

## Exiles of Erin

Sir William Gregory

1894

Edmund O'Flaherty made my acquaintance in 1847, when, after losing Dublin, I endeavoured to obtain a seat for Galway county. He took up my cause with great warmth, and though he had little influence, still his cleverness and quickness and inexhaustible resource would have been of great use had there been any contest, I had a high opinion of his dexterity and ability, and introduced him to the Duke of Newcastle, who was anxious to secure for the Peelite party the alliance of the Irish members. This was the more easy as the Peelites had to a man opposed the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, to which William Keogh, a very dear friend of Edmund O'Flaherty, headed the resistance. The duke invited O'Flaherty to dine with him, was immensely taken with him, constantly communicated with him, employed him as an emissary, and gave him a Commissionership of Income Tax in Ireland, with a promise of something better. He was one of the pleasantest men I ever met, full of fun and spirits and singularly soft-hearted and kind. His hospitality was unbounded, and when I remarked on his large expenditure, which my intimacy with him permitted me to do, he always said that he was engaged with the Birmingham Attwoods in iron speculations, which brought him in at times good sums of money, and that, *en attendant*, he had no scruple in running into debt. He was certainly the most avowedly unscrupulous man I ever met, but he was so open and candid about his laxity that I always treated it as a joke. Not so, however, my mother and Lord Dunkellin. Neither of them could bear him, and both warned me over and over again that I should have reason to regret the intimacy. To all this I turned a deaf ear. I know that he had a sincere affection for me, and to this day I fully believe he would have suffered much rather than have done me any injury. My affairs, too, were in a most embroiled state, and he constantly advised me with great ability upon them, and rendered himself a kind of William of Deloraine "good at need" by obtaining loans for me in all directions. This ultimately continued for several years, till one morning, in the early summer of 1854, I met Keogh coming down the steps of the Reform Club. He was evidently much discomposed, and said, "Can you tell me about Edmund O'Flaherty?" "What about him?" said I. "Don't you know that he has gone either abroad or to America, and that warrants are said to be out against him for extensive forgeries?" was Keogh's reply. I felt utterly overwhelmed, for I was sure at once that the accusation was true. It was but too true. He had forged the names of Lord Bolingbroke, Lord Dunkellin, Bernal Osborne, Mr. Godley, and my own upon bills, besides those of other persons I have forgotten. An action was tried against me in Dublin on two of these bills. It lasted two days, and the jury almost immediately gave a verdict in my favour. The plaintiff sought to prove two things—that I was so involved in money matters with O'Flaherty that he was, as it were, empowered to sign my name, and, secondly, that both I and my witnesses might be mistaken as to my handwriting, and that the signatures were really mine. A very curious test was employed, which, had I made the slightest error in dealing with it, might have lost me the case, but which gained me the suit at once by the correctness of my answer. Half a dozen closed envelopes were placed in the hands of my witnesses, a small piece of the corner of each of them was cut out, and in this open space there appeared my signature, but to what document it was affixed it was unknown. Some of my witnesses were very doubtful as to the signatures, and refused to swear whether they were mine or not. Some they thought were decidedly not mine. When my cross-examination came on these envelopes were, towards the close of it, produced. I was asked the question about the signatures, and I declared, looking at them one after another, that they were all mine. "Do you swear that?" said FitzGibbon, the counsel. "I do swear it," said I. "Give me back the envelopes," he replied in a sullen way. "No, my lord, I claim to have these envelopes opened on the spot and handed to the jury," cried I to the judge, looking up steadily at the jury, and from whom I never took

my eyes. The document in each envelope was a letter of mine to O'Flaherty of which only the signature appeared. I saw in one second that my cause was won.

Among the many forgeries was one on Bernal Osborne. O'Flaherty was dining one night in company with a naval officer, who expatiated on the readiness with which a Jew at Plymouth, named Marcus, lent money to officers, and he mentioned that Marcus had done business with some admiral's official, who was supposed to have given him a favourable contract in consequence. O'Flaherty said, "I am going shortly to Plymouth, and, as I am doing up my house in Dublin, I should like to borrow a small sum, even at usurious interest, in a remote place, for I don't wish to apply to my bankers, and it would be all over the town if I, a Commissioner of Income Tax, went to the house of a London or Dublin lender." The officer offered him a letter of introduction, in which he described him as a man of position, Income Tax Commissioner, etc., etc. A few days afterwards O'Flaherty presented himself to Mr. Marcus with his introduction. He said he called on him desiring to speak confidentially to him. The fact was that Mr. Bernal Osborne, the Secretary to the Admiralty, had been spoken to by the heads of the Government on account of his want of hospitality, and that he was obliged to set up an establishment and give dinners ; but he had, owing to the bad times, drawn but little rent from Ireland, and he wished to borrow £1500 for six months. The Jew hesitated. "Who told him about me?" said he. "Why, Captain So-and-So," naming the captain who had given him the letter, and adding that the letter was given in order to carry out the transaction from Mr. Osborne. Still hesitation on the part of Marcus. Then O'Flaherty played his trump card. "By the way, Mr. Osborne mentioned that I might say to you that certain contracts would be shortly advertised." "Have you got the bills?" said Marcus. Two bills for £1500 were produced, signed by Bernal Osborne, "I must have a second name on them," said Marcus. "No," said O'Flaherty, "Mr. Osborne will never allow it. He demands positive secrecy." "My God!" cried Marcus, "what can I do! My father-in-law won't give the money without two names. Why won't you put your name, Mr. O'Flaherty, on the bills, to serve your friend?" "I have never put my name to a bill in my life," said O'Flaherty, very solemnly ; "but I am afraid I shall have to do so shortly for £300, as I want to fit up my reception-rooms, and render them suitable to my position. I must then get the money for Mr. Osborne elsewhere ; and as for that navy contract, remember I made no allusion to it. I treat you, Mr. Marcus, as a man of honour." "Stop, stop, Mr. O'Flaherty," cried the Jew, in an agony. "Why won't you serve your friend by giving him your name? You know he is quite safe, and, though my father-in-law cashes the bills, I promise you no one will ever hear a word about them, and let me lend you the £300 you want." O'Flaherty consented with reluctance, signed the bills, and returned to London, with about £1700 in his pocket, just one week before his final disappearance. Marcus told the whole story to several persons as I have narrated it ; among others, to William Keogh, who was my informant, and who repeated it often in my company. [1]

I was greatly grieved at this lamentable conclusion of O'Flaherty's career. The accompanying letter from John Robert Godley will show that I was not the only person who had formed a strong regard for Edmund O'Flaherty :—

" June 23, 1854.

" My dear Gregory,

" I am deeply shocked by the contents of your letter. Though I was quite aware of poor O'Flaherty's obvious faults, yet his good nature and simplicity had quite won upon me, and I really felt a strong sympathy for him. Of all the extravagant men I knew there were few whom I should less easily have suspected of a dishonourable action, in the ordinary sense of the word, but I suppose he became desperate from want. I would not judge him too harshly. His character was utterly weak, and I am sure there was more weakness than wickedness at the bottom of his crime. I pity you, my dear Gregory, more than I can tell you. I used to think

your attachment to him undue and exaggerated, yet I can imagine him being very lovable, in his way, before he became spoiled. Anyhow, you must indeed be wretched now ; it is hard enough to lose a dear friend, but to have him turn out unworthy is a blow for which there is no consolation to be offered.”

I always remember that he never did me any injury intentionally, but would have gladly spent money, time, and trouble to do me a kindness. He did not foresee that his forgeries on me might have been ruinous. He was so versatile, so self-reliant, that he always looked to some lucky chance or speculation or marriage to put him on his legs again. He went to America, and there assumed the name of Captain Stewart. He began by writing for one of the papers, made some money, and then took a theatre, the Winter Garden, if I recollect aright. He was at first very successful, and he rapidly rose to be one of the most popular men in New York, famous for his hospitality and little pleasant supper-parties. It was well known there was something against him, but it was supposed that he had left England being unable to pay his debts ; moreover, at New York, a high standard of morality is not a requisite. Over and over again I have been surprised at hearing from Englishmen of great position, on their return from America, how they had been entertained by the pleasantest and wittiest of Irishmen, Captain Stewart. When I went there, in 1859, Mr. Brewster, afterwards Chancellor, warned me on no account to allow old feelings of friendship to prevail and to renew my former acquaintance ; that my character would be seriously compromised were I to do so. I did meet him once in the streets. We looked hard at each other and passed on. I have heard that he spent the large income he was making, and had fallen into poverty. In spite of all his errors I have always kept a soft corner in my heart for him. He died, 1887, in great poverty.

There was ten years' interregnum in my political life, six of which I would fain have blotted out. These six years were a time of struggle and humiliation, during which I abandoned society and public life for the turf only, during which I became deeply involved, chiefly through liabilities for friends, and during which I was forced to sell two-thirds of my ancestral estate. But at last, by a strong effort, I turned over a new leaf, and, though a poor man, became a free man, and once more in my right mind.

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The flight of O'Flaherty and the revelation of his doings came upon me like a shock, and I felt that there was only one course left to me, instantly to abandon the turf altogether, to face all my liabilities, to sell sufficient land to pay off all charges on the estate, and to make the best terms I could with usurious creditors, to whom I was largely indebted, partly on account of myself, but chiefly on account of friends who had taken their departure to other lands and left me to bear the brunt. I was guided in every step by Mr. Brewster, afterwards Lord Chancellor, and by that advice I placed my affairs in the hands of Mr. Bate, a Dublin solicitor, who proved himself to be an able counsellor and a true friend. Most fortunate for me and for my property was the large jointure of my mother and the arrears due on it, which protected the estate and secured the most valuable part of it to me, together with the demesne of Coole. Most fortunate was I in having such a mother, whose whole life was one of devotion to me. Under any circumstances it would have been necessary to sell a large portion of the property to clear off the mortgages not of my creation ; but when the question arose whether more should be sold, to pay off my mother's arrears of jointure, there was considerable difference of opinion. The object in doing so was to obtain a fund to settle my private debts. Some of my friends urged us to cling to the land, looking forward to a great rise in value of it here-after ; but my mother took a different view, and insisted on selling the outlying portions of the estate up to the full amount of the arrears due to her, in order to relieve me, so far as it lay in her power, from the misery and humiliation of debt, and every pound that came to her was thus expended. How wise was her resolution present events testify.

Considerable time elapsed before all the preliminaries for the sale of a portion of my estate were completed, and in the interim, during the spring and autumn of 1853, I devoted myself with enthusiasm to the construction of a pinetum in the nut-wood of Coole. I ransacked the nursery grounds of Bristol, Liverpool, and Exeter, and planted all the specimens that were invented and got up by ingenious nurserymen for the benefit of Coniferomaniacs, as we were then called. Judging from the amount of the bills paid, and the little result which followed, the appellation in my case was not misapplied. Half the conifers, indeed more than half, which would flourish exceedingly on any soil but limestone, died forthwith with me, and only a few seemed really to enjoy life. Among those who have done pre-eminently well are the *Pinus insignis*, and the giants in the nut-wood were only planted in 1855. They are the finest I have ever seen of their age.

My pinetum being well launched, I (1855) determined to pay a winter's visit to Egypt, and, on my return to Coole, I occupied much of my time in preparing a full account of my journey, and of the various places I visited, which included every spot of interest from Cairo to the Second Cataract. This, together with a narrative of a tour in 1857 with Sir Sandford Graham through Tunis, I had printed, in 1859, in two volumes. There was so much in these volumes written carelessly and playfully that I determined on not publishing them, but kept them for private circulation only. They were all burnt in 1873, in the *Pantechicon*, except two volumes I still possess and a few I had given to friends.

The rest of the year 1856 I devoted to completing my pinetum, and in preparing for the intending sale of my estate. In order to have the carriage of the sale, it was necessary to have a friendly creditor to place the property in the Landed Estates Court. This friendly creditor was my uncle, the Rev. William Gregory, who in every dealing which I ever had with him showed invariable kindness and consideration. On his recommendation, I appointed Mr. Henry Harrison Briscoe to be my agent. He was a man of high reputation, having been elected by the Poor Law Board to act as vice-guardian on several occasions. I had previously been most unfortunate in my agents, but with Mr. Briscoe my troubles came to an end ; he had every quality for an agent, especially at a critical period for his employer—uprightness, temper, and judgment. I fully believe that if he had been employed from the first there would have been no necessity for the sale of the estate, though, most fortunately, it was sold at good prices, and the remainder cleared.

The sale was announced for the — —, and before going into court I was warned by a very astute friend, who had been through the same ordeal, that there was great danger, in so large a sale, of many lots being knocked down at an inadequate price, as well as of a combination among buyers. He had got over this danger by means of the assistance of friends who had bid for him. I talked over the matter with Mr. ———, afterwards M.P. for——, a well-known railway and dock contractor in those days, with whom I was on intimate terms. He said, “ Trust to me, I will send you over an Englishman, a very clever fellow, who dresses the capitalist, and has all the manner of one. You must give him a list of the lots of the estate, with the lowest prices at which you consider it advisable to let them go, and he will bid up to that price. It will be impossible for the judge to put up the lots again for sale under a year, and in the meantime you can dispose of them. Of course the judge will be furious, and if he can lay hold of my friend he will make him acquainted with the interior of an Irish jail ; but there is not much likelihood of that, and he will willingly run the risk for a ten-pound note, which you will hand him after the sale. He will present himself at Kildare-street Club the morning before the sale, and will present my card.” Sure enough the capitalist, calling himself Mr. Almond, of Bolton, presented himself at the club in due time, and looked all over a well-to-do English-man—the very picture of neatness ; in short, rather Quakerly was his attire, and his whole aspect denoted wealth. The sale came on, and Judge Hargreave presided. The chief purchaser of the Kinvara estate was a Mr. Comerford, who had been a carpenter, and had

made money ; but he bought, as the tenants had reason to know, with borrowed capital. It was only the Kinvara lots which went badly ; the land was stony and poor, and by no means in general favour. Here stepped in Mr. Almond, and was declared the purchaser of the first lot which did not reach the price named. The judge asked for his name. “ Mr. Halmond, my lord, of Bolton,” was the answer. “ Halmond,” said the judge, “ do you write it with an H ?” “ No, my lord, with a Hay. Halmonds and raisins, my lord,” replied Mr. Almond, quite facetiously, and rubbing his hands. Several lots were knocked down to him, apparently by the encouragement of the judge, who urged him continually with, “ Now, one more bid, Mr. Almond.” “ Well, one more, my lord, but I am afraid I shall get very little return for my money,” and so the acute Englishman just gave a bid sufficient to cover my margin, and was either beaten by Comerford or declared the purchaser. I could hardly keep my countenance, so infinitely droll, and so perfect was the manner of Mr. Almond. When the sale was over, I pressed a ten-pound note into his hand, and said I hoped he would leave me his address. He said, with a benevolent smile, that for some time to come he was not likely to have any fixed abode to which he would like to invite the very civil Judge Hargreave, but that his services would be always available if I wrote to Mr.—, and so began and ended my relations with Mr. Almond. I need hardly add that Judge Hargreave was furious ; but his wrath was of no avail. The sale on the whole was a fair one ; much was disposed of at twenty-five years’ purchase, and much of the poor land at eighteen. The average was about twenty years’ purchase. Though I parted with it in regret, I cannot now but regard this transaction as my salvation.

I may here mention that the result of this sale had a very strong influence afterwards in my political career, and rendered me a very advanced politician on the tenants’ side, on the landlord and tenant question. Shortly after my father’s death I visited every holding on the estate, and was struck with the results of the unflagging industry of the tenants who occupied the light, stony land about Kinvara. They had by their labour, and with no allowance from the landlord, cleared large portions of their farms, and the great monuments, as they called them, of stones, attested their industry. From these clear patches they had excellent barley crops, and were in prosperity. My great-uncle and father were both just men, and allowed them to enjoy the fruits of their toil for many years without raising the rent. On the occasion of my visit, when I was about to drive away, I said to these tenants, who had assembled to greet me, that I was surprised to see so much good land, and that I thought it was capable of bearing a higher rent. Of course this called forth a general protestation, and very sad were their faces ; but they soon cleared up when I said to them, “ Were I to take one shilling out of your pockets on account of the additional value you have given to my property by your industry I should be a robber and ashamed to look you in the face. You can go on in good heart with your work, and be assured that while I own this property your rent shall never be raised on account of your improvements.” Such were my intentions, and such was the confidence of those tenants that they never asked for a lease, or I should have gladly given it to them. When the sale came on I was so occupied with other matters that I quite forgot their danger. Indeed it never crossed my mind, for I had then heard of no particular instances of rapacity on the part of new purchasers ; but I very soon had a terrible account of my remissness in not securing these poor folk. Mr. Comerford, to whom I have referred, as soon as he was placed in possession of the lots he had purchased on which those tenants dwelt, lost no time in dealing with them in the most remorseless fashion. The rents were raised so as to pay £5 per cent, on the borrowed capital, and a large income besides for himself. They were almost invariably doubled, and in some cases £5 was charged where £2 had been the rate of the former rent. But he killed the goose for the golden egg, the town of Kinvara was all but ruined, and the best tenants ran away. I met one in Australia, at Ballarat, and he assured me he was well off when I was his landlord, but a pauper three years after, when he emigrated. Such were the proceedings of the man whom the excellent parish priest, Father Arthur, never called by any other name than Holofernes ; and it was such proceedings, which I found were too common elsewhere, which made me a tenant righter, and the advocate of measures which, in a different state of society, I should have opposed.

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When the session of 1859 was over I determined on paying a visit to Canada and the United States. I had often received letters from my uncle, Colonel O'Hara, who had settled at Toronto, which had greatly impressed me by their ability, and I had heard so much of the charm of his society and of his family that I had long looked forward to the trip. Two days before starting I met Geoffrey Browne, now Lord Oranmore, at Kildare-street Club, and, on my mentioning my plans, he proposed to join me. I agreed ; he telegraphed to Liverpool and obtained the vacant berth in my cabin.

We sailed in the *Anglo-Saxon* on the 1st of September. We were to have started the day before, but the hurricane which raged caused a delay. It was terrific. Several ships had gone ashore in the Mersey, and the sight of these wrecks was not a pleasant one as we made our way by them. We got on board with great difficulty and danger, and after a few had reached the *Anglo-Saxon's* deck at the risk of their lives, the tender was obliged to sheer off till low water. For eight days this tremendous storm raged, and was the grandest and the most fearful sight I ever witnessed. At one moment we were perched on the summit of an enormous rolling wave, and then descended into an abyss, with a wall of green water rising right above us, but the ship went up bravely and easily.

For a day and a night we made but little way. It was almost impossible to remain on deck except on all fours, and, as the cabin was battened down, our time was not spent agreeably. But not a rope or bolt gave way, the engines did their work nobly, and the captain, a God-fearing, hard-headed Scotchman, never once, during those eight days of danger, took off his clothes, and inspired general confidence, even among the ladies, by his unceasing care and calmness. Once, however, he showed what he thought of our danger. At dinner one day, a young pert cockney said to him, in a chaffing manner, " I say, captain, if the rudder-chains gave way, what would you do ?" I shall not readily forget the captain's solemn reply : " Young man, if you knew how near you are to meeting your Maker, you would not ask such questions."

One of our fellow-passengers was John Head, the son of the Governor of Canada, who was going out to join his father. Sir E. Head, and family. He was a most charming young fellow, full of originality, and evidently of a very high order of ability. His mind was directed to scientific studies, and he was to enter at Cambridge next term, where every one prognosticated for him a distinguished career. When we reached Quebec we received an invitation from his father to join him at Montreal, and to proceed thence to Trois Rivières, a town at the mouth of the St. Lawrence river, from which we were to make an excursion of four or five days into the wild country on the banks of that river. We joyfully accepted the invitation, and had a most amusing public dinner at Trois Rivières, where the jolly mayor gave the health of the jolly Commander-in-Chief, Sir Fenwick Williams, of Kars, who accompanied us from Montreal. He wound up with a musical outburst, accompanied with the beating of a big drum, with a " bomm, bomm, bomm, and a boom, boom, boom—our artillery general's health, and boom, boom, boom." It was extremely comical, so much so that we all continued singing " boom, boom, boom," with the big drum beating time, and the mayor in the greatest fury in vain endeavouring to lay the spirit he had let loose.

Next day we started in boats of birch bark manned by half-breed Indians and employes of the Hudson's Bay Company. Nothing could be more delightful ; the marvellous tints of Canadian autumn had coloured the woods in purple, orange, and crimson of every shade. The weather at first was perfect. When we came to rough water on the river we got out of our canoes and carried them till the water was smooth again. Then we entered a chain of lakes, and the scene was very pretty. We had five or six boats, all rowing in procession ; each of the

rowers was clad in a red flannel jacket, and at a signal the steersman of the foremost boat tossed up his paddle and gave the signal for one of the old-fashioned Canadian songs, this was taken up by the next boat, and so all along the line, and the lake was full of music. I remember the beginning of one song, the refrain of which was extremely pretty—

“ Le fils du roi il est méchant,  
Il a volé mon canard blanc.”

Our first day's excursion was to the magnificent Falls of Shaweegan, the finest I had ever seen, not having yet visited Niagara. The great river comes tearing down a gorge, and, turning suddenly, meets a huge rock in mid-stream which bars its progress. It dashes itself high up in the air with a crash and turmoil heard far away. We bivouacked near it our first night.

Our party the first day consisted of Sir E. and Lady, Miss and John Head, Sir Fenwick Williams, and some friends from Trois Rivières, G. Browne and myself and Monsieur Cartier, the Prime Minister of Canada, once a rebel, and I believe out in the Papillon rebellion, but now as loyal a subject as her Majesty ruled over, and a most delightful companion, full of fun and with exuberant spirits. We halted toward evening near Shaweegan, where there was a house which the Governor and his party occupied, but we put up in tents and slept most comfortably and soundly on spruce branches, after a merry dinner. The evening wound up with Canadian songs and dancing, and M. Cartier, in the fulness of high spirits, seized a fiddle from one of the *voyageur*'s, jumped on an empty barrel and kept us in continual laughter by his songs and drolleries. I have known all our Prime Ministers since 1840, but I hardly think any combination of circumstances would have made any one of them give way to such friskiness, not even Lord Derby, in spite of his love for a practical joke. The next day the cares of office carried off Monsieur Cartier, to our universal regret ; but for two more days we had delightful journeys through beautiful woodland scenery and by magnificent waterfalls, passing occasionally the house of a settler, which was indicated by the smoke curling through the forest. It was on the second day that we arrived at the fine Falls of Grande Mère, and there we were forced by rain to remain two days. The weather clearing up we went on to the Falls of Les Pelles, and thence returned to our camp at Grande Mère. At dinner there was a good deal of banter at the expense of John Head for not bathing as the rest of us did, and Sir Edmund said laughingly to his son, “ If you do not get up and bathe to-morrow, I shall send the boatmen into your tent to pull you out of bed and duck you,” and I added, having just had a swim before dinner in the river, a strong warning to all not to bathe from a very tempting spot, as the sand was almost a quicksand, and that had I not been a good swimmer, I should have run great risk. The following morning, at about nine o'clock. Sir E. Head had gone out fishing, the ladies had not yet appeared, the boatmen were all sitting on the bank, and G. Browne and myself finished or were going to finish our breakfast in the cottage close to the falls, when a cry arose from the river, and there was a running to and fro of the boatmen in great agitation. Presently Captain Kettalich, the aide-de-camp, ran up and said, “ John Head is drowned.” We ran down immediately, a canoe was rapidly brought to the spot, and the boatmen dived all around the place where John Head had disappeared. He had run down from his tent, and, although quite unable to swim, he had entered the water at exactly the spot against which I had warned him and others. His feet slipped from under him, owing to the impalpable sand on which he tried to make a footing. Three times he rose above the surface, three times he sank in the full view of the boatmen on the bank, they merely remarking what a capital diver he was. It was not till he sank for the last time that the alarm was given, but the body had been nearly twenty minutes under water ere it was reached. He was close to the shore, not more than three or four yards, and apparently on all-fours, but there were sixteen feet of water where he lay, and a strong undercurrent. We set to work to endeavour to revive him, and in a short time Sir E. Head, who had been bathing and fishing, came and took the direction with perfect calmness and self-command. For three hours we rocked the body to and fro, and sometimes inspired by hope from air-bubbles which came

from the lips, but at last the hopelessness of our task became apparent. Sir Edmund looked me in the face and said, "It is hopeless." I could only bow. He turned to his poor wife and daughter, held up his hands, and fell flat on his face, perfectly senseless, as, in the words of Dante, "Caddi come corpo morto cade." One can readily imagine the misery which had succeeded all our joyousness. For two days we had to make our way down the river with the body of the poor boy wrapped up in a blanket. It was not till we reached Trois Rivières that we obtained a coffin. Sir Edmund was completely unnerved, and could do nothing, but Lady Head bore up wonderfully, and I was able to help them a good deal during that dreadful journey. When we parted she took my hand in both of hers and said, "May God thank you for your kindness to us. Come and see me when you can ; it will be a relief to me to see one whom I associate with the recollections of my dear child." And Sir Edmund seemed also to be much gratified when we expressed our intention to go down to Quebec to be present at the funeral. The cemetery at Quebec is a lovely spot overlooking the broad St. Lawrence. The people flocked in from all quarters to the funeral, and their conduct was admirable. There was no appearance of idle, vulgar curiosity, but they came as if their object were to fulfil a melancholy duty. The maple in its gorgeous beauty was waving over the grave, and solemn ancient pines added to the impressiveness of the scenery, I did not think the poor parents could have had the courage to face the ceremony, but they did.

JOHN HEAD,  
Aged 19 Years and 7 Months.  
*Died September 25, 1859.*

This was the inscription on the coffin. I could not help recalling the words of Tennyson, which seemed to come home to my heart as we looked from Spencer Wood and saw the ships with their white sails sweeping down the St. Lawrence to Quebec —

"The stately ships go down  
To the haven under the hill ;  
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still !"

From Ottawa I went to Pictou, to pay my friend Mr. Ryland a visit, and thence to Toronto, to my uncle Walter. I had heard that the establishment was extremely ree-raw, but, on the contrary, everything was orderly, very good living, and the warmest welcome. I was greatly taken with them all, but was only able to stay with them a day or two, having to go on to Niagara to meet Browne, who had preceded me. I need say nothing of Niagara, except that it was perhaps the only sight of my life which exceeded my previous expectations. No picture can give an adequate idea of the wondrous majestic calmness of that ceaseless fall, of its treacherous slate-green water, and of the pools of foam below. From Niagara I went to Chicago, and my letters are full of admiration of this great and ever-rising city, and from Chicago I traversed the State of Illinois to Quincy, a place of evil fame for rowdyism. I attended a fair held there, where there was a race between the ladies of Illinois and of Missouri, which was extremely amusing. As the Missouri lady won I fully expected there would be an outburst among the Illinois citizens ; but everything was orderly, though I heard in the hotel that a murder or two was expected during the night, not premeditated, certainly, but owing to difficulties arising among gentlemen from transactions during the fair.

We left Quincy and the rival female jockeys without regret, and took steamer to Louisville. The steamer was, as Mississippi steamers always are, of immense proportions, with very comfortable cabins, excellent living, and gorgeously fitted up. I had hitherto been under the impression that the Mississippi was a sluggish stream, flowing through swamps and fever-haunted morasses, but this higher part of it is extremely fine. There are, for some miles ere reaching Alton, in Illinois, high banks or bluffs, as they call them, which were of remark-

able beauty, and at that time, October 13, decked in all the magnificence of the American autumn. At Hannibal, quite a new place, and the point of departure for gold-diggers to the west, we took on board a lot of adventurers just returning from the Rocky Mountains to Pike's Peak. Such a set of ruffians in appearance I never saw before ; but they were extremely well behaved, and, though in rags and unkempt, very excellent, fine fellows. In the Western States at that period, for this was thirty-nine years ago, the disregard for human life was rather a striking feature. An Englishman on board told me he had been at Quincy only two years, and that during this time eight men had been pistolled or stabbed to death in quarrels, to say nothing of wounds, and yet Quincy was but a small place. While we were discussing this phase of society an American gentleman, wishing to do the honours of the customs of these regions, rushed up and urged me to go forward at once, if I desired to see a difficulty. On proceeding to the scene of action, I found the captain surrounded by a crowd, and remonstrating with a most ill-favoured, ragged young scapegrace, who was threatening to make some other man " smell hell." I asked a bystander what was going on, and he replied coolly, sending forth a squirt of tobacco juice, "Wal, I guess that 'ere gentleman wants to let blood from that other gentleman ;" and so it was, the youth had the sacrificial knife quite ready, and was only calmed down by the assurance of the captain that he would put a bullet through him if he heard any more nonsense. The youth believed the assurance and slunk away, cursing with remarkably strange oaths. The wild adventurers from Pike's Peak and myself became fast friends during this voyage. By good luck the *Times*, of which I had several recent numbers, had been giving very interesting descriptions of gold-mining districts, and among them was one, if I recollect right, of Pike's Peak ; at all events they were highly pleased with the accounts, and requested me to read them aloud to them. This was the cause of our friendship, and most warm were the invitations to Pike's Peak. On my hinting at the insecurity of life and property in those remote diggings, one of my friends replied, " I calculate, sir, your property is safer than on board this boat ; if a man steals we jest hang him up right off at once." And so they did, and the consequence was that in no part of the United States was there more honesty than among these wild desperadoes. I was highly amused at meeting my friends the day following our arrival at St. Louis ; they had discarded mocassins and leather leggings, and were arrayed in polished boots, sticking-plaster waistcoats, black coats, and chimney-pot hats, and seemed as conceited as butterflies just escaped from the chrysalis state.

From St. Louis, but recently the last stage of civilization, just on the outposts of savagedom, but now a fine flourishing town in a flourishing and settled district, I proceeded to Louisville, in Kentucky, partly to see that State, and partly to see the Mammoth Caves, which, however, I was unable to reach. At Louisville I was standing, in the evening, under the lamplight of the door of the hotel, when a waggoner rushed from his car and horses and almost embraced me, crying out, " Oh, my dear master, don't you remember me." I had not forgotten him. He was a tenant's son, and had crossed the Atlantic to seek his fortune some years previously. He told me the waggon and horses were his own, and that he was running, though quite a young man, into much money. The next day he brought a concourse of former inhabitants of my property, and of the vicinity, and we had a long and pleasant chat on home matters, and on their own affairs and prospects in America, which were certainly very encouraging.

At Cincinnati, to which I next proceeded, I had more gaiety. The porter of my hotel discovered that he had married a daughter of one of my tenants, a certain Mrs. Regan, of Lissatunna, and invited me to visit his wife that evening. She had been housemaid at Coole, a very good-looking and remarkably clever girl. I found her in snug rooms, well furnished, and full of friends from Gort, and the region thereabout. Nothing could be pleasanter than the evening which, with the help of tea, and I am afraid not a little whisky punch, was prolonged to a late hour. The whole assembly accompanied me to the hotel, and at parting my hostess

whispered something to her husband, who with a smile said to me, "I hope your honour won't be offended with the request, but my wife wishes your honour will, for the sake of old times, give her a kiss at parting." I willingly acceded, and gave the asked for accolade, and the party broke up with a cheer to celebrate it.

From Cincinnati I made my way to Cumberland, Virginia, to Washington, to Baltimore, and finally to New York.

I must mention Harper's Ferry. It is a small town at the junction of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, but of importance as being one of the armouries of the United States. Three days before my arrival it had acquired an immense notoriety, and, from the 17th of October to the 19th, the main topic of conversation, through the length and breadth of America, was "The Revolution of Harper's Ferry." On that day a band of desperate men, inflamed by religious fanaticism, and without a particle of sordid motive, seized, and held for a whole day, this armoury of the United States. This foray was contrived by Commander John Brown, a God-fearing man, deeply imbued with religious convictions, and perfectly convinced that he had received a Heaven-sent mission to act as a second Moses, and lead the slaves out of captivity. He seems to have inherited from remote ancestors a profound hatred of injustice, coupled with strong religious convictions. He was descended from John Brown, of Ashford, who was burned at the stake in his native village during the persecution of Henry VIII., and his more immediate ancestor had left England to worship with freedom in America. His early career was that of a tanner in Ohio, whence he removed to Kansas, then the theatre almost of civil war between the advocates of slavery and the abolitionists. There he made himself known and feared by his bloody retaliation of the murders and spoliation of the slave-holding party, and thence he removed to the Alleghanies. All this long period of his life he had ever before him, as his paramount act of duty, the liberation of God's children, as he called the negroes, by some signal insurrection. Emerson, writing of him, says, "It was not a piece of spite and revenge, a plot of two years, or of twenty years, but the keeping of an oath made to heaven and earth forty-seven years before."

For some time he had lived in the hills near the town, had obtained arms, and had inspired with his enthusiasm other fanatics like himself. Their plans were well laid; the arms, being seized, were to be handed over to the negroes, and emancipation proclaimed right and left. He confidently reckoned on a fierce and unanimous rising of the negroes, but, fortunately, he was disappointed, for a scene of bloodshed, robbery, and violation would have ensued which would have laid waste some of the fairest provinces of the Union. Not a negro stirred. He said in his letter, "The true object to be sought is first of all to destroy the money value of slave property, and that can only be done by rendering slave property insecure." The attacking party got possession of the arms and the stores, took the chief persons and the Government workmen prisoners, and then entrenched themselves in one of the public buildings, expecting vainly the rising of the black population. When the troops and volunteers arrived the following day they refused to surrender, and fought till thirteen were killed, and the rest, except one, who contrived to escape, desperately wounded. During the fight his son was shot dead. He laid down his rifle for a minute, and arranged his limbs decently, then took it up again, merely remarking, "This is the third I have lost in the cause." John Brown was made prisoner, and was being taken to Washington either by the train in which we were travelling or by the preceding one. He was supposed to be dying of his wounds. The Governor of Virginia, Henry Wise, one of the most fierce fire-eaters of the South, got in at Harper's Ferry with some other officials, and invited us to his carriage. Of course the conversation was on the subject of recent events. Some one of the party applied to John Brown the opprobrious name of "coward." "Sir," said Henry Wise, in a tone the sternness of which I still remember, "you know not him whom you are defaming. He is the bravest man I ever saw." But he had fully made up his mind to hang him, and did so very rightly. He was hanged at Charleston, and his dying words were of remarkable power and solemnity. He spoke to time and to

eternity, and even at that moment, when the minds of his audience were furious against him, they listened to him with respect, almost with awe. These were his last words, noble and simple and fearless : “ Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood with the blood of my children, and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit. So let it be done.”

His memory has been venerated in the North as that of a martyr, and the “ Marseillaise” of the Northern army, as they crushed and trampled on the Southern chivalry, was the refrain on the chant of his death—

“ John Brown’s body lies mouldering in the grave,  
His soul is marching on.”

Nothing could exceed the panic of the slave States caused by this attempt. They felt they were resting on explosives, and when men are terrified they are cruel. An English gentleman, Mr. Wynne, was in the train that arrived during the conflict ; the dead and dying were lying on the grass. One of the unfortunate wretches, dreadfully wounded and rolling in agony, called for water, and Mr. Wynne asked permission to give him a cupful. “ If you do,” said a volunteer, who was standing close by, “ I’ll jest shoot you as I shot him. I guess he shall die an uglier death than a dog or a horse.” Had we not been delayed accidentally at Cincinnati we should have come into the fray, for the train by which we were to have travelled had its baggage-master shot dead, and the guard’s hat was perforated ere they could retire out of bullet range. The guard was so infuriated by the majesty of his hat being outraged that he borrowed Mr. Wynne’s rifle, and, in the capacity of captain of militia, went “ a shootin’,” as he called it, that is, he joined the fight. The bullets of Mr. Wynne’s rifle were conical, and one of them blew open a poor fellow’s breast in such a style that the guard “ traded” half a dozen bullets he had left at half a dollar a-piece, as he triumphantly informed his audience.

After a very short stay at Baltimore I went on to New York, and lodged at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, then vaunted throughout all Christendom for its magnificence. It put up a thousand beds, and fifteen hundred persons could, and did at times, sit down to dinner. This enormous block of building was constructed of polished white marble. The *cuisine* was excellent, and every possible convenience and amusement were to be found in it. Eleven shillings a day covered all expenses. It is now considered old-fashioned, and its day has gone by. I had excellent introductions in New York, and was inordinately feasted during the few days I stayed there ; but I was bound to shoot with the young Mr. Rylands in the Illinois prairies, and started off, thinking nothing of the journey of fifteen hundred miles. I passed by beautiful Lake George and met my friends at Toronto, and, with them, started forth to the Illinois prairies. I forget the name of the station at which we were advised to stop. I remember that we arrived there at night, and, on asking at a small tavern, the only one in the hamlet, if we could have beds, we were told there were none vacant ; however, they made up something for my friends the Rylands, and offered me the choice of the kitchen table or to share the room of the “ School Marm” upstairs. I preferred the kitchen table.

Our shooting destination was about nine miles from the station. We hired a kind of butcher’s cart, and were told to drive straight to the “ Lone Tree,” and then to keep straight on, and retain the cart as long as we liked. We found the “ Lone Tree” by the aid of a patent compass, and reached our destination, which was a log house in a grove of oaks. The master of the house had gone away, but the maid made us welcome, and stowed us away in her master’s room and beds. When he returned he insisted on our staying where we were. We had capital butter and milk, fried pork for breakfast, and boiled beef and tea for dinner. No fermented liquor was allowed. The labouring men, about eight or ten, and ourselves all dined together. They were rough fellows enough, but most obliging. The weather was dreadful, and

but for this we should have had the most marvellously fine shooting. Wild ducks of all kinds, and wild geese and prairie chickens were literally destroying acres of Indian corn which lay between two lakes. There was no need of a dog ; we walked to and fro among the corn and put them up, or else shot them as rocketers flying over us. We brought back to Toronto a prodigious quantity and variety of game, which, being frozen, lasted our friends there during the whole winter till the following Easter. The owner came back the second day, a most excellent man, the very salt of the earth, I should say. He was from New England, very grave, very slow, very honest, and of strong religious views, and with a fine New England nasal twang ; he was also well informed, and our evenings were pleasant enough in his society. It is usual on such occasions to pay for one's board, and on my proffering what would be the recognized amount for myself, two friends, and horse, he said in his slow, sententious way, " Not a cent from you, sir. I am amply paid by the company of a gentleman from the old country. I don't forget my father was a Yorkshireman. If you wish to repay me, come again next year and stay a good long time with me." Such was the feeling everywhere.

The same reception awaited me in Baltimore. I had an old friend there, John Morris, a member of one of the principal families, and every house was open to me, every one anxious to make my stay pleasant. Well do I recall the merry suppers of roast oysters at the club, and the bright eyes of the pretty girls for which Baltimore is famous. It has given us a duchess (of Leeds) and a marchioness (Wellesley), and is about the most dangerous place a susceptible man can enter, for not only are the girls singularly beautiful, but they have the grace and sunniness of the South. Lucky is the man who departs heart whole ! It is one of the most aristocratic towns in the Union, and the society is refined and polished ; but, politically speaking, it was, thirty years ago, one of the most mob governed. The respectable portion of the community had retired in despair from political life, and violence and corruption carried the day. The judges, magistrates, ay, even the constables, were elected by universal suffrage ; criminals virtually did as they pleased, under the aegis of rowdiness ; and the decisions of the legal tribunals were notoriously influenced by bribery, or by a desire for popularity, as every four years the legal functionaries were re-elected. Human life was of as little value as that of a dog ; no election took place (and they were constantly taking place) in which several persons were not shot, and a gang of rowdies called " plug-uglies" ruled the city. This association armed themselves with gimlets, or awls, which are fastened to the arm under the coat by an indiarubber band. They consequently fly up the sleeves when not held in the hand. These instruments they were in the habit of thrusting into the body of any voter whom they considered to be opposed to them, and the result was to deter every timid person from the ballot-box.

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I left New Orleans with regret, though my heart was always constant to Baltimore. It is amusing to read in my home letters the dread I had of being forced to go back from America by the Galway Line, and to encounter bad fare, worse company, and still worse ships ; but I really think, had I started from the North, and not gone home by one of these rickety vessels, I should have incurred the lasting displeasure of Galway and of the Rev. Peter Daly, so I determined to make my way by Cuba, and found myself at Havannah early in the New Year of 1860.

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The next day there was to be a solemn and grand cock-fight at Matanzas, and all who could afford were to be in attendance. I received a formal invitation from the *alcalde* and *ayuntamiento*, the mayor and corporation, to be present, and after Mass we all walked in great state, they in their robes, I in my Sunday best, to the cock-pit. It was a most extraordinary sight. The cocks were not armed with steel spurs, but fought with the weapons nature had given them, which made each battle rather long. The betting was very heavy in those fine large pieces, the *onzas*, representing nearly £4. During the fight the cries and shouting were

loud : “ Ten ounces to one on the Platero,” the silver-coloured cock ; “ Five ounces to one on the Indian,” the black cock, and so on—and the bets were all taken by motion of the fingers. When the fight was over there was a dead calm, and one heard the clink of the large pieces of gold as they passed from one to another. Some men had piles of them on the rails before them, heaped up one on the other like crumpets. The member of the corporation who sat by me, said, “ I am not a better on cock-fights, though I delight in seeing them. Now let us have a small bet of a dollar on each fight. I will give you your choice when the cocks are produced.” I accepted the offer and rose up the winner of one dollar, and highly elated at my judgment having been correct. The love of cock-fighting in many countries seems extraordinary to us of the present generation, but up to the end of last century it excited the greatest possible interest in England, and old pictures give the portraits of famous victorious cocks.

On my return to England, when stopping at St. Thomas, young Mr. Crawford, the son of our Consul, was on board, and he invited me to mount the hill and pay a visit to General Santa Anna, the old dictator of Mexico, a stout soldier in his day, with one leg, the other lost in the war.

He was in exile, but had a nice country place. All along his avenue were dog-boxes, but the inmates were cocks, not dogs, and they told us that any person who wished for a fight at any time had only to come up and name his stake. He was not kept a minute, for all other business was set aside for the battle. He offered to fight a main for our edification, but the steamer was puffing below, so we refused the offer, and reached Southampton, without any incident, just before the meeting of Parliament.

[1] “ Of this O’Flaherty, the late Sir J. Pope Hennessy used to tell a very characteristic story. He paid a visit to Dublin, and was invited to dinner at the Mansion House by the Lord Mayor. The poor dignitary was, of course, on his knees before the great London financier and politician, as O’Flaherty was then supposed to be, and spread before him one of those gorgeous and appalling feasts for which civic entertainments are noted. There were four soups and half a dozen kinds of fish, and *entrées* by the score. O’Flaherty passed dish after dish, until the hapless Lord Mayor at last asked the great man what would tempt an appetite at once so lordly and so fastidious. ‘ I would like a mutton chop,’ quoth O’Flaherty. It was, as Talleyrand said of Lord Castlereagh, when he appeared without any decorations in the midst of the dazzling splendours of the Congress of Vienna, *bien distingué*.” This anecdote is given by Mr. T. P. O’Connor. — A. G.

Sir William Gregory, K.C.M.G., formerly member of Parliament and sometime governor of Ceylon : an autobiography (1894)

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