

**IRISH  
GEORGIAN  
SOCIETY**

**January - March 1963**

QUARTERLY BULLETIN OF THE  
IRISH GEORGIAN SOCIETY

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VOL. VI, NO. I

JANUARY - MARCH 1963

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by Charles Merrill Mount

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*Cover taken from an engraving of a Bed in the Chinese Taste from  
Chippendale's Directory 3rd Edition*

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PRICE THREE SHILLINGS

# A LETTER FROM FRANCIS JOHNSTON

*This important letter from Francis Johnston, the architect, to the author of Brewer's Beauties of Ireland (1826) is reproduced by kind permission of Mr. Patterson, Curator of the Armagh Museum.*

*Eccles Street, Dublin, Feb. 29, 1820.*

DEAR SIR,

I write to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21<sup>st</sup> of January and to give the best account I can of the several buildings erected by my plans and under my superintendence. In the early part of the year 1784 my Master Mr. Thomas Cooley (who built the Royal Exchange here &c.) died and I was in consequence appointed by the late Lord Primate Robinson, Architect to his buildings at Armagh, where I erected the present tower to the Cathedral in that city, completed the inside of the chapel attached to His Grace's palace, and an obelisk which stands on Knox's Hill in the demesne, and a few years afterwards (1789) I designed and built the Observatory for His Grace on another hill near Armagh. I was also employed by the Primate from 1785 to 94 (when he died) in erecting a very handsome mansion house and offices, with various other buildings, in which are included two churches (one at Ballymakenny within 3 miles of Drogheda and the other at Glenmore in the County of

Louth). The above mansion is situated about a mile from Dunleer in the County of Louth, N. East from that town and built on an estate purchased from Lord **Derby** by the Primate for himself and Family, as the residence of Lord **Rokeby** to which dignity he had been raised by His late Majesty, but times have so changed that none of his Family reside at Rokeby Hall, the name he gave this place, and it **is** now let out to farming gentlemen for what rent it will bring and must of course soon fall to decay. These buildings cost the Primate about £30,000 but if they were to be done at the present day £10,000 more would not be sufficient. For a very correct and well digested account of all the buildings which Primate Robinson erected and caused to be built at Armagh and in Louth I refer you to Mr. Stuart's history of that city (**which** I mentioned to you and which will be forthwith published, and Mr. **Cumming** will of course have it. On Primate Robinson's death in October 1794, I was employed by Mr. Balfour to plan and erect a very large mansion house and offices at his seat Townley Hall County of Louth within three miles of Drogheda, and within half a mile of the spot where the battle of the **Boyne** was fought, many marks **of which** remain to this day. The house measures 88 feet by 87, is cased with a beautiful stone, got in the neighbourhood, and contains several spacious apartments. The staircase a circle of 30 feet in diameter open to and lighted from the top has a good effect. During the progress of the erection of this house &c. I planned and executed **several** detached works, about the Castle of **Slane**, as the Gothic gate opposite the mill, the steeple of the Church and finished the hall, staircase, and entrance to the Castle. The other works there had been executed from the designs of Mr. James **Wyatt**, who was at Slane in the year 1785 for that purpose. This magnificent seat did at that time belong to Colonel Conyngham and is now the property of his nephew the Marquis Conyngham. From the death of Primate Robinson my residence and home

was Dublin, where I planned and executed the alterations and additions to the Foundling Hospital, Hibernian School in **the** Phoenix Park, the Bank of Ireland, the House of Industry, Lock Hospital, and Royal Hospital Kilmainham, and in October 1805 I was appointed Architect of the Board of Works and Civil Buildings, when I planned and erected the Castle Chapel, **the** Adjutant General's Office, the Quartermaster General's do, the gate to the Military road, **the** additions to the new Stamp Office in William Street, the porticoes to the Lord Lieutenant's residence in the Phoenix Park, the new gates and lodges to do, the Richmond House of Correction near Harold's Cross, the Richmond Penitentiary in Grangegorman lane, St. George's Church, the Richmond Lunatic Asylum, and the Post Office. I planned and executed the interior of Saint Andrew's Church, and many minor buildings not worth mentioning. I forgot to state before, that I planned the Roman Catholic Chapel of St. Peter's, Drogheda, erected the spire on St. Peter's Church, and planned and erected the Corn Market in that town. In the Co. of Meath I planned and erected an addition to Killeen Castle for Lord Fingal, and built a considerable mansion and offices for Elias Cobally Esq. in **the** same neighbourhood.\* In the town of Kells I planned the Popish Chapel and the Session House, and made plans for the Marquis of Headford to alter his mansion, which he approved of, paid me for, but never put into execution. I also built a villa at Galtrim near Summerhill in this County for the Revd. Vesey Dawson deceased who was nephew to the late Lord Cremorne, and I planned and directed additions to the villa of Thomas Bligh Esq. at Brittas, near Nobber, the birth place of Carolin, the famous Irish bard. In the County Westmeath I planned and directed a mansion house for James Gibbons Esq. at Ballinagall, near Lough Owell, the source from which the Royal Canal is supplied, also large additions to Pakenham Hall near the town of Castlepollard, the seat of the Earl of

\*Corbalton.

Longford, and made the plans for a church in Castlepollard, but I understand the people concerned have begun to build upon a cheaper one. In the King's Co. I planned and erected Charleville Castle and offices, it is a very extensive building imitating as near as modern convenience and comfort would admit an old British Castle. I did no other building in this County except the Church of Tullamore; the alterations and additions made at Lord Rosse's Castle, at Parsonstown or Birr were done by a Mr. John Johnston, who died about Five years ago. In the County of Cavan I planned and superintended the erection of a large addition to Farnham House for the Earl of Farnham. I also planned an addition to the house of James Saunderson Esq. of Glover Hill near Belturbet, and the Inn in the town of Cavan. In the Co. Sligo I planned and erected Markrea Castle near the town of Collooney, the seat of Joshua Edward Cooper Esq. In the County of Wexford I planned the church of New Ross, and in the County of Wicklow Mr. Synge's Castle at the Devil's Glen, and Mr. Tottenham's house at Ballycurry. Returning to Armagh, I sent a plan for the new Session House (erected there about seven years ago) but it has not been followed, the Managers (an Attorney and others) were prevailed upon by some of the workmen to reduce the diameter of the columns (I suppose for the greater convenience of getting the stones of which they are composed) and have thereby ruined the portico. In Dundalk I planned and directed the erection of a spire on the Church, which though very plain and simple has a good effect from its good proportion to the tower. At Killincoole about Five miles from Dundalk I erected a small Glebe House, and another near the town of Moate in the Co. of Westmeath. Thus I have detailed as near as I can recollect my whole life of Business, one which I submit to you with a due sense of the imperfections of many of my undertakings, some caused by my own inexperience and others by the whims and obstinacy of my employers, and for

which I am sure you will make reasonable allowance, considering that during my life of business, the arts have advanced from a very inferior state indeed to what they now assume. I expect with anxiety the works you state to have forwarded to me and shall be happy to acknowledge the receipt of them as soon as they come to hand. Believe me, dear Sir, with the best wishes for the success of your work.

Your Faithful, humble Servant,

FRANCIS JOHNSTON.

J. N. Brewer, Esq.

*(Copied from a copy at Kilmore in Francis Johnston's handwriting. G.H.J. 26.12.1905).*



*The Museum, Armagh; Archt. Francis Johnston.*

# THE IRISH CAREER OF GILBERT STUART

*by Charles Merrill Mount*

If the persons who fought the American revolution are more vivid to us than any comparable band in history, it is because in the years after that war they had at their disposal one of the most gifted and incisive portrait painters of all time. George Washington and his generals, Adams, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe, are more real than the Royal Governors who preceded them, or the shadowy figures who later filled their places, precisely because they are preserved to us as complex living human beings by the portraits of Gilbert Stuart.

It is often forgotten that before his return to America in 1793, Stuart had equally remarkable careers in England and Ireland. Let us then try to reconstruct what we can of Stuart's Irish career with the materials uncovered by ray recent searches.

\* \* \*

Gilbert Stuart appeared in Dublin like a meteor the autumn of 1787. Though he was in flight from London debts, without question he was the most important artist ever to have come to Ireland. In his pocket was money given him by the Duke of Northumberland, and introductions to leaders associated with the Shelburne-Pitt branch of the Whig party which had provided his principle English patronage. A Dublin contemporary noted:



His portraits were so well reported by the cognoscenti that a rage to possess some specimen of his pencil took place, and a difficulty of obtaining a finished picture became universal, so fond was he of touching the half-price . . . He was perfectly aware of his pre-eminence in painting; and he, by his manner, exhibited that self-opinion to his visitors. This gave him an air of a coxcomb, although he assumed an independence of mind which scarcely would be endured from another man.

Among Stuart's first sitters was Henry Grattan, and by the end of his first year in Dublin his career had assumed the form it was to retain. He had a virtual monopoly of all fashionable portraiture. It was also abundantly clear that he was dependent upon the short winter sessions of Parliament to bring his sitters to town. The abbreviated meeting of 1789, beginning a month late, and prorogued May twenty-fifth, indicated from the start how precarious this dependence might be.

Generally speaking his year's work was limited to the four months Parliament was in session. Then his income was good, from the numerous half-fees collected, the custom when beginning a portrait. Through summer and autumn he dallied about, completing these canvases; his earnings in these months were sporadic. With luck the eight months of the year when Dublin was quiet could yield as much as the four when he was booked with sitters. The greater part of each year therefore he stretched funds awaiting the next meeting of Parliament, and given his notoriously extravagant habits he was seriously in debt before each Parliament met.

Some persons were more permanently in Dublin. Appointive officials, Bishops, holders of posts in government agencies and the courts, might be expected to patronize him during slower seasons. They were small consolation. So long as he remained secure politically, while Pitt was Prime Minister, and Stuart's former English association with orthodox whiggery remained valid, Ireland was his private artistic domain.



Suddenly even that was not certain. Hardly did he bring over his wife and her two infants, who had remained behind in England, than in November 1788 an unexpected threat arose to Pittite control. King George III descended from his carriage in Windsor Great Forest and peevishly addressed an oak tree as the King of Prussia.

The King's insanity brought new hope to the minions of Pitt's opposition, headed by Charles James Fox. A Regency clearly was in order, and no one could deny that were the monarchy controlled by the Prince of Wales, he would ask Fox to head the government. Pitt temporized and prevaricated, gambling on the King's recovery. Fox planned his cabinet. For Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland he selected the Duke of Northumberland—Stuart was safe in favour. The War Ministry Fox offered to Lord Rawdon; another palpable hit for Stuart, who already had painted this military peer in London. Meanwhile, gradually, the King recovered. Fox exulted over his list of ministers; the King met with Pitt's. The latter had prevailed.

Held more securely in power than ever by his loyalty to George III, Pitt formed an alliance with the brilliant, vitriolic, arrogant man who for the balance of the century became the real ruler of Ireland. John Fitzgibbon was an eminent lawyer and Member of Parliament; a man of many enemies, his public character is not a pleasant one. Reckless in his assertions, if his pistol-like words missed the mark he seemed to knock down his opponents with the butt. As Lord Chancellor, Fitzgibbon ordered Stuart's first major work in Ireland, a full-length portrait in his robes of office. The fact that this was begun as soon as the King recovered again demonstrates the forces at work.

Few invitations to Lord Fitzgibbon's home in Ely Place were refused, and Stuart appears to have been a frequent welcome guest. To be among the associates of the all-powerful Lord Chancellor was advantageous, for this now was the



centre of place, preferment, patronage, and power. One evening, just as the cloth was removed after dinner, a gentleman came in, looking rather confused from not being on time. Lord Fitzgibbon ordered a servant to place a small table at one side and provide him with dinner.

"You must try and make the best of it," he explained. "It was your own fault; we waited half an hour."

Probably aware of the artist's childish pride in his perceptiveness, Fitzgibbon turned to him. "Now, Stuart, you are so accustomed to look all men in the face who come before you—you must be a good judge of character. Do you know that gentleman at the side table?"

"No, my lord, I never saw him before."

"Well, now tell me what sort of man he is in disposition."

"Is he a friend?"

"No."

"Then I may speak frankly?"

"Yes."

"Why then, my lord, if the Almighty ever wrote a legible hand, he is the greatest rascal that ever disgraced society."

Lord Fitzgibbon laughed his immoderate appreciation, and admitted the truth of Stuart's eye.

The association with Fitzgibbon was fertile; it led Stuart direct to the newer and inner sources of influences in Ireland, and by avoiding any direct appearance of partiality, he became the annointed painter-laureate to all factions in the Irish Parliament. What has been called *Grattan's Parliament* with equal justice was *Stuart's*, for he created a unique visual record of its membership and occupies a position in Irish history parallel to his more well-known one in America. Among the hundreds of portraits he turned out during his six years working in Ireland probably the masterpiece is his picture of Fitzgibbon himself; simple direct, forceful, elegant, firm in drawing, beautifully stylized, psychologically revealing, and painted with a downright fury unusual in the



eighteenth century, it was beyond the capacities of any artist then alive.

\* \* \*

As time passed Stuart's *Dublin*, monopoly grew even more complete. From humble country squires, and younger sons who yearly journeyed to Parliament to do the bidding of the greater magnates, to the magnificence of the mightiest petitioner of all, the Duke of Leinster, the whole of the Ascendancy flocked to Stuart. The Lords, the Bishops, the Parliamentarians, appeared before him in turn. For humbler members of this set, the Deans, he employed canvases slightly smaller than the normal bust size, and probably pared his price accordingly. "Mr. Stewart, an English gentleman lately arrived in this metropolis, excels in his delicacy of colouring and graceful attitudes," recorded the *Dublin Evening Herald*. His grasp on patronage became so strong there was no hope of competing with him. Though his price of thirty guineas for a simple head and shoulders portrait equalled what Robert Home had asked for a full-length, Home gave up the unequal contest in 1789, and other leading artists began to drift away. Thomas Hickey already had departed for India, James Dowling, who had been Home's assistant, came to work for Stuart, bringing much of his former master's hard enamelled surface to *replicas* of Stuart's more fashionable works.

One day while Stuart and Dowling were engaged on their respective tasks in the studio, word was carried in that Robert Fowler, Archbishop of Dublin, was below in his carriage and wished a word. Construed as an indignity by the somewhat pompous and pretentious artist, he sent word down that he was not accustomed to waiting on carriages. Archbishop Fowler sent word back that it was the gout prevented him from mounting the steps to Stuart's second floor studio.

Now thoroughly aroused to mischief, Stuart returned a message that he was sorry to hear of the Archbishop's sufferings, as he had the rheumatism himself. He suggested they meet half-way, on the landing.

His heel pulled out of his shoe, a silk handkerchief wrapped around his foot, Stuart limped to the landing where he awaited the Archbishop painfully limping up.

"Well," said Archbishop Fowler, "I have contrived to hobble up, you see, Mr. Stuart. Sorry to see your foot tied up."

"Ha! Oh, dear!" exclaimed Stuart.

"Do you suffer very much with your foot?"

"Oh, very much, my lord."

They went into the Studio.

"Well, Mr. Stuart," proceeded the Archbishop, "I came about my daughter's portrait. I am not quite reconciled to the picture. Now, she is not a bad subject, and I expected that she would make an interesting picture. All these portraits, so far as I know the originals, are not only striking likenesses, but pleasing pictures. I candidly own, I cannot say so much for my daughter's picture."

The silent artist was stung; he placed the picture on an easel, and with a large brush began to lay a dark neutral colour across the background of sky. This he continued until he had covered to the edges of the head; then he covered that too.

"Now, what are you doing?" remonstrated the Archbishop. "Are you painting it out?"

"Yes, I am putting your Grace out of pain, as much as I can. I shall return the half-price, and am sorry I could not please your Grace."

"I wished you to alter the face," was the outraged response.

But Stuart was stuck hard upon a point of vanity and pride. "That I could not," he replied. "I make it a rule never to alter but to rub out."

"*But I don't wish it rubbed out,*" said his Grace.



"Oh, don't you. I have then only to restore it," and he dipped tow in turpentine to wipe the fresh colour away.

Vanquished, his Grace asked that Stuart send the picture home at three o'clock, remarking he was the first painter to refuse altering a picture.

"That's not to be done!" the artist shot back. "And I have long since proved that point, which made me adopt as a rule . . . painting from my own vision and conception. A dressmaker may alter a dress, a milliner a cap. But a painter may give up his art if he attempts to alter to please. It cannot be done."

The Archbishop bowed obsequiously, perhaps recognizing the mood of the painter, and hobbled down the steps. Stuart attended him half-way, and bowing low, returned to his painting room in full enjoyment of the victory. Immediately he asked Dowling how he had enjoyed the scene; perhaps to capitalize on the obvious amazement of his assistant, he then ordered a servant to deliver the picture at the appointed time, "and get fifteen guineas, or bring the picture back." (!)

\* \* \*

An unstable character lay at the bottom of Stuart's frequently extraordinary behaviour; capricious, mischievous, ill-tempered, vain, and extravagant, by 1790 he had thoroughly undermined his own position in Ireland, just as he had previously done in England. Early in this year, his financial position deteriorating, Stuart appears to have placed himself under the "protection" of the Earl of Carysfort, who in a gesture somewhat reminiscent of that of the Duke of Northumberland in England, took Stuart away from Dublin to his estate at Stillorgan. There Lord Carysfort gave the artist a small eight acre holding; perhaps because of Stuart's still pressing debts, a lease was executed March 5, 1790 to a party called Richard Sinclair, who appears to have sublet to Stuart in an

unrecorded transaction. Without suffering the ignominy of a bankruptcy proceeding, Stuart thus became occupant of a modest newly erected house, surrounded by gardens and fields enough to keep pigs.

The move to Stillorgan was a happy one. Stuart's little home was a corner newly carved from Lord Carysfort's *Deer Park*. Just on the boundary of this little property an obelisque soared into the heavens, and far in the distance spread a panorama of Dublin harbour and Kingstown. The area was fertile. An apple orchard already had matured and produced bountifully; on the surplus Stuart fed his pigs through the winter. To farm, the experience of his most secure youthful years in America, was a pleasure to him, and stilled the tensions responsible for many of his ill-considered actions. Flowers he found an equal joy. Not content with the garden, he lined his paths with potted plants, and every visitor was marched about to be shown the garden, neatly cropped with his own hands, and the pigs, fattened on apples.

\* \* \*

In his portrait of Lord Fitzgibbon [FIG. 1] Stuart had demonstrated what extraordinary abilities he had. Yet the core of his Irish sojourn was of a different nature, for he suffered increasingly from a moral degeneration that affected his art. The causes are not hard to find. Removed from London and the wider world he had first astonished with the aberrant genius of his youth, his career in Dublin was without pleasure and coupled with it a sense of frustration. The dream of a return to England was slipping away, and neither in his professional nor his private life had he other compensating satisfactions. In a circle of convivial friends the temptation grew strong to raise his spirits up by pouring spirits down.

Anything capable of rousing him still brought proof of how extravagantly he was endowed. In drunken frenzy he

brushed a tomato-red portrait of Charles Tottenham of Ballycurry; the picture itself, recently re-discovered in the course of my searches for Stuart's works in Ireland, is an extraordinary one, despite its ruined condition. Never had small flat sable brushes cross-cut their own strokings so furiously, nor had he more trenchantly caught the alarm of his sitter. From the artist's Valhalla Frans Hals doffed his broad-brimmed hat, whispering warning of the perils ahead. It was heard, and Stuart rarely faced a client except in a state of entire downhearted sobriety. He experienced a dreadful failure with a full-length portrait of the Rt. Hon. John Foster, Speaker of the House of Commons, and one night, returning to his Stillorgan haven in the Black Rock coach from Dublin—

. . . coachee contrived to overturn us all—or as they say in New York—*dump us*—in a ditch. We scrambled up, felt our legs and arms . . . and finding on examination, that inside and outside passengers were tolerably whole (on the whole) someone thought of the poor devil who was shut up with the baggage in the basket.

He was found apparently senseless, and his neck twisted awry. One of the passengers, who had heard that any dislocation might be remedied, if promptly attended to, seized on the corpse, with a determination to untwist the man's neck, and set his head straight on his shoulders. Accordingly, with an iron grasp he clutched him by the head, and began twisting and pulling by main force. He appeared to have succeeded miraculously in restoring life; for the dead man no sooner experienced the first wrench than he roared vociferously, "Let me alone! I'm not hurt—I was born so!"

Stuart's own amusing account of the accident fails to mention that he himself had suffered a broken right arm, which, after a faulty setting, became swollen and inflamed. The clumsy surgeon then talked of amputation, and though fortunately,



through the intervention of a young Dublin doctor named Hartigan, this threat vanished, Stuart's progress into mental and spiritual malaise had been appreciably furthered.

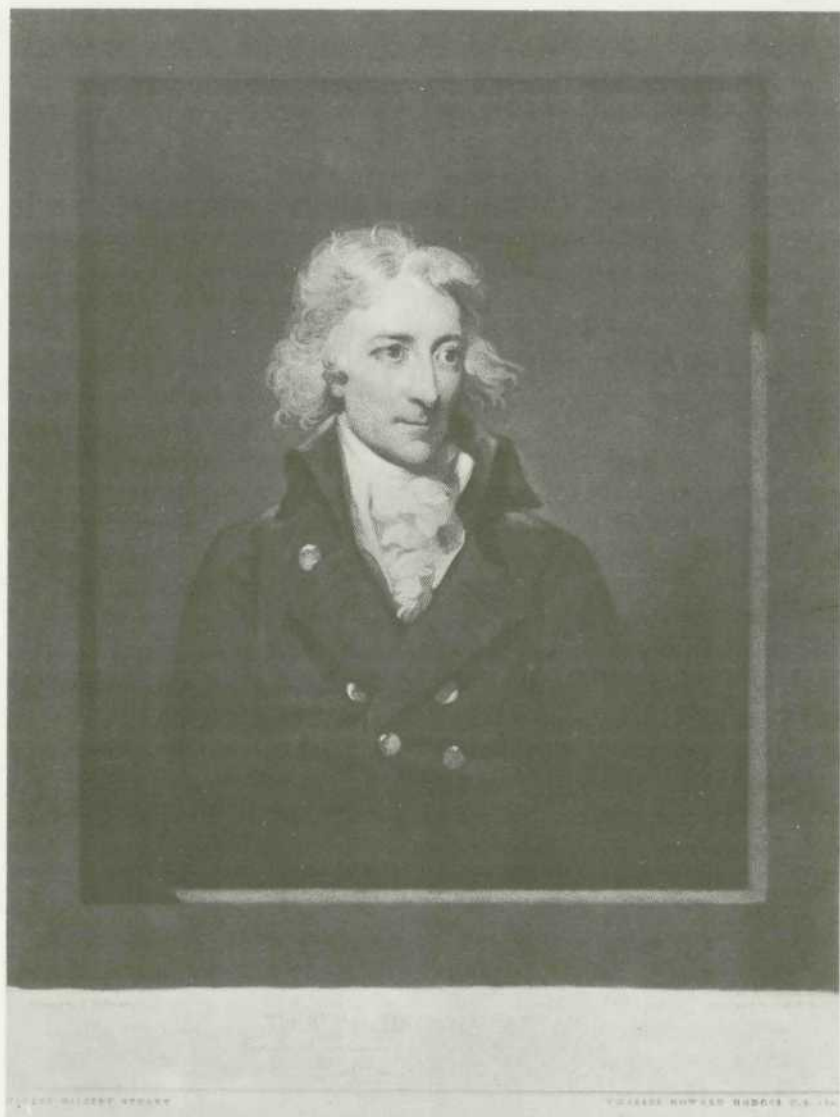
Unwilling to trust himself again to the Black Rock coach, Stuart purchased a horse, on which daily he rode the four miles to his Dublin studio. The bailiffs of the city, by this time well acquainted with his dislike for the inside of their *lock-ups*, developed a habit of posting themselves outside his door. On threat of a body execution it was easy for them to bilk him of a guinea, with which tribute they departed until he was again ripe for extortion. One evening, walking home to his studio with Dowling, Stuart performed the astonishing feat of recognizing from behind a group of three men who were preparing to snare him.

"Mind these directions," he instructed Dowling. "We shall first enter; in due time you return out at the front door, as if waiting for me. Occasionally look into the hall, and call out 'Stuart, are you coming?' I, meantime, will mount at the stable door, and ride to the corner. Then I'll call on you to know why you stay there—then bid you goodbye. You'll then behold their disappointment, and we shall triumph over the rascals."

Dowling asserts that everything worked "as he had foretold, and it was truly entertaining to see their manoeuvres preparing for him." But Stuart, appearing at the end of the street, so bubbled with the joy of his escapade he could not forebear a note of bravado. He shouted to ask Dowling, "if those gentlemen were my friends (!) Then, clapping spurs to his horse and dashing away . . . Deplorable looks in every face of the three wretched ruffians. They had some low converse, and sauntered away."

Gilbert Stuart was, for all his bravado, seriously perturbed by these events which left their mark on his character.

William Beresford, Lord Bishop of Ossory, was among those most aware of this deterioration. As a man of the church



FRANCIS MILNER WYMAN

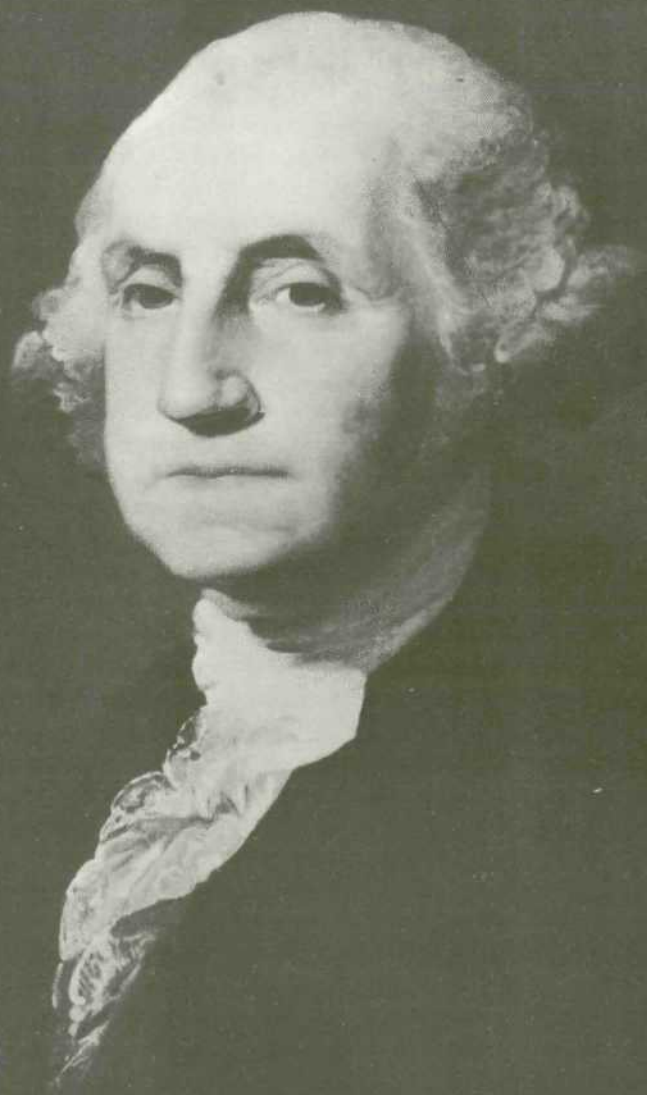
WILLIAM HOWARD WOODS, C.S.A. 1840

he employed his sittings with the artist to solve the dilemma as befits a Bishop. A brother to John Beresford, who was among the first of Stuart's Irish patrons, a brother also to the Marquis of Waterford, for whom Stuart made a plurality of portraits and "replicas", Ossory was married to the sister of Fitzgibbon. He was thus at the very heart of Stuart's patronage, and an amiable warmhearted subject.

But the religious turn Ossory gave conversation during their sittings was an annoyance to the artist. Raised in a vagabondage that early uprooted him from a community, Stuart felt little of the religious urge that is a part of community life. Properly respectful to belief in others, he felt little himself, nor was he disposed to dwell on it even for the Lord Bishop of Ossory. When he came to the lower part of the face, not caring to be lectured any longer, he bowed politely and said, "Will your Lordship please close your mouth." The Bishop complied, while an amused expression passed over his face. Notwithstanding the nature of the rebuff, he admired the artist sufficiently to present him with a handsome silver and tortoiseshell egg-shaped snuff box, engraved with the painter's three initials. The portrait of Ossory [FIG. 2] again in deplorable condition, is another that I have been fortunate in discovering during my searches; the identification made possible by a miniature found in the family of his daughter.

\* \* \*

January nineteenth, 1792, the Irish Parliament again assembled. At his painting-room Stuart received the annual flood of sitters, until unexpectedly, on the seventeenth of March, Parliament suspended business for nine days. Members drifted away; and on the appointed day the Parliament met again only to adjourn to April eighteenth. On that date it prorogued.





The loss of his season plunged Stuart into a bottomless mire of financial problems. In this desperation he was forced, for the second time in his life, to a decision for flight. A return to England, where debts still awaited him, was impossible as ever; his only choice was a return to his native America. To leave Ireland he was forced to adopt *stratagem*s and trickery, to abandon his debts, and to depart without notice. Walter Robertson the miniaturist, entirely dependant upon Stuart to feed him clients, and going through the pain of bankruptcy following the short session of Parliament, elected to accompany Stuart. The only occasion on which Dowling was invited to Stillorgan was for the purpose of breaking the news. One Sunday morning late in 1792 Dowling descended from the coach at Black Rock. ". . . As I walked up a narrow road . . . I saw some very pretty pigs; it struck me, at one moment's view, that they belonged to Stuart, and that I could not be distant from his house. To try that I was right in my conjecture I took up some little pebbles and threw them at them. They ran on, and I followed. They led me to a gate, into which they entered. It lay open, and before the house I saw Stuart tending some flower-pots."

"Ha," said he, "you are come."

"Yes, please the pigs."

"Then I told him how they led me. He was delighted at my recital, and more complimented than at anything I could say in praise of his works."

After dinner Stuart expanded on his plans for the year ahead. Soon the new Parliament of 1793 would meet. "I'll get some of my first sittings finished; and when I can net a sum sufficient to take me to America, I shall be off to my native soil. There I expect to make a fortune by Washington alone . . ."

"And what will you do with your aggregate of unfinished works?" Dowling enquired.

Stuart gave merry response. "The artists of Dublin will get



employment in finishing them. You may reckon on making something handsome by it," he insinuated; "and I shan't regret my default, when a friend is benefited by it in the end. The possessors will be well off. The likeness is there, and the finishing may be better than I should have made it."

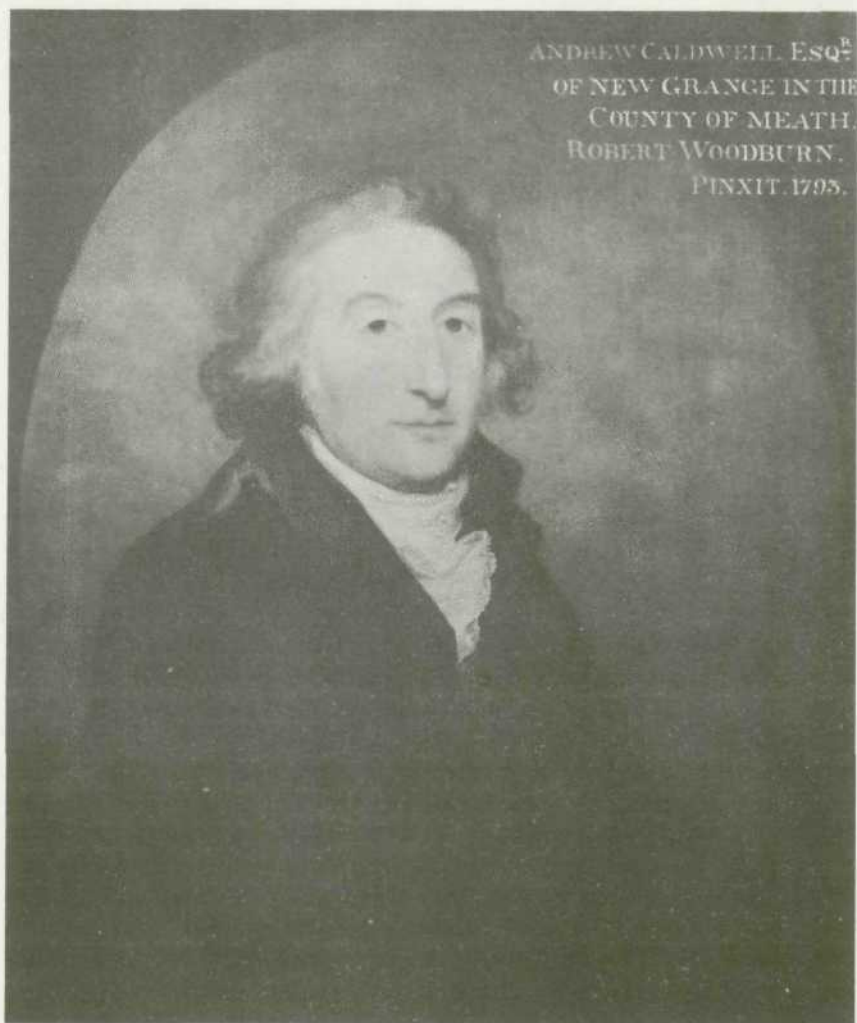
By such perversions of logic was his conscience stilled.

Parliament convened on the tenth of January, 1793, and Stuart put his plan into operation. Reasonably it should have been his intention to depart at the end of May; he would then have painted the maximum number of heads for the maximum number of half-fees. But history intervened. February 1, 1793, his plans were upset by the declaration of war against England published by the French Directory. An especial threat was poised against Ireland, for no better blow against England could be delivered than to land a French army in Galway. A battleground, such as it seemed certain Ireland shortly would become, was no place for an artist. It evoked memories of Bunker Hill, when as a youth Stuart had been shut up in the doubly besieged city of Boston. Now it became essential for him to depart Ireland with his wife and children *immediately*, before that was rendered impossible by embargoes, the closing of ports, and movement of troops. Even so, he returned to America under precisely the same conditions he had left it in 1775—through the teeth of a hostile fleet.

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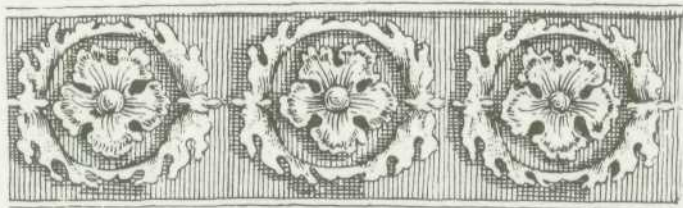
Stuart's ungentlemanly departure received only laconic notice in the *Dublin Chronicle* of March 19, 1793. "Mr. Stewart's quitting this Kingdom for America gives fair opening to the abilities of Mr. Pack, who now stands unrivalled as a portrait painter."

Behind him lay confusion. Unfinished pictures were claimed from his abandoned rooms, to be finished by Dowling,



Robert Woodburn, Thomas Hickey, and others unworthy to touch a canvas Stuart had begun. Some of these portraits, like that of James Hamilton of Holmpatrick [FIG. 3], recently rediscovered, were begun at least two years before Stuart's flight. A full-length of Henry Grattan was claimed by the sitter, to wait forty years before Nicholas Kenny filled in an inappropriate background. It now hangs in the dining hall of Trinity College [FIG. 4].

As in England, so too in Ireland, the exfoliation of Stuart's vast oeuvre had begun. His pictures, in common with those of his contemporaries, were not signed. Recollection of him lingered a while; then in the twilight of that ampler, more gracious age, and the growing wonder of a Victorian world, memory of Stuart's brief cryptic career vanished. When a new generation arose, doubly removed from that of Stuart, it knew only the few names of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney, to give their grand-parents' pictures. Stuart had vanished; his works became the works of others, to be searched for, and one day wrested back from oblivion.



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. John FitzGibbon, Earl of Clare: Gilbert Stuart.  
*{Reproduced by courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art}.*
2. William Beresford, Lord Bishop of Ossory: Gilbert Stuart.  
*{Collection Julian Peck}.*
3. James Hamilton: Gilbert Stuart 1793, finished by Thomas Hickey.  
*{Collection Lord HolmPatrick}.*
4. Henry Grattan (detail): Gilbert Stuart, finished by Nicholas Kenny.  
*{Rediscovered 1962, Trinity College, Dublin}.*
5. Henry Grattan: Engraving after Gilbert Stuart's first portrait now disappeared, by C. H. Hodges.  
*{Copy by James Dowling in the Irish National Gallery}.*
6. George Washington: Gilbert Stuart.  
*{Clarke Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass.}.*
7. Earl of Carysfort: Gilbert Stuart.  
*{Rediscovered 1962, collection Jocelyn Proby}.*
8. Andrew Caldwell, M.P.: Gilbert Stuart, finished by Robert Woodburn.  
*{Rediscovered 1962 in the cellar of the Irish National Gallery}.*

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Irish Georgian Society

## LECTURE

Dr. H. S. Corran will lecture on Musical Life in Dublin in  
the Late Eighteenth Century in the

PILLAR ROOM

next to the Gate Theatre, Parnell Square, Dublin on  
Wednesday, 20th February 1962 at 8 p.m.

\* \* \*

## YORKSHIRE TOUR, 1963



The Irish Georgian Society will be taking a group to York from May 5th-12th to visit the principal Georgian buildings in the neighbourhood, including Castle Howard, **Wentworth** Woodhouse, **Bramham** Park, **Harewood** etc. Those wishing to reserve rooms in York may do so now; full details will be announced later.