

**A SHORT MEMOIR  
OF TERENCE  
MACSWINEY**

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A Short Memoir of Terence MacSwiney by P. S. O'Hegarty

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**P. S. O 'HEGARTY**

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TERENCE MacSWINEY.

A SHORT MEMOIR  
OF  
**Terence MacSwiney**

BY  
**P. S. O'HEGARTY**

WITH A CHAPTER BY  
**DANIEL CORKERY**



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NOTE.

This was written in December, 1920. The manuscript, however, has had rather an exciting career, and I have only just recovered it.

The Memoir is based partly on materials supplied by Mrs. MacSwiney, by Mary and Annie MacSwiney, and by many of Terry's friends in Cork, but largely on my own personal recollections of him.

I have tried, in it, to see his life and death as a historian would, to show him in relation to his epoch.

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# A SHORT MEMOIR OF TERENCE MacSWINEY

## I. MACSWINEY OF THE BATTLE-AXE.

IN the early days of the English invasion of Ireland, their cartographers made many curious maps of that country, surprisingly accurate in some parts and quite inaccurate in others. But in those days they had the pleasant habit of decorating maps, and if you look at a fifteenth or sixteenth century map of Ireland, you will find the country peopled with strange figures. Old Neptune probably figures on the Atlantic, and in the Irish Sea a fish of wonderful proportions. And in various districts you will find a realistic representation of an Irish chief, drawn over the length of his territory.

In the far north-west, straddling over Donegal, you will find a huge figure with a battle-axe on his shoulder, and underneath "MacSwyney of the Battle-Axe." It was the battle-axe, and the use the MacSwineys made of it, which impressed the English.

The parent MacSwiney clan, the Donegal MacSwineys, was essentially a fighting clan. In alliance with the great O'Donnells, the Princes of Tir Chonaill, they make a proud appearance in Irish history, and in the van of every O'Donnell battle, every O'Donnell foray, gleam their battle-axes. But there was between the two clans more than a mere alliance, there was a strong friendship, a fosterage almost. Their position towards each other

was stable and constant. When Red Hugh O'Donnell was a child he was sent to the MacSwineys for fosterage, and it was from the MacSwineys that Perrott, through his pirate merchantmen in Rathmullen Harbour or Lough Swilly, captured him. And when after that capture, the English installed an illegitimate O'Donnell, Domhnall, as sheriff of Tir-Chonaill, it was out of the MacSwiney country that Inghin Dubh, Red Hugh's warrior mother, came and, with the MacSwiney battle-axes behind her, broke the battle on Domhnall and slew him. Let the battle-axe then be their symbol.

The Cork MacSwineys are of that clan. They first appear in Cork, in the Muskerry district, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and at the end of the sixteenth century, they were further added to when Hugh O'Neill made his circuit of Ireland. Whether it was done as settled policy or not, groups of northern names dot the lines of O'Neill's camps in West Cork. But to-day, with the MacSwineys or with others, the northern origin is only a dim tradition. They settled down, built castles and built bridges, and traded and hunted, and in the piping times of peace degenerated. But whenever there was fighting to be done the battle-axes were in it, and the Muskerry MacSwineys, as befitted their race, were sent "to Hell or Connacht" by Cromwell, and their castles and bridges assigned to Cromwellian soldier planters. But the planters have vanished. And though the MacSwineys no longer lord it over Muskerry, yet the valley of the Bride is full of their memories and their relics; and upon their ancient territory still stand MacSwineys, rooted in the soil. And when trouble is afoot they are in it. In Cork, as in Donegal, the MacSwineys remain warriors. Their symbol is still the battle-axe.