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Speech

Address to be given by Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of Congress from the Second Rhode Island Congressional District, at the Eighth Annual Banquet of the Elmwood Sons & Daughters of Eire, on Sunday evening, March 12, 1944, at the Narragansett Hotel, Providence, R.I.

I don't have to tell you - I'm sure - how happy I am to be here. It is always a thrilling occasion - to speak before a group of Irish men and women on this grand occasion.

It is really thrilling - something in the nature of an adventure. These banquets have been going on for such a long time - a man feels you must have heard the cream of the crop by now - and he feels he is being subjected to a terrible comparison.

I felt that as I came in, and Timmy Bannigan said he'd been wondering if I was coming. It reminded me, if you'll pardon my telling a story, of the occasion I read of once, when two boys of the IRA were told off to eliminate one who had been proven an informer.

Tim and Neill took their carbines and stationed themselves near the entrance to a cemetery - past which it was known this informer lad had walked every evening for several weeks. As is usual in such cases, time dragged by, and Neill and Tim began to grow anxious. They expressed concern several times over the fellow's laxity. Finally Tim looked at his time-piece - it was near midnight - he said to Neill - "You know, Neill, I have an idea he's not coming". "God", said Neill, "I hope nothing's happened to the poor man".

All over this world - wherever Irishmen gather - to commemorate the feast of Saint Patrick - men will recall the glories of Ireland and the deeds of honor of her great sons and daughters. There will be toasts drunk to Brian-Boroo - to Red Hugh - to Emmett and O'Connell.

Long will be the stories of days in the Emerald Isle - and the stars of night will have grown dim and pale before the advance of a new day - before weariness calls a halt to the parade of famous Irish names.

It's true that we take great pride in the deeds of Ireland's great. We'd not be human if we did otherwise.

But, I like to feel - and I know it's a fact - that Saint Patrick's day means more to us than just an occasion when we dwell in the recollections of days that are gone.

Saint Patrick's day - to us - is an inspiration. It is a time when we renew our pledge to be loyal to the ideals taught us by a tired father at the end of a hard day - or learned with our Hail Marys at a loving mother's knee. It is a day set apart - when Irishmen can add new fuel to the fires that burn in our hearts - fires that are our pledge to the world - that the torch of liberty and justice will never grow dim while an Irishman breathes the air of this mortal sphere.

It is natural that we take great pride in the accomplishments of the sons and daughters of the Gael - in all the climates of this earth. It is because of that pride that we resolve to be steadfast to what we believe to be the true Irish character.

Who could resist a feeling of pride when mention is made of John Boyle O'Reilly - a political prisoner - driven from his own little plot of ground because he believed in truth and justice - a tortured human wreck - existing in the horrors of a convict ship on his journey to VanDeeman's Land - a noble character who went on to again become a free man - to become distinguished in American literature - to prove that the love of freedom never dies in an Irishman's soul.

Who could hold back the surge of pride when the great General Patrick Cleburne is recalled - the great Stone-wall of the West - one of the greatest generals of the lost cause - ever championing the cause of freedom from slavery - yet giving his life but a short hour after he proclaimed his firm belief in the justice of the cause for which he fought.

Maybe there is a little hero-worship in each of us. It may be we like to dwell on the deeds of the Carrolls and the Barrys - the McNeVins and the O'Connors - who

gave so much that this Republic should be free from the tyranny of a foreign monarch.

I doubt if there breathes a man whose pulse doesn't beat a little quicker - whose breath doesn't come a little faster - when he recalls the story of the Irish immigrants who came to this land - seeking a haven from oppression - who brought with them a genuine and a pure love of liberty. They hewed a home from the wilderness - they built roads for our commerce - they spanned the continent with iron rails - they built canals and great cities - - yet they also made an unforgettable contribution to the Religious and Civil and Literary life of this young Republic.

Their sons fought at Valley Forge and at Trenton - they were in the ranks at Yorktown - they fought at Gettysburg - at Harper's Ferry - and they followed Sheridan to the sea - McDonough through Lake Champlain - and the immortal Jackson who drove Pakenham back into the Gulf of Mexico.

Wherever the flag of this republic has been in danger - wherever the life of the republic has been threatened - there you will find the sons of those same immigrants - giving their all for the preservation of the symbols of liberty and justice.

Oh yes! - many great Irishmen have fought with distinction on this Nation's battlefields. Many great Irishmen have followed Old Glory on the battlefields of foreign lands - - just as many, today, add new lustre to the glory of Ireland as they fight the nation's enemies in all the four corners of the globe.

In their hearts is the knowledge they fight for a cause that is just - a cause that is worthy of their best.

In this day, when the Nation is engaged in the greatest struggle of all time - we who boast of our Irish heritage have a great responsibility. We who thrill to the mention of King Cormac, Brian and Sarsfield - are again afforded an opportunity to prove our worth - to demonstrate to the world that we do not live in a world of dreams - or a world of fanciful wishes.

We are once more called before the bar of justice - to make clear our allegiance to the cause for which Irishmen have fought for a thousand years.

There are those who say - who believe they have established beyond a doubt - that wars will never cease - that justice and truth can never prevail - that man's genius will ever be directed toward the discovering and perfecting of new and more deadly instruments of destruction.

These are men who have no faith in human nature - they are men who have no knowledge of Ireland's history - the history of a land where climate and soil unite to tell man that brotherhood - and not domination - constitutes the only nobility for those who call this fair shore their Motherland.

We who are blessed with the faith of our fathers can disprove those assertions if we will.

Ours is not a mere negative assignment - merely to stand by and be content with disbelieving. Ours is a responsibility to be active - to be aggressive - to dare to speak boldly - to dare to say we stand for justice in the future ordering of the world - in order that mothers need not fear that the babe at breast is but a tool in the hands of some future war lord - or that this infant is to be a sacrifice to greed and the lust for power.

In the hearts where live the stories of '98 and '65 and '17, there will never be a corner for bad faith and injustice.

It is given to us to keep that faith and that pride alive - to prove we know we fight for the attainment of some goal. It is not enough merely to fight against a man - a group of men - or a government of men. It is not sufficient merely to hate - to kill - to destroy and to conquer. It is far more important that we know for what we fight - why we conquer. Win we will - determined we are that a new order will be the fruit of that victory - not a mere temporary lull - or a peace from which every semblance of Christian justice is excluded.

Far better it would be - to embark immediately upon the next holocaust - than to live in a world of deceptive promises - constantly listening for the booming of cannon announcing the outbreak of a new mass suicide.

All Irish valor and chivalry - whether of soul or body - have been directed for a thousand years to the end of justice. It was for this that Sarsfield died at Landen no less than did Brian at Clontarf.

The Monarch of Ireland, driving the invaders from Dublin Bay in the eleventh century - and the exiled hero leading the charge that routed King William in the Netherlands in 1693 - both fell on the same battlefield.

The cause of Ireland has found a hundred fields of foreign fame - where the dying Irishman might murmur with Sarsfield - "Would that this blood were shed for Ireland".

The blow we strike today - let it be for Ireland - for Ireland's age-old cause - for Liberty and for Justice.

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