

### When Corporal Birch stayed for dinner

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"That's fine," commented Birch, referring, no doubt, to both the provender and the music.

"Man, but I'm proud to have ye here this day," said the old dame, "the dandiest and the finest boys in the wuruld is the R-royal North West Mounted Po-lice. Manny's the time when I lay in me bed at night wid the kiutes howlin' in this wilderness, and knowin' there's them murtherin' devules of furriners all around us, thinks I, only for the dandy boys pat-rollin' around I'd be murdered and massacred over and over a half a dozen times in me bed."

"Oh, well," said Birch, "that's what the police are for."

"Aye, there's police, and police. I'm speakin' of the mounties, that ivery man, woman and child, red, black, white or yellow, thrusts as they would their mother."

"Well, the mounted got a good name, and each one feels that he has to live up to it. But, mother, I'm longing to be away to the war. I'm just waiting for my time to be up. I was fretting about it as I came up to your place for dinner."

"Aye, God help us, it's you and the likes of ye that'll go. Sure, soon there'll be better men below ground nor above it."

In the pause came the voice from the gramophone:

"Oh gramachee, macruiskeen, slanter gal mavourneen,  
Everybody loves an Irish song."

The old woman wiped her eyes with the lilac apron.

"Sure, didn't I have a grandson killed in the war only last month. He went with his father from Ireland. He was to follow us out here, but now, he'll be goin' to a better country, be the grace iv God. It's grieved I am when I think iv him, but I'm not wishin' him back, for when the red blood's flowin' in a good cause the O'Reilly's and the O'Rourke's, my people, were never spar-in', not like some traitors iv Irish that it boils me wid shame to think on."

The old woman held her head high and there was a blue flame in her eyes.

"You're the stuff, mother," said the policeman. "Yes, I'm impatient to be away too, the moment I'm allowed. In the meantime I'll do my duty that I've bound myself to."

"God forever bless ye, me brave lad, in your uprisin' and in your down-sittin', asleep or awake, now and in the world to come. The saints watch over ye, and may your bed in heaven be aisy."

The Corporal reverently bowed his head to receive this typically Irish blessing.

"Well," he said, rising, "I must be going."

He laid down two silver quarters and drew out a little account book.

"Just sign your name here, please, Mrs. O'Reilly," he said.

The old lady looked at him with an odd expression of hurt menace.

"For why would I sign?"

"A receipt for pay for dinner and horse-feed."

"Ye spalpeen ye, I want no pay for dinner and horse-feed."

The Corporal laughed with undiminished good humor. "The Dominion Government allows for this sort of thing, and I appreciate your kindness just as much as if I weren't paying for it. I mean as if the Government weren't paying for it. This receipt and its duplicate are really a benefit to me. They show by your signature that I really am right here on my job, and it tallies with my report about other things."

The old woman listened thoughtfully to this explanation, and became suddenly tractable.

"All right, I'll sign your wee book." So she signed on two papers in a remarkably firm, bold hand, "Mrs. Pat. O'Reilly."

She took up the silver in her worn hand. "So this is mine to do as I like wid?"

"I should say so, and many thanks," returned the policeman, shaking the ashes out of his pipe, preparatory to filling it.

"Well," said the old dame with a cunning smile, "just buy yourself some bacey wid it." And the quarters clinked in his coat pocket.

Birch held up an admonishing finger. "You're a sly woman," said he, "but thanks just the same. I'll buy the tobacco all right and think of the kind old lady who gave it to me. I know your kind, you couldn't sleep easy unless you gave it back."

The old woman laughed light-heartedly.

They shook hands, the mountie with a bow fit for a court, to the "God bless you and good-bye," of the old dame.

As the Corporal rode away from the barn the gramophone was busily playing "The British Grenadier."

### Assurance

By Frank Steele

Beside the tranquil pool of Siloam lilies grew,  
And birds piped joy in melody of song;  
A cooling zephyr, o'er the green sward blew,  
Laden with perfume as it stole along.

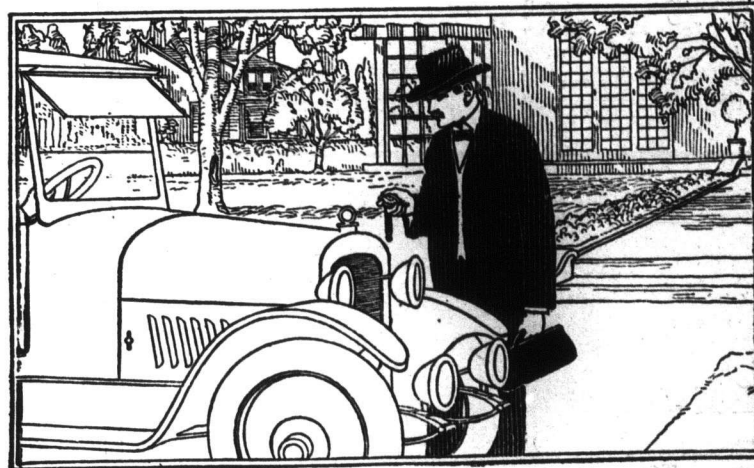
To this fair, quiet spot our Lord drew nigh,  
And followed Him the sick, the lame, the blind,  
Pleading for mercy. And Jesus heard their cry,

And made them whole. O Master, good and kind!

His feet no longer tread o'er Siloam's banks;  
The sick, the lame, the blind now leave in tears;  
But though we see Him not I do give thanks  
That He will heal us still and quell our fears.

If we but seek His great, effulgent Love,  
And plead as children for His healing power;  
The riches of His mercy from above  
Will fall like dew upon the thirsting flower.

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