

TALE OF NINETY-EIGHT

Paddy Neale Of Askeaton

DRY OF BRAVE UNITED IRISHMAN

(By "ORJAY")

A summer's evening many years ago, my old friend, Ned, sat communing together on a grassy bank at Askeaton. The alchemy of the setting sun warmed the old Desmond ruin overgrown with ivy and the warm waters of the ebbing Deel lapped at our feet. There was something evocative about the scene and I quoted a line that came to my mind: "Oh! God, put back the world, and give me yesterday." My companion was silent for a while, then he turned to me and said: "Did I ever tell you the story of Paddy Neale, the United Irishman who was executed on that hill just across the river from Askeaton? I believe poor Paddy's head is the last one to be impaled and exposed to view in these parts. But I'd better tell you the story from the beginning."

There was a branch of the United Irishmen founded here in Askeaton some time before the year 1788. It had a large membership, and they met to assemble in a quiet spot on the bank of the Deel, near where the Shannon flows. The leader was Paddy Neale. Paddy was a young type of young Irishman—vigorous, athletic, handsome, generous, and his men would have followed him anywhere. He had the qualities of a leader, but he was too impetuous and his daring outran his judgment. If he had only one drop of coolness in his make-up he would have accomplished anything. Then, he wouldn't have been Paddy Neale. Early in the year 1788 the authorities, fearing insurrection, and hearkening to the rumours, quartered a military detachment in the Castle. The military didn't do an ounce of work. They were strangers to the place, far from home, and tried to make the best of the cold weather by the dampness of the old Castle. But there were other people at work besides the military. Ireland was cursed with spies at that time, and we had our share of them in Askeaton.

THE MASTER SPY

The master spy was a renegade Irishman, who went by the name of Sul. This Sul soon wormed his way into Paddy Neale's confidence and for the purpose of getting their names tried to become a member of the United Irishmen. He was rejected. One evening at the time of the Rising of '98, a dress meeting of the local United Irishmen was called. The meeting was to be in the old spot, by the River Deel. Sul got to know about it and he arranged for a detachment of soldiers to conceal themselves near the place. Paddy Neale happened to be fishing in the river that day, and drawing up a boat by the Deel's mouth, he went to the rendezvous by an unguarded path. He stumbled on the soldiers' hiding place, and at that moment he realised the danger. He decided to sacrifice himself to save his companions. So leaping on top of a high bank, he shouted a warning to his companions who were converging on the meeting place. This thus attracted the soldiers' attention to himself, and at once a chase ensued. Away with Paddy Neale in the direction of the river. But his boots were too heavy for him, and the soldiers ran on him. So he threw off the boots and showed a clean pair of heels to his pursuers. They started after him then, and the shots rained on him. The soldiers at the Abbey. The soldiers at the Abbey now took up the pursuit, as they were fresh, and poor Paddy lay there and weighed down by his wet clothes, they soon gained on him. His one idea now was to reach his boat, which was at the opposite side, near the mouth of the river. So when the military were near to him, he dived into the river again, and the current when he was quickly taken down stream. But owing to his fatigue and the weight of his clothes he didn't stay long in the water, and he landed on the other side, and to his luck left him. For Sean and a few of the soldiers had named behind at the rendezvous, and poor Paddy, only a few hundred yards from his boat, and free, stumbled into their hands, and was captured.

BURNED AN INCRIMINATING DOCUMENT.

They brought him to the Castle and while he was awaiting interrogation in the Guardroom, Paddy pretended to shiver, and asked to warm himself at the fire and dry his clothes. He was allowed up to the fire, and one of the soldiers, at his request, started the embers blazing. Suddenly, Paddy whipped a sheet of paper out of his inside pocket and threw it into the fire. The soldier immediately scattered the embers around the floor. But it was too late, the paper was burned. And well it was. For that paper contained the names of every member of the local United Irishmen. And death or deportation was the penalty for membership.

After that, Paddy was removed from the warmth of the Guardroom, and flung into the Castle dungeon. Here, during the night, he was subjected to every known form of torture, to make him betray his fellow members. But Paddy was made of stern stuff, and the torture served only to bring into relief those sterling qualities that lay hidden in him.

SCOURGED AND HANGED.

Next day he was led out barefooted and clad only in his trousers. His hands were tied to his back and a long rope round his waist secured him to a gun carriage, drawn by a pair of horses. Thus, surrounded by military, he was led to Gallows Hill. As he walked, two men took up their positions on either side of him, each with a cat of nine tails. They scourged him till his back, sides and arms, were one bleeding mass, and he left a trail of blood on the road, like a wounded animal. He fell once or twice, and his poor bleeding body was dragged along the roadway like a sack. Eventually they reached Gallows Hill (Ard Na Croithe), and more dead than alive, poor Paddy was hoisted on to the hangman's car. Soon he was dangling in the fresh morning breeze that had started up from his beloved Shannon.

HEAD BOILED IN SALT.

The people of Askeaton were horrified at the bloody brutality of it all, and it is any wonder that memories are long and bitter. When the hanging was over, the body was cut down, beheaded and quartered. The mutilated and bloody remains were then limed and buried in the Croppy Grave beside Gallows Hill, all except the head. This was brought by the hangman to the Castle, where it was boiled in salt to prevent putrefaction, and in cummin seed to prevent the birds from pecking at it. It was then affixed to a pole and placed on top of the Castle battlements. Paddy had a fine head of hair, and on windy days, when the pole swayed, and the breeze played through the hair, the head seemed to come to life. It was a grim spectacle and terrified the people of Askeaton and countryside for many a day.

Paddy Neale's family lived in Askeaton, and their feelings at this crowning indignity can readily be imagined. They moved heaven and earth to have the head taken down, but to no avail. The authorities were steadfast in their barbarous design, the head must remain as a deterrent. Short of attacking the Castle with their bare hands, there seemed to be nothing else the poor Neales could do. But when all fruit failed, Mary, his sister, a comely, high-spirited young girl, hit upon a typically feminine plan to put an end to her brother's grisly vigil.

THE PLAN.

So she made up with one of the soldiers to the disgust of the local people, who didn't understand her motives. Soon she had the soldier eating out of her hand, as the saying goes. And then one night she persuaded him to smuggle her into the Castle, while he was doing the sentry. She got up to the battlements, and before her soldier friend knew what she was doing, she took Paddy's head off the pole, and threw it down to a friend, who was waiting below with a basket. The friend took the head immediately to the Abbey and buried it in one of the vaults there. The Military did everything they could to get it back, but failed. When her work was done, Mary Neale dismissed her soldier with scant ceremony.

And so, until the Last Trumpet sounds, Paddy's head, safe in the Abbey Vault, must suffer separation from his body, which lies across the river in Gallows Hill. But the spirit of the man, undivisible and unconquered, lived on in the hearts of the people, and Paddy did not die in vain.

CHANGE OF HOURS

In Mental Hospital

OBJECTION BY STAFF

THE nursing and attendant staffs of the Limerick Mental Hospital are not satisfied with the new hours of duty programme which began in the institution on March 1st.

On the staffs' behalf, Messrs. Tynan & Co., solicitors, wrote to last Saturday's monthly meeting of the Hospital Board expressing dissatisfaction and denying a statement made at the previous meeting by City Manager M. Macken that the staffs had then no grouse against the proposal to put the new schedule of working hours into operation.

Messrs. Tynan's letter said that the R.M.S. knew quite well of the staffs' objections to the new programme of work, but because the employees were awaiting a reply from the R.M.S., they hadn't given notice to the City Manager. They were doing that now.

"SEVERE ON PATIENTS."

Apart entirely from the satisfaction of the staff, the letter went on, the new programme was severe on the patients. It meant that they would daily spend 13 out of the 24 hours in bed. That, the staff submitted, was unnecessarily harsh, even at the prospect, through it, of cutting down staff.

"They further say," Messrs. Tynan wrote, "that while they do not wish to arrogate to themselves rights they have not got, they further say that any system of staff duty which results in the vast majority of the patients being 13 hours out of 24 in bed even during the summer could not be a step in a forward direction, even if it does save an increase in the staff."

The Chairman (Mr. R. M. Clery, Co.C.), said the purport of the solicitors' letter was very much contrary to what the Board was given to believe by the R.M.S. and the City Manager at the previous meeting.

GOT NO OBJECTION.

The City Manager said he had then not been informed of any objection by the staff to the proposed new working hours. The staff knew very well of the scheme to change the working hours, because this proposal had been before a previous meeting and adjourned. The proposal had then been published and the staffs must have been aware of it.

The Manager said that anyhow his idea had been to put the working hours into operation and then hear objections and grievances if they existed. It was not too late to do that now, but he could assure the Board that he'd do it only on the basis of what was for the benefit of the patients and the hospital. The fixing of a schedule of working hours was a management function and one which the staffs could never be allowed to arrogate to themselves. But if the staffs could convince him that there were some genuine difficulties, he would consider changing their programme of work. But he would not do that if it were just so that the staffs' consecutive hours of work would be changed to their liking.

BED-TIME PROGRAMME.

The Mayor (Mr. G. B. Dillon), asked if it were true that the patients were confined to bed for 13 hours during the summer under the new working hours programme.

Dr. P. J. Kelly, Acting R.M.S., said there was a slight change in the patients' bed-time programme. They were now allowed to stay in bed until 7.30 in the mornings, instead of 7 o'clock.

The Manager said he would look into the staffs' complaints, particularly into the suggestion that the patients were kept in bed 13 hours every day. He was even prepared, he said, to sit in conference with their representatives to agree to any proposals for necessary alterations.

The Board expressed satisfaction and, on the proposition of the Mayor, did not discuss the matter further.

GARDENING

Seasonal Guidance

(By J. J. O'CARROLL, F.R.S.O.)

THE spring cabbage which was perhaps planted out last September is doing well, but it needs a stimulant now to promote growth and early heading. A dessert spoonful of sulphate of ammonia distributed around about each plant would start them into growth and this dressing should be repeated in about ten days time. After the application, the fertiliser should be hoed in, or, better still, the ground should be forked over, lightly and the plants earthed up either with the shovel or draw-shoe.

Another planting of cabbage plants should be made now to succeed the September planted variety and plants which were sown last August will be suitable. Varieties such as Early Offenham, Flower of Spring, or Ellam's Early are all good, the latter being small headed and perhaps quicker in coming to maturity than the other two.

Early cabbage is often attacked at this time of year by pigeons. They pick the edges of the leaves early in the mornings and if they are not checked they will be as bad as hens in a garden and prevent the plants from growing.

There are only two ways that I know which will stop pigeons from devouring cabbage plants. One way is the gun and the other is black thread. The thread is stretched like a telephone wire on twigs along the rows of cabbages. If there is much to do, perhaps a line of it down every second row would suffice. The thread is stretched in a single strand about an inch above the cabbages and pulled tight. As it is black the pigeons, on alighting, touch it and as they cannot see it, they fly off with fright and don't come back again. The thread must be a good black sort that will not bleach white, because the whole secret of success with this method is the invisibility of the scare.

The same scare is dependable to keep sparrows and other small birds off young seedlings. They often do a lot of damage by pulling up whole rows of germinating seedlings, and a strand of thread down an odd row will keep them off. Do not put the thread criss-cross all over the bed, as it will be in the way of the hoe and won't make any better scare.

Cabbages for planting out now may have to be purchased, but for a later planting for summer and autumn cutting, one should sow a pinch of seed now.

Choose a nice warm border, and sow the seed in shallow furrows ten inches apart. Some manure ought to be dug into the ground in preparation of the bed. "Greyhound" is the best earliest variety to sow now.

The warmest way to grow them, and the saving of the manure or leaf-mould for the sets would be beneficial. A heavy feed of manure on to an adequate amount of a balanced compound fertiliser should be added at the time of planting at the rate of 4 oza. per square yard.

The following are good early varieties: Early Bore, recently introduced, is a heavy cropper. Another variety is the first to appear where late May planting is used. It is useless to plant too soon as they will lose nothing by their sprouting boxes for a while. Potato "seed" sacks should be turned immediately and boxed for heating in the house, as well to the plants.

PLANTING.

It is too late to plant black currants or raspberries as the latter have to be cut back severely and the plants not started to grow yet.

It is also late for spraying with the new late Dormant Oil. It will be put on. The plants should be white washed and the soil covered with a layer of straw.

Plants of raspberries, blackberries and currants must be cut within 6 ins. of the ground. The raspberry bed should be pricked lightly with a fork now and all weeds. A new bed can be made now but it should be allowed to fruit in the autumn.

Plants of the following can now be planted: All the tubers for the garden should be planted in heated houses. The plants will need to be put into boxes or pots and plunged into 3 in. pots. Tomatoes in cold houses must be got to the greenhouse as soon as possible. A hot bed will be needed for the early batches of peas.

LETUCE.

Autumn planted lettuce would also do with a stimulant now, but not so much at a time as for the cabbage. It often happens that the lettuce bed is gappy at this time of the year, and if one cannot procure suitable large, well hardened plants to fill the rows, it would be best to lift one gappy row and fill in the other rows with the plants lifted. This work ought to be done with a trowel, so as to lift the plants with a ball of soil and disturb the roots as little as possible.

Just like the cabbage, another plantation of lettuce should be made now for succession and a pinch of seed should be sown in a seed bed for transplanting, or, better still, a few rows could be sown between the early lines of peas. An earlier crop will be obtained by thinning this lettuce, the undisturbed plants heading up much sooner than the transplanted ones. A small early maturing lettuce is "Early Paris Market."

BEANS.

Autumn sown broad beans are now due for an earthing. If there are gaps, some of the plants could be lifted from the overcrowded part of the rows and planted into the gaps. A spring sowing of broad beans should be got in at once as the late sown lots are generally attacked badly by black fly.

POTATOES.

Some early potatoes could now be planted on a warm border, where they can get some protection from the late May frosts. Drills in which some stable manure can be put in,

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