

became a member, for I considered the direct invasion of Ireland wholly impracticable, while England remained at peace with her neighbors. Canada once gained, would serve as an excellent base of operations against the enemy; and its acquisition did not seem too great an undertaking, from the number, strength, and resources of our people on the American Continent. There was, too, an army of veteran Irish soldiers but just disbanded by the close of civil conflict in the United States, that were ready and anxious to be led to battle for their country. As to the propriety of invading Canada, I have always had but one opinion: Canada is a province of Great Britain; the English flag floats over it and English soldiers protect it, and, I think, wherever the English flag and English soldiers are found, Irishmen have a right to attack. In striking at England through Canada we attempted no more than was done by the American Republic in the war of the Revolution.

The movement of 1866, for two causes, either one of which had been sufficient, resulted disastrously. The men failed to be on the ground in available numbers at the appointed time, and those who did arrive were unprovided with arms and ammunition; various reasons were assigned for these two grave mishaps, some correct, others incorrect, but nearly all reflecting on the capacity and management of the then commanding general, T. W. Sweeny. The charges then made against General Sweeny have since been repeated, but with more bitterness, against myself. In a movement like ours, if unsuccessful, it seems inevitable that some one has to be made the victim. Disappointed patriots then fail to remember that the leader can only issue orders and instructions, and that prompt compliance therewith becomes their duty. Though the attempt be foiled by their neglect to carry out his orders, they are none the less quick to heap ignominy on his head, forgetful of the fact that they themselves were the chief authors of disaster by their criminal inactivity. In the movement of 1866 I occupied a subordinate position, whose duties I performed to the best of my ability. On the failure of the general plan of campaign I returned, as soon as released by the Federal authorities, to my home in Nashville, Tennessee. Then, and for some time afterwards, I labored quietly in the ranks to prepare another effort, without a thought of official connection with the Brotherhood. On the 1st of January, 1868, Col. W. R. Roberts resigned. At the earnest solicitation of P. J. Meehan and the other leading men of the Organization, and on their representations to me that the very existence of the Fenian Brotherhood depended on my action, I was induced to become its president, not, however, before I had exacted from the Senate of F. B. (fifteen in number,) a solemn promise that they would unite with me in preparing for a fight that year. My labors during the spring and summer of 1868 in addressing private and public meetings throughout the country and in attending at State Conventions from Maine to Minnesota, are well known to you. I was ably seconded in this work by the organizing corps, and also received some assistance from the then vice president of the F. B., James Gibbons—a man whose enthusiastic temperament and lack of judgment often betrayed him into making promises of a speedy fight wholly unwarranted by the state of our preparations. This gentleman has since, however, grown profoundly wise, and under the guidance of P. J. Meehan, the evil genius of Fenianism, was greatly instrumental in bringing about the recent failure—*rule or ruin* being the motto of himself and his master. Others of the Senators, instead of giving me the