

# THE HUMAN SIDE

By ARCHIE P. McKISHNIE

## ALONG THE WATER-FRONT.

THE rain spat and splashed a shrill treble to the boom of waves along the water-front. The few street-lights twinkled like spent stars through the mist. Away down at the wharf-side, the electric lights of the *Empress* glowed, a line of tiny red sparks.

Officer Doolin gazed toward them and for the twentieth time that night his hand sought the breast-pocket holding the blue envelope. It held a first-class ticket, berth included, to Dublin. Doolin would be off duty at twelve. At three he would be leaving for the Home Land. He would fetch Nannie and the baby back to this country with him, "plase God."

He turned and passed down his beat, humming a tune. A pile of heavy dock-timber stood in an alley, and Doolin stepped aside in its shelter, that he might light his dark-lantern.

Suddenly the hand, fumbling for a match, dropped to the revolver at his belt.

A man, hatless and coatless, with a bundle close clasped in his arms, had glided from the opposite side of the alley into yellow, misty gas-light.

Noiselessly, Doolin drew his heavy revolver. He wasn't taking any chances with the notorious Darcy. The capture of the escaped convict meant money and promotion to him. As he crept through the shadow, toward the advancing figure, a thought flashed through his mind, that scorched his brain and made him tremble. Could steel bars or prison walls hold him, he wondered, if Nannie were dying and calling him, calling for him as Darcy's dying wife had called for Darcy?

As the man with the bundle slunk opposite, Doolin stepped out.

"Hould up yer hands," he commanded.

The man raised his wild eyes to the officer's, then his head sank on his breast.

"I can't," he said hesitatingly, "you see I've got the baby."

"The phwat?"

Doolin, forgetful of caution, bent above the bundle. A low, wailing cry came from it.

"Where bees yes takin' it?" gasped the officer.

"I promised its mother I'd try and get across the ocean with it," faltered the other. "She asked me to start a new life for its sake, and I thought that maybe over there I might make good. I broke jail to come to her 'cause she was askin' for me all the time and I couldn't get parole. Well, she died this mornin' and I'm ready to go back with you, only I ask you not to put on the bracelets, 'cause I want to hold our baby as long as I kin. It's likely the last chance I'll have."

Doolin stood, looking away through the rain, toward the steamer-lights.

"Right turn," he commanded shortly, "and march in front av me straight t' th' wharf yander."

At the wharf's foot Doolin called a halt.

"Put wan hand behint ye, Darcy," he commanded.

The man did so, and Doolin reached for the blue envelope in his breast-pocket. He glanced hastily around, then placed it in the outstretched hand.

"Your berth's number twinty-siven," he growled, "and remimber you ate at th' bist table—come now, no words, remimber," as the other man turned toward him, a new light in his eyes. "If ye ain't aboard and in bid in fifteen minutes, I'll have ye

pinched, as sure as me name's Doolin."

Fifteen paces down the wharf, Darcy turned and held the bundle he carried aloft.

"He's goin' to be named Doolin," he called. Then he passed quickly on and up the gang-plank.

Down the wet, dreary street paced Doolin and up along the water-front, where the waves boomed hoarsely against the long pier.

At the alley, he turned and looked toward the lights of the *Empress*.

"He's goin' ter be named Doolin," he chuckled.

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## THE VETERANS.

THE morning sunlight flashed above the hill, and sweeping across the Poor-House Farm, bathed the dingy home in a flood of glory. Here and there, across the yellow fields, straggled a pauper toward his day's work.

Down from the implement-shed, toward the long row of berry-bushes near the road, marched two veterans of the Northwest Rebellion. Their pace was very halting, for the aged soldiers had had a long, long march of it. Once, with life and hope before them, had they been comrades in war. Now, with hope dead and life's march nearly ended, they were comrades once again. Throughout the day they worked together side by side. At night, they sat out under the maple and with pipes alight, watched the sunset on the lake. At such times they used to talk of the old days.

At the brow of the hill the white-haired soldiers paused. Away below them lay the city, with the sunlight's gold upon its every turret and steeple.

"If there was music, Cap'in, one might think yon was heaven," spoke the one gently.

"Aye, lootenant, but there is music. Can't you hear it?" cried the other. "It's the band, comrade—and it's playin' th' British Grenadiers."

Sure enough, far down in the valley, sounded the martial strains of a band. The music swelled and grew in volume. Suddenly, the two bent forms straightened and side by side the veterans stood, shoulders squared, hips drawn in and toes turned out at an angle of 45 degrees. As around the hill swung the battalion in step to the stirring music of its band. Onward, up the wide, white road, came the happy boys in red, while on the hill-top, two old veterans stood with tears streaming down their wrinkled cheeks and feet painfully marking time to the music.

As the battalion advanced, the old soldiers saluted. The quick eye of the young commanding officer saw it and he understood.

"Halt!" rang the command. "Right turn."

The soldiers on the road faced the soldiers on the hill.

"Salute!"

There was a flash of red, as five hundred arms rose and fell.

Then the company re-formed and passed on.

The veterans watched it until it was only a red line in the distance, and the strains of the British Grenadiers had died away.

Then by common impulse, they turned towards the berry-patch.

In the heart of each was a joy that would sing until the earth of potters' field covered it forever. They were paupers no longer, but veterans, veterans who had been honoured by the battalion.



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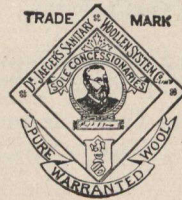
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