

Shamrock and thistle

or, Young America in Ireland and Scotland.

A story of travel and adventure

Oliver Optic

1867

SHAMROCK AND THISTLE, the second of the “Young America Abroad” series, contains the history of the Academy Ship, and the students who sailed in her on the coasts of Ireland and Scotland, with their excursions into the interior. Whatever the volume contains of a descriptive character was derived from the note-book of the author, written in the midst of the scenes it describes, and from an extensive collection of works gathered in England and the United States. But the book hardly aspires to the dignity of a history, or even of a book of travels, though the writer has been careful correctly to set down all that would be presumed to lie within the limit of fact.

It is not so easy to convey useful and valuable information, even in regard to foreign lands, as it is to tell an interesting or an exciting story. The plan of this and the subsequent volumes of the series includes a certain amount of geographical and historical matter, which may not be as acceptable to the young reader as exciting incidents of personal adventure ; but it is hoped there will be enough of the latter to season the former, and render the useful and valuable palatable to the reader.

With more of fear and trembling, therefore, than usual, the author presents Shamrock and Thistle to his friends, hoping that its story will please, while its historical and descriptive pages will instruct and benefit them.

HARRISON SQUARE, MASS.
September 30, 1867.

Geography and History.

THE Young America lay at anchor in the harbor of Queenstown. She had made her passage across the Atlantic in twenty-six days, during which time the regular studies of the scholastic branches of the Academy had been pursued with only an occasional interruption by bad weather. Her officers and crew had performed their sea duty to the satisfaction of the principal. There had been no serious accidents and no sickness on board during the voyage. Dr. Winstock could not command a patient for more than a single day ; but his position was by no means an ornamental one, for there was hardly a busier person in the ship. It was doubtless owing, in a large measure, to his watchfulness and his valuable sanitary regulations, that the health of the students was so effectually secured.

Mr. Lowington, the principal, who had devised inaugurated the system of instruction and discipline carried out in the Academy Ship, was entirely satisfied with the experiment. During the preceding year he had devoted his whole time and attention to the management of the institution, and being a gentleman of abundant wealth, this was no small sacrifice. He had devoted himself to his idea as a philanthropist, rather than as a speculator. The ship had crossed the ocean, not only to give the students a needed variety in their academic life, but to

afford them an opportunity to see the wonders of the Old World, and thus to cultivate the taste, enlarge the understanding, and give them broader views of nature and humanity.

During the season before them, the ship's company were to be tourists as well as seamen and students. It was the intention of Mr. Lowington to adapt the course of study in geography and history to the localities to be visited by the pupils. The geography and history of Ireland were to be the prominent topics while the Young America was in the waters of that country, and while the students were visiting the scenes of great historic events. The revolution of 1688, in its relation to Irish affairs, could nowhere be so interesting and impressive as at Drogheda and on the banks of the Boyne, where the battle in which James II. was overwhelmed and the power of William III. established.

The principal anticipated great results from the summer cruise of the ship. Though a firm disciplinarian, he was not an austere man. While he was unwilling to give up the occasion entirely to frolic and intemperate sight-seeing, he intended that his pupils should enjoy themselves. The regular routine of study was to be pursued with as little interruption as possible, though it was not expected that the purely intellectual results would compare favorably with those of the preceding year.

As soon as the ship came to anchor in Queenstown harbor, boats from the shore began to surround her ; but no visitors were allowed on board. The adult forward officers were placed at the gangways, and no amount of persuasive Irish blarney could induce them to allow any of the hotel runners, pedlers, or beggars, to place a foot on board. After dinner, the first business was to put the ship in order ; but the boys were impatient to go on shore. There was a world of new sights and sounds on the land near them, and they were naturally very eager to mingle at once with them.

As soon as the decks were " swept and garnished," all hands were piped to muster, and the students sprang to their stations, hoping to obtain some idea of the programme for the future, and especially to learn when they were to be permitted to go on shore.

" Young gentlemen," said Mr. Lowington, " our voyage across the Atlantic is happily finished ; and in our hearts let us thank God for his mercy in conducting us safely through the perils of the mighty deep. I have made many voyages, and this sentiment has been uppermost in my thoughts at the end of all of them.

" My young friends, you are naturally impatient to visit the shore. I sympathize with you in this feeling, and I shall not unnecessarily delay the privilege ; but I wish to ask you what this ship is."

" The Academy Ship, ' Young America,' " replied several.

" Precisely so — the Academy Ship. Our first business, you are all aware, is not with the objects of interest on shore. This is an academy. You have certain duties to perform on board ; certain lessons to learn and recite. This must be your first care."

" I don't know how we are to see anything of the country if we have to study and recite every day," said one of the crew.

" The routine will be entirely different in port from that followed at sea," replied Mr. Lowington. " You will turn out at six o'clock in the morning, wash down the decks, and put the ship in order. At eight the studies will be commenced, and continued, with a recess of half

an hour for dinner, until half past one. The rest of the day will be occupied in visiting the shore. The lessons must be attended to for five hours a day ; but the time will be varied as occasion may require.

“ Young gentlemen, I propose, in the course of a week or ten days, to give you a brief vacation ; and I have already planned an excursion to the Lakes of Killarney. We will take with us the gig and the four cutters. When we have visited Cork, Glengariff, and the Lakes, you will have seen all there is of special interest in the south of Ireland. In the course of two or three days we will go up to Cork. Now, my young friends, I wish you to curb this useless impatience, attend to your regular duties faithfully, and remember that the more progress you make in your studies, the greater will be your opportunities for visiting places of importance on shore. When you are dismissed from muster, you will pipe to the steerage, where Professor Mapps will give you his first lecture on the geography of Ireland.”

The boys were dismissed, and they exhibited a commendable disposition to regard the good advice of the principal. Books relating to the geography and history of Ireland were straightway in great demand. There was an extensive library of books of reference on board, and before the professor commenced his lecture, many important facts had been collected by the zealous pupils.

“ I beg your pardon, Mr. Lowington,” said Dr. Winstock, as the principal stepped down from the hatch, “ if I may seem to interfere with the discipline of the ship ; but I wish to ask a favor. I desire to visit Cork this afternoon, and to take the second lieutenant with me, upon a matter of some importance connected with the ship, but which you must excuse me for not mentioning.”

“ Certainly, doctor,” replied the principal, who appeared to be puzzled that there should be anything relating to the ship which needed to be concealed from him.

“ There is no treason in my purpose,” laughed the surgeon. “ Mr. Kendall will make up his lessons in his own time.”

“ But he will lose the professor’s lecture.”

“ We will not leave till that is finished.”

Dr. Winstock had forty-three pounds ten shillings in drafts on the principal for the purchase of the silver plate to be presented to Mr. Lowington, and he wished to visit Cork to obtain the gift. Unwilling to confide wholly in his own taste, he desired the assistance of Paul Kendall in making the selection.

After being dismissed from muster, the students collected in the steerage, which was the school-room of the ship, to hear the lecture of Professor Mapps. They seated themselves on the stools as near the fore mast as they could gather. On the mast hung a large map of Ireland, in front of which stood the instructor.

Though the exercise in which the students were now to engage was called a lecture, it was more properly a conversation party, in which the pupils were expected to ask questions, and comment on the subject.

“ Young gentlemen, where are we ?” asked the professor.

“ In the steerage,” replied a wag near the professor.

“ Excellent !” laughed Mr. Mapps. “ Your wisdom surpasseth that of the foolish. Where is the ship ?”

“ In Queenstown Harbor.”

“ Where is Queenstown ?”

“ In Ireland.”

“ Good ! We have reached the point. What is the area of the State of Massachusetts ?”

“ Eight thousand seven hundred square miles.”

“ Of New York ?”

“ Forty-seven thousand square miles.”

“ Of Maine ?”

“ Thirty-one thousand seven hundred and sixty-six square miles.”

“ Of Texas, the largest of the United States ?”

“ Two hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred and four square miles,” replied one of the boys who remembered the figures, while all wondered what this had to do with the geography of Ireland.

“ Very well. Now, what is the area of Ireland ?”

“ Thirty-two thousand five hundred and thirteen square miles,” answered twenty of the boys, who had just obtained the information from the books.

“ Ireland, then, is more than three times as large as Massachusetts ; two thirds as large as New York, and one eighth the size of Texas, and of about the same area as the State of Maine. The longest straight line that could be drawn through the island would be from north-east to south-west, three hundred and four miles in length ; and its greatest width is one hundred and ninety-four miles. Can any of you tell me the proper name, given as a whole, to England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland !”

“ Great Britain,” replied a forward young man.

“ No ; Great Britain is the island which includes England, Scotland, and Wales. After the Irish revolution of 1798, the British government took advantage of the conquest it had just achieved to unite the two countries more effectually than they had before been united. The purpose was carried out in 1801, and the first article of the compact was to the effect that the two islands should henceforward be called The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.”

“ That is a pretty long name,” suggested a student.

“ The United Kingdom is sufficient for ordinary purposes,” added Professor Mapps. “ Can you mention any appellations given to Ireland ?”

“ The Emerald Isle,” said one.

“ The Green Isle,” replied another.

“ Both on account of the rich green of the island. The grass is the finest and best for cattle.”

“ The Gim of the Say,” laughed another.

“ A pet name derived from the emerald, which is green. But what is the favorite poetical name ?”

“ Hibernia,” answered Goodwin.

“ Erin,” replied Paul Kendall.

“ Erin go bragh !” added Pelham.

“ Erin,” said the instructor. “ ‘ Erin go bragh !’ means ‘ Hurrah for Ireland,’ or ‘ Ireland forever.’ Eri, or Erin, is the name by which the island was called by the natives. It means ‘ western.’ By the ancients it was known as Ierna, Iouerna, Iuverna ; and from these it has been corrupted into Hibernia. The people of ancient Britain called it Iverdon, and the Saxons who conquered them, Ierland, which became Ireland, its present name, by one of the changes of spelling common in our language.

“ Now, young gentlemen, glance at the map,” continued the professor, taking his pointer. “ Ireland is bounded on three sides by the Atlantic Ocean ; on the east by the North Channel, which is only fourteen miles wide between the Mull of Cantire, in Scotland, and Torr Point, the north-eastern headland of Ireland ; by the Irish Sea, which is one hundred and thirty miles broad, and St. George’s Channel, seventy miles wide.

“ The surface of the country is undulating ; and there is seldom an elevation which rises to the dignity of a mountain, though some of them are, by courtesy, called such. The slopes are generally gradual, and there are extensive plains occupied by moorlands and bogs, from the latter of which is taken the peat — or turf, as the people call it — used for fuel by all the poorer classes.

“ In glancing at the physical geography of the island, you perceive that the hilly regions are near the coast. In the south-west are found the greatest elevations. The highest mountain is Carrantual, one of McGillicuddy’s Reeks, in the county of Kerry ; but it is only three thousand four hundred and fourteen feet high.

“ What is the height of Mount Washington ?”

“ Six thousand four hundred and twenty-eight feet,” replied several.

“ Of Kunchingga, the highest in the world ?”

“ Twenty-eight thousand one hundred and seventy-eight feet.”

“ The Irish mountains, then, are hardly worth mentioning. The highest in the United Kingdom is Ben Nevis, in Scotland, which is about the height of Mount Mansfield and Camel’s Hump, in Vermont. What is the largest river of Ireland ?”

“ The Shannon.”

“ How long ?”

“ Two hundred and twenty-four miles.”

“ English authorities call it two hundred and forty miles. The Thames and the Severn, in England, are of about the same length. We do not regard the Connecticut, four hundred and fifty miles in length, as a large river in our own country, though it is nearly twice as long as the largest rivers of the United Kingdom. Our ship now floats in Queenstown Harbor, or the Cove of Cork, which is the estuary of the River Lee. This stream has its source in Lake Gougane Barra, and has a course of thirty-five miles. The other principal rivers are the Barrow, Suir, Slaney, Erne, Foyle, Bann, Blackwater, Boyne, and the Lifey. What are lakes called in Ireland ?”

“ Loughs.”

“ The same as Lochs in Scotland. The lakes of the United Kingdom, measured by the American standard, are small affairs. Lough Neagh, in the north of Ireland, the largest, is a little larger than Lake Winnipiseogee, in New Hampshire, and Cayuga Lake, in New York. What are the four provinces of Ireland, Mr. Goodwin ?”

“ Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connaught.”

“ How many counties are there ?”

“ Thirty-two.”

“ The government of the country is administered by a viceroy, or lord lieutenant, appointed by the queen, who resides at Dublin. He has a privy council to assist him, the members of which are also appointed by the crown. Ireland is now represented in the British Parliament — of which I shall have some thing to say in the future — by four spiritual and twenty-eight temporal peers, with one hundred and five commoners.”

“ What are spiritual peers, Mr. Mapps ?” asked Paul Kendall.

“ Archbishops or bishops of the established church, who occupy seats in the House of Lords. A peer is a member of the upper house of Parliament, corresponding to our Senate. The country is not represented wholly with regard to the number of the population. Members are elected for boroughs, or districts, for cities, and even for universities. Each county in Ireland is entitled to two members, making sixty-four ; certain towns have thirty-nine ; and the University of Dublin has two.

“ Each county in Ireland is governed by a lieutenant, — who is generally a peer of the realm, — assisted by deputy lieutenants and magistrates, appointed by the crown.

“ Young gentlemen, perhaps you have already noticed that the climate here is milder than our own, though we are now nearly ten degrees farther north than Brockway. The summers

are not so warm, nor the winters so cold, as with us. If you glance at your nautical charts, you will observe that the warm waters of the Gulf Stream flow in this direction ; and they have a very sensible effect in moderating and equalizing the temperature. Ireland has about the average climate of Virginia, though its extremes of heat and cold are not so great.

“ The moisture of the atmosphere favors the growth of the grass, though it injures the wheat crop. Oats and barley are the principal grains ; flax is extensively produced in the north, while potatoes are raised in every part of the island, and form the chief article of diet of the poorer classes. The agriculture of Ireland is inferior to that of Scotland and England.

“ A few words in regard to the history of Ireland will complete what I have to say at present. Nothing authentic is known of the early history of Ireland, though a very remote antiquity is claimed by Irish writers for their country. The first event of present importance is the conversion of the natives to Christianity, a work which was commenced by St. Patrick.”

“ Long life to him !” said Lynch, who was of Irish descent ; whereat everybody laughed, including the professor.

“ St. Patrick was a Scotchman — ”

“ Not a bit of it — begging your pardon, Mr. Mapps,” interrupted Lynch again.

“ What was he ?”

“ An Irishman, to be sure. How could St. Patrick be a Scotchman ?”

“ There are grave doubts in regard to his birth place, I acknowledge,” replied the professor, with a smile. “ Some say he was born in Scotland, others in England, and still others in France ; but none claim that he was born in Ireland. It is said that he was taken prisoner in this country in his youth, and was employed as a swineherd for seven years, during which time he learned the Irish language. Having first studied with his uncle, the Bishop of Tours, St. Patrick went to Rome, and was sent to Ireland, with thirty-four assistants, to Christianize the people, by Pope Celestine. After ten years of labor and discouragement, he converted the king, Laera II., and then spent the rest of his life in travelling over the country, making converts, and founding churches and monasteries. He died at the age of one hundred and twenty.

“ After the introduction of Christianity, civilization and learning made considerable advances. A school, founded at Armagh, was celebrated all over Europe ; and for a time the island had so great a reputation for learned ecclesiastics that it was called the ‘ Island of Saints.’”

“ In the eleventh century, Brian Boroimhe, King of Munster, drove the Danes from his own kingdom, and was crowned King of Ireland, at Tara, the ancient capital of the island, where a magnificent royal palace is supposed to have been located. Moore, the Irish poet, sings the fallen fortunes of the place in the well-known lines :

‘ The harp that once through Tara’s halls
The soul of music shed,
Now hangs as mute on Tara’s walls
As if that soul were fled.’

Brian Boromhe, when Ireland was again invaded by the Danes, instigated by the King of Leinster, fought the great battle of Clontarf, in which he was slain. His body was conveyed to Armagh in solemn procession, placed in the cathedral, and for twelve days and nights the clergy continued their prayers and devotions over the corpse. Moore chants his praises in a poem : —

‘ Remember the glories of Brian the brave,
Though the days of the hero are o’er ;
Though lost to Mononia, and cold in the grave,
He returns to Kinkora no more.
That star of the field, which so often hath poured
Its beam on the battle, is set ;
But enough of its glory remains in each sword
To light us to victory yet.’

“ After the death of the powerful Brian, internal discord pervaded the island. It was the scene of various strifes, until the sovereignty of the country was given to Henry II., in 1174, by the pope ; but it was not finally subdued till 1210, when a charter of liberties was granted to the people by King John. The obstinate Irish barons continued to resist the government of England, and rebellions have been as fashionable in Ireland as pipes are in Holland, the most noted of which were those of 1641, 1689, and 1798.

“ Ireland has been grievously oppressed by England. Henry VIII. took the title of King of Ireland, though only a small portion of the country was really subject to the English laws. He introduced the Protestant reformation into the country ; and the province of Ulster, in the north, was settled by Scotch and English people of this faith. During the civil wars in England, the Irish Catholics attempted to overthrow the new religion, and an insurrection broke out in Ulster, which extended through all parts of the island. Ireland was in a state of anarchy till 1649, when Cromwell came with his army and suppressed the rebellion.

“ In 1688, after James II. had abandoned the English throne, and William and Mary had been proclaimed joint sovereigns, the self-exiled monarch, with the assistance of the French, rallied the Irish Catholics under his banner, established his court at Dublin, and held the country until his disastrous defeat in the battle of the Boyne. His power was completely overthrown in 1791. The Catholics were fiercely persecuted after the conquest ; their estates were confiscated, and for the succeeding hundred years they were relentlessly oppressed. Catholics were not eligible to offices of trust, were excluded from the army and navy, not allowed to keep or to bear arms, and were otherwise deprived of their rights.

“ The people were uneasy and discontented ; they demanded equal privileges ; and towards the close of the eighteenth century, as they again became restless under certain commercial restraints and the influence of the French revolution, the British government increased its severity, suspended the *habeas corpus*, dispersed meetings of the people with military and police forces, and quartered troops upon the inhabitants. The Catholic Irish formed secret societies, and invoked the aid of France, which furnished only assistance enough to encourage another outbreak — the rebellion of 1798. It was suppressed by Lord Cornwallis, — the one who surrendered his army at Yorktown, — lord lieutenant of Ireland, by the employment of conciliatory measures. In 1801 a more complete political union was effected between Ireland and her oppressor ; but the rights of the people were not recognized in the compact, and they were far from satisfied. In 1803 another outbreak occurred at Dublin, under the leadership of Robert Emmet, an enthusiastic young man, who, at the

suppression of the rebellion, perished on the scaffold ; but his name and memory are still affectionately cherished by the Irish people.

“ Catholic emancipation, which meant equality of rights to both the prevailing sects, was the great question agitated by the Irish for many years. Daniel O’Connell was the leading spirit in these agitations ; and in 1829 an act embodying Catholic emancipation received the assent of the crown. The two sects were now equal before the law ; but O’Connell and others continued to labor for the independence of the country, which, in spite of many rights and privileges granted to the people, was still grievously oppressed.

“ Only one tenth of the population of Ireland belonged to the established church ; yet tithes, or taxes for its support, were levied upon all alike. In our land this iniquitous law would breed a revolution in twenty-four hours ; and we need not wonder that the Irish have been impatient, especially when this was only one of their grievances. In 1838 the manner of collecting tithes was modified, a fixed sum being levied upon the landholders ; but, of course, it was ultimately paid by the tenants, and the tithes were concealed rather than removed.

“ The separation of the two countries, as the only means of obtaining justice, has been the object of the Irish leaders ; and in 1846 a new party, called the Irish Confederation, was formed ; and in 1848, under the stimulus of the events in France which resulted in the flight of Louis Philippe, a revolt was attempted ; but it was a signal failure. Several of the leaders were arrested, and some of them were sentenced to death for treason ; but the penalty was commuted to transportation. Most of them were subsequently pardoned. Thomas F. Meagher, one of them, went to the United States, and distinguished himself in the Union army. John Mitchell, who fled from the storm in his own country, was unworthy of the cause in which he had been engaged. In conclusion, young gentlemen, Ireland has always been an oppressed land. Her history is a continuous storm of battle and insurrection. Though her condition has been greatly improved, her people are still deprived of ‘ equal rights.’

“ I have taken this early opportunity to give you a very meagre outline of the geography and history of Ireland, that you may view with more interest and pleasure the historic spots you may visit.”

The professor retired ; the boys were dismissed, and hastened on deck, to gaze at the shores of the country whose history had just been related to them.

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