

A BOY, TWO PRESENTS AND TWO WARS

Being Some Episodes in the Life of Capt. Daniel Delehanty, in Which Lincoln, Archbishop Hughes, Roosevelt, "Bob" Evans, Cervera and John D. Long Figure in a Way to Delight the Heart of Old and Young Alike.



IN the early days of the Civil war, when the soldiers of the south were victorious on many fields, Abraham Lincoln summoned to Washington two eminent men of New York.

"Gentlemen," he said, "there is imminent danger that the Confederacy will be recognized by England and France. You can do more to prevent it than any other two men now living. You," he said, pointing to one of them, "I ask to go to England, and in the cities and in the towns, use all your great powers of eloquence in the cause of the north."

"You," he said to the other man, "I ask to go to Catholic France, where by reason of your gifts of oratory, your high office in the church and your wide influence you may be able to accomplish what no other man could do. I can make no higher call upon your patriotism than I now am making."

A little later the two eminent men—Henry Ward Beecher and John Hughes, archbishop of New York, were on their way across the Atlantic. Never did two more brilliant speakers go to plead the cause of freedom and never did two men fulfill their mission better.

The archbishop was the first to return. He reported that the north had no friends or sympathizers among the rich, the titled and the powerful in France, and that the danger of the empire recognizing the Confederacy was very great. It was not pleasant news for Mr. Lincoln to receive, but the president thanked him in that plain, simple way he had with all men.

"I wish," said the president, "that there was something that I could do—something that you personally desired—that would lessen the debt of gratitude under which you have placed me. Is there anything you want for any of your people, any of your friends?"

"Nothing," replied the archbishop. "I am sorry," said the president.

DELEHANTY'S APPOINTMENT. But as he was about to go the archbishop remembered something. "There is one thing, Mr. President," he said, "one of my dear friends has a boy too young to go into the army, but whose hope and ambition it is to become a soldier. If he could go to West Point?"

"And is that all?" asked the president.

"That is all," replied the archbishop. In New York the following day the archbishop sent for the boy and told him how the president of the United States had offered to send him to West Point.

"But," said the boy, "I don't want to go to West Point. I want to go to Annapolis. I want to go in the navy."

The archbishop was chagrined. He had understood what the boy's father had said about the lad's ambition.

"Well," he declared, "there is no mending it now. The president has appointed you to West Point, and to West Point you must go."

But the boy had no ambition except for the navy, and nothing the archbishop could say could change him. Finally the archbishop told him to go home and if he did not change his mind over night and decide to go to West Point the archbishop would write to the president and tell him the appointment could not be accepted.

That night the boy slept very little and the following day went to the archbishop and told him he desired nothing on earth so much as to go to Annapolis.

The archbishop could not see why a boy should be so obstinate.

LETTER TO LINCOLN.

"Well," he said finally, "I'll not ask the president to change the appointment, but if you want to go to Washington, and ask him yourself I'll give you a letter to him."

The boy was delighted. The archbishop wrote a letter and as the lad was leaving the archbishop said to him: "My boy, I doubt whether you can see Mr. Lincoln. Every minute of his time is taken up with great affairs and he is surrounded by so many persons that it is difficult to get an audience. But there is one man there who will get you to him if any one can. When you go to the White House inquire for him. Tell him you have a letter to the president from John Hughes."

To Washington went Daniel Delehanty with the archbishop's letter. The man the archbishop named was one of the president's messengers. "You have a letter from John Hughes and you want to see the president—wait a minute," said the messenger. When he returned he told the boy the president had been in council with the cabinet, but he had called him out. "Go up the stairs there. The president is waiting. Don't detain him a moment more than is necessary," he urged.

Up the stairs bounded the boy and when he got to the top and straightened up he stood before what seemed to him to be the tallest, strangest looking man he ever saw. "But the boy did not look at the man. He was so flustered he could not speak at first, and to add to his embarrassment a pair of eyes seemed to be looking at him from the president's feet. Mr. Lincoln had on a pair of embroidered slippers, and worked in a vamp of the slippers were beads to represent the eyes of some animal. These eyes fascinated the boy and he could not draw his attention from them. Queer notions came into one's mind in times of agitation, and the one thing the boy thought of just then more than anything else was that those were real eyes that were looking at him out of the slippers, maybe tiger eyes.

"I WISH THIS DONE."

Then, suddenly, he was roused from his odd thoughts by the sound of Mr. Lincoln's voice.

"You have a letter for me from Archbishop Hughes?" inquired the president. The boy handed the letter to him and the president read it.

"You want to go to Annapolis?" asked the president, looking at the boy with his head deep eyes.

"Oh! Yes, Mr. Lincoln," the boy replied.

The president took the prelate's letter, placed it against the wall and turned on it.

"I wish this done. A LINCOLN."

"Take this to the navy department, my boy," he said, placing his hand on the lad's head a moment.

The boy's mind was crowded with words of thanks, but somehow he could not give expression to them. Instead he said, "Mr. President, I'll never forget what you have done this day."

Mr. Lincoln smiled that sad, strange smile of his and before he reached the door of the cabinet room the boy had bounded down the stairs and was racing toward the navy building. In 15 minutes he had his commission for the naval academy.

More than 35 years of service Daniel Delehanty had given to his country. Climbing steadily in rank when one day he received an intimation that he would be asked to take the governorship of Sallor's Snug Harbor. The navy has nothing to do with the harbor, but the old salts in the institution had started to mutiny and the trustees had applied to the secretary of the navy to help them by letting them have an officer of high administrative ability and well able to handle men. Capt. Delehanty had served in the Asiatic Squadron and the Pacific fleet, the North Atlantic station and at the naval academy. He had been on the Saranac, the Independence, the Colorado, the Catskill, the Jackawanna, the Adams, the Wachusett, the Texas and other warships, and had been supervisor of New York harbor.

APPEALS TO ROOSEVELT.

Ordinarily the governorship of Sallor's Snug Harbor would be a coveted berth, but just at that time Capt. Delehanty did not want it. His friend, Theodore Roosevelt, was assistant secretary of the navy, and he went to see him.

"Mr. Secretary," he said, "we are going to have a war with Spain, and when it comes I don't want to be left on the beach."

Previously in conversations with the captain Mr. Roosevelt had expressed the opinion that war was certain, but now he said that the affair was being so managed that there would be no rupture of peace.

The captain was not convinced by what Mr. Roosevelt said, and Mr. Roosevelt jumped up and went in to see the chief, Secy. Long.

"Long says to take it," he announced when he returned.

Maybe he saw doubt still shadowed in the captain's face. At any rate he said: "Captain, there is no reason why you shouldn't take it. In the first place, there is going to be no war, and in the second place if there is a war I promise you I'll give you a ship."

"You promise?" said Captain Delehanty.

"Yes, I promise," said Mr. Roosevelt.

"All right, I'll go," said the captain.

To Sallor's Snug Harbor went the captain. He hardly had taken charge there before the Maine was blown up in the harbor of Havana. In a day the nation was aflame. War was in the air. It was useless for the governments of the two countries directly concerned to try to settle the trouble by diplomatic treaties. Millions of persons cried out for vengeance for the hundreds who went to death on the Maine. Outwardly protesting that war was not intended and would not be resorted to unless all other efforts failed, both the United States and Spain rushed their preparations for the conflict that both knew was inevitable.

GETTING READY FOR WAR.

In Washington the navy department was straining to bring into play its most formidable force. Night and day the officials studied the problems of equipment, personnel and concentration. Every commander saw in the coming conflict an opportunity to win for himself a high place in his country's regard and a niche, perhaps, in the temple of fame. For more than 20 years the nation had been at peace. Service in the navy had been dull and offered little reward. Men had given the best years of their lives to it and had grown old and gray without having attained much in the way of rank. A year of war meant more in the way of promotion than decades of service in times of peace. To the captain who had powerful friends in Congress there was the chance of appointment to command a fleet.

Captain Delehanty, newly installed in his office at Sallor's Snug Harbor, read the news day by day, and every day he regretted more and more that fate

had been so unkind to him. After all his years to be pigeonholed or side-tracked just at the time when the door of opportunity seemed about to be opened to the men of the navy was hard indeed. That he would be brought out from Snug Harbor for service was most unlikely. He had no reason to expect it except for the promise made by Theodore Roosevelt, and that promise undoubtedly would be forgotten in the stress of activity and the multitude of things that would overwhelm the assistant secretary of the navy in the preparations for the war.

Day by day the tension between Spain and the United States became more strained. In Congress the war party grew stronger and stronger, and the demand upon the president to act became more insistent. And as the tension became more strained and as the war feeling increased Capt. Delehanty's regret that he ever accepted the commission to Snug Harbor became more acute.

WAR DECLARED.

One day he was in the city, riding down Broadway in a car, when he heard the newsmen crying "Extra! Extra!" in a voice that told its own story. He got off the car and bought a paper. There across the whole page was the great news. War had been declared. The United States and Spain were to settle their differences by clash of arms. The navy was ready to be hurled at each other. Armies were assembling to meet each other and battle to the death. To the men trained to the service the door of opportunity was flung wide open at last, but not to Daniel Delehanty, neglected and forgotten, buried away at Sallor's Snug Harbor after 35 years of service.

As he went down Broadway after reading the extra, there was not a sadder man in all New York than Daniel Delehanty. He crossed the ferry to Staten Island and boarded the train at St. George for Snug Harbor with little thought of anything but his own ill fortune. As he entered the gate at Snug Harbor an orderly stepped forward, saluted, and thrust forward a paper.

"Telegram for you sir," he said, and saluted again.

NOT FORGOTTEN.

The captain opened the envelope mechanically. Then he read.

"War declared. You may have command of Suwanee or — Which do you prefer?"

"THEODORE ROOSEVELT, Assistant Secretary Navy."

In a moment the man who had been burdened with regret was transformed into a man full of hope, eagerness and activity. He hurried to the telegraph office and rushed a message to Washington. In a few days he was on his way to take command of the Suwanee. In a few months he was in the great battle of Santiago, where the navy of Spain was crushed in one of the most remarkable battles in the history of naval warfare.

When the fight was over he went in his launch to the battleship Iowa, and as he climbed up the companionway "Fighting Bob" Evans hurried forward, flushed of face and with both hands clasped in greeting. "Delehanty," he exclaimed, "I want to present you to one of the finest gentlemen I've ever seen."

Capt. Delehanty went forward and was presented to a man who, despite the rough garments of a common sailor, the first he could get into after being rescued from the water, nevertheless was an imposing figure. Dignified but gracious, greater in defeat, perhaps, than he was at any other time, Cervera, in his coarse, common garb, was no less the admiral and the gentleman than in the most resplendent of his uniforms.

To go back to Sallor's Snug Harbor

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CAPTAIN DANIEL DELEHANTY

after the war with Spain was no hardship to Capt. Delehanty. He had rounded out a fine career in the navy and in the manner every true officer of the navy hopes to round out his career. But there was one thing that he craved for, gotten for many times and never had been able to get, and one day in the navy department in Washington he got that.

BUT ONE REQUEST.

He had been talking with John D. Long, secretary of the navy, and as he was about to go the secretary asked him if there was anything he could do for him.

"Yes, there is," replied the captain. "There is a paper on file here in the navy department that I want more than anything else on earth. And then he told Secy. Long the story of the letter Archbishop Hughes had written. He told, too, all the details regarding his visit to the White House, his impressions of Mr. Lincoln, of the indorsement, "I wish this done. A LINCOLN," of how the president put his hand on his head as if in benediction, and of the flustered boyish speech, "Mr. President, you'll never regret what you have done this day."

The secretary listened to the plain, simple, human story, and then he summoned one of his secretaries and instructed him to get the letter. Out of the archives where it had lain for nearly 40 years was brought the faded letter of John Hughes, and together the secretary and the captain read it over and commented on it, and on the clear, legible writing of the great president.

COPY ON FILE.

"Mr. Secretary," said the captain, "every time I have asked for the letter I have been told the same thing. If I ever am to get the letter, which to me is so much and which to the department is so little, I am going to get it now. You asked me if I wanted anything. I want the letter. You said I should have it. If I leave here today without it I am sure I never will get it."

Mr. Long read once more the faded letter and once more he read over the inscription of the martyred president.

Then he summoned the secretary again. "Make a copy of this letter in strict conformity with the fullest requirements of the department," he said.

Have the copy certified and attested as soon as possible.

When the original and the copy were brought back the secretary compared the two and gave the copy to the captain for filing.

And then, turning to Capt. Delehanty, he handed to him the faded letter long ago.

RICHARD SPILLANE

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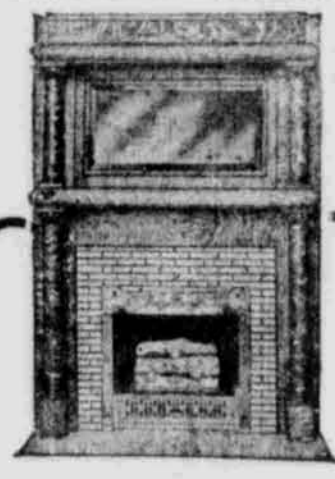
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