

O'Brien was the author of many mathematical works. His text books *Differential Calculus*, published in 1842, and *Plane Co-ordinate Geometry*, published in 1844, were popular for many years after his death. Other works were: *Solutions to the Senate House Problems of 1844*, *Lectures on Natural Philosophy*, 1849, and *A Treatise on Mathematical Geography*, 1852. There were also many pamphlets of a minor nature on various mathematical and astronomical problems.

O'Brien, who had always been delicate, broke down in health when only forty years old, went to the Channel Islands to recuperate, and died there on 22nd August, 1855.

### PATRICK O'BRIEN *(Limerick Piper)*

Patrick O'Brien, or Pdraig O Briain as he was more commonly called, was born at Labasheeda, County Clare, about the year 1773. His parents were comparatively well-off farmers and Patrick, who was a native speaker, received a good education at the hedge schools. He was an excellent Latin scholar and great hopes were held out for his possibilities in life, but unfortunately, his eyes were bad and, before the age of twenty-six he became totally blind.

Like so many blind people, Patrick turned to music for a livelihood and learned to play the Union bagpipes. Having thoroughly learned this instrument he went to Limerick City, and, not finding the encouragement he expected, eventually became a street musician. His favourite stand was at the corner of Hartstonge Street and the Crescent, where he became one of the sights of Limerick. Few visited the city without going specially to hear him play his melodious Irish tunes.

Here he was one day discovered by Joseph Patrick Haverty, the famous Galway artist, who, struck by the fine figure and noble features of the piper, made him the immortal subject of his painting "The Limerick Piper." In it, O'Brien is depicted as old and grey, but still possessing all the nobility of countenance of his youth, bent over his beloved pipes, playing, while his young and beautiful daughter sits pensively beside him. The background to the picture is a woodland scene. The picture is painted in the romantic style and we cannot help thinking how much better it might have been, good though it is, if Haverty had given O'Brien his proper background, the hard wet pavement and walls of O'Connell Street.

The original picture was painted for Sir Robert Gore-Booth, <sup>in 1844</sup> of Lissadel, County Sligo, but it became so popular that a copy<sup>i</sup> was made for William Smith O'Brien, who presented it to the National Gallery. From this an engraving was made by J. S. Templeton for the Royal Irish Art Union, and copies of the work may still be found in many Irish houses. There is one in the Limerick City ~~Museum~~ Art gallery.

[Haverty, the artist born in Galway 1794. Died 1864.]

O'Brien had a fall on the ice in 1855, injured himself badly, and from August, 1856, until his death on 1st December, 1856, he was completely confined to bed in his lodgings in Nicholas Street. He was buried in Kilquane graveyard just outside the city.

## PETER O'BRIEN

Peter O'Brien, Baron O'Brien of Kilfenora, Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, was the fifth son of John O'Brien, of Ballynalacken, and Ellen Murphy, of Hyde Park, County Cork. His father was Member of Parliament for Limerick from 1841 to 1852. O'Brien, who was born at Carnelly House on 29th June, 1842, will be more easily recognised by Clare readers by his less imposing but more descriptive title "Pether the Packer."

He was educated at Clongowes Wood Jesuit College and at Trinity College where he studied law. In 1865, he was called to the Bar and, after a sound apprenticeship to Chief Baron Pallas and his uncle, Justice James O'Brien, he joined the Munster Circuit. Here he soon established a reputation for his powers of cross-examination and, in 1880, took silk.

He was a fearless advocate and a good lawyer and, on account of his open hostility to Land Leaguers and Nationalists at a time when Ireland was rampant with agrarian disputes, he was retained by the Government for their prosecutions in such cases. He was of considerable assistance to them in quelling the disturbances and his promotion was correspondingly rapid—Sergeant in 1884, Solicitor-General in 1887, Attorney-General in 1888, and Lord Chief Justice in 1889. It was during this period he earned the soubriquet, "Pether the Packer" on account of his skill in packing juries that would convict the defendants.

In spite of this however, O'Brien, who was genial, humorous, a keen sportsman and an excellent talker, was liked by all the barristers of the Munster Circuit, and his lisp has been the subject of many a bar-room joke. Maurice Healy, in his recently published *The Old Munster Circuit*, writes of him: "He was full of mannerisms, of which his lisp was the least notable, being a sibillance rather than a lisp. He hated a wig, and, five minutes after coming into Court, he would take it off and put it on the table in front of him, from time to time playing a tattoo on his massive bald pate. He had enormous lips, with which he made slightly sarcastic suctional noises. He nearly always knew where the truth lay; sometimes he was too lazy to make sure it had reached the jury. 'Tith cathe mitht be thettled,' was a common phrase in his mouth. And yet, at the Bar, he had been noted for his courage; and Ajax never defied the lightning with greater imperturbality."