



John O'Mahoney's seven-week campaign in 1848 on the Comeragh Mountains is normally ignored. (Currier and Ives)

over the former's idea to publish a new radical paper. This had no appeal for Brennan, but he was unable to prevent Lalor from pursuing his plans: he busily contacted former associates including Father Kenyon, but he too steered clear of any involvement. There were clear instructions from the bishops against involvement in political conspiracies, though the tenant right campaign did attract clerical participation. Many local parish priests were actively preaching against further secret organisation. Early indications of the spread of a new movement came in February 1849 when the parish priest of Inishtown, Clonmel, dismissed two employees for being members. In March the Resident Magistrate in Waterford was advising the government of rumours of a renewed conspiracy, though its exact nature was as yet uncertain. The development of the movement seems to have rested on agents sent from Dublin to contact groups of sympathisers, ex-confederates and defenders. The actions of

these agents were conducted in secrecy and they may have restricted the active membership to unmarried men.

Lalor embarked on one of these missions in June 1849 accompanied by Thomas Clark Luby. He visited both Tipperary and Limerick writing a series of excited letters to Dublin proclaiming his success. His enthusiasm may have been misplaced—a Limerick RM wrote: 'I have been for some time aware of his being in this locality. I have had him watched. He is associated with a man called Meany and both endeavoured to gain converts...I believe without any success whatever. I know one instance where they were turned out, and their overtures rejected and that by a party who last year would have received them with open arms.' In Lalor's absence Brennan had the chance to assert his leadership over the movement.

Plan to kidnap Queen Victoria

The conspirators had already been approached to attempt a rescue of the Young Irelanders awaiting transportation in Dublin and were only deterred by a letter from John Mar-

tin. In August the visit of Queen Victoria presented an opportunity to act. On an evening whilst the royal party was in Dublin a group of about 200 gathered on the banks of the Royal Canal to attempt a kidnap. Being poorly armed and surprised by the police the attempt was abandoned. Brennan had however already sent messages to groups in the country to be prepared to rise and the failure to rise was to shake the confidence of local groups in the leadership's abilities. The government did make at least one arrest, but the chief concern of the administration focused on the political uproar caused by the Dolly's Brae incident in July. They were also besieged with appeals for the pardon of Smith O'Brien and the other Young Ireland leaders. The new conspiracy was not taken very seriously as the government was certain that their efforts would not mature into a serious threat. Clarendon had more respect for the abilities of the 'astute editor' of *The Nation*, Gavan Duffy, who had relaunched the paper after his acquittal.

In September the conspirators, determined not to let the year pass without some attempt, met at Clonmel. The meeting included delegates from all the eighteen active branches representing about a thousand supporters. The attempt may not have gone ahead if it had not been for the assurances of Rody O'Bourke of Glenbreda that he could lead a thousand men into the field. At a second meeting the final plans were made for a rising on Sunday, 16 September, involving attacks on a number of garrison towns in Tipperary and Waterford, followed by further attempts in Cork, Limerick and Kilkenny.

The failed 'rising'

To call what followed a rising is certainly a misuse of the term. Various small groups gathered on the night of 16 September at different locations in Tipperary, but bad weather and insufficient numbers led to the abandonment of any attempt. Local police and magistrates had received reports of such gatherings and there were arrests of those caught armed with pikes. In some areas supporters could not be persuaded to rise at all and were 'not able to remain in their houses at night for fearing that they may be made to go with the rebels'. At Cappoquin the story was somewhat different. Brennan had travelled