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CONTENTS

TYRONE HOUSE, CO. GALWAY

by Gordon St. George Mark

23

Cover: The Market House, Dunlavin, after an oil painting by Alec Cobbe. A dome of fluted Wicklow granite surmounts the little Palladian building, designed in 1740 by Richard Castle. In danger of being demolished, it is at present being saved by local effort. The Irish Georgian Society cleaned the building in 1975 at a cost of £1,631.

Full details of the various membership rates are available from the Irish Georgian Society, Castletown, Celbridge, Co. **Kildare**. All members receive the Quarterly Bulletin, and are entitled to attend lectures, join expeditions, etc.

The Society enjoys charitable status in the U.S.A., and contributions made out to the Irish Georgian Society Inc. are therefore tax exempt. Internal Revenue Service determination of May 1968.

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TYRONE HOUSE

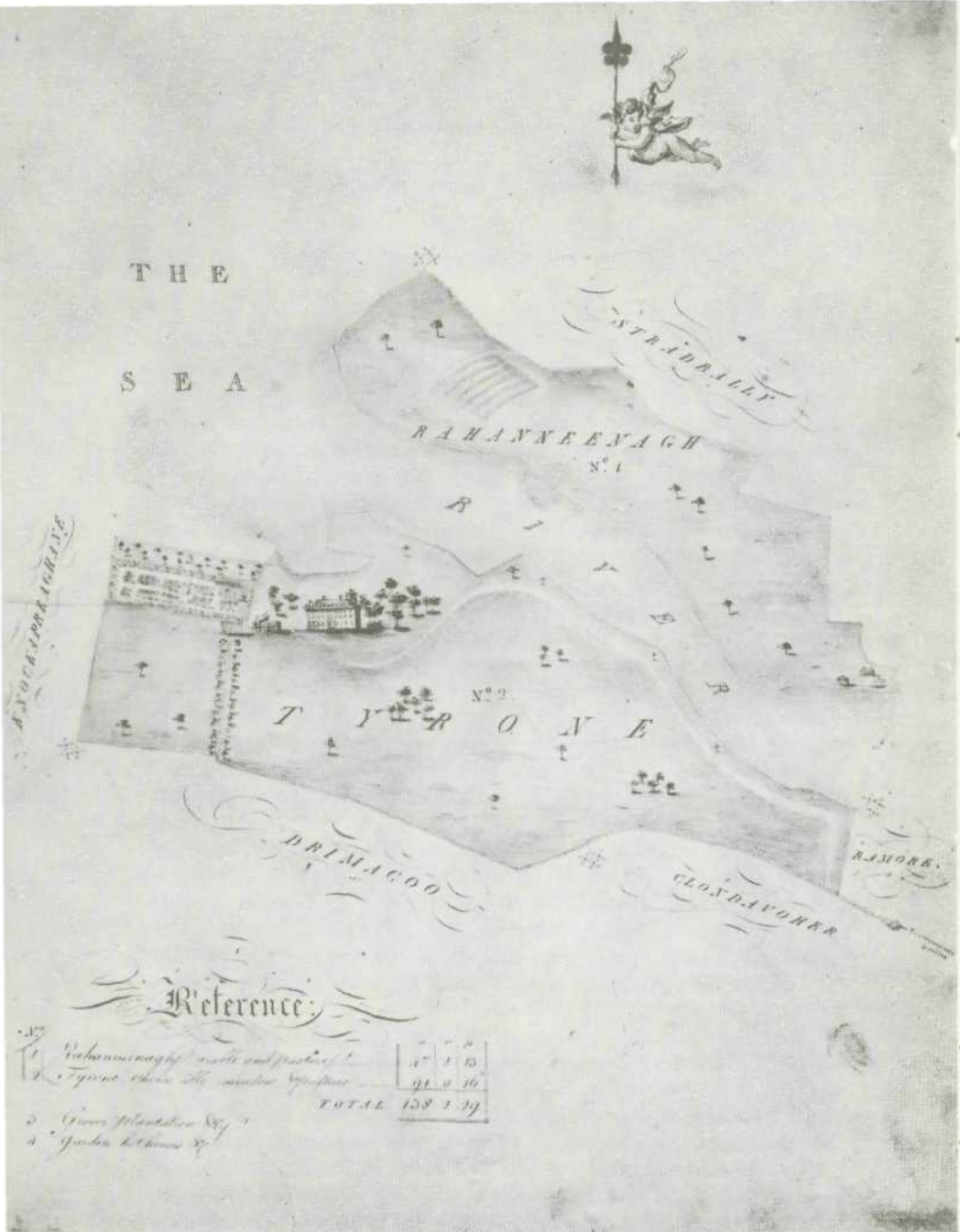
by Gordon St. George Mark

* * *

Tyrone House, County Galway, Ireland was a large square Palladian house of cut blue limestone built in 1779 by Christopher French commonly called Christopher French St. George. The house was situated on a promontary by the sea, about two miles from the village of Kilcolgan. It was a big solemn house, grandly planned, three stories high, built on a height, in order to dominate the surrounding land and sea. A high pillared portico framed the front door which was the sole entrance to the house. The front faced south, and the northern side was protected by dense woods, beyond which lay the Kilcolgan River. While the house was built at too late a period to be fortified, the wide and deep area (ditch), gave the forbidding impression of a moat. Beneath the house, the kitchens and cellars, which had stone vaulted ceilings, were provided with light by the area. Four huge round blue limestone rocks were placed in front of the house, two by the front door steps, which bridge the area, and two by the corners, almost as if they were sentinels to guard the house. The roof was surrounded by a plain stone parapet, except in the front where it became a balustrade. Surmounting the roof were two massive chimneys.

In a book entitled, *Survey of the Estates of Chris St. George Esqr. in the Counties of Galway Roscommon and Queen's County* by John Berne 1780, Tyrone is shown with formal gardens to the west. The properties of Tyrone comprised of 23,999 acres. Michael Egan made additional surveys for Christopher's son, Arthur French St. George between 1820 to 1824 when 2917 additional acres were added to the estates.

The architect¹ of Tyrone is believed to be John Roberts (1712-1796) of Waterford. The large hall of Tyrone contained a life-size white marble statue of Usher, Lord St. George (or George 1st Lord St. George) dressed in the robes of a Roman emperor. Over the niche containing the statue were the St. George coat-of-arms with a baronial coronet. The hall was decorated in the Adam style with classic medallions and festoons. On the ceiling were painted scenes representing the four seasons. To the western side of the hall there was a very narrow staircase, and the St. George family believed that the architect had added it as an after-thought.



Map of Tyrone, from Survey of the Estates of Chris St. George Esqr
in the Counties of Galway, Roscommon and Queen's County by
John Berne 1780.

In the introduction to volume V of *The Georgian Society Records*² a comparison is made between the town and country house.

"The main difference between the town and country mansion, is, however, that the latter, having no lack of ground, put all the reception rooms *en suite* on the ground-floor, while the former had their principal reception -rooms on the first floor, to which guests ascended by a stately staircase, and were received by the hostess on the landing outside the drawing-rooms. Hence in many country houses the staircase is manifestly of no consideration, being only for domestic use."

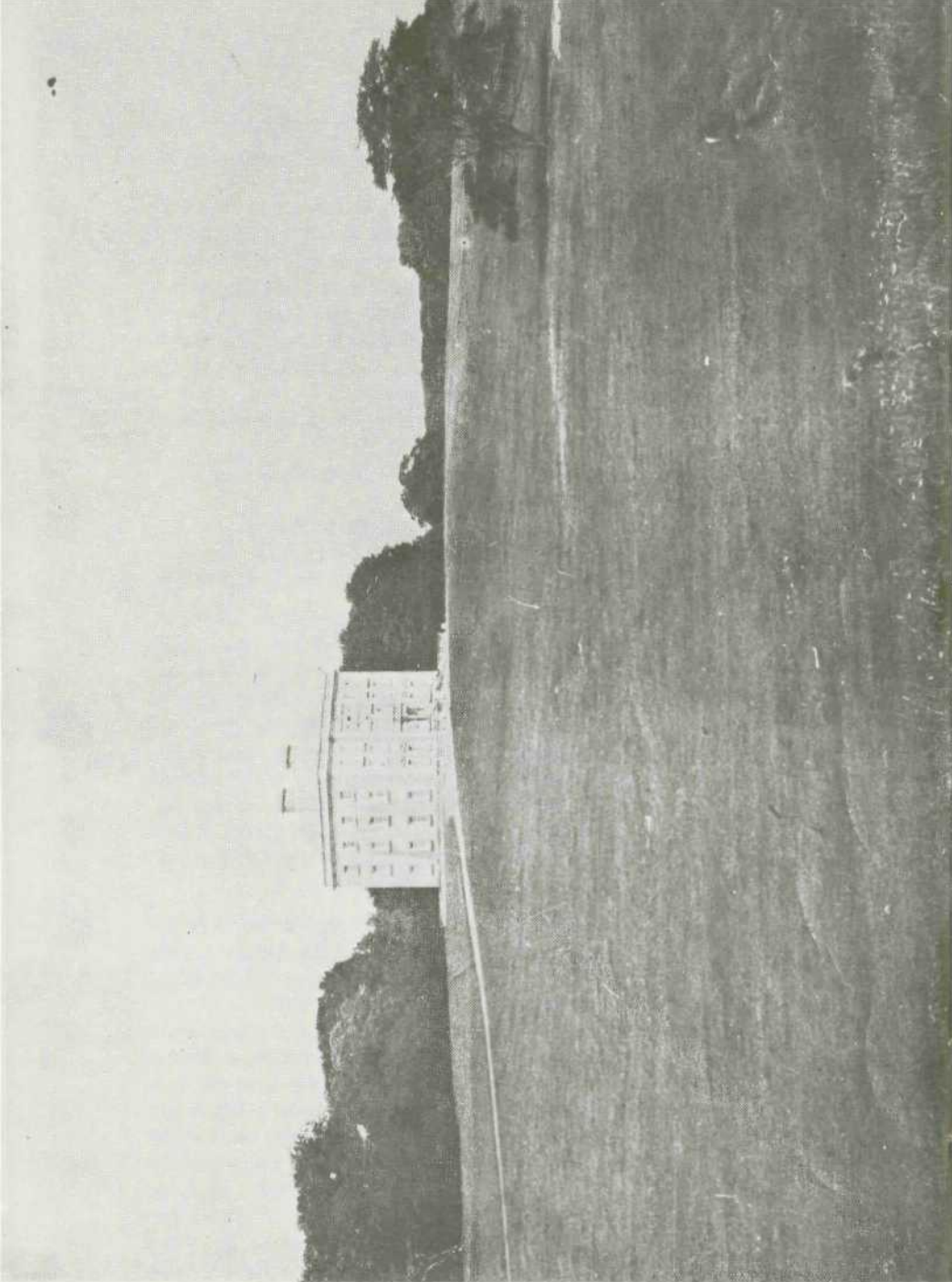
*The Georgian Society Records*³ also provide a description of Tyrone House.

Name and Parish:	Tyrone House, Drumacor.
Architect and Date:	1779
Original and Present Owners:	Christopher St. George. Representatives of the late Christopher French-St. George.

Particulars: Large square house of blue limestone, and portico with two Doric columns; Venetian window in centre; alternate stone coigns. Paved hall is decorated in plaster panels, with classic medallions and festoons; in a niche is a life-size marble statue of Usher, Lord St. George. Spacious dining-room has elaborate ceiling in low relief, with oval group in centre, and frieze showing Adam influence. There is a siena and white marble mantel; dimensions similar to the drawing-room, which has ceiling in low relief and elaborate overdoors. Pretty Adam ceiling in morning-room, where there is a good mantel in two marbles. Coved Adam ceiling office. Poor staircase.

In 1801, Christopher French St. George's son, Arthur French St. George married Lady Harriet St. Lawrence⁴ at Ardfry Castle which is near Tyrone. The journal of Louisa Beaufort⁵, discovered by the Knight of Glin, records her visit to Tyrone in 1808.

"It is a high house, standing on high ground; without a tree, bush or offices in sight, nothing can be more uncompromising than it looks from this road. We soon after approach two bridges over different rivers, which rise after a subterranean course — Kilcolgan by Clairan Bridge — near the first is a well looking house built in the castle style by Mr. St. George's father who lives there, keeps a *chere amie*, and to please her is turned Roman Catholic, a story is told of this dissolute old gentleman, which one can scarcely credit — the first day he went to Chapel, it happened that the Host was then elevating — at which everyone kneels — he supposed this



Tyrone House, County Galway.

obsequence performed in honour of him and bowed all around — when service was over he came forward, and made a fine harangue returning the congregation thanks for their civility to him! It must be an unpleasant circumstance to his son who is a moral, domestic County gentleman to have his father living so near him (not two mile from his gate), so dispicable a life — the old gentleman built the house and an excellent one it is — finished it in best manner — with painted ceilings to all the lower rooms, and to the hall, which is large and handsome — he furnished it in the best style of those days — of about twenty years back, lived in it and enjoyed it, and 9 or 10 years ago resigned it to his son, who soon after married Lady Harriet St. Lawrence, and they have lived happily and have seldom left it, never for any length of time — they have six little girls — and they appear very happy — Mr. St. George an excellent country gentleman, improving his estate, fond of hunting, shooting and all country sports . . ."

In 1832, there was an outbreak of cholera⁶ at *Kilcolgan*, a village near Tyrone.

"At the village of *Kilcolgan*, and its neighbourhood, this frightful malady made its appearance on Friday last, and five or six deaths have taken place; but owing to the extraordinary exertions, and the humane benevolent feelings of their kind and liberal landlord, Arthur French St. George, Esq., of Tyrone, we hope the malady will quickly take its departure from amongst his tenantry. There are but few landlords in Ireland so well deserving of the lasting gratitude of the peasantry, as Mr. St. George, for he holds it as a principle, that he would be undeserving of possessing his ample fortune, if he did not devote a large portion of it in alleviating the wants and privations of those who derive under him, whenever the exigencies of the times require it. We cannot adduce a stronger proof of his benevolence, than by stating, that Mr. St. George, at his own individual expense, has employed a very eminent physician and an apothecary, who are in daily attendance upon those visited by cholera on his estate. He has likewise employed nurses from Galway, to attend the sick and such was the alarm that existed amongst the villagers, that he was also necessarily obliged to send to Galway for men to bury the dead."

On March 15, 1810, Arthur French St. George's eldest son was born. This quaint article appeared in the *Hibernian Journal* of 1810:

"On the 3rd inst. the christening of Mr. St. George's (of Tyrone) oldest son took place on which occasion Mr. St. George gave a dinner to his tenantry on the lawn of Tyrone, of which upwards of eight hundred persons partook, and all seemed highly pleased with

their good cheer.

Mr. and Lady Harriet St. George with their usual unaffected goodness, attended in person to see that their rural guests were well taken care of. The tables were loaded with plenty of Beef and Mutton, roast and boiled, and as much porter and ale as they could consume after dinner. Mr. St. George desired them to drink the health of their good King which toast was received with shouts of enthusiastic loyalty.

They then dispersed in groups about the lawn where music was provided and the nymphs and swains tripped it the "light fantastic" toe to the no small entertainment of Lady Harriet St. George and her guests.

A numerous party of the surrounding neighbours assisted to dinner at Tyrone House previous to which, the christening took place. His Grace the Duke of Leinster was one of the sponsors on the occasion."

Tyrone was a centre of fox hunting and parties. Christopher St. George maintained a private pack of fox hounds at Tyrone. In the book, *An Irish Gentleman, George Henry Moore*⁷ the author, Col. Maurice Moore tells about the hunting at Tyrone. Moore Hall the seat of the Moores resembled Tyrone, and both are ruins today.

"In 1841 George Moore and his brother, Augustus, had given up all else and devoted themselves heart and soul to racing and riding. Their favourite hunting-grounds were in Tipperary with Lord Waterford, in Galway with Mr. St. George of Tyrone House, and at Melton ..."

"In Galway, a somewhat more methodical plan was adopted; the "schooling party" went from place to place seeking for awkward spots, the more reckless searched eagerly for some place to "pound" his friends. A correspondent of the *Irish Sportman*, writing more than half a century later, describes one of these "schools":

"The wall stood at least six feet six inches in height, for I myself saw Robert Dillon Browne, who stood six feet two, measure himself against it, and the sod topped his head by at least four inches. Lord Clanmorris^{†1} on Distiller; Mr. Parsons Persse² on Salmon; Peter Tranick on Thresher; George Henry Moore on Lion; Christopher St. Georget³ on Treasurer; John Denist⁴ on Pluto; and Martin

^{†1}Lord Clanmorris, father of the present Lord Clanmorris. late M.F.H., Galway.

^{†2}Parsons Persse. father of Burton Persse. late M.F.H., Galway.

^{†3}Christopher St. George. M.F.H. of Tyrone House, was owner of the grey Chanticleer, that great, but bad-tempered race-horse, who won the Goodwood Stakes with 9 st. 2 lb. on his back. He was so vicious that he used to roar like a bull, and on one occasion the groom had to be pulled out of his stable through the window. Someone said: "When Chanticleer is on Newmarket Heath I like to be off it". When Mr. St. George sold him for £2,000 Mr. Joseph Osborne said indignantly, "You had better have sold Tyrone House than the best horse you will ever own."

^{†4}John Denis, late M.F.H., Galway: called "Black Jack".



Tyrone House, County Galway.

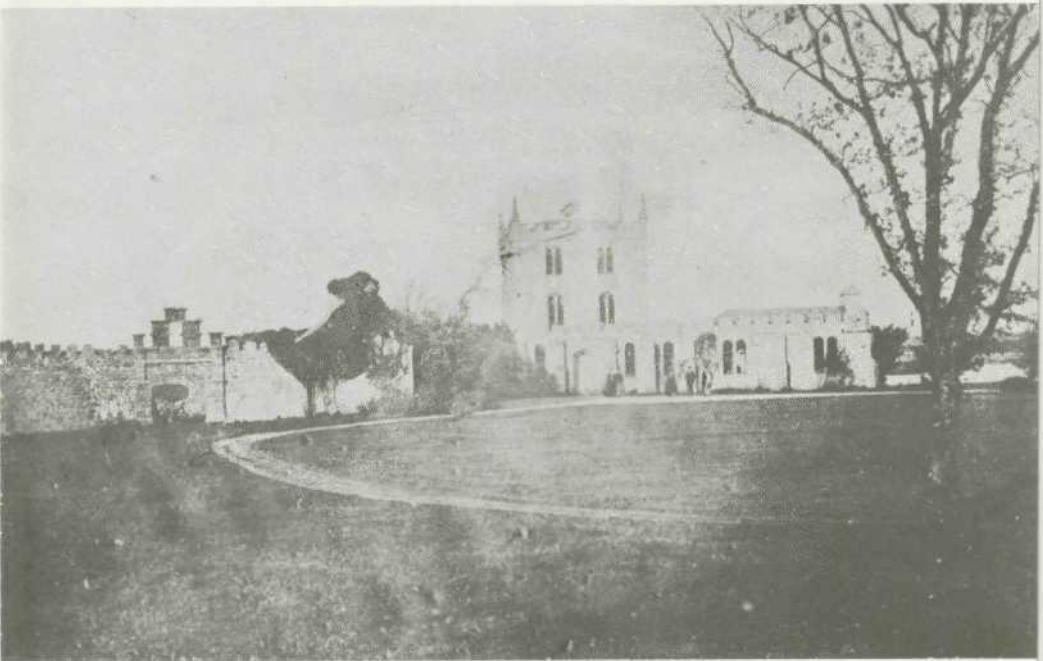
Blake on Brunette cleared it in a manner which I do not believe could have been matched in any other hunting country in the United Kingdom. But the most dangerous leap of the day was taken by George Moore and Martin Blake. It was an iron-spiked gate nearly six feet high, and the slightest touch would have lamed a horse for ever. Had Punchestown flourished then with Jerry and Lancelot in their prime and George Moore or Lord Clanricarde in the saddle both Plate and Cup would have gone to the west of Ireland." It was no easy matter to excel in Galway in those days; "Black Jack Denis," Master of the Galway Blazers, once rode his fine horse, Clinker, over the steeple-chase course at Rahasane, including ten stone walls and twenty-five other fences, without saddle or bridle, whip or spur, and accomplished the feat without balk or fall."

The great famine was a difficult period for Tyrone. Christopher St. George, 1810-1877, became a Tory member of Parliament for Galway in 1847. The owners of Tyrone took an active interest in Ireland, and wanted to improve the economic and educational conditions in the country. *The Tuam Herald*, on August 14, 1847 records a speech made by Christopher St. George prior to his election to Parliament.

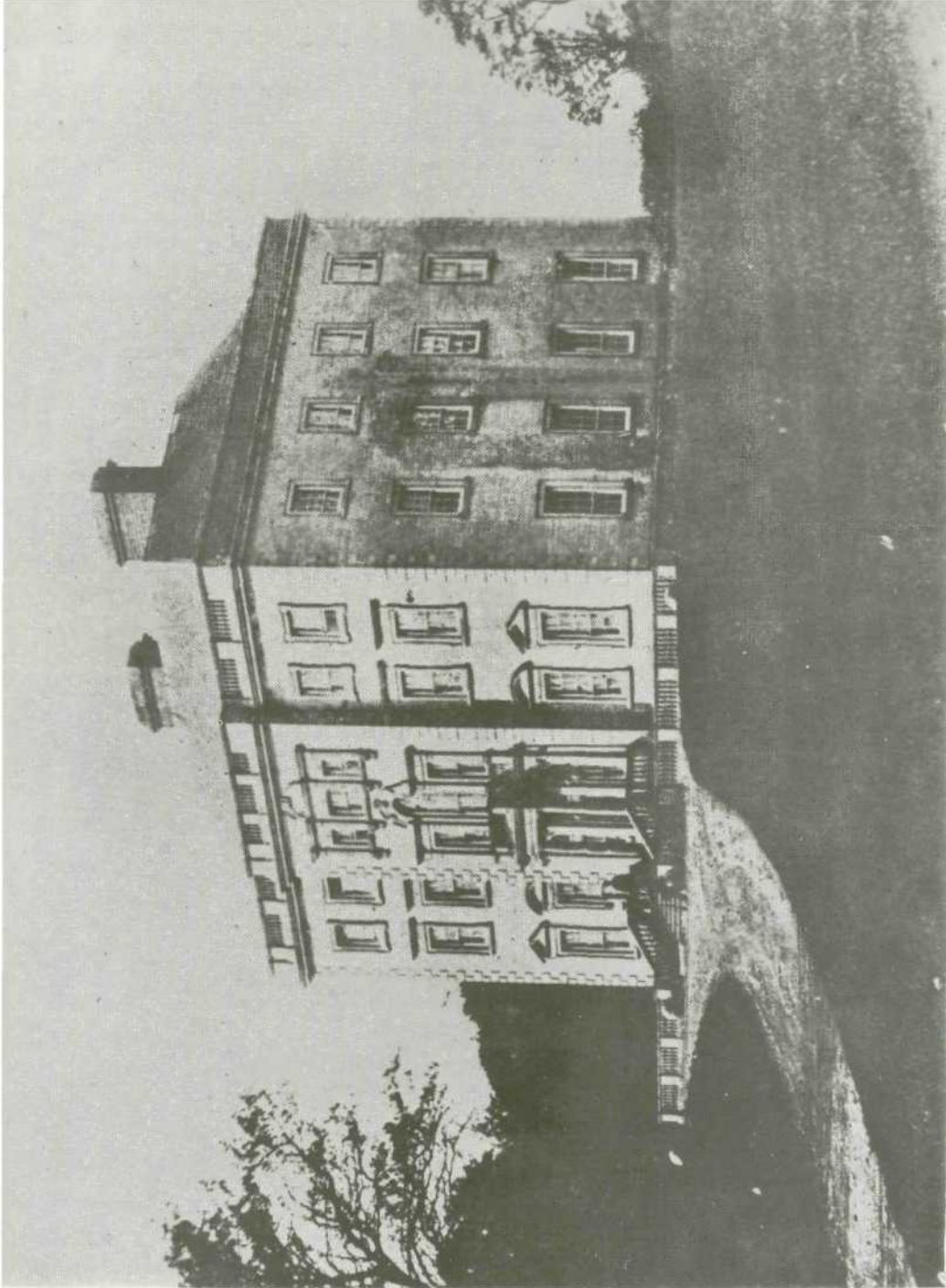
"C. St. George, Esq. next presented himself and said — Electors of the county Galway, no individual that has ever stood before you as a candidate for your suffrages, feels more thoroughly impressed than the humble individual who now addresses you how high the honour is to be permitted to aspire to be one of the representatives in Parliament of this important county. Six weeks ago, resulting from the suggestions of some friends and amongst them the proposer and seconder of my nomination to you this day, I continued the canvass of the electors of the county of Galway; and ere I had made much progress in it, I made to my valued friend, Mr. Denis Kirwan, an offer of supporting him at the present election, which he refused. I also stated to the late Lord Dunsandle that I would support his son, then Mr. Denis Daly, which offer at the moment not intended to be continued against me beyond a moderate period of time, was accepted of after a protracted period; although I had made considerable progress in my canvass, I at once ratified this offer by retiring from my canvass. The lamented death of that excellent landlord (Lord Dunsandle) for whose memory I entertain the greatest possible respect, has now allowed of my again appearing before you, an anxious aspirant to enter political life as the representative of this my native county — where I have resided all my life (hear, hear). I am happy to boast of an intimate acquaintance with all the inhabitants of it, and I trust I reciprocate



Tyrone House, County Galway.



Kilcolgan Castle, County Galway was sold with large church meadows, garden yard, totalling 25 acres 2 roods 29 perches for £1750 after death of Matilda St. George.





Hall of Tyrone House, County Galway.

in their views. I have to congratulate this county that in it religion is no longer the battlefield of political controversy. I am the advocate of civil and religious liberty and of every measure to promote the prosperity of Ireland I will have Ireland as she ought to be -

... "Great glorious and free, First flower of the earth and first gem of the sea."

I look forward to the regeneration of Ireland, and that England, notwithstanding the vituperate language of its press, will consider it but just to sympathize fully in the present affliction of Ireland, and to consider that awful famine which has visited our shores as a national calamity, should be met by national resources. **Mordicancy** and confiscation of property are near at hand. I shall expect on the meeting of parliament that the First Minister of the Crown will advise her gracious Majesty to announce from the throne, that England shall fully and alike share in Ireland's woes — Ireland that had contributed to England's glory — (hear, hear and cheers). I admit that the government have encountered famine, an occurrence of no ordinary character. I am willing to make certain allowances for the embarrassing situation in which they have been placed, still I do think they should have hearkened not only to the voice of the landed proprietor but even the poorest inhabitant of this country, as to the mode of expenditure of the large sums of money that have been lavished on works chiefly of a useless description. If I shall have the honour of a seat in parliament I shall feel it my duty to procure a railway to Galway; Galway must become a packet Station with America, such is necessary to advance the interests of Great Britain as well as Ireland. The fisheries of Ireland should be regarded Nature's bountiful gifts to Ireland must be properly appreciated. I consider that the education of the inhabitants of this country should be much attended to. It is education which permits man to raise himself in society. Providence has afforded the humblest individual I now address, power of discrimination, if not equal probably superior to my own. He demanded that education be ministered to all classes of society in this country (hear). As in the conformation of the human form, the blood which by arteries issues from the human heart, therefrom return by means of veins so must Irish freedom. He would not sanction Ireland's resources to be in foreign climes dissipated by Irish proprietors (hear, hear). He would not admit of absenteeism (hear, hear). He trusted he should find Irish representatives acting in the next parliament differently what they had **done**: They must stand together, and in a body contend for the interests of country. He expressed to the candidates of this day his very great respect and regard, and that, no matter how this contest may terminate, he would entertain sentiments of esteem for

all those whom he had the honour to address.

The hon gentleman encountered much interruption during his address."

While Christopher St. George was a member of Parliament from 1847-1852 some charges were made against him regarding the treatment of his tenantry.

In *The Great Hunger*⁸, Cecil Woodham-Smith relates:

"Relentless severity in rate collecting increased eviction, since on holding valued at £4 and under, the landlord was liable for the rate. On December 19 Captain Hellard, Poor Law Inspector at Galway, reported that "no less than eleven boats, loaded with destitute persons" had come into Galway Harbour from Connemara, "most from the estates of Christian St. George, our county member, who, I am told is ejecting them without even a rag to cover them."

The Galway Vindicator, reported on May 7, 1848:

"A number of men were employed on Saturday by the bailiff of Christopher St. George at 2/6 each for the purpose of levelling the houses of the unfortunate persons against whom decrees were obtained at the January sessions at Tuam."

The Times (London), Wednesday, April 5, 1848 records in full Christopher St. George's speech in the house defending himself against charges of cruelty to his tenants.

"The case of Mr. St. George

Mr. St. George entreated the indulgence of the house in rising to offer some explanation in a matter personal to himself. It would be in the remembrance of hon. gentlemen, that some short time ago certain charges were made against him of having illegally and inhumanly carried out extensive ejectments against a great number of poor persons in his estate in Galway. Some surprise had been expressed that he had not at once replied to these allegations, but the explanation he had to give of his silence was, that he had left London on the 8th of March to attend the Galway assizes; that he had not been until very recently aware of his name having occupied a place in the blue-book which had been quoted from, and that it was not until the 26th of March any communication upon this subject was received by him from the Government. The statement of the right hon. baronet (Sir G. Grey) in the house, referring to his (Mr. St. George's) case, had been made previous to the correspondence which had taken place between him and the Irish Government. He felt indebted to the hon. member for Stroud (Mr. P. Scrope) for having brought the facts before the house; and he (Mr. St. George) trusted that he would be able to satisfy everyone



Christopher St. George of Tyrone 1810-1877.



Honoria Kane, wife of Christopher St. George of Tyrone 1810-1877.

that his conduct had been misunderstood and misrepresented. On the 25th of March he received from Mr. Redington, the Under-secretary for Ireland, a letter drawing his attention to the report of the Poor Law Commissioner respecting the ejectments in the Galway union, and requesting to know if he was desirous of making observations to the Government on that document? He replied on the 28th of March, and took the opportunity of complaining of the partiality evinced by the Poor Law Commissioner in not having referred to him for information before inserting in the report statements copied from a Galway newspaper, which, for the most part, were altogether unfounded. He explained why he had not been present in his place in the House of Commons to rebut any aspersion which might be cast upon his character by pretended Irish philanthropists, and for the information of his Excellency the Lord-Lieutenant — whose courtesy he acknowledged — he narrated all that he himself knew or had been able to ascertain relating to the matters investigated by Major McKie. The statement which he made was this:—

"Mesdames Jane O'Flaherty and E. O'Shaunessy in the 1836 obtained from my father, the late Arthur F. St. George, a lease of the districts of Lettermore, Garumna, and other denominations of land thereto appertaining, at the yearly rent of £837.5s.4d., and £20. turf duty. On the 1st of May, 1847, there being unpaid to me by the aforesaid persons £1,255.18s., I was obliged to bring in Easter Term, 1847 against the premises ejectments for non-payment of this, to me, very considerable sum of money. Every person living on or at all interested in those lands was served with copies of ejectments. At least 600 householders were served on the 16th, 17th and 18th, and 19th of last May, and in Trinity Term following I obtained judgement in ejectment, and thereby was concluded the entire interest of Mesdames O'Flaherty and O'Shaunessy and the several tenants to the full extent that, until the sum of £1,255 18s. and all accruing rent and costs of ejectments were paid, the lessees or their tenants were not entitled to reside on or in any degree to enjoy the possession of the premises. Besides the sum of £1,255.18s. and £65 costs at law, and £30. turf duty owed, I was obliged to pay Mrs. O'Flaherty £150. in order to obtain immediate possession of my property. The aggregate quantity of money due to me and expended for recovery of my estate amounted to £1,500.18s. On the 25th of last August I proceeded to Lettermore and Garumna. I inquired into the circumstances of the tenantry. I found their condition indeed bad, arising from the neglect of the Mesdames O'Flaherty and O'Shaunessy. I discovered in those districts persons residing who, the outcasts from other estates, had come from all parts of

Ireland, chiefly pending the litigation between me and the Mesdames O'Flaherty and O'Shaunessy. I was informed by the more respectable portion of the tenantry, and by the priest the Rev. Mr. Horan, that nothing could exceed the depredations of the persons termed "squatters". A flock of upwards of 800 sheep existed amongst the tenants; not one now remains. Many cows have been killed and carried off. I informed the tenantry that £1,500 was due to me off the lands of Lettermore. I investigated their accounts, and found they owed Mrs. O'Flaherty and Mrs. O'Shaunessy as much money as was due to me. I inquired of them how they were disposed to act towards me? I stated to them that I had the full ability of dispossessing them all. They entreated me not to do so. I considered their sad position, and at length informed them, that if I was paid £400, within three months I would remit £1,100. The tenants and the priest considered my offer most liberal. The tenants informed me they would pay me £400, provided I got rid of the squatters and all bad characters. I engaged to them to do so. I have now to say I have not as yet received £400, as promised to me. On the 30th of September last, and two or three days subsequently, the deputy-sheriff of the county of Galway was occupied in executing the habere law against the lands of Lettermore, and I accompanied the sheriff, on the 30th of September, when possession was taken from some persons, who were permitted to return to their dwellings in character of caretakers. I explained to several persons who were pointed out to me as being objectionable persons that I could not allow them to remain on my property. I gave them money to enable them to remove elsewhere. Since the 30th of September the power of habere has been occasionally put in force. The vastness of the district required the deputy-sheriff not alone himself to act, but to grant specialties to carry out the intentions of the law. Several persons have been dispossessed, but I am informed no act of inhumanity has been perpetrated in their removal, unless in the most urgent cases, the ability which I possessed and still possess, to keep on my property such persons as I may deem fit shall remain has not been acted upon. I shall now apply myself to the report of Major McKie, and send certain affidavits to show that no person was illegally dealt with, and that no act of cruelty has been perpetrated. I have great confidence in the prudence of my manager, Mr. John Linnane, of Lettermore-house, and I am certain he can fully justify any act of his. I have looked through the book kept as to service of ejectments on the lands of Lettermore, and I find there stated—

'Thomas M'Donough, served personally 18th May, 1847.

James Connor.'

"The district called Garumna comprises many denominations of land. If I was aware of the exact part Michael M'Donough claims to be of I could inform you whether or not he was served with a copy of ejectment. This matters not, for judgement had, on the ejectment, concluded the entire interests of all parties. I am quite averse to acts of cruelty. I regret the state in which my property is in Connemara. Such is chiefly ascribable to middlemen. I have got rid of this class of tenants, save in one instance. Connemara is an extraordinary county, and requires more than private enterprise to uphold its inhabitants, and regenerate its circumstances. I have borrowed £6,000 under the Land Improvement Enactment, and have appropriated £1,500 to Lettermore and £1,000 to all parts of Connemara. I am not receiving my rents, and have paid an immense poor-rate, appropriated when a proprietor cannot realize anything from his property. Elsewhere, in Queen's County, and other parts of the county of Galway, my property is in a fairly wholesome condition. I pay weekly from £50 to £60 in different parts for the employment of my tenants. I feel indignant at being accounted a bad landlord. I scorn any charge of dereliction as to the duties of my position in society.

"I have the honour to be, Sir
"Your most obedient servant,
"C. St. George.

"To T. N. Redington Esq.
Under-Secretary for Ireland."

This correspondence, he thought, ought to have found its way to the blue-book; the blue-book, at any rate, ought not to have been published until his explanations had been forwarded to the Government. (Hear, Hear). The hon. member proceeded to read an affidavit bearing on his case, from Mr. O'Hara, Deputy-Sheriff of Galway, which fully confirmed the foregoing statement. This, he said, would show to the house that he has done nothing inhuman, and certainly nothing illegal. He did not censure Major McKie for the unavoidable incorrectness of his report, nor find fault with the Government for the promptness with which they had instituted an investigation. All he complained of was that he had not been fully informed of the inquiry which was going forward. There were a great number of witnesses examined by Major McKie, but the evidence of only two of these, the fourteenth and fifteenth witnesses, bore on the circumstances in which he (Mr. St. George) was implicated. No such occurrence as that described by the fourteenth witness, Thomas M'Donough had ever taken place; and the statement of the other witness, Michael M'Donough, that his house had

been pulled down, was equally untrue. He (Mr. St. George) had applied to the Rev. Mr. Horan, the parish priest of **Garumna** Island, for his opinion as to the character of Thomas M'Donough, and the information elicited was that he was a man of bad reputation, and that he had been convicted of stealing. The evidence of Thomas M'Donough was not altogether without foundation. It was true that the sheriffs' officers went to his house, but when they did so, in November last, they found that he had deserted it three weeks previously. The house of Michael M'Donough was still standing. The hon. gentleman quoted from an affidavit made by his agent, Mr. J. Linnane, referring to the report of Major McKie, and declaring that so far as it related to the estates of Christopher St. George, Esq., it was unfounded and devoid of truth. He hoped that he had now vindicated his conduct, and refuted all the charges urged against him; and, for the future, he trusted the house would refuse to listen to these *ex parte* statements against Irish landlords. So far as he himself was concerned, he could assure the hon. member for Stroud that the arrows he had fired fell utterly harmless.

Mr. Scrope asked if the hon. gentlemen could inform the house what was the precise number of tenants ejected and houses pulled down in Galway?

Mr. St. George would trouble the house only with the charges of which he had been object. (Hear, Hear.) He had nothing to do with the general accusation brought by the hon. member."

Christopher St. George was not an absentee landlord; he chaired meetings in **Galway**,⁹ and attended meetings in London. He made a general reduction in the rents at the time of the famine, and never raised them again. In the book, *Education in the Diocese of Kilmacduagh*¹⁰, M. Fahy states that as Christopher St. George was "a tolerant gentleman, he willingly gave Fr. Thomas Kelly the site for the church at Ballinderreen." In 1852, he made application for a school in the parish of **Drumacoo**. He offered the site rent free. The inspector reported that "Mr. St. George, the patron of the proposed school and the R.C. clergyman of the parish will, they state, use any exertion to render it as effective as possible". The building on this site did not go ahead and in 1856 he donated another site on the opposite side of the road from the church.

Maureen Dyas Parson, a great-granddaughter of Christopher St. George was told by her grand-aunt, Matilda St. George, that Christopher St. George owned two private packs of hounds and hunted in Galway, **Roscommon** and another county. He maintained a racing stud at the Curragh. Up to the time of his death in 1877, he employed eighteen indoor servants, and thirty-two outdoor

employees at Tyrone. A post boy was employed to carry two private post bags with locks and crests (St. George) to and from the post.

Various newspaper articles give interesting accounts of Christopher St. George's racing career and the obituary notices of his death in 1877 show the high esteem in which the family was held.

"English Turf Topics"¹

BREEDING SUCCESSES OF MR. ST. GEORGE — THE VICTORIES OF CHANTICLEER AND SOLON —

From Our Traveling Correspondent, LONDON, Wednesday Night

In this correspondence yesterday the name of Mr. St. George was mentioned as the breeder and lessor of the St. Leger winner, Knight of St. George. He was Mr. Christopher St. George, of Tyrone House, Oranmore, Co. Galway, and among Irish breeders who have left their imprint on the pages of the General Stud Book he takes a leading place. He bred a number of good horses, but the one breeders know best is Solon, sire of Barcaldine, to whom, through Hurry On, we owe so many great classic and other winners, and, through Marcovil and his son, My Prince, the winners of four Grand Nationals in comparatively recent years.

Mr. St. George, whose name would have been "French", had not his grand-father changed it in compliance with the settlement of an ancestor, Lord St. George, sat as M.P. for Galway for several years, was a Steward of the Turf Club, and was regarded as a judge of breeding and racing without any superior in his time. Breeding may have interested him more than racing, and he was very young when he took Rathbride House (The Curragh) and formed his stud.

He was fortunate enough to have two splendid foundation mares, Whim and Ennui, who quickly made his reputation as a breeder. Whim's fourth foal was a grey colt by Birdcatcher named Chanticleer, who showed fair form in Ireland. At the Curragh June meeting of 1847 he won three King's Plates.

Mr. St. George then sent him to Liverpool to contest the Cup, where he ran well enough to attract the attention of William L'Anson, then training for Mr. James Merry, who was later to run such horses as Thormanby, Doncaster, Scottish Chief, Belladonna, Lord of the Isles, Marie Stuart and Catherine Hayes. Mr. St. George was willing to sell, and took 1,000 guineas.

It was not long before Chanticleer was proving himself the best stayer in England. Soon after Liverpool, he won the Glasgow Cup and the Silver Bell at Paisley; but it was the next year that he became the Brown Jack of his day. He won two races at



St. George Landbook containing maps of the Tyrone property.



Portrait from Tyrone House of Anne Bingham wife of Christopher French St. George of Tyrone.



? Thomas, Lord Athenry & Earl of Louth, from Tyrone House.

THIS
ATTACHEMENT

OF
ARTHUR FRENCH ST GEORGE ESQUIRE



Donné le 20 Janvier

1817
A PARIS
Chez M. LAURENT
Rue de la Harpe, au Salon de la Librairie

THE
PEDAGREE

OF THE
MOUNTAIN NOBLE AND ILLUSTRIOUS HOUSE

OF
ST GEORGE

EXTRACTED FROM THE RECORDS OF THE OFFICE OF

ULSTER KING OF ARMS OF THE IRELAND

MDCCLXXVII

St. George Pedigree Book dated 1817.



Tyrone House, County Galway water colour by Andrew Lahiff
1886.



Harriet, eldest daughter of William, II Earl of Howth by his first wife Mary. Married 1801, Arthur St. George of Tyrone, born 1775, died 1830. Portrait by Bucks? about 1810.

Manchester, then the Northumberland Plate and the Gold Cup at Newcastle, and the Goodwood Stakes, with 9st. 2lb., including a penalty.

A jockey who had been engaged to ride him at Goodwood was suspected of having been nobbled, and the very astute Fred Swindell, who did most of Mr. Merry's commissions, had him stood down at the last moment, and Marlow substituted. They say the squeals of the nobblers who tried to get out could be heard half-way across Sussex. Mr. Merry, who was a tremendous better, won an immense stake.

He had Chanticleer out in the Cup two days later, but he was stale, and was beaten by the St. Leger winner Van Tromp, though he turned the tables on Lord Eglinton's horse effectively in the Doncaster Cup.

There was a belief in those days that the Sir Hercules breed did not stand more than three seasons' racing, and Chanticleer, as well as Van Tromp, were beaten in the Gold Cup the following year; but this was two days after he had run fourth in the Ascot Stakes with 9st. 13lb. He left the Turf that year, with, as was said at the time, a reputation as a weight-carrier. Oddly enough when he went to the stud Chanticleer's best horses were nearly all sprinters.

James Merry, his owner, was a very rich Scottish ironmaster and one of the most disliked men of his age; for he was said to be mean, hard, suspicious and utterly ungrateful; But no matter who frowned on him, fortune smiled and gave him one good horse after another.

Mr. St. George did not appear to care very much about racing horses in England, so after Knight of St. George had won him the National Produce Stakes at the Curragh he leased him to Mr. Morris, who sent him to be trained by Longstaff at Hambledon, where L'Anson had trained Chanticleer. Practically his last good horse was Solon.

Solon was a smart two-year-old, and when Mr. St. George took him to Epsom to run for the Derby he had an army of Irish supporters. They and the owner's friends were astonished, and, perhaps displeased, when on the morning of the Derby it was decided not to start Solon, but to run him instead in the Great Surrey Foal Plate on the Friday, a race that he won on his head.

Mr. St. George, doubtless, had an excellent reason for not running his colt in the classic race. He was a friend of William L'Anson, who had bought Chanticleer from him and in that year, which was 1864, L'Anson had a colt he thought a good deal of, that had never run in public and was to make his maiden effort in the Derby, and no less.

There would appear to have been a good reason for L'Anson's

high estimate of his maiden three-year-old, for the designation of the animal was only Blair Athol, who won his Derby with ease, and the St. Leger as well. How he came to be beaten in the Grand Prix de Paris is one of the unexplained mysteries of racing.

Mr. St. George was, therefore, well advised to go for the substance of the Great Surrey Foal Plate instead of the shadow of the Derby. Solon did not return to England again, and his Turf career, apart from the Epsom event, was almost entirely confined to Ireland. His record was 17 starts, 9 wins. He and Tom King were almost the last to carry the sea-green jacket and white cap of Mr. St. George, who was gravely stricken in health in 1866, when all his horses were put up for sale.

It was noted yesterday that Mr. St. George, in his breeding activities, had a great liking for the blood of Hetman Platoff. He had an equal affection for that of West Australian. It was the association of these two horses that gave him Solon. He had a mare by Birdcatcher, the mare we know as "Darling's dam", who was out of a mare by Hetman Platoff out of Whim, and, therefore, a half-sister to Chanticleer, and when he mated her with West Australian the produce was Solon.

After he went to the stud Solon did not have an important winner in England until the three-year-old Arbitrator took the Liverpool Autumn Cup in 1877 for Mr. C.J. Blake. It was a year later that the mighty and unbeaten Barcaldine was foaled. I cannot recall more than four horses sired by Solon that left any stud name — Barcaldine, Arbitrator, Philammon and Buckshot.

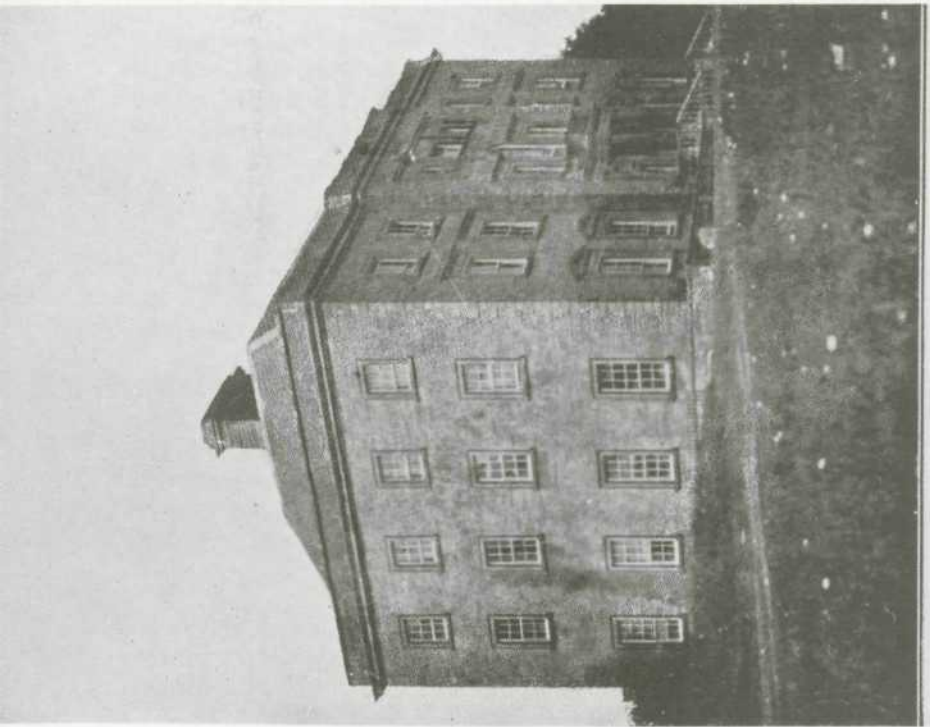
The last-named spent a great deal of his stud life covering half-bred mares in the West, but he was the sire of Pella, from whom Colonel Kirkwood bred The White Knight, and he got many good steeplechase horses. Solon ended his days, I believe, in the ownership of a Mr. Cashman, a dealer who had stables in Pembroke Street, Dublin.

Mr. St. George was a confirmed invalid for years after his retirement from racing, but lived on until 1877, when he died at his Galway home in his sixty-seventh year. It was written of him in the Morning Post that he was almost the last of a generation of Irish sportsmen, most of whom besides imparting lustre to the Turf of their own country, made their names still more famous in the annals of the national pastime in England by the brilliant deeds of their thoroughbreds on this side of the Channel.

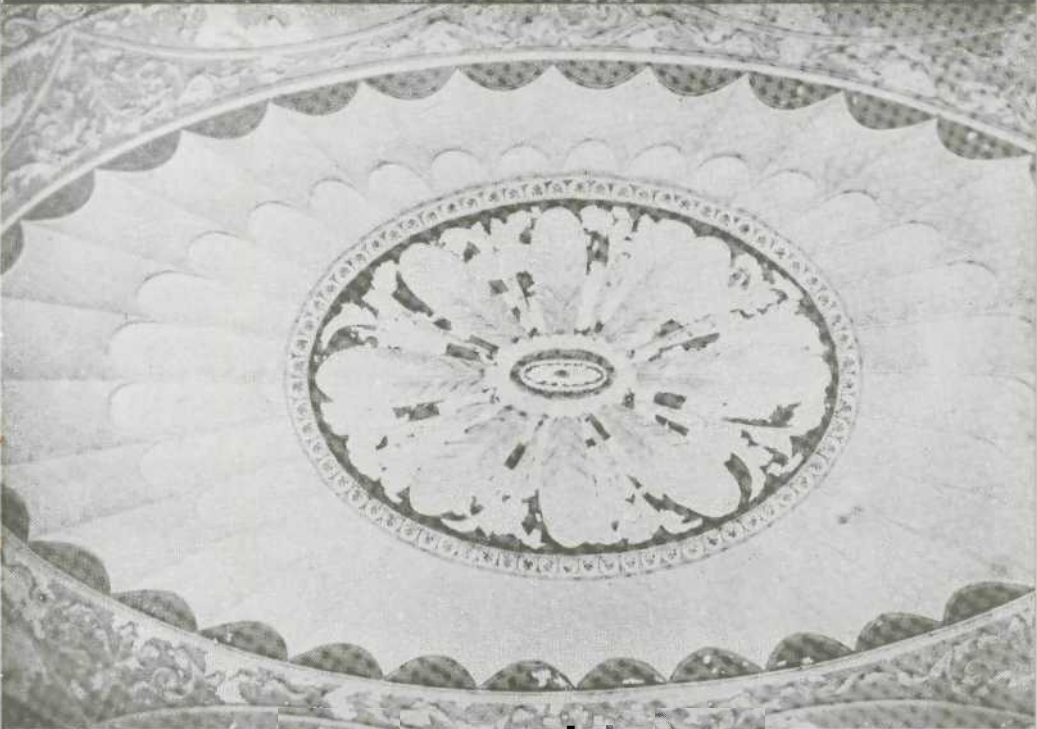
Contemporary with him were Lord Westendra, Lord Mulgrave, Sir Thomas Burke, Mr. John Maher, Mr. E.J. Irwin, Mr. George Watts, Mr. Mangan, Mr. Disney, Lord Howth, Mr. Fergusson, Lord Miltown, Mr. Michael Dunne, Mr. George Henry Moore,



CILING OF DRAWING-ROOM.



TYRONE HOUSE (CO. GALWAY).



Vol. V, Georgian Society Records, 1913.

Mr. Robert Holmes, and Mr. Quin, who ran second with Attraction in the Oaks won by *Cymba*.

Galtee More."

*"Death of Christopher St. George, Esq. D.L."*¹²

We regret to announce the death of Christopher St. George, Esq. Tyrone House, which melancholy event took place on Tuesday evening, last at six o'clock. The lamented gentleman had been ailing for several years back, but his demise was not at all expected when it took place. Mr. St. George was in early life a devoted sportsman, and was well known to a wide circle of friends of the highest rank in the United Kingdom. He was also an active politician and represented this County in Parliament from 1847 to 1852; and was indefatigable and attentive in the discharge of his Parliamentary duties. As a landlord and a country gentleman, Mr. St. George was universally esteemed. He made a general reduction in the rents on his estates in the famine years, or immediately after and did not since make any alteration. The deceased gentleman, who was cousin of the Earl of Howth, belonged to one of the most respectable families in this Province. His remains will be interred in the family mausoleum on Friday next at twelve o'clock."

*"Funeral of the Late Christopher St. George, Esq."*¹³

The funeral of the late lamented Christopher St. George, Esq., J.P., D.L. and for several years one of our county representatives took place on Friday last at twelve o'clock at Tyrone House, and was one of the largest funerals ever seen in the county *Galway*. The tenantry of the St. George estates, numbering about a thousand wore scarfs, and hat bands and formed a procession before the coffin. About four hundred of the tenantry were mounted on horse back and presented a very imposing appearance riding three deep. The men on foot about six hundred, marched three deep after the horsemen. Next came a number of Catholic clergymen who also wore hat and shoulder scarfs. Amongst whom were Rev. Father Geoghegan P.P., Rev. Father Forde P.P., Rev. *Father* Goode C.C., Rev. Father Maloney, P.P., Rev. Father Considine, P.P., Rev. Father Quinn, P.P. Next came the remains in Black's state hearse, which was drawn by four black horses richly caparisoned, the state hearse in urns and plumes. The coffin was of oak richly polished and bore the following inscription:

Christopher St. George J.P., D.L.,
Born 15 March 1810
Died 12th November 1877

The coffin was visible in the State Hearse which is a domed canopy supported by *corinthian* pillars with a plate glass sarcophagus.

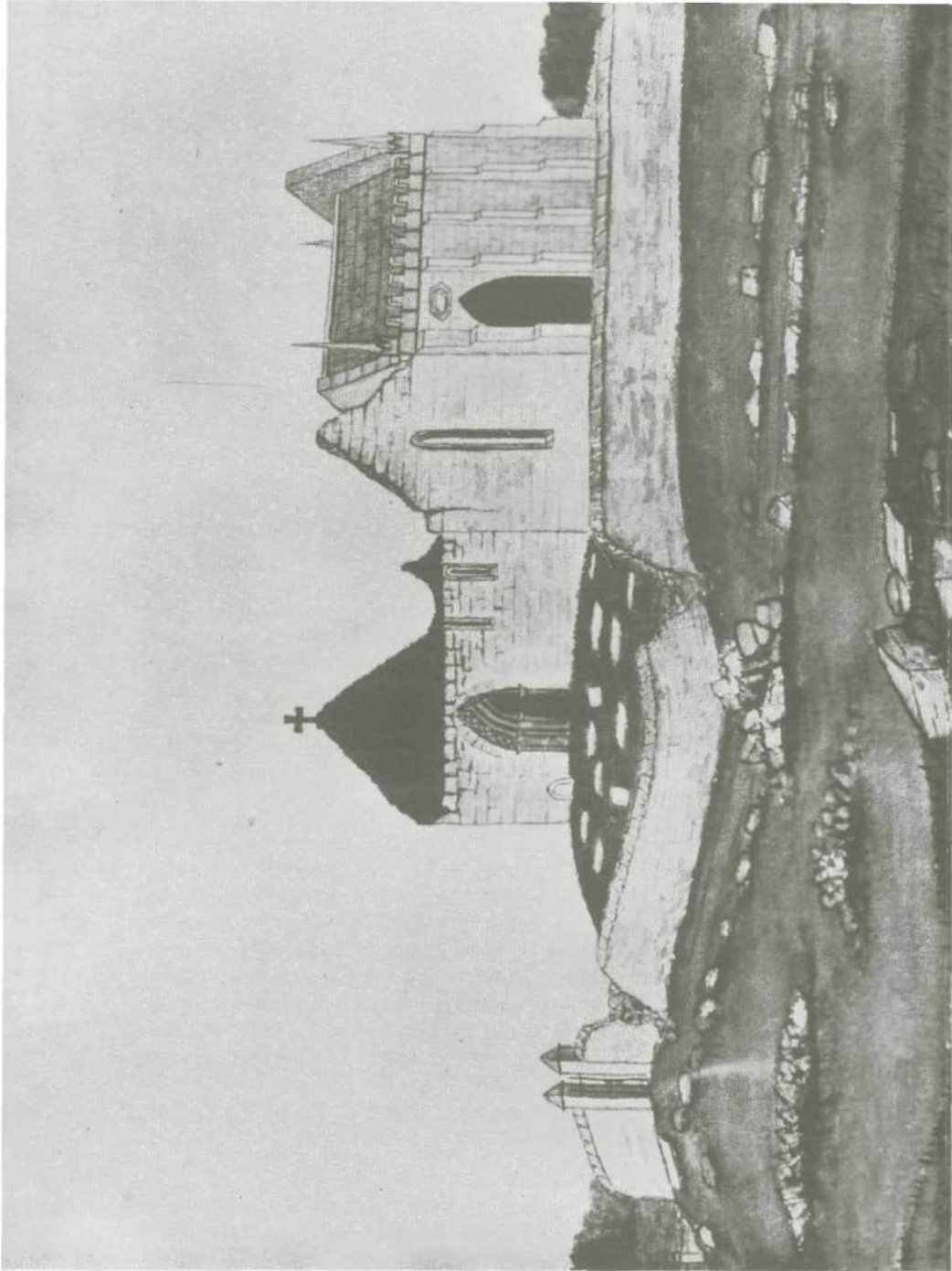
Immediately after the coffin the following walked as chief mourners: William St. George, James St. George, Esqrs., sons of the deceased; Thomas Lucas, Edmond Blake, Thomas Lambert, F.A. Blake, Robert J.K. St. George, Daniel Lahiff, Esqrs., Sons-in-law of deceased, Richard St. George, Thomas St. George Pepper, Charles Pepper, Esqrs., nephews of deceased, James Browne, and Andrew Browne, and Edward Browne, Esqrs., Lord Delvin, Lord Wallscourt, John H.W. Lambert, Esq., James Lahiff, Esq., Sir Valentine Blake, Bart E.H. Persse, Esq. The chief mourners wore black crape scarfs hats and gloves. Amongst those present we observed: Pierce Joyce, Walter Shaw Taylor, Capt. Dudley Persse, Gyles E. Lambert, W. Lambert, the O'Donnellan Blake-Forster, James Blake, Edward Guilfoyle, James Blaquier, Henry Blaquier, William Daly, John D. Mahon, Frank Joyce, Dr. Davis, Henry Morgan, Nicholas Blake, E.C. Robinson, Capt. Galbraith, A. Nolan, Dr. O'Dea, B. Hill, Michael Cloherty, R.N. Somerville, Michael McNamara, Thomas Hughes, Thomas Kelly, D. Kelly, D. Delargy &c &c &c. The procession covered three miles of the road. The remains were deposited in the family mausoleum which is situated within the demesne and is on the site of the ancient Abbey of Drumacoo. The funeral service was read by the Rev. W. Moran, Rector of Kilcolgan, who delivered a very impressive discourse on the occasion. The funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr. Hennessey in his usual excellent style, and to the entire satisfaction of the family."

*" Funeral of the late Christopher St. George, Esq., D.L."*¹⁴

In noticing the persons present at the funeral of the late lamented Christopher St. George, Esq., J.P., D.L. We inadvertently omitted several gentlemen, amongst whom were:— Sir William H. Gregory, K.C.B.; Capt. Llewellyn Blake, Cloughballymore- Rev. Father McDonagh, P.P., Clarenbridge; Dr. Nally, S. Xavier Blake Butler, J.P.; John Usher, & c, & c. The following noblemen and gentlemen, who were unavoidably absent, sent their carriages to join in one in the funeral processions which, as we noted in our last impression, was the largest ever seen in this country:— Viscount Gough, Loughcourtra Castle; Lord Clanmorris, Creggclare; Christopher T. Redington, Esq., D.L., Kilcornan; John H. Blake, Esq., J.P., Rathville; James Blake, Esq. J.P., Cregg Castle, &c.

*Christopher St. George*¹⁵

"Christopher St. George, Esq. of Tyrone House in the county of Galway, J.P. and D.L., died there on the 12th inst., aged sixty-seven. He was the eldest son of the late Arthur French St. George, Esq., of Tyrone House, by Lady Henrietta St. Lawrence, his wife,



Abbey of Dromacoo and St. George Vault water colour by Andrew Lahiff circa 1886.

daughter of William, second Earl of Howth, and was grandson of Christopher French, Esq. of Tyrone, who assumed the surname of St. George in 1774 in compliance with the settlement of his great grandfather, Lord St. George. Through his mother, Lady Henrietta St. George, he was one of the coheirs of the barony of Athenry a claim which was instituted before the House of Lords many years ago, upon which no decision was had. Mr. St. George received his education at Trinity College, Dublin. He sat in Parliament for the county of Galway from 1847 to 1852, and was a well known patron of the turf."

*"Galway Notes"*¹⁶

There occurred in Tuam last week the death at her residence, Circular Road, of Mrs. Josephine Concanon, widow of the late Charles Concanon, Esq. of Bermingham, Tuam. The deceased lady was the youngest daughter of the late Christopher St. George, Esq., D.L., of Tyrone House, Oranmore, who at the time he came in for his extensive property was one of the most prominent men in the county. He was one of the largest landholders in the great county of Galway which then was the county of large resident landed properties and having the most considered families and a Grand Jury panel the second to none in Ireland, Galway could justly boast in those days of having the largest resident gentry of any county in Connaught, and these families were all of the longest lineage. Now all that is changed. These families are nearly all extinct.

After Mr. St. George's death the vast Tyrone estates up at Oranmore were broken up and sold and gradually became the property of the occupying tenantry. Today very little of these once broad acres owned by the St. Georges ever since Lord St. George the original progenitor, settled here and got them together, remain. With the departed acres went the other, the splendid mansion of Tyrone. It was the finest of its class in Ireland. It was early Georgian and cost some thirty thousand pounds in its erection. It unhappily came in for the fate of so many other Irish mansions and is like them a ghastly ruin and monument of infamy. Although it stood in the solitary grandeur of its imposing proportions, was uninhabited and a beautiful seat in the magnificence of its outline, with no occupant and but little furniture, it was burned down a couple of years ago. The marble statue, made of finest Carrara marble by an Italian artist of the original Lord St. George, was ruthlessly smashed up and the head knocked off because being a fine work of art it as such excited the savage rage of the infuriated rabble rout that attacked the place. In that splendid mansion the late Mrs. Charles Concanon was some sixty years ago born, and there were reared with her some dozen of her elder sisters and two brothers. They are nearly all dead

except Miss Tilly St. George and Mrs. Joyce. In their day they were admitted to be the finest girls in the county. They created quite a sensation when at the Co. Hunt Ball in the Railway Hotel, Galway, they made their debut and were led up the spacious hall by their cousin, Lord St. Lawrence, then M.P. for Galway borough, and afterwards Earl of Howth, and the last to bear the honoured title. All but one of these girls were subsequently married, one to Mr. Blake, who was the last Mayor of Galway, one to Mr. Jack Joyce, a genial barrister, and the son of Pierce Joyce, one to Mr. Arthur Blake, of Cregg, and others to other well known people. The two St. George male members of this fine family died early in life and were unmarried.

Mrs. Concanon was the youngest daughter of Christopher St. George, and she and her sister who was married to the late Mr. Robert Kerr St. George, a well known Dublin Solicitor and a cousin, inherited what was left of the vast estates, including thousands of acres at Tyrone, Kilcolgan, Clarenbridge, and at Caherlistrane, near Tuam."

In an article following the obituary (February 1924) notice of Josephine Concanon, the paper mentioned that Christopher St. George tried to give the Gurrans Race Course near Tuam to the town. He had separated the site from other lots which he owned, but was prevented from making the gift by his creditors.

Dr. T. Woulfe, writing in *The Kerryman*¹⁷, stated: "The most prominent sporting personality connected with the first meeting at Killarney was Christopher St. George." The Killarney meeting took place in 1842. Christopher St. George was also one of the founders of the Galway Races with his cousin, Lord St. Lawrence. *Portraits of Celebrated Racehorses*¹⁸ by T.H. Taunton records the racing performances of a number of Christopher St. George's horses.

In the *Dublin Directory*, 1878, under landlords property, Christopher St. George is listed as having 15,172 acres valued in 1873 at £4,473. Over 10,000 acres had been sold or given away. After Christopher St. George's death in 1877 the decline continued. While Christopher St. George had two sons and ten daughters by his wife Honoria, daughter of Bartholomew Kane, only his two youngest daughters inherited the bulk of the remaining estates.

In 1847, Christopher St. George had obtained a license¹⁹ to marry, Honoria Kane, his wife by an earlier Catholic marriage performed by Father Kelly. At that time, he had two sons and seven daughters. His seventh daughter, Harriet had just been born at Rathbride House (The Curragh), and the marriage did not take place. Another license²⁰ was obtained in 1852, and the marriage

took place at St. Anne's Church, Dawson Street, Dublin, the following day.

Around the end of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth, Christopher St. George's widow continued to live at Tyrone. The old kitchens in the cellar were abandoned. Keogh, the butler left and went to New York as one of the body guards for J.P. Morgan. Even the front drawing room and dining room were locked most of the time. One daughter, Mary Lahiff lived in the second drawing room with her daughter Henrietta. Mary Lahiffs son, Andrew painted several water colours of Tyrone, Dromacoo and Ross Abbey around 1886.

The eldest son of Christopher St. George, William, lived on the second floor, and was looked after by his son Willie. The white room on the second floor was very beautiful, and was kept as a guest room.

On the third floor, Christopher St. George's widow, Honoria and her maid, Bridget Larkin, lived with her maiden daughter, Matilda St. George. Honoria Kane St. George always carried a huge bunch of keys which were fastened to a belt around her waist. All the cooking for Tyrone was done by the cook, Peggy Greelish, before an open fire in one of the third floor rooms. The southeast corner room, on the third floor, was where visiting granddaughters slept in a sort of dormitory.

Tyrone was on a high rise of land, and looked out partly toward the Aran Islands and on another side toward the Kilcolgan River. Two paths led from the house to the gardens, yard, quays and belfry (a W.C. built in the form of a castle). The walled garden was large and beautiful. Honoria St. George had a splendid collection of roses. The foundation walls of the greenhouse, where grapes were grown can still be seen. There were many varieties of wall fruit, flowers and vegetables. Martin Tierney, the gardener, would bring fruit and vegetables to Tyrone, and an old country woman, Biddy Gorman, tended the pigs and chickens.

Mary "Wash" was in charge of a large laundry in the yard where table-cloths and sheets were pressed by passing them through heavy rollers weighted with stones. Jam was made in a special jam house where fruits and berries were prepared in huge copper pans and put into jars.

The boatmen, Bartley and Shaun Dan, were kept at Tyrone to manage two pookawns. The boats would bring in turf to the quay at Tyrone and other provisions.

In the summertime the grandchildren and parents were taken to Mweenish Island near the bay of Tyrone for camping. Tents, and even a wooden platform for dancing were set up.

In 1905, Honoria Kane St. George died at the age of 96 and the family abandoned Tyrone. Some of the furniture was sold, and many family records were burned. Seven family portraits, a set of hunting prints, racing trophies, books, silver and a few pieces of furniture are still owned by the descendants of Christopher St. George. Tommy Martyn was the caretaker of Tyrone and his son's widow lives in a cottage close to the ruin.

Matilda St. George inherited Kilcolgan Castle which had been the dower house for Tyrone from her brother James, and moved there after the death of her mother in 1905.

Tyrone House was the inspiration for Somerville and Ross's, *The Big House of Inver*. Violet Martin, whose pen name was Martin Ross, wrote a letter²¹ to Edith Somerville describing her visit to Tyrone.

March 18, 1912.

"Yesterday I drove to see X--House. A great cut stone house of three stories ...

"Perfectly empty . . . It is on a long promontory by the sea, and there rioted three or four generations of X—s, living with country women occasionally marrying them, all illegitimate four times over... About one hundred and fifty years ago a very grand Lady — married the head of the family and lived there, and was so corroded with pride that she would not allow her two daughters to associate with the neighbors of their own class. She lived to see them marry two of the men in the yard

"Yesterday, as we left, an old Miss X, daughter of the last owner, was at the door in a little donkey-trap. She lives near in an old castle, and since her people died she will not go into X--House, or into the enormous yard, or the beautiful old garden.

"She was a strange mixture of distinction and commonness, like her breeding, and it was very sad to see her at the door of that great house.

"If we dared to write up that subject——!

"Yours ever,
"Martin."

Maurice Collis in *Somerville and Ross*²² tells about the visit of Violet Martin to Tyrone.

"Before going to Coole she was taken over to see Tyrone House, a visit that suggested to her the plot of a novel, which Edith thirteen years later used in a book called *The Big House of Inver*. Tyrone House had been the seat of an old Galway family, the St. Georges,

but was now 'a wonderful wreck of a place'. Writing to Edith shortly after the visit she describes it as 'a bigger and much grander edition of Ross, a great square cut stone house of three stories with an area, perfectly empty, and such ceilings, architecture, teak doors, and chimney pieces as one sees in old houses in Dublin' In early days the St. Georges were very grand, but in the late eighteenth century they abandoned their aristocratic tradition and let the semi-barbarism of their remote situation engulf them. They made alliances with the village girls, dispensed with legitimacy, fought among themselves, drank heavily, neglected their estates and lived in squalor, crowded into the big house. The theme, Martin felt, provided scope for a powerful drama. But, as will be disclosed, much was to happen before the attempt to write it was made by Edith

She had started a novel, to be called *The Big House of Inver*, a book which owed its inception to a letter which Martin wrote to her on 18 March 1912 describing a visit she had just made to Tyrone House, one of the big houses which had gone to ruin. Quotations from this letter occur earlier in this book corresponding with the time when the visit was made. During the three and a half years between March 1912 and Martin's death in December 1915 the two women made no attempt to develop the idea which had come to Martin at the sight of Tyrone House. But twelve years had passed since then and now Edith felt the moment had come to make the plot of a novel. That Martin had wished to do this was a strong incentive. If she still was of the same opinion, she would collaborate with more enthusiasm than over a plot new to her. By the time of the Remembrance Week in 1924 Edith had written a part of the book. Access to Martin has been easier and her advice clearer than was generally the case. *The Big House of Inver* was published in 1925, a large edition of 10,000 copies, that sold well and was praised by the critics. It stood for more than the story of a particular family. Edith noted: 'This is the history of one of those minor dynasties that, in Ireland have risen, and ruled, and rioted, and have at last crashed in ruins. They had their great days and peace and plenty, and built fine houses that now stand empty. Their very names are sunk in squalor, misspelt, mispronounced, surviving only illegitimately.' They have their place in history of the Irish Landed Gentry, an exceptional part, for most of the gentry survived, even through the terrible time of the great famine, a financial calamity which greatly impoverished them. But they became an anachronism. There was little place for them in the political, economic and administrative structure of the new Ireland. Yet they managed to retain their gentility. The Somerville-Ross papers disclosed in minute detail what they were

like, how proud they were of being Irish, how they loved Ireland and how delightful and amusing they found the country people. They no longer had any power, or at least no more power than the landed gentry across the sea in England, but, they were still for the most part treated with the old respect, so that it was possible for Martin to write how sad it was to see the last of the St. Georges in a donkey-trap outside their once palatial residence, looking like something between a lady and a cook. The outward sign of the Irish gentry's survival was the ancestral houses. As long as they could manage to keep them up, some semblance locally of their old standing remained."

A great empty house on the sea, local gossip, and a vivid imagination produced Martin Ross's letter of 1912. Lady Harriet St. George was a very kind person, and none of her children married any of the men in the yard. Christopher French (St. George) 1754-1826, Arthur French St. George 1780-1844 and Christopher St. George 1810-1877 all attended Trinity College²³, and took an active part in the affairs of Galway. It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that the family gave up to some degree their aristocratic tradition. The parish records do show the baptisms of a number of illegitimate children, and marriages to country women. For the most part, the St. Georges continued to marry into the principal families of Galway. The misinformation in Violet Martin's letter has been repeated by other authors.

A photograph of Matilda St. George shows that the description of Violet Martin's was made chiefly to fit her literary imagination. In later years, Matilda St. George became very eccentric, but in her younger days she was quite charming. Edward VII gave her a gold bracelet. Often Matilda St. George would go off shopping to London and then return to live quietly at Tyrone. Her room was always piled high with boxes from the leading London shops.

Some of the tenants felt that as long as Tyrone stood, the land would not be divided. Another excuse for burning down Tyrone was a rumour that the Black and Tan troops were going to use the house as a hospital. The tenants deliberately burned Tyrone²⁴ down by bringing straw into the hall and setting it on fire. Then on the 25th August 1925, Matilda St. George died, and this more or less ended the St. George Family's possession of Tyrone. The dense woods around the house are now all gone, and the ruin of the house can be seen for miles.

James Morris in his book, *Heaven's Command, An Imperial Progress*²⁵ presents a similar picture of the St. Georges, and probably draws on the Somerville and Ross's papers.



Matilda St. George of Kilcolgan Castle, 5th daughter of
Christopher St. George 1810-1877.

"It was rare indeed that an Anglo-Irish family mingled on genuinely equal terms with the local Gaels. One that tried was the family of St. Georges, who lived at Tyrone House on the Galway coast, looking across to the Connemara Mountains. The younger St. Georges had, so to speak, gone native. They liked the local girls, took to the company of local farmers, and gradually became absorbed in the environment. Politically this may have been far-sighted, but socially it was a disaster. Their gaunt mansion on its bluff above the sea had been one of the gayest houses in Galway, its invitations eagerly accepted, its lights ablaze across the bay on summer evenings. By the 1830's, as the St. Georges began their metamorphosis into Irishness, it was beginning to look forlorn, without the spanking jaunting-carts drawn up at its door, or the tea-parties on its lawns: and before long, so inexorable were the unwritten laws of the English occupation, Tyrone House would be altogether deserted, its lovely gardens overgrown and its high silhouette windowless against the sky†."

During his lifetime, Christopher St. George (1810-77) was listed in *Burke's Landed Gentry of Ireland*, but no mention was made of his wife or children. Since his death, only his two youngest daughters, born after his Protestant marriage, and who inherited most of Tyrone are listed in *Burke's* though Christopher St. George acknowledged all of his children from his earlier Catholic marriage, and listed them in his will.²⁶

William, his executor, married September 1878 Ellen Phyns and had issue.

Anne, married 24 November 1870 Edmond Blake of Furbough, Co. Galway, last Mayor of Galway 1831-41, leaving an only daughter Anne who died unmarried. Anne Blake sold the sword and mace of Galway to Louis Wine Ltd. in 1930. In 1938, they were purchased at Christie's by William Randolph Hearst, and in 1961 were returned to Galway.

Mary, married Daniel Lahiff and had issue.

Elizabeth, married 31 May 1863 Thomas Walter Lambert of Aggard and had issue. She died 3 December 1910.

Olivia, married Thomas Lucas of Ballynagaddy, County Mayo, and had issue.

James, of Kilcolgan Castle, died 24 November 1896 aged 54.

† (Still, I remarked to a passing farmer one day in 1970, it would make a fine house even now — what a place for a ball. "Oh", the Irishman picturesquely replied, "wouldn't you say it was too late for that kind of fandango?")

Matilda, of Kilcolgan Castle, died 25 August 1925.

Honoria, died age 22.

Harriet, born 1 November 1847, married 9 November 1876 John Joyce 4th son of Pierce Joyce of Mervue, Co. Galway, and had issue. She died 16 February 1930.

Louisa, married 3 February 1876 Arthur Blake of Cregg Castle and had issue.

[Catherine, married 5 February 1874 Robert Ker St. George of Woodsgift, Co. Kilkenny, nephew of Sir Theophilus St. George 3rd Bt. and had issue. She died in 1934.

Josephine, born 1 April 1856, married 2 June 1878 Andrew Browne of Carnacregg County Galway and 2ndly Charles Concanon of Bermingham, Tuam. She died 1924, leaving issue by her first marriage.

As long as the St. Georges lived at Tyrone and Kilcolgan the country people treated them with the old respect. When Christopher St. George's second son, James died on November 24th, 1896, *The Galway Vindicator*, related:

"As a mark of respect due to himself and his family, the shutters were put up on every business house throughout the town without a single exception."

The country women would always curtsy, and the men remove their hats when the St. Georges passed or went to church. In its own way Tyrone was like a little kingdom.

Lady Gregory in her *Book of Saints and Wonders* relates:

"Saint Colman's well beyond Kinvara is a very good well. To perform around it seven times you should, and to leave a button or a tassel or some such thing on a bush. The people of Coole and of Tyrone used to be going to it at time of wars, asking safety for their sons and their husbands. And whoever would pray there would be freed from the war and would come home safe again."

On the death of Lady Harriet St. George on 3rd February 1830, her husband Arthur French St. George built a vault²⁷ on the site of the old cemetery at Dromacoo. It contains six main tombs and the ancient vault. The roof has fallen in, and it has been neglected for years.

In *Ireland Observed*²⁸, The Knight of Glin refers to a poem, *Ireland with Emily*²⁹ written by the poet laureate of England, Sir John Betjeman, which describes the St. George vault at Dromacoo.

"When we bicycled together
Down the bohreens fuchsia-high.
Till there rose, abrupt and lonely,
A ruined abbey, chancel *only*,
Lichen-crusted, time-befriended,
Soared the Arches, splayed and splendid,
Romanesque against the sky.

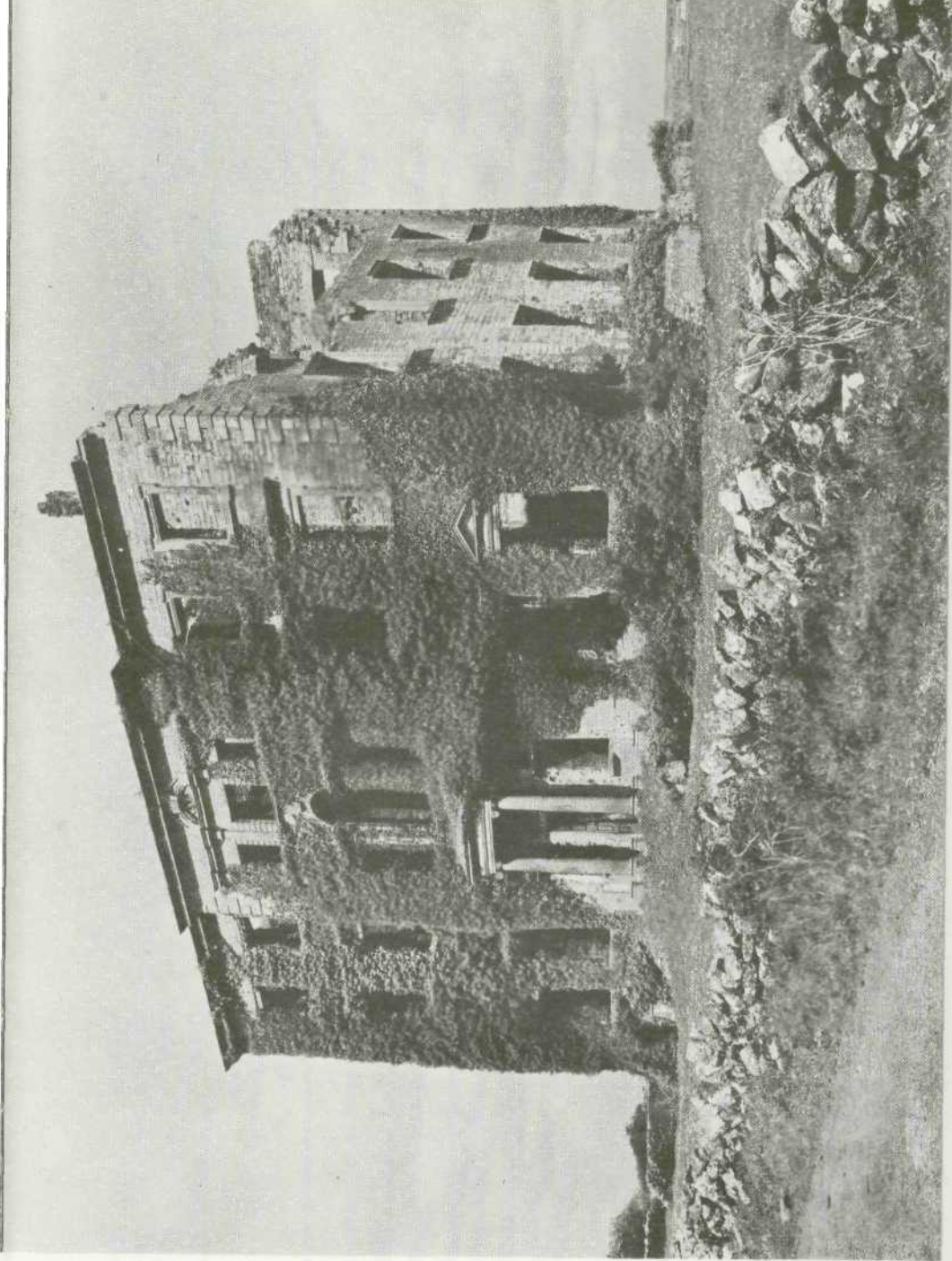
There in pinnacled protection,
One extinguished family waits
A Church of Ireland resurrection
By the broken, rusty gates.
Sheepswool, straw and droppings cover,
Graves of spinster, rake and lover,
Whose fantastic mausoleum
Sings its own seablown Te Deum,
In and out the slipping slates."

In 1972, the Irish Georgian Society acquired the ruin of Tyrone. Perhaps the reprinting of *The Big House of Inver*, and a growing interest in Georgian architecture will stimulate interest in the restoration of Tyrone House.

* * *

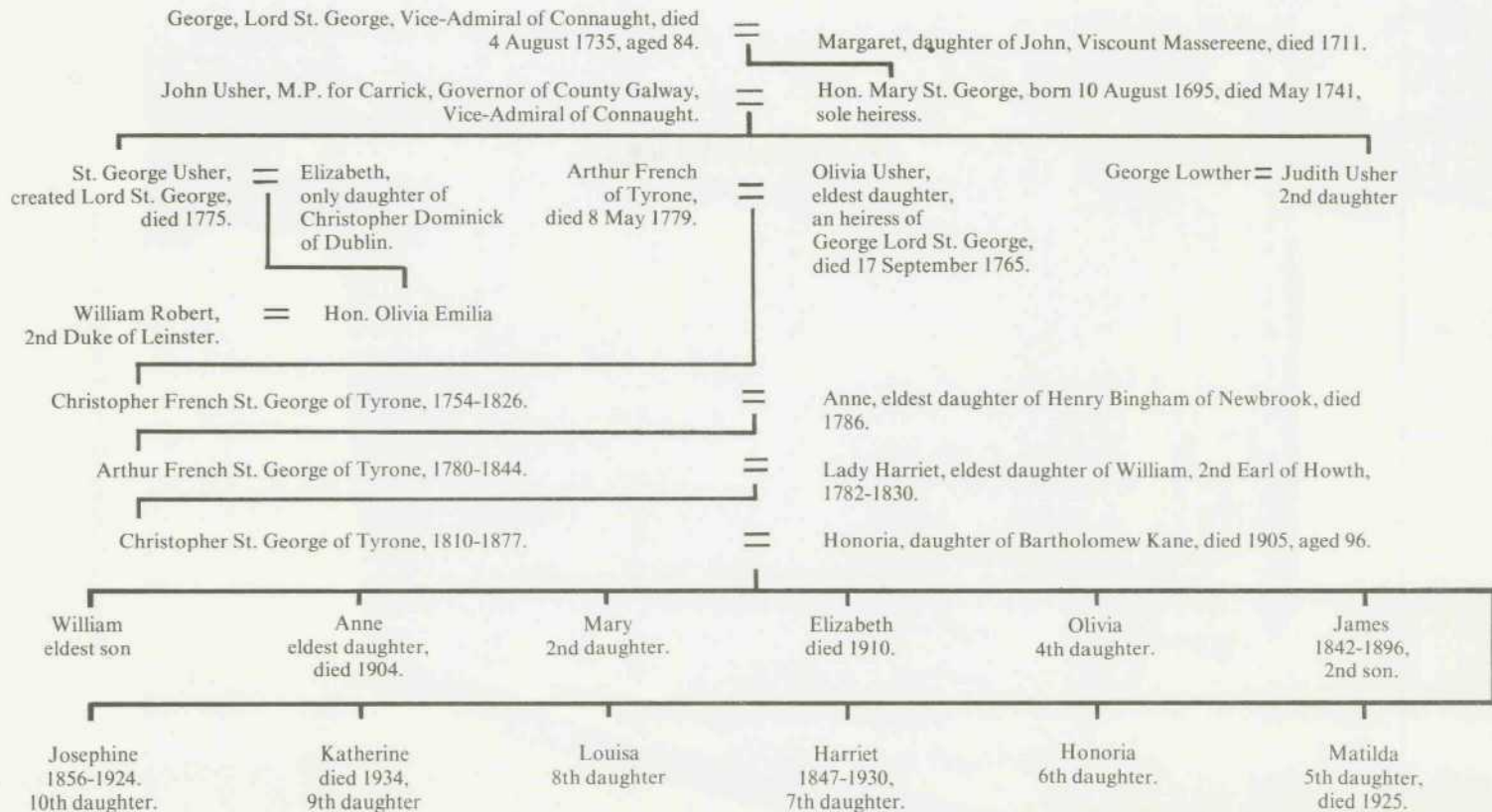
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mrs. Mary Keegan of Dublin and Rev. Martin Coen furnished much of the material used in the article on Tyrone. My mother, Mrs. St. George Mark, a daughter of John and Harriet (St. George) Joyce, spent many summers as a child with her grandmother, Honoria Kane St. George at Tyrone, and has been able to tell me a great deal about the house.



Ruin of Tyrone House, County Galway.

ST. GEORGE PEDIGREE



FOOTNOTES

- 1 Letter of Gordon Joyce dated November 11, 1970 — "The name of the architect for Tyrone House was Roberts. I met a grandniece of his about 50 years ago. You know, of course, that the man forgot the staircase and as a result had to substitute a wretched narrow one, which more or less spoiled the house."
- 2 *The Georgian Society Records*, Irish University Press, Shannon, Ireland, 1969, Volume V, pages 11, 12.
- 3 *Ibid*, page 91.
- 4 Farrar, *Irish Marriages*, p. 127, Lady Harriet's maternal aunt married Joseph 1st Lord Wallscourt whose seat was Ardfry Castle.
- 5 Louisa Beaufort, daughter of Rev. Daniel Beaufort of Collon, Co. Louth, describing her journeys around Ireland. 1807-1810. (T.C.D. Ms. 4034.)
- 6 *Connaught Journal*, November 8, 1832.
- 7 Moore, Col. Maurice, *An Irish Gentleman, George Henry Moore*, T. Werner Laurie Ltd., Clifford's Inn, London 1913, pages 82-85.
- 8 Woodham-Smith, Cecil, *The Great Hunger*, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York and Evanston, 1962, page 319.
- 9 *Tuam Herald* 19 September 1846. 7 October 1846; *Freeman's Journal*, 5 August 1849; *Tuam Herald*, 24 February 1849.
- 10 Applications 2c6716 (No. 134) PRO 1. He had also "as proprietor of the soil offered to make a lease at a nominal rent for a school in Lettermore". Applications 2c6716(No. 74) PRO 1.
- 11 Date and Newspaper Unknown.
- 12 *Galway Vindicator*, November 14, 1877.
- 13 *Ibid* November 17, 1877.
- 14 *Ibid* November 21, 1877.
- 15 *Illustrated London News*, November 24, 1877.
- 16 Newspaper Unknown, February 1924.
- 17 *The Kerryman*, July 12, 1958, page 5.
- 18 Taunton, Thomas Henry, *Portraits of Celebrated Racehorses*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, London, 1887, Vol. IV, pages 19-23, 136-138.
- 19 *Marriage Licenses for All Protestant Marriages from 1845*, Genealogical Office, Dublin Castle. Entry on 25 November 1847 for Christopher St. George, Tyrone M.P. and Honoria Kane, Rathbride, County Kildare. and five entries later Christopher St. George, Tyrone House, Esq. and Honoria Kane, Tyrone House, 14 December 1852.
- 20 *Ibid*.
- 21 Somerville, E. OE., and Ross, Martin, *The Big House of Inver*, The Zodiac Press, London 1973.
- 22 Collis, Maurice, *Somerville and Ross*, Faber & Faber, London 1968, pages 163, 225, 226.
- 23 Alumni Dublinenses.
- 24 *The Tuam Herald*, September 1, 1928. In an article on the St. Georges, Martin J. Blake states that Tyrone was burned down about 1922.
- 25 Morris, James, *Heaven's Command, An Imperial Progress*, Harcourt Brace Jovanich, Inc., New York, 1973, page 163.
- 26 Will of Christopher St. George dated February 15, 1876. Public Records Office, Dublin. William St. George. Executor.
- 27 Mrs. Oswald Browne of Galway has a memorial in marble with the coat-of-arms of Arthur French St. George which formerly was at Dromacoo.
- 28 Craig, Maurice, and the Knight of Glin, *Ireland Observed*, The Mercer Press, Cork 1970, page 104.
- 29 Betjeman, John. *Collected Poems*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1958. pages 121-123.

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