

A FEW TEXTS

APPROPRIATE FOR THE 12th JULY.

Armagh Rioters One Hundred Years Ago—Lord Gosford's Famous Address to the Magistrates and the Resolutions Proposed and Moved on the 28th Dec., 1795.

As it happens that we publish this week on the famous anniversary of the Boyne, and as we have been giving our readers a series of articles on the Act of the Union, the Penal Code and all the consequences that flowed from misgovernment in Ireland, we pause in our chain of arguments, and dedicate the space we had reserved for this subject to an account of Orangeism in the north of Ireland, at the end of the last century. We give Lord Gosford's speech and the resolutions it led up to. We would like if a few of the gentlemen who take a periodical fit of anti-Catholic hatred on this day would ponder over what follows:

In the beginning of the year 1795, parties of contending rioters, denominated *peep o'day boys*, and *defenders*, disturbed different parts of Ulster, by acts of violence and outrage against each other. Some say their animosities originated from electioneering. To these succeeded, in the summer of the same year, a description of public disturbers, calling themselves Orangemen, who now made their appearance in the County of Armagh. They formed themselves into a society, in the house of one Sloan, with the object, not to suffer a Catholic to remain within the limits of their sphere of action. They posted up on the doors of the Catholic houses peremptory notices of departure: specifying the precise time, a week at the farthest, in the following words:—"To hell or to Connaught with you, ye bloody papists; and if you are not gone by" (mentioning the day) "we will come and destroy yourselves and your properties: we all hate and curse the papists here, and the old that sits on the seven hills of Rome, but preaches and teaches you from the bottom of H—"

They generally were as good as their words. The Catholics at first saved themselves by flight; but those who received notices at a later period, were able to take some of their properties along with them. It is astonishing to think that such could take place, when there were any men of intelligence, honesty, or public spirit; and still the facts are indubitable: nay, these enormities were connived at, or totally overlooked, until many thousands of the Catholics were thus driven from that part of the country, and that it became necessary to find occupiers for the lands they had been obliged to abandon. Even the gentlemen of landed interest in the country did not exhibit, by any public testimony, a disavowal of these horrid atrocities, until the period of letting the forsaken territory roused them from their slumbers. They then discovered to their amazement and dismay, that, among the few bidders who appeared, not one was found to offer more, for any lot, than about half what was paid for the same before by the Catholic tenant. Then indeed, and not till then, did the banishment of the Catholics appear alarming. It was seriously alarming to these gentlemen, thus in a moment to lose half their incomes, through the ingratitude of pampered scoundrels and hired banditti, but until this fatal discovery was made, the number of wretched poor, proscribed and violently driven from their homes, deprived of their cabins and their all, was a circumstance unworthy of these gentlemen's notice.

To counteract this calamity as much as possible, a numerous meeting of the magistrates of the County of Armagh was held at the special instance of the governor, Lord Viscount Gosford, on the 28th day of December, 1795. To this assemblage, on taking the chair as president, his lordship spoke a pointed address on the occasion; which, together with the proceedings, will be found in the Dublin Journal of the 5th of January, 1796. We copy the address below.

The following is Lord Gosford's address to the magistrates of the County of Armagh, with the resolutions entered into, on the 28th of December, 1795:—

"Gentlemen,—Having requested your attendance here this day, it becomes my duty to state the grounds upon which I

thought it advisable to propose this meeting, and at the same time to submit to your consideration a plan which occurs to me as most likely to check the enormities that have already brought disgrace upon this county, and may soon reduce it into deep distress.

"It is no secret that a persecution accompanied with all the circumstances of ferocious cruelty, which have in all ages distinguished that dreadful calamity is now raging in this country. Neither age, nor sex, nor even acknowledged innocence as to any guilt in the late disturbances is sufficient to excite mercy, much less to afford protection.

"The only crime which the wretched objects of this ruthless persecution are charged with, is a crime, indeed, of easy proof—it is simply a profession of the Roman Catholic Faith, or an intimate connection with a person professing this faith. A lawless banditti have constituted themselves judges of this new species of delinquency, and the sentence they have pronounced is equally concise and terrible!—It is nothing less than a confiscation of all property, and death or immediate banishment.

"It would be extremely painful and surely unnecessary to detail the horrors that attend the execution of so rude and tremendous a proscription—a proscription that certainly exceeds in the comparative number of those it consigns to ruin and misery, every example that ancient or modern history can supply; for where have we heard, or in what story of human cruelties have we read of more than half the inhabitants of a populous country deprived at one blow of the means as well as of the fruits of their industry, and driven in the midst of an inclement season, to seek a shelter for themselves and their helpless families where chance may guide them?

"This is no exaggerated picture of the horrid scenes now acting in this country. Yet surely it is sufficient to awaken sentiments of indignation and compassion in the coldest bosoms. These horrors are now acting with impunity. The spirit of impartial justice (without which law is no better than an instrument of tyranny) has for a time disappeared in this country, and the supineness of the magistracy of Armagh is become a common topic of conversation in every corner of the kingdom.

"It is said in reply: the Catholics are dangerous. They may be so. They may be dangerous from their numbers, and still more dangerous from the unbounded views they have been encouraged to entertain; but I will venture to assert, without fear of contradiction, that these proceedings are not more contrary to humanity than they are to sound policy.

"It is to be lamented, that no civil magistracy happened to be present with the military detachment on the night of the 21st instant—but I trust the suddenness of the occasion, the unexpected and instantaneous aggression on the part of the delinquents will be universally admitted as a full vindication of the conduct of the officer and the party acting under his command.

"Gentlemen, I have the honor to hold a situation in this country, which calls upon me to deliver my sentiments, and I do it without fear and without disguise.

"I am as true a Protestant as any gentleman in this room. I inherit a property which my family derived under a Protestant title, and with the blessing of God, I will maintain that title to the utmost of my power. I will never consent to make a sacrifice of Protestant ascendancy to Catholic claims, with whatever menace they may be urged, or however spaciouly or invidiously supported.

"Conscious of my sincerity in this public declaration, which I do not make unadvisedly, but as the result of mature deliberation, I defy the paltry insinuations that malice or party-spirit may suggest.

"I know my own heart, and I should despise myself, if under any intimidation I could close my eyes against such scenes as present themselves on every side, or my ears against the complaints of a robbed and persecuted people.

"I should be guilty of an unpardonable injustice to the feelings of gentlemen here present, were I to say more on this subject. I have now acquitted myself to my conscience and my country, and I take the liberty of proposing the following resolutions:—

1. That it appears to this meeting, that the county of Armagh is at this

moment in a state of uncommon disorder; that the Roman Catholic inhabitants are most grievously oppressed by lawless persons unknown,—calling themselves Orangemen, who attack and plunder their houses by night, and threaten them with instant destruction, unless they immediately abandon their lands, goods and habitations.

2. That a committee of magistrates be appointed to sit on Tuesdays and Saturdays in, the chapter-room in the town of Armagh, to receive information against all persons of whatever description, who disturb the peace of this county.

3. That the instruction of the whole body of magistrates to their committee shall be to use every legal means within their power to stop the persecution now carrying on by an ungovernable mob, against the Roman Catholic inhabitants of this county.

4. That said committee or any three of them be empowered to expend any sum or sums of money, for information or secret service out of the fund subscribed by the gentlemen of this county.

5. That a meeting of the whole body of the magistracy be held every second Monday at the house of Mr. Chas. McReynolds, in the town of Armagh to hear the reports of the committee, and to give such further instructions as the exigency of the case may require.

That offenders of every description in the present disturbances shall be prosecuted out of the fund subscribed by the gentlemen of this county." From the Dublin Journal of January the 5th, 1796, and copied in all the papers in Ireland.

Here is a pen and ink picture from the Rev. Dr. Reid, Presbyterian Minister, at Moneysland, County Down, Ireland. It will be found in Mitchell's writings:—

The usual Orange style is thus described by one who knew the North of Ireland well: "In some districts of that country, Protestants are the majority of the people; the old policy of the 'government' has been to arm the Protestants and disarm the Catholics. The magistrates at all sessions are Orangemen or high British loyalists. In those districts, therefore, Catholics lead the lives of dogs—lie down in fear and rise up in foreboding; their worship is insulted, and their very funerals are made an occasion of riot. One of the July anniversaries comes round—the days of Aughrim and the Boyne; the pious Evangelicals must celebrate those disastrous but hard fought battles where William of Nassau, with his army of French Huguenots, Danes, and Dutchmen, overthrew the power of Ireland, and made the noble old Celtic race hewers of wood and drawers of water even unto his day. Lodges assemble at some central point, with drums and fifes playing the 'Protestant boys.' At the rendezvous are the Grand Masters, with their sashes and aprons—a beautiful show. Procession formed, they walk in lodges, each with its banner of orange and purple, and garlands of orange lilies borne high on poles. Most have arms, yeomanry-muskets or pistols, or ancient swords, whetted for the occasion. They arrive at some other town or village, dine in the public-houses, drink the 'glorious, pious and immortal memory of King William,' and 'To Hell with the Pope;' re-form their procession after dinner, and then comes the time for Protestant action. They march through a Papist townland; at every house they stop, and play 'Croppies lie down!' and the 'Boyne Water,' firing a few shots over the house at the same time. The doors are shut—the family in terror—the father standing on the floor with knitted brow and teeth clenched through the nether lip, grasping a pitchfork, (for the police long since found out and took away his gun.) Bitter memories of the feuds of ages darken his soul. Outside, with taunting music, and brutal jests and laughter, stand in their ranks the Protestant communicants. The old grandmother can endure no longer; she rushes out with gray hair streaming, and kneels on the road before them, she clasps her old thin hands, and curses them in the name of God and His Holy Mother. Loud laughs are the answer, and a shot or two over the house, or in through the window. The old crone in frantic exasperation takes up a stone and

hurls it with feeble hand against the insulting crew. There; the first assault is committed; everything is lawful now; smash go the unglazed windows and their frames; zealous Protestants rush into the house raging; the man is shot down at his own threshold; the cabin is wrecked; and the procession, playing 'Croppies lie down!' proceeds to another Popish den. So the Reformation is vindicated. The names of Ballyvarley and Tullyorier will rise to the lips of many a man who reads this description."

This will suffice for one week.—EDITOR TRUE WITNESS.

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