

To My Mother.

Since thou didst pass, beloved, to thy rest, Long years ago, one constant hope has filled My longing heart—its first wild anguish stilled— That we shall walk again in regions blest With all the old sweet human love unchilled By time or absence; but to-day oppressed With fear I shrink; from dreams like this I flee.

LILY LASS.

By JUSTIN HUNTLEY MCCARTHY, M. P. PROLOGUE BY GEOFFREY LONGSTAFF, OF NEW YORK, AUTHOR.

When General Brian Fermanagh, of the ninth corps of the Grand Army of the Republic, fell in the last of the many desperate charges in which he led his regiment up the heights of Fredericksburgh, it came to the lot of certain of his brothers-in-arms to look after his affairs and make the necessary arrangements with regard to the property he possessed.

Brian Fermanagh was unmarried; he had no relations in the United States; it was only after considerable difficulty that his executors discovered some distant connections in the old country, to whom his few possessions, his farm in Illinois, and what little money he had saved, finally went. He had not made much money; he never seemed to care for money or for the things that money gives; he had lived, until the war broke out, the tranquil life of a man who might have been a philosopher, but who was a soldier in somewhat sterner times.

When the war did come, he flung himself into the struggle with the keenest enthusiasm. He fought with reckless bravery; he planned with rare military skill. In words like those which Freiligrath used about the German poet Platen, he lay dead in the South while the North was ringing with his praise.

Among the General's closest friends was a young journalist from New York, who had abandoned his profession at the outbreak of the war to fight for the Stars and Stripes. He was by Fermanagh's side when the Confederate bullet found its billet in the best and bravest bosom that ever throbbed beneath a soldier's coat.

There came a momentary lull in the pitiless hail of lead, the repulsed remnant of Fermanagh's regiment had rallied again, a more handful of survivors, and charged once more with a wild cheer, their tattered green flag flying still, up the heights where most of their comrades lay reddening the trampled grass with their blood.

However, the other day I was tranquilly surveying Hudson from the stoop of a little place on the river where most of the "Manhattan Essays" were elaborated in the pleasant afternoons of an Indian summer, Brian Fermanagh's boys flashed across his mind. I scarcely know how, and something prompted me to take it from its hiding place and for a second time investigate its contents.

There is a lad now at West Point learning a soldier's lesson and bearing a soldier's name; I hope that Brian Longstaff will bear witness to the softness of the paternal heart. So, I trust, will the dainty young lady who is, I am told, making sad havoc among the young men of our acquaintance with those bright eyes which reproduce for this generation "those sweetest eyes were ever seen," to which Geoffrey Longstaff wrote impassioned verses twenty years ago.

Certainly I make no apology for the fact that the tears dimmed my eyes as I read over again those lines traced by the hand of the good and gallant gentleman who fought and fell for our flag, and who lies beneath the grass at Fredericksburgh. Poor Brian. Since he died that other strand for Ireland of which he wrote has come to pass, and passed away with its own special story of suffering and its own train of high and melancholy memories. So, too, in its time that Truce of God, of which he dreamed, has come to pass—justice has taken the place of the passion of post; England and Ireland are friends for the first time in history.

I do not know if Irishmen will ever again be joined together in a determined effort to free themselves. Please God, they may, again and again, until the end. I hope, and indeed believe, that the day will come when the great quarrel between the two countries will be changed to a great

friendship, that men will arise in England and in Ireland who will see and will realize the dreamed-of brotherhood. But, no matter who they be, the men who will yet serve Ireland, I say this, and I say it from a full heart, that they cannot be better, braver, truer, and nobler than those who struggled and suffered for liberty in the name of Young Ireland. I have heard words spoken among our brothers here in the great American cities which lead me to think that a green flag may yet again flutter over Irish meadows; that pikes may be trailed, and muskets levelled on the hillsides yet. Well, I am no longer young; the hot blood of my youth has cooled; I should like to think that justice might come without strife, that in the fulness of time Englishmen and Irishmen might join hands in a common freedom and a common love. But let no man believe that the Irish hopes are crushed. Ireland is not dead; she is only sleeping, and something tells me that she is well nigh on the point of waking. May I be there to see. But if I am called away before then, I should like to let those who come after me know all that I can tell them of the last stand that was made for Ireland, the last fight fought for her, the last time her flag floated over our own fields; the last blow struck in the battle that Smith O'Brien (God's grace be on his soul!) began."

Here the paper in the general's handwriting came to an end, and no further investigation discovered any other writing of the General's on the same subject. The young journalist, however, carefully preserved all the papers in the box; sealed the box itself carefully, and deposited it in a place of safety, intending, on some further occasion, to study more closely all the documents it contained in the hope of finding out that his dead friend had done more towards his dreamed-of purpose than that solitary fragment.

But the young journalist recovered from his wound and went back to the war, and the war dragged on its weary length, and when it came to an end the young journalist had his living to make, and the sweetheart who had waited for him all through the dreary years of civil war became his wife, and he begat sons and daughters, and had his way, a hard way sometimes, to make. He made it at last; he thinks he may say with pardonable pride that there is no more admired writer on the New York Press than your humble servant, Geoffrey Longstaff—for to be plain I was the young journalist of whom I speak—that his novels contain the truest pictures of American society that he, at least, is acquainted with, and that his favorite volume, "Manhattan Essays," is destined to a niche in the temple of fame not too far removed from those of Emerson and of Carlyle.

But while that way was being made, while those novels were being written, while those excellent and exemplary essays were being slowly and laboriously evolved in hours of philosophic reflection, Brian Fermanagh's strong box was, I am sorry to say, forgotten. Not exactly forgotten, but it lay in the lumber-room of my memory, together with the materials for my great tragedy in blank verse on the subject of George Washington, of which to this day not a line has ever been put on paper, and my contemplated history of Mexico.

However, the other day I was tranquilly surveying Hudson from the stoop of a little place on the river where most of the "Manhattan Essays" were elaborated in the pleasant afternoons of an Indian summer, Brian Fermanagh's boys flashed across his mind. I scarcely know how, and something prompted me to take it from its hiding place and for a second time investigate its contents.

I did so. There was something curiously melancholy in looking once again upon objects that I had not seen for the fifth part of a century, when I was in my hot youth and Brian Fermanagh my companion in arms. The young journalist of those days is getting to be rather an elderly journalist now; his hair is grizzled and his form is not as slender as it was in the days when he buttoned over it the blue uniform of a Federal officer. But his heart is, I hope, as soft as ever.

There is a lad now at West Point learning a soldier's lesson and bearing a soldier's name; I hope that Brian Longstaff will bear witness to the softness of the paternal heart. So, I trust, will the dainty young lady who is, I am told, making sad havoc among the young men of our acquaintance with those bright eyes which reproduce for this generation "those sweetest eyes were ever seen," to which Geoffrey Longstaff wrote impassioned verses twenty years ago.

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I looked over Brian Fermanagh's papers long and carefully, and I found nothing at all that would serve, or seem intended to serve, for that history of the movement of his youth which he made allusion in the few words in his own handwriting.

There were some old diaries into whose private history I entered under the sanction of Fermanagh's dying request; there were a great many letters, all of which I read. There were a large number from men, many men, but the majority of them were written to one man by one woman. They were very tender and pathetic to read, after all these years; sacred, with something of the sanctity of relics, they seemed to me as I handled their yellowed pages reverently and pored over the dimmed and faded handwriting which once had seemed to gush warm and living from the heart's blood of a man and the tears of a woman. These were letters which Brian Fermanagh received from over seas in the later years of his life. They came from within the gray walls of a convent, and they talked to him sweetly and sadly of the days of the writer's youth and the days and friends that were no more. With them were certain of Brian's own letters, sent to him from the same gray convent walls, when she to whom they had been written fell asleep.

I felt almost ashamed to intrude myself into the counsels of those dead and gone writers, and yet, as I read, the reading formed such a story about me, bit by bit, that with the instincts of my trade I could not but continue. As I went on, somehow or other, I scarcely knew how, the lives of those of whom I read seemed to take shape, and I could almost fancy at times that the shadowy presences of those who had once breathed those warm words of love and friendship and patriotism hovered about and lent their gentle sanction to my toil.

At last, when from long study I had grown familiar with every document that the box contained, it seemed to me that I was the absolute master of the secrets of the lives which had lain so long embalmed in darkness. I felt as if by some subtle spirit of enchantment beyond my knowledge I had breathed a breath of life into those dead records, and that those they told of had quickened for me, and not for me alone.

I cannot tell if I am, indeed, as truly right as I believe myself to be; perhaps my long apprenticeship to the craft of fiction is playing its impish tricks with my cooler judgment. All I know is, that as I read those papers the story I am about to tell grew upon me; that every document, every scrap of paper, every hint I found in the box fitted into the whole with faultless perfection, and that such inquiries as I have since been able to make, and such communications as I have received from correspondents to whom I have addressed myself in Ireland, have justified all my assumptions and ratified all my speculations.

Still, the fact remains that I am by trade that strange production of our modern civilization—the professional novelist, who is never more fanciful with his art than when he affects to be interpreting the voices of the dead.

A story-teller beside the gates of an Eastern town tells his tales beneath the Syrian or Egyptian skies to a crowd of eager listeners. The traveller from the prosaic Occident who approaches may learn in a little that his narrative, which flows so readily in its soft, guttural Arabic from the teller's lips, which is heard with such eager devotion by the dark-skinned and dark-eyed group about him, is but one of those marvellous tales which the fair Sultana Shahrazad told to her lord for a thousand nights and one night to avert her threatened destiny.

It is, perhaps, the story of Camaralzaman and his love for the Chinese Princess, or the adventures of the three Calendars, who were sons of kings, or mayhap, the fortunes of Hassan the Prince.

All the crowd who sit and listen there so attentively have heard the story perhaps a hundred times before, could set their master right if he slipped in a single incident or strayed in the slightest from the familiar thread of romance.

They all know the tale as well as he does, and yet they are content to spend long hours in the cool of the evening, till the sun has sunk to sleep and the stars come out, dreaming upon deeds that are as familiar as, and far more real to them than, the daily doings of the bazaars or the gossip by the fountain.

In something of the same way all stories of a man's life must have a great resemblance in them one to another. We of the Western civilization are content to listen day after day and year after year to tales scarcely less familiar to us in their general plan than are the stories of Alif Laila to Bedawin or Copt or Fellah.

living who knew my dream-children in the flesh they will be able to say how far I have adhered to or departed from authority.

CHAPTER I. A SOUTHERN CITY.

The town that Brian Fermanagh was born in had, as he always maintained with pardonable pride, no rival in all the South of Ireland. The green hills that girdled it from the world seemed to keep it in an eternal peace. There never was a place where life glided by more pleasantly, or where people grew old more gently. The wide and tranquil river that flowed through the busy streets and under the ancient bridges, that were, perhaps, a little grass-grown, out among the meadows into the smiling country beyond, seemed ever to lull the inhabitants to repose.

Out beyond the town the river lapped its slow way along between green fields and wide meadows, where the mild-eyed, soft-coated kine crushed the clover and the grave sheep grazed, and the horses stood beneath the shadows of the trees, and wished, perhaps, that summer and sunlight brought no flies with it, and watched their colts wheel noddily over the grass. Farther and farther the river flowed, leaving the murmuring town behind it, passing between white villages, and in the broad domains which had once acknowledged native lords, and which now were owned by men of foreign name and race and speech, by ruined castles where the crests of the ancient clans had mouldered from the walls, and where the encircling woods seemed ever to answer the summer breezes and the winter winds with some whispered echo of the forgotten war-cries of the septs.

But in spite of the stately calm of the river, in spite of the placid tranquillity of the fair country which circled round the city of my story, as wrought gold encircles some rare jewel with a setting worthy of the precious stone; in spite of the soft, attractive air of languor which those gentle skies diffused, and which seemed to make the spot a Hibernian rival of my own dear, legend-hallowed Sleepy Hollow, the town was wide awake and unusually active at the time of which I write.

That was the time when Thomas Davis, but lately dead, had fired the heart of all Ireland with his deathless ballads; when the teachings of the Nation were animating the youth of the country with passionate aspirations and glowing hopes; when the oratory of Meagher and the genius of Mitchell were inspiring new ambitions and suggesting new and well-nigh undreamed-of possibilities.

In spite of its surroundings of more than Aecadian quiet, in spite of its lulling appearance of complacent repose, the city was throbbing as actively with passionate purpose and restless animation as a beehive on an early morning in summer. There were few young men in that fair city who were not proud to call themselves "Young Irelanders;" few, indeed, who were not eager to rise, every man and boy of them, "with the pikes in good repair," when the signal should come from their leaders. The lovely, languid city was as dangerous as a grass-grown but still active volcano at the moment when my tale begins.

The principal inn of the city stood in the city's principal street, of which, as it was placed at a central point from which the road curved in both directions, it commanded a comprehensive view. The citizens were vastly proud of their principal street, and scarcely less proud of their principal inn, which ranked as one of the civic lions, and counted only immediately after the town hall.

Indeed, the old inn was in its way a building to be proud of. It had been solidly constructed in the middle years of the last century with as much care and pains as if it had been intended to outlast the Pyramids. In the early days of its existence it had been looked upon by the townspeople as a masterpiece of its kind. The town and county members had often been heard to declare that it had not its fellow for cleanliness or comfort even in the Viceregal Capital itself.

Such of the local gentry as had made the Grand Tour, and knew their way about great cities like London and Paris and Vienna, had been known, time and again, as they warmed their wet riding-boots and drew the steam out of their damp surtouts before its hospitable hearth, to assuage with the copious assistance of many genteel and amazing oaths and sundry imprecations upon various parts of their person that there was not another hostelry in all wide Europe, from the Low Countries to Sicily, which could for a moment compare with the Crown, good luck to it.

In its best parlour the Hell-Fire Club had held some of their merriest and maddest meetings, and there were wild tales of their doings and of a duel which had been fought in the backyard with the landlord himself standing in the doorway to see fair play, and the serving-men and cook-maids watching the fun from the kitchen windows. How that duel came to be fought was one of the marvels of local legendary history, for though the Hell-Fires were a quarrelsome set enough they were friendly folk among themselves, and if they were reckless of life and limb, and the lives and limbs of others, seldom thirsted for each other's blood.

What lent an older and ghastlier air to the whole story was that the two antagonists had been close friends, and that no one knew of any open breach between them until some trumpet squabble over wine or cards sent them out into the inn yard of the Crown on that fatal evening to tilt with desperate steel at each other's lives.

The upshot of that duel was that the

chairmen and the footmen carried my Lord Mountmarvel home to die, and that Desmond MacMurched had to fly for his life over seas, and end his chequered career as a soldier in the service of Spain. The Hell-Fire Club, it was said, never quite recovered from the scandal of the duel. Its members, indeed, still met at stated seasons, still amused themselves in their cups by insulting women and pinking harmless, unwarlike burgesses; but somehow the heart had gone out of them. The ordinary decent citizens who were neither drunkards, drabbers, nor diceers, plucked up courage to make head against the eccentricities of the Hell-Fire Club. It began to be found that when heads were to be broken, the head of a "Hell-Fire" was no harder than another; so the Club died out of existence gradually in that town, and the fame of its worthies faded into the purple of the past.

There were portraits of many of these last century worthies still in the possession of the Crown. They had been presented to the Club in its palmy days, and there they still were hanging in some of the Crown's dim corridors. My Lord Mountmarvel, in all splendor of his star and blue ribband, smiled furtively down upon the ever-changing company of the coffee-room as if even in his painted image the weak, vicious face sought to avoid the stern and sinister gaze of the portrait opposite. Succeeding generations of hosts of the Crown when they showed the picture to visitors would explain that the picture had only been painted a year before that fatal duel in the inn yard. Standing on tip-toe the landlord would touch with fat forefinger the spot on the left breast, just above the heart, where the small sword of Desmond MacMurched made that ugly hole through which the thin tide of my lord's foolish, evil life had ebbed away. At this point the landlord would always turn round and, pointing impressively to the picture on the opposite wall, would say in tones of horrified admiration, "and that's the man who killed him."

The picture of Desmond MacMurched displayed a very different man from his enemy and victim. The dark-eyed, dark-skinned man in the blue frockcoat, whose powdered hair contrasted fantastically with the almost Oriental swarthiness of his skin, was staring straight out of his canvas across the room at the picture of his rival and enemy. The painter who had done the portrait was no prophet; but he may have heard whispers about the country-side concerning the growing feud between the two friends, or it may be that Desmond MacMurched's hate for his friend and foe, being then the busiest thought in his brain, had stamped itself already in lines of characteristic sternness upon his lineaments. However, there the two were, scowling and smirking across the somewhat gaunt coffee-room of the Crown Inn, with the likenesses of many of their companions about them.

Faded gentlemen these, who had been very splendid once, and heard the chimes at midnight a great many times ringing out from the sweetest peal of bells and the fairest steeple in Christendom, and who had diced and drunk and quarrelled and cursed and fought their way through life, and had died in all sorts of ways—violent ways most of them, of which a broken neck in the hunting-field was the mildest and most respectable; and a bullet fired at the length of a neck-cloth, or a sword-thrust cunningly dealt by the dim, flickering light of the linkmen's flambeaux, the commonest; and violent disunion by suicide of the bankrupt soul from the bankrupt body, the worst and most shameful.

CHAPTER II. PICTURES AND PEOPLE.

Everybody in the city who had ever been inside the portals of the Crown knew those pictures and their history by heart, and everybody who was anybody had, at some period or another, been called, by business or by pleasure, within the ample walls of the venerable hostelry. It was to strangers, therefore, that the landlord of the Crown, at the time my story opens, chiefly relied for an audience to whom to relate the particulars of the great Mountmarvel-MacMurched duel, and to descant upon the blended horrors and splendors of the old Hell-Fire Club.

In these days strangers were not quite so common as they are now in the fair southern city of which I write. The railway from Dublin to-day pours in daily its living freight of alien wanderers; but in the times to which I refer no train linked the capital of Ireland with the city of the South. At a certain point beyond Dublin intending travellers were obliged to take the mail coach, and to make the best of their way by that uncomfortable and ungainly vehicle to the place of their destination.

So the landlord's tale was growing somewhat rusty from lack of repetition. The fame of the inn and its details and its duel had spread abroad, and fair days and lusty days and great civic celebrations seldom brought in strangers from the country for miles about who were not as familiar with the records of the Hell-Fire Club, and the deadly manner in which Desmond MacMurched pinked Lord Mountmarvel, as the honest host of the Crown himself. Luckily for mine host, however, at an epoch when the chronicles of the Club and the details of the duel were becoming strange to his mind from long disuse, an occasion arose for him to go over all the circumstances under peculiarly favorable conditions.

One day, in the early spring of 1848, CONTINUED ON THIRD PAGE.

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what the distinguish of the best a sitting-r the princip its walls on Hell-Fires Topham Tr as "Hell" became L ventent su room was tinguishin cular mom "Chesteri question w most popu tenanted by A man r clesely elden grizzled, had on the is the prod a man who and grave, him to be a near the pages of a displayed h cramped a study of w solitary a for ever an smiled, a himself i in the not So intent that he behind him gracious p nineteen y for a mon resting a h surveyed w student. She wait the open s pretty thin pale yun keener lue painter wh then night slight girl face, and brown hair angels. I saintly sch model than who pause threshold of figure befo noiseless st icio slipped ing the roo wary schol very light, "Edward that kind loving lips to the most commonpl The reader book, and fingers, as in a fond p he threw h and looked him with affection. "The girl as Lily Lass her warm thin face of "Edward lord has qu "I do not scholar into girl's fair I. She sho a pretty slightly fr when peop appearance "Don't mean that quite take He sees in illimitable who is, ho ciently high liguence to beloved old me all over all sorts of "Indeed a little. The girl "Don't gentlemen me to-day shadow of or a beat They were "Ghosts "Yes, a They were quite a gal fellows in a had a wild name, som ever so lo scene of th their port to the inn ment. It before you you do p antiquity. The girl's was as lig leaf, and it as if h girl did no "Do you myself co those spect so wicked, so loud an are their q to set the those red sodden eye traits are t I feel like of some p gentlemen bottle and, perha The gi shudder,