

Some may claim that this was the mere outbreak of a naturally restless people aroused by the fiery eloquence of the revolutionary spirits which were so successful on the continent. For France was shaken to its nethermost foundation by the violence of the reform movements which assailed every form of government, which sought law and order. The Carbonari in Italy had started their nefarious society, which was to lead to the upheaval of 1812. The new French philosophy, representing two schools under the leadership of Voltaire and Rousseau, combined with Febronianism in Germany and Austria, made revolution the order of the day. The propagation of the revolutionary principles of Hobbes, Shaftesbury and Locke was successful for a time even in old solid, conservative England, when Edmund Burke, that great politician physician, perceiving the wild work that was going on in France, intelligent of symptoms, distinguished between the access of fever and the force of health, and what other men conceived to be the vigor of her constitution he knew to be no more than the paroxysm of her madness; and then, prophet-like, he denounced the destinies of France, and in his prophetic fury, admonished nations. But though other countries could be duped into anarchy, bloodshed and rebellion by the insidious arguments of false philosophers and reformers, let me enumerate a few of the outrageous laws that compelled every loyal Irishman to make immediate resistance.

Up to the time of the revolution there were three distinct historical epochs. First, the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169; second, the Statute of Kilkenny in 1367, which declared the separation of England and Ireland; third, the union of the English and Irish crowns in 1541. But it was in the year 1691 that the first of the penal laws, which ultimately led to the revolution was enacted, so that it was really after laboring under infamous laws for over a century Ireland followed the example of her continental fellow revolutionists.

The penal code began under William III, received its worst features under Anne, and was largely extended under the first two Georges. Its statutes poisoned all official, social, commercial and private relations between Catholics and Protestants, even the most sacred domestic relations in Catholic families.

In the year 1695 the principal penal laws in existence were: