

THE ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS

ITS ORIGIN AND RECORD

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In response to requests from members for information about the origin and early history of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the following series of articles was published in the 1966-1967 issues of the Hibernian Journal.

The articles are by way of being a compilation taken from various Histories of the Order, early issue of the Hibernian Journal, and various other sources published some years ago.

Readers will appreciate that a compilation of this kind has its limitations. It is not, and does not profess to be, a complete history. Anything less than a sizeable volume must be incomplete that attempts to span nearly four centuries. However it is hoped that the articles will achieve two main objectives. Firstly, to establish the continuity of the A.O.H. over three centuries and more. Secondly, to give some of our younger members an insight into the work that the A.O.H. has done in the centuries of its existence.

Bishop of Derry's Tribute

To the

Ancient Order of Hibernians

Most Rev. Dr. Farren, Bishop of Derry, has kindly consented to allow us to publish by way of a Foreword to this History a tribute he paid to the Organisation some years ago.

Dr. Farren said:

"I would like to express my appreciation of that Order, the A.O.H., and to say that from my knowledge of them, they live up to their high ideals.

"There are no people in the Diocese who have a greater respect for law, both human and divine, than they. They are always willing to co-operate in every work of Catholic Action in the Diocese. I thank them for all the work they are doing."

CHAPTER I FORMATIVE YEARS

Briefly it may be said, that the Order was established for the protection of what was at the time described as the "Catholic peasantry," and the early Hibernians also acted as a bodyguard for the Priests.

The date of the formation of the A.O.H. is claimed by some as early as 1565, and certain it is, that from that year, there was a combination working on behalf of the Catholic community, and that combination was in all probability our Organisation, yet there is insufficient reliable material available to support this date as entirely accurate. From the year 1641 our Historian is on surer ground. In 1640 Sir William Parsons and Sir John Borlace were appointed by the British Crown as Lord Justices for the Government of Ireland. Shortly after their appointment, at a banquet in Dublin, Sir William Parsons declared, "In twelve months from this date there will not be a single Catholic left in Ireland." It was perfectly clear how Sir William meant to achieve his purpose, and it was this utterance which gave impetus if not actual birth, to the Hibernians or the Defenders as they were then known, whose declared purpose was the defence of Faith and Fatherland—its motto familiar to all present day members—Friendship, Unity and True Christian Charity.

For obvious reasons, membership of the Order was confined—as it is to-day—to Irish Catholic Nationalists, and the absence of class distinction right down to our day—is attributable to the fact that to their credit be it said, that many of the Catholic gentry threw themselves thoroughly into the movement.

EXILES ORGANISE

Sir William Parsons' boast alerted the Catholics, and the project of a rising was discussed and eventually agreed upon, the idea found favour among exiled Catholics, indeed the idea of a rising seems to have first been mooted by the exiles. To organise thoroughly for the purpose and to ensure the success of the return of the exiles, it was necessary that a man of unquestioned honour, integrity and one of unblemished record should be chosen as leader—such a man was found in Rory (Roger) O'Moore, whose portrait now has a place of honour in our Hall in Parnell Square. Rory O'Moore was reared in the Spanish Court, and was a man of great courtesy and charm. O'Moore secured the services of nearly all the Catholic gentry in the North, in the West; too, he met with a large measure of support. In Leinster he found greater difficulty in organising. In May 1641, Captain Neil O'Neill arrived from the Netherlands with an urgent request from John Earl of Tyrone, to all his clansmen to prepare for a general insurrection. He also intimated that Cardinal Richelieu had promised the exiles arms, money and transport, O'Neill brought back a message to his Chief that the Irish would be prepared to take the field a few days before or after All Hallows. .

It is unnecessary to dwell on the success of the Rising of 1641, suffice it is to say, that in three Provinces every vestige of English power and influence was swept away. The success of the Rising, however, was spoiled in Dublin, and a gallant Irish Patriot, Hugh McMahon, was captured and brought to England. McMahon's pronouncements before the Lord Justice were forcible and cogent as he told the Judge that the failure to capture Dublin could not stay progress of the movement.

CONFEDERATION OF KILKENNY

The success of the Irish Rising of 1641 calmed for a time the verocity of the English settlers, but it was only a short era of peace, and to secure the full force of public opinion in England on the government side, the wildest stories were circulated of a massacre of Protestants by Irish Catholics, and English public opinion was aroused against the Catholic community of Ireland, and a systematic murder of Catholics was carried out. This policy, of course, only strengthened the resolve of the Catholic Leaders and the Confederation of Kilkenny was summoned, and met on October 23rd, 1642. Supreme Council of six members from each Province was elected, and the Council made laws for the Government of the Country, and this was the only authority recognised by the Irish people for the following three years, as it undertook all the duties and responsibilities appertaining to a government and carried them out with justice and impartiality. It was claimed with certain justification that Ireland was practically free during this time.

The Confederation of Kilkenny, which was the unity of all Catholic bodies and organisations, for the defence of the Church and property of Catholics, embraced the brotherhood of the Defenders. As the Defenders were merged in the Confederation, we cannot for a considerable time find sufficient reliable data to trace the original body as a distinctively separate organisation. Indeed, the task of compiling a history of the Organisation has been hampered by the fact, that for obvious reasons, little or no records were kept.

CHAPTER 2

CROMWELL ERA

In 1649 Cromwell was appointed Lord Lieutenant and then began an era of crime, slaughter and massacre, familiar to every student of Irish history. It may appear that we are giving a history of Ireland rather than that of Defenders or Hibernians, but it is quite impossible to write a history of one without the other. The history of Ireland contains chapter after chapter with records of the Defenders. The cruelty dealt out by Cromwell's soldiery provoked the worst passions of all, and it is little wonder, that the records speak of excesses on both sides. It is quite impossible for anyone removed from actual participation to sit in judgment. That some organisation was required to rally defiance to the oppressor is self-obvious, and there is little in our own generation, which can justify our looking with scorn on the methods, perhaps even the excesses, to which the Whiteboys or Ribbonmen may have resorted. Again, the nature of the times meant that rigid control could not be exercised by those at the top.' Cromwell's campaign lasted nine months and practically wiped out the Confederate army. Owen O'Neill's death at this period practically paralysed the Catholic resistance.

A word of explanation is necessary here about the Whiteboys—so called because when retaliating for acts of aggression against the Catholics, they wore white shirts over their clothes.

When the Defenders started the campaign against Landlords, there sprang up in the South of Ireland a body known as the Whiteboys, also aimed at the relief of the farmer, and in order to effect a thorough plan of working, the Defenders joined hands with the Whiteboys and the combined body worked under the title of Ribbonmen. This combination of forces was necessary, as the Landlords of the South were as hard and cruel in their dealings with their tenants as their brother Landlords in the North, and a United Front on the part of the tenants would obviously be more effective. There are many who condemn the Whiteboys as a cruel and lawless organisation, but again we say it is impossible to express such a view without experience of the trials and provocations suffered. Other writers indeed claim that the Whiteboys were a defensive body only and that in all the circumstances of the time, considering the provocations, it was a wonder that they could remain defensive. Mitchell, a Protestant, writing of the state of the country at this period, says of the Defenders—they were "never bad enough to become aggressors and it is right to understand once and for all..." "That in all the violent and bloody contentions which have taken place between the Catholics and Protestants from that day to the present, without any exception, Protestants have been the wanton aggressors." This reference of Mitchell applies principally to the North where the Peep of Day Boys, a Protestant Society, which afterwards ripened into the Orangemen, persecuted the Catholics of Ulster with the connivance of the authorities.

The Historian—Lecky—quotes a source as saying that "The Whiteboys were treated worse than Negroes by their Lords and Masters and their deputies," and he ascribed Whiteboyism to "the sentiment in every human heart that asserts man's natural right to liberty and good usage, that will and ought to rebel when oppressed and provoked to a certain degree."

The war continued at intervals for two years after Cromwell left Ireland when the Irish surrendered at Kilkenny, and a policy of extermination was ripe. Thousands of Irish children were transported to the West Indies and many of our Irish sons enlisted in the services of foreign countries, the remainder of the Irish who lived outside Connaught had to yield up their farms and property and seek refuge in Connaught. We do not propose to follow the various resistances through the centuries. What we are concerned with is describing the years of the origin of the Defenders. The fight of the Irish at the Boyne, and later their valour at Limerick are in any event well known. We might mention, however, that Sarsfield was a Grandson of the Defender—Rory O'Moore. The Defenders remained true to their trust standing guard while the Priest said Mass in the valleys of Ireland, up to the year 1745, when the Catholics were at length granted the right of public worship. The occupation of the Defenders as a bodyguard for the Priests saving Mass being now unnecessary, they turned their attention to matters affecting the internal welfare of Ireland, to the redress of laws governing the relations between Landlords and Tenants, the redress of the grievances unbelievable in our day and age under which the agricultural community laboured.

LANDLORDISM

The efforts the Catholic peasantry were compelled to make to meet the Landlords' claims invariably reduced them to a state of semi-starvation, and that even in a prosperous season, but when the crops were unfavourable, there was only one thing—the roadside. The American Hibernian Historian, Mr. McGrath, says—"The Ribbonmen's Association may be considered as a vast 'Trades Union' for the protection of the Irish peasantry, the object being not to regulate the rate of wages or the hours of work, but to keep the actual occupant in the possession of his land and in general to regulate the relation of Landlord and Tenant for the benefit of the latter." It was in many senses the forerunner of the Land League and that sturdy Land Leaguer—Michael Davitt—paid an earnest tribute to the work our Organisation accomplished for farmers in the stirring days of persecution. When considering these times, it is perhaps worth recording that, in 1935, Mr. De Valera conceded that in his opinion about the greatest period in Irish History was the period in which Parnell, Davitt, Dillon and others fought to gain the land for the Irish people. It required a greater spirit for the Irish people to hold together then than it required to hold out against the Black-an-Tans.

While the name "Ribbonmen" was used by both Defenders and Whiteboys from the time of the amalgamation, yet Historians when treating of disturbances in the South, refer to Whiteboys, not Ribbonmen, and similarly when referring to any friction in the North, the term Defenders was used instead of the newer title. Thus an impression is created that the Defenders were confined to the North and that another organisation of Whiteboys existed in the Southern Counties. As already explained, both organisations were amalgamated under the name "Ribbonmen."

CHAPTER III

THE UNITED IRISHMEN

In May 1795 a Convention was held in Belfast to introduce a new movement under the title of the United Irishmen. To this gathering representatives of the Ribbonmen were invited and took part in the deliberations affording additional proof of the claim we make that the members of this Organisation if not directly responsible for every national effort made to free Ireland were active in all such efforts.

At this period the Peep of Day Boys were working havoc amongst the Catholics of Ulster. We are told by Plowden that in one month 7,000 Catholics were compelled to leave Ulster owing to the lawlessness displayed by the Protestant Society. So well did the Defenders organise resistance that they presented a real menace to the Government. Through its many hirelings the Government strove to compel the Irish Nation to an insurrection, with the objective of carrying the Act of Union between Britain and Ireland. To help this campaign the most fantastic stories were fabricated of the massacre of Protestants in Ulster by the Defenders. To their glory be it said, that some of the upright Protestants refuted these statements, and as an instance, the first company of Volunteers in Ulster composed entirely of Protestants threw the whole blame for the state of the province on the Peep of Day Boys.

The first serious encounter between the Defenders or Ribbonmen, and the Peep of Day Boys occurred at this period, and is known by the extravagant term of the "Battle of the Diamond." Some authorities claim that the Defenders sent a challenge to the Orangemen, but this is hardly likely, for the Defenders knew their opponents had useful weapons, while they had at their disposal only their numbers and hands to rely on. The Peep of Day Boys opened fire from a hillside on the Defenders who were in the valley, and then swept down the slope. The Peep of Day Boys were, of course, victorious, but authorities disagree as to the nature or extent of the victory, although from that day the toast of the "glorious battle of the Diamond" is given at all Orange banquets. A victory indeed for the armed against the unarmed side! We are told in the "History of Orangemen" that the Peep of Day Boys after the Battle of the Diamond changed the name of their Organisation to that of "The Orangemen"—the object attributed to the change being to avert blame for their lawlessness at the Diamond. The change in title was effected on September 21st, 1795 at the village of Loughgall.

Owing to the insurrection of 1798 there is a period when there appears to be no reliable trace of the Defenders. Elated by the suppression of the '98 Rising, and the carrying of the Act of Union, the Government and their supporters set about anew to exterminate the Catholics—Robbery, Plunder, Massacre were the order of the day. To meet the intensified challenge, branches of the Ribbonmen sprang up all over and in several countries under different designations. In England and Scotland divisions were formed under the names—Hibernian Funeral Society. In

1825 the Ribbonmen were condemned by the Government as an unlawful association, and in that year, the name was changed to St. Patrick's Boys—a reward of £100 was offered for information as to where a body of Ribbonmen could be found.

ST. PATRICK'S FRATERNAL SOCIETY

A look at the listed Rules of the Society to be known as the St. Patrick's Fraternal Society establishes the connection with our own Rules and objects of the present day, viz.

1. The object of this Society (to be called St. Patrick's Fraternal Society) is to promote Friendship, Unity and True Christian Charity.
2. None but members of the Catholic Church shall belong to this Brotherhood... and each shall be expected to live up to the practice of his religious duties.
3. The Society shall consist of an unlimited number of members forming Branch Societies and governed by officers regularly elected.
4. The members shall meet every month and pay their subscriptions.
5. The proceedings of the meetings shall be considered private from all persons not interested in the Society.

From the year 1825 to 1836 the Organisation was worked under this name—St. Patrick's Fraternal Society, and in the latter year authority was given by the Executive in Ireland to a number of members who had immigrated to America to establish the Organisation in that country. The Charter authorising the establishment of branches in America contains these provisions:

"Be it known to you and to all it may concern that we send to our few Brothers in New York full instructions with our authority to establish branches of our Society. The qualification for membership must be as follows—First: All members must be Roman Catholics, Irish or of Irish descent, and of good and moral character, and none of your members shall join in any secret Societies contrary to the laws of the Catholic Church, and at all times and in all places your motto shall be—Friendship, Unity and True Christian Charity." The Charter went on:

... Be it known to you that you are at liberty to make such laws as will guide your workings and for the welfare of our old Society, but such laws must be at all times according to the teachings of the Holy Catholic Church and the obligations that we send you and all your workings must be submitted to any Catholic Priest when called for.

It is easy to imagine the benefit, which the Organisation in America was to the Irish exiles particularly in the famine year of 1849.

About the year 1838, the title of the Order was again changed—this time in America, to the title by which it is known to day. While the official title of the Organisation underwent for various compelling reasons changes, it is true to say, that some divisions or branches retained the old title. Indeed as late as the year 1904, a Convention of the Order was held in Belfast and delegates attended representing themselves as the Defenders, although the title was officially extinct for close on 100 years previously. There are no more conservative people than the Irish, and many did not take easily to the change of name. This accounts for the confusion— an understandable confusion that exists in the minds of some who endeavour to identify or separate as the case may be,

the Ribbonmen, the Defenders, the Whiteboys and the St. Patrick's Boys with the Hibernians of to day. As will have been seen, proof of the connection exists, and we are able to trace the Organisation under its various names in the annals of Irish history. Thus we have traced the formation of a body styled the Defenders by Rory O'Moore, in 1641, although as we stated in the beginning, there is reason to believe that some such organisation was in existence nearly a century earlier. We have shown the date when the Society was changed from the Defenders to the Ribbonmen, viz. when the Defenders and Whiteboys Societies were amalgamated, and further when the Ribbonmen altered the title to St. Patrick's Fraternal Society—the latter body giving authority to America to start divisions in that country—so that the bona fides of our claim seems clear. The A.O.H. in America paid levies to the Irish Governing Body up to the year 1898 so recognising that the Headquarters were in Ireland.

CHAPTER IV

DIVISION IN THE ORGANISATION

In the late eighteen hundreds there developed in the Organisation a lamentable split, and like most such splits, certainly in retrospective we can see it was one which never should have taken place, for the reason that it was occasioned not by any difference of principle, but on a detail, and by the refusal of the minority to accept a majority decision. It came about in this way. In 1884 a change was made in the Constitution of the A.O.H. in America. In all the circumstances, if the Order was to survive in that country, the change was necessary, but it gave rise to serious differences of opinion amongst the members there.

Under the Old Constitution, only men of Irish birth or parentage were eligible for membership, but at the Convention held in America in 1884 a majority vote decided in favour of admitting to membership those of Irish birth or descent. True the change was only sanctioned by a narrow majority, but instead of abiding by the decision, the minority raised an agitation, which was destined to provoke much ill feeling, and have far reaching results. A delegation was sent from America to take counsel with the Executive here in Ireland. Unfortunately the Irish Board was also divided in its views, and for the first time in its long history, the Society was split in two. The Executive in Ireland divided and we find two bodies of Hibernians here in Ireland under the same title, while a similar state of affairs existed in America, one section in America recognising one section of the Order here in Ireland, and the other section in America recognising the other section here in Ireland. This disunion continued in America up to the year 1898, when through the intervention of His Lordship, Bishop McFaul of Trenton, unity was achieved in America. All through the period of the American split, the two sections in that country paid their quarterly levies to the particular Board, which they recognised in Ireland.

At this period there was no such office as National President, the practice being for the County delegate in whose district the Board of Erin met to preside at the meetings. The two most prominent figures in the dispute here in Ireland were two Belfast men, viz. Mr.

John Morgan and Mr. James Crilly—regrettable and in many senses petty as the whole affair was—it seems quite clear that both men and both sections held the views they expressed honestly and sincerely at this period.

Although Unity was established in America, the disunity still continued here at home. In the year 1902 through the good offices of the Rev. J. J. McKinley, C.C.—later to become National Chaplain—a Conference was arranged. The Conference held in March 1902 terminated by both sides agreeing to allow the two Executives to work jointly until a Convention could be arranged to consider the reconstitution of the Order. An Agreement was drawn up and signed by delegates representing both sections.

CHAPTER V

The Convention at which the difference between the two Sections was to be adjusted was summoned for Belfast in 1904. Since Fr. McKinley had brought the two Executives together, harmony had prevailed; it was of course on the understanding that outstanding differences would be settled on a satisfactory basis. The real issue then at stake was whether the Order should be registered as a Friendly Society or not—the decision arrived at by the Convention was to adjourn a decision until the following Convention. The adjournment was necessary as the only means to maintain unity, because both Sections held the view to register or not to register equally strongly, or rather whether registration should be compulsory or not. By postponing the consideration of the matter, it was hoped to allow a cooling off process, so that when the next Convention was held, the matter could be discussed more calmly. Unfortunately the decision of the Convention was flouted and some delegates had recourse to the Public Press to further their own views on Registration. The Executive, fearing another break, decided at a quarterly meeting in December 1904, to put the matter of registration to Arbitration, rather than wait for the Convention and risk a cleavage. Whether it was a wise decision or not for the Executive to do this, having regard to the decision of the Convention, it is quite obvious that their paramount purpose was to preserve unity.

The Arbitration Committee consisted of two from each section, viz., two in favour of compulsory registration and two against compulsion, with the Rev. James Cannon, Adm., of the Diocese of Raphoe, Rev. J. J. McKinley, C.C., of the Diocese of Down and Connor, and the Rev. J. Conroy of the Diocese of Elphin.

The Conference met in Enniskillen in December, 1904. The Committee recommended registration, but with a proviso that for the time being no division should be forced to register if their financial affairs could be arranged in a satisfactory way with the Post Office Savings Bank, and that this procedure should prevail until the Convention of the Order in July, 1905, and the Conference further recommended the selection of a Governing Body on a thoroughly sound and democratic basis.

A NEW CONSTITUTION

The Convention held in Belfast in 1904 was attended by Mr. Joseph Devlin representing Belfast and Mr. John D. Nugent representing Dublin. It was arranged to convene a Convention for the following year in the Banba Hall, Dublin. The Constitution of the Order as we know it to day was drawn up by Mr. Nugent and submitted to this Banba Hall Convention in 1905. Neither the Constitution nor the policy submitted was initially received favourably but as a result of the personal influence and the inspiring eloquence of Mr. Joseph Devlin, who at the Convention was elected National President, the delegates were won over to approval of the new Constitution and Rules, and again there was liberality allowed in the matter of the registration, although registration was favoured by the newly elected officers and Executive. It is only fair to say that while opposition came from elements who wanted to capture the Organisation for their own ends, there was also quite sincerely (and understandably So) opposition to registration from those who thought the question of Registration for benefit purposes would supersede the Friendship, Unity and True Christian Charity principle of the Organisation. It was a fateful Convention. Up to this time, the Order Simply consisted of a group of several bodies loyal to the one ideal, but each acting more or less independently without any connecting link or universal Rules to follow. The Order at this time was also without funds—and the newly elected National Secretary had to pay out of his own pocket for the printing of the Rules.

CHAPTER VI

We here divert to record that at this period the Organisation laboured under the disability of only being tolerated by the Catholic Church. It is neither necessary nor seemly for us to enter into the reasons for this, further than to emphasis that at this time there was no central authority as such, and as we have previously emphasised, the Organisation, like many others in our time, had probably its full share of the impetuous and over zealous. It seems clear that it was those two factors, which led to the reserved attitude towards the Order by some members of the Irish Hierarchy. We may, however, here quote Fr. McKinley as saying that "the men to be depended upon had been the members of the A.O.H., individuals might have gone wrong, but as a body it had always been right." At this period fortune gave us a powerful friend in the person of Cardinal O'Donnell, Bishop of Raphoe, Who incidentally drafted our Ritual, and pressed our claim for recognition as a Catholic Organisation. In 1904 he succeeded in getting the toleration ban removed from the Order. Cardinal O'Donnell remained, right up to the time of his death in 1927, the firm friend and champion of the A.O.H. It will be of interest to our members to know that the late lamented Very Rev. Canon McCafferty, P.P., Chancellor of the Diocese of Raphoe, and at the time of his death in 1951 National President, recalled in later years that he joined the Organisation the very day in 1904 when he received a letter from Cardinal

O'Donnell, written from Maynooth, saying that he had that day succeeded in getting the toleration ban removed from the Organisation. For some years later the ban remained on the Order in Scotland, but in the light of greater understanding, this in due course was also removed.

This seemed the appropriate place to explain the Disability and the reasons for it under which the Organisation laboured in the early years of the century.

We now return to the decision of the 1905 Convention, which was that there should be no compulsion on divisions to register. Notwithstanding this, the Section that had favoured compulsory registration registered a code of Rules and about 20 divisions seceded from the Board of Erin. There was thus the spectacle of two bodies claiming the same title, the one that had received the Convention's approval consisting of close on five hundred divisions with a gross membership of fifteen hundred. The large body, however, ignored the existence of the smaller group and were soon so eminently and efficiently disciplined that a number of the divisions, which had seceded from the Board of Erin, asked permission to return.

In September 1905, however, the seceders served a Writ on the Trustees of the Board of Erin. A summary of the Statement of Claim was that the Plaintiff, viz. the seceding Society, which was on the 29th January, 1904, registered as the Ancient Order of Hibernians Benefit Society with registered offices at 129 Donegal Street, Belfast, wanted an injunction against the Board of Erin, Ancient Order of Hibernians Friendly Society, so registered on the 23rd February, 1905—offices at 80 Prussia Street, Dublin. The Plaintiffs complained that the Defendants were using the title Ancient Order of Hibernians in a manner calculated to deceive the public into the belief that the Plaintiff Society was a branch of or identical with the Defendant's Society. The Board of Erin entered their Defence, and there the matter rested for ten months, when the Plaintiffs wrote asking if the Board of Erin would agree to all further proceedings being stayed—each party to pay their own costs. The Board of Erin refused to agree to this, because they were only too anxious that the case should be brought to trial for their own vindication. A further lapse of time and another letter from the Plaintiff Society requested Arbitration. The Board of Erin agreed, but a team of Arbitrators could not be agreed upon, and the case eventually came to trial and was dismissed with costs against the Plaintiffs. The Defendants, i.e., the Board of Erin could not collect their costs and consequently lodged a petition in the High Courts for the winding up of the Plaintiff association. The Plaintiffs were wound up as Bankrupt and Mr. John E Nugent was appointed Liquidator, but the Sheriff could collect nothing and the registration of the Plaintiffs was cancelled. Thus in January 1908, the Board of Erin registered a code of Rules under the Friendly Societies Act. Our troubles were not over. An attempt was made by some of the former members of the defunct group to reorganise and they approached and convinced some members of the Order in

America of their bona fides and the American Order was led to believe that there was still a split in the Organisation in Ireland. Delegates were sent here to try and heal the breach. At some later date we may go into more detail regarding this visit. For the present it is only necessary to make a few points clear. The officers of the alleged A.O.H. in Ireland were all either expelled or rejected members of the Board of Erin and had become identified with a political party which had, to put the matter mildly, no particular liking for the A.O.H. or its constitutional policies and there was also considerable grounds for the suggestion that there was a link with extreme political elements in America. When the Board of Erin became convinced of the above facts, they refused to enter into conference, or rather to continue negotiations with the American delegation.

Before we leave this portion of our story, we should add by way of a footnote that at this time Cardinal Patrick Moran, Archbishop of Sydney, wrote to the then National President Bro. Joseph Devlin, thanking him for his work in keeping the Hibernians in Ireland clear of these extremists. Also when the Organisation in America became aware of the true position, the conduct of their delegation and the partisan spirit, which they had displayed while here in Ireland, was condemned by the different State and County Bodies in America.

We have now, we think, achieved one at least of the objectives of this series of articles, i.e. to establish the continuity of the Organisation over close on four centuries. We have, however, been asked to write something further about the years from 1910 onwards. We propose, therefore, to do so briefly in succeeding issues of the Journal and to tell something of the triumphs and hardships—we have had our share of both—in the succeeding years.

CHAPTER VII

CURRAGH REVOLT

For very many reasons in dealing with some periods of our history we must place a restraint upon ourselves. We are still too close—indeed, happenings in the North this very year have showed us how very close—to say much about certain happenings, particularly the incident, (and that is minimising its significance) which has come to be known as the Curragh Revolt. Some present day writers regard the 1916 Rebellion as the brainchild of the Curragh Revolt and North East Ulster's appeal to force in the years 1912, 1914. Certainly the Preface to "The Complete Grammar of Anarchy" states "It is not often that political chickens come home to roost as quickly as those which were hatched in North East Ulster during the years 1912, 1914." Rebellion was openly preached, men were drilled, arms were landed, the assistance of the Kaiser was invoked, the forces of the Crown were defied, and their Commanders seduced from their allegiance." The situation was menacing for the Catholics, particularly in the North. The Hibernian Organisation did not stand idly by, Committees were organised, and a sizeable quantity of, shall we say, "defensive equipment" was procured. No present day member of the Organisation can fully appreciate the nature of the task and the methods, which were used by the then members to provide defence for Catholic

laity, Bishops and Priests houses.

SOCIAL INSURANCE

At this time, too, in the social sphere our Organisation was active. The years from 1910 were years spent in consolidating the Ancient Order of Hibernians, not just in Ireland but in every Irish centre in England and Scotland where the Irish vote in Britain was something, which many an English politician had to reckon with, and to their chagrin, their return to Westminster was dependent on the Irish workers in Britain. The Irish centres in Britain were in many senses synonymous with the A.O.H. Divisions. In the year 1912 the Irish Party at Westminster was instrumental in getting the National Health Insurance Act applied to Ireland.

In the 1960's it is quite impossible to convey just how far-reaching a development this was—it brought a little hope and comfort, a little reassurance into the lives of that very large section who "just could not afford to be sick"—for the most excellent reasons—economic ones. The National Secretary and Assistant Secretary campaigned the country to organise the A.O.H. for National Health purposes, and there was not a town or village in Ireland, and very few in England and Scotland not visited—the result was a tribute to the excellence of the organising—"Out of sixty-five Societies operating the Health Insurance, the A.O.H. secured one in five of every insurable person. So impressive was the organising that the National Secretary was offered the Chairmanship of the National Health Insurance Commission, i.e. the Commission that would control all the Societies, but he elected to remain with the A.O.H. To round this off, we must again anticipate in our story somewhat, to state that when some twenty years later all the Health Societies were amalgamated by an Irish Government in one State controlled Society, the system and form of working of the A.O.H. was the basis chosen on which the unified Society worked.

A.O.H.—POLITICALLY

A word is now necessary regarding the "politics" of the A.O.H. In the early years of the century, our country was, of course, under an alien Government, and its representatives were the Irish Parliamentary Party described at the time by a distinguished Irish Bishop as "the army and navy of Ireland." The A.O.H. threw itself solidly behind the Party.

UNSOLICITED TRIBUTE

In this regard our readers will be interested in an unintending tribute paid to the A.O.H. in a sizeable volume entitled "The Unknown Power Behind the Irish Nationalist Party." The preface of this sizeable book goes on to prove to its own satisfaction that the Organisation, viz. the A.O.H. was formed for the purpose of driving the English Government out of Ireland. The preface goes on to say—"If the Ancient Order of Hibernians were a small body we might look upon it with indifference, but it is not a small body—and it quotes Michael Davitt as describing it "as the most powerful pro-Celtic organisation in the world." The preface further continued—"None but Roman Catholics are allowed, under any circumstances to join its ranks, and it is necessary that every member shall attend regularly to his or her religious duties. Everywhere it is pledged to maintain the authority of the Church of Rome . . . It has received the benediction of Pope Pius X, and the approval of Cardinal Logue, Cardinal Moran,

Cardinal Gibbons and many Archbishops, Bishops and Priests in England, Ireland and America."

We gladly plead guilty to the indictment of repudiating the right of a British Government to govern any part of Ireland and we register also a plea of guilty to the charge that none but Roman Catholics of Irish birth or descent are eligible for membership. We, therefore, reject not a line of the accusations quoted above levelled at us by the noble English Peer who edited the volume. It is in itself a tribute to the constancy and purpose of the Defenders—the Ribbonmen, the Hibernians.

In vindicating the wisdom of our predecessor's decision to support the "Irish Party" we list a summary of the Party's principal achievements over a period of 40 years.

Passed the Home Rule Act for the whole of Ireland despite the House of Lords; and its operation was only defeated by the outbreak of the catastrophic war of 1914-18.

Destroyed the veto of the House of Lords.

Abolished Landlordism and the Grand Jury system of an Ascendancy bureaucracy of bigots and tyrants.

Established an Irish Nation of Peasant Proprietors.

As a preliminary reduced Irish Farmers' Rents by £2,000,000 a year.

Provided Irish labourers with 50,000 cottages and half acre to acre allotments.

Devised machinery for breaking up the grass ranches to solve the congested Districts problem.

Restored nearly 4,000 evicted tenants.

Ended the Ascendancy Dictatorship.

Created a Local Government system of County, Urban and Rural Councils in which the people have control.

Extended the franchise to men and women in Ireland.

Provided Old Age Pensions for Irish men and Irish women.

Settled the long standing University question by the establishment of the National University.

Obtained £12,000 a year for the teaching of Irish in the National Schools.

Made possible the establishment of five Irish Professorships in the National University.

Secured grants of over £114,000 a year for National Teachers; £40,000 a year for school building improvements, and £45,000 for a pension scheme.

Secured about £600,000 a year additional contributions from public funds towards education of Catholics in Scotland.

Procured the application to Ireland of the National Health Insurance Acts.

Won every Reform in the programme of the Land League and the National League.

Secured the Registration of the Irish Trades Mark for the protection of Irish manufacturers.

The Party that achieved so much was in the main a Party of poor men. A great proportion of them have died poor. Their lives were passed in an alien assembly in which treachery to Ireland was sure of substantial pecuniary recognition. Yet they passed through the furnace of temptation unscathed. Prominent public men closely identified with the 1916 movement have in recent years and in a calmer atmosphere come to realise that whatever has been achieved for the Irish cause was made possible by the magnificent pioneer work of the Irish Parliamentary Party, just as many who were passionate adherents of and are still grateful admirers of that Party will admit that according to their lights the- leaders of more recent days were guided

and inspired by the purest ideals of patriotism. Love of Ireland is the monopoly of no man and no party, and patriotism does not mean hatred of any other country but love of ones own. In connection with the Irish Party's methods to achieve a self-governing United Ireland, we submit the following telling facts. First, at a Redmond Symposium in Wexford in 1956, Professor O'Donovan O'Sullivan of Galway University, speaking of the 1916 period said:

"The National Party was swept aside and the appeal to force was substituted as a means of settling the Irish question." "But," Professor O'Sullivan continued, "Redmond as we know, always strove for a United Ireland . . . He did not achieve it, but the men who overwhelmed him in their appeal to force against constitutional methods have not achieved it either."

CHAPTER VIII

Our second reference is from a broadcast in the Thomas Davis Lecture series on Radio Eireann on Sunday, May 22nd, 1966. The Lecturer was the Revd. Professor F. X. Martin, O.S.A., who confirms the statement we have made in listing the Irish Party's achievements, viz. that the Home Rule Bill had been passed in Parliament, had received royal assent, was on the Statute Book since September, 1914 and was due to be implemented as soon as the war was ended. Rev. Father Martin underscored this by stating that at this time Ireland was being ruled by a benign British triumvirate accepting the fact that they were on their way out. Further, Father Martin continued, that because the Irish Parliamentary Party was eliminated in the 1918 election, it has been thought that before 1916 they were already a spent force, but, Father Martin stated, this interpretation, as being a justification for the Rising did not square with the facts of Irish Political life, even as late as the Spring of 1916. "What was clear," said Father Martin, "were the great services given by Redmond and his lieutenants. Redmond, the man of integrity . . . was fortunate in his two extremely capable lieutenants. John Dillon and Wee Joe Devlin—Dillon with his irascible energy and volcanic eloquence; Devlin with his hard commonsense and pulsating oratory. "During the 20 years previous to 1916, these Irish leaders had forced through the British Parliament a series of Bills which meant nothing less than the transfer of power from the Anglo Irish Ascendancy to the Irish middle-class and small farmers. From 1906 to 1912 the tide of victory had risen steadily in favour of the Irish Parliamentarians. They held the balance of power in the House of Commons and the Liberal Government which they kept in office were satisfied to do a deal with them over the Home Rule Bill."

In 1918 the Irish Party was overthrown by Sinn Fein—the Rebellion, but perhaps more than anything else the executions had inflamed public opinion in Ireland—the Irish Parliamentary Party was swept aside.

Fittingly enough we print an extract from the address delivered by our own National President, Bro. J. M. Billion, at the Irish Club in London early this year (1966). The address was on the work of the Irish Party in the British House of Commons. Bro. Dillon said:

"Whether the final act of the drama of the indomitable Irishery was served by the bloodshed of 1916, 1918 to 1921, and subsequent years—in the Civil War and all that flowed from it—only history can justly establish. One fact remains. When the

Irish Party laid down its weapons Ireland was known to history and to the world as an Ireland of 32 Counties and a nation from the centre to the sea."

The telling fact remains that within two years of the overthrow of the Irish Party, Partition was an established fact. That Partition which was refused by the Irish Party, and this time we quote Mr. T. H. Healy, First Governor General of the Irish Free State writing in the "Irish Independent," October 19th, 1921:

"In 1914 Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon at the Buckingham Palace Conference with Messrs Carson and Craig, on the eve of the war, refused to purchase Home Rule by any such surrender, yet seven years later Sinn Feiners are expected to crawl down to a tamer position and go forth to history as signatories to a pact in Downing Street Which Mr. Redmond refused to make in a Royal Palace."

CONSCRIPTION

With the outbreak of the 1914 War, there came the threat of Conscription and the Irish Bishops and leaders of practically all sections of our people decided to oppose conscription; the Hibernian Organisation took a more prominent and vital part in organising opposition to Conscription. Particularly successful was the A.O.H. organising of the two Irish Police Forces—the R.I.C. and the D.M.P. Under the guise of a Holiday Fund, the men were linked together and financial support to fight the Conscription threat was thus provided. In Dublin alone out of 1,100 Police of all ranks, 700 were members of the "Holiday Fund." The British Government soon understood that if it attempted to enforce compulsory military service it would have to withdraw a substantial portion of British troops from the continental battlefield to deal with the grave effects that would follow in Ireland. Voluntarily tens of thousands of Irish men rallied to the cause, not of Britain, but to the cause of small nations—of little Belgium—voluntarily, but no conscription. True, in some quarters the Irish who had volunteered for military service were denounced by their own fellow countrymen, but maturer judgments will come—and this year, the Taoiseach of the Irish Republic, Mr. Sean Lemass, conceded to these men gallantry and understanding—their action which it is, of course, no part of our purpose to defend, was nevertheless most aptly and beautifully put by Tom Kettle, who himself died on the battlefield of Flanders. In a beautiful poem written to his only daughter Betty, he said:

"Know that we dead now with the foolish dead,
Died not for Flag, nor King, nor Emperor, But for a
dream born in a herdsman's shed, And for the
secret scriptures of the poor."

CATHOLIC ACTION

No account of Hibernian activity during this time would be complete without a reference to the part played by our Dublin members during the General Strike of 1913. In August/September that year a concentrated effort was made to take the children of the workless to Protestant and Atheistic Homes in Britain. The A.O.H. backed the efforts of Father Fottrell, S.J., to block this export. Every Irish port was watched and every train leaving Dublin was searched and children were removed and placed in the care of the Irish Sisters of

Charity or temporarily housed until the heat of the time had subsided. The members of the Order in Dublin had arranged a code with cab drivers going along the streets who alerted our members as to the number of children they were conveying to boat and train. Notwithstanding all the precautions some children were sent away, but with the help of a zealous Priest in Liverpool, Father Leech, the children were traced. The whole cost of these operations was borne by the A.O.H.

Too, at this time the Organisation set itself, and did in fact defeat the plans of souper schools that were engaged in a nefarious traffic in which the souls of innocent little children were being sold into spiritual slavery.

Yet another 'credit' was the action taken by the Organisation to prevent the sale of indecent postcards and literature, and the A.O.H. was instrumental in getting these vendors who persisted in this traffic sent to gaol.

Again, we must emphasise that all this was before Catholic Lay Action in the modern concept was known or practiced. In many senses the A.O.H. was ahead of its time—thus also fifty years ago we were making provision for Widows and Orphans, State pensions not then being provided.

CHAPTER IX

We feel it incumbent on us to again apologise to our readers for what may well be regarded as a lack of sequence in our reportage, but it must be understood, that the A.O.H. had—as it still has—a dual role, that is to say, a twofold objective—service to Faith and Fatherland. If, therefore, we seem to advance to the year 1918 and then return, it is only to follow through reportage of a particular happening.

We have already referred to the support, which the Hibernian Organisation rendered to the Irish Parliamentary Party. The A.O.H. remained unflinching in its loyalty. Organisations like individuals must be prepared to suffer for their principles, and certainly the A.O.H. stood this acid test. Misrepresentation, intimidation, were the order of the day, these in themselves were the unintended compliments paid to our constancy.

Many an inducement was held out to the members of the then Board of Erin, to District, Division Officers and members. In turn the members were cajoled and threatened, but who shall now deny that our middle of the road policy was well justified when 1916 gave way to 1921, 1922 and the tragic years of the Civil War.

The fact, however, that the A.O.H. took neither side did not save us. Our Halls were ravaged, burned or confiscated, band instruments smashed. Members returning from meetings were ambushed. In 1925 an attempt was made to wreck a Hibernian excursion train bringing Hibernians from Burtonport to Letterkenny. Our members—let us not shirk the word—our members were murdered for no other reason than that they belonged to the A.O.H. This fact may in any language seem little justification for what this Organisation went through, was put through, but human nature being what it is, our opponents tried to destroy what they had failed to control. When thinking of these "Murders," we call to mind the names of Treanor, McPhillips and O'Brien of County Monaghan, who

fell victims to the vendetta being waged against us. In the little churchyard at Carrickree, in County Monaghan, a Celtic Cross erected by fellow Hibernians, bears the telling inscription "Killed by Armed Men." Their fidelity to the principles in which they believed, their sacrifices, were not in vein—The Order lives on.

In the 1920's and 30's the A.O.H. was again to the fore helping and defending the Catholics of the North, during the dread years of the Pogrom. In Belfast and in Westminster, the National President —Bro. Joseph Devlin—was mercilessly exposing the methods being used to maintain in the Six Counties Lord Craigavon's "Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people."

Wherever there was a contest in which there was a chance to send a Champion of Catholic or Irish Rights either to the Imperial or the Northern Parliament, the A.O.H. helped to supply the funds and to provide Speakers and points for meetings. This, however, is as good a place as any to emphasise, that the survival of the A.O.H. to our day, is due not entirely, perhaps, not even mainly, to our great Leaders and National Officers, inspiring and valiant though they were. The tenacity of the ordinary members, their refusal to be intimidated, to be cowed, theirs is perhaps the greater glory. We have referred to the fact that our Halls were burned. What we did not say is that they were rebuilt.

PARTITION

When Partition was established, it is true to say, that the A.O.H. was the spearhead of the Nationalist survival in the North. The A.O.H. it was that fought, sometimes ours was the only voice heard to condemn the evil of abstention from Parliament, pointing out that you cannot beat your antagonist by running away from him. The A.O.H. it was, when within the last decade the impulsive and impetuous in the North, were again resorting to physical force, the A.O.H. it was, who unpopularly but fearlessly denounced physical force as a means to end Partition.

In the fight against Partition, exposing its falsity and the dishonest gerrymandering, which made a mockery of Democracy, we applied with Considerable efficacy the maxim that "the pen is mightier than the sword." We put in circulation throughout the English-speaking world, pamphlets, the titles of which speak volumes and indicate the manner in which the A.O.H. was serving the cause of a United Ireland.

"The Partition of Ireland" "The Canker of Partition" "An Open Letter to Lord Craigavon" "Lord Craigavon and The Prince of Wales" "Craigavon in the Dock" "How Partition Has Hit Derry"

and many more. We have said these pamphlets were put in circulation throughout the English-speaking world. It needs to be emphasised that this was no indiscriminate circulation. We saw that copies were sent to all newspapers with Irish leanings in the United States, copies were sent to the Ministers of State of the different countries of the British Commonwealth—care being taken in particular when any such Minister was—and there were many—of Irish descent.

Nowadays we hear a great deal of talk about conciliation, patience, understanding and toleration. How many know, or knowing, would acknowledge the fact, that in our dealings with the Protestant Countrymen of the North, the conciliation doctrine was being preached by the A.O.H. thirty years ago. Can

readers visualise what it meant to preach patience to a people who lived in daily fear, whose lives and livelihood were in jeopardy. When we read in the 1960's of religious and racial riots thousands of miles from our shores, do our younger generation realise what their elders went through to keep the Faith and preserve the ideal of Nationality. It was difficult to convince and difficult to tell the victims or the relations of these victims, of outrage and atrocity, of the essential sanity of Hibernian Policy of conciliation, difficult to convince them that this Policy was not defeatism. Now thirty years later, the words conciliation, patience, tolerance and understanding, are the words of counsel being used by many who thirty years ago declared the A.O.H. was "soft."

In the realm of conciliation and here we take a big stride into the 1960's. In the realm of conciliation, let it never be forgotten, that the first, certainly the first known meeting between Orange and Green was brought about by an invitation from an A.O.H. Platform—an invitation issued by the National Vice-President, Senator J. G. Lennon to Sir George Clarke, Grand Master of the Orange Lodge. The meeting took place. Did nothing come of it? Who can say? This much can be said: They met and the skies did not fall, nor was the famous battle of the Diamond re-enacted. Let others; however, speak on the importance of this meeting.

CHAPTER X

The "Irish Times" Special Correspondent wrote: "The seeds of what well may be the foundation of peaceful co-existence between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland have been sown by the leaders of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Orange Order."

FAITH

Lest some may think that we of the Hibernian Order have paid more attention to our pledge of service to Fatherland rather than to Faith, we turn back the pages of history again.

We have referred to the Pamphlets we put in circulation exposing the evils of Partition. We also printed and circulated Pamphlets such as

"An Insult to all Catholics"

"Facts About Communism"

"The Communist Philosophy of Life"

"The Red Danger"

"The Menace of Communism"

Need we emphasis the objective of these. At every opportunity and where there was no opportunity we made one, in accordance with Papal teaching, we exposed the dangers of "Exaggerated Nationalism," the hidden working of Freemasonry and the subtlety of Communism. The A.O.H. was, if not the first, then one of the very first in this country to see the issues involved in what was in many senses miscalled the Spanish Civil War. When a world wide campaign was being engineered by Communists and fellow travellers to confuse the issue, and many local Councils and Boards here in Ireland were, as they naively put it, "not taking sides," the A.O.H. declared itself on the side of Catholic Spain. A patriotic Spanish Priest—Father Gabanna—was prohibited from lecturing in England, The A.O.H. it was who contacted him and paid all his expenses to come to Ireland and tell the people of Ireland the "Truth About Spain." A Public Lecture was organised by the A.O.H. in Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, and Father Gabanna's lecture tours sponsored throughout the country.

The A.O.H. too, it was, who in 1937 exposed "The plan of the Secular Society of Ireland," the plan to

"get rid of the Catholic Church." Throughout the pages of our Journal we published and circulated articles by such well-known authorities on "Communist Plans" as the late Rev. Fr. Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp. and others. The A.O.H. it was who helped to give the "light of day" to the machinations of the "Connolly Clubs" in Britain.

We may, of course, console ourselves with the thought, that what the A.O.H. has done has not gone unacknowledged. Generous tributes have been paid to us by the Catholic Hierarchy here in Ireland, and the Organisation has received the Apostolic Blessing of successive Pontiffs. In Scotland, too, there has hardly been a Bishop who looked in vain for Hibernian help.

We do not propose to publish the many, many tributes paid to us—they are on the record. We are, however, prompted in a spirit of ecumenism, to record one kindly tribute, if only because "Praise from Tiberius is praise indeed." It is indicative perhaps of the very spirit of understanding, which the A.O.H. has tried to foster. In no less a place than the Belfast Parliament, a Dr. Morrison, Queen's University, in a reference to Bro. Joseph Devlin, then National President, said:

"I must say in paying this tribute, which may be thought an impertinence on my part, that so far as I have watched him in his public life, he has constantly supported the poor in connection with the National Health Insurance and this great Organisation with which he is associated. The Hibernian Order with which he is connected has as a Friendly Association been most generous, as friendly as any other Friendly Society, if not more so."

THE "MOLLY MAGUIRES"

Before concluding I have been asked to lay a Ghost—the Ghost of the "Molly Maguires" or "The Mollies," as sometimes applied to the A.O.H. Invariably the epithet is used by those who have not the slightest idea of what they are talking about and used too to suggest that there is something sinister or discreditable associated with the label of "Molly Maguire." We think differently, but so that our members may judge for themselves, we reprint from a 1909 Hibernian Journal the origin of the term "Molly Maguires." This article was at the time reprinted from "The Freeman" of March 15th, 1909.

"From "The Freeman" 15th March, 1909

"MOLLY MAGUIRE"—WHO THE WOMAN WAS

A Tale of Antrim life 100 Years Ago

The Evicted Widow and the Scottish

Planter

Did "Molly Maguire" ever exist in the flesh, or was she a sort of mythological fantasy of the type of "Dark Rosaleen" or "Kathleen Ni Houlihan" or the "Shan Van Vocht"? Or, indeed to employ a purely Saxon parallel, was "Molly Maguire" a sort of literary half-sister to "Sairey Gamp's friend, the inimitable "Mrs. Harris." Many years have rolled by, and many changes have taken place in the conditions of rural life in Ireland since that far off period when the name of "Molly Maguire" occupied anything approaching the notoriety on political platforms in this country and throughout Great Britain into which it has suddenly obtruded again. At a Unionist meeting in Rathmines Town Hall on Wednesday night last a reference by Mr. J. H. Campbell, K.C., M.P., to the Ancient Order of Hibernians evoked from the audience a chorus of voices shouting "Molly Maguire." How many of those who raised their voices knew if "Molly Maguire" had ever lived—had ever been a woman and a mother, had ever been an ordinary human being, just like their own mothers. It seems

from their cries and excited cheers as though in the eyes of these Rathmines loyalists, Molly Maguire was a mythological monster—a she dragon that had been slain by their loyal ancestors and the very mention of whose name was an echo from the long dead past.

It is not my purpose here to discuss the qualities of "Molly Maguire" as a political entity but rather to throw some light upon the woman as a real living personality whose name a century after her death has once again come into prominence.

About a century ago there dwelt in the County Antrim a Catholic peasant, his wife and children. The peasant tilled his plot of land and earned his daily bread by the sweat of his brow. The times in which he lived were dark and troubled, the neighbours round about him were, for the most part, not his friends, nor were they his co-religionists. In all the dark annuals of the country, there was perhaps no period at which the outlook was more gloomy and more helpless for the Catholic Celt who tilled the soil. He had no hold upon the land—he was simply suffered to live. In his own life, from day to day, he could well realise that Ireland had lost everything and gained nothing by the Act of Union. The new "United" Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland assuredly was not the friend of the Irish peasant and Maguire and his neighbours were leaderless, friendless and desperate. Forbidden by law to practise his own religion, he and his wife and children heard Mass on the wild and barren hillside, or in some remote place away from the ever-prying eyes of the faces of "law and order."

And at the same time Maguire and his neighbours were preyed upon by an army of Tithe Proctors. And not only so, but poor Maguire and his neighbours knew full well that the presence of Papists was regarded with disfavour amidst the hills and valleys of Antrim. Daily he witnessed the most heartless evictions. A peasant dies and instead of the tenancy passing to his son or his widow, the weeping mourners were thrown upon the roadside ere the body of the dead had been long consigned to the earth and the alien planter was installed in the building. Night had its terrors for the Catholic peasant of Ulster in those days—terrors that would baffle the powers of the most graphic pen to depict in all their gloomy horror. Under the cover of darkness, bands of murderers went abroad and perpetrated without fear of punishment the most brutal outrages upon the unhappy Catholic serfs.

These bands called themselves by various fantastic names—"Hearts of Oak," "Hearts of Steel," "Peep o' Day Boys" and the like. The Counties of Armagh, Down and Fermanagh were overrun by these murderous ruffians. "From Scotland come many, and from England not a few" wrote an Ulster Protestant writer at an earlier date, generally the scum of both nations who from death, or breaking, or fleeing from justice, or seeking shelter, come hither, hoping to be free of man's justice in a land where there was nothing, or but little as yet, of the fear of God . . . On all hands Atheism increased, and disregard of God; iniquity abounded with contention, fighting, murder, adultery."

Such was the class from which these bands of terrorists were recruited. At midnight they fired the thatch of the Catholic peasant's home, they slew the men, and the committed the most unspeakable outrage upon the women and children. One concrete illustration

will throw a sufficient light upon their character. At Ballymacnab in the County of Armagh, a band surrounded at midnight the house in which dwelt an aged priest, his widowed sister and her child; they slew the venerable priest, murdered the poor lady, and when the light of morning broke over that desecrated Catholic home a young girl, bereft of her reason was the only survivor of the horrors of the night.

Such were the times in which the poor Catholic peasant, Maguire, lived and died amid the glens of Antrim. And when he was dead, his widow and her children were thrown upon the roadside, and the little holding in which the peasant had given his life work was handed over by the landlord to a Scottish planter. The name of that widow, so the story runs, was Molly Maguire. Friendless now and homeless she was with her children round about her. The day for her was pregnant with misery and sorrow; the shadows of night were charged with unspeakable terrors; but there were men still left in Antrim— and who did not call themselves "Hearts of Oak" or "Hearts of Steel" or "Peep o' the Day Boys," but simply Catholic Irish peasants, with hearts big enough to think of other people's troubles as well as their own. And there came a night soon after the widow's eviction when the house where the Scottish planter now dwelt was surrounded by a band of men. And they broke into the planter's house, and when the planter challenged them who they were, a man's voice answered and said, "We are the friends of Molly Maguire." And they put that planter down on his knees, and they made him swear that he would quit the little holding, and he did quit it on the morrow. And the widow got back her own, for no planter dared to take the farm afterwards.

Such, briefly and disjointedly told, is the story of Molly Maguire—a page from the dark history of the Land War in Ireland. And if the name of the Widow Maguire is not to be found like that of Captain Boycott enshrined within the covers of an English Dictionary, the tale is one which like many another, can be told without bringing the blush of shame to the cheeks of a Catholic peasant or any genuine Irish Nationalist."

CONCLUSION

We have written much—there is much that will never be written. As an Organisation the A.O.H. does its most effective work in silence and remote from the limelight. One of the highest compliments paid to a famous British General, Lord Roberts, by the Poet Kilping, was that he "did not advertise." The A.O.H. does not advertise, but those most intimately acquainted with its operations are well aware that no other organisation has so effectively discharged its duties to its members and it has done so with a minimum of beating of the drum or orchestral effects. There are organisations, which revel in stunts and publicity and think that nothing matters but what appears in the Press. The greatest work achieved by the A.O.H. has been and must continue to be that which never appears in the press, which does not lend itself to pyrotechnics, but which produces healthy results. The A.O.H. has a record to maintain and a character to preserve. It has to act not by impulse but by judgment; to consider carefully every step taken; and

to be able to defend whatever course of action it enters on. We are at the end of our story. We hear it said, that the A.O.H. is not as strong as it used to be; that there has been a decline in its membership. Of what Organisation in Ireland or elsewhere can it be said, that it has not felt the reaction that almost inevitably follows on periods of intensive activity. Neither societies nor individuals can long retain what may be called a war temperature. From a temperature too high there is sometimes a drop to a temperature too low. Both temperatures are unhealthy, particularly for organisations. It can be said, without fear of contradiction, that the A.O.H. is the only Irish Organisation of its kind which has come through a period of storm and stress with the loyalty and confidence of so large a body of its members unshaken. What the A.O.H. is experiencing at present is, in the judgement of the writer, a normal healthy temperature, neither too high, but certainly not too low.

It is no part of this compiler's function to forecast the future. I will content myself with this— The A.O.H. will last—the A.O.H. must last, so long as the causes of Faith and Fatherland are in need of steady heads and stout hearts.

This historical sketch will we trust have proved helpful to our younger members. I propose to conclude with an extract from the December 1966 issue of the Hibernian Journal:

"As we reach out to the future then, we must at the same time retain a hold on our links with the past. We must build, but build upon the foundations we have inherited. Which, precisely, is where the standing principle of the A.O.H. comes in. Fidelity to Faith and Fatherland is not an ideal that becomes outdated. It belongs to every age."