shortly before Lenihan became a member of the Corporation, a movement was initiated to erect a memorial to Daniel O'Connell in Limerick. Lenihan, as an old admirer and personal friend of O'Connell naturally threw himself with a will into the movement; and in his newspaper he reminded his readers that Mr. Bianconi, while on a recent visit to Rome, had erected a commemorative tablet on the site where O'Connell's heart was buried, and urged his countrymen not to be outdone in generosity at home in Ireland. But while the movement to have O'Connell worthy commemorated was cumberously getting under way, another committee with apparently unlimited financial resources made a daring attempt to have erected in the Crescent a statue to commemorate a soldier, Lord Fitzgibbon, who was killed in the recent battle of Balaklava. The Fitzgibbon memorial committee actually secured this site from the Corporation, although Fitzgibbon's memory possessed no claims to so signal an honour from the citizens of Limerick. There does not seem to have been any positive ill-will against the character of the dead man. His family name was, however, tainted; for he was the grandson of John Fitzgibbon, first Earl of Clare, the too willing and efficient tool of Pitt in the achievement of the legislative union of 1800. There were Limerick folk still living to whom the sinister name was more than a mere memory. The members of the O'Connell memorial committee now discovered, to their chagrin, that the best site in Limerick was to be set aside for a statue of the detested family. Lenihan was one of the secretaries of the new committee, and he spared no pains in giving the Fitzgibbon project the fullest publicity in his own newspaper. There were angry debates in the council room of the Corporation. Members of the Fitzgibbon memorial committee moved a resolution in the corporation that the Crescent site be retained for their purpose in view of the Council's previous authorisation and added this 'patriotic' rider: "That this council sympathises fully and deeply with the gallant and glorious conduct of Lord Fitzgibbon and the men of Limerick and Clare who fell in their country's cause in the defence of the peace of Europe and the liberty of the world". The great majority of the city fathers, however, were now wiser men than when they first allowed themselves to be stampeded over this Fitzgibbon memorial; so they rejected the resolution and henceforth the Crescent site was secured for the O'Connell memorial. The inauguration of the O'Connell statue took place on the 15 August 1857. Judging by the press reports of the time, it was a gala day for Limerick. O'Connell admirers were present in their thousands from all over Munster. For many it was their first experience of a journey on the recently constructed railroads. Lenihan, as a committee member, was accorded one of the places of honour in the ceremony of inauguration. The press of Dublin gave a generous share of print in writing-up the event. Limerick of the period in which these
events were taking place presents a strange contrast to Limerick today—in one respect at least. I mean the language question. Irish was heard in the market place; and in the courthouse an interpreter was still required to translate, for the legal man, the statements of many of the country-folk during the sessions of the court. In the minute-book of the Corporation, so late as 23 February 1860, we find the following entry: "Application read of John Roberts to be Irish interpreter at the Court House. Application was founded upon a certificate from Mr. Keogh going Judge of Assize and an appointment to the office by the late High Sheriff, but it was not entertained." It is peculiar that Lenihan has nothing to say in his Reminiscences concerning his own use of the Irish language; yet it is practically certain that he was an Irish-speaker. Where he uses an Irish phrase the orthography is unusual and such as to lead us to suspect that he had no reading knowledge of the language. In his later years, as we shall see, he advocated the teaching of Irish in the schools and universities. His interest in the Irish language never lapsed at any period of his life—not even during the period of his closest association with O'Connell. He mentions a visit to the veteran Gaelic scholar, Father Matt Horgan, in 1843 at Blarney, Co. Cork, but does not tell us in what medium the conversation was conducted. Throughout the Reminiscences, we find frequent references to eminent Gaelic scholars of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. His later open advocacy of the cause of the Irish language can possibly be traced to the influence of Eugene O'Curry. Lenihan first made the acquaintance of the great Gaelic scholar in 1852. O'Curry was then working on his edition of the Brehon Laws at Dr. Graves' rooms in Trinity College, Dublin. It was on the same occasion that Lenihan made the acquaintance of Dr. Petrie. "Between that year and the year 1862," he writes, "I had frequent opportunities of seeing and corresponding with O'Curry. Whenever I visited Dublin I embraced the occasion of calling upon him; he was very genial, good-humoured, full of anecdote that was racy of the soil ... anxious to communicate as freely as possible all he knew of whatever subject on which enquirey was made to him."

Lenihan does not state when precisely he became interested in the history of his adopted city; but there can be no doubt that O'Curry gave him encouragement to embark on the task. It is clear from the early numbers of the Limerick Reporter that Lenihan had taken up the study of Irish history. His first idea of a history of Limerick was limited in scope. He made a study of the last sieges, as he tells us in his preface, and published the fruits of his study in serial form. After completing this work, he began to entertain the idea of publishing a history of Limerick from the earliest times. It is certain that, before O'Curry's death in 1862, Lenihan had read widely and collected much matter for his complete History of Limerick.

Mgr. O'Beard the work took five years of incessant labour. His Sundays were spent in the country copying inscriptions on tombstones and collecting folklore and general information bearing upon the subject. And yet at this busy period of his life, he found time to interest himself and the citizens of Limerick in the question of recognition by the British Parliament of the recently founded Catholic University of Ireland.

The Catholic University of Ireland had been founded ten years previously, but was unrecognized by the government. Lenihan was deeply conscious of the long-standing grievance of discrimination, in the matter of higher education, against the Catholic laity at a date thirty years after the granting of Catholic Emancipation; and in the columns of the Reporter and Vindicater he presented, with his matchless vigour and enthusiasm, the case for the recognition of the Catholic University. At a meeting of the Corporation, 13 February 1862, he gave notice of a motion to be debated: "That a memorial from this council be presented to His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, expressive of the opinion of this council in favour of the grant by Government of a Charter for the Catholic University of Ireland." The motion passed unanimously, and every Protestant in the council supported it by his vote. Lenihan and five other members of the Corporation were appointed to prepare the address. When the address received the appro
ed the historians of the Council, a deputation — including the Mayor (Mr. Lane Joynt), the proposer (Lenihan), the second and three others — was chosen to present the memorial to the Viceroy. On their arrival in Dublin the members of the deputation were entertained at a banquet given in their honour by the Rector of the University, Most Rev. Dr. Woodlock. Next day, Lady Day, the members of the deputation were presented to the Viceroy. Lenihan says that he gave anything but a favourable reply. The text of the Viceroy's reply disguised all too thinly the scant courtesy with which he received the deputation.

The Corporation of Limerick next decided, by an unanimous vote, to attend the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone of the new University buildings and travelled to Dublin for the event, which took place with great solemnity on July 20, 1862. Lenihan had special reason for his enthusiasm in the cause of a University whose name will always be associated with that of Cardinal Newman. It was Newman who discovered the genius of the great Eugene O'Curry, and it was almost natural for Lenihan to feel an interest in the cause of the University that could boast of a scholar of O'Curry's stature. It was at the ceremony of the foundation stone that Lenihan met O'Curry for the last time. He recalled that O'Curry and himself sat together at the banquet which followed the ceremonies; and before returning to Limerick, he received an invitation to spend an evening at O'Curry's home.

“it was an agreeable evening indeed,” he says, “though I saw that my gifted friend was somewhat exhausted after his hard day's work and thought his spirits were depressed. He zealously urged me to persevere in my then projected History of Limerick. He felt much interest in my sketches of the last sieges as they appeared in the Reporter and Vindicador; and, if through post office delay or other lapse, a number did not duly reach its destination, he lost no time in acquainting me with the fact and in expressing a desire of the missing copy. He contributed a very interesting passage from the Book of Lecan as to the origin of the name of Limerick, of which I availed myself cheerfully and thankfully and the manuscript of which, written in Irish with a translation in his own clear and admirable hand, I carefully preserved.” A fortnight later Eugene O'Curry died.

The history of the last sieges, as it appeared in weekly instalments of the Limerick Reporter, required long and careful preparation on Lenihan's part. But more was required than long and careful preparation when he started on this early history of Limerick. He was sufficiently aware of the pitfalls into which an amateur like himself might stumble in so difficult a part of the work, so he looked for advice and guidance from O'Curry, a master in this department of Irish history. We of the twentieth century appreciate O'Curry for his lasting worth as an archaeologist and master of Celtic studies, yet the fact remains that in his lifetime he was far from receiving the recognition that was due to his genius. The great Newman, alone of the scholars of the day, recognised the genius of O'Curry. For most of his life in Dublin O'Curry was employed as an 'assistant editor' who did the spade-work in rediscovering the genuine text of ancient MSS., while others took all the credit that was alone O'Curry's due. It required acumen on Lenihan's part to see through the propaganda of silence waged by aspiring 'intellectuals' whose reputation for Irish scholarship rested on the achievements of O'Curry but who refused to acknowledge their indebtedness.

It would be rash to deny that Lenihan's History of Limerick taken as a whole is free from error. Indeed the wonder is that Lenihan did not fall into more errors than he actually did. In his use of sources he might well have dispensed with the works of Macaulay. Thus, Macaulay's picturesque fable of the women of Limerick fighting during the siege finds its way into Lenihan's work. Again, the episode of Vereker's "strategic retreat" at Coloneey is described in all the fanciful detail of the fable that it is. Unfortunately, Lenihan's words on the matter have been reprinted — often word for word — in many local histories. There are other errors as well; yet, when the vastness of the work is considered, it is remarkable how few they are. It is true that the book is hardly notable for its good order; but for all that nothing is lost in the confusion. Everything worth knew-
must have a good idea of the expense of bringing out two volumes respectably—something, I suppose, between five and seven hundred pounds according to the style of bringing out".

In collecting materials for his history, he was particularly fortunate in his discovery of the Arthur MS. (The Arthur MS. is the fee-book of a Catholic physician, Dr. Thomas Arthur, a graduate of Paris University, who practised medicine from 1619 until 1663. The diary, which is in Latin, was published in part by Lenihan in the *Kilkenny Archaeological Journal*, 1867). This document is an invaluable source of social history of the period not only for Limerick. Unfortunately, owing to straitened circumstances in his later years, Lenihan was reluctantly compelled to sell this and other valuable MS. materials for his projected histories of Clare and Tipperary. The *History of Limerick*, on its first appearance, was hailed by many eminent scholars as an authoritative work. The current learned reviews in England and Ireland acknowledged its impartiality. A generous share of the costs of publication was met by the long list of subscribers whose names are tabulated at the end of the book; but the author must have found himself considerably out of pocket as the result of the poor demand for the book. For three years at least after the *History* appeared, an advertisement of two columns giving excerpts of the reviews was published in almost every number of the *Limerick Reporter*. In his correspondence with Father Meehan and Prendergast (author of the *Cromwellian Settlement in Ireland*) he complains that his book was eagerly read but not bought. Lenihan, was never in affluent circumstances; and it should be borne in mind that, at the time of the first appearance of the *History of Limerick*, he had to earn his daily bread as a journalist and to provide for the education of a family of eight or nine children.

It is sometimes said that a great portion of Lenihan’s *History of Limerick* is that of another writer, and the name of Thomas Stanley Tracey is mentioned as being that of the real author. This objection against Lenihan’s authorship need not be taken seriously. There is no mystery about the name of Thomas Tracey. He graduated a B.A. of Trinity College in 1841 and became a journalist. For many years he occupied the post of sub-editor to the *Limerick Reporter*. Lenihan quite openly admits his obligations to Tracey. In the Preface he states: "In translation, research, revision and, generally, literary assistance I have enjoyed the constant, efficient and friendly aid of Thomas S. Tracey, B.A., who was conveniently near me."

Two explanations can be assigned for the propagation of this legend of dual authorship. In the first place, the fact that Tracey was a university graduate impressed people at a time when few Catholics possessed a university degree. To this it may be answered that Lenihan, though prevented from receiving the benefit of a university training because of his faith, had probably had quite as good an education as Tracey. There is the added consideration that, if Tracey wrote a considerable part of the book, it is matter for wonder that he did not protest when his name did not appear on the title-page as that of co-author. The second source of the legend can certainly be traced to Michael Hogan. Hogan was the author of a number of scurrilous pamphlets under the name "Seán na Scuab," which were directed against the members of the Limerick Corporation. These pamphlets are long since out of print and deservedly so. The story of Hogan’s grievances against the Corporation is too well known to be repeated. But however justified his grievances, no admirer of Hogan can defend a work which offends against justice and charity. Lenihan’s *History* had been published only two or three years when Hogan started writing this series of pamphlets. As a member of the Corporation and as a defender of the Liberal candidates against Sir Peter Tait and a Fenian candidate at the elections of 1868, Lenihan came under Hogan’s displeasure. Hogan represented Lenihan in these pamphlets as the son of a tinker from Cork, a servant in Carlow College, a man who caused trouble between a bishop and his clergy, an adventurer who sought refuge in Limerick where he cobbled somebody’s history. Public opinion was not influenced by such wild and unfounded statements.

Elections of members of Parliament were arranged for November 1868. Gladstone was seeking a mandate for the disestablishment of the State Church in Ireland. The Liberal candidates for Limerick were Francis William...
Russell and Major George Gavin. Both these candidates had openly pledged themselves to support Gladstone’s Dis-establishment Bill, and it was taken almost for granted that no other candidate would take the field against them. The Mayor, Sir Peter Tait, who had been absent from the city since the previous March, to the consternation of many, proposed to go forward as a candidate. Tait, who had been a very popular employer in Limerick, stood a reasonable chance of being elected. He was known however to be a conservative in politics, and at once the Liberal policy supporters became alarmed. He was joined in opposition to the Liberals by a young journalist from Dublin who edited a paper, The Irishman, which strongly supported the Fenians. On the face of things, it was a strange election contest: Conservative and Fenian versus Liberals. The secret ballot act was not yet in existence and elections were disorderly in consequence. The Limerick elections of 1868 were no exception to the rule, and in the demonstrations that occurred one life was lost. The Liberal candidates were elected with 1,026 votes for Gavin and 794 for Russell. The popularity of Tait may be estimated from the fact that he came a close third to Russell with 720 votes. The Fenian candidate got poor support with only 187. The Conservative and Fenian candidates immediately entered a plea that the Liberals won by wholesale bribery and corruption. A commission was appointed to inquire into the charges and commenced its sessions on January 19th, with Lord Justice Fitzgerald as chairman. After a lengthy examination of the evidence for both sides, the judge declared that the Liberal candidates were duly elected. The findings of the court indicated that if the Liberals were to blame, the opposing candidates were no less blameworthy.

Meantime the growing unpopularity of Tait was shown by a resolution passed at a public meeting of the citizens on St. Stephen’s Day 1868. “We on the part of the burgesses beg respectfully to bring under your notice the following resolution which was passed unanimously at a public meeting convened at the City Court House by the (acting) Mayor on Saturday last 28th/31st December: ‘That we indignantly protest against the conduct of Sir Peter Tait in tampering with the civic chain of our most respected Mayors in that position from which they were so unwarrantably removed by the Champlain of Tory ascendancy.’” This address of the citizens to the Corporation was read at a council meeting on New Year’s day 1869. Sir Peter Tait had evidently decided to leave Limerick, as his business was not prospering, and in the course of the past year had been preparing for new financial ventures in Leeds and London. He wished however to have some memorial of his connexion with Limerick and, in commemoration of his triple term of office as Mayor, he decided to insert a large medallion in the civic chain. The insertion of the medallion required some change of the rings of former Mayors. He did this without any authorization of the Corporation or the citizens of the city. A resolution of the Corporation then notified Tait that a medallion was inserted only for some remarkable corporate event — as, for instance, the formation of the Reformed Corporation of 1840 — and that he was asked to present in place of the medallion one or three rings of the same pattern as those affixed by all the former Mayors. Tait refused to consider the proposal, and about three weeks later the City Treasurer was instructed to return the medallion to Tait. Two further attempts were made by the Corporation to have Tait reconsider his decision, but Tait refused to have any memorial of his mayoralty inserted in the civic chain except the medallion.

Lenihan, as might be expected, took no small part in the preceding events, the 1868 election and the affair of the Tait medal. His newspaper editorials gave his fullest support to the Liberals; for it seems that Lenihan and Tait that a medallion was inserted only for some remarkable corporate event — as, for instance, the formation of the Reformed Corporation of 1840 — and that he was asked to present in place of the medallion one or three rings of the same pattern as those affixed by all the former Mayors. Tait refused to consider the proposal, and about three weeks later the City Treasurer was instructed to return the medallion to Tait. Two further attempts were made by the Corporation to have Tait reconsider his decision, but Tait refused to have any memorial of his mayoralty inserted in the civic chain except the medallion.

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