

Joseph Williams's Recollections of the Irish Rebellion of 1798.¹

[The narrator of the following was Joseph Williams, of Randalls Mills, in the County of Wexford, or "Cousin Joe," as he was familiarly called. He was born in the old homestead where he afterwards went through the experiences here related—experiences taken down by a friend in 1866. There he lived unmarried with his sister Jane, making his living off a farm, and by the earnings of his little flour mill. Randalls Mills was and is a lovely spot, still occupied by collateral descendants. He and his sister were types of the best outcome of old Quakerism. How well I remember the peaceful charm of the place, and the solemnity of the week-day meetings latterly held in the parlour. He was the adviser, the executor, too often the troubled trustee of a large circle of Friends then living in the County of Wexford. He died in 1867, aged 91. This is not the place to discuss the origin or history of the Rebellion of 1798. Of the hundreds of Friends living in the disturbed districts in Ireland, none were injured, or seriously molested, in their persons, except one who took up arms on the Government side. An ancestor of mine and her eight unmarried sons and daughters, aged from ten to twenty-one, resided in the town of Wexford during its six weeks' occupation by the insurgents. Monuments have of late years been very generally erected by the inhabitants of Wexford to those who on the people's side fell in the strife.—ALFRED WEBB, Dublin.]

The country was in a disturbed state and proclaimed under martial law in Fifth Month, 1798, but no one in our immediate neighbourhood had been arrested.

On First day, the 27th of Fifth Month, a servant told me early in the morning that the rebellion had broken out several miles to the northward, but, notwithstanding, we (my father, mother, sister, and self) set off about 8 o'clock as usual to attend meeting at Cooladine. About two miles on the road, John Peare, whose house we passed, told us that the rebels were killing two men at the cross of Ballymurrin. They had left the spot before we reached it, and though most likely the bodies were there we did not see them. As we rode along we observed several parties of men on the hills in the distance, and before we passed the gate of Ballinkeale a band, armed with pikes and forks and such weapons, met us, but offered no violence, one only rather civilly remarking, "It has come to this at last with us!" Another and larger body, of about forty or fifty,

¹ For other accounts of Friends and the Rebellion of 1798, see Dinah W. Goff's *Divine Protection through extraordinary Dangers*, 1857, etc.; Dr. Hancock's *Principles of Peace*, 1825, etc.; Armistead's *Select Miscellanies*, iv: 296; and several MSS. in D: [EDS.]

armed like the last, and headed by a man on horseback, who carried in place of a pike part of a sheep shears fastened on a pole, stopped us before we reached the bridge of Ballinkeale, and insisted that we should turn back, the leader saying that we should else give news of them to the troops in Enniscorthy and bring them out against them. We assured him that it was for Cooladine, not Enniscorthy, that we were bound, but to no purpose; he still declared that we should carry tidings some way or other, and we were forced to return.

Through the afternoon news of the progress of the rebels was constantly arriving, and towards evening, from the high ground behind the house, fires, caused by the burning of gentlemen's places, were to be seen in the distance. In the evening we heard that the troops had left Wexford, and that almost the entire body of North Cork Militia, amounting to upwards of 100 men, had been cut to pieces at Oulart Hill, only two or three escaping, while the rebels took possession of their arms. Later on in the evening a party of these latter, carrying guns and pikes, passed our place, coming from Castlebridge direction and going up the road to Crossabeg. About half-an-hour after, while I and two others were sitting on the battlements of the bridge, they returned with about thrice as many added to their number, forty or so in all, and dragged out a workman belonging to this place, beating him and forcing him by threats and violence to accompany them. The man went with them part of the night, but was back again the next morning. Cowardice, however, rather than loyalty, prevented his joining more heartily in the rebellion. During the afternoon a man in our employment came to me asking for a large hay-fork that was up in the garret. My answer was that if he wanted it he must go and take it himself, for that I would have nothing to do with such things. In the end I do not think he took it. That night we went to bed as usual. During the next day news came of country places having been destroyed, Enniscorthy attacked and many houses burned.

On Third day the rebels marched towards Wexford and encamped about Three Rocks or Newtown, where, though there was no regular fight, Colonel Watson, who went out against them from Wexford, was killed by a stray shot from a distance. General Faussett, with a party of Royal Meath Militia, and two or three cannon, moved from Duncannon Fort to reinforce Wexford, and was cut off at

Three Rocks in the Mountain of Forth. I have often seen the spot where this happened. It was called "the bewitched field"; for many years neither corn nor potatoes would grow on the part where the slaughter took place. (Dinah Goff, in her narrative, called this party Yeomen, but as far as my memory serves me, they were Militia.)

About Fifth or Sixth day, the rebel party, after getting possession of Wexford, marched by this, and many hundreds swarmed into the yard and house, asking for food and clothing. They had prisoners with them, one I remember distinctly, a soldier, who, in token of his position, was marched along with his coat turned inside out. I called him in and gave him food. Our visitors were not at all violent, and we supplied their wants as far as we could. Indeed at this time and for weeks after, the baking of barley bread and some kind of cooking or other went on incessantly in our house to meet the constant demands made for food. I recollect one of the party just alluded to, a civil, reasonable sort of man, asking where a companion of his was. "Upstairs, putting on a shirt," somebody replied. "I worked hard and earned the shirt that I have on me," was his remark, "and if it's my fate to die, I'll die in no one else's clothes."

Towards the afternoon when the various parties had mostly gone by, and the place was quiet, I thought I would go and take a look around to see what stock had been left to us. The old smith, he whom the rebels had tried to take the First day before, went with me. I found that four horses had been carried off, and only two young untrained ones remained. While we were in the field called Ochaboulla (of seven or eight acres) a man with a gun in his hand crossed the ditch looking for a horse, and asked me whether the young filly was trained. I said, not. After a while he inquired why I was not at the camp. The man who was with me told him I was a Quaker and did not fight. "I don't know who *you* are," he roughly answered, pushing at him with his gun, "but I'll take you both to Vinegar Hill and find out more about you." After marching us before him for about half-a-mile we passed by a house at Lacken, and I said to the man to whom it belonged, and with whom I was acquainted, "I suppose I'm going a prisoner to Vinegar Hill." "I'm sorry for it," was the answer. The other, seeing us talking together, asked whether my friend knew me. "Yes," he said, "I know him well. He's a Quaker, and I'll take my oath he's neither an Orangeman

nor a Protestant." "I've heard that the Quakers are a good, quiet set of people," remarked the other, "and hurt no one. There are none in my part of the country and I've only heard of them." He then shook hands with me, saying that he should be sorry to injure such, and passing on left us free. The smith went home at once; but my acquaintance told me to go into his house and sit down until he had spoken to some strangers who were coming up, and when the place looked quiet he came in and desired me to return to the mill by the Slaney, and he thought I should meet with no harm from the neighbours. When, however, I had nearly reached the field where the man had taken me first, two men, armed, came in sight and called me over to them. They, too, wanted to know whether the filly had been trained. Again I answered, "No," and after a little more talk, one of them angrily said to me, "Go about your business! If I say another word to you I shall shoot you." I just remarked that I was not afraid of my neighbours, or something to that effect, and again he bade me go about my business, and off I went.

When my sister and I went to Meeting—so far as I can remember she went once and I twice during these troubles—we were obliged to walk, all the horses fit for work having been taken from us by one party or the other. On the day that we went together, I think about a fortnight after the beginning of the Rebellion, we had got unmolested about as far as the Chapel of Ballymurrin, when some one called out to us two or three times to turn to our right, that was, towards the Chapel, but we walked on without taking any notice. Near the bridge of Ballinkeale two men came out of a cabin and told us that we might go to Mass, if we pleased, but nowhere else. We said that we were going to Meeting, and that as we were not interfering with them they need not do so with us, whereupon one of them remarked, "This might do for a while, but in the end there must be only one religion." We tried to induce them to let us pass by, telling them that our neighbours, those who knew us, did not trouble us, but they persisted in their determination, until another man, named David Quinlan, coming near, they beckoned him up and told him what they were doing. He asked them what business they had with us, and said that we were quiet people, who did no harm to any. Hereupon the two remarked that if he said that, they would give us up to him, and he took charge of us until we met another in

higher authority than he, Kennedy Barlow, a kind of commissary or magistrate under the rebel authority in the parish. Quinlan reported his proceedings and the other said that he had acted aright. Barlow was on horseback and wanted my sister to mount behind him, but as there was no pillow she could not accept his offer. He kept by us until we reached Thos. Thompson's at Cooladine, where the meeting was held. Nothing particular happened to us during our return home.

To be concluded.

Gulielma Maria Springett and Her Tenant.¹

Upon the 22th day of y^e month called July, 1669, Accounts were stated between John ffuller and his Landlady, and it appeared y^t at y^e time called Michaelmas, then next ensueing, there would be due from him to his Landlady for Rent one hundred and eighty pounds.

It was then also agreed between them, that John ffuller should hold y^e farm (without y^e woods), for one year more at fourscore pounds; and in case it should prove a good year John shal advance his Rent five pounds, but if it should prove an ill year, his Landlady shal abate five pounds; and y^t it shal be referred to two men to determine whether it be a good or a bad year.

Agreed further y^t if an house be built on y^e farm next Summer, John shal lay in at his own charge ten thousand Bricks, and if it be thatched he is to find Straw.

GULIELMA MARIA SPRINGETT.

¹ D. Penn MSS. 125. This original document was borrowed of the owner in Brighton by the late Robert Horne Penney, who brought it up to London in 1899 to show to the Recording Clerk. The latter purchased it, and it was subsequently presented to the Reference Library by Alexander Peckover. It consists of a single leaf of paper, about 8 inches by 6, somewhat stained, but generally in good condition, and not torn. It is in the small, neat handwriting of Thomas Ellwood, and the signature of the landlady (then in her 26th year) is in somewhat large, carefully written characters. It was in 1669, the date of the agreement, that Ellwood was sent, as he himself says, by Mary Penington to accompany Guli Springett from Buckinghamshire to the home of her Uncle Springett in Sussex, and also to "assist her in her business with her tenants." Evidently in the agreement we have one of the fruits of this errand.