

Finn's Leinster Journal

Mary Kenealy

THIS IS the story of a newspaper, one which lasted longer than its contemporaries in provincial Ireland, in fact for almost 200 years. Covering such a wide span of time it is necessarily superficial but I have endeavoured to outline how the paper developed, the society it portrayed and most of all the people who were responsible for guiding its fortunes throughout the years.

I have divided its lifespan into three periods: first from 1765 when it was founded by Edmund Finn and called Finn's Leinster Journal until the early 1800's when it passed into the ownership of Patrick Kearney. From this time until 1830 it was known as The Leinster Journal, proprietors being Patrick Kearney and later Andrew Henderson. During the third and longest period from 1830 on it was owned by the Maxwell and later the Kenealy families and was known as the Kilkenny Journal. In 1926 it became a limited company the directors being chiefly the members of the Kenealy family.

We will now discuss Finn's Leinster Journal. When Edmund Finn first produced his Journal provincial newspapers were an unfamiliar phenomenon, though they had been produced fitfully from the first quarter of the 18th century.

One appeared in Limerick as early as 1726 and in Cork a year previously. Waterford had a paper as early as 1729 but none of these papers survived for very long, only the Limerick Chronicle, almost contemporaries with the Kilkenny Journal, survived into this century.

It must have been quite an exciting event for the small closely knit town of Kilkenny when on the 24th Jan., 1767, Edmund Finn produced his newspaper from an address in St. Mary's Graveyard and Kilkenny had a newspaper of its own even though the man in the street would scarcely be able to afford the 4d. which it cost. But no doubt it was bought and passed around. It was published twice weekly on Wednesdays and Saturdays and circulated in all the towns around where messengers brought it on horse-back also to Carlow, Castledermot and Kilcullen Bridget and it went by post to Dublin, London and Edinburgh. The messengers were obliged to provide their own horses. Gentlemen living en route received their papers on the day of publication or should do so but

sometimes Mr. Finn had to print an apology stating that the delay was not his fault but was due to "the villainy of the messengers" but being careful to explain that he intended no reflection on Kilkenny Post Office.

An Editor a century later was not so concerned. He wrote: "We cannot comment on the Dublin papers since the Post Office has not yet delivered them. Nothing new about this. It happens frequently."

The address of St. Mary's Graveyard is explained by the fact that all the surrounding houses opened on to the graveyard as the wall forming St. Mary's Lane wasn't then built. Rev. James Graves has identified the house as the Corner House of St. Mary's Lane nearest the Tholsel i.e. either Mr. Oliver Kelly's or Good's, probably the former.

Edmund Finn did not remain long at the graveyard address. In December of the same year he announced his removal to another house in High Street which he describes as lately occupied by Mr. Keran Laffan Chandler, opposite Mr. William Watters, Merchant, a description which doesn't help us very much but I have good reason to believe this house was that formerly occupied by D. Smithwick & Co. and now the site of the L & N Supermarket.

This move to a much more palatial establishment denotes considerable prosperity. The old premises were offered for sale and the purchaser could have all the fixtures and improvements at a valuation so the new premises received all new equipment, all of which indicates the spending of money. Edmund Finn had a wealthy brother, William, a merchant in Carlow. William is frequently referred to as proprietor of Finn's Leinster Journal but as his name never appears on the paper, I must assume that he was responsible to some extent at any rate for financing the paper, perhaps now or possible on the death of Edmund. (I will come back to the Carlow family later). In fact, it seems to have been a family concern; a sister was married to Stokes who was Edmund Finn's foreman.

In 1777, just over 10 years after starting his paper, Edmund Finn died leaving a widow and seven young children the eldest not more than 8 years old.

This was a daunting position for a young woman to find herself in. But Catherine Finn was a woman of ability and quite ready to pick up the challenge. Born Catherine Butler, she may have been one of a family of printers of that name operating in Kilkenny at the time. At any rate the following month she announced that she intended carrying on the paper herself and soliciting the continued custom of the gentry. From that time until the beginning

of the next century she ran the paper successfully save for a few years from 1796 when the name M. Finn appears on the imprint no doubt indicating that she had handed over to her eldest son, Michael. But Michael proved a bitter disappointment.

In 1796 he had married a Miss Sarah Williams, daughter of a bookseller of Skinners Row, Dublin, an agent for the journal. Her brother, William Williams, started a private bank in Kilkenny in May 1800. In October, Michael Finn joined him as partner and they extended their business to Dublin. The Bank was badly managed and bankruptcy proceedings commenced probably in 1806 and continued for many years Williams fled and it is said that only his death prevented Finn from being prosecuted for fraud.

Catherine appears to have resumed control of the paper during this episode. She also had bad luck with her younger son, James. He was the clever one of the family taking all the prizes at Burrell's Hall where he was educated. But he died in 1793 at the age of 19 and is buried in the Finn tomb in St. Mary's Churchyard. Catherine herself lived until 1832 when she was 83 years of age. Where she was laid to rest I do not know, possibly with her husband in the St. Mary's Churchyard, but the inscription is so obliterated that it is impossible to read it.

A few words about the Carlow Finns. William was a prosperous merchant, a tanner, he lived in Castle Street. His family of 4 boys were better educated and seem to have had more ability than the Kilkenny family. Thomas, the eldest, was a journalist, described as a writer of considerable power but enjoying a reputation for eccentricity. He was an accurate historian and wrote many pieces about the Carlow of 1798. The next son, William, had a distinguished career at Trinity and studied for the Bar. He became a friend of Daniel O'Connell, at that time starting his brilliant legal career. When O'Connell sought a husband for his favourite sister, Alicia, his choice fell on William Finn. But William had to show that he was financially eligible. He told O'Connell that his father had promised to leave him several farms which he owned in Co. Kilkenny, at present set in leases which brought in £300 a year but when the leases fell in would be worth at least £1,000, and also freehold property.

He also mentioned that his father was in very poor health and not likely to recover. This was apparently considered satisfactory because the marriage took place a few months later. It is interesting to note that some years later O'Connell's financial advisers when urging him

to curb his extravagance quoted a list of debts which he owed which included one of £800 to William Finn.

Finn took up politics, he settled in Tullaroan, no doubt on one of the family farms and took an active part in the affairs of the County.

He was twice elected to Parliament as M.P. for Kilkenny County. At one time a collection was made to provide a National Testimonial for some political service. He and his wife died on the same day in 1862.

We now come almost to the end of the Finn connection with the paper. In January, 1802, a paper was published entitled *The Leinster Journal*, proprietor Patrick Kearney, very similar in format to Finn's paper but for the title in a more ornate typeface. But Catherine was still producing occasional numbers of Finn's *Leinster Journal* and occasionally there are numbers of *The Leinster Journal*, Printer: C. Finn. Patrick Kearney appeared to have been a family friend, at least he stood as sponsor for Michael Finn's daughter, Catherine, in 1801. After 1805 I have come across no more numbers of Finn's *Leinster Journal*.

We may now ask what was this newspaper like? Dr. M. M. Madden, the 19th century historian, thinks Edmund Finn was too abject and insulted his fellow Catholics with offensive tirades. I have not seen any evidence of this, in fact, the proprietors, who were also usually the editors of these newspapers, did not offer any opinions of their own but contented themselves with long extracts from London and foreign papers, some few items, very few, in fact, of local news. The rest of the paper consisted of advertisements, the most frequent being notices of the sale or letting of large estates. For example in 1801 we find: To be sold the timber of Kilcash in the county Tipperary consisting of oak, ash, beech, elm, lime, Fir. Proposals in writing to the Earl of Ormond. Was this the devastation that the poet lamented? Very large rewards were offered for the return of stolen property and "no questions asked."

Dr. Madden felt that Catherine Finn had a more independent outlook than her husband, nevertheless he had some biting criticism to offer her too. I quote "Despite the fact that the widow Finn described it as a monument of literature and taste in the city of Kilkenny I have not been able to discover in it from first to last any evidence of or acquaintance with literature nor any indication of taste liberal or political or any interest in any cause which was humane or patriotic." These are strong words

but his pronouncements on some of the Dublin papers were even more devastating.

Catherine devoted more space to Irish news than the earlier numbers and one can detect her views from the extracts which she quoted. She had no love for what would now be known as the Establishment and printed anecdotes about the English Royal family which did not redound to their credit. She obviously favoured the underdog, for example here is an extract from the Dublin Evening Post : "We are sorry to declare that no relief will be administered to the poor of Ireland during the present session. Administration seem intent upon removing the causes from which disturbances originated but upon punishing the disturbers themselves."

The advertisements give us the flavour of life in the 18th and 19th centuries :

"Two Apprentices have run away and their master threatens he will enforce the law against anyone who should employ them."

"A fencing master proposes opening a school. Particulars from the Red Lion in Coal Market."

"Mr. Lewis Byrne a tail setter informs the public that he nicks horses with the greatest safety from a week old to any age."

"A silk weaver has set up in the Frying Pan in Patrick's St." The advantages and power of publicity were quickly realised by the public.

Consider this which appeared in September 1767 :

"A lady living near Kells has misbehaved and proved an imposter to a gentleman from Tipperary. If she does not make speedy restitution her name and the whole transaction will be published in this journal."

The year 1799 brought the controversial question of the proposed Union with Britain. The Catholic Bishops meeting at Maynooth believing that the proposed union held out more hope for their religion than the Protestant Parliament in Dublin and relying on a promise given by Pitt that the Union would immediately be followed by emancipation, had agreed to give their support to the Act. In Kilkenny a meeting of the Catholics was held in St. Mary's Chapel and they elected delegates of whom Michael Finn was one to present their petition in favour of the Union to the Lord Lieutenant. The obsequies note of the petition expressing gratitude for past favours etc. was symptomatic of a severely oppressed people. But the following year the journal was enthusiastically reporting meetings held by the anti-Unionists led by W. B.

Ponsonby, M.P. for the County and Sir Edward Loftus. The conduct of the paper having in the meantime again reverted to Catherine seems to indicate some family disagreement on this issue. As we know from history the Bill was passed despite all opposition.

In January, 1801, the paper printed the curt announcement :

"This day the Unions of the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland having taken place the guns of the salute Battery in the Phoenix Park were fired and the Royal Standard of the United Kingdom was displayed upon the Bedford Tower." No other comment on the matter appeared.

We now come to Kearney's Journal of which the first number was published on 4th January, 1802; more Kilkenny news is now appearing. Famine is widespread in the city and the Charitable Society appeals for provisions to feed the poor stating that many people were expiring daily from want of food

Gentlemen with surplus vegetables in their gardens were asked to give them for soup. Rev. Peter Roe preached a Charity sermon which realised £67 "an honour to his head and his heart."

About 1813 competition appeared for the first time in the form of a paper called the Kilkenny Chronicle, published by John Reynolds, which however, only lasted a few years. It was expensive costing 5d. and appeared three times a week. More serious rivalry came the following year when Abraham Denroche started the Moderator, a Protestant paper appealing to the landlords and Protestant gentry. It must have had an effect on the circulation. However, Kearney lasted another six years, until 1820 when he sold out to Andrew Henderson. There are very few copies of the paper available for these years during Henderson's ownership. I understand the quality of the paper manufactured at this time was poor and it deteriorated rapidly.

The paper was now stated to be published from High Street near the Parade. This was probably the building on the corner of High Street and the Parade which was to be its home for the next hundred years and was known to later generations as Maxwells Corner. During the 1820's the country was in a very disturbed state. The Whiteboys and other lawless bodies roamed the countryside. Murders were reported nearly every day usually of process servers or tithe proctors. Mr. Henderson who was firmly on the side of law and order wrote editorials condemning the violence which would be quite familiar to us to-day.



In 1830 a new era started for the paper. It was purchased by Cornelius Maxwell who changed the name to the Kilkenny Journal and Leinster Commercial and Literary Advertiser, the first number under the new name being published on the 17th March, 1830. Maxwell does not appear to have had any experience as a journalist. He is described as a Land Agent, the son of Leighlin Maxwell and Mary Hogan and owned a considerable amount of house property in the city chiefly in Patrick Street and William Street. He was a friend and staunch supporter of Daniel O'Connell at that time at the height of his career, having achieved Catholic Emancipation and about to launch his great campaign for Repeal of the Union.

A newspaper devoted to his cause was an essential asset. In the provinces he found this in the Kilkenny Journal under Con Maxwell. From this time on the paper took a strongly nationalist line in politics.

But first a few words about this family which was to guide the paper's fortunes for the remainder of its life. In 1819 Con Maxwell had married Mary Anne Doly and as his wife's family besides being more colourful and interesting than the Maxwells was also the originator of another branch which was destined to become closely linked with the papers fortunes. I will deal with it in more detail. For this we must go back to Paris in the year 1746 when a son was born to Francois Doly and his wife, Genevieve Boitel. They called him Louis Francois. His father was a *traiteur*, a member of the powerful corporation of restaurateurs though not known by that name at the time. His godfather, Louis Lelievre, was a cook and his godmother, Margarite Cossin, the wife of a baker, so it is easy to deduce the trade followed by the family. The *traiteurs* had very rigid rules which they enforced vigorously, for instance, only members of the corporation could serve sauces or ragouts. On one occasion, one Henri Boulanger not being a *traiteur*, had the temerity to serve white sauce with pigs trotters. He was sued by the corporation.

The case came before the highest court of Parlement and became a *cause celebre*. The court decided in Henri's favour. Instantly he became famous and all Paris flocked to his door. Thus was the power of the *traiteurs* broken. I am indebted to Theodora Fitzgibbon in her book: *A Taste of Paris*, for this piece of information. All this took place later. At the time Louis Doly was born the *traiteurs* were still supreme. We next hear of Louis living in Kilkenny some twenty odd years later. Why he came and settled here we do not know but we can perhaps surmise.

In 1773 he married Mary Ann Madden, daughter of Matthew and Judith Madden, a prominent Kilkenny family. Matthew died soon after but Judith, now known as the Widow Madden, was a person of considerable importance. She is said to have owned a number of shops in High Street and was proprietress of "the Hole in the Wall" the well-known tavern. I have no documentary evidence to prove this, it is merely family tradition, but if it were true there would immediately spring to mind a connection between a high class inn keeper catering for the nobility and the gourmet world of Paris. She may have been the one who induced Louis Doly to come and settle here. This of course is pure hypothesis. From an early date he is referred to as a shop-keeper or merchant in High Street and he also owned house property at St. Patrick's Gate.

Judith also had a son, Edmund, who married into the Langton family of High Street, whose descendants inherited the great stone house in High Street. This family has been researched by our member, Rev. Edmund Hayburn.

From one of Edmund's daughters, Ellen, the O'Rourke and through them the Buggy families are descended, who were to have close connections with the journal in its later years.

All these families had their portraits painted. It was apparently fashionable at that time.

Rev. Hayburn has presented copies of the Langton and Comerford portraits to the Society. The Dolys were satisfied with miniatures which we still have and very nice they looked too.

They were all members of the prestigious charitable Society (of which we possess a Minute Book for 1785 in our Library) which sometimes met at the Widow Madden's house. On one occasion Edmund Madden and Louis Doly were thanked for acting as Secretaries for two years without remuneration; the normal fee for Secretary was £10.

The Free School Society formed to provide free schooling for Catholic children also met at the Widow Madden's house. Was this, one wonders, The Hole in the Wall?

To come back to Louis Doly and his wife. They had many children starting off with three sons, Louis, Matthew, William, but as happened only too frequently at that time many of them died young. On Louis' tomb in St. Mary's Churchyard we find the inscription:

"Here with 6 of his children who died young lies the remains of Louis Doly and honest man and a good citizen. He died in 1818 and his wife Mary Ann in 1819."

The Leinster Journal of that date records : “ On Sunday night last died Mr. Louis Doly a native of France but for upwards of 40 years an inhabitant and a respectable trader of this city. The death of this good man affords another striking example of the mutability of all things that are under the sun. On Sunday he walked dined and went to bed to wake no more. In him his family have lost an indulgent parent and affectionate husband, society a good citizen and an honest man.” Could anyone wish for a better epitaph.

The Dolys had at least one daughter who survived and not only survived but lived to the good age of 85 years. She married Con Maxwell and surviving her husband was proprietress of the Journal for over 25 years.

I must now refer to the other branch of this family descended from Ellen Madden who became Ellen O'Rourke. In 1800 she had a son christened Louis, no doubt in compliment to his uncle, Louis Doly. We don't hear of her again until 1812 when obviously a widow she was renting a house in Patrick Street from Louis Doly and later from Con Maxwell who was paying her an annuity of £30 a year.

Louis, her son, married Ellen Tobin, thus bringing another Ellen Rourke into the family. In 1826 a son was born also called Louis but he died in 1846, aged 20, and is buried with his parents in St. John's Old Churchyard. This may be a bit confusing to the family who always understood that Louis O'Rourke had emigrated to Australia and whose descendants frequently returned here on visits. I think it was probably a later Louis who emigrated. There were at least four generations with the same name. The two families, the Maxwells and the Rourkes, grew up together in Kilkenny and were obviously closely united, the Maxwells standing as sponsors for the Rourke children in baptism and vice versa. The Maxwells lived in No. 4 Upper Patrick Street (near the Gate) and the Rourkes in King Street in the house now occupied by Callaghan and Connolly. Both had large families, mainly daughters. I don't wish to bore you by going in detail into family history so I will confine myself to the members of each family who specifically concern us. In the case of the Maxwells it was a daughter, Rose, who married William Kenealy, whom I will refer to later. In the case of the Rourkes the important member was Elizabeth who married John Buggy, a merchant of High Street, and a farmer of Cantwell's Court, Kilkenny. He was later to become Mayor of Kilkenny and is notable for the fact that during his

term of office an old penal law prohibiting Catholics from entering churches in their robes of office was repealed. Within 24 hours of the passing of the Act John Buggy in his Mayoral Robes and followed by the Corporation entered St. Mary's Cathedral in State. His example was immediately followed all over Ireland.

The Buggys had a large family of boys well known to the older generation of Kilkenny people, the eldest was Michael, a solicitor, who was to become the first Chairman of the Kilkenny Journal Ltd. in 1926. There was one daughter, Alice, who married Cornelius Kenealy, eldest son of William and Rose, and who on the death of her husband in 1909 found herself like Catherine Finn in earlier days, shouldering the burden of a young family and a newspaper.

Before coming to the Kenealy era I would like to say a few words about the policies of the paper under Maxwell ownership.

Gavan Duffy writes of the Kilkenny Journal of this time: "Among the Repeal papers in Leinster outside the Capital, the Kilkenny Journal held a leading place. Some of the most capable and experienced men of the National Party were resident within the range of its circulation and in turn it is understood that it lay within the range of their influence" (Young Ireland).

Maxwell engaged Editors who reflected his strongly held Nationalist views one of the early ones being Kyran Thomas Buggy, son of Michael Buggy and Alice Birch and brother of John Buggy before mentioned.

Our Secretary, Mrs. Phelan, read a very interesting paper on Kieran Thomas Buggy to our Society in 1953. It deals with an interesting and brilliant young Kilkenny man and also gives a picture of life in Kilkenny during the period in which he lived. I can only give here a brief notice of his career as Editor.

A task which he took upon himself while Editor of the Journal was the reform of the Corporation which had been solidly in the hands of the Tory Party for generations. By a series of bye-laws they had taken all power from the people and abolished elections. Kieran Buggy challenged them basing his claim on the Charter of James II which vested municipal power in the sovereign and burgesses. To aid him in the fight he founded The Citizens Club devoted to securing the rights of all citizens. The struggle was watched with interest by other counties, for all had the same problem.

When a Catholic Mayor, Richard Sullivan, was elected

he urged him to call a meeting of all those entitled to vote, namely, the Freeman and Freeholders of the city. He persuaded all his friends who were entitled to be Freeman to apply for enrolment as he did himself. Eventually the meeting was called, in fact a series of meetings and all the offending bye-laws were rescinded. This paved the way for the Municipal Reform Act which was passed a few years later guaranteeing free elections to all municipal bodies. In the meantime Kieran Buggy had left Kilkenny and gone to Belfast to edit "The Vindicator" a bi-weekly journal founded by Gavan Duffy for Northern Catholics where he was an immense success. Mrs. Phelan has disclosed that it was a broken love affair which caused him to leave and which seriously affected his health. He died two years later at the age of 27 and his death caused dismay and desolation among the Catholics of Belfast. Daniel O'Connell, whose Secretary he was for a time, on hearing of his death spoke of him at Conciliation Hall in the flamboyant style of the period: "Ireland did not possess a purer patriot, a finer Irish heart than his never throbbed in our Irish bosom. An honest sincere more single-hearted, more disinterested man never throd the earth" etc. etc.

He was buried in Friar's Bush graveyard where a monument, the finest in the graveyard, was erected by public subscription.

The Buggy family of Kilkenny have a snuff box and a tray presented to him by the Citizen Club, no doubt at the farewell dinner which was held in their new rooms in William Street, now C.Y.M.S., with Edmund Smithwick in the chair.

There was a great resurgence of spirit among the Catholic and Nationalist population in the 1830's. The paper was filled with accounts of joyful social gatherings, travelling companies of players in the Courthouse, Flower Shows, festive dinner parties. Of course plenty of political activity too, but I suspect O'Connell's Monster Meetings were as much social as political gatherings. There was intense anti-tithe agitation but even that sometimes took a lighter form, such as the anti-tithe dinner in Graigue to which the Citizen Club of Kilkenny were invited as guests.

By the 1840's tension was rising between the followers of O'Connell and the younger and more militant members of the Nationalist Party. The climax occurred in July 1846 when the young men led by Smith and O'Brien walked out of Conciliation Hall to form a new party later dubbed the "Young Irelanders." A bitter enmity grew up between

the two groups. John O'Connell, the M.P. for Kilkenny at the time naturally assumed that the Kilkenny Journal would unhesitatingly support his father's followers, but to his dismay, though giving pride of place to the O'Connell meetings etc., they also printed articles and letters from the Young Irelanders. "What" he asks in a letter to his friend Edmond Smithwick "what has come over the Kilkenny Journal." "Has young Ireland hopelessly given it the itch? Alas for poor old Ireland always division but this is the most humiliating discension of all." Worse was to follow; an unfavourable review of his Repeal Dictionary was reprinted in the Journal. He concluded that a new Editor was responsible. "I am sorry" he writes to the Editor "that the once respectable Kilkenny Journal has fallen to be a miserable plagiarist of the nation. I don't know who you are. I know you are not Con Maxwell the true-hearted proprietor of the Kilkenny Journal but some newly imported public instructor come to teach us all our duty." The only response from the paper was a short note stating that its policy was independence and concluding: "We will bestow our praise or censure on whatever men or measures we think deserving of either.

Maxwell was much absorbed in municipal affairs at this time. He was one of the first Aldermen in the Reformed Corporation and was later made Borough Treasurer which he held till his death. He was apparently being considered for the Mayoralty in 1844. But, in fact, the popular Robert Cane was the next Mayor and Maxwell never achieved that distinction.

Even the death of Daniel O'Connell did not end the quarrel but eventually the two parties were re-united in the Irish League formed in a new effort to achieve Repeal. Alas, it was quickly followed by the abortive '48 rebellion, the arrest and imprisonment of the leaders, the suppression of the Nation newspaper and the scattering of the brilliant band of young writers who had so dazzled the nation. Some were imprisoned or deported but many escaped to America where they started new lives.

At home the people were filled with apathy and hopelessness and thousands were emigrating. Con Maxwell died in 1851, the writer of his obituary echoed the mood of the people when he wrote "he was a link between a generation which has passed with all its stirring memories and the tamer, colder generation of the present day." He comes over to us as a sincere, conscious and genuinely patriotic man without the brilliance or personal magnetism of K. T. Buggy or the drive and determination of his son-



in-law, William Kenealy, nevertheless he was well thought of and respected by all and tributes were paid to him on his death even by the rival newspaper, *The Moderator*, a fact which was noted with satisfaction in his own paper.

About this time a Kilkenny man who had been in America for about 5 years returned to his native town. His name was Joseph Denieffe. He describes his arrival in Kilkenny: "I walked through deserted streets although but 9 o'clock on a fine bright night. Even at night I could see the change for the worse that had come over the little town, the woollen mills which were working when I left, was closed and deserted, gloom and sadness prevailed." The next day, however, he was cheered to meet his friend, John Haltigan, who was he thought, next to Robert Cane, the most popular man in the city. He was foreman printer in the *Kilkenny Journal*. Both were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood recently formed in America. Haltigan also had a small farm on the outskirts of the town and the two friends spent their Sundays hunting with greyhounds on the Tullaburn Mountain where he, Haltigan, knew many men of the right stamp and initiated them into the movement.

Haltigan later became foreman printer on "The Irish People" the Fenian newspaper. When the paper was suppressed he was arrested and sentenced to 7 years penal servitude. He was released after serving 4 years, completely broken in health. He died in Cork in 1884. His remains were brought back to Kilkenny and buried in St. Patrick's Cemetery where the nationalists of Kilkenny erected a beautiful Celtic Cross to mark his grave. (The long inscription on the cross is recorded in our graveyard records).

Denieffe returned to America after failure of the Fenian Rising and died there in 1910. His description of the Ireland of the time perhaps justifies the rather arrogant claims of James Stephens. "Apathy," he said, "and the continuous flight of the best bone and sinew of our race to the emigrant ship were becoming a settled conclusion in all minds. No effort was being made to avert the impending desolation which must follow. The poor house was the only refuge for those who could not get away." Stephens declared: "I had found the cause of Ireland dead, I awaked the dead and gave it action and power."

Another member of the *Journal* staff who took an active part in the I.R.B. organisation was a former Editor, James Roche. He worked with John O'Mahony in America

and was one of those who signed the summons authorising Stephens to prepare for Revolution in Ireland.

Despite the militant tendencies of some of its staff the Journal always favoured constitutional change rather than physical force. This may be due to the influence of its proprietress, Mrs. Maxwell, who is described at her death as a staunch O'Connellite all her life. O'Connell's aversion to physical force is well-known.

At this time, i.e. the early 1850's, a young writer was composing a song which he called "The Moon behind the Hill." It was one of a spate of "exile" songs which poured forth from the poets and ballad makers of Ireland and were sung nostalgically by the Irish in their new homes. "The Moon behind the Hill" was first published in New York in Mitchel's newspaper "The Citizen." The writer was William Kenealy, a Corkman who under the pseudonym, William of Munster, had contributed articles and patriotic verse to *The Nation*, *Duffy's Fireside Magazine* and other publications. In 1856 he was appointed Editor of the *Kilkenny Journal*. A look at his career may be of interest. Born in Cloyne, Co. Cork, in 1828. The son of a smith who also had a farm outside the village, William was bred in the revolutionary tradition. In those days the people most feared by the authorities were the smiths and the schoolmasters, both had excellent opportunities for meeting people unobtrusively, and many a revolutionary plot was hatched in a smiths forge.

William became a schoolmaster and at the age of 20 was appointed head teacher in the Churchtown school. It was the year of rebellion and there was much political unrest. An inflammatory proclamation was published, addressed to the St. Colman's Club, the authorship of which was traced to Kenealy; a local magistrate appealed to the Commissioners of Education and Kenealy was dismissed. He was rescued by Dr. Maginn, the young Co-adjutor Bishop of Derry, a fervent admirer of the Young Irelanders who offered him a teaching post in his Diocesan college. From there he went to Leeds where he edited the Catholic newspaper "The Lamp" and subsequently returned to Ireland to edit the "Tipperary Leader." Here he ran into further trouble. A writer on his paper produced an article reflecting on a Protestant clergyman who took an action for libel against the paper. Kenealy as Editor took responsibility and refused to give the name of the writer. For this he was obliged to serve a term in gaol and damages of £2,000 were awarded against him which he was unable to pay. It was while he was in gaol in Clonmel

that "The Moon behind the Hill" is supposed to have been written. It was at this time that he applied for the position of Editor of the Kilkenny Journal and was immediately accepted although another applicant for the position was Charles Kickham who had already an established literary reputation. Kickham and Kenealy however remained friends and on Kenealy's death, Kickham gratefully acknowledged this. He wrote: "Though our opinions on some subjects were poles apart I am happy to think that our friendship was never dimmed even by a passing cloud since I first long ago in early manhood made the acquaintance of genial William of Munster."

During his time as Editor, Irish politics were dominated by the struggle for land reform and nobody could have been more dedicated to this cause than William Kenealy. With E. P. Mulallen Marum he travelled the country addressing meetings in support of the Tenants' Defence Association, a body which with other prominent Irishmen he had helped to found. The accounts of the meetings of the Kilkenny Tenants' Association filled the columns of the paper almost to the exclusion of all other news.

In 1858, two years after he became Editor, William married Rose Maxwell. Co. Maxwell, Jr., the only son had died the previous year. On his marriage, William received a half share in the newspaper with the option of purchasing the other half on the death of Mrs. Maxwell. In the event he predeceased his mother-in-law so the option expired. (His salary as Editor had been £130 a year, he was now to receive half the profits). Shortly after this he was involved in another libel action, this time as plaintiff. The action was against the Editor of the Belfast Mercury, one Durham Dunlop, for libel contained in an account of an agricultural meeting which had taken place in Kilkenny.

It would take too long to go into the details of this encounter in which highly colourful language was used on both sides and which must have been quite entertaining for the inhabitants of Kilkenny. Honours were more or less even in the end, Kenealy winning on some counts, Dunlop on others.

The Belfast gentleman's description of the Kilkenny Journal given in a pamphlet published after the event is highly expressive: "The Kilkenny Journal, one of those rebel prints whose obscurity gives audacity to its disloyalty and whose existence is a moral pestilence to the community contaminated and cursed by its presence." William Kenealy he described as: "a Roman Catholic Incendiary, a 48

disloyalist and a rebel in heart and in principle to the British Constitution."

His fellow citizens however thought more highly of him. Arthur McMahan in his Journal writes: "I never heard him speak an unkind word of anyone no matter how he might be opposed to him in politics on which he had strong and decided views of his own. He was an ardent and sincere lover of his country in the truest sense of the word, a firm and useful friend to the tenant farmers whose cause he persistently advocated in *The Journal*. He was a fluent and eloquent speaker on any subject political or social. Strangers who had met him at some social gathering afterward declared that they had never heard at any public meeting more beautiful language or more exquisite similes than Kenealy had made use of on any impromptu subject that turned up."

He was twice Mayor of Kilkenny in 1872 and 1873, and also received an honour from the French Red Cross Society for help given to the wounded in Paris after the Franco-Prussian War. This took the form of an inscribed bronze cross which we still have. William Kenealy died in 1876 at the early age of 48. He is buried in St. Patrick's Graveyard, Kilkenny.

It was sad that William Kenealy did not live to see the goal for which he had striven so hard to achieve i.e. the three F's: Free Sale, Fair Rent and Fixity of Tenure. These did not become law until 1881. The 1870 Land Act from which great things were expected was a disappointment, one of the chief causes of resentment being the Ulster tenants receiving all the privileges denied to the rest of the country.

It is rather difficult now to estimate what influence this and similar newspapers had during the 19th century, one feels they occupied the place now taken by television. Every political group and every movement, constitutional and revolutionary, felt the necessity of having its own newspaper. In fact, I would say that the latter half of the 19th century was the great age of the newspaper. They had columns upon columns of closely printed material. A weekly provincial easily provided reading material for the week.

One would like to think that the Editorials, the public meetings, the continual agitation of men like William Kenealy, E. P. Mulhallen Marum and others like them throughout the country created the climate which enabled

Gladstone to introduce and pass the Land Act which secured at last for the tenants of Ireland the means to obtain ownership of their lands.

PRINCIPAL BOOKS CONSULTED :

- “ ‘98 in Carlow ” by Peadar MacSuibhne. “ The Nationalist,” Carlow 1974.
 “ The Correspondence of Daniel O’Connell.” Edited by Prof. Maurice O’Connell, 1975.
 “ The Young Irelanders ” by T. F. O’Sullivan. The Kerryman Ltd., 1944.
 “ Young Ireland ” by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy. M. H. Gill & Son, 1892.
 “ A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood ” by Joseph Denieffe. Irish University Press, 1969.
 “ The Felon’s Track ” by Michael Doheny. M. H. Gill & Son Ltd., 1918.
 Files of all relevant newspapers Family papers.
 Parish Records of St. Mary’s Cathedral, Kilkenny.
 Records of Graveyard Inscriptions, Rothe House Library.



GRAVEYARD INSCRIPTION FROM CO. WICKLOW

BRAY, Parish of Bray, St. Paul’s churchyard (Ch. of Ireland), Barony of Rathdown, County of Wicklow.

FOOT. Quotation from a list of memorials compiled by Rev. G. D. Scott, Rector, c. 1898. A comment by Canon Scott follows the inscription :

“ Rev. Simon Charles Foot M.A. Canon of St. Canice Cathedral, Rector and Vicar of Knocktopher, in which parish he fulfilled his ministry for 51 years. He entered into his rest on June 3 1885, aged 77 years.”

No inscription. Entry in Register : “ Rev Simon Foot Canon, the Lawn Bray, June 5 1885, age 77.

