

## Joseph Williams's Recollections of the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

*(Concluded from page 20.)*

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As instances of the lawlessness around I may mention two events that happened about the time : A family of the name of Atkins lived at Coolamaine. On the breaking out of the rebellion they fled to Wexford, but when the town was taken by the rebels, returned to their house. Seeing them pass by we brought them in and gave them some refreshment, buttermilk or something of the kind. A few days after, they were taken prisoners by the insurgents, and marched along the road at the back of the house near the kiln on their way to Wexford. The party conducting them halted just outside our place, and the old smith, before mentioned, came to me in great alarm, saying the escort had been heard talking among themselves and declaring that I ought also to be taken. He begged me to hide so that they might not be able to find me, but I said, "No ! If they want me, let them come here and take me." I did not like to show any want of confidence by hiding or securing, seeming afraid in any way, but I acknowledged his kindness of intention towards me. One of the Atkins told me afterwards that the story was a true one, the men were talking as had been reported to me.

Our attention to the Atkins nearly brought us into trouble in another way. The owner of a tup or fulling-mill, close to ours, lived with his family on the opposite side of the stream to us. One of the daughters about this time went into Wexford, and on her return came to us in great apparent distress, declaring that while in town she had heard that in revenge for our conduct on the occasion referred to, the rebels intended to burn our house and mill. She said that she had been obliged to take an oath not to tell this, but that for friendship to us she warned us of our danger, and so urgent was she for us to go to a neighbour's for safety, that I went for a little, but could not be easy to remain. My father so far believed her tale that he remained walking about the yard all night in expectation of the

assault. We afterwards found out that the whole was a story, made up to get us out of the house and mill that the girl and her family might take possession of both.

The following annoying circumstance may also be told. A young fellow, about 16 or 17 years of age, who had not been out with the rebels, collected a number of children and paraded them about like soldiers. Amongst them was a little boy who had been much noticed by my mother and sister, and had frequently been about the house. There were some twenty boys in the company, armed with sticks, their leader having some kind of gun. They came one day and demanded drink. We offered them water or milk, but their captain was determined to have something stronger. It so happened that there was just then in the cellar a keg of mead, not fit for drinking, and my sister, when the party got into the house and found their way there, stood with her back to it and pointing to the empty beer casks, told the boy that we had none to give him. "But what's that behind you?" asked he. "Only mead that is not fit for drink," said she. "We'll taste it," he remarked, "and if it's not right we'll leave it," and made her bring it into the parlour where the whole party soon busied themselves upon it. A woman of the neighbourhood coming in told them such things were for the fighting men, not for them. "If *they* had got it, it wouldn't have been here for us," replied the lad.

The Sixth Month Monthly Meeting was adjourned to the Third Day before the Quarterly Meeting. I had hoped to attend it, but was too poorly to do so. We were none of us at the Quarterly Meeting. The Friends coming thither from Dublin in their own vehicles had frequently to alight and move the dead bodies out of the way. On the Meeting day a young man, who lived above Castlesow, sent down his servant girl to ask me to go to him. I told her I would do so if I could, and I accordingly went up. He was at home with his sister, and he told me that he wanted to see me in order to charge me if I valued my life not to venture to Meeting again, as he had heard I had done. Morgan Byrne, such was the name of my new friend, had been a yeoman, and had deserted to the rebel side. Most likely he knew that the fortunes of his party were on the decline, and wanted in good time to make friends with loyalists. When the insurrection was put down he was obliged to hide from the Government, and wandered from place to place,

often coming here to supper, but I was always unwilling to let him stay long lest he might be arrested in our house, and I frequently told him that I never should be able to convince those around that we had not betrayed him ; but he always had full confidence in us.

We knew scarcely anything of the movements of the royal troops. Reports were frequently brought in, but generally false, and even when they were at Oulart Hill, the day before the battle of Vinegar Hill, we were ignorant of the fact. About 6 o'clock on the morning of the battle we could hear the cannon, and from the high ground near the haggard, I could see the smoke and guess that the fighting was at Vinegar Hill or Enniscorthy. I noticed the difference between the report of the cannon and mortars. About 9 or 10 o'clock the firing ceased. We sat down as usual, it being our Meeting day (Fifth Day), and before the sitting was over several fugitives from the battle hurried by. The servants were in great excitement. My sister asked one of them what was the news, " Oh, we may all lie down and die," was the reply. Some said that the fight was to be resumed at Wexford, but there was nothing of it.

The next day (Sixth Day) I went into the field and met two soldiers, who took my watch, a shilling that I had in my pocket, and my penknife. They talked of taking me prisoner, and I said I should like to let the people at home know beforehand. This induced them to come over to the house, where they took my father's watch, also some money from my sister, and one of them turned out an old tea-chest in which were my silver shoe buckles and two bad shillings. These latter he carried off and left the buckles behind. We told them we were Friends and took no part with either side, and, satisfied with their plunder, they left us in peace.

I had a similar encounter about this time. Being on the high ground behind the house I saw a quantity of smoke to the south-west, and having heard a report that the houses of two of our neighbours were likely to be burned, I went towards the place to see whether they were on fire. I was espied by a party of yeomen, and two of them came towards me across the fields. When I saw what they were about I stopped, and one of them called me over. I thought it best to go up boldly, as if I were not afraid. He asked me some questions as to where I was going, and I answered that I had just come up from my place to see where the fire was. He put his pistol to my head, and, as he confessed after-

wards, was on the point of shooting me, when a comerade of his, John Crane, rode up and called to him to stop, for I was a friend of his. He (John Crane) told me afterwards that he was in such a hurry to save me and so confused at seeing the great danger I was in, that he could not in the least remember my name, though he knew it well, having served his time with my uncle, Richard Neale, in Waterford.

Some time after the battle of Vinegar Hill, it came to my knowledge that a great many women, wives and daughters of farmers mostly, were sheltering in the out-houses belonging to our place, refugees chiefly from Enniscorthy and the neighbourhood, where the army was in possession. There were several, too, of a better sort hiding in the meal-room, amongst them two sisters of Morgan Byrne. This party had brought beds and bedding with them, and kept themselves closely concealed, having got in through the trap door by means of a ladder, which they pulled up after them. Large parties of soldiers were frequently in the house, and yet the whereabouts of these fugitives was never suspected. Those hiding round in the sheds, etc., had been there a good while before we knew, and we took little notice of them, except giving them food when they came begging at the door, such conduct being safest for all parties.

One morning, just at this time, an officer, with a party of, I think, the 4th Dragoons, passing by, halted, and sent in to inquire whether we could supply them with food. It so happened that a loin of veal was roasting at the fire for the family, considerably increased just then by the uninvited guests before mentioned, and a piece of bacon boiling for the servants and others, besides which a quantity of barley bread had been baked. Hearing of the officer's question I went out to speak to him, my father being deaf and infirm, and invited him and his company in, my sister setting the veal and a piece of wheaten bread before him in the parlour, while the daughter of the owner of the tup-mill supplied the men in the kitchen, in two or three divisions, with bacon, barley bread, and milk.

The officer was very civil and asked me whether there were any rebels hiding in the neighbourhood, telling me if I knew of such, to desire them to lay down their arms and get protections from the Government. At this very time I knew that a number of men, who had been more or less concerned in the rising, were crowded into a sort of covered

passage for the mill-stream in the yard, crouching in as they could with their feet in the water. I had not seen them myself, but I knew of their whereabouts, and that their terror was extreme at the nearness of the soldiers, all making sure that, if discovered, they would every one be forthwith dragged out and shot. So close were they to the troops that the man farthest out could see the latter through the grass at the entrance of their refuge. In answer to the officer's question I said generally that there were doubtless people hiding round, and that if I saw them, as I might very likely in the morning or evening, that I would give them his message. When he and his men were gone, I went to the party in the mill-yard and repeated his words, telling them that I left them to do just what they thought best, I taking no responsibility in the matter. There was such danger of suspicion as to betrayal that these precautionary words were needed. Almost all of these men eventually took out protections, though in many cases the injunction as to giving up arms was not attended to.

A week or ten days after the visit of the officer just mentioned, my sister and I were appointed to buy some clothing for a family of Friends whose house and almost all they possessed had been burned. While going into Wexford, we passed hundreds of the country people on their way in to take out protections or returning from the same errand. When we reached the bridge leading into the town I was stopped by a guard there. I told the officer on duty that my business had nothing to do with protections, but he would hear nothing, and sent me to the office under an escort of soldiers. Fortunately for me, Colonel George Le Hunte was the presiding officer there, and when he saw me from the window, he called, "Come here, Joe," desiring me to join him in the room where he was. When I had told him that I should want a pass to get by the guards—"Fill him up a protection," he called to his clerk; "No," said I, "I will not have one. I have not been concerned in the Rebellion, and I will not let it appear as though I had." "You are right," he answered, and desired that a pass only should be prepared for me, to save me from annoyance or interruption in going about my business.