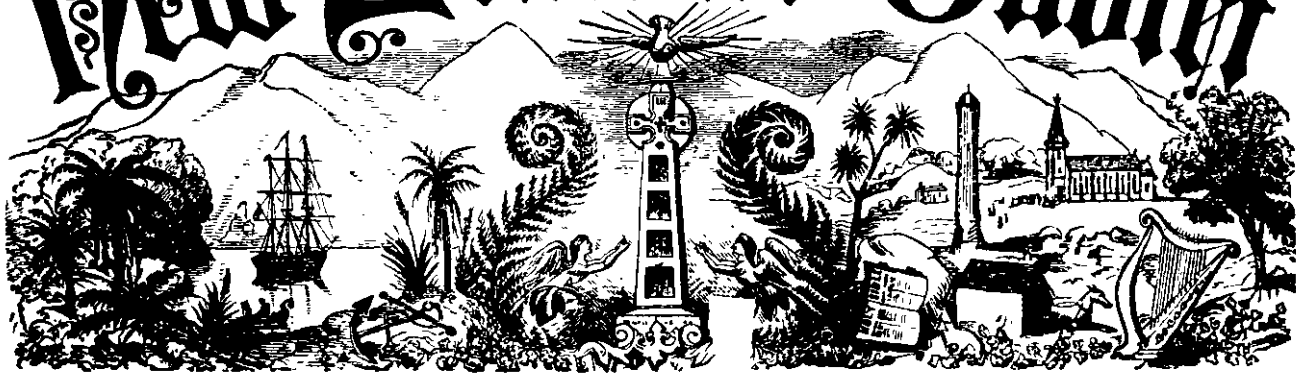


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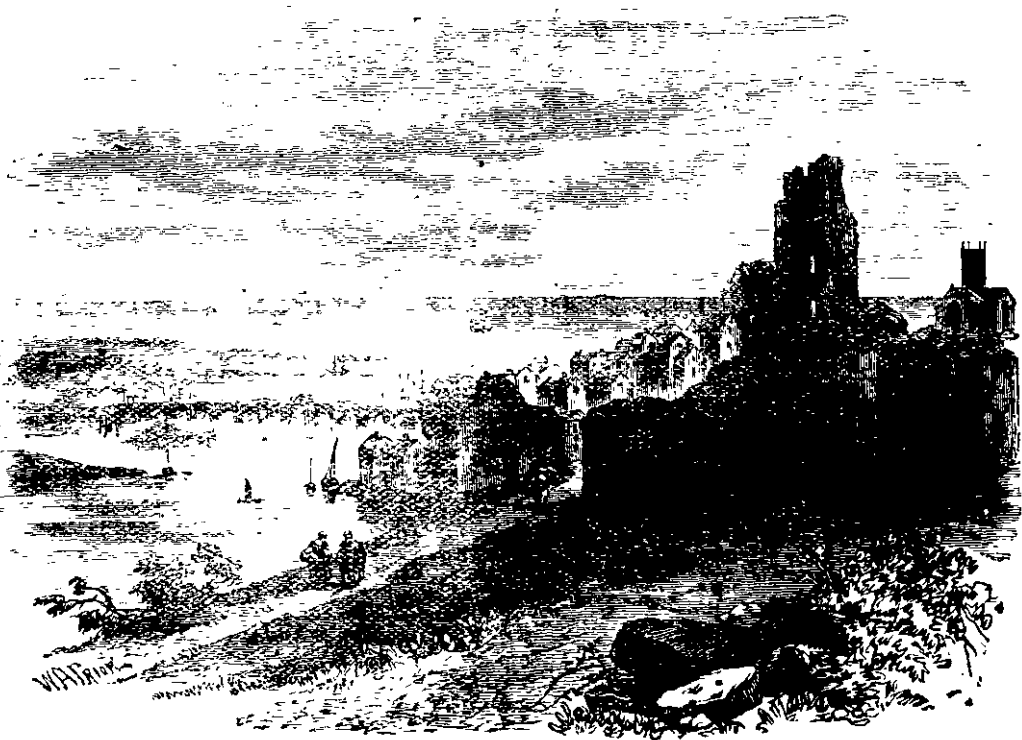
ARKLOW.

THE town of Arklow is remarkable in history as probably forming the turning point at which was decided the fate of the Irish Insurrection of 1798. "Never before" writes Miles Byrne, the famous patriot leader, "never before had the English Government in Ireland been so near its total destruction." When Hoche's expedition appeared on the coast in 1796, the Irish nation was ready to avail itself of it, to throw off the English yoke; but now the people found they were adequate to accomplish this great act of themselves without foreign aid. What a pity that there was not some enterprising chief at their head at Arklow, to have followed up our victory to the city of Dublin, where we should have mustered more than a hundred thousand in a few days; consequently the capital would have been occupied

without delay by our forces; when a provisional government would have been organised, and the whole Irish nation called on to proclaim its independence. Then would every emblem of the cruel English Government have disappeared from the soil of our beloved country, which would once more take its rank amongst the other Independent States of the earth."

The battle of Arklow has been variously claimed; the Government troops, under General Needham and Colonel Skerret, asserting their right to the victory, and on the other hand the like honor being ascribed to the insurgents. The truth is that, according to the dictum of Sir Jonah Barrington, the affair was a drawn battle, but in all probability it would have resulted in favour of the patriot forces had they been properly commanded.

The fight commenced at about 4 p.m. on the 9th of June. The insurgents numbering some 20,000, but being poorly armed, and short of ammunition, advanced on all sides, except that on which



they were hindered by the river. Their three pieces of artillery they brought forward along the Coolgreaney road, exposing themselves to a heavy and effective fire from the garrison; and the patrol of cavalry, sent to encounter them on the sea-shore, they terrified to such good purpose that the valiant cavaliers set spurs to their horses, and never cried halt until they had placed the waters of the Ovoca between them and the hostile ranks.

At one time the defeat of the royalists seemed certain. The bravery of the insurgents was irrepressible; through grape-shot, and the constant fire of musketry they came on again and again, and the Durham fencibles, with whom lay the great hopes of the garrison's success, were so galled and broken, that General Needham proposed a retreat, but was answered by Colonel Skerret, with reason as well as gallantry, that such a motion in the face of an enemy far his superior in numbers would be destruction. Thus

they persevered, until the death of Father Michael Murphy, killed by a cannon-ball, dispirited the insurgents, who drew off; retiring towards Coolgreaney, and, if Miles Byrne be sufficient authority, losing the cause of Ireland by their untimely retreat.

The three priests, Fathers Roche, and M. and J. Murphy, who took so prominent a part in the affair of '98 have been most loudly of all condemned. Maxwell, in his account of the insurrection, which, indeed, is more an abusive tirade than a history, as it pretends to be, loads them with every vile epithet. But of the style and accuracy of this writer let us take as a specimen a few sentences descriptive of the march of the insurgent forces on Arklow. "To maintain that religious frenzy," says he, "which was their great source of courage, at the end of every mile during the march, their leaders said Mass, and used every mode of exhortation, and every superstitious device that priestcraft could invent." Here is