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# The True Witness



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## ST. PATRICK'S DAY

### 1905.

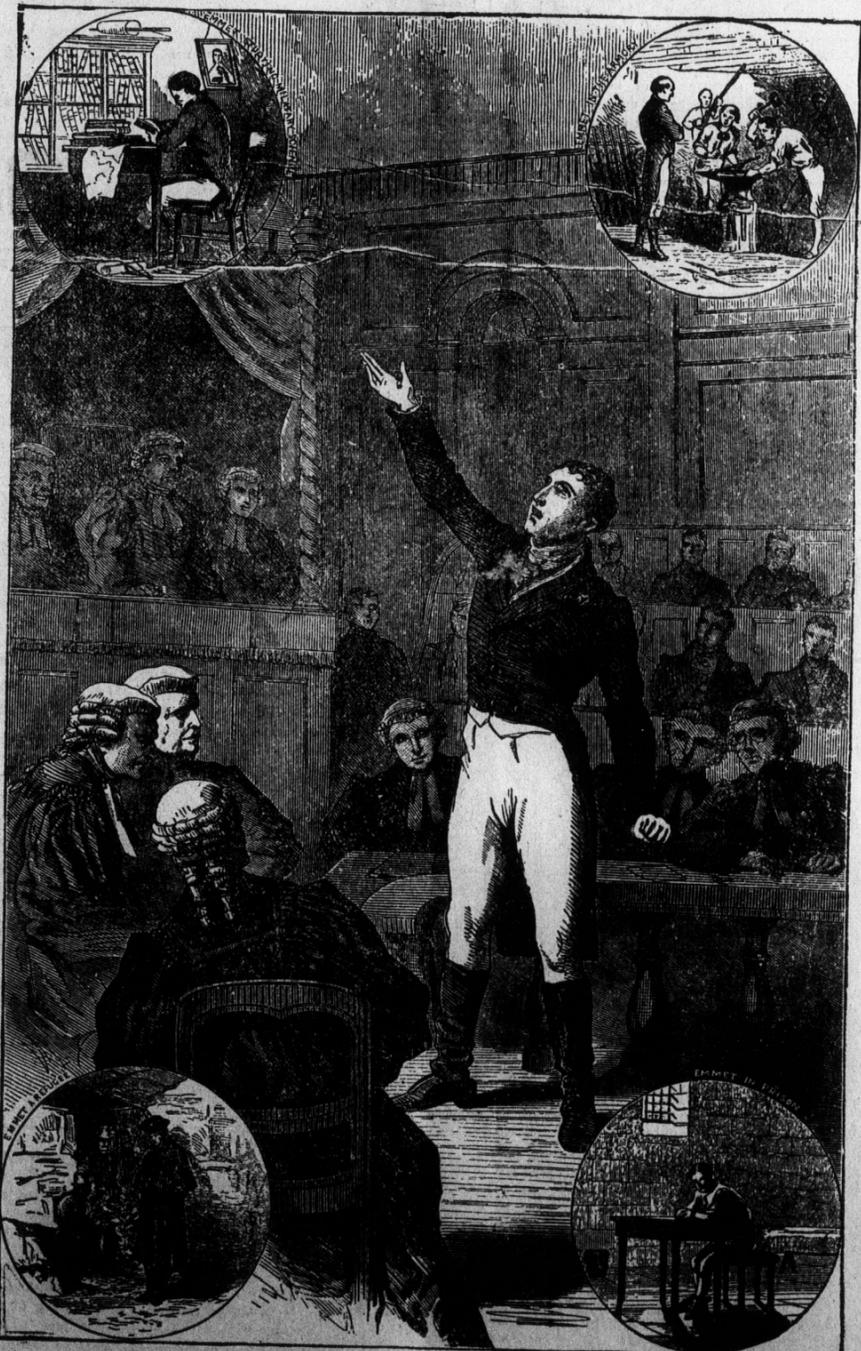
On March 4 Irishmen throughout the world celebrated with fitting honor the 127th birthday of one of the most illustrious and self-sacrificing patriots who occupies a place in the political martyrology of Ireland. The birthday of Robert Emmet awakens memories of one who gave life, fortune, the love of a pure and noble woman, and abandoned great worldly prospects for the cause he espoused and which he thought best for the redemption of his native land. Not only did those of Irish birth and lineage do honor to the martyred Emmet, but all who cherish nobility of soul, largeness of heart, unselfishness of character, lofty genius and pure patriotism gave him thought. He may have failed to right the wrongs of his country. What if he did? Others, who drew the sword in the cause of liberty, have not succeeded. His memory is not less honored because of failure. The name of Emmet is enshrined in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen. His youth, his commanding presence, his unselfish character, his magnanimity in refusing to save himself by involving others, and his manly bearing in the presence of death have endeared him to the Irish race. Robert Emmet may have been over-impulsive. His patriotic ardor may have been too intense through the hope that springs from youth, but his heart was true to Ireland; his soul burned with a love for the fatherland. Peace to his ashes! Honor to his immortal name! Reverence to his memory! In spirit Irishmen stood at his unknown grave and said with John Boyle O'Reilly:

"With pride and not with grief  
We lay this century leaf  
Upon the tomb, with hearts that do not falter:  
A few brief, tolling years  
Since fell the nation's tears,  
And lo, the patriot's gibbet is the altar!"

Robert Emmet was born in Dublin in 1782. His father was a practicing physician in the beautiful city on the Liffey, which is filled with so many memories of Ireland's one-time prosperity and independence of government. It was the wish of his family that he should study for the bar, and at 16 years of age we find him entering Trinity College, that Protestant institution of learning founded by the blood-thirsty Queen Elizabeth, and which is still liberally endowed by the British Government. Emmet made rapid progress in college. He possessed mental qualities of a high order, was a fluent speaker and industrious student. His intellectual accomplishments quickly brought him to a front place in the "Historical Society" of Trinity. In the rooms of the Society students met in debate to discuss the political and social questions of the day. Emmet, through his fiery temper and ardent presentation of Ireland's wrongs, attracted the attention of Lord Chancellor Clare, who expelled him for advocating a Republican form of government to replace English tyranny. After his expulsion he became the object of suspicion to the "Castle" minions, who watched his every move with the dogged persistency of government underlings. He was forced to leave Ireland on the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and take up a residence in France. At this period Napoleon was in the zenith of his power. England, to the "Little Corporal" was an enemy to strike down, and as Ireland was approaching a stage of rebellious ferment Na-

oleon gave audience to Emmet and others who were the leading spirits in a proposed insurrectionary movement. Bonaparte promised to support any attempt that was made to wrest Ireland from English misrule. Emmet was chosen to be director-general of the rebellious plans that were woven out to carry the issue of revolution to a success. The Habeas Corpus Act, which had many times since the days of Emmet been suspended in Ireland, was

again in force, and the exile set sail for his native shore. Reaching Dublin he lived under an assumed name that he might best escape the surveillance of the "Castle" minions and that he might better forward the movement on which he had set his heart. The whole of his family patrimony, which amounted to 2500 pounds, he resolved to devote to the cause of the proposed insurrection. Renting a house in the suburbs of Dublin, under the name of "Ellis,"



"I am going to my cold and silent grave—my lamp of life is nearly extinguished. I have parted with everything that was dear to me in this life for my country's cause—with the 'idol of my soul,' the object of my affections:

My race is run, the grave opens to receive me, and I sink into its bosom! I have but one request to make at my departure from this world—it is the charity of its silence. Let no man write my epitaph; for as no

man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them, let not ignorance nor prejudice asperse them. Let them rest in obscurity and peace. Let my memory be left in oblivion, and my tomb unadorned, until

other times, and other men can do justice to my character. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written."—Speech of Robert Emmet in the Dock.

Emmet nightly gathered around him men whom he trusted to aid him in carrying out the plans of the coming uprising. On one occasion in an address to his compatriots at the rented quarters he rose to sublime eloquence. In his speech he said in part:

"Liberty is the child of oppression, and the birth of the offspring is the death of the parent; while tyranny, like the poetical desert bird, is consumed in flames ignited by itself, and

name of K— (Emmet was always careful not to divulge the name of an adherent to the cause of revolution, fearing the odious system of "Castle" spydom) and Emmet while patriotism has admirers or Ireland a friend. Our country has never been ungrateful, and so few have been her benefactors, that she is prodigal of thanks for even dubious favors. Of us she can have but one opinion, for ingenuous enmity cannot attribute any but laudable motives to our de-

its whole existence is spent in providing the means of self-destruction. . . . To reason upon the political state of his country has long been the thought of the Irish peasant; and from continually thinking upon the subject he has at length learned to think right."

On another occasion, when remonstrated with for his rashness in attempting to upset England's rule, Emmet replied to the criticisms of those who doubted his chances of success. He said: "Admitting for an instant that we shall be unsuccessful, think not that our endeavors will be forgotten, or that our country will cease to remember us. No, my friend, the tyrant may condemn us, the tyrant authority asperse and vilify our characters; but rely on it that Irishmen shall reverence the

signs. For Ireland I will spend my private fortune, and for Ireland I shall, please God, venture my life. Kosciusko is a name as beloved in Poland as that of Washington in America."

Emmet's love for the beautiful Sarah Curran, daughter of John Philpot Curran, the brilliant lawyer and orator, was the love of a noble youth for a pure and affectionate woman. Miss Curran's interrupted love and sad fate, in dying far from her native land, inspired Moore to write these pathetic words:

"She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps,  
And lovers around her are sighing;  
But coldly she turns from their gaze and weeps,  
For her heart in his grave is lying."

A friend, previous to the fatal day that Emmet made his futile attempt at insurrection, referred to Miss Curran and her anxiety that her beloved would give up all thought of participating in insurrection. Emmet replied to him, saying: "Oh! I see Miss — has put something into your ear. Well, I can excuse you, for a being of such perfect loveliness might well disturb a hermit's prayer, though I will not allow her to divert a patriot's purpose." Not even the love and devotion of a pure and accomplished woman could divert the impulsive youth from his resolve to fight for Ireland or die in the attempt.

Emmet's attempt at insurrection was unsuccessful. He was deceived. The men from the surrounding counties who promised to give him support failed to appear. I have been over the ground which Emmet selected for the rendezvous of his supporters from Kildare, Dublin, Wexford and Wicklow. The "Castle" in those days was not difficult of access. Dublin was not crowded with British troops as it is now or had the entire country the strong military garrison it has to-day. The weapons of England's soldiers were not of the quick-firing pattern. The Irish pike in the hands of brave and determined men, could thin the ranks of a British regiment. But through the defection of men, who pledged themselves to follow Emmet to death or glory, the cause for which the noble youth labored and suffered exile was lost. The attempt at insurrection failed, and Emmet advised his followers to disperse and seek safety from arrest. The young enthusiast could have escaped arrest through flight. He was counselled to do so, but refused. To those who desired him to leave Dublin he said: "Excuse my obstinacy, but there is one to whom I must bid an eternal farewell, before the terrors of government shall force me into exile. Why should I refuse to acknowledge the cause? I am not ashamed of a weakness that compels me to do an act of justice—to beg, and, if possible, to obtain forgiveness from a woman whom I have unintentionally injured—whom I have loved so well that I must once more see her, hear her, and converse with her, though ten thousand deaths awaited an interview."

Awaiting an interview with Miss Curran caused Emmet's arrest. The notorious Major Sirr with his blood-thirsty followers swooped down upon him as he was sitting down to dinner. A "Special Commission" was formed, to try him for high treason, with the brutal Lord Norbury at its head. His trial was a farce. The jury was a packed one made up of adherents of the "Castle," just as juries have been formed since Emmet's death to try Fenians in Green Street court house for treason against the "Crown." Judge Norbury knew Emmet's family, and he upbraided him for disgracing its members. He mockingly asked the unfortunate youth, when convicted of high treason, if he had anything to say "why sentence of death should not be passed upon him."

With flashing eyes Emmet advanced to the front of the "dock" and in reply to Norbury, delivered the speech which is known to every schoolboy in Ireland. That speech will live in the pages of Irish history while history is written and men admire true eloquence.

(Continued on Page 8.)