

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. ---¹ 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

¹ Referring to Robert Holmes, the advocate.

united to one who was. I spoke to your daughter, neither expecting, nor in fact, under those circumstances, wishing that 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.