

of the Volunteers. Therefore 1781 was given also to the reviewing of the regiments, the perfecting of their armaments, and perpetual reiteration by the various corps of the great truth they were pledged to maintain—viz., that in the “King, Lords and Commons of Ireland” lay the only power to govern Ireland. On the 15th of February, 1782, the delegates of thirty thousand northern Volunteers met in the little church of Dungannon, and from the hill whereon it stood went fourth to the four provinces the declaration that “the men of the north” at least would have legislative freedom for Ireland and liberty of conscience for their Roman Catholic brothers.

During this same February, Grattan introduced an address to the king declaring the rights of Ireland; but the servile legislators obeyed the whip of the obstinate ministers, and he was defeated. The end of the ministry was at hand. Lord North defeated and disgraced, was hurled from power, and Lord Rockingham and Fox became the king’s advisers. Lord Carlisle, who had been as blatant of honeyed words as one of his successors in his title used to be a few years ago when filling the self-same post in Ireland, was succeeded by the Duke of Portland as viceroy. Portland was an adroit and wily courtier, well fitted to play the part he was sent to fill. Heraldizing his advent, Fox wrote some letters to the Earl of Charlemont—his old and esteemed friend—he styles him—embellished with his eloquence and adorned with compliments; they are entitled to rank as the best efforts ever made in writing by one man to attain a point by playing on the vanity of another. Luckily for Ireland, by the desk of Charlemont stood Grattan, and Fox was informed that the postponement of the meeting of Parliament for which he pleaded was impossible; that Ireland could have no confidence in any administration which would not concede all she declared to be hers in Grattan’s Declaration of Rights, and which he was to move anew on the meeting of the house. The government now saw that they should decide quickly whether they would reject the demands of Grattan, set at defiance an armed nation, or, acquiescing in the inevitable, yield to Ireland all that Ireland was prepared to take. The meeting of the Irish Parliament was fixed for the 16th of April, 1782;

on that day Grattan’s Declaration was to be moved; on that day would be decided whether war was to be waged between England and Ireland, or not. On the 9th of April, however, Fox communicated to the English House of Commons a message from the king, in which his majesty, “being concerned to find that discontents and jealousies were prevailing amongst his loyal subjects in Ireland,” asked the house “to take the same into their most serious consideration, in order to such final adjustment as might give mutual satisfaction to both kingdoms.” This meant that all that Ireland asked for was to be conceded; that England weak was about to do penance for wrongs done when England was strong. Ireland’s Magna Charta was to be signed and sealed by as unwilling hands, under as direct compulsion, as was the Great Charter of English liberties by the only coward amongst the Plantagenet kings.

From early morning on the 16th of April the populace had begun to fill the streets, the Volunteer corps to assemble, those who had right to do so to seek admission to the galleries of the House of Commons. Lining the space before its portals were drawn up in serried files some of those to whom belonged so much of the glory of this day, the Volunteers. Other corps, cavalry, artillery, and infantry, lined the quays, were posted on the bridges and in the principal approaches.

A few regular soldiers kept a narrow passage through the surging crowd by the statue of King William, through Dame Street and Cork Hill to the castle gates, for the coming of the viceroy—a “thin red line” indeed, fit emblem of the power of England to cope with Ireland that day. From every house fluttered banners; every window and every housetop was crowded with spectators—spectators of a revolution. When the carriage of the viceroy appeared slowly moving between the soldiers, cheers such as had seldom rung through the streets of Dublin heralded his coming—cheers from the throats of newly made freemen who had burst their shackles themselves; from the throats of citizens who saw their city raised to the dignity of the capital of a nation; from the throats of Irishmen who saw the grasp of the stranger struck from their native land.

Inside the house the scene was even more impressive. In the galleries were