

Mr. Mahon's companion did not at all share Ken Rohan's unalloyed enthusiasm on the subject of the poet. The General, as he was in respectful whispers called, was a somewhat low-sized, compactly-built, middle-aged man, with a strong bronzed face, a quiet manner, and a decisive grey eye—the man of action in every line of his clean-shaven face, and in every stiff, upright hair that resisted to the last the embaldening process which was spreading from the crown of his scalp. Unlike the poet's dreamy vagueness of look as was the dart of his quick eye, his soft, low voice and high-bred repose of manner offered no less striking a contrast to the hearty boisterous tones and fantastic dialect of Captain Mike. It was West Point against the Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers—the cultured, skilled, scientific soldier, and the reckless, rollicking son of the people, who made for the Rappahannock with no other education than a brave heart and a certain knack with his rifle. The one mysterious communion cup which united them all was an indescribable feeling of thumping at the heart and tightness in the throat at mention of the name of Ireland; and the sensation was no less masterful, though he was better able to conceal it, in the cool, almost cynical-looking General, who had never before this morning laid his eyes on the Irish hills, but had heard at his father's knee forty years ago the story of his flight from Tipperary as leader of one of the rustic tithe battles in which the troops had been repulsed with slaughter. His first arrival on the Irish shores was of an uncommon character. For a whole day and a whole night, a stout schooner had been lying off Galley Head, hovering in the track of the American liners, its little row-boat ready in the water, and the men on board eagerly scanning every dark object that broke upon the Western horizon. They were waiting by arrangement for the overdue Guion steamer, and Mr. Mahon in his soft hat and flowing cloak was in nominal command of the crew, though there was the strongest reason to think that his thoughts and his gaze were all the time floating millions of miles in the air. Shortly after daybreak the look-out man distinguished the welcome Guion's red funnels, and the schooner bore up right in her path, while two of the men jumped into the row-boat. Ten minutes afterwards the monster steamship came up ploughing and puffing. The men in the row-boat pulled out into the wash of the steamer just at the point where the stern was passing them. As they did so, they saw a man jump over the railing on the poop, and, after pausing an instant to steady himself, take a tremendous leap into the sea. They could see a few excited figures rush to the railings; but the steamer was already flying far from the spot where the body of the man overboard had been engulfed. The boat-men had a few horrible moments of anxiety, while their eyes searched the boiling white waters, their own boat tossing like a cockle-shell in the waves ground into fury by the ship's paddles. Then they saw a dark object emerge at some little distance, and to their joy saw it was the head and shoulders of a man swimming lustily. Twenty strokes pulled in a delirium of delight, and they had the General in the boat, the coolest person of the three after his adventure. As the Government had taken to swooping upon all Irish-Americans indiscriminately the moment the tender boarded the Atlantic liners at Queenstown, this risky mode of landing had been prearranged with the Dublin Directory, who had despatched Mr. Mahon to carry out their portion of the plan, while the General had seconded his own nerve and strength as a swimmer by an ingenious swimming apparatus, which would have enabled him to live for a considerable time in the water at need—if, for example, the steamer had passed Galley Head in the dark and if there should be any confusion about the colored signals prearranged. When the General got on board the lugger, they found Mr. Mahon lying fast asleep in his flowing cloak, with his jetty, white-streaked locks blowing about his face. The vigils of the long, disconsolate night had been too much for him, and from waking dreams he had glided into sleeping ones of a franker character.

"It did not seem to matter much," said the General afterwards to Captain Mike—"things seemed to go on all the better without him:—but business is business. There was a sharp temptation to begin my acquaintance with Mr. Mahon by shooting him."

"Revolver only loaded with sea-water, I guess!"

"And, besides, it would have been more satisfactory and more just to shoot those who sent him. I don't like it, MacCarthy. I tell you candidly, I don't like it."

"Seems more ornamental in a Poet's Corner than at the angle of a trench, I do concede, General. But Mahon is a noble piece of statuary all the same—would do immortal credit to the artist as a National Statue of a Lost Cause."

"Our business here is not to lose causes but to win them," remarked the General, decisively, biting the end off a cigar. Nor was he much better satisfied to see how many irresponsible looking youths were assembled in the Tower to receive him, as leading personages in the district. "They are fine lads enough," he said to Captain Mike. "They will do capitally after a week or two in the field. But surely you don't expect me to tell my business to all these youngsters. I didn't undertake to come to Ireland to address monster meetings." As a matter of fact, he devoted himself to acquiring information rather than imparting it; cross-examining the young men keenly as to the state of things in their several charges, and confining his explanations of his own apparition to a general intimation that he had come as the harbinger of an American expedition and of an immediate insurrection. Nor were any further particulars demanded, or even desired. Your true Celt never cares to spoil a good mystery by sniffing about for details. The signal for action was enough to set their young hearts chirping more contentedly than if the whole campaign had been figured out to them in maps and statistics. It was not a Celtic generation that lost faith in the Pillar of Fire that went before the hosts of Israel.

"The sooner they go now the better; and let us get to business," whispered the General, as soon as he had learned as much and said as little as he thought judicious. He was a little uneasy at seeing a hot supper and some long-necked bottles introduced into their deliberations.

Captain Mike looked at him half-respectfully, half-reproachfully. "General," he said, "you may clean out this island of the Britishers, and you will—in genuine Sedgwick's New Yorker style—in a word, bully; but I'm derved if you're goin' for to eject Editor Murrin before he's finished his grog. Don't you be too rough on the boys, General, you needn't rar'. It's in their blood—and—darn'd if it ain't in mine, too. Mat Murrin, send on the decanter! A piece of the breast of that goose for the General, Ken, my lad—not forgetting the concealment."

And the General's own grave, close-knit face began to smooth out under the spell of the riant gaiety which breaks from Irish hearts at the approach of danger, as trains of sparks fly from the flintstone with every clash of steel. The boys seemed to be already clustered around their first camp-fire the night before their first battle; and boys with the heady vapors of young enthusiasm in their brain were not likely to remember that the most important part of a battle consists in the surgical operations and the undress burying-work, and the mourning-gowns and streaming eyes and desolate hearts that make the rear-guard. The plates clashed and the wine glugged, and the glasses rang, and the pine-logs sparkled, and the laughter and the wit outsparkled all. Don't tell me that Irish humor departed just as shoes for Irish feet were coming! In a night-mail train coming home from the Mallow Election, I have seen friends Healy and Sexton burst into conversations of wit which lit up the whole one hundred and forty miles of metals, like a fairy torchlight procession. I have seen the dingy Reporters' Room of the *Freeman's Journal* flashing and flashing again with a war of wits that would have made the old rafters of the Mitre Tavern split for joy—wit kindlier, and perhaps not much less keen, than if the tossing curls of the dear old Chief who presided had been the scratchwig of the grim Doctor himself. But who shall repeat the dainty aerial music of such hours? Who shall bring back the foam that mantled for one evanescent moment upon last year's champagne? Nothing in nature, we know, is destroyed. Is it too great a stretch of optimism to believe that, like the subtle essence of Attic souls themselves, the bouquet of their wit and the very foam of their champagne only pass into a higher state—are, so to say, stored up in celestial cellars for eternal consumption on a never-ending Attic Night?

Don't understand me as meaning that the youngsters

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