

the earliest period of his existence, he resolved to assert, even by arms, if driven to them, the liberties of Ireland. Grattan's predominant passion was his patriotism. He was much impressed by a speech made by Mr. George Grenville, at the commencement of the dispute with America, in which that gentleman defended the right of England to tax America, and extended his doctrine to Ireland; and Grattan was known to say that that speech filled his mind with a horror of the doctrine it advocated, and that he believed it was owing to it he afterwards became so very active in his opposition to the principles of British government in Ireland.

He loved Ireland with a devotion passionate, yet regulated and intelligent. He early saw that Irish prosperity and Irish constitutional freedom were impracticable, so long as the productive energies of the great bulk of the people were cramped, or rather neutralised, by the legal fetters that made them mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. A Protestant himself, he spurned the baseness of the bigots who desired to monopolise for Protestants all the privileges of citizenship. By his patriotic politics he incurred the displeasure of his father, who was colleague with the celebrated Charles Lucas in the representation of Dublin, and who marked his anger by bequeathing away from his son the family mansion of the Grattans. In those days the county of Kilkenny was renowned, as it has been at much later periods, for the extensive hospitality and social amusements of the principal inhabitants. Amateur theatricals were frequently practised. Grattan had connexions in Kilkenny; entered with spirit into the histrionic exhibitions of the joyous coteries whose refinement and brilliancy yet linger in the local traditions; and among whom a prominent character was Henry Flood, whose career, long continuing in friendly connexion with Grattan, and afterwards diverging into embittered rivalry, is inseparably connected with the great public transactions of the time. Grattan and Flood read poetry and acted plays together. Flood was fourteen years older than his friend; over whom his talents, his fascinating manners, his extensive information, and, above all, his services in asserting our legislative independence, necessarily gave him great influence. He had been representative in Parliament for Kilkenny since 1759, and had greatly distinguished himself by creating a powerful opposition in the House, and eliciting from the country a large display of public opinion in

favor of the course he adopted. He effectively promoted the Octennial Act of 1768, by which the duration of each parliament was limited to eight years, instead of continuing, as had been previously the case, for the life of the reigning sovereign. But, while Flood was on most points in accordance with Grattan, there was one vital matter on which their principles were totally at variance. Flood, while strenuously asserting the independence of the Irish legislature, opposed every political concession to the Catholics. He was willing to relieve them from all restrictions as to property or industrial employment. But he would not remove one single link of the purely political chain; he would not suffer them to vote at parliamentary elections. Grattan, with a larger heart, and greater sagacity, conceived that the permanency of the Irish constitution was fatally imperilled by excluding the great majority of the people from full participation in its benefits. The result has justified his prescient wisdom. In 1775 the brother of Lord Charlemont, Major Caulfield, was drowned on the passage from England. His death caused a vacancy in the borough of Charlemont, which the noble patron filled up by nominating Grattan, who took his seat on the 11th December in that year.

Further on, the agitation for free-trade, backed by the volunteer army, resulted in success. But the speeches of Grattan, and of the patriots who worked with him in Parliament, produced a strong conviction throughout Ireland that the acquisitions they had gained were insecure so long as the British legislature considered itself entitled to any species of authority in Irish concerns.

Early in the session of 1770, Grattan gave notice that he would move for a Declaration of Irish Rights. "This measure," says his son, "alarmed the Castle, and every effort was made to stop the growth of popular feeling. The government proceeded to canvass against the Declaration of Rights and the repeal of Poyning's Law." But the government canvassed in vain. Grand juries, county meetings, meetings of volunteer corps, passed numberless resolutions affirming that no power on earth was entitled to make laws for Ireland save only the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland. Grattan, previously to bringing on his resolution in the House of Commons, retired to the residence of his uncle, Colonel Marley, at Celbridge Abbey, to meditate on his approaching motion. He has himself given us the following account of his patriotic resolutions: "I grew convinced that