

**IRELAND SIXTY  
YEARS AGO**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649520749

Ireland Sixty Years Ago by John Edward Walsh

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**JOHN EDWARD WALSH**

**IRELAND SIXTY  
YEARS AGO**





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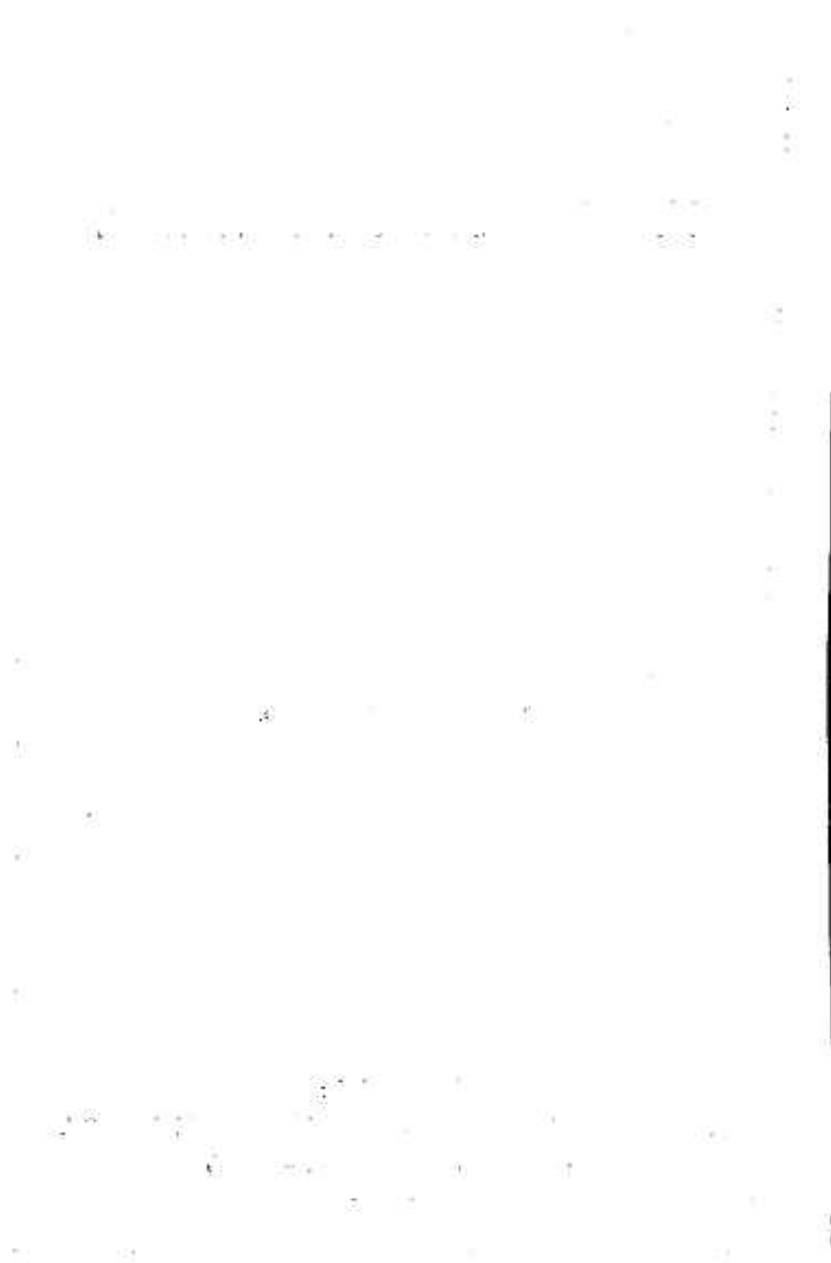
IRELAND SIXTY YEARS AGO.



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THIRD EDITION, REVISED.

DUBLIN:  
JAMES M'GLASHAN, 50, UPPER SACKVILLE STREET.  
WILLIAM S. ORR AND CO., LONDON,  
MDCCLL



## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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GENTLE READER,

The writer has no desire to indulge the taste of atrocity-mongers, still less to depreciate the character or exaggerate the faults of his countrymen, by any of these sketches. The object of them is the very reverse, if so light a matter as this volume can be said to have an object. No person who knows the state of Ireland at the present day, and compares it with Ireland sixty years ago, can fail to be struck with her great improvement. Sixty years ago we were an isolated and peculiar people, only settling down into the order of a peaceful community, after centuries of intestine commotion; intercourse with our sister England was limited and unfrequent; few of our neighbours visited us, and we visited few of our neighbours; a comparatively young man may remember the time when a voyage to Liverpool often occupied ten days, and was considered a matter of difficulty and danger—even of boast and exultation—to the adventurous traveller who had accomplished it. All this is now changed. Years of peace have taught us to prefer quiet and industry to violence and scheming. Intercourse with England has now become as easy and frequent as between two neighbouring counties at home; as we mix with our neighbours, the rough prominences which distinguished our national character are rubbing off;



fight in our streets, gambling upon coffins, bucks, bullies, rapparees, duelling, drunkenness, bull-baiting, idleness, abduction clubs, and a thousand other degrading peculiarities which marked the higher as well as the lower classes—even the chance of a rebellion, and the necessity for a college visitation—have disappeared; and the propriety and decency, peace and good order, which have long been the boast of our English neighbours, have begun to form a part of our character also. The contrast between what we *are* and what we *were*—between our present state of social peace, advancing enterprise, and regular habits, and the brutal violence, barbarism, and recklessness from which we have emerged, ought to encourage a hope of corresponding improvement for the future. And improve we will; notwithstanding the gloom which at present overspreads us, the forebodings of alarmists, or the abuse with which, in some quarters, Ireland and the Irish, of all classes, are so abundantly assailed; notwithstanding even, what is more serious, the scattered instances of systematic lawlessness and crime which, though now limited to a few districts, sometimes even yet bring us back to the past century.

If you, gentle reader, should be inclined to moralize over any of the following trifles, the writer indulges a hope that your thoughts will turn in this matter into the same current as his own.

W.

DUBLIN, June, 1847.

## CONTENTS.

### CHAPTER I.

	PAGE.
State of Society and the City of Dublin—Liberty Boys and Ormond Boys—Collegians—Police—Bucks and Bullies—Chalkers . . . . .	9

### CHAPTER II.

Duelling—Judicial and Legal Duellists—Duelling Clubs and Rules—Hayes—Pat Power—Bryan Maguire—Trials for Duels . . . . .	21
---	----

### CHAPTER III.

Abduction—Abduction Clubs—The Misses Kennedy—Miss Knox . . . . .	32
--	----

### CHAPTER IV.

Civic Processions—Riding the Franchises—The Liberties—The Lord Mayor's Penance . . . . .	45
--	----

### CHAPTER V.

Drunkenness—Notions of Conviviality . . . . .	53
---	----

### CHAPTER VI.

Gambling—Lotteries . . . . .	56
------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER VII.

Shoeblocks—The Streets—Public Vehicles . . . . .	59
--	----

## CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE.
Slang Songs—Prison Usages—The Night before Larry was Stretched—The Kilmainham Minit—Executioners—Bull-baiting—Lord Altham's Bull—The Bush . . .	68

## CHAPTER IX.

Rapparees and Robbers—Hedge Schools—Freny—Northern Robbers—Shawn Crossach—William Crotty—Crotty's Lament—Felons' Bodies—Frederick Caulfield . . .	83
---	----

## CHAPTER X.

Tiger Roche . . . . .	96
-----------------------	----

## CHAPTER XI.

The Kingdom of Dalkey—The Dalkey Gazette—T. O'Meara . . .	107
---	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

The Visitation of 1798—United Irishmen—James Farrell—Expulsion of Power and Ardagh—Cause of the Visitation—Its Proceedings—Lord Clare—Dr. Browne—Dr. Stokes—Its effects—Sketch of Farrell—of Corbett . . .	119
--	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

Lord Clare's Funeral . . . . .	148
--------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

The Gibe' Parliamentary Privileges—Fire in the House of Commons . . . . .	150
---	-----