

# Wolf Tone Lynch

which Scott was incapable." Scott was incapable (let us be thankful for it), and with characteristic generosity credited Byron with "deep seated knowledge of the human heart." But we are not bound to follow Scott in all his critical pronouncements, and pretend to hold at this time of day that the Byronic hero—that sturdiest of all stager puppets—is a miracle of psychological analysis.

It further appears, on the authority of the same critic, that Scott was devoid of "what we call literary conscientiousness." He was not an artist in the proper sense of the term. His style was of the easy, go-as-you-please description. "Both his poetry and his romances suffer from the same fault—the entire absence of critical revision." Scott has been "superannuated" by the "lack of artistry in him." "Some of us who care for form are irritated by Walter Scott." Some of us who care for literature are irritated by Scott's censor. Scott "lives no more for the present generation," because he is defective in "style," if it is by virtue of style that authors live.

The cat is now out of the bag, and a sufficiently mouldy and venerable animal she proves to be. What is all this but the dreary old cant about Sir Walter's "style" for which, most unfortunately, Mr. Stevenson gave the cue to a number of writers conspicuously inferior to himself! Scott did not trouble to play the assiduous and meticulous ape to anyone. But his style in point of vocabulary and diction will bear comparison with that of the most industrious nigglers who ever subjected their mosaic to "critical revision," and, whatever its demerits, it achieves its object and produces the effect aimed at, which is the great and essential thing about the means to any end. That his rhetoric, when occasion demands, is superb not even the dull ear of a London critic can probably fail to recognise. As for the talk about psychology, Mr. Carlyle played the part of devil's advocate on that point many years ago, and no modern successor is likely to improve upon his effort in special pleading. Perhaps the Sage's stern view might have been modified but for the mysterious miscarriages or neglect of a letter addressed by him to Sir Walter on the strength of his intercourse with Goethe. In any event, there are no signs that posterity has ratified his familiar strictures about fashioning characters from the skin inwards. The tendency of present-day criticism is all, we think, in the other direction; and the isolated instance from the metropolitan press to which we have directed attention merely serves to emphasise what less antiquated persons than the critic of the "Daily Telegraph" would never have dreamt of disputing. His remarks may be dismissed (with a caution) to the later Victorian section of the museum for antediluvian curiosities.—By J. H. Millar in "Chamber's Magazine."

I'd back one man in Corkshire,  
To beat ten men from Yorkshire;  
Kerry men against Kerry men,  
And Ireland against creation.  
W. Whitbread:  
'Tis a pity we shud'nt a nation.

**W**HEN the McLean regime of the Benefit Life was replaced by the Coogan faction, and Michael Coogan, the nickel magnate, became president, the position of office-boy fell vacant in the actuarial department.

It lay within the province of Mr. Francis Demarest, the tenth assistant actuary, to examine the candidates, and he did so with a certainty and dispatch born of long experience. The contest narrowed itself down to two boys.

If there was one thing on which Mr. Demarest prided himself, it was his sense of diplomacy. One of the applicants was named Schmidt, the other Lynch, and by the same token here was an opportunity to pay the company's new executive a delicate compliment.

It came over Mr. Demarest like a flash that Lynch's red hair, his grey eyes, the scarpular-string showing above his collar, would gratify Mr. Coogan. Even a Coogan is susceptible to flattery, he thought, and so with a satisfied grin Mr. Demarest assigned to the bench outside the candidate Lynch, whose Christian names were Wolfe Tone. So much for Mr. Demarest's knowledge of Irish history.

The other occupants of the bench were two in number, both hired by Mr. Demarest out of compliment to Mr. McLean, whose benefices in the realms of Protestantism stand in such marked contrast to his business career. They were named, respectively, Wesley E. Merrill and Campbell Ashbury Pomeroy, and if a general air of godliness and well-mannered mien count for anything, Wesley and Campbell were of the elect.

Beside them, Wolfe Tone was distinctly unplaced. His red hair defied the brush and comb, while his closely bitten fingernails were rimmed with a neat black line. He sat down next to Wesley, and drew in a sharp breath through his teeth.

"Stiffs!" he muttered, and buried his hands deep into his trousers-pockets.

A moment later Mr. Demarest came out of his room and cleared his throat ostentatiously.

"Wesley—Campbell," he said, "this is the new boy."

Mr. Demarest suffered from enlarged tonsils, and habitually spoke as if he were midway in the swallowing of food.

"What shall we call you?" he asked Wolfe Tone.

"Huh?" Wolfe Tone ejaculated.

"What name shall we call you?" he continued, and then what he conceived to be a joke formulated itself in Mr. Demarest's mind. He launched it with a grin.

"I don't want to call Wolfe, Wolfe," he said, "when there is no wolf."  
Wesley and Campbell broke into chuckles. They could appreciate humour from a tenth assistant actuary not quite as well as from a ninth assistant. The same brand of humour from the chief would have left their sides aching for a week.

"What does your mother call you?" Mr. Demarest continued.

"Red," Wolfe Tone growled, and glared at Wesley and Campbell.

Mr. Demarest shook his head.

"That wouldn't do for this office," he said. "Hereafter we'll call you Tony."

He grinned again, and then it occurred to Wolfe Tone for the first time how much he wanted to kill Mr. Demarest.

"Wesley and Campbell will tell you what to do," continued Mr. Demarest, over his shoulder, and left Wolfe Tone alone with his two conferees.

There was an embarrassed silence for a moment. Wesley was the first to speak,

"Say, Tony," he began. He went no further, for Wolfe Tone's grey eyes seemed to shed sparks.

"S-a-y," he growled, and the baneful tinkle of his voice made Wesley shiver—"you wanter cut out dat dago talk. Me name's Lynch—see?"

Wesley was tall for his fifteen years, but as loosely put together as Wolfe Tone was well knit. His hair composed itself in two slick divisions over his egg-shaped head, and he wore a different necktie every day. In appearance he differed from Campbell only in the length of his nose and the colour of his eyes. Campbell, however, was one year his senior, and lavished his hebdomadal six dollars on candy for a stenographer in the medical department.

"Well, then, Lynch," Wesley went on, "you'll find a dust-rag in the closet in Mr. Demarest's office. You've gotter clean off the desks this morning."

Wolfe Tone looked up. "Gutter, hey?" he ejaculated. Wesley winked at Campbell.

"Sure," he replied. "I did it yesterday, and it's Campbell's turn to-morrow."

"Show me de desks," said Wolfe Tone, rising to his feet.

It was barely nine o'clock, and the majority of the clerks had not yet arrived. Wesley led the way to the vacant desks, for the most part old oak furniture that had been discarded by the outer offices. The general public rarely visits the actuarial department; hence, there is no such show of mahogany and brass as makes the Benefit Life's counting-room a veritable palace.

Wesley and Campbell usually devoted a scant quarter of an hour to their task, but it was fully ten o'clock before Wolfe Tone returned to the bench.

"What kept you?" Wesley asked. Wolfe Tone scowled.

"Narten," he said.

"Why, it oughtn't to take you half an hour to clean those desks," Campbell declared, and fell to manicuring his nails with a penknife.

Wolfe Tone snorted and sat down on the bench, while Wesley went off to examine the job. He came back snickering, and whispered to Campbell, wheret they both burst out laughing.

Wolfe Tone glowered at them.

"Wof's bitin' you?" he demanded.

"Why," said Campbell, "you cleaned off the ink-stains."  
There were blots on the desks that had remained undisturbed for months. Campbell and Wesley had contented themselves by a perfunctory rubbing with the dust-cloth.

"Sure I did," Wolfe Tone replied.

"They laughed again.

"How did you manage it?" Wesley asked.

Wolfe Tone's lip curled contemptuously.

"Wit me spit wot I got and me finger-nails," he replied, scathingly. "I ain't no Willie-boy."

Unconsciously his fists clenched and he glared at Campbell, who continued his manicuring, while his fellow exquisite whistled a popular melody in a tuneless undertone.

ority, so that it was half-past two before Wolfe Tone hastily partook of his mid-day frankfurter on Ann-street.

Even the normal digestion of a four-year-old will rebel at such trefle meat, and, spurred as much by a dull pain in the region of his stomach as by a sense of outraged justice, he entered Mr. Demarest's room a few minutes after four o'clock.

"Say," he said to the tenth assistant actuary, "dese two guys outside ain't answered de bell wexst to-day."

Mr. Demarest arched his eyebrows suspiciously.

"An' de Wesley kid sez—now—dat yer ring want," Wolfe Tone continued, "dat dat's fer me. Is dat straight?"

The tenth assistant actuary rose from his seat.

"You get outside," he roared, "and stay there!"

Wolfe Tone went back to the bench, and Campbell, who had overheard his complaint, edged away from him.

"You dirty, sneakin' Mick!" he muttered, and then, amazed at his own temerity, he pulled out his pocket-knife and resumed his manicuring.

Wolfe Tone jumped from the bench and stood in the middle of the floor. Slowly he removed his coat. The "spirit of '98" shone in his face, blended with the pent emotions of all that long day. He spoke no word, but for challenge tapped Campbell gently on the forehead.

In two minutes the Benefit Life's actuarial offices sheltered as pretty a free-for-all fight as ever jeopardised the glass-ware in a Chatham Square saloon. Actuaries in every grade of assistance from four to twelve, aided by two elevator-men, restored the peace with a net loss of three wounded. So violent was the conflict that the uproar penetrated even to the president's office itself, and just as the struggling Wolfe Tone, borne between two elevator-men, appeared in the main hall the crowd of clerks that pressed forward parted respectfully to make way for a little grey gentleman.

"What's all this noise?" he demanded. "Drop that boy."

They stood Wolfe Tone on his feet, half naked from his rough usage. His dogged little face flushed hotly through the blood, some of which was his own. The little grey gentleman turned to the elevator-men.

"Bring him in here," he said.

Wolfe Tone struggled again to free himself.

"Whisht, yer young fule!" one of the men cried. "It's Mr Coogan."

They half carried him into the office of the president, who had seated himself behind his mahogany desk, the personification of judicial dignity.

"Now, then," asked Mr Coogan, "what have you been doing?"

There was the faintest suspicion of an Irish burr in the president's speech, and all the trepidation and shyness fell away from Wolfe Tone. He grasped in his left hand the remnant of his beloved scarpular, and held together the fragments of his only suit with the other. As rapidly as his agitation permitted, he recounted the injustices of the day.

"I leave it ter you, Mr Coogan," he concluded, frankly, "if dat wuz on de level."

"The president hid a smile with his hand.

"What did you say was your name?" he inquired.

"Wolfe Tone Lynch," was the reply. "An' dey wanted ter make it Tony, ick short."

Mr Coogan frowned.

"If you had any complaint, why didn't you come to me?" he said gently. "You shouldn't have fought about it."  
"But dat Campbell kid called me a dirty, sneakin' Mick," Wolfe Tone rejoined, and the blaze in his eyes found an answering gleam in Mr Coogan's.

He struck the call-bell on his desk.

"Wilson," he said to the officer that answered, "here's twenty dollars. Take this boy out, let him wash himself, and buy him some decent clothes."

He turned to the ragged little figure with a smile.

"Hereafter you're working for me in the office outside, he concluded. "And we'll call you Wolfe Tone Lynch."

Montague Glass in "Mummy's."

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