

malign expression; but still, bend the brows or tighten the lips as time might, the face was always the face of a man of singular courage, and of acute though unbalanced genius.

There is a story told of this young politician in early life, that proved his secretive power and resolution. He was fond of studying chemistry, and one night late, after the family had gone to bed, he swallowed a large quantity of corrosive sublimate in mistake for some acid cooling powder. He immediately discovered his mistake, and knew that death must shortly ensue unless he instantly swallowed the only antidote,—chalk. Timid men would instantly have torn at the bell, roused all the family, and sent for a stomach-pump. Emmet called no one, made no noise; but, stealing down stairs and unlocking the front door, went into the stable, scraped some chalk which he knew to be there, and took sufficient doses of it to neutralize the poison.

In 1798, when that self-willed and reckless, but still generous and single-hearted, young officer, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, commenced to conspire against the English government, the two Emmets conspired with the United Irishmen, and Thomas the barrister was seized, with the other Leinster delegates. That seizure added the whole conspiracy as far as Dublin was concerned. Thomas Emmet said before the Secret Committee of Safety, that he was sure that Lord Edward would have ceased to arm and discipline the people the moment their wrongs were redressed, and force had become unnecessary. He denied that the conspirators had any intention of murdering the English judges and noblemen: they wished only to have held them as hostages for the conduct of England. At that same committee, Thomas Emmet told the Lord Chancellor boldly to his face, that the '98 insurrection had been produced by the oppressive free quarters granted to the soldiers and yeomanry, the burning of houses, the tortures, and the military executions in the counties of Kildare, Carlow, and Wicklow. There is no doubt that the cruelties of Vinegar Hill and Wexford, led to retaliations almost as cruel. The yeomanry, half of them raw lads, flushed with newly acquired power, and savage because their families had either

suffered or been in danger, were often brutal and ruthless; innocent persons were shot, and harmless persons were plundered. Juries were too eager to condemn; judges inclined always to death. The chance had come to bleed the rebels, and the lancet was keen and cut deep.

In the prisons, well-born and refined men, like Thomas Emmet, suffered cruelly. The cells were crowded and unhealthy; the jailers, insolent and cruel. There was no discipline, and the thieves' orgies were interrupted only by the tolling of the death-bell. In such a den, the brave wife of this sincere but misguided man immured herself for twelve months, refusing to go out unless dragged away by force; only once stealing out at night, and in disguise (by the connivance of the jailer's wife, whose rough nature she had softened by her tears), to visit a sick child, for whom her heart was almost breaking. The sufferings of his brother and his brother's wife no doubt increased Emmet's hatred to the existing government more even than all the sabreings and platoon-firing in Wicklow and Wexford. The Union bill passed in 1801, after Grattan's scornful and passionate invectives; and Lord Castlereagh's triumph and cold arrogance frenzied the United Irishmen, and drove such men as Emmet to believe in open insurrection as their only hope.

Wolfe Tone has spoken highly of the talents of the Emmet family. He described Thomas Emmet as a man of great and comprehensive mind and a warm heart, one who would adhere to his principles through all sacrifices, and even to death. Of another brother, Grattan said: "Temple Emmet, before he came to the bar, knew more law than any of the judges on the bench; and he would have answered better both in law and divinity than any judge or bishop of the land." The heart of the young conspirator, fresh from exile, burned as he heard with perfect faith all the exaggerated stories of the recent Protestant cruelties. He remembered the promises of the French plotters; he did not foresee that Napoleon was too selfish and too busy just then to do much for Ireland; money was scarce, merchants were timid, the peasantry was cowed and scared; the Presbyterians were incensed by the cruelties at Wexford, and the Catholics distrustful