necessity forces us to retaliate, we will bury our resentments in the field of battle, if we are to fall, we will fall where we fight for our country - Fully impressed with this determination, of the necessity of adhering to which past experience has but too fatally convinced us; fully impressed with the justice of our cause which we now put to issue. We make our last and solemn appeal to the sword and to Heaven; and as the cause of Ireland deserves to prosper, may God give it Victory.

Conformably to the above proclamation, the Provisional Government of Ireland, decree that as follows.

1. From the date and promulgation hereof, tithes are for ever abolished, and church lands are the property of the nation.

2. From the same date, all transfers of landed property are prohibited, each person, holding what he now possesses, on paying his rent until the national government is established, the national will declared, and the courts of justice organized.

3. From the same date, all transfer of Bonds, debentures, and all public securities, are in like manner and form forbidden, and declared void, for the same time, and for the same reasons.

4. The Irish generals commanding districts shall seize such of the partisans of England as may serve for hostages, and shall apprise the English commander opposed to them, that a strict retaliation shall take place if any outrages contrary to the laws of war shall be committed by the troops under his command, or by the partisans of England in the district which he occupies.

5. That the Irish generals are to treat (except where retaliation makes it necessary) the English troops who may fall into their hands, or such Irish as serve in the regular forces of England, and who shall have acted conformably to the laws of war, as prisoners of war; but all Irish militia, yeoman, or volunteer corps, or bodies of Irish, or individuals, who fourteen days from the promulgation and date hereof, shall be found in arms, shall be considered as rebels, committed for trial, and their properties confiscated.

6. The generals are to assemble court-martials, who are to be sworn to administer justice; who are not to condemn without sufficient evidence, and before whom all military offenders are to be sent instantly for trial.

7. No man is to suffer death by their sentence, except for mutiny; the sentences of such others as are judged worthy of death, shall not be put in execution until the provisional government declares its will, nor are court-martials on any pretext to sentence, nor is any officer to suffer the punishment of flogging, or any species of torture, to be inflicted.

8. The generals are to enforce the strictest discipline, and to send offenders immediately before court-martials, and are enjoined to chase away from the Irish armies all such as shall disgrace themselves by being drunk in presence of the enemy.

9. The generals are to apprise their respective armies, that all military stores, arms, or ammunition, belonging to the English government, be the property of the captors and the value is to be divided equally without respect of rank between them, except that the widows, orphans, parents, or other heirs of such as gloriously fall in the attack, shall be entitled to a double share.

10. As the English nation has made war on Ireland, all English property in ships or otherwise, is subject to the same rule, and all transfer of them is forbidden and declared void, in like manner as is expressed in No.2 and 3.

11. The generals of the different districts are hereby empowered to confer rank up to colonels inclusive, on such as

they conceive to merit it from the nation, but are not to make more colonels than one for fifteen hundred men, nor more Lieutenant-Colonels than one for every thousand men.

12. The generals shall seize on all sums of public money in the custom-houses in their districts, or in the hands of the different collectors, county treasurers, or other revenue officers, whom they shall render responsible for the sums in their hands. The generals shall pass receipts for the amount, and account to the provisional government for the expenditure.

13. When the people elect their officers up to the colonels, the general is bound to confirm it - no officer can be broke but by sentence of a court-martial.

14. The generals shall correspond with the provisional government, to whom they shall give details of all their operations, they are to correspond with the neighbouring generals to whom they are to transmit all necessary intelligence, and to co-operate with them.

15. The generals commanding in each county shall as soon as it is cleared of the enemy, assemble the county committee, who shall be elected conformably to the constitution of United Irishmen, all the requisitions necessary for the army shall be made in writing by the generals to the committee, who are hereby empowered and enjoined to pass their receipts for each article to the owners, to the end that they may receive their full value from the nation.

16. The county committee is charged with the civil direction of the county, the care of the national property, and the preservation of order and justice in the county; for which purpose the county committees are to appoint a high-sheriff, and one or more sub-sheriffs to execute their orders, a sufficient number of justices of the peace for the county, a high and a sufficient number of petty constables in each barony, who are respectively charged with the duties now performed by these magistrates.

17. The county of Cork on account of its extent, is to be divided conformably to the boundaries for raising the militia into the counties of north and south Cork, for each of which a county constable, high-sheriff and all magistrates above directed are to be appointed.

18. The county committee are hereby empowered and enjoined to issue warrants to apprehend such persons as it shall appear, on sufficient evidence perpetrated murder, torture, or other breaches of the acknowledged laws of war and morality on the people, to the end that they may be tried for those offences, so soon as the competent courts of justice are established by the nation.

19. The county committee shall cause the sheriff or his officers to seize on all the personal and real property of such persons, to put seals on their effects, to appoint proper persons to preserve all such property until the national courts of justice shall have decided on the fate of the proprietors.

20. The county committee shall act in like manner, with all state and church lands, parochial estates, and all public lands and edifices.

21. The county committee shall in the interim receive all the rents and debts of such persons and estates, and shall give receipts for the same, shall transmit to the provisional government an exact account of their value, extent and amount, and receive the directions of the provisional government thereon.

22. They shall appoint some proper house in the counties where the sheriff is permanently to reside, and where the county committee shall assemble, they shall cause all the records and papers of the county to be there transferred, arranged, and kept, and the orders of government are there to be transmitted and received.

23. The county committee is hereby empowered to pay out of these effects, or by assessment, reasonable salaries for

themselves, the sheriff, justices and other magistrates whom they shall appoint.

24. They shall keep a written journal of all their proceedings signed each day by the members of the committee, or a sufficient number of them for the inspection of government.

25. The county committee shall correspond with government on all the subjects with which they are charged, and transmit to the general of the district such information as they may conceive useful to the public.

26. The county committee shall take care that the state prisoners, however great their offences, shall be treated with humanity, and allow them a sufficient support to the end that all the world may know, that the Irish nation is not actuated by the spirit of revenge, but of justice.

27. The provisional government wishing to commit as soon as possible the sovereign authority to the people, direct that each county and city shall elect agreeably to the constitution of United Irishmen, representatives to meet in Dublin, to whom the moment they assemble the provisional government will resign its functions; and without presuming to dictate to the people, they beg to suggest, that for the important purpose to which these electors are called, integrity of character should be the first object.

28. The number of representatives being arbitrary, the provisional government have adopted that of the late house of commons, three hundred, and according to the best return of the population of the cities and counties the following numbers are to be returned from each: -Antrim 13 - Armagh 9 -Belfast town 1 - Carlow 3 -Cavan 7 -Clare 8 Cork county, north 14 -Cork co. south 14 -Cork city 6 -Donegal 10 -Down 6 -Drogheda 1 -Dublin county 4 -Dublin city 14 -Fermanagh 5 -Galway 10 -Kerry 9 - Kildare 4 -Kilkenny 7 -Kings county 6 -Leitrim 5 -Limerick county 10 -Limerick city 3 -Londonderry 9 -Longford 4 -Louth 4 -Mayo 12 -Meath 9 -Monaghan 9 -Queen's county 6 -

Roscommon 8 -Sligo 6 -Tipperary 13 -Tyrone 14 -Waterford county 6 -Waterford city 2 -Westmeath 5 -Wexford 9 -Wicklow 5

29. In the cities the same sort of regulations as in the counties shall be adopted; the city committee shall appoint one or more sheriffs as they think proper, and shall take possession of all the public and corporation properties in their jurisdiction in like manner as is directed for counties.

30. The provisional government strictly exhort and enjoin all magistrates, officers, civil and military, and the whole of the nation, to cause the laws of Morality to be enforced and respected, and to execute as far as in them lies justice with mercy, by which alone liberty can be established, and the blessings of divine providence secured.

ACCOUNT OF THE LATE PLAN OF INSURRECTION IN DUBLIN, AND CAUSE OF ITS FAILURE.

The plan was comprised under three heads: - *Points of Attack* - *Points of Check* - and *Lines of Defence*.

POINTS OF ATTACK

The points of attack were three - the Pigeon House, the Castle, and the Artillery Barracks at Island Bridge.

The attack was to begin with the Pigeon House - number of men 200 - the place of assembly, the Strand, between Irishtown and Sandymount - the time, low water - the men to divide into two bodies; one to cross by a sandbank, between the Pigeon House and Light House, where they were to mount the wall; the other to cross at Devonshire Wharf, both parties to detach three men with blunderbusses, and three with jointed pikes concealed, who were to seize the sentries and the gates for the rest to rush in. Another plan was formed for high water, by means of pleasure or fishing boats, going out in the morning, one by one, and returning in the evening to the dock at the Pigeon House, where they were to land. A rocket from this was to be signal for other two, viz: -

The Castle, the number of men 200. The place of assembly, Patrick-street Depot. A house in Ship-street was expected, also one near the gate. A hundred men to be armed with jointed pikes and blunderbusses, the rest to support them, and march openly with long pikes. To begin by the entrance of two job coaches, hackney coachmen, two footmen, and six persons inside, to drive in at the upper gate into the yard; come out of the coaches; turn back and seize the guard (or instead of one of the job

coaches, a sedan going in at the same time with two footmen, two chairmen and one inside); at the same moment a person was, in case of failure, to rap at Lamprey's door, seize it and let in others, to come down by a scaling ladder from a window, on the top of the guard-house, while attacks were made at a public-house in Ship-street, which has three windows commanding the guard-house, a gate in Stephen-street, another at the Aungier-street end of Great George's-street, leading to the Ordnance, another at the new house in George's-street, leading to the riding yard, and another over a piece of a brick wall near the Palace-street gate. Scaling ladders for all these. Fire halls, if necessary, for the guard-house of the upper gate. The *Lord Lieutenant* and *principal officers of government*, together with the bulk of artillery, to be sent off, under an escort, to the commander of Wicklow, in case of being obliged to retreat. I forgot to mention, that the same was to be done with as much of the Pigeon House stores as could be. Another part with some artillery, to come into town, along the quays, and take post at Carlisle Bridge, to act according to circumstances.

Island Bridge, 400 men. Place of assembly, Quarry-hole opposite, and Burying-ground. Eight men with pistols, and one with a blunderbuss to seize the sentry walking outside, seize the gates, some to rush in, seize the cannon opposite the gate; the rest to mount on all sides by scaling ladders; on seizing this, to send two cannon over the bridge facing the barrack-road. Another detachment, to bring cannon down James's-street, another towards Rathfarnham, as before. To each of the flank points when carried, reinforcements to be sent, with horses, &c., to transport the artillery. Island Bridge only to be maintained (a false attack also thought of, after the others had been made, on the rear of the barracks, and, if necessary, to burn the hay stores in rear.)

Three rockets to be the signal that the attack on any part was made, and afterwards a rocket of stars in case of victory, a silent one of repulse.

Another point of attack not mentioned, Cork-street Barracks; if the officers could surprise it, and set fire to it; if not, to take post in the house, (I think in Earl-street, the street at the end of Cork-street, leading to New-market, looking down the street with musketry, two bodies of pikemen in Earl-street), to the right and left of Cork street, and concealed from troops marching in that street. Another in (I think Marrowbone-lane) to take them in the rear. Place of assembly, fields adjacent or Fenton-fields.

POINTS OF CHECK

The old Custom-house, 300 men, gate to be seized, and guard disarmed, the gate to be shut or stopped with a load of straw, to be previously in the street. The other small gate to be commanded by musketry, and the bulk of the 300 men to be distributed in Parliament-street, Crane-lane, and those streets falling into Essex-street, in order to attack them if they forced out. The jointed pikes and blunderbusses lying under great coats rendered all these surprises unexpected; fire balls if necessary, and a beam of rockets.

An idea also was, if money had been got, to purchase Rafferty's cheese shop, opposite to it to make a Depot and assembly; and to mine under and blow up a part of the Custom-house, and attack them in confusion, as also the Castle. The miners would have been got also to mine from a cellar into some of the streets through which the army from the barracks must march. The assembly was at the Coal-quay.

Mary-street barracks, sixty men. A house-painter's house, and one equally removed on the opposite side (No. 36, I believe),

whose fire commands the iron gate of the barracks, without being exposed to the fire from it, to be occupied by twenty-four blunderbusses; the remainder, pikemen, to remain near Cole's-lane, or to be ready, in case of rushing out, to attack them. Assembly, Cole's-lane market, or else detached from Custom-house body.

The corner house is Capel-street, (it was Killy Kelley's), commanding Ormond-quay, and Dixon, the shoemaker's (or the house beyond it), which open suddenly on the flank of the army, without being exposed to their fire, to be occupied by blunderbusses; - assembly detached from Custom-house body.

LINES OF DEFENCE

Beresford-street has six issues from Church-street, viz., Coleraine-street, King-street, Stirrup-lane, Mary's-lane, Pill-lane, and the Quay. These to be chained in the first instance, by a body of chainmen; double chains and padlocks were deposited;¹ and the sills of the doors marked.

The blockade to be afterwards filled up; that on the Quay, by bringing up the coaches from the stand, and oversetting them, together with the butchers' blocks from Ormond-market. The houses over the chains to be occupied with hand-grenades, pistols, and stones. Pikemen to parade in Beresford-street, to attack instantly, any person that might penetrate; the number 200. Assembly, Smithfield Depot, where were 800 pikes for reinforcements. The object was, to force the troops to march towards the Castle, by the other side of the water, where the bulk of the preparations and men to receive them were.

Merchant's-Quay. In case the army, after passing the Old Bridge, marched that way, Wogan's house, and a Birmingham warehouse next to it, to be occupied with musketry, grenades,

¹ In the original a sketch is given of these double chains.

and stones; also, the leather crane at the other end of the Quay; a beam to be before the crane, lying across the Quay, to be fired at the approach of the enemy's column. A body of pikemen, in Winetavern-street, instantly to rush on them in front; another body in Cook-street to do the same, by five lanes opening on their flank, and by Bride-street in their rear. Another beam in Bridge-street, in case of taking that route, and then Cook-street body to rush out instantly in front, and the Quay on the flank.² A beam in Dirty-lane; main body of pikemen in Thomas-street to rush on them instantly on firing the beam. The body on the Quay to attack in the rear; in case of repulse, Catherine's Church. Market-house, and two houses adjacent, that command that street, occupied with musketry. Two rocket batteries near the Market-house, a beam before it; body of pikemen in Swift's-alley and that range, to rush on their flank, after the beam was fired, through Thomas-court, Vicar-street, and three other issues; the corner houses of these issues to be occupied by stones and grenades; the entire of the other side of the street to be occupied with stones, &c., the flank of this side to be protected by a chain at James's-gate, and Guinness's drays, &c.; the rear of it to be protected from Cork-street, in case their officer there failed, by chains across Rainsford-street, Crilly's-yard, Meath-street, Ash-street, and Francis-street. The Quay body to co-operate by the

² "There was also a chain higher up in Bridge-street, as well as diagonally across John-street, and across New-row, as these three issues that led into the flank of the Thomas-street line of defence, which it was intended only to leave open at the other flank, as it was meant to make them pass completely through the lines of defence. Wherever there were chains, the houses over them were occupied as above, and also such as commanded them in front. For this reason the Birmingham warehouse, looking down Bridge-street, was to be occupied if necessary. There was also to be a rocket battery at the crane, on the Quay, another in Bridge-street. The number of men, 300, assembly, Thomas-street Depot."

issues before mentioned (at the other side), the chains of which would be opened by us immediately. In case of further repulse, the house at the corner of Cutpurse-row, commanding the lanes at each side of the Market-house, the two houses in High-street, commanding that open, and the corner houses of Castle-street, commanding Skinner-row, (now Christ-Church-place), to be successively occupied. In case of a final retreat, the routes to be three; Cork-street, to Templeogue, New-Street, Rathfarnham, and Camden-street department. The bridges of the Liffey to be covered six feet deep with boards full of long nails bound down by two iron bars, with spikes eighteen inches long, driven through them into the pavement, stop a column of cavalry, or even infantry.

The whole of the plan was given up by me for the want of means, except the Castle and lines of defence; for I expected three hundred Wexford, four hundred Kildare, and two hundred Wicklow men, all of whom had fought before, to begin the surprises at this side of the water, and by the preparations for defence, so as to give time to the town to assemble. The county of Dublin was also to act at the instant it began; the number of Dublin people acquainted with it, I understand, to be three or four thousand. I expected two thousand to assemble at Costigan's mills - the grand place of assembly. The evening before, the Wicklow men failed through their officer. The Kildare men, who were to act, (particularly with me) came in, and at five o'clock went off again, from the Canal harbour, on a report from two of their officers that Dublin would not act. In Dublin itself, it was given out, by some treacherous or cowardly person, that it was postponed till Wednesday. The time of assembly was from six till nine; and at nine, instead of two thousand, three were eighty men assembled. When we came to the Market-house, they were diminished to eighteen or twenty.

The Wexford men did assemble, I believe, to the amount promised, on the Coal-quay; but three hundred men, though they might be sufficient to begin on a sudden, were not so, when government had five hours notice by express from Kildare.

Add to this, the preparations were, from an unfortunate series of disappointments in money, unfinished; scarcely any blunderbusses bought up.

The man who was to turn the fuzes and rammers for the beams forgot them, and went off to Kildare to bring men, and did not return till the very day. The consequence was, that all the beams were not loaded, nor mounted with wheels, nor the train bags, of course, fastened on to explode them.

From the explosion in Patrick-street, I lost the jointed pikes which were deposited there; and the day of action was fixed on before this, and could not be changed.

I had no means for making up for their loss, but by the hollow beams full of pikes, which struck me three or four days before the 23rd. From the delays in getting the materials, they were not able to set about them till the day before; the whole of that day and the next, which ought to have been spent in arrangements, was obliged to be employed in work. Even this, from the confusion occasioned by men crowding into the Depot, from the country, was almost impossible.

The person who had the management of the Depot, mixed, by accident, the slow matches that were prepared with what were not, and all our labour went for nothing.

The fuzes for the grenades, he had also laid by, where he forgot them, and could not find them in the crowd.

The cramp irons could not be got in time from the smiths, to whom we would not communicate the necessity of dispatch; and the scaling ladders were not finished (but one). Money came in at five o'clock; and the trusty men of the Depot, who alone

knew the town, were obliged to be sent out to buy up blunderbusses; for the people refused to act without some. To change the day was impossible; for I expected the counties to act, and feared to lose the advantage of surprise. The Kildare men were coming in for three days; and after that, it was impossible to draw back. Had I another week – had I one thousand pounds – had I one thousand men, I would have feared nothing. There was redundancy enough in any one part, to have made up, if complete, for deficiency in the rest; but there was failure in all, - plan, preparation, and men.

I would have given it the respectability of insurrection but I did not wish uselessly to shed blood. I gave no signal for the rest, and they all escaped.

I arrived time enough in the country to prevent that part of it, which had already gone out with one of my men, to dissuade the neighbourhood from proceeding. I found, that by a mistake of the messenger, Wicklow would not rise that night; I sent off to prevent it from doing so the next, as it intended. It offered to rise, even after the defeat, if I wished it; but I refused. Had it risen, Wexford would have done the same. It began to assemble; but its leader kept it back, till he knew the fate of Dublin. In the state Kildare was in, it would have done the same. I was repeatedly solicited, by some of those who were with me, to do so; but I constantly refused. The more remote counties did not rise, for want of money to send them the signal agreed on.

I know how men without candour will pronounce on this failure, without knowing one of the circumstances that occasioned it; they will consider only that they predicted it. Whether its failure was caused by chance, or by any of the grounds on which they made their prediction, they will not care; they will make no distinction between a prediction fulfilled and justified – they will make no compromise of errors – they will

not recollect that they predicted also, that no system could be formed – that no secrecy nor confidence could be restored – that no preparations could be made – that no plan could be arranged – that no day could be fixed, without being instantly known at the Castle – that government only waited to let the conspiracy ripen, and crush it at their pleasure – and that on these grounds only did they predict its miscarriage. The very same men, that after success would have flattered, will now calumniate. The very same men that would have made an offering of unlimited sagacity at the shrine of victory, will not now be content to take back that portion that belongs of right to themselves, but would violate the sanctuary of misfortune, and strip her of that covering that candour would have left her.

R.E.

LETTER TO JOHN PHILPOT CURRAN

**Addressed to John Philpot Curran, the father of Emmet's
sweetheart, Sarah Curran.**

I did not expect you to be my counsel. I nominated you, because not to have done so might have appeared remarkable. Had Mr. —³ been in town, I did not even wish to have seen you; but as he was not, I wrote to you to come to me at once. I know that I have done you very severe injury, much greater than I can atone for with my life; that atonement I did offer to make before the Privy Council, by pleading guilty if those documents were suppressed. I offered more — I offered, if I was permitted to consult some persons, and if they would consent to an accommodation for saving the lives of others, that I would only require for my part of it the suppression of these documents, and that I would abide the event of my trial. This was also rejected, and nothing but individual information (with the exception of names) would be taken. My intention was not to leave the suppression of these documents to possibility, but to render it unnecessary for any one to plead for me, by pleading guilty to the charge myself.

The circumstances that I am now going to mention I do not state in my own justification. When I first addressed your daughter I expected that in another week my own fate would have been decided. I know that in case of success many others might look on me differently from what they did at that moment, but I speak with sincerity when I say that I never was anxious for situation or distinction myself, and I did not wish to be united to one who was. I spoke to your daughter, neither expecting, nor in fact, under those circumstances, wishing that

³ Referring to Robert Holmes, the advocate.

there should be a return of attachment, but wishing to judge of her dispositions – to know how far they might be not unfavourable or disengaged, and to know what foundation I might afterwards have to count on.

I received no encouragement whatever. She told me she had no attachment for any person, nor did she seem likely to have any that could make her wish to quit you. I stayed away till the time had elapsed, when I found that the event, to which I allude, was to be postponed indefinitely. I returned, by a kind of infatuation, thinking that to myself only was I giving pleasure or pain. I perceived no progress of attachment on her part, nor anything in her conduct to distinguish me from a common acquaintance. Afterwards I had reason to suppose that discoveries were made, and that I should be obliged to quit the kingdom immediately. I came to make a renunciation of any approach to friendship that might have been found. On that very day she herself spoke to me to discontinue my visits. I told her it was my intention, and I mentioned the reason. I then for the first time found where I was unfortunate, by the manner in which she was affected, that there was a return of affection, and that it was too late to retreat. My own apprehensions, also, I afterwards found, were without cause, and I remained.

There has been much culpability on my part in all this, but there has been a great deal of that misfortune which seems uniformly to have accompanied me. That I have written to your daughter since an unfortunate event has taken place was an additional breach of propriety, for which I have suffered well; but I will candidly confess that I not only do not feel it to have been of the same extent, but that I consider it to have been unavoidable after what had passed ; for though I will not attempt to justify in the smallest degree my former conduct, yet when an attachment was once formed between us – and a sincerer one never did exist – I feel that, peculiarly circumstanced as I then was, to have left her uncertain of my situation would neither have weaned her affections nor lessened

her anxiety; and looking upon her as one whom, if I lived, I hoped to have had my partner for life, I did hold the removing of her anxiety above every other consideration. I would rather have the affections of your daughter in the back settlements of America, than the first situation this country could offer without them. I know not whether this will be any extenuation of my offence; I know not whether it will be any extenuation of it to know that if I had that situation in my power at this moment, I would relinquish it to devote my life to her happiness; I know not whether success would have blotted out the recollection of what I have done; but I know that a man with the coldness of death on him need not to be made to feel any other coldness, and that he may be spared any addition to the misery he feels, not for himself, but for those to whom he has left nothing but sorrow.

LETTER TO RICHARD CURRAN

Written on day of Robert Emmet's execution, addressed to Richard Curran, a close friend and the brother of Emmet's sweetheart Sarah Curran, 20th September 1803.

My dearest Richard: I find I have but a few hours to live; but if it was the last moment, and the power of utterance was leaving me, I would thank you from the bottom of my heart for your generous expressions of affection and forgiveness to me. If there was any one in the world in whose breast my death might be supposed not to stifle every spark of resentment, it might be you. I have deeply injured you; I have injured the happiness of a sister that you love, and who was formed to give happiness to every one about her, instead of having her own mind a prey to affliction. Oh, Richard! I have no excuse to offer, but that I meant the reverse: I intended as much happiness for Sarah as the most ardent love could have given her. I never did tell you how much I idolised her. It was not with a wild or unfounded passion, but it was an attachment increasing every hour, from an admiration of the purity of her mind, and respect for her talents. I did dwell in secret upon the prospect of our union; I did hope that success, while it afforded the opportunity of our union, might be a means of confirming an attachment which misfortune had called forth. I did not look to honours for myself; praise I would have asked from the lips of no man: but I would have wished to read, in the glow of Sarah's countenance, that her husband was respected. My love, Sarah! it was not thus that I thought to have requited your affection. I did hope to be a prop round which your affections might have clung, and which would never have been shaken; but a rude blast has snapped it, and they have fallen over a grave. This is no time for affliction. I have had public motives to sustain my mind, and I have not suffered it to sink; but there have been moments in my imprisonment when my mind was so sunk by grief on her account that death would have been a

refuge. God bless you, my dearest Richard. I am obliged to leave off immediately.

ROBERT EMMET.

LETTER TO SARAH CURRAN

My dearest Love, I don't know how to write to you. I never felt so oppressed in my life as at the cruel injury I have done you. I was seized and searched with a pistol over me before I could destroy your letters. They have been compared with those found before. I was threatened with having them brought forward against me in Court. I offered to plead guilty if they would suppress them. This was refused. My love, can you forgive me? I wanted to know whether anything had been done respecting the person who wrote the letter, for I feared you might have been arrested. They refused to tell me for a long time. When I found, however, that this was not the case, I began to think that they only meant to alarm me; but their refusal has only come this moment, and my fears are renewed. Not that they can do anything to you even if they would be base enough to attempt it, for they can have no proof who wrote them, nor did I let your name escape me once. But I fear they may suspect from the stile, and from the hair, for they took the stock from me, and I have not been able to get it back from them, and that they may think of bringing you forward. I have written to your father to come to me tomorrow. Had you not better speak to himself tonight? Destroy my letters that there may be nothing against yourself, and deny having any knowledge of me further than seeing me once or twice. For God's sake, write to me by the bearer one line to tell me how you are in spirits. I have no anxiety, no care, about myself; but I am terribly oppressed about you. My dearest love, I would with joy lay down my life, but ought I to do more? Do not be alarmed; they may try to frighten you; but they cannot do more. God bless you, my dearest love. I must send this off at once; I have written it in the dark. My dearest Sarah, forgive me.

LETTER TO THOMAS ADDIS EMMET

**Addressed to Robert's older brother Thomas Addis Emmet
and his sister-in-law Jane Patten.**

My dearest Tom and Jane: I am just going to do my last duty to my country. It can be done as well on the scaffold as in the field. Do not give way to any weak feelings on my account, but rather encourage proud ones that I have possessed fortitude and tranquillity of mind to the last.

God bless you, and the young hopes that are growing up about you. May they be more fortunate than their uncle, but may they preserve as pure and ardent an attachment to their country as he has done. Give the watch to little Robert; he will not prize it the less for having been in the possession of two Roberts before him. I have one dying request to make to you. I was attached to Sarah Curran, the youngest daughter of your friend. I did hope to have had her my companion for life; I did hope that she would not only have constituted my happiness, but that her heart and understanding would have made her one of Jane's dearest friends. I know that Jane would have loved her on my account, and I feel also that, had they been acquainted, she must have loved her for her own. None knew of the attachment till now, nor is it now generally known; therefore do not speak of it to others. I leave her with her father and brother; but if those protectors should fall off, and that no other should replace them, take her as my wife, and love her as a sister. Give my love to all friends.

ROBERT EMMET.

LETTER TO WILLIAM WICKHAM

**Addressed to Sir William Wickham, Chief Secretary For
Ireland on the 20th of September, 1803.**

Sir,

Had I been permitted to proceed with my vindication it was my intention not only to have acknowledged the delicacy with which I feel with gratitude that I have been personally treated, but also to have done the most public justice to the mildness of the present administration of this country, and at the same time to have acquitted them, as far as rested with me, of any charge of remissness in not having previously detected a conspiracy which from its closeness I know it was impossible to have done. I confess that I should have preferred this mode had it been permitted, as it would thereby have enabled me to clear myself from an imputation under which I might in consequence lie, and to have stated why such an administration did not prevent, but under the peculiar situation of this country, perhaps rather accelerated my determination, to make an effort for the overthrow of a Government of which I do not think equally highly. However as I have been deprived of that opportunity I think it right now to make an acknowledgment which justice requires of me as a man, and which I do not feel in the least derogatory from my decided principles as an Irishman.

I have the honour to be, sir, with the greatest respect, your most obedient, humble servant,

Robert Emmet.

ROBERT EMMET'S SPEECH FROM THE DOCK

Dublin, 19 September 1803

A few minutes after the judge's charge, the foreman of the jury accordingly addressed the court:

"My lords, I have consulted with my brother jurors, and we are all of opinion that the prisoner is guilty".

The clerk of the crown read the indictment, and stated the verdict found in the normal form. He then concluded accordingly:

"What have you, therefore, now to say why judgment of death and execution shall not be awarded against you according to law?" Robert Emmet, immediately responded,

What have I to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced on me, according to law? I have nothing to say which can alter your predetermination, not that it would become me to say with any view to the mitigation of that Sentence which you are here to pronounce, and by which I must abide. But I have that to say which interests me more than life, and which you have laboured, as was necessarily your office in the present circumstances of this oppressed country to destroy. I have much to say why my reputation should be rescued from the load of false accusation and calumny which has been heaped upon it. I do not imagine that, seated where you are, your minds can be so free from impurity as to receive the least impression from what I am about to utter. I have no hope that I can anchor my character in the breast of a court constituted and trammelled as this is. I only wish, and it is the utmost I expect. that your lordships may suffer it to float down your memories untainted by the foul breath of prejudice, until it finds some more hospitable harbour to shelter it from the rude storm by which it is at present buffeted.

Were I only to suffer death, after being adjudged guilty by your tribunal, I should bow in silence, meet the fate that awaits me without a murmur; but the sentence of the law which delivers my body to the executioner, will, through the ministry of the law, labour in its own vindication to consign my character to obloquy, for there must be guilt somewhere – whether in the sentence of the court, or in the catastrophes posterity must determine. A man in my situation, my lords, has not only to encounter the difficulties of fortune, and the force of power over minds which it has corrupted or subjugated, but the difficulties of established prejudice. The man dies, but his memory lives. That mine may not perish, that it may live in the respect of my countrymen, I seize upon this opportunity to vindicate myself from some of the charges alleged against me. When my spirit shall be wafted to a more friendly port – when my shade shall have joined the bands of those martyred heroes, who have shed their blood on the scaffold and in the field in defence of their country and of virtue, this is my hope – I wish that my memory and name may animate those who survive me, while I look down with complacency on the destruction of that perfidious government which upholds its domination by blasphemy of the Most High – which displays its power over man as over the beasts of the forest – which set man upon his brother, and lifts his hand, in the name of God, against the throat of his fellow who believes or doubts a little more or a little less than the government standard – a government which is steeled to barbarity by the cries of the orphans and the tears of the widows which it has made.

Lord Norbury – *“The weak and wicked enthusiasts who feel as you feel are unequal to the accomplishment of their wild designs”*.

I appeal to the immaculate God – I swear by the Throne of Heaven, before which I must shortly appear – by the blood of the murdered patriots who have gone before me – that my conduct has been, through all this peril, and through all my purposes, governed only by the convictions which I have uttered, and by

no other view than that of the emancipation of my country from the superinhuman oppression under which she has so long and too patiently travailed; and I confidently and assuredly hope that, wild and chimerical as it may appear, there is still union and strength in Ireland to accomplish this noblest enterprise. Of this I speak with the confidence of intimate knowledge, and with the consolation that appertains to that confidence, think not, my lords, that I say this for the petty gratification of giving you a transitory uneasiness. A man who never yet raised his voice to assert a lie will not hazard his character with posterity by asserting a falsehood on a subject so important to his country, and on an occasion like this. Yes, my lords, a man who does not wish to have his epitaph written until his country is liberated will not leave a weapon in the power of envy, nor a pretence to impeach the probity which he means to preserve, even in the grave to which tyranny consigns him.

Lord Norbury — *“You proceed to unwarrantable lengths, in order to exasperate or delude the unwary, and circulate opinions of the most dangerous tendency, for purposes of mischief”*.

Again I say that what I have spoken was not intended for your lordship, whose situation I commiserate rather than envy — my expressions were for my countrymen. If there is a true Irishman present, let my last words cheer him in the hour of his affliction —

Lord Norbury — *“What you have hitherto said confirms and justifies the verdict of the jury”*.

I have always understood it to be the duty of a judge, when a prisoner has been convicted, to pronounce the sentence of the law. I have also understood that judges sometimes think it their duty to hear with patience, and to speak with humanity; to exhort the victim of the laws, and to offer, with tender benignity, their opinions of the motives by which he was actuated in the crime of which he was adjudged guilty. That a judge has thought it his duty so to have done, I have no doubt; but where is that boasted freedom of your institutions — where is the vaunted

impartiality, clemency, and mildness of your courts of justice, if an unfortunate prisoner, whom your policy, and not your justice, is about to deliver into the hands of the executioner, is not suffered to explain his motives sincerely and truly, and to vindicate the principles by which he was actuated?

My lords, it may be a part of the system of angry justice to bow a man's mind by humiliation to the purposed ignominy of the scaffold; but worse to me than the purposed shame or the scaffold's terrors would be the shame of such foul and unfounded imputations as have been laid against me in this court. You, my lord, are a judge; I am the supposed culprit. I am a man; you are a man also. By a revolution of power we might change places, though we could never change characters. If I stand at the bar of this court and dare not vindicate my character, what a farce is your justice? If I stand at this bar and dare not vindicate my character, how dare you calumniate it? Does the sentence of death, which your unhallowed policy inflicts upon my body, also condemn my tongue to silence and my reputation to reproach? Your executioner may abridge the period of my existence, but, while I exist, I shall not forbear to vindicate my character and motives from your aspersions; as a man to whom fame is dearer than life, I will make the last use of that life in doing justice to that reputation which is to live after me, and which is the only legacy I can leave to those I honour and love, and for whom I am proud to perish.

As men, my lord, we must appear on the great day at one common tribunal, and it will then remain for the Searcher of all hearts to show a collective universe who was engaged in the most virtuous actions or actuated by the purest motives — my country's oppressor, or —

Lord Norbury — *"Stop, sir! Listen to the sentence of the law".*

My lord, shall a dying man be denied the legal privilege of exculpating himself in the eyes of the community from an undeserved reproach thrown upon him during his trial, by charging him with ambition, and attempting to cast away for a

paltry consideration the liberties of his country? Why did your lordship insult me? Or rather, why insult justice in demanding of me why sentence of death should not be pronounced? I know, my lord, that form prescribes that you should ask the question. The form also presumes the right of answering. This, no doubt, may be dispensed with, and so might the whole ceremony of the trial, since sentence was already pronounced at the Castle before your jury were empanelled. Your lordships are but the priests of the oracle. I submit to the sacrifice; but I insist on the whole of the forms.

Lord Norbury – *“You may proceed, sir”*.

I am charged with being an emissary of France. An emissary of France! And for what end? It is alleged that I wish to sell the independence of my country; and for what end? Was this the object of my ambition? And is this the mode by which a tribunal of justice reconciles contradictions? No; I am no emissary.

My ambition was to hold a place among the deliverers of my country – not in power, not in profit, but in the glory of the achievement. Sell my country’s independence to France! And for what? A change of masters? No; but for my ambition. Oh, my country! Was it personal ambition that influenced me? Had it been the soul of my actions, could I not, by my education and fortune, by the rank and consideration of my family, have placed myself amongst the proudest of your oppressors? My country was my idol. To it I sacrificed every selfish, every endearing sentiment; and for it I now offer myself, O God! No, my lords; I acted as an Irishman, determined on delivering my country from the yoke of a foreign and unrelenting tyranny, and from the more galling yoke of a domestic faction, its joint partner and perpetrator in the patricide, whose reward is the ignominy of existing with an exterior of splendour and a consciousness of depravity. It was the wish of my heart to extricate my country from this doubly-riveted despotism—I wish to place her independence beyond the reach of any power on earth. I wish to

exalt her to that proud station in the world which Providence had destined her to fill. Connection with France was, indeed, intended, but only so far as mutual interest would sanction or require.

Were the French to assume any authority inconsistent with the purest independence, it would be the signal for their destruction. We sought their aid – and we sought it as we had assurances we should obtain it – as auxiliaries in war, and allies in peace. Were the French to come as invaders or enemies, uninvited by the wishes of the people, I should oppose them to the utmost of my strength. Yes! My countrymen, I should advise you to meet them on the beach with a sword in one hand and a torch in the other. I would meet them with all the destructive fury of war, and I would animate my countrymen to immolate them in their boats before they had contaminated the soil of my country. If they succeeded in landing, and if forced to retire before superior discipline, I would dispute every inch of ground, raze every house, burn every blade of grass; the last spot on which the hope of freedom should desert me, there would I hold, and the last of liberty should be my grave.

What I could not do myself in my fall, I should leave as a last charge to my countrymen to accomplish; because I should feel conscious that life, any more than death, is dishonourable when a foreign nation holds my country in subjection. But it was not as an enemy that the succours of France were to land. I looked, indeed, for the assistance of France; I wished to prove to France and to the world that Irishmen deserved to be assisted – that they were indignant at slavery, and ready to assert the independence and liberty of their country; I wished to procure for my country the guarantee which Washington procured for America – to procure an aid which, by its example, would be as important as its valour; disciplined, gallant, pregnant with science and experience; that of allies who would perceive the good, and polish the rough points of our character. They would come to us as strangers, and leave us as friends, after sharing in

our perils, and elevating our destiny. These were my objects; not to receive new taskmasters, but to expel old tyrants. And it was for these ends I sought aid from France; because France, even as an enemy, could not be more implacable than the enemy already in the bosom of my country.

Lord Norbury – *“You are making an avowal of dreadful treasons, and of a determined purpose to have persevered in them, which I do believe, has astonished your audience”*.

I have been charged with that importance in the efforts to emancipate my country, as to be considered the keystone of the combination of Irishmen, or, as your lordship expressed it, “the life and blood of the conspiracy”. You do me honour overmuch; you have given to a subaltern all the credit of a superior. There are men engaged in this conspiracy who are not only superior to me; but even to your own conception of yourself, my lord; men before the splendour of whose genius and virtues I should bow with respectful deference, and who would think themselves disgraced by shaking your bloodstained hand –

Lord Norbury – *“You have endeavoured to establish a wicked and bloody provisional government”*.

What, my lord! shall you tell me, on the passage to the scaffold, which that tyranny, of which you are only the intermediary executioner, has erected for my murder, that I am accountable for all the blood that has been and will be shed in this struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor? Shall you tell me this, and must I be so very as slave as not to repel it?

Lord Norbury – *“A different conduct would have better become one who had endeavoured to overthrow the laws and liberties of his country”*.

I who fear not to approach the Omnipotent Judge to answer for the conduct of my whole life, am I to be appalled and falsified by a mere remnant of mortality here? By you, too, who if it were possible to collect all the innocent blood that you have shed in your unhallowed ministry in one great reservoir, your lordship might swim in it.

Lord Norbury – *“I exhort you not to depart this life with such sentiments of rooted hostility to your country as those which you have expressed’.*

Let no man dare, when I am dead, to charge me with dishonour; let no man attain my memory by believing that I could have engaged in any cause but that of my country’s liberty and independence; or that I could have become the pliant minion of power in the oppression and misery of my countrymen. The proclamation of the Provisional Government speaks for my views; no inference can be tortured from it to countenance barbarity or debasement at home, or subjection, humiliation, or treachery from abroad. I would not have submitted to a foreign oppressor, for the same reason that I would resist the domestic tyrant. In the dignity of freedom, I would have fought upon the threshold of my country, and its enemy should only enter by passing over my lifeless corpse. And am I, who lived but for my country, who have subjected myself to the dangers of the jealous and watchful oppressor, and now to the bondage of the grave, only to give my countrymen their rights, and my country her independence – am I to be loaded with calumny and not suffered to resent it? No, God forbid!

Here Lord Norbury told Emmet that his sentiments and language disgraced his family and his education, but more particularly his father, Dr. Emmet, who was a man, if alive, that would not countenance such opinions. To which Emmet replied: –

If the spirits of the illustrious dead participate in the concerns and cares of those who were dear to them in this transitory life, O! ever dear and venerated shade of my departed father, look down with scrutiny upon the conduct of your suffering son, and see if I have, even for a moment, deviated from those principles of morality and patriotism which it was your care to instil into my youthful mind, and for which I am now about to offer up my life. My lords, you seem impatient for the sacrifice. The blood for which you thirst is not congealed by the artificial terrors which surround your victim [the soldiery

filled and surrounded the Sessions House] – it circulates warmly and unruffled through the channels which God created for noble purposes, but which you are now bent to destroy, for purposes so grievous that they cry to heaven. Be yet patient! I have but a few words more to say. I am going to my cold and silent grave; my lamp of life is nearly extinguished; my race is run; the grave opens to receive me, and I sink into its bosom.

I have but one request to ask at my departure from this world; it is – THE CHARITY OF ITS SILENCE. Let no man write my epitaph; for as no man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them, let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them and me rest in obscurity and peace, and my name remain uninscribed, until other times and other men can do justice to my character. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written. I have done.