

WOLFE TONE'S GRAVE.

(‘Dublin Weekly News,’ March 28.)

ON Sunday, 22nd March, Bodenstown churchyard, near Sallins, county Kildare, was the scene of a remarkable demonstration. Some six months ago, a new slab was placed over the grave of Wolfe Tone in the locality just mentioned, to replace the original one, which had been injured and broken by persons chipping off portions of it to carry away with them as relics. To save the new stone from meeting the fate of the old, the men of Kildare have recently enclosed it with an iron railing, which arches over at the top, at a height of about eight feet, and effectually prevents it from all injury. The railing is of a tasteful pattern, and displays a range of spear-heads and shamrocks on the crown of the arch. There is a door to the enclosure, for which two keys are kept, one by the Wolfe Tone Band, Dublin, and the other by the Kildare men who have taken part in this patriotic work. The meeting of Sunday was intended to mark the completion of this erection, and to pay a tribute of affection to the memory of one of the foremost of the men who “rose in the dark and evil days to right their native land.” A large number of persons, including the Wolfe Tone Band and the Volunteer Band, left Dublin for Sallins on Sunday morning by the 9.30 train. The fine brass band of the coopers proceeded in a drag drawn by four horses, and displaying their trade banner to the place of meeting. There also attended, with contingents numbering hundreds from each locality, the Clare Brass Band, under the presidency of Mr J. Hampson; the Killocock Brass Band, and the Newbridge Band; there came also a band from the town of Kildare, accompanied by a large number of stalwart men; and a band from Naas, similarly attended. When all were assembled it was computed that there were about 3000 present. All were well dressed, orderly and intelligent people, and amongst them was a considerable number of the fair daughters of Kildare. The platform was erected close by the grave of Tone, beside the ivy-grown wall of the ruined church, in which past generations of the faithful people of Kildare worshipped their Creator. When the people had all gathered in front of the platform, the Killocock Band gave out the solemn strains of the Dead March, which under the peculiar touching circumstances of the scene had a very solemn effect. On the cessation of the music, the proceedings of the day commenced. On the motion of Mr Mooney, seconded by Mr Keegan, the chair was taken by

MR T. D. SULLIVAN.

The chairman was enthusiastically received. Cheers for his brother, M. A. Sullivan, and cheers for Louth were also called for and given very heartily. Mr Sullivan thanked the meeting for the honor they had done him in calling on him to preside on that impressive and solemn occasion. They had assembled there to perform a pious act, to honor the memory of a great and gifted Irishman who gave his life for Ireland (cheers). They were there to complete by that meeting the work of the young men of the Wolfe Tone Band of Dublin, and the men of Kildare, who had taken measures to preserve from injury the slab that covered the honored relics of Theobald Wolfe Tone. They knew how the necessity for that work had arisen. Little bits and fragments of the old slab were being carried away every day by Irishmen to foreign lands, as memorials of that martyr for Irish liberty; and though the feeling which prompted the act was to be respected, the act itself was not to be commended, for under such a course of conduct the most precious antiquities in the country would soon disappear (hear, hear). Mr Sullivan then proceeded to give a brief outline of the career of Theobald Wolfe Tone, stating that he entered public life as a reformer, seeking by legal and constitutional means the removal of the penal laws which pressed upon the Catholics of Ireland. It was not until his last efforts in that direction were spurned and defeated by the government that he turned to the last resource of outraged nations. The history of his life should be a warning to every government, and teach them that it is not in human nature, at all events not in the nature of a brave and high-spirited people to submit tamely to injustice and oppression (cheers). The speaker then referred to the two expeditions which as a consequence of Tone's negotiations were fitted out in France for the relief of Ireland, and to their failure owing to stress of weather; he briefly alluded to Tone's capture, trial, and death, and said that to the last pulse of his heart Tone was true to Ireland (cheers). It was fitting that the grave which held the relics of such a man should be honored by the Irish people. Years ago the heart of Thomas Davis (cheers) was gratified when he came to that spot, and found there a few persons who knew and revered the burial-place of Wolfe Tone. How happy would he be could he have seen such an assembly of the brave men and fair women of Kildare as were now present to do it honor (cheers). Mr Sullivan concluded by introducing Mr Moorey, who would propose a resolution to the meeting.

Mr Mooney briefly proposed the following resolution:—

“That in dedicating this tomb—restored by the Wolfe Tone Band of Dublin, and enclosed by the patriotic men of Kildare—to the memory of Theobald Wolfe Tone, we desire to give a testimony of his labours in the cause of Irish independence, to honour the zeal, the courage, and the devotion which he displayed in the service of his country, and to declare our fidelity to the great principle of self-government for Ireland, which he died to maintain.”

Mr Richard Keegan, in seconding the resolution, said that the men who had just completed this holy task considered it but a simple act of duty; but, silently and unostentatiously as they had carried it out, their conduct would be widely known and talked of, and to many thousands of their countrymen would be a source of hope for the future of Ireland. The record of this day's proceedings would be spread far and wide through the land. It would be borne across the ocean to the other Irish nation in the great western land of promise, bringing to the home of many an Irish exile the joyous assurance that a spark of the spirit of the old land still survives. A generation of men have passed away since the fatal midnight when Theobald Wolfe Tone was laid here to rest. More than the allotted span of human life—the traditional three score and ten—have elapsed—

“Yet still the tale of his young life sets Irish hearts aflame.”

At the recital of his sorrows, the starting tear dims the eye and moistens the cheek of beauty. The story of his wrongs calls up the flush of indignation to the brow of young, lusty manhood, and with the memory of his mighty achievements strong hands were clenched and stout hearts throbbled with bright hopes and high resolves. The speaker then, in referring to the glorious career of Tone, said the whole history of his life and that of many a brave brother might be summed up in the words of the poet:

“He drew his sword 'gainst Ireland's foes,
He died in '98.”

He said that in commemorating the glorious achievements of Wolfe Tone they should also record their veneration for the many others who like him gave their life for Ireland. Fellow-countrymen (continued the speaker) it is a reflection full of glory in the past, and of bright hope for the future, that neither force nor fraud, though both were applied with all the energy and persistency that cruelty and wickedness could prompt, could ever crush out or eradicate that spirit of Irish nationality in defence of which Wolfe Tone died. It may slumber for a while, it may in the hour of dire trial appear for ever dead, but like the shamrock, the triple emblem of Ireland's faith, her fertility, and her love of freedom, though long trodden down, it is but to spring up again with a new life, green and vigorous. It may be asked what is meant by this spirit of Irish nationality. I will explain what I mean by the phrase. It is the full confidence of the Irish people in the complete qualification of this country to sustain, in every sense, the position of a nation; their belief in the indisputable right of the Irish nation to frame and administer laws for the government, protection, and welfare of the Irish people; and their determination to struggle for ever and ever, or place Ireland in the possession of her national rights. This spirit of national integrity is the birthright of the Irish people. It has been fostered by our fathers, and nourished with their best blood for ages past. It is the theme to-day as it was when Wolfe Tone died asserting it, the same as it was in the remoter days when Hugh O'Neill upheld its principle with his strong red hand. And it will continue to increase in power and brilliancy until its long struggling flame shall burst forth in all the dazzling glory of the sunburst of Ireland's independence (loud cheers). Fellow-countrymen, ours is a country of grand natural advantages and capabilities—a fatherland worthy of all our love and of every sacrifice. God and country, faith and fatherland, are kindred sentiments. Next to the homage we owe our Creator comes the devotion and fidelity due to our native land. This is the creed of the world, and the man who is false to it meets the reprobation of all men worthy of the name. The dusky savage, with little more than animal instinct, will up with his rude spear or hatchet and war to the bitter end against the invader of his hunting ground. It is the same from the burning tropics to the regions of perpetual ice: love of our country is a natural instinct, one of the strongest and most abiding of the human breast (cheers). What should be said to the Irishman, then, who would abandon his country, the fairest on the face of God's world, to a state of conquered, craven subjection? And the deplorable fact that this country is in a state of enforced subjection is but too fatally apparent. A union between this country and England should be an arrangement for the mutual advantage of the two countries. When we take part in the toils and dangers of her battles, we should be entitled to a share in the advantages arising from victory. When we contribute our share of money and brain and sinew to develop and extend her trade and commerce, we should have a claim to a proportion of the prosperity derivable therefrom. Is there a living man possessed of the hardihood to say that this is the case? No, before the honest judgment of the world the lamentable fact must be recognised, that since the fatal hour of the enforced and fraudulent Union, it has been a time of dismal decay of the Irish nation and the Irish race (cheers). Fellow-countrymen, our mission here to-day is a holy one, and here in the presence of the mighty dead we plight our undying fidelity to the holy cause of Erin, the motherland of saints and of heroes, the nurse of the bright and the brave, of Grattan, O'Connell, and Davis, of Emmet, Fitzgerald, and Wolfe Tone (loud and prolonged applause).

The chairman then put the resolution, which was carried unanimously and amid great cheering. A vote of thanks to the chairman was then proposed and seconded, and carried with acclamation, after which the chairman returned thanks in appropriate terms, and the proceedings terminated. The bands then marched around the tomb playing national airs, and from thence proceeded on their various routes homeward. Before quitting Bodenstown, each of them halted and performed some music in front of the house of the Messrs Roddy, whose father, in the year 1844, pointed out the grave of Tone to Thomas Da is, Sir John Gray, and others who had gone from Dublin to discover it. The spirit and the patriotism of old Mr Roddy, the blacksmith of Bodenstown, are referred to in a letter descriptive of the visit above referred to, and signed “J. G.,” which we published in the ‘Nation’ of September 20, 1873. The proceedings of last Sunday show that the patriotism of the old man “who seemed to be the self-constituted guardian of Tone's grave” still lives in the breasts of his children. The proceedings throughout were marked by the utmost decorum and regularity, and were highly creditable to all who took part in them. The grave of Wolfe Tone is now a conspicuous object in the grave-yard, it is well protected from all chance of injury, and it will doubtless be the scene of many a pious pilgrimage of the sons of Ireland in ages yet to come.

The following strange incident is reported by a contemporary:—On Saturday week, between eleven and twelve o'clock, a wooden bridge 25ft. high, across the main creek between the Blue Spur and the Christchurch road, caved in, the whole structure tumbling away. At the time of the occurrence, a boy about fourteen years old, a son of Mr Harcourt, of the Upper Crossing, was riding a pony across the bridge, and both the rider and pony fell into the bed of the creek, which was dry. Singularly enough the timber fell clear of them, and neither the boy nor his pony were hurt.