

his long Napoleonic face, and his thin, soft hair brushed down over his high forehead. In 1802, care and thought had bent his brows into a high habitual frown, had compressed his lips, and turned down the outer angles of his mouth to a painful and 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 neutralise 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 that 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 jailors insolent and cruel. There was no discipline, and the thieves' orgie was 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 jailor'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 sabrings 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 had 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 of the north. Ardent and impetuous, Emmet had returned, eager to draw the sword, about the same time, and probably in conjunction with, an Irish officer named Russell, who had been released from Fort George after the troubles of '98, on condition of his transporting himself out of his majesty's dominions, and who had now returned with a secret French commissioner as general-in-chief.

This Russell was a religious enthusiast, a wild interpreter of prophecies. He was to head an insurrection in Down and Antrim contemporaneously with a landing of the French in Scotland and with Emmet's seizure of Dublin Castle.

To other motives for ambition Robert Emmet now (in 1803) added the strongest of any. He fell in love, with all the passion of his vehement nature; he had won the heart of a daughter of that great forensic orator, Curran. Mr. Curran was irresolute in the cause of the United Irishmen, and he did not share in the dreams of the handsome young enthusiast. The prairie was ready to light, but the fire had still to be put. The lives of thousands of rash men were dependent on the momentary caprice of this fugitive, who, led away by enthusiasm, would have seen ten thousand men fall dead by his side, nor have felt a moment's regret, if he could only have planted the green flag and the "Sunburst" on the walls of Dublin Castle, and have filled its cellars with English prisoners. The one idea had grown dominant, and he had now braced himself to make the Curtius' leap. On his first return he had taken the name of Hewitt, and hidden himself in the house of a Mrs. Palmer, at Harold's Cross. There he corresponded with the leading conspirators, and sketched out his rough plans. On the 24th of March, 1803, he went with a Mr. Dowdall, who had been formerly secretary to the Whig Club, and contracted for a house at a place called Butterfield-lane, near Rathfarnham. But their mysterious and stealthy movements soon exciting suspicion, and the spot not being central enough, they soon left there. About the end of April, when Ireland's meadows began "the wearing of the green" more luxuriantly and rebelliously than ever, Emmet's friends took for their young leader a roomy malt-house in Marshall's-alley, Thomas-street, which had been long unoccupied. It was a retired place, the space was ample, above all, it was central and near the heart of the city, at which the first desperate blow was to be struck. There he lodged, while men were forging pike-heads, moulding cartridges, running bullets, stitching green and scarlet-faced uniforms, hemming green flags, and filling rocket-cases—taking only a few hurried hours of sleep on a mattress, when, exhausted in mind and body, he sank back amid the clang of the hammers and the clatter and exultation of twenty hard-working associates. In one depot alone this indefatigable conspirator had accumulated forty-five pounds of cannon-powder, eleven boxes of fine powder, one hundred bottles quilted with musket-balls and bound with canvas, two hundred and forty-six ink-bottles filled with powder and encircled with buck-shot, to be used as hand-grenades, sixty-two thousand rounds of ball-cartridge, three bushels of musket-balls, heaps of tow mixed with tar and gunpowder for burning houses, twenty thousand pikes, bundles of sky-rockets for signals, and many hollow beams filled with combustibles. The arms were stored in various depots through the city, but chiefly in Mass-lane and Marshall's-alley. The White Bull Inn, in Thomas-street, was a haunt of the conspirators, and there tailors and other workmen

were made drunk, decoyed to the depot, and forced to lend their aid. Spies and suspected persons found lurking near the depots were lured in and detained. The volcano would soon burst out, the hidden fires were already foaming upwards towards the surface.

When already the police agents were beginning to have glimpses of danger, and to patrol the bridges and quays of Dublin armed, an accident had almost betrayed Emmet's plans. An explosion took place at one of the depots in Patrick-street during the manufacture of some gunpowder. Those who know the recklessness of the lower orders of Irish, especially under excitement, may easily guess the cause of the accident. Some of the workmen, in the absence of their foreman, would smoke over a barrel of gunpowder, or some of the rebel smiths would hammer at the red-hot pike-heads, and drive the sparks to where their comrades were filling rocket-cases. The half-drunken rebels were suddenly astonished by a burst of flame and a roar of momentary thunder. One man, in dashing up to a window to escape suffocation gashed open an artery in his arm, fell back, and bled to death. A companion was taken prisoner by the police, who instantly rushed in. Luckily, however, for Emmet, Major Sirr and the Dublin police, over-secure, were pacified by lies and misrepresentations, and the government took no alarm. The levees at the Castle went on as usual, though there were still rumours of a "rising" that made the Lord-Lieutenant order the patrols of certain stations to be doubled.

In the mean time, Robert Emmet was racked with fears and anxieties, and with sorrow for the recent loss of life (strange contradiction in a man who was about to send thousands to death). He dreaded detection just as the great enterprise was about to bear fruit. He moved now for the third time, hiding in the depot at Mass-lane. There, with feverish restlessness, he spent all day, urging on the blacksmiths and bullet-makers, and at night slept for an hour at a time, when exhausted, between the forge and the rocket-makers' table.

There were not yet more than eighty or a hundred conspirators actively engaged with Emmet, Dowdall, and Quigley, but these men firmly believed all Dublin—nay, all Ireland—would rise when once they emerged from the depot, and their young Hannibal had shouted in the streets the first "Eria go bragh!" There was too much of Hamlet about Emmet for such an enterprise as this, he had not the experience of men, or the power of command, requisite to conduct such a revolt. He was too sanguine, too credulous, too mild and tender-hearted, too trustful, too easily deceived by promises and pretences. He did not know how the nation had suffered in '98, and how humbled it was since the defeats of that year. He was not one of those Caesar-like beings who overrule other men's wills, and magnetise all with whom they come into contact. Some of his associates, fearing discovery, proposed at once flying to arms; others thought action still premature. Seven days were spent in these debates; at last it was agreed to surprise the arsenals near the city, and take the Castle by a coup de main. As in '98, the mail-coaches were also to be stopped on the same day, as a signal for the country to rise.

Imagine the feelings of this man, to-day, a fugitive skulking from Major Sirr and his armed agents, to-morrow, as he thought to be, the patriot chief who was to restore liberty to Ireland! To-morrow the lover of Sarah Curran would clasp his beloved to his breast, and be greeted by her father as a conqueror and a victor. To-morrow England, France, Europe, the world, would know his name—the good and free to bless, the weak and wicked to curse and execrate it. In such a fever of conflicting passions, Emmet drew up an impetuous manifesto from "The Provisional Government to the People of Ireland." It concluded thus:

"Countrymen of all descriptions! let us act with union and concert; all sects—Catholic, Protestant, Presbyterian—are equally and indiscriminately embraced in the benevolence of our object, repress, prevent, and discourage excesses, pillage, and intoxication; let each