

THE
Cruise of the "Erin's Hope;"
OR
"Gun-running in '67."

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Ἐκδοτὴς τῆς ἑξῆς Κατολίκης ἰ κήρυξης,
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The following account of the Cruise of the *Erin's Hope* is strictly authentic, being founded on the report of the Expedition furnished to the Central Executive of the Fenian Brotherhood, A. A. Griffith, Esq., by Captain Kavanagh, Commander of the Expedition, upon his return to New York.

The Cruise of the "Erin's Hope."

AN INCIDENT OF THE FENIAN RISING OF '67.

CHAPTER I.

IT was Monday night, the fourth of March, 1867. In several places throughout Ireland bodies of men, wrapped in heavy overcoats, might be seen wending their way along the country roads. The different groups were silent, and the stern gaze and set features of the men proclaimed that they were hastening to no festive celebration, but that they were bent on a serious mission. To some, indeed, it was to be a mission of death. To many it was to bring imprisonment or exile. Yet underneath those heavy frieze overcoats on that March night some of the manliest hearts in Erin were beating quickly, and some of the noblest blood in the land was coursing proudly. From the dark Celtic eyes, half concealed by the leaves of the slouched hats, fires flashed, such as must have lighted the eyes of the Celtic clans as they hurled themselves on the Danes at Clontarf eight centuries previously; and the strong nervous hands clutched rifle and pikeshaft with a grasp that betokened stern determination.

Determined men were those who thus made their way along the roads, and proud must they have been, for their mission was one that appeals to every Celtic heart. It was the same as nerved the troops of Roderick O'Connor to hurl dismay and death on the robber bands of De Courcy by the waters of the Shannon. It was the same as strengthened the arms of the soldiers of the two Hughs when they chased Elizabeth's veteran army before them from the Yellow Ford to the walls of Dublin. It was the same as inspired Owen Roe O'Neill's followers, and enabled them to smite the disciplined legions of Munroe at Benburb, and to scatter them like chaff tossed about by the wind along the banks of the Blackwater; and it was the same as sent the

undisciplined peasants of Mayo and Wexford against the trained Red-coats of England in the sad but glorious year of '98. These frieze-coated men were out that night with the object of freeing their country from the tyranny that was oppressing her, of freeing her by the aid of the flashing sword, the shining rifle barrel, and the deep-throated cannon. They were out again to raise the Sunburst, Ireland's national banner, over men armed and equipped, and drawn up in serried ranks beneath its folds ready to engage in a deadly struggle with the foe whose iron-clad heel was pressing the life out of their homeland. They were out to announce to Ireland's enemies, by means of rifle volleys and cannon salvos, that Ireland had reached the limit of her patience, that the dragon's teeth sown in her bosom had borne fruit, and that a body of men, who relied on other weapons than the pen and the tongue, had unsheathed the sword, and had sworn not to put it back in its cover until Ireland had been made a Nation once again.

One by one the groups approached the different places of meeting allotted to them. They knew not that Government spies had got into their ranks and into the councils of their chiefs, that Dublin Castle was aware of almost every detail of their plans, and that at that very moment most of their best and most trusted leaders were lying in prison. They were ignorant of the fact that at almost all the points to which they were hurrying the soldiers of England were drawn up ready to give them a warm reception. They knew not these things, nor, indeed, cared, for they were all loyal members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, each one of them as willing to die as to fight for the land that gave them birth, and which they loved with that passionate love of country which seems a special characteristic of the Irish Celt.

Sad in truth was their fate. Transient rays of success fell on the banners of some of the contingents. Kilmallock was captured by one band. Another, led by the famous Captain Mackay, swept a countryside clear of its enemies. A party of the Irish

Republican Brotherhood of Kingstown captured the police barracks at Stepaside and Glencullen in the County Dublin; but in most cases the rising on the night of the fourth of March was a failure. Still their partial successes cheered the insurgents. The bands, such as Captain Mackay's, that were still in the field, knew that every hour would see their numbers increase, that to them would soon rally thousands of their supporters then scattered through the country. They determined to retreat to the hills and mountains, and from these strongholds maintain a guerilla warfare until such time as they would be strong enough to descend into the plains. That ultimate success would have attended such a policy is possible, nay, probable; but the hand of God intervened in the struggle. It was decreed that Ireland's chains were not yet to be broken, for the cup of our country's sorrows had not yet been drained to the dregs. Suddenly on the evening of the fifth of March, not twenty-four hours after the commencement of the insurrection, a dreadful snow-storm swept over the land, such a storm as had not visited the shores of Ireland for fifty years previously. For five successive days the snow kept falling unceasingly. The mountains and plains were covered with it, in places to a depth of four feet. The valleys were filled with it. The roads were rendered impassible by it, and it changed small streams into roaring torrents. The snow-storm gave the death blow to the insurrection. Unprotected by tents or other shelter the unfortunate members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood found themselves exposed to all the fury of the weather on the snow-covered mountain sides. Their friends could not get to them to help them, and they were left without food or fire to sustain them. Their weapons fell from their benumbed fingers; and at length, recognising that they were beaten, they gave over the struggle and attempted to make their way to their homes. Some succeeded in reaching the life-giving warmth of their own hearths. Others, after rambling for days through the mountains, protected by the love of the Irish

peasants, got to the seashore and escaped to America ; but a great number fell into the hands of the watching soldiers and police. Thus the green flag was forced once more to kiss the dust, and the flag of England floated more triumphantly than ever over Dublin Castle.

The insurrection was over in Ireland, but the danger to English rule was not yet fully averted. When the news reached America that, 'midst the Irish hills, Irishmen were in arms fighting for their country's independence, the exiled sons of Erin set about getting ready to come to the help of their brethren. The Fenians were much better organised in America than in Ireland, and by the twelfth of April the Irish Americans had a ship ready to proceed to Ireland bearing supplies to the insurgents. On that date Captain Kavanagh, a prominent member of the Brotherhood residing in New York, received the following letter from Captain John Powell, Chief of Naval affairs, and Anthony Griffin, Chief of the Executive of the Fenian Organisation in America :—

“ New York City,

“ April 12th, 1867.

“ SIR,—You will proceed with the vessel under your command to Sligo Bay on the coast of Ireland, or to any other part of the same coast of Ireland where you may more safely land your cargo and passengers. You will use every precaution to ensure the delivery of the cargo and passengers to the persons authorised to receive them.

“ If possible, after you land your cargo and passengers, you will return with your vessel to New York and turn her over to the proper authorities; but in case you see no chance of escaping with her, destroy her if practicable. You will in all cases use your own judgment.

“ God bless and speed you.

“ Yours fraternally,

“ JOHN POWELL,

“ Chief of Naval Affairs, F.B.

“ To Commander John F. Kavanagh.”

This was the letter that sent speeding to the shores of Ireland the first war-vessel to sail 'neath the Irish flag since the downfall of the Irish monarchy. It was a brigantine of about two hundred tons burden, and had been laden at New York with a cargo purporting to consist of pianos, sewing-machines, and wine in casks. These goods were consigned to a firm of merchants in Cuba, and safely passed the scrutiny of the United States Customs authorities. There were, indeed, piano-cases, sewing-machine cases, and wine barrels in the hold; but they contained far different contents from what their exterior would lead one to expect. They contained 5,000 stand of arms, three batteries of artillery, 1,000 sabres, 5,000,000 rounds of small arm ammunition, a large supply of artillery ammunition, and equipments necessary for a brigade, all of which were destined, not for Cuba, but for the Irish Republicans, whom the Irish-Americans believed were then engaged with England's soldiery in a death struggle. This expedition was distinctly intended by the Executive merely to assist in giving hope and courage to the Irish until a more powerful expedition could be got off to their support, preparations for which were already being made in feverish haste.

Owing to the strictness of the United States neutrality laws the vessel, then known as the *Jacknell*, left New York with but the usual complement of sailors on board, and flying the American flag. Had she been searched just before leaving the quay-side one suspicious circumstance could scarcely have escaped notice. On board was a number of carpenters, busy erecting berths as if to accommodate a large number of men. However, the vessel reached Sandyhook in safety, and there lay to as if waiting for a favourable wind. She was not very long thus when a small steamer approached her and lay to under her stern. In the steamer were over forty men, who had got on board at New York to take a pleasure trip down the bay. In reality they were all Irishmen who had distinguished themselves in the American Civil War, and who were now

coming back to Ireland to assist in the fighting there. Amongst them was Captain Kavanagh, to whom had been entrusted the command of the brigantine, and General J. E. Kerrigan, who had command of the military side of the expedition. This was the first time Captain Kavanagh saw the brig that he was to command, as he was a well-known figure in Fenian circles, and was closely watched by spies of the English Government.

By 4.30. p.m. all the officers and men had been transferred from the steamer to the *Jacknell*. The latter then spread all her sails and set off on her adventurous journey, whilst the steamer returned to New York. Fearing lest the American authorities might be rendered suspicious by the return of the steamer without any of her passengers, and might send some revenue cutters after the *Jacknell*, Captain Kavanagh had his vessel steered at first southwards. On the following morning he spoke a ship bound for Boston, and put on board her the carpenters, who had completed putting up the berths. Then at length, considering himself out of danger of being intercepted by any of the American revenue-cutters, he changed the ship's course and headed for Ireland.

A week passed away, a week of continuous sailing, and no accident of any kind befel the expedition. This period was spent by the crew in the usual occupations of a voyage, mending the sails and rigging, and making everything on board fast. On the 21st inst. the Captain summoned a meeting of his principal officers. He considered the *Jacknell* an unsuitable name for the first Fenian transport to Ireland, and he desired to consult them as regards changing it. It was unanimously decided to re-christen it the *Erin's Hope*. At noon that same day, which was Easter Sunday, the crew and officers were mustered on deck. The Captain addressed them a few cheering words, produced his orders and read them aloud; then, amidst a solemn silence, the American flag was hauled down, and to the masthead was sent the Sunburst, Erin's war standard. The men

were too deeply moved to cheer; instead many an eye was wet as the beloved banner of Green and Gold spread its folds on the Atlantic breezes. A salute of 32 guns thundered forth, one for every county in Ireland, to welcome the Standard of the Gael, and then the vessel was given its new name. As the words *Erin's Hope* fell on their ears the pent-up feelings of crew and passengers burst forth in round after round of wild cheering; and grasping each other by the hand those loyal sons of Ireland swore that, come what might hereafter, it was good to have lived to witness such a scene. How their hearts must have leaped with pride as they at last found themselves in mid-ocean, an avowedly Irish gunboat, bound for Irish waters, beneath their feet, and their national banner floating over their heads! What high hopes must the event have enkindled in their breasts, and what dreams must their imaginations, inspired by the scene, have created, dreams of fields of war on which Ireland's foes were smitten and routed and Ireland's cause carried to a triumphal conclusion! The future was mercifully concealed from them, and they knew not that their dreams of victory were all to prove hollow, that their great anticipations were all to be falsified, that even at that very moment the shadow of a traitor was falling on the deck of their beloved vessel. No; they knew not these things, and carried away by their present happiness those brave soldiers became like little children, and spent the remainder of the day in sport and merry-making.

On the following day, when the position of the ship was taken, it was found that in the eight days which had elapsed since leaving New York they had covered 1,200 miles. This filled all on board with the greatest joy, and they confidently looked forward to making the passage in 25 days, a record time then. Unexpected obstacles however prevented this. Owing to the hurry and great secrecy in which the vessel had been fitted out her old sails, which were totally unfitted for an Atlantic crossing, had not been replaced, nor had others been put on board to enable

them to be replaced at sea. This difficulty compelled the captain to shorten sail, and consequently the vessel's speed was considerably reduced.

To further lessen their rate of progress very bad weather ensued during the following ten days. The *Erin's Hope*, however, proved herself a capable sea-going vessel, and the only effect the heavy seas and storms had on her was to further delay her passage. To keep the officers and men from feeling the weariness of the long voyage Captain Kavanagh set them sorting the arms and equipment, and with this work all hands were kept busy until the eight of May, by which date they had drawn near English waters.

It was now necessary to exercise the greatest care lest the expedition should come to grief by being recognised by an English warship. There were then many such vessels prowling around the Irish coast, as the English Government were expecting that some such attempt as the *Erin's Hope* expedition would be made by the Irish in America to send help to their brothers in the homeland. Knowing the precautions that the British had taken to intercept such aid, Captain Kavanagh held a consultation with the chief officers to decide on the plan of action they would adopt in the event of their falling in with any of the English ships. They determined, if the intercepting vessel was a gunboat or a revenue cutter, to nail their colours to the mast and fight until their ship or their opponent's went to the bottom; but if the English vessel was a large ship, to fight which would be only the maddest folly, they agreed that the best thing to do then would be to take to the boats and rafts, and to blow up the *Erin's Hope*. They would have died to a man rather than allow a single musket destined for the Irish Republicans to reach the hands of the Red-coats. When this decision was arrived at Colonel Tresilian, the chief engineer of the expedition, made the arrangements necessary for the destruction of the vessel should such a sad fate have to be hers.

It was on the tenth of May, in the early morning,

that the anxious gaze of the returning exiles got the first glimpse of the land for the love of which they had abandoned peaceful, happy homes, and were risking the tortures of the prison cell or the terrors of the battlefield. At eight o'clock in the morning the ship made Blackrock, off Eagle Isle, just 12 miles from the mouth of Donegal Bay, after a passage of 33 days.

Now, indeed, joy seized on every bosom. At last they were going to meet their friends. In a day at most they would be standing on Irish soil, would be delivering their arms and ammunition to hands eagerly stretched forth to receive them and willing and ready to use them. So did those men dream as their vessel cleft the sunlit waters of the Bay. Yet, though they kept their day signals flying during the day, and when night came displayed the night signals, they were unable to open up communication with the shore. The Captain was puzzled, but kept in the Bay, which was the point of communication between him and the Irish Fenians agreed on in New York. For six days he kept the *Erin's Hope* hovering around, at no time more than four miles from the shore, but no answering signals greeted his, and no Fenian friends came out to welcome the first Fenian transport. Instead of finding a people looking out eagerly for them, and extending to them a cordial welcome, they could not find a single friend to enter into communication with. In vain they looked for some sign of the insurrection which, according to the American papers, was then in progress in our island. In vain they sought for some glimpse of the revolutionaries who were supposed to be holding the hillsides and watching and waiting for American help. In vain they scanned the shores in search of the green flags that would proclaim to them the presence of Fenian bands. The only signals that they received were those sent from the coastguard stations inquiring what ship theirs was and what was her business in the bay. These signals told them that no rebel forces could be near at hand when England's coastguards were thus exercising

undisturbed their duties. The only visitors who came out to welcome them were pilots and fisherfolk, simple, kindly folk, all anxious to know what was keeping the vessel so long there, but all of them ignorant of any military movements taking place in the vicinity, and none of them knowing anything about the Fenian forces. At last Captain Kavanagh was forced to recognise that the news retailed in America was a gross exaggeration of the actual facts, and that the large number of men who were supposed to be under arms in Ireland were mere products of some writer's imagination.

Still, though the Fenians might not have actually taken up arms, the Captain believed that if he could only land his men and supplies he would soon rally around him a force capable of holding the soldiers of the Crown at bay until further help would reach him from the States. With this hope he determined on a bold plan, which, had it been carried into execution, might have changed the destinies of Ireland. He resolved to send on shore two of his men, Colonel O'Dogherty and Lieutenant O'Shea. They were to be landed near Sligo town, and were to try and get into communication with the local Fenians. If they found themselves unable to do so they were to return within 24 hours. The Captain then would run the vessel into Sligo, seize the town, land the arms and stores, muster the friends of the Fenian cause in the vicinity, and entrench himself there to await the general insurrection that he confidently expected would follow at once the spreading of the news that an American force had landed and that the Irish flag floated over Sligo town. He believed that the men of the North-west would rally to his help just as the men of Mayo had assembled in support of the French the moment they learned that the ships of the latter were in Killala Bay; and he had laid his plans accordingly. The move was an audacious one, as well as being highly dangerous, but the men of the *Erin's Hope* were as capable of carrying it out successfully as they were of conceiving it. The Captain at once started to

prepare for the coup; a Sligo pilot was taken on board, and the ship was headed for Sligo harbour.

As the *Erin's Hope* sailed quietly towards the town the Captain espied signals being made to his vessel from the shore. It was late in the evening, and the signals were not sufficiently distinct to be understood. Suddenly they ceased and were not repeated. Fearing lest it might be only a ruse of the enemy to entrap him, and yet not wishing to go away from the vicinity without having found out if it were friends who had been signalling to him, he sent a boat ashore with Colonel O'Dogherty and Lieutenant O'Shea, as had been before decided on, and with them went a fully armed escort lest enemies should be awaiting their landing.

The two officers were safely put ashore, and the boat with the escort returned to the ship. Her crew reported that no further signals had been seen, nor had they been able to discover by whom the former ones had been made. Although disappointed at the news the Captain set everybody on board getting ready the arms and ammunition for the landing. On the seizure of Sligo he was determined, even though the whole British army lay in the vicinity. Accordingly the night and the whole of the next day were spent in completing arrangements for the disembarkation. By the following evening the transport rafts that they had on board were all ready to be launched at a moment's notice, and the guns and ammunition and stores were so arranged as to take but a very short time to get ashore. As the preparations were being completed a loaded revolver in the hands of one of the party accidentally was discharged, and the bullet passed through the thigh of a man named Coffey, lodging in the ankle of a seaman named O'Connor. This was the first blood shed on the expedition, and O'Connor afterwards died of the wound. Many of the officers, though passing off the accident lightly, felt secretly depressed, and regarded it as an ill-omen; and in truth it was a dire portent as after events showed. The man in whose hands the revolver had been when it went off was none other than Buckley,

he who later turned Queen's evidence, and whose testimony consigned to England's gloomy dungeons his comrades of that heroic expedition.

As the hour for the raid drew nigh a deputation of the officers and crew presented Captain Kavanagh with the following document :—

“ On board the expeditionary vessel, *Erin's Hope*.

“ Donegal Bay, Ireland,

“ May 24th, 1867.

“ To Captain John Kavanagh, Lieutenant

William Sweetman, and Ensign O'Neill.

“ GENTLEMEN,—As we are in sight of Ireland and in a few hours must part, each to fulfil the position and perform the duties assigned him in the great work and sacred cause of Ireland's liberation, we deem it our duty to give expression to our highest appreciation of the devoted fidelity, untiring vigilance, and successful seamanship of yourselves and your small but faithful crew.

“ During a voyage of five weeks, through the fatigues of long, cold, and cheerless watches in the severity of the storm and the tempest, labouring under the disadvantages and annoyances of a crowded ship and deficient outfit, you have nobly done your part. It gives us great satisfaction to bear grateful testimony to the invaluable services rendered by you to Ireland in bringing this voyage to a successful termination in the face of difficulties which would have chilled the determination of men less enthusiastically resolved to dare dangers for Ireland's redemption.

“ Be pleased, therefore, to accept the earnest expression of our appreciation of your worth as an index of the remembrance we will carry with us of the days we have passed together on the

deck of the *Erin's Hope*, the first expeditionary vessel under the green flag.

"Signed,

"BRIGADIER-GENERAL J. E. KERRIGAN,
Commanding the military detachment.

"BRIGADIER-GENERAL W. J. NAGLE,
Second in Command.

"BRIGADIER-GENERAL JOHN WARREN,
Third in Command.

"COLONEL S. R. TRESILIAN.

"COLONEL PHILIP DOGHERTY.

"COLONEL PAT DEVINE.

"LIEUT.-COLONEL JAMES PENDERGAST.

"CAPTAIN D. J. BUCKLEY.

"CAPTAIN M. GREEN.

"CAPTAIN J. F. FITZSIMONS.

"CAPTAIN A. E. COSTELLO."

[Here follow the names of the other military members of the expedition.]

As the shades of night began to fall orders were given to stand in for Sligo, so as to take on board the officers who had been landed the previous evening, and, if they had been unable to get into communication with the local Fenians, to land and take the town. Little did the people of Sligo think on that lovely May night that in their bay a stranger ship was sailing bent on such a warlike errand. Little did they dream that armed men were hoping to be within a few hours in possession of their town, and were determined to make it, as it had often been before, the scene of fiercest fighting in defence of Ireland's rights. As the citizens moved through the narrow streets, chatting and laughing, little they knew that, unless fate came quickly to their rescue, those same streets would soon re-echo to the thunder of cannon, the rattle of musketry, the groans of the dying, and the cheers of the victors. They knew nothing of the danger that thus threatened them, nor did they ever learn, for fate played a trump card

just at the last moment and saved Sligo, but perhaps lost Ireland.

Just as the ship was heading for the town, bent on her errand of war and liberation, the Captain sighted a cutter-rigged vessel bearing down on him. Mistaking her for a revenue cutter, he had preparations made to give her a warm reception, as with Sligo in sight neither he nor his crew were disposed to allow themselves to be interfered with in any way. Great, however, was their surprise when, as soon as the cutter came within hailing distance, a lusty voice shouted from her deck the Fenian countersign. Relief and joy lit up every face as the welcome password rang across the water. Now at last were they in touch with the Irish Fenians. Now at length would they learn the true state of affairs. Lowering her sails the *Erin's Hope* lay to, and a boat was lowered and sent from her to meet the oncoming vessel. The latter stopped also, and when the small boat came alongside her a man swung down from her deck into it. It was rowed back to the *Erin's Hope*, on board which the stranger soon stood. He was the Fenian envoy from the Dublin headquarters.

Right heartily was he greeted by Captain Kavanagh and the officers, and many were the questions heaped upon him as to the position and strength of the Fenian forces, and why the *Erin's Hope* had been left so long on the coast without having been communicated with. Seated in the cabin he told them how matters really stood with the Fenian cause in Ireland, and his news was very different from what they had expected. They had known before leaving America that dissensions had sundered the ranks of the Fenians there, breaking them into two sections, more or less hostile to each other, but they were not prepared to hear that Captain Dunne, the dispatch bearer from headquarters in America, who had been sent to Ireland with news of the coming of the *Erin's Hope*, and with a description of the signs by which she could be recognised, had been tampered with by the wing of the organisation that was opposed to the expedition. They were more than

surprised to hear from the Dublin envoy that Dunne, on reaching London, had withheld the dispatches from Colonel Kelly, him whom the Manchester martyrs were afterwards so bravely to rescue at the cost of their own lives, and that he did not give them to him until twelve days after his arrival in the city. Even then, when Colonel Kelly got them, they were so mutilated that it was utterly impossible to decipher the signals which the ship was to show when off the Irish coast, and by which alone she could be recognised. Thus the Fenians were all the time totally unaware of her identity, and this was the reason that her signals had been left unreplied to.

This was vexing news indeed to the daring soldiers, but the envoy had worse to relate. He told them, and the words fell like a chill blast on their hearts, that they had come too late to be of any help to the rebellion. It was over. The people had become disheartened after the first failures; and, dismayed by seeing traitors springing up daily in their ranks, some of them even being men in whom they had had the most implicit faith, they would not now fight. He informed the Captain that it was hopeless to expect an immediate renewal of the rebellion, and that all that could now be done was to get the arms and stores landed and save them for some future date, when the people, recovered from the effects of defeat and treason, would be willing to renew the struggle.

For a moment the gallant Captain and his men were stunned by the bad news. They had come across that waste of waters, had braved the perils of oceans, storms, and hostile men-of-war, only to be now told that all their trouble had been in vain, that they had arrived too late. Too late, too late, so it had ever been with the Irish cause. Robert Bruce landed with his Scottish warriors only in time to bring back to Scotland the headless body of his brother, who, had he come but a few days earlier, would have reigned King over a free Celtic Ireland. Don Juan Del Aquila landed with his Spanish army just too late to save the dauntless Hughs from defeat

and destruction. Had he arrived a short time previously, with his help they would have captured Dublin, and would have banished the English for ever from our island. The French expeditionary fleet arrived in the Shannon almost whilst the ink was still wet on the famous Treaty of Limerick. It arrived a few days too late to save the city and the Irish cause. Humbert and his Frenchmen in 1798 sailed into Killala Bay to aid the Irish insurgents, but some weeks after those insurgents had been defeated and scattered. Now, last of the failures, the *Erin's Hope* had come to find Ireland prostrate and bleeding, buried in a lethargy from which nothing seemed capable of wakening it. Is it a wonder that those gallant Irish-Americans, who had travelled so far and endured so much, to try to be of aid to their native land, should have believed that a wayward fate had decreed that Ireland was never to be permitted to shake off the chains of her oppressors? They could not see into the future. Had they been able to do so they would have recognised the meaning of that fate. They would have read that Ireland was to regain her freedom only when her children were able to win it for her by their own united strength. Had the veil of futurity been rent from their eyes they would have seen their beloved land rise Phoenix-like from her ashes young and beautiful, and without aid from any other land strike off with her own recovered might the fetters that bound her, and spring of her own initiative into her legitimate place amongst the ranks of nations. They could not see these things; therefore for a moment they were sorrow-stricken and dismayed. Yet they took their defeat like brave men, and did not break down under it as did Brigadier-General Massey, another Irish-American officer. This soldier, who had been through the whole American Civil War, and who had come over early in the year to Ireland to aid in the insurrection, had been arrested just as he was on his way to the Limerick Junction to take command of the rebels there. Dismayed at finding that Corydon, a man who was high in the councils of the Fenian

organisation, was betraying the conspiracy to the Government, he lost his head, and thinking that matters were worse than they really were, he came to the conclusion "that the sooner the whole business was burst up and stopped the less victims would there be," and accordingly he turned Queen's evidence. Not so did the men on board the *Erin's Hope* bend beneath the news of defeat. Rather it only inspired them to renewed efforts to try and take up the broken threads of the conspiracy and to piece them together again.

When the Captain asked what course he and his men were now to pursue the Dublin envoy handed him the following order:—

"May 25th, 1867.

"Captain Kavanagh,

Commanding expeditionary vessel.

"SIR,—You will proceed to the point of communication, which is Toe Head, off Skibbereen, south coast of Ireland. The brig is to sail when in those waters with her jib down, but not furled on the boom. You will be met by a craft from the shore, which will approach you with jib also down and unfurled."

With this order came a new set of signals to replace the ones that had been so treacherously mutilated. The order itself was not signed, but the Dublin envoy presented it to the Captain as coming from Colonel Kelly, then acting chief organiser of the Irish Republican Brotherhood in Ireland.

After spending some further time with the officers the envoy returned to his own ship and was brought ashore. Of the officers on board the *Erin's Hope* he took with him Colonels Phelan, Pendergast, and Devine.

Thus was frustrated the Captain's plan of seizing Sligo. Perhaps it was better so. Perhaps the freeing of Ireland was not worth the shedding of all the blood that would have flowed had those brave Irish-Americans succeeded in landing. Yet we

cannot but entertain the greatest respect for the courage and loyalty of the men who, although but fifty in number, were ready to so defy the mighty power of the British nation for Ireland's sake. They were men, real men. May Ireland ever have such heroes to fight for her when perils gather around her.

CHAPTER II.

After the departure of the Fenian envoy the gloom of disappointment settled down on all the members of the expeditionary force. They, who before his coming had been pulsating with joy, and had been eagerly looking forward to the coming battle, were now grown strangely sad and morose, and a silence more eloquent than any words reigned throughout the *Erin's Hope*. Gradually the sun sank towards the horizon, seeming to draw after it from the East by means of its innumerable rays the dark shades of evening. One by one the surrounding cliffs and hills disappeared from the view of the watchers on the silent deck. The night, dark and dreary, clasped the ship in its embrace.

It was then that Captain Kavanagh ordered a boat to be lowered and sent on shore to bring back to the ship Colonel O'Dogherty and Lieutenant O'Shea. As he had on board no suitable provision for attending to the sick he also sent in the boat the two men who had been injured by the explosion of the revolver. They were to be put on land, and brought to a house that had been designated by the envoy, where they would be under the care of friends and assured of the best attendance. The officer who had been given charge of the boat received orders to return before daylight, and not to allow anything to prevent him from doing so. Then the boat pushed away from the side of the *Erin's Hope*.

About 3.30 a.m. a hail from close by announced the return of the boat, but she had not the two soldiers on board. The officer in charge reported that he had been unable to find either O'Dogherty

or O'Shea, owing to his having gone astray in the darkness and mistaken the point of landing. He had also failed to reach the house designated by the envoy; and as he knew that it would be certain death for the wounded men to bring them back to the ship, where their injuries could not be properly attended to, he had left them on the beach with one of his men, Lieutenant Nugent, to do for them what could be done until daylight. Thus misfortune seemed to follow every move of these brave men. They seemed struggling against a merciless fate, hemmed in by a net from whose meshes there was no escape.

As it was now almost daylight the Captain ordered all the sails to be set and the vessel to be headed out of the bay. With the greatest regret he found himself compelled to abandon the officers whom he had landed, but he knew that he would be gravely risking the safety of the ship and her precious cargo by remaining longer in the neighbourhood. In fact he had already remained almost too long, and in a short time he got cause to congratulate himself that he had left the bay at the time he did. Quickly his commands were obeyed, and the *Erin's Hope* started slowly to draw away westwards, as if loath to leave in the Saxon's power the town, over which by this time it had been anticipated that the green flag would be flying. Then gradually the winds filled her sails, quicker and quicker she sped onwards, until finally she raced through the waters on her journey to Toe Head, the new point of communication agreed on with the envoy.

It was only just in time that the Fenian transport left Sligo Bay. It had scarcely covered a two hours' run when her look-out sighted a vessel hastening at full speed towards the town. As it drew near it proved to be an English gunboat. However, by the time it had got into communication with the authorities in Sligo the Fenian ship was well away, and as a fine breeze sprang up, and lasted during the following eight hours, she saw no more of the gunboat. Still the escape had been a narrow one.

It seems that the *Erin's Hope* had been viewed with suspicion by some of the local coastguards on account of her American build. The gunboat had been summoned from Blacksod Bay station, and had come at once, only to pass on the way without recognising it the object of her visit. So the *Erin's Hope* made her escape; but by this time the whole Channel fleet had been warned of the presence of an enemy, and each ship was eagerly searching for it, trying its utmost to have the honour of planting the Union Jack over the dauntless brig. They would never have done so as long as one of her crew remained alive and able to blow her up.

On May the 27th the *Erin's Hope* safely made the point of communication, but again the efforts of her crew to get in touch with the Irish Fenians was unavailing. They knew not that the arrest of almost every leader had totally disorganised the local organisation, and that every day was adding to the confusion into which it had fallen. Hoping against hope, the Captain kept his vessel sailing between Toe Head and Gally Head, a space of twelve miles, though he expected every moment to see one of the Channel fleet appearing on the horizon. He left not a portion of the shore unexplored, keeping the jib-sail lowered and unfurled, as he had been ordered; but no ship came out to meet him, nor did he get any reply to his signals. On the 30th he lengthened the vessel's course to the Old Head of Kinsale, and for another couple of days he kept cruising between this point and Baltimore, a distance of some thirty miles. All his efforts were in vain. Try as he might, he and his tiny war-vessel were not to be allowed to interfere with the course of fate.

By this time the crew of the transport were in dire straits. To the dangers that they were running from the Channel fleet were now added the pangs of hunger and thirst. Their provisions were almost exhausted, and they had run short of fresh water. In this plight the Captain decided to land some of the men, and so lessen the number of the mouths to be provided for. He hoped in this way to eke out their

pitifully short rations until he would be in a position to get a fresh supply. In accordance with this decision the *Erin's Hope* was headed for a sandy beach lying between Glandore and Gally Head in search of a spot where the officers could be disembarked. The ship had reached within a few miles of the shore when a coastguard's boat was seen to come out from a sandy cove and head straight for it. Captain Kavanagh at once tacked ship and stood out to sea again, but the wind was light, and the *Erin's Hope* was not sailing at a speed of more than three miles an hour. Gradually the boat began to overhaul her until it looked as if it would soon be alongside. In this dilemma the Captain determined to allow the coastguards to come on board and then arrest them. He would keep them prisoners until the officers and stores had been safely landed. There was, however, no necessity to carry this determination into effect. As the boat was almost within hailing distance a stiff breeze sprang up and the *Erin's Hope* began to glide more rapidly through the water. Soon she was drawing away from the coastguards. When they saw this they signalled to her to heave to; but Captain Kavanagh, finding it already difficult enough to feed his crew and passengers without embarrassing himself with prisoners continued seawards. The coastguards stuck to their oars for a little longer, pulling lustily in a vain endeavour to reach the retreating vessel; then, recognising that to do so was now impossible, they gave over the chase and returned ashore.

Their discomfiture did not annoy them in the least, for they firmly believed that the transport had escaped them only to fall into the hands of a man-of-war. Earlier in the day when they first had sighted the vessel, and had come to the conclusion that it was the same ship as had visited Sligo Bay, they had sent word to the nearest naval station on the south coast, and had asked that a ship of war be sent to them at once. They were confident that this ship could not be very far away, nor were they mistaken.

The *Erin's Hope* had not proceeded far on her course, and it was still only evening, when Captain Kavanagh saw a light draft Government steam ram coming from the westward and heading straight for the coastguard station. It was the vessel dispatched from the southern naval base. When the ram came within communicating distance of the coastguards her crew commenced exchanging rocket signals with them. There were two other vessels in the offing besides the *Erin's Hope*, and they were inquiring of the coastguards which was the Fenian ship. Knowing that a contest with such a vessel could only end in disaster to his ship, Captain Kavanagh ordered all sail to be crowded on the brig, and while the crew of the ram were endeavouring to complete their signals, he made for mid-channel. The breeze was favourable to him, and by the time that the ram had learned which vessel was the transport, the *Erin's Hope* had secured a good lead. The ram put on a full head of steam and started in pursuit, but the Fenian vessel, with the wind in its favour, was, as her Captain himself puts it, the ram's mistress. Darkness also soon came to the help of the fleeing vessel. Gradually it enveloped her, and finally it shut her off completely from the view of her pursuers.

When day dawned again anxious eyes from the deck of the *Erin's Hope* sought on every side for a glimpse of the steam ram, but no trace of it was to be seen. They had shaken it off during the night. Then, as it was blowing a heavy southwest gale, the Captain ordered the speed of the vessel to be eased, and she lay to under easy sail all that day, whilst he and the chief officers debated what was the best course for them to adopt, now that their previous plan had miscarried. The decision arrived at was again a characteristic one. In his official account of the Expedition Captain Kavanagh writes:

"Now our friends having failed us twice, we lost faith in their ability to act with us, and knowing nothing of the situation on shore, we here decided to turn in again and try to get into communication (where most convenient) with the people themselves,

and endeavour to induce them to take the arms and secrete them, if they could not use them, for we were particularly averse to bringing them back again."

Accordingly about midnight he again made sail, and as he was now off the Wexford coast, he stood in towards the shore. His aim was to come across some fishing smack, and to send ashore in her Colonels Nagle and Warren. These men were to move amongst the peasantry, and to try and get in touch with the local leaders, with whom they were to deal directly, without waiting for orders from the Dublin headquarters, and in conjunction with whom they were to try and form a plan for the landing of the arms and stores. At the same time the remainder of the officers were to be landed near Ballycotton Island, so as to be able to render any assistance that the two Colonels or the local leaders might require of them. The brig would remain cruising around in the vicinity for a week after their landing, to give time for complete arrangements for the getting ashore of the arms to be made. It would then stand in once more for the shore, and would at last, it was hoped, get her cargo into the hands of the Irish Fenians.

The morning of the first of June rose dark and gloomy. A heavy mist enveloped the ship, and it was impossible to see very far ahead. The *Erin's Hope* found herself within four miles of the Saltee Islands, between the harbours of Wexford and Waterford. She continued southwards along the coast, heading for Dungarvan, and about ten o'clock passed Helvick Head, at the entrance to Dungarvan Bay. The mist was still so thick that the crew were unable to distinguish the headland, though they were within a few miles of it. They were beginning to fear that they would find no fishing smack in the vicinity when suddenly they sighted one making for the shore. Eagerly they hailed her, and she drew alongside. As the day was an admirable one for effecting a landing, the Captain changed his original plan and determined to send ashore, not alone

Colonels Nagle and Warren, but also all the other officers.

Soon the preparations for their departure were completed. They bade the Captain a hearty good-bye and went aboard the fishing-smack. Colonel Nagle was in command of the party, and he had received strict orders that no landing was to be attempted before night had fallen. The two vessels then separated, the *Erin's Hope* standing off for the Bristol Channel, so as not to be seen in the vicinity of the fishing-smack when the fog would lift, the latter vessel preparing to cruise around until darkness would afford a safe shroud under which to land the Fenians.

Unfortunately for all concerned, Captain Kavanagh's orders were not carried out fully. Seeing that there was no appearance of the fog lifting, the soldiers thought that it was only a useless waste of time to wait for night to go ashore. They believed that the mist would prevent their landing being seen. They brought round Colonels Nagle and Warren to their views, and the fishing smack was headed towards the shore. Soon the whole thirty-two were standing on Irish soil, happy and contented. Their jubilation was but short-lived. As Captain Kavanagh had feared would happen, a coastguard had observed their landing, and had become suspicious at seeing so large a number of men coming off a smack. He communicated with the police authorities, and soon messages were speeding to all the neighbouring police stations, ordering the arrest of the newly landed. In a short time every one of the thirty-two were in prison. It was a sad penalty to have to pay for a trifling disobedience of orders.

The prisoners were brought before the magistrates at Dungarvan, and one of the first witnesses examined was Patrick Whelan, one of the crew of the fishing boat. His evidence, and that of his comrades, may be found in the edition of the *Freeman's Journal*, June 5th, 1867. It in no way compromised the prisoners.

"I am a fisherman," he said, "and reside at Ballinagoul. I was out to sea on Saturday last, the 1st instant, to take up trammel nets. About mid-day I saw a vessel coming from sea. She was a brigantine, and had new white sails set. The vessel was deep in the water, and appeared to have ballast in. She hove to outside us, and a person on board asked me if I had any fish. He called to me, and I did not like to go too near for fear the vessel would stove me. A man in the brigantine told me he had two men to put on shore, and asked me what price I would charge for taking them ashore. I said £2, and was told to come alongside them. I did so, and the man threw me the end of a rope. He then took the ship's boat on board and held my boat fast. I directed my man, whose name is Browne, to go on board, and just then a number of men jumped over the side of the brigantine and got into my boat. I should say there were more than twenty. Browne handed me two sovereigns, but I did not know where he got them. Having parted company with the vessel, we hoisted our sails and made for shore. I landed them on the Ring Strand outside the pier at Ballinagoul. The men in the boat were speaking Irish and English. When they were leaving the boat one of them gave me a sovereign."

The following day they were transferred to Kilmainham Prison, Dublin. No charge had as yet been formulated against them, as they had only been arrested on suspicion, and the Government never for a moment believed that it had under lock and key the daring soldiers who had been so openly insulting its authority from the deck of the *Erin's Hope*. After some weeks had passed without any information of an incriminating character having been obtained against the officers, Dublin Castle was beginning to consider whether it would not be better to release men against whom they could bring no charge, when one of the prisoners, the infamous Buckley, betrayed his comrades, and told everything about the expedition to the Government. At the ensuing Commission all his companions stood in the dock,

indicted for treason-felony, and were convicted on his evidence. Colonel Warren, though a naturalised American citizen, was sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude, and his companions got equally severe sentences. The explosion of the revolver in Buckley's hands had indeed proved an omen of misfortune to his comrades.

The *Erin's Hope* had in the meantime been cruising in the Channel. She had now on board her, beside the Captain and the crew, Brigadier-General Kerrigan, the commander of the military side of the expedition, and Colonel S. R. Tresilian, who had remained to superintend the landing of the arms. On the morning of June 2nd, the morning after the parting with the smack, the fog lifted and Captain Kavanagh found himself quite close to a British gunboat that was steaming in an opposite direction to himself. The moment it sighted his ship its course was changed, and it headed straight towards him. What follows is best described in the Captain's own forcible language.

“ She hoisted the English ensign and asked the usual questions: ‘ What ship,’ ‘ where from,’ etc. I also ran up the rag of the Britisher, dipped it thrice by way of salutation, as is customary, and answered his questions to my own and his satisfaction, or perhaps only partly to his satisfaction, for he continued to scrutinise me through his glasses, and remained in my company for over two hours. But my disguise was perfect, for ‘ he left me for another ’—for another ship three miles off, and, lest he should return, I tacked ship, and stood for the west coast of England.”

The captain of the gunboat never suspected that whilst he was conversing with the strange ship her crew were making all preparations to blow her to atoms should he think of sending some of his men to search her. They were now too few to resist; but each man of them was as determined as ever that over the *Erin's Hope* and her cargo none but the Irish flag would ever fly.

As had been agreed on with Colonels Warren and Nagle Captain Kavanagh kept his vessel cruising around during the following week. Owing to the keenness of the search now in progress for him he thought it safer to keep to the English coast, and accordingly he spent the time sailing between Lundy Island and Land's End. Still, every day saw him running grave risks; but no considerations of personal safety could induce him to abandon the men he had sent ashore. Time and again he was boarded by English coast pilots anxious to know why he was remaining so long in the neighbourhood. For each of them he had the same answer, that to his good luck satisfied them. He always told them that he was bound to some port that then happened to be to windward, and was waiting for the wind to change.

On the sixth of June, when the week was up, he again headed for Ireland, and on the seventh safely reached Mine Head, the point of communication he had agreed on with Colonel Nagle. His surprise was great when again no signals from the shore replied to his. Then, and only then, did he despair of success. He knew that the men who had come across the Atlantic for Ireland's sake were all tried and trusty soldiers, and that nothing but death or capture would keep them from communicating with him. In their silence he read the failure of the enterprise. Still hoping against hope, he kept his vessel off the Head for a further three days, but no word or sign or signal came to him. Though he knew now that to delay longer was utterly useless, and that he would only be running unnecessary perils, still on the eleventh he sailed along the south coast from Dungarvan to Toe Head, keeping his signals flying from the masthead all the time. Anxiously he and his companions scanned the shore looking for a reply. None came, for those who might have sent one were now under lock and key. That evening the Captain was handed the following document by General Kerrigan:—

“ On board the *Erin's Hope*, off Toe Head.
 “ County Cork, Ireland,
 “ June 11th, 1867.

“ To Captain John F. Kavanagh.

“ We, the undersigned military and naval officers on board the *Erin's Hope*, having become satisfied that we will receive no communication from our friends on shore, and having cruised for three days along the coast of Ireland, from Tramore to Ballycotton Bays, beyond the time of communication appointed by Colonels Nagle and Warren, have concluded and deemed it necessary that you should, in view of our very meagre supplies, and the all-important purpose of saving the arms, ammunition, and vessel for the organisation, and the furtherance of the cause of Ireland's nationality, head your vessel for New York.

“ We further do not deem it safe to remain any longer on the coast, having been on it in all twenty-four days, and almost always within hailing distance of coastguard stations, lighthouses, and men-of-war.

(Signed), “ BRIGADIER-GENERAL J. E. KERRIGAN.
 “ S. R. TRESILIAN, Colonel of Engineers.
 “ WILLIAM SWEETMAN, Chief Officer.
 “ HENRY O'NEILL, Second Officer.”

When the Captain read this document he recognised only too well the truth of the statements it contained. Yet all that night he sailed along the coast, expecting to the very last that fate would change her cruel treatment of the expedition and give it a favourable conclusion. His hope was in vain, and next morning, finding himself off Cape Clear, he headed the vessel's prow away from Ireland, and steered westwards across the Atlantic. Watching from the deck the now fast-receding hills of Ireland, Captain Kavanagh's heart was oppressed with an unwonted sadness, as he thought of the gallant companions who had left New York with him so full of hopes and high expectations, and who now were lying in different dungeons amidst those same green hills.

Their only crime had been a too passionate love for the land that had given them birth, and the price they were paying for their loyalty to her was a heavy one. Yet to the feelings of sorrow that for this reason oppressed the gallant Captain, there was also added one of pride that he had not been the fault of the failure of the enterprise. He on his side had been eminently successful. He had accomplished an audacious voyage, the story of which would read more like a romance than a narrative of actual happenings. For twenty-four days he had been cruising off the Irish coast, and had remained four other days on the English coast. During that time his ship covered 2,060 miles, sailing ever in the midst of a hostile fleet, and escaping destruction or capture only through his great ability, masterly seamanship, and readiness in all emergencies. In spite of the watchfulness of Ireland's enemies both by sea and land, thanks to his able handling of the brig, he would be able to inform his chiefs on his return to America that there was no point of the coast at which he touched during all this time that he could not have landed there any amount of men and arms, had there been preparations made to take them from him.

Furthermore, he would be able to state that, although his ship had not fired a shot, it had been the means of sending three British warships to the bottom of the sea. Whilst in pursuit of the *Erin's Hope* the *Lapwing*, a first-class gunboat, had been lost in Killala Bay; the *Revenge*, also a first-class gunboat, had been wrecked on Daunt's Rock, and a second-class gunboat had foundered in a gale off Cape Clear.

Certainly Captain Kavanagh had reason to be proud. To have sailed unscathed amidst the whole Channel fleet, to have met, spoken with, and escaped its vessels, to have caused the wreck of three of them, to have humbugged coastguards and navy-men, to have landed the officers at different parts of the coast, and finally to be bringing back to New York both his ship and her cargo in safety, this was an

accomplishment unequalled in the days of Drake and Grace O'Malley. It was a feat before which the recent exploits of the *Fanny* pale into insignificance. It was a deed that well deserves to be recorded amongst the noblest and most daring of the many noble and daring deeds that have time and again been wrought by Ireland's children in behalf of their native land.

The *Erin's Hope* reached New York once more on the first of August, 1867, after a voyage of 100 days, and after having covered during that time over 9,000 miles. Her return journey was uneventful, though carried out under the most trying conditions. In the first place the provisions on board, when leaving the coast of Ireland, were wholly inadequate for the voyage, and were it not that the the Captain had the good fortune to obtain further supplies from two ships he met at different times on the Atlantic, famine would have done for the crew what England's navy failed to do. Moreover, they were but a day or two out when General Kerrigan and Colonel Tresilian fell ill. Their stalwart constitutions had been undermined by the privations they had suffered, and by the bad provisions they had been forced for some time to live on. A few days after they had fallen ill Mr. Sweetman, the first officer, was also taken sick. The enforced absence of Mr. Sweetman from his post severely handicapped Captain Kavanaugh, as his crew were already two short. One sailor, he who had been wounded by Buckley, had been put ashore at Sligo; the second had landed at Dungarvan with the military officers. However, in the end all obstacles were overcome, and as the *Erin's Hope* sped through the waters of New York bay, her brave commander was already revolving plans for a more extensive and elaborate expedition to his native land. These plans never matured, but, whilst he lived, he ever cherished the hope that some day a chance would be given him to sail again with such men as his comrades of the *Erin's Hope*, on a like errand, and under that same green flag it had been his pride and joy to hoist over the first Fenian transport.