

working barrister. His practice became enormous and, in 1787, he was rewarded by the Government with the office of Prime Serjeant.

Like most of the barristers of his time, Fitzgerald found the additional profession of politics useful towards his advancement. He was M.P. for Ennis in 1772, and for Fore, County Westmeath, from 1776 to 1783. In the latter year he was elected for both Tusk and Killybegs in Roscommon and accepted the former seat for which he was re-elected in 1790. In 1797 he was elected for the Borough of Kildare, and, as a member of Grattan's patriotic parliament, was one of its fiercest opponents of the Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

Fitzgerald's experience at the Bar and his forensic eloquence earned him the reputation of being one of the greatest orators in Ireland—and this reputation in the days of great speakers like Grattan and Flood, was no mean one. His most famous speech was made in the year 1782 when he proposed, in those unenlightened days, a measure of relief for his disenfranchised Catholic fellow-citizens. In spite of his eloquence, the measure was of course rejected.

He was no great statesman but his eloquence made him particularly sought after, and though he never sought political office, his career in the House of Commons gained him many professional appointments. He was especially brilliant in his many speeches against the Union and earned for his honesty the bitter enmity of Castlereagh and his corrupt associates. Just as those who voted for the Union gained titles, money and political office, Fitzgerald was deprived of the prime-serjeantcy for his opposition and refusal to accept bribes. In spite of this, however, the Irish Bar showed its respect to him by continuing to give him precedence over the newly-appointed attorney and solicitor-generals.

Once the Union was law, Fitzgerald accepted the position and sat for Ennis in the Imperial Parliament until 1808, when he resigned in favour of his son, William Vesey Fitzgerald. In 1782 he married Catherine, the daughter of the Rev. Henry Vesey, a grandson of the Archbishop of Tuam and cousin to Lord Glentworth of Limerick. In 1826 he refused an English peerage and his wife was created Baroness Fitzgerald and Vesey. He was then 84. Having remained faithful to his ideals to the end, and having served Ireland in an upright and honest fashion, according to his own lights, this grand old man died at Booters-town, about four miles outside Dublin, on the 20th January, 1835, at the ripe old age of 93.

SIR JOHN FITZGERALD

The Chevalier Sir John Fitzgerald was born in 1640, son of Sir Edmund Fitzgerald, of Clonlish, County Limerick. When

his father died in 1666, Sir John was living at Nantes in France, and David O'Bruadair, in a lament for the father, prayed that the son would return home safely. He did and became O'Bruadair's chief patron, and most of O'Bruadair's existing poems are on Fitzgerald or his family.

In 1680 Sir John, with many other Catholic landowners, was arrested in connection with the alleged "Popish" plot and imprisoned in London. In the war between William and James he held the post of Lieutenant-Colonel in Lord Mountcashel's regiment of foot, and later commanded a regiment of his own. On the surrender of Limerick, he went to France, but it seems that few of his regiment followed him.

However, those that did go distinguished themselves in the Flanders campaign and at the battle of Landen. In 1696 they again distinguished themselves in the Italian campaign under Catinat, and in 1697 they fought on the Rhine. This year, among other changes in the French Army, the Limerick Regiments were disbanded and incorporated in other corps. Little further is known of Fitzgerald, but it is probable that he was the John Fitzgerald who was admitted to the Hotel des Invalides in 1703.

During the Jacobite wars in Ireland, Trinity College was garrisoned by the Irish Army, and Sir John was put in command of it. About this time the "Book of Lecan" disappeared mysteriously from the Library and it is probable that Sir John took it. He sold it to James Terry and it was eventually deposited in the Irish College in Paris. Later it was returned to Ireland, through the good offices of the Chevalier O'Gorman, of County Clare, and it is now in the Royal Irish Academy Library.

O'Bruadair wrote of Fitzgerald when he was arrested and tried in London for complicity in the supposed "Popish" Plot of the period: —

If my prince were to cast but one glance at the visage and limbs of
 this man,
 His vigour, deportment and kindness, distinction and beauty of form,
 I am sure in the course of his prudence and justice he ne'er would
 admit
 On the word of a scoundrel that treason could ever have entered his
 heart.

WILLIAM VESEY FITZGERALD

William Vesey Fitzgerald, Irish statesman, was the son of James Fitzgerald, of Ennis, Barrister and Member of Parliament, by his wife, Catherine Vesey. He was born in the year 1783 and educated at Christ Church College, Oxford. Although he had a brilliant career there and established a reputation for his intelligence and ability, he seems to have led a fairly wild life and was involved in the scandalous affair of Mary Anne Clarke and the Duke of York,