

But early, perhaps too soon, a shadow came upon the happy home, and the loving music was forever hushed, though the songs and the precepts endured. McGee never ceased to speak of his mother in terms of the purest filial affection. In 1841, at eighteen years of age, the lad, inscribing a poem to his mother, sings :

"The sunbeam falls bright on the emerald tomb,
And the flow'rets spring gay from the cold bed of death,
Which encloses within it, oh ! earth's saddest doom,
Perfections too pure for the tenants of earth."

Of McGee's schoolboy days we have little or no record beyond the fact that he attended the day school at Wexford, whither his family removed. We can entertain no doubt, however, that the boy must have been a diligent scholar, not only of general literature, but especially of the legendary and folk lore of Ireland.

From whatever cause, at the age of seventeen, McGee decided to cross the ocean and make his home in America, and in the year 1842 he took ship for Boston. With what bitter feelings of regret he left the beloved home of his childhood, his juvenile poems, instinct with the anguish of boyish grief, attest. But no vain regrets were permitted to thwart his purpose, and he arrived safely on the western shores ; and, after a short visit to an aunt in Rhode Island, reached Boston in June, 1842. The immediately succeeding 4th of July was too much for the imaginative boy to resist, and he fell a victim to the oration fever, delivering himself, almost within a month of his arrival, of an oration which did him this much good, that a day or two after he was offered, and accepted, a situation on the *Boston Pilot*, becoming two years later the editor-in-chief. The times, fraught with the "Native American" excitement, and the intensity of the Repeal agitation, which was at its height both in America and in Ireland, furnished just such an opportunity as McGee's genius required for its display, and, with all the energy begotten of earnest conviction and active sympathetic patriotism, he threw himself heart and soul into his congenial work. In the columns of his own journal, on the platform at Repeal meetings, by the lectures which he delivered throughout New England, he exerted an influence which was widely felt, and acquired a name for himself, not only in this country, but in the old land itself, where kindred spirits watched with admiration and surprise the workings of their exiled fellow countryman. Proud, indeed, must the young Wexford lad have been when, across the ocean, whose billows he himself had crossed heavy laden and heart sore but three years previously, there came a message from the proprietor of the *Dublin Freeman's Journal*, then one of Ireland's leading papers, inviting the youthful scribe to assume its editorial chair. Can aught be more pleasing to an exile than the assurance that his labours abroad find favour in the eyes of those at home? Can any praise be more appreciated than that which is wafted to the wanderer from the honoured ones