



Figure 1: Map of Ireland, 1793, by A. Taylor (*Up In Arms*, p.86)

*De La Tocnaye's A Frenchman's Walk Through Ireland:
In a Country on the Brink of Rebellion*

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Acknowledgements

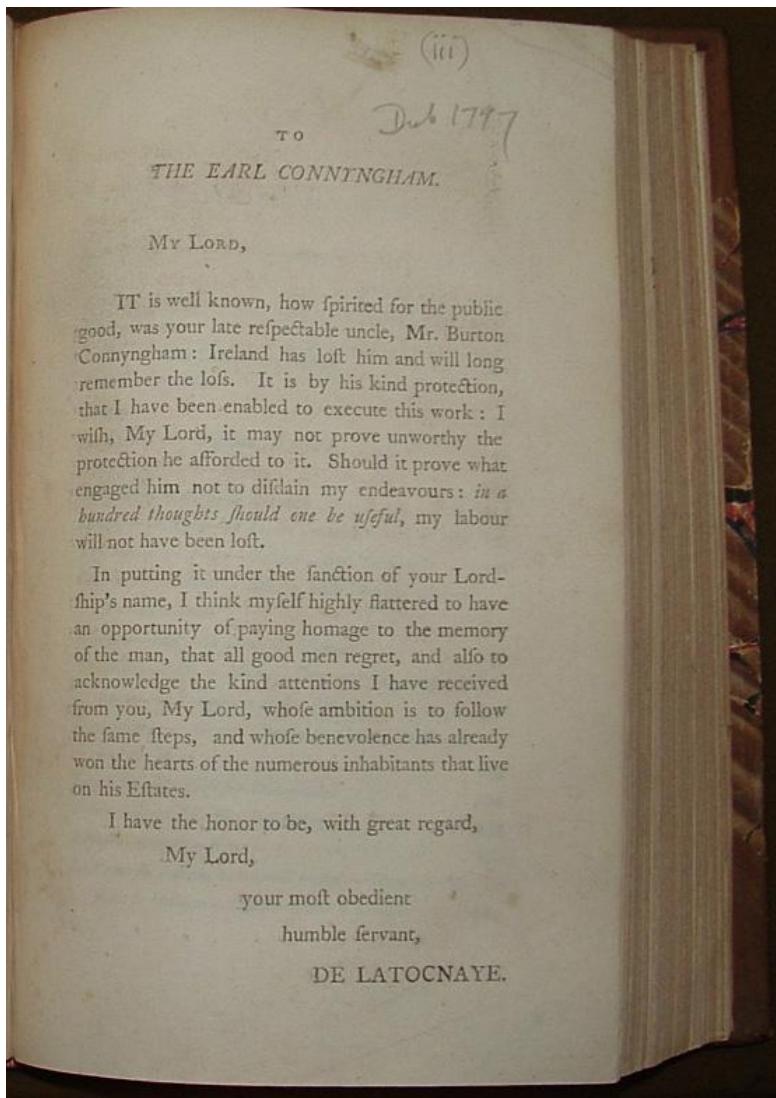


Figure 2: La Tocnaye's tribute to the late W.B. Connyngham

All my thanks to the people at the Main Library's Special Collection (QUB), the Belfast Newspaper Library, the Linen Hall Library, the Belfast Central Library, the National Trust and the Ulster Museum, and many thanks to Pam Duke, our tutor in the Local Studies course, and to the guest lecturers and students, for all the interesting and fruitful discussions!

Introduction

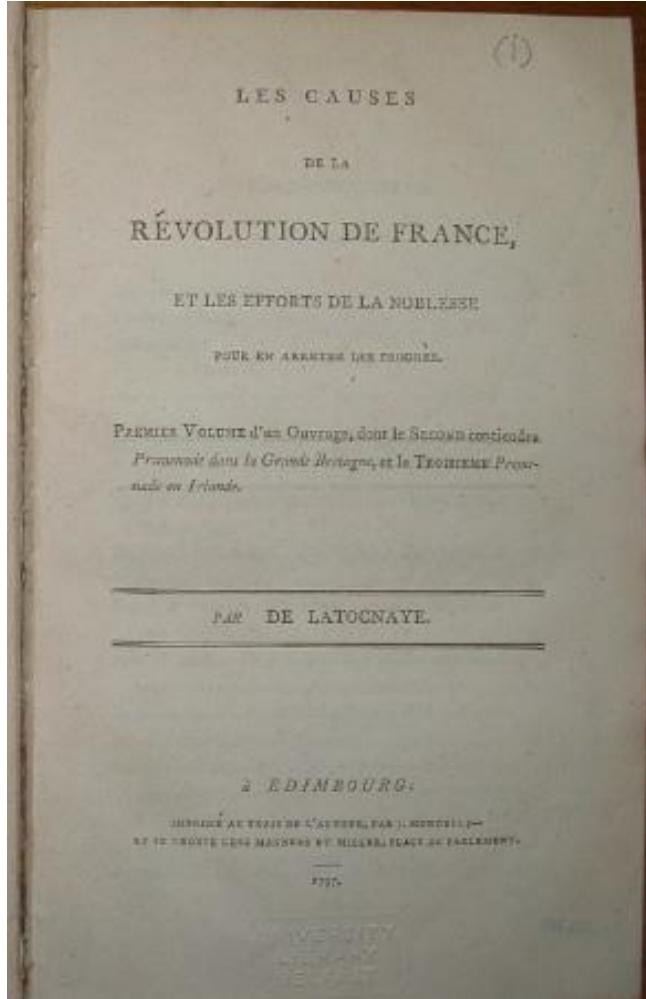


Figure 3: Title page of the original volume, in French

My first idea, for this project, had been to study the point of view of immigrants, or one immigrant's personal history. I had initially thought of the Huguenots, who emigrated from France after 1684, or the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes protecting Protestants in France by Louis XIV: for instance the Crommelin family in Lisburn, or the Latouche in the South of Ireland. Then I considered 1798, “the year of the French”: what

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about telling the story of the failed invasion in Mayo, as seen by the different parties involved¹? It was not practical: too far for research.

However, as I was reading Jonathan Bardon's *History of Ulster*, I stumbled upon a name: 'De La Tocnaye'². In the bibliography of the same book, I then discovered a reference to a book: *A Frenchman's Walk Through Ireland 1796-1796, De Latocnaye*, translated from the French by John Stevenson in 1917, reprinted by Blackstaff Press. Here was a first-hand description, by an émigré fleeing the French Revolution, of Ireland on the eve of the 1798 Rebellion.

What I have tried to do in this project is to compare De La Tocnaye's vision of Ireland with other sources, to underline some of his biases, the events that he missed or overlooked, and the facts that he misunderstood. His journey coincides almost with the end of that "Penal Era or Golden Age" that had been the 18th century, and it is especially interesting that he met so many people of completely different social classes: from the peasants living in a cabin made of mud, to Lord Camden, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. As an outsider, he tended to have a somewhat impartial view of the different factions; the fact that he was not really involved with any of these also meant that he could get access to them much more easily than, say, an Englishman.

Most of my sources are actually books written by historians on this period; in particular, Constantia Maxwell's *County and Town in Ireland under the Georges*, a very

¹ I learned later that Thomas Flanagan had done this, brilliantly, in his novel: *The Year of the French*.

² J.Bardon's *History of Ulster*, p. 194: '[...] but the Chevalier de Latocnaye found it in some difficulties in 1796[...]. In ch.7, 'Prosperity, Revolution and Reaction c. 1750-1800

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detailed look at the social history of the 18th century. However, my main primary source was the original French text by La Tocnaye available in the Special Collection of the Main Library, at Queen's University Belfast. Another important primary source was the whole set of *Northern Star* newspapers for the years 1796 and 1797, available at the Newspaper Library in Belfast. I also found, in the Linen Hall Library, copies of two texts of the same period reprinted by Athol Books: Rev. T. L. Birch's *The Causes of the Rebellion in Ireland* (1798) and Theobald Wolfe Tone's *Address to the People of Ireland* (1796), which both give valuable insights into the United Irishmen movement. For most of my illustrations and the maps, instead of the originals, I have used copies that I found in books; especially in *Up In Arms: The 1798 Rebellion in Ireland, A Bicentenary Exhibition*, published by the Ulster Museum. I had planned to go to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (e.g. to consult Lord Castlereagh's diaries³), but unfortunately I never found the time to go there.

This project is divided in three parts. In the first one, I will try to answer the following questions: who was La Tocnaye? Why did he write this book? For whom did he write it? In the second part, I will study his journey through Ireland and compare it to other sources, and I will focus on a few significant areas, namely the social, economic and religious contrasts. Finally, I will concentrate in the last part on Northern Ireland, which La Tocnaye visited last, just around the time when the troubles were coming to the

³ Robert Stewart (1769-1822), Viscount Castlereagh, son of Robert Steward, Earl of Londonderry, and about the same age as La Tocnaye, who met him in Mount Stewart ([STE] p.224). Castlereagh would become a hated figure for his role in the repression of the United Irishmen and in bringing about the Act of Union (cf. *Up in Arms*, p.275)

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boil, especially in Armagh. This last part will thus focus on the rise of the Defenders, the United Irishmen and the Orange Order.

Note on some conventions used in this project:

In the footnotes, for references concerning De La Tocnaye's text, I will generally give the page numbers in the text in French and in Stevenson's translation. To simplify the references, those page numbers will be given in the following format: [DLT] p.XXX / [STE] p.YYY. The first number is associated with the French text, the second one with Stevenson's translation.

Note also that the page numbers for the text prefixed by [DLT] are only relevant for *Promenade d'un Francais dans l'Irlande* (the original title in French). For references associated with *Les Causes de la Révolution* (also by La Tocnaye), I will use the normal format.

Finally, I may use different spellings of his name: De Latocnaye, De La Tocnaye, Latocnaye or La Tocnaye. I may also refer to him sometimes simply as 'the Chevalier', a title he used in some of the editions of his books⁴.

⁴ Cf the introduction by John A. Gamble of Stevenson's translation (Blackstaff Press edition).

Part I: Who? Why? For whom?

Who was the Chevalier de La Tocnaye?



Figure 4: Coat of arms, de Bougrenet de la Tocnaye

Who was Jacques-Louis de Bougrenet, chevalier de La Tocnaye⁵? It is not an easy question to answer, especially considering how little he talks about himself in his books. Most of the information I have found came from the Internet, and I gathered the rest from *Promenade d'un Francais en Irlande* and *Les Causes de la Révolution*⁶. The best way to elucidate his identity would have been to do some research in France, in the archives of Nantes and La Rochelle, but this was not very easy for me!

⁵ cf. <http://www.bnf.fr> : the website of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Catalogue Bn-Opale Plus, by doing a search on "Latocnaye": I obtained a reference to 'La Tocnaye, Jacques-Louis de (1767-...)' and other forms of his name, esp. Jacques-Louis de Bougrenet, comte de La Tocnaye. It also gives its date of birth as 20 November 1767, but does not give the date of his death (site last accessed on 7 May 2005).

⁶ *Les Causes de la Révolution en France: et les efforts de la noblesse pour en arrêter les progrès*: this text is part of the same edition as *Promenade d'un Francais dans l'Irlande* and *Promenade d'un Francais dans la Grande-Bretagne*, but was written earlier (cf bibliography).

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He was born on the 20 November 1767⁷, and may have died in 1823⁸. This means he was 29 years old when he did his tour of Ireland, which is consistent: only somebody of this age could have been able to walk as much as he did, and not mind the lack of comfort in some of the places in which he slept! It is also consistent with somebody who already has some experience, but is not necessarily fully “mature” (his style - especially the jokes! - underlines that latter characteristic).

The name ‘de La Tocnaye’, or ‘de Bougrenet de La Tocnaye’, is associated with the old aristocracy of Britanny and the Vendée in the west of France; I have found several references to it on the Internet. This name appears several times in the registers kept in the Archives at Nantes: ‘M., 16 février 1767, " Mre Louis Mosnier, Sgr de Thouaré, mineur, fils de feu Mre Jacques Mosnier, Chr, Sgr de Thouaré, Cer du Roy, Me ordre en la C. des C., et de De Foise Le Grand de la Coutais, avec Delle Jeanne-Geneviève **de Bougrenet**, fille de Mre Pierre **de Bougrenet, Sgr de la Tocnaye** et de l'Aumondière, et de feu De Marie-Catherine Binois ”’ (Marriage, 16/02/1767, between J.G. de Bougrenet, daughter of Pierre de Bougrenet, lord of la Tocnaye)⁹, or ‘B., 9 février 1769, Jean-Pierre, fils Mre Jacques Pierre **de Bougrenet, Sgr de la Tocnaye** et de la Laumondière, et De Julianne Fresneau de la Templerie ; p., Mre Louis Fresneau de la Templerie, Cer, Me ordre des C. ; m., De Jeanne-G. **de Bougrenet**, fe écr Mre Louis Mosnier, Sgr de Thouaré’ (Birth, 09/02/1769, of Jean-Pierre, son of Jacques-Pierre de Bougrenet, Lord of la Tocnaye

⁷ Cf above, BNF’s website. I also found a reference to him at http://www.ub.uni-mainz.de/Dateien/frankreichforschung_zeitschrifteninhalte_1999_2.pdf , in the Library of the Johannes Gutenberg Universitaet Mainz, Frankreich Forschung (French research), Zeitschriften Inhalte (newspaper catalogue), p.32, section ‘Chateaubriand, gentilhomme breton’, reference to ‘Jacques-Louis de La Tocnaye (1767-1823), étonnant voyageur et compagnon d’exil de Chateaubriand’ by Patrick Mahéo (last access on 7 May 2005).

⁸ Cf previous footnote. Unfortunately, I could not find Patrick Mahéo’s book! So this date of death is only a possibility.

⁹ http://www.archives.nantes.fr/PAGES/RESSOURCES/inventaires/GG/serie_gg_saint_donatien.htm , Archives de Nantes, digitalised registrar of the parish of Saint-Donatien (last access 7 May 2005).

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[...])¹⁰. Those could be possible parents: a grandfather (Pierre), a father or uncle (Jacques-Pierre), a mother or aunt (Jeanne-Geneviève), a brother or cousin (Jean-Pierre)?

The coat of arms of the ‘de Bougrenet de La Tocnaye’ is described as: ‘D’or, au lion de gueules grimpant, chargé de macles d’or sans nombre’^{11, 12, 13}. This is the French description of the coat of arms in the figure at the beginning of this chapter. In *Les Causes de la Révolution*, De La Tocnaye gives some hints of his aristocratic origins. In the preliminary discourse, he describes the aristocracy, of which ‘he is proud to be a member’¹⁴. He later mentions his father’s castle¹⁵. He describes himself as an officer in the Royal Army, stationed in Metz in 1789¹⁶; his first name is Jacques-Louis, which indicates that he is not the first born son (who would have had a single first name, as was the tradition, and still is nowadays in some monarchist families in France), and as only the eldest son would have inherited the land, the younger brothers would have gone into the professions (army, law, priesthood). During one of his leaves, he returns to his home near Lucon, in the Vendée (south of Nantes)¹⁷. He mentions a brother, in Strasbourg¹⁸, but tells us neither his name nor his profession.

¹⁰ http://www.archives.nantes.fr/PAGES/RESSOURCES/inventaires/GG/serie_gg_saint_vincent.htm, Archives de Nantes, digitalised registrar of the parish of Saint-Vincent(last access: 7 May 2005).

¹¹ http://www.euraldic.com/blas_bo_1.html, a French commercial heraldic website (last access 7 May 2005).

¹² <http://big.chez.com/grandarmorial/armorialB.htm>, website of a French amateur heraldic club, ‘Le Grand Armorial’ (last access 7 May 2005)

¹³ <http://g.bachelier.free.fr/lacharlonnie.htm>, an amateur website dedicated to the ‘La Charlonne’ family’s genealogy (last access: 7 May 2005). La Tocnaye may have married Cécile-Désiré de la Charlonne, according to this page.

¹⁴ *Causes de la Révolution*, preliminary discourse: ‘Ils serviront à exposer, dans un plus grand jour, l’esprit dominant de cette noblesse (dont **je me glorifie d’être membre**) [...].’

¹⁵ *Idem*, p.47.

¹⁶ *Idem*, p.114.

¹⁷ *Idem*, p.130.

¹⁸ *Idem*, p.170.

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With this information, and having read *Les Causes de la Révolution*, it is possible to reconstruct La Tocnaye's personal history. As it was mentioned, when the French Revolution starts in July 1789, he is an officer in the Royal Army, in Metz. He is a witness of the 'Great Fear' of July and August 1789¹⁹ and the progressive unravelling of the army²⁰, to the point where officers start to be threatened, and sometimes attacked, by their own soldiers²¹. Fortunately for La Tocnaye, his own regiment seems a bit quieter, and is assigned to peacekeeping around Lyons (south-east of France)²². The commander of the regiment is soon forced to wear the revolutionary cockade²³, to the great indignation of La Tocnaye. During one of the long winter leaves that the officers of that time used to have²⁴, he goes to Turin in Italy, where the exiled princes are also staying²⁵, and bored by his idleness, does a tour of Italy. Before going back to his regiment in Lyons, he decides to go back home in Lucon and Nantes, all the way across France, on foot²⁶ (a foretaste of his future exertions abroad)!

He returns to his regiment around April 1791; as he walks across France back to Lyons, tensions start to appear: he hears the song "*Ca ira, les aristocrates à la*

¹⁹ *Causes de la Révolution*, pp.113-114.

²⁰ *Idem*, p.118: 'La faiblesse du gouvernement avait opéré la défection des soldats: on les montrait sur les places publiques, mais le peuple savait à n'en pouvoir douter qu'il y avait ordre de le ménager et j'ose le dire de ne se pas défendre' = the weakness of the government had caused the disaffection of the soldiers: they were paraded on the public squares, but the people knew, without a doubt, that they had orders not to abuse them [the people], and, I dare to say so, not to defend themselves.

²¹ *Idem*, p.118: 'Les officiers, alors, n'eurent pas de plus grands ennemis que leur propres soldats, il est plusieurs fois arrivé qu'ils en ont été renvoyés, ou même massacrés' = the officers, then, did not have greater enemies than their own soldiers; it often happened that they [the officers] were expelled, or even massacred.

²² *Idem*, p.120.

²³ *Idem*, p.120, the 'ruban national'.

²⁴ See Thomas Bartlett's essay, 'Indiscipline and disaffection in the French and Irish armies during the revolutionary period', in *Ireland and the French Revolution*, p.179.

²⁵ *Idem*, p.124.

²⁶ *Idem*, pp.129-133.

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*lanterne*²⁷, and is a witness of the split in the Catholic church between priests taking the revolutionary oath and the ones refusing it²⁸. Not long after his return to Lyons, on 21 June 1791²⁹, the king Louis XVI and the queen Marie-Antoinette try to escape, but are arrested near Varennes, and escorted back to the Tuileries in Paris³⁰. It can be considered as the beginning of the end for the French monarchy: the revolutionaries, from then on, are convinced that the king and queen cannot be trusted, and may be traitors. Three weeks later, all officers are required to take a revolutionary oath, in which the king is not mentioned; those who refuse must retire from the army... and probably be lynched by their men or the people³¹: indignant and unbowed, La Tocnaye decides to desert, and to flee to Italy, just across the mountains. The man carrying his possessions, which he has sent in advance, is arrested, so he has to flee without anything³².

²⁷ *Causes de la Révolution*, p.150. The song is “Ah ca ira, ca ira, ca ira, les aristocrates à la lanterne, ah ca ira (ter), les aristocrates on les pendra!” = everything will be fine / the aristocrats / to the lantern / we will hang them. This is still a famous revolutionary song in France.

²⁸ *Idem*, p.151.

²⁹ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, p.151.

³⁰ *Causes de la Révolution*, p.157. This episode is known in France as the ‘Flight to Varennes’; the postmaster is supposed to have recognised the king by his profile, stamped on every coin at the time!

³¹ *Idem*, p.162. The officers are given eight days to think about it.

³² *Idem*, p.163.

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Figure 5: The Flight to Varennes, 21 June 1791 (Up In Arms, p.66)

He joins the counter-revolutionary armies in Turin, then Geneva, then Koblenz where he joins the guard of ‘Monsieur, frère du Roy’ (the king’s brother, also simply called ‘Monsieur’)³³, count of Provence, the future Louis XVIII. On 27 August 1791, the kings of Prussia and Austria, in the Declaration of Pilnitz, threaten France with invasion if the king is not reinstated³⁴. In November 1791, the French National Assembly issues a decree against the *émigrés*³⁵, basically turning them into outlaws guilty of a capital crime³⁶. As a consequence, emigration increases, as La Tocnaye notes³⁷. In 1792, France

³³ *Causes de la Révolution*, p.171

³⁴ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, p.156.

³⁵ Doyle, p.176.

³⁶ See T. Bartlett, ‘Indiscipline and disaffection in the French and Irish armies during the revolutionary period’, in *Ireland and the French Revolution*, p.184: ‘From mid-1791 [...] the officer class showed its true colours by wholesale resignations and emigration. By the end of 1792, about 60% of the French Royal Army officers had gone’.

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declares war on Austria (10 April)³⁸, then Prussia (13 June). The monarchy is overthrown on 10 August 1792, the first battles of the revolutionary wars are fought (initial defeats, followed by the astonishing victory of Valmy), and the republic is proclaimed on 22 September 1792³⁹. For La Tocnaye and the counter-revolutionaries, the 'Campaign of 1792' is a series of disillusionments⁴⁰. Valmy especially, in September 1792, is a terrible blow to the counter-revolutionary armies: caught in the retreat, the *émigrés* fall to pieces, fleeing ahead of the republican forces⁴¹. Soon afterwards, Provence and Artois disband their armies, on 23 November 1792⁴².

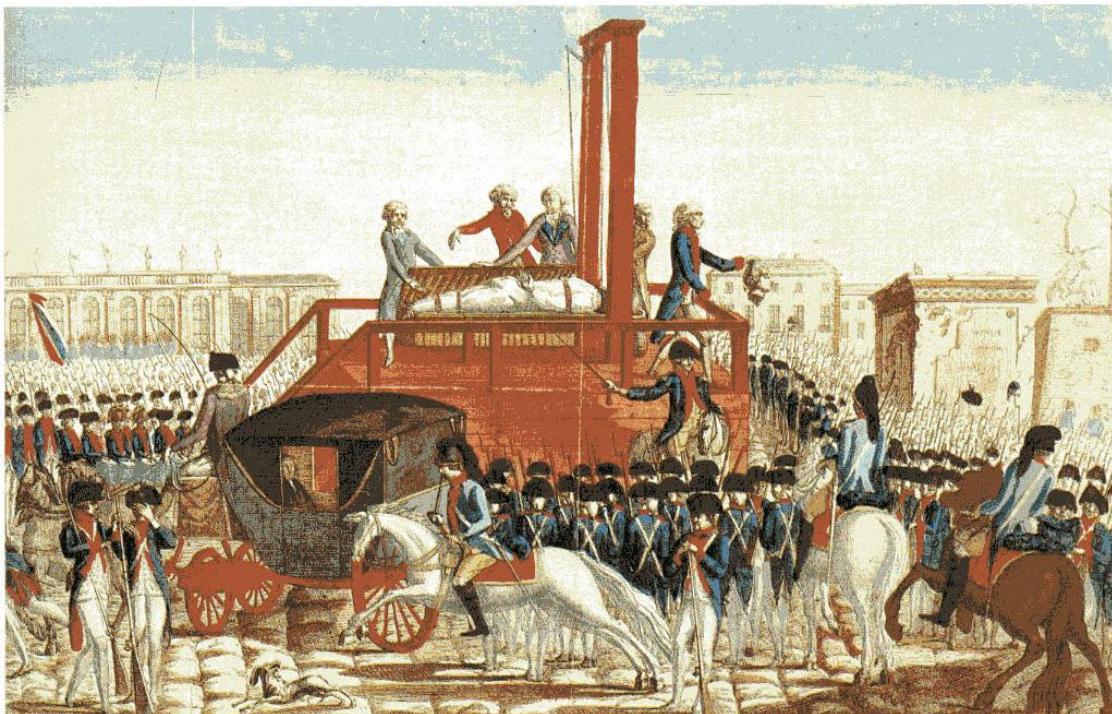


Figure 6: The Execution of Louis XVI, 21 January 1793 (*Up In Arms*, p.67)

³⁷ *Causes de la Révolution*, p.171: 'C'est à peu près à cette époque que l'émigration a réellement commencé à être générale [...]' = It is around that time that emigration really started to be widespread.

³⁸ *Idem*, p.188.

³⁹ cf Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, chapter 9, 'War against Europe 1792-1797'.

⁴⁰ *Causes de la Révolution*, p.200, Chapter 'Campagne de 1792 – Marche en France – Retraite – Licenciement'.

⁴¹ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, chapter 13, 'Counter-Revolution 1789-1795', esp. p.306.

⁴² *Causes de la Révolution*, p.231: 'Le coup décisif arriva enfin!... Nous fûmes licenciés!' = The fatal blow arrived at last! We were disbanded!

La Tocnaye, his morale shattered, drifts across the Netherlands: Maastricht, Nimegues, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Harlem, Leyde, La Haye, Delft, and Rotterdam. In between, the execution of king Louis XVI, on 21 January 1793, is probably a further blow. In Rotterdam, he takes a boat, and lands near the Tower of London on Saturday 29 December 1793, one of many *émigrés*. Soon afterwards, probably because he is bored by his idle life in London, he starts a tour of England, which will take him nearly two years, and about which he will write his *Promenade d'un Francais dans la Grande-Bretagne*. After that initial moderate success, more tours will follow: *Promenade d'un Francais dans l'Irlande* in 1797, then *Promenade d'un Francais en Suède et en Norvège* in 1801.

Why did he write his book?

As it is mentioned above, in 1795, La Tocnaye had already completed his tour of Great Britain, and published a book on his journey. In the introduction of *Promenade d'un Francais dans l'Irlande*, he relates his memories of writing this previous book, under the patronage of the late Lord Dreghorn⁴³. Around that time, the counter-revolutionary forces tried to land soldiers in Quiberon (Brittany), on 27 June 1795, but that expedition ended in a disastrous defeat on 21 July⁴⁴: it definitely shattered whatever hope was left for *émigrés* to return to power. No need to say that the atmosphere in London, in the French community, where La Tocnaye was back after his tour, would have been very gloomy at this time. Moreover, he tells us himself that '*Après avoir renouvelé connaissance avec mes amis, mon génie observateur ne me permit pas de me*

⁴³ [DLT] / [STE] ch. I, 'Londres (London) – Quiberon'.

⁴⁴ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, pp.311-315.

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*tenir tranquille*⁴⁵. Obviously well acquainted with the right people⁴⁶, he was told that it would be a good idea to do the same kind of tour he had just completed in Ireland.

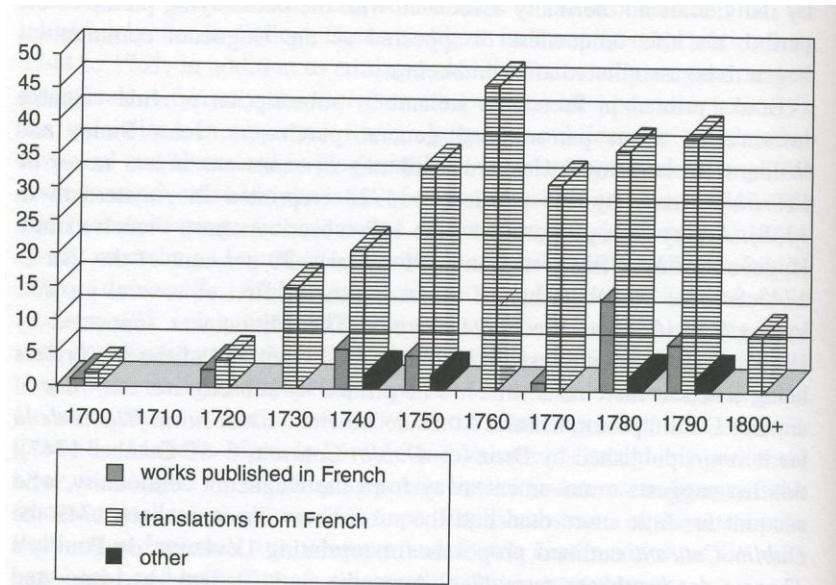


Figure 7: French books published in Ireland (*Ireland & French Enlightenment*, p.178)

Another motivation was, of course, money. La Tocnaye obviously had wealthy patrons, who could provide him with letters of recommendations which would give him access to some of the best houses in the country, but also money or advantages in nature for his book, like the plates donated by General Vallancey⁴⁷. Through the system of 'sale-or-return'⁴⁸, a writer could get his books published for a modest sum. Moreover, books in French were in demand amongst the upper and upper middle classes⁴⁹; the 18th century had been dominated by the cultural hegemony of the French Enlightenment, and French

⁴⁵ [DLT] p.8 / [STE] p.7 'After a short time devoted to renewal of acquaintanceships my genius of observation would not permit me to rest.'

⁴⁶ [DLT] p.8 / [STE] p.7 'I was possessed of kindly-given letters of recommendation, some of them to men of great wealth'.

⁴⁷ [DLT] p. iv: La Tocnaye thanks the General Vallancey for the four plates in this edition.

⁴⁸ *Ireland and the French Enlightenment*, essay 9, 'The trade in French books in 18th century Ireland', p.179.

⁴⁹ *Ireland and the French Enlightenment*, essay 1, 'Readership in French: the Irish experience'

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culture was extremely fashionable for the elites⁵⁰. The most popular authors would have been Voltaire, Rousseau or Montesquieu⁵¹. Although that cultural dominance was declining towards the end of the 18th century, and although it would have been balanced by a deep political mistrust (due to the numerous wars fought against France)⁵², it was still very strong. La Tocnaye, a young and witty French royalist, having had first-hand experience of the tumults of the French revolution and having fought alongside Louis XVI's own brother, was guaranteed to be welcome within the highest aristocratic circles, as a guest, or even better, as an author, such would have been his 'entertainment value'.

Finally, towards the end of the 18th century, the number of books published and circulated was increasing almost exponentially, with the development of a rich and educated middle class⁵³. Being a writer was starting to be commercially viable, a possible profession, at least for a young man like La Tocnaye. Travel literature was a very popular genre in those days, a "low-brow" response (the novel genre was only starting to appear) to the "high-brow" books by authors like Edmund Burke, Montesquieu or Adam Smith. As Gamble details in his essay⁵⁴, in Ireland alone, there had already been quite a few travel writers in the 18th century: like the famous Arthur Young and his *Tour in Ireland* (1780), quoted several times by La Tocnaye, or the irritable R.Twiss and his *Tour in Ireland in 1795*, also mentioned by La Tocnaye⁵⁵. Travel writing seemed to have been an

⁵⁰ Cf. Derek Beales' essay, 'Religion and culture', in *The Eighteenth Century (Short Oxford History of Europe)*, p.131.

⁵¹ *Ireland and the French Enlightenment*, p.179.

⁵² Cf. John A.Lynn's essay 'International rivalry and warfare', in *The Eighteenth Century (Short Oxford History of Europe)*, p.178.

⁵³ Again, cf. Beales, 'Religion and Culture'.

⁵⁴ J.E.Gamble, 'An introduction to the literature of travel in Ireland 1600-1900', in *An Uncommon Bookman*, p.47.

⁵⁵ [DLT] p.22 / [STE] p.21: 'I was warned by the case of a certain Mr. Twiss to be careful as to what I should put on paper'.

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activity not unlike our modern guide-book writing: a bit of reuse, kind words for the people who treated you well, barbs for the ones who did not, and anecdotes or ‘bulls’ – whose accuracy was not necessarily an issue – in between (cf Maria Edgeworth’s description of Lord Craiglethorpe in *Ennui*⁵⁶)!

For whom did he write it?

SUBSCRIBERS NAMES.	
<i>His EXCELLENCY THE EARL OF CAMDEN, Lord Lieutenant of the Kingdom of Ireland.</i>	
<i>The late RIGHT HONOURABLE BURTON CONNIGHAM.</i>	
A.	B.
The Earl of Altamont, 4 copies	Earl of Belvedere
Henry Alcock, of Wilton, Esq.	Countess of Belvedere
Mrs. Alcock	Mrs. Brownston
John Anderson, Esq.	Rev. Edward Bayly, Rector of Arklow
Thomas Arthur, Esq.	Lord Boyle
James Anglim, Esq.	John Beauman, of Hyde Park, Esq.
Martin Arthur, Esq.	James Boyd, Esq.
<i>Scotland.</i>	
Lord Ankerville	Mrs. Boyd
Lord Viscount Arbuthnot	Alex. Blair, Esq. London
Sir Philip Ainslie, Bart.	John Brown, Esq. 2 copies
	Cornelius

Figure 8: Beginning of the list of subscribers for this edition of *Promenade...*

⁵⁶ In *Ennui*, pp.207-212.

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The list of subscribers⁵⁷ to Latocnaye's volume is probably the best indication of the kind of audience he had in mind when he wrote his book: as the excerpt in the above figure shows, it is almost a roll call of the Protestant Ascendancy and the gentry in Ireland: added together, the yearly incomes of all these individuals would have probably exceeded £1,000,000⁵⁸! With such patronage, it was highly unlikely that he would be overtly critical of the Establishment, and indeed the tone of the book is staunchly on the side of the dominant order⁵⁹. The criticisms that La Tocnaye allows himself are generally very moderate and general, and are consistent with the opinion of his patrons: landlords should develop their lands, install manufactures, treat their tenants fairly⁶⁰, control and suppress the sectarian tensions – of the lower orders, e.g. Whiteboys, Defenders and Peep O'Day Boys - and there should be none of that nonsense about parliamentary reform (which the United Irishmen demand)⁶¹! Considering his views on the French Revolution, it is hardly surprising that he does not think much of reformers in general. As he says himself, after meeting a United Irishman:

‘He spoke about the reform of Parliament, and complained much of abuses in elections, preached of tolerance, and indulged in philosophical discourse, such as was heard from our foppish talkers before the Revolution. To tell the truth, I returned from my excursion with a poor opinion of the United Irishmen.’⁶²

⁵⁷ [DLT] pp. vi-xi.

⁵⁸ See C. Maxwell's *Country and Town in Ireland under the Georges*, ch.I ‘The social life of the gentry’.

⁵⁹ See R. Foster's *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, ch.8 ‘The Ascendancy mind’.

⁶⁰ See also C. Maxwell, ch.4 ‘Landlords and agriculture’.

⁶¹ See [DLT] pp.289-294 / [STE] pp. 258-263.

⁶² [DLT] pp.230-231 / [STE] p.205

Part II: La Tocnaye's Tour of Ireland

Short description of Ireland in 1796-1797

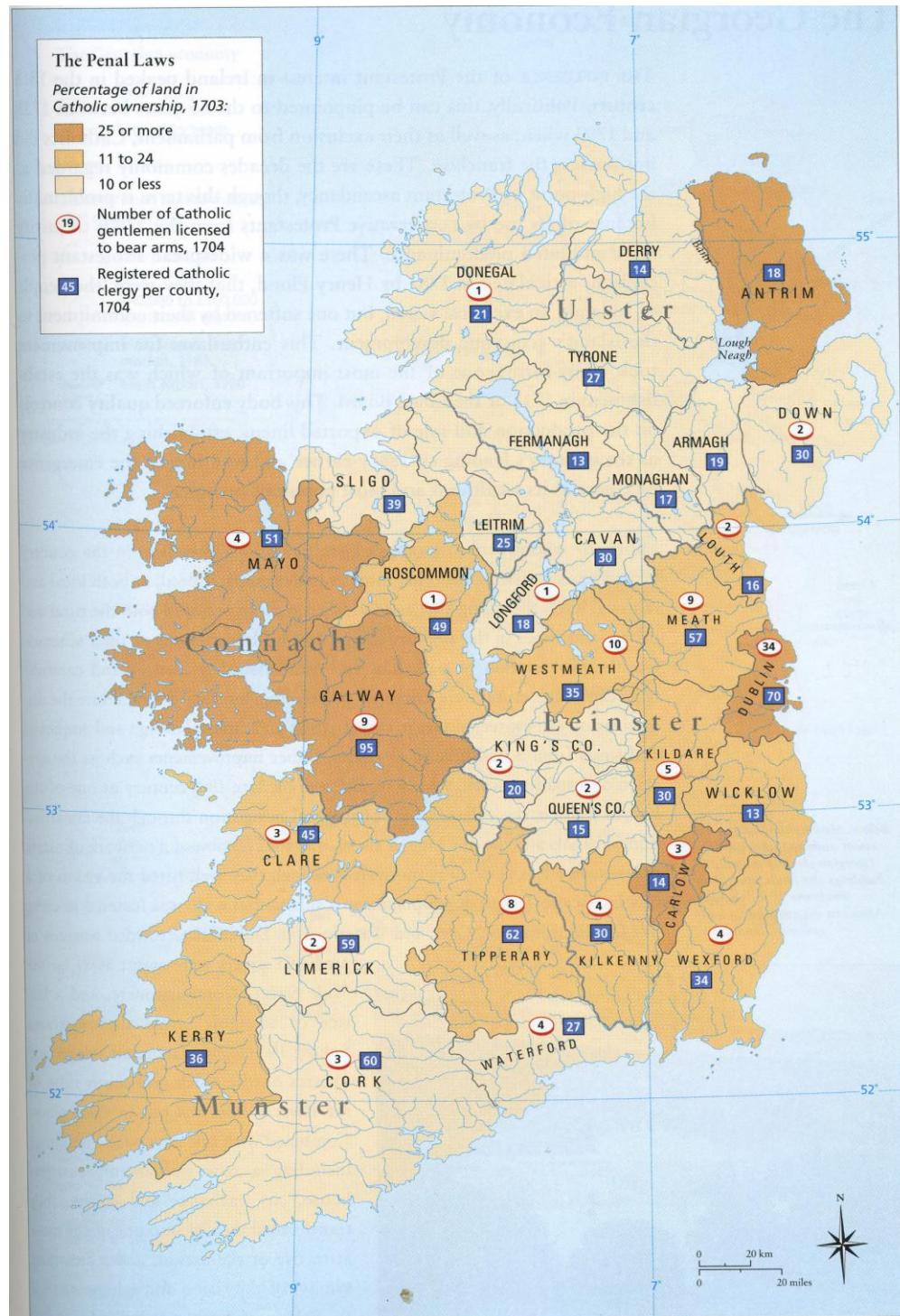


Figure 9: Penal Laws, early 18th century (*Atlas of Irish History*, p. 77)

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Ireland in the last years of the 18th century was coming to the end of an era, a period often referred to as a “Golden Age”⁶³, but also a “Penal Era”⁶⁴. It had started after the end of the Williamite Wars in 1691 and would last until the Act of Union of 1800, and was characterised by the flamboyance of the ruling class and the oppression of the Catholic Irish. As the century was coming to an end, however, the flamboyance was evolving into decadence and corruption, while the oppression was being relaxed and a Catholic middle class was beginning to assert its rights. Added to this was the influence of the American independence, as well as the shockwave of the French Revolution and the effects of the continental wars, which would last from 1792 until 1815⁶⁵.

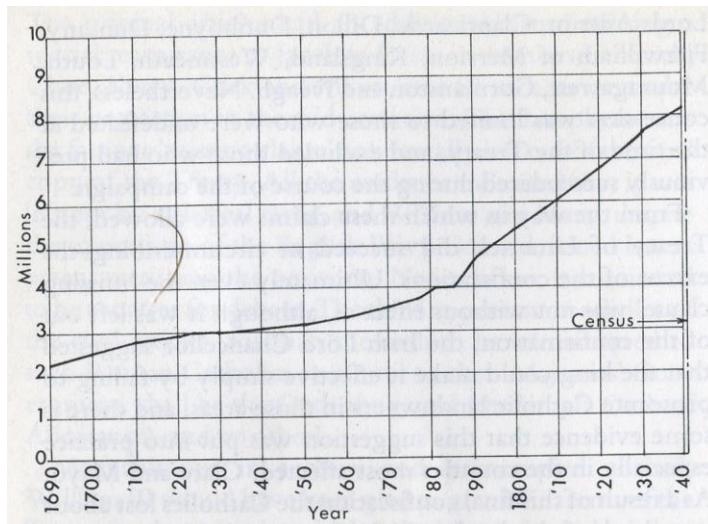


Figure 10: Population growth (from E.M.Johnston, p.14)

⁶³ See R.Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, ch.8 ‘The Ascendancy mind’, p.167.

⁶⁴ See R.Foster, ch.9 ‘Economy, society and the “hidden” Irelands’, p.195.

⁶⁵ See J.A.Lynn, ‘International rivalry and warfare’, in *The Eighteenth Century (Short Oxford History of Europe)*.

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The 18th century saw a spectacular demographic and economic growth, with a population around 1800 (~ 4-4.5 millions) almost 3 times the one in 1700⁶⁶! Urbanisation had also increased, with the main towns in Ireland being: Dublin (~200,000 inhabitants), Cork (~80,000), Limerick (~60,000), Belfast (~30,000), Newry (~10,000)⁶⁷. In terms of commercial importance, Belfast would have ranked next in commercial importance to Dublin and Cork⁶⁸. There was, however, a clear difference between the North and the rest of the island, the linen trade being much more important in the former, the cattle and provision trade in the latter.

The Penal Laws, dating from the beginning of the century⁶⁹, were progressively repealed: Relief Acts allowing Catholics to lease bogland (1772), re-establishing leaseholds and inheritance rights (1778), allowing freeholds outside parliamentary boroughs and access to educational rights (1782), admitting Catholics to the practice of the law (1792) and to parliamentary franchise (1793); establishment of a Catholic seminary in Maynooth (1795), so that priests could be trained locally and not abroad anymore⁷⁰. However, it was still far from the full emancipation demanded with increasing insistence by the Catholic middle class and their sympathisers across the religious divide, such as the Whig Clubs⁷¹ or the United Irishmen (founded in 1791, in Belfast).

⁶⁶ E.M.Johnston, *Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ C.Maxwell, *Country and Town in Ireland under the Georges*, ch.5 ‘the provincial towns’.

⁶⁸ C.Maxwell, p. 233.

⁶⁹ See also *Up in Arms: the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland*, p.38, catalogue entry 28.

⁷⁰ Dates taken from the chronology in the handout for lecture 4 (18th century Ulster) of course 320ICE121.

⁷¹ C.Maxwell, p.199.

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Figure 11: Georgian economy (*Atlas of Irish History*, p.79)

Main Phases and Aspects of La Tocnaye's Tour



Figure 12: Parliament House, College Green in Dublin, 1790 (*Up in Arms*, p. 31)

La Tocnaye arrived in Dublin around the beginning of 1796⁷², and stayed there until 25 May 1796⁷³, before starting his tour, counter clockwise, towards the south. He found Dublin 'a very considerable city, about one-fourth the size of London, of which it is the image in little – even the streets bear the same name'. During his sojourn he was introduced to the best society⁷⁴, including the Rt. Hon. Burton Conyngham, and Lord Camden⁷⁵⁷⁶, the Lord Lieutenant, but was also shocked by the beggars⁷⁷ (see also Maxwell⁷⁸) and the public hanging⁷⁹ that he witnessed.

⁷² [DLT] p.16 / [STE] p.16

⁷³ [DLT] p.42 / [STE] p.34: '[...] I fixed on May 25 as the day of my departure'

⁷⁴ [DLT] p.20 / [STE] p.19: 'Among those to whom I had letters of recommendation were generals and doctors, bishops and curates, bankers and authors, lords and professors, barristers and solicitors'.

⁷⁵ [DLT] p.31 / [STE] p.29.

⁷⁶ See *Up in Arms: the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland*, p.156, catalogue entry 131, about Camden (1759-1840).

⁷⁷ [DLT] p.18 / [STE] p.17.'The splendid carriages and the apparent wealth of the principal houses render the more displeasing the sight of the beggars, whose abject poverty is horrible'.

⁷⁸ C.Maxwell, *Country and Town in Ireland under the Georges*, p.132:'Nothing throws so much light upon the miserable condition of the poor in Ireland in the 18th century as the number of beggars that were to be found in all parts of the country.'

⁷⁹ [DLT] p.19 / [STE] p.18. '[...] to me it appears a great cruelty to make a sort of parade of the death of a man, and in diminishing the horror of the punishment crime is increased and executions multiplied'.

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Figure 13: Lord Camden (1759-1840) (*Up in Arms*, p.156)

Departing on 25 May 1795, Delatocnaye walked towards the south, to Bray⁸⁰, Enniskerry⁸¹, Hollybrook (where he was received by Lord Molesworth)⁸², Bellevue (residence of the famous Huguenot family, the Latouche)⁸³; there, he learnt the death of his good friend Conyngham (also reported in the *Northern Star*⁸⁴). David Latouche, who ‘acquired a considerable fortune’, ‘although a banker [...] was humane and charitable’! Then he went on to the Wicklow Mountains, and visited Glendalough (his spelling is ‘*Glandahugh*’)⁸⁵. Next he walked to the gold mine near Avoca, on the Croghan Mountain, where somewhat of a ‘gold rush’ had happened at the end of 1795⁸⁶. He then passed through the port of Arklow and the bishopric of Ferns on his way to Wexford,

⁸⁰ [DLT] p.45 / [STE] p.37

⁸¹ [DLT] p.46 / [STE] p.38

⁸² [DLT] p.48-49 / [STE] p.40

⁸³ [DLT] p 50 / [STE] p.42

⁸⁴ *Northern Star*, Mon, Jun 6 – Fri, Jun 10 1796, p.4, Dublin section: ‘The estates of the late Rt Hon W.B. Conyngham, which are very considerable, devote to his nephew, Lord Conyngham’.

⁸⁵ [DLT] p.52 / [STE] p.44

⁸⁶ [DLT] pp.56-58 / [STE] pp. 48-50

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which he reached probably around the end of June 1796. Near Wexford, in Forth, he noticed that the inhabitants seemed to 'still speak a singular language, which is more akin to Flemish than to modern English'⁸⁷ (C.Maxwell also mentions them, and Vallancey wrote a paper about the 'baronies of Bargy and Forth'⁸⁸). He heard about the recent Whiteboys disturbances of July 1793, and during his stay a French privateer blocked the vessels in the port⁸⁹; this could have been the 'Morgan' mentioned by the *Northern Star* at the end of June 1796⁹⁰ (which shows the vulnerability of the Irish coasts at the time).



Figure 14: Waterford in 1829 (C.Maxwell, p.229)

⁸⁷ [DLT] p.66 / [STE] p.54

⁸⁸ C.Maxwell, *Country and Town in Ireland under the Georges*, p.144

⁸⁹ [DLT] p.71-72 / [STE] p.59

⁹⁰ *Northern Star* Mon, Jun 27 – Fri, Jul 1 1796, Dublin section for Wed, Jun 29 1796: '[...] the **Morgan** privateer of Le Prigny of 10 guns and 60 men [...]' . Also *Northern Star* Fri, Jul 1 – Mon, Jul 4 1796, Dublin section for Fri, Jul 1: 'We have from the authority of the masters of the vessels that were captured a few days ago by the **Morgan French privateer**, that they were taken by SW by W, about 12 or 13 leagues distance from the Tower of Waterford [...]' .

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From Wexford, he crossed the river Suir, saw the 'New Geneva', a failed attempt to settle immigrants from the German Palatinate (see also Maxwell⁹¹), and then arrived in Waterford. There, at the theatre, he witnessed an incident where some people in the audience requested 'God save the King' to be played, and forced others to take off their hats⁹² (the *Northern Star* reported a similar scene in Newry later⁹³, and Whelan mentions one in Wexford earlier⁹⁴). Then he travelled to Cork, passing through Dungarvan and Lismore⁹⁵.



Figure 15: Cork in 1806 (C.Maxwell p.225)

⁹¹ C.Maxwell, p.146

⁹² [DLT] p.76 / [STE] p.65

⁹³ *Northern Star* Mon 9 Jan – Fri 12 Jan 1797, Belfast section: 'On Wednesday the 4th a dispute arose at the Newry Theatre, in consequence of some Military Gentlemen, who commanded the Audience to take off their hats, during the playing of *God Save the King*.'

⁹⁴ K.Whelan, 'Politicisation in county Wexford and the origins of the 1798 Rebellion', in *Ireland and the French Revolution*, p.168: 'By December 1792, the Wexford theatre witnessed an unusual manifestation of political sentiment: "some gentlemen in the pit in the theatre defied the band to play *God Save the King* and a few hisses were heard."

⁹⁵ [DLT] pp.78-86 / [STE] pp.66-73

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He called Cork 'the dullest and dirtiest town which can be imagined'⁹⁶, though it was the second largest city in Ireland. He was appalled by the poverty and the dirt in the street and asked 'Why should it be so difficult to do for the public what interest has done for the richer classes?'⁹⁷. He spent some time in and around the city; meeting, amongst others, the general Vallancey, a somewhat eccentric scholar⁹⁸; exploring the port of Cove; visiting Lord Shannon; and witnessing a strike of the apprentice-shoemakers⁹⁹! It was probably around the beginning of August, since he watched children lighting bonfires (Lughnasa?)¹⁰⁰ He then departed towards the west, visited Lord Bandon, got an umbrella added to his sword-stick in Macroom (something highly unusual, which made the girls laugh!)¹⁰¹, passed through the mountains to Dunmanway, where he saw a wake and met some French republican prisoners¹⁰², and then was received in Bantry by a Mr Richard White, who would be the first, four or five months later, to alert the authorities in Cork about the arrival of the French fleet in the bay (for which he would be made Lord Bantry)¹⁰³!

⁹⁶ [DLT] p. 86 / [STE] p.73: he also said that 'the people met with are yawning'!

⁹⁷ [DLT] p. 87 / [STE] p.74

⁹⁸ He thought that the Irish language was derived from the language of Carthage, and had many fanciful theories about the origins of Ireland – Stevenson omitted several of those explanations, which Latocnaye had included in his book, when he translated the original text. See [STE] p.77, footnote.

⁹⁹ [DLT] pp.91-100 / [STE] pp.78-85.

¹⁰⁰ See also C.Maxwell, ch.3 'The peasantry'.

¹⁰¹ [DLT] p.103 / [STE] p.87.

¹⁰² [DLT] pp.105-106 / [STE] p.89-92

¹⁰³ [DLT] p.111 / [STE] p.95

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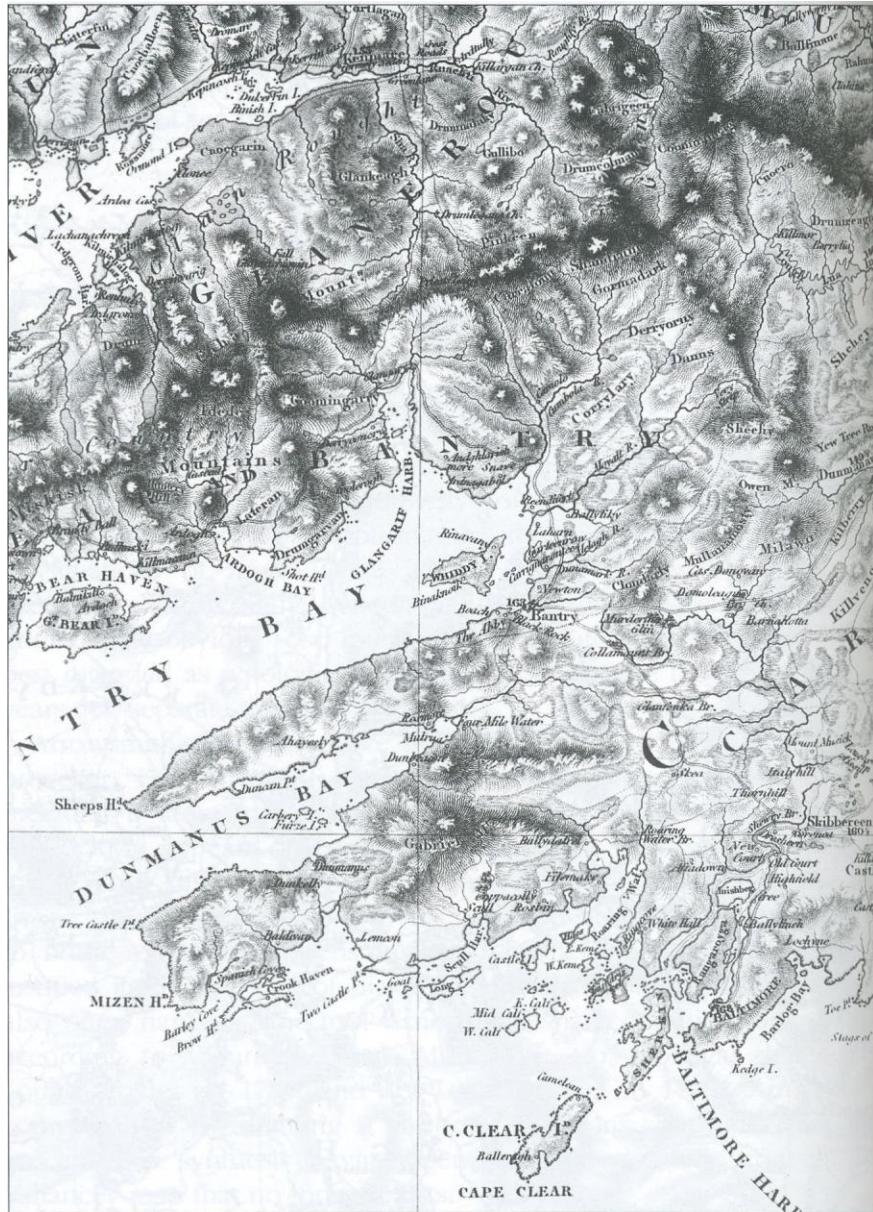


Figure 16: Bantry Bay in 1811 (*Shapes of Ireland*, p. 260)

From Bantry, travelling ‘among these wild and absolutely deserted hills’¹⁰⁴, he traversed Kenmare on his way up to Killarney, where he stayed with Lord and Lady Kenmare a few days; the area was quite popular with visitors, and Maria Edgeworth also had Lord Glenthorn visit it in *Ennui*¹⁰⁵. He saw another wake while there, and some

¹⁰⁴ [DLT] p.115 / [STE] p.98

¹⁰⁵ *Ennui*, pp.251-252; he also visited the Giants’ Causeway.

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beggars who ‘build miserable huts along the road and importune the passers-by’¹⁰⁶. He then walked up Tralee and Ardfert, where he saw yet another holy well¹⁰⁷. According to him, ‘nearly all the people in this part of the country are Catholics, but Catholic and Protestant agree here very well’. He also noted the power of the priests¹⁰⁸. From there he followed the coast up to the mouth of the Shannon, then turned to the east, towards Limerick, via Rathkeale where he visited villages inhabited by the descendants of German settlers from the Palatinate, and praised their farms and industries¹⁰⁹.



Figure 17: Co. Limerick, 1759 (*Shapes of Ireland*, p.208)

¹⁰⁶ [DLT] p.124 / [STE] p.106. He adds: 'I have often thought that this annoyance could easily be abolished by the establishment of a small House of Industry, in which the beggars should be forced to work'.

¹⁰⁷ [DLT] p.126 / [STE] p.108.

¹⁰⁸ [DLT] p.129 / [STE] p.111.

¹⁰⁹ [DLT] p.136 / [STE] p.118.



Figure 18: Limerick in 1776 (C.Maxwell, p.228)

He arrived in Limerick during the racing season (probably sometime around September 1796) and ‘there came to the races some bullies from Cork and Youghal, with the laudable intention of putting lead into the brains of the Limerick folk’; in eight days, there were ten or twelve duels and an officer of the Irish brigade was killed¹¹⁰ (a similar incident was reported in the *Northern Star* in July¹¹¹). That kind of duelling and faction fighting was widespread, according to C.Maxwell, in the gentry as much as in the peasantry¹¹². He had to renew his wardrobe, and a description of his possessions follows:

‘A powder bag made out of a woman’s glove.

¹¹⁰ [DLT] pp.139-140

¹¹¹ *Northern Star*, Fri 1 Jul – Mon 4 Jul 1797, p.3, for 2 July 1796: ‘Accounts have reached town of a very disagreeable riot having taken place at the races of Coolgreny, a few days since. Two companies of the Donegal militia (headed by an officer) appearing amongst the country people, and not conducting themselves with the regularity that might be expected, a tumult was early apprehended [...].’

¹¹² C.Maxwell, pp.156-157: ‘The Irish are a pugnacious race, and in the 18th century the poorer classes were as fond of the blunderbuss and the shillelagh as the gentry of pistol and sword’.

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A razor.
Thread.
Needles.
Scissors.
A comb, carried in one of a pair of dress shoes.
A pair of silk stockings.
Breeches, fine enough to be, when folded, not bigger than a fist.
Two very fine shirts.
Three cravats.
Three handkerchiefs.
The clothes in which I travelled'

All of which he would stuff in his six pockets or in a handkerchief at the end of his swordstick¹¹³! After Limerick, he continued along the Shannon, until Killaloe on Lough Derg, where he noticed the lack of industry¹¹⁴, then followed the western shore to Tuamgraney, Mountshannon, crossed into Connaught where ‘it really seemed [to him] that [he] was no longer in the same country’, then to Portumna¹¹⁵. At this point he turned to the northwest, past Lough Rea, try to converse with Irish-speaking peasants who offered to carry his packet, and walked to Galway, where he was shocked by the poverty but discovered the merits of the potato diet¹¹⁶. He also encountered numerous hedge schools. In the city itself, he found that the commerce, formerly extensive, had declined¹¹⁷.

¹¹³ [DLT] p.144 / [STE] p.125.

¹¹⁴ [DLT] p.151 / [STE] p.131.

¹¹⁵ [DLT] pp.151-158 / [STE] p.131-137.

¹¹⁶ [DLT] p.167 / [STE] p.145: ‘The nakedness of the poor near Galway is most unpleasant – is it not possible to organise industries which would enable these people to lead a less painful existence? [...] “How is it that your countrymen have so many and so healthy children?” “It’s the praties, Sir,” he replied.’

¹¹⁷ [DLT] pp. 169-170 / [STE] p.147.

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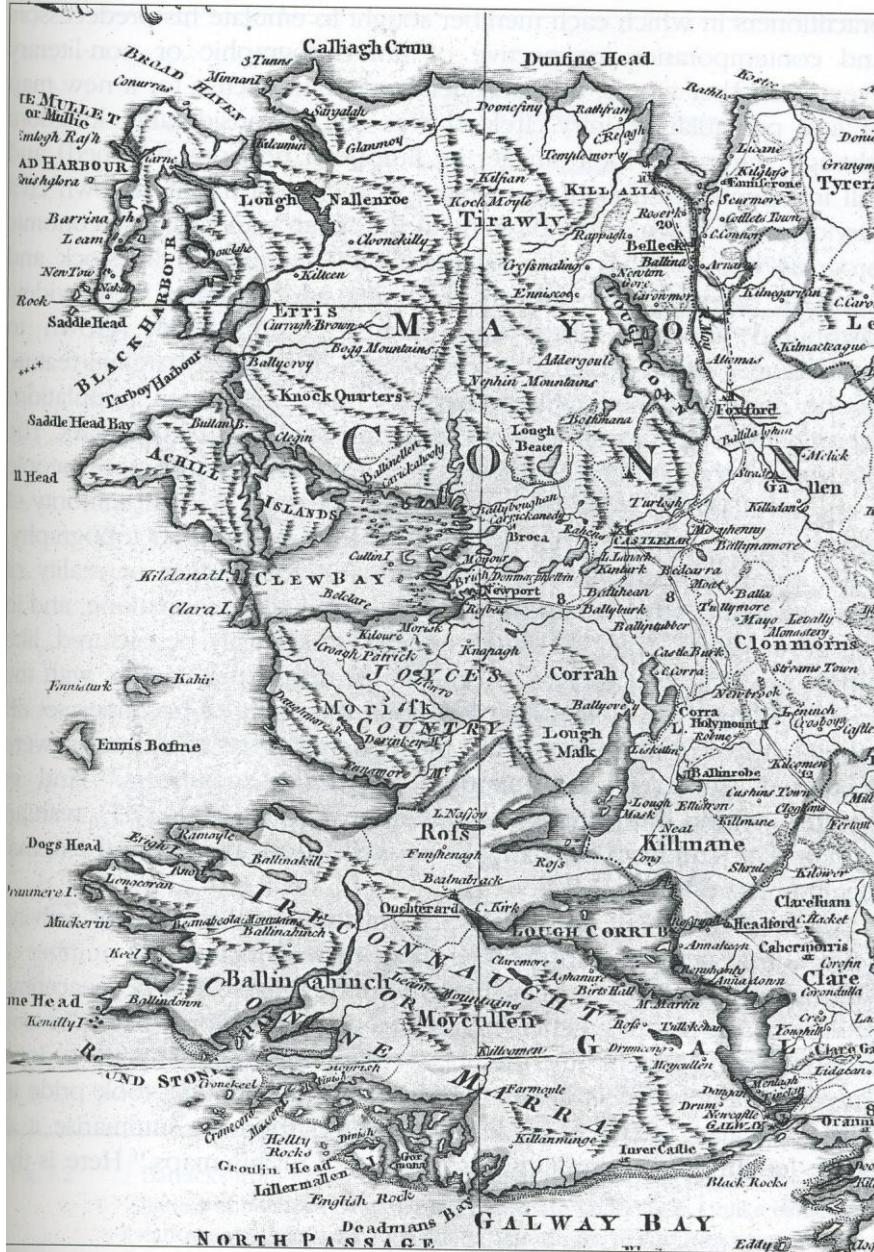


Figure 19: West Connacht in 1759 (*Shapes of Ireland*, p.187)

He then entered Connemara, a region with a bad reputation¹¹⁸, passed Lough Corrib and Oughterard, ‘the last village in Eyre Connaught’, and arrived at Ballinahinch

¹¹⁸ [DLT] p.174 / [STE] p.151: ‘Of the persons from whom I asked information some replied vaguely, others begged me not to visit such a barbarous country, where I should not find a dry stone to sit down on, and where the few inhabitants were as barbarous as the Iroquois.’

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at the home of the Colonel Richard Martin¹¹⁹, also known as ‘hair-trigger’ Dick (for the number of duels he fought) or ‘humanity’ Dick (for his good heart)¹²⁰, who indeed was giving refuge to the victims fleeing persecution in the North (‘To Hell or to Connaught’)¹²¹. Now with a horse, he rode north along the coast, a region of wreckers, up to the bay of Killary, then followed the shores of Clew Bay until Westport, where he was received by Lord Altamont, and visited Croagh Patrick¹²².



Figure 20: A pattern in Connemara (C.Maxwell, p.161)

Travelling towards the north, he met an “inoculator” (vaccination against smallpox had just been introduced, in 1796, by Edward Jenner¹²³). He followed Lough Conn, up to Killala (which would become famous as the place where the French

¹¹⁹ [DLT] pp. 175-180 / [STE] pp.153-157.

¹²⁰ C.Maxwell, *Country and Town in Ireland under the Georges*, ch.I ‘The social life of the gentry’.

¹²¹ [DLT] p.185 / [STE] p.162.

¹²² [DLT] pp. 187-197 / [STE] pp.164-175.

¹²³ *The Eighteenth Century (Short Oxford History of Europe)* p.271.

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landed¹²⁴), Ballina and Sligo, then set out with Colonel Cole to go and visit Lord Enniskillen in Florence Court¹²⁵.



Figure 21: Belleek, painting in Florence Court (National Trust)



Figure 22: Enniskillen, painting in Florence Court (National Trust)

¹²⁴ See T. Flanagan, *The Year of the French*, or *Up in Arms*, pp.252-255.

¹²⁵ [DLT] pp. 199-206 / [STE] pp.175-181.

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He stayed a few days in Florence Court and visited Marble Arch, then went to Enniskillen, where he deplored the gate with the inscription 'The Glorious Memory of the First of July' celebrating the victory at the battle of the Boyne¹²⁶ and was received at Lord Belmore's Castle Coole. Then he went on to Belleek on the Lower Lough Erne, Ballyshannon, Donegal and finally Londonderry, where he saw another memorial of the Williamite wars: the Arch of Triumph commemorating the siege of 1689¹²⁷. He described the town as prosperous and charming, and noted that the main industry was the linen trade (he saw the weekly market). He visited Downhill, one of the many palaces of the Bishop of Derry, then followed the coast to Coleraine, the Giant's Causeway (a spot as popular in those times as today: M. Edgework's character, Lord Glenthorn, also visited in *Ennui*¹²⁸). He was starting to feel a change in the atmosphere, 'that spirit of contention then reigning in this northern province'¹²⁹, meeting a United Irishman and seeing a 'potato digging' (more on this later).



Figure 23: Downhill, co.Derry, in 1824 (C.Maxwell p.73)

¹²⁶ [DLT] p.211 / [STE] p.186.

¹²⁷ [DLT] pp. 214-223 / [STE] pp. 189-197.

¹²⁸ In *Ennui*, p.250.

¹²⁹ [DLT] p.228 / [STE] p.202

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He continued to Ballycastle, where a newly arrived regiment got his weapons stolen, to his great surprise¹³⁰; then Fair Head, and Cushendun, where he remarked that the inhabitants were almost all Catholics, and spoke an English different from the rest of the province¹³¹. He walked along the coast to Glenarm, seat of the Marquis of Antrim, then turned inland, towards Broughshane, and Lough Nea, where he was received by Lord O'Neill at Shane's Castle; then to Ballyscullen, another one of the palaces of the Bishop of Derry and Toome. While heading to the town of Antrim, he noticed that 'the spirit of the people was here in such a state of fermentation that it could easily have become dangerous in the absence of precaution'¹³². He found Antrim a 'poor little town without any appearance of trade or industry'.



Figure 24: Reetling, scutching and hacking flax in Antrim, 1791 (C.Maxwell, p.233)

¹³⁰ [DLT] p.239 / [STE] p.211-212

¹³¹ [DLT] p.244 / [STE] p.217.

¹³² [DLT] p.247-248 / [STE] p.220.

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From Antrim, he crossed the mountains to Belfast, which he was surprised to find much quieter than he had expected from the rumours, and with the 'look of a Scotch town', and more preoccupied with trade than international politics¹³³. He visited Carrickfergus, recalling the French assault on this town by Thurot in 1760, then stayed with Lord and Lady Londonderry at Mountstewart, then on 21 December 1796, took the boat to Scotland from Donaghadee, to spend the winter there¹³⁴.

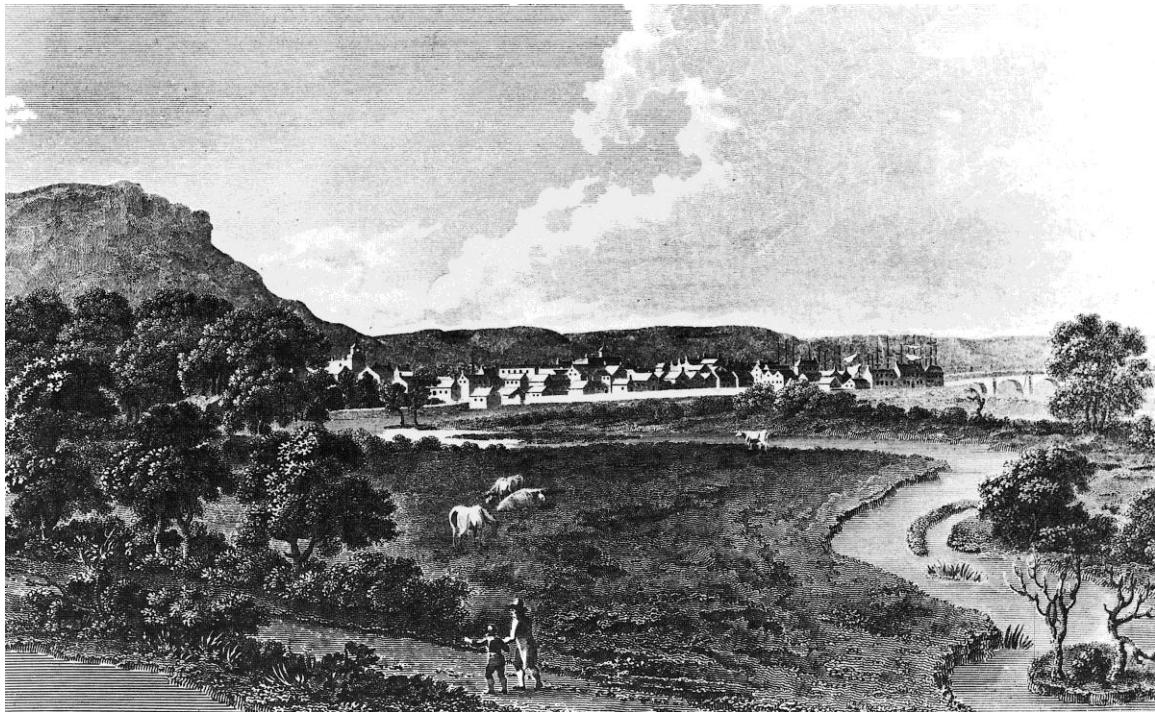


Figure 25: View of Belfast in 1772 (*Irish Historic Towns Atlas*)

Returning to Belfast, probably around mid-May 1797, a bit anxious, considering what he had heard about the situation there while in Scotland, he felt however that the country was quiet enough, although it was 'out of the King's Peace'. The atmosphere,

¹³³ [DLT] pp.249-250 / [STE] p. 222

¹³⁴ [DLT] pp. 250-255 / [STE] pp.222-227.

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just in the middle of the repression organised by General Lake¹³⁵, was nevertheless quite stormy, and he read in an inn in Newtonards a sign that said that ‘if there is another shot fired over the sentinel, orders will be given to burn the town’¹³⁶. He arrived in Belfast for the King’s birthday (so probably around 4 June 1797¹³⁷), and witnessed the fear of the people and the misbehaviour of the soldiers running wild in the town; because of these troubles he left earlier than he had planned, travelling now by coach (safer than on foot) through Lisburn, Hillsborough (castle of the Marquis of Downshire) and Dromore, noticing the importance of the linen trade in these places, although it was disturbed by the troubles¹³⁸.



Figure 26: The brown line market in Banbridge, 1791 (C.Maxwell, p.233)

On his way to Armagh, he observed soldiers ordering people to take off their green ribbons, and met a company of Orangemen. In Armagh, seat of Archbishop

¹³⁵ See *Up in Arms*, p. 158, entry 133.

¹³⁶ [DLT] p. 281 / [STE] p. 251.

¹³⁷ *Up in Arms* p.4, George III was born 4 June 1738.

¹³⁸ [DLT] pp.284-286 / [STE] pp.253-254.

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Robinson, he found the inhabitants almost used to the surrounding violence¹³⁹. He was surprised that the roads were safe during the daytime, and walked to Newry, like Belfast submitted to the army's repression; crossing the mountains to the south, he saw some burned houses, which he considered unfortunate but inevitable¹⁴⁰.



Figure 27: Newry in 1829 (C.Maxwell, p.232)

Glad to be on the other side of the mountains, he walked to Dundalk, then Dunleer, Drogheda, and to the Boyne valley, where he saw the site of the famous battle and the obelisk¹⁴¹. At Slane he met yet another funeral, and admired the town built by Mr. Burton Conyngham, his late patron, and visited Newgrange¹⁴². Then he went to Navan, Finglass, Clontarf and finally back to Dublin, probably around mid-July 1797,

¹³⁹ [DLT] p. 295 / [STE] p. 264.

¹⁴⁰ [DLT] pp. 300-301 / [STE] p. 269.

¹⁴¹ [DLT] p.307 / [STE] p.273.

¹⁴² [DLT] p 309-310 / [STE] pp. 274-275.

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where he noticed the companies of Volunteers (each profession forming its own corps: barristers and solicitors, merchants, students, etc)¹⁴³. He had been on the road for a little more than a year.

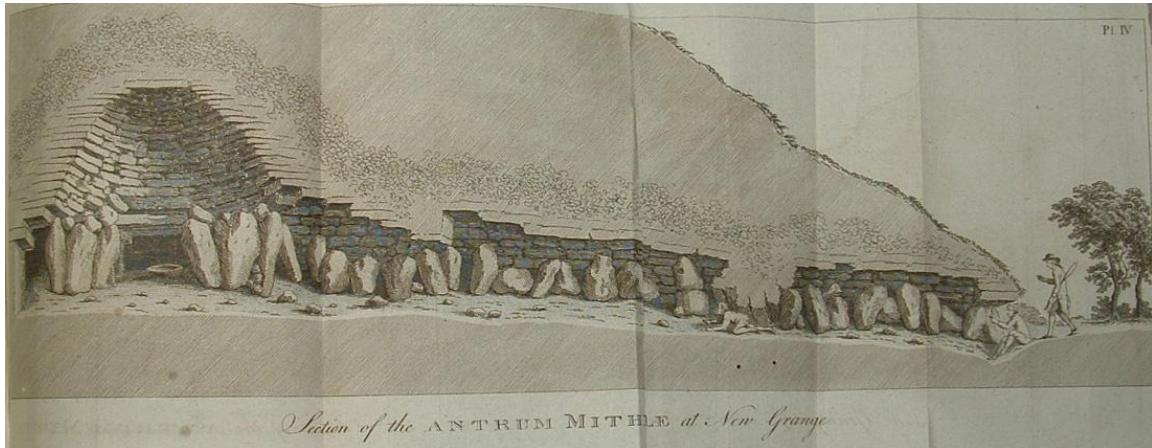


Figure 28: Section of Newgrange ([DLT] p.311)

Contrasts and Extremes



Figure 29: Florence Court (National Trust)

¹⁴³ [DLT] p. 320-321 / [STE] p.281.

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La Tocnaye said about Castle Coole that 'the temples should be left to the gods'¹⁴⁴; and indeed Lord Belmore was bankrupted by its construction¹⁴⁵. Towards the end of the 18th century, the Protestant Ascendancy had it all: wealth and power. The wealthiest had astronomical annual incomes: the Duke of Leinster, £20,000; the Duke of Ormonde, £22,000; Mr Connolly of Castletown, £25,000; Lord Belmore, £12,000¹⁴⁶ ... The spirit of this elite is caricatured by Maria Edgeworth in *Ennui* and *Castle Rackrent*: an idle, corrupt and slightly decadent class. Latocnaye, for obvious reasons, is quite silent on the faults of the gentry; at one point, he only says that '[he] grew visibly fairer and fatter'¹⁴⁷. Ostentatious hospitality was one of the characteristics of the upper classes, with excesses of food and drink, and the distractions of the hunts and the duels¹⁴⁸. As many landowners supplemented their already sizable incomes by relying on office holding¹⁴⁹, bribery and jobbery were widespread. Although some landlords contributed to the development of the towns, the progress of agriculture, and the introduction of manufactures, these initiatives were piecemeal and lacked consistency.



Figure 30: Lord Belmore (National Trust)

¹⁴⁴ [DLT] p. / [STE] p.187.

¹⁴⁵ R.Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p.193

¹⁴⁶ C.Maxwell, ch.1 'The Social Life of the Gentry'.

¹⁴⁷ [DLT] p.104 / [STE] p.88.

¹⁴⁸ C.Maxwell, ch.1.

¹⁴⁹ R.Foster, p.174.

At the other extreme, there was the labourer, earning a pittance: ‘the price of labour in this country is very low, not more than two pence halfpenny or three pence’¹⁵⁰, noted Delatocnaye near Limerick, and ‘the peasant is idle here; but what use would activity be to him? The price of his day’s work hardly suffices to maintain him and his family’¹⁵¹, near Cork. He was shocked several times by the absolute poverty he encountered; he slept a few times in miserable cabins¹⁵², and near Galway he saw ‘huts [that] are not like the houses of men’¹⁵³. As one of the only escapes, whiskey was causing ravages, as he bemoaned¹⁵⁴, proposing a tax on it; in 1791, the consumption was estimated to be over a gallon of whiskey a year per inhabitant¹⁵⁵! Although conditions for the poor were getting slightly better towards the end of the century, beggars were everywhere, and houses of industry were totally inefficient in dealing with the problem.



Figure 31: The ‘Irish slave’, 1820 (C.Maxwell, p.149)

¹⁵⁰ [DLT] p.135 / [STE] p.117.

¹⁵¹ [DLT] p. 87 / [STE] p.76.

¹⁵² [DLT] pp.79-80 / [STE] pp. 68-69.

¹⁵³ [DLT] p.167 / [STE] pp.144-145

¹⁵⁴ [DLT] p.94 / [STE] p.80.

¹⁵⁵ C.Maxwell, p.129.

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As a result of the economic boom, the development of trade and urbanisation, a middle class had developed. In the more prosperous cities like Dublin and Belfast, the number of lawyers, solicitors and businessmen was increasing. Maria Edgeworth illustrated this transition with the character of Lord Glenthorn in *Ennui*, evolving from an idle landlord into a professional lawyer. Moreover, as the Penal Laws were being repealed, Catholics were starting to get involved, especially through the Catholic Committee funded in the 1760s¹⁵⁶. That professional class was becoming increasing vocal and critical of the establishment, and was pushing for reforms, especially in the way that the Irish Parliament worked and the distribution of power.



Figure 32: The Bishop of Derry's Mussenden Temple (National Trust)

There were also numerous contrasts in the religious life of the people. The Established Church, despite being the religion of a minority of people, was extremely wealthy: the Primate was receiving £8000 a year, the Archbishop of Dublin £5,000, and

¹⁵⁶ See R.Foster, ch.12 'Enthusiasm defying punishment: revolution, republicanism and reaction'.

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the Archbishop of Derry, the flamboyant and eccentric Frederick Augustus Hervey, Lord Bristol, £7,000 on top of an enormous personal fortune, which he used to build palaces in Ireland and in England, where he lived most of the time¹⁵⁷. The humble curate could expect £40 a year. Their incomes came from tithes and land. On the other hand, the 22 bishops of the Catholic Church were paid by the parish priests, who themselves made their money via fees and collections. Latocnaye noted that the priests were quite diligent in getting their dues paid: '[The priest] consigned to all the devils (although in highly proper terms) all those infamous enough not to pay his dues'¹⁵⁸. Although not as repressed as the Catholics by the Penal Laws, the Dissenters were also regarded with suspicion by the ruling order, and numerous Presbyterians were also radicals and reformists¹⁵⁹. Because of the lack of properly trained priests, religious practise had degenerated among Catholics, as shown by the superstitions associated with holy wells, and the pilgrimages, that Latocnaye encountered frequently along the way. The tradition of the wakes had also declined¹⁶⁰; initially poetry or music would be performed, but by the end of the century it would be left to hired hands, like the old women that Latocnaye noticed¹⁶¹, and whom Maria Edgeworth caricatures in the Glossary of *Castle Rackrent*¹⁶².

¹⁵⁷ C.Maxwell, ch.7 'Parsons and Priests'.

¹⁵⁸ [DLT] p.129 / [STE] p. 111.

¹⁵⁹ See R.Foster, p.215, for instance, and the creation of the Northern Whigs.

¹⁶⁰ C.Maxwell, ch.3, 'The Peasantry', p.154

¹⁶¹ [DLT] p.121 / [STE] p.104: [...] the coffin surrounded by a prodigious number of females who wept and chanted their "hu lu lu" in chorus [...].

¹⁶² *Castle Rackrent*, pp.124-127.

Part III: La Tocnaye in Northern Ireland

The Troubles in the North

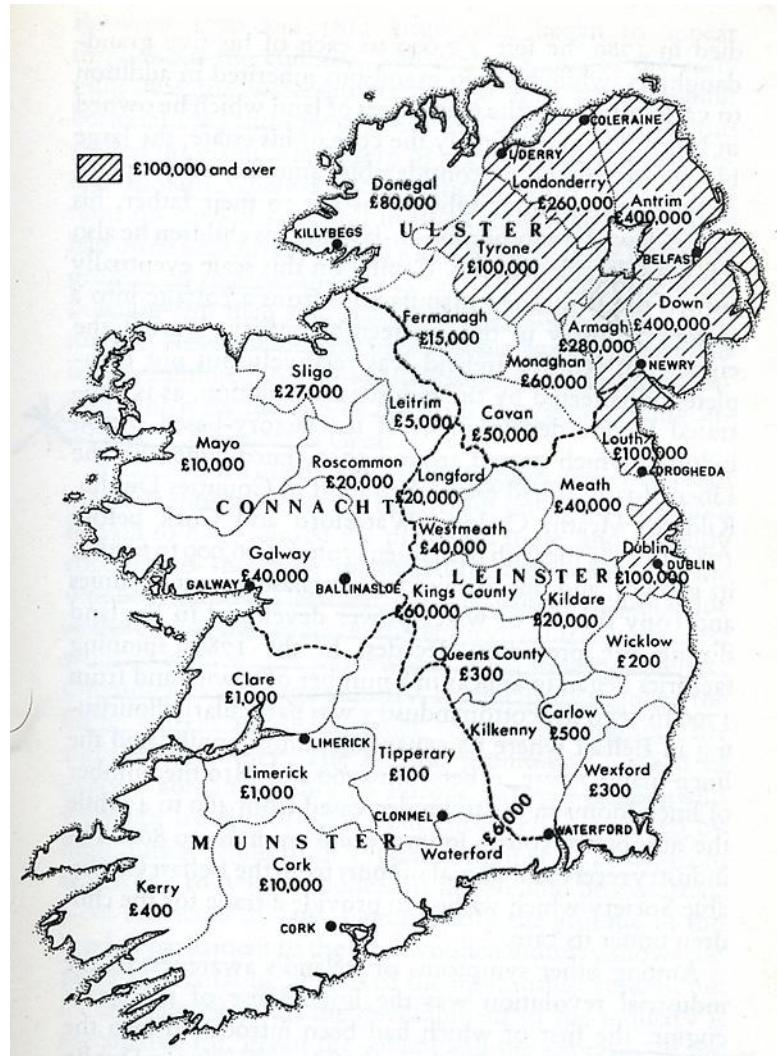


Figure 33: Distribution of linen sales in 1770 (*Ireland in the 18th century*, p.93)

Troubles had been brewing in the North for quite a while. This region was very different from the rest of the Ireland; a lot of descendants of Scottish settlers lived there, Presbyterians who would have come after the Cromwellian wars. Moreover, the north-eastern part of the island had been spectacularly enriched through the linen trade (cf.

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above figure). Finally, there were strong links between Ulster and America, and a lot of sympathies for the War of Independence¹⁶³. The battle cry of 'No taxation without representation' was finding an echo in the Protestant middle class exasperated by the abuses of the Irish parliament. T.L.Birch, a leading United Irishmen, described the emergence of the movement in his pamphlet entitled: *The Causes of the Rebellion in Ireland, Disclosed in an Address to the People of England in which it is proved by Incontrovertible Facts that the System for some Years pursued in that country has driven it into its Present Situation* (written after 1798, after his exile to America). He depicted the United Irishmen as the inheritors of the Volunteer movement of the 1780s, which had pushed for parliamentary reform successfully in 1782 (Dungannon Convention), with the repeal of Poyning's Law, but had failed to obtain satisfaction the next year (Dublin Convention), and had thus more or less fallen into decline¹⁶⁴. Although the initial motivation of the Volunteers was to defend the Constitution and clean up the politics, after the failure of 1783 a sizeable proportion moved towards radicalism¹⁶⁵.

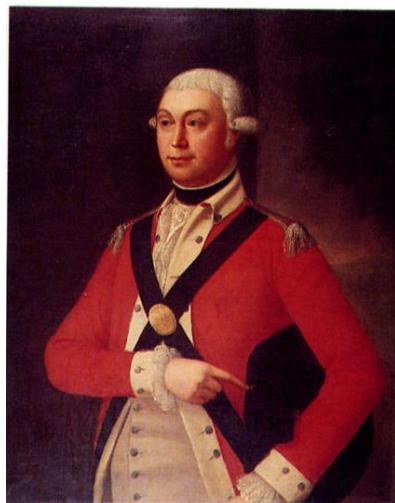


Figure 34: A Lurgan Volunteer in 1780 (*Up in Arms*, entry 37, p.53)

¹⁶³ R.Foster, ch.11 'Americans, Volunteers and the Politics of Patriotism'.

¹⁶⁴ T.L.Birch, p. 91.

¹⁶⁵ R.Foster, p. 246.

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The French Revolution electrified both sides, the radicals as much as the conservatives, and it almost coincided in England with the Regency crisis¹⁶⁶, which had triggered calls for reform. The Belfast Volunteers celebrated the 14 July 1791 with parades and planting of “liberty trees”, and the Society of the United Irishmen was founded shortly afterwards by men like William Drennan and Theobald Wolfe Tone¹⁶⁷. Some of the Revolutionary ideas also inspired other movements, like the Defenders, although they overlooked the anti-Catholic aspects. The *Northern Star*, a Belfast radical newspaper, was established in September 1791, and would soon supplant the *News-letter* in the city¹⁶⁸; it published news from America and France along with radical pamphlets. With war becoming inevitable, Pitt, in England, was convinced of the necessity of ensuring the support of Catholics in Ireland, and was thus pushing for relaxation of the Penal Laws, which in turn was increasing the feeling of insecurity among the Ascendancy.



Figure 35: The port of Brest in 1794 (*Up in Arms*, entry 90, p.110)

¹⁶⁶ R.Foster, p.256.

¹⁶⁷ R.Foster, p.265.

¹⁶⁸ See J.Gray, ‘A Tale of Two Newspapers: the contest between the Belfast News-Letter and the Northern Star in the 1790s’, in *An Uncommon Bookman*, p.175.

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After the start of the war between France and Austria in April 1792 and with England in February 1793¹⁶⁹, the pressure intensified even further, and a crackdown on radicalism started. Ireland was now a possible target for invasion, and its defences had long been lacking, as the attack on Carrickfergus by Thurot had shown earlier (in 1760, during the Seven Years war), as well as the threat from French privateers (as the one noticed by Latocnaye as he was in Wexford). Moreover, one of the main fears of the Ascendancy was a connection between radicals or educated ‘Whiteboys’ and French agents¹⁷⁰. In County Armagh, on top of all this, long-standing rivalries between Catholics and Protestants were starting to evolve into a low-intensity conflict, culminating on 21 September 1795 with the Battle of the Diamond in Loughall and the creation of the Orange Order¹⁷¹. The *Northern Star* issues for the year 1796 give a feeling of that escalation of radicalism and repression, with the background of the French victories on the continent (and the rise of a certain Bonaparte). T.L.Birch considered the Insurrection Act of 1796 as a great misjudgement on the part of Lord Camden¹⁷², and the *Northern Star* viewed it as ‘A BLOODY CODE!’¹⁷³. The failed landing of an *émigré* force at Quiberon, in Brittany, with English support, in July 1795, had created the conditions for a revenge strike by France on British, and spies in Brest, towards the end of 1796, were starting to report preparations for an invasion¹⁷⁴. Indeed, in December 1796, a French

¹⁶⁹ Cf Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, ch.9 ‘War against Europe 1792-1797’.

¹⁷⁰ G. O’Brien, ‘Francophobia in later 18th-century Irish history’, in *Ireland and the French Revolution*, p.48.

¹⁷¹ R.Foster, p.272.

¹⁷² T.L.Birch, p.102.

¹⁷³ *Northern Star*, Mon 1 – Thu 4 Feb 1796, Belfast section: ‘We have received a copy of the bill brought into the House of Commons by the Attorney General, to prevent tumults and riots. It is indeed “A BLOODY CODE”, to use his own words [...]’.

¹⁷⁴ See, for instance, *Northern Star* Fri 2 – Mon 5 Dec 1796, Belfast section: ‘Authentic intelligence has been received by Administration that the French have possibly resumed their intention of invading Ireland;

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fleet under the command of Hoche, the top general of the day, appeared in Bantry Bay in the southwest, with Tone on board, who in a pamphlet that he had prepared declared:

‘[...] I am firmly convinced [that] the doctrine of Republicanism will finally subvert that of Monarchy, and establish a system of just and rational liberty, on the ruins of the thrones of the despots of Europe’¹⁷⁵.

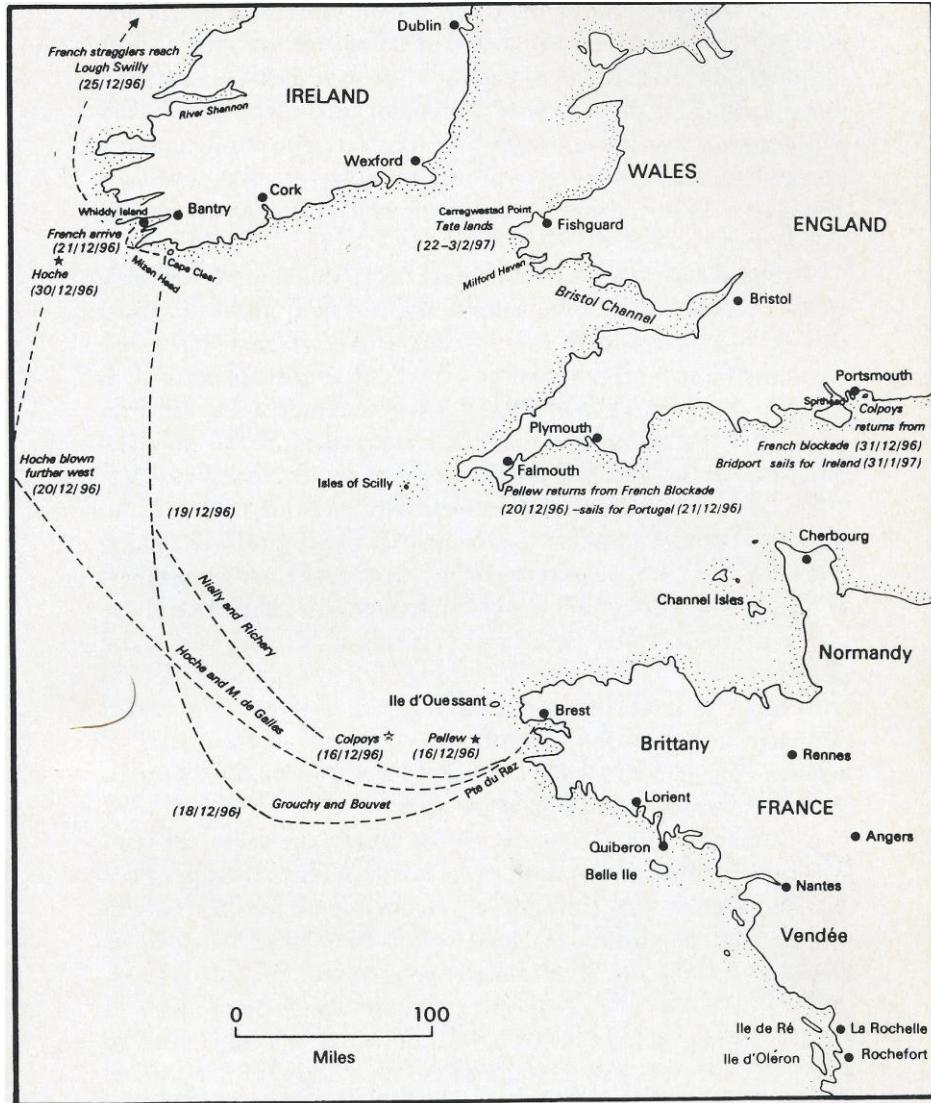


Figure 36: Failed invasion of 1796 (*Ireland and the French Revolution*, p.205)

that possibly they are embarked to the amount of 80,000 men; that possibly they are at sea; and that possibly they may effect their passage, a landing, and a conquest of this country.'

¹⁷⁵ Tone, *Address to the People of Ireland*, p.10.

The invasion attempt in Bantry Bay triggered a wave of paranoia across the island; it had been a very close call, and only the 'Protestant winds' stood between Ireland and a landing expedition of some 15,000 soldiers¹⁷⁶. Around the same time, La Tocnaye was crossing over to Scotland. While he was away, the repression, already quite harsh, was stepped up dramatically: on 13 March 1797, the proclamation of General Lake put the North virtually under martial law¹⁷⁷. This is the atmosphere in which Latocnaye would come back around June 1796: a cowed population, and burning houses.

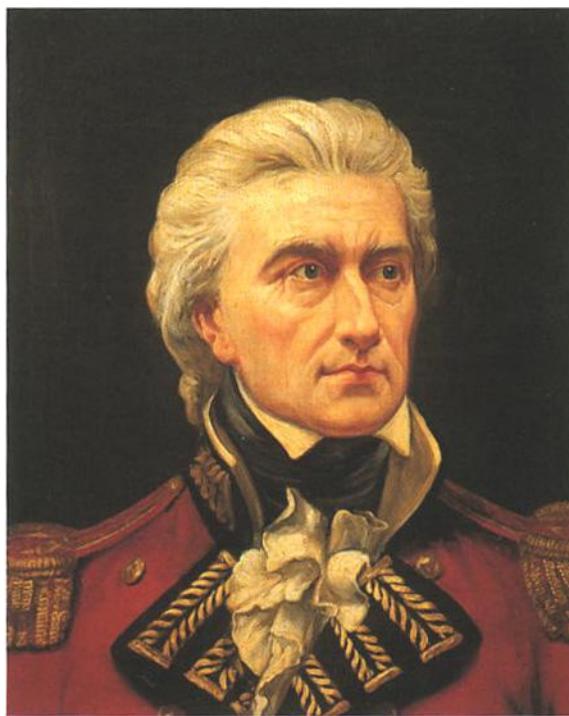


Figure 37: General Lake (1744-1808) (*Up in Arms*, entry 133, p.158)

¹⁷⁶ See *Up in Arms*, p.113: 43 vessels, including 17 ships of the line, 14,450 troops with artillery, arms and ammunition for themselves and to supply the Irish as well.

¹⁷⁷ See *Up in Arms*, entry 142, p.166: 'Whereas the daring and horrid outrages in many parts of this province [...] have increased to such an alarming degree, as from their atrocity and extend to bid defiance to the civil power, and to endanger the lives and properties of his Majesty's faithful subjects. And several [...] persons [...] have been forcibly and traitorously deprived of their arms, it is therefore become indispensably necessary for the safety and protection of the well disposed, to interpose the King's troops under my command; and I do hereby give notice that I have received authority and directions to act in such manner as the public safety may require. I do therefore hereby enjoin and enquire all persons in this district (peace officers and those serving in a military capacity excepted) forthwith to bring and surrender up all arms and ammunition which they may have in their possession to the officer commanding the King's troops in their neighbourhood. I trust that an immediate compliance with this order may render any act of mine to enforce it unnecessary'.

Whiteboys, Defenders, United Irishmen and the Orange Order

Towards the end of his *Tour*, Latocnaye gives his point of a view of the troubles in the county of Armagh¹⁷⁸; according to what he has heard, those started after a quarrel between two peasants at a fair, developed into a brawl, then in a vendetta. The government, after a long time, decided to intervene, and the magistrates put into execution some of the Penal Laws forbidding Catholics to bear arms, thus leaving them at the mercy of their attackers. As Protestant partisanship increased, the 'Orange Boys' were formed, and the other side, 'correctly enough', took the name of 'Defenders'. Soon enough Defenders were threatened to go 'To Hell or To Connaught'. The persecution encouraged the Defenders to more extreme violence. Latocnaye makes the difference between the troubles in Armagh, sectarian in nature, to the ones in Antrim and Down, instigated by the United Irishmen. He accuses Defenders turning into United Irishmen of hypocrisy: how could they 'say that all religions were equal', after 'having practised the most barbarous cruelties on their compatriots on religious pretexts'? Then he explains how the United Irishmen organised themselves, 'announced their republican opinions, and declared that they only waited the arrival of the French to join them'. He underlines the arrival of the French fleet in Bantry Bay as a turning point: this event 'opened the eyes' of the government, and 'convinced them of the necessity for rigorous methods in dealing with the dissatisfaction'. Volunteers corps were formed, troops sent from England, and 'they set themselves to act with severity against the discontented'. Just then, the troubles in Armagh started again, with excesses on both sides. For Latocnaye, of all those problems, 'the real reason is that the fertility of the country attracted a great many

¹⁷⁸ [DLT] pp. 289-297 / [STE] pp.258-266.

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strangers [...] who have become too numerous to allow an equitable division of the land with the descendants of the ancient stock'. For him, a solution would be, like Charlemagne had done, to forcibly transplant a part of the people to a less populated area! It is clear from this passage that, although Latocnaye has a poor opinion of Orangemen, he has an even poorer view of the United Irishmen, and is totally behind the policy of the government and the severity of the measures taken.

It would be interesting, then, to have another opinion on the situation of the time. For this I used several different sources: Tone's and T.L.Birch's pamphlets, the *Northern Star*, and various historians' essays on the question. All along the 18th century, there had been sporadic eruptions of violence: first, the woodkernes, Tories and rapparees, petty criminals with some links to the dispossessed Irish families; then movements like the White Boys, whose grievances were more agrarian in nature, a protest against high rents, grazing, excessive tithes and fees; or the Oakboys, around the 1760s in Ulster, against forced road labour; or, again, the Steelboys, reacting to the high rents demanded by Lord Donegal for his estates¹⁷⁹. In his introduction to Birch's essay, Clifford even claims that those 'terrorist movements' were instrumental in the emancipation of Ireland¹⁸⁰. Birch mentions the long-standing rivalry between Catholics and Protestants in Armagh, which he calls 'petty quarrels [...], which, however, produced no serious mischief', at least until the 'Peep O'Day Boys' started stirring up trouble¹⁸¹. Birch, although he recognises that

¹⁷⁹ C.Maxwell, p.174, footnotes.

¹⁸⁰ Clifford, in introduction to Birch's *Causes of Rebellion*: 'The actual beginnings of democracy in Ireland lie in those terrorists movements – in the Whiteboys in Munster and the Steelboys in Antrim and Down. But for these movements, Irish society would have been a dehumanised heap of misery below with an inhuman gentry capering on top of it.'

¹⁸¹ Birch, p.99.

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the Defenders committed crimes, says that those were provoked by the exactions of the Orangemen, and that justice was completely one-sided. The *Northern Star* also reported several times 'the striking contrast between the conduct of the United Irishmen, who are the subjects of ministerial vengeance, and the Orangemen, who are protected and encouraged by the supporters of Administration'¹⁸². The repression was not something new; it had started around 1792, shortly after the creation of the United Irishmen, who in reaction had gone underground; but from the end of 1795 it was clearly intensifying, coincidentally with the rise of the Orange Order: 'In the year 1792 United Irishmen were prosecuted *because they published*; in 1796 they are prosecuted *because they are silent.*'¹⁸³

'Test-oath taken by the United Irishmen:
I, A.B., in the Presence of God, do pledge self to my country, that I will use all abilities and influence in the attainment of an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish nation in Parliament – and as MEANS of absolute and *immediate* necessity in the establishment of this chief good of Ireland, I will endeavour as much as lies in my ability, to forward a BROTHERHOOD OF AFFECTION, and identity of interests, a community of rights, and a union of power among Irishmen of all religious persuasions; without which every resort in Parliament must be partial, not national – inadequate to the wants – delusive to the wishes – and inefficient for the freedom and happiness of this country.'

Figure 38: Excerpt from *Northern Star*, Mon 4-Thu 6 Apr 1796, p.2.

On 12 July 1796, the Orange Order organised its first march, to the fury of the *Northern Star*: 'These banditti, who have hunted upwards of 700 families from their homes and their all – who have put the Catholics of the county out of the "King's Peace", parade in open day, under banners bearing the King's effigy, and sanctioned by the Magistrates! Irishmen! Is this not plain enough!'¹⁸⁴ With hindsight, it appears that the

¹⁸² *Northern Star*, Fri 7 – Mon 10 Oct 1796, Belfast section, p.3.

¹⁸³ *Northern Star*, Mon 30 May – Fri 3 Jun 1796, Belfast section, p.3.

¹⁸⁴ *Northern Star*, Mon 11 – Fri 15 Jul 1796, p.2.

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strategy of the Ascendancy was twofold: to stir up sectarianism to split the United Irishmen, and to bolster Protestantism against Catholics¹⁸⁵. In that context, the Orange Order was a useful proxy. Conservatives like Lord Downshire and Lord Castlereagh had every interest to protect the Ascendancy, against the threats of Defenderism and the United Irishmen, while keeping at bay a meddlesome English government: they benefited from the corruption of the electoral system, which the *Northern Star* was denouncing¹⁸⁶. Radicalism was spreading, as shown by the cropped hair, the green ribbons (which caused Latocnaye to cut the one he had on his umbrella, to avoid trouble!¹⁸⁷), and the planting of liberty trees: in August 1796, Camden had reported those to the Home Secretary¹⁸⁸, and the *Northern Star* played them down¹⁸⁹. In reaction, the authorities were using the Orange Order during their arm searches or to prevent 'potato diggings'¹⁹⁰ (like the one witnessed by Latocnaye¹⁹¹). To the convergence of the United Irishmen and Defenders, and their infiltration of some Volunteers and Militia corps¹⁹² corresponded the links between the Ascendancy, the Yeomen and the Orange orders¹⁹³.

¹⁸⁵ See R.Foster, in ch. 8, 'the Ascendancy Mind'.

¹⁸⁶ *Northern Star*, Mon 25 – Thu 28 Jan 1796, Belfast section: 'those who are enemies to contested elections must rejoice at the cordiality that subsists between the Marquis of Downshire and Lord Viscount Castlereagh. No longer shall we hear of contests of above 50 days duration: no longer shall perjury, drunkenness and debauchery overspread the land: one hour in the court-house, another hour at dinner, and six hours devoted to good claret, will in future be the burden of a county Down Election'.

¹⁸⁷ [DLT] pp. 285-286 / [STE] p. 255.

¹⁸⁸ N.J.Curtin, in 'Symbols and rituals of United Irish mobilisation', p.68, in *Ireland and the French Revolution*.

¹⁸⁹ *Northern Star*, Mon 20 – Fri 24 Jun 1796, Belfast section, p.2: 'We have been amused with silly reports of idle boys planting sticks and branches of bushes, which they, or any others, call *Liberty Trees*. A correspondent advises, that the best remedy against such idle folly would be, for the Gentlemen of Ireland to order all the Timber on their estates to be cut down and burnt, even the *Oak of Shillelagh*, and then if they will plant, they can get nothing better than the *Shamrock*.'

¹⁹⁰ *Northern Star*, Fri 11 – Mon 14 Nov 1796 p.3: 'Intelligence of the meeting having been conveyed to Revd. Philip Johnston, he, attended by a troop of Dragoons and a number of armed men, who are reported to be Orangemen, marched to the potato field, and attacked, without ceremony, the unoffending multitude.'

¹⁹¹ [DLT] pp.235-236 / [STE] p. 209.

¹⁹² See Bartlett, 'Indiscipline and disaffection in the French and Irish armies', p.194, in *Ireland and the French Revolution*.

¹⁹³ See *Up in Arms*, ch.8 'Orangemen, Defenders and Yeomen'.

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'On Monday last, about 600 men assembled on the lands of Mr. William Orr, near Antrim, and armed themselves each with a sheaf of his oats upon their shoulder, and proceeded to the attack of his hay yard where they deposited their arms, after having got possession of the post without opposition.' (*Northern Star*, Mon 3 – Fri 7 Oct 1796)

'On Tuesday the potatoes of David Long, of Drumbo, now in Down jail, on a serious charge, were dug by about 1000 people, in the space of ten minutes and a half, after which they carried in his hay on their backs.' (*N.S.*, Mon 17 – Fri 21 Oct 1796)

'Hasty Digging! [...] On Monday, about 3000 people assembled (including 500 females) and dug the potatoes of Mr William Weir of Dunmurry in twenty minutes.' (*N.S.*, Mon 24 – Fri 28 Oct 1796)

'THE UNITED POTATOE DIGGERS (a song): [...] A digging let us go / A digging let us go / To show our love for these brave men / Who to jail for Truth did go' (*N.S.*, Mon 24 – Fri 28 Oct 1796)

'On Saturday last a large number of people (included a number of females) assembled to raise the potatoes of a poor widow woman who has lately lost her husband, in the neighbourhood of Stonyford.' (*N.S.*, Fri 11 – Mon 14 Nov 1796)

Figure 39: The potato diggings seen by the *Northern Star*.

By the time Latocnaye came back from Scotland, the repression by the army was already well under way. Already, in May 1797, the *Northern Star* had been definitely silenced by the Monaghan Militia, to the great satisfaction of General Lake and also Lord Downshire, who had long tried to suppress it¹⁹⁴. The severe strategy of the government, although indiscriminate and excessive, was ruthlessly efficient, and the arm confiscations and the arrests broke the momentum of the radicals. It certainly contributed to the failure of the Rebellion in 1798 in that part of the island. In the *Address to the People of Ireland* he had prepared for the invasion in December 1796, Tone said: 'The alternative which is now presented to your choice, with regard to England, is, in one word, *union* or

¹⁹⁴ See J. Gray, 'A tale of two newspapers: the contest between the Belfast News-Letter and the Northern Star in the 1790s', p.191, in *An Uncommon Bookman*.

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*separation!*¹⁹⁵ He would be proved right, but not in the sense that he expected... In a similarly prescient way, Latocnaye was declaring:

‘A happy experience will prove to England that the prosperity of this beautiful kingdom, far from being hurtful to her, will increase her own, and that in destroying the ridiculous prejudices which have been for ages existing against the most beautiful and richest part of her possessions, and in really making Ireland share the advantages of the beneficent laws by which she is, herself, governed, she will acquire the love of 4,000,000 of subjects, which her armies have conquered, but which justice alone will bring to submission’.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Tone, p.10.

¹⁹⁶ [DLT] p.255 / [STE] p.227.

Conclusion

In this project, I have tried to get a glimpse of who Latocnaye was and what he experienced during his tour of Ireland; to compare his vision of the country with other points of views; and, through his accounts and the newspapers, to get an idea of the troubled situation of that time, on the eve of the uprising of 1798. His book is full of details, each of which would be worth more research in its own right; and I still have numerous unanswered questions, loose ends. Some events may be dated more precisely, like the races in Limerick. It would also be interesting to try to find out whether people like Lord Castlereagh mention him in their diaries or journals, and get more details about his various hosts. Though it is frustrating not to have more information, it keeps the project open!

It is surprising how Latocnaye's writing makes him at the same time close and distant from us: reading his account gives a voice to the past, it produces a vivid impression of a period which we otherwise only experience through much more sober history books. However, his mind frame and the shocking realities of that age also act as a reminder of how far society has evolved since then, although some echoes of these troubled times still resonate nowadays.

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