A HERO FROM ERIN.

THE BATTLE RECORD OF GEN. THOMAS W. SWEENY.

How an Irish Peasant Boy Became an American General—During Deeds in Mexico, on the Plains and in the War for the Union.

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BOY in his teens putting on soldier harness and leaving his Cumberland steeple a city training company, a regular armed general leading a Union division into the breach before Atlanta to buffet the fiercest Confederate sorties and save the day—the one the dawning, the other the climax of an Irish exile's career. The pathway between these extremes of time would be no more to follow, and of course was not all veiled in clouds.

General Sweeny landed in New York in the thirties, in a family of exiles from the famine stricken island, and after a few years of study in the public schools took up the printer's trade. These were the days of general training, when the national militia made some show of keeping the law, and every large city boasted numerous companies of organized soldiery. Sweeny enrolled himself in a band known as the "Hasten Blues," and proved so good a soldier that at the beginning of the Mexican war he was elected a lieutenant in the Second New York volunteers. That regiment marched and fought with Scott from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico, and Sweeny was in every battle up to Chorubusco. He was wounded there in the fierce attack led by Gen. Shields against the flank of Santa Anna's army while the regulars assaulted the position in front. The Mexicans fought Shields with unusual desperation in order to save their main line from a foe in the rear.

The New Yorkers made a brilliant charge, lost heavily and came out covered with glory. Sweeny's right arm was shattered above the elbow and was amputated at the shoulder. On his arrival in New York he was given a public reception at Castle Garden theater, then the arena for great ovations, and was loaded with honors. Of course the hand lost at Churubusco could no longer stick type and Uncle Sam kindly recognized the loss, staff behind that empty sleeve with a commission in the regular army.

There was work in those days for the regulars in making the far, far west habitable for the venturesome white man, and Sweeny was in every battle up to Cheyenne. He was also the remnant of the Sixteenth corps. Before new dispositions could be made a Confederate corps, led by General Hardee, burst from the woods into the open field and flashed one or four lines deep upon the flank of the Seventh corps to roll up the line. An eyewitness says that Sweeny's division sprang to arms like magic, the Sixteenth unlimbered on a knoll where they happened to be resting, and before the bold assailants had time to recover their surprise at the presence of this unlooked for danger they were met at close range by a storm of bullets and canister that sent them back to the cover of the trees. Again and again they re-formed and charged. At the third repulse Gen. Sweeny gathered up three regiments and led them with fixed bayonets against the broken Confederate ranks.

After dashing on at the repulse of the enemy by Sweeny, Gen. McPherson rode out beyond the new left flank to find a brigade that he had hastily ordered there to support of Sweeny. He unwittingly rode into the enemy's lines and was shot down, a noble sacrifice for the army and the nation and a personal loss to Gen. Sweeny at the time. In the excitement of the hour the general commanding the Sixteenth corps rode up to Sweeny's line and peremptorily detached several regiments by giving orders direct to the colonels and ignoring the division and brigade leaders altogether. His action broke up the division, and it subsequently fought in brigades and detachments, but always successfully, capturing cannon, flags and prisoners.

After the battle Gen. Sweeny made a fiery protest against the arbitrary conduct of his superior, and a personal encounter was the sequel. He was placed in arrest and deprived of his command. When the affair reached the ears of Gen. Sherman he wrote a strong letter to Gen. Logan, who had succeeded to McPherson's place, to deal cautiously in the matter and secure justice to the brave Irishman. This interference had the effect of retaining Sweeny in service until the end of the war, when he was tried and acquitted.

A sensed cloud settled upon Gen. Sweeny's fortunes in 1866 as a result of his love for the land of his birth. The Fenian brotherhood numbered him among its adherents to common with most of the distinguished sons of Ireland in the Union camps, and he was chosen to lead the Irish forces for the invasion of Canada. He had reached the rank of brigadier general in the regular army, and resigned his exalted and honorable position to fight for the banner of green. A force of 40,000 men was promised him, but when the clans mustered on the Canada border there was not a good division on all the line between St. Albans and Buffalo.

Yet the die was cast, and the general crossed over at Buffalo with Col. Neill's detachment, and led the attack on Lime stone Ridge, and shed blood for the cause. It was a farce of the most disastrous sort, and the whole movement went to pieces. But the regulars who took unpaid(?) to the heroic exile, and he was soon afterward restored to full rank in the army and placed on the retired list. So he died a soldier in the enjoyment of a rank earned upon a score of battlefields.

GEORGE L. KILMER.

GEN. SWEENY AT THE BATTLE OF BATTLE HILL.

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