

John R McCormack and the *Tipperary People* Newspaper

By Bob McCormack

Introduction

At seven-thirty on Monday morning 16 January 1882, Head-Constable Guerin of Tipperary RIC with a party of thirty police, all under arms, arrived at the Henry Street residence of John R McCormack, proprietor and editor of the *Tipperary People* newspaper, and arrested him under Foster's Coercion Act,¹ on a warrant charging him with 'intimidating people against paying rent.'² According to McCormack, he was arrested on a 'fallacious suspicion, founded upon the whisper of an *ambitious* policeman, or grounded on the *elastic* information of a hireling informer ...'.³ McCormack was promptly removed to Clonmel Jail or 'bastile', to join the 81 other 'suspects' there.⁴

John R McCormack

McCormack established his newspaper, *The Tipperary People – Journal of Literary and Political Instruction*,⁵ in Nenagh in 1875, setting out as his objective 'To advance the National interests of Ireland, to maintain her right to an independent political existence, and to aid in putting an end to [the] slavish doctrine of West-Britonism ... Second to keep alive a healthy national spirit, and to encourage the development of ... a passionate love of their country, a fervent, sincere and active piety, a deep reverence for religious institutions and an ardent devotion to the cause of human freedom.'⁶ He saw *The People* as following in the tradition of O'Connell and Grattan, employing widespread non-violent means to achieve political independence and social change. To end landlordism 'it is not necessary to murder any person, nor even to wrong anybody'.⁷ Awareness of your rights, political activism and moral persuasion would be enough.

As a young man, McCormack was fully persuaded of the need for physical force to achieve Irish independence. When he was in college, perhaps intending to train for the priesthood, he was excited by the revolutionary plans of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and took an active part in their abortive rising, before fleeing to the United States and becoming involved in the Fenian skirmishes along the Canadian border,⁸ returning to Nenagh early in 1869. He paid a further visit to the United States in 1873.⁹ Before establishing his newspaper in Nenagh in 1875, McCormack worked as a shop keeper, a farmer, and for a short time he worked on another newspaper.¹⁰ He married Eliza Sadlier of Bonorea, Anacarty, and their first child Catherine was born at the end of October 1869 in Nenagh. John R. and Eliza had three other daughters, Mary Ellen born in 1874, Anna Josephine born in 1880, and Elizabeth (Lizzie) born in 1883. Both Catherine and Mary Ellen died



Tipperary People Newspaper premises, 7 Davis Street, Tipperary Town, c. 1905

young, aged 27 and 15 respectively, while Anna Josephine married Daniel McCormack of Graniera (they were second cousins) and moved to Montana, USA, and Lizzie married James Bulger of Dublin.¹¹

There is no baptismal record for John McCormack, but he was born about 1845 to Thomas Cormack and Mary Ryan of Coumnagellagh in Curreeny half-parish. His father was accused by Lord Dunalley of intimidating him and he was sentenced to a month in prison – the local folklore has him calling the landlord ‘an ould brute’.¹² His three paternal uncles were tenants in the area, in Curreeny, Laghile and the Milestone and his relatives contributed to his Testimonial (Thomas giving £3¹³), and assisted in the building of New Tipperary with horses and men (John McCormack of the Milestone was one of the organisers in Upperchurch and Drumbane¹⁴) while John of Laghile was in Clonmel ‘bastille’ with him.

In establishing his newspaper, McCormack did not seek subscribers in advance of publication, taking the full risk himself; moreover he was entering a crowded market with both the unionist *Nenagh Guardian* and the nationalist *Tipperary Advocate* well established in the town. His first issue appeared on 15 August 1875 but due to ‘mechanical and other errors over which he had no control’ the *People* did not appear again until 25 August 1876.¹⁵ In January 1877 he moved his newspaper to Tipperary town where he continued to publish until his death in July 1900, when his wife Eliza continued to manage the paper while expanding the printing business.¹⁶ Eliza died in September 1916 and the business was left to her daughter Lizzie. It continued under the ownership of the Tipperary Printing

& Publishing Co Ltd until 1921 when the newspaper and printing works were sold, and the paper re-appeared as the *Tipperaryman*.¹⁷

McCormack was an unapologetic proponent of the nationalist cause, as set out in the paper's motto:

'To labour in defence of right –
For God and home to make a stand,
To carry on the grand old fight,
For freedom, faith and fatherland.'

The paper's cultural and literary aspirations were minimal – patriotic verses, occasional serialisation of a novel – but political education in nationalism was central to his purpose. Perhaps because of the risk of defamation or informing his adversaries, his editorial style is often obtuse, laced with historical references understood by his nationalist readers. His material is drawn from the local court hearings, the meetings of the Town Councillors and the Boards of Guardians (both dominated by nationalists in later years), and the meetings of the various branches of the Land League, the Ladies Land League and the National League, as well as political speeches at public meetings, developments in Westminster, local evictions and the misconduct of the RIC. Some letters to the editor were published, and butter prices and other agricultural matters also featured. And like all local papers, the *People* relayed items from other newspapers, including quirky news from around the world to fill space if needed.

Advertising was the main source of income and the *People* had many regular advertisers. The first page and up to half of the second page consisted of advertisements and public notices (sales, auctions, invitations to tender, renewal of pub licences, etc) with occasional small advertisement on pages three and four. The contract from the Board of Guardians was sought, not just for Tipperary town, but neighbouring Unions as well.¹⁸ McCormack's business seems to have struggled at times, and not just when he was in jail. He was before the Petty Sessions court in 1887 and again in 1891 for non-repayment of loans to the Tipperary Loans Fund Society,¹⁹ and in 1883 for non-payment of car hire.²⁰ He was also in dispute with his apprentices for not completing their contracts – one left early to join the army in Clonmel, another was fired for not showing up for work – he counter-claimed for being fired!²¹ McCormack also had other brushes with the law; two years after moving to Tipperary town, he refused to pay a toll in the town, claimed it was an illegal charge and that the toll-keeper refused to give his name and attempted to hit him with his stick;²² on another he was found in a public house in Rossacrow outside of opening hours.²³

Land League

When McCormack arrived in Tipperary town in 1877, there was little or no tenant agitation. The earlier Tipperary Tenant League had failed to attract wide support, as the leadership in the town consisted of businessmen who themselves were middle landlords. In June 1880 a branch of the Land League was established but in October, Parnell complained that the absence of agitation had allowed the government to move a large body of police from Tipperary to Mayo. The following March, the town's main landlord, A.H. Smith-Barry,

offered a 10% reduction which was readily accepted by the tenants although this was less than what the Land League had demanded.²⁴

In this period, the *People's* advocacy of advanced nationalism resulted in some negative reactions: 'How often he was shunned in public, and the *People* returned, lest the "good" landlord, or agent, should hear that they were "friends" to the terrible man, or subscribers to the terrible paper...'.²⁵ Though the newspaper man's arrest was the first in the Barony of Clanwilliam, it was not altogether unexpected. His cousin, John McCormack of Laghile, had been arrested on 3 January²⁶ under the Coercion Act and was in Clonmel prison at the time of John R's arrest. Besides, McCormack had been a consistent critic of the landlord class and an ardent supporter of the Land League, as were Archbishop Croke and the local clergy.

McCormack's arrest left the survival of his newspaper in doubt.²⁷ Many readers of the paper had not paid up their subscription, and the next issue of the *People* set out a stark warning. Subscribers who are in arrears should pay up 'now or never'. 'A heavy blow has been struck at us, but we are confident our friends will not permit the *People* to fall 'neath it. We think this enough to say presently but, if not, we must adopt another and more drastic course.' One correspondent suggested that the names of those subscribers owing the most should be published each week until they paid up!²⁸

Fortunately help was at hand. On the Saturday following his arrest, a group of supporters led by local curate Fr James Ryan and including Town Councillors William Hurley, John O'Connor and Michael D'Alton, met in the Town Hall to organise a Testimonial for McCormack.²⁹ The contributions were headed by Archbishop Croke and many of the clergy in nearby parishes contributed, or organised local contributions. Contributions were published weekly in the *People* and by 24 February £105-14-6 had been collected from 188 subscribers, and contributions continued to come in until the end of April.³⁰

Two weeks after McCormack's arrest, Archbishop Croke visited him and two other suspects in Clonmel when returning from his visitation to the Bishop of Waterford. In Waterford he had declared that the land movement was a great and good one, having a backbone. It had for its object the cutting down on rack-rents, he said.³¹ McCormack himself was also active on his own behalf. On 14 February he wrote to the Irish Party MP Thomas Sexton "respecting the way in which the Coercion Act was being administered in Tipperary" but the governor of Clonmel jail informed him that he could not send it as it contained charges against the constabulary. Instead the governor forwarded the letter to Dublin Castle. Meanwhile McCormack had again written to Sexton to check if he had been forwarded the letter. The MP speaking in the Commons on the occasion of a supplementary vote of funds for the RIC, explained he had still not received the letter even though it had been impounded by the governor nine days previously and subsequently 'captured' by Dublin Castle. This showed, the MP said, the great difficulty there was in preferring any charge against the constabulary.³²

On 23 February McCormack wrote another letter which had a much wider impact. 'Dear Sir', he wrote to the United States Consul in Dublin, 'I beg to bring to your notice that

I am an American citizen suffering imprisonment under the English Coercion Act.¹³³ McCormack was not the first of the 'suspects' to cite US citizenship as a shield against arbitrary imprisonment, and the matter was gaining increasing public attention in the United States, particularly among Democratic Party politicians.

The relevant U.S. statute stated: 'Whenever it is made known to the President that any citizen of the United States had been unjustly deprived of his liberty by or under the authority of any foreign government, it shall be the duty of the President forthwith to demand of that government the reasons of such imprisonment; and, if it appear to be wrongful and in violation of the rights of American citizenship, the President shall forthwith demand the release of such citizen; and if the release so demanded is unreasonably delayed or refused, the President shall use such means, not amounting to acts of war, as he may think necessary and proper to obtain or effectuate the release; and all the facts and proceedings relative thereto shall, as soon as practicable, be communicated by the President to Congress.'¹³⁴

The essence of the UK Foreign Office position, under Lord Granville, was that the imprisonment of the 'suspects' was legal as the Coercion Act suspending *habeas corpus* was passed by Parliament and was binding on American citizens living in the UK as it was on UK citizens; the American position was that every American citizen had a fundamental right to a fair trial whether they were in the United States or while abroad, and accordingly the American suspects had been 'unjustly deprived' of their liberty. McCormack's letter to the U.S. Consul was on point: 'I am guiltless of any crime punishable by law, and what I request is that, in pursuance of a resolution passed by the United States legislature, you use your office in securing for me the protection which I claim as a citizen of the United States, and that justice which, only through your government, I can obtain.' He went on: 'all I ask is that I be brought to trial and given a chance of refuting the charge before one of the legal tribunals of the country.'¹³⁵

The problem for the American suspects was that the U.S. ambassador ('minister in London') Mr Lowell was not prepared to robustly pursue their case with Granville and rather acted as an apologist for the UK position. The Dublin Consul replied by return of post, telling McCormack that 'the fact of your being an American citizen confers upon you no immunity from arrest and imprisonment under the Coercion Act.' The ambassador could only interfere if he had been arrested 'by obvious mistake' or had been negatively discriminated against, on account of being an American citizen. This, of course, was not what the statute stated.

McCormack wrote again to the Dublin consul on 18 April enclosing his certificate of American citizenship, asking that it be forwarded to Ambassador Lowell without delay 'as I am now undergoing my fourth month of imprisonment without the slightest shadow of a charge against me.' He complains that his business is suffering severely 'through this most wanton outrage perpetrated on me by the British Government', and asks that Lowell demands compensation for him for his loss. 'I shall expect at least that my trial or unconditional release will be demanded forthwith.'¹³⁶ There was growing anger in the United States at the lack of action, either to bring the suspects to trial or to release them,

and there were demands for Lowell's recall from London. Both the *Tipperary People* and the *Tipperary Advocate* reported on reaction in the American papers.³⁷ The House of Representatives sought a full report from the President, including all communications between the suspects, the ambassador and his staff, and the UK Foreign Office, as provided for in the statute, and this report was furnished to Congress on 22 May 1882.

Foster's Coercion Act was an attempt by the British administration to disrupt Land League activities and undermine the morale of national and local Land League leaders. In the early months of 1882, the numbers imprisoned under the Act continued to grow, with Clonmel having more suspects than any other prison: eighty-three in early January; ninety-three in early February; 104 in early March, peaking at about 120 before dropping back to about eighty in early May when more and more were being moved or released, often without notice; on 20 April twenty-three suspects were moved from Clonmel to Naas and Kilmainham. Among the leaders, Parnell, Dillon, Davitt and O'Kelly were imprisoned in Kilmainham in this period and were not released until the beginning of May. Nationally the numbers imprisoned under the Act rose to 587 in March.³⁸

As to the conditions in Clonmel prison, John McCormack of Laghile reported: 'These prisoners are all dieted from outside, and the food given is of the best and most liberal quality'³⁹; John Hayes, a 'suspect' from Doon spoke highly of the benevolence of the good ladies to whose care he and his fellow suspects were entrusted, as also of the courtesy of the prison officials.⁴⁰ Such praise for prison officials hardly pleased Dublin Castle! In Naas the suspects survived on prison rations until the Land League decided in February, to provide them with three meals daily.⁴¹ In the battle of wills between the Dublin administration and the Land League, the suspects invariably reported that they were 'in good health and good spirits', that they would not accept any conditions imposed on their release, and in the case of the American suspects, that they would not undertake to return to the U.S. immediately on their release, even if their travel costs were paid for by the UK government.⁴²

The administration continued to arrest suspects – sometimes for a second time - and to move them between prisons, away from family and friends. At times this descended into petty matters. In parliament, Irish MPs Redmond and Daly questioned the Chief Secretary for Ireland as to whether there was a rule in Naas jail that prisoners could not shake hands with visiting friends; whether a suspect with a broken leg was being refused bandages and other necessities in Naas, and whether a suspect being transferred from Cork to Naas prison was handcuffed because he raised his hat to some lady friends. In Limerick suspects were confined to their cells for two days because they cheered when they heard of Parnell's release.⁴³ By the end of April, the editor of the *People* is giving 'Naas Bastile' as his address. On Monday 15 May, McCormack and another suspect, John O'Brien of Roscrea, were transferred from Naas to Kilkenny jail: they were unaware of the transfer up to the last moment.⁴⁴ Then on 3 June 1882, McCormack and William Allis, Chairman of Tipperary Board of Guardians, were released unconditionally from Kilkenny prison.⁴⁵

New Tipperary⁴⁶

'It would not be a very impossible thing to build a new Tipperary very convenient to that place which the unspeakable scion of Barrymore calls his own. The people built the town, their descendants will rebuild it on another site if necessary, sooner than surrender that which is dearer to them than [the] world's goods.' For the second time, the *People* and its editor became the story when on 27 September 1889, McCormack penned the above proposal. It is unlikely the suggestion was incidental on his part; more likely it was developed among his circle of advanced nationalists who were the newspaper's correspondents and supporters. The ready adoption of McCormack's suggestion lends support to this view.

By now the 'war' against Smith-Barry and his landlord syndicate had reached a critical point. In February, the syndicate had taken over the Ponsonby estate near Youghal, subverting the negotiations between Ponsonby and his tenants. In June evictions began on the estate; William O'Brien MP, author of the Plan of Campaign, urged action by Smith-Barry's Tipperary tenants: a petition was sent and a delegation of tenants met Smith-Barry in London asking him to withdraw from the syndicate so that a settlement could be facilitated, but this was rejected. The *People* published Archbishop Croke's letter to the parish priest, Canon Cahill, describing Smith-Barry as 'an aggressive busy-body and a virulent partisan' and concluding 'I cannot but approve of [the tenants'] fraternal and sympathetic resolve'.⁴⁷

In response, Smith-Barry put the interest in five Tipperary tenant farms up for sale, which the tenants bought back, causing some tensions among his tenants⁴⁸. In July, while on bail on a charge of advocating non-payment of rent, O'Brien again addressed the Tipperary tenants urging non-payment of rents in support of the Ponsonby tenants. As a result, two-thirds of Smith-Barry's 355 tenants in the Tipperary area withheld the July half-yearly rents, and in August O'Brien was sentenced to four months in prison.⁴⁹ The new town proposal followed closely on the death of a 15-year-old youth from police buckshot, a coroner's court verdict of murder against two policemen, and a highly-organised political funeral at which Fr David Humphreys gave the graveside oration.⁵⁰ Following on from McCormack's proposal, the National League was suppressed in October in Tipperary and neighbouring parishes, but continued to meet as before, sometimes under the name of the Tenants' Defence Association, with their resolutions being reported by the *People's* correspondents. This often led to farcical incidents as police sought to prevent such meetings while members evaded their pursuit.⁵¹ It could also lead to newspaper reports being used as evidence in court.⁵²

Tensions between the landlord interest and the tenant interest escalated during this period, and the *People* recorded many incidents of police harassment, of Resident Magistrate bias, and of land agent provocation.⁵³ The paper recounted with relish those occasions when the tenants outwitted the police, such as when farmers rushed their cattle through the toll-gate, thus avoiding paying;⁵⁴ or when shopkeepers were brought to court for placing some of their goods on the walkway outside their shops, and the police couldn't prove they were an obstruction.⁵⁵ The editor regularly gave the local establishment figures a tongue-lashing in his weekly editorials – during the National League period his targets

were Smith-Barry's land agent Horatio Townsend, bailiff Bob Power, Sub-Sheriff Arnold Power, Resident Magistrate Albert Meldon⁵⁶, Colonel Caddell and District Inspector Gamble.⁵⁷ The authorities in turn targeted local leaders, in particular Fr Humphreys and John Cullinan.⁵⁸ Smith-Barry's landlord syndicate was a direct challenge to O'Brien's Plan of Campaign, and in the words of T. P. Gill, MP, whose brother was the architect of New Tipperary: 'If something desperate were not done to rally and inspire our ranks, disaster was inevitable.'⁵⁹

Work on the new town began in November, led by Fr Humphreys, John Cullinan and Michael O'Brien Dalton, first to remove stock and possessions during the eviction notice period⁶⁰, and then to plan the town layout and begin building. The Tenants' Defence Association provided funding for the building, which was augmented by an extraordinary level of local support – horses, carts and men to level a very uneven site and to transport materials. A call by the *People* for more districts to provide horses and men as late as June 1890 immediately resulted in Kilmoyler (52 horses), Kilcommon and Hollyford (82 horses), Upperchurch and Drumbane (72 horses), Ballyporeen (72 horses) and Knockaney (25 horses) responding on successive days.⁶¹ All of these developments were followed closely in the *People*, both in McCormack's impassioned editorials where he made frequent reference to the Premier County's fighting past, and in the more factual reports elsewhere in the paper. Most of the Tipperary town businesses and residents were on Smith-Barry land, including the *People* newspaper offices. Eviction notices followed sporadically for businesses and farms alike. McCormack received his eviction notice on 31 May 1890; he packed up and moved 'across the border' to No. 4 Upper William O'Brien Street. His Abbey Street office was repossessed in June 1890 but he had placed the plant of the *People* 'beyond the reach of the bludgeonmen' two months earlier, and had purchased some new equipment for his printing business.⁶²

The highlight of the New Tipperary project was the grand opening of the William O'Brien Arcade on 12 April 1890, attended by 30 MPs and distinguished visitors from Britain, with many toasts and speeches. But as the *People* predicted, when the flood-tide of enthusiasm had reached its height, 'the season of despondency, faint-heartedness and recrimination must infallibly set in'.⁶³ Despite John Dillon's successful fundraising abroad, the building of New Tipperary was a huge drain on the Irish Parliamentary Party's resources which could not be sustained. Over the summer of 1890, local divisions within the national league emerged, between Fr Cantwell's branch and Fr Humphrey's branch, the latter determined to hold out against Smith-Barry at all costs.⁶⁴ In this he was supported by the *People*, and for a time by the national leadership, although Parnell was never enthusiastic about the project. McCormack's position is not surprising given his IRB background, his abhorrence of the landlord system⁶⁵ and his vocal public support for the New Tipperary project from the beginning.

For the national leadership, the building of New Tipperary became a rallying point for fund-raising, and for maintaining the momentum of the Plan of Campaign (which was first implemented on the Ponsonby estate) at a critical time. However for the tenants it ended in failure as by July 1891 Smith-Barry had gained control over the land on which the Arcade was built and demolished it, and tenants were forced to settle with Smith-

Barry on unfavourable terms over the next few years.⁶⁶ It was a foolhardy battle, taking on a millionaire landlord, a Tory MP with the full backing of Balfour and Dublin Castle; an enterprise that required £30,000 to £50,000 capital, that impacted more on town businesses than on farmers, and in the end caused deep divisions among the nationalist community. The *People's* editor reflected 'When it was decided to fight him, the odds were certainly altogether in his favour ... the tenants had but one weapon – to leave him his property.'⁶⁷ However Smith-Barry could well survive the loss of the Tipperary rents and exploited the law to its greatest extent - 'ejectments, writs, Chancery proceedings, garnishee orders, motions for the appointment of Receivers, even Bankruptcy threats'.⁶⁸ The New Tipperary struggle was 'the most malicious, rancorous and truculent of all struggles'⁶⁹ of the Land War and a grave misjudgement by the national and local leadership.

Tipperary Newspapers in this Period

The nineteenth century was the age of the proprietor-editor, when a man of conviction and determination might launch a new title with little capital, provided he reflected the aspirations of a significant section of the populace. There are many similarities between McCormack's career and that of Thomas Walsh who established the *Cashel Sentinel* newspaper in 1885. Walsh was a former Fenian (he took part in the Ballyhurst episode in '67) who embraced constitutional nationalism and was imprisoned in Clonmel in 1881 for his involvement in the Land League. Later, as editor of the *Sentinel*, he took a leading role in the Smith-Barry struggle in Boherlahan-Cashel during the New Tipperary period, resulting in six months imprisonment in Tullamore and Clonmel. He too benefitted from a Testimonial headed by Archbishop Croke and his paper survived his imprisonment, and publication continued until 1914, the year after his death.⁷⁰

Like the *People* and the *Sentinel*, the *Tipperary Nationalist*⁷¹ which began publishing in Clonmel in 1886⁷², was a strong supporter of the national movement. Unlike the other papers, it was owned by a company and had a succession of editors and hence a long life, continuing to the present. During the New Tipperary period, John E. O'Mahony of the Skibereen Eagle became editor and, along with Thomas Walsh, supported the Smith-Barry tenants, and was prosecuted for conspiracy to withhold rents. O'Mahony became ill during the trial and the case against him was dropped rather than delay the trial.⁷³ There was mutual regard and a good working relationship between the *People* and the *Nationalist*.⁷⁴

McCormack's former nationalist rival in Nenagh, Peter E. Gill's *Tipperary Advocate*, was launched in 1857 from the vacated premises of Maurice Lenihan's *Tipperary Vindicator* when the latter moved his operation to Limerick. Unlike McCormack, Gill was a one-man-band who enjoyed the limelight, and used his paper to promote his various campaigns.⁷⁵ He was an inveterate campaigner for the tenant farmer and for various shades of nationalism, which sustained his paper but not his aspirations for parliament. His large-format 4-page 7-column weekly edition featured extensive and diverse content. The *Advocate* ceased publication in 1889, two years before Gill's death.

While there was a growing number of nationalist publications during this period,⁷⁶ other shades of opinion were well catered for. In this period, the *Tipperary Free Press*,

established by the Hacketts in Clonmel in 1826, reflected the older Catholic Liberal tradition until its demise in 1880. In Cashel, John Davis White's *Cashel Gazette* attracted an apolitical readership, avoiding religious and political controversy in favour of local news and literary material. The *Gazette* ceased publication on the death of its owner in 1893.⁷⁷

The *Clonmel Chronicle* and the *Nenagh Guardian* were the establishment newspapers of this period, reflecting the loyalist viewpoint on current events and strongly supporting the *status quo*. Both papers evolved in the early years of the twentieth century into more nationalist-flavoured publications, the *Chronicle* in 1910 when it declared itself "independent of all parties", and the *Guardian* following a change of ownership in 1916. The *Chronicle* ceased publication in 1935 and its press was purchased by the *Nationalist*.⁷⁸

When McCormack launched his paper in 1875, there were five other titles being printed in the county, only two of which were still published in 1900. Newspaper start-ups faced numerous challenges, the most common of which were creaking printing presses,⁷⁹ worn typefaces, small circulations and unpaid subscriptions and advertisements.⁸⁰ Running a nationalist newspaper during the Land War ran the additional risk of prosecution and many proprietor-editors were jailed. On the other hand, harassment and imprisonment cemented relationships among local nationalist leaders, especially among the 'suspects' in Clonmel and Naas who supported McCormack's paper. As one 'suspect' recalled:

'the sad and unexpected death of dear old Mac, as he was familiarly called ... in season or out of season, pleasure or displeasure, he always held like grim death to the principles of independence which he learned in the free States of America. Well can I recall his fearless spirit when, as suspects, we paced the ring within the iron bars, how indignantly he would scout petty officialdom and say: "Is Ireland ever to be free? Must we submit for ever to tyranny?" ... and as years rolled by when his constitution grew weaker, he became more interesting as the glister of the eye and the wave of the hand conveyed the ardent emotion which possessed his heart. ... a truer Nationalist I never met with.'⁸¹

Acknowledgements

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References

- 1 W.E. Foster was Chief Secretary in Ireland in this period and introduced a Coercion Bill in Westminster in 1881 which suspended habeas corpus, and introduced imprisonment without trial. Known also as Buckshot Foster because he supplied the R.I.C. with buckshot cartridges.
- 2 *Tipperary Advocate*, 21 Jan 1882. This was the common charge against 'suspects'.
- 3 Letter from McCormack to Mr Barrows, American Consul in Dublin, 26 Apr 1882, reproduced in *American Citizens Imprisoned in Ireland*, US House of Representatives, 22 May 1882, p. 16.
- 4 *T.A.*, 14 Jan 1882.

- 5 A previous newspaper, *The Tipperary People & Mercantile and Agricultural Gazette*, existed in Clonmel in 1865-1866 – see J.C. Hayes, *Guide to Tipperary Newspapers (1770-1989)*, THJ, 1989. It is likely the title appealed to McCormack as an *omage* to the Fenian newspaper, the *Irish People*, to which his friend Thomas Brohan had contributed.
- 6 *Tipperary People*, 8 Dec 1876.
- 7 *T.P.*, 2 Feb 1883, editorial.
- 8 *T.P.* 13 July 1900, obituary by William London.
- 9 *American Citizens Imprisoned in Ireland*, p.15.
- 10 Civil birth records on www.irishgenealogy.ie which list father's occupation; obituary by William London.
- 11 Civil records on www.irishgenealogy.ie: Anna Josephine died Montana; Lizzie and her husband are buried in Ballintemple graveyard.
- 12 Schools' Folklore Collection, Curreeny School, p.38, on www.duchas.ie. The language used by Thomas was surely more robust than that! The jail sentence is recorded in Nenagh Gaol Register for 28 Oct 1882 on www.findmypast.ie.
- 13 *T.P.*, 24 Feb 1882.
- 14 *T.P.*, 13 Jun 1890.
- 15 *T.P.*, 25 Aug 1876. The apology was repeated a number of times, and on 29 Dec 1876 (his final Nenagh issue) it appears on the front page.
- 16 See Eliza's obituary *T.P.*, 6 Oct 1916.
- 17 *T.P.*, 8 Apr 1921 – announcement that the *Tipperaryman and Limerick Recorder* would commence publication the following week. The *Tipperary People* premises are now the premises of Fitzpatrick Printers, who print this journal.
- 18 See votes of sympathy from Boards of Guardians of Tipperary and Kilmallock. *T.P.*, 13 Jul 1900.
- 19 Tipperary Petty Sessions Order Book for 16 June 1887 and 7 January 1891, accessed on www.findmypast.ie.
- 20 *Ibid*, 22 March 1883.
- 21 *Ibid*, 26 July and 11 Oct 1883.
- 22 *Ibid*, 31 July 1879.
- 23 *Ibid*, 8 Aug 1883. This was the licenced premises of Johanna Sadleir of Rossacrow, probably a relative of his wife Eliza.
- 24 D. G. Marnane, *Land and Violence, A History of Tipperary from 1660* (Tipperary, 1985), p. 101-2.
- 25 *T.P.*, 27 Jan 1882.
- 26 *T.A.*, 7 Jan 1882.
- 27 *T.P.*, 20 Jan 1882: 'He leaves behind him, however, a young and helpless family – a wife at present, unhappily, sick; but a brave woman with a clear intellect, a strong will and a good pen.'
- 28 *T.P.*, 20 Jan 1882. McCormack's Nenagh competitor, Peter Gill of the *Tipperary Advocate*, was having similar difficulties, though he wasn't in prison, *T.A.* 21 Jan 1882 and 4 Feb 1882. Also a breakdown in his printing machinery prevented the *T.A.* from appearing on 28 Jan 1882, as it was 30-year-old machinery, *T.A.* 4 Feb 1882.
- 29 *T.P.*, 20 Jan 1882.
- 30 It is not possible to calculate the total subscribed as no issues of the *T.P.* are extant for March 1882; the 7th April issue was printed but not distributed (may have been seized); the 14th April issue lists a further 32 subscribers.
- 31 *T.A.*, 4 Feb 1882. The other suspects were Martin Fitzgerald of Ballingarry and Thomas Collier of Templetuohy.
- 32 *T.P.*, 24 Feb 1882.
- 33 *American Citizens Imprisoned in Ireland*, p. 15.
- 34 Section 2,001, Revised Statutes, quoted in *The Political Reformation of 1884: A Democratic Campaign Book*. New York: The National Democratic Committee, p. 2.

- 35 *American Citizens Imprisoned in Ireland*, p.15-16.
- 36 *Ibid*, p. 16.
- 37 *T.A.*, 25 Mar 1882; 8 Apr 1882; 15 Apr 1882; *T.P.*, 28 Apr 1882.
- 38 *T.A.* Various dates from January to May 1882. On 18th March 1882 the *Advocate* reported the total number of suspects arrested since the passing of the Coercion Act was 764.
- 39 *T.A.*, 14 Jan 1882.
- 40 *T.P.*, 13 Jan 1882.
- 41 *T.A.*, 4 Feb 1882: 'Suspects' Maher and O'Mahony, secretaries of the Holy Cross and Clonoulty respectively, reported that they had spent the previous 46 days on a prison diet. They had just received notice that all the Naas suspects would get three meals a day from the Land League.
- 42 *T.P.* 28 Apr 1882: 'The American Suspects'; *American Citizens Imprisoned in Ireland*, pp. 10-11.
- 43 *T.A.*, 11 Feb 1882.
- 44 *T.A.* 20 May 1882.
- 45 *T.A.* 3 Jun 1882.
- 46 For a detailed account of New Tipperary see D.G. Marnane, 'Fr David Humphreys and New Tipperary', in William Nolan (ed.) *Tipperary: History and Society* (Dublin, 1986) pp. 367-378; D.G. Marnane, *Land and Violence: A History of West Tipperary from 1660* (Tipperary, 1985) pp. 104-113; G. Sutton, 'New Tipperary revisited: the case of Arthur Hugh Smith-Barry', *THJ* (2005), pp.155-172.
- 47 *T.P.*, 28 Jun 1889: 'Important letter from the Archbishop of Cashel'.
- 48 D.G. Marnane, *Land and Violence*, p.106.
- 49 G. Sutton, 'New Tipperary revisited: the case of Arthur Hugh Smith-Barry', p.166.
- 50 *T.P.*, 20 Sept 1889: 'Tipperary's First Martyr.'
- 51 *T.P.*, 25 Oct 1889 and 15 Nov 1889.
- 52 *T.P.*, 11 Jan 1889, Coercion Act hearing against John O'Connor MP and others arising from a public meeting in Tipperary town.
- 53 When the sheriff entered a smallholding across private land in order to evict a family, solicitor William Frewen objected. In court, Mr Meldon RM told him 'that the sheriff was hedged round with a divinity which placed him above the law.' *T.P.*, 25 Apr 1889.
- 54 *T.P.*, 11 Oct 1889: '...kept their money deep in their breeches pockets.'
- 55 *T.P.*, 18 Apr 1890: 'A New Departure'
- 56 E.g. *T.P.*, 8 Nov 1889, editorial.
- 57 An exception was George McCarthy R.M., a Roman Catholic, whom McCormack described as 'fair and just'; he was transferred to Clifden in August 1851. See D.G. Marnane, *Remembering to remember (1861-2012): Thomas St George McCarthy and the Abbey School Tipperary*, *THJ* (2012) p. 107. Fr James Ryan believed that the landlords of the district had McCarthy – 'our late and greatly respected Resident Magistrate' –moved from Tipperary. *T.P.*, 20 Jan 1882.
- 58 *T.P.*, 18 Oct 1889, p. 2.
- 59 *Freeman's Journal*, 25 Aug 1891.
- 60 Some businesses disposed of stock through clearance sales e.g, Daniel Kelly's drapery sale advertisement 'Preparing for Eviction', *T.P.*, 11 Apr 1890.
- 61 *T.P.*, 13 Jun 1890.
- 62 *Ibid*.
- 63 *T.P.*, 25 Apr 1890, editorial.
- 64 D.G. Marnane, 'Fr David Humphreys and New Tipperary', p.376.
- 65 *T.P.*, 9 Feb 1883: 'What is the Cause?' where he attributes all the ills of emigration to landlordism.
- 66 G. Sutton, 'New Tipperary revisited: the case of Arthur Hugh Smith-Barry', p.168.
- 67 *T.P.*, 6 Jun 1890.
- 68 *T.P.*, 25 Apr 1890, Editorial.

- 69 Lawrence Geary, quoted in Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly, *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, p.174.
- 70 D.G. Marnane, 'A valuable property: The Smith-Barry Cashel estate', *Boherlahan Historical Journal* 2018, pp.117-35.
- 71 The *Nationalist* began publication in Thurles in 1881 and lasted two years, before being bought up and moved to Clonmel where it appeared as the *Tipperary Nationalist*, then reverted to the *Nationalist* title in 1890.
- 72 D.G. Marnane, 'A valuable property: The Smith-Barry Cashel estate' p.118.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 *T.P.*, 13 July 1900: The editor of the *Nationalist* noted: 'The warm personal regard existing between us and our valued old friend was never once disturbed.'
- 75 See Peter Gill in Des Marnane's 3rd 100 Radio Talks, forthcoming.
- 76 Other short-lived nationalist newspapers were the *Tipperary Leader* (Thurles) 1881-1885, and the *County Tipperary Independent* (Clonmel) 1883-1891
- 77 See D.G. Marnane, 'John Davis White's Sixty Years in Cashel (Part I)', *THJ*, 2001
- 78 Hayes, 'Guide to Tipperary Newspapers (1770-1989)', *THJ* 1989 (Supplement).
- 79 Both *T.P.* and *T.A.* reported mechanical problems; there are worn type-faces; lower tenders for advertising indicated smaller circulation, etc.
- 80 In June 1888, McCormack stated in an affidavit that his average circulation over the previous eleven years was 700 copies, three-quarters of which were posted to subscribers; that he employed 'four paid hands'; that a sum of £800 was due to him (presumably from unpaid subscriptions and advertisements – see appeal for payment in *T.P.*, 10 Aug 1888); that he had a net income of about £350 p.a.; that his machinery and plant were worth at least £200. McCormack submitted his affidavit to show he could meet the costs of a libel case before the Lord Chief Justice; the defendant, Michael Gillane, shopkeeper and member of the local National Land League, claimed that McCormack 'did his printing in the back yard attached to his house in a space not four yards square', that he was the sole staff of the paper, that his wife set the type, 'while a number of small boys ran about with the paper in order to dispose of it.' This was part of a bitter dispute between McCormack and some members of the local Land League over the appointment of a medicines supplier to Tipperary PLU (*Clonmel Chronicle*, 13 Jun 1888). The case was remitted to Canon Cahill and William O'Brien MP for mediation.
- 81 *T.P.*, 13 July 1900.