

## The Price of Being Irish

DUBLIN, March 7.—Limerick is a city of tragedy today. Mayor George Clancy was shot dead in his bed early this morning and his wife wounded in a heroic attempt to protect him from his assailants. Michael O'Callaghan, ex-Mayor, died from wounds inflicted by unknown assassins, and a resident named O'Donoghue was taken from his residence and his lifeless body was found later in a neighboring field. . . . Beyond the bare statement of the murders no light is thrown officially on the occurrences.—*New York Times*, March 8, 1921.

**W**HEN my wife and I were visiting Ireland last summer our hosts in Limerick were the O'Callaghans. At this time Michael O'Callaghan was mayor of Limerick. In Dublin we had met him at the home of a well-known writer, where we had gone to be introduced to Arno Dosch-Fleuret of the *New York World*. It was curious meeting Michael O'Callaghan. On seeing him I forgot he was "mayor of Limerick." I recognized him as a cousin from his likeness to his brother Eugene, whom I knew in childhood, and he delighted me by claiming me as cousin. I thought him handsome, though he was very broad-shouldered and at the same time short in stature. On this occasion he wore a suit of light homespun that became him excellently and increased the air of brightness that went with his fine clear, brown eyes and his definitely friendly hand clasp.

We liked the O'Callaghans instantly. Mrs. O'Callaghan I at first thought was an American, she had a style so little like the indifferent ease of Dublin, and in Limerick, when we knew her better, we twitted her for having bought at least one cloak in London. But in five minutes' talk it was indisputable that she was Irish. She had the flashing darkness of eye that goes with certain quick-spoken and quick-hearted natives of Southern Ireland. She was from Cork, we found. My wife soon admired her as one of the first Irish wives she had met who had ideas and opinions on her own account, though both she and her husband were equally devoted to Gaelic culture, their Catholic religion, and Irish freedom. I liked Michael O'Callaghan partly because of these precious sympathies but also because of himself. There is something that one finds in men and women of the Irish gentry, a quality of heart mingled with a quality of manner, which he possessed to the full. It is kindness, if you like, but kindness that unites with a warm smile and the warm tones of a voice to bring one into the inner room of intimacy. Yet his was not that seductive gift for intimacy which means only that a man is socially receptive, and receives more than he can humanly entertain. His nature had that touch of dignity which comes from having been tested. He had had experience and trial, which

gave him integrity and candor. This fact, that he not only rang sweetly but rang true, was what endeared Michael O'Callaghan to us.

We went to Limerick in August. The afternoon we arrived from Kerry an English journalist, Hugh Martin of the *Daily News*, was calling on the Mayor, and after the Mayor had carried my bag up the steps we all gathered into the front-room where Martin quizzed the Mayor as to the recent activities of the Imperial police. Martin was, if it must be known, rather trying. He is a neat, precise, slender man in black and white with good small features but the severity of a moral accountant. His profession has taught him the need of cautiousness, but his cautiousness implied mistrust, a sort of high Liberal mistrust of the well-meaning but impulsive natures with which he had to deal. Mrs. O'Callaghan, who was serving tea, flashed a glance at me that showed impatience, but Michael O'Callaghan beautifully met Martin on his own ground and patiently gave him affidavits and sworn testimony. Martin, after all, was *honest*. The Mayor promised to take him next day to see with his own eyes the four houses that the police had burned to the ground, and to examine the hundred houses that the police had smashed up because two detectives had been disarmed and tied to a tree. "Were the detectives maltreated?" "Were the three men killed by the police, all innocent Englishmen, as stated?" The whole thing was gone into, and Martin was to return next day.

"They're all the same!" Mrs. O'Callaghan declared after he'd left. "He's a nice man and you can trust him, but he's an English Liberal and he won't face the truth. Now, look what he's written: 'the Black and Tans are recruited from some of our best soldiers' and all that sort of thing. How does he know that? Michael says they're hired braves, and Martin denies that and tries to put a good English front on it. What good are these Liberals? They have a lot to say about poor Terry MacSwiney, but they'll let him die. And if Michael is arrested and goes on hunger-strike, they'll let him die. And, Michael, you'll have to go on hunger-strike!"

"I know, Kit. I know Martin isn't for us. But by Gad he's willing to come here and see what the Black and Tans are doing. That's something . . ."

A Belgian journalist arrived, and *he* understood. He had just attended a conservative meeting in Limerick and Michael O'Callaghan's perceptive and tolerant comments on the conservative position found an acute listener. The Belgian was at once thoroughly appreciative and thoroughly hopeless. He saw imperialism with cruelly candid eyes. After he had bowed himself out, we sat

dejected. And then Michael O'Callaghan quoted Kipling with gusto. "You may say what you like about Kipling's imperialism," he laughed, "but think of the fiendish art of the fellow! Yerrah, man, there's no one can sing like him, in his own way." I said, "I never thought I'd hear a Sinn Fein mayor rave about Kipling!" "Ah, but there's surely no national boundaries to literature." And then I found that Conrad and Kipling and Turgenev entranced him, but he talked of Dostoevsky with a kind of fascinated horror and awe.

This breadth of spirit was not tepidness. Michael O'Callaghan burned for his country with a flame. He had been one of the first believers in Sinn Fein, when Sinn Fein meant self-help and an economic policy. He had been an early participant in the Gaelic League. But with his ardor there went a civilized leniency which came from much knowledge of his city and county and nation. He had pride in Ireland, but deep pride in the right things. The first evening I met him his eye kindled when he said, "Ah, there's great heart in the people, great heart in them." And seeing fully that Ireland had found itself he saw also with a rare charity those Irishmen who had not yet found Ireland. One small incident showed a bit of his character. On Sunday he wanted us to have lunch at Castleconnell, by the Shannon, and we started to motor there a little late. As we rolled along the straight road we saw two black grayhounds ahead of us lying in our path. The chauffeur saw these dogs lift themselves with that aristocratic lethargy peculiar to grayhounds, and he supposed they would deign to move more swiftly when we came near. We swept by them as one darted free of the car, but on looking back we were sickened to find that the other was down. He was curled up on the road in a limp circle. Then his owner walked out and lifted the dead dog in his arms . . . The chauffeur kept on, but the Mayor with an expression of sheer pain stopped him, nodded regretfully to us, got out and walked back. We watched the little conference between the owner, his friends and Michael O'Callaghan, while we remained guiltily in the car. And when he came back he looked as miserable as we did. He smiled to my wife, however, and said, "I told him to come to the Town Hall tomorrow. By that time the dog 'll have a pedigree back to Adam."

We stayed with the O'Callaghans only three nights. Curfew was at nine o'clock, and after nine Michael O'Callaghan would be restless, waiting to hear if shooting would begin across the Shannon. The second night we heard a few shots at 9.15. O'Callaghan looked at his wife with a kind of set pain. "Kit, they're at it again." "Ah, may-

be it's only a few shots to frighten them," meaning the belated town-people. There were no more shots until the middle of the night. I awoke at the sound of a muffled explosion. Next day we learned that the police had set off a bomb under a Sinn Fein Club but, luckily for the caretaker, the bomb was planted improperly and exploded into the street.

One death warning had been sent to Michael O'Callaghan when the British police assassinated the Lord Mayor of Cork, Thomas MacCurtain. At that time the Sinn Fein Volunteers wanted to protect the Mayor and so, also, much to his amusement, did the local District Inspector of the R. I. C. (the Imperial police), who was friendly. O'Callaghan knew that if the police came they would find the Volunteers already on guard and so, to prevent trouble, he had to lock up his house and go to a hotel. But when he re-opened his house, which stood back from the Shannon with a long strip of garden in front of it running up to a high garden wall, he more or less expected a raid from the military or the Black and Tans. As a Sinn Fein mayor he was a marked man, and in view of the methods employed by the British in Ireland he never knew, and his wife never knew, what penalty would attach to his outspokenness, his open letter to General Nevil Macready as to Black and Tan outrages, his friendship for MacSwiney and Arthur Griffith, his definite identification with Sinn Fein.

We now know from the press report what has happened to him, in the same hour that his successor as mayor paid the same price. After curfew the English assassins climbed the wall and came knocking at the door. Mrs. O'Callaghan probably walked from the room where we had our long talks, and asked the men what they wanted. When they pushed her aside she knew their errand and she attempted, as one might know she would, by her own young strength to keep them from killing her husband. She threw herself in front of her husband when he came to join her, and in the struggle that followed I am afraid he was driven to save her by coming to meet his death. Then these three servants of Lloyd George and British justice gave Michael O'Callaghan the death that is due to all Irishmen who believe in Irish independence.

It is hard to realize that such an end could come to so kind a man. I think of our plans to have him visit us in New York, our urgent insistence that he should come when his term as mayor expired. His term as mayor expired only a month ago, but not his term as an Irishman. It was because he was a true Irishman that the English Crown forces assassinated him.

FRANCIS HACKETT.

## Landscape

THE suburb centres about a great disreputable common, upon which the presence of human life seems to have fallen like a disease. The soil is sterile and pale; the grass is dirty and thin; and there are bald spots, as if the earth were eaten by a kind of mange. The instinct for cleanliness and order seems never to have been felt here at all: the common is littered with refuse and waste in sprawling filthy heaps,—tin cans and broken crockery and papers, all plastered down together by the rain. And among the piles old women are picking in garments like the rain-rotted papers and children are playing with lean dogs as mangy as the common. These children, in their rags and dirty shifts, find the first romantic landscape of their games in the muddy stagnant lakes of the hollows and the sodden mountain ranges of the junk.

Along one side of the common and facing directly upon it, stands a row of shabby frame houses which at first seem mere rubbish, like the cans,—old worn-out things thrown away and defaced and disintegrated by the weather out of all recognition as objects which have once served the uses of life. But, as one studies them, they take on the aspect of horrific rectangular masks, glaring, ferocious and gleeful, but not with the expressions of life; their fixed stare is more like the faces of men who have died in delirium or by violence,—the upper windows like wide-open eyes, with half-lowered shades for the lids; the porches like gaping jaws, with the railings for long narrow teeth.

They might almost be totem-pole figures, the gods of some savage tribe; but they are not so solid and bright as the images of barbarous peoples: they are flimsy, half-heartedly built; they are entirely without dignity or pride; the yellows and browns of their sides are smeared and discolored now. They are helplessly down and out; they are beaten and insulted by the elements. But they do not protest against their fall, nor wish to be decent and sound. They are dead creatures rotting and grinning, in an ecstasy of humiliation, with the derision of the eternal spirit of cheapness and indifference and decay for the effort that builds and makes strong and the long labor of beauty.

EDMUND WILSON, JR.

## Bandana Dance

The dance of the red bandana  
is not for men only nor women only.

It is for lovers of fire, men and women,  
in a high wind and a gold red moon  
and light feet circling thornapple  
branches burning.

CARL SANDBURG.

## The Great Emollient

IT was privily urged upon one of the functionaries of Mr. Wilson's entourage a little while before that administration came to an end that it would be a shrewd and clever thing to do, a good "publicity stunt," to throw open the gates of the White House and make the grounds and the accessible state rooms of the presidential edifice free again to the public. The suggestion was denied admittance. Had it been heeded, Mr. Harding would have been deprived of what has proved to be the most effective possible gesture as he begins his term of residence at No. 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

It beats all what a change has come over the spirit and manners and disposition of this town since Mr. Harding came in. I don't know how long it will last. It is too idyllic to last forever. Partly this new manifestation of peace on earth goodwill to men is due to opening the White House gates, but mostly it is due to Mr. Harding himself. He has undeniably made a good start. He has made an immensely favorable first impression. He has got started off on the right foot. He has quickly won for himself a great body of local favorable public opinion. That is so startling and vivid a contrast to the condition that has prevailed here for some time that it assumes, temporarily at least, an appearance of tremendous significance and importance.

In the local area now under observation, at any rate, the normalcy so long ago set forth as one of the chief ends to be attained, has been achieved.

For a long time the social-political atmosphere of Washington has been one of a bleak and chill austerity suffused and envenomed by hatred of a sick chief magistrate that seemed to poison and blight every ordinary human relationship and finally brought to a virtual stoppage every routine function of the government. It was a general condition of stagnation and aridity that had come to affect everybody here. The White House was isolated. It had no relation with the Capitol or the local resident and official community. Its great iron gates were closed and chained and locked. Policemen guarded its approaches. It was in a void apart. Almost from the beginning it had seemed to the sensitive local intelligence to exhale a chill and icy disdain for the chief subordinate figures and personages who under the President comprise the personnel of the Washington community. This may have been imagination but it had the full effect of a reality. It all made for bleakness and bitterness and a general sense of frustration and unhappiness.

Now the chief thing to report at this early period of the new dispensation is that this miasmatic