The Letters of Sylvester O’Halloran

II

Edited by

J. B. Lyons, M.D., F.R.C.P.I.

To Macpherson

Wilson’s Dublin Magazine for 1763 contains two communications addressed to Macpherson; an essay “The Poems of Ossine, the Son of Fionne MacComhal, reclaimed. By a Milesian”, in January and a letter, reproduced below, in August. Writing to O’Conor, Sylvester O’Halloran mentions a letter in Wilson’s Magazine for Jan. 8, 1764 but may have been mistaken about the date. At any rate there is no letter of O’Halloran’s in the Dublin Magazine for January 1764.

A letter to Mr. Macpherson, occasioned by his Dissertation on the Poems of Temora

By a Milesian.

After having waited, in vain, a considerable time from your publication of Fingal, for some abler hand, who, fired with the love of truth and of his country, might have undertaken the laudable task of proving the unquestionable claim of Ireland to those Poems, I, at length, took up my pen, however foreign to my profession and inclination, and in the Dublin Magazine of January last, I think, proved the absurdity of your allegations in as modest a manner as the nature of the plagiarism would admit; vainly concluding, at the same time, that a tenderness for your reputation, or a love of truth, would oblige you to apologise for your impositions, or, at least, in your succeeding work, endeavour at some kind of defence of them. But how great is my astonishment to find in the work before me, purile evasions, manifest contradictions, and barefaced inconsistencies, substituted for facts supported by solid reason.

You acknowledge that the name of Scot was first known in Britain about the latter end of the third and beginning of the fourth century; this is the period fixed by our Historians for the peopling the Highlands from Ireland by Carbery Rheuda, with a select corps, from him called Dal Rhiada; this is confirmed by Bede, a Briton, who flourished in the seventh century. From this circumstance you agree that they were a new colony, as, indeed, they were; notwithstanding this, at the distance of about 1400 years, you have discovered this to be a mistake, in opposition to the traditions and histories of both countries, as well as concurrence of foreign, and nearly contemporary writers. You affirm, that the Highlanders and the Picts were the same people, speaking the same language, but that the Highlanders, by their roving and unconfined way of living, became enemies to the Lowlanders; by which means they found out a new language, laws, and customs. I must ask Mr. Macpherson one question, When did this confusion of tongues take place? In the next paragraph, conscious
of your mistake, you seem surprised that the subversion of the Public Government happening so late, no traces of the language can be found. Now if I am not misinformed, it exists to this day in the Lowlands, mixt with barbarous Irish and English, where it is spoken in common. This, however, you observe, favours your system; though you had before laid it down as a principle! for, you say, had they been different nations, their language, in like manner, would have been different; now the names of places and of their kings are of Gaelic origin: profound, conclusive this! because, forsooth, the names of places and kings are Irish, it must follow that the Picts and Highlanders are of one common stock: Could the mixture of a few friendly Saxons amongst you totally destroy your original language; whilst Ireland, though under an English government for more than 500 years has preserved almost the original purity of hers to this day?

Having thus most industriously formed one nation of two people, different in language, customs and manners, contrary to reason and history, you confidently affirm, that from this people the Northern parts of Ireland were first stocked with inhabitants, as were the Southern by the Belgae of Britain: this we shall grant, however repugnant to history as well as commonsense, and proceed to ask you the following question: How happened it that, notwithstanding the continual wars between the Cael or Northern Irish, and the Belgae, or Southern, as you affect to call them, for such a series of years, they have to this day (for 3,000 years) preserved their original tongues, that, though divided by ambition and interest, they have agreed in being the same people, with the laws customs and manners, whilst the Picts and Cael, or Highlanders, became mortal enemies; and by the conflict found out different genealogies and customs?

From this hopeful system, you proceed next to introduce a new theory of history, from the poems in question; and boldly affirm, that from the whole one fact, at least may be gathered, namely, "That Ireland had no kings before the latter end of the first century;" though a little before you admit "that the Firbolgs landed here many centuries before the Christian era." If Ireland had no kings before that period, how are we to account for the country's being so populous the next century? Ossine celebrates their heroes and chieftains, he mentions their provincial kings, and recounts the several contests for the monarchy; even your favourite poet, whom you oppose to our most ancient records, might have persuaded you to suppress this part of your absurdity. But while you graciously vouchsafe to allow us kings from the first century, you acknowledge also, that our mother country, Caledonia, has no history before the fifth, nay, that Fordun, and the other Scottish historians, were obliged to have recourse to the Irish for genealogies and descents, in order to form a history of their own country. Does it not seem unaccountable, that a nation, which in the second century, produced such heroes as Fingal and Oscar, such a bard as Ossine, should not, in the twelfth, be able to produce any traces of their history, but such as the Irish afforded them! You observe from Sir James Ware, that the genuine history of Ireland began still later than yours. But if we reject every history in which a mixture of fable is to be found, what must befall even the father of fable as well as of history, Herodotus? nay more, what must befall even professor Macpherson himself?

As you acknowledge Scotland had no history beyond the fifth century, and that ours was still later; everything antecedent to this must needs be fiction, our antiquity a dream, and the respectable names of O'Flaherty, &c, no more be mentioned.
With coolness and composure you oppose the poems of Ossine, written in the second
century, acknowledged by yourself to be an age of fable, to our authentic annals,
to the psalters of Ireland subject to a national scrutiny every three years; to the
writings of St. Cormoc, King and Archbishop of Cashel, written in the eighth century;
to the Leavar Lecan and other records preserved in the University of Dublin and
Oxford; authenticity of which was never questioned; 'till professor Dempster,
Innes, &c. began lately to call them in question.

You allege, that the Irish spoken in Scotland is purer than ours; in this you are
ill-informed, as the Highland dialect is much coarser, and the best Irish is confessedly
that of Connaught. You have in like manner, thought proper to affirm ' That a
Scot can easily understand an Irish composition, whilst an Irishman, with study only,
can understand a Scotch one.' This if it means anything, besides the false insinuation
you would deduce from it, must be understood thus, That the Scot is born a scholar,
whilst the Irish man acquires this by study only. It is a notorious mistake that the
Irish call their language Gaelic Eireannach; it has ever been called by us Gaelig,
from Gael, or Gathelus, our common ancestor. And here it may not be amiss to
inquire, Why a Celtic derivation for an Irish people? or, What affinity between
Caledonia and Gaelig? Scotland had been known by that name, long before the
Irish migration as appears from Caesar, Mela, Ausonius, &c.; nor did we ever know
it by any other name but Allaban, which our ancestors first gave it, not from Inis-
ban, as Camden has it, but from its snow covered tops, Tallav-ban or the White
country.

Having thus, Alexander-like, cut through what you could not unfold, and trampled
down everything that could oppose your theory, let us see how you prove the poems
of Ossine to be Scotch. After quoting several detached pieces of old Bards full of
absurdities, in which the Irish Fingal is made a monster, a giant, you think you
prove that he and your Hero were different persons. This proof is nearly as strong,
as what, probably, some systematic Historian may draw from a perusal of your notes
and dissertation on the works of Ossine. He may advance, ' I reject everything that
could seem to prove this writer a Scot, so many absurdities and contradiction; appear
through the whole that it must certainly be the work of some Carthagian'.

You say, ' That the Irish first came to a knowledge of these poems after the Eng-
ilish invasion'; and not content with this, ' That they had the address to make
these very Scotch to believe them as Irish composition, by erasing every line that
could prove the contrary; though by mistake, every now and then Siol Albin slips
from them'. In the name of wonder were all the copies in their hands? could not
the scholar born Scotch detect the imposture at that time? You have acknowledged
already that the Scotch have no history earlier than the fifth century, that a much
earlier period they applied to the Irish for materials, and you have admitted that this
people were not known in Britain until the latter end of the third century, and own,
that these poems are written a century earlier; that the Irish did not know them till
after the English invasion, though all the transactions happened in their country;
and that no ancient nation took more pains to transmit their memorable actions to
posterity than they; that they were minute in their accounts of Fionne, and that
no part of their history is clearer and fuller than this period. I have in my first essay,
(see Magazine for January, 1763, p.21) traced the family from Ossine up to Niah
Neacht, king of Leinster, whilst you attempted to impose Tremor the son of this
prince, in Fingal, for a Scandinavian, from whence you were then pleased to fix their

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original, though in the present work to make them Gauls. Can you oppose a single fact to what I have advanced? No: yet, to persuade the public that this is a Scotch poem, you have left nothing unattempted. Do you suppose the world will take on trust the reveries which you have thought proper to advance, because a professor of History? That Fionne made several successful incursions to Britain is certain; and mention is even made of a bloody contest when they returned home on dividing the booty; hence the succeeding Irish in Scotland, might call him Siol Albin to commemorate these actions, as the Romans surnamed their Generals from the countries in which they had distinguished themselves.

But let us examine the authenticity of the poems which overturned our history and antiquities. Cucullin, who, our history assures, flourished under King Cornelius, in Ulster, about the year 3040, was the son of Sualtus, or Semo, and had his residence near Dundalk: e.e. with Leary, surnamed the victorious, Connal Cearnach, the son of Avergin, the three valiant sons of Uisneach, viz. Naoisc, Ainle, Ardan, Fergus, the son of Ross, were cotemporaries; and so renowned were they, for courage and strength, as to be called in our histories, mor seisor curiaite, na Craive Ruaid.—the seven champions of Caearannagh—of these your poet makes Cucullin, and his three nephews, Naoisc, &c., cotemporary with Finn and Ossine, who figured it three hundred years later; and, still more astonishing they join with the Irish in expelling the Danes, though nothing is more true than that the Danes were not known in Ireland till the middle of the ninth century. Here then is an anachronism of above 800 years! the poet brings an action which happened 600 years after his death! what! was he endued with second sight? But stranger still, Mr. Macpherson, the underminer of antient history, in his notes, everywhere declares all these people cotemporaries!

Scotland was formerly to Ireland, what the low countries have been, of later times, to the Spirited of Europe, a nursery for soldiers! thither the gallant youth of our country repaired, and in conjunction with the Picts, or Lowlanders, successfully attacked the Romans and Britons when nothing offered worthy their valour at home: so early as the first century, Cucullin figured there. By this means, the parts most contiguous to Ireland became inhabited, and the Irish names, which they have to this day, were then first given them. On different expeditions, their numbers increased and then it was, that Raguda made a regular settlement there, from Ireland. By the usual intercourse and assistance afforded to this country from Ireland, the works of our Bards became familiar there. These poems, the works of different poets, and written at very different periods, were put into your hands; but being either ignorant of our history, which it is hard to believe, as you so often oppose our most celebrated writers; or, which is worse, willing to change their property intirely, you have advanced such a system, as, for the honour of learning, no other age ever produced! In litigated points of history, where we have nothing certain to direct us, we are at liberty to choose the most plausible conjecture; but we cannot oppose modern reveries, to uncontroverted facts.

In this disquisition, it has been neither my intention, or inclination, to offend the gentlemen of North-Britain. I hope nothing has escaped my pen that could give the least countenance to such a conjecture; they are a brave, a polite, and a learned nation. But to you, sir, whom I look upon as an enemy to antiquity, I might say a broacher of fables, I think little compliment is due from Scotland and Ireland, or
from any man of genius and learning. To you I shall conclude with this motto which it has ever been my aim to deserve, 'Quaé verum atque decens, curro et rogo, et omnis in hoc sum!'

To the Medico-Philosophical Society

The Medico-Philosophical Society was founded in 1756 by Drs. Charles Smith and John Rutty. Communications addressed to the society are preserved in a three volume manuscript Repository, and the first volume, in the library of the Royal Irish Academy contains a letter from O'Halloran to the secretary, Mr. Cleghorn.*

Dear Sir,

As nothing can give me, greater pleasure, than to gain the Esteem of men of merit and Erudition, I flatter myself, that the following Communication, will not be an unacceptable present, to Mr. Cleghorn.

"The Wife of Richard Nickle, soldier in Gen. Strode's Regiment, and Capt. English's Company, quartered in this City, about the fifth month of her pregnancy, had strong symptoms of Miscarriage, the flooding Encreasing, the midwife applied to me. The Foetus was separated from its membranes. The Placenta was remarkably large and the membranes strong—this was May 24th past; but a large Cystis was pendulous from the belly, Exactly at the Navel, and the belly remarkably flat. To Examine this Phenomenon, with the more leisure and exactness, I had it brought to my house. The Cystis, from the Umbilical Chord, and Joining the belly, reached as far as the Pubis, and was visibly inclined to the left side. Its Colour was redish, and its upper parts, felt thick and Gelatinous; but at bottom was thin, and transparent, seeming to Contain a fluid; I must observe, that this bag, took its rise, from the Umbilical Chord, tho' near the belly, not from this last; being visibly a gradual stretching of it—I opened this bag, at its fundus, and there flowed from it, above a half pint of a reddish Salt Water—indeed it seemed to me, but the Liquor Amnii, growing like it thick and Gelatinous on boiling, tho' deeper coloured: I continued my Aperture, thro' its whole length; and finding it Contain part of the bowels, I enlarged my opening, by a Crucial Incision. I found in this Cystis, first, towards the right side, the liver, from which the Umbilical vein took its rise, here, as well as if it had been in the belly; it Contained also, the Stomach, Spleen, Mesentry and all the Intestines, entire, but part of the Caecum, which with the Chord entered the belly, and terminated in the rectum: the two Arteries as usual pierced the belly, at the Navel, and as usual, took their rise, from the Iliacus. The usual Circumvolutions of the Intestines, in the bowels, were manifestly perceived here, and all these Viscera, perfect and Entire, as if in the body! On opening cautiously the belly, the contents here were, the Aorta Descendens, and Vena Cava: the Capsula Atrabilaires, and Kidneys, with their proper vessels; the Umbilical Artery, the Urachus, bladder, womb, (for 'twas a female), with the Rectum, and part of the Caecum—towards, the Sternum, at the right side there were no traces, of a Diaphragm; tho' at the left, there was a sensible Septum. All the Viscera in both Capacities were remarkably sound; the brain was

* An account of this case entitled The History of an uncommon Foetus was also published in the Dublin Magazine for August 1762.
completely formed; nay Even the different Humours in the Eyes, were Compleat and distinct, as were all the Limbs, and I have made a skeleton, of this Extraordinary Foetus—

Many remarkable instances are recorded, of the Uncommon Abortions; and I think the two mentioned in the first Volume of the London Medical Essays, are very Curious. That part of the Contents of the lower belly, should be lodged in the Thorax, and the Women to come to their full time, and the Children to show, even signs of life, is worthy remark—in the present Case, the Woman felt herself quicken; and if the Foetus had not the kind of life, usual in that state, it is demonstrable, that the Parts could not Increase, and Come to the perfection as they did. You will, I think, Sir, Certainly Conclude, with me, that the Viscera on this Case, Contained in a Cystis, could not answer any of the purposes, which they do in, an state, Consequently, that the State of a Foetus, in Utero, is in some sort Vegetative. But I forget—I am at present content, to give you, an Exact relation of facts, and to yourself must submit, for the proper Inductions from them—if this does not answer the Ends of entertaining, and obliging, you; I have taken some trouble to little purpose; but it shall not hinder me, from giving you, that place in my thoughts, which I think due, to me of merit; and to Every Gent. who labours, to Improve a profession, with which the good of mankind, is so Closely Connected—

I am Sir your most Obedt. and humble Servt.

Sil: O Halloran

Limeric June 8th 1762

To Charles Vallancey

Charles Vallancey, the son of a Frenchman formerly named de Vallance, was born in Windsor in 1721. He joined the engineers and was posted to Ireland where he became engineer in ordinary in 1762. He was secretary to the Society of Antiquaries in Ireland in 1773. In 1784 he was elected F.R.S.

He was described in words of uncompromising disparagement by Norman Moore (Dict. Nat. Biography) as “the founder of a school of writers who theorise on Irish history, language, and literature, without having read the original Chronicles, acquired the language, or studied the literature, and who have had some influence in retarding real studies, but have added nothing to knowledge.”

O’Halloran’s letter to Vallancey, first in the possession of Shaw Mason and later in the Phillip’s collection, is now in the National Library of Ireland. (MS 4158, f.20).

I with pleasure sit down, my Dear Sir, to return you, my sincere Acknowledgements for the Draught of Saint Cormac’s Chappel, and for the trouble you took in Altering and amending my design’s of the Holy Cross. Mr. Ewing will present you with one of my Books: it is but a poor return for your friendly Assistance; but you will have the pleasing reflection to think that by it you have in some Measure rescued this poor Neglected Country from part of the unmerited reflection’s, she has so long lain under.
As I should be pleased to be ranked the Number of your Friends you will Excuse me, if I am Curious to know, whether you have made any further Advances in the Topographical History, you were so kind as to shew me, when I had the Honour of seeing you last October in Dublin. I have within these last three months got some new acquisitions to my Collection on Irish History; if you think anything in my power can in the least promote your Intentions none has so good a right to Call upon me as Major Vallancy. As to my own Work, I have viewed things thro’ a Medium, very different from any of my Predecessors; whether thro’ a true or false one time only can tell. Animated with an Exalted love of truth and of my Country I have censured and applauded freely, where I thought they were merited; and I have been as free in my remarks on later times, as on the more Early periods of our own History. I may be Censured of boldness in some particulars; but I think in none of Falsehood.

I subscribe my-self, with very great Esteem Dear Sir,
Your very Humble
and Obedt. Servt.
Sil: O’Halloran

Limeric April 10th 1772

To the French Nation

The Limerick Chronicle for August 23rd, 1910 contains a letter from Mr. J. P. Lynch, Bedford Row, Limerick, regarding the O’Halloran family and includes Sylvester’s letter “... which he addressed to the French Nation when Voltaire assailed the character of the Irish people, which is as follows, translated from the French.”

Gentlemen,

Permit me to offer my respects, as a stranger who admires and reveres you. It is the love of truth joined to a love of my native land, Gentlemen, which shine forth in your learned works that has dictated what I am venturing to send to you. If it is rash to expose such an essay to eyes so critical it is not the less glorious to ambition their suffrages (to hope for their help).

I have not seen without indignation the repeated efforts of modern writers to obscure the glory of ancient Ireland. Their number has not frightened me, nor has their talents. I have attempted as a citizen, to vindicate the truth of my native land from their calumnies. The goodness of my cause and the authentic monuments of my country have furnished me with what confounds their vague statements and superficial reasoning.

If in endeavouring to give a fair idea of the ancient inhabitants of one of the most beautiful though now the most unhappy countries of Europe, I have rendered myself, Gentlemen, worthy of your approval, or that my work has brought into existence investigations of a more searching kind, amongst the learned members of your illustrious Society my labour will have been amply repaid and my ambition satisfied.

I have the honour to be etc.,

S. O’Halloran.

Limerick January 20th, 1773.
To the Surgeon-General

O'Halloran's *A Complete Treatise on Gangrene and Sphacelus, with a new Method of Amputation* was published in 1765. To further its success in Ireland, which had not, apparently, come up to the author's expectations, he contributed the following letters to the *Freeman's Journal* in January 1772 and July 1774.

To the COMMITTEE for conducting the FREE-PRESS

Gentlemen,

I Flatter myself, that the Importance of the following Letter will induce you to give it a Place in your useful Paper.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most humble Servant,

SIL. O'HALLORAN

Limerick, Jan 3.

To W. Ruston, Esq. ; Surgeon-general; Messrs. Daunt, Gibbon, Shewbridge, Whittingham, Whiteway, Croker, Hume, Woodroffe, and Foreside, Examinator of Irish Surgery; and to the rest of the very respectable Body of Surgeons, of the City of Dublin.

Gentlemen,

It is now about six Years, since the Publication of my Treatise on Gangrene, *with a new Method of Amputation* ; and though fully convinced of the importance of that Work to the Public; yet, at the same Time, sensible of the Misfortune it lay under, in not having the Name of an Author of Reputation enough, to excite Public Curiosity, I took the most prudent Measure, I could think of, to gain it that Attention it so well merited. To this Purpose, I sent Copies of it to the Royal Academy of Surgery at Paris, for their Inspection. This celebrated Body, in their Answer, were pleased, not only to approve of the Work in general, but to give it, as their Opinion, "That in it were many Facts, worthy all the Attention of those who practice Surgery!" In the Year 1767, and not before, an Opportunity offered in our Hospital, to perform my Operation on the Thigh, and it was attended with the greatest Success. This case, which was printed in the Court Magazine, for June 1767, I addressed to the Surgeons of London, flattering myself, that the Importance of it would excite their Curiosity, and I was not deceived. It has not only been warmly recommended to their Pupils, by some Teachers of Eminence there, but practised in many other Hospitals, besides those of London, with Success; one Surgeon only, namely, Mr. White, of Manchester, having performed it, no less than seven Times, with Effect.

Had I, Gentlemen, taken the same Pains, to engage the Attention of Irish Surgeons to so useful an Object, it is more than probable, that it would have gained some
Degree of Credit amongst us; that I may no longer reproach myself with such Omission, is the Occasion of this Address.

John Linane, of a sallow Complexion, about eighteen Years old, was received into our Hospital, last November; the Entire of the Tibia was strangely distorted, the Bones of the Tarsus were quite spungy and soft, and two profound Sinuses run from both Sides the Head of the Tibia, deep into the Condyles of the Femur. He had long laboured under this Complaint, which originally proceeded from Cold in the Fields, and it was visible that there were no Alternatives, but speedy Amputation, or Death. On the 26th of Nov. last, I took off this Thigh, exactly as described in my Book; the Eighth Day after, I applied the reserved Flap to the bare Bone, and by the Tenth, the Bone and almost the entire Stump were fairly covered with firm Flesh and Skin! This, Gentlemen, is no Ipse dixit; many Gentlemen of the City, as well of the Faculty, as others, were Witnesses of this Fact. In a few Days more no sore remained, except an Union between the Edges of the Flap and Stump, which was, however, effected by the 26th of last Month, in every Part except a very small Space, about the Length of Half; and not the Breath of a Quarter of an Inch, in the internal Part of the Thigh. Why this Part was not so soon united as the rest was a little Turn the Flap took to the Side on which he lay, and which, by my Absence from Town, for two or three Days, was not remedied; but which, after all, Gentlemen, you see is not of the least Consequence. Such is the Success of this new Method of Amputation; but, lest I should be suspected of exaggerating; you are publicly invited to make strict Enquiry into the Truth of this Relation; and surely; it is an Object too interesting to the Profession of Surgery; and to Mankind, to be omitted, especially as the Patient still remains in our Hospital.

When we reflect on the Length of Cure after Amputation, in the common Way, of the Thigh—from the Largeness of the Limb to be taken off—the great Surface to heal—the Projection of the Bone—but, above all, from the thin Cicatricie, with which the Bone is covered, perpetually exposed to public Injuries, and excruciating Pains on every Alteration of Weather; and for Life too, we must feel sensibly for the unhappy Subject. In vain has the cross Suture of the Stump the double Incision, and the later Improvement of Mr. Louis been tried; the Complaint still subsists, notwithstanding all these laudable Attempts.

To present to the World a Method of Amputation, by which the Extremity of the Stump is covered with firm Flesh, and the Patient freed from these piercing After-pains; so sensibly felt after every other Method, even though the Cure should be more tedious, is surely a most desirable Object. But when, besides this PRINCIPAL POINT gained, it shall appear that all this is effected: 1st; By an Operation more expeditious and not more painful than the common one. 2nd; That the Union of the Flap and Stump is attended with no Pain. 3rd; That the Cure is completed in one, instead of many Months. And 4th; That after twelve or fourteen Days, the commonest Tyro may finish the Cure: The Surprize will be, that so important a Discovery should be so long overlooked. Indeed, so sensible was I of the Importance of this new practice, and the extensive Inductions to be drawn from its Principles, that I had Reason to think myself intitled to national Reward, for my unwearied Diligence in this Affair: sure I am, that in any other Country of Europe, the Author of so useful a Discovery would not be unnoticed!

I have now, Gentlemen, laid before you a faithful Narrative of the Success of my new Method of Practice; a Method, which I am acknowledged to be SINGLE in.
This Address is an Appeal to your Judgements, as Gentlemen eminent in your Profession: It is an Appeal to your Humanity as Members of the Community. If this Practice has so many Advantages superior to all others, why will you not adopt it? Sure you will not think the worse of it by being the Discovery of your Countryman? If any Doubts should arise, I am ready to answer them. Should I be called upon I am willing to perform it in the Capital.

But though the Flap Operation is attended with such striking Advantages in the Thigh, yet, by the same Method, in the Leg, the Cure is not so speedy, though every other Advantage is gained. You, Gentlemen, I am all Candour. The Reason of this Delay is the Thickness of the gastronomic Muscles; but I have adopted a much more simple, and much more expeditious Method for the Leg. This I mention, because it differs from that described in my Treatise.

I have the Honour, Gentlemen, of being personally known to most of you: You will not, I hope, suspect me of Vanity in this Address. These, that know me best, must acknowledge, that through the Course of my Life, I have laboured MUCH to merit Applause. I have studied LITTLE the modern Modes of attaining it. Warm in the Cause of afflicted Humanity, I have wished to make my Labours useful Abroad; had they met with the Attention I hoped, I should not be obliged to have Recourse to this Letter at Home.

I have the Honour to subscribe myself,
With very great Respect and Esteem,

GENTLEMEN

Your most humble and obedient Servant,

SIL. O'HALLORAN:

DUBLIN, January 16.

To the COMMITTEE for conducting the FREE PRESS

To WM. RUXTON, Esq., Surgeon-General and to the very respectable Body of surgeons of the City of Dublin.

Gentlemen,

Zealous in the cause of humanity, and ambitious to advance the reputation of IRISH SURGERY, I (in 1765) published a Treatise on Amputation, with the description of a new method of amputation, repeatedly and successfully practised by me; which work was most favourably received in Britain and on the Continent. But as I found it very little attended to in Ireland, in January 1772 I had the honour of addressing a letter to you in the Freeman's Journal, reciting the success of my method of amputation on the thigh, in a case then in the hospital of Limerick, which I flatter myself was highly worthy your notice. Repeated experience has since proved to me that the method I had adopted in the leg, though infinitely more eligible than any
other anterior to it, had defects which required some alteration in the mode of operating, and that that followed in England for the ankle as described by Mr. White in the Medical Essays of London, etc. required still greater alterations. The operation in both cases I have reduced to the utmost degree of certainty and simplicity; and being lately in London, I prevailed on my much esteemed friend William Bromfield, Esq.; Surgeon to her Majesty, and to St. George’s Hospital, to practise it in the case of a leg that required amputation. This operation he performed in St. George’s Hospital on the 8th of last month in the presence of numbers of gentlemen of the profession, with that coolness and ability for which he has been always distinguished; and on the 19th (i.e. eleven days from the operation) there was a complete union between the stump and flap, and the entire sore reduced to a small trifle. The success attending this case has met with the applause and countenance of Mr. Adair, and has determined many other gentlemen there to adopt it; amongst others, I particularly mention Mr. Else of St. Thomas’s Hospital, and Member of the Paris Academy.

Great applause and merit are certainly due to Mr. Bromfield for his generous and disinterested conduct on this occasion. Tho’ himself formerly a teacher of Anatomy and Surgery, and always supporting a most distinguished character in his profession, yet zealous for the public good, and for the establishing and confirming of useful practice, he condescended to adopt a mode of practice, the invention of a person greatly his inferior in every point of chirurgical merit, merely because he was satisfied of the justness and utility of it; and by so doing has greatly raised its reputation and consequence.

I am persuaded, Gentlemen, you want no incentives to promote and extend whatever may help to alleviate the miseries of the sick and distressed in your line; and that even without laying this case before you, you would readily adopt any practice that tended to public utility, even though a native of the kingdom was the author of it.

I have the honour to subscribe myself, with great esteem,

Gentlemen,

Your most humble
and obedient servant,

SIL : O’HALLORAN.

Dublin July 8,
1778

To the Rev. Dr. Leland.

O’Halloran, in 1774, in the form of a letter to the Antiquarian Society, published a pamphlet entitled Ierne Defended, or a candid Refutation of such Passages, in the Rev. Dr. Leland’s and the Rev. Dr. Whittaker’s Works, as seem to effect the Authenticity and Validity of ancient Irish History, evoking an angry letter in The Freeman’s Journal from someone who signed himself A School Boy.
'Too tedious it would be,' wrote this waspish correspondent, 'to follow you through all your silly remarks on Mr. Leland, his history can never suffer by the impotent attacks of Surgeon O'Halloran. Your account of the learning of the Irish before the Roman name was known, and your imagining this Island to be the Island of Calypso, where Telemanus was, are so absurd and ridiculous, that no one but a person that is non compositus mentis, would listen to such nonsensical stuff. Any degree of credit you might have got by your introduction to the History of Ireland, is now entirely ruined by your last beggarly performance. I do now conjure you, Sir, if you have any regard for yourself, that you will drop any more scribbling, and mind the Systole and Diastole of the human body, which I suppose you are better acquainted with than with history.'

O'Halloran mistakenly assuming that the letter was written by Dr. Leland addressed a reply to the reverend gentleman, signing himself Another Limerick School-boy. His letter appeared in The Freeman's Journal June 4th to 7th, 1774.

To the COMMITTEE for conducting the FREE PRESS.

To the Revd. DOCTOR LELAND.

Revd. Sir,
Mr. O'Halloran then being not thought an object worthy your pen, as an Historian, you have employed your amanuensis in the character of a schoolboy, to correct this gentleman for his audacity in presuming to criticise on any performance of your's. Like a schoolboy, it must be confessed, he has acquitted himself! but Gens contra Gentes; and as a Surgeon against a Doctor, why not, one schoolboy against another. Though the many mistakes and blunders he has fallen into, would make me suspect it was the very Doctor himself in disguise; but whether as a Pedagogue or a Pupil, you shall always command attention, and be diligently waited on.

You have asserted that it was not the Amor Patiae, but your overlooking him in your work that brought him on your back; and that Mr. Whitaker's treating him with some contempt, was the cause of involving him in the scrape. How little do you know the real sentiments of this Gentleman! Could, Sir, Mr. Hume, M. de Voltaire, the two Macphersons, and Sir John Dalrymple, have offended him? And yet all these, as well as Doctor Leland, and Mr. Whitaker, he has attacked in defence of his country. Far from treating him with contempt, Mr. Whitaker expressly says; that in Mr. O'Halloran he honours the patriot, and the defender of his country.

Mr. O'Halloran complains, in his letter to the Antiquarian Society, of the shameful neglect of Irish history, even amongst ourselves; and in contradiction to this, you affirm, "that these who are conversant in the annals of Europe, know as much of Irish history as is necessary, i.e. the parts that are not fabulous." But who but the author of so many other capital mistakes, would assert this? And do the annals of Europe throw our history into any comprehensive view? Surely no! what little is mentioned of it, even in modern Geographers, is to the last degree erroneous. Dr. Warner, an English-man, complains in the dedication of his Irish history to the King, and elsewhere, of the shameful ignorance and ungenerous misrepresentation of
Irish annals; and Dr. Leland, and an Irishman, affirms, that this is all that is necessary to be known! For say you, an Englishman could no more pronounce the very names of our fabulous Kings, than he could of so many Hottentots! How can you, Revd. Sir, be eternally tripping, and eternally displaying your hatred to your native country? So far from being unable to pronounce, we find some of the ablest antiquarians of Britain, not only dipping into our antiquities, but studying close our language! Need I on this occasion name the great Camden, Hhind, Stillingfleet, Nicholson, &c.? Shall I mention at this very period, names so dear to Ireland as a Vallancy and a Bernard, who have already defended our annals? Mr. Chapel of Exeter, and many others, who are now pursuing the same tract, to assist them in their investigation of British antiquities! Besides, Sir, this sneer is paying a very indifferent compliment to the Antiquarian Society, composed of persons of the first quality and state in the kingdom, who, sensible of this great neglect now labour hard to remedy it, and conjure their expatriated countrymen, to further their design.

In quoting the first paragraph of your preliminary discourse, animadverted on by Mr. O'Halloran, and indeed the only one attempted to be answered by you; why have you not given it to us entire, as in your book, and as he has quoted it? No, Sir, you became at length sensible, that it was too much to repeat absurdities with falsehoods; and was content to give us the last simply as they were; more resigned to be the retailers of errors than of nonsense. But how have you defended the paragraph, even as you have given it to us? You say the Irish were reduced so low by the Danes, as to lose what little arts and sciences they had; and this I deny. You affirm, that Cromwell reduced them to such inferiority, as to send 100,000 of them out of the kingdom. That they quitted the kingdom by thousands then is certain, and Mr. O'Halloran has shewn, that from the respect these emigrants met with on the continent, the fugitive Charles gained support and friends. Did not 20,000 Irish at once quit their country, in the days of King William; and were not these followed by above 200,000 of their countrymen from time to time; and yet in neither instance were the Irish “flung with the reproaches, with the contempt of their neighbour”—as you have insultingly asserted, and now labour to prove! To the reverse, the establishments they then met with from the different courts of Europe, and still so honourably maintain, are the strongest refutations of your unmanly, your ungenerous assertions.

But why, say you, should Mr. O'Halloran mention the Irish in the reign of Charles the First? In this instance you conclude him mad; and to prove it attempt to inflame the passions, instead of convincing the judgment.

“A period say you that degrades the Irish nation. If slaughtering 40 or 50,000 Christians in cold blood; if rapine, plunder, rapes, &c. are the characteristics of a respectable nation, the Irish at the period the learned Surgeon mentions, had them in an eminent degree!”

With regard to the charge of madness, I shall say little; but I have consulted all the boys of my class and they have all read more or less of your history—and they seem unanimous that you are in no danger of falling into the same misfortune, and for obvious reasons. But with regard to the heavy charges against the Irish nation, at this period, I am just after consulting Dr. Warner, and he affirms, that the numbers massacred in this unhappy war did not exceed 4,000; but four lives, Sir, instead of 4,000 taken away in cold blood are not to be justified. But even his is a new instance of your insincerity, in charging on the nation what was the act of a few. The publick synods of the Irish clergy, at that time, forbad it, under pain of excommunication:
her Generals and Officers punished it whenever detected; and the whole nation denied the charge! They were the acts of a few desperate banditti, commanded by a wretch worthy such actions, Phelim O'Neal! Thus you see, Sir, even in this pel instance, the Irish, far from barbarians, as you wantonly affirm.

That civil wars in general are attended with uncommon cruelties, is but too true! What torrents of blood did the contentions between Marius and Sylla produce, and how dreadful the proscriptions! What can exceed the infamous Sicilian Vespers, where the throats of all the French in the island were almost at the same instant cut! Who can but with horror reflect on the entire English nation conspiring, and in one night massacreeing all the Danes through the kingdom, and they very women to join in the plot! What were the scenes of desolation and carnage committed by the Guelfes and Ghibelines on each other in Germany and Italy! And are these nations to be pointed as barbarian, in eternum, for what the galling hand of oppression inflamed them at particular periods to perpetrate? If they are not, Sir, why do you bring this charge against your own country or her generous sons? Why do you, Sir, instead of being the minister of peace, attempt to renew these breaches? If ever peace and union were necessary for the sons of Ireland it is surely at this day!

You affirm, that none but one non compo mentos would imagine Ireland to be the Ogygia of Homer. I will not appeal to an abler judge than yourself of this matter; and, after you read the Odyssey, I believe you will think he who doubts it, and he only, non compo. But why, Sir, so frequently those hints at insanity? You have been already fairly acquitted of any tendency to it, from the thickness of the partition. I will give even stronger proofs of it: neither a tool nor a mad man could compose a work consisting of three volumes in quarto, without being even acquainted with the subject, much less take in the London and Dublin booksellers for 2,000 pounds.

But, do you really think, Sir, this flimsy—and to use your own expression—this beggarly letter, a sufficient vindication of yourself, from the accumulated charges brought and proved against you? At least, I believe, the impartial publick in general, the Literati in particular, who have read IERNE defended, will not.

You may affect to despise Mr. O'Halloran, as an antagonist unworthy your pen. In my opinion, it is the most prudent measure you can keep. The fastidious Bently behaved just so, with regard to our great countryman, Boyle. Mr. O'Halloran does not dispute your abilities; but he contends for it, that, in Irish history, you are shamefully ignorant, and unjustifiably prejudiced. But why so eager to make Mr. Whitaker of your party, or promise a future letter in his defence? You will do much better first to re-establish your own character.

I have read that Gentleman's history of Manchester, as well as his history of the Britains; and, if I may judge of his abilities from them, as I surely may, you need not be uneasy about his defence. If ever he means it; if ever he thinks he can do it with candor and justice, I pledge myself he will acquit himself of it—not as a common scold, not as a school-boy—but as a Gentleman and as a Scholar.

I am, reverend Sir,
your most humble servant,

Another Limerick school-boy

May 31, 1774.

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A further letter from A School Boy pointed out O'Halloran's error:

'Your endeavoursing to make the publick think that Dr. Leland was the author of a letter signed a School Boy, shews your ignorance; for any person of common sense would find as much difference between Mr. Leland's stile and that of a school boy, as between yours and Mr. Hume... Your illiberal and wanton reflections... are the product of a malicious and envious heart.'

To this second offensive epistle, O'Halloran made no reply.

To Edmund Burke

There are two letters from O'Halloran to Edmund Burke in the Fitzwilliam collection at the Central Library, Sheffield. Burke was the London correspondent of the Catholic Committee and it may have been through this connection that O'Halloran gained his acquaintance.

The first letter is primarily concerned with Gardiner's Catholic Relief Act of 1778; the second is most interesting and suggests that O'Halloran was angling for a Civil List pension.

Dear Sir,

The Uncertain State of our Bill, was what prevented me from writing to you before. It seems then, that it is at length arrived, with the Test Act Expunged; and both parties are preparing against next Monday, their utmost forces. My good Lord Shannon has, set off for Dublin, at the head of His Cohorts, determined to Carry his Cause, or Relinquish his place. Is it not astonishing, that the Gentlemen who forced the test clause, into this Bill, and pruned and curtailed it so, as to make it far from Answering the Expectations of Patriots and Honest men, should at the same time, Endeavour to get clearly rid of it, by proposing to put off the further proceedings on it, to a long day, which proved how little they desired, that this Clause should take place —Is it not I say curious, that the Expunging of this Clause is now loudly made a handle of, as a predilection, in favor of Popery! Very Doubtful is the Event of this Bill; and tho' threatened with War and Invasion, yet the sons of Despotism and Tyranny—for surely such may the pretended sons of Liberty, in Ireland be Called!—seem as Anxious to prevent a firm Coalition of all parties for their mutual defence as ever. The Catholics are highly sensible of their situation; and are Resolved, by Every legal and Constitutional Means, they can devise, to Endeavour to procure a Repeal of laws as Unjust and Cruel as they are impolitical and Ruinous to the Nation—I met Dr. Curry, and a few friends immediately after my Arrival at Dublin, I Exposed to them what were your sentiments, with Respect to their Conduct. they Acknowledged the justness of your Remarks, and all agreed (Except a Mr. Reynolds, a man the clearness of whose head, by no means corresponds with the goodness of his heart) that a Petition should be presented in case the present Bill was defeated. they Expressed in the strongest and most lively terms, their gratitude to you. at Limeric I had a very Respectable Meeting of our friends, who Unanimously Applauded, and
Resolved to adhere to your opinion; I am requested by them, to Return their thanks to you, in words more warm and Animating than I Can Express. It was resolved to write to Cork on these Matters, but Everything has been suspended till the fate of the present Bill is known—

Should this Bill be thrown out, or pass so Multilated as to Answer little of the good purposes, originally hoped from it, the advice of friends and lovers of this once glorious but now wretched and Oppressed Country, would be highly Useful and Necessary; and amongst these, who stands so Conspicuous as Mr. Burke? Whatever advice or Opinion you will please to give me on these Matters, I shall Exactly and faithfully Communicate as you direct and no more; Rely upon it, that they will be paid the Utmost attention to.

I shall be much Obliged to you, to Enquire of Mr. St John, how the Memorial I gave him was disposed of. I cannot help thinking that the laws of Common Humanity, are Interested, in that affair, especially at the very dawn of a Bloody War, and that a good Minister and a good Man, will not overlook it. In some Enquiries, since my arrival here, after the Ancestry of our friend Theobald, I found at Cahir con l'is the real Arms of the Burkes of Clan William Barry, and which Arms no Heralds office can Refuse, being Engraved on Stone, in the dismantled part of an old Church there. They are "in a field OR, a Cross of Malta Argent; in the first Canton, a lion rampant and in the second an hand Couped at the wrist"—both I do suppose Guules (for they are not Expressed) over the Center of this old Monument is a Crucified Saviour in Relief with this inscription "Ecce Signum Crucis"—on the right is a figure of the Virgin, over which is Engraved "Sancta Maria"; and on the other side another female figure with "Sancta Joam"—the rest broke off—the following part of the inscription surrounding the Arms, is perfect and legible—"Hunc tumulum Theobaldus Bourke, sibi & Uxori suae Slaniae ny Bryen, fieri fecit"—here follows a label from which Letters have been Erased, or wore out—below this—"Bourkiadum Soboles, Carolino Sanguine tincta, atque Brianorum a Nob". the Remainder, not to be satisfactorily made out, tho' we must suppose from what Appears that it was the Remainder of an Epitaph, (and from the specimen we may conjecture no despicable one) in praise of the family—Quere, is it to be Inferred from the Carolino Sanguine that they alluded to be somehow, the descendants of Charlemagne? By the strict Laws of Heraldry, no Arms Can be Assumed without a Clear title to them. behold here then, an Unanswerable one for the Burkes of the County of Limerick.

Upon a supposition that this little Account would not be Unpleasing, I have taken the trouble of sending it, to you.

With best Respects to Mr. Burke & Compliments to Mr. Burke, I have the Honor to Subscribe, with Great truth & affection

Dear Sir

Your most Humble
Obbedt. Servt.

Sil: O'Halloran

Limeric Aug. 1st —78

P.s. the letter to Mr. Bryant, requests your Conveyance.
Dear Sir,

Last Friday, I delivered to my Esteemed friend John Bourke a large silver ring & a seal Antique, for your use. It was found near Solohead, two miles on this side Tipperary, a noted pass, on which many bloody Conflicts were determined, particularly in the Danish wars. I need not tell you, that, besides the ring, which was indiscriminately wore by the Celtic Knights, as well as by these of Rome, the former also wore a Torques. You will see by the size of this ring, that our Antient Knights were no Pigmies; and by Examining it with a good glass, you will see more than I can describe. It was not till after we parted that I found I omitted sending you another Curiosity—namely an Antique Spur—When last in London, Conversing with some Virtuoso, I mentioned some Fresco paintings in tolerable preservation, which I discovered, particularly at Adare, & in an old Monastery, at the mouth of the Fergus, in the Shanon; but tho' they seemed to admit the facts, yet they doubted much if any remains of such works could be now visible, in old dismantled Churches, & in so moist an Air. the fact is, however, that they are; tho' when neglected, or overlooked, covered with Mould. I had, about five weeks ago, a long letter, from a Mr. Leeson, a Correspondent of mine, praying my opinion, on a large piece of Fresco painting, he had discovered in an old Abbey near Tuam, C. G. It is comprised in the space of about 14 feet Square, in two Compartments. In the first are three Skeletons of Kings, with a Crown or Coronet, on the head of each, but differing from each other. In the same line are three Kings with a crown on the head of each—one in a mantle with three feathers in the girdle; the second in a mantle with a hawk on his finger; the other more in a Roman dress, with a large Broad Sword in his hand, with the point to the side of his face, Under these six figures, is a line of Irish Inscription is some perfection; but this last, he did not transcribe. In the next Compartment, is a naked figure tied to a tree, and an Archer with a bow & arrow. seven arrows seem to have pervaded the naked figure from that side; & at the back stands another Archer, with a bow and arrow, & shaft of Arrows by his side. this last has lodged only one Arrow in the body. Behind sits, on a larger Sophia, a large figure, in a robe fastened round the neck, & a great hood, & in his hand he holds a book or role. the figures have shoes on, but of different sorts, & something of an old Roman or Highland dress about the Breech. Under this is a second line of Inscription—such is the Account of this Curious painting, which I intend visiting my self, when the weather becomes Composed; & which I would hardly trouble you with, but that, I hear, great affairs of State do not deprive you, of these sensible Relaxations which great men, of all ages Enjoyed.

Tho’ my labors in the Cause of my Country, & in the advancement of my profession, have by no means been rewarded, yet this neglect has by no means relaxed my pursuits; & I beg leave to Cover thro’ you, to my honored friend Mr. Adair, a couple of cases, one of which appears to me, & I think will to him, if properly pursued, to be, of very great importance to the Public, & to the healing Art. I should also long since have Ushered into the World, a new Edition of my Treatise on Gangrene, wherein the Utility of the New Method of Amputation is proved by 14 Cases,

* Solohead.
† Canons’ Island.
† Knockmoy.
in the Hospital of this City, but the immature death of an Amiable & Accomplished wife has for a long time suspended its Execution;** but which will be immediately resumed—You Sir, have interested yourself warmly in my behalf; Lord Beauchamp, I am sure would do the same, as would most undoubtly Mr. Adair. tho’ my Claim, in the cause of my Profession may perhaps not appear to you, so Eligible; yet now as a man of Letters; as one who has warmly & Successfully interested himself in Exploring, Vindicating, & Establishing his Native History, some public Countenance is due. In North & South Britain, we see pensions & appointmts settled on Lettered men; whilst on our Civil list, for above a Century an Instance do’s not occur, except one pension of fifty pounds a year settled by the late Lord Chesterfield, on a blind Doctor Clancy? The fact is, our Irish men of Consequence seldom extend a thought, beyond themselves & their immediate dependents; so that Genius may flourish or Expire for any Attention paid by them to it. I cannot help thinking, but a proper representation thro’ you, would be a means of Extending Royal Munificence to this side of the Channel. I have wrote to Lord Beauchamp, on this head. If you would speak to him, or write with him, you would confer a very lasting obligation on me—at least, I flatter myself with receiving your Sentiments on this Matter. I beg my best respects to your Amiable Lady & the Councillor, & have the Honor to subscribe myself, with very great Esteem and Respect.

Dear Sir
Your most Humble
Obedt. Seryt.
Sil: Ó Halloran.

Limeric Sept. 15th 1793

** His wife, formerly Mary O’Casey, died on July 6th 1782.

To the Society of Surgeons

The Dublin Society of Surgeons was founded in March 1780, with Henry Morris, surgeon to Mercer’s Hospital, and James Henthorn, surgeon to the House of Industry holding the offices of President and Secretary respectively. Sylvester O’Halloran was made an Honorary member later that year. His letter to the secretary on that occasion as well as a letter written in the following year are preserved in the library of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

Sir,  
I was yesterday favored with your letter of the 27th Instant, informing me, that the Dublin Society of Surgeons, had unanimously Elected me, an Honorary Member of their body.

Be Assured Sir, that I am highly penetrated with Gratitude & Esteem for this distinguished Honor Conferred on me, by so Eminent & Respected a body of Gentlemen: an Honor as unexpected as unsolicited; & I do Request that you will be so-
obliging as to Express these my Sentiments to the President & Associates of your Illustrious Company in the warmest terms. My particular thanks are due to you Sir, for the polite & obliging manner, in which you have Conveyed to me the above Resolution; & when more at leisure, you will be so good as to Inform me, of the Nature & Objects of the Society, that I may Contribute my mite to the advancement of so Usefull an Institution.

I have the Honor to Subscribe myself—
Your
most Obed. & Humble Servt.

Sil. Ó'Halloran.

Limeric October 31st, 1780

Sir,
The Enclosed, which thro' you, I have the Honor of presenting to our Society, should have appeared much sooner but for some Unavoidable delays. However I hope (if approved of) that it is time enough to appear in the first Volume of the work. My Inclination to Testify my Gratitude for the Honor Conferred on me by the Dublin Society of Surgeons, has prompted me to offer this Coup d’Essai, & if it meets with their approbation, that, joyned to my Zeal for the Honor of our Irish Surgery, will stimulate me, to further attempts; & it will be more my Misfortune than my fault, if I shall not Appear in some measure worthy the Esteem they have manifested for me. it is for this Reason that you may probably hear again from me in the Course of a Month or six Weeks—

I am Sir, Your very Humble
& Obed. Serv.

—Sil. Ó'Halloran.

Limeric April 7th 1781.

To William Dease

During his editorship of the *Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science* (a forerunner of the Irish Journal of Medical Science) Sir William Wilde published a detailed and informative article on O'Halloran, in the course of which he referred to three letters to William Dease, expressing his intention to publish them, some time in the future, in full. Unfortunately he failed to do so, and if they still exist their present whereabouts is unknown. Dease was one of the founders of the College of Surgeons. He was President in 1789, and Professor of Surgery from 1785 until his tragic death in 1798. He shared a common interest with O'Halloran in the management of head-injury. The following fragments are taken from Wilde's paper:
April 22nd, 1786: 'My absence in the county of Tipperary for some days will, I hope, plead my excuse for not acknowledging your esteemed favour of the 8th inst. sooner. I am much pleased that the cases I sent with your approbation, and that the College approved of my endeavours to second their views, so honourable, I hope, to our country, and so useful to mankind. I should be glad to know if they were handed over to Mr. Henthorn for publication. If so, accept of the following as a codicil to them.'

June 2nd, 1786: 'You apologise for not writing earlier as wishing to lay my papers before the College before that period. I am highly sensible, my dear Mr. Dease, of your friendship and predilection for me, and this even before I had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with you. I have been well informed that, through your solicitation, I was admitted an Honorary Member of the Chirurgical Society, with my esteemed friend Mr. Adair. I have a letter of the secretary's informing me that they waited for a Royal Charter before they would make any publications; and I as naturally concluded, when this event took place, that I was as much a member of the new society as of the old. There is an old adage, *qui cito dat, bis dat*. As the smallest demur has taken place, it becomes no longer an object worth consideration by me. Being a member of all the literary societies in Europe will not add a single iota to a man's real merits; but such societies reflect honour to themselves, when they embellish their catalogue with meritorious and illustrious names. This little stricture is, my dear Sir, reserved for your own perusal. I have not seen John Hunter's work, but know that it has been advertised in the English papers above a month. I know him personally, and have seen him operate at St. George's, where my friend Bromfield attends. As I lodged in Parliament-street, when last in London about my History, I had frequent cards from some hospitals, particularly St. George's, whenever operations took place. Hunter's character is respectable, and his collections much esteemed; but, considering his confined and narrow education, I should expect nothing very remarkable from him: however, *I should suspend my judgement*. You conclude your letter with an offer of your services; I accept of this offer with the same candour I would give it. I told you that I had left in town a treatise on injuries on the head, which was to have been published in eleven weeks. I had entered into a written agreement with a Mr. Whitestone, —who, I believe, is nobody; at least, I am sure with respect to me he is devoid of truth. He had long amused me, but upon inquiry I found he never committed the work to press. Whether he made an indirect use of my manuscript, or had a copy made out for his own purpose remains to be explored; but the manuscripts, I have got out of his hands. Well acquainted with booksellers, and in general with their not being "righteous overmuch," I wish to make it the interest of one of them to engage in the present, as I did Ewing some years since, but Whitestone is not the man.'

To Richard Griffith, Esq., M.P.

A letter from Richard Griffith to Henry Bell, Esq., Chairman of the Meeting of the Inhabitants of the town of Lisburn was published in the Dublin Evening Post on Saturday August 21st, 1784. Griffith had been chosen to represent the town at the National Congress to be held in Dublin on October 25th. He wrote saying he was
obliged to relinquish the very honourable station to which they have been pleased to appoint me,’ giving his reasons why he dissented from the proposal for ‘the extension of the elective franchise to our Roman Catholic brethren.’

A reply from O’Halloran appeared in the Dublin Evening Post on September 2nd, 1784.

For the DUBLIN EVENING POST

To RICHARD GRIFFITH, Esq.,

Sir,

As the laudable zeal you have displayed, as a legislator, in promoting the trade, manufactures, and emancipation of your long distressed and oppressed country, has justly gained you the esteem and confidence of every good Irishman, of course whatever you offer for public consideration, must meet with more attention than thousands of anonymous productions.

In your letter to the inhabitants of Lisburn, you have given your opinion on a measure of very great national importance, with a candour and precision, that marks a clear head and a good heart. You, nevertheless, think it may be controverted, but you wish to have it done with that temper and politeness which so strongly mark your own address. It is certainly a question of the greatest moment, more especially now that party feuds and animosities seem to threaten a total dissolution of that approaching coalescence to union, without which no kingdom or empire ever flourished, and whose fatal effects, for two centuries past, are still so legible in this, I fear, STILL ill-fated country.

The granting the right of suffrages to Roman Catholics, who being by far the most numerous part of the kingdom, you judge would be productive of two most dangerous consequences:—1st. “The established government would in time be subverted,” and 2dly. “We must become a province to France!” Let us examine these positions, without adverting to the incontrovertible right, which by the faith of treaties, and the laws of nations, Roman Catholics have to all these rights, by the capitulation of Limerick, which in no instance, to this day, they have infringed.

Elizabeth, after ascending the throne, declared herself a Protestant. She had been illegitimated by Parliament, in the reign of her father, and excommunicated by the Pope. It cannot with truth be said, that a single Reformist was then in Ireland, yet her government was acknowledged in the PALE, the only part of the kingdom that adopted a foreign mode of legislation. The other provinces, enjoying their independency and ancient laws, made no opposition to her title to the crown of Ireland. If at different periods, in the subsequent parts of her reign, disturbances were raised, and particularly the last war, which ended not but with her death, the faithful pages of history will shew that it was to protect their lives, their properties, their liberty, and everything that was dear to man. Yet even in the last war, Elizabeth had the address to disunite the people; and notwithstanding the armies sent from time to time from England, she must have given to the nation that peace and protection they contended for, if a very considerable part of the people, and these Roman.
Catholics too, had not joined her standard. When the desperacy of Irish affairs made O'Neil, &c. to apply to Spain for relief and protection, there was not the most distant hint of a separation from England: had such an idea existed, Philip would not have supplied them in the poor scanty manner he did.

Her successor was a profess'd Protestant. The Reformists were not then, not for a long period after, the hundred part of the kingdom; yet his dominion was acknowledged at large; and for the first time, the English mode of legislation was universally adopted. In the turbulent reign of his successor, they stood firm to the King, and received the oppressed Catholics of England, with open arms; they followed or rather supported his contemptible successor Charles, in his exile; and it is acknowledged that he would be scarce known on the continent, but for the money he received, and the consequence he derived from the expatriated Irish! With the same zeal and ardor, they supported his successor; nor had his religion any part, in their attachment; had he been a Protestant or a Dissenter, they would have pursued the same plan; for an oath to the last degree is binding on this body of men. I need not tell you, Sir, that whilst they adhere to the cause of this Prince, they despised both his abilities and capacity; and if you doubt this, the well pointed answer made by Sarsfield publicly at Limerick to General Ginkel, recorded by Burnet will convince you,—"change King's with us, and in six months we will beat you out of the kingdom."—The Irish that followed this Prince, with the Brigade of Mount Cashel, before this period in France, formed an army of 25,000 men, the bravest troops perhaps in the world, as the allies found to their cost, in every defeat as well as in every victory France sustained! The affairs of James were desperate; that of his son, were still more so. Think you Sir, that, if at any subsequent period, even these expatriated heroes, had the smallest idea of transferring their allegiance to France, and where they had much more than three-fourths of their countrymen at home, labouring under the most severe oppressions, that intolerance and persecution could devise, that that wily nation would not stretch every nerve, to obtain a measure in its effects so ruinous to England?—But no such thing! The very idea of it would strike them with horror. From the time of their arrival in France to this day, they carefully drew a line of separation from the French troops. Their regimentals are scarlet; their ensigns, those of their country; and their discipline and commands were always in the English tongue! I need not tell you, that to this day, they consider not the French as their friends, but in the time of battle.

From this simple narrative supported by irrefragable facts, you will I flatter myself, Sir, be convinced, that emancipating the Roman Catholics will be by no means attended with these consequences you apprehend. But as the utmost satisfaction should be given to obviate your first objection—and the only one that merits attention,—what more easy than to frame a Roman Catholic's oath, as a freeholder, with a tack, never to attempt subverting the established religion and constitution of this country.

I have I hope now Sir, fully removed your doubts, if doubts they were. Permit me now to refute these more silent and more alarming ones, the dread of thousands.

It is generally believed, that however steady and virtuous the bulk of R.C. may be, yet the influence of their clergy is capable of making them attempt dangerous expedients. As a fact, I can affirm, that save in religious duties, every R.C. execrates the idea of their clergy's interfering in temporal matters. And to bring this point to a proof, the friends of Government, thought as too many do. It is said they have
tampered with the R.C. dignitaries, particularly in Munster; and that many of these Gentlemen have laboured to draw a line of separation between them and their associated brethren, but ineffectually; so that no attempt at disunion can be charged on this body of men.

A second cause of alarm is, that in time they may lay claims to estates, so long since lost, that at this day, not one in an hundred could be able to produce his title. I will examine this matter. By a plot, whether real or imaginary—or the proofs have never yet appeared—eight entire counties in the North were forfeited, or claimed by James the first. The ancient proprietors were dispossessed; and though the grand-children of many of these sat in the Parliament of James the second, yet not the smallest claim or attempt was made, to reinstate them in the hands of their ancestors. James himself had reigned in England three years, during which time no attempt was made, either in England or Ireland, to repeal the act of settlement, passed in the reign of his brother. It was a measure he himself recommended from the Throne, on his arrival in Ireland; not so much for lands taken away, but in revenge to the then possessors of them, who were his most active and dangerous enemies. To this, Sir, let me add a well known fact—In the year 1718, when a coalition of Whig and Tory, and indeed of most descriptions of people, agreed to bring about a second Revolution, it was stipulated with the Candidate for the Throne—That the settlement of Ireland must remain, as it was, without the smallest alteration of property.

Having thus laboured to spread diffidence, suspicion and disunion through the land, by heavy charges against a generous and long oppressed people, supported by arguments far from well founded—you seem yourself to forget the Patriot. You think England will never tamely permit such a measure to go on. You judge it better to wait patiently the pleasure of that haughty nation, as Mr. Pitt has pledged himself to bring forward such a measure there, than by persevering, to plunge your native country in all the horrors of a Civil War!

If Ireland has a right, at least to internal Legislation, with what pretences can Britain interfere in her regulations? And have you, Sir, confidence enough to threaten the nation on with fire and sword in her name, for presuming to form its own laws? This demonstrates in what a state of thraldom we are still held, notwithstanding our boasted liberty! However, Sir, I will tell you, that the consequences you draw can never be apprehended from a firm union of the people. England would not presume to interfere, much less dictate to a people determined to support their own constitution; but all the dangers you announce may be most reasonably expected, by the disunion which your letter manifestly tends to spread.

However Protestants may boast their love of liberty, and of their country, yet glaring facts prove, that from the reign of Elizabeth to the Revolution, Catholics sacrificed everything that was dear, in support of both. When James II fled to France, ambassadors were sent from Ireland, to treat about his reception. Both he and his followers, tho' they saw no hope, but through the medium of Ireland, yet were as little inclined to emancipate this country as any British Princes either before or since that period. The Catholics were not to be amused; nothing less than the most universal acknowledgements of the rights of this imperial kingdom, would satisfy them! Soon after his arrival a Parliament was called, foreign usurpation rejected, the freedom of Irish navigation declared as boundless as the ocean; premiums were offered to encourage ship-building, foreigners of all discriminations were invited to settle in the kingdom, and arts and manufactures encouraged; and though this
Prince was expelled Britain by Protestants, and that both in the north and the south of Ireland, they rose in arms against him, yet, the only act relative to religion, passed in the Catholic Parliament, was, an act of UNIVERSAL TOLERATION, with a power in the Crown to choose her officers, civil and military, from the people at large! Hear this, ye advocates for oppression—forget it not, ye promoters of intolerance!

Your apprehensions of a separation from Britain seems to precede every other consideration—I hope you are now convinced they are groundless. But, would you wish to promote the interests of that people, you will do it best by advancing that of your own.—There is not a fact more certain, than that every penal law passed in this kingdom, since the Revolution, has been acquisition to France. By them, her armies have been recruited; and a sense of persecution added double energy to the arms of an oppressed people! From the year 1691 to 1745, no less than 450,000 Irish have bled for the support of France; and she gained much greater advantages by the adopted mode of government in Ireland, than if the kingdom had been reduced to the state of a French province! Again, the restraint on our trade, and the ruin of our woollens, were new sources of wealth to France. At the Revolution, she had scarce any manufactures, and the very clothing of her armies was sent from Ireland and England. In the course of five years subsequent to this period, above 20,000 woollen manufacturers quitted this kingdom—and the wise Colbert availed himself of this new blunder in English politics, by giving every degree of countenance and protection to these proscribed manufacturers.

I am to apologise, Sir, to the public, and to you, for the hasty manner of this address. I have endeavoured to reduce a great deal of matter into a narrow compass. I have committed my thoughts to paper as they occurred; nor would the avocations of my profession, nor the tendency of your letter, admit of much delay. To this let me add, Sir, that had it been a person less respectable, or less noted for patriotic zeal than Mr. Griffith, who had published the letter in question, I should not have bestowed a thought upon it.

I have the honour to subscribe myself, with great respect, Sir your very humble and obedient servant,

SILVESTER O’HALLORAN.

Limerick. August 28, 1784.

MISCELLANEOUS

Under a pseudonym Philanthropos, he also made contributions to the Press. One letter dealing with Premature Interment, recently reproduced elsewhere is not included here, but since its publication I have had an opportunity to peruse his Manuscript on the Air which contains an identical passage confirming that its attribution to O’Halloran is correct.

The evidence on which the following letter is attributed to him is less certain, but its style and sentiments are highly reminescent of O’Halloran’s writings, and he
had experience of duelling, once as a challenger and many times as surgeon to the defeated party.

From The Limerick Chronicle, Thursday, October 30th, 1788.

To The Printer.

Sir,

The promtitude to duelling, which has so long been a characteristic of the young men of this country, is certainly a very reprehensible propensity. And though it may be very expressive of the contempt for life, which seems to mark true bravery, yet I am inclined to think, it is more frequently the result of impatience, misconception, and impetuosity, than of nice honour, cool courage, or determined spirit.

Nothing can more strongly prove the truth of this remark, than the evident certainty that nine-tenths of the duels fought in this country, originate in a bottle or a punch-jug, while the imagination is heated—the conceptions disordered, and the speech unguarded by reason—in this state, expressions are dropped inadvertently, and returted warmly;—mere jokes are construed into insults,—and each party being too proud to give, or too violent to bear or await an explanation, which would set all matters right—pistols are immediately proposed—and the parties adjourn to the field, perhaps staggering drunk—and even if recovered from intoxication, ashamed to recede from the rash purpose:—and probably when one of them receives a ball through his skull, the error is discovered—but alas!—too late for reparation.

If persons of good sense and coolness, present at the origin of such disputes, would have the humanity to interpose by good humour'd mediation; and either change the discourse, or turn the subject of contest into laughter, the mutual animosity of the disputants would probably subside—pride and petulance would frequently cede to cheerfulness and goodfellowship—for a drop of pleasantry, like oil thrown into the sea, would calm the rough waves of discord—and the blood-shed too frequently consequent to paltry wrangles, would be happily avoided.

Now, Sir, though I very highly condemn the levity and rashness with which young men rush to the serious decision of imaginary wrongs—yet I do not by any means hold with those moralists, who argue for the total abolition of duelling, at least in the present posture of things.—For though I revere the laws of my country, and admit their competence in general questions of property—of assault—of felony, and all points in that parity;—yet their are others which we are taught with the first principles of reason and manhood—to regard with a degree of enthusiasm—and where we are wantonly injured on those points—there is no law existing in the code of this realm, which awards an adequate reparation.

An insidious scoundrel, in the garb of a gentleman, may, without speaking a direct sentence—but by mere nods, winks, and innuendos—stigmatize the virtue of my wife, my daughter, or my sister—or the honour of my friend, or of myself—without fear of legal punishment.—An athletic ruffian, may wantonly insult every man his inferior in strength, and trample on all laws of good manners, careless of legal, and fearless of personal chastisement—were it not for that source of appeal which places every man on a level, and constitutes each the guardian of his own honour.

Every humane man must lament the rigour of those laws which condemn culprits
to death;—but if the use of the gallows was to be discontinued, without some adequate substitute being adopted—the throats and purses of peaceful citizens would soon feel the effects of ill-judged lenity.

It should not be forgotten that Severity to the few is Mercy to the many.—If it is necessary to the social happiness in a State, that certain culprits should die, in terrorem to others it is very immaterial whether the punishment is inflicted with a rope or a pistol—on the scaffold or in the field.

The ruffian that wantonly wounds my honour, or that of my family, by wanton insult or insidious defamation, is infinitely more guilty, in my mind, than the wretch, who, perhaps, forced by hunger and miseries of his starving off-spring, robs me of a paltry trifle.—And since the laws of honour, as well as those of the land, have for their object the happiness and good order of Society—I should hold, that the practice of duelling, sanctioned under the one, is as utile and defencible as that of strangling, enjoined by the other—and therefore a useful supplement to the Penal system under proper restrictions.

I am, Sir,
Your Constant Reader,

PHILANTHROPOS.

* * *

It is clear that Sylvester O’Halloran was a prolific letter writer. There is little doubt that the journals and periodicals of his time contain further contributions from his pen. Someday, possibly, they will come to light: for my failure to disinter them, borrowing O’Halloran’s own words, ‘the Avocations of my Profession must plead my Excuse’.

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